



## **Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023/2024**

### **1.0 Annual Self-Assessment**

1.1 Bespoke Supportive Tenancies (BeST) are required to make a submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), providing a link to its published self-assessment, annual complaints performance, service improvement report and its governing body's response.

1.2 BeST must comply with the Ombudsman's statutory Complaint Handling Code (Code). BeST has assessed itself against 'the Code' in 2023 and updated this again in 2024 following the updating of the Code. BeST noted its full compliance with the Code. BeST updated its Complaints Policy and Procedure to take account of the updated Code to ensure compliance. The self-assessment is available from the following page on the website <https://www.bestha.co.uk/complaints.php>.

1.3 The Code introduced by HOS has been helpful in allowing BeST to fully develop its approach to overseeing complaints and understand the key areas for improvement. This has allowed BeST to develop a more robust customer approach to handling complaints.

### **2.0 Qualitative Analysis of Bespoke Supportive Tenancies Complaint Handling Process**

2.1 To gain a better understanding of the complaints raised and themes identified we have taken a closer look at all the complaints data collected, including comments and feedback during 2023/2024 in this report.

2.2 A clear issue that was identified within BeST's tenant base was the need to raise the profile of complaints with our tenants and their support providers.

2.3 To further develop a positive complaint handling culture, BeST raised the profile of 'how to make a complaint' with all its tenants during January 2023. A comprehensive letter and a tenant information leaflet 'Compliments and Complaints' was issued to all tenants. This also included the sharing how to make a complaint on our social media platforms, our website <https://www.bestha.co.uk/> and via email correspondence.

2.4 Our programme to raise awareness of the complaints profile has resulted in an increase in the number of complaints reported compared with previous years. The increase in volume was to be expected given the active approach BeST took in embracing the new Code. An average of seven complaints were received monthly within our complaints team during 2023/2024.



### **3.0 Stage 1 Complaints**

3.1 Our analysis of this data confirmed that only 58% of complaints were logged and acknowledged within five working days and only 14% of complaints were responded to within the ten-day time frame, leaving 86% of those making a complaint at stage 1 not receiving a response within the 10-day time frame that BeST is expected to respond within.

3.2 The self-assessment against the Code identified improvements that could be made to the process and the establishment of a complaints steering group has resulted in a more efficient and effective process.

3.3 BeST has made great strides in this area since the analysis was undertaken and the changes made, with all historical complaints now actively addressed and closed during 2023/2024.

### **4.0 Stage 2 Complaints**

4.1 During 2023/2024, BeST received a total of four Stage 2 complaints. 25% were logged and acknowledged within five working days and 25% responded to within the 20-day time limit. Unfortunately, 50% of those making a complaint at stage 2 did not receive a response within the 20-day time limit.

4.2 BeST has made a concerted effort to address these complaints since the analysis was undertaken, along with the procedural changes, and 100% of complaints at stage 2 have now been actively addressed and closed during 2023/2024.

### **5.0 Repairs and maintenance**

5.1 The analysis of complaint themes (see table 8.5 below), identified that the majority of BeST's complaints relate to the repair and maintenance delivery, with 82% of all complaints relating to the repair and maintenance service.

5.2 BeST have responded to this challenge through a re-organisation of the Asset Management department. A new structure has been introduced that includes a Head of Assets, a Repairs & Void Manager, a dedicated contract management team, a gardening contract manager and a compliance team. We have also appointed BeST's main repair contractor to triage all repairs to help us deliver an improved repair and maintenance service. These changes have already started to show improvements in the repairs performance in terms of timescales. Utilising a professional team to triage the repairs has also resulted in clearer communication to tenants and more realistic timescales being applied.



## **6.0 Dampness**

6.1 BeST received four complaints relating to damp that have been satisfactorily resolved at stage 1 of our complaints process. BeST's response to reports of damp and mould are timely and reflect the urgency of the issue. BeST has implemented a data driven, risk-based approach with respect to reports of damp and mould. This has helped to identify hidden issues and to prioritise interventions before a complaint or disrepair claim is made. BeST has ensured that it clearly and regularly communicates with tenants regarding actions taken to resolve reports of damp and mould. All related policies and processes are updated regularly in accordance with recommended practice.

6.1 BeST also undertook a full stock condition survey at the start of 2024 to improve the quality of the data held on properties. This has enabled a more accurate picture to be established of BeST's varied stock portfolio.

## **7.0 Tenant Perception /Satisfaction Survey 2023 Handling Complaints**

7.1 The new Tenants Perception/Satisfaction Survey questions focus on the satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints. BeST's annual Tenant Perception/Satisfaction Survey carried out in 2023 identified the lowest level of satisfaction and the highest level of dissatisfaction within the survey for complaint handling. In addition to the changing format of the questions, since the introduction of the Regulator's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), dissatisfaction with this measure is also considered, not just how a tenant's complaint was managed. For example, tenants not getting the outcome they expected or still awaiting a response.

7.2 The results from the TSMs across the social housing sector have shown a general decline in general satisfaction, partly linked to the manner in which the questions have been asked but BeST is also aware that there was significant dissatisfaction with its complaint handling process.

7.3 The largest decrease in satisfaction from the previous survey was in relation to complaint handling (down 25%). BeST had seen a notable increase in the number of complaints received, following a successful promotional campaign but the organisation has not shied away from the fundamental message that its tenants were not happy and deserved an improved service. BeST now understands that adjustments are necessary to adapt to this increased frequency.

7.4 To help deal with handling process and improve efficiency, support was provided to the Complaints Officer and a Complaints Steering group was established to resolve issues more promptly. A programme of training across the organisation is



raising the profile of complaints which is resulting in matters being dealt with more effectively.

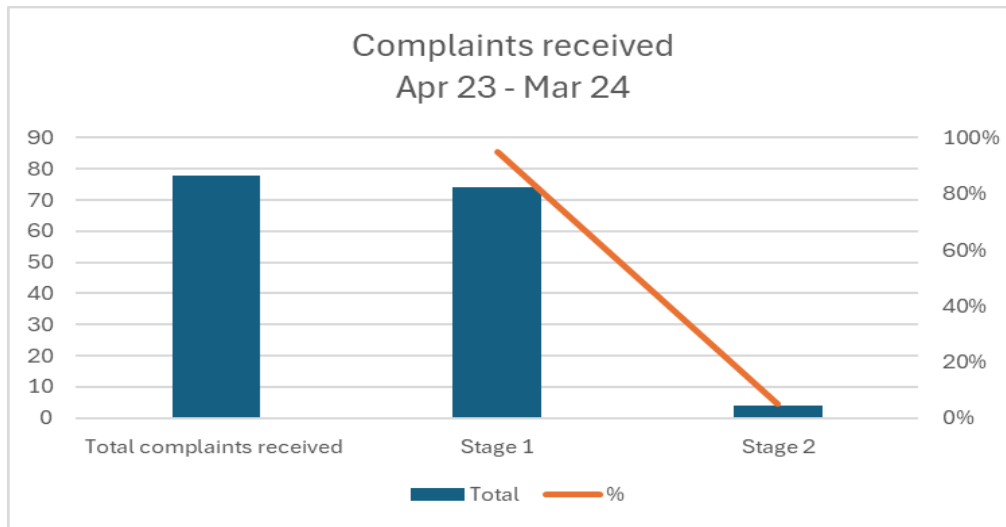
7.5 A sample of comments from tenants relating to their experience with raising a complaint included:

- “Need to deal with complaints better.”
- “Act upon complaints.”
- “Reply to repairs, problems in a more timely matter.”
- “Having a more responsive approach to resolving issues in a complaint.”
- “Quicker responses.”
- “Act upon complaints and keep us/staff up to date on progress.”
- “Have a meeting once a month.”
- “Be more proactive.”
- “Act quicker when dealing with complaints, stop passing to other departments.”
- “Understand Autism, more understanding and listen to the tenant.”

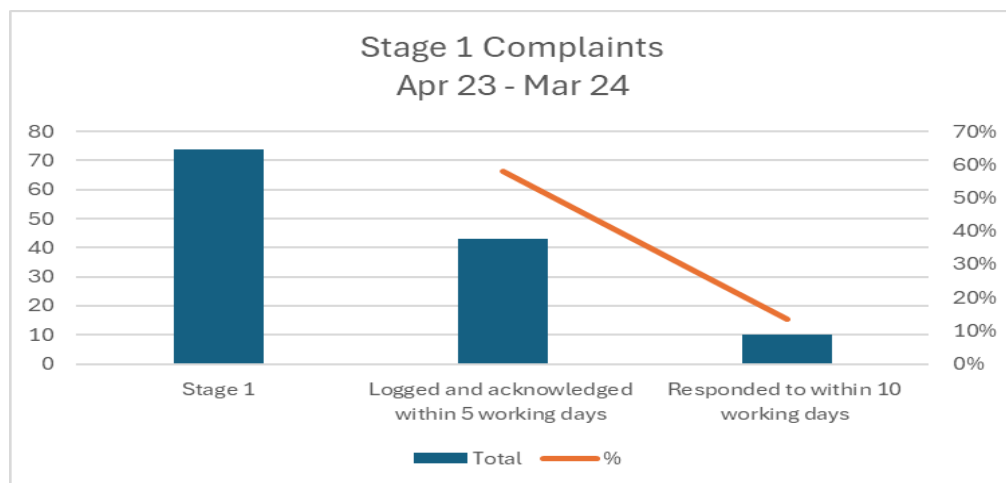
7.6 These comments have been taken on board, along with the specific needs of our client base, and BeST will monitor the success of the changes being made to ensure that they deliver.

## **8.0 Quantitative Analysis of the Complaint Handling Performance**

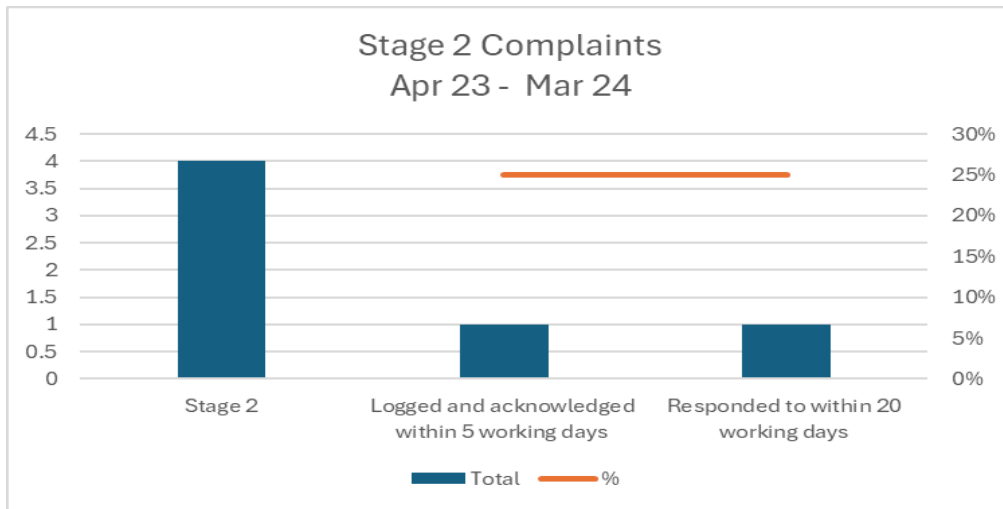
8.1 Below are tables evidencing the complaint handling performance and an analysis of the complaints made over the period. These highlight the pre-eminence of the issues of repairs in terms of generating complaints.



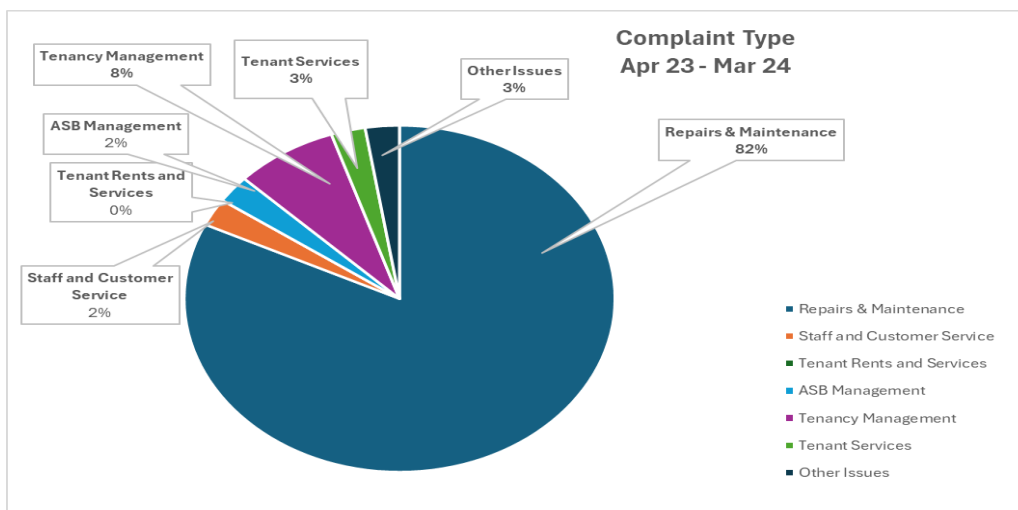
8.2 The table above details a total of seventy-eight complaints received during 2023/2024.



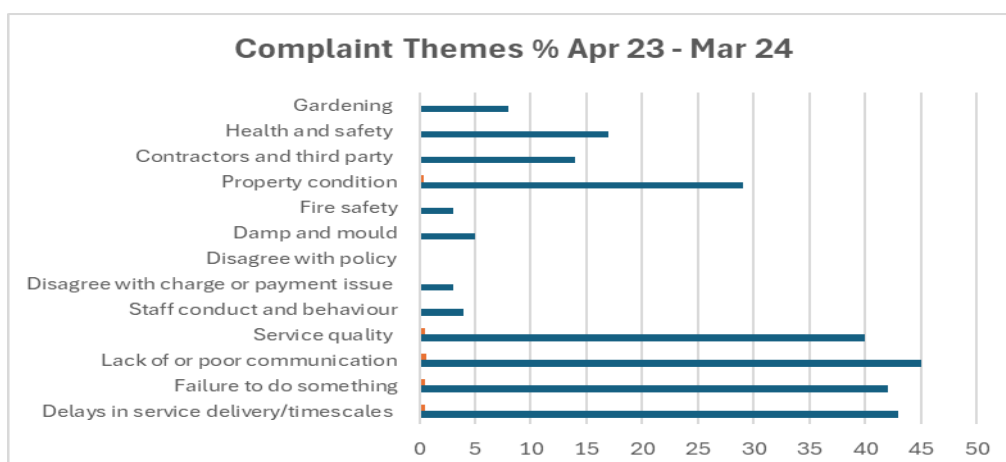
8.3 The table above details seventy-four complaints processed for stage 1 during 2023/2024.



8.4 The table above details four complaints processed at stage 2 during 2023 2024.



8.5 The table above details the type of complaints made and details 82% of complaints related to the repair and maintenance service during 2023/2024.





8.6 The table above details the theme of complaints received during 2023/2024 with 45% concerned about the lack of or poor communication.

## 9.0 Additional information.

9.1 BeST did not reject any complaints during 2023/2024.

9.2 BeST was not found to be non-compliant with the Code by the Housing Ombudsman in 2023/24 and, to date, we are not aware of any complaints that were escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service in the period.

9.3 Staff have made use of the wealth of documentation and training that is available through the Housing Ombudsman's website and its Centre for Learning. Key staff are signed up to the Centre for Learning to make use of webinars and training. As well as learning from maladministration reports, staff are encouraged to read the Spotlight reports and where these are of particular interest to BeST, they are circulated, such as 'Damp and mould' and 'Attitudes, respect and rights'.

## 10.0 Service Improvements

10.1 Below is a summary of the service improvements made, which are noted in the Action Plan attached:

- **Service Delivery Timescales** - 43% of the complainant themes identified related to delivery timescales for our repair and maintenance service. We have now reviewed our repair and maintenance priorities and reassessed them into three clear categories, with realistic repair activities included in each: 24-hour, 7-day and 28-day repair categories. We will also be rolling out a planned and cyclical programme of works during 2024/2025 based on a full, on-site stock condition survey that was carried out, which has enabled a clear risk-based approach to be taken to resolve the more urgent maintenance issues.
- **Lack of or Poor Communication** – We now have a monthly complaint steering group led by our Complaints Officer to monitor complaints and identify early key learning from our complaints. BeST has implemented a 35-point complaints checklist to review complaints at the end of the process to confirm that the correct process has been followed and to identify any key learnings. Complaints are reported to our Board and discussed with our Member Responsible for Complaints on a quarterly basis.
- **Property Condition** – 29% of the complaints' themes identified related to general property conditions. As noted above, a full, on-site stock condition survey was completed in 2024, which has provided BeST with it's more up to date property information.



- **Staff Training** - All staff involved in managing complaints are signed up to the <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/centre-for-learning/>. An internal programme of training has also been scheduled specifically in relation to the revised Complaints Handling Process.





## Member Responsible for Complaints Report

As the BeST Board was unable to meet prior to the need to report the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023/2024 to the Housing Ombudsman, it was circulated to Board on 20 June 2024, along with the Action Plan derived from the Report.

The Board had previously reviewed the self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code at its Board meeting on 28 February 2024. At the same meeting, the Board approved a new Complaints Policy, which had been updated to take account of the changes in the revised Complaint Handling Code. The only area of non-compliance noted was in relation to the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, which has now been completed.

The Board noted the contents of the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report. The Board had been aware of the resourcing issues faced by the organisation due to its current focus on its financial viability and progress to exit regulatory engagement. The self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code had identified actions to improve issues around staff training and awareness of complaints, which has enabled BeST to clear the backlog and respond more efficiently and effectively to complaints. Ongoing training will help to address issues around communication, along with the development of the Complaint Steering Group.

The Board has been sighted over the issues with the condition of properties and the repairs service over the past six months and has taken action to improve outcomes in these areas. A full stock condition survey was undertaken, the repairs policy was updated and triaging of repairs was outsourced to BeST's main contractor, all of which are enabling BeST to address the issues in these areas.

The Board noted the contents of the report and are confident that the actions being taken will result in improved complaint handling performance in 2024/25.



## Housing Ombudsman Complaints Action Plan & Learning Outcomes 2023- 2024

Action Point	Action Point Identified	Complaint Issues Raised	Outcome	Time Frame
1	Repair & Maintenance priority jobs unreliable.	43% of the complainant's themes related to delivery timescales for our repair and maintenance service.	<p>We have now reviewed our repair and maintenance job priorities and have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority 1 - 24-hour emergency repairs,</li> <li>• Priority2 - 7- working day repair and</li> <li>• Priority 3 - 28- working day repair category.</li> </ul> <p>This was rolled out to tenants from January 2024</p>	January 2024
	Repair Job descriptions and repair diagnostics	42% of complainants identified failure to do something	Contractors now expected to make more detailed notes on jobs with before and after photographs advising tenants on identifiable recharge repairs and report back on any recommendations	Jan 2024
2	Internal Communication	<p>Internal communication between teams was challenging.</p> <p>External Communication with tenants and support providers not consistent</p>	<p>A dedicated Complaints Handler in the contract management team has been appointed, supporting the investigative side of complaints.</p> <p>A dedicated Complaints Handler business-wide has been appointed with administrative support to coordinate and monitor KPI's.</p>	March 2024



Action Point	Action Point Identified	Complaint Issues Raised	Outcome	Time Frame
		35 Point Check List audit on all complaints to develop and maintain consistency	The checklist is now in operation so that BeST can identify that the process has been carried out in accordance with the HOS Code.	April 2024
Action Point	Action Point Identified	Complaint Issues Raised	Outcome	Time Frame
4	Staff Training & Development	Learnings over the last twelve months has identified a variety of training requirements in this area. Internal training has been scheduled including Complaint Policy & Process	<b>Staff Training</b> All staff involved in managing complaints are signed up to the <a href="https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/centre-for-learning/">https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/centre-for-learning/</a> to complete the free complaints modules. Internal complaints training has also been scheduled alongside the identified areas.	April 2024
		Customer Care		June 2024
		Dispute Resolution skills Attitude Respect & Rights Apologies		Jul -Sept 2024
				July -Sept 2024