



**Grounds
Maintenance**



**Repairs &
Maintenance**



Health & Safety



Tenancy & Housing



Have Your Say



Financial Matters



My Important Stuff



Safeguarding

Support Provider Handbook

Who are Bespoke Supportive Tenancies?

Bespoke Supportive Tenancies, or BeST for short, is a landlord that specialises in providing Specialist Supported Housing.

Our Head Office is based in Eccles, Manchester.

You can contact our Head Office from 9am to 5pm (Monday to Friday) on 0161 786 6000.

You can also contact us via email on: info@bestha.co.uk

Our website has lots more useful information: www.bestha.co.uk

Check out our Facebook page too. Just search "bespoke supportive tenancies" and like our page for up-to-date information about our service, stories from our tenants and much more.



What this handbook is about

Bespoke Supportive Tenancies works in partnership with over 30 care providers. Together we enable people with support needs to achieve independent living. We provide homes for over 1,000 tenants across 70+ Local Authorities in both England and Wales.

This handbook has been produced to provide more information about Bespoke Supportive Tenancies, how it operates, and what you as a care provider can expect from your Housing Officer.

We hope you will find it useful and that it will help you both in your role as tenants' advocates and in promoting independent living.

A section has been included for you to record useful details about this property - see pages 4 to 7. Please take some time to complete these sections so that you have them to hand if an emergency occurs at the property in the future, or for when you are reporting repairs for kitchen/laundry equipment provided.

There is a separate 'Repairs Logbook' to help you keep track of repairs that have been reported on behalf of tenants. You can find extra copies of the Repair Logbook and many other useful documents that you can print out on our website:

www.bestha.co.uk



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My Important Stuff

This section covers:

- ▶ Contact Details
- ▶ Key Contact Information
- ▶ Fixture Locations
- ▶ White Goods and Equipment



Contact Details

Head office

2a Sentinel House
Albert Street
Eccles
Manchester
M30 0NJ

Email info@bestha.co.uk

Phone 0161 786 6000

Emergencies Out of hours: 0161 786 6000

Website www.bestha.co.uk

Opening hours

You can contact our Head Office from 9am to 5pm
(Monday to Friday)

Facebook



Check out our Facebook page. Just search **bespoke supportive tenancies** and 'like' our page for up-to-date information about our service, stories from our tenants and much more.

If you call our head office number you will be presented with 6 options:

Option
1

To report a new repair

You will be put through to our asset management team who will take the details of the repair issue and provide you with a log number. You must keep this number for future reference.

Option
2

Calling about a repair that has already been reported

If you would like an update on a repair, use this option. You must have already reported the repair and have a log number so our team can bring up the details and update you on the repair.

Option
3

Housing or tenancy related issue

This line is for all general matters that involve tenants and tenancy management. Usually, you would contact the Housing Officer for the property first, however, this line is available for further support and advice.

Option
4

To discuss an invoice

Will put you in contact with our finance team. If you have been sent an invoice from BeST please quote the reference number on the invoice to help our team locate the invoice for you to answer your queries faster.

Option
5

Rent accounts information or advice on housing benefit

Will put you through to our Revenue and Benefits team who have access to all tenants rent accounts. The team will be able to update you on a tenant's arrears or update you on the stage of a housing benefit claim. You can also speak to this team about the rent levels or breakdown of the rents for each property.

Option
6

All other enquiries

If you are unsure if any of the above suit your query, please chose this option and someone will be happy to help guide you to the right person to help you with your query.

Useful email addresses

info@bestha.co.uk

General enquires email address for queries you are unsure who to send to. This will be picked up by an office administrator who will forward on the email to the relevant person.

repairs@renov8.uk

Emails an inbox managed by all our asset management team. We still encourage people to call in to report repairs, but this email can be used for email trails, chasing up repairs or sending in photos.

compliance@bestha.co.uk

An email box managed by both BeST and Myshon who instruct and monitor the compliance of all BeST properties. Email this address for updates on certification or to request digital copies as required.

accounts@bestha.co.uk

An email inbox managed by our finance team. It can be contacted for general queries about invoices and payments.

Key Contact Information

In case of emergency, or where there is an unavoidable delay in repairing equipment whilst parts are ordered, you may want to note below alternative arrangements for coping with the situation.

Please carry out a risk assessment if there is any unavoidable delay in repairs to specialist equipment.

Bathing

where specialist bathing equipment is not working

Contact person:

Contact tel number:

Heating

Contact person:

Contact tel number:

Laundry

Address of nearest launderette:

Opening hours:

Service Providers

Gas: Company name: Company contact details:

Account details:

Electricity: Company name: Company contact details:

Account details:

Water: Company name: Company contact details:

Account details:

Internet: Company name: Company contact details:

Account details: Password:

Flood from neighbouring property

Address 1:

Contact person:

Contact tel number:

Address 2:

Contact person:

Contact tel number:

Other:

Think about things that are needed on a day-to-day basis and assess whether alternative back-up solutions might be required. eg specialist fittings, refrigeration, cooking etc

Fixture Locations

The following information will help you to respond quickly if you have to deal with an emergency or have to report repairs for particular fixtures or equipment.

Please take some time to complete the information for the scheme you work at.



Item	Location
Electric fuse box	
Electricity mains trip switch	
Gas mains stop tap	
Central heating boiler	Make of boiler
Immersion heater	
Mains water stopcock	
Hot water cylinder	
Cold water tank	

Other fixtures of importance

White Goods and Equipment

The following information will help you to respond quickly if you have to deal with an emergency or have to report repairs for particular fixtures or equipment.

Please take some time to complete the information for the scheme you work at.

Item

Make and model

Oven

Hob

Fridge

Freezer

Fridge Freezer

Dishwasher

Washing Machine

Tumble Dryer

Central Heating Boiler

Other equipment of importance





Health and Safety

This section covers:

- ▶ Fire Safety
- ▶ Leaks
- ▶ Pest Control
- ▶ Prevention



Fire Safety

Emergency exit lighting

We carry out fire risk assessments on all our properties. This assessment identifies where emergency exit lighting has been fitted. Where this is the case, the system will be tested on an annual basis.

Fire alarms

We carry out fire alarm testing either annually or bi-annually depending on the system in place at your property.

It is expected that care providers will test the fire alarm regularly to ensure it is working

and keep a fire alarm test log as part of the routine health and safety duties.

You should report any faults to our maintenance team.

Smoke alarms and heat detectors

Smoke alarms are fitted to most of our homes as standard items.

In other properties there will either be hard wired smoke or battery charged detectors.

We will service smoke alarms and any heat detectors annually and will change batteries when required.

The batteries in smoke alarms give out a high-pitched beeping noise when the battery is running low. If this happens the tenant or you should contact us as soon as possible to report the fault.

Fire blankets and fire extinguishers

Some schemes have been provided with a fire blanket and small extinguisher in the kitchen. Where we have provided this equipment then we will arrange for it to be serviced annually.

Leaks

Gas leaks

- ▶ Turn off the gas mains stop tap.
- ▶ Turn off or remove all sources of ignition in a safe manner.
- ▶ Do not turn electrical lights or switches either 'on' or 'off'.
- ▶ Open all doors and windows for ventilation.

▶ **Phone the National Grid on 0800 111 999 (free phone)**

- ▶ Give the tenant's full name and address.
- ▶ Get a job number from the National Grid.
- ▶ Finally, let us know that you have reported the leak.

Water leaks

Please report water leaks as soon as possible after they have been discovered.

For minor leaks - please try to contain these until the tradesperson arrives, by using a pan or bucket to catch the water.

For serious leaks - it is essential that you know the location of the mains stop tap to the property, so that you can turn off the water supply quickly and minimise damage. You may want to note down its location at the beginning of this handbook.



Pest Control

In many cases we do not provide pest control services. You, or the tenant, should either deal with the problem yourselves, or contact the local authority or local contractor as outlined below.

You may want to keep a note of the telephone number of your local Environmental Health Department herefor future reference.

If we do provide pest control services, or if you are unsure, please contact your housing officer to either report the problem or seek advice.

Ants

If there is a problem with ants, we would expect care staff to support tenants and treat this, as you would at your own home, by using powder paid for by the tenant(s).

Wasps

If there is a problem with a wasps' nest you will need to contact your local Environmental Health Department / local contractor who will advise on how to get rid of the problem. The cost of this service must be paid by the tenant(s).

Vermin (e.g. rats, mice, squirrels etc.)

If you have a problem with vermin external to the property you will need to contact your local Environmental Health Department / local contractor who can help to get rid of the problem. The cost of this local service will have to be paid by the tenant(s).

If the issue is internal then you will need to contact BeST on 0161 786 6000, please note if the property is found to be in such a condition that would attract vermin the cost of this will be re-charged back to the tenant(s).

Prevention

Water hygiene

Legionella is found in all water systems including rivers and ponds. Within buildings it can be found in hot and cold stored water systems and pipework.

Legionnaires' disease can only be caught by breathing in water droplets from systems that have been infected with legionella bacteria, it cannot spread from person to person. For normally functioning systems the risk is very low as legionella grows between 20 and 50 degrees centigrade, and in most domestic hot or cold-water systems the water temperature is higher or lower than this.

We have surveyed all our properties to identify any areas where there may be a risk of legionella bacteria growth. The survey determined what needs to happen going forward in the property, for example, checking temperatures and cleaning regimes.

We will advise you about this and how often these checks will need to happen. In some cases, we may ask you to assist by running taps etc.

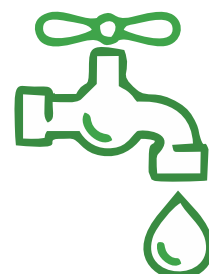
The report will outline the checks that are required and confirm if we will undertake them or ask you to assist.

Good practice in the control of legionella is:

- ▶ Regular cleaning of all showerheads and taps.
- ▶ Run all your taps or showers at least once per week.

If the property is left empty for more than a week then:

- ▶ Open windows for fresh air.
- ▶ Baths and basins - run taps gently for about three minutes.
- ▶ Showers - put the showerhead on the bottom of the shower or bath and let it run for about three minutes.



Condensation

Often when tenants or their representatives, report damp in their properties the problem is caused by condensation. This happens when moisture in the air comes into contact with a cold surface like a window pane or cold wall.

Evidence of condensation is usually indicated by black spots of mould on walls or other surfaces.

The trick is to minimise moist air in the property by keeping it warm and well aired.

In most instances taking some simple measures can prevent condensation problems:

- ▶ Where fitted, use the extractor fan to remove steam from the bathroom or kitchen.
- ▶ Open windows in the kitchen and bathroom to remove moisture from the air when cooking or bathing.
- ▶ Keep the bathroom door shut when a bath or shower is being taken.
- ▶ Cover saucepans when cooking and open the kitchen window.
- ▶ Wipe down windows and surfaces that have condensation on them.
- ▶ Always keep the property warm and well ventilated.
- ▶ Make sure shower cubicle doors are shut when someone is taking a shower.
- ▶ Make sure shower curtains are tucked within the bath or shower tray when the shower is being used.
- ▶ Do not dry wet clothes by draping them over, radiators or a clothes horse.
- ▶ Do not stand large, heavy furniture against the cold, outside walls of rooms.
- ▶ Do not have fitted wardrobes installed along the cold, outside walls of rooms.

Asbestos

Asbestos can be present in all buildings built prior to the year 2000. Asbestos is safe if undisturbed and not damaged in any way. There are numerous regulations and guidance on how asbestos should be managed within the home.

When any major works are carried out by BeST if a survey has not already been carried out then this will be done to advise whether asbestos is present in your home.

This is to ensure that everyone at the property stays safe during the process.

If the tenant, or someone on their behalf, wants to carry out any works that break the surface of the walls, floors or ceilings on the inside or outside of the property, please inform us so that a survey can be provided.



Repairing and Maintaining Properties

This section covers:

- ▶ Repairs Process
- ▶ White Goods and Furniture
- ▶ Internal Decor
- ▶ Rechargeable Repairs
- ▶ Property Maintenance
- ▶ Adaptations
- ▶ Code of Conduct for Contractors and Trades



Repairs Process

As the landlord of the property, we will repair most parts of tenants' homes.

The tenant does not have to pay any more money for this since the costs are covered in the rent.

However, tenants or the care provider will be charged the full cost of the repair if:

- ▶ They, or you act on their behalf, say something is an emergency when it is not.
- ▶ The tenant, their family, support staff or friends cause any damage in the property.

Repairs and what to do

When things get broken and need repairing, please tell us straight away.

You can telephone, email, or access the website to report a repair (see below)

We have a team of staff who you can report repairs to.

It is advised you keep a log of all repairs that you report.

We can provide a logbook to record these repairs. Just call and ask and we will send one out for you.

If you need to report a repair, you can do so by:

Visiting our website: at any time of day or night and using the repair reporting tool. Please be aware this is not monitored 24/7 so if an emergency always call the number below to report.

Telephoning: The main telephone number is **0161 786 6000**. Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, and outside of these times for emergencies.

Telephone: Out of office hours - emergency repairs only 0161 786 6000. Monday to Friday 5pm - 9am, all weekends and bank holidays. You will note that this number is the same as the daytime telephone number, however after 5pm the service becomes an emergency one only.

How to report repairs

When you, or the tenant telephones our contact centre you will be asked for the following information:

- ▶ Your name
- ▶ The property address.
- ▶ A telephone number so you can be contacted at a later stage if needed.
- ▶ As much information about the repair as possible.
- ▶ When access will be available at the property.

How long will it take to get things repaired?

We aim to complete repairs within four timescales:

Emergency repairs – make safe same day.

Urgent repairs - make safe within 24 hours.

Routine repairs - completed within three to five working days.

Non-urgent repairs - completed within 20-40 working days.

Here are some examples of the type of repairs within each target group:

EMERGENCY/URGENT REPAIRS – the situation will be made safe within the same day or possibly 24 hours.

An emergency repair is something that could be a life-threatening danger or could cause serious damage to the property. For example:

- ▶ If there is no electricity
- ▶ If there is no heating
- ▶ If there is no hot water
- ▶ If there is a leak or burst pipe
- ▶ If the house is not secure
- ▶ If the only toilet in the property is blocked



If there is a gas leak telephone the National Grid immediately on 0800 111999

ROUTINE REPAIRS – these should be completed within five working days.

A routine repair is something that causes the tenant a great deal of discomfort or inconvenience. For example:

- ▶ Any work needed following an emergency repair.
- ▶ If some, but not all the electrical sockets and lights are not working.
- ▶ If some, but not all the water supply stops working.
- ▶ If some, but not all the gas supply stops working.
- ▶ If some, but not all the heating stops working.
- ▶ If some, but not all the hot water stops working.
- ▶ If drains are blocked or leaking.
- ▶ If the toilet is blocked or not flushing.
- ▶ If the sink or bath is blocked.
- ▶ If there is a leak from the water or heating pipes, tank, or cistern.
- ▶ The property's roof is leaking.
- ▶ Windows, door or locks are insecure.

NON-URGENT REPAIRS – these should be completed within 20 working days.

Non-urgent, or routine repairs, are repairs that can wait a short time before being dealt with. For example:

- ▶ If there is a small problem with the toilet, bath, or sink.
- ▶ If doors or windows are sticking.
- ▶ If plaster or brickwork needs repairing.

What to do if a repair is not completed within the priority time

When you report a repair, you will be given a target time for completion as stated above.

If a repair has not been completed within this time frame, then you should contact us and discuss the situation further.

If the matter is not resolved after this, you should discuss the problem with your housing officer.

If you wish to make a complaint, compliment, or comment you can contact us during our office hours, by post or by email.

REMEMBER

The main telephone number is

0161 786 6000

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm.

Out of office hours - emergency repairs only

0161 786 6000

Monday to Friday 5pm - 9am,
all weekends and bank holidays.

White Goods and Furniture

Items of furniture/white goods eligible for replacement

Below is a list of items that are eligible for replacement.

White goods

- ▶ Washing machine
- ▶ Washer/dryer
- ▶ Tumble dryer
- ▶ Fridge
- ▶ Freezer
- ▶ Fridge/freezer
- ▶ Cooker
- ▶ Oven
- ▶ Hob
- ▶ Extractor hood

Furniture

- ▶ 3-piece suite
- ▶ Dining table and chairs
- ▶ Kitchen table and chairs - seating, dining tables and chairs will be based on the number of tenants residing at the property.

Please note that we will not purchase the following equipment:

- ▶ Sofas and chairs that are recliners or manual footstools.

Replacement of existing appliances/ furnishings where BeST are responsible

Your housing officer will assess the condition of each piece of furniture and any white goods at the scheme review.

This helps to budget for potential replacements ahead of the next financial year.

It is normal procedure to replace equipment on a 'like for like' basis.

Repairs to white goods

If a repair is needed to a white goods item, you should contact us on 0161 786 6000 and let us know:

- ▶ Full details of the repair
- ▶ Property address
- ▶ Telephone number
- ▶ Access arrangements

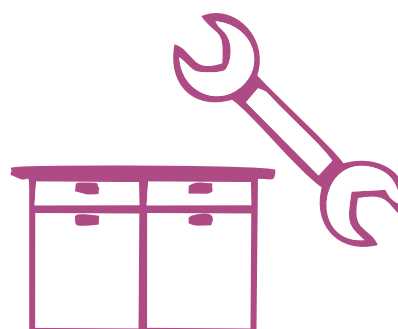
We will arrange for a contractor to contact the property directly to make a suitable appointment for access to assess the issue, or if possible, carry out a repair. The timescale for the contractor to attend is five working days.

Should the appliance need parts ordering then the contractor will contact us for authorisation and then the parts will be ordered. We will be able to advise you of the timescale for the repair.

Where there have been several previous repairs carried out to the same piece of equipment, we may ask the contractor to assess the job and report back as to whether it is cost-effective to carry out another repair.

Responsibility for disposing of furniture and electrical equipment

The white goods that are being replaced will be taken away and disposed of by the supplier. Should there be any issue with an old appliance not being removed when a new one has been installed then you should contact us. We would ask that you support the tenant to remove old furniture and you, or the tenant may have to contact your local council to arrange for the items to be removed.



Internal Decor

Responsibility

The tenant will be responsible for the internal decoration of their own bedroom and/or flat as part of their tenancy agreement.

BeST will be responsible for the decoration of the communal areas in a property that are not being let to one specific tenant. BeST review and complete communal decoration on a cyclical basis approximately every 3-5 years depending on the condition of the property and available budgets.

Which areas are communal?

Internal, communal areas are generally understood to mean all shared areas, such as:

- ◆ Sitting room / lounge
- ◆ Dining room
- ◆ Utility room
- ◆ Hall, stairs and landing
- ◆ Kitchen
- ◆ Bathroom

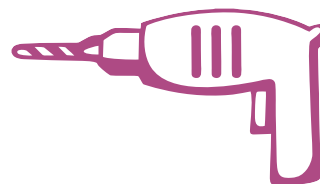
Who arranges for communal, internal decorating work to be carried out?

In most cases we are responsible for arranging the decorating of shared internal areas.

If the care provider is responsible for this budget on behalf of tenants, then it is up to the tenant(s)/staff to instruct a contractor of their choice to carry out the work.

Monitoring internal decor

We will routinely note the condition of internal decorations at the time of carrying out the review visit to properties. Where the care provider is the budget holder for internal decorations, the housing officer will, if necessary, bring the need to redecorate to their attention. If you are unsure who holds the budget, please contact your housing officer.



Rechargeable Repairs

In most cases we are responsible for carrying out general property repairs, as well as repairs to any white goods and furnishings that have been provided by us.

The cost of these repairs is contained within the rent and service charge paid by the tenant.

However, there are occasions when a recharge may be made to the tenant(s) or care provider for the cost of carrying out certain repairs.

What is a rechargeable repair?

A rechargeable repair is something where a repair is required because of neglect, wilful damage, or misuse.

This list is not exhaustive, but examples might include:

- ▶ Failing to keep a pre-arranged appointment with a repair's contractor.
- ▶ Pouring fat or other substance down the sink or drain, which causes it to block.
- ▶ Throwing anything down the toilet that may cause it to block, such as incontinence or sanitary pads or the inner tube of toilet rolls.
- ▶ Tenants making wilful holes in walls and doors.
- ▶ Lock damage or loss of keys.
- ▶ Broken windows if done on purpose or due to carelessness.

How will the repair be recharged?

We will always let you know if we think that we may recharge the cost of the repair when you report it. Once the repair is completed, we will send an invoice to the person or organisation that caused the damage.

Property Maintenance

Planned Maintenance

We plan to maintain some parts of properties on a regular basis. This is called the planned maintenance programme.

There are two types - planned maintenance and major repairs:

Planned Maintenance – this is work that is repeated each year or at longer intervals. For example:

- ▶ Annual servicing of gas appliances
- ▶ Annual testing of portable electrical appliances
- ▶ Painting the outside of the property (about every five years).

Major Repairs - this is where we plan for the replacement of major items in the property. For example:

- ▶ Windows
- ▶ Bathroom
- ▶ Kitchen units
- ▶ Roof

Specialist bathing equipment

Where we have provided specialist bathing equipment, we will ensure that it is serviced twice a year and issue a certificate to confirm it is safe to use.

In the event of the equipment requiring a repair, we will arrange an inspection between 24 and 48 hours of the report.

The repair will be made within three weeks.

If these timescales have lapsed and the repair has not been completed, please let us know.

During the time when the equipment is not working you will need to refer to your own organisation's contingency arrangements, for suitable alternative bathing.



How to repressurise the boiler

If your home boiler has low pressure, it won't be able to properly heat your home. Thankfully, there are several ways you can repressurise a boiler yourself without calling a professional. You can also call BeST on 0161 786 6000 (Option 1 for maintenance) who will talk you through the process of repressurising the properties boiler. This will both save time and money for all involved.

If your boiler loses pressure on the front of your boiler on the little LCD screen you will have a fault code flash up F22.

Underneath your boiler you will find two little black taps attached to a filling loop. Open one of the black taps slowly and then open the other one slowly as well. You will hear water running into your boiler.

On the screen there are two ways of doing it. There's a little solid line. If the solid line rises above the dotted line your boiler will fire and the fault code will clear. Also, you can press any one of these four buttons and you will get a blue back screen. If you push the button underneath the radiator symbol twice it will show you the pressure in figures. Again, when you open the black tap you will see the figures increasing.

Once you get to about 1.5 bar turn the tap off. It's important that you turn both taps off because if you leave them open even slightly, your boiler will go to over-pressure.



If you are unsure about whether you can repressurize the boiler in the property with the instructions above, then please call BeST as soon as possible. One of our co-ordinators will be more than happy to help you with any boiler issues so we can have the heating and hot water back on in no time.

Gas servicing

We are responsible for annually servicing all gas, oil, biomass, and air source heat pump appliances that are provided in the properties.

Co-operation in providing access to the property is essential since this inspection is a legal requirement to make sure everything is safe and in proper working order. If we or our nominated contractor is not allowed access, or appointments made are not kept, then legal action may be taken under the terms of the tenancy agreement to gain access to the property.

Continued failure to allow access to a property could potentially result in a tenant losing their home if a Court Possession Order has to be sought. This may sound like drastic action but potentially BeST staff could be prosecuted if we fail to complete a landlord's safety check in all our properties each year.

A qualified contractor will issue a Landlord's Safety Certificate.

If you or the tenant does not have a copy and would like one, please contact us.

If the heating appliance is found to be unsafe the qualified contractor will legally be required to disconnect the gas supply until the problem is rectified.

The engineer will report their findings back to us and we will arrange for any remedial work to be carried out as a matter of urgency.

Hoists - fixed either on specialist baths or a ceiling

Where we have provided fixed hoists, it is our responsibility to carry out any necessary repairs. We will carry out two visits to the equipment each year, one is a six-month service, and the following visit will be a full service which includes a health and safety inspection.

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)

We are responsible for the annual testing of portable electrical appliances that we own to ensure that they remain safe to use. Examples of the type of equipment that will be tested are fridges and washing machines.

If you are not sure what equipment the BeSTHA is responsible for then you should contact your housing officer who will advise you.

In any case your housing officer will routinely check these electrical tests have been carried out during the previous twelve months at the review visit they carry out at each property.

If an item fails a 'PAT test' arrangements will be made for the repair or the replacement of the appliance. If a tenant wants their own electrical equipment testing, including any that might have been bought between them for communal areas, then they will have to arrange and pay for this themselves.

We will not carry out portable appliance testing on items owned by tenants or care providers. If you would like us to do this, please contact us and we will let you know how much it will cost.

Thermostatic mixer valves (TMVs)

As a rule, TMVs are fitted to all baths and some older shower units. TMVs are integral to new electric shower units and do not need checking.

Please note there are some properties where other agencies have fitted TMVs on sinks and wash hand basins. We will arrange to service TMVs every 12 months.



Adaptations

BeST supports tenants to live as independently as possible and this may mean that tenants will need aids or adaptations installed to help them remain independent.

Examples of adaptations that may be considered:

- ▶ Thumb turn locks
- ▶ Lever taps
- ▶ Brighter lighting
- ▶ Assistive technology
- ▶ External ramps
- ▶ Low level thresher
- ▶ Wet room
- ▶ Specialist bath
- ▶ Handrail
- ▶ Grab rail
- ▶ Drop down rail
- ▶ Shower pole

Criteria for application

Adaptations and improvements will be considered if they meet the criteria below:

- ▶ They enhance a tenant's quality of life by supporting them to live independently or with support to remain in their home.
- ▶ They are supported by an occupational therapist or other health care professional report.
- ▶ They do not have a negative impact on other tenants if it is shared accommodation.
- ▶ That funding has initially been sought from the local authority via a Disabled Facilities Grant or similar and it has been declined.

We will take an overall view across all our properties and prioritise requests for adaptation work taking into consideration:

- ▶ Any health and safety issues and the risk of not doing an adaptation.
- ▶ If work can be carried out later.

The tenant, or yourself acting on their behalf, should contact your housing officer and ask for a minor adaptation/improvement form.

This is so the work required can be established.

Application timescales

Application forms take on average 6-8 weeks to process. If you have an occupational therapist's report, please send this in with the application form. We will update you on the progress of your application.

How long will take for the adaptation?

We cannot say beforehand how long an adaptation will take as each one is different.

Some improvements may require planning permission from the local authority before they can go ahead. This often adds time.

Once a request has been approved to go ahead, timescales can be given. This is usually 28 days from the date of issuing the works order or it can be up to 6-9 months for more complex adaptations and improvements. Our housing and/or maintenance teams will regularly keep you updated on any changes.

What happens if your application is declined?

If a request for adaptation work is turned down it will have been for one of the following reasons:

- ▶ It is too costly
- ▶ It does not meet the criteria

In these cases you may wish to look for funding elsewhere. Further advice can be sought from your housing officer.

We will advise the tenant/yourself in writing where we cannot help with adaptation.

Code of Conduct for Contractors and Tradespersons

All contractors are required to observe the following rules when visiting tenants' homes:

Appointments

The contractor must arrange access as directed on the repair works order.

Identity

All contractors and their employees must carry identification cards.

The contractor will also have a copy of the official works order with them unless they are carrying out emergency repair work outside normal office hours.

IMPORTANT

If you are in any doubt about letting someone in, then telephone **03333 204555** to confirm the person's identity before allowing them into the property.

Preparation for work

Where necessary, contractors must move all furniture and other items, from the area of work and replace it after the work has been completed.

Respect for tenants' homes

Contractors must respect tenants' homes and property and will be responsible for security if loaned keys or given free access. They and their insurers will be liable for any damage caused to the property or the tenant's belongings.

Cleanliness

The contractor shall:

- ▶ Minimise mess.
- ▶ Remove all rubbish on completion of the works or at the end of each day for longer jobs.

Loss or damage

The contractor is responsible for any loss or damage caused and should immediately advise BeSTHA of any claims made against them by tenants.

Complaints

Any complaints about the contractor's standard of work should be reported to BeST on 0161 786 6000 in the first instance.

IMPORTANT

If you are in any doubt about letting someone in, then telephone **03333 204555** to confirm the person's identity before allowing them into the property.



Grounds Maintenance



This section covers:

- ▶ In the Garden
- ▶ Boundaries



In the Garden

What can the gardening budget be spent on?

The gardening budget can only be used for general maintenance of the garden, such as pruning, grass cutting and general tidying-up of borders.

If the tenants would like to carry out their own gardening and no longer require gardening services, please let our maintenance team know. We can suspend this service and remove it from the rental charge.

Removal of trees or major tree surgery

Any request for removal of trees or major tree surgery must be sent to your housing officer so that any restrictions, such as Tree Preservation Orders or boundary issues may be investigated.

Installing permanent features in the garden

If the tenant wants to install a garden shed, greenhouse, pond, or other permanent structure they will need to get written permission from BeST before doing so. These items will remain the responsibility of the tenant(s) to maintain in future.

If the tenant moves out, they may come to an arrangement with any remaining tenants for them to take over responsibility for the item. Where this is not possible the item must be removed, and the area returned to its original state.



Removing existing permanent features

If there are any permanent structures within the garden which tenants want removed, for example fences, hedges, or sheds, please contact your housing officer to obtain written permission before these are removed.

Keeping safe - slips, trips and falls

If there is a grit bin at the property, please ensure it is kept topped up for use in icy conditions by letting your housing officer know if a refill is required.

Care staff should always carry out a risk assessment of paths, walkways and parking areas in bad weather.

REMEMBER

To report any repairs required.

0161 786 6000

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm.

Out of office hours - emergency repairs only

0161 786 6000

Monday to Friday 5pm - 9am,
all weekends and bank holidays.

Boundaries

Fences and walls

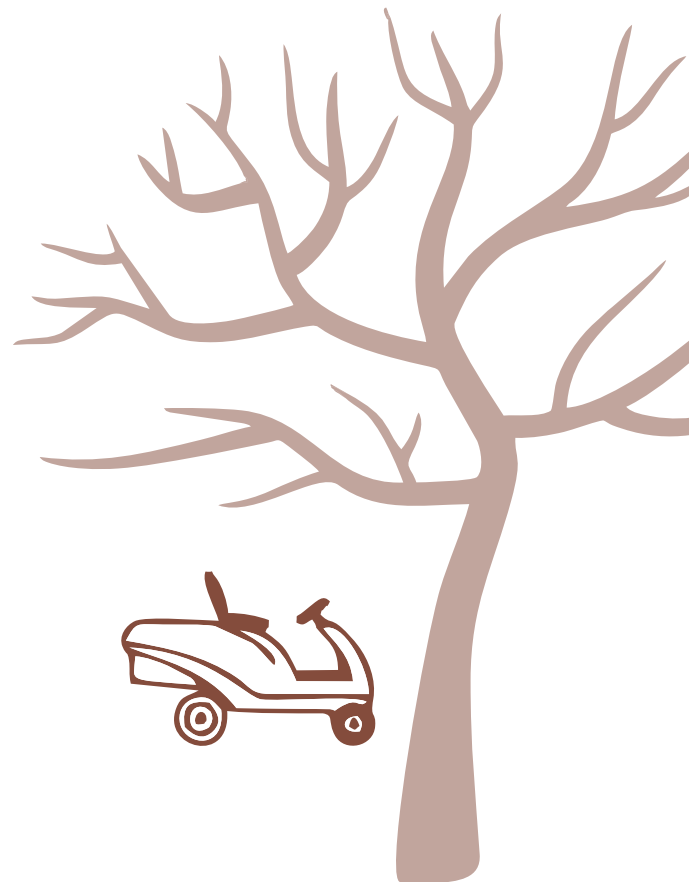
The responsibility for boundary fencing and walls can vary from property to property and will depend on whether it is at the front, rear, or sides of the dwelling.

Responsibility for boundaries at the sides and rear of a property may be particularly difficult to determine, so if you need to check responsibility, please contact your housing officer.

Where BeST has boundary responsibility

Where we are responsible for boundary walls and fencing, we will undertake whatever repairs necessary.

Full-scale replacement of walls and fences will only be undertaken when it is no longer cost-effective to carry out repairs.







Tenancy & Housing

This section covers:

- ▶ Housing Officers
- ▶ Tenants' Rights & Responsibilities
- ▶ Letting Vacancies
- ▶ Tenancy Terminations
- ▶ Management and Lease Agreements
- ▶ Contract Review Visits



Housing Officer

The role of a Housing Officer

The Housing Officer is usually your first point of contact for all your housing management issues and some examples of their role is as follows:

- ▶ They will visit your property to carry out service level contract reviews
- ▶ They will assist tenants to sign and understand their tenancy agreements
- ▶ They will assist tenants in dealing with repair and maintenance issues and tenancy advice
- ▶ They will assist in the process for ending a tenancy and moving out
- ▶ They will give Housing Benefit and other welfare benefit advice
- ▶ They will advise on how to pay your rent and how rent and service charge works
- ▶ They will be the first point of contact for any breach of tenancy anti- social behaviour issues

Your local Housing Officer will visit the property a minimum of twice a year.

If you are unsure of who your property's Housing Officer is and would like their contact details, please contact us on 0161 786 6000.



Tenants' Rights and Responsibilities

Tenants have several rights and responsibilities which are detailed in their tenancy agreement.

Tenants and their visitors should comply with the obligations set out in the tenancy or the lease.

For example, one of the tenant's rights is an entitlement to the "quiet enjoyment of their home" whilst one of the responsibilities is not to behave in an anti-social way towards other people.

It is expected that tenants can maintain and look after their flat.

Care providers should be able to work with tenants to ensure minimum standards of hygiene, health and safety are met.



If tenants are unable to maintain their property to a minimum standard, the Housing Officer should be informed.

Letting Vacancies

Who finds new tenants for empty properties?

It is important that empty properties are re-let as soon as possible. When a vacancy occurs, we will contact the relevant service commissioner or/ care provider to nominate a suitable applicant.

During this period the Housing Officer will contact you on a regular basis for updates on any suitable applicants that may be interested in the property.

Housing application forms must be completed in full for the nominated person.

If applicants do not want to live at the property, then the Housing Officer will work with you to understand why this is the case and a further inspection may be required to see if the problem can be rectified.

When arranging for the tenant to sign their new tenancy agreement, a date will be set for as soon as possible after the termination date of the previous tenancy, however this will depend on the interest for the property.

We reserve the right to refuse to accept a nomination if we feel that the accommodation will not meet the person's needs or there are compatibility issues that make the letting unsuitable.

Details of the new tenant

BeST requires at least two weeks' notice that a new tenant may be moving in along with the completed application/referral form of the intended tenant. You will be sent an application form to complete and return as soon as possible. This information will be used to create the tenancy agreement and to set up the tenancy. It is important that you tell us at this point if the tenant has the capacity to understand the tenancy agreement and the implications of signing this legal document. If they are not able to, then please refer to 'What does signing up for a tenancy actually involve?' where this is explained in more detail.

Signing a tenancy agreement

One of our Housing Officers will liaise with you to arrange a convenient date to meet with the new tenant to explain the agreement and then for them to sign it if they are happy to do so.

We will liaise closely with you, the care provider.

Before the sign up we will be happy to answer any queries and concerns that arise at this stage, so that a prospective tenant and their representatives can gain a better understanding of the implications of having a tenancy.

At the sign up, the Housing Officer will simply explain the terms of the tenancy agreement. We use an easy read pictorial tenancy agreement and other easy read leaflets.

The tenant will sign the agreement unless they do not have the capacity to do so. If the tenant does not have capacity, then we will accept a Best Interest Report from a social worker or other professional who has the authority to supply this document.

Alternatively, a Court of Protection may be sought from the courts, or a valid Property and Financial Affairs Lasting Power of Attorney may be provided. If one of these options is to be considered, please contact the Housing Officer who will be happy to guide you/the tenant's representative through the process.

Your Housing Officer will ensure that the correct paperwork has been completed to apply for Housing Benefit or other welfare benefits. The tenant will be asked to sign forms to enable these departments to correspond with us directly to assist with any future issues that may arise.

The Tenants' Handbook and appropriate information leaflets will be given to the tenant at sign up. These are also available online at www.bestha.co.uk.



It is important that the tenant does not move into the property before signing the agreement as they do not have a legal right to live there until this process has been completed.

Furthermore:

- ▶ BeST's building insurance cover may be negated should anything happen to the building whilst an unauthorised person is occupying the premises
- ▶ The tenant would be unable to claim either their full entitlement for any welfare benefits or any Housing Benefit without a tenancy agreement and they would then be liable to pay the rent themselves
- ▶ A fire risk assessment would not have been carried out by BeST putting the tenant at a potential risk
- ▶ The property may still require essential repairs, again putting the tenant at risk
- ▶ The person's legal rights in respect of the accommodation would be severely restricted.

For these reasons we do not permit emergency placements in our supported living properties.

Tenancy Terminations

A tenancy can come to an end for several different reasons. Examples include:

- ▶ **Formal termination** – where a tenant gives formal written notice.
- ▶ **Death of a tenant.**
- ▶ **Transfer** – where a tenant moves to another property within the portfolio of Bespoke Supportive Tenancies.
- ▶ **Abandonment** – where a tenant has abandoned a property without notice.
- ▶ **Eviction** – where we have completed court action and obtained authority to evict a tenant.

What does a tenant have to do?

Only the tenant, or their legal appointee can end their tenancy. They are required to give 4 complete weeks' notice in writing of the intention to move out, starting on a Monday and ending on a Sunday. If the tenant moves out earlier then they will still have to pay the 4 weeks' rent and service charges due up until the termination date.

We can provide the tenant with a standard termination of tenancy letter, which they, or their appointee, just need to sign and return. Alternatively, the tenant/their appointee may prefer to write their own letter.

If the tenant does not have the capacity to end their tenancy, but it is in the best interest that the tenant moves on from the accommodation, then we would request that a Best Interest Report is obtained from a social worker or a professional who is authorised to provide one.

What do the care provider staff need to do?

We ask that as soon as you know that there is going to be a vacancy at a property that you contact your Housing Officer or contact a member of the Housing Management Team.

A copy of the 'Notification of Tenancy Termination' form can be forwarded either by email or by post. This needs to be completed and returned to us as soon as possible.

What will BeST do?

When BeST receives a notification of a tenancy termination, we will acknowledge the termination in writing and confirm the date the tenancy will end on.

- ◆ Give the current rent account balance.
- ◆ Advise that the rent account must be completely clear at the end of the tenancy.
- ◆ Advise the Housing Benefit department or in the case of Universal Credit the DWP of the termination date.

Moving out

When the tenant moves out, they must ensure that:

- ◆ The property is left in a clean and tidy condition
- ◆ The property is cleared of all personal possessions
- ◆ Any fixtures or fittings installed without permission have been removed
- ◆ Any damage caused is put right
- ◆ All keys to be returned to Bespoke Supportive Tenancies or the care provider on, or before, the end of the tenancy date
- ◆ Any outstanding rent is paid up to and including the end of the tenancy date regardless of whether the tenant has moved out prior to this date
- ◆ They advise the Housing Benefit department or DWP in the case of Universal Credit of the termination date

- ◆ They provide a forwarding address
- ◆ They terminate any utility contract and leave appropriate meter readings
- ◆ They advise Royal Mail, utility companies and any other organisations of their change of address.

If the tenant leaves furniture in the property after the tenancy has ended, we may recharge the tenant for the cost of removing any items left behind.

Inspections

Shared properties

Once the property is empty, we need to ensure that the room/s to be re-let is/are in a good condition for any future tenant to move into. If the property is shared, your housing officer will contact you and carry out a telephone inspection. This will involve you answering questions about the room around the condition. For example, is the room in need of decoration, etc? Following this, any repairs required will be carried out. If you feel that an inspection is required due to a high level of repairs, then we will arrange for one of our contract surveyors to visit.

Flats

With regard to empty flats, an inspection will be carried out by us, and the property will be re-let once all the necessary repairs have been carried out.

Damage

During an inspection it will be determined whether any repairs are down to accidental or wilful damage, neglect or vandalism by a tenant or a tenant's visitor. We will ensure that any such repairs will be completed but depending on the circumstances a recharge may be made.

What happens if a tenant dies?

In the unfortunate event of the death of a tenant, we will require the care provider, or another tenant representative to provide a member of the Housing Management Team with a copy of the death certificate in order that the tenancy can be legally terminated.

Regarding the condition in which the property is left in, the requirements are the same as those already highlighted in the case of a formal termination.

The tenancy will be terminated on the date of death and Housing Benefit is only paid up until this date. In the case of Universal Credit, this would end from the beginning of the Monthly Assessment Period in which the tenant dies. Unfortunately we cannot re-let the property until the keys are returned. Therefore, we will recover costs for loss of rental income and the rent will continue to be charged for a two-week period. As any benefits will have ceased, the outstanding charge will be recovered from the former tenant's estate.

We recognise that this is a difficult time for the care provider staff who have known the tenant and supported them throughout their tenancy. It is also appreciated that it is a sensitive time for the tenant's family. The family therefore may require some flexibility for clearing the property and extra time may be granted for the property to be cleared and the keys returned.

Your Housing Officer will need to request the deceased tenant's estate to cover any additional rent for the extra period granted. This will be at the full rent that is normally charged for the property.

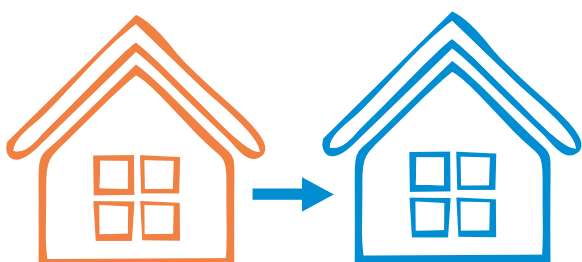
Where there is no next of kin or representative identified, then the estate vests in the Crown. The Queen's and Lords Treasurer's Remembrancer must be notified, and the appropriate procedures followed.

What happens if the tenant has abandoned the property?

Abandonment is where the tenant appears to have left the property without advising you or us that they intend to terminate their tenancy agreement. There will usually have been some trigger to make you consider whether the tenant has left the property without the intention to return. If this has occurred, please contact your housing officer so we can investigate further. There is a legal procedure that must be followed, and the property cannot be re-let until this process has come to its conclusion. We will keep you updated.

Transfers to another BeST property

If the tenant is transferring to another Best property, then contact your Housing Officer and they will talk you through the process, as this is slightly different compared to a tenant ending their tenancy completely.



Management and Lease Agreements

Most of BeST's properties have a management agreement in place, with either a local authority commissioner or a care provider.

What is a management agreement?

The agreement will explain the situation in respect of:

- Obligations of the parties. That is, who is responsible for each aspect of the service
- Voids and who will be responsible for any lost income as a result of vacant rooms or flats
- Sale of the property, should it not be possible to identify suitable tenants for future vacancies
- Staff facilities, such as a staff room or sleep-in room and whether a charge is made for this
- How much notice is required to end the agreement should the care provider no longer be contracted by the service commissioner to provide the support to the tenants living in the scheme, or if the property is to be sold due to lack of demand.
- Selection of tenants
- Review and dispute resolution.

How long does a management agreement last for?

This can vary but it is usually for a fixed term period of 10 years and then reviewed periodically from thereafter.

Why have I never seen a management agreement for the scheme?

The front line staff providing care and support at schemes may not be aware or have seen the management agreement since this is normally held at the care provider's head office, or with the service commissioner.

If you need to know more about management agreements, please contact your housing officer.

Lease agreements

In some instances, BeST may have a lease agreement rather than a management agreement. This is similar to a management agreement in that it identifies the responsibilities and obligations of the relevant parties.

Lease agreements are used when BeST does not own the property or where it permits other agencies to use a property for alternative service provisions, such as respite care or resource centres.

A lease agreement will highlight who is responsible for property repairs. If the property that you work in is leased, you may have a different contact number for some repairs.

If you are unsure who to contact regarding a repair, please contact the repair and maintenance team at maintenance@bestha.co.uk who will be able to check for you.



Contract Review Visits

It is our policy to carry out a review visit at all of our supported living schemes. These are carried out at least once a year, with a follow up visit or call within six months to ensure all actions outlined in the original visit have been completed.

New supported living schemes will be visited within four months of the property being available to let, and then annually thereafter.

What are review visits?

Review visits are usually carried out by one of our housing officers. This is to ensure that tenants remain happy in their homes, the property is in good order and the scheme is meeting all the requirements set out in the service level contract/agreement.

Review visits take around two hours to complete.

A convenient date will be arranged in advance with you for the housing officer to carry out the review. The housing officer will plan several visits in the same area on the same day. We ask that appointments are not cancelled unless an unavoidable problem arises.

If you do need to change a review visit appointment, please let us know as soon as possible.

Who does the housing officer need to speak to at the review visit?

We want to ensure tenants have the opportunity to meet their housing officer and raise any issues they may have. They will also speak to the support provider at the scheme.

What is the purpose of the visit?

There are several purposes to the review visit. These are to:

- ▶ Ensure that our responsibilities as a landlord are being fulfilled
- ▶ Ensure that at least the minimum standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing are being met
- ▶ Check that tenants are getting the service outlined in their tenancy agreement
- ▶ Check that care providers, acting on the tenant's behalf, are also satisfied with the service that is being provided
- ▶ Ensure that any health and safety risks have been identified and are managed
- ▶ Ensure the fire risk assessment is still current for the building/tenants
- ▶ Identify any problems and resolve them quickly.

What will happen at the review?

The housing officer will inspect the scheme and the property internally and externally to assess the general state of décor, household standards, and if there are any repairs and maintenance issues or health and safety obligations to meet.

What questions will be asked at the review visit?

Some of the typical questions the Housing Officer might ask the care provider and/or the tenant are if there are:

- ▶ Any current Housing Benefit/Universal Credit or general welfare benefit issues that may affect the ability for the tenant to make rent payments
- ▶ Any current problems in respect of rent payments
- ▶ Any current empty rooms/flats and what is being done to fill the vacancies

- Any outstanding issues in respect of white goods/furnishings that are our responsibility, or if any items are likely to need replacing over the forthcoming year. The white goods and furnishing inventory will be updated as necessary
- Any aids and adaptations needed/are likely to be needed in the near future
- Any outstanding property repair issues That gas and electrical checks are still valid
- Health and safety procedures are in place and whether there have been any reported incidents in the last year pertaining to the property. (A request will be made to see the scheme's health and safety record)
- Any issues in respect of the 2007 'Smokefree' legislation
- Up-to-date fire procedures and regular fire drills (The Housing Officer will ask to see the scheme's fire drill record)
- The current BeST Fire Risk Assessment is available and where it is kept
- Any issues with staffing levels that may have an impact on how the scheme runs
- Any health and safety risks you may have identified pertaining to the maintenance of the property and outside areas.

Your Housing Officer will check that our records are up-to-date in respect of:

- The preferred method of communication for tenants
- Contact number and email address of the care provider
- The support hours available on site.

Tenants will be informed about the time of the visit and will be asked:

- Whether they are happy with the housing service they get
- Whether they are interested in getting involved with BeST, such as attending a tenant's meeting
- If they have any stories for the tenants newsletter that they want to submit

- If they know about our feedback procedure and if they know how to make a complaint, give a compliment, or give feedback on something that has been done wrong, so it can be put right
- If there are any other landlord issues they want to raise.

The Housing Officer will summarise at the end of the review any action required to be taken after the visit.

What happens after the review visit?

The Housing officer will follow up any outstanding matters and keep the care provider and/or the tenant informed of the outcomes

- Any outstanding property repairs will be reported
- Any outstanding issues in respect of white goods/ furnishings will be reported
- Any new information that is kept on the housing management system will be updated as necessary
- Details of any tenant interested in becoming more involved will be forwarded to the Tenant Involvement Officer - this is the member of staff who co-ordinates community involvement
- For first review visits only - any outstanding development matters will be investigated with the Development Team
- Give updates on any new fire risk assessment that is required, or amendments to the existing document.





Financial Matters

This section covers:

- ▶ Rent Payments
- ▶ Service Charges
- ▶ Housing Benefit
- ▶ Council Tax



Rent Payments

It is the tenant's responsibility to ensure that the rent is paid in full using one or more of the following methods:

- ▶ Housing Benefit direct payments
- ▶ Standing order

If tenants want more information about using these payment methods, then they can either talk to their Housing Officer, contact our accounts department for payments by calling on 0161 786 6000 (Option 3) or by emailing accounts@bestha.co.uk

How is the rent calculated?

Rent is made up of two elements:

The core rent

The amount of core rent that a tenant pays is dependent on the type of property and area they live in. Core rent includes the cost of:

- ▶ Long-term maintenance of the property e.g. replacing a roof or a bathroom.
- ▶ The cost of developing the property.
- ▶ The housing management service.
- ▶ Service charges (see section overleaf).

If you, or someone else acting on behalf of a tenant requires any further information about how the rent is calculated, then you should contact either the housing officer for your area, or our Revenue and Benefits Department by emailing revenueandbenefits@bestha.co.uk

What the rent doesn't cover

The rent does not pay for any of the following:

- ▶ The cost of supporting tenants.
- ▶ General household bills, other than those relating to communal areas that are paid through service charges.
- ▶ Insurance of the tenant's personal belongings.

Does the amount of rent payable change?

The tenant will be told in writing how much the total rent is when they first sign for their tenancy.

We review rents and service charges each year and write to the tenant, usually in February, to tell them what the new charge will be. The new charge usually takes effect from the first Monday in April.

If the rent increases, it cannot be increased again for twelve months. Occasionally the service charge may increase or decrease at any time during the year. If this happens, we will consult with the tenants and provide a minimum of 28 days notice if the charge is increased.

What is a rent schedule?

We issue a rent schedule to every tenant at the time of signing for their tenancy and every year thereafter. The schedule contains a detailed breakdown of all the charges that make up the total weekly rent that the tenant must pay to live in the property.

The rent schedule is divided into three broad sections:

- ▶ The core rent – this is the rent charged for renting the property itself.
- ▶ Communal service costs – these are the charges for providing communal services.
- ▶ Ineligible service costs – these are the charges for services that the tenant will be recharged for but that are ineligible for Housing Benefit.



Service Charges

What are service charges?

Service charges are the charges made for providing communal services. The charges are included in the tenant's total rent and are listed in the rent schedule. In addition, a copy of the rent and service charge schedule for a particular property is issued to each tenant when they sign for their tenancy, and this is updated every year.

The schedule will detail what particular services the charges are being made for and can include:

- ▶ Heating and lighting for shared areas e.g. hall and stairs.
- ▶ Cost of maintaining the garden.
- ▶ The repair and replacement of some items of furniture, kitchen and laundry appliances (white goods) that BeST has provided.
- ▶ Cost of internal redecoration of shared rooms e.g. living room.
- ▶ Cost of grounds maintenance.
- ▶ Servicing costs of equipment provided by BeST e.g. portable electrical testing, firefighting/detection equipment.
- ▶ Servicing and costs of specialist equipment provided by BeST e.g. baths and fixed hoists.
- ▶ Cost of landlord's contents insurance (i.e. items owned by BeST).

Service charge reviews

Service charges are reviewed annually. Most of the charges are based on the previous year's costs and any known increases are then added. Service charges can go up or down dependent on expenditure or predicted future costs. Normally, the service charge will not change until the following April. In exceptional circumstances the service charge can be changed at other points in the year. If this is the case, we will consult with tenants and one month's notice will be given of any proposed changes.

With regards to new developments, it is necessary to estimate the service charges. This can be more accurately assessed after a year's worth of bills have been received for the property.

Housing Benefit

Many of BeST's tenants qualify for either full or part Housing Benefit so we ask that tenants make an application either before they move into a property or when their tenancy starts.

As a guide, tenants with:

- ▶ Less than £6k in savings are likely to qualify for full Housing Benefit.
- ▶ Over £16k in savings will have to pay their own rent in full.
- ▶ Between £6-16k are likely to qualify for part Housing Benefit.

Making a Housing Benefit claim

If the tenant applies for Housing Benefit, they will need to provide:

- ▶ Two proofs of identity e.g. birth certificate, passport, medical card, National Insurance number card, recent gas or electric bill.
- ▶ Proof of income e.g. amount of benefits received – award notices/wage slips/pension slips/bank statements.
- ▶ Proof of tenancy and when it began e.g. tenancy agreement.
- ▶ Proof of savings e.g. bank, building society or post office books/last two bank statements.
- ▶ Proof of interest or dividend on investments or savings e.g. bank, building society or post office books/last two bank statements.

Whilst the above documents will be needed to complete a claim, **DO NOT DELAY MAKING THE INITIAL CLAIM FOR ANY REASON.** Getting Housing Benefits backdated is a difficult process and best avoided. The Housing Benefit Unit will write and request information outstanding to complete a claim but the date of claim and the date of initial contact are important.



They will also need to have the following

- ▶ The name and address of their landlord. The address can be found on the tenancy agreement.
- ▶ The eligible rent – this can be different from the full rent. Make sure you check with your housing officer.
- ▶ Details of anyone the tenant lives with, including their name, date of birth, age and income.
- ▶ Account number and sort code of the bank account the tenant wishes the benefit to be paid into.
- ▶ The tenant's email address, landline and/or mobile telephone number.
- ▶ The tenant's postcode.

It is advisable that the completed application, if in paper format, is taken to your local Housing Benefit department in person and you ensure that you request a receipt for it. If the form is subsequently mislaid the receipt will act as proof of the date it was originally delivered. If the tenant does not have proof that the application was actually submitted on time, then payments for that period may not be made and the tenant may be liable to pay themselves. If it is not possible to hand deliver the Housing Benefit form it is recommended that it is sent by recorded delivery.

The tenant is also responsible for informing the Housing Benefit department if there is any change in their circumstances, including when the rent changes in April of each year. On rare occasions, after a change of circumstances has occurred, this may result in a tenant receiving more Housing Benefit than they are entitled to. If you are aware of this, then you have a duty to report this to the Housing Benefit department. Failure to do so can be deemed as acting fraudulently.

It is essential that claims for Housing Benefit are made without delay, or the tenant may lose entitlement. If the claim has not been submitted within the month of the application, then the claim will be closed down. Any claims subsequently made after this date will not be backdated and the tenant will be liable for payment of the rent for this period. Housing Benefit is likely to be paid only from the date the tenant moves in and not from the tenancy start date.

The support provider should assist the tenant in applying for Housing Benefit and in replying to any associated correspondence. Your Housing Officer is always happy to offer advice in respect of the process and will supply information, such as a rent schedule.

The Housing Benefit process

The Housing Benefit department will write to the tenant to advise them of their entitlement. There are three levels of entitlement:

- ▶ **Full entitlement.**
- ▶ **Partial entitlement.** This may be because one of the service charges is ineligible for Housing Benefit or because the tenant works or has some savings. If there is a shortfall then the tenant is expected to pay the difference.
- ▶ **Nil entitlement.** This can be because the tenant's savings levels are too high at the moment or because all the information the Housing Benefit department requested has not been supplied. In these circumstances the tenant is required to pay the full rent and service charges themselves (see the Rent Payments section).

In most cases, tenants opt to have Housing Benefit paid directly to BeST, as the Landlord. It is usually paid four-weekly in arrears.

Please note: All tenants living in supported housing can continue to claim housing costs through Housing Benefit and NOT Universal Credit, but they must make it clear on any application that they live in supported accommodation. The tenant must satisfy the Housing Benefit department that:

- ▶ Accommodation is provided by a registered social landlord or a not-for-profit organisation.
- ▶ Care, support or supervision is more than minimal.

BeST's tenants fall into these categories.



Rent changes and Housing Benefit

We will write to the local authority Housing Benefit department at least one month before any change is made to the rent payable. If the tenant receives Housing Benefit, then they are also required to complete a 'change of circumstances' form to notify the local authority of the change.

If the tenant, or their representative is not happy with the increase they have the right to appeal. They should first contact their housing officer to discuss the matter. If they cannot satisfactorily resolve the matter, then an appeal will need to be made to the rent officer and they decide if the rent is fair. This can be done via the Valuation Office Agency Rent Officers who provide valuations for tenants and landlords for fair rent registrations. The tenant's housing officer should be contacted and will help the tenant with this process.

Service charges and Housing Benefit

There may be some service charges that are not eligible for Housing Benefit. In these instances, the tenant must pay these charges directly to BeST. Any ineligible charges are recorded at the bottom of the rent schedule.

Eligibility of service charges may change from time to time due to amendments in legislation.

Shortfalls in Housing Benefit

If a tenant only qualifies for partial Housing Benefit, then there will be a shortfall between the Housing Benefit payable and the rent due. It is the tenant's responsibility to pay the remaining rent and to repay any arrears that may have accrued whilst their Housing Benefit claim is being calculated.

The support provider should assist the tenant in claiming Housing Benefit and in managing their finances so that their rent account does not fall into arrears. Our Housing Officers and Revenue and Benefit Officers are happy to work with tenants and their support staff to come to arrangements over how to clear any rent arrears.



Housing Benefit can be suspended or stopped by the local authority at any time.

Suspended Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit departments can write to the tenant at any time to ask them to renew their claim.

Some Housing Benefit departments only do this when a tenant moves but others do this annually. All Housing Benefit departments do this if other welfare benefit entitlements have changed.

Until the Housing Benefit department has received the new form/information they will suspend rent payments to BeST and the tenant's account will fall into arrears.

The Housing Benefit department may subsequently either reinstate Housing Benefit or stop payments completely, particularly if they do not get a response from the tenant to complete a new Housing Benefit form or for more information.

If the claim is reinstated it is important that the dates in the Housing Benefit letter sent to the tenant are checked carefully to make sure there is no gap between when it was suspended and when it was restarted.

Stopped payments

Housing Benefit can stop payments for a number of reasons. If this happens the support provider should assist the tenant to find out the reason why. Your Housing Officer can help if the tenant wishes to appeal the decision. The appeal must be made within one calendar month of the date of the Housing Benefit award notification letter. If the appeal fails, the tenant will need to make arrangements with BeST to pay the rent and any arrears that have accrued.

Avoiding Housing Benefit problems

The support provider should:

- ◆ Make sure all post is opened and understood, especially correspondence from the Housing Benefit Unit, the Revenues and Benefits Team is here and happy to help with any queries.
- ◆ Help tenants, where necessary, to be proactive in managing their benefit entitlements. If it is a while since a form was submitted and there has been no response, then chase it with the Housing Benefit department
- ◆ Notify any changes in the tenant's circumstances promptly to the Housing Benefit department, if you're not sure if it's relevant then report and let the Housing Benefit Unit decide.
- ◆ Notify BeST if there is any circumstance that affects the tenant's rent payments
- ◆ Compare each notification of a Housing Benefit award against the rent schedule to make sure that Housing Benefit is paying all the elements of the rent due. If there is a discrepancy you should contact the Housing Benefit department and your housing officer to discuss the matter further.

If a claim is suspended or stopped, BeST will always support with any suspensions and will be in touch if this applies, you can always contact us if you're unsure of anything.

Council Tax

Council Tax discounts

Some Council Tax departments apply a discount to supported living schemes. You as the support provider can assist tenants by either ringing the Council Tax department and requested a Severe Mental Impairment (SMI) form or visit the webpage at www.gov.uk/council-tax/discounts-for-disabled-people.

You can then assist, or complete, the form on the tenant's behalf and return it so that any qualifying discount can be applied.

Note:

In shared housing schemes where Council Tax is charged it forms part of the rent and BeST will therefore make the payments due. However, in self-contained properties the tenant would need to apply for any discount and to make the necessary Council Tax payments.



Safeguarding

This section covers:

- ▶ Sharing Data
- ▶ Anti-Social Behaviour



Sharing Data

To maintain the services provided by both Bespoke Support Tenancies and you as the care provider, it is often essential to share information about the service users (tenants) or the service you provide.

When Bespoke Support Tenancies asks the tenant to sign the tenancy agreement, it will also be explained in writing that with their consent, data sharing in certain circumstances will take place.



If any tenant would like to access the information we hold about them, or they, or you as their care provider have questions about data sharing, you can contact us on 0161 786 6000 and ask for the GDPR lead.

What might be required?

The following are examples of what might be required; however, this list is not exhaustive:

- To provide information on support funding arrangements.
- For the collection of lifestyle information in respect of risk assessments.
- For the collection of financial information to collect rent and keep records of rent collection.
- Information about Housing Benefit/Universal Credit claims to ensure the payment of rent is maintained.

Who we might share information with

The people we may need to share the information with are:

- Contractors, care providers and commissioners, suppliers and local authorities.
- Law enforcement fire and rescue services.
- Debt collection departments and agencies.
- Utility companies.

We take the processing of personal data seriously, especially when it relates to sensitive information. We ensure we comply with data protection legislation (currently the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018). This encompasses sharing and storing data using secure methods.

Anti-Social Behaviour

What is anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is any activity that impacts on other people in a negative way and interferes with a person's right to live peacefully in their home and the surrounding area.

Different people may be distressed or alarmed by different types of behaviour and activity. There may be matters that do not concern us so we do not get involved. Consideration will be given to whether an activity is anti-social and the evidence to prove the anti-social behaviour is taking place.

The housing officer will consider how severely the activity or behaviour is affecting others, how regularly it is happening and whether it is considered unreasonable.

Anti-social behaviour covers a wide range of activities including:

- ▶ Hate crime
- ▶ Mate crime
- ▶ Domestic abuse
- ▶ Noise nuisance
- ▶ Verbal abuse
- ▶ Damage to property/vandalism or intimidation
- ▶ Drug, alcohol, or solvent abuse
- ▶ Rubbish, graffiti, fly-tipping and overgrown/unkempt gardens
- ▶ Using housing accommodation to carry out unlawful activity
- ▶ Teenage gangs or other forms of intimidating groups or individuals such as young and unruly children
- ▶ Pets - particularly dangerous and/or barking dogs
- ▶ Abandoned cars
- ▶ Theft, robbery

Any of the above incidents should be reported to the scheme's housing officer who will liaise with the Head of Housing and legal action may be

considered at this point. The housing officer will normally remain your point of contact.

Incidents that relate to domestic noise are not classed as anti-social behaviour and include such issues as:

- ▶ Banging doors
- ▶ Footsteps from adjoining properties and/or communal areas
- ▶ Noise of children running or playing
- ▶ Talking from adjoining properties and/or communal areas
- ▶ Low level noise from TVs, radios, or music
- ▶ Noise from washing machines, vacuum cleaners, or other domestic appliances
- ▶ One-off parties or festival/events – such as bonfire night
- ▶ DIY at reasonable hours.

In such circumstances BeST expects tenants to show tolerance and understanding towards their neighbours.

What is hate crime?

A hate crime is any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim, or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

What is mate crime?

Mate crime is a form of crime in which a perpetrator befriends a vulnerable person with the intention of then exploiting the person financially, physically, or sexually. The perpetrators take advantage of the isolation and vulnerability of their victim to win their confidence.

BeST's approach to anti-social behaviour

It is acknowledged that there is a high potential for anti-social behaviour among the client groups that we provide accommodation for. In many instances this behaviour is neither deliberate nor malicious. It may also arise because of a temporary change or permanent deterioration in a tenant's health condition or difficulty in coping with independent living. We are also aware that complaints against our tenants of anti-social behaviour sometimes arise from false concern and prejudices about that tenant's differences.

Many of our tenants receive 24-hour support to maintain their tenancies and to enable them to acquire independent living skills. This involves you as the care providers working with them to ensure they live harmoniously with others sharing their accommodation, and in the community generally.

The role of the support provider

Given your role, along with your specialist knowledge of the tenant and their particular behavioural traits, we expect you to initially support the tenant/act on their behalf in trying to resolve problems of anti-social behaviour. This usually involves first talking to the person who is (allegedly) causing problems, since they may not even know that their behaviour is causing upset.

If the problem continues, or if there are serious threats to a tenant's safety, then you as a member of the care providers team, or the tenant suffering from anti-social behaviour should contact the housing officer to discuss the matter.

It is expected that most tenants making complaints of suffering anti-social behaviour will need assistance to do this and we may ask you, on behalf of the tenant, to put the complaint in writing, giving full details of any incident(s) that has taken place.

We ask that you record everything in as much detail as possible. Whilst legal proceedings are always a last resort there is always a possibility that an anti-social behaviour problem may result in legal proceedings at some stage.

If legal action is taken in a case, your evidence will be used in court and a general summary isn't taken as seriously by the court as word for word evidence. It is important that you provide as much detail as possible.

Here is a checklist of useful information that will help you :

- ▶ The date and time of the incident(s)
- ▶ What happened (write down exactly what you saw and heard)
- ▶ Where did it happen? Who was involved?
- ▶ Were there any witnesses? Did anyone else see or hear the incident? If so, record their name, address, and contact telephone number
- ▶ Have you reported it? If so, write down who you spoke to and where and when you made the report. For example, the police or social services
- ▶ How has it affected you, or the person who has been subjected to the anti-social behaviour? Write down the way the incident has made you/them feel.

What happens following a complaint?

We aim to respond to anti-social behaviour cases promptly and professionally. Your housing officer is trained to manage the cases of anti-social behaviour with empathy and integrity.

If the anti-social behaviour reported involves the use, or threat of use of violence, domestic abuse or hate crime, then we will contact the person who reported the incident within one working day.

For all other cases, the person reporting the incident will be contacted within five working days.

Once a case is opened, we will:

- ▶ Investigate a case professionally, impartially, and honestly
- ▶ Agree an action plan and complete a risk assessment of the situation
- ▶ Keep the person who reported the incident updated on the progress of the case in the way that was agreed with them

- Write or email them with any updates and when a case is closed
- Conduct a customer satisfaction survey following the closure of a case.

Opening a case

Any person can report an incident of anti-social behaviour by logging the case through the 'contact us' form on the website www.bestha.co.uk, in person at Bespoke Supportive Tenancies office or by telephoning 0161 786 6000.

When a tenant reports anti-social behaviour we will advise them to try and resolve the issue by talking to the person causing the problem. If it is not appropriate, or talking to the person does not work, then your Housing Officer will assess the situation and respond in accordance with our service standards.

The tenant may be asked to keep a diary record of incidents prior to a case being investigated. If diary sheets are not returned or completed appropriately or the complainant fails to co-operate with any other part of the investigation, then BeST will consider closing the case.

In some instances, we may only be able to offer advice and information and where it is appropriate signpost the customer to another agency.

If the anti-social behaviour reported involves the use or threats of the use of violence, domestic abuse or hate crime, we will advise the tenant to contact the police, if they have not already done so. Either your Housing Officer or a member of their team will contact the person who reported the incident within one working day.

For all other cases the person who reported the incident will be contacted within five working days.

We will work closely with you as the tenant's care provider and/or the tenant's advocate. This will be for the duration of the case until it is closed.

Initial investigation

Most reports of anti-social behaviour are dealt with quickly without having to consider legal action. The tenant will be asked to provide as much evidence as possible to get a full picture of events.

If the case does not involve threats, violence, or serious harassment, it will be suggested that the witness talks to the person causing the problem about the anti-social behaviour explaining the effect it is having on them, making sure that they do this in a polite and reasonable manner.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of a tenant will always be maintained if BeST is satisfied that identifying the tenant to the individual(s) they are reporting would put them at real risk of harm, though further enforcement action may not be possible unless the witness can be identified to the court.

In circumstances where confidentiality may be required to be lifted, then we will always discuss this with the tenant first.

As a rule, we will not inform the other party of the identity of the individual(s) who have reported an incident. The Housing Officer or a member of the Housing Team will always get an individual's permission before discussing details with the other party. If reports are made anonymously, they will be considered, however it may be that limited, or no action can be taken.

Interviewing the other party

In many cases a member of staff from BeST will need to speak to the other party usually at their home. The reports that have been made will be discussed. They may admit that they have acted in an anti-social manner and if so, they will be given a verbal warning which will be followed up in writing. They might have been unaware of this until we have spoken to them as the nuisance might not have been caused deliberately. In this case advice will be given which will be followed up in writing.

If the party does not admit to doing anything wrong and continues to cause a nuisance it is likely that more evidence will be required. In this case the

witness would need to complete an incident diary to record the incidents that they witness/hear. Help will be given to complete this form. If a tenant has difficulty completing the incident diaries, then other ways of recording the nuisance will be suggested.

The housing officer or a member of the Housing Team might also need to collect other evidence such as photographs, video, or audio recordings of the incidents as they happen. Or they may also need to speak to other people who have witnessed the incidents or other agencies such as the police.

We have a range of tools to deal with anti-social behaviour and will make use of these appropriately by using the action that is reasonable, proportionate, and most likely to produce an effective solution. In the most serious cases legal action may be taken.

Closing the case

We will close an anti-social behaviour case when the housing officer:

- Believes they have resolved the problem, or the problem has stopped
- Thinks that there is no case to investigate and believe the evidence does not warrant action
- Has not had a response from the witness after they have reported an incident

The case will be closed if the issue involves a dispute between neighbours and evidence is not sufficient to demonstrate that one party is more at fault than the other.

We will record why the case has been closed and will write/contact to tell the witness(es) giving the reasons for the decision. This may be followed up with a telephone/ written questionnaire.

Partnership working and sharing information

To be effective in tackling anti-social behaviour and sustaining long-term solutions, we want to work in partnership with you as the care provider. Other agencies may need to be contacted to provide support to individual perpetrators. This may be the local authority or the police for example.

Victims and witnesses may be informed of the action taken to tackle anti-social behaviour when it is appropriate and justified to do so. We may also inform the wider community, again when it is appropriate and justified. The updating of victims or the community will always be done so by abiding by legislation and data protection regulations.

Protecting our communities

We aim to take a swift course of action appropriate to the severity of a case, taking into consideration the needs of the witness and the circumstances of the perpetrator. We will strive to achieve a balance between prevention, early intervention, enforcement, and support actions in order to provide long-term solutions.

Early Interventions

We will act upon a report of anti-social behaviour to prevent it escalating to a more serious level. Interventions used to try and resolve the anti-social behaviour as quickly as possible include visits, verbal warnings, warning letters, restorative justice, and mediation.

We may also consider asking the perpetrator to agree to sign an Acceptable Behaviour Contract which sets out the behaviour that will not be tolerated and the consequences of continued anti-social behaviour.

The housing officer for your area would arrange for this document to be drawn up and would discuss the detail of it with the tenant, you the care provider and/or advocates as necessary.

Safeguarding vulnerable persons

If you feel that a tenant is being abused or neglected in any way, please contact the local authority, and advise that you have a safeguarding issue that you wish to log and discuss with them. Alternatively, you can discuss this with your housing officer.

Support for witnesses and victims

We understand that standing up to perpetrators can be stressful and the housing officer will keep witnesses informed of any action taken and maintain contact with them.

The housing officer will ask all witnesses and victims if they would like to be referred into a witness support service if the incident warrants such a referral.

If there are a number of witnesses in a particular case, then setting up a witness support group will be considered. Additional security measures such as installing CCTV to help support the witnesses may also be considered.

Often there may be significant underlying problems which contribute to a person causing anti-social behaviour, such as abuse or neglect, alcohol, and drug misuse. If we think a perpetrator might have a problem of this kind, then the housing officer may work with you and/or other agencies or make referrals to other agencies who can provide support that will help prevent the behaviour.

If the anti-social behaviour continues once supportive actions have been put in place, then enforcement action may take place through the courts.

Enforcement measures

In the vast majority of cases enforcement action is not necessary. When it does become necessary then it will be primarily through the county courts.

It is recognised that some of the tenants may lack mental capacity, and most will have a medically recognised disability or be perceived to be vulnerable. Therefore, consideration will be given to ensure that any proposed action is proportionate.

An example of some of the enforcement measures directly available to Bespoke Supportive Tenancies include:

Civil Injunction Order

In more serious cases injunctions are orders which are made at the court's discretion. They can be granted against an individual, requiring them to stop their anti-social behaviour or to do a specified action. If a person disobeys a Civil Injunction Order, they could be fined or sent to prison. We can seek an injunction against anyone living in or visiting our properties even if they are not a tenant.

Possession Order

As the landlord, we can ask the county court for an Order for Possession of a property if the tenant or a member of their family or friends are engaging in serious or persistent anti-social behaviour, or who are causing harassment.

All other alternatives or remedies will be considered to address the anti-social behaviour and its causes before resorting to possession proceedings and asking the court for an eviction. The mandatory grounds for possession is available to a landlord where a tenant, a member of a tenant's household, or a person visiting the property has met one of the following conditions:

- Convicted of a serious offence
- Found by a court to have breached a Civil Injunction
- Convicted for breaching a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO)
- Convicted for breaching a noise abatement notice; or
- The tenant's property has been closed for more than 48 hours under a closure order for anti-social behaviour.

Other options

There are other tools to tackle anti-social behaviour which are not directly available to us, but can be implemented through working with other partners, particularly with the local authority and the police. Together the ability to influence the application for these options could include:

Community Protection Notice

These processes can be issued by council officers or the police against anyone aged over 16 years who is committing anti-social behaviour which spoils the community's quality of life. To breach the order is a criminal offence resulting in a fixed penalty fine.

Criminal Behaviour Order

In serious cases CBO can be issued by any criminal court against a person who has been convicted of an offence. They are designed to tackle the most persistently anti-social individuals who are also engaged in criminal activity. It is the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) that decides to seek an order. Breach is a criminal offence which can lead to a penalty of five years in prison.

Closure Order

In very extreme cases a Closure Order gives power to the police and local authorities to close premises which are being used, or likely to be used, to commit nuisance or disorder. The order can last from 24 hours up to six months depending on the circumstances. The order prevents any person from entering the building.





Have Your Say

This section covers:

- ▶ Tenant Involvement
- ▶ Complaints Procedures



Tenant Involvement

Get Involved!

We know that the best way to improve our services is to ask our tenants what they think. These ideas can be used to see if the way things are done by BeST can be improved upon. We try to be as inclusive as possible and welcome feedback from support staff about how all tenants might be included.

Why get involved?

Tenants must have the opportunity to express their views and participate in the landlord service they receive. There are many benefits of getting involved, including:

- ▶ Meeting new people who share similar interests or concerns.
- ▶ Learning new skills and improved confidence.
- ▶ Free training and support.
- ▶ Improved services.

We value the involvement of all our tenants and recognise that our services can improve by listening to their views.

How can tenants get involved?

Our BeST Involvement Team works with tenants and promotes tenant involvement.

A 'menu of involvement' is offered so that tenants and their support can get involved as much or as little as they like.

Some options include:

- ▶ Filling in questionnaires and surveys.
- ▶ Coming to tenant meetings.
- ▶ Contributing stories or ideas to the tenants' newsletter.
- ▶ Giving feedback, compliments and complaints.
- ▶ Entering competitions.
- ▶ Becoming a tenant inspector.

- ▶ Carrying out mystery shopping activities.
- ▶ Becoming a tenant representative.
- ▶ Being a member on a scrutiny panel.
- ▶ Having a cuppa and a chat with us, online or in person, to discuss any issues and to let us know how you feel about us, our services, and your home.

What does BeST do to encourage tenants to get involved?

BeST aims to support tenants to become involved in ways that most suit them. To encourage tenants to get involved, BeST will:

- ▶ Provide bespoke involvement opportunities and tailor to individual needs.
- ▶ Find meeting places that are accessible to everyone.
- ▶ Run information/training sessions, led by what tenants want to know more about.
- ▶ Use picture cards, where applicable, to communicate important ideas to help people better understand.
- ▶ Pay the cost of travel to meetings and lunch.
- ▶ Enter their name into a prize draw every time a tenant participates.

Tenant profiling

We carry out regular tenant profiling exercises. This may be a simple telephone call to our tenants to ensure we have the correct details on our system, or it may be a more in-depth questionnaire.

Tenant satisfaction survey

We send out tenant satisfaction surveys every two years to tenants, their relatives (where known) or other advocates, as well as the care provider's scheme leader.

Tenants' meetings

In response to interest expressed by tenants, we may hold a series of small meetings in different parts of the country. Meetings may be one-off or if there are enough tenants in a particular area then more regular meetings will be hosted. These will be between four to six times a year. These meetings will usually be virtual through Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

At tenant meetings, we talk about various topics all relating to being a tenant. There may be a particular topic that a group may want to discuss or scrutinise, such as repairs and maintenance, anti-social behaviour or services charges.

Tenants are very welcome to bring their support staff and wider support networks with them to any tenant meetings.

Tenant newsletter - Snippets

We issue a newsletter twice a year, in the summer and winter. As part of the process of producing the newsletter, we host tenant meetings to discuss with tenants what they think of the previous edition and how future editions can be improved.

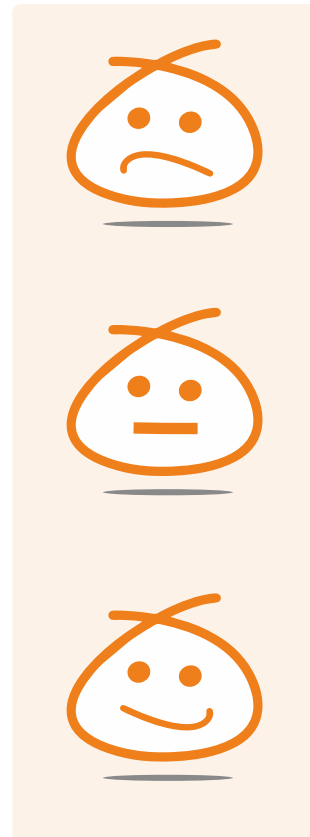
We also talk about what storylines they would like to see featured and share other ideas.

We also have tenant editor volunteer roles for those who might want to get involved on a more technical and permanent basis.

How to tell us what you think

We are committed to providing our tenants with the best services and want to know if something is wrong so we can put it right.

You can give us feedback via our website, email or by giving us a call. If tenants are not happy with the quality of service they receive or how our staff or contractors treat them, they have the right to complain.



Complaints Procedure

What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual tenant or group of tenants*'.

A copy of BeST's Complaints & Compliments Policy, and our Complaints Procedure can be found on our website (see contact details below).

How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made in any of the following ways:

- ▶ In writing
- ▶ By email
- ▶ Telephone
- ▶ By completing the complaints form on BeST's official website

Complaints about rent or service charges

Complaints about these items are usually made directly by the tenant or their legal representative (if they lack capacity and one has been appointed).

If a Support Provider wishes to submit a complaint about the above, on a tenant's behalf, they must first obtain a signed form of authority, authorising them to act in this matter, on behalf of the tenant, or with the legal representative's permission.

It may not be appropriate for the support provider to act for the tenant in all complaints, particularly where legal representative exists.

Additional Notes



Bespoke Supportive Tenancies Ltd is a Registered Charity,
registration number 1143046

Bespoke Supportive Tenancies Ltd is a Registered Provider of Social Housing,
registration number 4718

Bespoke Supportive Tenancies Ltd is a Not-for-Profit Organisation,
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