



Bespoke Supportive Tenancies

Snippets

Edition 14

From the MD

Welcome to our Winter Edition of Snippets. We hope you are managing to stay safe and are keeping well during this pandemic.

- Our services remain open; however, our phone lines are again operating at minimum capacity, only option 1 for Repairs and Maintenance is in use.
- If you need to contact another team, you can find all the relevant email addresses on the back page and also on our website www.bestha.co.uk
- You can still report any repairs and maintenance issues through our usual channels, via our website or by phoning our Repairs and Maintenance Team on 0161 786 6000 option 1.
- Our contractors continue to work in line with the government guidelines. However, repairs may take longer as we deal with the increased demand during Winter.
- We continue to make good progress on our journey to become compliant with the Regulatory Standards, you can read more about this on page 11.
- I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and understanding of the necessary adjustments we have had to make to our services during these unsettling times.
- On behalf of everyone at BeST, I would like to wish all our tenants, support providers, contractors, funders, partners and friends a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Shelley Hobbs
Managing Director

Get Involved!

We are looking for tenant representatives who want to work with us.

You can get involved in a way which suits you.

Please visit our back page for more information!



Christmas Competition

Do you have the best Christmas tree?
Or can you make the best Christmas card?

You could be in with a chance of winning a £50 gift of your choice and your tree, or card design on our 2021 card!

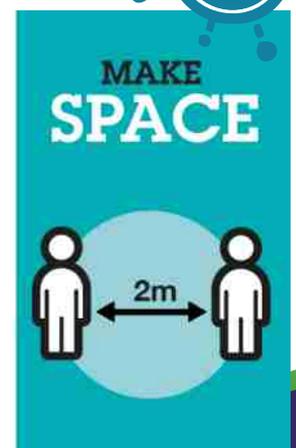
Find out how to enter on **page 6**.



COVID-19 Update

Following the government's recent announcement and current lockdown measures, most of our staff have returned to home working. Your safety, security, and wellbeing are our key priority, and we are doing our best to deliver our services as usual.

You can visit our website for more information
www.bestha.co.uk





What's Eric Been Up To?

Hello friends

I am missing the farm trips and meeting my fellow woofers, tier 3 means no sneaky Sunday afternoon treats under the table, in the pub, after Sunday dinner! That might be a good thing as my harness is getting a bit tight now...

Although lockdown has not been all bad, I have been enjoying the many walks with my family and sisters. I met some interesting wildlife while I was out and about. Sealions on the east coast, what a delight! I also met a big gull which was scary, the closer I got the more its wings span out, but then it flew off! I don't know why I'm scared, mummy says it won't hurt me!

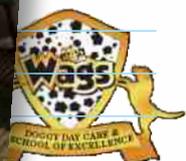
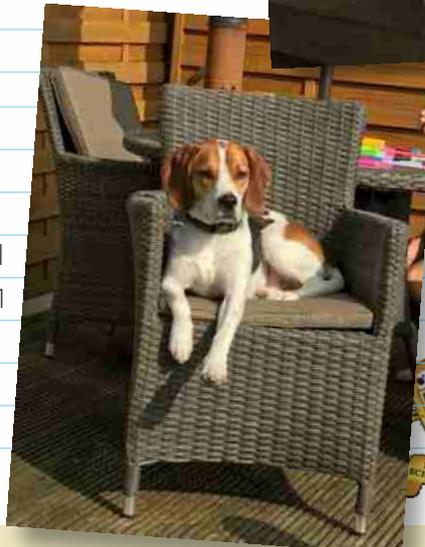
My sisters recently had birthday parties, Pearl and Coco were spoilt as usual, but I did get to play with the balloons before Pearl popped them all. She loves playing with balloons, she jumps so high, she is quite talented really but don't tell her I said that... Mummy bought us some lovely peanut butter spread for our treats and bones... it's scrumptious but again, not good for my waistline.

We have put our Christmas decorations up now, we let mummy do most of the work, me and Pearl just played with the tinsel and made a little mess... mummy said no treats for a week! A week!!!

We hope Santa still brings us our presents in our doggy stockings, we think we have been good girls and boys this year.

So, until you hear from me next year, I hope you all have an enjoyable Christmas, let us hope that 2021 brings more positivity across the world. Merry Christmas. Woof Woof.

Eric, BeST Mascot



Welcome to BeST!

New elves. Yay!



Simone Cassidy
Compliance Officer

I started working at BeST in February as a Maintenance Coordinator. I enjoyed the role as it was like what I did previously at City West and Irwell Valley. However, when a compliance role came up, I jumped at the chance to learn something new and challenge myself.

My role now includes making sure that all aspects of compliance get booked in and done. From gas certificates to appliance testing, duct cleaning to fire alarms, this not only makes sure that we are completing our legal obligations, but it also helps tenants feel a lot safer in their homes.

Outside of work, I also work most weekends for Bridgewater Cruises where I have worked for over 2 years now, I fully enjoy serving afternoon tea as well as Sunday lunches.

I also like to spend time with my daughter who has now turned 21, time flies very fast!

Linda Jones
Credit Control



As a Revenue and Benefits Officer and now moving to the role of a Credit Controller. I have worked at BeST for just over 1 year. My role is to help to resolve any issues of outstanding debt. Most of these issues can be easily resolved by working closely with Local Authorities and our colleagues in both the Finance and Housing Teams.

I have worked in housing for many years on both the Income collection side and as a generic Housing Manager. I enjoy working with people and at BeST there is a nice working culture that makes it easy to enjoy the role and in these tough times I would say if we stick together we can get through it.

My hobbies include socialising with friends and playing darts, I have been relatively successful playing both Internationally for Wales and winning the individual ladies News of the World Darts Championship, where I shared the stage with Phil the Power Taylor.

I am asked quite a lot what it takes to get to that level to be successful, I think the same applies to any sport or walk of life. My top tips are you don't have to be the most naturally gifted person to succeed, accept the plaudits but go away and work even harder, be respectful but most of all be nice.

The moral of the story is anyone who has a talent can achieve their goals, so just go for it!

Stay Safe and Good Luck to you all.





Ellie Partington
Office Administrator

I'm Ellie, the Office Administrator at BeST. Some of my duties include; sending and distributing post, taking calls and directing them to the right team, organising and more importantly replenishing the tea and coffee! Working for BeST is a very rewarding job because you feel like you are making a difference and supporting those who need it.

I live in Manchester, although my second home is Fleetwood, where we have a caravan. I am very family orientated and family caravan weekends away are always the best!

I travel around the country quite a lot, competing in freestyle disco dancing competitions, which I have done since being 7. I have won titles such as European Champion, British Champion, Northwest Champion, and many more.

I am currently learning my dance teaching exams and if I am not at work, dance, or the gym, you will find me at home cuddling my spotty 12 year old dalmatian Tia, who I completely adore.

Hey, I'm Casey. The new (and first) Tenant Engagement Officer here at BeST.

Although I have worked at BeST for over 4 years now, I have never been more excited about my role! (Shhh don't tell my old bosses Alan or Steve).

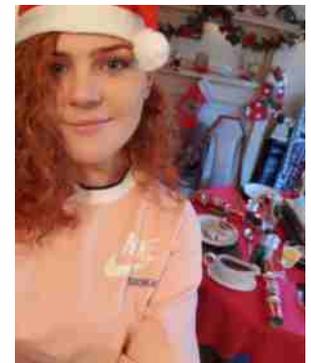
I can't wait to meet you all (or maybe e-meet you for now) and listen to what you have to say. I'm looking forward to working together so that we can improve our services and what we do for you. If you are interested, check out the back page to get some ideas of what this might involve!

At the moment, I am working with the Housing Team on a Tenant Engagement Strategy and we are in the process of developing an action plan.

I will be reaching out to those that show interest over the next few months.

If you would like to get involved then please get in touch with me, my contact details are also on the back page!

I can't wait! Let's get to work.



Casey Willis
Tenant
Engagement Lead
Officer



Lorraine Pass
Accounts Assistant

I started at BeST as Accounts Assistant in Sept 20 and my role involves the housing benefit payments.

Having previously worked in supported housing, I was fortunate to meet with some of the tenants and to see exactly what it means and how important it is for people with a learning disability to be able to live independently with care and support. I am delighted to be working as member of the BeST team.

My favourite activity is going for long walks with my dog Rolo in and around Bolton where I live. Spending quality time with my family is very important to me and socialising with friends. In recent months, gardening has become a keen interest for me – a great way to switch off and relax.



Meet Our Tenants

Congratulations

Gillian on your weight loss - 8 stone 6lbs WOW!!

A big well done to Gillian at St Helens, since starting her weight loss journey she has lost a life changing weight of 8 stone 6 pound.

The top photos show Gillian at the beginning of her weight loss journey and then at her 50th birthday party.

The picture underneath was taken recently. I am sure we can all agree she looks absolutely fabulous!!

A big well done to Gillian, all the staff are very proud of you and everything you have achieved, we could not be more happier for you!



Achieve Together Staff

 Great effort both of you!



When our Housing Officer, Hannah said to Paul he could paint his fence he was delighted and got straight to work! As you can see, Paul is one happy man with his work! So he should be, well done Paul, great work, we are very impressed!

Tenant Area

The Great BeST Bake Off Winners

Emily Josie and Loz have done it again! They are getting quite famous now and proving themselves to be the best winners!

Emily, Jo and Loz enjoyed baking through lockdown, especially trying out new flavours so what better way than to make a BeST creation with some of their favourites...



B – blueberry
E - espresso coffee and walnut
S – strawberry
T - toffee swirl



YUM!

The BeST Christmas Tree and Card Competition

Do you have the best Christmas tree?
Or can you make the best Christmas card?
Then we would love to see!

To enter, send a photo of your tree or card, along with your name, address and telephone number and a short description to communications@bestha.co.uk

The winner will receive a £50 gift of their choice and your tree or card design will be on our 2021 Christmas card!

Entries close January 4th, 2021

Good luck everyone and Merry Christmas!

Good
Luck
everyone!

This year's Christmas card will be digital so keep a look out in your emails... the card has last year's winner on the front cover!

WINNER



Snowman Cookies Recipe



Ingredients

125g butter, softened
125g golden caster sugar
1 egg, beaten
1 tsp vanilla extract
250g plain flour, plus extra for dusting

For the decoration

400g white fondant icing
Icing sugar for dusting
100g pack mixed red, yellow, black and blue ready-to-roll icing
Tube white icing, for sticking
Tube black icing

Method

STEP 1

Heat the oven to 190C/170C fan/gas 5. Cream the butter and sugar until pale and fluffy, then beat in the egg and vanilla. Stir in the flour and mix to a fairly soft dough. Tip onto a lightly floured surface and knead gently. Put the dough on a plate, cover and chill for at least 2 hrs.

STEP 2

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to a thickness of around 0.5cm. Use a cookie cutter or water glass to stamp out 7cm rounds. Re-roll the trimmings and repeat.

STEP 3

Transfer the biscuits to two lined baking trays and bake for 8-14 mins until the edges turn lightly golden in colour. Leave to cool.

STEP 4

To decorate, roll out the white fondant icing on a surface lightly dusted with icing sugar. Stamp out 7cm circles using the same cookie cutter or glass as before, then use a dab of the white tube of icing to stick a fondant round on each biscuit.

STEP 5

Knead together some of the yellow and blue icing to make green icing, then do the same with the red and yellow icing to make orange (alternatively, buy separate packs of each colour). Roll out one icing colour at a time. Stamp out a 7cm circle of icing, cut in half and stick on for a hat. Cut a strip of another colour and make some markings to make it look like the elasticated band of a hat, then trim to fit and stick on. Repeat with all the biscuits, mixing and matching colours.

STEP 6

Decorate the hats with icing spots and stripes, if you like. Roll out balls of coloured icing, poke holes all over with a cocktail stick and stick on as pom poms. Mould lumpy balls of the orange icing for noses and roll out balls of the black icing for eyes. Press down to flatten, then stick on with white icing. Use the tube of black icing to pipe rows of dots for the smiles. Leave to set. Will keep for up to five days in an airtight container.

Lockdown Linguistics

Hola, I'm Matt, I am one of the Portfolio Managers at BeST. The year 2020 has been tough for everyone, and when the UK was locked down in March and we all had to stay at home, many people took up new hobbies and interests at home to keep them busy. I was one of those people, I decided during lockdown to try and learn a new language through an application called Duolingo on my phone.

For 135 days I spent a little time each day trying to learn Spanish! It has been really fun learning a new language, and hopefully when I can next go on holiday to Espana (Spain) and I can try out my new skills!

Below there is a little quiz with some Spanish words.

Can you match them up to the right English translation?

Gato

Banco

Museo

Tomate

Ensalada

Bicicleta

Telefono

Telephone

Tomato

Cat

Bank

Salad

Museum

Bike

Top Tip: Most of these words sound like the words we use in English!

Answers: Gato (Cat), Banco (bank), Museo (museum), Tomate (tomato), Ensalada (salad), Bicicleta (bike), Telefono (Telephone)

Staff Stories

During the first lockdown I realised I had an asset at home which I had not utilised and would make the lockdown more bearable.

This was my back garden, or to be more accurate, the space at the back of my house that would make a nice garden!

So, during my week off, I set myself the task of transforming the space below into somewhere to sit out in (and walk around when I'm on the phone).



The hard work was totally worth it and with the gyms closed, a punishing form of exercise. Having a project to work on and a space to enjoy later was a huge mental uplift for me.

I also spent time chatting with my neighbours over the fence, something I'd not done in the previous ten years!

So, there are some good things to come from the lockdowns, of course there is great tragedy and I'm very thankful that my COVID-19 experience has been an inconvenience more than a misery and I appreciate how lucky I have been.

However, I can't wait to say goodbye to 2020 and its bizarre statements we never thought we would say... "I miss the gym", "I miss the office", "Don't forget your face mask".

Roll on 2021 and saying things like "See you at the pub" and "Give me a hug".

My front garden is a mess too, so next summer... I will hire a gardener to renovate it!

Andy Bowler, Head of Development



Department Updates

Housing Update

A Big Hello to Casey Willis

I would like to introduce you to the latest member of the Housing Management Team. Casey Willis has been seconded into our Housing Management Team to help us focus on our Tenant Engagement Strategy. Casey's role is to help us develop our Tenant Engagement Strategy, into an action plan that will allow us to further improve our involvement with our tenants.

Casey was previously our Communications Officer and an opportunity to join the Housing Management Team leading on 'Tenant Engagement' was too good to miss. Casey will continue to lead on the development of our Snippets newsletter, hopefully with more involvement from you, our tenants. Watch this space!

Tenant Satisfaction Survey Update

A huge thank you to all our tenants who participated in our 'pilot' Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Although this was only a pilot scheme, despite the COVID-19 pandemic we received a great response, and we will be busy analysing these results over the coming weeks as part of our tenant engagement action plan. This will enable us to develop some key actions for our tenant involvement activities. Don't forget we need your help so get in touch!

Keeping Safe

We work very hard to maintain the highest levels of safety in your home, but we need to work together to ensure that your home is a safe place for you to live. Please help us to help you by following the handy hints and top tips provided and by allowing us access to your home to carry out any safety tests and checks.

*Richard Lowthian
Head of Housing*

If you have a repair that needs sorting,
you can report a repair via our website
www.bestha.co.uk
at any time, on any device and anywhere.



Damp and condensation can cause structural damage to your home as well as making any health problems you have worse.

To keep your home free from damp and condensation, follow the helpful tips below:

- Keep your home warm – it is better to have your heating on at a low temperature for extended periods
- Wipe off any condensation (water) that forms on any window and surface
- Improve the ventilation in your home by opening your windows whenever possible – especially if you are cooking, bathing or drying clothes
- Never dry clothes indoors or put clothes on radiators – this can create up to five litres of water in the air
- Do not block your radiators/ heaters or air vents
- Keep lids on pots and pans when cooking and keep your door closed
- If you have an extractor fan in either your kitchen or bathroom or both, use it when cooking or bathing
- If you use a tumble dryer, make sure the external vent/hose leads outside your home.

Benefits Update

Job Centres remain open and one-to-one support is available for those who are unable to interact via phone or digitally.

Face-to-face medical assessments continue to be suspended. Please note, as of 2nd November 2020 claimants who fail to attend (by telephone) may have their ESA stopped or Universal Credit entitlement changed.

*Patricia Mokhberi
Compliance Manager*

Repairs and Maintenance Update

We are working closely with our contractors and partners to operate as usual, in line with the government guidelines.

We have put extra measures in place to make sure that you are protected; this includes Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for our contractors and operatives.

Please notify us of any potential COVID-19 risks at the time you report your repair so the necessary precautions can be taken.

Thank you once again for your continued support during this pandemic.



Our **OUT OF HOURS SERVICE**

is still in place, for
emergency repairs only.

If you have an emergency
repair outside of working
hours, please call our OOH
number on

07534 089962.

Delivering COVID-19 secure services



We have carried out a COVID-19 risk
assessment



We have cleaning and hygiene procedures in
line with the guidance



We have supported and enabled staff to work
from home where possible



We have taken all reasonable steps to
maintain a 2m distance in the workplace



Where people cannot be 2m apart, we have
done everything practical to manage the
transmission risk



We have supplied all our staff with the
appropriate and necessary PPE.

Alan Winstanley
Head of Repairs and Maintenance

*Our latest compliance
certification position at
the end of November is:*

ASBESTOS
RE-INSPECTION SURVEYS

97.9%

FIRE RISK
ASSESSMENTS

99.7%

FIXED WIRE
CERTIFICATION

99.8%

GAS
CERTIFICATION

99.1%

LEGIONELLA RISK
ASSESSMENTS

98.0%

Our advice for the up and coming winter months

Keeping you safe and warm this winter

Don't be a victim of burst pipes, if possible, keep your heating on and set your room thermostat to a minimum of 18°C. If you go away for any length of time, turn off your water supply at the stop tap and open all the taps. This will prevent your pipes from freezing in the cold winter temperatures.

- Keep your heating on at a low constant temperature at least 18°C
- Ensure your boiler pressure remains at the required pressure, usually between 1 and 2
- If you have a pre-payment meter, make sure you have sufficient credit
- Close all blinds and curtains at night to keep the heat in
- Keep furniture away from radiators to allow heat to circulate freely and avoid any fire risk
- Keep outside doors shut and use draught excluders to keep out draughts and report any ill-fitting doors and windows to the Repairs and Maintenance Team
- Be aware of where the grit bins are and if empty contact your Repairs and Maintenance Team to have them re-filled
- If you do have to venture out in bad weather, ensure you have adequate clothing. Wrap up in plenty of layers, and don't forget hats, scarves and gloves!
- Look out for your neighbours, friends and family
- **...and lastly, we are here to help if you need us!**

Alan Winstanley, Head of Repairs and Maintenance



A Message From the Chair

The Board continue to meet monthly and are working on an agenda to make the organisation compliant with the Regulatory Standards. We have also been holding monthly meetings with the Regulator who is monitoring us closely and happy with the progress that is being made.

We are grateful for all the hard work everyone continues to do, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

At the moment, we are concentrating on:

- Rents
- Health and Safety
- Stock Condition
- Leases
- Staffing
- Business Planning

You might have read, that several lease-based providers have been served with notices by the Regulator for being non-compliant on the Rent Standard. We have been working to demonstrate our rents are compliant. This has been a massive task and we hope to have a final picture in January.

We are also working on understanding more about our stock and what needs spending on it. This is another big piece of work which should be completed in December.

We have also commissioned some work on staffing so that we will have the right structures and terms and conditions. We are expecting a report to the December Board. All the information we collect will be going into the business plan. We will then be looking to meet our lenders to share the financial position and discuss how we can move forward.

Thanks again for all the work. Take care and keep safe.

Tom Miskell
Board of Trustees Chairman

Regulatory Update



We continue to make progress towards Regulatory compliance and the Board are satisfied that key projects are progressing satisfactorily in line with expectations. In light of the White Paper announcement issued recently, increased focus towards the Consumer Standards is required throughout the sector.

We will be focusing more on Tenant Engagement and have appointed a lead officer to support our Tenant Engagement Strategy which will see tenants further involved and empowered in our key decision making and service improvements.

We are fully committed and working exceptionally hard to achieve our goals and ensuring our services are compliant with the Regulatory Standards.

Shelley Hobbs
Managing Director

Are you interested in getting involved and working in partnership with us?

This could be things like

- being on a tenant board/ scrutiny panel as a tenant representative/ champion
- attending focus groups
- participating in tenant forums
- organising or attending community activities and/ or events
- mystery shopping tenant inspector
- helping to write, edit and / or review Snippets newsletter



or simply having a cuppa and a chat with us, online or in person (when we can again) and just letting us know how you feel about us, our services and your home.

We would love for you to participate in any way you like, get in touch and let us know if you are interested and we will go from there!

Phone Casey on:

07525 277308

Or email Casey at:

casey.willis@bestha.co.uk

Or write to Casey at:

**Casey Willis
Bespoke Supportive Tenancies
2a Sentinel House
Albert Street
Eccles
M30 0NA**

Team emails



To report or discuss a repair, or any maintenance related issues you can email **maintenance@bestha.co.uk**



To discuss your housing management or tenancy related issues you can email **housingteam@bestha.co.uk**



To discuss your rent account balance or for help claiming Housing Benefit you can email **revenueandbenefits@bestha.co.uk**



To discuss an invoice you can email **accounts@bestha.co.uk**



For all other enquiries you can email **info@bestha.co.uk**