

Bespoke Supportive Tenancies

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Version: 02

Review

Date of This Review	Date of Last Review	Policy Author	Executive	Next Review Date
16/02/2024	30/12/2020	Richard Lowthian, Head of Housing and Casey Willis, Communications and Tenant Engagement Lead	Shelley Hobbs, Managing Director	January 2026

Details of Amendments

Version	Date	Update Amendment Detail	Resulting From
V01	07/12/2020	New Policy	
V02	30/01/2024	Revised policy in full as a single complaints policy. Compliments and Feedback policies are now separate.	Changes in legislation, Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code, and operational processes.

Approved by

Executive Team	
Board	28/02/2024

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bespoke Supportive Tenancies (BeST) aims to provide the best service to its tenants. We understand that sometimes things can go wrong and are dedicated to addressing and responding to tenants' concerns. This policy outlines our response and approach to managing complaints from all tenants, their representatives or other third parties.
- 1.2 We aim to ensure that our actions are carried out as quickly as possible and that our communication is clear, timely and polite. We aim to provide a good, reliable service to all our tenants and treat all feedback as an opportunity to improve services.
- 1.3 This policy is designed to meet regulatory requirements and our tenants' expectations. This policy is available on our website with our procedure and Complaints Handling Code Self-Assessment and upon request.

2. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 2.1 The development of this policy was guided by the following reference materials, which should sometimes be read in conjunction with:

External

- The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents
- Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards
- Chartered Institute of Housing Professional Standards

Internal

- Complaints Procedure
- Housing Ombudsman's Self-Assessment
- Complaints Recording Guidance
- Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Policy
- Repairs, Planned Cyclical Maintenance and Recharge Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- GDPR Policy
- Compensation and Remedies Policy
- Unreasonable Behaviour Policy

Key Legislation

England

- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- The Housing Act 1985, 1988, 1996 and 2004
- Localism Act 2011
- Building Safety Act 2022
- The Care Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Equality Act 2010

Wales

- Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016
- Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Act 2021
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to all tenants, their representatives, and any individual or group affected by the services BeST provides.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual tenant or group of tenants. The word 'complaint' does not need to be used for it to be treated as such.

5. KEY PRINCIPLES

- 5.1 The policy and associated procedures are guided by several principles, including, but not limited to:
- Making the complaint process clear and simple to ensure accessibility for all.
 - Ensuring procedures align with best practices and legislative and regulatory requirements.
 - Working together collaboratively to resolve complaints.
 - Accepting shared responsibility, without blaming others.
 - Adhering to the professional standards set by the Chartered Institute of Housing when handling complaints.
 - Handling complaints fairly and providing appropriate explanations for decisions.
 - Addressing complaints promptly, politely, and confidentially.
 - Recording and monitoring all complaints.

- Assigning a reference number and contact name for reported complaints.
- Offering apologies and corrective actions when service delivery falls short.
- Learning from complaints to enhance our services.
- Involving tenants in the review of complaints and services and reporting on our performance.
- Managing all complaints in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

6. OUR APPROACH

- 6.1 We welcome feedback in the form of complaints from anyone who is affected by a service we provide, or a decision taken by us, including:
- Tenants and support providers;
 - Any third party negatively affected by our actions or decisions;
 - A representative of any of the above, who is authorised by them to make a complaint on their behalf in accordance with data protection regulations.
- 6.2 Whenever a tenant expresses dissatisfaction, they will be asked if they would like to make a formal complaint.
- 6.3 Our aim is to address all issues at the initial point of contact. A service request is a request requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but are recorded, monitored, and reviewed.
- 6.4 Follow-ups on a service request, such as a missed appointment, can often be resolved 'there and then' with an apology and by providing another appointment. This may not need to be entered into the complaints system.
- 6.5 If a tenant remains dissatisfied with the response to their service request, or if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if requested, the issue will be logged as a formal complaint. This will not negatively impact the efforts to address the service request.
- 6.6 Complaints can be reported by:
- Telephone: 0161 786 6000 (option 6)
 - SMS/WhatsApp: 07525277308
 - Email: complaints@bestha.co.uk
 - Website: www.bestha.co.uk
 - Facebook: www.facebook.com/bespokesupportivetenancies
 - Instagram: www.instagram.com/bespokesupportivetenancies

- In writing: Bespoke Supportive Tenancies, 2a Sentinel House, Eccles, M30 0NJ
- In person to a member of staff, including housing officers.

7. COMPLAINT STAGES

7.1. Stage 1

- 7.1.1 New complaints are logged and acknowledged within 5 working days of being received as a stage one complaint. The complainant will be contacted via their method of complaint, and the details of the complaint will be discussed, any outcomes sought, as well as their preferred method of contact.
- 7.1.2 The acknowledgement will set out our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes that the complainant is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the complainant will be asked for clarification.
- 7.1.3 Additional complaints raised during the investigation will be included in the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. If the stage 1 response has been provided, the new issues are unrelated to those already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint.
- 7.1.4 The complaint will be investigated, and a response will be provided by their preferred method of contact, within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.
- 7.1.5 If we need more time to investigate the complaint, we will provide an explanation to the complainant containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. We aim to respond within 10 working days or within a timeframe agreed by both parties.
- 7.1.6 The response will propose a resolution and address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, legislation, or best practices where appropriate.
- 7.1.7 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the resolution in the first stage, they can request it to be escalated to stage 2. The complainant has 28 days from the date of the outcome letter to escalate their complaint to the next stage of the process. If a complaint is raised to stage two, an independent review of the complaint will be carried out.

7.2 **Stage 2**

7.2.1 Stage 2 complaints are logged and acknowledged within 5 working days of the initial escalation.

7.2.2 A senior manager, different from the person who dealt with it in the first stage, will review the investigation, complaint decision, and any additional information submitted for the review request to ensure that the initial investigation was conducted appropriately.

7.2.3 We aim to respond with an outcome within 20 working days of the acknowledgement or within an agreed timeframe acceptable to the tenant. If the investigation takes longer than the initial 20 working days, then we aim to respond within a further 10 working days or at an agreed timeframe through the preferred method of contact.

7.2.4 If it's not possible to respond to the complaint within the agreed timescale, the complainant will be notified, and a new date will be mutually agreed upon with the person making the complaint. Where an agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, we will provide the Housing Ombudsman's' contact details.

7.2.5 Stage 2 is the final stage of the internal process, if the tenant or complainant feels that their complaint has still not been resolved, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman. Further details can be found at:

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 1484

Unit D, Preston

PR2 0ET

7.2.6 Tenants and their support can also directly contact the Housing Ombudsman at any point during our internal complaints process.

7.3 At each stage of the complaints process, we will:

- Deal with complaints on their merits, act independently and have an open mind;
- Give the tenant a fair chance to set out their position;
- Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and
- Consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.

7.3.1 When something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions we have taken or intend to take, to put things right. This can include:

- Apologising;
- Acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
- Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons;
- Taking action if there has been delay;
- Reconsidering or changing a decision;
- Amending a record or adding a correction;
- Providing a financial remedy;
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

7.3.2 We will not keep a complaint open if the answer to the complaint is known, any outstanding actions required to address the issue will be tracked and actioned with updates provided to the tenant.

8. EXCLUSIONS

8.1 We will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to. There may be occasions when the complaint cannot be investigated by BeST. For instance:

- a) In exceptional circumstances, the tenant will be notified of why we cannot investigate. Examples include:
 - The complaint is unreasonable, without foundation and used to harass, annoy, or subdue somebody, in accordance with our Unreasonable Behaviour Policy.
 - Is subject to on-going legal proceedings or where the case may be under ongoing criminal investigation and details of the claim have been filed in court.
- b) If the complaint has not been made within a reasonable time – for example, the issue prompting the complaint happened over twelve months ago.
- c) Issues previously addressed or considered under the complaints policy. However, where the problem is a recurring issue, we will usually consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint as we feel that this will help resolve the issue for the customer and provide a better outcome.

8.2 If we decide not to accept a complaint, the complainant will be informed of the reason and where to direct their complaints, such as contacting the support provider, police, Housing Ombudsman, etc.

8.3 Each complaint will be considered on its own merits.

9. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

9.1 While recognising limitations on the action and feedback possible for anonymously submitted complaints, we commit to investigating such complaints in accordance with the policy and associated procedures.

10. COMPENSATION AND REMEDIES

10.1 If a complainant requests compensation as part of the resolution to a complaint, or if a senior manager deems compensation appropriate, it will be offered in accordance with our Compensation and Remedies Policy.

10.2 Remedies will reflect the impact on the tenant as a result of any fault identified, in accordance with our Compensation and Remedies Policy.

11. PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING

11.1 Complaints performance and service improvements will be presented to the board quarterly.

11.2 Our complaints performance and service improvements report and the response from the board will be published on our website annually.

11.3 We will constantly monitor performance and trends to identify and suggest service improvements and learning.

12. LEARNING

12.1 We aim to use complaints as a learning tool to prevent the same mistakes from happening again. We will consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from complaints.

12.2 We will analyse complaints to identify trends, provide insights to senior management and inform changes to improve services. When complaints highlight the need to improve existing services, policies, or procedures, we aim to implement these changes promptly.

12.3 Learning and improvements from complaints will be shared with tenants, staff, and relevant stakeholders online, in scrutiny sessions and in other forums.

13. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

13.1 This policy supports our Equality and Diversity Policy, ensuring our complaints process is accessible and easy to use for all our tenants.

13.2 If you need support in putting your complaint in writing, please let us know. Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Any agreed adjustments will be documented and regularly reviewed. You can request a reasonable adjustment from us through the staff member you are engaging with or by contacting us through your preferred method. Examples of the support we can provide include providing information in different formats and adjusting our communication methods.

14. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

14.1 We are committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who submit complaints to us. We understand the importance of handling personal information in accordance with GDPR. Any personal data collected during the complaints process will be treated with care and used solely for the purpose of addressing and resolving the complaint. We will only share this information with relevant parties involved in the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

14.2 We will retain this information for as long as required to meet our legal obligations and address any potential follow-up inquiries.

15. RESPONSIBILITIES

15.1 Responsible Officers

15.2 The Head of Housing is responsible for ensuring this policy is up to date, relevant and complied with and the Communications and Tenant Engagement Lead is our lead complaints officer.

15.3 BeST is responsible for ensuring any third parties handle complaints in line with this policy and the Housing Ombudsman's Code. Third parties, including contractors, will follow our policy and procedure. Tenants will not be expected to go through two complaints processes.