



Bespoke Supportive Tenancies Ltd

# Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Policy

Version: 01

## Review

Date of this review	Date of last review	Policy author(s)	Compliance Manager	Next review date
25/02/21	25/02/21	Richard Lowthian	Patricia Mokhberi	25/08/23

## Details of amendments

Version	Date	Update/ amendment detail	Resulting from
		New Policy Document	

## Approved by

Executive Team	01/04/22
Board	01/04/22

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** Bespoke Supportive Tenancies (BeST) is a Specialised Supported Housing Charity that provides homes for people with various support needs.
- 1.2** BeST considers tenant engagement as an important way to involve customers in key issues and objectives affecting them and the Charity. The range of opportunities available enables a transparent approach to the delivery of services which provides accountability across all areas.
- 1.3** This policy supports related internal and external policies, which should be read in conjunction with this document.

### **Related Documents**

#### **External**

- TPAS Engagement Standards 2021
- Regulator of Social Housing Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

#### **Internal**

- Complaints and Compliments Policy
- Repairs, Planned Cyclical Maintenance and Recharge Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

### **Key Legislation**

- The Social Housing White Paper (Charter for Social Housing Residents) 2020
- The Equality Act 2010
- General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- The Human Rights Act 1998

- 1.4** BeST considers tenant engagement an important way to involve service users in key issues and objectives affecting them and the Charity. The range of opportunities available enables a transparent approach to the delivery of services which provides accountability across all areas.
- 1.5** BeST is working hard to improve the timeliness and quality of customer insight/tenant satisfaction data made available to it. Such data is collected partly through ordinary service user housing management activities, but increasingly through other methods such as surveys and structured focus groups.
- 1.6** The information gathered from all these sources will be used to influence BeST's service and business priorities.
- 1.7** To help deliver service user engagement activities, BeST invests in both operational budgets and more specifically, community investment opportunities. These areas are managed and prioritised, based on service user feedback, performance, insight, and scrutiny.
- 1.8** This strategy is critical in delivering the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, with reference to:
- Customer service, choice, and complaints, by giving service users a real voice and opportunities to be heard
  - Involvement and empowerment, by providing a wide range of opportunities to our service users to influence and become involved in the co-creation, monitoring and review of BeST's engagement strategy
  - Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of our service users,

using service user insights to understand the different needs of our communities

- BeST will ensure that we consult with service users at least once every three years on the best way of involving our service users in governance and scrutiny

## **2. PURPOSE**

**2.1** The purpose of this Policy is to inform the organisation, our service users, and our stakeholders of BeST's approach to tenant engagement.

### **2.2 Aims**

The Policy will help BeST to achieve our current business objectives aims by:

- Helping us to make better decisions
- Helping us to strengthen relationships with our service users and stakeholders
- Helping us better understand the diverse needs of our service users and accordingly improve the services available to them

## **3. SCOPE**

**3.1** The Policy will be shared with company employees, support providers, service users, and our Board, to help facilitate a greater understanding of the benefits of our having in place, a planned service user engagement strategy across the Charity.

**3.2** The Policy will be reviewed regularly. BeST's tenant engagement methods will reflect the profile of BeST's specialised customer base and will take account of our service user needs and vulnerabilities, communities, and housing types.

## **4. KEY PRINCIPLES**

**4.1** To ensure we are effective we will adopt the following principles when we engage

with our tenants:

Scope	BeST Principles
What is in what is out regarding tenant engagement	Here we consider what the scope of engagement is, and identify who needs to be involved
What level or degree of engagement is required?	This will be based on tenant needs, vulnerabilities and disabilities
Purpose	
Why are BeST working on a tenant engagement strategy?	We need to consider the purpose of the engagement, i.e. why are we doing it?
What is it that our service users know?	What do we want to achieve?
Outcomes	
What specific outcomes are we hoping to achieve?	<p><b>List the outcomes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does successful engagement look like?</li> <li>• Are we using the right methods to get the best outcomes? For example, do we need to ensure we tailor our approaches to tenants with varying support needs?</li> <li>• Accountable to our tenants reviewing and monitoring our performance</li> <li>• Reflecting the diverse needs and aspirations of our tenants</li> </ul>
Participants	
Who needs to take part in order that the desired outcome is achieved? include any third-party services we may need to buy in, to achieve this	<p>Consider who we need to involve, how can we best reach them? How can we utilise service user insights to reach the right people? Develop partnerships with support providers and carers!</p>

## 5. WHERE ARE WE NOW?

### 5.1 Engagement Policy

- 5.2** As a growing organisation we have dipped in and out of tenant involvement opportunities, using more traditional methods.
- 5.3** The Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Policy considers the changes that are needed to our current working practices, coupled with a desire to bring together service user insights and customer satisfaction, that will help us to inform and direct services, based on service user need and demands.
- 5.4** BeST recognises that involvement does not necessarily involve any active participation or even any choice or consent, but that engagement is generally regarded as something more active and assumes consent and that one party's actions affect and are affected by the others.
- 5.5** BeST also understands that some forms of engagement will have a greater effect than others.
- 5.6** BeST recognises that there are challenges to this approach:
- Traditional engagement mechanisms are not always effective in helping us collect substantial but necessary detailed information for statistical analysis.
  - Those willing or able to engage are not necessarily representative of our diverse tenant and service user base.
  - Engagement can be relatively costly for the organisation, so engagement is not enough by itself; we need also to place emphasis on tenant/customer insight.

## **6. WHAT WILL INSIGHT DELIVER?**

- 6.1** BeST aims to be a top-performing specialist supported housing provider at a national, regional or peer group level. To do this we have to provide the best services, which

afford both high quality and value for money to our service users.

- 6.2** BeST will endeavour to obtain a real understanding of what service users want, based on who they are, and what their views are. This will help us to deliver an effective strategy.
- 6.3** Meaningful service user insight is obtained by evaluating and translating information, which has been gathered in a variety of ways. Different types of information can be linked together to achieve the maximum value in helping us to better understand the bigger picture.
- 6.4** We need to use tenant/service user insights intelligently and sensitively to ensure that BeST meets its obligations, and ultimately provides services that are equitable and fair to all members of the community.
- 6.5** The Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Policy, whilst placing an emphasis on our gathering service user insights, will continue to use more traditional forms of engagement (form filling) as regards the collection of data and statistics, to ensure that BeST continues to fulfill its statutory obligations as registered social landlord.

## **7. WHAT WILL BEST DO DIFFERENTLY?**

- 7.1** BeST Tenant Engagement insight will focus increasingly on:
- Further developing mechanisms for real participation and control
  - Developing stronger links with representatives of key, less represented and/or hard to reach tenants/service users
  - Providing greater richness in relation to the information gained through our insight activities

## 8. ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

8.1 The core elements of our strategy are highlighted in the table below and will be key in developing our Tenant Engagement action plan.

### BeST will:

Core activity	Key activities
Develop scrutiny activities within BeST (scrutiny here includes a range of activities including service reviews, specialist forums, service user tenant inspections etc.)	Introduction of a service user Champions Scheme: Tenant Digital Champions – increasing the use of the digital media platforms we use, supporting tenants to engage Tenant Green Inspectors -ensuring the external maintenance services such as grounds maintenance, windows etc. are monitored Tenant Scrutiny Panel members- encourage tenants to help scrutinise our services
Develop consultation groups, we particularly aim to encourage those who are less well represented and/or those in hard-to-reach areas regionally	A focus on tenant priorities based on tenant satisfaction & insight data including customer services, repair and maintenance and complaints
Support independent service user groups, which will help to further develop those skills and talents, within our local communities	Community engagement activities Asset Based (ability) Community learning
Regularly use Tenant Satisfaction Surveys to drive the continuous improvement of BeST's services	Deliver proactive targeted programs to develop services, based on strategic analysis of the information available to us
Work with digital platforms to encourage positive engagement including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn	Bringing together our diverse communities engaging through digital platforms
Deliver community investment fund activities,	To create resources and opportunities for

i.e., we will apply for available grants or funds, from the National Lottery or other similar institutions	disadvantaged tenants who may not normally be able to access activities and develop their skills
Develop closer contact between BeST's Board and service user groups	Create a Menu of involvement for our Board and service user groups Service user voice activity at Board meetings
<b>Support Learning Disability England</b> Provide support to people with disabilities, families, professionals and organisations A free resource library is available A public Campaigning platform is engaged with the promotion of social justice and disability improvements	BeST will consider paying for service user membership, where this will actively encourage and support those service users, who wish to become pro-active in campaigning for social justice and disability improvements

## 9. WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO DELIVER OUR AIMS?

- 9.1 To achieve our aims, we need to embed these areas into a smart tenant engagement action plan.
- 9.2 Gather and utilise service user insight/tenant satisfaction data to deliver targeted outcomes, improving further on the pilot tenant satisfaction surveys undertaken earlier in 2020.
- 9.3 Ensure there are opportunities that are accessible to all our tenants/service users in all our regions.
- 9.4 Create more digital and online engagement activities and opportunities for our tenants in all our regions.
- 9.5 Develop a suite of service user inspection and tenant scrutiny opportunities, and

develop a team of service user inspectors.

**9.6** Further embed a 'one team' approach so that engagement and consultation with our serviceusers is a key requirement within all our services and departments.

**9.7** Ensure Heads of Departments and Managers are able to access the information and training they need to do this themselves.

**9.8** Use service user insight /TSS to inform how we can make best use of available funding to provide additional service and benefits to service user.

## **10. MEASURING THE IMPACT**

**10.1** It is important that we understand the impact of the engagement work we undertake. This is necessary to ensure:

- we know what works
- what difference has been made
- and how effectively resources are being used

**10.2** We need to measure the social value of projects that we implement. This means quantifying and applying a monetary value to the outcomes and impacts of projects, as well as more importantly, measuring the benefits the improvements make to our services wellbeing, through case studies.

**10.3** We need to engage more people to become involved, particularly younger tenants. To do this, we need to consider different ways to engage, including online opportunities.

**10.4** We want to ensure we deliver qualitative outcomes, but we will still set targets on the number of service users we engage with in any given year.

**10.5** We will need to measure the outcomes of any tenant engagement work. In order to achieve this, we will utilise a 'Star' survey, a tool that can be adapted to measure the impact we have on service users' lives where appropriate.

## **11. RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **11.1 Responsible Officers**

The Head of Housing will be responsible for delivering the strategy.

### **11.2 Training**

The Tenant Engagement Lead Officer will be responsible for organising the training.

## **12. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

**12.1** BeST is committed to mainstreaming equality and diversity throughout all its activities as well as meeting the general and specific duties imposed on it through the legislation. Please refer to BeST's Equality and Diversity Policy to read the Policy details in full.