

Our national standards for social housing

The six standards that will apply from spring 2010

Here you will find details of the six new standards that social housing providers will have to meet from spring 2010. Against each, we have described the outcomes we expect to see delivered.

We believe the best place for the quality of services to be discussed, agreed and scrutinised is locally, between providers and their tenants. So our standards require landlords to set out what they offer to tenants and set local standards that reflect the local priorities.

Our objectives

- Improve standards of service delivery for tenants
- Support decent homes and neighbourhoods
- Promote effective tenant involvement and empowerment
- Ensure providers are well run and deliver value for money
- Promote and protect public and private investment
- Encourage and support a supply of well-managed social housing

We want to develop a new relationship between landlords and their regulator. We want the main relationship being between landlord and tenant – one where tenants help shape, influence and monitor the service provided. This is what we call co-regulation. This is not a top-down way of regulating. In a clear shift from regulation in the past, there will be less red tape and a clear focus on deregulation and reducing burdens where appropriate. In return, landlords will be expected to make themselves more accountable and to more closely with their tenants.

What can tenants expect in the future?

- A greater focus on the issues that matter most to them, such as repairs, affordable rents and tackling anti-social behaviour
- More opportunities to have their say, to get involved and to hold their landlord to account
- A greater emphasis on their own priorities, through new local standards agreed by tenants and landlords
- More feedback from their landlord, including an annual report setting out just how well they are doing against local standards and the TSA's national standards

What can landlords expect in the future?

- More responsibility to work closely with their tenants to drive improvements
- More flexibility about how they deliver their housing services in return for more accountability to their tenants and partner
- A modern 'co-regulatory' relationship with their tenants and the regulator where many of the activities necessary to regulate outcomes are undertaken by landlords with their tenants
- A fair and proportionate approach if their performance needs to improve

Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

Customer service and choice

Registered providers must design and deliver housing services that tenants can access easily. Tenants must be offered choices over the services they receive, and be treated with fairness and respect. In relation to all the standards, registered providers must consider equality issues and the diversity of their tenants, including tenants with additional support needs. Registered providers must understand their tenants' needs and use this information to:

- design and deliver housing services
- communicate with tenants

Involvement and empowerment

Registered providers will offer all tenants opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing. This must include opportunities to:

- influence housing related policies and how housing related services are delivered
- be involved in scrutinising performance in delivering housing-related services

Registered providers must offer tenants support so they are more able to be effectively engaged, involved and empowered.

Responding to complaints

Registered providers must have a clear and accessible policy. They must deal with tenants' complaints and any other feedback promptly, politely and fairly. The policy must include how they use complaints and other feedback to:

- change how they do things
- improve services

Home standard

Quality of accommodation

Registered providers must ensure that all homes are warm, weatherproof and have modern facilities.

Repairs and maintenance

Registered providers must provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants. They must meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of tenants in their homes.

Tenancy standard

Allocations

Registered providers must let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They must take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. They should demonstrate how their allocations processes:

- make the best use of available housing
- contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities

There should be clear decision making and appeals processes.

Rents

Registered providers will charge rents in accordance with the objectives and framework set out in the Government's direction to the TSA of November 2009.

Tenure

Registered providers must offer and issue the most secure form of tenure compatible with:

- the purpose of the housing
- the sustainability of the community

They must meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements.

Neighbourhood and community standard

Neighbourhood management

Registered providers will keep the common areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. To achieve this, they will work in partnership with:

- their tenants
- other providers and public bodies, where this is the most effective way of achieving this standard

Local area co-operation

Registered providers will co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic well being in the areas where their properties are.

Anti-social behaviour

Registered providers must work in partnership with other public agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.

Value for money standard

Value for money

In meeting all national standards and their local standards, registered providers have a comprehensive approach to managing their resources to provide cost-effective, efficient, quality services and homes to meet tenants' and potential tenants' needs.

Governance and financial viability standard

Governance

Registered providers have effective governance arrangements that ensure that they have structures, systems and processes to deliver their aims, objectives and intended outcomes for tenants and potential tenants in an effective, transparent and accountable manner. Governance arrangements ensure they:

- adhere to all relevant legislation
- comply with their governing documents and all regulatory requirements
- are accountable to tenants, the TSA and relevant stakeholders
- safeguard taxpayers' interests and the reputation of the sector

Financial viability

Registered providers must manage their resources effectively to ensure their viability is maintained.

More information on our approach, the use of our powers and the questions we are asking as part of the consultation can be found in the full consultation paper, which is available online at: www.tenantservicesauthority.org or by calling: 0845 230 7000 (option 1).