



Tenants Services Authority (TSA)

A new regulatory framework for social housing in England: A statutory consultation

Summary paper 2: Standards for social housing providers

“Equipping the profession for today and tomorrow”

November 2009

Summary paper 2: National and local standards

This is the second summary paper in a series of three which summarises the new regulatory framework for social housing in England published by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) on 12th November 2009.

Other summaries include:

- Summary paper one: Overview of the regulatory framework
- Summary paper three: Regulation in practice

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National standards

National standards have been set only where:

- There is government direction
- A standard is essential for the TSA to carry out formal regulation
- It is a customer priority.

The national standards are designed to reflect the experience of and outcomes for tenants. They set out prescribed, one-size-fits-all standards to be delivered across the sector. They are intended to safeguard customer choice, facilitate resident engagement and help protect tenants in relation to their housing and housing-related services.

Local standards

In addition, registered providers are required to develop a range of local standards to supplement the national standards. These will drive the delivery of services tailored to local needs and aspirations.

National standards explained

There are six national standards outlined in the table below. Equality and diversity and tenants with additional support needs are cross-cutting themes which should permeate all standards.

Proposed Standard:	Areas covered:	Applies to local authority providers?
1. Tenant involvement and empowerment	Involvement and empowerment Customer service and choice Complaints	Yes Yes

	Equality and diversity Tenants with additional support needs (see page 28 TSA document)	Yes
2. Home	Repairs and maintenance Quality of accommodation	Yes Yes
3. Tenancy	Allocations Rent Tenure	Yes No (to follow) Yes
4. Neighbourhood and community	Neighbourhood management Local area cooperation Anti-social behaviour	Yes Yes Yes
5. Value for money	Value for money	Yes
6. Governance and financial viability	Governance Financial Viability	Not applicable to LA providers

Local standards explained

Local standards cannot vary the national standard, but should complement, strengthen or tailor national standards, reflecting local priorities and aspirations. TSA anticipates that local standards will be used to set a higher standard than the national standard.

All registered providers will be expected to publish their plans for developing local standards, in conjunction with residents, by 1st October 2010. They will be expected to have local standards in place no later than 1st April 2011. Plans are expected to include:

- The establishment of targets
- Details of how performance will be monitored and communicated to tenants
- Tenant scrutiny methods and comparison with other providers
- Forms of recourse where local standards are not met, and
- Arrangements for annual review of local standards.

Defining local

The TSA will not be prescribing content of the local standards, or providing a definition of the term 'local'. Providers will be expected to define both the content and boundary of local standards in consultation with tenants. Local could mean a local authority boundary or alternatively it could mean a neighbourhood with significant characteristics, priorities or needs.

For registered providers with homes in different areas, setting local standards will be more complex. Meaningful customer engagement will be required to determine 'local' rather than the delivery of a one-size-fits-all approach to service delivery. Variations in service that may be brought about in different locations will not be an issue where the service delivery genuinely reflects local priorities, agreed in consultation with tenants. TSA expects that

independent mediation would be sought where providers and tenants failed to agree on a definition of 'local'.

Involving tenants in the development of local standards

The *Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard* sets out clear expectations about how providers should involve tenants in the development, monitoring and scrutiny of local standards. TSA believes that registered providers should offer opportunities for resident involvement and that they should support and build residents' capacity to shape services in meaningful ways. The standard reinforces the message that resident involvement and empowerment are not the same thing and sets out the regulators' expectations around empowerment of tenants.

Different local standards will deliver different outcomes for communities, but it is anticipated that developing the skills and capacity of residents and creating increased levels of tenant scrutiny will lead to equitable outcomes.

Evaluation of local pilots

As part of developing a co-regulatory approach the regulator has established a programme of 37 local standards pilots across England. Each of the pilots is testing a number of different approaches to the definition of local standards. The future evaluation of the pilot programme may help providers in their development of local standards.

Codes of practice

In the future, codes of practice may be introduced to amplify or support individual standards, however it is not anticipated that any will be published on 1st April 2010. Any necessary future codes of practice will be developed in a co-regulatory manner, and in consultation with tenants, providers and stakeholders.