

# A new regulatory framework for social housing in England

A statutory consultation  
Summary version

**TSA**

**TENANT  
SERVICES  
AUTHORITY**

# Tenant Services Authority – Our standards

Since our launch on 1 December 2008 we have worked with tenants and providers from housing associations, co-ops, ALMOs and local authorities to explain our purpose, identify what matters most to tenants and decide how best to use our new powers. We want to make a difference to the four million households who live in social rented homes in England.

The reasons why have been set up are that:

- tenants have limited ‘market’ power – they cannot hand back their keys, walk away and move into another home at the same rent and size. A regulator is needed to protect tenants if their landlord performs poorly
- there has been substantial past public investment in social housing and regulation helps to ensure that investment delivers ongoing public benefits
- social housing affects the wider quality of life in communities – regulation can help ensure that all providers play their part to support local authorities in their strategic place making capacity
- we provide security for private sector investors. Our powers to intervene and protect both private investment and the public purse are critical to the continued flow of funding at competitive rates for new homes and better services

Our standards are at the centre of our approach to regulation. We have published our full statutory consultation paper which is available at: [www.tenantservicesauthority.org](http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org)

This document summarises the proposed principles for the new regulatory system and sets out each of the six standards in full. We want to make things better for the eight million tenants in England.

Our aims are to:

**Improve standards of service delivery for tenants.** We will set standards for those landlord services that tenants care about the most, such as repairs and maintenance. Our framework protects tenants from poor performance by their landlord. Providers that involve their tenants to deliver good services and have sound governance and finances will experience much less regulation and be freer to innovate. We will encourage those in the middle to improve by requiring open and transparent reporting of their performance, and by enabling them to compare themselves against other landlords.

**Support decent homes and neighbourhoods.** We will ensure all homes meet the Decent Homes Standard (subject to funding being available for local authority homes). We are proposing standards

on anti-social behaviour and management of the neighbourhood because we know that the safety and security of places matter to tenants.

**Promote effective tenant involvement and empowerment.** Our latest survey showed that only one in two tenants are satisfied with opportunities for involvement and only one in six feels their landlord takes a lot of notice of their views. We want to work with both landlords and tenants – we call this co-regulation – and to make it really work for tenants, our standards place involvement and empowerment at their core with local deals, improved accountability, public reporting and tenant scrutiny.

**Ensure providers are well run and deliver value for money.** We know great service delivery starts with effective governance and sound financial viability. Our standard on value for money requires providers to be open about how they prioritise spending (on new supply, existing homes, community work) and how they constantly strive to improve.

**Promote and protect public and private investment.** We want to maintain the confidence of private sector lenders and investors to finance improvements in neighbourhoods and the building of more homes. Private sector investors look to the

TSA, as an independent regulator, to safeguard their interests through our regulation of the governance and financial viability of housing associations. A modern risk-based regulatory framework makes access to private finance cheaper than it would otherwise be. We estimate that this benefit is worth about £250 per year per home – a benefit that helps reduce the cost of social housing to the taxpayer and to tenants.

**Encourage and support a supply of well-managed social housing.** We know how important it is for potential tenants and those living in overcrowded homes that providers help increase the supply of affordable homes. Our value for money standard will help promote a more efficient sector and our allocations standard will help to ensure that the process is fair and flexible.

# Our six standards

The six new standards set out in this document for social housing providers are the centrepiece of our new regulatory framework. They describe the outcomes we want to see delivered and the specific requirements we expect all providers to comply with in meeting these outcomes. 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 providers to set out what they offer to tenants and set local standards that reflect the priorities of local communities.

We know that the majority of tenants are satisfied with their landlord and there are many excellent providers who already meet much of what we are requiring in these standards. We also know that where performance is poor or involvement is weak this can have a significant effect on tenants' lives. Registered providers must meet our standards. Where they don't, we will expect speedy self-improvement and where this is insufficient we have a new graduated range of enforcement powers to ensure that tenants get the service they deserve.

By working together with tenants and landlords we are confident that our new regulatory framework will meet these priorities and help deliver the best possible deal for tenants in England.

# Our new approach to regulation

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. In return, landlords will be expected to make themselves more accountable and to work more closely with their tenants.

We have proposed ten principles that define this approach:

- our national standards will be established based on clear criteria
- our national standards will be clear, succinct, based on outcomes and avoid prescribing detailed processes
- we will require providers to agree local standards with their tenants for the areas of service that are relevant to them locally
- as every tenant matters, we expect providers to understand and respond to the particular needs of their tenants and to demonstrate how they have taken into account the needs of tenants across the six diversity groups
- we will promote transparency in reporting performance by providers for tenants and local authorities (in their strategic role) in the areas they operate
- good governance is a universal principle and is essential to the quality of service delivery, financial robustness and value for money
- we want to promote effective forms of independent validation, audit and benchmarking of performance to encourage providers to improve continually and free the best from unnecessary red tape
- for the national service delivery standards, we will focus our resources in 2010-11 on identifying and addressing the worst performing providers, where tenants are being let down by their landlord's performance
- the standards framework must support the principle of sector led improvement. Where problems are identified the provider will usually be offered an opportunity for speedy self-improvement
- registration criteria should encourage new landlords into the social housing sector, consistent with our objectives in the 2008 Act

# Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

This standard will apply to all registered providers.

## Required outcomes

- 1. Customer service and choice –**  
Registered providers must design and deliver housing services that are readily available to tenants, offer them choices over the services they receive, and treat them with fairness and respect. They must understand their tenants' needs and use this information to design and deliver services and communicate with tenants. This must include taking into account equalities and provide for diversity and tenants with additional support needs.
- 2. Involvement and empowerment –**  
Registered providers will offer all tenants opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the opportunity to influence the formulation of housing related policies, the delivery of housing related services, and to scrutinise their performance. They must offer tenants support in order to build their capacity for involvement and empowerment so

that they can engage effectively with their provider.

- 3. Responding to complaints –**  
Registered providers must have a clearly explained and accessible procedure that ensures that complaints and feedback from tenants are dealt with promptly, courteously and fairly and that complaints and feedback inform policy development and improvements to service delivery.

## Particular requirements

- 1. Customer service and choice**
  - 1.1 Registered providers will be able to demonstrate they have arrangements for understanding their tenants, their views and their needs, and use this information to inform service delivery improvement against all the standards, including offering tenants choices in the services they receive. Registered providers should in particular have regard to equalities and diversity and tenants with additional support needs.

1.2 Registered providers will provide accommodation and housing services that incorporate choices that are designed to meet the diverse needs of their tenants.

1.3 Registered providers will provide tenants with accessible, comprehensive and timely information on:

- the standards of housing services that their tenants can expect to receive and how they are performing against those standards
- the choices available to tenants in relation to the provider's services including information on any additional costs that are relevant to specific choices
- how to access services and communicate with their provider

## **2. Involvement and empowerment**

2.1 Registered providers, having consulted their tenants, have in place arrangements that facilitate tenant involvement and empowerment that include:

- opportunities for tenants to be involved in the management of their homes and to influence

the strategic priorities of the registered provider, including in relation to the repairs programme and choice of main contractors

- how their tenants will measure and scrutinise the effectiveness of their involvement and empowerment policy
- how they provide support to enable tenants to build capacity for involvement and empowerment so that they can engage effectively with their provider
- these arrangements are published in an accessible way for their tenants

2.2 Following consultation with their tenants, registered providers will establish by no later than 1 April 2011 local standards in those service areas where the TSA has indicated that its national standards should be tailored with local standards where tenants want them. Local standards should include commitments on:

- local standards for performance
- how performance will be monitored and reported to tenants

- how tenants can be involved in scrutinising performance
- what happens if local standards are not met
- arrangements for reviewing the local standards on an annual basis

2.3 Registered providers will consult with their tenants on appropriate levels of tenant membership on their governing bodies or service delivery committees at least once every three years.

2.4 Registered providers offer tenants a range of opportunities to scrutinise their performance in relation to all the national standards.

2.5 Registered providers, where they are obliged by legislation to consult tenants about changes to their constitution (eg change of landlord) should clearly and impartially set out the options and the costs and benefits of the options.

2.6 Where a registered provider has consulted tenants pursuant to any of the standards, it should provide feedback on how it has taken these views into account.

### 3. Responding to complaints

3.1 Registered providers have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible to tenants and potential tenants. It should include a range of ways for tenants to express a complaint and include details of what to do if they are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint.

3.2 Registered providers will ensure that all complaints, comments and feedback are managed respectfully, objectively and promptly to service standards developed, agreed, and monitored with tenants and are resolved fairly and efficiently.

3.3 Registered providers will publish annually details of the number and nature of complaints received, the areas of business the complaints relate to, the outcome of the complaints and how they took these complaints into account in policy development and the design of service improvements.

# Home standard

This standard will apply to all registered providers.

## Required outcomes

### 1. Quality of accommodation –

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

### 2. 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 statutory requirements applicable to providers that provide for the health and safety of tenants in their homes.

established at the point at which the home was first built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded capital grant, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard.

1.2 Registered providers must meet the standard in 1.1 by 31 December 2010 and continue to maintain their homes to that standard. Where it is reasonable for a registered provider to have an extension to this date, the TSA may agree such a later date with the provider.

1.3 Registered providers must ensure their tenants have the opportunity to agree a local standard (in line with requirement 2.2 of the Involvement and Empowerment standard). The local standard should be no less than the standards required for meeting 1.1. In developing local standards, registered providers should have regard to Section 6 of the Government's Decent Homes guidance, and be able to demonstrate how they have ensured that tenants' views have been taken account of in relation to the standard and scope of work described in that section.

## Particular requirements

### 1. Quality of accommodation

1.1 Registered providers must ensure tenants' homes either meet the Decent Homes Standard set out in Section 5 of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance\*, or the standards of design and quality that were

## 2. Repairs and maintenance

- 2.1. Registered providers must have a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service which is designed with the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time, within published standards agreed with their tenants. This includes offering tenants opportunities for choice, for example about appointment times for carrying out repairs.
- 2.2. Registered providers must ensure a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance, demonstrating an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs and value for money. This includes responsive repairs, planned and capital work, work to empty properties, adaptations and cyclical works. It covers work to individual homes and communal areas.
- 2.3. Registered providers maintain compliance with all applicable legislation and regulations that establish requirements for the health and safety of the occupants of their homes.
- 2.4. Registered providers must ensure their tenants have the opportunity to agree a local standard (in line with the requirements of 2.2 of the Involvement and Empowerment standard).
- 2.5. Registered providers must provide tenants with clear information on the provider's responsibilities and the tenant's responsibilities. This includes providing accurate information about the progress of works.
- 2.6. Registered providers must co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets the needs of their tenants.

# Tenancy standard

This standard will apply to all registered providers apart from the rental element which only applies to not-for-profit and for-profit registered providers. Local authority landlords are currently subject to a different rental policy which has been set by the Government.

## Required outcomes

1. **Allocations** – Registered providers must let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way that takes 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, and have clear decision making and appeals processes.
2. **Rents** – Registered providers will charge rents in accordance with the objectives and framework set out in the Government's direction to the TSA of [X] October 2009.

3. **Tenure** – Registered providers must offer and issue the most secure form of tenure compatible with the purpose of the housing and sustainability of the community. They must meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements.

## Particular requirements

1. **Allocations**
  - 1.1 Registered providers co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing function and duties to meet identified local housing needs, including assistance in respect of local authorities' homelessness duties, and through honouring obligations in nominations agreements. They justify any decision not to participate in choice-based lettings schemes in areas where they own homes.
  - 1.2 Registered providers will develop and deliver services to address under-occupation and overcrowding in their homes, within the resources available to them, which meet the needs of, and offer choices to, their tenants.

- 1.3 Registered providers will provide access to clear and relevant advice to tenants wishing to move concerning their housing options. They will participate in mobility schemes and mutual exchange schemes where these are available.
- 1.4 Registered providers publish their allocations policies and outcomes and how this has made best use of available housing and contributed to sustainable communities. The published policies should include, where applicable, participation in common housing registers, common allocations policies and local lettings policies. They will clearly set out and be able to justify criteria which they adopt for excluding existing and potential tenants from consideration for allocations or mobility and mutual exchange schemes.
- 1.5 Registered providers will develop and deliver allocations processes to meet required (and agreed) standards of customer service and the needs of existing and potential tenants, including those with support needs and those who do not speak English as a first language.
- 1.6 Registered providers will work to ensure that the specific needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants with diverse needs are reflected in the choices available to them. This applies particularly to the development and operation of local lettings policies.
- 1.7 Registered providers must minimise the time that properties are empty between lets but in doing so must have regard to the circumstances of the tenants to whom those properties are offered.
- 1.8 Registered providers must record all lettings and sales in the Continuous Recording of Lettings system.
- 2. Rents**
- 2.1 Registered providers will ensure they meet the following requirements which derive from the Government's direction to the TSA of [X] October 2009 and published within Directions to the TSA, October 2009, CLG.
- 2.3 Where the application of the rents standard would cause registered providers to be unable to meet other standards, particularly in respect of financial viability, including the risk that a reduction in overall rental income causes them to risk failing to meet existing commitments such as banking or other lending covenants,

then the TSA may allow extensions to the period over which the requirements of the rent standard are met.

- 2.4 Registered providers must provide clear information to tenants that explains how their rent and any service charge is set, and how it is changed, including reference to the RPI benchmark to which annual changes to rents should be linked (except where rents are controlled under different legislation).

### **3. Tenure**

- 3.1 Registered providers must publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management and develop and provide services that will support tenants to maintain their tenancy agreement, therefore preventing unnecessary evictions, and how they will ensure that the home continues to be occupied by the tenant to whom the home is let.
- 3.2 Registered providers provide tenants with accessible, comprehensive and timely information on their responsibilities and those of their provider.

# Neighbourhood and community standard

This standard will apply to all registered providers.

## Required outcomes

1. **Neighbourhood management** – Registered providers will keep the common areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe, working in partnership with their tenants, other providers or public agencies where this is the most effective way of achieving this standard.
2. **Local area co-operation** – Registered providers will co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic well being in the areas in which their properties are located.
3. **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.

## Particular requirements

### 1. Neighbourhood management

- 1.1 Registered providers will consult with tenants in developing their policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhood (including any communal areas) associated with their homes, and where they have a responsibility for the condition of that environment. They must publish and implement this policy.
- 1.2 Registered providers ensure their tenants have the opportunity to agree a local standard (in line with the requirement 2.2 of the Involvement and Empowerment standard).

### 2. Local area co-operation

- 2.1 Registered providers will identify and publish the roles they are able to play within the areas where their properties are situated, and having regard to their presence and impact within these areas, co-operate with local strategic partnerships and local strategic housing authorities where they are able to assist them in achieving their objectives.

### **3. Anti-social behaviour and security**

- 3.1 Registered providers will develop and deliver services which are effective in achieving the core commitments of the Respect Standard for Housing Management.
- 3.2 Registered providers publish and implement a policy on how they work with relevant partners to tackle anti-social behaviour in areas where they own property.
- 3.3 Registered providers ensure their tenants have the opportunity to agree a local standard (in line with the requirement 2.2 of Involvement and Empowerment standard).

# Value for money standard

This standard will apply to all registered providers.

## Required outcomes

1. **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.

## Particular requirements

### 1. Value for money

- 1.1 Registered providers publish, as part of their communications with their tenants, information on at least an annual basis that demonstrates:

- how they have allocated and prioritised expenditure on different areas of housing services covered by the national standards and their local standards and other priorities such as investment in the supply of new social housing

- how they have ensured that it has secured value for money in that expenditure, how they have tested this, and the benefits that tenants can expect

- their expectations for future value for money improvements and how they have taken into account in these expectations improvements arising from asset management, income management, and procurement policies

- 1.2 Registered providers have arrangements for tenants to influence the services delivered and the cost of those services that result in service charges to tenants. Registered providers must ensure their tenants have the opportunity to agree a local standard (in line with the requirements of 2.2 of the Involvement and Empowerment standard).

- 1.3 Registered providers' governing bodies scrutinise the performance of the registered provider at least annually against this standard.

# Governance and financial viability standard

This standard will apply to all not-for-profit and for-profit providers. It will not apply to local authority providers as different arrangements exist for regulation of these areas across the wider range of local authority service provision.

## Required outcomes

1. **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

2. **Financial viability** – Registered providers must manage their resources effectively to ensure their viability is maintained.

## Particular requirements

### 1. Governance

- 1.1 Registered providers will adopt and comply with an appropriate code of governance, explain and justify to the TSA their rationale for their choice and explain areas of non-compliance with their chosen code.
- 1.2 Registered providers must establish and maintain clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for their board, Chair and Chief Executive. They must assess, at least annually, the effectiveness of these arrangements in meeting the required outcomes above.
- 1.3 Registered providers submit an annual return on an accurate and timely basis in a form determined by the TSA, which at present comprises the Regulatory and Statistical Return (and its successor the National Register of Social Housing).

1.4 Where a registered provider is within a wider group structure that is not regulated by the TSA, it ensures with its parent that nothing in their relationship will hinder the subsidiary's ability to meet all the national standards and the TSA's effective regulation of performance against these standards.

- financial forecasts are based on appropriate and reasonable assumptions
- planning sufficiently considers the financial implications of risks to the delivery of plans
- they monitor, report on and comply with their funders' financial covenants

## 2. Financial viability

2.1 Registered providers' ensure that:

- effective controls and procedures are in place to ensure security of assets and the proper use of public funds
- effective systems are in place to monitor and report delivery of their plans accurately
- the risks to delivery of financial plans are identified and effectively managed

2.2 Registered providers ensure that they have a robust and prudent business planning and control framework that ensures:

- there is access to sufficient liquidity at all times

2.3 Registered providers provide accurate and timely statutory and regulatory financial returns.

# Making a difference on the ground

So what will this new approach look like on the ground? Some social landlords are already embracing the opportunity to engage their tenants more fully in challenging what they do. Others have started work as part of our pilot programme to develop local standards with their tenants. There are lots of different ways of working effectively with residents to deliver better services. Here we outline some examples. These are not the only ways of engaging tenants effectively – but all share a commitment to real influence and choice.

## **Accord Housing Group: Finding new ways to reach out**

Imagine you get a text message from your landlord telling you how well it's doing at getting its empty homes back into use. But suppose you know that actually the organisation's performance isn't all it's cracked up to be – because you've seen two of its properties lying vacant for weeks just around the corner. That's just how text messaging could be used by residents to hold their landlords to account, says Accord Housing Group Chief Executive Chris Handy. "We need creative ways to engage people," he says. "These things can help residents to influence the way we deliver services, in what way and in what place. It's not just imposing our ideas on them, it's so they can influence and challenge and hold us to account.

If we send a text message to say we've cut our void costs and they see that's not the case in their own experience, they can challenge us."

Text messaging, social networking groups and video and photo diaries for tenants are just some of the innovative methods Accord is planning to develop as one of the pilots on local standards.

Tenant Louise Jones is already very involved in ensuring the group's performance is kept up to scratch, going out and about checking services against the standards they are supposed to meet. She's also helped train other tenants to ask the right questions. "People could say 'Oh yes, we do that,'" she says, "but we have got to see the proof."

"I do feel that I have real clout," she adds. "They haven't got residents involved just because they think it's what you do, they are listening to us and keeping in contact with us."

## **Bristol Housing Partnership: Fair access for all**

If you're a social tenant with disabilities in Bristol, getting your home adapted to your needs can be a postcode lottery. Some landlords in the city aim to fit adaptations within a couple of weeks, others might

take months. Some might put in up to £2,000 of their own money, others might apply for grant for even the most minor work.

Now that's set to change, thanks to a project by Bristol Housing Partnership to transform the way aids and adaptations services are delivered in the city.

The partnership, which involves Bristol Council and housing associations in the city, is one of the successful bidders for the TSA's local standards pilot programme.

Its project involves the city's landlords working with a steering group of tenants to produce clear service standards for everyone. "At present, tenants get different levels of service depending on which part of the city they live in and who their landlord is," says Oona Goldsworthy, Chief Executive of Bristol Community Housing Foundation, one of the associations involved in the project. "We want to do something which is meaningful and makes a real difference to tenants' lives. There will be more transparency, it might speed things up and we can be clearer about what we spend and what tenants should expect."

### **Salix Homes: Involving tenants on the ground**

Salix Homes's tenants knew what they wanted when they were asked to come up with a plan to monitor their landlord's services. Real bite. "If your scrutiny doesn't have teeth, then it's just pointless," says Salix tenant Colin Marchbank-Smith.

Colin is now chair of Salix's customer senate, a pioneering group of tenants tasked with holding the ALMO to account on its performance. The 13 'senators' have unfettered access to information from across the organisation, plus the right to mediation from the local council if the board does not agree with their recommendations. The senate, set up last year, has already reviewed Salix's contact centre service, making a number of recommendations that have resulted in positive change for tenants. It has also secured a new deal for minor adaptations for disabled tenants' homes.

"People can actually see outcomes for themselves," says Colin. "We have got people who have never been involved with their landlord before."

Alison Hill, Salix's Director of Improvement and Customer Service, says, "Our customers were given a blank sheet of paper. They wanted to move away from the traditional tenants' associations. Those are

all well and good but we all wanted something which could really hold us to account. They are really proud as we are of what they have been able to achieve.”

### **Wakefield & District Housing: Listening to local priorities**

Wakefield & District Housing tenant Colleen Adamson is an ambassador, tenants’ advocate and watchdog all rolled into one. She’s a tenant board member and she’s been heavily involved in Wakefield’s tenants’ champions programme, which encourages residents to act as the eyes and ears of the association in their patch. She’s also often out and about at the association’s community activities, speaking to other tenants.

“It’s talking to other tenants that encourages them,” she says. “You can say: ‘I helped to get that changed.’” The tenants’ champions scheme, she says, has really lifted community morale, because tenants can see issues they have raised are being acted on.

Tenants at Wakefield have a number of different ways of helping to improve their landlords’ performance, including acting as tenant inspectors and getting involved in the ‘community talkback’ scheme. That scheme encourages residents to set their own priorities for action each month, which the association

will then follow up. “We are actively going to them and saying, ‘What are your priorities?’” says Juliet Craven, Wakefield’s Corporate Services Director. “We feed those through to the frontline, chase for answers and publish what we are doing locally. It makes people see that we are listening and that they have a direct route in.”

All of this has contributed to a consistent rise in tenant satisfaction levels since Wakefield’s homes were transferred from the council more than four years ago.

Colleen Adamson has certainly seen a big shift. “When I first got involved, we couldn’t get our repairs done – nobody was listening,” she says. “It’s been a real change.”

### **West Kent Housing Association: Tenants shaping services**

When West Kent Housing Association asked its tenants about how often their grass should be cut, it was a bit surprised by the answer it received. Tenants wanted a better service – even though they knew full well it might cost them more. “It wasn’t what we expected when we started,” says Will Campbell-Wroe, Managing Director of the association’s community development charity.

Thanks to the tenant feedback, West Kent introduced an enhanced grounds maintenance service, which is being tried out for a year at no extra cost before residents will be asked again whether they want to pay a little bit more for the service.

That's just one example of how West Kent is opening itself up to the views of tenants.

The association, which was the first in the country to receive the top three-star rating from the housing inspectors, organises a whole host of community events through West Kent Extra. It sees these activities as a vital way of engaging those tenants who might be put off by more traditional forms of tenant involvement. "People who won't come to formal meetings will happily give their feedback when you are doing something positive in the community," says Will. "What you end up getting is a much broader spectrum of opinion and you start to pick up the key issues. On grounds maintenance for example we went through the formal route, but we also got feedback at play days."

Jim Fisher, chair of the Association of West Kent Tenants and Residents, says tenant activists and the association have worked hard to reach out to tenants. "There is a lot of youth work, which gives young people the chance to put their views. The people growing up now don't want to get involved in meetings and committees, but they will tell you what they think."

On the more formal side, Jim says West Kent is involving tenants in scrutinising its policies and performance as it moves into the new regulatory era. "They are listening," he says.

# Tenant Services Authority

## Working with landlords and tenants to improve the standard of service for tenants in England

### What can tenants expect in the future?

- A greater focus on the issues that matter most to them, such as repairs, tackling anti-social behaviour and affordable rents
- 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 partners
- A new, more mature relationship with their tenants and the regulator

- A fair and proportionate approach if their performance needs to improve

This publication provides a summary of some of the key messages of our full statutory consultation document. We have set out each of the TSA standards in full in this publication but more information on our approach, the use of our powers and the questions we are asking as part of this consultation can be found in the full document which is available on [www.tenantservicesauthority.org](http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org) or by telephoning our Customer Services team on 0845 230 7000 (option 1).

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