



Local Standard Pilot prospectus

July 2009



TSA

TENANT
SERVICES
AUTHORITY



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July 2009

Foreword

The TSA launched in December last year. Our aim is to work in partnership with tenants and landlords to improve the quality of services for existing and potential tenants in England. We launched the National Conversation in January and we published the results together with our draft regulatory framework discussion document in June.

The National Conversation confirmed that tenants' priorities vary from place to place. We believe that across the range of landlord services there is a need to define levels of service and expectations that should be a universal given irrespective of location. We also recognise that issues and priorities are not the same for all tenants across a region, across neighbouring local authorities or even within a local authority - each local community has their own needs and aspirations. We want to encourage landlords to take these differences into account and tailor some of their service delivery according to the priorities of their tenants. It is our expectation that these locally tailored 'offers' will always be over and above the national standards that every tenant should have a right to expect.

We are looking for landlords who can be at the forefront of shaping our emerging regulatory framework to pilot this approach. This is a chance for landlords to be ahead of the game and share with us their experience of delivering locally agreed standards before we 'turn on' the new framework in April 2010. This document sets out how you can do this and become a Local Standard Pilot. We look forward to working with you to share and develop best practice in the delivery of locally responsive services.

Peter Marsh
Chief Executive

Introduction to the Tenant Services Authority

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) became operational on 1st December 2008 as the new independent regulator charged with promoting and championing the interests of social housing tenants in England. The TSA has ten statutory objectives set out in the Housing and Regeneration Act. We summarise these under three main themes:

- To **champion** the needs and aspirations of both existing and future tenants and residents as well as building a detailed understanding of what they want from their housing and landlords
- To promote **choice** for tenants and providers of affordable homes; encouraging a growing and competitive market in exceptional management services, and publishing market defining research that will shape the future of affordable housing provision
- To **challenge** providers of affordable housing to meet and exceed the highest standards of organisational delivery through the establishment of a new standards framework that promotes choice and excellence whilst challenging mediocrity and complacency

Working in partnership

We are moving to a co-regulatory model which will see landlords, tenants and the TSA working in partnership to ensure high quality services across the sector. The TSA is working with tenants, landlords and other stakeholders to develop the regulatory framework and standard areas.

In January 2009 we launched the biggest ever consultation exercise, the first phase of which was centred on us gaining an in-depth understanding of what is most important to tenants. This is to be used to inform the development of the new regulatory framework for the sector.

During this first phase we received more than 25,000 completed questionnaires, held a number of regional events for tenants and landlords and engaged with local communities.

Taking into account feedback received so far, we have developed some early thoughts on the standards that we think should be set and the operation of the new regulatory system. On 9 June we launched a consultation document which sets out the full details of our early thinking on how regulation of social housing might work from April 2010.

We are seeking feedback on the content of this document and the closing date for this is 8 September 2009. Full details of the findings from the first phase, the discussion document and how to get involved in the next phase can be found at the National Conversation website www.nationalconversation.co.uk.

To deliver our mission we will set national standards that define an expectation of what every tenant in England should receive from their landlord. We want to build a framework that encourages landlords to set out their own offer over and above the national framework and design into that the different priorities of people in different places. We propose to encourage the setting of local standards in relation to service delivery and other standard areas. For local standards to be effective we believe landlords will need to demonstrate that their involvement and engagement approaches are robust so that tenants and landlords can work together to agree clear targets and robust accountability mechanisms.

Tenant Excellence

The TSA wants to identify and promote best practice landlord and tenant partnership working that can demonstrate a significant impact on tenants and the service they receive. We recognise that it is providers themselves that develop best practice and that many good landlords are already working closely with their tenants to design locally tailored services. We also recognise that other landlords are keen to start working in this way.

This is an invitation to work with the TSA in developing and shaping a co-regulatory approach and the new regulatory framework. We want to hear from landlords who can lead the way in co-regulation in the standard areas outlined below. Full details on each of these standard areas can be found in Annex 1. Full details of all standards areas can be found in the consultation document which can be found at: <http://www.nationalconversation.co.uk/getdoc/654d7073-c391-406b-8fb0-2c93ad7a561a/Discussion-paper.aspx>.

Theme	Standard area
Service offer to tenants	Quality of accommodation (decent homes) Tenant choice and customer service Repairs and maintenance Neighbourhood and estate management Anti social behaviour and security
Tenant empowerment and involvement	Tenant empowerment
The tenancy agreement	Allocations

Existing good work

We would like to invite those providers who are already working closely with their tenants on developing local standards in these areas to share their experience with us. Expressions of interest to do this should be forwarded via email to tef@tsa.gsx.gov.uk by 5pm on 5 August 2009. We will then liaise with individual providers to capture their best practice before the end of September so that it can be used to inform the statutory consultation phase of the National Conversation due to be launched in the autumn 2009.

Local Standard Pilots

We are also looking to establish a number of pilots to establish local standards by April 2010. These local standards will support driving up performance in a joint approach with tenants. Additional funding may be required by some landlords to facilitate this work and we will consider applications for up to £9,000 from the Tenant Excellence Fund. This is a revenue programme administered by the TSA to support the introduction of the new regulatory framework for social housing, with a particular focus on tenants. This is also part of the wider concept we have on supporting the improvement agenda.

We are deliberately not being prescriptive in what we mean by 'local' at this stage and we want to use the pilot approach to help us define what 'local' is. For some standards 'local' may mean tailoring services to a particular neighbourhood or estate, for others there may be a local authority-wide standard that providers might be willing to 'sign up' to. In other areas there may be standards that a provider wishes to adopt that are 'local' to their offer across a wider patch on a sub regional or regional basis. These examples are illustrative only. The TSA believes that these pilots will be key to understanding the practicalities of establishing, implementing and monitoring performance of local standards. Pilots will be central to developing best

practice to ensure that tenants can hold landlords to account for delivery of these standards.

We are looking for a cross-section of pilots which between them represent:

- cross-domain landlord types
 - Local Authorities
 - Arms Length Management Organisations
 - Housing Associations
 - Co-operatives/ Tenant Management Organisations
 - Multiple landlords in a local authority area
- a variety of landlord sizes
- a range of geographic locations
- a range of single and multi-landlord estates

As well as other key social housing interests including:

- vulnerable people
- BME communities
- urban locations (above 10,000 population²)
- rural locations (below 10,000 population)

² As defined by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

In order to effectively capture key learning, successful pilots will be asked to record, monitor and regularly feedback their progress as defined by the TSA. We are likely to require a minimum of:

- A report at the start of the project to include details of partnership working with tenants and how performance will be assessed and monitored
- An interim report in December 2009 to include details of how tenants are involved in establishing the local standards
- A further interim report in March 2010 which will include lessons learnt and progress in the setting of locally agreed standards
- Local standards in place by April 2010
- A final report later in 2010 which includes details of the impact of agreeing local standards and how the work can be replicated.

We would also expect the pilots to explore how locally set standards may be regulated, for example:

- How they could be reported to the regulator
- How the regulator will assess compliance to locally set standards
- How the regulator may become involved if
- landlords do not set local standards

- landlords do not seek to improve services for their tenants
- tenants and landlords cannot agree on local standards to be set
- The fit with existing local arrangements
- The level of tenant capacity building
- Tenant scrutiny

We will be looking to the pilots to identify ways of grading performance that will best enable tenant comparison across landlords using local standards so that they can easily assess performance.

Organisations wanting to be a TSA Local Standard Pilot must complete the application form and follow the instructions which can be found at www.tenantservicesauthority.org/tenantexcellence.

It is essential that tenants are engaged from the outset and partnership working and commitment from tenants, as well as robust mechanisms for continued engagement must be demonstrated in the application. Applicants must also clearly outline the intended impact the pilot will have on tenants and the service they receive from their landlords as well as how that will be measured.

Applicants may want to refer to the TSA funded guide *Driving up performance – producing*

effective local information which can be found at [http://www.housemark.co.uk/hmresour.nsf/lookup/DrivingupPerformance.pdf/\\$File/DrivingupPerformance.pdf](http://www.housemark.co.uk/hmresour.nsf/lookup/DrivingupPerformance.pdf/$File/DrivingupPerformance.pdf). This report looks at the practical implications of providing comparative data for tenants at a local level.

All pilot projects must have agreed standards in place by April 2010. The TSA will then be responsible for ensuring that the experiences of the pilots are shared across the sector and best practice is easily replicable.

Organisations wishing to carry out more than one pilot must submit separate applications for each one. Organisations can submit joint applications, and in fact this is encouraged where multi-landlord estates will be covered.

Criteria for assessment

As well as prioritising the applications to ensure a mix of projects to meet the cross-section outlined above we will be using the following criteria for assessment:

- Partnership working with tenants
- Approach to pilot
- Date for getting started
- Method of measuring impact
- How they fulfil obligations under Equality & Diversity

Bid process and timetable for pilots

Applications will only be accepted on the form available on our website at www.tenantservicesauthority.org/tenantexcellence.

The application form has a word limit and may not be accompanied by any additional materials. Applications that exceed the specified length and/or have further explanatory attachments will not be considered for funding.

Completed application forms must be submitted via email to tef@tsa.gsx.gov.uk and the deadline for applications is 5.00pm on Wednesday 5 August 2009.

Organisations that are successful in their application will be notified via email by 9 September 2009. Such organisations will also be required to enter into the TSA's standard form of grant agreement as a condition of receipt of grant funding.

Bidding calendar

Prospectus launched	1 July 2009
Submission deadline	5 August 2009
Assessment of applications will include a visit to some applicants. This will not impact the assessment of these applications but will further inform the overall process	Up to 2 September 2009
Applications approved and announcements made	9 September 2009

Next steps

You have an idea on how to implement a local standard which is supported by tenants and you believe that it would positively impact on the service provided to them



You are clear on how the impact of that local standard can be measured



You have a clear plan of how to implement the local standard (if it is not already in place) and know how much it will cost you



Go to our website at www.tenantservicesauthority.org/tenantexcellence to download and complete the application form



Submit your completed application form to tef@tsa.gsx.gov.uk by 5pm on Wednesday 5th August 2009. We will accept proposals by Special Delivery, subject to prior agreement by the TEF Programme Team who can be contacted at the above email address



After we have assessed all applications received by the deadline, we will contact all applicants to inform them of the outcome of their application by 9 September 2009

Contact information

The application form is available from our website
at:
www.tenantservicesauthority.org/tenantexcellence

and must be completed and submitted by 5.00pm
5 August to:
tef@tsa.gsx.gov.uk

If you have any queries regarding this bidding round
or prospectus, please contact the TEF Programme
team at the email above or phone our Enquiries
Team on 0845 230 7000.

Annex 1

Details of each of the standard areas (copied from the full consultation document which can be found at <http://www.nationalconversation.co.uk/getdoc/654d7073-c391-406b-8fb0-2c93ad7a561a/Discussion-paper.aspx>).

The service offer to tenants

These are the services that relate to tenants' day-to-day experience of living in their homes, whether they relate to the home itself, or to the neighbourhood where they live (and for which the landlord is mainly responsible). Each of the areas for a standard has been identified through the National Conversation as a service area that is important for tenants.

All of these national standards would apply to all social landlords. With some limits in respect of the quality of accommodation standard, we think that all of these standards should permit landlords and tenants to establish a service 'offer' that is tailored to the local area.

Quality of accommodation

Reason for proposing a standard

Tenants told us during the National Conversation that ensuring that homes are up to date and in a decent condition was a priority for them. In addition, the quality of accommodation standard will be subject to a direction by the government and sets out the condition that social housing should be maintained to.

A standard for the quality of accommodation is central to how all types of landlord provide social rented housing. Without any reference to the quality of housing, providers would not be obliged to make sure that the homes they provide meet any agreed or accepted benchmark of condition. This is relevant both to the day-to-day lives of tenants, and to the requirement to make sure that public subsidy provided to build that housing continues to maintain homes to the standards that would reasonably be expected by the government.

Objectives for the standard

Current government policy is that all social rented homes, with some specific and limited exceptions, should meet the government's Decent Homes Standard by December 2010, and should then continue to be maintained to that standard (and this would be the basic expression of TSA's national standard). On a case-by-case basis, landlords may be allowed more time to achieve that standard on the grounds set out in the current CLG guidance. The government's published Decent Homes Guidance is likely to be referred to in the direction, and it may be sensible to set it formally as a TSA Code of Practice. Our approach to enforcing compliance with this national standard will need to take account of the different funding regimes that are currently in place between housing associations and local authorities.

It is possible that local standards may be agreed that provide for quality of homes that goes beyond this definition. For instance, tenants and landlords have discussed with us their desire to improve further the environmental performance of existing homes. We know that there are times when the cost of environmental upgrades can be more than offset by reduced energy bills and we want to explore how best to encourage further debate in

this area. We also know that tenants would not always prioritise spend on the areas outlined in the Decent Homes Standard and there may be trade offs that need further discussion between the costs of internal improvements versus the costs of work to communal areas and outside spaces. In both of these cases we will need to consider the public funding implications, so that we do not create unreasonable additional public expenditure burdens either through additional Housing Benefit costs or requirements for direct capital subsidy.

The requirements for design standards of the Homes and Communities Agency for new homes (and prior to that, the requirements of the Housing Corporation) are generally higher than those established by the Decent Homes Standard, eg in relation to their energy efficiency and sustainability. It is our view that homes developed to higher standards should be maintained to reflect the expectations of government about the quality of design at the point at which funding was allocated for their development.

Tenant choice and customer service

Reason for proposing a standard

The promotion of choice for tenants and potential tenants is explicitly incorporated in the TSA's fundamental objectives. Choices can be at a number of levels:

- the type and level of services provided to tenants
- options on how to move into home ownership
- the management organisation

The tenant choice and customer service standard is concerned with choice in respect of the services provided by landlords.

By customer service, we mean the way in which landlords design and manage their organisation and their systems to provide services and information to their tenants.

Throughout the National Conversation, tenants repeatedly said that quality customer service was important and that they wanted a choice over the services offered by their landlord.

Objectives for the standard

The tenant choice and customer service standard is intended to make sure that tenants receive good quality customer service and are offered an appropriate degree of choice in respect of the housing services that their landlord provides.

To deliver an excellent service, landlords must understand and consult with their tenants, provide choice and deliver and evaluate services on the basis of those views and opinions. Choice should play a part in all aspects of service delivery and, more fundamentally, should determine what services and levels of service are provided. Clearly, the National Conversation has highlighted that greater choice on repairs and maintenance and design of homes is a priority for tenants.

The need to provide good customer service is important in all types of business, and what tenants expect is fundamentally the same as what customers would usually expect from most businesses. For this reason, we believe that there is an advantage to looking at work on developing customer service standards that has already been designed and implemented for similar types of business and service provider.

For example, the government has developed a standard for customer service excellence². It is designed to consider the whole customer experience and requires organisations to:

- identify, understand and consult with customers
- examine the culture of the organisation
- provide comprehensive information and access to customers
- focus on outcomes for customers and using their feedback to develop services and assess the timeliness and quality of service

Requiring, as part of the TSA national standard, that the Cabinet Office standard should be achieved would mean that large numbers of landlords would have to engage in extensive testing under the processes required. However, it is the achievement of the objectives that the standard tests rather than the test itself which is likely to be important to tenants. Whichever route we adopt, it is clear to us that commitment to good customer service will underpin the delivery of standards.

We would like to explore two options for encompassing choice and customer service in the standards:

² More information on this standard can be found at: <http://www.cse.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/homeCSE.do>

1. A single national standard, which promotes choice and customer service as a requirement that must underpin the delivery of all of the landlord's services to tenants. This single standard would guide landlords towards ensuring that these are an integral part of all activities being undertaken

2. To include specific elements of (and/or requirements for) choice and customer service through other standards and their associated Codes of Practice – as such there would be no stand-alone national standard on choice and customer service, instead choice would be incorporated into other standards such as repairs and maintenance, involvement, quality of accommodation, rents, allocations

If choice and customer service is provided for in a single standard, its objective might be expressed as:

“Landlords know and understand their tenants. Across the planning and delivery of all areas of housing services, an offer involving choice is made to tenants, either collectively or individually, based on engagement with tenants as specified in the standard on tenant empowerment. The evaluation and development of services is focused on outcomes for tenants.”

Alternatively, these basic principles might be expressed explicitly in each of the individual national standards or Codes of Practice within the 'service offer' theme, where it is reasonable to do so. The offer of choice may relate to overall provision or to the delivery of services within a location. It would be for the landlord (and the tenants) to determine where and on what basis it was appropriate to offer choice.

Repairs and maintenance

Reason for proposing a standard

Repairs and maintenance was the top priority arising from the National Conversation. Repairs and maintenance affects all tenants and all types of landlord. This is one of the most significant service areas for landlords and tenants, in terms of the cost of providing it, the challenges of delivering a good quality service and the impact it has on tenants' satisfaction generally with the service that their landlord provides.

Objectives for the standard

Historically, sets of requirements for social landlords and related sets of performance indicators focused

on a single categorisation of repairs (emergency, urgent and routine repairs) and the time periods that such repairs should be completed in. Many landlords continue to set targets and monitor their performance on this basis.

Although this has been the established approach, it has clearly not delivered for a large number of tenants a service that they think is of good quality. There are a number of reasons for this, perhaps the most important of which is that landlords' processes and systems are designed and managed with more focus on maximising their reported performance than on delivering a good service from tenants' perspective.

In addition, this approach effectively sets in part a specification which landlords use to procure repairs and maintenance services from contractors, limiting the extent to which they can innovate and collaborate (with contractors and with other landlords) to improve service quality and value for money. Tenants have told us that they want to see us set a national standard that requires the repair to be done at a time that is convenient for them, and for the repair to be done right first time. Overwhelmingly, it is the first issues of convenience and quality that matters far more than the 'top

down' performance indicator-driven priority-based approach.

On the basis of what tenants told us, we think that the objective for this standard might be expressed along the following lines:

“Landlords should design and deliver systems for repairing their tenants' homes, and maintaining them in good repair, so as to:

- ensure that repairs are done to a good standard in times that reflect the seriousness of the disrepair and its significance to the occupier
- minimise waste and inconvenience in the completion of the repair or maintenance work both to tenant and to landlord
- enables a prudent, planned approach to asset management which permits reasonable certainty in managing financial resources, particularly in the balance between planned and responsive maintenance”

This service area represents a significant proportion of the money that landlords spend, and the way in which the national standard is described must take this into account. We will, therefore, need to consider how to develop a Code of Practice which sufficiently describes how these objectives might

be balanced and delivered, given that landlords have a wide range of different types and distribution of homes, and organise, or have the potential to organise, the procurement of repairs in a very wide range of ways.

Supplementary local standards are clearly desirable, but the need to balance how much they vary locally with efficient procurement approaches will need to be taken account of and the impacts of local offers discussed and agreed with tenants. We recognise that this approach is likely to have significant implications for the comparability and specification of performance information compared to current arrangements.

Neighbourhood and estate management

Reason for proposing a standard

The servicing and maintenance of common and communal areas was a key issue raised in the National Conversation. This is also an important aspect of the standards framework which supports, among others, the TSA's fundamental objective to encourage landlords to contribute to the environmental, social and economic well-being

of the areas where the housing is situated. Most tenants tell us that they value the work done under the Decent Homes programme, but that a 'decent community' where people feel safe and secure matters too.

One of the reasons for this is that the way estate management is carried out is often linked to other issues of anti-social behaviour, such as dealing with graffiti, vandalism, litter and fly-tipping. Whilst the cause of these problems can be addressed through the type of measures that a standard on anti-social behaviour and security might address, landlords' approaches to estate management must also ensure that its consequences are well managed in order to provide a safe and clean neighbourhood.

Objectives for the standard

Neighbourhood and estate management covers all aspects of how landlords manage communal areas of housing estates and/or social housing – that is those parts of the property that they own and manage which extend beyond the immediate front door of their tenants' homes. This standard would

also deal with grounds maintenance and cleaning of communal areas.

The objectives for this national standard might be to “ensure that landlords manage their estates to standards agreed with tenants at a local level and which support the provision of a safe and clean neighbourhood for the tenants that live there”.

This national standard could be supported by a Code of Practice, and would need local agreement on the level and type of services provided.

Anti-social behaviour and security

Reason for proposing a standard

This relates to the ways in which landlords are meeting the expectations of their tenants to be able to live in a safe environment. During the National Conversation, tenants told us that safety and security were priorities for them. Taken together, safety, security in the neighbourhood and anti-social behaviour were the top three issues after repairs and maintenance that tenants wanted their landlords to pay attention to.

Objectives for the proposed standard

This national standard would apply to all types of landlord. However, the measures that landlords will need to agree with their tenants will be very variable at a local level, depending on the particular context. We would therefore expect this national standard to be subject to local offers developed in agreement with tenants.

The objective for the national standard might be to “ensure that providers take a comprehensive approach to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour and, that tenants feel that their landlords are taking action to deal with persistent nuisance”. Although achieving this objective will often be linked to the previous national standard on estate management, anti-social behaviour and security encompasses not just measures to manage the condition of estates and neighbourhoods effectively, but also, and more significantly, measures to manage and support tenants effectively.

This is not a straightforward area for setting national standards for landlords. There are shared and overlapping responsibilities for tackling anti-social behaviour, including with police and local authorities. Tenants can be perpetrators as well as victims of anti-social behaviour. In particular, we expect that

this national standard will need to be clear about how vulnerable tenants and potential tenants are supported at all stages of engagement with their landlord to enable them to sustain their tenancy.

Tenant empowerment and involvement

This group of national standards is intended to cover those aspects of landlords' work that describe how we expect them to show that they embed within their work, a culture and set of processes which make sure they involve and are accountable to their tenants.

In this context, our view of this group of national standards is that it sets out our requirement for landlords to commit to co-regulatory principles, which open themselves up to scrutiny by and accountability to their tenants. We believe that these standards are fundamental to the delivery of a shift of focus from the requirements of the regulator (or inspector) to the requirement of tenants. The more effective and representative these arrangements are, the less there should be for the TSA to do to intervene.

Tenant empowerment

Reason for proposing a standard

The National Conversation clearly indicated that many tenants want to be involved in decisions about their homes, and they want good communication from their landlord. Particular points are that:

- tenants want to be consulted by their landlords and involved in decisions about their homes
- tenants want high quality communication from their landlord
- proactive tenants are significantly less satisfied than other tenants
- tenants want genuine involvement and not a 'tick box' approach
- tenants want tenant involvement to be broad, not narrow, and empowering, not controlled

In addition, tenant involvement is an area on which the government has a power to direct the TSA in relation to standards, and intends shortly to consult on such a direction.

Objectives for the proposed standard

Subject to the direction by the Secretary of State, following consultation, we would expect requirements for this standard to be:

"Tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence:

- the formulation of their housing related policies
- the delivery of their housing related services
- that tenants are supported to develop and implement this empowerment"

From the TSA's perspective, we think this national standard is closely linked to the governance and accountability arrangements of all types of landlord, and therefore their governance arrangements under the proposed TSA governance standard. It is an essential part of a co-regulatory regime that landlords have worked with tenants in a way that makes sure they have made themselves accountable and responsive to tenants' views.

The objectives for this national standard might be:

- to set expectations of how tenants should be involved in influencing and monitoring the

scope and range of services received from their landlords

- to require landlords to engage meaningfully with tenants to empower them
- to set out how tenants can be involved in the management of their homes

There are many different ways in which landlords can meet these objectives in ways that reflect the different circumstances of landlords and their tenants, and we would not want to be overly prescriptive about how each landlord should meet the national standard. However, we would expect that landlords will, under this standard, have:

- established a clear approach, agreed with tenants, as to how they will involve them in influencing and monitoring service delivery at a local level
- agreed how and when local standards will be agreed and monitored
- developed and implemented arrangements for seeking the views of tenants which would operate both for seeking the views of individual tenants on their experience and wider scrutiny or tenant inspection arrangements, and demonstrated how they have modified and improved services to respond to those views

We think that this national standard should set specific requirements for providing information to tenants. Open and active provision to tenants of relevant information on service performance against standards at a local level is essential to empowering tenants and to achieving our objectives for a co-regulatory approach.

This means that we would require all landlords to provide the following information to their tenants at a local level ('local' for the purpose of this standard would mean, as a minimum, the local authority level):

- their performance on the two measures included within the National Indicator Set under the Local Performance Framework, which are measures of overall tenant satisfaction and the proportion of homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard (covered in the quality of accommodation standard)
- performance at a local level against local agreed standards within the TSA standards framework

We could specify the national standard so as to list a greater range of information, but we are mindful that for local authorities this would potentially run counter to our commitments to observe the principles of the Local Performance Framework. Here we draw a distinction between

the information that providers are required to collect to comply with this framework and the information that good landlords will be routinely collecting and sharing with their tenants. Where landlords, particularly local authority landlords, and their representative organisations agreed that a wider range of information should be made available to their tenants, perhaps responding to where tenants suggest they would like a wider range of information available to them, that would allow us to use this information without creating unreasonable additional burdens.

There is a practical issue that will need to be addressed with respect to tenant satisfaction measures. Although the definition of satisfaction as a measure is common across different types of social landlord, at present, these must be statistically valid overall for landlords, but for larger landlords with geographically dispersed homes, these measures will not always be valid at a local authority level to a degree that allows for reliable comparison with other local social housing landlords. We will need to agree the best way to capture tenant satisfaction in a representative way at the local level.

Changes to definitions of performance measures, and how these are collected, take time to introduce, and our approach to this national standard would reflect the need to develop a consistent set of definitions and data collection arrangements across all landlords that would not generate administrative burdens that are incompatible with our obligations and commitments in this area.

Allocations

Reason for proposing a standard

The national allocations standard relates to the way landlords let their homes.

Tenants said this was important to them during the first phase of the National Conversation. The way tenants and potential tenants get social housing is a fundamental issue for our regulation. This national standard should make sure that there is a transparent, fair and consistent approach by landlords to allocating lettings to the homes they provide.

Objectives for the proposed standard

We think the main objectives for the national standard in this area might be expressed along the following lines:

“Landlords should let their homes in a fair and clear way that:

- responds to the housing needs, aspirations and ambitions of tenants and potential tenants
- maximises choice and tenure and geographic mobility
- makes best use of the available housing
- contributes to sustainable communities
- has a strong decision-making and appeals process
- meets applicable legal requirements”

Allocations is an area where local issues of supply and demand, as well as other specific local issues could be allowed to play a part in deciding allocations criteria, and where agreement locally between social landlords and local authorities (in respect of their strategic housing function and duties) on how accommodation should be allocated is desirable and important for fairness and transparency within local areas.

We are mindful that there is a risk that the priorities for existing tenants and potential tenants may be different. In establishing local standards we would expect providers to work closely with local authorities in respect of their strategic housing function to make sure that a proper balance is struck in ensuring that the interests of different groups are incorporated in local offers.

It is clear, therefore, that this national standard has a bearing on the strategic function of local authorities, and, among other things, on the way in which choice-based lettings schemes are specified and operated.

Our offices

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London W1T 7BN

Fourth Floor
One Piccadilly Gardens
Manchester M1 1RG

For enquiries, contact us at:

Tel: 0845 230 7000

Fax: 0113 233 7101

Email: enquiries@tsa.gsx.gov.uk

Website: www.tenantservicesauthoriy.org

Local Standard Pilot Prospectus

July 2009

This is an invitation to work with the TSA in developing and shaping a co-regulatory approach and the new regulatory framework. We want to hear from landlords who can lead the way in co-regulation and help to shape this new approach.



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