

# Draft National Engagement Standards

November 2019





## Engagement 2019

The new Tpas National Engagement Standards reflect the renewed importance of the tenants' voice. We believe that words mean little but action is far more revealing of an organisation's intentions.

Our National Engagement Standards set the benchmark as they are directly derived from the views, desires and needs of our members.

The new National Engagement Standards reflect the operating environment of social housing providers post the Grenfell Tragedy. It considers the 2018 Green Paper, the subsequent reviews of the Consumer Standards of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) as well as the Hackitt Report of 2018.

The National Engagement Standards dovetail into our ***Excellence in Engagement Certificate***, which pulls together our experience of working alongside communities to meet challenges and so places us in a perfect position to reflect on what works well.

## Foreword

Over 30 years of engagement experience allows us to reflect honestly about the activities that are designed to engage with residents and local communities. Whilst we are aware that in some parts of the sector, good work exists and positive impacts are made, we also recognise that in large parts of the sector there is still more that could be done.

Now is the time to re-affirm some of the basics, celebrate positive outcomes from engagement, develop a more creative environment and share in the success that we know collaboration can deliver.

At Tpas, regardless of changes in funding or political focus, we will remain committed to encourage tenants, landlords and other partners of interest to work together. This pledge is what has carried us through all the years of lack of investment in engagement and reduced focus on the tenants' voice.

This brings us right up to date where now the political, moral and populist view is that tenant and community engagement should be a given. We always believed this to be the right things to do. What we can say is that we will continue to work with all in the sector to drive improvements and raise the level of engagement of all who have a right to be heard.

These National Engagement Standards are derived directly from listening to our tenant members, and can proudly declare that they are as a result of co-creation.



## Culture

Although there are standards to meet, it's the *behaviours and attitudes* which run through an organisation that set the foundation for positive outcomes to take place.

Without the right culture, meeting standards on a consistent and continuous basis can be challenging. For Tpas, those attitudes and behaviours are essential. Without them, the effort can be a waste of time and resources. We firmly believe that:

- A positive culture starts with the recognition and respect of the *co-regulatory role and place of residents* in the organisational governance arrangements.
- True *transparency* and willingness to *accept challenge* will increase trust and build relationships between tenants and Landlords.
- Unrestricted *information sharing* and *continuous learning* and development enables organisations to *respond positively* to its environment and the evolving needs of its tenants.
- Meeting the *diverse* needs of tenants, *removing barriers* be those physical, cultural or financial and providing information and documentation written in *plain language* without vague detail, is non-negotiable.
- Providing a *range of opportunities* to engage residents with *appropriate support* systems shows an *inclusive* behaviour which can increase outputs and lead to more *meaningful outcomes*.
- Acknowledgement of, and support for *community-led* and driven solutions are essential

The RSH stated in its review of Consumer Regulation 2018-19 that *'how registered providers engage with their tenants is often indicative of its culture and the quality of the governance.'* This link from the Consumer Standards to governance should be seen as a clear sign of intent, and give ample warning that systematically failing to meet the consumer standards could be at the detriment of a regulatory rating.

## Our Framework

We have created a framework for these National Engagement Standards around seven key themes and activities. Some of the themes are areas where involvement is vital to demonstrate a positive approach to co-regulation, and the activities things that just make really good sense. The term *residents* is used in the following section as a collective term to refer to tenants, leaseholders and, where appropriate, other relevant community stakeholders.



# National Engagement Standards for involvement

## Management & Responsibility

- There is a clear role for, and agreed with, residents in the management arrangements of the organisation
- There are clear routes for residents to challenge and hold the organisation to account on agreed standards for service delivery
- There is an obvious culture of respect of all residents
- There is an honest relationship between the organisation and its residents on areas for improvement
- The organisation regularly demonstrates to residents how it keeps them safe in their homes and communities
- The organisation creates alongside residents an appropriate Annual Report
- There is consistent, honest sharing of information with residents about the risks the organisation faces
- There is clear and obvious sharing of information about how the organisation is meeting key organisational and regulatory targets
- The organisation records and shares the outcomes and impact made from resident involvement

## Scrutiny

- Appropriate Scrutiny arrangements are agreed with residents with clear defined routes into the management arrangements and business planning procedures
- The organisation welcomes challenge from an independent tenant-led scrutiny process
- Scrutiny produces evidence based recommendations
- Scrutiny is designed to improve services, increase efficiency and provide robust challenge
- Scrutiny activity is provided with the financial and administrative support it needs to carry out its business
- Scrutiny is provided with all relevant performance, regulatory and legal information it needs to carry out its function
- Scrutiny has clear routes into wider engagement structures to support its overall aims

## Policy, Service & Strategic Development

- Residents are consistently engaged in the co-design, monitoring and review of policy, service and strategic development
- Residents are engaged as partners in a regular review of the organisation's engagement framework



- Residents are clear of the purpose of all engagement activities and their intended outcomes
- Impact assessments are completed for all policy, service delivery and strategic involvement activities to avoid negative outcomes
- A timeframe is agreed with residents to ensure that engagement activities provide sufficient time to hear and consider their views
- There is a clear mechanism for reporting back to residents how their views have been considered

### Complaints

- There is a clear, widely publicised complaints process designed with residents
- Residents are engaged in the complaints process and are part of its continuous learning and development
- Complaints drive change are documented, communicated and consistently publicised
- Complaints are encouraged and accepted as opportunities to learn
- Residents are engaged in routinely reviewing the complaints process

### Information

- Involved residents and recognised Panels are provided in timely fashion with all relevant information, to allow them to monitor and challenge how key objectives are being met
- Information is provided in a format, and using a range of methods, that reflects its audience
- Information is provided without jargon and acronyms, is clear and understandable with key points summarised
- Information is provided in a timeframe agreed with residents before any involvement activity

### Support for involvement

- Residents have been engaged in the discussion about the resources made available to support effective involvement
- There are sufficient finance and people in place to deliver effective involvement
- Engagement activities are regularly reviewed alongside residents to ensure they provide Value for Money
- There is a commitment to support people through timely advice, relevant training and where appropriate, effective mentoring
- There is a commitment to support residents to independently network and gain wider sector & policy information
- There are clear expectations and explanations of the role of residents & staff in all involvement activities
- All staff understand and can describe the business case for resident involvement

### Opportunities to engage

- There is an appropriate range of methods, developed from the knowledge and understanding of their residents, to encourage widespread involvement



- There is a commitment to identify and tackle the barriers to inclusive involvement
- Methods are used that suit the purposes of the involvement
- It is clear the role residents play in involvement activities with clear explanations of the time needed and their level of influence
- Residents have a role to play in the process of hiring services and staff
- Where local regeneration or major modernisation of property or community takes place, residents form part of the project planning, delivery and monitoring team
- There is a clear and obvious plan to support local community action where the impact will be positive for the communities in which organisations have residents
- Community Investment activities support locally prioritised action and provide opportunities to increase insight of resident and community priorities

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