



TENANT ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS

tpas

Tpas Contractor Resident Engagement Standards

Setting the Standard for
Effective Engagement





Contractor Engagement Standards

At Tpas we are proud of our heritage and experience of driving up the standard of resident engagement in the social housing sector.

Meaningful and effectively resourced resident engagement can make a significant improvement to the homes and services that social housing landlords provide, and the communities their residents live within.

Although contracting organisations do not have the same regulatory obligations to involve residents, we believe that by partnering with social housing landlords, they should adopt some corresponding behaviours.

This is even more important where the contractor delivers a major part of a Landlord's customer facing experience, say by delivering a responsive repairs service. That will call for a consistent set of behaviours and attitudes to help mitigate any issues, and provide that seamless experience that results in fewer negative experiences for residents and their landlord partners.

In essence, happier residents are more likely to be satisfied with work carried out, which results in less complaints for the landlord to deal with which produces improved efficiencies, increased effectiveness and longer-term relationships.

We are very aware of the great work contractors and DLOs carry out in local communities, further strengthened by the requirements of the **Social Value Act**, the **Better Social Housing Review**, the **Regulator for Social Housing (RSH)**, and the **Housing Ombudsman**.

While we understand that commercial organisations aim for sustainable growth, achieving this requires demonstrating their ability to be a partner of choice in a sector that now places greater emphasis on transparency and a willingness to hear the residents' voice.

Social housing landlords increasingly seek to partner with organisations that:

- Improve communication with tenants.
- Deliver consistently high-quality repairs.
- Embed resident feedback into service delivery.
- Leverage data to drive service improvements.
- Strengthen partnerships with housing providers.
- Demonstrate commitment to social value and community impact.
- Foster transparency and maintain accountability.

These attributes are essential for meeting the expectations outlined in recent reviews and for enhancing tenant trust and satisfaction.

In addition, landlords want to work with organisations that:

- Understand and respect their residents.
- Share similar beliefs, ethics, and behaviours.
- Can support them in meeting their regulatory and legal responsibilities.

We firmly believe that any organisation delivering face-to-face resident services should ensure that the residents receiving these services are able to influence them.

The impact of getting this right includes **continuous service improvement**, **reduced waste**, and **increased efficiency** – benefits that resonate across the entire sector.

The Ombudsman Perspective

As the Housing Ombudsman, I am privileged to contribute this foreword to Tpas' comprehensive publication on contractor standards in social housing.

The regulatory landscape for addressing complaints in this sector has undergone significant transformation, marked by the introduction of new powers for the Housing Ombudsman, designed to enhance accountability, transparency and learning. This includes the statutory Complaint Handling Code to ensure complaints are taken seriously and resolved earlier. It is paramount that residents' voices are heard and their concerns treated with respect, as these principles are the foundation of trust and quality in social housing.

To further this mission, it is essential we foster a collaborative partnership among all stakeholders housing providers, contractors, and residents alike – to proactively address issues and reduce the number of unresolved cases being escalated to the Ombudsman's service. I welcome these standards for effective engagement set out in this best practice. It makes important points about culture and communication, and I would urge landlords and their providers to make use of them.

Together, we can cultivate an environment where high standards and respect are the norms, ensuring a more responsive and fairer housing system for all.

Richard Blakeway,
Housing Ombudsman



The Role of Social Housing Landlords

The ability of contractors to meet these standards will largely be determined by the commitment and trust their social housing landlord partners have in them.

Without this we will probably never be able to achieve that seamless experience that exists when the three parties (landlords, residents and contractors) are aligned.

To this end we will be looking for landlords to take the lead and recognise that they may have to work a little more flexibly to truly create an environment of collaboration. This is a challenge we are prepared to drive, but landlords have to meet us halfway.



The Landlord Perspective

Effective and meaningful engagement with social housing customers is more important than it has ever been.

Expectations from customers around the services they receive have quite rightly increased and customer centric services are a key focus for social landlords. The relationship between landlord and customer must be balanced, and as a sector it is the minimum requirement that we get the basics of respect, transparency and accountability right, every time.

When our contractors are visiting our customers' homes or doing work within our communities, we want them to be displaying the same behaviours and respect that we expect from our colleagues. They may not be wearing the Aster badge, but they are representing us and that customer experience is an Aster customer experience, irrespective of who completes the work.

In 2023 we were delighted to achieve our accreditation having assessed ourselves against Tpas' National Engagement Standards. Those standards set an expectation of what "good" looks like from a landlord's perspective around customer engagement, and the Contractor Standards set a similar framework for those that work in partnership with landlords.

At Aster we have a framework in place for involving customers in our procurement activities. This framework demonstrates that we are committed to ensuring customers' needs and priorities are considered in current and future procurement activities and ensures we're partnering with organisations that have a similar culture and values to us. We are also driven to maximise the social value that we can deliver to our customers and communities in collaboration with those that we work with.



The sector has changed significantly in recent years and there is no hiding place for poor practices. The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 has led to a more strengthened and proactive regulatory regime where landlords must not only evidence that they have engaged with customers on key decisions, but they must also demonstrate how that engagement has impacted on decision making.

The Building Safety Act 2022 introduced legislation and a new Regulator that sets out how safety of homes is managed and documented to ensure accountability, and with the additional Housing Ombudsman powers to ensure appropriate remedy where there is failure from the landlord, it is more important than ever that social landlords and their partners are aligned in what social housing customers can expect and deserve.



Neil Kane
Head of Customer Voice
Aster Group

ASTER
GROUP

Culture

At Tpas we have long spoken about the role, the culture, of an organisation has on its ability to produce effective resident engagement outcomes. Without the right culture, it is difficult to create meaningful positive impact on people or place.

That cultural stance has to be embedded throughout the organisation for it to gain any traction. We have witnessed many positive engagement practices on the front line through

resident liaison staff, but it has to be more than that. Resident engagement has to be valued from an organisation's governance function, through its bid teams, strategic and operational management teams, site managers, and operatives. It truly has to be a team effort.

These standards can only produce long-term results if they are embraced and resourced appropriately. Each of the themes are fundamentally linked and dovetailed to support and contribute to the success of each other. In isolation each theme will have limited impact, and so we urge any organisation looking to utilise these standards, to consider their overall strategy to resident engagement to improve their chances of success.

This will require commitment. A commitment to understand and respond to the role resident engagement plays in the social housing sector.





Contractor Engagement Standards

These are our revised set of Contractor Standards. They have been created in a way to allow any organisation, regardless of their size, to demonstrate their commitment to effective and meaningful resident engagement.

These contractor standards have their DNA rooted in our National Tenant Engagement Standards, which we believe is a robust test of a Landlord's commitment to resident engagement. This will ensure that there is consistency and tangible links through to the social housing operating environment.

These standards also provide an opportunity for contractors to showcase their community investment ethos and social value impacts. We know that this is one area where contractors can add significant value to the places in which they operate.

There are quite rightly some differences between these standards and our tenant engagement standards, principally around governance and finances, but there are many similarities, particularly around communication, information and complaints.

Meeting the Standards

Within these standards there are elements that are purely organisational responses that set the culture in which resident engagement behaviours can exist. These are not restricted by any outside influences and as such should allow an organisation to demonstrate its strategic commitments.

We understand that, at times, commissioning landlords may for good reason, restrict the amount of exposure and engagement contractors can have with their residents. This will have a profound effect on the ability to meet some of these standards.

In those circumstances we would suggest that organisations consider how they meet the standards across the business, not an individual contract. This should allow them to demonstrate examples of their positive behaviours. Where an organisation cannot provide evidence, a display of understanding and solutions to meet the standard would be encouraging.



Our Themes

We have set out our standards under five broad themes. These themes are the areas in which we, and our members believe the most difference can be made, and where contractors have an opportunity to demonstrate their positive resident engagement culture. These standards also link to the National Engagement Standards.

1

Encourages Resident Engagement

This theme is all about the strategic and planned commitment to resident engagement. This looks to ensure that resident engagement is not just an operational activity, but that it has its foundations and feedback mechanisms linked to strategic oversight through a positive and embedded engagement culture.

2

Responds to Challenge

This theme looks to test the organisational approach to complaints and the desire to utilise the learning from complaints. This may require contracting organisations to adopt a new approach to listening and dealing with customer complaints that is strategic and collaborative.

3

Respects Residents

This theme is all about ensuring that the time, experiences and homes of residents are given due regard. This is about clear expectations for how and when residents are involved as well as making sure that there is a consistency where sub-contractors are being utilised.

4

Communicates Effectively

This theme is all about the quality, consistency and complexity of the organisational communications. It considers the inclusivity and appropriateness of communications while responding appropriately to the communities it works within.

5

Supports Local Communities

This theme looks to test the desire to work in localities and respond to their priorities by asking how an organisation plans its social value commitments and how it collaborates with the third sector.

In the following standards overleaf, the term 'organisation' refers to main contractors / DLO...



1 Encourages Resident Engagement (EE)	
Standard	Description
EE1	The organisation makes clear its commitment to supporting effective resident engagement and provides the required resources to deliver those commitments
EE2	The organisation facilitates or attends sessions with residents with direct lived experience of their services
EE3	The organisation uses appropriate resident engagement methodologies that reflect the insight of residents they are working with
EE4	The organisation can evidence how feedback from residents is fed into operational and strategic decision-making structures to embed continuous improvement
EE5	The organisation regularly publicises improvements made through its resident engagement activities
EE6	The organisation demonstrates its commitment to resident engagement through continuous formal training and networking to gather and share good practice



2 Responds to Challenge (RC)	
Standard	Description
RC1	The organisation has a clear, consistent and fair complaints process that is publically available showing information such as timescales and primary contacts
RC2	The organisation welcomes challenge, and uses complaints as a tool for improvements that has strategic level overview
RC3	The organisation internally promotes the learning from challenge to ensure that all staff can see the impact
RC4	The organisation has a clear process for ensuring compliance with the overarching approach to taking and responding constructively to feedback, and that the organisation involves residents who are engaged in training and and continuous learning, alongside staff and sub contractors
RC5	The organisation responds positively to contract specific requests by clients' formally engaged residents

3 Respects Residents (RR)	
Standard	Description
RR1	The organisation has a customer charter and monitoring process for how they, and their sub-contractors, will respect residents and their home
RR2	The organisation provides timely and relevant information and appropriate resources to all resident engagement groups it facilitates, to enable them to carry out their role
RR3	The organisation provides an appropriate level of appreciation for residents who get involved in any service improvement activities
RR4	The organisation can demonstrate that all staff and sub-contractors understand the impact of negative stereotyping, handling challenge and dealing with conflict as well as working with diverse residents with complex needs
RR5	The organisation and its employees demonstrate high regard for resident's health, safety and welfare whilst working in and around their home



Want to demonstrate that you've met the Contractor Resident Engagement Standards?

4 Communicates Effectively (CE)	
Standard	Description
CE1	The organisation uses a range of methodologies to increase understanding for residents for the scope of works in each contract
CE2	The organisation provides a clear and well-informed point of contact that residents can use to raise any queries to find early resolutions
CE3	The organisation identifies and tackles communications barriers and has solutions in place to support residents and contractors whose first language is not English
CE4	The organisation ensures that all communications are clear, accessible, relevant and appropriate to their diverse needs
CE5	The organisation uses appropriate information and communication channels that meet the needs of its / their client's residents
CE6	The organisation makes public through its website their commitment to deliver effective resident engagement

5 Supports Local Communities (SC)	
Standard	Description
SC1	The organisation has a clear and meaningful approach to engaging local groups and residents when working in communities that reflects the residents' profile and responds to their different needs
SC2	The organisation maximises its social value impacts by, where possible, supporting local community priorities to create long term lasting outcomes
SC3	The organisation has a clear methodology for measuring and sharing the value the organisation brings to the local communities it works within
SC4	The organisation has a clear process to provide its client with up to date information on experiences witnessed in their homes that may be harmful to a residents quality of life



We have a range of ways to support you on your journey to resident engagement excellence. Our services range from simple self-assessments, to more in-depth reviews and accreditation.

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