

Regulator of Social Housing's consultation on changes to the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard and Consumer Standards Code of Practice

Overview

Southern Housing is one of the largest housing providers in the UK with around 80,000 homes across London, the South East, the Isle of Wight and the Midlands, giving over 167,000 people somewhere affordable to call their own. As a registered provider of social housing, we're regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing.

The Regulator of Social Housing is consulting on Updates to the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard and its Code of Practice relating to competence and conduct and Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements. The Government has consulted on the competence and conduct and STAIRs requirements and published the outcome of the consultation. The Regulator has been directed by the Government to reflect these new requirements in the standards. It's also consulting on a new TSM on electrical safety checks, following new safety requirements for landlords.

We generally agree with the proposed changes to the TI&A Standard to reflect the Government's Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) but recommend adding further detail directly in the Standard about responsibilities for obtaining information held by third parties.

We also agree with the proposed changes to the Consumer Standards Code of Practice, while noting the STAIRs policy statement is broad and may lead to ambiguity in interpreting what information must be published.

However, we're concerned that ambiguities in the legislation underpinning the proposed Electrical Safety Checks TSM mean it will prove difficult to provide data for, and therefore the proposed TSM won't provide the meaningful insight to residents the Regulator intends. Before implementing a new TSM, this inconsistency should be resolved.

Our response to the proposed changes (online form)

Proposed amendment to the Transparency, Influence and Accountability (TIA) Standard, to reflect the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRS)

Question 1. Do you agree or disagree that the proposed change to the TI&A Standard accurately reflects the Government's STAIRS Direction to the Regulator?

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please provide comments if you wish to explain your response.

We're in general agreement with the proposed updates to the TI&A Standard in relation to STAIRS. The attached policy statement directly states:

2.9. If the relevant information is held by a body/person responsible for the management of the registered provider's social housing on behalf of the registered provider, the registered provider must use all reasonable endeavours to obtain the information and fulfil the tenant's request for relevant information.

We believe it would be clearer for users if this detail was provided in the TI&A Standard itself, instead of users being redirected to the policy statement for this information.

We also suggest a small change in the wording in the proposed TI&A standard at 1.7.1 copied below with suggested change **in bold**. This is to make explicit that we have a responsibility for the provision of information that may be held by contractors, managing agents etc who act on our behalf. It helps to highlight to these third parties that they have an indirect responsibility to cooperate with us in meeting this requirement.

*1.7.1 "Private registered providers must provide information to their tenants concerning the accommodation, facilities and services provided by them, **or on their behalf**, in connection with social housing..."*

Proposed amendments to the TI&A Standard to reflect the Competence and Conduct Direction

Question 2. Do you agree or disagree that the proposed changes to the Transparency, Influence and Accountability (TI&A) Standard accurately reflect the Government's Competence and Conduct Direction to the Regulator?

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please provide comments if you wish to explain your response.

No further comment provided.

Proposed amendments to the TI&A Standard related to Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Question 3. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to the specific expectations in the TI&A Standard for the TSMs?

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please provide comments if you wish to explain your response.

No further comment provided.

Proposed changes to the Consumer Standards Code of Practice

Question 4. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to the Code?

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please provide comments if you wish to explain your response.

The proposed wording for the Code of Practice summarises the STAIRs policy statement that was released in September. Unfortunately, the policy statement is deliberately wide in terms of the scope of information we're expected to produce in relation to guidance on the different classes of information listed in the publication scheme.

Some of the examples of information typically included for each class of information are quite broad and open to different interpretations e.g. "maintenance work", "use of service charge revenue", "tenant meeting minutes". Because they are so broad, they could cover very large volumes of material - potentially hundreds of individual documents.

So, while the Code lacks guidance on the different classes of information we could be expected to provide and is deliberately wide, it does reflect what is in the policy statement. The changes will be added to the TI&A Standard and Code of Practice from 1 October 2026 – in line with the deadline for PRPs to release their publication schemes. We'd be keen to see the Regulator support providers in the understanding and delivery by providing further guidance on the types of information we have to provide, reflected in the Code of Practice as and when we receive it.

Proposed Electrical Safety Checks TSM

Question 5. Do you agree or disagree that the proposed TSM will provide an appropriate level of information about landlord performance in carrying out required electrical safety checks?

- Agree
- **Disagree**
- Don't know

If you disagree, please explain and provide any alternative suggestions on the proposed TSM.

Southern Housing supports, in principle, the introduction of a Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) relating to electrical safety. Ensuring robust and transparent oversight of electrical safety in residents' homes is clearly in the public interest. However, we don't believe the proposed TSM, as currently drafted, will provide an appropriate or meaningful level of information about landlord performance, primarily because the underlying legislative requirements remain insufficiently defined.

The TSM is intended to reflect compliance with 'all required electrical safety checks'. But the *Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) (Amendment) (Extension to the Social Rented Sector) Regulations 2025* contains ambiguities, particularly around the definition of "relevant electrical equipment". This lack of clarity is already resulting in varied sector interpretations and legal advice being sought. Until the regulatory framework is unambiguous, any TSM linked to it risks producing inconsistent or misleading data across landlords.

Additionally, the Regulator has not yet released the final technical specification for the measure. At present, landlords cannot be confident about precisely what will need to be reported, how completeness will be defined, or how communal versus in-dwelling responsibilities will be distinguished. Without clarity on definitions, exclusions, and measurement rules, the TSM risks becoming an imprecise proxy for compliance rather than an accurate measure of performance.

We would support the introduction of an electrical safety TSM if the Regulator first provides a clear statutory definition of "relevant electrical equipment", aligned with landlords' actual responsibilities. The sector is also keen to see a detailed technical specification to enable consistent reporting.

Please tell us if you have any other comments on the electrical safety checks TSM.

While we support the principle of a TSM on electrical safety, we disagree that the current proposal will provide an appropriate level of information about landlord performance. A clearer regulatory foundation and a more precise specification are required before a TSM can meaningfully and fairly reflect landlords' duties and performance.

Impact assessments

Question 6. We want to explore whether there might be any regulatory impacts or impacts on people who share protected characteristics which we haven't thought about in relation to our proposed changes (within the scope of this consultation). Do you agree or disagree with our regulatory and equality impact considerations in Annex 5?

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't know

Please provide comments if you wish to explain your response and include anything else you think we should examine.

No further comment provided.