

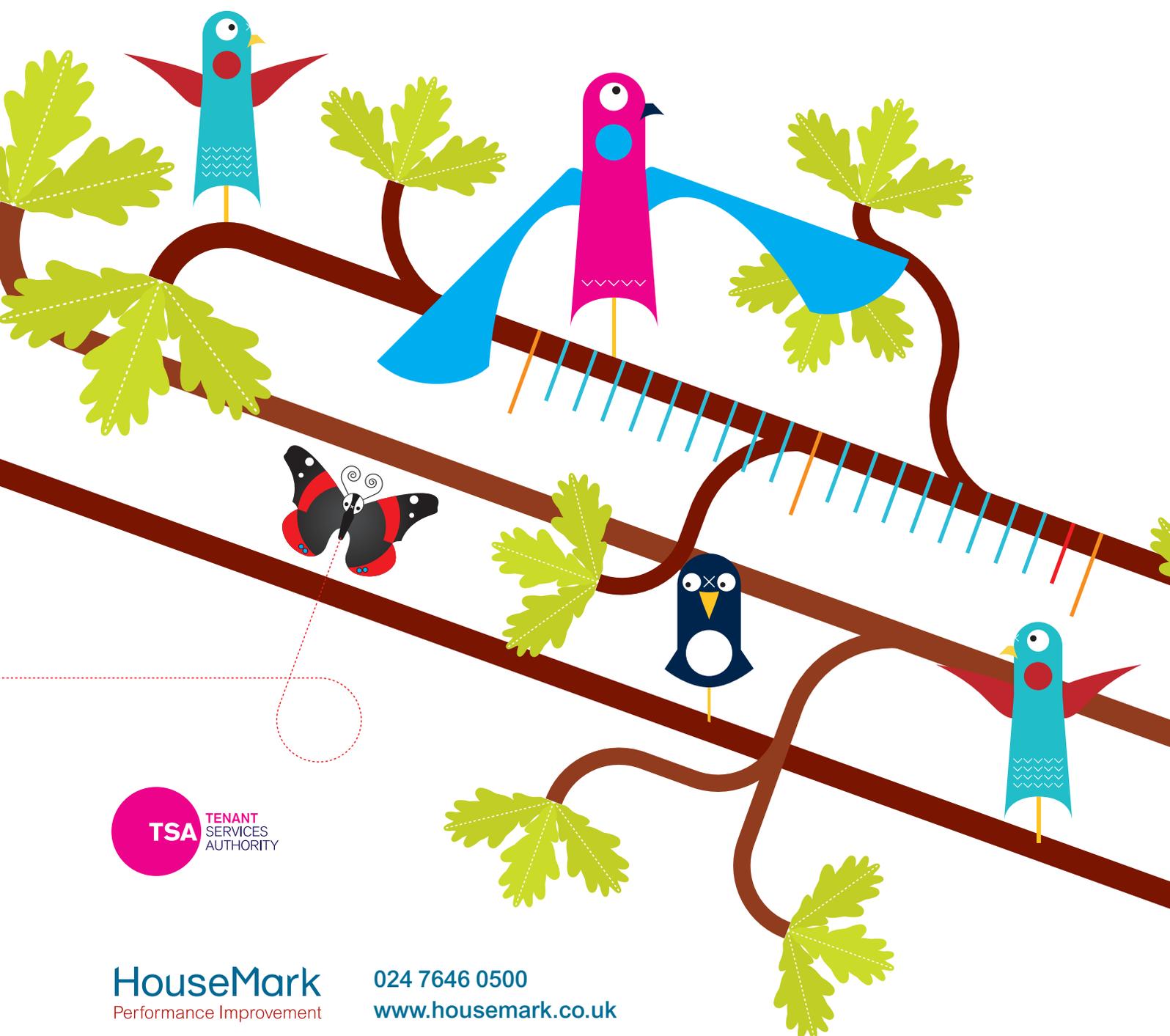


How to develop and monitor local performance measures

A guide for tenants and landlords

Second Edition September 2009

Marianne Hood and Steve Smedley



HouseMark
Performance Improvement

024 7646 0500
www.housemark.co.uk

Acknowledgements

This guidance is based on findings from a HouseMark project, supported by an Innovation and Good Practice grant from the Housing Corporation.





How to develop and monitor local performance measures

A guide for tenants and landlords

by **Marianne Hood and Steve Smedley**



HouseMark
Performance Improvement

Contents

Chapter 1:	About this guidance	5
Chapter 2:	Involving tenants in developing and monitoring performance measures	6
	Chapter 2.1: The opportunity	6
	Chapter 2.2: Succeeding	7
Chapter 3:	Developing and monitoring local performance measures: a suggested process	10
Chapter 4:	Conclusion	24
Appendices		
Appendix 1:	What we did and how	25
Appendix 2:	Services that matter most to tenants	26
Appendix 3:	Defining a good service from the tenant's perspective	28
Appendix 4:	Compendium of Performance Indicators	31
Appendix 5:	Presenting performance information – style guide	46
Appendix 6:	Jargon buster	49



Chapter 1:

About this guidance

This guidance was originally published in 2008, based on findings from a HouseMark project, supported by an Innovation and Good Practice grant from the Housing Corporation. Since then the Housing Corporation has ceased to exist – its regulatory role has passed to the Tenant Services Agency (TSA) whilst its funding role falls within the remit of the new Homes & Communities Agency (HCA). Both went live on 1st December 2008. Housing associations are already regulated by the TSA, and providing all goes to plan, local authority social housing (including ALMOs) will fall under its remit from April 2010.

At the time of revising this guide, the TSA, in conjunction with tenants and landlords, is in the process of forming the new regulatory framework, and crucially, the standards by which landlord performance will be judged. Fortunately, when we wrote the original guidance, we had a good sense of where regulation was going. Therefore this revision is ‘light touch’ and confined to reflecting the TSA’s early thinking on the regulatory framework and standards.

The primary aim of the project was to provide guidance to help social landlords and tenants develop customer focused local performance measures associated with core landlord services, against which standards can be set and performance monitored. This guidance, therefore, is particularly relevant to tenants and staff engaged in

establishing the ‘local deal’ and improving their approach to tenant scrutiny. These are key elements of the proposed regulatory framework¹. Essentially, the TSA’s aim is to complement national standards of service delivery with ‘local standards for landlords to tailor better their offer to tenants.’ In this guidance we suggest a stepped process that will help you establish what tenants want from their services, set service standards, consider how performance should be measured and reported and explore how tenant scrutiny may be embedded in the organisation’s performance and accountability framework. In other words, it guides the reader through the process of establishing ‘the deal’ and then monitoring its delivery.

¹ *Building a new regulatory framework*
<http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org/server/show/ConWebDoc.18499>



Chapter 2:

Involving tenants in developing and monitoring performance measures

2.1: The opportunity

Seeking to embed a customer focus in the way social landlords prioritise investment, shape services and make decisions is not a new concept. Increasingly, the better performing landlords are seeing this kind of approach as good business sense – a way to differentiate their services from those of other providers by ensuring resources are focused on the right things and that the services they provide are what tenants want.

Over recent years, this kind of 'meaningful involvement' and a focus on the tenant as an empowered consumer has received new impetus from the reviews and reports of the Tenant Involvement Commission², Hills³ and Cave⁴. Key players in the social housing sector have also lent their weight to this ideal:

“Making services and decisions accountable to, and contestable by, residents, and responding to the resident voice, are vital to achieving... excellence in housing.”

Chartered Institute of Housing, 2008

“Tenant empowerment is at the heart of the Government's drive to ensure that decent homes are available to all who rent from social housing landlords. Ministers expect tenants to have meaningful opportunities to participate in the day to day management of their properties and to be involved in their landlords' strategic decision making processes.”

Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007

“This group of national standards (tenant empowerment and involvement) is intended to cover... how we expect (landlords) 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... 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 intervene⁵.”
TSA, 2009

The objective of this level of involvement is essentially about the delivery of better services by ensuring that tenants are able to influence service design and hold their landlord to account for performance. This is particularly important for social housing tenants as, generally speaking, they are not able to take their custom elsewhere. The result is that tenants can find themselves captive customers of poorly performing landlords with limited powers of redress – an issue that the revised approach to regulation is seeking to address.

Involving tenants in developing and monitoring local performance measures directly contributes to this objective as the process enables tenants to:

- define what is important and express preferences about the shape of services, including the setting of standards
- monitor performance and hold the landlord to account

² *What tenants want*, Tenant Involvement Commission (2006)
<http://www.housing.org.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=434#2>

³ *Ends and means: the future roles of social housing in England*, CASE (2007)
http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/_new/publications/year.asp?pubyear=2007

⁴ *Every tenant matters: review of social housing regulation*, CLG (2007)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/everytenantmatters>

⁵ *Building a new regulatory framework*
<http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org/server/show/ConWebDoc.18499>

It is an opportunity, therefore, to embed customer-focus in the way the landlord behaves and operates and, as a consequence, deliver better services.

As suggested in the Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) work on 'resident-led self-regulation', although this level of involvement has been encouraged for some time, and promoted in the existing approach to regulation (eg the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs)), it is not commonplace in the sector.

The new approach to social housing regulation

As previously stated, at the time of revising this guidance, the new approach to social housing regulation is being developed. One of the aims is to minimise the regulatory burden in return for more responsive, customer-focused services. This requires a strong local approach to performance management, coupled with accountability to tenants.

The TSA is clear that those landlords who are prepared to embrace this kind of 'meaningful involvement' and customer focus will benefit from reduced regulatory attention as, in the true spirit of Cave's 'co-regulatory' vision, consumer power will increasingly drive landlord behaviour as opposed to the regulator. This presents landlords with a further opportunity – less regulatory 'interference.'

The CIH has thought further about the tenant role within the new regulatory framework in its work on 'resident-led self-regulation'.⁶ We have sought to complement that thinking, particularly around the concept of the role of a landlord-wide tenant 'Scrutiny Group' which serves as a hub for the landlord's various tenant involvement initiatives, and as the formal body that holds the landlord to account. We would encourage readers who are serious about embedding a customer-focused approach to familiarise themselves with CIH's work.

Your approach does not have to be based on the CIH model, nor indeed any particular model of tenant involvement. It should be about building an approach that is best for your organisation and that fits with, and can develop from, your existing tenant involvement structures. However, the concepts and principles discussed in 'resident-led self-regulation' will help you think through the key issues associated with empowered tenants holding the landlord to account.

2.2: Succeeding

To successfully embed customer-focused performance indicators in the landlord's approach to performance management and accountability structures, the following challenges and issues must be addressed.

Commitment from the top

The Board and senior management team need to back the endeavour with resources and genuine support. If not championed from the top, it will fail. For many organisations, this represents a real practical and cultural challenge. Some of the key decision-makers may have difficulty accepting the principles of meaningful involvement in organisational decision-making and being held to account by tenants. Winning them round will require skilful political management and persuasive argument.

Holding the landlord to account: building the confidence and capacity of tenants

Some tenants, in spite of their active involvement in a range of activities, have fairly low levels of confidence in their own capabilities. This is particularly the case with the interpretation of performance information. Bringing staff and tenants together to discuss ways to improve services and performance can help develop a shared understanding and sense of partnership, as well as improve tenants' confidence in their own skills and knowledge. This can be supported by joint training on monitoring and evaluating performance. Landlords need to identify the development needs of tenants and staff if they want to maximise input from tenants and provide appropriate staff support.

⁶ CIH has produced three briefings on this subject. The final one, *Leading the way: achieving resident-driven accountability and excellence*, CIH (2008) is particularly helpful in terms of exploring a model of tenant scrutiny and challenge: <http://www.cih.org/policy/LeadingTheWay.pdf>

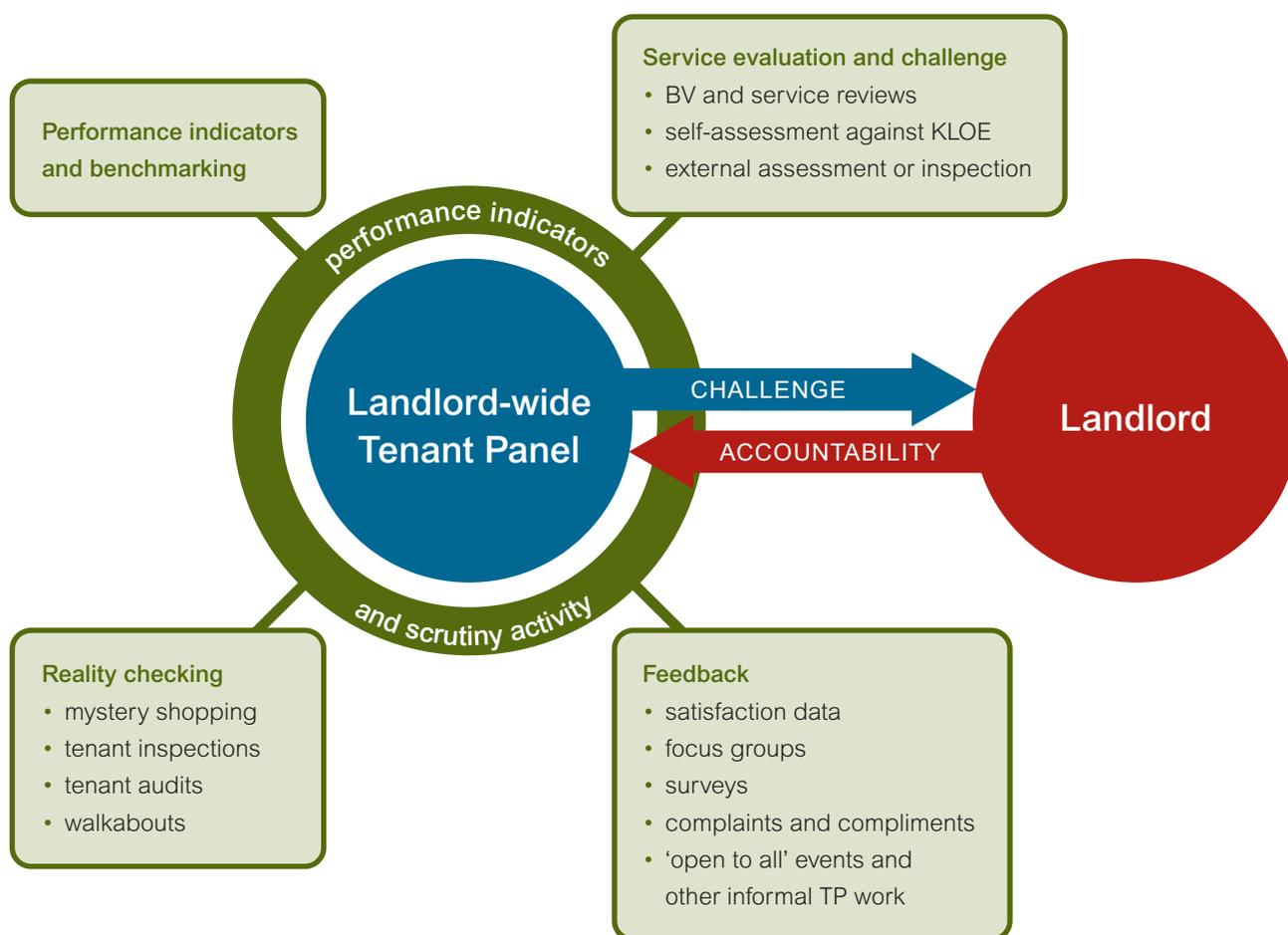
Avoid making an industry out of performance information

In making themselves more accountable to tenants, landlords run the risk of significantly increasing the burden associated with the production of local performance information and its scrutiny. There is a need, therefore, to ensure that the performance information underpinning local approaches to performance management passes the test of being used, useful and manageable to avoid information overload and so that effort does not transfer from service improvement to performance measurement.

Performance indicators as part of an overall approach to performance management

Performance indicators need to be complemented by other performance information and scrutiny activity such as the results of service reviews, mystery shopping, tenant inspections, tenant feedback mechanisms, etc (see diagram 1). Essentially, this is about having a good overall approach to performance management⁷ that draws on a range of information and scrutiny activity to accurately reflect the 'customer experience.'

Diagram 1: Performance indicators as part of an overall approach to performance information and scrutiny activity



⁷ There are many useful publications that will help you develop a robust approach to performance management including:
 Audit Commission publications: <http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk/performance/resource-publication.asp>
 IDeA performance management resources:
<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=76209>

Performance Data Collection: Good Practice Guide, Housing Corporation and HouseMark, 2003:
<http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/conWebDoc.2129>
Respect Standard for Housing Management: A Performance Improvement Toolkit for Landlords (Section B), CLG, 2007:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/landlordtoolkit>

We have adopted the term 'Landlord-wide Tenant Panel' here to refer to the landlord's existing arrangements that enable 'involved' tenants to hold the executive or Board to account for performance. Such practice is reasonably common and typically features a recognised group that has been established to represent the interests of all tenants. It is often complemented by a range of less formal techniques aimed at involving the wider tenant body such as consulting a consumer panel of tenants or ad hoc 'open for all' events.

Although it might be possible to establish a set of customer-focused measures without a Landlord-wide Tenant Panel (eg by consulting the wider body of tenants via focus groups and surveys - see Step 2 in Section 3), it is difficult to envisage a system of effective scrutiny, challenge and accountability without the involvement of the collective voice of tenants in this manner. However, it is important that the Panel does not become the sole means of involving tenants or an elite group, detached from the wider body of tenants.

The Landlord-wide Tenant Panel may be seen as the hub for the range of tenant involvement and scrutiny activity and the focal point for assessing performance and holding the landlord to account. The Panel is able to consider a broad range of performance information and as a consequence better understand the 'story' of performance (see right). Such a body of tenants is also able to develop a degree of expertise in understanding the social housing 'business.' This combination of having a deeper understanding of performance and the 'business' makes for more considered scrutiny and challenge.

Tenant scrutiny activity typically involves reality checking such as mystery shopping, tenant inspection and audits as well as monitoring performance indicators. Some of the scrutiny and service evaluation activity may be delegated to sub-groups that focus on specific service areas, and which are also involved in service reviews and improvement work (see Case Study 3). However, the Panel needs to maintain oversight, as it represents the focus of tenant power within the organisation (see Step 1 in Section 3).

The landlord and Landlord-wide Tenant Panel need to work together to:

- build up a 'story' of performance by interpreting the key messages from the performance information and scrutiny activity
 - based on the available information, reach an intelligent, balanced understanding of current service performance
 - identify where improvement action is required
 - avoiding getting bogged down with too much data, e.g. thick reports of bewildering tables, raw data and limited commentary
 - avoiding getting bogged down in analysing data

Officers have a key role here in ensuring that tenants are not inundated with too much information and that they are not expected to analyse raw data. Officers should analyse the data and present the results in an easy-to-understand format (see Findings 5 and 6).

It is the distilled results of data analysis that tenants should be exploring with the landlord in order to build up a story of performance.

- decide what action to take, bearing in mind the landlord's overall strategic objectives, service priorities and resource availability (which should of course be influenced by tenant input)
- take improvement action
- monitor the result



Chapter 3:

Developing and monitoring local performance measures: a suggested process

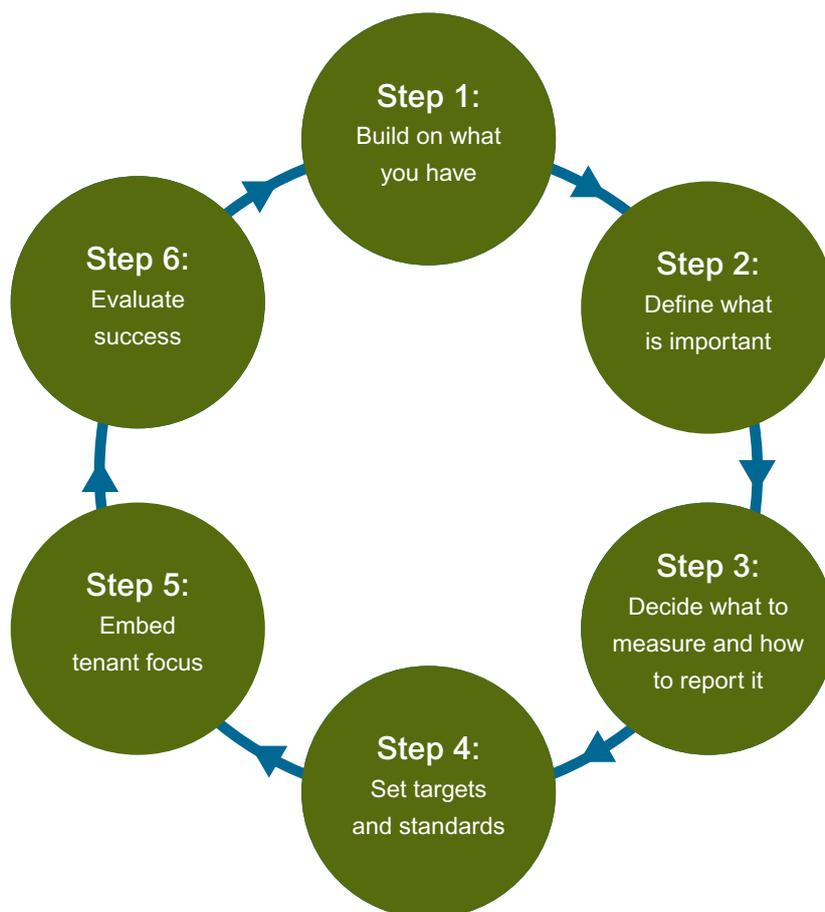
As previously indicated, this suggested process is aimed at landlord and tenants working together. In terms of the tenant input, it assumes the engagement of ‘involved tenants’, i.e. those tenants who are already involved in monitoring, evaluating and reviewing services. However, it is critical that the wider body of tenants is not overlooked. We have identified those stages in the process most suited to wider involvement.

We have used the term ‘Landlord-wide Tenant Panel’ throughout this section to refer to the landlord’s existing arrangements that enable ‘involved’ tenants to hold the executive or Board to account for performance (for more see Section 2.2: *Performance indicators as part of an overall approach to performance management*). It may be that tenants and landlords are not yet ready to adopt all of the principles associated with the full tenant scrutiny and challenge role, in which case a steady and incremental approach should be taken to build confidence and capability.

We have set out the key steps involved in diagram 2.

You should not necessarily view the various steps as being a clear cut sequence. We have simply tried to group certain actions together in a logical manner and order. Some issues will be ongoing, particularly around the setting up of the necessary infrastructure to support tenant scrutiny and challenge at Step 1. Similarly, although we have suggested setting targets and standards at Step 4, you will undoubtedly start dealing with this when you discuss ‘what is important’ at Step 2. The reason for us suggesting targets are revisited at Stage 4 is that you cannot set targets against performance indicators until you have decided what those performance indicators should be (Step 3).

Diagram 2: Developing and monitoring local performance measures: the process



Step 1: Build on what you have

This step is about preparing the ground for developing and monitoring local performance measures with tenants. The landlord and Landlord-wide Tenant Panel should work together to explore the extent to which the existing performance management and accountability structures need to be adapted to take on the scrutiny and challenge role. Again, this is not just about monitoring performance indicators, it is about the way in which the landlord is held to account by tenants and therefore should feature as a critical strand of the landlord's approach to improving tenant involvement (see Case Studies 1 and 2).

Having reviewed the existing arrangements, the work associated with developing the new performance management and accountability structures will need to start taking shape and is likely to be ongoing, e.g.:

- clarify who should be on the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel, how they get a place on the Panel and what their relationship is with the rest of the tenant involvement structure and wider body of tenants. It is absolutely

critical that the Panel serves as a hub for wider tenant involvement as suggested at Section 2.2 and avoids becoming an elite group, divorced from the wider tenant body.

- clarify the role of the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel and any sub-groups. For practical purposes, and to fit in with existing arrangements, the Panel may wish to delegate some of the work associated with developing and monitoring performance indicators to sub-groups that focus on specific service areas and which are also involved in service reviews and improvement work, e.g. Service Evaluation or Performance Groups (see Case Study 3). However, the Panel needs to maintain oversight, as it represents the focus of tenant power within the organisation.
- clarify the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel's (and sub-groups) relationship with the board
- clarify the extent and nature of Landlord-wide Tenant Panel's (and sub-groups) powers, including powers of redress
- agree dispute procedures

- agree support and servicing arrangements for the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel, ie training as well as managerial support and assistance, all of which has to be resourced. The Panel will not succeed without support and training.
- establish an appropriate monitoring forum, if none exists

This is a good opportunity to promote the tenants' role in improving services in general. As well as publicising the planned endeavour of a Landlord-wide Tenant Panel holding the landlord to account on behalf of tenants, it can encourage involvement from the wider tenant body via other mechanisms. As monitoring performance in a formal way does not appeal to all, it may offer the opportunity of a supporting role in areas of specific interest, eg as tenant

inspectors and auditors (including estate walkabouts), mystery shoppers, or as part of a focus group (see Case Studies 4 and 5). Increasingly, landlords are using tenant participation databases, such as 'TP Tracker' to identify:

- who wants to be involved
- their interests and availability
- how they want to be involved

Before starting the process of developing and monitoring performance indicators, the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel and staff involved need to understand the nature of the endeavour about to be embarked upon. This includes advance notice to those staff who will need to support the scrutiny and challenge role, eg performance management and tenant involvement staff.

Case study 1:

A comprehensive approach to involvement and scrutiny Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing

Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing (KNH) uses a long established tenant participation structure which draws on a range of mechanisms to ensure it has a comprehensive and accurate picture of the customer experience, including surveys, focus groups, estate inspections, mystery shoppers, tenant inspectors, and Tenant Talkback (a panel of tenants outside the formal tenant participation structure who provide feedback via postal questionnaires, telephone surveys or focus groups).

Formal arrangements for tenant input to service standards, decision-making and monitoring take place via:

- an Investment Conference to discuss spending priorities
- estate plans and manifestos to enable tenants to set specific local standards and targets to meet local priorities. The estate plans and manifestos are published and circulated to tenants.
- four Area Committees which receive quarterly reports from the Neighbourhood Offices in their area. The Area Committees monitor and review performance and report their findings into the governance structure for KNH (which includes Kirklees Federation of Tenants & Residents Associations (KFTRA), Senior Management Team and the Board). Each Neighbourhood Operations Manager presents a report which explains what has gone well and what has not, illustrated with four or five

key performance indicators agreed with tenants. The report also sets out planned remedial action.

Where an ongoing service issue has not been resolved by the Neighbourhood Operations Manager, tenant committees can:

- ask the Neighbourhood Operations Manager to investigate the problem and to produce an improvement plan for the next meeting
- recommend a change in policy or procedure that will prevent any recurrence
- refer the matter to KNH's Customer Services Panel who will conduct an independent investigation on their behalf

KFTRA have a defined and agreed role in scrutinising all aspects of KNH's services and performance and as a consequence make recommendations to the KNH Board.

Case study 2:

A comprehensive approach to involvement and scrutiny Derby Homes

Tenants are involved in 15 Community Panels with a remit that includes setting standards and monitoring performance and decision-making at local level.

Derby Association of Community Partners (DACP) serves as an umbrella organisation representing the 15 Community Panels. Each of the Panels and other member groups can elect three people to represent them at the DACP, although at least two must be Derby Homes tenants. DACP produces a quarterly newsletter for all tenants and meets ten times a year with the Director of Derby Homes and other senior officers. DACP has a formal service level agreement with Derby City Homes.

Other features of this approach:

- local service level agreements with input from tenants to service and performance standards and targets
- on-line surveys and discussion forums
- 'KidzTalk' - an innovative use of the internet to involve young people in the development and review of services. Very specific problems are posed via a 'blog' and there is a reward system to encourage input.

Case study 3:

Service Evaluation Groups LHA ASRA Group

LHA ASRA Group has developed an approach where tenants are recruited to form service-specific Service Evaluation Groups (SEGs). By interrogating its involvement database, it was possible for LHA to identify which services particular tenants are interested in and the extent to which they want to get involved.

Some tenants want to be fully involved in service evaluation and review whilst others are content to answer questionnaires, inspect or mystery shop specific elements of the service, eg estate standards, customer care, etc. The former are encouraged to become core SEG members, whilst the latter feed into the process of service evaluation and review with a vital 'reality check' on the

service. SEGs also receive other performance information to enable them to evaluate and review services which makes them ideally placed to agree and monitor PIs. The flexibility of the SEG model allow tenants to be as involved in monitoring services as they want to, in a way that suits them. SEGs are overseen by the landlord-wide tenant group, known as the 'Quality Circle' in LHA.

Case study 4:

A range of involvement options: routes to involvement West Kent Housing Association

Direct involvement

- West Kent Housing Association (HA) Board – up to one third of the Board are tenants
- West Kent Extra (WKE) Board - community charity that has taken on the community development work of West Kent HA (up to one third of the WKE Board are residents, including two tenant representatives)
- Association of West Kent Tenants and Residents (AWKTR) – representative body for tenants and leaseholders – scrutiny of West Kent HA services and advocacy on behalf of tenants
- tenant representatives – represent tenants in their areas to West Kent HA and AWKTR

Consultation and feedback

- Individual consultation – on issues that significantly affect tenants, eg new kitchen or bathroom design
- surveys and questionnaires – regarding specific services
- West Kent People – a database of those who want to have their say, in a way that suits them
- Youth Extra – consultation group for those aged between 11-18 years, including three youth action groups
- focus groups - for service reviews
- partnering groups - service planning, contract negotiation and monitoring for tendered services
- Development and Environment Consultation Group
- Service Performance, Monitoring and Control Groups
- Service User Consultation Groups - for older people and supported tenants who receive a service from West Kent HA
- Disability Forum
- Security Budget Sub-Committee - decides how budget is spent on improving security to West Kent HA homes
- residents and community groups
- support to community groups (Community Chest)
- tenant newsletter and other publications – includes tenant editorial group
- West Kent HA website
- complaints and compliments
- annual review of Resident Involvement Statement



Case study 5:

Tenant Audit Team Willow Park Housing Trust

Willow Park Housing Trust is working with a group of tenant volunteers to develop an in-house Tenant Auditor Team. They decided at an early stage that they wanted to delve much deeper into the Trust's services than simple mystery shopping. They opted to spend time and resources to develop a highly trained team of tenants that would carry out in-depth audits of the Trust's services.

They decided at an early stage that they wanted to delve much deeper into the Trust's services than simple mystery shopping. They opted to spend time and resources to develop a highly trained team of tenants that would carry out in-depth audits of the Trust's services.

Tenants were recruited through:

- advertisements in the quarterly newsletter
- the Customer Service Panels

A 'What's Involved' meeting outlined the aim of the project along with an indication of the level of commitment required.

The Tenant Auditors worked with officers to draw up a Code of Conduct and signed a Data Protection Act undertaking before they were allowed to undertake any audits.

The Trust took a slow and steady approach to training the Tenant Auditors over a period of some six months.

Training and information gathering included:

- equality and diversity training (external trainer)
- mystery shopping (external trainer)
- data protection (internal trainer)
- fact-finding visit to South Liverpool Housing
- visit to Willow Park's contact centre

Training is ongoing and before each exercise, the auditors are trained in the specific area on which they will be working.

The auditors are split into three teams of three so that each team can audit:

- different parts of the service simultaneously
- the same service independently of each other to test consistency amongst the audit teams

A management group oversees the project. It is made up of all departmental Heads of Service and two Tenant Auditors. It is this group which decides the service area to be audited and oversees the process.

The management group decided to start off with a very easy project – to visit and inspect Willow Park receptions. The auditors were given training on the Trust's customer charter and devised a simple check sheet to aid the inspection.

Tenant Auditors also conduct exit surveys with people using the Trust's offices. They do this every month, visiting each office on a rota basis. The Trust believes that the Tenant Auditors get a more objective and accurate picture of what tenants think about the service.

The initiative is still in its infancy but the Trust already sees the benefits as including:

- a cost effective way of monitoring and improving services
- building capacity within the community

Over time, the Trust hopes that the tenants involved may go on to become Tenant Board Members and use their insight and knowledge to provide effective leadership and challenge.

Step 2: Define what is important

This step is about reaching agreement about which services are the most important and which elements of those services are valued most by tenants, ie it is about understanding what the key outcomes should be and what the landlord needs to get right. It is an opportunity to engage with the wider body of tenants who may not be interested in getting involved in monitoring services but are keen to be consulted about the nature of service provision.

Before you start, there might be a need to ensure that tenants understand the range of services for which the landlord is responsible. It will help understanding if core landlord services (ie associated with the formal landlord/tenant relationship) are differentiated from non-core services (such as regeneration and housing plus type activities) which are delivered in partnership with other agencies. This will assist in managing expectations of what is possible, ie by differentiating what the landlord can directly control from those services or outcomes it can only influence.

The landlord and Landlord-wide Tenant Panel, drawing on the wider tenant involvement suggested below, should work together to agree what is important in terms of the services they receive:

- identify which services matter most to tenants (see Finding 1: *Services that matter most to tenants*). This may be achieved by holding a number of discussion sessions with the Panel. It is important to allow time to properly understand, discuss, summarise and agree the issues.
- identify the key elements of a good service in each service area (see Finding 2: *Key elements of a good service*). Having identified which services matter most, you can then look at what makes for a good service in any given service area. This is where the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel may wish to involve sub-groups (e.g. Service Evaluation or Performance Groups that focus on a specific service area and which are also involved in service reviews and improvement work). Again, this may be achieved by holding a number of discussion sessions.

In terms of identifying what matters most and the key elements of a good service, you should also look to engage the wider tenant body, e.g. via:

- newsletter articles
- surveys
- focus groups which reflect the diversity of residents

- 'open to all' events where tenants can identify what matters most or the key elements of a good service by, e.g. casting votes or placing stickers against key issues

The findings from such consultation should serve as the starting point for the landlord and Landlord-wide Tenant Panel discussion sessions described above. They should be complemented by other relevant information, e.g. service reviews, inspections and tenant feedback.

The facilitation of these sessions is very important in terms of lending credibility to the process. It requires knowledge of the services in question, the ability to distil and communicate the key issues, and a commitment to accurately reflect tenants' interests and act on the results.

You should note that this step is not simply about the process of setting performance indicators, it is about understanding what matters most and what a good service looks like from the tenant's perspective. In short, it will inform a customer-focused approach to service improvement generally. That is why this stage needs to be integrated with your overall approach to performance improvement. It will have also kick-started the debate about service standards, which is revisited at Step 4.

Your findings from this stage may well inform which services are prioritised for review, require immediate improvement action, and/or which get reality checked (e.g. tenant inspections, mystery shopping, etc).

Where there are specific issues affecting certain estates or neighbourhoods, there will be a need to engage actively with the tenants concerned, many of whom may not have been previously involved in a consultation exercise and may be 'hard-to-reach'. This might require, for instance, the recruitment to and setting up of local focus groups which reflect the diversity of tenants and/or 'open to all' events. By eliciting their views on problems and potential solutions, this could lead to the setting of some very bespoke performance indicators which aim to address specific local issues (see also Finding 7: *Location as performance driver: deciding at which geographical level you should set your indicator*).

Finding 1: Services that matter most to tenants

We asked our tenant focus groups which core landlord services mattered most. You might find our findings a useful starting point or as a trigger for discussion in terms of agreeing what your service priorities are.

We have grouped some services together as this best reflected how tenants perceived them, ie:

- allocations, lettings and empty properties
- setting rents and service charges, rent collection and payment methods, and action to prevent and tackle rent arrears

Top priorities

There was overall agreement about the top four service areas. This group represents a cluster of services where the top priority will vary depending upon local circumstances and issues:

- repairs
- preventing and tackling nuisance and anti-social behaviour
- customer care

- tenant consultation on matters that affect them, e.g. the nature of services provided

Other priorities

The next group of services should also be seen as a cluster where, once again, priority order will depend upon local circumstances:

- lettings and managing empty properties
- rents and service charges
- maintaining and improving the local environment, including caretaking, cleaning and grounds maintenance
- mainstreaming equality and diversity so that services are sensitive to diverse needs and discrimination is avoided

This finding is explored in more detail at Appendix 2: *Services that matter most to tenants*.

Finding 2: Key elements of a good service

We asked our tenant focus groups what they thought a good service looked like in each of the service areas set out at Finding 1.

A number of common themes were identified as applicable to any service area:

- good quality customer care, including good quality information and communication about the service area in question, so all parties understand respective responsibilities and what to expect
- good quality consultation and involvement in shaping the service
- awareness of, and meeting, specific tenants' needs (equality and diversity)
- value for money

To help 'unpack' any given service, there are four key questions that can assist:

- what is good/what do you like about the (e.g. repairs) service?

- what is not so good/what do you not like about the (e.g. repairs) service?
- is there anything we are not doing that you think we should?
- is there anything we are doing that you think we should not?

We have set out our findings in more detail at Appendix 3: *Defining a good service from the tenant's perspective*.

In conjunction with the Audit Commission's KLOEs, you might find it a useful starting point or trigger for discussion in terms of agreeing what are the most important elements of each service area.

Step 3: Decide what to measure and how to report it

Having decided what is important at Step 2, Step 3 is about deciding how to measure and report it.

The landlord and Landlord-wide Tenant Panel (and/or sub-groups) should work together to agree:

- what performance information is wanted (see Finding 3: *Performance information needs of tenants: Landlord-wide Tenant Panel -v- wider body of tenants* and Finding 4: *The type of performance information wanted*). This is the point in the process where performance indicators are selected and additional forms of performance information identified.
- how information should be presented (see Finding 5: *Understanding performance indicators* and Finding 6: *Presenting performance information: how it should look*)

- the level at which the indicator should be set (see Finding 7: *Location as performance driver: deciding at which geographical level you should set your indicator*)
- how much performance information is realistic in terms of time, resources and systems capacity:
 - start simply and modestly, then develop and improve over time – when starting out, it does not matter if it is not perfect
 - maintain the maxim, ‘is it used, useful and manageable?’ If adding to the overall information burden, consider dropping some of the existing requirement - is it all really needed?
- which indicators should be compared internally (e.g. across local offices) and externally (e.g. with other landlords)
- frequency of reporting to Landlord-wide Tenant Panel and wider body of tenants

Finding 3: Performance information needs of tenants: Landlord-wide Tenant Panel -v- wider body of tenants

Both landlords and our tenant focus groups agreed that essentially we have two different tenant audiences in terms of performance information:

- Landlord-wide Tenant Panel (and any delegated sub-groups), ie those involved in monitoring, evaluating and reviewing service performance
- the wider body of tenants

Landlord-wide Tenant Panel

Whilst it is important to guard against information overload, it was clear from our tenant focus groups that they felt they needed comprehensive information to fulfil the scrutiny and challenge role. This includes specific background information to enable them to ‘unpack’ the performance indicators. To make the most of this information, it needs to be pre-analysed by officers and presented in an easy-to-understand and accessible format (as discussed at Findings 5 and 6).

Wider tenant body

Participants in this project agreed that the wider body of tenants is generally not interested in getting involved in monitoring and evaluating landlord performance. These tenants simply want a good service when they need it and are happy to ‘let the landlord get on with it,’ providing they

get this good service. You should not confuse this point with the need to engage tenants in expressing preferences about the services they receive. There is a difference between being consulted on service provision and getting involved in monitoring and evaluating services.

However, in the interests of transparency and accountability, there will always be the need to publicise the landlord’s performance. This information needs to be relevant and intelligible to tenants who may not be as knowledgeable and experienced as the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel.

A neat way of dealing with this could be for the landlord and Landlord-wide Tenant Panel to work together on a brief ‘report card’ that sets out the ‘story’ of what is good and not so good, and what is being done about it. By doing this, both landlord and Landlord-wide Tenant Panel are able to provide a fuller and more accurate picture, which draws on the full range of performance information they have scrutinised.

In this way, it starts to take the shape of a considered joint self-assessment rather than what could be a misleading and unintelligible straight reporting of limited performance data to the uninitiated. The Landlord-wide

Tenant Panel should sign off the report card in conjunction with the landlord. The report card could include carefully chosen performance indicators that reflect the 'customer experience' (see Finding 4). However, the key point is that a list of performance indicators, even if carefully chosen and well-presented, is not enough; they must help illustrate a story and not be the story.

This kind of information could be provided on an annual basis as a:

- standalone A4 flyer/poster
- centrepiece feature in the newsletter
- designated web page

Finding 4: The type of performance information wanted

We asked our tenant focus groups what type of performance information is needed to properly understand performance and hold the landlord to account (e.g. as members of a Landlord-wide Tenant Panel).

The compendium of performance indicators at Appendix 4 reflects the kind of indicators they said they needed. Many of the indicators reflect service outputs or outcomes which help to measure the 'customer experience', eg percentage of jobs done right first time, satisfaction with the repairs service, etc. They are useful, therefore, in terms of telling you **how well** the service is performing from the perspective of the customer and also lend themselves to reporting to the wider body of tenants as part of the performance 'story' (see Finding 3).

The compendium also suggests background information our tenant focus groups thought would be useful to better understand **why** performance is the way it is, thereby facilitating informed scrutiny and challenge on the part of a Landlord-wide Tenant Panel (or delegated sub-group) and the starting point for improvement action.

The aim of the compendium is to provide a selection of indicators that tenants and landlords can 'pick 'n' mix' and map across to what they deem to be important (Step 2). Similarly, within the context of the new regulatory framework, these indicators are straightforward to map across to the TSA's standards. Many of these indicators lend themselves to making performance comparisons with other landlords – critical in terms of making judgements about how good the service is.

These indicators cannot be the end of the story – they will need to be communicated effectively (see Findings 5 and 6) and complemented by other information such as the results of service reviews, mystery shopping, tenant inspections, tenant feedback such as focus groups, surveys, complaints/compliments, etc (see Section 2.2

Performance indicators as part of an overall approach to performance management).

In the interests of equality and diversity, satisfaction data should be broken down by client type

Our tenant focus groups were keen to see satisfaction data broken down (disaggregated) by client type, e.g. BME, elders, younger people, disabled, etc. It is important that landlords understand the relative satisfaction levels of different client groups so that they can take targeted improvement action. Other performance data may be broken down in this way too to ensure transparency and equity, e.g. lettings information. This kind of disaggregation should extend to leaseholders too. You should note that satisfaction and perception measures can be significantly influenced by external factors over which landlords may have little control. For more on this we would point you to the research undertaken by Ipsos MORI in 2006 '*Frontiers of performance in housing.*'

Performance managing customer care

Our tenant focus groups felt that customer care was very important but that it is not necessarily seen as a service in its own right, rather an aspect of whichever service is being accessed, e.g. repairs, ASB, etc. Ideally, therefore, customer care performance should be reported as a facet of the various service areas. From a performance management perspective this is helpful as it isolates specific service areas where there might be a problem with customer care.

It was also felt that high level satisfaction questions such as *'generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your landlord deals with repairs and maintenance?'* may be helpful in terms of understanding overall comparative performance but they do not isolate which element of the customer experience is letting any given service down, ie they have limited use as performance improvement tools.

In order to improve performance, you need to 'unpack' the headline indicator. We suggest, therefore, that the kind of questions asked in STATUS (the standardised tenant satisfaction survey that regulators require most social landlords to undertake on a two or three-year cycle) that breakdown the 'customer experience' into its component parts, such as those for repairs (Q24) and general enquiries (Q12e and 18-21) could be adopted as real-time improvement tools, ie they become part of your regular monitoring and reporting arrangements.

Such questions can be applied to each service area to help pinpoint where things are going wrong, so that remedial action may be targeted to where it is needed. You do not need to restrict yourself to the STATUS questions, but rather use the concept of 'realtime' testing the customer experience by service area to develop your own approach. A number of landlords have been doing this for some time, eg by sending out survey forms, conducting exit surveys or using the call centre/repairs desk to contact a sample of recent service recipients with carefully considered pre-set questions. If it is not possible to target a sample of those who have used

any given service on a monthly basis, you should seek to undertake a representative sample of recent service users at least annually.

Mainstreaming choice

Tenants want choice wherever possible. Tenants are keen that landlords look at each service area and pose the question, "how can we offer choice here?" e.g. appointment slots, kitchen/bathroom components, fixtures and finishings, rent payment methods, etc. Our tenant focus groups felt that this was an aspect of the 'customer experience' worthy of measuring, i.e. how satisfied recent service recipients were with the choices on offer.

Mainstreaming the quality of information and communication

Similar to the point made above with regards to choice, tenants are keen that landlords look at each service area and pose the question "how can we improve information, communication and consultation on this service area?"

Again, our tenant focus groups felt that this was an aspect of the 'customer experience' worthy of measuring, i.e. how satisfied recent service recipients were with the information and communication associated with the service experience, e.g. how well informed did they feel from the literature provided and advice given by staff, did they know what to expect, were they kept informed where necessary, and did they feel listened to?

Finding 5: Understanding performance indicators

For tenants to get to grips with holding the landlord to account and use performance information intelligently they need to be clear about its purpose, context and the landlord's understanding of what is going on and what will happen next.

The critical point is that performance indicators without a 'story' are not helpful (see Finding 6 also). The following provides a basis for thinking through the presentation of performance indicators and the kind of explanation that should accompany it.

Purpose

- why is it a good performance indicator? What does it do?
- how should you use it? What are you looking for?
- should this performance indicator be clustered

- with others to obtain a rounded picture?
- is a high/low score good/bad?

Contextual story

What are the contextual or background issues that affect performance?

- geography, e.g. remote or dispersed stock
- stock profile, e.g. high proportion of flats
- demography, ie how the tenant profile might influence performance

- deprivation
- seasonal issues, eg how the weather might affect performance
- other local variables that affect performance
- whether other agreed priorities or objectives may impact on performance
- this could include secondary contextual performance indicators

Commentary

What is the manager's story behind good/bad performance?

- including reference to trends
- did anything unusual happen?
- is performance within tolerance? (i.e. acceptable normal fluctuation)
- how is it going to be improved?

Finding 6: Presenting performance information: how it should look

Presentation is key in terms of helping all players understand performance.

Many staff, as well as tenants, struggle to understand performance because they are deluged with pages of performance indicator tables and graphs with unintelligible labels and limited context and commentary that joins it all up (see Section 2: *Performance indicators as part of an overall approach to performance management*). They may be 'data rich' but they are 'information poor.'

Presentation to both the wider body of tenants and the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel, needs to be carefully considered and made as short and simple as possible – a story supported by carefully chosen charts and tables. Generally, charts work best, although tables can be helpful if simplified. In either case, as previously noted at Finding 3, they need to illustrate the message or story you are seeking to convey and not be the story.

We found that in terms of charts, bar charts worked best and were seen as being particularly useful for showing performance over time (trends or direction of travel) and comparisons with others (benchmarking). Some

tenants struggled more with pie charts. However, we would recommend that you persevere as they can be extremely useful to show how a whole amount of something (eg overall spend, the incidence of ASB, etc) breaks down into its component parts. These types of breakdowns were perceived by our tenant focus groups as being useful.

In terms of tables, we found that they can be greatly enhanced by introducing graphics, eg:

- traffic lights or smiley (or not so smiley) faces to show at a glance where performance is in relation to target – but note with traffic lights that some people have colour blindness, so here the solution could be to superimpose R, A, or G over the traffic light (for red, amber or green)
- performance compared to the previous score can be shown by arrows indicating upwards, downwards or static

We have set out some examples in our style guide at Appendix 5 and at Appendix 6 have provided a 'jargon buster' to help with the terminology associated with performance information.

Finding 7: Location as performance driver: deciding at which geographical level you should set your indicator

As already indicated there is a need to keep the amount of effort involved in collecting performance information manageable. Breaking data down (disaggregating) to geographical levels below that at which the landlord already collects needs careful thought.

Many housing associations collect performance information at a regional or a sub-regional office level

but cover numerous local authority areas. Breaking down key performance data to the local authority level is likely

to be difficult and time consuming, although there are associations which feel this is a necessary step in terms of ensuring the quality of their services and accountability to tenants, and see new technology as assisting them in this.

For local authorities and ALMOs, this is generally not an issue as their area of operation is tightly defined by the recognised local authority boundary. Many local authorities and ALMOs also disaggregate overall landlord performance down to the neighbourhood office or ward level. It is useful to have this level of disaggregation in order to understand performance at a very local level and allow comparisons between offices.

When discussing the issue of reporting performance indicators at a very local level with tenants and landlords, it became clear that it was felt necessary in specific circumstances. Firstly, is there a problem associated with a specific area? - ie does 'location' drive performance or the incidence of something?

If so, identify the nature of the driver, e.g.:

- poor local service provider serving a specific geographical area (eg estate management services, housing management team, repairs contractor, etc)
- high levels of disrepair, poor quality accommodation or poor environment
- unpopular area affecting void rate and transfer requests
- high incidence of ASB
- socio-economic problems and deprivation
- rural or dispersed stock

The nature of the driver determines the appropriate level of the indicator. For many issues, it will be at the estate/ neighbourhood level. But it need only be applied to those hotspots where there is an issue. This kind of targeting allows tenants and landlords to understand what is happening in a given estate/neighbourhood both in terms of the incidence of something and landlord performance in addressing issues, eg you would hope to see the incidence of ASB reduce as the landlord and partners address problems associated with a specific estate/neighbourhood.

Arguably, if location is not driving performance or the incidence of something, there is no need to disaggregate it.

It is interesting to note that many of the locational drivers above could be described as quality of life issues. These issues often extend beyond core landlord services and require 'joined up' solutions from a range of local service providers. This requires engagement with the wider body of tenants who generally do not get involved and may be hard to reach, e.g. by recruiting to and setting up local focus groups which reflect the diversity of tenants. By eliciting their views on problems and potential solutions, it could lead to the setting of very bespoke performance indicators which aim to address specific local issues. If this is the case, we would point you to *The importance of community owned performance indicators* – Amanda Beckles, Alison Ewart and Professor Richard Tomlins, 2006.

Step 4: Set targets and standards

Having decided what to measure at Step 3, Step 4 is about setting targets or standards against those measures.

The debate about targets and standards will have started at Step 2 as a natural consequence of agreeing what is important. We revisit it here.

The landlord and Landlord-wide Tenant Panel should work together to:

- identify those indicators against which a target can be set and agree a target as part of a mature debate reflecting:
 - associated costs and therefore what might not get done as a result of diverting resources
 - what is ambitious but realistic - it has to be possible
 - the lead in time for the landlord to adopt new practices and prepare staff
 - the performance of similar landlords

You should note that it may not be possible to set a target if you are using the indicator for the first time as you have no baseline performance score to refer to. This is where benchmarking data may well be useful, in terms of setting aspirational targets based on, for example, top quartile performance.

- Identify those other elements of a good service where an indicator may not be possible but a standard can be applied, eg a lettable standard, cleaning standard, code of conduct, etc. A decision will need to be made in terms of how much of this standard-setting work can be carried forward at any given time as it may well require substantial service development work, eg exploring good practice and delving deeper into tenant expectations. Once a standard has been set however, compliance with these standards can be measured or inspected and reported back to tenants.

Targets and standards may then be publicised to all tenants in the form of local service level agreements, 'tenant promises,' charters, etc, along with details about how to seek redress for failing to deliver against targets and standards.

Step 5: Embed tenant focus in the landlord's approach to performance

Step 5 is about ensuring the Board, executive and staff reflect the implications of the above steps in terms of their day to day activities and behaviour:

- new indicators will need to be set up within the landlord's monitoring arrangements – this may have significant implications in terms of staff time and the need to adapt and develop IT systems. In addition any background information to help the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel (or sub-groups) 'unpack' the performance indicators will need to be assembled.
- the timely production of intelligible performance information and associated analysis as discussed at Step 3 needs to be programmed into the routines of relevant staff. This also includes considerations around reporting to the wider body of tenants.
- acting on the performance information – improvement and remedial action agreed at the performance monitoring forum must be communicated to the appropriate staff, responsibility allocated, and where applicable, resources found
- responsibility for the correct functioning, support and on-going development of the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel (including sub-groups) and the associated performance monitoring forum should be allocated to an appropriate senior manager
- standards and targets will need to be communicated to staff and reflected in the way staff are performance managed, eg picked up in service plans, team and individual targets
- enhanced services or new practices may require the establishment of new procedures and training for staff
- ongoing joint tenant/staff information and training sessions – to help develop a common understanding of performance issues as well as consolidate a partnership approach to service improvement

Step 6: Evaluate success of approach

This final step is about ensuring that the approach is contributing to the desired outcome of delivering better services as a result of embedding customer-focus in the way the landlord behaves and operates. For example, does the approach:

- help establish tenant priorities in the landlord's approach to performance management and improvement, resulting in better performing services?
- help tenants monitor performance and hold the landlord to account?
- enhance accountability through tenant scrutiny and challenge?
- improve understanding on the part of landlords and tenants about the use of performance indicators?
- provide the opportunity to compare customer focused performance indicators across providers of social housing?
- enable landlords to demonstrate a customer focused approach to service delivery?

In short, what is the impact of this endeavour? Has it made a difference to tenants in terms of improved services?

The landlord and Landlord-wide Tenant Panel will need to evaluate the extent to which the above objectives have been met and what needs to be done to improve the approach. This will include considering:

- performance indicators – are they still focused on the right things?
- targets and standards – are they right? Do they need to be revised?
- are the indicators and targets driving performance improvement in the areas that tenants have said is important? Are there any unintended consequences associated with the indicators or targets, e.g. is there an over-focus on some activities to the detriment of others?
- performance information - can it be improved?
- scrutiny and challenge role - is it working as it should?

What are the blockages, e.g.:

- is the monitoring forum integrated into the landlord's performance management and accountability structures and functioning correctly?
- how can the Landlord-wide Tenant Panel's relationship with the landlord and wider tenant body be improved?
- is the scrutiny and challenge role supported in terms of commitment from the top of the organisation, training, and assistance from staff?



Chapter 4: Conclusion

The process of involving tenants in developing and monitoring performance measures is a means to an end – the goal is about ensuring better, more responsive services which tenants want. It is important to remember this to ensure that the process does not become an end in itself.

Developing such an approach is no easy endeavour, but neither does it need to be overly technical in terms of monitoring performance. When starting out, it does not have to be perfect, as over time you can improve your approach as you learn about what is right for your organisation. What is more important is that landlords and tenants start to work together in this fashion with the shared objective of service improvement.

The real challenges are those set out in Section 2 and are not confined to developing and monitoring performance measures:

- securing commitment from the top for the cultural and practical changes required to involve tenants in decision-making, scrutiny and challenge

- building the confidence and capacity of tenants so they are able to perform the scrutiny and challenge role and hold the landlord to account effectively
- avoiding getting bogged down in the production of performance information which serves no real purpose, overwhelms all of those involved, and simply shifts the effort from service improvement
- ensuring a good overall approach to performance management which draws on a range of performance information and scrutiny activity to accurately reflect the 'customer experience'

We hope this guidance helps in developing your approach to tenant scrutiny and challenge, and the delivery of better services.

Appendix 1: What we did and how – the method

Following a desktop exercise, which included an exploration of good practice and an analysis of the emerging regulatory regime, we consulted widely. Focus groups were held in the NorthWest, North East, Midlands, South East and SouthWest. An initial round of focus groups was held with tenants, followed by a series with landlords and then we went back to tenants again to check our understanding. Participants reflected both the housing association and local authority sectors. A list of contributing organisations is provided below.

The consultation included:

- what matters most to tenants - which services are most important and what are the key elements of a good service from the tenant's perspective
- the type of performance information needed to enable tenants to assess performance and to hold the organisation to account
- the best way to present performance data to enable easy understanding
- the kind of process that might enable tenants and landlords to develop and monitor performance indicators

The tenant focus group discussions drew on the knowledge and expertise of 'involved' tenants (i.e. those involved in scrutinising landlord performance and holding the executive/Board to account). Their contributions have been invaluable.

Our landlord focus groups also drew on the knowledge and expertise of staff who are clearly committed to improving services through the meaningful involvement of tenants.

We would like to thank all those tenants and staff who gave up their time to assist.

The project was guided by a Steering Group which comprised:

- Bernadette Fry - Audit Commission
- Cora Carter - TAROE
- Debbie Lerner - CIH
- Deborah Illott and Stuart Hill - Housing Corporation
- John Bryant and Helen Jeffery - National Housing Federation
- Phil Morgan - TPAS Ltd

We would also like to thank our Steering Group for their time and insight.

Attendees at tenant and landlord focus groups

Yorkshire and Humber and North East

Broadacres Housing Association
Coast & Country Housing
Erimus Housing
Hull City Council
Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing
Shoreline Housing Partnership
West North West Homes (Leeds)
Yorkshire Housing Association

North West

Adactus
Bolton at Home
Harvest Housing Group
Regenda
Willow Park Housing Association

Midlands

Castle Vale Housing Association
Derby Homes
Guinness Trust
Sandwell Homes
South Staffordshire Housing Association
South Warwickshire District Council
Trent and Dove Housing
Wrekin Housing Trust

London and South East

Federation of Islington Tenants' Associations
Cambridge Housing Trust
Homes for Haringey
Peabody Housing Trust
Raven Housing Trust
Stevenage Homes
Thames Valley Housing
West Kent Housing Association

South West

Devon and Cornwall Housing
Knightstone Housing
Merlin Housing Society
Somerset Housing Group
Western Challenge Housing Association

Appendix 2: Services that matter most to tenants

We asked tenants which core landlord services mattered most. You might find the following feedback a useful starting point or trigger for discussion in terms of agreeing what your service priorities are. As part of its consultation on social housing standards, the TSA engaged in a 'National Conversation'⁸ with tenants in 2009 which also sought to crystallise 'what tenants want.' It complements what we have set out here.

We have grouped some services together as this best reflected how tenants perceived them as service areas, i.e.:

- allocations, lettings and empty properties
- setting rents and service charges, rent collection and payment methods, and action to prevent and tackle rent arrears

Top priorities

There was overall agreement about the top four service areas. This group represents a cluster of services where the top priority will vary depending upon local circumstances and issues.

Repairs

This is a key service area because it is at the heart of the landlord/tenant relationship and the service that most tenants access, and most often. Our findings underline the Housing Corporation's 2004 findings that it is the single most important service area, so it follows that if you get this right, you are a long way down the track to giving tenants what they want. Tenants were particularly keen to point out that the provision of good quality information is especially important for this service area, so customers know what to expect.

Preventing and tackling nuisance and anti-social behaviour

Quite simply, where ASB and nuisance is a problem, it really impacts on the quality of life. If not addressed, this service failure is not just an inconvenience (as with, say, a bad repairs experience) but a threat to the well-being of individuals and communities. As with other quality of life issues, there is often a strong locational driver, i.e. the problem is associated with a geographically defined hotspot that requires targeted action (see Finding 7 *Location as performance driver: deciding at which geographical level you should set your indicator*).

Both tenants and landlords acknowledged that, whilst this is a top service priority, it depends upon input from other partners for a good service to be delivered.

Customer care

This includes general communication with tenants and overall provision of information, as well as staff performance in terms of courtesy, knowledge, empathy, reliability and responsiveness. Good quality information and communication was repeatedly identified as a top priority so that tenants know what is happening and what to expect.

Customer care is seen as being very important but is not necessarily seen as a service in its own right - rather an aspect of whichever service is being accessed, eg repairs, ASB, etc. Customer care is particularly important to tenants with a disability or who are vulnerable in some way.

Tenant consultation

Arguably this is not a service area; rather a means of obtaining input into decision-making and service provision. The tenants involved in this project said this was a top priority activity. This is perhaps not surprising as those consulted were primarily 'involved' tenants with an appetite for consultation and involvement.

Nevertheless, the point was made that although the majority of tenants may not wish to be involved in monitoring or managing the services, they do want to be consulted on matters that affect them, such as the nature of services provided, and their views should be taken into account when making decisions.

One of the reasons why this was cited as a top priority was the continuing perception that landlords fail to properly consult tenants from the earliest opportunity and fail to pay due attention to tenants' views and concerns.

Other priorities

The next group of services should also be seen as a cluster where, once again, priority order will depend upon local circumstances:

Lettings and managing empty properties

This was seen as one overall service where the various activities are all inter-linked.

⁸ <http://www.nationalconversation.co.uk/>

Most landlords confirmed that although they recognised this response from tenants, they had not thought about treating this as one complete service area for the purpose of reporting and monitoring performance. However, there was interest in doing this and support for trying such an approach.

Rents and service charges

This is another example of a service area where several activities are linked to give, from the tenants' perspective, one overall service. This includes setting rents and service charges (and judging value for money of rents and service charges), rent collection and payment methods, and action to prevent and tackle rent arrears.

Maintaining and improving the local environment

In terms of core landlord services, this is about caretaking, cleaning and grounds maintenance, as well as repairs to communal parts and environmental improvements. On estates and other locations where these services are critical to making the 'place' attractive, poor provision can really impact on quality of life and perception of the area. In such cases, for those affected, this service area gets promoted to the top priority list above.

The concept of local environment goes beyond core housing activities to include the provision of local amenities, regeneration work and 'housing plus' type activities where the landlord may often be working in partnership with others to 'shape places' and deliver well-being. This non-core activity is beyond the scope of this guidance, as it is the responsibility of the local authority in partnership with others to improve the well-being of its citizens, but for many tenants it is extremely important. So landlords must ensure they are active partners in such endeavours. Indeed, as with the discussion in the previous paragraph, these issues can have a direct bearing on one's quality of life to the extent that other issues do not seem so important. You should note that it is generally accepted that poor satisfaction with 'place' influences how tenants feel about their landlord even though the landlord might have limited influence over the forces shaping such perceptions.

Mainstreaming equalities and diversity

A strong sense of equity and consideration of the needs of various client groups, particularly the vulnerable, came across from the tenants taking part in our consultation. This came as a surprise to some landlords. Essentially it is about ensuring that in each service area, service provision is sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the various client groups and that nobody is discriminated against.

As suggested at Finding 4, there is a need to break down performance information, particularly satisfaction data, by key client group, eg BME, elders, young people, disabled, etc in order to assess the 'customer experience' from the perspective of different client groups. This of course requires the landlord to know who their tenants are in the first place, which requires a committed approach to customer profiling. Knowing who your customers are is the basis for the provision of choice and more personalised services. The best landlords are already doing this and incorporating the results in customer relationship management systems.

Appendix 3: Defining a good service from the tenant's perspective

The following findings are drawn from our tenant focus groups. In conjunction with the Audit Commission's KLOEs, you might find them a useful starting point or trigger for discussion in terms of agreeing what are the most important elements of each service area.

1. Definition of a good repair service

Information and communication

- making clear what tenants/ landlord are responsible for
- clear priority structure, eg emergencies differentiated from other repairs
- clear procedures for reporting repairs and clear details about appointments
- notifying tenants if appointments have to be delayed or cancelled by the contractor (and tenant expected to do likewise)
- making sure tenants know what is happening
- providing good quality information and feedback to tenants on service standards and performance against those standards
- knowledge (by everyone) of repair timescales and repairs procedure

Customer care

- certainty - turn up and do what was agreed at the agreed time
- convenience - choice over time slot, job done in one visit where possible and with no mess
- quality of contact, i.e.:
 - in reporting the repair:
 - politeness and competence of staff
 - ease of reporting, ie easy access and not expecting the tenant to be a technical expert
 - confidence in the system, ie that once a job has been reported there will be no need to chase up
 - in terms of operative (politeness, competence, no reworking necessary, no mess)
- efficient, responsive service for tenants
- good appointment system with choice for tenants, e.g. two-hour slots with penalties for contractor and tenant if either fail to keep the appointment

- choice of improvements, fixtures, fittings, finishing/decorations
- good out-of-hours service
- code of conduct for contractors – and making sure it is put into practice
- follow-up satisfaction surveys by post or phone to get feedback from tenants
- inspections carried out to check standards
- monitoring levels of tenant satisfaction with the service including information and communication

Value for money

- intelligent approach to maintaining the stock, focused on planned replacement
- getting the job done right, first time, without the need for follow-on work.⁹

Consultation and involvement

- consulting and involving tenants in setting 'standards' and prioritisation of repairs
- involving tenants in setting terms for contracts and in selecting contractors

Meeting specific needs (equality and diversity)

- up-to-date knowledge of who the customer is so that specific needs and preferences can be reflected in service delivery, eg a disabled customer may take some time to answer the door; a female customer may prefer not to be alone in the company of men

2. Definition of a good service to address anti-social behaviour and nuisance

Information and communication

- good quality information for tenants covering:
 - the nature of the service
 - descriptions of the various types of anti-social behaviour so that everybody can differentiate between serious criminal activities and less severe cases
 - what action can be taken and by whom (tenants need information about the role of other bodies/agencies)
- making clear what tenants/landlord are responsible for

⁹ Ideally operatives should have discretion to adapt job description if necessary to get the job done and even take the opportunity to proactively address any other quick jobs within the time slot.

- prompt feedback given to tenants about what is being done (and what can't be done) and ongoing communication about progress
- landlord picks up on local issues and has good local information to help solve problems

Customer care

- listen, respond in unbiased way and solve the problem
- quick response from all services
- seek to identify culprits, eg dumping rubbish, litter etc
- local housing staff who have strong links with council departments (refuse, cleansing, lighting etc), and other agencies to facilitate a joined-up response
- estates kept clean, safe and well-maintained with good lighting and fencing
- seeking high levels of satisfaction amongst different groups, eg BME, young, elderly, etc. Testing their perceptions of problems and effectiveness of action taken

Value for money

- evidence of learning from problems to develop preventative strategies
- good multi-agency working

Consulting and involving tenants

- estate inspections organised and carried out with tenants
- input from tenants to strategies to tackle problems
- wide range of techniques including focus groups to involve tenants

Meeting specific needs (equality and diversity)

- awareness of how different groups of people are affected by different problems
- prompt action over nuisance, anti-social behaviour etc., that is targeted at any specific sections of the community
- awareness of the needs of children and young people – and providing somewhere for children to play and also to be involved in the community
- high levels of satisfaction amongst children and tenants

3. Definition of good 'customer care'

As discussed at Finding 4, we found that tenants did not tend to look at 'customer care' as a service area in its own right. Instead it was identified as a feature of whichever service was being accessed. We have sought to reflect this in the compendium of performance indicators at Appendix 4 by differentiating between those customer care issues

that should be addressed within the context of any given service area and those that are more general, e.g.:

- addressing complaints
- accessibility of staff and general services

Our tenant focus group identified the following important customer care issues:

Information and communication

- listening to tenants
- good two-way communication
- providing good feedback

Customer care

- good, easy-to-use, complaints procedure, complaints handled effectively and re-dress for tenants
- transparency in the way complaints are handled
- mutual respect demonstrated
- making sure appointments are kept
- making sure all staff have training in responding to tenants in an appropriate way
- personalised responses to tenants (and staff identifying themselves)
- evidence available for tenants to show how the profile information they have provided is being used by their landlord
- phone answered politely, quickly and courteously – and any query/ problem is dealt with promptly
- provide choices where possible
- flexibility and responsiveness
- making sure promises are put into practice
- accessible services, accessible offices, easy access to officers and an 'out-of-hours' service

Consulting and involving tenants

- using questionnaires, focus groups and tenant 'mystery shoppers' to test services
- involving tenants in setting standards and assessing services
- involving tenants in developing questionnaires and surveys

Meeting specific needs (equality and diversity)

- no discrimination on any grounds of colour, sex or religion
- disabilities properly taken into account
- understanding of, and responsive to, how different groups of people are affected by different problems

4. Definition of a good lettings and empty property management service

Information and communication

- good quality information about the service (including policies and procedures) available to all tenants
- information about different housing options including shared ownership

Customer care/Customer focus

- good quality homes provided to all tenants
- help available for tenants who want to move
- properties inspected to a publicised lettable standard
- all facilities safe and in good working order
- properties carefully matched to tenants to stop tenancy turnover and help create sustainable communities
- choice of where to live

Value for money

- incentives to encourage tenants who are 'underoccupying' to move to smaller properties
- incentives to encourage tenants to keep their homes well maintained
- recovery of costs for any damage (and rent arrears)
- properties not left empty for too long (compared to average for best performers)
- tenants stay in the home for a good length of time
- avoid over-focus on how quickly empty homes are filled; instead ensure the home is suitable and the tenant wants to live there

Meeting specific needs (equality and diversity)

- good 'mapping' of the profile of the community, identification of different needs etc, and regular reviews to make sure needs are being met
- ensuring needs of tenants are promptly met for aids and adaptations
- help with decorating for tenants who cannot do decorating themselves
- high levels of satisfaction of different groups of tenants (BME, young, older, disabled etc) with:
 - the actual lettings process
- the suitability of the home - this has two strands:
 - assessing the suitability of a new let
 - assessing the extent to which those who have been housed for some time, in what might have been appropriate accommodation at the time, still feel that it is appropriate

5. Definition of a good rents and service charges service

Once again, as we have described above, this is a service that, from the tenant's perspective, includes setting rents and service charges (and making associated value for money judgements), rent collection and payment methods, and action to prevent and tackle rent arrears.

The key elements identified of a good service therefore include:

Information and communication

- clear information for tenants and leaseholders about what rents and service charges pay for
- good quality, accurate information to tenants and leaseholders about their rent account/service charge account
- intelligible statements regularly provided and available on request, and access to the account via the internet
- good quality information given to tenants and leaseholders about methods available for paying rent and service charges
- clear, regular information given to tenants and leaseholders about levels of arrears

Customer care/Customer focus

- correct information sent out to tenants and leaseholders at the outset
- affordable rents and service charges
- flexibility: wide variety and choice of payment methods available for tenants and leaseholders
- andlord listens to tenants and leaseholders
- money advice/debt counselling available and/or good 'sign-posting' to these services

Value for money

- information about rent levels and rental income levels and comparison with other landlords

Consulting and involving tenants

- involving tenants in setting rents and service charges
- use of estate inspections to check that services are being provided
- landlord tests tenants' and leaseholders' views and levels of satisfaction with all aspects of rent and service charge levels, methods for paying rent, action over rent arrears, and 'value for money'.

Appendix 4: Compendium of Performance Indicators

Purpose of the compendium

The aim of the compendium is to provide a selection of performance indicators (PIs) that tenants and landlords can 'pick 'n' mix' and map across to what they deem to be important (Step 2). Similarly, within the context of the new regulatory framework, these indicators are straightforward to map across to the TSA's standards. Many of the indicators therefore reflect service outputs or outcomes which help to measure the 'customer experience', e.g. percentage of jobs done right first time, satisfaction with the repairs service, etc. They are useful in terms of telling you **how well** the service is performing from the perspective of the customer and also lend themselves to being reported to the wider body of tenants as part of the performance 'story' (see Findings 3, 4, 5 and 6).

The compendium includes some indicators which are not particularly customer-focused but were felt by our tenant focus groups to be useful to better understand **why** performance is the way it is. Complemented by the background information we have listed below, the tenant focus groups felt that this additional information would enhance scrutiny and challenge. Much use has also been made of footnotes to further explain information needs.

You should note that we found that tenants were very keen to understand value for money, hence the inclusion of various cost measures associated with core activities.

Many of these indicators lend themselves to making performance comparisons with other landlords – critical in terms of making judgements about how good the service is. In terms of selecting the overall number of measures, remember the maxim, 'will it be used, useful and manageable?'

Do not get carried away with the possibilities, otherwise staff will spend all of their time measuring the service as opposed to making it better. Best to start modestly and keep focused on the priorities.

Please remember that the focus of this guidance is the 'customer experience' of core landlord services and not resident involvement. If you are looking for useful indicators that explore resident involvement, please refer to the HouseMark website where you will find details of the Resident Involvement Benchmarking service. Developed in conjunction with landlords and tenants, it includes many indicators that you should find helpful.

Wherever possible, we have drawn on existing indicators that many organisations might already be collecting, e.g. former regulatory indicators, STATUS, etc. This saves a great deal of time and effort in establishing new indicators and also allows for continuity and the possibility of benchmarking.

The compendium is not exhaustive and you may need to establish your own indicators from scratch. If you do this, you might wish to consider the following guidance:

- the Audit Commission has issued a number of useful free guides that explore performance measurement, which can be found on their website¹⁰
- *Performance Data Collection: Good Practice Guide* – Housing Corporation and HouseMark, 2003¹¹
- *The importance of community owned performance indicators* – Amanda Beckles, Alison Ewart and Professor Richard Tomlins, 2006

Note that satisfaction performance indicators in all sections lend themselves to disaggregation by client type, eg BME, elders, young people, disabled, etc. This facilitates an understanding of the 'customer experience' from the perspective of different groups of clients.

Satisfaction and perception measures can be significantly influenced by external factors over which landlords may have little control. For more on this we would point you to the research undertaken by Ipsos MORI in 2006 '*Frontiers of performance in housing.*'

If you think you have a really good indicator which should feature in this compendium, let HouseMark know and we will add it to our indicator library.

¹⁰ <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/resource-publication.asp>

¹¹ <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/conWebDoc.2129>

How the compendium is arranged

The compendium is arranged by service areas identified at Finding 1: Services that matter most to tenants.

Each indicator is followed by a source reference which points you in the direction of the body that currently collects that indicator and where you can find details of the full definition:

- **HM** – indicates that HouseMark collects this indicator and can therefore be compared to others if you wish. As discussed above, some might be discontinued (but useful) regulatory indicators that many landlords still collect for internal performance management reasons as well as for comparison purposes. Note for those who wish to dig deeper into performance measurement, HouseMark collects many more indicators than those shown here. If you need help with HouseMark indicators and your organisation subscribes to HouseMark, contact the Benchmarking Helpline on 024 7647 2707.
- **In development** – indicates that this is an indicator that tenants might want but there is no clear definition as yet. HouseMark intends to work on these in conjunction with the sector. If your organisation collects such an indicator, or something similar, HouseMark is keen to hear about it. Not all of these indicators may be suitable for benchmarking.
- **HCPI** – indicates that it is a current TSA indicator inherited from the Housing Corporation. As the TSA finalises its approach to data over 2009-10, these PIs might change.¹²
- **NI** – indicates that it is a current National Indicator which features in the new performance framework for local authorities¹³
- **STATUS** – indicates that it features on the current STATUS survey (2008)¹⁴. For brevity we have set out the general needs STATUS questions. STATUS also produces a variant questionnaire targeted at homeowners/ leaseholders. Many of its questions simply repeat that which is asked of tenants but you may wish to explore it for further ideas. Clearly it is good practice to understand the ‘customer experience’ from the leaseholder’s perspective.
- **BPSA** – indicates that it is collected by local authorities and ALMOs as part of the Business Plan Statistical Appendix submitted to CLG on an annual basis
- **AC/IDeA Local Library** – indicates that it features in the Audit Commission and IDeA’s Library of Local Performance Indicators¹⁵
- **TIC** – indicates this was an issue picked up in the work of the Tenant Involvement Commission, and noted in What tenants want which was published in 2006¹⁶. The Commission was set up by the National Housing Federation to look at how associations can deliver the best results for tenants.

¹² <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/nav.2252?PHPSESSID=f8b0e37c2b0ac5a6b312ed1f653ca9ed>

¹³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/nationalindicators/>

¹⁴ <http://www.housing.org.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=291&mid=1033&ctl=Details&ArticleID=717>

¹⁵ <http://www.local-pi-library.gov.uk/index.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.housing.org.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=434#2>

1. Responsive repairs

Suggested PIs	PI Source
Cost Measures	
Total major works and cyclical maintenance costs (planned repairs) as a percentage of total repairs costs ¹⁷	HM
Total cost per property of responsive repairs (client-side costs) ¹⁸	HM
Basket of common repairs	HM
(Hard) Performance Measures¹⁹	
Average number of responsive repairs orders per property ²⁰	HM
Number of recharges made to tenants and percentage recovered ²¹	In development
Appointments kept as a percentage of response repairs appointments made	HM
Percentage of response repairs where an appointment was cancelled by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the contractor • the tenant 	In development
Percentage of aborted calls	In development
Percentage of repairs done right first time	In development

¹⁷ This is a useful value for money (VFM) measure as it is generally held that your overall repairs spend should be weighted to planned works. The BPSA at Section D 26-28 seeks to do a similar measure but bases the planned/responsive split on minor repairs/routine maintenance (revenue spend). Note also that many tenants are interested in understanding the extent to which repetitive failures of specific components are picked up by landlords through the intelligent use of repairs data and included in planned maintenance programmes. There probably is not a PI that neatly does this but the landlord might be able to provide other useful information, eg report on high numbers of jobs for specific components, provide an explanation and whether it is to be picked up in a planned maintenance programme.

¹⁸ By collecting client-side costs only (ie the cost to the landlord of organising the repair as opposed to doing the repair work), we can isolate the costs associated with administration of the repairs service. Comparing overall responsive repairs spend (ie including the repair work) is not necessarily helpful as each organisation will have a different set of factors driving its spend, eg stock condition, profile, etc. This indicator will help you determine whether you are high spend on administration. The aim is of course to keep the cost of administration down so that more may be spent on the repairs themselves.

¹⁹ Note the absence of PIs associated with repair timescales. Although 'average end to end repair time' and the familiar ex-regulatory

timebanded PIs were included in our consultation, there was broad agreement that these are NOT something that tenants see as a priority. Over-emphasis on time could actually detract from 'customer focus' and what really matters to tenants. Time may be a viable measure for those landlords whose performance is so poor, they are still failing on a general basis to turn around repairs in a reasonable timescale. Managers might also want to collect repairs time PIs in terms of their understanding of the process but must realise the unintended consequence of an over-focus on time over and above what tenants value, which is essentially certainty (turn up and do what was agreed at the agreed time), convenience (choice over time slot, job done in one visit where possible and with no mess) and quality (no reworking). If an average repair time is to be used, it is suggested that this should exclude emergencies. Emergencies achieved within timescale could be reported separately.

²⁰ A number of tenants were interested in this PI being supported by contextual information that outlined broadly the type of repair work typically occurring here and if problems were associated with a specific area.

²¹ A number of tenants were interested in this PI being supported by contextual information that outlined broadly the type of repair work typically occurring here and if problems were associated with a specific area.

(Soft) Satisfaction Measures	
Generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your landlord deals with repairs and maintenance?	HCPI (GNPI37); STATUS Q22; BPSA Sct E 8; TIC; HM
Thinking about your last completed repair, how would you rate it in terms of...?: ²² a) being told when workers would call b) time taken before work started c) speed with which work was completed d) attitude of workers e) overall quality of repair work f) keeping dirt and mess to a minimum	STATUS Q24
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the system for reporting repairs	In development
In terms of the appointment: • percentage of tenants satisfied with the appointment system, possibly further broken down into: • were you happy with the choice of times? • did operatives attend when agreed?	In development

Background information

- details of any tenant consultation and feedback from tenants (numbers of surveys sent out and percentage returned)
- summary of the state of the properties and nature of repairs needed
- details of the recharge policy

²² Asked in STATUS only if the customer had repairs completed in the last 12 months. As with the comments in the Customer Care section, it is felt that this STATUS question would be useful as a real-time performance tool, ie that this question should be integrated into the day-to-day approach to performance management because it breaks down the customer experience of the repairs service into its component parts

and is useful therefore to pinpoint where things are going wrong and target improvement action. A number of organisations have been doing this for some time. Typically this has evolved from the 'repairs slip' left with tenants following a repair. In some organisations, the call centre/repairs desk telephone a sample of recent recipients of the service and go through a set of carefully chosen questions which break down the 'customer experience' into its component parts.

2. Major works and cyclical maintenance

Suggested PIs	PI Source
Cost Measures	
Total cost per property of major works and cyclical maintenance (client-side costs) ²³	HM
(Hard) Performance Measures	
Percentage of social housing rental stock failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard	HCPI (CMPI01); NI 158; BPSA Sct E 14; HM, TIC
Average SAP rating (energy efficiency) of social housing rental dwellings	HCPI (GNPI14); HM
The condition of the completed refurbishment or planned work project in respect of snagging at the time of handover, using a 1 to 10 scale	HM
(Soft) Satisfaction Measures	
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their newly-built homes	New HCPI
How satisfied the resident was with the completed refurbishment or planned work project using a 1 to 10 scale	HM
How satisfied the resident was with the service provided by the landlord's representative and/or contractor using a 1 to 10 scale	HM

²³ As with 'responsive repairs cost per property (client-side costs)' in the responsive repairs section, this PI seeks to isolate the comparative cost of administration. The aim is of course to keep the cost of administration down so that more may be spent on the works themselves.

3. ASB and nuisance

Suggested PIs	PI Source
Cost Measures	
Cost of housing management staff tackling ASB per case	HM
ASB related repair/clean up costs per case ²⁴	HM
Cost of external legal costs per ASB case	HM
Cost of external non-legal costs per ASB case (e.g. mediation, professional witnesses, etc)	HM
(Hard) Performance Measures	
Number of new ASB cases per 1,000 properties	HM
ASB broken down by type (eg noise, verbal abuse, harassment, etc) and where necessary, by estate/neighbourhood ²⁵	HM; STATUS 14 ²⁶
Average number of days taken to resolve ASB cases	HM
Number of closed resolved cases ²⁷	HM
Number of closed unresolved cases	HM
Percentage of properties managed covered by Good Neighbour Agreements	HM
Percentage of properties managed covered by Neighbourhood Warden Schemes	HM
Percentage of perpetrators evicted due to ASB	HM

²⁴ Tenants were keen on capturing this but you should note that it will require effective internal working between housing management and repairs and maintenance teams to isolate costs associated with ASB from other activities.

²⁵ ASB is one of those service areas that is only an issue for a tenant if they have a problem! To get to grips with ASB, there is a need to understand what kind of a problem you have and where it is happening. Accordingly our tenant focus groups felt that this information had to be collected at neighbourhood or estate level. This only needs to be targeted at known problem areas (hotspots). Tenants were keen that such information should be linked with a commentary by the landlord about how they

are responding to the issues (including preventative work and associated costs) and the success of that response. They also want to understand the extent of partner organisations' contributions to the prevention and resolution of ASB.

²⁶ Note that STATUS asks for tenants' perceptions of various types of ASB as opposed to the actual incidence of ASB

²⁷ Supported by contextual information that evidences the effectiveness of the landlord's role in resolving the case. For those who wish to explore this, consider the HouseMark ASB PI 'Number of closed resolved cases for each main intervention that led to case resolution.'

(Soft) Performance Measures	
Percentage of respondents who found it easy to contact a member of staff to report a complaint about ASB or When you last had contact, was getting hold of the right person...? a) easy, b) difficult, c) neither, d) can't remember	HM STATUS Q29 ²⁸
Percentage of respondents who found the member of staff dealing with their ASB complaint was always 'helpful'. This indicator can also be applied to 'courteous', 'sensitive', 'responsive' or 'knowledgeable' or Did you find the staff...? a) helpful, b) unhelpful, c) neither, d) can't remember	HM STATUS Q30
And were they...? a) able to deal with your problem, b) unable to deal with your problem, c) neither, d) can't remember	STATUS Q31
How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects of how your report were handled? a) advice provided by staff b) being kept informed c) support provided by staff d) how the complaint was dealt with e) final outcome of your complaint f) speed with which the complaint was dealt with	STATUS Q32, HM
Percentage of respondents who have already made a complaint of ASB that would be likely to do so in the future	HM
Percentage of respondents concerned about ASB in their local area or Perceptions of ASB	HM NI17 ²⁹

You should note that we found when discussing ASB with tenants the range of information they could possibly want is very wide. For brevity we have sought to narrow down the above table to key issues. Those who really want to explore this area should note that HouseMark ASB benchmarking covers a range of additional PIs.

Background information

- identification of hotspots and background information about the profile and history of the area or estate, e.g. longevity of tenancies, type of ASB/nuisance, estate standards regarding cleaning, grounds maintenance, etc
- details of planned action for such areas, including successes and failures
- responses and input from other partners

²⁸ Asked in STATUS only if the customer reported ASB in the last 12 months (applies to STATUS Q29-32)

²⁹ This NI along with many other perception NIs are picked up through the biennial 'Place Survey' (a feature of the new performance framework

for local authorities) and are not limited to tenants, ie they reflect the views of all citizens in a given local authority area. Other NIs might be useful too in the context of ASB, eg NIs 2, 3, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27 in the "Safer Communities" section of the NI set.

4. Customer care - service-wide issues, including complaints

We have included here those PIs that span the landlord service.

Suggested PIs	PI Source
Cost Measures	
Total cost per property of Housing Management ³⁰	HM
Operating cost index HCPI	HCPI
Breakdown of rent/service charge	See Rents & service charges section
Overheads as a percentage of direct costs	HM
Number of working days lost due to sickness absence	HM
Staff turnover	Former BVPI 12
(Hard) Performance Measures	
Percentage of enquiries resolved at first contact ('first contact resolution')	HM ³¹
Average number of customer contacts per resolved request (avoidable contact) ³²	NI 14
Unmet demand, ie abandoned phone calls (for call centres)	HM ³³ ; similar in AC local PI library
Average end to end time for handling complaints	In development

³⁰ This is collected by the regulators for housing associations and local authorities but is inconsistent between sectors. HouseMark's measure is based on a methodology that seeks to provide a level playing field so that landlords may be compared across the domain.

³¹ In conjunction with 'Mpathy Customer Experience' and designed for use in call centres - defined as resolved without any transfer of contact to any other party within the business or any requirement for a call-back.

³² This new NI is essentially about failure demand but is clearly related to the PI above. Failure demand is essentially where tenants have to make unnecessary contact with a landlord because the landlord has not done something right in the first place. It is therefore very much about 'getting it right first time' and not putting the customer through any unnecessary inconvenience. Note that there is some concern amongst local authorities as to how difficult it is to capture this PI. In view of this, the STATUS question, Q12e), might be a good alternative "how enquiries are dealt with generally."

(Soft) Satisfaction Measures	
Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services provided by your landlord?	HCPI (GNPI 22); BPSA 7; STATUS Q10; HM; NI160; TIC
Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following? a) the overall quality of your home b) general condition of this property c) neighbourhood as a place to live ³⁴ d) the value for money for your rent	STATUS Q11; HM; TIC
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your views are being taken into account by your landlords? ³⁵	HCPI (GNPI 23); STATUS 26; HM
How good or poor do you feel your landlord is at keeping you informed about things that might affect you as a tenant? ³⁶	STATUS Q27; HM
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their newly-built homes (based on lettings within the last three years)	New HCPI
Percentage of complainants satisfied with the outcome of their complaint	In development
Percentage of complainants satisfied with the way their complaint was dealt with	In development; TIC
Percentage of complaints upheld	In development

Background information

- details about customer care policies and procedures
- details about provision of information in different formats
- breakdown of complaints by type along with identification of patterns over time
- details of compliments

³³ In conjunction with 'Mpathy Customer Experience'

³⁴ The scope of this project is limited to the core landlord function but we have included this for completeness. Note that NI 5 for use in the performance framework for local authorities collects overall/general satisfaction with local area

³⁵ Our focus groups felt that although many tenants do not wish to get

involved in service delivery, they do wish to express preferences and influence the shape of services.

³⁶ The quality of communication came across very strongly in our focus groups and the Tenant Involvement Commission's research. Our tenant focus groups felt that the quality of information and communication should be captured in each service area (see the next section on service-specific issues).

5. Customer care - service-specific issues

Our tenant focus groups made the point that tenants do not necessarily see 'customer care' as a service in its own right, rather an aspect of whichever service they are accessing, eg repairs, ASB, etc (see Finding 4). So we suggest the following questions are asked of recent recipients of any given service area shortly after they

have experienced it. The reason for this is that they are useful real-time performance tools because they break down the customer experience of whichever service is being used into its component parts. This helps pinpoint where things are going wrong so that remedial action may be targeted to where it is needed.

Suggested PIs	PI Source
(Soft) Satisfaction Measures	
How satisfied are you with... how enquiries are dealt with ³⁷	STATUS Q12 e
When you last had contact, was getting hold of the right person...? a) easy, b) difficult, c) neither, d) can't remember ³⁸	STATUS Q18 ³⁹
And were they...? a) able to deal with the problem, b) unable, c) neither, d) can't remember ⁴⁰	STATUS Q20
Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the final outcome?	STATUS Q21
Were you satisfied with the range of choices offered to you? ⁴¹	In development
Satisfaction with information and communication, covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when you made contact, did you feel informed about what to expect (needs to include coverage of information literature)? • were you kept informed about what was happening (if appropriate)? • did you feel that you were listened to? 	In development

³⁷ In STATUS, this is asked as 'how enquiries are dealt with generally.' We are suggesting that in any service-specific survey, this question is asked in relation to a customer's recent experience of whichever service was used.

³⁸ A variant on this might be 'Satisfaction with ease of access to the service' and could be broken down by type of access, eg telephone, attendance at an office, website, etc

³⁹ STATUS Q18-21 asked only if the customer had contact in the last 12 months

⁴⁰ A variant on this might be 'Satisfaction with staff answering calls/at reception (promptness, politeness and courtesy)'

⁴¹ Tenants want choices wherever possible. Landlords and tenants should look at the various core service areas and explore, realistically, where choice might be possible and identify such areas, eg repairs appointments, improvements, fixtures and fittings, decorations, where to live, etc. Where appropriate, it would then be useful to introduce a question on choice such as this but framed in the context of the service area.

6. Lettings and empty properties

Suggested PIs	PI Source
Cost Measures	
Total cost per property of managing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lettings • empty properties 	HM
Average expenditure per property on voids repairs (to bring it up to a lettable standard)	HM
Rent loss due to empty properties as a percentage of the rent due for the year	BPSA Sct E 20; former BVPI 69; former HCPI; HM
(Hard) Performance Measures	
Breakdown of lettings to various client groups, e.g. lettings to black and minority ethnic households, homeless, transfers, medical, etc	HM; CORE
Percentage of new tenancies that last more than 12 months	HM
Percentage of refusals to offers	HM
Percentage of tenancy turnover	HM; former ACPI
Percentage of social housing rental dwellings vacant at 31 March ⁴²	HCPI (CNPI 02)
Average re-let time ⁴³	HCPI (CNPI 03); BSA Sct E 3; former BVPI 212; HM
Percentage of new tenancy visits made within six weeks	AC/IDeA Local Library
Percentage of people who want to relocate	In development; TIC
Ratio of positive to negative departures, broken down by reason	Kirklees

⁴² Housing Corporation contextual PIs CMCX 13-16 deal with the percentage of homes empty and available/unavailable and facilitate the unpacking of this PI.

⁴³ Note that we experienced conflicting views from tenants on this. On the one hand, time does not seem to be a big issue; probably better to

ensure that the void is of a good standard and that the right applicant moves in. However, on the other hand, tenants are conscious of how void rent loss damages the financial health of the landlord and further limits the availability of scarce resources. A balance must be struck here and this needs to be understood by everyone.

(Soft) Satisfaction Measures	
How satisfied are you with... advice on moving home?	STATUS Q12 b
How satisfied are you with... support provided to new tenants?	STATUS Q12 c
Percentage of customers satisfied with the outcome of the allocated property (ie the suitability of the accommodation offered). ⁴⁴	In development
Percentage of customers satisfied with the lettings process (ie the customer experience of offer, viewing, etc)	In development
Percentage of new tenants satisfied with state of new home, broken down by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repairs • cleanliness • décor/decorations allowance 	In development
Percentage satisfied that home meets their needs/aspirations now ⁴⁵	In development

Background information

- details of lettable standard
- condition of properties when they become empty
- numbers vacant, broken down by time vacant (ie numbers vacant distributed across various time bands)
- numbers of applicants
- lettings broken down by whether property accepted by first, second, third etc, applicant
- breakdown of reasons why properties not accepted
- breakdown of reasons for people wanting to move
- details regarding the approach to decorations, how much is on offer, and when it is not given
- analysis and understanding of the relative sustainability of various areas, extent of turnover, etc and what the landlord's strategy is in each area

⁴⁴ There was some support for this being measured at a time when the 'euphoria' of receiving an offer has subsided, eg six months after tenancy commencement.

⁴⁵ This is about assessing the extent to which those who have been housed for some time, in what might have been appropriate accommodation at the time, still feel that it is appropriate

7. Rents and service charges, including collection and arrears

Suggested PIs	PI Source
Cost Measures	
Breakdown of rent/service charges ⁴⁶	N/A
Rent arrears management cost per property HM	HM
Rent collection and accounting cost per property HM	HM
Leasehold management cost per property	HM
(Hard) Performance Measures	
Percentage of rent collected	HM; former BVPI 66a; BPSA Sct E 17;
Percentage of service charges collected	HM
The number of tenants with more than seven weeks of (gross) rent arrears as a percentage of the total number of tenants or Percentage of tenants 13 plus weeks and less than £250 in arrears at year end	former BVPI 66b HM; former ACPI 38990
Percentage tenants in arrears who have had Notices Seeking Possession served	former BVPI 66c
Percentage of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	HM; former BVPI 66d
Percentage of rent arrears of current tenants	HCPI (CNPI 04); HM; BPSA Sct E 18; former BVPI;
Former tenant arrears as a percentage of rent roll	HM; former BVPI; former HCPI
Rent written off as percentage of rent roll	BPSA Sct E 19; former BVPI 66c
Percentage of tenants on Housing Benefit (HB) (compared to others) ⁴⁷	In development
Percentage of debtors accepting debt advice/support (internal/external) ⁴⁸	In development

⁴⁶ Notwithstanding the limitations placed on landlords in terms of rent setting, our tenant focus groups were interested in how the average rent (or pound of rent) is broken down in terms of spend across housing management activities. HouseMark benchmarking also facilitates the comparison of the cost of the various landlord activities. There was also interest in information on running cost to the tenant of various homes, eg by type, bed size. These figures should be set against average tenant incomes as an affordability measure

⁴⁷ Our tenant focus groups were interested in the average time to process new HB claims and satisfaction with HB service. They were also interested in understanding the extent of deprivation as a basis for appreciating the financial pressures on tenants.

⁴⁸ Our tenant focus groups were also interested in how much these debt advice services cost compared with the revenue they bring into the service.

(Soft) Satisfaction Measures	
How satisfied are you with... advice on rent payments?	STATUS Q12a
Satisfaction with methods available for paying rent/service charges, broken down by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tenants • leaseholders 	In development
Satisfaction with information about how rent and service charges are set broken down by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tenants • leaseholders 	In development

Background information

- details of effectiveness of different actions to prevent and to tackle arrears and also the extent to which the cost of chasing FTAs and recharges is economical

8. Estate appearance

Suggested PIs	PI Source
Cost Measures	
Cost per property of cleaning service	HM
Cost per property of grounds maintenance	HM
Cost per property of concierge service	HM
Spend on estate services as a percentage of total spend on landlord function (landlord function meaning “core” housing management and maintenance - for a local authority, anything within the HRA)	HM
Spend on estate services broken down by activity (eg staff, transport, material, overheads, training etc.)	HM
Spend on monitoring estate services	HM
Spend on communal repairs broken down by estate/neighbourhood	In development
(Hard) Performance Measures	
A PI which captures the internal scoring regime for caretaking and cleaning and groundsmaintenance -v- the organisation’s own standards as agreed with tenants. ⁴⁹	N/A
or Score from the HouseMark Estate Services 'Peer Review' quality assessment exercise	HM
(Soft) Satisfaction Measures	
Percentage of residents “satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with the estate services provided by their landlord	HM
Percentage of residents “satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with the cleaning of the shared internal parts of their blocks	HM, AC/IDeA Local Library
Percentage of residents “satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with the grounds maintenance service provided by their landlord	HM, AC/IDeA Local Library
Satisfaction with the information provided about services and charges for those services, broken down by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leaseholders • tenants 	In development
Satisfaction with the value for money of estate services, broken down by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cleaning service • grounds maintenance and expressed for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leaseholders • tenants 	In development

⁴⁹ This, of course, is not capable of being compared with other organisations but still useful in terms of tracking improvement over time. This could be captured at a high level, eg the average score for the entire service, but is perhaps more useful when broken down by

estate/neighbourhood. Ideally, tenant inspectors should be involved in the scoring. Our tenant focus groups were also interested in capturing the number of estate inspections as evidence of landlord commitment to improving standards

Appendix 5: Presenting performance information - style guide

This appendix is designed to help you think through the presentation of your performance information. We have distilled good practice from a range of social landlords but would particularly like to acknowledge the contributions of Harvest Housing Group, Yorkshire Housing Association, Tristar Homes, Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing and Bolton at Home. Further examples of good presentation may be found on the HouseMark website.

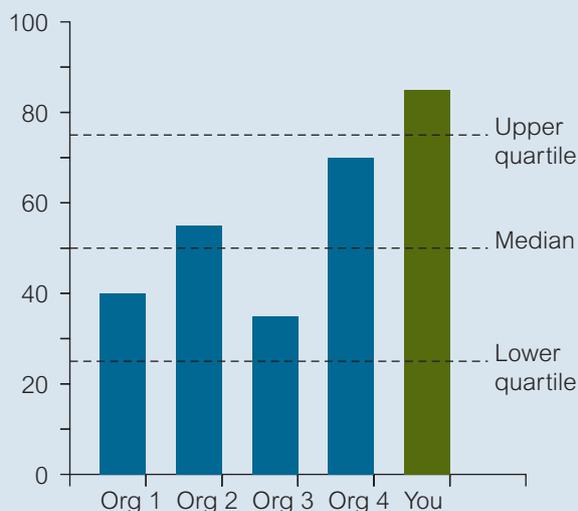
Bar charts and performance indicators

Performance over time



Use this type of chart to show your performance over time, ie your trend or 'direction of travel.' The horizontal axis could be set on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. Your target or standard may be overlaid as a line.

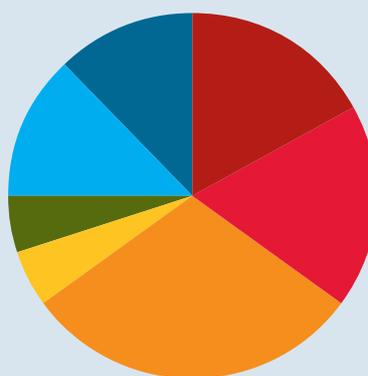
Our performance compared to other landlords



Use this type of chart to compare your performance with others. Each bar represents a different landlord. By overlaying quartile performance, a judgement about good, average or bad performance can be made. This approach can be used internally for comparing landlord performance across outlets or offices.

Pie chart – breaking something down

How every £1 of money received is spent



- 17p Interest on loans
- 18p Routine repairs
- 30p Management
- 5p Major repairs
- 5p Voids and bad debt
- 13p Other costs
- 12p Tenants' services

Use a pie chart to show how a whole amount breaks down into its various components, eg:

- average rent or £1 of rent breaks down into spend on various items, eg housing management, repairs, paying off loans, etc
- ASB breaks down by type, eg noise nuisance, verbal abuse, harassment, etc
- total lettings break down by client type, eg BME, elders, etc

If you really do not get on with pie charts, then you could consider the stacked bar.

How every £1 of money received is spent



- 17p Interest on loans
- 18p Routine repairs
- 30p Management
- 5p Major repairs
- 5p Voids and bad debt
- 13p Other costs
- 12p Tenants' services

Tables

Tables should be simplified by limiting the number of columns and rows where possible. Use of a summary sheet can help communicate performance against a number of indicators 'at a glance'. They can also be greatly enhanced by introducing graphics, eg:

- traffic lights or smiley faces to show at a glance where performance is in relation to a target or standard - but note with traffic lights that some people have colour blindness, so here the solution could be to superimpose R, A, or G over the traffic light (for red, amber or green). An amber light or ambivalent face (ie neither smiley, nor unhappy) may be used to indicate performance

which is below target but within accepted tolerance. Traffic lights and smiley faces may also be used to illustrate benchmarking information, ie how your performance compares to others.

- performance compared to the previous reported score can be shown by trend arrows indicating upwards, downwards or static
- icons and colour coding - whether you are presenting your information as a chart or table, the use of icons and colour coding can help the reader quickly understand which service area you are referring to

The icons, traffic lights, smiley faces and arrows below are available from the HouseMark website as downloads.

Traffic lights or smiley faces



Arrows



Icons



We have incorporated the above concepts in the example tables overleaf.

Examples of summary tables

 Customer Care	PI against target	Trend
Percentage of enquiries resolved at first contact	G	↑
Percentage of complainants satisfied with how a complaint was dealt with	A	↑
Number of working days lost to sickness absence	R	↓

 Repairs	PI against target	Trend
Percentage of repairs done right first time	G	↑
Percentage of customers satisfied with the appointment system	R	↓
Percentage of customers satisfied with overall quality of repair work	G	↑

 ASB and Nuisance	PI against target	Trend
Number of new ASB cases per 1,000 properties	A	↑
Number of closed resolved cases	A	↓
Percentage of tenants satisfied with how complaint was dealt with	R	↑

 Rents and service charges	PI against target	Trend
Percentage of rent arrears of current tenants	G	↔
Percentage of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	A	↑
Percentage of debtors accepting external debt advice support	G	↑

Examples of full tables

 Repairs	Year end 07	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Target 08	PI against target	Trend
Percentage of repairs done right first time	70%	71%	72%	75%	75%	😊	↑
Percentage of customers satisfied with the appointment system	80%	81%	79%	77%	85%	😞	↓
Percentage of customers satisfied with overall quality of repair work	85%	86%	88%	91%	90%	😊	↑

 Lettings & managing empty properties	Year end 07	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Target 08	PI against target	Trend
Percentage of tenancy turnover	4.2%	4.2%	4.1%	4.1%	4%	A	↔
Percentage of customers satisfied with the lettings process	85%	87%	87%	88%	90%	A	↑
Percentage of customers satisfied with the state of their new home	89%	94%	95%	97%	95%	G	↑

Appendix 6: Jargon buster

The language used to describe performance need not be complicated. It should be kept as short and simple as possible. However, occasionally it is difficult to avoid some of the 'technicalities' so we have produced the following glossary which covers the most common performance terminology.

Benchmarking

In the context of this guidance, benchmarking is simply about comparing your cost and performance to other organisations. The main reason for doing this is to understand how well you are performing against similar, as well as the best, organisations. It provides an indication of:

- where improvement is needed
- how much to improve, eg you might find yourself to be:
 - below average and want to take immediate steps to attain at least median performance in the short to medium term (see quartile and median)
 - average and set your sights on the best performers by aiming for top quartile performance
- how you might improve, eg by adopting and adapting the good practice of the best performers

Economy

Refers to the cost of inputs required to deliver the service, eg the cost of staff, office space, computers, vehicles, plant, materials, etc. Cost measures or indicators are useful in assessing value for money but they should not be looked at in isolation. They need to be considered alongside efficiency and effectiveness measures (see right).

Efficiency

Refers to the relationship between inputs and outputs. In a housing context the output may be seen as the service itself and can be broken down into a number of output measures, eg number of repair jobs per property, percentage of jobs done right first time, etc. Efficiency is maximised when you get the best possible output from the least input. For this reason efficiency is often associated with improving systems and processes by making them smarter and leaner with no wasted activity by staff.

Effectiveness

Refers to the relationship between outputs and outcomes. Effectiveness is about assessing whether the service outputs are achieving the objectives of the service. For example, the main objective of the repairs service might be to ensure that the housing stock is well maintained so that tenants obtain the maximum satisfaction from their home and so that no one has to live in sub-standard accommodation. Outcome measures might therefore include percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs service, percentage of homes failing the Decent Homes Standard, etc

Performance measure or indicator

The terms 'performance measure' and 'performance indicator' tend to be used interchangeably. They provide an 'indication' of how well you are performing against a specific objective.

Performance target or standard

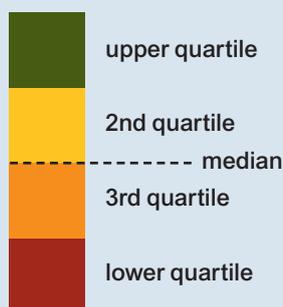
A target or standard may be set against any given performance measure. A standard is often used to describe a minimum level of acceptable performance whilst a target is what the organisation aspires to achieve.

Quartile and median

Quartiles are used in benchmarking to show how well your organisation is performing compared to others:

- **upper quartile** – you are in the top 25 per cent of organisations included in the comparison
- **2nd quartile** – you are in the 25 per cent below top quartile
- **median** – you are right in the middle
- **3rd quartile** – you are in the 25 per cent below 2nd quartile
- **lower quartile** – you are in the bottom 25 per cent

excellent performance



poor performance

Many organisations use quartile positions to help them set performance targets, e.g. they aim for top quartile performance.

Value for money

Refers to the relationship between the cost of the inputs required to deliver services and the outcomes achieved. The 'value chain' therefore encompasses economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Making a judgement about value for money is about reaching a considered opinion based on a range of cost and performance measures, complemented by other information such as customer feedback (including complaints) and service assessment.

Further information

For further information visit our website www.housemark.co.uk or call **024 7646 0500**.

HouseMark, 8 Riley Court, Millburn Hill Road,
University of Warwick Science Park, Coventry CV4 7HP.



About HouseMark

HouseMark is the leading provider of performance improvement and value for money solutions to the social housing sector and is jointly owned by the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Housing Federation; two not-for-profit organisations which reinvest their surpluses in the social housing sector.