

Standards for Tenant Engagement in Rent Setting and Affordability Decisions

*& Self Assessment
Tool for Social
Landlords*

What are the standards?

TPAS Cymru has developed a set of standards to support social landlords in Wales to effectively engage tenants in rent-setting and affordability decisions. These Standards reflect the importance of the Tenants' voice. They set out clear principles and practical actions that social landlords can take to continuously improve how Tenants are involved in rent setting and affordability decisions. The standards have been designed using Tenant insight and sector good practice. They also reflect the expectations of the Welsh Government's Rent and service charge standard 2026 to 2036 and The Regulatory Framework for Welsh Registered Social Landlords.

Purpose

This self-assessment tool helps social landlords evaluate how effectively they engage tenants in rent-setting and affordability decisions. It is designed to support continuous improvement and demonstrate alignment with the principles of meaningful tenant participation, transparency, equality and affordability. Landlords should consider how to undertake a co-assessment exercise with tenants.

For landlords, the Standards provide a practical framework to reflect on and evidence what's working, identify where things could be stronger, and improve how tenant voices shape decisions.

For tenants, they'll offer a clearer picture of how they can influence those decisions, and what meaningful involvement should actually look like.

For Boards, committees and decision-makers, they can provide valuable assurance, helping to demonstrate that tenant perspectives have been properly heard, challenged and reflected in the final decision.

In addition, the results of this assessment can provide a useful basis for tenants to scrutinise, challenge and hold their landlord to account.

How to use this tool

There is no prescribed way to use this self-assessment tool. It is designed to be flexible so that landlords can adapt it to their own governance arrangements, tenant engagement approaches and organisational context. It can be completed by staff, tenant groups, scrutiny panels, either individually or as part of a facilitated discussion. The aim is to encourage honest reflection, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and support continuous learning.

One approach could be is for each assessment area, choose the option that best reflects your organisation's current position.

Rating	Description
1. Not in Place	This is not currently in place or there is little or no evidence.
2. Partly in Place	Some aspects are in place, but they are inconsistent, incomplete or not yet embedded.
3. Mostly in Place	This is in place in most areas and there is good evidence, although some improvements are still needed.
4. Fully in Place	This is fully embedded, consistently applied and supported by clear evidence.

The Standards

1.Understanding Tenants and Affordability

The Landlord:

- Understands the demographic profile of its tenants.
- Understands household composition, income levels, employment patterns and financial vulnerability.
- Identifies affordability pressures across different tenant groups.
- Uses this intelligence to inform rent-setting decisions.
- Understands Tenants preferred methods of engagement in rents

Assessment Evidence could include:

- Tenant profiling data
- Income and affordability analysis
- Customer insight reports
- Segmentation analysis
- Board reports showing use of tenant data

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2.Inclusive and Representative Engagement

The landlord uses its understanding of Tenants profile information to ensure engagement in rent setting reflects the diversity of its communities and actively seeks the views of those most affected by rent decisions, including:

- tenants on low incomes
- people with irregular earnings
- working households
- older people
- disabled people
- younger tenants
- minority ethnic communities
- digitally excluded tenants
- rural communities

Assessment evidence could include:

- Participation analysis
- Equality monitoring
- Targeted engagement plans
- Representation reports

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3.Accessible Engagement Methods

The landlord uses a range of accessible engagement methods that enable meaningful participation, including both digital and non-digital approaches. Methods are designed to remove barriers relating to:

- disability
- language
- literacy
- digital access
- caring responsibilities
- geography
- confidence

Assessment evidence could include:

- Engagement strategy
- Attendance data
- Accessible information
- Translation and interpretation
- Community outreach

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4.Transparency During Engagement

When consulting tenants, the landlord clearly explains:

- what decisions tenants can influence
- what decisions are already determined
- the organisation's financial position
- how rent has been spent
- how the organisation is achieving value for money
- evidence supporting costs and options
- how tenant feedback will influence decisions.

Tenants understand the purpose and limits of engagement.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Consultation materials
- Presentations
- FAQs
- Financial summaries
- Feedback reports

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5. Affordability Assessment Model

The landlord has a clear, evidence-based affordability model/framework to assess affordability, which:

- is transparent
- reflects tenant priorities
- provides a clear definition of 'affordability'
- considers all housing liabilities: Proposed net rent and mandatory service charges.
- has built-in flexibility for sudden changes in circumstance or benefit cap impacts
- considers broader affordability essentials: Food, utilities (gas, electricity, water), and local council tax.
- informs rent setting proposals
- is regularly reviewed.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Affordability model
- Tenant influence in codesigning model
- Tenant testing of model
- Financial modelling
- Policy documents

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6. Understanding of Associated Costs and Local Context

The landlord considers overall household running costs and wider community insight when assessing affordability, including:

- deprivation
- cost of living
- energy costs
- food insecurity
- employment trends
- transport costs
- rurality
- local economic conditions.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Local authority data
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation
- Cost of Living assessments
- Local insight reports

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7. Learning from Previous Rent Setting Decisions

The landlord reviews the impact of previous rent setting decisions, including:

- affordability
- arrears
- hardship
- tenancy sustainment
- demand for support
- tenant satisfaction with rent related support

Learning is used to improve future rent setting.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Post-implementation reviews
- Performance reports
- Numbers and diversity of tenants seeking rent related support services
- Tenant feedback
- Income reports

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8. Equality Impact Assessment

A robust Equality Impact Assessment is undertaken for rent-setting proposals. The assessment considers whether any protected or disadvantaged groups may experience disproportionate impacts and identifies appropriate mitigations.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Protected characteristic analysis
- Board reports

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9.Tenant Engagement in Wider Landlord Activities

Tenants are engaged in influencing, co-designing and constructively challenging wider landlord strategic priorities, decisions and service delivery plans, with the aim of helping to ensure the affordability of rents for both current and future Tenants.

Areas of engagement could include:

- Business Plan priorities
- Value for Money strategies and plans
- Value for Money reviews of services
- Budget planning priorities
- Procurement

Assessment evidence could include:

- Business Plan showing Tenant influence
- Value or Money strategy
- Investment or asset planning strategy showing tenant influence

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10.Co-designing Rent Related Support

Tenants are involved in designing, testing and improving:

- financial support
- advice services
- financial assistance
- communication materials
- referral pathways.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Co-design workshops
- Service redesign
- Tenant panels
- Scenario Testing/Tenant Mystery Shopper exercises
- Evaluation reports

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11.Accessible and Dignified Support

Support for Tenants linked to rent charges is:

- easy to access
- timely
- relevant to all Tenants ,including self-payers.
- well communicated
- communicated to relevant stakeholder/partner organisations
- confidential
- free from stigma.

The landlord actively removes barriers to seeking help.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Customer journey mapping
- Support take-up data
- Tenant feedback

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12.Assessing Impact and Mitigation

The landlord assesses the likely impact of different rent options on tenants and identifies mitigations before decisions are made. Mitigations are proportionate, targeted and monitored.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Option appraisal
- Risk assessments
- Mitigation plans

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13.Tenant Scrutiny and Challenge

Tenants are provided with genuine opportunities to scrutinise, question and challenge rent setting options and proposals before decisions are made. The landlord demonstrates openness to changing proposals.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Scrutiny panel reports
- Challenge sessions
- Minutes
- Consultation feedback

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14. Demonstrating Tenant Influence

The landlord can clearly demonstrate how tenant feedback influenced the final rent setting decisions and related services , including:

- what changed
- why changes were made
- where suggestions could not be adopted
- reasons for those decisions.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Consultation reports
- Board papers
- Feedback summaries

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15. Board and Committee Assurance

Rent setting proposal decision reports to Boards/Committees include:

- what tenants said
- evidence supporting tenant views
- changes made following tenant engagement
- issues that could not change
- Equality Impact Assessment findings
- reasons for recommendations
- mitigation and support plans
- monitoring arrangements to assess impact of decision
- communication plans for tenants and stakeholders.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Board reports
- Committee papers
- Decision records

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16.Closing the Feedback Loop

The landlord demonstrates the value and outcome of tenant engagement in rent setting by publishing:

- You Said – What Tenants told us.
- We Did – What changed.
- We Couldn't –What could not change.
- Because – The reasons why.

This information is accessible, provided in a range of formats and shared with all Tenants.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Tenant newsletters
- Information in rent notification correspondence
- Website updates
- Social media
- Annual reports

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17.Continuous Engagement & Communication

The landlord treats rent setting as an ongoing conversation rather than a once-a-year consultation. Tenant discussions and communications about affordability, value for money, service quality and investment take place throughout the year and help shape future decisions.

Assessment evidence could include:

- Annual engagement programme
- Tenant forums
- Customer insight reports
- Service planning

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Reflective Questions

Before finalising your self-assessment, consider:

- Can we demonstrate that tenant engagement genuinely changed our proposals?
- Did we hear from tenants most affected by rent increases?
- Is our affordability assessment transparent and evidence-based?
- Would tenants understand how and why the final decision was reached?
- Have we clearly explained what we could and could not change?
- Are support and mitigation designed with tenants rather than for tenants?
- Can our Board be assured that tenant voices have had a meaningful influence on decision-making?

For further support or if you'd like more information or assistance with completing the self-assessment do get in touch: enquiries@tpas.cymru