

Top tips for the annual reports to tenants

- Explain the purpose of the report:
 - Why it's different to previous years
 - Emphasise that it is a report to tenants, but will inform the TSA.
- Explain how tenants have been involved in putting together this report:
 - How tenants have influenced its design and content
 - Have they been consulted on it?
 - Have they signed it off?
 - Have they been involved in verifying the strong performance?
- Think about the key messages and make sure they are easy to spot early on:
 - How do you rate against the standards?
 - What are you doing about it?
 - Progress on local offers
 - Co-regulation and scrutiny
 - Exercise caution about stating that you meet all of the standards – unless you have the evidence to back it up.
- Decide on a structured approach for each section and stick to it, eg:
 - Explanation of the standard and requirements
 - How you meet it
 - Challenges
 - Plans for 2010/11.
- Cost, efficiency and value for money is high on everyone's agenda:
 - What are your costs for service provision, eg, dealing with ASB, recovering arrears, tenancy management, repairs, etc?
 - How do costs compare with performance and satisfaction achieved?
 - How do your costs compare with others?
 - What was the cost of producing the annual report to tenants and does this demonstrate value for money?
- Make sure you are reporting on the performance areas that really matter to tenants and not just the usual indicators that housing professionals use – we call it 'turning the indicators inside out'
- Make sure you explain your performance and put it into context. How is the reader to know whether 12 days, 22 days, 32 days or 42 days is a good turnaround time for your empty properties?

- Explain to the reader how you are validating your performance and your report – both internally (tenant mystery shoppers or inspectors) and externally
- Watch out for jargon and housing speak slipping in (particularly in the value for money sections). Get uninformed tenants and junior members of staff to read the report – the more comments and challenges the better
- Even the shorter reports are still long. Make them interesting, break up the text. Use pictures, graphs and case studies.

What to remember

- The arbiters of quality are your tenants. Seek tenant views on the usefulness of the report and take this into account in future communications
- The TSA is not publishing the methodology it will use to assess annual reports. Seek the views of your TSA contact officer (they can offer informal guidance but cannot bless an annual report in advance)
- Compare your report versus others from local landlords and those that get sent into HQN/NFA. How do you rate your report against others?
- The government could form a view on the sector and individual landlords based on these annual reports.