

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL RESIDENT & INDEPENDENT PANEL MEMBERS

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Panels are a consultative body and are an important way for Network Homes to engage with residents ensuring we put residents at the heart of the organisation.
- 1.2 Local Panels can escalate any issues with service delivery up to the Customer Services Committee.
- 1.3 The Panel help Network Homes set local priorities, make recommendations on local issues and monitor local service delivery.
- 1.4 Scrutiny Panels act as an independent group to assess services and processes provided by Network Homes. This representation is to ensure there is a consistent approach to delivering first class customer service in every aspect of the business with the ability to make recommendations at a local level.
- 1.5 Scrutiny Panels can escalate issues to the Local Panels, to further be escalated to the Customer Services Committee.
- 1.6 The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide a set of guidelines that members of the Panels must agree to:
 - Carry out their duties effectively
 - Conduct meetings in a business-like manner
 - Ensure all members feel able to contribute
 - Demonstrate the highest standards expected to be maintained by all members at all times.
- 1.7 All members of the Panels are expected to follow this Code of Conduct in the course of their work. Please read this carefully and ask about anything that you do not understand.
- 1.8 Behaviour by any member which breaks this Code of Conduct could result in the member being dismissed from their respective Panel.
- 1.9 When you have read and understood the Code of Conduct please sign to confirm that you agree to comply at all times. Please retain one copy for your records, a copy with also be held by the Resident Engagement Team.

2. Confidentiality and data protection

- 2.1 Members will have access to confidential and sensitive information during the course of their duties and must not divulge or discuss it with anyone outside of the Panel. All members must ensure that confidential papers are returned to the Resident Engagement team for destruction once their dealings have been concluded, and to ensure that they assist Network Homes to comply with Data Protection legislation.

2.2 For the purposes of this agreement, confidential information includes all information, however stored, relating to Network Homes' residents, applicants, homeless applicants, products or services, financial information, research and development information, business methods, price lists, customers lists, designs, formulae, know-how processes, strategies and other similar information.

2.3 The Data Protection Act 2018 and related codes and legislation places responsibilities on any organisation to process personal data that it holds in a fair and proper way – to prevent information about individuals being used in a way that would be detrimental to them. This information is known as personal data and can either be personal data recorded in paper records or electronic records. Personal data must not be disclosed outside of the panel or Network Homes without written approval from the Resident Engagement Team.

3. Equality and diversity

3.1 Panel members must be fully committed to the principles of equality and diversity and agree to:

- accept that they work for the benefit of all residents regardless of location, gender, race and ethnicity, nationality, disability, age, sexuality, their life style choices, or tenure type
- help Network Homes in its duty to monitor and tackle inequality and promote diversity
- be aware of their individual responsibility for ensuring that the principles of equality and diversity are evident in their behaviour when carrying out their role as committee members.

3.2 No member will discriminate on any ground against any other member of the Panel or public.

3.3 Discriminatory language, derogatory or personal remarks will not be used in discussions.

4. Out of pocket expenses

4.1 The role of Local Panel Member is unpaid. No member will receive an allowance.

4.2 Out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed upon production of receipts.

4.3 Car mileage will be paid at the rate of £0.45 per mile.

4.4 See Network Homes expenses policy for further details.

5 Declarations of interest

5.1 Members must ensure that private and personal interests do not influence decisions, and that their membership is not used to obtain personal gain of any sort, or for family or someone you have a close personal relationship.

5.2 Decisions should be made on the basis of the values of Network Homes and should not be made in order to gain benefits for yourself, your family or friends.

5.3 Declarations:

Remember that the purpose of the Panel is to benefit tenants, residents and members of the community generally and not specific individuals. A member who believes or suspects there may be a conflict of interest between them and the activity of Network Homes or a third party working on our behalf, should set out their concerns in writing to the chair and Network Homes' Resident Engagement Team. They will agree the appropriate course of action and advice on what action needs to be taken. Individual members may be affiliated to or be members of a political party but they may not represent a political party in their role as a member of the Panel.

5.4 Conduct in meetings:

When the Panel discusses an item which poses a conflict of interest for any Member or employee present, that person should declare an interest. If the conflict is clear and substantial, the Member should offer to withdraw and if invited to remain, must refrain from voting on the matter. Where such a conflict is likely to occur on a frequent basis, the member should offer to resign.

5.5 Any member found not to have declared a conflict of interest will be asked to leave the meeting and will have their membership reviewed under section 13 of this code.

6. Meetings

6.1 Panel members will:

- Prepare for the meetings by reading all relevant papers and bring them to the meeting
- Give their apologies to the Resident Engagement team and the chair if they cannot attend the meeting with at least two working days prior notice, where possible
- Any member missing three consecutive meetings without apology will have their membership reviewed as per section 13 of this code
- Arrive on time to enable meetings to start promptly
- Direct all questions or comments through the Chair
- Adhere to the subject matter of the meeting
- Not shout, use abusive language or other threatening or intimidating behaviour
- Treat everyone (employees, members, invited guests and residents alike) with consideration and respect their contributions to meetings
- Work together constructively to achieve positive outcomes which support the improvement of Network Homes' services. Members should not speak or write on behalf of the Panel without the prior agreement of the Panel. Copies of any correspondence sent on behalf of the Panel should be made available to all members
- Act independently, objectively and constructively to improve services for all residents of Network Homes. Members should ensure that private or personal interest never influences their decisions and that they never use their position for personal gain of any sort

- Address problems with poor performance at Panel meetings but these should be raised in a constructive way so as to help staff to resolve them and not personal criticisms. Members should only raise criticisms of staff with a senior manager, the Executive Director, or the Chair.
- 6.2 The Chair is responsible for ensuring that all Members have their say at meetings. Meetings are intended to allow Members to reach a consensus in a manner that avoids inappropriate behaviour. Background documentation is provided by staff for Members to review so that decisions are soundly based. The quorum for each meeting is at least three members as per the Local Panel Terms of Reference.
 - 6.3 Once the Panel has come to a conclusion, all Members share responsibility for the decision, regardless of whether they are present at the meeting or not. It is therefore in everyone's interests that all members are expected to attend.
 - 6.4 Persons appearing under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs/substances or causing disruption will be asked to leave the meeting and have their membership terminated.
 - 6.5 If at a meeting any member, in the opinion of the Chair, persistently disregards a ruling of the Chair or behaves improperly or offensively or obstructs the conduct of business, they will be asked to leave the meeting and have their membership reviewed as per section 13 of this code.
 - 6.6 If a member of the Panel or any attendee at the Panel Meeting feels that the Chair or a Panel Member behaves improperly they may raise this at the meeting or in writing thereafter. The issue will be reviewed by the Executive Director or the Chair (as appropriate) and may result in the Panel Member or Chair having their membership terminated.

7 Media

- 7.1 No member is authorised to make media statements or respond to media questions relating to Network Homes. Any approach from the media on any matter relating to Network Homes should be referred to the Resident Engagement Team immediately.

8. Gifts and Favours

- 8.1 Members:
 - should never solicit gifts from another individual or organisation
 - should never accept gifts of cash or cash equivalents regardless of the amounts
 - may accept small personal gifts (such as chocolates or flowers) where refusal may offend. These gifts should be pooled to be distributed by the discretion of the Panel.

9. Raising specific issues

- 9.1 As part of their role, Members may wish to take up issues on behalf of a specific tenant, tenants, or community group. This may be as an advocate or to ensure that a problem gets resolved quickly. This is a valued aspect of being a locally based provider.
- 9.2 Any such issues should be presented to the Panel at the first available meeting under Any Other Business. The Panel may vote to decide to add the item to the agenda at the next meeting and request reports from the relevant line manager.
- 9.3 If the Panel vote not to add the item to the next agenda then the member raising the issue should report the matter as per the Network Homes Complaints Procedure.
- 9.4 Individual matters should not be raised at Panel meetings. Members raising an issue with their own residence should follow normal operating procedures.

10. Membership

- 10.1 Membership of the Panel is subject to probity checks so as to assist suitability for appointment.
- 10.2 Any Member charged with a criminal offence may have their membership suspended pending outcome of trial. The appropriateness of suspension will be considered on a case by case basis, considering the seriousness and circumstances of the charge.
- 10.3 Any Member convicted of a criminal offence may have their membership terminated. The decision to terminate will be considered on a case by case basis, considering the seriousness and circumstances of the charge and finding of guilt. Any member will be given the opportunity to provide written representations as to the matter should they wish to remain a member.
- 10.4 Any Member in former or current tenant arrears will be unable to serve on the panel until a payment plan to clear the arrears is agreed and the Member can demonstrate that it is being adhered to.
- 10.5 Any Member accused of high level Anti-Social Behaviour will be suspended from the panel pending outcome of an investigation. Any member proved to be the perpetrator of high level Anti-Social Behaviour shall have their membership terminated.
- 10.6 Any Member subject to a Notice Seeking Possession or involved in other legal action with Network Homes will be suspended from the panel.
- 10.7 Any resident Member ceasing to be a resident of Network Homes shall no longer be a member of the panel.

11. Training and Appraisals

- 11.1 Membership is subject to completion of an induction and commitment to the training programme provided to each member. Additional support will be available to panel members where necessary.
- 11.2 Impact assessments will be used to ensure the Panels, as a collective and Network Homes governed bodies, are conducting business in an effective manner.

12. Terms of Reference

- 12.1 All members should familiarise themselves with the Terms of Reference of our resident Panels to ensure that they aim to meet the aims and objectives of the Panel.

13. Breach of the Code of Conduct

- 13.1 If a member of the Panel does not abide by the Code of Conduct, the Chair has the right to ask that they leave the meeting.
- 13.2 If a member of the Panel continues to ignore the Code of Conduct at subsequent meetings, then the Chair will ask the Panel to vote on whether the member should be asked to leave and their membership terminated.
- 13.3 If a member of the Panel feels that the Chair has breached the Code of Conduct, they may ask the Panel to vote on whether the Chair should be asked to leave the meeting. If the majority of the membership is dissatisfied with the performance of the Chair, they may vote to remove the office of Chair or have their membership of the Panel terminated.
- 13.4 If a staff member feels that any Panel Member or the Chair has breached the Code of Conduct, they may refer the matter to the Executive Director who can consider bring it to the Customer Services Committee to vote to have the membership of the Panel terminated or to remove the office of the Chair.

14. Future development of the Code of Conduct

It is expected that this Code of Conduct will continue to develop to reflect best practice. The Resident Engagement Team will review the code periodically and any changes shall be notified in writing to all members of the Panel who shall be required to accept such changes.

Agreement

I have read and understood this Code of Conduct and agree to follow it in full during my service on the Panel. I understand that breaching the code could result in the termination of my membership.

NAME: _____

SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____