



Because good homes make everything possible

London & Herts and Out of London Panels

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

- 1.1. Resident 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. They are the co-regulatory champion providing assurance to the Customer Service Committee that the consumer standards are being met.
- 1.2. They will ensure the local 'voice' is heard at a higher level with the opportunity for it to be raised up to Customer Services Committee.
- 1.3. They will help Network Homes set local priorities, make recommendations on local issues and monitor local service delivery.

2. Role

2.1. Their responsibilities will include:

- Monitoring performance of Network Homes Scrutiny Panels
- Reviewing of key performance indicators such as complaints/estate services/ASB/income collection/void management, shared services such as Asset Management and Customer Services Centre, overview of maintenance budget and review of corporate social responsibility projects
- Holding Network Homes accountable for its performance by challenging poor performance, celebrating success and acting as a critical friend
- Overseeing the delivery of the local service improvement plan
- Ensuring efficient and effective services are provided across Network Homes and monitor actions to address under performance
- Monitoring, commenting and having oversight on performance of strategies and policies in addition to monitoring actions to address under performance at a local level
- Recommending scrutiny of shared services and maintaining a strong working relationship with Scrutiny Panels
- Acting as a co-regulation champion to shape, monitor and scrutinise Network Homes' compliance with the consumer standards particularly where there are concerns of potential serious detriment or risk
- Referring to Customer Services Committee matters of potential serious detriment or risk
- Reviewing and commenting on published regulatory reports and audits in relation to operational matters
- Making recommendations to Customer Services Committee on operational matters
- Monitoring issues which affect residents' ability to sustain their tenancies such as welfare reform and/or employment provision
- Focussing on annual priorities and outcomes

- Reviewing and commenting on customer facing strategies prior to implementation

3. Membership

3.1. The make up of the panel will be:

- Up to 12 members made up of residents and independents which may include up to 2 Ward Councillors at the discretion of the local panel
- The panel can, at its discretion, co-opt 1 x specialist.

3.2. The chair will be a resident appointed by an interview panel which will comprise of three or four individuals including the exiting chair, the Chair of the Customer Services Committee and the Company Secretary or the Executive Director of People and Partnerships, provided they are available, otherwise another suitable representative.

3.3. Recruitment to Local Panels will be through recruitment and selection process and the membership will reflect the resident base of the area.

3.4. Members will be expected to attend meetings and away days.

3.5. Members will be expected to undertake an induction and training programme to fulfil their role as representatives and/or specific criteria within their role profile.

3.6. No person may become or remain a Local Panel member if he/she:

- Is not or ceases to be a Network Homes' resident (unless they choose to reapply as an independent panel member)
- Is or becomes an employee of Network Homes
- Is under a court order relating to a breach of the terms of his/her tenancy or lease agreement or contract with Network Homes
- Is removed as a panel member under the terms of the Code of Conduct
- Fails to attend a minimum of 80% of meetings and/or away days without offering apologies for absence.

3.7. Independent members will be selected by each Local Panel based on the skills needed and priorities of the panel

3.8. Independently review the work of the scrutiny panels. The use of the word independent confirms that ideally Panel Members should not form part of a scrutiny review.

3.9. Term of Office:

- Local Panel members will initially be appointed for three years. They may stand for re-election for a further term
- No appointee will be allowed to serve for more than a maximum of six consecutive years
- If a member who has served for six years wishes to stand for election again in the future then they can do so after a three-year break.

3.10. Chair and Vice-Chair:

- The Local Panel can make recommendations for the position of Chair and Vice Chair from the membership of the panel every three years subject to approval from the Customer Services Committee. The Chair will have to follow the recruitment process detailed in 3.2.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair will hold these positions for a maximum of three years
- The Vice Chair should be the Chair in training. This will give one/two years of work shadowing and means they are ready to take over as Chair
- The Chair cannot stand for the position of Chair or Vice-Chair immediately after their three year term has ended, until there has been a break of three years
- The Chair will represent the local panel at the Customer Services Committee.
- All members including independents may be elected as Chair.

4.0 Meetings

- 4.1. Meetings will be held at least quarterly and will fit in with the cycle of Board meetings and Customer Services Committee.
- 4.2. In addition to the scheduled meetings, the Panel may be called for additional meetings by giving 24 hours' written or verbal notice and / or urgency decisions may be made by means of circulation, resolution, electronic mail or telecommunication, which if approved by three quarters of the members of the Panel then 'present', provided that meeting or decision is quorate, shall be deemed as resolved by the Panel.
- 4.2. Each operational team will be responsible for supporting the panel in their local area. Officer attendance at the meetings will be delegated by the respective Executive Director.
- 4.3. All papers for meetings will be provided to members at least 10 working days before a meeting.
- 4.4. Apart from an emergency and with agreement of the Chair no additional papers will be tabled at meetings.
- 4.5. All Local Panel members and members of the public can propose future agenda items direct to the Chair, at least six weeks prior to the next meeting. These will be included at the Chair's discretion.
- 4.6. All Local Panel meetings will be open to all Network Homes' residents living within the relevant catchment area at the Panel's and Executive Director's discretion.
- 4.7. All Local Panel meetings will comply with Health & Safety and equality and diversity requirements.
- 4.8. Local Panels may request the attendance of any senior member of staff or contractor at meetings, as long as sufficient notice is given.

- 4.9. The quorum for the meeting is at least 3 members of the Local Panel to be present at the meeting. If there is less than this number then the meeting will be inquorate. The meeting can go ahead but no decisions can be taken.

5. Conduct

- 5.1 All Local Panel members will sign a copy of the Code of Conduct
- 5.2 Poor conduct will be addressed in line with the Code of Conduct. Network Homes will remove members from the Panel for breaching the Code of Conduct.

6. Escalation

- 6.1 In the event that the Local Panel deems that the Customer Services Committee has not responded appropriately or has failed to act on concerns raised, the Local Panel will have access to an 'escalation process' in order to address their concerns and hold Network Homes accountable. It is proposed that a formal escalation process will adopt the following structure:

Stage 1: The Local Panel will submit a formal report in writing to the Customer Services Committee via the Local Panel Chair detailing their concerns and recommendations for resolution. This should be presented to the Customer Services Committee by the appointed Local Panel Chair. Should it not be possible for the Local Panel Chair to present the report, it may be provided to the Chair of the Customer Services Committee for that Chair to disseminate to the Committee. The Customer Services Committee or their representative will discuss these concerns with the relevant personnel and upon conclusion, will in turn issue a formal response to the Local Panel within 28 days

Stage 2: If, following stage 1, the Local Panel feel that their concerns are not adequately resolved, they can submit their formal report to the Network Homes Board via the Network Homes company secretary. The Board or their representative will respond directly to the Local Panel in writing within 28 days.

Stage 3: If the Local Panel's concerns are not addressed in Stages 1-2, they can then approach an independent external agency for advice and guidance. This external agency will be TPAS (tenant participation advisory service).

- 6.2 It will be the responsibility of the Local Panel Chair to ensure the Customer Services Committee is apprised of all developments at each stage of the escalation process.

7. Review

- 7.1 The Local Panel Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually by the Resident Engagement Team. If, during this review, amendments are made, these will be presented to the Customer Services Committee for approval.

Appendix 1

Consumer standards

These standards apply to all registered providers. Providers' boards and councillors are responsible for ensuring their organisation meets the consumer standards. The regulator's role is limited to setting the consumer standards and intervening only where failure of the standard could lead to risk of serious harm to tenants (the 'serious detriment test') as described in chapter five.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard 2017

Required outcomes

1. Customer service, choice and complaints

Registered providers shall:

- Provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs to their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- Have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly

2. Involvement and empowerment

Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range to opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- The formulation of their landlord's housing related policies and strategic priorities
- The making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- The scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved
- The management of their homes, where applicable
- The management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and
- Agreeing local offers for service deliver

3. Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

Registered providers shall:

- Treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- Demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs

Home standard

Required outcomes

1. Quality of accommodation

Registered providers shall:

- Ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard
- Meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard
- In agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section six of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance

2. Repairs and maintenance

Registered providers shall:

- Provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvement right first time
- Meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes

Tenancy standard

Required outcomes

1. Allocations and mutual exchange

1.1 Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. They shall demonstrate how their lettings:

- Make the best use of available housing
- Are compatible with the purpose of the housing
- Contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities

There should be clear application, decision-making and appeals processes.

1.2 Registered providers shall enable their tenants to gain access to opportunities to exchange their tenancy with that of another tenant, by way of internet-based mutual exchange services.

2. Tenure

- 2.1 Registered providers shall offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of the individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock.
- 2.2 They shall meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements or terms of occupation.

Neighbourhood and Community standard

Required outcomes

1. Neighbourhood management

Registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.

2. Local area co-operation

Registered providers shall co-operative with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties.

3. Anti-social behaviour

Registered providers shall work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.