

Scrutiny Panel Terms of Reference

1. Background and purpose

The Scrutiny Panel has been created in response to the commitment of Catalyst Housing to meet the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard within the regulatory framework for social housing in England. This standard requires landlords to “ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in...the scrutiny of their landlord’s performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved.

The Scrutiny Panel will act as the independent, resident-led group that holds Catalyst Housing to account through scrutiny and challenge to ensure continuous improvement. The Scrutiny Panel will do this by:

- Monitoring performance
- Carrying out in-depth service reviews
- Suggesting improvements
- Challenging the organisation when parts of it are not performing well

2. Aims & objectives

- To ensure that the views and priorities of residents are at the heart of Catalyst Housing’s performance and service improvement framework
- To strengthen the links between resident involvement and governance at Catalyst Housing
- To help drive continuous improvement at Catalyst Housing

3. Functions

Role and remit

The panel’s activities will initially focus on **service quality and performance**. When a decision is made that the panel has the necessary skills, they will be able to start looking at **business direction** and **governance** if they choose to. This decision will be made by the Independent Mentor together with the organisation’s Scrutiny Champion.

Choosing areas to review

The Scrutiny Panel will make their own decisions on what to look at based on performance information, complaints and collective feedback from residents. Catalyst Housing can request a review of a particular area but it is up to the Scrutiny Panel to decide to accept the request.

Access to information and resources

The Scrutiny Panel will be:

- Given access to performance information, benchmarking information and resident feedback (e.g. through complaints or surveys)
- Able to use other resident involvement groups and activities to help gather information (e.g. mystery shopping)
- Given a budget to use for carrying out scrutiny work
- Able to request relevant documents, e.g. policies and leaflets
- Able to carry out surveys and/or interviews with staff
- Able to carry out surveys and/or interviews with residents
- Able to arrange to job shadow staff

4. Payment and expenses

Membership of the Scrutiny Panel is on a voluntary basis, however any reasonable out of pocket expenses (e.g. mileage/train fare) will be reimbursed via the Resident Involvement Team.

5. Responsibilities

- To make sure residents' views are taken into account when monitoring and improving services
- To make sure residents are able to influence decisions which affect them
- To strengthen the links between resident involvement and the Board
- To push Catalyst Housing to continually make sure services for residents are the best they can be

6. Values

The Scrutiny Panel will work in line with the following values:

- The Scrutiny Panel must act with openness, honesty and integrity.
- The Scrutiny Panel must add value to the business.
- The Scrutiny Panel's reports and recommendations must be balanced, evidence-based and take into account regulatory standards, good practice and the operating context.
- The Scrutiny Panel must have due regard for value for money in all their activities and recommendations.
- The Scrutiny Panel must have respect for the remit of the Board in making final decisions.
- The Scrutiny Panel must be accountable to the wider resident body.

7. Reporting

The Scrutiny Panel will be required to:

- Present their findings to Local Boards and main Board for approval
- Report on their activities on a quarterly basis to the Catalyst Residents Federation and also to residents via Catalyst4You and the website
- Report on their activities, findings, recommendations and the outcomes of any scrutiny reviews in the Annual Report

- Explain the reason for any service reviews, the methods used and how they came to their recommendations in any scrutiny report
- The Scrutiny Panel is also required to publish an impact assessment of their activities on an annual basis.

8. Membership

- The panel can have up to 12 members
- Membership is open to tenants and leaseholders who are not in breach of their tenancy agreement and are not employees, board members, business partners or potential business partners of Catalyst Housing.
- Only one person from each household can be a member.
- Priority will be given to achieving a panel make up that as far as possible reflects the customer profile of Catalyst Housing

9. Recruitment and training

- Members will be recruited via a skills-based recruitment process based on the Scrutiny Panel person specification.
- Each member must sign up the Scrutiny Panel code of conduct and confidentiality agreement.
- Each member will undergo an initial six month probation period. At the end of this they will under an appraisal. The aim of this is to identify training and development needs; ultimately however it may result in members being asked to stand down from the panel.
- The appraisal process will be repeated every six months.
- A training programme will be developed for the Panel based on the results of an individual skills assessment
- An independent mentor will be provided to assist the panel during their first 1-2 years.

10. Frequency of meetings

During reviews, members will need to attend frequent meetings (approximately every 1-2 weeks depending on role). Member's work, family and other commitments will be taken into consideration and meetings will be agreed with the majority of the panel.

11. Length of term

The length of term for membership is 3 years. After this members must step down but can re-apply through the same recruitment process as everyone else. Nobody can stay on the Scrutiny Panel for more than 3 consecutive terms (9 years).

12. Chair

A Chair and Vice Chair will be elected for a term of one year.

13. Quorum

The quorum of the panel (number of people needed to make decisions) shall be 5 members or half of the current membership (whichever is the lower).

14. Safeguards

- Skills-based recruitment process
- Provision of an enforceable code of conduct and confidentiality agreement
- Provision of an independent mentor
- Six-month probation period
- Ability for the Board to arrange an independent scrutiny of the panel