****

**Customer Challenge Group**

**Code of Conduct**

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to set standards for how Herefordshire Housing’s Customer Challenge Group will conduct themselves towards each other, other customers and Herefordshire Housing’s colleagues they come into contact with during the course of scrutiny work they are involved in.

This code of conduct covers the following important issues:

* Personal conduct
* Conduct on and for The Customer Challenge Group and Herefordshire Housing
* Disclosing interests and dealing with conflicts of interest
* Confidentiality
* Dealing with breaches

A copy of the code of conduct will be signed by each member.

1. **Personal conduct**

Herefordshire Housing’s Customer Challenge Group members are expected to:

* Appreciate and respect differences – e.g. in knowledge, background of the people they come into contact with. The Challenge Group will never discriminate on any ground against anyone else in the course of carrying out a service review
* Not to seek to obtain any personal benefit or advantage (other than the rewards and expenses payable for participation in service reviews), or expect to receive more favourable treatment by colleagues, because of being part of resident scrutiny.
* Not to speak on behalf of the team of Herefordshire Housing Ltd (HHL) or The Customer Challenge Group in an official capacity, without their prior agreement and the consent of the landlord.
* Not to disclose any information received from other customers, or organisations, which has been gained as part of their role, without first gaining consent from HHL.
* Sign a confidentiality agreement under the Data Protection Act

1. **Conduct on Scrutiny**

All members are expected to observe the following conventions when taking part in a scrutiny:

* Be responsible. For example arrive punctually, or send advanced apologies with likely times of arrival to the Chair or HHL’s Customer Involvement Team
* Ensure a professional appearance. Dress smartly.
* Switch off personal mobile phones during a scrutiny, or agree with those present that your current circumstances need them to be on
* Agree a rota for chairperson, or a permanent chairperson over time
* Keep work on track. Follow an agenda/plan
* Have regular breaks, where possible (i.e. during meetings and training sessions, but not during interviews)
* Ensure you are prepared before meetings. For example, if information is provided in advance, read this beforehand and ask questions if you are unclear about anything
* Use common sense. Avoid using jargon.
* Be courteous to anyone you come into contact with and do not use offensive, provocative, discriminatory or racist language.
* Avoid expressing political or religious views
* Talk respectfully to others, when presenting your point of view. Don’t talk over others or butt in.
* Respect other people’s points of view. All views need to be represented – this includes the views of other customers.
* Follow the requirements of the organisation for who you are carrying out scrutiny (this may be for an organisation other than your landlord)
* Co-operate and work in partnership with other organisations
* Be aware you are representing HHL.
* Remember the purpose of the Challenge Group is to benefit all customers generally and not specific individuals
* Regardless of whatever other customer involvement arrangements Challenge members are engaged in, when carrying out scrutiny, the role is solely that of a scrutiny member undertaking service reviews
* Treat information gathered about customers, fellow challenge members and HHL Colleagues and Board as confidential at all times.
* Remember that the information collected by the Challenge Group during the course of a scrutiny ‘belongs’ to the organisation being inspected and therefore must not be passed onto any third party e.g. other tenants, other organisations, other colleagues etc.
* The Customer Challenge Group as a whole will be the only persons to pass on information about strengths and learning points to HHL. However, the group might agree to appoint one or more Challenge Group representative(s) to present this, or appoint a nominated colleague within HHL to do so.

1. **Disclosing interests and dealing with conflicts of interest**

Challenge Group members must:

* Disclose any interest, whether personal or on behalf of any resident or customer group they belong to, which might possibly affect or influence their approach to a service review
* Offer to withdraw from a service review where a conflict of interest is clear and substantial.

Challenge Group members should contact a member of the Customer Involvement Team if they think that a conflict of interest may or will affect the Challenge Group.

1. **Confidentiality**

Customer Challenge Group members sign a code of confidentiality which applies to this code of conduct.

The Challenge Group will respect the confidentiality of personal information about individuals which is provided for the purpose of conducting a service review.

The Challenge Group will refrain from mentioning specific individual cases which may cause embarrassment or identification of an individual, whether this is a HHL employee or a resident.

Any information of a confidential nature must not be disclosed to anyone else apart from the lead officer from HHL or other organisation whose services are being inspected.

1. **Gifts and Hospitality**

If any gift or hospitality is received in the course of acting as a Challenge Group member, it will be brought to the attention of the Chair and a member of the Customer Involvement Team and the future of the gift will be discussed at the next Challenge Group meeting. All hospitality will be entered into the HHL’s gifts and hospitality register.

1. **Dealing with breaches**

If a Challenge Group member fails to abide by the Code of Conduct or the Confidentiality Agreement, the Customer Involvement Manager and the Chair of the Challenge Group may warn them verbally that if they break the code again, they may not be able to continue as a member of the Challenge Group. If the breach is by the Chair, then this will be administered by the Vice Chair and the Customer Involvement Manager

If, despite a warning, a member of the Challenge Group continues to breach this Code, or, in the case of a first and more serious breach, a Challenge Group member will be suspended or removed from future work.

The matter will be investigated by the Chair and the Customer Involvement Manager and the outcome will be confirmed in writing.

Examples of serious breaches include, but are not confined to, the following:

* Misusing or disclosing resident feedback or other resident information obtained for the purpose of conducting a service review
* Acting in a manner that causes offence to another person (customer or officer) – e.g. displays of prejudice, verbal and non-verbal

A third/final right of appeal may be made in writing to the Chief Executive of HHL, or a senior manager who is chosen to act on her/his behalf.

All breaches will be considered within 10 days and the result will be communicated within 3 days to the Challenge Group member.

***In signing this Code of Conduct, I agree to abide by all requirements set out above:***

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Herefordshire Housing Challenge Group Member

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***In return, Herefordshire Housing Ltd will agree to provide training and support (including travel and other expenses):***

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of Herefordshire Housing Ltd

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_