

Guide to scrutiny

What is resident scrutiny?

Resident scrutiny provides a higher level of involvement, enabling customers to check on the services they receive and make recommendations on how things can be improved. The Customer Inspection and Improvement Panel (CIIP) is open to tenants and leaseholders of East Durham Homes. Membership of the panel is capped at 15 members.

What does an inspection involve?

- Document reviews
- Job shadowing
- Consultations with residents associations
- Customer focus group and telephone interviews for those who can't attend
- Staff interviews and focus groups
- Interviews with other partners organisations where applicable
- Linking in with other tenant groups where possible to support the process
- Debrief session to bring everything together

Aims of the panel

- To look into the services East Durham Homes provides in a detailed way
- To work on the behalf of and in the interest of customers to make recommendations for improvements
- To work well together as a team
- To develop in confidence and ability, both individually and as a group

Conduct

Panel members should follow to the Ten Golden Rules and Code of Conduct at all times. People should not bring up personal issues in meetings. Other panel members have the right to challenge others if they feel they are not behaving in an appropriate manner.

Due to the representative nature of the group, the CIIP aims to be made up of a diverse group of people and ages. Therefore panel members should focus on team work and make every effort to get to know other members of the group. This will be aided by social events held throughout the year.

Issues between individual team members should be resolved within the group and not discussed with non-members of the panel. If members are in conflict with one another, they should take this issue up with the team facilitator and/or the customer scrutiny officer as outlined in the complaints protocol.

Role of customer scrutiny officer

The scrutiny officer offers support and guidance to the group. This includes practical help such as arranging meetings, but also providing training, looking out for the welfare of all members of the group and offering guidance during an inspection. The scrutiny officer will sit in on meetings to stay informed of what needs to be done for the group. Overall the scrutiny officer aims to help the group develop and become more skilled and independent.

Role of team facilitator

The team facilitator is the point of contact for the Board and members of staff. The facilitator will lead on meetings and will attend a pre agenda meeting with the customer scrutiny officer to agree the agenda. If the team facilitator is unable to attend the meeting, the customer scrutiny officer will meet with the two co-ordinators to prepare the agenda. A short guide to chairing a meeting is being prepared to support the two co-ordinators should this situation arise.

Role of the team co-ordinators

The team co-ordinators are in place to support the team facilitator and to ensure all members of the group are informed and included. The group will be divided between two co-ordinators who will be responsible for their own group. If a member of the panel can't attend a meeting and has a question they should pass it on to their co-ordinator who will raise it on their behalf. Moreover, if a panel member can't make the task they've been assigned for in the inspection they should contact their co-ordinator who will rearrange this and inform the scrutiny officer of the change. Team co-ordinators must ensure when arranging a swap that all members have equal levels of responsibility and that no members are missed out. Co-ordinators are not to continually volunteer themselves as the substitute unless no one else is available.

Team secretary

The secretary supports the team facilitator in meetings, enabling them to lead the meeting whilst the secretary will keep a record of all relevant decisions and action points. The secretary will also produce a few lines after each meeting summarising what happened which can be sent to all those unable to attend to keep everyone informed. The role is open to the team co-ordinators as well as the rest of the panel and could be carried out on occasion by the customer scrutiny officer if the secretary is unavailable.

Communication

Due to the size of the group, it may not be possible for the whole group to attend every meeting. The customer scrutiny officer will make every effort to include all panel members where possible taking childcare, working hours and other commitments into account.

The team facilitator is required to get back to people within a period of 24 hours, unless they had already made clear they would be unavailable. In this case, the team co-ordinators will assume the role of point of contact for the group. The contact list will include a preferred method of contact for different panel members.

The team facilitator and co-ordinators have the responsibility of informing the customer scrutiny officer of any issues arising within the group so that they can be resolved.

Communication during an inspection

Due to the potential cost, panel members will not be able to meet every day as a large group to debrief. Therefore, panel members must be committed to passing on relevant information from each interview to the next interviewers for them to follow up on. The group will meet at the end on an inspection to discuss their findings.

Interview questions will be drawn predominantly from findings of the document reviews. Panel members make sure they are prepared for interview by familiarising themselves with the material and must take the initiative to highlight any questions they do not understand before going into the interview.

Planning the inspection

At the beginning of each inspection the panel will receive a presentation from the relevant service manager which will include an information pack. All panel members

will receive a copy of the relevant service standards to ensure they know what's been promised to the customer.

The customer scrutiny officer, team facilitator and co-ordinators will devise a 12 week plan so panel members are aware of dates of meetings well in advance. It must be noted some meetings may need to be added to this plan at a later date if required.

It is beneficial for panel members to rotate round jobs to gain a wide range of experience. The scrutiny officer and facilitator will keep a record of who has carried out which tasks in previous inspections which will be used when the panel assign tasks. The customer scrutiny officer will offer guidance if they think a pairing is unsuitable. The panel should aim to have at least one experienced person in each of the roles assigned.

Desktop reviews

Panel members will be allocated a period of time within the 12 week plan to read over policy and performance documents. A meeting will be scheduled where a member of the performance team will be available to assist the panel in understanding some of the content, with other officers there to support.

Panel members are welcome to arrange additional meetings between themselves to talk through the document reviews. However, document reviews must be completed by the deadline to ensure there is enough time to formulate interview questions.

Updates on previous inspections

All recommendations (after they go to Board) are stored on performance accelerator allowing managers to monitor how quickly they are being implemented. The panel will be given an update of the progress once a quarter until all recommendations have been considered. A hard copy of this progress will be kept at Meridian Court.

Staff

The CIIP will use a document request list to select which documents they wish to review. Managers should pass the relevant documents onto the customer scrutiny officer promptly. The scrutiny officer will ensure interviews are arranged in line with the joint working policy.