

# **Resident-led Scrutiny A Good Practice Guide**

**Tower  
Hamlets  
Homes**



**January 2013**

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If you would like further information, please contact:

Fokrul Hoque  
Strategic Engagement Manager  
Tower Hamlets Homes  
Strategic Engagement Team  
Jack Dash House  
2 Lawn House Close  
London  
E14 9YQ

Phone: 020 7364 0701

Email: [fokrul.hoque@towerhamletshomes.org.uk](mailto:fokrul.hoque@towerhamletshomes.org.uk)

Web: [www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk](http://www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk)

# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this good practice guide to Resident-Led Scrutiny. Here at Tower Hamlets Homes we always seek to place residents at the heart of our service. Residents scrutinising our work is seen as one more opportunity to achieve this objective.

The Residents' Panel was established to deliver scrutiny of all our services. From the outset, the Residents' Panel set out with four guiding principles.

- Being open and transparent
- Involving everyone
- Reaching evidence-based decisions independently
- Following through – ensuring all the scrutiny recommendations are acted on and that they achieve the desired outcomes.

This guide sets out how we do this in practice. We are very happy to share our experience with others in public housing so that we can continue to learn from each other.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the many people who are supporting successful resident-led scrutiny at Tower Hamlets Homes. First and foremost, I would like to pay tribute to all the residents, on the Residents' Panel, who have given so much of their time and delivered an unstinting commitment to scrutiny. My thanks go to Pam Haluwa, Mike Nulty, Jackie D'Arcy, Ian Campbell, Zoinul Abidin, Azezzun Zahraah, Safia Jama and Andrew Robinson.

I would also like to thank the members of staff, who have been open with residents engaged in investigating their services; their frank and honest approach has really helped to shed light on some difficult areas and come up with practical and workable solutions. In particular, Fokrul Hoque, Kamal Hanif, Sarah Pace and Lesley Owen have been at the heart of servicing and providing information to our Residents' Panel.

Last, but not least, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the residents' independent advisor, Irene Bannon, of Campbell Tickell. She has helped us to develop the scrutiny framework and has mentored and assisted our residents throughout the process.



**Gavin Cansfield**

Chief Executive, Tower Hamlets Homes





# Introduction

## What is Tower Hamlets Homes?

Tower Hamlets Homes is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) set up in 2008 as a not-for-profit company. The organisation's sole purpose is to deliver high quality housing services for residents living in 22,000 London Borough of Tower Hamlets Homes. In the last three years Tower Hamlets Homes has gone from 0 to 2 stars, kicked-off a £165m Decent Homes Programme, and seen resident satisfaction increase by nearly one third in a recent STAR survey. And we have won a national housing award for our work with the Somali community and were highly commended finalists for our work with young residents.

## About this guide

This guide sets out how the Residents' Panel, with the support of Tower Hamlets Homes, has brought about significant improvements to our services. The Residents' Panel was established to ensure the effective and strategic scrutiny of all of our services.

This guide summarises our experience of resident-led scrutiny. It aims to give readers the benefit of our work, which can be used directly, or adapted, to suit individual organisational circumstances.

## How to use the guide

Reading the guide from start to finish will give you a good understanding of our work, and the guide offers practical examples to illustrate our approach. We have provided templates of documents, which we hope you'll find useful. Good practice points can be found throughout the guide. We know that every organisation is different, but we are keen to share some useful tips on what went well, but just as importantly, what did not go so well.

## Who is the guide for?

It is intended that this guide will be of practical assistance to anyone in social housing who is involved in scrutiny, including Board members, members of staff, residents and other stakeholders.



## The regulatory context

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, published by the Homes and Communities Agency in March 2012, sets out the responsibilities of Registered Social Landlords to provide their tenants with opportunities to scrutinise service delivery.

The standards are split into two parts, the economic standards and the consumer ones. The specific expectations of landlords in relation to tenant influence and scrutiny are found in the consumer standards. Boards and Councillors are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that their organisations meet the consumer standards.

The Homes and Communities Agency, as the regulator, has a limited role in its oversight of consumer standards. It will only use its intervention powers if the failure to meet a consumer standard could lead to a risk of serious harm to tenants.

The Involvement and Empowerment standard sets out how tenants must be given the opportunity to influence and be involved in:

**“ The scrutiny of their landlord’s performance and making recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved. ”**

It goes on to how registered providers shall:

- Support the formation and activities of tenant panels, or equivalent groups and respond in a constructive and timely manner to them.
- Make the provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord’s performance in a form, which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants. Such provision must include the publication of an annual report, which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets.
- Consult with tenants on how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants and arrangements for reviewing these on a periodic basis.

- Consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in governance and scrutiny of the organisation’s housing management service.

### Good practice points

- Although the regulatory framework is directed at tenants, allow for the involvement of leaseholders as well as tenants in your scrutiny arrangements. Both have a stake in ensuring excellent and cost-effective service delivery. Both should be represented in your scrutiny arrangements to reflect the landlord’s tenure mix.
- Although the regulator will be taking a ‘hands off approach’ to this consumer standard, do not downgrade its importance. Provide as much commitment to delivering successful resident-led scrutiny as you would to meeting the other regulatory standards. Successful scrutiny not only leads to improved performance but can also reduce costs and conflict.



## The resident engagement structure

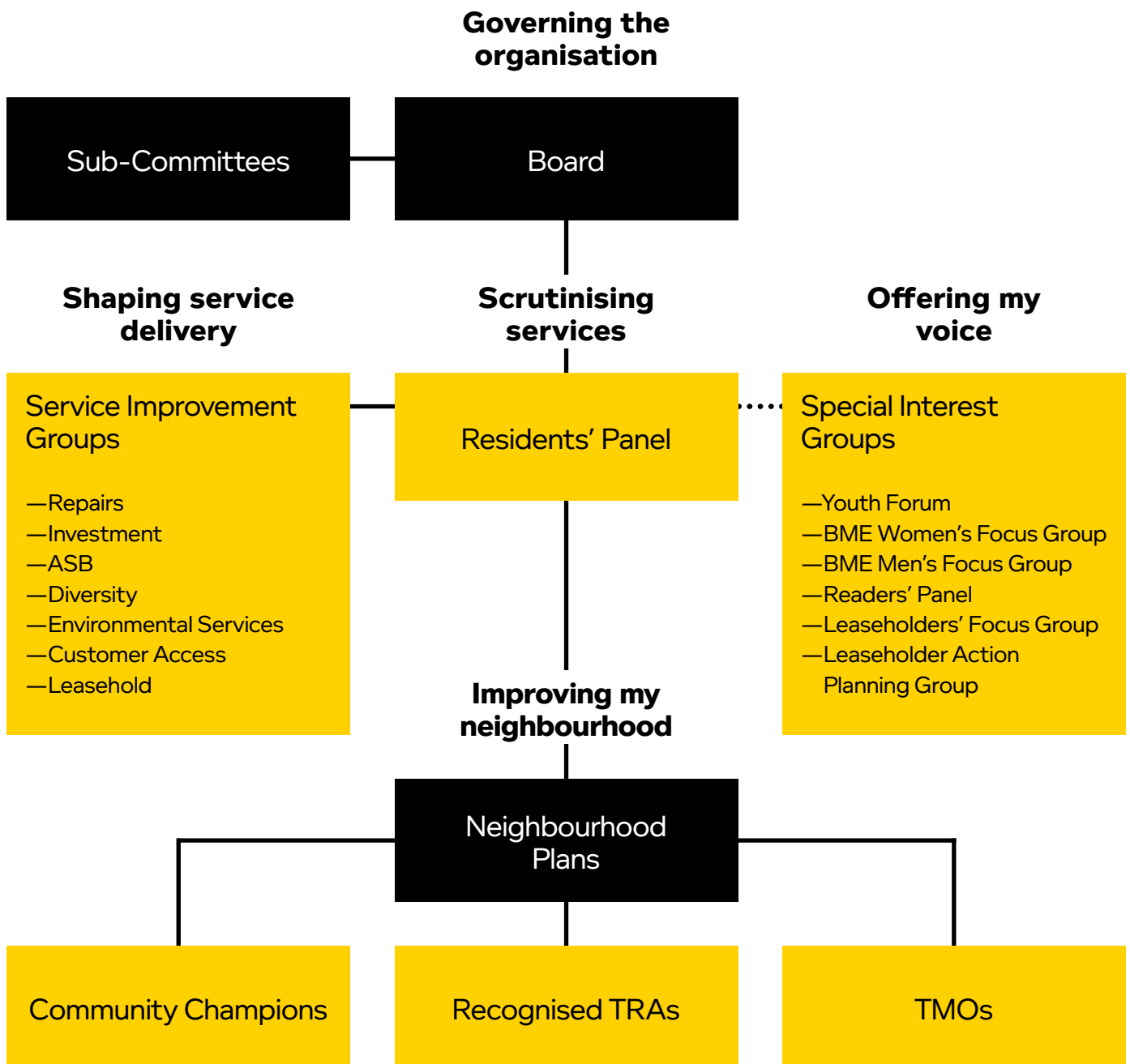
At Tower Hamlets Homes the resident engagement service covers community development/ sustainability work and resident participation type activities. The structure for supporting residents and delivering this work is given below.

Resident scrutiny, undertaken by the Residents' Panel, is at the heart of the engagement service. The Residents' Panel, made up of ten residents, has a direct relationship with a number of different bodies. These include: the Tower Hamlets Board, which receives and responds to the Panel's reports; the Service Improvement Groups, which may be asked to undertake work on behalf of the Panel and/or receive its reports; the Special Interest Groups, members of which may be asked to give evidence at scrutiny reviews and/or invited to sit on the Scrutiny Panel. There are also links to those residents who are working in particular areas to improve the service. For example, mystery shoppers may be asked to carry out an exercise as part of a scrutiny investigation or representatives of resident associations may be asked to come to a focus group targeted at exploring their experience of a service under scrutiny.

### Good practice points

- The Residents' Panel was grafted onto an existing resident engagement structure. The roles of the existing parts of the structure, particularly the Service Improvement Groups (SIGs), were not reviewed at the time and this led to some confusion. Therefore, we would strongly recommend that scrutiny bodies are placed in a central position in the organisation, with everyone's role in that structure clearly defined.
- Landlords have a duty to consult tenants every three years on the best way of involving them in scrutiny. This could be a good opportunity to review the structure and see if it is delivering for you.

# How do I get involved in...



## Rating the service THH provides



## Meeting the THH team





## The role of the Residents' Panel



The role of the Residents' Panel is captured in its Terms of Reference. It is to ensure that the resident voice – in terms of needs, concerns and aspirations – is listened to, heard and acted upon by Tower Hamlets Homes. A clear and robust Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct agreed by all parties from the outset will ensure there is clarity on purpose and roles and responsibilities. The Terms of Reference is given at Appendix A and the Code of Conduct is available on our website.

The Residents' Panel achieves its purpose by:

- Reviewing and monitoring a range of performance indicators relating to customer service;
- Challenging and exploring reasons for any areas of under-performance, and identifying areas for improvement;
- Commissioning in-depth or light touch scrutiny reviews;

- Making evidenced recommendations to the Board of Tower Hamlets Homes;
- Monitoring to ensure that its recommendations are not only acted upon but are also effective.

When undertaking its work the Residents' Panel adheres to its four guiding principles as set out below.

### **Being open and transparent**

The Residents' Panel achieves this by:

- Having regular reports on its work in Open Door, the quarterly newsletter for residents;
- Reporting back on its work in the Annual Report to Tenants;
- Posting the Residents' Panel minutes on the Tower Hamlets Homes website;
- Publishing its meeting dates on the Tower Hamlets Homes website;



- Allowing residents to visit Residents' Panel meetings to listen in;
- Holding regular local resident conferences to report back on its work and seek views on its work programme;
- Posting the results of all scrutiny reviews on the Tower Hamlets Homes website;
- Liaising with other parts of the resident involvement framework.

### **Involving everyone**

The Residents' Panel achieves this by:

- Ensuring that every tenant and leaseholder has the opportunity to become one of the ten members of the Residents' Panel through an open selection process. See recruitment process and role profile of Panel members on our website;
- Supporting residents who wish to join the Residents' Panel with an induction and ongoing training programme;
- Taking action to ensure that the membership of the Residents' Panel is reflective of the diverse community living in Tower Hamlets;
- Conducting resident, community, staff and stakeholder focus groups, and residents' surveys at each in-depth scrutiny review;
- Commissioning resident inspections or mystery shopping when scrutinising a service. Well over 100 people were invited to contribute to the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Scrutiny Review.

### **Reaching evidence-based decisions independently**

The Residents' Panel achieves this by:

- Deciding its work programme by reviewing:
  - Key performance indicators;
  - Benchmarking data;
  - Results of resident satisfaction surveys;
  - Complaints statistics;
  - Direct feedback from residents;
- As a result of the above exercise, and depending on the complexity of the problems identified, a decision is taken to commission either an in-depth or light touch scrutiny review;
- The commissioned scrutiny reviews are listed

- in the Residents' Panel's Work Programme and are undertaken in priority order based on the seriousness of the impact residents may suffer because of the service failure. An example of the work programme is given at Appendix B;
- Before a scrutiny review starts, the Residents' Panel agrees the scope and purpose of the review, areas to explore, evidence of problems and relevant Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data, together with start and end dates for the review. The team set up to undertake the scrutiny review then turn this into a work programme. (More information on how the scrutiny reviews are undertaken can be found in the following section.);
- All recommendations arising from the reviews must be based on evidence, with clear audit trails available;
- The Residents' Panel is provided with an independent advisor to support the Panel in its work.

### **Monitoring**

To ensure its work is effective the Residents' Panel regularly monitors:

- The progress of ongoing scrutiny reviews;
- The implementation of recommendations arising from completed scrutiny reviews;
- The effectiveness of implemented recommendations;
- Its own effectiveness.

The agreed 'Framework for Review' with the Residents' Panel is available on our website as well as examples of a typical Residents' panel agenda and minutes.

# The scrutiny process

The Residents' Panel is driven by evidence-based decision-making. The Panel's work programme is decided by a methodical and regular review of all relevant data as outlined in the preceding section. The processes through which the Residents' Panel progresses are captured in the diagram below:

## Deciding what to scrutinise

When the Scrutiny Panel was first established, it considered all the available performance data, together with the performance targets. The amount of information available was copious and too much for the residents to review on a regular basis. They filtered



it down to the areas, which interested them. They chose 34 indicators covering customer service calls, complaints, resident involvement, neighbourhood inspections, repairs, estate cleaning, anti-social behaviour, rents and service charges. These KPIs are reviewed on a monthly basis to ensure that the Scrutiny Panel cover the performance of the overall service delivery. An example of the performance report and format is available on our website.

The performance information is given to residents in a traffic light format with a top sheet summarising all the information at a glance. In addition, a written report is provided, which highlights the variances and the action to be taken.

The Residents' Panel periodically reviews the results of resident surveys and benchmarking reports.

Residents' Panel members may also be part of their own local association, or active in other parts of the involvement structure, and so pick up on residents' views of the services from anecdotal sources.

### **The scrutiny work programme**

As residents pool the various different sources of information, the poor performing areas emerge and these service areas are put into a scrutiny work programme. An example of the scrutiny work programme is given at Appendix E. Some areas requiring investigation may be relatively simple and so will be given a 'light touch' scrutiny review. Other areas may be complex and therefore require an in-depth scrutiny review. Information on how these differing reviews are undertaken follow in the next sections.

### **Scoping the individual scrutiny reviews**

A sub-group of the Residents' Panel will be formed to carry out each individual scrutiny review. The Residents' Panel agrees the scope of the review for the scrutiny team to carry out on its behalf. The scoping framework paper will cover the membership of the scrutiny review team, the review start and end dates, the purpose of the review, areas to be explored, evidence of concerns, relevant KPI data, resources and methods to be used in the review. An example of a scoping framework paper for the ASB

in-depth scrutiny review is given at Appendix C.

To assist the residents to make these decisions a scrutiny tool box was used. A copy of the tool box is given at Appendix D.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

As has been underlined throughout this guide, the Residents' Panel has a key role to undertake – not only in monitoring current service delivery and checking that appropriate targets are set, but also in monitoring and evaluating its own performance. This is achieved by the residents having an annual away day where they will review the Terms of Reference to see if they are still fit for purpose, review how they are operating as a team, identify areas for improvement, and undertake individual training needs assessments.

#### **Good practice points**

- Encourage residents to choose the indicators that interest them and allow them to ask for new indicators if they want to.
- Review the targets with residents to ensure that they are set at the appropriate level.
- Show residents different examples of how performance data can be presented so that they can pick the format which is most suitable for them.
- When providing percentage (%) results, give the number of people asked and the number of people responding as well as the % outcome.
- Residents often question the validity of performance results as it may not match their own experience. A light touch review on how data is collected and verified should help to restore residents trust in the system and the figures.
- Develop a 'resident approved' stamp that can go on all performance data that the Residents' Panel has checked to provide trust to the wider residents.
- To expand the number of residents involved in scrutiny allow for co-option of other residents, who are not members of the Residents' Panel, onto the individual service scrutiny teams.



# In-depth scrutiny reviews

'In-depth' scrutiny reviews are specifically for areas that are: complex, may involve more than one department and/or outside partners, have a major impact on residents' lives and will take considerable time to undertake.

Membership of the scrutiny team should not be too large. A team of three resident members, with officer support in addition, has proved to be a workable size. It has been very beneficial to have the member of staff who heads up the service under review as part of the review team. This approach has been balanced by providing an independent advisor for the residents, assisting them to take a critical overview and bring in an outside perspective to the review. Administrative support is also required to service the scrutiny team and this could be quite significant at the early stages of the review. The steps of in-depth scrutiny reviews are shown in the diagram on the right.

Once the Residents' Panel has approved the scrutiny findings and the recommendations it sets about ensuring that Tower Hamlets Homes takes the appropriate action as described in the scrutiny processes in the preceding section.

## The work programme

The work programme will be tailored to the individual needs of each in-depth scrutiny investigation. Typically, the activities will include a presentation from a senior officer outlining the service under scrutiny, a review of policies and procedures, consideration of relevant KPIs, diversity data, user satisfaction surveys, complaints and benchmarking data. Holding user focus groups, conducting staff and partner interviews, reviewing access points to the service and public information on the service (including the website) also offer useful insight into the service. Site visits, mystery shopping and good practice visits have further proved to be fruitful.

The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) scrutiny work programme is given at Appendix E.

## The final report

At first, we prepared two versions of the final scrutiny report. The first was a full report detailing all of the scrutiny team's work, findings, recommendations, and a vast appendix of evidence. The second was a summary report of the key findings, recommendations and a reduced appendix.

In hindsight, it is only necessary to produce a summary report but keep a detailed audit trail of the scrutiny team's work, findings and evidence for all the recommendations made.

The final report also provides a section for the ALMO to give its formal response to the findings and recommendations.

An example of the full and summary final reports on the scrutiny of our ASB Service can be found on the Tower Hamlets Homes website.

Turn the scoping framework document into a work programme

Undertake the work programme, keeping the full panel regularly updated

Agree the final scrutiny report which will include a summary of the scrutiny work programme undertaken, the key findings, recommendations, and the measures that will be monitored, once the recommendations have been implemented, to ensure that the service has improved to the required standard

Record key findings from each activity undertaken and any recommendations, which flow from those findings

Report the scrutiny findings back to the Residents' Panel and seek its approval

## Light touch scrutiny reviews

### Communications plan

There will be many parties who will have an interest in the outcome of any major scrutiny review. In the case of our ASB Scrutiny Review this included residents, staff, the police, youth organisations, Council and Board members and many others. To keep everyone informed, and to maximise impact, we produced and followed a communications plan. At the heart of that communication plan, has to be the wider resident population, so that they can see the outcomes and impact of the review.

An example of a communications plan is available on our website.

### How much time does it take?

It was estimated that each resident undertaking the ASB scrutiny work programme spent at least 10 full days of their time on the project. The independent advisor spent 8-10 days plus 15 days of administration support, and the manager of the service 15 days, working on the review.

### Good practice points

- All recommendations arising from a scrutiny review must be specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable and given a target time (or 'SMART', the acronym to which these terms are sometimes abbreviated).
- Keep final scrutiny reports short and punchy.
- Do not underestimate the resources required to deliver a successful scrutiny work programme and plan to provide them.
- Find a way to reward residents who undertake in-depth scrutiny reviews.
- Produce a communications plan at the end of each scrutiny review to maximise its impact.
- Always have an 'independent' person on an in-depth scrutiny review to support the residents and prevent bias from creeping in.
- Encourage the scrutiny team to report their findings back to the staff of the service under review to consult them on the findings and elicit their support.

Not all reviews require an in-depth approach. Indeed there are many benefits from taking a 'light touch' approach. As these types of reviews take less time more residents may be willing to take part. They can often deliver quick wins, giving everyone a boost of satisfaction as they see their involvement making a visible difference.

Light touch reviews should not take more than an average of three meetings to address and answer specific and clearly defined areas of concern. Good examples would be: the clarity of rent statements; or the way performance data is presented to residents; or testing the ease of access, and usefulness, of a particular part of the landlord's website.

The process used will be the same as in an 'in-depth review' but the work programme will be much simpler and straightforward. There should be no need to undertake major policy reviews, staff interviews, surveys, focus groups, and the like. It should be a simple matter of looking at the area of concern and coming up with clear solutions. An example of light touch final reports can be found on the Tower Hamlets Homes website.

### Good practice points

- When undertaking a 'light touch' review, you may be tempted to expand its scope on the way. Resist this temptation as you do not know where it may lead. Follow your work programme, and in your final report highlight any other areas requiring a review that you have discovered.

# Supporting scrutiny and making it stick

## Training

In our experience residents agreeing to join the scrutiny process feel their responsibilities keenly. They are aware that they are fulfilling a regulatory role and want to get it 'right'. In order to develop residents' knowledge base, confidence and build on their existing capacities, foundation and on-going training is offered.

The foundation training or induction covers:

- How resident scrutiny works, the regulatory framework, the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct, how scrutiny reviews are undertaken;
- A briefing on the organisation, its key structures and people, the governance arrangements, participation structures and how scrutiny fits in, giving an opportunity to meet some of the staff on site;
- A session on customer profiling, the location of homes, residents' current views on the service, including survey results, complaints data and the opportunity for estate visits;
- A session on performance data and how to understand it, setting and monitoring targets and benchmarking.
- Visits to other housing providers to see how others are doing scrutiny work and what is working well for them.

A training/induction pack with supporting information is provided. In addition, we are now starting annual training needs assessments for Residents' Panel members and offer training to meet any gaps found.

## Facilitating scrutiny

The administrative support required for our scrutiny framework has been considerable. At first we just bolted it on to existing officers' work responsibilities with the assistance of an outside consultant. However, as the scrutiny work took off, this approach was not sustainable. We have now employed an officer who is responsible for co-ordinating scrutiny. This has proved to be a positive and cost-effective measure. We continue to provide our residents

with access to an independent advisor who brings an external challenge to the process and a breadth of experience that has enriched the quality of our scrutiny outcomes.

Members of staff who are called to give evidence to scrutiny reviews will also need support and encouragement. In our experience front line staff and middle management are not eager to attend interviews with residents not knowing what they will be asked or what approach they should take. However, after attending such interviews staff attitudes changed. They were pleased to see residents shared their concerns for the service and were delighted to receive positive support for their ideas on how the service could be improved.

We also invested in a workshop with our Heads of Service, again facilitated by an outside consultant, to make sure that staff understood the wider context for scrutiny.

We found that officers who were part of an in-depth scrutiny review team spent a considerable amount of their time undertaking the review. After the review they went on to spend even more time developing and implementing improvement plans flowing from the review. This cannot just be added onto an existing workload and therefore adjustments will need to be made.

## Work Plans and Monitoring

After each light touch and in-depth scrutiny review the relevant service manager prepares and delivers an improvement work programme to deliver the approved recommendations. In the case of our ASB scrutiny review there were over 50 recommendations. Some of them had major financial implications, for example the implementation of a new case management system, and some were simple, for example improving access to website information. Timescales in the work plan had to take account of budgetary implications but there were ways to get some quick wins. For example the Service Manager agreed with all of the recommendations and so did not wait until the conclusion of the review to start to implement the emerging recommendations.



The Residents' Panel receives regular progress reports on the service improvement work programme. Tower Hamlets Homes has also set up a Priority Scrutiny Board of senior officers to co-ordinate the delivery of scrutiny across the organisation. The Priority Scrutiny Board keeps the programme on track, un-blocks any sticking points and reports back to the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team.

At the end of each service scrutiny the review team sets out the indicators that will be looked for, once the recommendations have been implemented, to ensure that the desired service improvements have taken place. These are known as the Hallmarks of Success. Monitoring will take place to ensure that the Hallmarks have been delivered.



### **Good practice points**

- If you are running an extensive induction programme incorporate some 'real scrutiny' as part of the process. The longer residents are delayed from some 'hands on scrutiny' experience the likelihood increases that they will become frustrated and disillusioned and want to drop out.
- If you run an annual training programme for your residents include your scrutiny induction programme as part of the annual offer. This may encourage more residents to become involved in scrutiny work.
- Offer a 'buddy' system for new residents joining your scrutiny committee.
- Encourage residents to attend external conferences, courses and networks to widen their experience.
- Review your staff induction procedures and make sure that they cover the importance of scrutiny in your organisation.
- Provide your residents with access to an independent advisor. This not only boosts their confidence but adds credibility to the scrutiny process.
- Work with your staff – residents need to plug into a structure that is ready to receive them. Make sure that staff understand the regulatory context for scrutiny and what has been learned in the sector about what works best, as well as how scrutiny will work in their organisation.
- Encourage and support staff who are called to interview in the scrutiny process. Ensure that all staff contributions are non-attributable. Advise staff to be honest and open at interview – warts and all.
- Senior management should allow for the extra time required of their staff members who are participating in scrutiny review teams.
- Make sure you set the 'Hallmarks of Success' at the end of each scrutiny review and monitor to ensure that they are delivered.

# Appendices

- A**    **Terms of Reference for the Residents' Panel**
- B**    **Residents' Panel Work Programme**
- C**    **Example of a scoping framework document**
- D**    **Scrutiny Review Toolbox**
- E**    **Example of an individual scrutiny work programme**

# Residents' Panel Terms of Reference

## 1. Background

The Residents' Panel of Tower Hamlets Homes was established to ensure effective and strategic resident scrutiny of the ALMOs services.

## 2. Role of the Panel

The Panel's role is to ensure that the resident voice – in terms of needs, concerns and aspirations – is listened to, heard and acted upon by Tower Hamlets Homes. The Panel will execute this role through the following means:

- Reviewing and monitoring a range of performance indicators relating to customer service (whether service standards or other measures of tenant and leaseholder satisfaction or local offers or a combination of some or all of these elements);
- Challenging and further exploring at Panel meetings the reasons for any areas of under-performance, and identifying areas for improvement;
- Commissioning in-depth scrutiny of any area of service by drawing on a range of resources, from staff expertise and additional data to practical support from other elements of the resident involvement framework to independent validation or support to a combination of some or all of these elements; and
- Making recommendations based on consideration of the evidence submitted by the scrutiny exercise.

The outcomes of the Panel's work are focused on improving consistency of the quality of service provision to residents and ensuring that the resident experience is taken into account in how services are designed and delivered.

## 3. Structure of Relationships

The Panel will feed insights, concerns and recommendations to the Tower Hamlets Homes Board, and will have a right of response from the Board. The Panel will undertake to communicate regularly with other residents through:

- the Open Door publication;
- reporting to Area Hub meetings;

- liaison – where beneficial – with other parts of the resident involvement framework;
- having a dedicated section in the Annual Report; and
- any other communications deemed appropriate.

## 4. Eligibility

Only tenants and residents of Tower Hamlets Homes will be eligible for selection as Panel members. Any tenants or residents who are the subject of complaints, or have any previous or current history of anti-social behaviour, will not be eligible. Tenants and residents who are members of other elements of the resident involvement framework cannot be members of the Panel to avoid potential conflicts of interest. Finally, it should be noted that the Panel has the power to remove any members who are in breach of the Code of Conduct.

## 5. Membership of the Panel

The Panel will comprise a maximum of 10 members. Where possible, the composition of the Panel will aim to reflect the diversity of the resident profile, whether tenure (the balance between tenants and leaseholders) or demography, ethnicity, and other diversity strands.

Appointments to the Panel will be competency-based. As and when vacancies on the Panel arise, an assessment will be made of skills gaps on the Panel and how these are best filled through a recruitment and selection process.

The Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets Homes will attend meetings of the Panel by invitation only. A Tower Hamlets Homes Board member will attend meetings of the Panel also by invitation only. The Panel will be serviced by Tower Hamlets Homes Strategic Engagement Manager.

## 6. Chairing of the Panel

The Panel will be chaired for the time being on a rotating basis, although no member will be forced to take up the role of Chair if they do not wish to do so. While the position of Chair is rotating, the Chair of the Panel will be considered to be in post from the day after the previous Panel meeting to the end of



that day on which they chair the Panel meeting. The Panel retains the option to appoint a fixed Chair in the future, should members anticipate benefits to doing so. No fixed Chair of the Panel may take up that role for more than 2 years. The Chair (whether rotating or fixed) will be responsible for finalising the agenda for any meetings s/he will chair.

The Chair is only entitled to speak for and on behalf of the Panel at non-Panel meetings with its prior consent. The Chair may only sign off documents on behalf of the Panel with the Panel's expressed consent.

### **7. Length of Service**

Panel members will serve for a minimum of 2 years. It is expected that after 2 years, starting from 2013, half of the Panel members will step down and half will remain. Those stepping down will be selected on the basis of volunteering their resignation and/or random selection. Thereafter, on a biennial cycle, renewal of half of the Panel's membership will take place primarily through any members who wish to do so stepping and secondly through the longest serving members stepping down. It is not envisaged that any Panel member would serve for a term of longer than 4 years.

### **8. Frequency of Meetings**

The Panel will meet for a minimum of 6 times each year, and these meetings will be timetabled to take place prior to Tower Hamlets Homes Board meetings.

### **9. Accountability and Feedback**

The Panel will report to the Tower Hamlets Homes Board and to Area Hub meetings on its progress. Recommendations focused on contributing to improved performance and increased overall customer satisfaction will be reported to the Board. Outcomes will be reported to all residents.



# Residents' Panel Work Programme

Areas	Light Touch / In-Depth
<p><b>Estate Cleaning Services</b> Requesting a pilot project for improving estates that receive a constant 'bronze award' that, if successful, is rolled out onto all 'bronze estates'. Request Tower Hamlets Homes to produce a refuse management plan to cover how they will improve/change the service to areas where so much weekly refuse is being produced that it constantly overflows into the surrounding environment.</p>	In-depth
<p><b>Leaseholder Accounting</b> A review on ongoing work and its effectiveness.</p>	Light touch
<p><b>Resident Involvement</b> The review will look at how effective the current arrangements are, and seek ways to improve any problem areas found. It will look for ways to reduce duplication of effort, and improve representativeness.</p>	In-depth (under way)
<p><b>Data Review</b> A light touch review on performance reporting to residents.</p>	Light touch (completed)
<p><b>ASB</b> An in-depth review into the ASB Service.</p>	In-depth (completed)
<p><b>Decent Homes/Vulnerability measures</b> Investigate and agree what these measures should be.</p>	Light touch
<p><b>Tenant Profiling</b> Making sure that up-to-date details for residents (taken from all sources) are uploaded into Northgate's tenant profile area.</p>	Light touch
<p><b>Complaints Service</b> A light touch review on the definition of what makes a complaint and what the customer journey is through the complaints process.</p>	Light touch
<p><b>Website</b> Review the Tower Hamlets Homes website contents, ease of use, and make recommendations for improvement taking account of the recommendations from the ASB Scrutiny Report.</p>	Light touch
<p><b>Welfare Reforms – Assistance to residents</b> Look at the effectiveness of Tower Hamlets Homes assistance to residents, in respect of the effects of the Welfare Reform Act.</p>	Light touch (completed)
<p><b>Repairs Contact Centre</b> A Service Improvement Group has been seeking to improve this service. This review will look at the results and see if further work needs to be done.</p>	Light touch

**Anti-Social Behaviour  
Service**

<b>Resident Review Chair</b>	Zoinul Abidin	<b>Lead Senior Officer</b>	Trevor Kennett
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<b>Resident Review Members</b>	Jackie D'Arcy, Ian Campbell
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<b>Review Start date</b>	March 2012	<b>Review end date</b>	September 2012
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<b>Purpose of the Review</b>	To explore the reasons for residents dissatisfaction with the ASB services and make recommendations on how the service should be improved.
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<b>Areas Explored</b>	Structures and processes within the ASB department. Partnership working with other agencies, for example the police and youth service. If, when compared with others, the service is delivering value for money.
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<b>Evidence of concerns</b>	Audit Commission inspection raised ASB as an area of concern, at HUB meeting with residents held in November 2011, residents expressed major dissatisfaction with the service. In the HUB survey 51% of residents said the service needs to improve.
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<b>Current KPI data</b>	To be included when available.
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**Scope of Review - The resources or methods of scrutiny for this review****Mystery shoppers**

Commission Tower Hamlets Homes in-house residents mystery shopping team to test the service.

**Policies Required**

All policies and procedures covering ASB services.

Copies of standard letters used.

Definition of what triggers the opening and the closing of an ASB case.

The procedures to be used from the opening to the closing of an ASB case.

Case work management manuals/written advice used by ASB staff.

Any enforcement policies and procedures.

Copies of all current tenancy agreement/leasehold agreements in use.

**Information Required**

Structure chart of ASB team.

Copies of all publicity material on the ASB service.

A definition of how ASB cases are prioritised.

Processes for ensuring that residents are kept informed on the progress of their ASB case.

Methods used for case work supervision.

Quality control procedures.

List of all other agencies involved in ASB work for example the police, social, health and educational services.

**Data required**

The numbers and types of new ASB cases over 2 years on an area basis.

Trends analysis of ASB cases over a 2 year period.



Analysis of feed back received from residents at the closure of their cases for the past 2 years on a subject and area basis.

The numbers and types of complaints received about the ASB service over a 2 year period and their outcomes.

Information on any Ombudsman referrals in relation to ASB cases.

All performance data covering the ASB service.

The number of NOSP issued, over the past 2 years, for ASB infringements of the tenancy agreement.

The number of evictions, over the past 2 years, for ASB infringements of the tenancy agreement.

The number of actions taken against leaseholders for ASB infringements of their tenancy.

Copies of Tower Hamlets Council's own resident surveys results relating to ASB services.

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### **Budgetary information required**

All internal costs including staffing, accommodation and overhead costs.

All re-charge costs for example, Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers, Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

All equipment/hire costs for example the use of borough CCTV Control Room.

All equipment assets purchased for the exclusive use of ASB dept [for example CCTV suites etc].

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### **Staff to be interviewed**

ASB Manager.

Other members of the ASB Team as the Panel determines on inspection of the structure chart.

Representatives of police and youth service and other partners as the Panel determines.

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### **Key Questions to be explored**

Where does Tower Hamlets Homes responsibility start and end in relation to reported ASB cases?

Who co-ordinates activities on all reported cases?

What are all the different channels where residents can report an ASB problem and how are these co-ordinated in relation to logging the cases and getting an ASB reference number?

What evidence is there of lessons being learned and changes being made to the service?

What evidence is there of successful partnership working on complex ASB cases?

What quality control measures are in place?

What evidence is there on the victims of ASB being regularly up dated on the progress of their case?

What evidence is there to show that cases are not 'lost' when referred to other agencies?

What evidence is there to show that priority is given to the most serious ASB cases?

What evidence is there to show that residents are receiving an effective ASB service?

What evidence is there to show that the ASB team is providing value for money?

What are the key barriers on addressing ASB issues?

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### **Site visits**

A visit to a Social Landlord who is leading in the field of ASB services

A visit to a Tower Hamlets Homes location reporting high levels of tenancy related ASB issues to talk to residents and address the day to day issues.

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### **One off events**

A member of the panel to 'shadow' an ASB Officer for a day and report back to the ASB Scrutiny Team.

A focus group meeting with residents whose ASB cases have recently been closed.

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### **Communication Strategy**

Article in local papers inviting written submission to the ASB Scrutiny Review.

Regular column in Open Door giving feedback on progress since last Residents' Conference.

ASB Scrutiny Review meetings open to observers save for confidential matters.

Minutes, and regular feed back, provided to Residents' Panel and ASB SIG.

Minutes posted on Tower Hamlets Homes website.

Copies of final report and recommendations posted on Tower Hamlets Homes website and sent to

Residents' Panel, ASB SIG, TH Federation of TRAs, Tower Hamlets Homes Tenants/Residents Associations, Tower Hamlets Homes Executive Team and Tower Hamlets Homes Board.

Article in local papers reporting back on findings/recommendations.

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### **Additional help required**

Attendance of independent resident advisor and drafting of the final report.

Commission focus group consultation.

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# The Scrutiny Review Toolbox

Decide if you want a 'light touch' or 'full review' and tick the tools you want to use. Remember staff will be on hand to prepare all the information you request and assist you through the review. Once you have established the tools you wish to use, a work programme can be developed for the scrutiny team to follow.

## Preparing For the Review

- Establish:
- If you want a 'light touch' or 'full review'
  - Who will be on the review panel
  - How long the review will take
  - The officers you will need to assist you
  - Who will service the scrutiny team
  - If additional help will be required by the scrutiny team

## Data Review

- Find out if performance is improving, declining, remaining the same:
- Key Performance Indicators
  - Customer satisfaction
  - Number of complaints made
  - Number of complaints to the Ombudsman
  - The results of the last STATUS survey on the service
  - Number of complaints from MPs/Councillors
  - Anti-social behaviour data if relevant
  - Benchmarking information on quality
  - Review external/internal audit reports

## Policy and Procedure

- Review the existing policies and procedures and the operation of the service:
- Review current policies and procedures
  - See standard letters sent to residents
  - Review public information on the service – written/ website
  - See staffing structures for the service/job descriptions
  - Look for evidence to see if staff are following the current policies and procedures
  - Establish if the policies and procedures meet current statutory requirements
  - Carry out research to establish good practice for this service
  - Establish if the current policies and procedures used met good practice standards
  - Find out if all published information on the service is clear, easy to understand and available in the necessary formats and languages
  - Is there evidence to show that staff are delivering a quality service?
  - Is resident access to the service satisfactory?
  - Consider which staff you may wish to interview

## Investigating for Value for Money

Find out answers to the following questions:

- What is the cost of providing the service?
- How do the costs of the service compare when benchmarked against others?
- How do customer satisfaction rates compare when benchmarked against others?
- Is the service performing better or worse when benchmarked with others?

## Customer Views

Find out customers' views on the service by:

- Looking at customer satisfaction surveys
- Holding customer focus groups
- Undertaking a 'Mystery Shopping Exercise'
- Undertaking a 'Customer Journey Exercise'
- Meetings with resident representative organisations
- Holding public meetings
- Attending local residents' associations meetings

## Visits and other interviews

Consider if any of the following would be helpful:

- Good practice visit
- Visits to estates
- Meeting with partners used to deliver the service
- Meetings with Councillors
- Meeting with senior staff/Heads of Service/Chief Executive

## At the end of the scrutiny review agree recommendations

Make all your recommendations SMART  
Recommendation examples:

- Make existing policies and procedures in line with good practice by X date
- Reduce the number of stages in the process from 4 to 2 by X date
- Increase/decrease targets – state by how much and by when
- Increase the number of ways that a customer can lodge a complaint – state by how much and by when
- Improve the ways customers are kept informed about the progress of their complaint by X date
- Undertake a full value for money review starting on X date and reporting back by Y date
- Ask staff to prepare an improvement plan to deliver all the recommendations – they should draft a plan to be presented to the Area Board meeting on X date

## Delivery / Work Programme

<b>ASB Scrutiny Team Resident Chair</b>	Zoinul Abidi
<b>Review Members</b>	Jackie D'Arcy, Ian Campbell
<b>Lead Senior Officer</b>	Trevor Kennett
<b>Independent Advisor</b>	Irene Bannon
<b>Purpose of the Review</b>	To explore the reasons for resident dissatisfaction with the ASB services and make recommendations on how the service should be improved. For further details please refer to the scoping framework document attached.
<b>Review Start date</b>	March 2012
<b>Review end date</b>	September 2012

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Chair</b>	Ensure the smooth running of meetings. In partnership with others facilitate the timely delivery of this programme. From time to time to be available to take decisions between meetings.
<b>Lead Senior Officer</b>	Ensure that the Scrutiny Team receives full co-operation and support from all relevant Tower Hamlets Homes staff and their agents. Support the Chair to facilitate the timely delivery of this programme.
<b>Administrator</b>	Facilitate the smooth running of the Scrutiny Team, including booking venues, giving notice of meetings, taking minutes, co-ordination and dispatch of all Scrutiny Team papers, co-ordination of site visits and interviews.
<b>Independent Advisor</b>	To support the resident members of the Scrutiny Team in the successful delivery of their role. To facilitate the preparation of the Scrutiny Panel's final report and recommendations.

## ASB Scrutiny Review Team Work Programme

### Session 1

Date

Presentation from ASB Manager giving an overview of the service showing the ASB team structure and the customer journey from first contact to case closure and providing answers to the following key questions:

- Where does Tower Hamlets Homes responsibility start and end in relation to reported ASB cases?
- Who co-ordinates activities on all reported cases?
- What are all the different channels where residents can report an ASB problem and how are these co-ordinated in relation to logging the cases and getting an ASB reference number?
- What evidence is there of lessons being learned and changes being made to the service?
- What evidence is there of successful partnership working on complex ASB cases?
- What quality control measures are in place?
- What evidence is there on the victims of ASB being regularly updated on the progress of their case?
- What evidence is there to show that cases are not 'lost' when referred to other agencies?
- What evidence is there to show that priority is given to the most serious ASB cases?
- What evidence is there to show that residents are receiving an effective ASB Service?
- What evidence is there to show that the ASB Team is providing value for money?

Agree venue, frequency and duration of ASB Scrutiny Team meetings  
Agree scope of Mystery Shopping Exercise  
Agree press release  
Agree date time and venue of next meeting

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### Session 2

Date

Scrutinise all ASB policies and procedures  
Agree good practice visits  
With reference to structure chart agree which staff to be interviewed  
Agree which 'partners' to interview and key areas to explore  
Agree proposed 'tenants' focus group' arrangements  
Agree proposed ASB Scrutiny Team meeting schedule

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### Session 3

Date

Scrutinise data, including:

- The numbers and types of new ASB cases over two years on an area basis
- Trends analysis of ASB cases over a two-year period;
- Analysis of feedback received from residents at the closure of their ASB cases for the past two years on a subject and area basis;
- The numbers and types of complaints received about the ASB Service over a two-year period;
- Information on any Ombudsman referrals relation to ASB cases;
- All performance data covering the ASB Service;
- The number of NOSP issued, over the past two years, for ASB infringements of the tenancy agreement;
- The number of evictions, over the past two years, for ASB infringements of the tenancy agreement;
- The number of actions taken against leaseholders for ASB infringements of their tenancy;
- Copies of Tower Hamlets Council's own resident surveys results relating to ASB services ;
- Scrutinise publicity materials on ASB Service;
- Agree methods for case work file scrutiny;



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**Session 4**

Date

Scrutinise budgetary information

Receive report back from Mystery Shopping Exercise

Agree key points from interviews and visits that need to be included in the final report

Review key points emerging for inclusion in the final report

Agree key recommendations for the final report

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**Session 5**

Date

Agree final report and recommendations

Agree press release

Final wrap up







**Tower  
Hamlets  
Homes**

# **Resident-led Scrutiny**

## A Good Practice Guide