

**Code of Conduct**

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| * ‘‘insight’’ is the name given to the voluntary customer scrutiny panel
* Great Places Housing Group will be referred to as GPHG throughout the document
* Customer is used as a generic term that refers to anyone who needs, requests or receives a service from the GPHG, including tenants and leaseholders, applicants for rehousing, residents who live in neighbourhoods managed by GPHG and people buying their homes from GPHG
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1. **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to set standards for how volunteer members of ‘insight’ will conduct themselves with each other; with other customers they come into contact with, with staff, with Board Members as well as when they are representing ‘‘insight’’ and GPHG during the course of scrutiny work they are involved in. Members of ‘insight’ undertake this role on a purely voluntary basis and do not receive remuneration from GPHG.

This code of conduct covers the following important issues:

* Personal conduct
* Disclosing interests and dealing with conflicts of interest
* Confidentiality & Handling Information
* Dealing with breaches

A copy of the code of conduct will be signed by each member of ‘‘insight’’ along with the Role Profile, Confidentiality Agreement and Terms of Reference. All documents are complementary, designed to work together and must be read and understood fully prior to signing.

1. **Personal Conduct**

Group members will:

* Appreciate and respect other peoples’ differences. Never discriminate on any ground against anyone else whilst carrying out a scrutiny project. Treat other people fairly and equally regardless of race, gender, disability, cultural or religious beliefs, age or sexuality avoiding the use of discriminatory or negative remarks
* Support each other throughout the course of a scrutiny investigation being mindful of people’s different skills, knowledge and experiences
* Ensure that ‘insight’ and GPHG are not brought into disrepute by the actions of individual ‘insight’ members
* Not seek to obtain any personal benefit or advantage (other than the rewards and expenses payable for participation in scrutiny projects) or expect to receive more favourable treatment by staff because of being a member of ‘insight’
* Not disclose any information received from anyone in accordance with the signed confidentiality agreement
* Behave in a manner, which is professional and aids the smooth process of completing scrutiny, communication and the improvement of services for GPHG customers. Examples of this behaviour can be found in Appendix One
* Be inclusive and never intimidate, leaving as friends even if there are disagreements during the meetings and work together to solve conflicts or disputes
1. **Disclosing interests and dealing with conflicts of interest**

‘insight’ members must:

* Disclose any interest, whether personal or on behalf of any customer or customer group they belong to, which might possibly affect or influence their approach to scrutiny
* Withdraw from the scrutiny work (in whole or in part) where a conflict of interest is clear and substantial.
* Notify the Customer Involvement Co-coordinator immediately if they think a conflict of interest has or may arise.
1. **Confidentiality & Handling Information**

‘insight’ members will treat information received as confidential and in accordance with the signed Confidentiality Agreement.

* ‘insight’ will respect the confidentiality of personal information about individuals, which is provided for the purpose of conducting a scrutiny project. ‘insight’ must also refrain from mentioning specific individual cases, which may cause identification of an individual.
* Any information of a confidential nature must not be disclosed to anyone, except to the Customer Involvement Co-ordinator.
* I will not publish any defamatory and / or knowingly, false material about the GPHG, other customers, ‘insight’ members or anything likely to bring GPHG into disrepute on social networking sites, “blogs” (online journals), “wikis” and any online publishing format such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn or any other social site.
* Handle confidential information as agreed with ‘insight’, in-line with the criteria of the signed Confidentiality Agreement.
1. **Gifts and Hospitality**

 If any gifts or hospitality is received in the course of acting as an ‘insight’ member, it will be brought to the attention of the Customer Involvement Co-ordinator and the future of the gift will be discussed at the next ‘insight’ meeting.

 All hospitality will be entered into the GPHG gifts and hospitality register.

1. **Dealing with breaches**

If an ‘insight’ member fails to abide by the Code of Conduct, Terms of Reference, Role Profile or Confidentiality Agreement or acts in a manner, which is not in the spirit of these documents or goes against the principles of co-regulation and partnership working, the following actions may be taken:

* Any breach should be raised immediately with the Customer Involvement Manager or Co-ordinator
* The Customer Involvement Co-ordinator will undertake a preliminary investigation of the alleged breach, informing the ‘insight’ member under investigation. This initial investigation will inform a formal investigation, if the breach is found to be substantiated.
* The investigation will aim to conclude within a maximum of 10 working days.
* The Customer Involvement Manager and a member of the Customer Services Voice will determine the level of the breach; these will be the Investigating Group. Any member of the Investigating Group will not have a conflict of interest in this breach or be implicated by it.
* The Investigating Group will determine the severity of the breach and whether it is necessary to suspend the ‘insight’ member who is alleged to have made the breach.
* The Investigating Group will determine the outcome of the alleged breach based upon findings of their investigation.
* The outcome will be confirmed in writing to all parties.

**How serious is the breach?**

There are 2 levels of breach:

* Minor breaches will not require the suspension of the ‘insight’ member. An example of a minor breach would be acting in a manner that causes offence to any other person, e.g. displays of prejudice, verbal and non-verbal.
* Major breaches would be defined as a serious misuse of power, information or a 2nd minor breach. An example of a major breach can be:
* the misuse or disclosure of information obtained for the purpose of conducting a scrutiny project
* an act which places ‘insight’ or GPHG at risk from adverse publicity and / or investigation, including but is not exclusive to; exhibiting bullying or harassing behaviours, the use of foul, abusive or discriminatory language or any form of physical assault

The Investigating Group will determine whether the breach is minor or major.

**Outcomes**

A range of outcomes may be taken as a result of the investigation, including:

* identify and offer relevant training and support (minor breach)
* a final written warning to be served, which is formally recorded by ‘insight’ and GPHG, (a minor breach)
* the member asked to leave ‘insight’ (a major or 2 minor breaches)

A first and final appeal on the breach outcome may be made in writing to the Director of Housing Services, within 10 working days of receiving notification of the decision. The Director of Housing’s decision will be confirmed in writing to all parties within a maximum of 10 working days.

**Who can raise a breach?**

Any aggrieved person, including customers, staff and a member of Board of GPHG can raise a breach with the Customer Involvement Manager or Co-ordinator.

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**Appendix One**

**In carrying out the work of or representing ‘insight’, members are expected to observe the following conventions when taking part in a scrutiny:**

1. Act in a professional manner both inside and outside of meetings, keeping confidentiality and not gossiping but promoting and representing the best principles of Scrutiny.
2. Respect each other, be tolerant of each other’s opinions, listen and not talk over each other because each member within the group has an equal say
3. Set aside personal or individual disputes and not bring along to ‘insight’.
4. Accept the majority decision, even if you do not personally agree with it
5. Not abuse their position as an ‘insight’ member to gain any favour or personal benefit
6. Act in an open minded, non-judgemental way
7. Abide by the terms of the Confidentiality (data protection) Agreement
8. Not use technology or social media to share information from scrutiny or any issue in dispute with GPHG or within ‘insight’ either individually or as a group
9. Come prepared to meetings, having completed work allocated
10. Co-operate and work in partnership with each other, other GPHG customer organisations and GPHG staff and Board
11. Be reliable, punctual, attend meetings and events connected with the work of the Group, always giving notice and reasons if unable to attend within working 2 days of the meeting date
12. Apologise if they are unable to attend a meeting
13. Be honest, listen and always be willing to learn
14. Enable everyone to contribute and communicate with each other and speak through the meeting co-ordinator at all times
15. Be clear and brief and assist the smooth running of meetings by keeping to the agenda and to the point
16. Show a commitment to equality and diversity and avoid abusive and offensive comments about individuals and discriminatory remarks
17. Work with other ‘insight’ members and others generally to resolve any disputes or conflicts
18. Respect that each member of the committee has different skills and knowledge, and be willing to pool their skills and knowledge for the good of ‘insight’ as a whole and for all customers of GPHG

Appendix 1

1. Switch off mobile phones or keep on silent when attending meetings and other events, except at the express permission of the group
2. Observe personal hygiene, be presentable and appear professional
3. Always act for the benefit of the customers of GPHG
4. Remember the purpose of ‘insight’ is to benefit customers generally and not specific individuals
5. Be courteous to anyone you come into contact with during a scrutiny investigation and not use offensive, provocative, discriminatory or racist language
6. Not have meetings within meetings, speak via meeting chair, to the whole ‘insight’ group
7. Be relevant and stick to the point / matter in hand, personal matters and complaints will be kept out of the meeting and parked
8. Ensure each members safety, security and comfort

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

Print name : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed by\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

‘insight’ Group Member

***In return, GPHG will agree to provide training, support (including travel and other expenses) for the Group, which are identified upon appointment and in appraisals.***

Print name : ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of GPHG