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# Scrutiny Panel: our guidelines

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**Date of issue: June 2021**

**Review date: February 2022**

This panel will oversee and deliver independent, customer-led scrutiny. This will involve reviewing key services and policies. These reviews will be delivered with the full support of NCHA.

The panel's key goals are to:

- Act as a critical friend to NCHA, holding us accountable, while also recognising good service
- Deliver positive outcomes for all customers through service improvements, better value for money and increased transparency / accountability
- Be the link between informal involvement activities and the Scrutiny Panel, Homes and Neighbourhood Panel, Customer Committee and Board
- Support compliance with important/legal standards
- Recognise and promote customer-led scrutiny approaches, to encourage more diversity in engagement and the best possible outcomes. These can include, scrutiny projects, task and finish activities, 'boot camp' and 'action forum' approaches.

## Keeping things in check

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The Customer Committee will oversee activities via panel meeting minutes. They'll also complete reviews after the first 12 months of the panel's work, then every two years.

All panel members share responsibility for the decisions made. Actions will be taken only in the best interest of NCHA and its customers. Panel members must not act on behalf of any other group or themselves. They should put the interests of our customers and NCHA before their own interests.

The Homes and Neighbourhood and Scrutiny Panel Chairs will meet quarterly to ensure their work is aligned. This will include an annual review meeting. From these meetings, they'll produce short, quarterly reports for the Customer Committee.

The panel will issue reports of all completed scrutiny, task and finish or similar activities to the Customer Committee. This will be completed using the agreed process for each activity and by the agreed timescale.

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The panel can review these guidelines after the first 12 months, then every two years. Recommendations from these reviews will be made to the Customer Committee.

## Support for the panel

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The Head of Homes and Wellbeing will be the lead NCHA employee who supports the work of the panel. NCHA will cover members' expenses where necessary.

## Membership

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The panel will include the following membership:

- 1 Panel Chair (customer)
- 6 customers (including at least 1 leaseholder and 1 care and support service user)

New customer members will be recruited in line with NCHA's Recruitment Policy. They'll be appointed by the Head of Homes and Wellbeing, the Panel Chair and customer member(s) of the Customer Committee. The Panel Chair is appointed by the Head of Homes and Wellbeing, a customer member of the Customer Committee and the Customer Committee Chair.

One customer member will join the panel as a subject matter expert. This role will take the lead in identifying and sharing best practice. It will also act as a link with organisations, such as TPAS and recommend appropriate training.

The Panel Chair and customer members can't hold other positions within NCHA's formal involvement and governance structure.

Members will serve for an initial two years, subject to successful involvement in the panel. This can be extended by another two years at a time, up to a maximum of six years.

Customer members will have a review 12 months after they join the panel to ensure they're still fit for the role. This will also help to identify training and development needs. The Panel Chair and Head of Homes and Wellbeing will confirm whether customer members are still fit for their role. Future reviews will take place every two years.

## Attendance

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NCHA employees may be invited to attend all or part of panel meetings. Attendees will usually include:

- Director of Homes and Wellbeing
- Head of Homes and Wellbeing
- Head of Property Services
- Head of Communities
- Customer Involvement Manager
- Governance Manager

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- Other directors and managers as required
- Members of the Customer Involvement team as required.

The panel will be supported by the Customer Involvement team. It will have a specific person to organise evidence gathering, internal and external meetings and other admin tasks.

The panel will have reasonable access to reports, colleagues and any other relevant information to support their tasks.

## Meetings

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The panel will meet quarterly to:

- Review and progress all activity from the previous quarter
- Monitor overall performance of the panel
- Identify training needs for panel members
- Review any barriers to delivering effective scrutiny.

All meetings/focus groups associated with scrutiny activity will be agreed and overseen by the panel. These meetings may include a mix of panel members, other customers, NCHA employees and external experts.

For meetings to take place, at least four customer members including the Panel Chair will be needed.

## Areas of responsibility

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The panel will recommend a 12 month plan for all scrutiny activities, with timescales, to the Customer Committee. These proposed activities should include scrutiny, task and finish and other exercises the panel aims to deliver.

The panel will keep NCHA's internal audit programme and other service reviews in mind when making plans. This will help to avoid duplicating activities.

The panel will recommend a proposed annual budget, to cover activities, to the Customer Committee. This will be in line with NCHA's budget setting timetable.

The panel will identify future scrutiny activities from the following:

- Service improvements identified by the Customer Committee and Homes and Neighbourhood Panel
- Customer feedback from informal involvement activities
- External and internal feedback.

The panel will present recommendations following scrutiny, task and finish and other activities that have been overseen. Reports will be presented with conclusions, supported by evidence and research with clear recommendations. These will be submitted to the Customer Committee or Board for consideration.

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The panel will have agreed timescales for implementing approved recommendations and for updates from service leads. These timescales will be recommended to the Customer Committee or Board.

Scrutiny recommendations that NCHA and/or the Customer Committee don't accept, will be initially discussed between the following:

- Customer Committee Chair
- Scrutiny Panel Chair
- Lead NCHA employees for both groups.

If these people don't agree on an outcome, the issue will be escalated to the Board.

The panel will identify training, development and support for members as needed. If necessary, the panel will use external experts to support scrutiny activity.

The panel will produce agreed criteria and processes for each type of activity they get involved in. This will be shared with the Customer Committee.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion

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The panel will support NCHA's commitments outlined in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Policy.

The panel will ensure fair and equal treatment for all, regardless of any protected characteristics.

This panel will ensure obstacles that may prevent customers from getting involved are identified. It will find a way to remove those obstacles.

The panel will review its membership every two years after the initial 12 month review. This will ensure membership is representative of the communities where NCHA operates.

The panel will abide by NCHA's policies on equality and diversity. Members will attend equality and diversity training as part of their role.

## Confidentiality

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Customer members of the panel will have access to sensitive and confidential information. Any confidential or sensitive information seen must not be shared outside of the panel.

Customer members will sign NCHA's Code of Conduct and confidentiality statements as part of their role. They'll be expected to uphold NCHA's values at all times.