



AREA PANEL CODE OF CONDUCT

1. WHY DO WE NEED A CODE OF CONDUCT?

Area Panel members are representatives of Northwards Housing. Members show integrity; our actions are transparent and therefore at all times our behaviour allows us to avoid any suggestion of influence by improper motives.

The Board believes that staff, Board Members and Area Panel Members, as well as residents, want to be associated with an Organisation that publicises and upholds its values. High standards of conduct imply disclosure of matters that might conceivably be seen as giving rise to a duality of interest, and require Area Panel Members to uphold the spirit, as well as the wording, of this Code of Conduct.

All Area Panel Members are required to sign this Code of Conduct

2. CRITERIA FOR PANEL MEMBERS AND OBSERVERS

Applications to become an Area Panel Member, or to be an Observer at a meeting can not be considered by people who have or are:

- Rent arrears or other housing-related debt of more than £250 and no satisfactory arrangement to pay
- Former tenant with a legal possession order against you
- Former tenant who did not end the tenancy according to the agreement
- Behaviour which spoils(t) the peaceful enjoyment of residential dwellings, or you are/were violent to or threatened other tenants or residents, your Landlords staff or agents.
- An unspent conviction for a community offence or are the subject of an Anti Social Behaviour Order or other civil restraining order and we believe you are a significant risk to the community. (See appendix 3)

3. MEETINGS

Area Panel Members will:

- support and respect the Chair
- request to speak through the Chair
- listen to the views of the Panel and allow open discussion
- respect individuals views
- respect the principles of equality and diversity
- behave in a reasonable and courteous manner to all present
- will declare any interest in an agenda item

Observers will:

- observe the rules above
- have prior Area Panel agreement to attend the meeting (Area Panel Constitution 12.8)
- not speak unless invited to do so by the Chair, and not speak about personal issues
- not vote on any issue
- be required to leave the meeting during confidential discussions as directed by the Chair
- not use information for personal or political gain

The Chair will ask an Observer or Panel Member to leave a meeting if they break these rules. If an observer breaks these rules they will be refused attendance at any future meeting. Area Panel Members may be subject to disciplinary procedures (see Appendix 1)

4. BEHAVIOUR

- We must be especially careful of relationships with residents, and never allow any personal relationship with a resident to conflict with their best interests.
- Giving and receiving gifts creates a relationship that can be seen to influence our judgement. Therefore, we should always avoid gifts.
- We should also avoid accepting hospitality. Occasional and modest hospitality is acceptable.
- Our work involves confidential information about our customers and Northwards' business, and we must respect that confidentiality.

- Our work and reputation relies upon us all upholding and promoting Northwards' values and objectives (Appendix 2)
- Our work can take Northwards into the political arena but we must ensure that we demonstrate its non-political nature and keep our personal political activities totally separate from Northwards' work.
- We must avoid suspicion of special treatment of suppliers by not using services or products from Northwards' suppliers.
- To declare all my interests be they employment, positions of responsibility, membership of Registered Social Landlords, directorships and any financial interest that may relate to the work of Northwards.
- Panel Members may not receive any payment other than reasonable travelling and out of pocket expenses when carrying out Northwards business.

5. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

- You must tell Northwards if you or your close relative could in theory receive a personal or business benefit (other than salary and expenses) as a consequence of any Northward's activity.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- Northwards is committed to achieving equality of opportunity in every area of its work. Our aim is that everyone should be treated fairly.
- Area Panel Members should follow Northwards Equality and Diversity policy and act in accordance with all equality legislation. They should also be aware of the scope for discrimination in decision making. Area Panel Members must follow established procedures when involved with decision making, to prevent either direct or indirect discrimination from happening.
- Northwards monitors equality and diversity profiles of Board Members and staff, and of households seeking and receiving accommodation. Area Panel Members are encouraged to supply this information. The aim is to ensure that Northwards reflects the communities it serves.

7. GENERAL

- In all cases where Panel Members' personal conduct might be viewed as conflicting with their role as an Area Panel Member, they are required to disclose details to the

Governance Support Officer. Advice on any matter in this Code of Conduct should be sought first from the Governance Support Officer.

- In any case of uncertainty, Panel Members should always contact the Governance Support Officer for advice.
- All Panel Members should carry out their responsibilities in accordance with the Northwards policies and procedures.
- All Panel Members who represent Northwards are expected to dress and conduct themselves appropriately for the duty or function that they are carrying out or attending. Panel Members should provide identification when required.

8. FAILURE TO FOLLOW CODE OF CONDUCT

- Area Panel Members should recognise that failure to follow this Code of Conduct may damage Northwards reputation and its' work and so will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.
- In the event of an alleged breach of the Code by a Panel Member, any investigation or action will be reviewed by the Area Panel Conduct Panel. Further action will be considered in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.

As an Area Panel Member of Northwards Housing, I acknowledge the contents of the Area Panel Code of Conduct and agree to all terms.

Signed.....Date.....

Print Name.....Area Panel.....

Appendix 1

Disciplinary Procedure

If an Area Panel Member is alleged to have broken the code of conduct the following procedure will be used:

- The Area Panel will form a Conduct Panel. The Conduct Panel will include the Chair or Vice Chair and two other Panel Members.
- If the matter is still not resolved the Conducts Panel may request that the Board forms a Standards Panel to review the case in accordance with Article 22 (2) of the Board's Articles of Association.
- The Standards Panel decision will be final
- The Area Panel will be informed of the action or decision at each stage.

Appendix 2

Values and Objectives

Values:

Top Class Customer Service

We will provide an excellent and accessible level of service to all of our customers.

Local Services

We take pride in being based within North Manchester and delivering local services to our customers.

Embracing Equality and Diverse Communities

We will treat everyone fairly and with respect, and we will embrace diverse communities and identities.

Tenant Focused

Tenants are at the heart of everything we do. We will involve tenants in our decision making, consult and listen to them to develop and improve services.

Committed to our Employees

We will value and support our employees to attract, develop and retain a highly skilled and motivated staff team.

Accountable

We will be open with and accountable to tenants, employees, the Council and partners in all of our dealings.

Objectives:

Warm, Safe and Affordable Homes

To provide warm, safe and affordable homes for all our tenants through advice, support and a multi million pound investment programme, which will create jobs for local people.

Successful Communities

To contribute to the regeneration of North Manchester, and work with partners to help develop successful communities.

Quality Services

To work with customers to develop and deliver excellent services that satisfy their needs and aim to meet their aspirations.

Value for Money

To provide sound financial management, and to ensure that we offer excellent value for money to our customers.

Safer places to live

To work with partners and local communities in helping to reduce crime, fear of crime, and anti-social behaviour.

An Attractive Environment

To help develop a safe and attractive environment within North Manchester, which contributes to the pride and well-being of local communities.

Promote Equality and Diversity

To understand the needs and aspirations of the diverse communities of North Manchester, and to work with partners to address inequality and to meet the needs of vulnerable people.

Appendix 3

List of Offences

- Aggravated Burglary
- Aggravated vehicle taking
- Any offence where racial motivation has been proved
- Arson and criminal damage endangering life
- Breach of anti social behaviour order
- Dealing, being concerned in the supply or intending to supply any controlled drug
- False imprisonment
- Homicide and attempted murder
- Indecent Assault
- Rape
- Robbery
- Second or subsequent offences of burglary
- Serious offence against children including sex or violence
- Three or more serious motor vehicle crimes which will include taking without consent, criminal damage to vehicles
- Use of firearms
- Wounding/GBH with intent (Section 18)
- Wounding/GBH without intent (Section 20)

Rehabilitation

We only need to know about convictions that are not spent. More information about this is available from Northwards Housing.

A conviction which results in a sentence of more than 2½ years will never be spent.