

Customer Voice

Terms of Reference - Scrutiny

Introduction

One Vision Housing (OVH) is a housing provider whose mission is to create opportunities and change lives. At OVH, we believe that our service to our customers is more than just a landlord. We provide quality and safe homes in communities that we invest in.

We recognise that our customers can help to shape our services, and this is why we have a dedicated Customer Experience team who engage with customers and create a future-proof service, which supports us to continue to provide affordable homes in safe and inviting communities.

In line with the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard (2024), *'registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in delivering landlord services'*.

Purpose and Aims

We are committed to providing customers with meaningful opportunities to shape and influence our services and as such, we have regular scrutiny reviews allowing customers to delve deep into housing matters which they may be concerned about or underperforming areas where they feel there is room for improvement. By involving customers in our decision-making, we are able to enhance our services, increase satisfaction, and become more efficient.

These reviews strengthen the relationship between tenant and landlord, fostering trust and improving our reputation in the process. We believe that effective communication is key, and we are dedicated to providing an open and honest forum where customers can have their questions answered and suggestions respected.

We believe that scrutiny should be independent and inclusive as set out by the Tpas* guidelines below:

- **Independent:** Tenants lead and own the scrutiny process. This includes choosing topics, being given the information asked for within reasonable timescales, and compiling their own recommendations.
- **Inclusive:** Scrutiny is outward looking and connects well with other engagement structures and the wider tenant base. It also provides opportunities for all tenants to contribute to the scrutiny process such as influencing the topic for review or contributing to the evidence gathering process.

**Tpas are England's leading tenant engagement experts. They are a not-for-profit organisation who have been representing members across England since 1988. They promote, support and champion tenant involvement and empowerment in social housing across England.*

Scrutiny reviews are carried out by our Scrutiny Team. **The role of the Scrutiny Team is to:**

- Scrutinise OVH's services and performance against the strategy and objectives of the organisation.

- Hold management to account by scrutinising how operational targets are being met.
- Refer to scrutiny evidence to advise the Board and Management on performance improvement and business direction.
- Ensure the customer voice is effectively heard so that services reflect customer views, resulting in high quality customer experiences.

Remit of the Scrutiny Team

Involved customers receive training to be able to carry out detailed assessments on OVH service areas identified as being a priority by dips in performance or escalations of complaints. The assessments are programmed and a minimum of two reviews will be carried out each year.

Where performance information indicates there is a concern with a service area, the Scrutiny Team will carry out an investigation from a tenant's perspective and make recommendations for improvement.

Scrutiny criteria includes:

- Serious, persistent or systematic failure or deterioration of services
- Low or falling levels of resident satisfaction and/or increasing levels of complaints
- Poor or reducing levels of performance
- Non-compliance with Regulatory Standards
- Poor Impact/Value for Money (VFM) rating
- Performance lower in comparison with other peer organisations
- Community call for scrutiny

Once the scrutiny topic has been decided, **the Scrutiny Team will:**

- Work with the Customer Experience Team to identify areas of concern and follow an evidence-based approach when completing the review.
- Have full access to back-office functions and cooperation from OVH staff in their investigative processes.
- Carry out a desktop review of evidence gathered during the investigation and make evidence-based recommendations on how the service might be improved.
- Work with the Customer Experience Team to generate a report and present findings to service managers and members of the Executive Management Team (EMT).

Following the report, an action plan will be developed, and the Scrutiny Team will carry out a six-month review to monitor progress.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

We are fully committed to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. We continue to promote a positive culture of valuing and celebrating diversity and accepting and including people regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstances. Whatever their background, customers can expect to be treated fairly, with respect and free from discrimination - this is demonstrated by:

- OVH assesses key customer satisfaction measures against known customer profile information to identify any disparity for groups with protected characteristics and puts mitigation measures in place if any are identified
- OVH maintains a comprehensive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and associated action plan to ensure fair access to services and where required will alter processes to mitigate any differentials that may exist
- OVH provides mandatory training (that is periodically refreshed) for all front-line staff on equalities issues to raise awareness and promote good practice

Wherever possible, members of OVH’s Scrutiny Team will reflect the diversity of the communities in which we operate.

The Customer Experience Team will endeavour to identify any barriers customers may face in taking part in the scrutiny review process and find solutions to enable participation.

Decision Making and Accountability

There is no maximum amount for the number of Scrutiny Team members. However, there will be a minimum amount of five members in order to complete a scrutiny review.

Members of the Scrutiny Team will be recruited from OVH’s Customer Voice list of involved customers.

All OVH customers have an opportunity to become involved with OVH Customer Voice.

All OVH customers can request to join the Scrutiny Team subject to recruitment and eligibility criteria.

Members must be compliant with their tenancy agreement. If a breach is identified, the member may be asked step down from the team until the issue is resolved. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected through a vote by the Scrutiny Team. This will be agreed annually by the team. If the Chair is unavailable, the Vice-Chair will take responsibility for running the meeting.

The team will meet regularly (once monthly minimum). Where in-person meetings are held, the Customer Experience Team will arrange an accessible venue, and the date/time of meetings will take into account the needs of the majority of the team.

Meetings between Chair of the Board and Chair of the Scrutiny Team

To ensure there is an effective and regular dialogue between the Scrutiny Team and the Board a series of regular meetings have been scheduled between the Chair of the OVH Board and the Chair of the Scrutiny Team. Regular agenda items for these meetings will include:

- Chair of the Board’s update
- Update and recommendations from any ongoing / completed Scrutiny Team investigations
- Performance updates, including Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) performance and any Service Review Group commentary

Code of Conduct

Members of the Scrutiny Team must adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct. This includes upholding the Code of Conduct, which outlines the ethical principles and behaviours expected of all team members. By adhering to this code, the Scrutiny Team ensures transparency, impartiality, and accountability in its work.

In the event of any potential breach of the Code of Conduct, the Chair is notified that there is an issue concerning a Scrutiny team member. An agenda item will be included for the next meeting to discuss whether there is a case to answer. If the team decide there is a case to answer, then it must determine the process to be followed in particular whether it will be team or a workgroup which will deal with issue. An investigation will be carried out by an independent person either a staff member of OVH or an external representative. Findings of the investigation will be reported back to the Scrutiny Team.

If a Scrutiny Team member is suspected of breaching the Code of Conduct, the Chair will be informed. The team will then decide whether to investigate the matter. If an investigation is warranted, then it must determine the process to be followed in particular whether it will be team or a workgroup which will deal with the issue. An investigation will be carried out by an independent person from OVH or an external source. The findings of the investigation will be presented to the Scrutiny Team.

- If there has been a breach, The Scrutiny Team will decide on the most appropriate sanction to be imposed. The Scrutiny Team member will then receive notice at the next Scrutiny Team meeting and that the sanction will have immediate effect.
- Where there is no breach the Scrutiny Team member will be advised accordingly and invited to the next Scrutiny Meeting.

Expenses & Remuneration

OVH will reimburse residents for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of their involvement with corporate activities. Expenses payable to the Scrutiny Team can be found in the OVH Customer Empowerment Expenses and Reimbursement Policy.

Scrutiny Team members undertake this role voluntarily on an unpaid basis. However, in certain circumstances, high-street gift vouchers may be offered as a reward for participation. This will be agreed with the Customer Experience Team in advance of any Scrutiny review.

Changes to Terms of Reference

Customers will be consulted on any significant changes to the Terms of Reference to ensure their needs and expectations continue to be met.

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually by the Customer Experience Team in partnership with the Scrutiny Team.