

ASPIRE

Panel Annual Report

2025





As members of the **ASPIRE Panel**, we're proud to share the progress we've made over the past year in strengthening the voice of Stockport Homes Group (SHG) customers. Our role is to make sure customer views are heard at the highest levels, helping to shape decisions and improve services.

In 2022, the Government introduced the Social Housing Regulation Bill, which gives tenants more influence, improves access to fair resolutions, and strengthens the role of the Social Housing Regulator. A key part of this change was the introduction of new Consumer Standards, one of which focuses on transparency, influence, and accountability.

To respond to these changes and put customers at the heart of decision-making, SHG launched the Customer ASPIRE Panel as part of its Customer Voice and Influence Strategy. Our panel was created to ensure customers have a direct role in shaping SHG's services, replacing the previous Customer Scrutiny Panel and Customer Monitoring Group with a fresh, dynamic approach.

The ASPIRE panel was set up to:

- ▶ Make sure SHG meets the required consumer standards
- ▶ Monitor SHG's performance and provide constructive challenge by customers
- ▶ Consult on key strategies, policies, and projects
- ▶ Oversee and commission scrutiny exercises to drive service improvements

After a period of planning and a detailed recruitment process, we officially launched in July 2024. Since then, we've been meeting every quarter to scrutinise SHG's performance, challenge and ensure customer views are at the centre of decision-making.

Progress to Date



Establishing a Strong Foundation

SHG collaborated closely with customers to create clear governing documents, ensuring the panel would be structured in a way that allows us to make a real difference. These documents were shaped through planning sessions led by an Independent Mentor, with sessions designed to be as accessible and inclusive as possible.



Choosing the Right Name

A key moment in our journey was choosing a name that reflects SHG's values. ASPIRE stands for Ambition, Social Responsibility, Passion, Innovation, Respect, and Excellence—principles that guide our work and our commitment to driving positive change.



Recruiting a Diverse Panel

We wanted to make sure the ASPIRE Panel truly represents SHG's customer base. A comprehensive recruitment campaign was launched, reaching out to customers via social media, email, and text messages. We received over 200 expressions of interest, showing just how many customers wanted to get involved. Customers were invited to a meeting (either in-person or on-line) to find out more about the role and to help them decide if it was something they would be interested in. Those who were interested were also offered support to make an application.

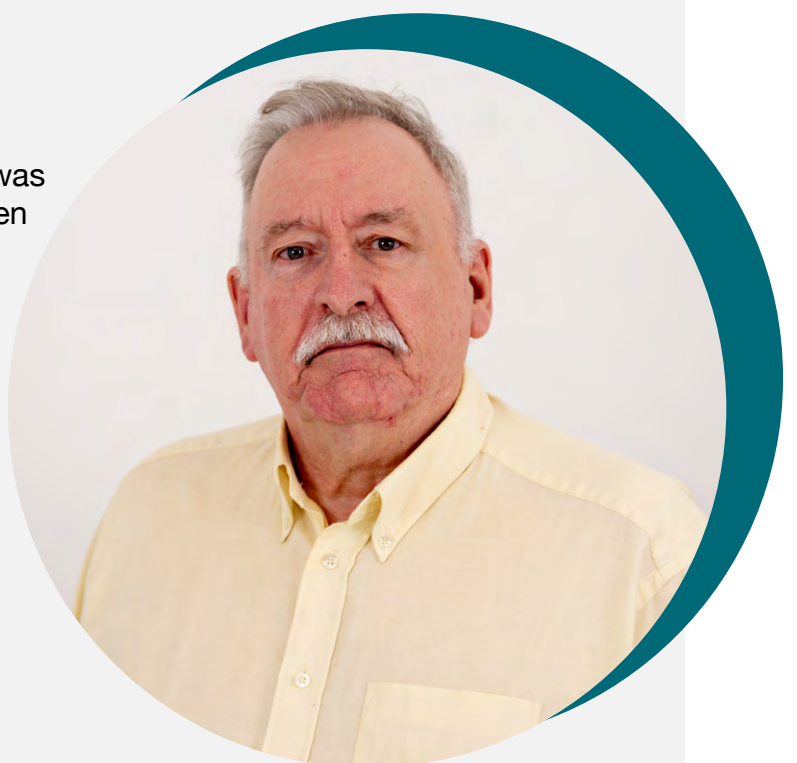
Applicants took part in assessment sessions, where we looked at skills, experience, and a shared passion for making a difference. Fifteen customers were selected, ensuring a broad mix of voices, backgrounds, and experiences from across the borough.

Meet Our Chair

Our panel is led by Bob McGechan, who was chosen by fellow members through an open selection process. Bob brings valuable experience and a strong commitment to customer influence. The Chair role is reviewed annually, allowing for fresh perspectives and wider participation.

"I joined the ASPIRE Panel because I've seen first-hand how customer involvement can drive real change. This panel gives us a strategic platform to influence decisions, ensuring our voices are heard where it matters most."

Bob McGechan, ASPIRE Panel Chair



How the ASPIRE Panel is Making an Impact

Since our launch, we've been actively involved in shaping SHG's services:

- ▶ **Holding SHG to account**
At each meeting, we review key performance data, challenge where necessary, and push for improvements.
- ▶ **Shaping policies**
We've already provided feedback on SHG's Repairs Policy and Tenancy Management Policy, ensuring they reflect customer needs.
- ▶ **Ensuring transparency**
We regularly scrutinise Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and customer feedback data, being able to discuss and challenge performance, which SHG are passionate about.
- ▶ **Influencing key projects**
Before SHG introduced a more targeted approach to Current Tenant Visits, we were consulted to ensure it would prioritise customers with the greatest needs, such as those who are vulnerable or lack digital access. We also advised on SHG's Annual Report to Customers, suggesting improvements to accessibility, particularly for those with visual impairments.
- ▶ **Involvement in strategic reviews**
We've been involved in SHG's strategic review of high-rise living, which provided us with an opportunity to raise issues such as lift breakdowns and contingency planning for disabled residents.
- ▶ **Involvement in senior recruitment**
Being part of the recruitment process of two new Directors and an Assistant Director at SHG



As we move forward, we'll continue to build on this progress, ensuring that the information we receive is relevant, transparent, and gives us the best opportunity to influence and challenge SHG's decisions.

A New Era for Customer Scrutiny

SHG has a long history of customer scrutiny, previously led by the Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP). In 2024, as we transitioned to the ASPIRE Panel, it provided SHG with an opportunity to rethink scrutiny and how a fresh approach could be introduced. In May 2024 however, the CSP completed its final scrutiny review in its then current structure, which was on the Repairs Service and focussed on accessibility and communication. This review highlighted several areas where SHG could improve its approach which resulted in tangible improvements to the services that customers are provided with when they raise a repair.

Claire Blacka of Tentacles Consultancy

With the appointment of Claire Blacka of Tentacles Consultancy as SHG's new Independent Mentor in February 2025, scrutiny activities are now restarting, with a fresh and more inclusive approach:



- ▶ The ASPIRE Panel has the authority to commission scrutiny exercises, ensuring that service improvements are evidence-based and customer-led.
- ▶ Instead of a fixed panel, scrutiny exercises will involve a wider group of customers, making it easier for more people to get involved in topics that interest them.
- ▶ Customers will be paid fairly for their time, recognising their contributions and encouraging participation.
- ▶ All SHG customers who have previously engaged, including those who expressed interest in joining the ASPIRE Panel, will be contacted about scrutiny opportunities, ensuring greater representation and diversity.
- ▶ To make scrutiny exercises as accessible as possible, customers who can't attend in person will be able to provide input in other ways, such as through online surveys or virtual meetings.
- ▶ Scrutiny exercises will now follow a task-and-finish model, allowing us to complete more reviews each year and drive faster improvements.

Once a scrutiny exercise is completed, the ASPIRE Panel will review the findings and challenge the process before submitting recommendations to the Board's Customer Focus Committee, which has the final say on approving changes to services impacting customers.

Other activities

Beyond our core work, ASPIRE Panel members have taken part in some other activities.

- ▶ Some of our members attended the TPAS Tenants' Conference (July 2024) to learn best practices in tenant engagement.



Engaging Communities Conference 2024

the only National Conference for Engagement Professionals

Nottingham, Wednesday 13th March 2024

#TpasConf23

Looking Ahead

With a strong foundation in place, we're focused on expanding our impact and influence. Key priorities include:

- ▶ Appointing a Vice Chair to strengthen leadership within the Panel.
- ▶ Ongoing training and development, including SHG-led courses on housing and customer participation.
- ▶ Enhancing scrutiny activities with support from the new Independent Mentor.
- ▶ Continuous improvement, working closely with SHG's Governance and Customer Engagement teams to maximise our effectiveness.

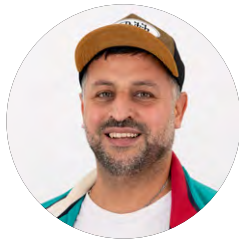
Conclusion

In our first year, the ASPIRE Panel has made real progress in further embedding customer voice into SHG's governance structure. Our influence is already shaping key policies and decisions, and we're committed to building on this momentum.

Moving forward, we will continue to ensure that SHG remains accountable, transparent, and customer-focused—because at the heart of everything they do is us, the customer.

Meet the Panel

You've already heard from our Chair, Bob but here are some comments from some of our other members.



Reza Meme

I have been a Stockport Homes tenant for the last 13 years and have seen some of the ongoing issues around my neighbourhood and in the surrounding area. I am happy to be part of the group and use my skills and knowledge to provide my input for any piece of work the Panel engage with.



Michael Stonebridge

The things that have impressed me the most is the opportunities to meet new people, make new friends and be an integral part of the ASPIRE Panel, contributions. Also, the incentives provided to ASPIRE Panel are impressive which is a positive motivation for Panel members to engage and challenge appropriately.



Andrzej Czajkowski

I've been really impressed by the diversity of the panel. Everyone brings different experiences and perspectives, which leads to well-rounded discussions and positive changes for Stockport Homes customers.



David Partington

The reason I joined the Panel is so that we can make a difference for Stockport Homes customers, and we can engage in various projects that are important to customers and Stockport Homes alike.




Denise Cowgill

I joined the Aspire panel to gain a fuller understanding of how SHG ensure customers are at the forefront of everything they achieve going forward. I want to help bring a voice to SHG tenants in shaping the future of how social housing continues to develop.



Peter Wilkins

I have been impressed by the presentations given by Stockport Homes staff. Comments from the Panel are taken on board with enthusiasm. It's early days, but I think in time we will be able to provide more influence on things.

 To see more information about our other members and to find out more about the ASPIRE Panel, please visit this website

<https://www.stockporthomes.org/my-home/get-involved/customer-aspire-panel/meet-the-aspire-panel/>