

ASPIRE Panel Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct sets out the rules and standards of personal attitudes and behaviour ASPIRE Panel (CSP) members are expected to adhere to. Compliance with guidelines is critical to the success and credibility of the CSP.

YOUR ROLE AS AN ASPIRE PANEL MEMBER

To do this, you must approach the task with the right attitudes:

- **Be honest and open-** Without this, you won't be able to get to the truth about services or be able to make a difference.
- **Listen and keep an open mind** about things until you have collected all the facts and evidence. Try to understand and appreciate the concerns and circumstances of the people who you encounter and show them respect.
- **Actively show that you are interested in and care about SHG** and want to make a positive difference.
- **Choose the right time, place and way to feedback your thoughts and findings-** Do not share your impressions and ideas with people while you are still collecting evidence from them.
- **Keep to any relevant rules or policies.**
- **Notify Stockport Homes**, in advance, of any holiday requirement or any change of address or contact numbers. Notify the Company of any illness that may prevent you completing your voluntary placement.
- **Inform** the Governance or Customer Engagement Team if you wish to leave the panel.

As an ASPIRE Panel member your role is to provide assurance to customers and the Board, to monitor and challenge Stockport Homes' (SHG) performance and to hold Stockport Homes to account in meeting the requirements as set in the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH's) Consumer Standards. You are expected to adhere to the code of conduct. Failure to comply may result in your removal from the Aspire Panel. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this code, appropriate contacts will be provided upon becoming a panel member. These contacts are also available for reporting any instances of misconduct.

STAYING SAFE

Before you start any work with the ASPIRE Panel, Stockport Homes will do a short exercise to identify and assess any risks that might arise from your work. You must then observe any rules or guidelines that come out of this risk assessment, and take reasonable steps to ensure your own health, safety, and welfare.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT

Your direct experience as a customer is what makes you special and unique as an ASPIRE Panel member. Your own experience and views should inform, but not dominate or dictate how you work. You need to stay impartial and avoid conflicts of interest. As a general rule, a conflict of interest exists if a member of the public could reasonably conclude that your judgement may be biased.

You should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with the Independent Mentor, Governance Officer or Customer Engagement Team

An example of where conflicts might arise could be if you have any personal connection with any part of the service that you are scrutinising.

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

As an ASPIRE Panel member, you will have access to a lot of information about Stockport Homes and its customers and suppliers. Much of this information will be personally or commercially sensitive. The Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act control how information may be shared and used. Panel members will receive training in relation to these pieces of legislation and should raise any questions they have with the Independent Mentor, Governance or Customer Engagement Team.

You should follow two simple rules in all your work:

- Treat all information you receive as **confidential** unless there is a clear reason to share it more widely.
- If in doubt **seek advice** from the Independent Mentor, Governance or Customer Engagement Team
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It is possible that you may come across something during your work with the ASPIRE Panel that really worries you (for example, if you think there is fraud going on, or any other sort of criminal or serious undesirable behaviour). If this happens, you must tell the Independent Mentor, Governance or Customer Engagement Team. If any of these people are connected with your concerns, you should contact the Director of Resources.

Aside from these formal protocols, you will need to be **tactful and diplomatic** in all your dealings with people you come into contact with. Only you can judge this, but always think about how you say what, to whom, and what impact it will have.

RESPECT

In your work as an ASPIRE Panel member, you must have and show respect for all the people you deal with and take their circumstances and personal differences into account. This is about putting equal opportunities into practice in your work. The key is simply to

respect differences fairly, so that you do not exclude anyone from your work or treat anyone inappropriately or unfairly.

Again, this can sometimes be difficult, and only you can make it happen. So, in your work, think about:

- **How you can scrutinise the service** – does it allow everyone to have a say? For example, telephone surveys may exclude people whose first language is not English.
- **Where you work** – for example, holding interviews in an upper floor office may be difficult for people who use a wheelchair or have limited mobility.
- **When you work** – for example, holding focus groups during the day may exclude people with childcare responsibilities or who are at work.
- **Being consistent** – for example, do not be ‘tougher’ on some people than others without reason.

Again, if you are in any doubt about how your work might affect different people, please ask the Independent Mentor, Governance or Customer Engagement Team for advice.

INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE

Being professional is about being fair (see above) but also about how you conduct yourself. As an ASPIRE Panel member you are an ambassador for yourself, all residents, the Panel as a whole and Stockport Homes. So, to project a good, professional image, think about:

- Your **personal appearance and dress** – be clean, smart, and appropriate.
- How you **speak** – be clear, concise and courteous and avoid swearing.
- Your **body language** – be relaxed, focused and positive.
- Being **organised and punctual** – plan and prepare things well and be on time.
- Being **in control** – never carry out your role for the panel if you have recently had alcohol, drugs, are too tired, or have done anything that might affect your concentration and poise.

DEALING WITH OTHER CUSTOMERS

Any enquiries from customers that you receive should be signposted to the Governance Officer or Customer Engagement Team Leader for action. You should not attempt to answer queries yourself, take responsibility or try to solve individual customer problems. You must never handle customers’ money.

CONTACT WITH STOCKPORT HOMES STAFF AND CONTRACTORS

All ASPIRE Panel members, staff and contractors should observe high standards of courtesy in their dealings with each other. You should uphold Stockport Homes’ and the ASPIRE Panel’s values and agreed procedures when dealing with staff and/or contractors. You should carefully consider the potential impact of any comments you make. Remember your comments reflect on the ASPIRE Panel because you are an ambassador.

As an ASPIRE Panel member there may well be occasions when you need to consider whether you are acting as a customer or as a Panel member and whether the situation presents you with a conflict of interest. If you ever feel under too much pressure or stress because of your role as an ASPIRE Panel member, please tell the Independent Mentor, Governance or Customer Engagement Team.

CONTACTS

If you need to discuss the Code of Conduct or need to find out more about anything to do with the ASPIRE Panel, please contact the Independent Mentor, Governance or Customer Engagement Team.

Each Aspire Panel member will be given the names and contact details for the Independent Mentor, Governance and Customer Engagement Team for the purposes outlined in this document.

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