



NTOApproved™ guidance

NB – if you are copying this guidance for a number of people, you do not need to copy it in colour.

We have developed the NTOApproved™ system as a tenant & landlord sector led approach to driving up standards of co-regulation; to help tenants and landlord work together; and to develop clarity of expectations for tenants and landlords about Tenant Panels. By applying NTOApproved™ you are supporting the tenant movement and the housing sector to define its own standards for Tenant Panels.

This guidance sets out how the NTOApproved™ process works and clarifies expectations within the process. The process is not intended to be arduous - we hope that many Tenant Panels and landlords will already be doing a lot of the things it refers to. But it is intended to set high standards and expectations – expectations we have developed in partnership with tenants and landlords across the country and their professional representative bodies, based on what is happening in the best landlords out there at the moment. Those expectations will change and develop over time. The information we gather from Tenant Panels and landlords as we carry out assessments for NTOApproved™ will be fed into developing the system further. NTOApproved™ – as much as has been possible for us to do – has been tenant and housing sector led and we consider it to be a reflection of consensus of what is expected from all Tenant Panels and all landlords.

What do we mean by “tenant panel”?

There is no one definition of Tenant Panel. In fact, a collection of tenant bodies exist in most landlords, covering various aspects of decision-making, scrutiny, complaints, service review, policy consideration, communications and various other functions. Our guidance document “Tenant Panels: Options for Accountability” provides more detail. Therefore, when we refer in the guidance to the “Tenant Panel”, we actually mean by this all the different elements that go towards making up a set of Tenant Panel arrangements that encompass all methods being used to involve tenants in decision-making; to monitor and scrutinise services and performance; to receive tenant issues and complaints – and anything else that could be considered to be part of tenants holding the landlord to account. But we have used the term “Tenant Panel” as shorthand for all of this!

NTOApproved™ applies to Tenant Panels in one particular landlord. There are some interesting discussions currently taking place between some tenants and landlords about setting up Collaborative Tenant Panels covering tenants of different landlords in the same local areas. This is discussed in “Options for Accountability”. Tenants and landlords everywhere should be discussing whether tenants might benefit from such arrangements in some of the localities where the landlord owns homes. Dependent on the results of current discussions, we may develop **NTOApproved™** to enable area based Tenant Panels to be approved.

What do we mean by “tenant”?

We generally expect Tenant Panels to cater to the needs of all service users of a landlord, and so, whilst we use the term “tenant” because we wish to reinforce the status of being a tenant, we are intending the word to include all people who are service users of a landlord. This could include social, intermediate and market rent tenants; those with temporary tenancies and tenants of hostels etc;

leaseholders; shared home owners; those who receive particular care or other services; and possibly others. Most of these groups fall under the legal definition of being a “tenant”.

What do we mean by “will”?

You will note in our requirements that we refer on several occasions to “will” such and such happen. This is because we are conscious that many Tenant Panel arrangements are in the process of being established or have been over the last two years. As yet, they may not have results and outcomes of those activities yet to demonstrate. The majority of the **NTOApproved™** process is about showing that the commitment is there to do certain things. This may change in the future as it becomes more widely accepted that particular standards should have been met.

Some landlords will have been meeting the **NTOApproved™** requirements for many years, and they will be able to demonstrate this either by producing the policies & procedures that say they do it or some other records that show that they have done it already.

What do we mean by “landlord”?

Generally when we refer to the landlord, we mean the organisation that owns and manages the homes lived in by tenants. There are complications with this definition in relation to management organisations managing on behalf of the landlord.

In relation to Arms Length Management Organisations and Tenant Management Organisations, in an ideal world an application for **NTOApproved™** would comply with our requirements in relation to the Tenant Panel, the management organisation and the landlord (ie. the local authority or housing association). However, we recognise that there may be circumstances where one or other of the

management organisation or landlord may comply with the requirements that relate to them but the other doesn't. It would be unfair for us to penalise the Tenant Panel and the organisation in compliance where this is the case by insisting on the organisation not in compliance reaching **NTOApproved™** standards before we agree to approve the Tenant Panel.

In such circumstances, we will issue **NTOApproved™** status to the Tenant Panel subject to:

- a) the Tenant Panel agreeing to formally forward our report stating that we do not consider the landlord or management organisation to be in compliance with **NTOApproved™** to the organisation in question.
- b) a clear understanding that the organisation that is not in compliance with **NTOApproved™** is informed that they may not use the **NTOApproved™** logo on any of its publicity material or publish any material that suggests that it helped the Tenant Panel to become approved.
- c) a clear statement being made in the annual report to tenants that **NTOApproved™** status has not been granted to the organisation that is not in compliance and the reasons why they are not in compliance.

We will discuss situations on a case by case basis in relation to other management organisation arrangements and group structure arrangements.

The NTOApproved™ process

The Self-Assessment Stage

In the self-assessment stage, the Tenant Panel and landlord work together to self-assess the Tenant Panel against the NTOApproved™ criteria. Of course there are a number of different groups of people who could do this, but we would expect at least some tenants and some staff (and any independent chairs of panels) and possibly some people at governance level to be involved in the process. You may also wish to get someone independent to participate, or arrange for the process to be independently facilitated. The NTOs can provide someone independent to facilitate your self-assessment if this would be helpful to you. We would have to agree a fee with the landlord to do this. We would ensure that whoever was providing this facilitation support was not involved in our NTOApproved™ assessment, and we would make it clear that if we provide this service to you, it will not impact in any way on the outcome of the NTOApproved™ assessment.

In order to make the process of self-assessment simpler for all of those involved, we have provided a scoring system against which the assessment should be made. Each element of the programme should be scored between 1 and 4 as below (3 or above is necessary for NTOApproved™ status):

- 1 we don't comply with the requirement
- 2 we partially comply with the requirement
- 3 we are in compliance with the requirement
- 4 we do much better than the requirement

Whilst these things may seem obvious, we would suggest that:

- a) the first group self-assessment you do should involve both tenants and staff. We do not think that either tenants or staff should turn up to the self-assessment with one they have prepared already. This is meant to be co-regulation – not either the tenants or the staff regulating and then the other group being told what the results are!
- b) all of those involved in doing the self-assessment should individually score each item and feed them in to the group before you discuss between you what your consensus score should be. Some tenants and some staff may not be as confident as others about expressing their views and so it is important that all of your self-assessors are empowered to honestly give their scores rather than people being swept along with an assessment that may be just coming from one or two particularly confident members of the team.
- c) you could use the [NTOApproved™](#) process to consider between you what you need to do and what could improve your co-regulatory activities. You should record all the points made by your team and keep that record.
- d) if you wish to apply for [NTOApproved™](#) status you will need to keep records of your self-assessment.
- e) honesty is critical in your self-assessment. If you are not honest in your assessment, you won't know what you need to improve.

- f) a score of 3 is saying that you have achieved the required standard. A score of 4 is saying you are excellent at it and that you probably don't need to consider that area for the moment. A self-assessment that includes a lot of 4s will be particularly interesting - either because what you are doing is really good or because the self-assessment has not been particularly honest!

Once you have completed your self-assessment, you would want to develop an action plan with regards the requirements where you have scored 1 or 2 in order to improve those items.

The External Assessment Stage

If you wish to apply for **NTOApproved™** status, you will need to register with us and send us details from your self-assessment. You should only apply if you consider that you have reached 3 or above on all requirements in the **NTOApproved™** framework. In order for the NTOs to grant **NTOApproved™** status, you need to show us how you have reach 3 or above on all the requirements.

There are two parts to this – a “desktop” review, where you provide us with paperwork that shows you meet requirements, followed by a “visit” with members of the Tenant Panel and with members of staff.

Blue requirements - the desktop review – coded **B** in our guidance below

In the section below that discusses each individual requirement, we specify “what we would expect to see – evidence requirements”. These are the items that we think will show us whether or not you are complying with the requirement in the **NTOApproved™** process. Our guidance below refers to you providing us with documentation (**blue requirements**) that shows that you will do something (ie. a policy, procedure, protocol or statement). In some cases, the requirement will not be evidenced in this way in a written document, and we are happy to consider alternative evidence that shows that you

meet the requirement (ie. evidence of your actually doing something that shows that you have already met the requirement). Where we refer to a “statement”, this may be a statement that has been drawn up and agreed specifically for the **NTOApproved™** process.

Most of the evidence relates to documentation where things that are written down. We would expect you to produce a dossier with these pieces of evidence (provided to us digitally on a memory stick or CD). The dossier needs to be prefaced by our proforma for providing the evidence, which requires you to be specific about the evidence (providing only one primary and one subsidiary piece of evidence with “hyperlinks” where appropriate to where the detailed page and clause numbers where the evidence requirements are shown to be met). If you do not comply appropriately with this, and if our assessors are not able to quickly identify that the requirement has been met – we may return the dossier to you asking you to be more specific.

We would expect that your dossier would include:

- your self-assessment scoresheet
- our completed proforma that will demonstrate how you satisfy the **blue requirements**
- the documents that the completed proforma refers to
- up to 2 sides of A4 that you can use to support your application for **NTOApproved™** status (if you wish to). This may be used to provide contextual information about how your Tenant Panel arrangements are constructed.

It would be our aim that all **blue requirements** would have been fulfilled prior to us carrying out a visit. To not do this would be to waste your time as well as ours. If you have not satisfied us in relation to a **blue requirement**, we will let you know and give you an opportunity to provide us with documentation we consider is missing.

Red requirements - the Tenant Panel Meeting – coded **R** in our guidance below

Once we are satisfied that you comply with all **blue requirements**, we will arrange for our assessor to visit you. We would want our assessor to meet with a Staff Group and a Tenant Panel on the same day (preferably in that order).

We would expect the Tenant Panel Meeting to include up to 10 tenants from different parts of the Tenant Panel arrangements. Between the 10 tenants, we would hope that there would be people who could speak about all aspects of the panel's work. We are conscious that good quality tenant volunteers are not always good at presenting or articulating themselves, and so we have arranged the meeting to take account of this. We would hope to be meeting with 10 tenants who are enthusiastic to talk to us about their roles in working for tenants, and we hope that the discussion we will have with them would be a fun opportunity for them to get across to us how they see their roles. We would hope that the Tenant Panel Meeting would not be dominated by one or two individuals, and the meeting is structured so that some activities are done as a team and some with individual members of the team.

Some Tenant Panels may have temporary independent and non-tenant chairs. We would be happy for such people to participate within the 10 tenants but expect that they do not dominate discussions, and that they encourage participation from the other attendees. Because we are exploring the Tenant Panel's role in holding the landlord to account, we would normally expect that the 10 tenants would not include tenants directly responsible for governance – ie. tenants who are also councillors of stock retaining local authorities, tenant board members of housing associations, ALMOs or TMOs.

The issues we will discuss with the Tenant Panel Meeting will include the **red requirements** as well as any other issues that we may wish to discuss that have arisen from the desktop review.

We will ask the Tenant Panel members to give a 10 minute presentation to our assessor on how they see their Tenant Panel structures and arrangements providing benefits for tenants. We will be considering the content of the presentation – not presentation skills.

We anticipate that the Tenant Panel visit would usually last no more than 2 hours, and we will ensure that we arrange the timing of the visit to suit the participants.

Green requirements - the Staff Group Meeting – coded G in our guidance below

On the same day as our visit to the Tenant Panel (preferably prior to and within 2 hours of the Tenant Panel meeting), our assessor will want to meet with a Staff Group. The Staff Group Meeting should consist of up to 10 members of staff usually including:

- the staff member who has lead responsibility for implementing the resident involvement strategy
- resident involvement staff
- at least 2 members of senior staff (Directorial level) drawn from housing management operational departments (eg. repairs, rent arrears handling etc)
- at least 2 members of “frontline” staff
- staff responsible for communications with tenants
- any other members of staff the landlord considers relevant

The Staff Group Meeting could also include a governing body member (ie. a councillor or Board member) if considered appropriate by the landlord.

The issues we intend to discuss at the Staff Group Meeting will include the **green requirements** as well as any other issues that we may wish to discuss that have arisen from the desktop review. Similarly, some of the activities at the meeting will involve the full team and some may be directed at individual members of the team.

We will also ask the Staff Group Meeting to give a 10 minute presentation to our assessor on how the Tenant Panel will make the landlord a more effective business.

We anticipate that the Staff Group Meeting would usually last no more than 2 hours.

What happens after the visit?

We will decide whether **NTOApproved™** status can be granted. We anticipate that this will usually take no more than 10 working days. Hopefully our next communication with you would be to advise you that your Tenant Panel has achieved **NTOApproved™** status. We will provide you with a written report of our assessment which will identify areas where we considered you have performed well and suggestions for areas for improvement. A condition of us granting **NTOApproved™** status will be that this report is shared with your Tenant Panel and your governing body.

Once **NTOApproved™** status has been granted, we will send you the **NTOApproved™** logo which we will expect to be used on appropriate communications material and on websites. We are particularly keen that all tenants are aware of the award of **NTOApproved™** status, and we will expect information on it to be included in the next and subsequent annual report to tenants.

NTOApproved™ status will last for a period of three years, but should we receive significant reports that it should not have been granted, we may choose to investigate matters further, possibly resulting in our rescinding our approval.

When we have completed the process with you, we will also ask for your feedback on the process and whether you think we can improve it. We will also include you on our NTOApproved™ database, which will mean that you will receive updates from us regarding any future changes to the system, and inviting you to send in ideas and thoughts about how the system can be improved.

You would not be expected to apply any changes we make to the system in the three years you are registered as NTOApproved™ but it would make sense for you to consider any new requirements because they will apply when you reapply. We will make contact with you six months prior to when you are due to reapply to the programme to alert you of the need to reapply.

What happens if we do not grant NTO approved! status?

Our aim will be that as many Tenant Panels achieve NTOApproved™ status as possible, but the scheme would quickly lose credibility if we did not maintain high standards in the programme. This means that our assessors may consider that it is not possible to grant NTOApproved™ status following the visit. If this is the case, they will identify the requirement(s) that they consider you did not achieve satisfactorily, with a brief explanation as appropriate.

Problems relating to a **blue requirement** (ie. a documentation requirement) should have been resolved prior to the visit, but if there was a reason why this was not the case, it may be possible for you to provide the documentation required relatively swiftly. We may also be prepared to grant

NTOApproved™ status on a provisional basis where a commitment has been made to approve a particular document that may require governance level agreement provided we are aware of the timescale involved. Any items of this nature will have been identified prior to a visit being carried out.

If the problem relates to a **red requirement** or a **green requirement** this might be more difficult to resolve in a short space of time. Problems of this nature would mean that our assessors considered that either there was a problem regarding the understanding of or some other matter relating to the Tenant Panel or there was a problem with the support and/or commitment of the landlord. These sorts of problems could require time to fix, but it may be the case that even a problem of this nature may be resolvable within a short period of time – in which case, our assessor would need to carry out another visit for which there would be an additional charge. We would advise you before an additional visit if we consider the problem to be fundamental and not possible to resolve prior to a second visit. For additional fees, we may be able to provide additional support to enable you to resolve issues of a fundamental nature.

In any event, we have to be in a position to grant NTOApproved™ status within one year of your registration on the programme, or otherwise we would expect the process to start again (of course, we will discuss with you revised deadlines in the event of there being a delay of our making).

Right of appeal

If we consider that it is not possible to grant NTOApproved™ status, applicants to the programme may exercise a Right of Appeal to our Moderation Committee within 28 days of our formal communication to you of our decision. The Right of Appeal would need to be in writing (supported by both your designated Tenant Panel and landlord representatives), stating your reasons why you disagree with our assessor's decision.

Our Moderation Committee is made up of representatives from the four National Tenant Organisations. It carries out quality and consistency checks of the programme. The appeal will hear evidence from your Tenant Panel and landlord and from the assessor who carried out the assessment. If you request it, they will also discuss your appeal with a representative of a trade body of your choosing (ie. the National Housing Federation, the Local Government Association, the National Federation of ALMOs or another body).

The Moderation Committee may choose to:

- a) uphold your appeal – in which case **NTOApproved™** status will be granted immediately, or
- b) partially uphold your appeal subject to certain actions – in which case **NTOApproved™** status will be granted on a provisional basis subject to a requirement that you take some specific action (ie. produce some further documentary evidence)
- c) reject your appeal – in which case **NTOApproved™** status will not be issued.

Our Moderation Committee's decision will be the final decision we will make regarding your application.

If an application for **NTOApproved™** status is rejected, the Tenant Panel may not reapply to the programme for a period of one year following our confirmation that we have rejected the application.

The NTOApproved™ requirements

A CO-REGULATION

The first element of the NTOApproved™ system is the important area of co-regulation – whereby tenants and landlords work in partnership to self-regulate and ensure that landlords are delivering what is expected of them in the regulatory standards. We would certainly expect this to include the “consumer” standards:

- the tenant involvement & empowerment standard
- the home standard
- the tenancy standard
- the neighbourhood and community standard

But we would also expect that an NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would be able to have involvement in considering issues relating to the other standards (ie. the rents standard, the value for money standard and the governance and viability standards).

There are three overarching areas that relate to all of the standards which an NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would be expected to cover - tenant involvement in decision-making and in shaping services; tenant involvement in monitoring and scrutiny; tenant involvement in complaints.

INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING & SHAPING SERVICES

Most involved tenants want to be involved so that they can work in partnership with their landlord to improve services and quality of life for all tenants. To facilitate this, there should be a range of ways that the Tenant Panel can be involved in decision-making about the landlord's policies, strategies and services.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
A1	Can the Tenant Panel influence the landlord's housing management related policies & strategies?	B Documentation on service reviews that shows how the Tenant Panel is routinely involved in the housing management service review programme R Confirmation with the Tenant Panel Meeting that tenants are comfortable with their involvement in shaping housing management services
A2	Will the Tenant Panel be consulted on the landlord business plan & corporate objectives?	B Documentation regarding how the Tenant Panel will be consulted on the business plan and corporate objectives
A3	Will the landlord provide financial and Value For Money information to the Tenant Panel?	B Documentation demonstrating a commitment to provide financial and Value For Money information to the Tenant Panel

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
A4	Will the landlord routinely report key performance and strategic housing related issues to the Tenant Panel?	B A standard format designed with the Tenant Panel for routine reporting of performance information that compares performance data with targets and benchmark targets. Documentation demonstrating a commitment to reporting strategic housing management related issues (ie. conclusions from performance data; significant housing management issues and changes that have arisen since the previous report).
A5	Will the landlord consult the Tenant Panel on changes to housing management related policies?	B Documentation demonstrating a commitment to consult with the Tenant Panel in relation to changes to housing management related policies & procedures
A6	Is there a means by which the Tenant Panel can access the governing body and senior staff?	B Documentation that demonstrates that the Tenant Panel can formally raise matters of a governance, strategic or policy nature with the governing body (eg. the Board of a Housing Association or ALMO or the portfolio holder for housing/cabinet in a local authority). B Documentation that demonstrates that the Tenant Panel can access senior staff when appropriate. G Confirmation that Tenant Panel can access governing body and senior staff at Staff Group Meeting.
A7	Will the Tenant Panel be involved in shaping and monitoring the resident involvement strategy?	B Resident Involvement documentation that set out that the Tenant Panel will be involved in shaping, monitoring and reviewing the resident involvement strategy; methodology for reporting on the strategy to the Tenant Panel

MONITORING & SCRUTINY

Tenants being able to monitor and scrutinise landlord operations and services is an important part of the co-regulatory system. It enables tenants and landlords to work together to ensure that the landlord is complying with the regulatory framework in the best possible ways that will meet tenant and future tenant expectations.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
A8	Can the Tenant Panel monitor and scrutinise landlord performance/behaviour re. the regulatory framework?	B Documentation agreed by the governing body that identifies that the Tenant Panel can monitor, scrutinise and call the landlord, its officers and governing body members to account regarding “consumer” regulations, and reference to how the Tenant Panel can engage with the landlord regarding “economic” regulations. R Confirmation with the Tenant Panel Meeting that tenants are comfortable with the monitoring and scrutiny approach.
A9	Is there a procedure agreed with the Tenant Panel by which areas for monitoring and scrutiny are decided?	B Written documentation (agreed with tenants) that enables tenants and staff raise areas to be considered for monitoring and scrutiny and then enables decisions to be made about what is reviewed and when it is reviewed. We would expect added weight to be given to areas where evidence exists that suggests review is particularly required to improve performance, to reduce detrimental impact on tenants, or to improve value for money.

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
A10	Will conflicts of interest between governance and monitoring/scrutiny functions be dealt with?	<p>B Documentation that shows that real or perceived conflicts of interest have been considered and dealt with to ensure effective monitoring and scrutiny (eg. by appropriate separation between those involved in decision-making and monitoring/scrutiny).</p>
A11	Will monitoring and scrutiny be informed by appropriate evidence?	<p>B Documentation that sets out the types of methods used to gather evidence that supports monitoring, scrutiny and review processes that could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • satisfaction/dissatisfaction/complaints/compliments data • a range of different ways to gather tenant opinion relating to the subject matter • comprehensive performance information & targets • benchmark information comparing performance both against similar types of landlord and against the best performers • consideration of best practice methods being used elsewhere in relation to the field under consideration • discussions and reports from staff regarding detailed assessments of delivery of services

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
A12	Will comprehensive monitoring and scrutiny reports be produced?	<p>B A template for the production of monitoring and scrutiny reports, that could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis of what areas were being considered in the review exercise and what led to those areas being reviewed • a summary of tenants, staff and others involved in the review process and any particular information as to why those people were involved • an account of the evidence base that supported the review • conclusions drawn from the evidence • recommendations for action
A13	Will monitoring & scrutiny reports be considered at appropriate levels in the landlord?	B Documentation regarding how scrutiny reports will be considered by the landlord – by senior staff and at governing body level
A14	Will the outcome and resulting planned actions of monitoring and scrutiny exercises be fed back to tenants?	B Documentation regarding how the landlord will feed back the outcome of its considerations of monitoring and scrutiny recommendations and its planned resulting actions to the Tenant Panel and tenants generally

COMPLAINTS

Having some part of the Tenant Panel whereby individual tenants can raise issues of concern and get them resolved is an important part of getting issues resolved quickly and locally. It is one means by which the Tenant Panel can be accountable to the tenant constituency.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
A15	Is there an appropriate means by which the Tenant Panel is involved in complaints?	<p>B Documentation that sets out how the Tenant Panel will be involved in complaints that could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being able to receive informal issues from individual tenants prior to them becoming part of the formal complaints procedure and referring them appropriately to members of staff to get them resolved • providing advice to tenants about how the complaints procedure works • tenant involvement in Stage 2 or 3 complaints reviews • involvement in reviews of trends of complaints received
A16	Is there a landlord-designated "complaints body" that can refer complaints to the Ombudsman?	<p>B A statement of the process landlord and Tenant Panel will use to agree the approach to establishing a "designated" body for referral of complaints to the Ombudsman by April 2013.</p>

B TENANT LEADERSHIP

The second element of the NTOApproved™ relates to:

- the understanding of the tenant leadership – whether it understands its purpose, roles and responsibilities and aims to discharge them constructively and for the benefit of tenants
- how tenants become involved in the Tenant Panel
- how the Tenant Panel is set up and how it operates

TENANT LEADERSHIP – ENTHUSIASM & UNDERSTANDING

In each landlord, there are likely to be different sets of arrangements for Tenant Panels, with different tenants performing different functions. Regardless of how those people arrived in their positions, or what functions they play, we refer to the people involved in Tenant Panels as the “tenant leadership” – tenants who are there to lead the ways that the landlord engages with its tenants, and to be accountable to their tenant constituencies for what they do.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
B17	Does the Tenant Panel aim to work constructively in partnership with the landlord to improve services and quality of life for tenants?	B Documentation setting out aims and objectives of the Tenant Panel and its constituent parts. R Constructive aims evident in a discussion at the Tenant Panel Meeting. G Confirmation of constructive approach in discussion at Staff Group Meeting.
B18	Are there sufficient numbers of tenants involved in Tenant Panel activities?	B A listing of the tenants involved in each part of the Tenant Panel showing a reasonable breadth of tenants involved (and not the same ones in every activity). NB. if there are “independents” involved, we would expect to see this specified – together with procedural clarity regarding their appointment and role. R Confirmation that there are sufficient numbers of tenants involved in the Tenant Panel at the Tenant Panel Meeting. G Confirmation that there are sufficient numbers of tenants involved in the Tenant Panel at the Staff Group Meeting.

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
B19	Does the Tenant Panel engage enthusiastically in debate?	R Enthusiasm to engage in debate about tenant issues at Tenant Panel Meeting
B20	Is the Tenant Panel aware of the regulatory standards?	R A broad understanding of the Regulatory Standards demonstrated at the Tenant Panel Meeting
B21	Does the Tenant Panel understand how and when to raise issues with the landlord?	R A general understanding of when to raise issues with the landlord demonstrated at the Tenant Panel Meeting
B22	Does the Tenant Panel understand how and when they can raise issues with the Ombudsman/ regulator?	B A statement regarding how the Tenant Panel will be aware by April 2013 of the Independent Housing Ombudsman and regulator roles and how and when they can raise issues with them (including a commitment to read the NTO “guide” document when it is published in early 2012)
B23	Is the Tenant Panel aware of how they could work with MPs and councillors?	B A statement regarding how the Tenant Panel will consider how it will engage with MPs and councillors

TENANT PANEL DEVELOPMENT, INDEPENDENCE & CHALLENGE

Establishing the right structures for tenants to hold their landlords to account is a shared responsibility for tenants and the landlord. The process of holding the landlord to account and utilising tenant input to improve services requires that tenants involved have reasonable levels of understanding, are able to meet and consider issues independently, and constructively challenge their landlord when there is a need to do so.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
B24	Were tenants involved in setting up the Tenant Panel? (see note below)	<p>B Documentation that shows that tenants were involved in shaping the development of the Tenant Panel – its structures, systems, protocols and recruitment processes for Tenant Panel members. R Confirmation from the Tenant Panel Meeting that tenants were involved in setting up the Tenant Panel. G Confirmation from the Staff Group Meeting that tenants were involved in setting up the Tenant Panel.</p>
B25	Can the Tenant Panel consider issues and reach conclusions independently of the landlord?	<p>B Documentation that shows that the Tenant Panel and its constituent parts are able to meet, discuss issues and make decisions about the tenant viewpoint independently if they wish to. R Confirmation with the Tenant Panel Meeting that they can meet, discuss issues and make decisions about the tenant viewpoint independently if they wish to. G Confirmation with the Staff Group Meeting that the Tenant Panel can meet, discuss issues and make decisions about the tenant viewpoint independently if they wish to.</p>

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
B26	Is the Tenant Panel encouraged to challenge the landlord where it is right for them to do so?	<p>B Documentation that shows that the Tenant Panel is encouraged to challenge the landlord where it is appropriate to do so.</p> <p>R Confirmation with the Tenant Panel Meeting that they are encouraged to challenge the landlord where it is appropriate to do so.</p> <p>G Confirmation with the Staff Group Meeting that the landlord wishes the Tenant Panel to challenge the landlord where it is appropriate to do so.</p>

NB. if tenants were not involved in setting up the Tenant Panel, we would expect the landlord to explain why this was the case. We would also expect confirmation that the Tenant Panel is now in a position to review how it is set up and propose changes if necessary. As the NTOs, we are regularly contacted by tenants regarding issues of concern they have with their landlords. In some cases, tenants have expressed concern about the processes landlords are using to set up Tenant Panels. If we receive such reports before or during an NTOApproved™ assessment process, we may wish to discuss them in the assessment process (of course, we will consider any reports from tenants on their merit. We will not necessarily consider allegations made by one or two tenants to be conclusive). We are particularly concerned about some reports we have received where tenants have alleged that landlords, in setting up new structures, have closed existing tenant representative structures without seeking agreement with their tenants that this is the appropriate course of action.

RECRUITING & DEVELOPING TENANT PANEL MEMBERS

The s/election and development processes for Tenant Panel members are as important to Tenant Panels as equivalent processes are to recruiting and developing staff. This section explores the approach to tenants becoming members of Tenant Panels and how they are individually and collectively developed.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
B27	Are potential qualities identified in the process by which tenants become Tenant Panel members?	B Role “specification” agreed with the Tenant Panel of potential qualities for Tenant Panel members indicating to potential applicants what qualities are being sought (NB. we are not seeking to restrict access to Tenant Panels with a role specification. A specification is intended to indicate qualities tenants may need to develop as Tenant Panel members.)
B28	Is there an appropriate system to assess performance of Tenant Panel individually and collectively?	B Documentation that shows how the individual and collective performance of the Tenant Panel is assessed, and that Personal Development Plans are developed to assist their performance and development
B29	Are appropriate procedures in place to develop the capacity of the Tenant Panel?	B Tenant Panel training and development documentation aimed at developing the capacity of the Tenant Panel individually and collectively (ensuring that the programme is periodically reviewed for its effectiveness)
B30	Will the Tenant Panel have opportunity to have regular contact/dialogue with tenants of other landlords?	B Documentation that demonstrates a commitment to providing the Tenant Panel with regular opportunities to engage with tenants of other landlords in order to assist in the development of knowledge of other systems, opportunities & performance levels

C ACCESS TO ALL & FAIRNESS

The third element of the **NTOApproved™** framework relates to ensuring that Tenant Panels are run fairly, in accordance with equality & diversity principles, are accessible to all tenants and other service users, and operate in accordance with accepted standards of fairness and conduct.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & FAIRNESS

It is rare that a Tenant Panel membership would neatly match diversity criteria, but we would expect that the issues of equality and diversity to be considered in their make-up and activities – particularly aiming to ensure that the needs and aspirations of all tenants are catered for.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
C31	Is the make-up of the Tenant Panel considered against diversity principles?	B Documentation regarding assessment of the Tenant Panel against diversity principles
C32	Will the Tenant Panel consider the diversity of the tenant constituency in carrying out its work?	B Documentation that sets out how the diversity of the tenant constituency will be considered in relation to the Tenant Panel's activities R Consideration of the Tenant Panel's attitude towards equalities issues in the Tenant Panel Meeting
C33	Does the Tenant Panel cater to all landlord service-users?	B Terms of reference for the Tenant Panel that refer to all landlord service-users
C34	Is there a commitment to assess Tenant Panel performance against diversity criteria?	B Documentation that sets out how Tenant Panel's activities will be considered against diversity criteria

ACCESS TO ALL

Tenant Panels need to be there for all tenants and all tenants need to be able to access its services, raise issues and make comment, and be in a position to apply to participate in the Tenant Panel.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
C35	Is access to the Tenant Panel publicised to all tenants?	B Publicity materials that publicise how tenants can raise issues and complaints with the Tenant Panel
C36	Are there methods by which the Tenant Panel will be accountable to all tenants?	B Documentation that sets out how Tenant Panel activities will be communicated and reported on to all tenants; how views of tenants will be periodically gathered on how the Tenant Panel carries out its role
C37	Are all tenants able to put themselves forward to be a Tenant Panel member?	B Documentation regarding s/election of Tenant Panel members showing that process is open to all, clear and transparent; publicity material for Tenant Panel recruitment processes demonstrating that processes have been advertised widely

CODES OF CONDUCT

All tenant activity should be governed by codes of conduct (developed and agreed with tenants) that set out what is expected of those participating. Appropriate stepped action should be taken if codes are breached.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
C38	Are there codes of conduct in place for the Tenant Panel?	B Codes of conduct that cover all parts of the Tenant Panel that include the elements of the Nolan Principles (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership), confidentiality and conflicts of interest
C39	Will codes of conduct be enforced?	B Documentation that sets out how codes of conduct will be enforced

D FUNCTIONING STRUCTURES & ADEQUATE SUPPORT

The fourth element of the NTOApproved™ relates to the structures of the Tenant Panel – that they are clear, reviewed and that appropriate support structures are in place to make them effective.

TENANT PANEL STRUCTURES

Tenant Panel structures will evolve to meet the needs of each tenant constituency and landlord. There needs to be clarity about what those structures are, with clearly defined terms of reference, and with clarity that all parts of the structure have a specified objective.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
D40	Are the Tenant Panel structures clearly defined?	B Documentation that defines Tenant Panel structures (ie. a structure chart/map)
D41	Are there terms of reference and defined objectives for all parts of the Tenant Panel structure?	B Terms of reference for each part of the Tenant Panel structure that include clear objectives for each element of the structure
D42	Will there be appropriate consideration as to whether tenants could collaborate with other tenants in local areas?	B A statement that the Tenant Panel and landlord will consider whether tenants could collaborate with tenants of other local landlords (where it is appropriate to do so)

REVIEW & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The field of tenant empowerment changes quickly, and what was appropriate once may not be any more. Value for Money considerations require that any activity that uses voluntary or financial resources should be reviewed and “impact assessed” to ensure that they are producing benefits for tenants.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
D43	Has the NTO approved! self-assessment process been done in partnership between the Tenant Panel and the landlord?	B Record of NTO approved! self-assessment meeting - with a signed declaration by a tenant and landlord representative that the self-assessment was carried out by tenant and landlord representatives (or a confirmation e-mail from both)
D44	Is there a means for the Tenant Panel to periodically review and impact assess its structures?	B Documentation that sets out how the Tenant Panel's structures will be periodically reviewed (with Tenant Panel involvement) to fit changing circumstances, and "impact assessed" to ensure that they are producing benefits for tenants
D45	Is there a periodically reviewed action plan agreed between the Tenant Panel and the landlord?	B Documentation regarding production of action plan for the Tenant Panel that shows how actions are dependent on the results of reviews and impact assessments and the process for agreeing the plan between the Tenant Panel and landlord

SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

Tenant Panel arrangements will not deliver unless there is proper support to make all of its constituent parts effective. Tenants may wish to voluntarily be part of the arrangements to support the Tenant Panel, but generally Tenants Panels will be reliant on staff support, and it is important that there is clarity of expectations of what that staff support will be and how the Tenant Panel will be involved in shaping the resources provided to support the Tenant Panel.

An NTOApproved™ Tenant Panel would have satisfied the NTO assessor in relation to the following:

	Element	What we would expect to see – evidence requirements
D46	Does the landlord enthusiastically support the Tenant Panel?	R Confirmation at the Tenant Panel Meeting that the Tenant Panel is supported by the governing body and senior staff G Enthusiasm for and appropriate awareness of the Tenant Panel demonstrated at Staff Group Meeting
D47	Has the landlord provided sufficient resources to support Tenant Panel operations?	B A statement of resources that will support the Tenant Panel, including any voluntary resources, budgets, dedicated staff support and support from other members of staff in relation to specific functions. G An understanding of how to manage relationships between the Tenant Panel, governing body and staff
D48	Is resource allocation considered jointly by the Tenant Panel and landlord?	B Documentation regarding how resource allocation will be considered jointly by the Tenant Panel and landlord
D49	Does the landlord have a strategy to train its staff on engagement with the Tenant Panel?	B Staff training procedure in relation to engagement with the Tenant Panel, including general expectations that all relevant staff will be trained in relation to engagement with the Tenant Panel, and specific training in relation to dedicated staff resources
D50	Does the "lead" staff member consider themselves to be accountable to the Tenant Panel for their work programme?	B A statement that sets out that staff member(s) who have overall responsibility for resourcing and supporting the Tenant Panel consider themselves to be accountable to the Tenant Panel and the landlord. G An understanding of accountability from the "lead" staff member regarding their work programme to the Tenant Panel demonstrated at the Staff Group Meeting.