



Challenge yourself - become

NTOapproved™



NTOApproved™

Delivering the best housing services requires effective Tenant Panels. Tenants need dynamic and accountable Tenant Panels so that they can get the best out of the resources available. Landlords need Tenant Panels to make their businesses more effective.

The National Tenant Organisations (NTOs) have developed NTOApproved™ as a basic checklist to help tenants and landlords work together to develop their systems for accountability, self-regulation and scrutiny. Tenants and landlords can use the checklist to assess themselves and their systems, and, if they wish to, they can apply to become approved by the NTOs that they meet the NTOApproved™ framework.

Tenant Panels can be set up in many different ways. We summarised some of them in our DCLG funded guide “Tenant Panels: Options for Accountability” available at www.nationaltenants.org/tenantpanels

By Tenant Panels, we do not just mean one specific group of tenants. Tenant Panels are a collection of arrangements by which tenants and their landlord work with each other – enabling tenants to get involved in decision-making and shape services, to monitor and scrutinise services, and to enable tenants to be involved in complaints.

NTOApproved™ is a basic level of assessment. It assesses principles, commitments, systems, processes and resources. It is not about deciding the appropriateness of particular structures. There is not a right or wrong structure for Tenant Panels – they , need to reflect different local circumstances.

We have deliberately tried to design the system to be as simple as it can be whilst ensuring that it robustly reinforces a set of principles that should sit behind Tenant Panels – principles that we have consulted as widely as possible on amongst tenants, landlords and their professional bodies, and which are derived from what is going on out there at the moment in the best landlords.

Many Tenant Panels and landlords will already be doing a lot of what is set out in our framework. All good Tenant Panels/landlords will want to consider the **NTOApproved™** framework. But we hope that you will also want to formalise and have your good work be independently recognised by applying to us to become **NTOApproved™**.

By becoming **NTOApproved™**, you are supporting the tenant movement and the landlord sector to work together to define standards and provide clarity about what tenants and landlords should expect from Tenant Panels.

There are various reasons to support **NTOApproved™**:

- it will help tenants and landlords consider what is needed to make co-regulation work effectively – making the business more effective and delivering benefits for tenants
- applying for **NTOApproved™** status provides an independent assessment of the basic principles behind Tenant Panels. These principles have been developed using the knowledge and expertise of the NTOs, gathered through much work and discussion with many tenants, landlords and housing professional bodies.
- it will provide reassurance to tenants and others that the Tenant Panel and the landlord meet basic standards
- it will be a means of demonstrating compliance with Regulatory Standards in relation to Tenant Panels

The NTOApproved™ Process

The process is in two stages:

Stages	Description
Self-assessment stage	Your Tenant Panel works with your landlord to carry out a self-assessment against the NTOApproved™ framework. We hope that you will tell us the results of your assessment. We can offer independent support to help carry out the self-assessment if required.
External assessment stage	If you wish to apply for NTOApproved™ status, it will be granted following an external validation carried out by an NTO assessor. This validation will consist of an assessment of relevant paperwork as well as a visit to meet with members of the Tenant Panel and relevant members of staff, councillors or board members. To achieve NTOApproved™ status, your Tenant Panel and your landlord will need to demonstrate that you have achieved all the necessary standards in each area of the framework.

NTOApproved™ is granted for a period of three years. Should we receive significant reports that question whether NTOApproved™ should continue to apply, we may wish to investigate the Tenant Panel and possibly rescind approval.

NTOApproved™ is applied for by a Tenant Panel (or a relevant and agreed part of it) but we would expect this to be done in partnership with the landlord. We would expect that a landlord would assist in and be supportive of the application.

There is a fee for being granted NTOApproved™ status. This fee is to cover the NTO's costs in carrying out the assessment. We have deliberately aimed to keep the fee as affordable as it can be to make it easier for landlords to support their Tenant Panels apply for NTOApproved™ status. The fees in 2012 are £900 plus VAT.

The NTOApproved™ process has been designed to be helpful, supportive and interactive. During the process and in a final report, we will highlight activities we have been particularly impressed by, and we will identify areas where we think improvements can be made.

Once a Tenant Panel has been approved by the NTOs, the Tenant Panel and the landlord would be expected to use NTOApproved™ logo on appropriate communications material and websites and refer to NTOApproved™ in the annual report to tenants.

For further information, please contact Nic Bliss on nic@cch.coop or 07947 019287.