**National Customer Experience and Housing Management National Group –Terms of Reference**

Updated May 2023

**Purpose of National Groups**

The National Housing Federation’s (NHF) National Groups are a crucial element in meeting our core values – to put members at the heart of everything we do, and work together to achieve that. National Groups support us in developing and testing new policy ideas, gathering vital market intelligence, and informing our responses to government and other key stakeholders.

Groups should support us in delivering our business plan, and should be flexible in response to the external environment and salience of key issues. They should also provide added value for members through the opportunity to shape debates at a national level, in a dynamic setting and with high quality support from NHF staff.

We are committed to several key principles in relation to national groups; and our approach to member engagement more broadly:

* **Fairness** - all members are clear about who is on the group, the reasons why, and the mechanisms /rationale for involvement;
* **Inclusivity** – all members are clear about the group’s purpose and how to contribute in the fullest way;
* **Transparency** – the group operates in transparent way, which is clear and visible to other members.

**Terms of Reference**

**1. Purpose**

Each of the NHF’s National Groups have specific purposes to facilitate discussion around new thinking and best practice. They will also support and advise the NHF on its lobbying and influencing work.

The NHF’s **Customer Experience and Housing Management National Group** exists to lead, inform and influence the NHF’s work on customer excellence, housing management and tenant/ resident engagement.

The group will be outcome focused, with an overarching aim to influence the current policy environment, lead the understanding of customer excellence across the sector and enhance the sector’s reputation and relationship with key stakeholders.

It will focus on influencing, thought leadership and acting as a sounding board for the NHF on the following strategic themes:

* Making the case for ‘customer excellence’ – thought leadership and best practice in approaches to customer service in the sector.
* Implementation of the new consumer regulation regime and Social Housing Regulation Bill.
* Implementation of the recommendations of the Better Social Housing Review around customer service and resident engagement
* Significant developments in housing management, including the Renters’ Reform Bill.

The group’s specific activities and work plan will be driven in part by the strategic direction laid out by the National Housing NHF’s Board and in part by changes in the external operating environment. The group will maintain a strategic focus, as this is where it best adds values to the NHF and the sector, and will ensure its areas of focus remain consistent with the themes listed above. It will not be expected to produce consultation responses, but to act as a strategic sounding board and source of input into NHF consultation responses and policy positions.

**2. Membership**

National Groups comprise of up to 25 members. All members must be staff of organisations affiliated to the National Housing Federation. Members will be selected in a fair and transparent way, and the NHF’s Member and Business Support team will ensure consistency in the process.

The group does not seek to be wholly representative (there is no vote or mandate), but will encourage genuine diversity of members. The following factors will be taken into consideration when assessing applications:

* The need to ensure there is at least one member from each size band of housing association: large, medium and small.
* The need to ensure the group membership is formed of housing associations from a range of geographical locations.
* The need to ensure a diversity of skills and expertise among the individual members of the group.
* The need to ensure a diversity of strategic and operational understanding of issues among the individual members of the group.

In the instance where the group find it valuable, persons who are not staff of organisations affiliated to the NHF may join as Expert Advisors.

**3. Length of term**

A standard term will last for 3 years in accordance with the NHF’s business planning cycle. However as this is a new member group we will be flexible on the length of group membership to ensure for effective continuity and succession planning.

**4. Meetings and commitment**

* 4 x core meetings per year (virtual)
* Includes some activity in between meetings e.g. acting as a virtual sounding board on emerging policy issues, promoting group activity with members’ own networks etc.

We expect the approximate time commitment will be approximately 12 – 15 hours a year excluding travel time. This will rise to up to approximately 20 hours for the Chair.

Members will be expected to attend at least 3 meetings a year and participate in activity in between meetings. The majority of activity is anticipated to be virtual.

**5. Chairing**

A Chair will be nominated from within the group’s membership, to serve for a minimum term of two years. As this is a new group, the initial chair will serve for a three year term to enable successful embedding of the group’s purpose and activity. The Chair will be expected to:

* Be an active Chair at meetings
* Act as an effective ambassador for the NHF externally
* Work with the NHF’s group lead and the wider group to shape the work plan, agendas and group activity.

Nominations for a vice chair will be sought from within the group’s membership. The Vice-Chair will be expected to:

* Chair meetings on behalf of the Chair where appropriate
* Act as an effective ambassador for the NHF externally
* Work with the Chair and NHF lead to shape the work plan, agendas and group activity.

**6. Expectations of group members**

Group members will be expected to:

* Provide creative, critical and constructive feedback in order to strengthen the NHF’s policy work across the housing management and consumer agenda, and support us in delivering the objectives in our business plan.
* Participate in open, honest and respectful discussions within the group, creating a safe space for challenge and diversity of views.
* Attend as many of the meetings as possible, and at least 3 across the year, and participate in additional meetings or forums where necessary.
* Act as an effective ambassador for the NHF and the group with both member and external audiences.
* Contribute blogs, articles or other activities from time to time in order to support us in reaching out to the wider membership.
* Take actions forward outside of meetings as appropriate (e.g. provide views on email, canvas opinion from other members).
* Attend ad hoc roundtable meetings to contribute to relevant policy discussions or consultation responses, or nominate appropriate colleagues to do so.
* Have their names published on our website as part of the group information section, and in alignment with NHF commitments around transparency and openness.

**7. What group members can expect from the NHF**

Overall, we promise to ensure our approach is FIT for purpose:

* Fair – in our processes and decision-making
* Inclusive – in that we will always seek to reflect the diversity of our membership
* Transparent – in how we make decisions, and how we work with you

Members can expect:

* A clear framework, aligned to our business plan objectives, to support group activity.
* Opportunities to input ideas, test policy proposals and influence the delivery of a critical area of our business plan.
* Support and input from the NHF’s Member Relations Team at every meeting.
* Support and input from a range of NHF staff where appropriate.
* Clear and consistent feedback and evaluation on how the group is making a difference to our work.
* Clear communication with NHF leadership – an opportunity for the group to engage directly with our Chief Executive or another member of the Leadership Team at least once a year.
* Flexibility and responsiveness – we will review the format regularly and in partnership with you, to ensure it is fit for purpose.
* Efficiency and Value for Money – we have no desire to create meaningless bureaucracy within our groups; the focus will be on creative thinking and practical action that will help to deliver our business plan.

In practice, this means:

* Providing dedicated resource to administer the group, which will include holding the mailing list, noting actions at meetings and circulating agendas.
* Regularly demonstrating the added value of the group’s activity to business plan delivery, through evaluation and feedback.
* Ensuring the work of the group is communicated and accessible to the wider membership.

**9. Review**

We want to make sure the engagement mechanisms we have are strong and successful, and support us in delivering our business plan. We will review the group after the first 6 months and on an annual basis thereafter. We will always involve our members in discussions around changes.