

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Tenant Voice Panel (TVP) exists to independently review, challenge and scrutinise the services provided by Bernicia. The TVP aims to improve service quality, value for money for tenants, and tenant satisfaction through evidence-based recommendations.

It has an important role to play in helping and advising the Customer Services Committee in their decision making in respect of improvements to customer service and identifying and confirming customer priorities.

The TVP will ensure the customer voice is heard and listened to and Bernicia is open and accountable to its customers.

2. Scope and Authority

2.1 The TVP is authorised to:

- Select service areas for review based on performance data, tenant feedback, and strategic priorities
- Access relevant policies, procedures, and performance information (subject to data protection requirements)
- Request information and explanations from staff at all levels
- Interview staff, contractors, and tenants as part of their investigation
- Make formal recommendations to Bernicia's Executive Team and Customer Services Committee
- Monitor implementation of agreed recommendations

2.2 The TVP operates independently but reports formally to the Customer Services Committee.

3. Membership

3.1 The TVP shall consist of 10-15 tenants or leaseholders of Bernicia.

3.2 Members shall be recruited through an open application process based on interest, willingness and commitment. Interested candidates will informally meet with the Bernicia engagement team and also the chair/vice chair to understand the activities of the panel and determine if it is something they feel they would like to contribute to.

3.3 Customers of Bernicia are eligible to join the Tenant Voice Panel provided that they:

- Are not Board or Committee members and they are not involved in governance activities.
- Are not employees of Bernicia.
- Are not in breach of their tenancy / lease conditions. Examples of types of breaches include those who:
 - Are in rent arrears without an agreement to pay.
 - Have a Notice Seeking Possession in place for a breach of tenancy.
 - Are subject to any anti-social behaviour order or investigation

3.4 Members may serve a maximum of two three-year terms with a further three one-year terms being permissible subject to the needs of the organisation.

3.5 Members will be required to stand down in a rolling programme of three members each year, based on length of service, starting at the third anniversary of the Tenant Voice Panel's formation. In the event of more than three members being eligible to stand down, lots will be drawn. Members may be reappointed to the Tenant Voice Panel should a place become available but cannot be reappointed for at least 3 years.

3.6 A chair and vice chair will be appointed for a three-year term via self-nomination, followed by a closed ballot of panel members. Both posts are eligible for re-election. Should the ballot for either position result in a draw, a re-ballot will be held at the next quarterly meeting. In the event that a re-ballot also results in a draw then a name will be selected at random. The chair and vice chair may only serve a maximum of 6 years.

3.7 Any member who has not attended 3 consecutive meetings will be contacted to determine whether they still wish to remain on the panel. Members who are unable to attend meetings for whatever reason will need to accept that their membership cannot be held open for them and that Bernicia will have to offer their place on the panel to another tenant. This ensures quorum for meetings is maintained and ensured diversity of voice.

4. Meetings and Operations

4.1 The TVP will meet a **minimum** of four times per year, with additional meetings as required for specific scrutiny projects based on the annual work plan.

4.2 Meetings will take place at a time and format which suits the existing membership and will be reviewed as new members join. This could include:

- Face to face, daytime
- Face to face, evening
- Hybrid (mixture of face to face and MS Teams), daytime
- Hybrid (mixture of face to face and MS Teams), evening
- Fully digital (MS Teams)

The time and format of the meeting should not be a barrier to new members joining.

Face to face meetings will be hosted at Bernicia's offices in either Ashington, Durham or Berwick for those who wish to attend in person, with the facility to join via MS Teams should that be more convenient for tenants.

4.3 A quorum shall be a minimum of 5 current members, including the Chair and/or the Vice Chair.

4.4 During any vote in the case of a draw the Chair/or Vice Chair would have the casting vote

4.5 The TVP will develop an annual work plan identifying priority service areas for scrutiny which will be endorsed by the Executive Team and the Customer Services Committee. The workplan will be both tenant-led, and also Bernicia led to ensure regulatory requirements are met.

4.6 It is anticipated The TVP will conduct 1-2 in-depth scrutiny reviews annually. Training will be provided to all panel members on how to conduct scrutiny effectively by TPAS.

4.7 Administrative support will be provided by the Customer Insight and Engagement Team.

5. Scrutiny Process

5.1 To enable the TVP to develop a workplan and fulfil its role, Bernicia will provide:

- Quarterly performance against key measures and targets.
- Quarterly customer feedback.
- Results from surveys and consultations.
- Operational decisions and updates from Customer Services Committee, Investment Committee and Group Board.
- Complaint Improvement Reports
- Resources to allow fulfilment of responsibilities.

5.2 The TVP will prepare an annual work plan identifying 1-2 areas to scrutinise based on the data provided.

5.3 Prior to conducting each review, the TVP will:

- Define clear objectives and scope
- Develop a project plan with timelines
- Gather evidence through various methods
- Analyse findings and develop recommendations
- Produce a written report for the Executive Team and Customer Services Committee
- Monitor implementation of agreed actions

5.4 The TVP will also complete the following tasks:

- An annual assessment of Bernicia's compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards which will form part of the Board Assurance Report
- An annual assurance statement that validates the effectiveness of arrangements for scrutiny, challenge and compliance
- A quarterly review of any other considerations based on adverse trends or feedback, outside of the agreed workplan, which the TVP believes requires the Executive Team and Customer Services Committee's attention. This will be delivered as a summary report prepared by the Chair
- Ongoing monitoring of the budget allocated to engagement and scrutiny

6. Reporting

6.1 The TVP will submit formal reports to the Customer Services Committee (CSC) following each scrutiny review as part of the Voice of the Customer (VoC) update.

6.2 The CSC will provide feedback to the TVP via the Customer Insight & Engagement Team where relevant.

6.3 The TVP will also deliver an annual report to the Customer Services Committee summarising activities and impact. This will be shared in a joint annual meeting between the TVP and CSC where the TVP will provide assurance that scrutiny has been conducted effectively, and to share collective ideas and learnings.

6.4 Key findings and outcomes will be communicated to all tenants through Bernicia's website, portal (MyBernicia) and social media

7. Resources and Support

7.1 Bernicia will provide:

- A dedicated budget for scrutiny activities
- Training and development opportunities for members
- Administrative and professional support
- Access to external expertise when required
- Reasonable expenses for TVP members

7.2 It is mandatory to participate in any scrutiny training offered by Bernicia. Bernicia will endeavor to provide suitable alternative dates to ensure maximum attendance.

8. Code of Conduct

8.1 TVP members will abide by the Bernicia Involved Tenant Code of Conduct which will be provided to all members in advance of each meeting.

8.2 In brief, members are required to:

- Maintain confidentiality regarding sensitive information
- Declare any conflicts of interest
- Act in the collective interest of all tenants
- Make evidence-based recommendations
- Maintain constructive working relationships with staff uphold the Association's values and equity, diversity and inclusion policies

9.Review

9.1 The Tenant Voice Panel will sit within the governance structure as detailed in Appendix 1.

9.2 The Tenant Voice Panel will operate within the requirements of Bernicia Rules, Standing Orders, the internal Control Framework and Framework for Delegated Authority

9.3 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually by the TVP and the Customer Services Committee by completing a TVP effectiveness Self-Assessment form.

9.4 Changes require approval from both the TVP and the Customer Services Committee.

Approved by: Tenant Voice Panel

Date: 21st January 2026

Approved by: Customer Services Committee

Review Date: January 2027

Group Board

Tenant Voice
Panel

Customer
Services
Committee

Investment
Committee

Audit
Committee

RRA
Committee

