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# **Independent Housing Ombudsman and Designated Tenant Panels**

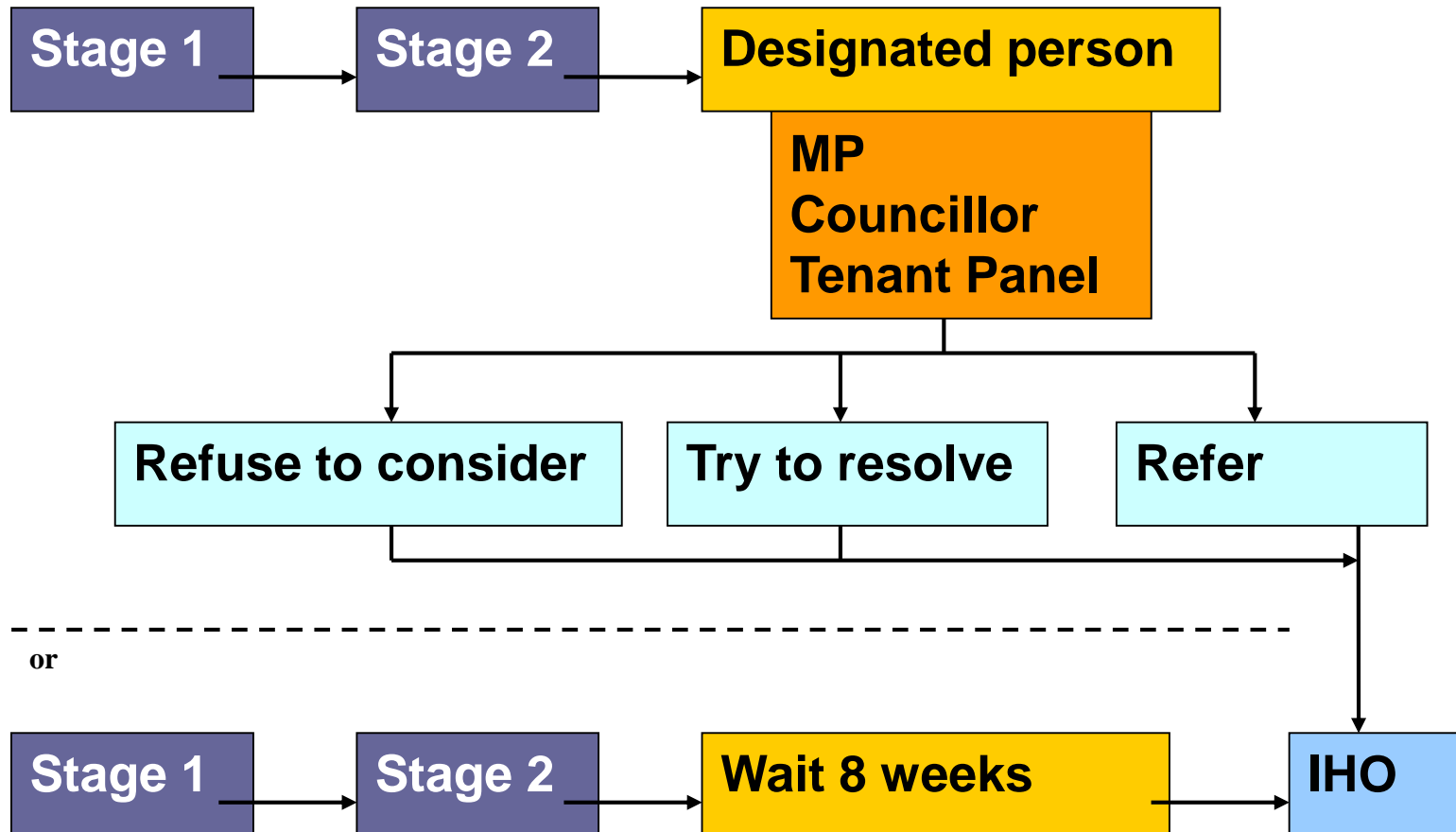
Changes to the arrangements for  
referring complaints to the  
Ombudsman that have been through  
the Council's complaint procedure

# IHO and Designated Tenant Panels

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1. Arrangements for referring complaints to the Independent Housing Ombudsman.
2. Designated Tenant Panels – what is needed to set one up?
3. Designated Tenant Panels – what criteria will be used for recognising them?
4. Examples.
5. Voting.

# Referring complaints to the IHO



# What does a Designated Tenant Panel do?

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- a. Receive complaints
  - From tenants and leaseholders
- b. Decide what to do
  - Refuse to consider
  - Try to resolve
  - Refer to Housing Ombudsman
- c. Assist with complaints referred by the Housing Ombudsman

# Designated Tenant Panels – things to consider

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- a. What are the benefits to tenants and leaseholders of having a Designated Tenant Panel they can refer their complaint to... (flip chart)
- b. What are the potential difficulties for Designated Panels receiving complaints... (flip chart)

# Designated Tenant Panels – things to consider

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## c. Skills and abilities - need to be good at

- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Understanding and empathy
- ✓ Analysing information
- ✓ Understanding and unpicking problems
- ✓ Seeing the big picture and the details
- ✓ Seeing it from different angles
- ✓ Finding solutions
- ✓ Being realistic and fair
- ✓ Making suggestions for improvement
- ✓ Keeping good records

# Designated Panels – things to consider

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d. Training and knowledge will be dependent on the skills of the people recruited, but for example:

- ✓ Mediation
- ✓ Advocacy
- ✓ Housing practices and procedures

# Designated Panels – things to consider

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e. What is the best size, number and make up of panels?

- One Designated Panel for the city
- Several smaller panels
- One panel for repairs issues, and one panel for all other issues



# Designated Panels – Things to consider

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- f. Where should Designated Panel members be drawn from?

Flip chart

# Designated Panel – things to consider

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- h. What monitoring should be put in place
- Tenant Panels will keep records of the cases they have been involved with
    - ✓ Dates
    - ✓ Outcomes, locally and IHO
    - ✓ Learning and service improvements
    - ✓ Customer satisfaction with TP involvement

# Designated Panel – things to consider

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## **i. Governance arrangements**

- Independent of the Council
- Legal input essential
- Data protection and confidentiality
- Code of conduct for Panel members
- Recruitment process
- Financial support
- Equalities Impact
- Auditing and scrutiny

### 3. Designated Panels - Recognition

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What recognition criteria should we have for Designated Tenant Panels?

- Representative cross section of the community
- A well defined structure
- Easily accessible
- Provide prompt responses
- Keep good records
- Achieve realistic outcomes
- Identify service improvements
- Maintain complete confidentiality

# Designated Panels – example case (a)

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Complaint about being placed in a flat with unsociable neighbours living upstairs. Complainant says he was not advised about this family before he moved in.

S1 stated that noise is nothing more than everyday sounds of a young family. Older property and council will not install soundproofing.

S2 agreed with decision at S1.

Complainant wants council to either evict the family, insist they are quiet and installs soundproofing.

Designated Tenant Panel decision? Refuse, try to assist, or refer?

# Designated Panels – example case (b)

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Complainant has three children under five and said the flat is damp and is causing the children to be unwell. Has requested that they are moved out until the damp is sorted out and the property is made fit for them to move back in.

S1 stated the damp is caused by lifestyle and advice was given on how to reduce condensation. Will not place in temporary accommodation. Informed of programme of work scheduled for following year.

S2 agreed with S1 decision but identified some minor works should have been carried out.

Complainant wants the ombudsman to intervene to force the council to carryout the work.

Designated Tenant Panel decision? Refuse, try to assist, or refer?

# Designated Panels – example case (c)

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Bathroom ceiling was brought down by rainwater flooding in through the roof. Patch repair carried out to roof pending programmed works. Ceiling not repaired because there is still some rain water getting in when weather is really bad. Tenant complains this is unacceptable, heat is being lost through open ceiling and the room looks a complete mess.

S1 apologised for delay in properly fixing roof.

S2 recommended property be made weather tight and ceiling repaired, but work not done.

Complainant wants to refer to Ombudsman on the basis that they cannot use bathroom and the council is not meeting it's obligation to keep the property weather tight.

Designated Tenant Panel decision? Refuse, try to assist, or refer?

# Designated Panel – Question 1

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Q1 Given that tenants and leaseholders can use an MP or Councillor as a Designated Person do you think a Designated Tenant Panel is something that would be made use of?

- A. Yes.
- B. No.
- C. Unsure.



# Designated Panel – Question 2

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Q2 Based on what you have discussed is a Designated Tenant Panel something you think tenants and leaseholders would want to set up and run?

- A. Yes.
- B. No.
- C. Unsure.

# Designated Panel – Question 3

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Q3 If the majority of reps across all Area Panels would like there to be Designated Panels would you like to have...

- A. One panel for the whole city.
- B. A panel for each area.
- C. One panel for repairs and one for every thing else.
- D. No preference.

# Designated Panels – Question 4

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The recruitment process. Do you think reps for Designated Panel(s) should be selected through:

- A. A similar process used for Scrutiny Panels.
- B. Tenant reps pick from a list of people who are interested.
- C. A process as yet to be decided by the Involvement and Empowerment Servicewide Group (August onward).
- D. No preference.

# Designated Panels – what happens next?

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- Officers will prepare a report for HMCSC giving feedback from the Area Panel Meetings.
- We would like one rep from each Area Panel to help produce report.
- The reps to assist in the presentation of report and its recommendations to HMCSC.

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# **Independent Housing Ombudsman and Designated Tenant Panels**

Thank you for your help