

Criteria for inclusion on the panel

These criteria will be applied when considering applications from planning professionals who wish to be included on the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Panel.

1. General

The panel exists to satisfy demand for independent examiners of neighbourhood plans.

An independent governance body, made up of representatives of professional bodies and key stakeholders, will oversee recruitment onto the panel, and ensure recruitment is both fair and rigorous.

Any person appointed to the panel must fully understand and implement the quasi-judicial role required of them.

Panel members must understand that they will not be engaged to make decisions on the basis of any personal preference or conviction, rather (whilst applying their professional knowledge, experience and insight) they must assess evidence presented to them by the parties and reach well-reasoned and justifiable conclusions.

2. Assessment of panel members

Selected candidates will be required to complete training and undertake an assessment (including interview), for which there will be a charge to cover venue and other costs.

The assessment process will normally have regard to the following:

- Professional qualifications (all panel members must be qualified members of at least one recognised professional body involved in the planning system);
- Relevant experience and knowledge of the planning/political system; particularly the relevance of the NPPF to Neighbourhood Planning;
- Knowledge of the legal administrative environment.

3. Current and recent experience

Panel members must be able to demonstrate relevant experience in their purported areas of expertise.

Panel members must submit to regular reassessments, and monitoring of their CPD records

4. Additional skills and competencies

The responsibilities for acting as an independent examiner under this service are considerable, and therefore, a high degree of relevant professional competence is expected.

The main criteria for appointment to the panel are based on relevant professional qualifications and experience, and a range of additional skills/knowledge prescribed as follows:

- An understanding of the Localism agenda and the practicalities of developing projects from a community perspective;
- Appreciation of the differing levels of skills and knowledge in neighbourhood groups;
- Ability to be flexible and able to manage the process efficiently
- Excellent communication skills, both oral and writing (must be able to write reports in an accessible, coherent and consistent style;
- Able to deal with different personality dynamics and ‘real world’ problems;
- Understands policy intentions/landscape as well as legal implications.

5. Continuing Professional Development

Members of the panel will be required to demonstrate, as a condition of remaining on the panel, that they keep up to date in their area of expertise and are reasonably up to date on relevant law and practice through appropriate Continuing Professional Development. Panel members may also be subject to reassessment as and when the governance body considers appropriate.

6. Selection for appointments

Membership of the panel does not guarantee that someone will receive a referral as an independent examiner.

Generally the number of times panel members are appointed to act as examiners will be determined by the demand for appointments.

In individual cases, appointments will be determined by the requirements of the parties in relation to:

- Relevant professional qualifications desired of a panel members by the parties
- Relevant experience and understanding of the particular subject matter
- Timescales and availability of an individual panel member to act when needed
- Independence of a panel member from the relevant parties and the subject matter of the examination
- Location of a panel member relative to the geographic area where the need for an examiner has been identified

7. Removal from panel

General

Members of the panel should accept that inclusion on the panel is on the basis that they can also be removed at the discretion of the independent governance body

The governance body must give reasons for removal. Appeals against removal will be considered by an independent review panel constituted by RICS in conjunction with RTPi and POS, which will be chaired by a lay person.

The governance body will regularly liaise with DCLG and obtain feedback from users of the service to review the performance of each panel member.

The governance body has an absolute discretion as to whom it may remove from the panel, but would normally have regard to the following:

Performance

If a panel member fails to meet the required standard of performance as set out in the service level agreement (SLA) for panel members.

Continuing Professional Development

A panel member fails to undertake the required level of CPD as set out in the SLA.

Disciplinary Investigation

If a panel member is subject to a disciplinary investigation by their professional body they will be suspended from the panel until the outcome is known and reviewed by the governance body.

Complaints

A complaint about the performance of a panel member that is subject to an investigation by either the governance body and/or the panel member's own professional body will result in suspension of the member from the panel until the outcome is known.