

Access to Information

Access to information and confidentiality

ASRA holds information which is of a personal and sensitive nature.

Keeping you informed

We are committed to providing you with information about our policies and procedures on our housing services. These can be translated into different languages and formats on request.

You have a number of opportunities to find out about the activities and services we provide including:

- ▶ Our newsletter, *In Touch*, which is issued four times a year
- ▶ This handbook and various leaflets on particular topics
- ▶ A Performance Report that tells you how well we are doing each year. This is sent out to every tenant, leaseholder and shared owner once a year
- ▶ Letters or fact sheets about particular plans we have or projects we are involved in
- ▶ Tenant group meetings in your area.

Confidentiality

Disclosure:

- ▶ We will only disclose information on a need to know basis or with your consent. The only exceptions to this are where the law permits someone access to information we hold. The law allows us to share information with Police, Benefits Agency Fraud Officers and other landlords, for example to prevent or deal with antisocial behaviour, crime and fraud.



- ▶ Disclosure of specific tenant names and addresses is avoided. Estate, scheme or project names are used in publicity. In reports to committees, tenants are referred to by initials and tenancy number and not by name and address
- ▶ ASRA staff are trained in confidentiality awareness and sensitivity. A breach of confidentiality by a member of staff is a serious issue and is regarded by ASRA as potential gross misconduct.

Security:

- ▶ Tenants' files are kept in secure filing units that are secured overnight and offices are protected by burglar alarms
- ▶ Records held locally are kept in a secure cabinet.



Provision of Data Protection Act 1998

Description of your file:

We hold personal data relating to you, your family and your tenancy. We also have information about rent arrears, Housing Benefit and any repairs done to your home. This is not exhaustive, as we hold records of most contacts between yourself and our office.

Use of the data:

We use the data to manage rent arrears and help you with Housing Benefit claims. If you give us consent, we will use data on file to provide a reference should you apply for a mortgage or want to move to a private rented home. Information about you and your family will be used if you request a transfer, apply to buy your home or apply for a grant to buy a new home. We also use the data to assess any support requirements.

All tenants, leaseholders, former tenants and applicants have the right to see information about them or their immediate family. Tenants and leaseholders will be granted access to their files by writing in with their request.

Access to information

▶ *Can I inspect the information about me?*

Yes, under the Data Protection Act 1998, you have the right to check information about you that is held by ASRA on both manual and computer files.

▶ *Can I see everything about me?*

No, we can't show you information provided to us by third parties such as doctors, social workers etc or information that involves other people.

You can only see this information if we have written permission from the person who wrote it.

▶ *How can I get a copy of the information held and how long will it take?*

You need to write to your housing officer stating clearly that you would like a copy of your file and enclose a cheque/postal order for £10. With your letter you must include your name and address, your telephone number, your signature, a £10 fee.

Please remember that we must receive all the above information and £10 fee before we can comply with your request.

▶ *What will be sent to you?*

You will receive a copy of the information we have about you within 40 days of receiving your application. However your right to see certain information may be limited. For example if providing you with the information would be likely to affect the way a police investigation or a criminal prosecution is carried out then we are not permitted to disclose the information to you. In some cases your right to see certain health and social work details may also be limited.

▶ *What if some of the details are inaccurate or incomplete?*

You can ask us to change or remove the information from your file or the computer. We will need evidence that the information is inaccurate or incomplete as to any matter of fact. If this is not possible we will make a note on your record showing your objection.

▶ *What if I am not satisfied?*

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which we have collected, processed or stored data you should write to the Complaints Co-ordinator at ASRA stating your reasons for dissatisfaction. The complaint will be handled in line with our complaints policy.