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## **Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Housing Associations: useful information for residents and local people**



This information sheet has been produced by the Housing Corporation and the National Housing Federation. It explains how the Freedom of Information Act 2000 relates to housing associations, what information you are able to request and where from.

### **Are housing associations covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000?**

No. Although they may work closely with local authorities and the Housing Corporation (which are all covered by the Act), housing associations are not 'public authorities' and so are not covered.

The Act lists the bodies which are covered by Freedom of Information, and the Secretary of State may add to this list at any time.

For further information see the Department of Constitutional Affairs website ([www.dca.gov.uk/foi](http://www.dca.gov.uk/foi)).

### **But housing associations receive public money, so should they not be considered to be public authorities?**

Many organisations receive public money - charities, private companies, housing associations. This does not automatically make them public authorities. Even though an organisation may carry out activities similar to that of a local authority or other government body, it is not necessarily considered to be public.

### **How can I get information about a housing association?**

There is lots of general information about housing associations already available. The Housing Corporation and National Housing Federation can provide you with this, some of which you may need to purchase. Our contact details are given in this document.

You can also write to housing associations. Most try to be as open as possible and will provide you with information when they are able.

The Housing Corporation requires housing associations to be accessible, accountable and transparent to residents and other stakeholders. The National Housing Federation Code of Governance states that associations should operate in an open and accountable

#### **Useful Contacts**

National Housing  
Federation  
Lion Court  
25 Procter Street  
London WC1V 6NY

020 7067 1010  
[info@housing.org.uk](mailto:info@housing.org.uk)  
[www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk)

Housing Corporation  
Maple House  
149 Tottenham Court Road  
London W1T 7BN

0845 230 7000  
[enquiries@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk)  
[www.housingcorp.gov.uk](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk)

Information Commissioner's  
Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF

01625 545 700  
[mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk)  
[www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)

manner by generally making information about their work available to their residents, local communities and other stakeholders.

**How can I access personal details held by a housing association about me?**

Housing associations that collect and store personal data must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. Under the Act, you can make a Subject Access Request to find out what personal information is held about you. A charge may be made to process your application. Contact your association to find out more about the way you can access your personal data under this Act.

**Can I access the information that the Housing Corporation holds about housing associations?**

The Housing Corporation does not usually hold information about individual properties, or about much of the day-to-day activity of housing associations. It does receive information to help it regulate housing associations and make investment decisions. The Corporation's publication scheme outlines the type of information it holds and releases into the public domain. You can find this on its website.

You are entitled to apply to the Corporation for information it does hold. As a public authority, it will deal with this as laid out by the Freedom of Information Act. There are some circumstances in which it cannot release information, including those which involve 'commercial interests', 'investigations and proceedings by public authorities' and 'information provided in confidence'. The Information Commissioner's website provides more details about the exemptions to disclosure under the Act.

**Can I access the information that the Federation holds about housing associations?**

The National Housing Federation is the membership body of around 1,400 housing associations in England. It is not a public authority and therefore does not fall under the Freedom of Information Act.

It does not hold information about individual properties, or the day-to-day activity of individual housing associations. It provides good practice guidance for associations, and collects examples of their work.

*Useful contact details are given on the front page of this document.*