ARAWAK WALTON HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) Policy

Approved by	Board
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Date issued to staff	September 2026
EDI impact Assessed	Yes
Date of Next Review	September 2029
Policy Ownership	Chief Executive
Corporate Objectives	Customers & Communities

1. What is STAIRs and why does it matter?

1.1 The Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) are new government rules that give social housing tenants greater access to information about how their homes and services are managed.

1.2 STAIRs is intended to make social landlords more open and accountable. Access to information helps tenants understand how we work, how decisions are made, how we are performing and how we use our resources. It also helps tenants question and influence the services they receive and hold us to account.

1.3 STAIRs works in two ways:

- **Publication Scheme.** From **1 October 2026** we must routinely publish certain information without tenants having to ask for it.
- **Information Requests.** From **1 April 2027** tenants can ask us for other information about the management of our social housing.

1.4 As a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) housing association, Arawak Walton recognises that some of the communities we serve have historically experienced barriers to accessing information and public services, including language, digital and cultural barriers.

1.5 Being open with the communities we serve has always been important to us. STAIRs gives us an opportunity to strengthen that commitment and make sure tenants can find, understand and use information about their homes and our services.

2. Our commitment to tenants

2.1 Our aim is that information should be shared wherever possible. We will:

- proactively publish information about our services, performance, finances and policies
- make information easy to find and understand
- explain our decisions clearly
- respond fairly and promptly when tenants ask us for information
- only withhold information where there is a clear and legitimate reason
- provide information in accessible formats wherever possible
- learn from requests and reviews so we can improve the information we routinely provide.

2.2 We will never withhold information simply because we are worried that it might reflect badly on Arawak Walton or because we disagree with how the information might be used.

3. Who STAIRs applies to

3.1 This policy applies to Arawak Walton in its role as a social landlord, including information held on our behalf by another organisation involved in managing our social housing.

3.2 STAIRs applies to our social housing tenants, including shared owners and people on probationary or trial tenancies. It does **not** apply to 100% leaseholders.

3.3 A tenant can authorise someone else to make a request on their behalf, for example a family member, carer, support worker or legal representative.

3.4 Where someone acts for a tenant, we may need to check that they have the tenant's permission. This is to protect the tenant's privacy.

4. How STAIRs works

Part 1 - Our Publication Scheme

4.1 From 1 October 2026, we will routinely publish information about the management of our homes and services. Tenants will not need to ask us for this information. Our **Publication Scheme** (Appendix 1) sets out what we publish and where it can be found.

4.2 We will regularly review the information we publish to make sure it remains relevant, up to date, accessible and easy to find.

Part 2 - Asking us for information

4.3 From 1 April 2027, tenants can ask us for information about how our social housing is managed where the information is not already published. We will generally withhold any personal information. If you want to see your personal data you can make a subject access request via our contact us page. (Please note - dealing with personal data requests falls under a separate data protection policy)

4.4 Tenants do not need to use a particular form, refer to STAIRs or explain why they want the information. They simply need to tell us what information they would like.

4.5 Information requests can be made through our usual contact routes, including by phone, email, online, through AW-Connect, or by post or in person.

4.6 Our current contact details are available on our website Contact Us - Arawak Walton Housing Association.

4.7 Following a request , we will:

- acknowledge the request promptly, usually within 5 days
- provide a full response within 30 calendar days, or where the request requires clarification, 30 days from receipt of the clarification.
- explain what information we have provided;
- inform the tenant if information has been withheld or redacted and explain why
- provide the information in an accessible format wherever possible.

4.8 In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to extend the timeline for a response. Where this is necessary, we will inform you at the earliest opportunity. Every effort will be made to respond in a reasonable timeframe where any extension is required.

4.9 If there is likely to be any delay in providing a response, we will ensure that we provide you with a reason for the delay together with our best estimate as to when you may be likely to receive a response.

4.10 We are not required to create new information to answer a STAIRs request. However, if relevant information is held on our behalf by a contractor or another organisation involved in managing our social housing, we will take reasonable steps to obtain it taking account of our duty to comply with the requirements balanced against the need for a proportionate approach and the availability of resources.

4.11 We will keep a record of information requests, how we responded and whether we met the required timescale. This will help us identify patterns, improve the information we routinely publish and monitor how well STAIRs is working.

5. Making information accessible

5.1 Our tenants reflect a wide range of cultures, languages and lived experiences. We recognise that information is only useful if tenants can access and understand it.

5.2 We will therefore make reasonable adjustments and provide information in alternative formats where needed. This may include:

- languages other than English
- large print
- Easy Read
- audio or other accessible formats
- using graphics or other ways of presenting information where this makes it easier to understand.

5.3 We recognise that some tenants may experience digital exclusion. Information will therefore not only be available online, and tenants can contact us for help accessing information in another way.

5.4 We will make every effort to accommodate requests for alternative formats at no cost to tenants.

Charging for information

5.5 We will not normally charge tenants for information provided under STAIRs.

5.6 Where a request involves multiple copies of the same information that are particularly costly to reproduce or post, we may consider whether a reasonable charge is appropriate.

5.7 Before considering a charge, we will discuss other ways of providing the information with the tenant or their representative.

6. Information we may not be able to provide

6.1 Our starting point is to share information. However, there are circumstances where information cannot, or should not, be disclosed.

6.2 We may need to withhold or redact information where, for example:

- it contains another person's personal information - information about an identifiable individual may be protected by data protection law;
- it is legally privileged - for example, confidential legal advice;
- it is commercially sensitive - for example, information about ongoing contract negotiations where disclosure could cause genuine commercial harm; or
- disclosure could cause significant harm - for example, where releasing information could put someone's safety at risk.

6.3 We may also be unable to deal with a request under STAIRs where, for example:

- we do not hold the information;
- the request is for information outside the scope of STAIRs;
- the request repeats one we have already answered;
- we cannot establish that the person making the request is entitled to use STAIRs;
- the request is not clear enough for us to identify the information being requested;
- dealing with the request would exceed the time limit set by the STAIRs requirements (18 hours of staff time); or
- the request is offensive or abusive.

6.4 Where a request is unclear, we will try to help the tenant clarify what information they need before deciding that we cannot deal with it.

6.5 If we withhold information, redact part of a document or refuse to deal with a request, we will explain our reasons clearly.

Who makes the decision?

6.6 Arawak Walton has Data Stewards who are managers with responsibility for specified areas of information covered by STAIRs.

6.7 The Data Steward responsible for the relevant information will normally make the first decision about whether information can be disclosed or whether anything needs to be withheld or redacted. They will apply the requirements of STAIRs and the grounds set out in this policy.

6.8 Where a decision is complex, sensitive or unclear, the Data Steward will seek appropriate advice before a final decision is made.

7. STAIRs, complaints and personal information

7.1 A STAIRs information request or review is separate from our normal complaints process. Should any STAIRs complaints arise - as these relate to access to information and transparency, rather than service delivery – these are handled outside the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

7.2 We recognise that tenants should not have to understand our different procedures before contacting us. Tell us what information you need or what you are unhappy about, and we will make sure it reaches the right person.

7.3 In general:

- if you want information about how we manage our homes or services, this may be dealt with under STAIRs

- if you are unhappy with a service we have provided, for example how we dealt with a repair, this will normally be dealt with under our Complaints, Concerns & Compensation Policy
- if you want information about yourself, this will usually be dealt with as a Subject Access Request (SAR)
- if you are unhappy with how we have collected, used, shared, stored or otherwise handled your personal information, this will be dealt with under our Data Protection Complaints Procedure.

7.4 If something raised by a tenant raises involves more than one of these processes, we will make sure each part is dealt with under the appropriate procedure and explain this to the tenant.

8. If you're unhappy with our response

8.1 A tenant can ask us to review our decision if they believe:

- we have not published information that should be available under our Publication Scheme
- we have not provided information they believe should have been disclosed
- information has been wrongly withheld or redacted
- we have not responded to an information request within the required timescale
- we have otherwise failed to deal with their request properly under STAIRs.

Step 1 - Ask us for a STAIRs review

8.2 Tenants should ask for a review within 3 months of our original response or, where the concern relates to information we should have published, within 3 months of becoming aware of the issue.

8.3 To make things simple, tenants can ask for a STAIRs review using the same contact routes available for making a complaint to us.

8.4 They do not need to contact a particular member of staff, complete a particular form or use the words "STAIRs review". We will make sure their request reaches the right person.

8.5 Although the same contact routes are available, a STAIRs review is separate from our Complaints, Concerns & Compensation process and will not be treated as Stage One of that process.

8.6 The review will normally be considered by an appropriate manager who was not responsible for the original decision, wherever practicable.

8.7 We will provide the outcome of the review within 30 calendar days. If we need more time in exceptional circumstances, we will tell the tenant or their representative as soon as possible and explain why.

8.8 We will explain:

- what we have reviewed;
- our decision and the reasons for it;
- whether any further information will be provided or published; and
- what the tenant can do next if they remain dissatisfied.

Step 2 - Contact the Housing Ombudsman

8.9 If a tenant remains dissatisfied after our internal STAIRs review, they can make a STAIRs complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

8.10 We will explain how to contact the Housing Ombudsman in our review response and advise the tenant of any relevant time limit for referring the matter.

9. Monitoring, learning and accountability

9.1 We will monitor how we are meeting the STAIRs requirements, including:

- whether information is being published as required;
- the number and type of information requests we receive;
- whether requests and reviews are completed within the required timescales;
- reasons for withholding or redacting information;
- the outcome of STAIRs reviews; and
- themes or gaps that indicate information should be published more routinely.

9.2 We will use this information to improve our Publication Scheme and how we communicate with tenants.

10. Equality and diversity

10.1 This policy is intended to promote fair and equal access to information for all tenants, regardless of background, disability, language or any other protected characteristic.

10.2 As a BME housing association, we are particularly mindful that some communities have historically experienced barriers to accessing information and public services. We will monitor how this policy works in practice and take action where we identify barriers or unequal access.

11. Reviewing this policy

11.1 We will review this policy every three years, or sooner where there is a significant change to STAIRs or relevant regulatory guidance.

11.2 Where possible, tenants will be involved in reviewing how well this policy is working.

Appendix 1: Our Publication Scheme

1. Introduction

1.1 This appendix sets out information, much of which we already share with tenants, organised so tenants can find it without needing to know what it's called or which team looks after it.

1.2 In line with the Government's STAIRs rules, we have grouped our information into seven straightforward areas. We will continue to add to this list as we publish more - we'll review it at least once a year to make sure it stays accurate and useful.

2. How we're run and make decisions

2.1 The Government call this “Governance and decision making” - it means *How we're run and make our decisions*

What we publish	What this includes
About us	Our mission, vision and values, and our corporate objectives.
Our group structure	Our organisational structure, including named individuals responsible for key duties such as fire safety.
Our board	Who sits on our Board, and their role in overseeing Arawak Walton.
Our committees	Our Board committees and their responsibilities, including membership.
Our Executive Team	Our senior staff responsible for running Arawak Walton day to day.
Our decision-making processes	Our constitution, articles of association, and standing orders.
Tenant consultation documents	Newsletters, and how we involve tenants in decisions. (Meeting minutes and our tenant participation strategy are still being brought together.)

Board papers	A public version of our Board's papers, agendas and minutes.
Key strategic decisions	Documents behind major decisions, including our Corporate Plan.

3. How we manage your money

3.1 The Government call this "Spending" - it means *Where Our Money Comes From and How We Spend It.*

What we publish	What this includes
Audited accounts and financial statements	How we spent money, including grants and use of service charge revenue.
Rent collection and rent rates	How rent levels are set and collected.
Procurement procedures	How we choose who we buy goods and services from.
Contracts and tenders over £500	Contracts and tenders for housing management services above this threshold.
Merger-related costs and financial risk assessments	Where relevant, the costs of any merger and associated financial risk assessments.

4. How we maintain and invest in your home

4.1 The Government call this "Housing stock management" – it means *Our Plans for Looking After and Improving Your Homes*.

What we publish	What this includes
Corporate Plans and Objectives	Our strategic goals for managing our housing stock, including decent homes, planned investment, estate management, maintenance, environmental performance, social investment and resident engagement.

Stock profile and transfers	Details of any homes bought, sold, or transferred in the last 12 months.
Property conditions and improvements	Maintenance and repairs carried out over the last 12 months, and response times.
Stock and asset condition data	Home types, rent levels, tenant satisfaction, lettings and sales, and compliance data required by our regulator.

5. How well we're doing

5.1 The Government call this “Performance” – it means *How Well We’re Actually Doing*.

What we publish	What this includes
Inspection outcomes and ratings	Judgements from the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman.
Performance reviews and audits	Internal and independent external audits of our performance.
Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Annual Report	Results of our TSM survey, and our annual performance report.
Media releases	News coverage about Arawak Walton, including community and charitable activities.
Complaints handling and performance	Our complaints policy, performance data, and self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
Information request data	A log of previous STAIRs information requests and how we responded.
Health and safety performance	Organisational health and safety performance and assessments, where these can be shared safely.

Number of evictions	How many tenants we've evicted and the reasons, without identifying anyone personally.
Compensation and redress	Compensation paid through our own process, Housing Ombudsman orders, and legal claims, reported in aggregate.
Awaab's Law compliance	Our response times for emergency and significant hazards.
Number of decants	How many tenants have needed temporary accommodation while work was carried out.

6. How we deliver services and stay in touch

6.1 The Government call this “Housing services and tenant liaison” – it means *How we support you and keep you informed?*.

What we publish	What this includes
Advice and guidance for tenants	Information on your tenancy, allocations, mutual exchange, rent, and income support.
How we involve tenants	Our engagement strategy, tenant groups, and how tenants scrutinise our services.
Consultation and feedback	How we consult tenants and what we do with feedback.
News and updates	The latest news and updates for tenants.
Equality and accessibility	Our commitment to equality and making our services accessible to everyone.

7. Where to find our records

7.1 The Government call this “Lists and registers” – it means *The safety checks and records that keep your home safe*.

What we publish	What this includes
Safety registers	Gas safety, fire risk assessments, electrical safety (EICR), asbestos, water hygiene, and building safety performance. Aggregate compliance is reported; individual property-level registers are not published.
Damp and mould case tracking	How we track and monitor damp and mould cases (not at an individual property level).
Estate inspection schedules	Our schedule for inspecting communal areas and estates.
Home accessibility and adaptations register	Our register of homes with accessibility features or adaptations, in aggregate.

8. What to expect from us as your landlord

8.1 The Government call this “Social housing management” – it means *Our Policies That Set Out What You Can Expect from Us As Your Landlord*.

8.2 Here we set out our policies affecting your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, including: aids and adaptations; anti-social behaviour; arrears; building safety; compensation; complaints; communal spaces; safeguarding; damp and mould; decants; disrepair; fire safety; fraud; income management; leasehold management; neighbourhood and estate management; pets; parking; rent; repairs and maintenance; moving and allocations; shared ownership; service charges; succession; tenancy; and water safety.

What we publish	What this includes
Full policy list	All policies listed above.

9. What we won't have here

9.1 We want to be as open as possible, but a few things won't appear in this scheme:

- Decisions made by the local authority rather than us - for example, allocations, homelessness assessments, or housing benefit decisions.
- Information about property or services that aren't part of our social housing - for example, any commercial premises we might own.
- Draft or working documents, old versions, and internal correspondence.

9.2 We won't create brand new documents just to answer a gap in this list, and we may sometimes need to leave out or blank out a small part of something we publish where it's fair and reasonable to do so - our STAIRs Policy explains how we make that decision.

10. Can't find what you're looking for?

10.1 If you think we hold information that should be here but isn't, just ask us for it - see our STAIRs Policy for how to make a request or ask for a review.

11. Need this in another way?

11.1 We know not everyone finds it easy to read information on a website, or in English, or in this format. If you'd like anything in this appendix - or anything we publish - in large print, Braille, easy read, audio, or another language, just ask us and we'll arrange it for you, free of charge.