

SOCIAL TENANT ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS (STAIRS) POLICY

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Updated by:	Head of Quality and Compliance		
SLT Policy Owner:	Director of Operations	Policy Group:	Operations
Last Full Review:	October 2026	Next Review Due:	September 2029
Any major update in relation this policy must be approved by Operations & Development			
Policy Implemented:		1 st October 2026	
Replaces previous policies:		n/a	
If you have any queries in relation to this policy, please speak to your line manager.			

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SOCIAL TENANT ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS (STAIRS)

1. Purpose, Legal and Regulatory Context

- 1.1 This policy explains how Inspire North will meet the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements, known as STAIRs. STAIRs require private registered providers of social housing to publish information about social housing management and respond to tenant information requests.
- 1.2 STAIRs was introduced following the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 to strengthen transparency, accountability and tenant access to information. It applies to recorded information about the management of social housing held by Inspire North, or by another organisation managing social housing on Inspire North's behalf.
- 1.3 This policy supports Inspire North's commitment to transparency, accountability and tenant access to information and sits alongside existing data protection rights and obligations. Further detail is set out in Section 9.

2. Policy Scope and Principles

- 2.1 This policy applies to Inspire North's social housing services, tenants, designated representatives with appropriate authority, and contractors, partners or third parties who hold relevant information on Inspire North's behalf.
- 2.2 Requests that are more appropriately handled through another process will be signposted to the correct route. Further examples are set out in Section 7.
- 2.3 Inspire North will apply STAIRs in line with transparency, accountability, accessibility, lawfulness, consistency and proportionality, balancing tenant access to information with data protection, safeguarding, confidentiality, commercial sensitivity and information security.

3. Publication Scheme

- 3.1 From 1st October 2026, Inspire North will publish, or otherwise make routinely available, information it holds within the required STAIRs publication classes (see Appendix 1).
- 3.2 Inspire North may redact information before publication where it is reasonable and lawful to do so, including to protect personal data, confidential information or information that should be withheld under a permitted ground for refusal, withholding or redaction.

4. Information Requests

- 4.1 From 1 April 2027, tenants, or their designated representatives, will be able to submit written requests for recorded information relating to the management of Inspire North's social housing. Inspire North will fulfil valid requests for relevant

information unless one of the permitted grounds for refusal, withholding or redaction applies. These grounds are set out in Section 8.

- 4.2 Requests must be made in writing, including by email, letter, online form, web enquiry, social media direct message or another written format accepted by Inspire North.
- 4.3 The use of a STAIRs request form (Appendix 2) can help clarify the request and support prompt processing but Inspire North will not reject a written request solely because the applicant has not used the form, provided the request contains enough information to identify the requester and the recorded information requested.
- 4.4 Where a request is made by a designated representative, Inspire North will complete proportionate eligibility, and authority checks before disclosing information.
- 4.5 A valid STAIRs request must be made by an eligible applicant, include contact details, describe the information clearly enough to identify and locate it, and relate to Inspire North's social housing management.
- 4.6 Where a request is unclear but is identifiable as an information request, Inspire North will make reasonable efforts to assist the applicant to make a clear and valid request. Where clarification is required, the request will not be treated as valid until sufficient information has been provided to identify and locate the recorded information requested.
- 4.7 Inspire North will make tenants aware of routinely available information, how to make a STAIRs request from 1 April 2027, and how to raise a complaint if dissatisfied.

5. Responding to Requests

- 5.1 Inspire North will acknowledge receipt of STAIRs information requests promptly and will respond to valid requests no later than 30 calendar days from the date the request is accepted as valid, subject only to permitted extensions.
- 5.2 In responding to a STAIRs request, Inspire North will assess whether the request is valid and within scope. It will consider whether the information can be disclosed in full or in part, apply any lawful refusal, withholding or redaction where necessary, and explain the outcome clearly, including any review or complaint route.
- 5.3 Further time to respond will only be used where permitted by STAIRs. Where a request is refused, delayed or only partly fulfilled, Inspire North will explain the reason and signpost any review or complaint route.
- 5.4 Responses containing personal, sensitive, confidential or redacted information will be sent securely using an appropriate method.
- 5.5 Inspire North is not required to create new information to respond to a STAIRs request.

- 5.6 Where relevant information is held on Inspire North's behalf, Inspire North will use reasonable endeavours to obtain it and respond.

6. Requests That May Fall Outside STAIRs

- 6.1 Some requests will fall outside STAIRs and may need to be managed through another statutory, regulatory or organisational process. This may include requests relating only to personal data, complaints or service failures, matters determined by another body, non-social housing functions, or information not held by Inspire North or on its behalf.
- 6.2 Where a request does not fall within STAIRs, or where the information may be accessed through another statutory regime, Inspire North will explain this and make reasonable efforts to direct the requester to the appropriate route for accessing the information.

7. Refusing, Withholding or Redacting Information

- 7.1 Inspire North may refuse a STAIRs information request where a permitted refusal ground applies, including where the applicant's identity cannot be established, the request remains unclear, the information is not relevant, the work would exceed the permitted time limit, the request is repeated or unreasonable, the request is abusive, or a withholding or redaction ground applies.
- 7.2 When considering whether information can be disclosed, Inspire North will balance transparency with relevant legal duties, including data protection, confidentiality, safeguarding, information security, commercial sensitivity and third-party interests.
- 7.3 Inspire North will not refuse an information request solely because disclosure may create reputational risk for Inspire North.
- 7.4 Decisions to withhold or redact information must be made in line with this policy, based on the circumstances of the request and the potential impact of disclosure. The reason for the decision must be recorded clearly, and support Inspire North's commitment to transparency and accountability.
- 7.5 Separately, information may be withheld or redacted where disclosure would be unreasonable or unlawful, including because of data protection, confidentiality, legal privilege, safeguarding, safety, security, commercial sensitivity, legal restrictions or third-party interests.
- 7.6 Where information is refused, withheld, redacted, not held, delayed or considered outside the scope of STAIRs, decisions will be recorded so they can be reviewed and monitored.

8. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- 8.1 STAIRs does not replace existing data protection rights or obligations. UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 continue to apply, and Inspire North must balance transparency with privacy, confidentiality and information security duties.

- 8.2 Where a request is for the requester's own personal data, it will usually be managed as a SAR under Inspire North's Information Governance Framework.
- 8.3 Where a request includes both personal data and wider housing management information, Inspire North will determine the most appropriate way to respond and may handle different parts of the request under different processes.

9. Complaints and Housing Ombudsman

- 9.1 If a tenant is dissatisfied with a STAIRs matter, they may raise a complaint under, or aligned with, Inspire North's Compliments, Concerns and Complaints (Feedback) Policy, unless STAIRs or regulatory requirements require a different route. If they remain dissatisfied after Inspire North's complaints process, they may escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

10. Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments

- 10.1 Inspire North will support tenants to access information in a way that meets their needs wherever reasonably possible, including by considering reasonable adjustments, alternative formats, communication needs, language needs and digital exclusion.
- 10.2 Inspire North will make reasonable efforts to provide non-digital access routes where tenants are digitally excluded or need support.

11. Records, Monitoring and Review

- 11.1 Inspire North will maintain proportionate STAIRs records to support transparency, accountability, compliance monitoring, assurance and organisational learning.
- 11.2 Records will be retained in line with Inspire North's records retention requirements.
- 11.3 Inspire North will monitor STAIRs activity, risks, learning, regulatory developments, Housing Ombudsman outcomes and relevant audit or assurance findings.

Appendix 1

STAIRs Publication List Summary

This summary sets out the main categories of information Inspire North will publish or make available under STAIRs, where the information is held and suitable for publication or routine access.

STAIRs publication class	Information Inspire North will publish or make available	How tenants can access it
Governance and decision making	Information about how Inspire North is governed and how decisions about social housing are made, including relevant policies, governance arrangements, tenant engagement information, consultation outcomes and information showing how tenant views influence services.	Website, reports or request.
Spending	Relevant information about spending connected to the management of social housing, including service charge information where applicable, procurement information, contract information and summaries of housing-related expenditure where held and suitable for publication.	Annual reports, tenant information, finance updates or request.
Housing stock management	Information about how Inspire North manages homes and buildings, including repairs, maintenance, planned works, property safety, compliance, adaptations and asset management information where held.	Tenant pages, service communications, compliance updates or request.
Performance	Information about the performance of social housing services, including complaints, tenant satisfaction, repairs performance, service standards, health and safety compliance and improvement actions.	Performance reports, newsletters, governance reports or request.
Housing services	Information about the housing services tenants receive, including tenancy management, repairs processes, complaints, antisocial behaviour, tenant engagement, support routes, service standards and how to access services.	Tenant handbook, service leaflets, website, or request.
Lists and registers	Relevant lists and registers relating to the management of social housing where held and suitable for publication, such as policy registers, compliance records, asset-related records and other relevant governance or service records.	Website, governance publications or request.
Social housing management	Information about how Inspire North manages social housing overall, including relevant policies, procedures, standards, monitoring arrangements, regulatory compliance, tenant involvement and improvement plans.	Policy pages, tenant communications, reports or request.

STAIRs Information Request Form

STAIRs Information Request Form

This form can be used by tenants or designated representatives to request recorded information relating to the management of Inspire North's social housing under STAIRs. You do not have to use this form if your written request gives us enough information to identify you and the information you are requesting.

Section 1 – Tenant details

First name(s)	
Surname	
Address / accommodation	
Service, scheme or project	
Telephone number	
Email address	

Section 2 – Details of person requesting the information, if different from the tenant

This section should be completed where the request is made by a designated representative acting on behalf of the tenant.

Representative name	
Organisation, if applicable	
Relationship to tenant	
Address	
Telephone number	
Email address	

Section 3 – Authority to act on behalf of the tenant

Do you have written authority, consent, power of attorney or other evidence that you are authorised to act on behalf of the tenant?	☐ Yes ☐ No		
Please describe the evidence provided			
Tenant consent, where applicable: I authorise the person named above to make a STAIRs information request on my behalf and to receive correspondence about this request.			
Tenant Signature:		Date:	

Section 4 – Information requested

Please describe the recorded information you are requesting. Include dates, services, properties, topics, documents or decisions where known. The more specific you can be, the easier it will be for us to identify and locate the information.

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Section 5 – Communication and accessibility needs

Preferred response format	☐ Email ☐ Post ☐ Collection ☐ Other
Accessible format or support required	☐ Large print ☐ Easy read ☐ Audio ☐ Translation / interpreter ☐ Support to read information ☐ Other
Please provide details of format / support required (i.e. language for translation)	

Section 6 – Declaration

I confirm that the information I have provided is correct. If I am acting as a designated representative, I confirm that I am authorised to act on behalf of the tenant named in this form.

Signed:		Date:	
Print name:			

For internal use only

Date request received			
Received by			
STAIRs reference			
Tenant / representative validated?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Further information required		
Date request accepted as valid			
Response deadline			
Forwarded to Quality and Compliance Team			
Date:		By:	