

# Four Million Homes

Knowledge and action for change in social housing

## Social Tenants Access to Information (STAIRS)

### Consultation response

The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper ([Social Housing White Paper](#)) included a commitment to introduce an access to information scheme for the tenants of private registered providers (PRPs). The commitment specified that the scheme would allow social housing tenants and their representatives to access information related to the management of their housing.

This consultation seeks views on the content of a policy statement which outlines the requirements providers will need to meet under the new Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs).

This consultation also seeks views on a proposed Direction from the Secretary of State to the Regulator of Social Housing ('the Regulator'), directing the Regulator to require PRPs to comply with the policy statement for STAIRs.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> July, Four Million Homes hosted a webinar to gather responses to the question, through polling attendees and inviting comments. Below is the summary of results.

In total, 30 people fed into the consultation.

## Number of responses

#	Question	Responses
1	Do you agree with the requirements for the publication scheme, as outlined above? If not, why not?	20
2	Do you consider it appropriate for the publication scheme to include a requirement for providers to publish previous information requests made under STAIRs, and the responses to those requests?	26
3	Do you agree with the assessment of the impacts of the publication scheme, as outlined in the 'Publication scheme impacts' sub-section? If not, why not?	23
4	Do you have any wider comments on the costs providers will face in implementing STAIRs?	Comments
5	Do you agree with the scope of information that is covered by STAIRs, as outlined in paragraphs 46-50? If not, why not?	26
6	The above section (paragraphs 51 to 53) outlines the requirements relating to who can make information requests. Do you agree with these requirements? If not, why not?	26
7	Do you consider it appropriate for the requirements to apply to local authorities with tenant management organisations in relation to information held by such bodies? Please provide details.	27
8	Do you agree with the information provision requirements outlined in paragraphs 55-60? If not, why not?	27
9	Paragraph 57 relates specifically to information held on behalf of the landlord by another body or person. Do you agree with the requirements relating to information held on behalf of the landlord? If not, why not?	0
10	Do you agree with the requirements relating to where providers can refuse to disclose information? If not, why not?	30
11	Do you agree with the staff time limit (18 hours) for responding to requests, as outlined in paragraph 63? If applicable, please make reference to any costs or other burdens relating to the time limit.	27
12	Do you agree with the requirements relating to responding to information requests, including time limits, as outlined in paragraphs 68-74? If not, why not?	29
13	Do you have any comments regarding the process for dealing with complaints?	Comments
14	Do you have any comments on the draft direction?	Comments

## Questions and responses

1. Do you agree with the requirements for the publication scheme, as outlined above? If not, why not?

Yes	No
20	0

2. Do you consider it appropriate for the publication scheme to include a requirement for providers to publish previous information requests made under STAIRs, and the responses to those requests?

Yes	No
25	1

3. Do you agree with the assessment of the impacts of the publication scheme, as outlined in the 'Publication scheme impacts' sub-section? If not, why not?

Yes	No
16	7

- Would need to have more detail on this
- think there will be initial costs but once set up should be minimal

4. Do you have any wider comments on the costs providers will face in implementing STAIRs?

- Concerns that costs will be passed on to tenants
- To be able to reply to requests for information, they have to have an up-to-date picture of what's going on in their properties, landlords should but don't always have this
- If housing associations are doing their jobs properly, they would have all this information anyway and would be very easy to access, and not afraid to publish.
- Concerns that the system is not accessible in terms of everything being written, and that costs would increase if accessibility provision was taken into account
- Again there are cost implications with assistance particularly when you have tenants with different needs
- A lot of pressure on frontline and housing staff (for small providers)

5. Do you agree with the scope of information that is covered by STAIRs, as outlined in paragraphs 46-50? If not, why not?

Yes	No
24	2

**Comments:**

- Will it include service charge information for tenants
- Will it include information on breakdown of service charges
- Will it include where shared owners are contributing to communal properties/services on estates

**6. The above section (paragraphs 51 to 53) outlines the requirements relating to who can make information requests. Do you agree with these requirements? If not, why not?**

Yes	No
25	1

**7. Do you consider it appropriate for the requirements to apply to local authorities with tenant management organisations in relation to information held by such bodies? Please provide details.**

Yes	No
27	

**8. Do you agree with the information provision requirements outlined in paragraphs 55-60? If not, why not?**

Yes	No
25	2

**Comments:**

- Will HAs keep records of the people who are asking for information, even if that request is turned down

**9. Paragraph 57 relates specifically to information held on behalf of the landlord by another body or person. Do you agree with the requirements relating to information held on behalf of the landlord? If not, why not?**

Didn't ask question

**10. Do you agree with the requirements relating to where providers can refuse to disclose information? If not, why not?**

Yes	No
5	25

- feel like this sets up a loophole
- tenants should have the right to organise and request information together where they have a collective concern
- 'request is offensive or communicated in an abusive manner' – feels subjective, sometimes things can be read wrong. Was raised that people have a right to not be abused at work – however here the line between something being abusive and merely a bit frustrated is more difficult!
- When providers refuse to provide information - will they have to give a reason and can the person asking appeal?

**11. Do you agree with the staff time limit (18 hours) for responding to requests, as outlined in paragraph 63? If applicable, please make reference to any costs or other burdens relating to the time limit.**

Yes	No
5	22

- 18 hours is nothing for something like a service charge request or in for example processing a complaint
- Feel like this could negate the whole process
- How can they decide, in advance, that a request will take more than 18 hours to fulfil?

**12. Do you agree with the requirements relating to responding to information requests, including time limits, as outlined in paragraphs 68-74? If not, why not?**

Yes	No
3	23

- Are there any teeth to this, doesn't feel like HA s are going to meet it
- Should be a tighter timescale
- the information should be provided within 10 working days

**13. Do you have any comments regarding the process for dealing with complaints?**

- Some confusion about how/whether this relates to HA's complaints policies and the timescales
- Should be correlation with local authority tenants

**14. Do you have any comments on the draft direction?**

- What are the penalties if landlords don't meet the requirements
- Comments that this represents a good direction.