CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

1.0 Statement

All information Radcliffe Housing Society (RHS) holds about our tenants, leaseholders, freeholders, others and assets is confidential and must be treated in accordance with the guidelines stated in this Policy.

2.0 Aims

The aims of this Policy are to ensure that we comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and other appropriate legislation regarding:

- The protection and disclosure of information
- Providing a framework within which personal information is collected, stored, handled, and disposed

3.0 Objectives

3.1 This policy reflects the principles, practices, and objectives we follow when dealing with information held both digitally and hard copy (paper) about our customers, including tenants and applicants.

3.2 This Policy covers all our customers including tenants, freeholders, leaseholders, and other stakeholders.

3.3 We need to collect, process and store personal information about our residents and other household members (when they provide information about household members, we assume that they do so with their full knowledge and consent), in order to operate as a Registered Provider of housing and deliver efficient and effective services.

4.0 Documents

4.1 We operate a clear desk policy. Anything confidential or for limited circulation will be locked away.

4.2 All filing cabinets, lockable drawers are locked at the end of each day, and keys are stored securely.

4.3 All information held about residents is stored electronically. The nature of our business means at times there will be a legal requirement to take paper documents of any type to Court.

5.0 Telecommunications

5.1 Our incoming calls from external sources will be subject to monitoring or recording.

5.2 Our staff with access to work mobiles will make sure their phone number is not blocked, when contacting a customer.

5.3 We verify every resident who contacts us by using personal information to verify the identity of the caller. Failure to be verified means we reserve the right to terminate the call without providing any information requested.

5.4 As part of our digital offer, we encourage residents to send photos to an office mobile phone if directed to, by a member of staff. However, information will not be stored on that mobile phone. If we receive digital media in this way, we will store the information electronically, at the earliest opportunity.

6.0 Partnership Contractors and Suppliers

6.1 Our contractors have limited access to information about our customers. Our contractors adopt the principles of the Data Protection Act (2018).

6.2 We are obliged to share information with our contractors and suppliers in the interests of health and safety, to protect our staff, contractors, and suppliers.

6.3 Further information about the information we hold, process and how it's used can be found within our Privacy Notice.

6.4 Our contractors and suppliers must:

- Disclose the contents of any emails, documents, spreadsheets, or any other information obtained about our residents
- Delete any information requested by us
- Comply with current GDPR legislation
- Not misuse the information available to them or copy the contents
- Agree to keep all operational business information confidential
- Indemnify RHS against breach of this Policy to the extent, permitted by insurance policies
- Alert RHS if there is any data protection breach immediately
- Be bound by our Privacy Notice and this Policy, in the same way as our staff and our Board

7.0 Verification

7.1 If a resident representative, partner, parent, or child requests information, a "Authority to Discuss" form must be obtained from the tenancy or leaseholder, before information will be given.

7.2 When discussing anti-social behaviour with residents, every effort will be made to collect information, without giving away confidential information about any other resident.

7.3 For utility companies, only the following information may be provided, unless a Court Order obliges us to do so:

- Name of tenant
- Date of commencement of tenancy
- Name of previous tenant and date of commencement and termination of the tenancy

7.4 We will not disclose to anyone if a resident or occupier has died. We must receive any requests in writing for deceased individuals, and we will liaise with the next of kin or executor of the will.

7.5 Forwarding addresses must be provided for Council Tax purposes, where they are required.

8.0 Statutory Agencies

8.1 We aim to co-operate in the prevention and detection of crime and in complying with the Law. We will not provide the Police or third parties with any information unless a crime has been established, or we have adopted an information sharing protocol.

8.2 It is our responsibility to make sure correspondence about Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and all other benefit entitlements are genuine.

8.3 The Social Security Administration Fraud Act 1997 places a duty on a landlord in receipt of Housing Benefit Direct to inform the statutory agencies, of any change in the tenant's circumstances, where they know this is likely to affect a claim. This could include whether or not the tenant:

- has abandoned the property
- failed to move in
- has any change in rent
- has started work or stopped their employment

8.4 The penalty for not doing so could be a fine or imprisonment. These disclosures are outside the scope of the Data Protection Act 1998, as the provisions of these Acts do not apply where the disclosures are required by another statute.

8.5 Where tenants are making a claim for benefit entitlements, in receipt of benefits or where we receive benefit payments direct on behalf of the tenant, we will ask for the Consent Form – Radcliffe Representing A Resident (See Appendix 1). This provides consent for us to disclose such information, as is requested by Local Authorities or Universal Credit departments.

8.6 When receiving queries from other statutory bodies, including social services or probationary services, we will determine the type of information requested and determine the reason for asking for the information.

9.0 Members of Parliament and Councillor Enquiries

9.1 If an MP or Councillor contacts us on behalf of a resident, the query will be automatically referred to the Operations Director, to facilitate a response.

9.2 MPs and Councillors have the right to request personal information about a resident. If it is relevant in providing a response to their query, they can do so, without consent from the resident. We may provide information where it is necessary to respond to an MP's or Councillor's enquiry, without obtaining consent from the resident concerned.

9.3 Our approach to responding to queries and complaints, is set out within our Complaints Policy.

10.0 Third Parties

10.1 Letters from lending institutions (banks, building societies, credit agencies or loan companies) requesting a reference must be accompanied by a completed Consent Form - Third Party Representing A Resident (See Appendix 2).

10.2 If not, correspondence will be written to the requestor advising we need the residents' consent before releasing any information.

10.3 No information will be given to friends or families without express permission from our resident. We will always ask for an Authority to Discuss form to be completed.

11.0 Media enquiries

- All press enquiries should be referred to the Chief Executive.
- All Freedom of Information requests should be referred to the Operations Director.

12.1 Appendix 1

Consent Form – Representing a Resident

Your
Name:……

Your
Address:……
……
……
……
……

I hereby give my consent to Radcliffe Housing Society disclosing any relevant information as requested by Housing Benefit team.

Signed
(Resident)……

Date ……

Please complete and return to:
Radcliffe Housing Society Ltd, Homefield Road, Riverhead, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 2DU
Or email your signed and scanned form to: housing@radcliffehs.org

12.2 Appendix 2

Consent Form –
Third Party Representing a Resident

Your
Name:……

Your
Address:……
……
……
……
……

I hereby give my consent to Radcliffe Housing Society disclosing any relevant information as requested, by a third party.

Signed
(Resident)……

Date ……

Please complete and return to:
Radcliffe Housing Society Ltd, Homefield Road, Riverhead, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 2DU
Or email your signed and scanned form to: housing@radcliffehs.org