



# STAIRS PUBLICATION POLICY

**Freebridge**  
COMMUNITY HOUSING



| STAIRs Publication Policy           |                          |             |           |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Last Reviewed                       | June 2026                | Next Review | June 2027 |
| Responsible Officer                 | Chief Operations Officer |             |           |
| Publication Scheme effective from   | 1 October 2026           |             |           |
| Information Requests effective from | 1 April 2027             |             |           |

## Policy Statement

Freebridge Community Housing is committed to being open, transparent and accountable in the way we share information with customers and their representatives.

This policy explains how customers can access information about their homes, services, performance, decisions and how we are run. It also explains what information we will publish, how customers can ask for more information, and how we will respond clearly, fairly and on time.

Our aim is to make information easy to find, easy to understand and accessible to everyone, including people who need information in a different format or support to use digital services.

## Policy Detail

This policy explains how Freebridge Community Housing meets the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs).

It sets out how we will give current customers and their representatives clear, useful and accessible information about our services, decisions, performance and governance. It helps customers understand how decisions are made, how services are delivered, and how they can hold Freebridge to account.

## Scope

This policy applies to all Freebridge employees and to any organisation delivering social housing management services for us. It covers the information we publish, how we respond to customer information requests, and how we manage reviews and complaints about STAIRs.

Everyone involved in preparing, approving or publishing information must make sure it is accurate, up to date, accessible and easy to understand.

## **Our Commitment**

Current customers, and representatives acting on their behalf, have the right to access information about their home, landlord services and how Freebridge is run. This includes the right to ask for information we hold, receive a response within 30 calendar days, and ask for a review if they are unhappy with our response or if the information has not been provided in a suitable format.

- We will publish as much information as possible, make it easy to find and understand, and provide it in accessible formats where needed. We will also support customers who cannot use digital services, including through phone contact, face-to-face support, paper copies and community-based engagement routes.
- Our approach is based on four key principles: transparency, accessibility, accountability and fairness. This means we will share information openly wherever we can, make it available in a way people can use, explain our decisions and performance clearly, and handle requests consistently and promptly.
- We will publish or provide information unless there is a clear and lawful reason not to, such as data protection, confidentiality, commercial sensitivity or safety concerns. If we cannot share information, we will tell the customer why and only remove or hide the parts we cannot share.

## **STAIRs Requirements**

STAIRs has two parts: the Publication Scheme, which applies from 1 October 2026, and Information Requests, which apply from 1 April 2027.

### **A. Publication Scheme**

- We will publish, or regularly make available, information we hold about how we manage our social housing.
- Our Publication Scheme will be organised around the seven STAIRs classes of information: governance and decision-making, finance and spending, housing stock management, performance, housing services and customer liaison, lists and registers, and social housing management policies and strategies.

The full Publication Scheme is set out in [Annex 1](#) and will be reviewed at least once a year. We will keep published information up to date, clearly signposted and accessible. We will also record decisions where information is outside the scope of STAIRs or where information needs to be removed or hidden before it can be shared.

## B. Information Requests

From 1 April 2027, current customers or their representatives can ask for information about how Freebridge manages its social housing. We may need to confirm the identity of the customer or their representative before we respond.

### How to request information

- Requests must be made in writing. This can include letter, email, text message, website form, social media message or other written route where we can clearly identify the customer and a valid address for correspondence.
- Customers do not need to mention STAIRs for their request to be considered under this policy. If a customer cannot make a written request without support, we will make reasonable efforts to help them make a clear and valid request, including by recording a verbal request and confirming it with them where possible.
- We will acknowledge requests promptly, ideally within three working days, and respond within 30 calendar days from receipt of the request or, where clarification or identity checks are needed, from the point that clarification or verification is received.
- In exceptional circumstances, we may extend the response time where it is reasonable to do so, and we will explain the reason for the delay and when a response can be expected.
- If we can answer a request more quickly through our usual service process, we may do this as long as the response is still complete and clear. We will still tell the customer that they can ask for a formal STAIRs response if they wish, and we will record the request in our disclosure log.

Our full process is set out in [Annex 2](#).

### Accessibility and Inclusion

We are committed to making sure all customers can access and understand the information they need, in a way that works for them.

- This includes recognising that not everyone can use digital services or standard written information, and that some customers may need additional support because of disability, language, literacy, confidence or other accessibility needs.
- Where needed, we will provide information in alternative formats such as large print, Easy Read, audio, translated versions or paper copies.
- We will also support access through phone contact, face-to-face services, community events and help from our customer and community teams.
- We will use plain English in published information and take reasonable steps to remove barriers, so customers can access information fairly and confidently.

## Withholding or Redacting Information

- We will share information unless there is a clear and lawful reason not to. We may withhold information, or remove or hide parts of it, if it includes personal data, is commercially sensitive, is confidential, is legally protected, could affect safety or an investigation, or could cause harm that outweighs the benefit of sharing it.
- We will carefully consider the law, data protection rules and any possible harm before deciding whether information can be shared.
- We will not take into account the identity of the customer, their reasons for asking, how they may use the information, or any reputational impact on Freebridge.
- If we cannot share all the information, we will explain why and only remove or hide the parts we cannot share. In limited cases, where saying whether we hold information would itself reveal sensitive information or create harm, we may say that we can neither confirm nor deny whether we hold it. We do not have to create new information to respond to a request.
- We may also refuse a request if the information is not covered by STAIRs, we do not hold the information, we cannot identify the customer or representative, the request is unclear and has not been clarified, the request is repeated, offensive or abusive, or responding would take more than 18 hours of staff time.
- Where we refuse a request, we will explain the reason, confirm the right to request an internal review, and signpost the customer to the Housing Ombudsman once the internal review process has been completed.

## Reviews and Complaints

- If a customer is unhappy with how we have handled an information request, thinks information is missing from the Publication Scheme, disagrees with a decision to withhold or remove information, or believes information has not been provided in an accessible format, they can ask for an internal review.
- A request for review should normally be made within three months of the original response or decision. We will complete the review and respond within 30 calendar days, unless there is a good reason why more time is needed. Wherever possible, the review will be carried out by someone who was not responsible for the original response.
- If the customer remains dissatisfied after the internal review, they can escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman where it relates to STAIRs.
- This is separate from Freebridge's standard complaints process and applies only to matters about the Publication Scheme, information requests, internal reviews or how STAIRs have been handled.

## Data Protection

- We will protect personal data in line with data protection laws.
- Personal data will not be disclosed through STAIRs where doing so would breach the UK GDPR or Data Protection Act.
- If a request is for the customer's own personal data, or includes information that identifies them, we will handle that request, or the relevant part of it, as a Subject Access Request rather than as a STAIRs request.
- Further information is available in our Privacy Policy.

## Monitoring and Assurance

- We will monitor how well we are meeting this policy and use what we learn to improve.
- We will track key measures, including how many Publication Scheme documents are up to date, how many requests are acknowledged within three working days, how many are answered within 30 calendar days, the number and type of information requests, the number handled through our usual service process, refusals and reasons, reviews and outcomes, accessibility requests and formats provided, and any learning from complaints or Housing Ombudsman findings.
- Performance will be reported quarterly to the Executive Team and regularly to the Board or relevant committee. We will also maintain a central disclosure log of all requests, outcomes, review decisions and evidence of searches or redaction decisions.
- We will use insight to shape our published information, planned updates and customer communications, while continuing to provide alternative formats and support for customers who need or prefer other routes.

## Equality Impact

- We recognise that some customers may face barriers when accessing information, including digital exclusion, language barriers, disability or other accessibility needs.
- We will reduce these barriers by offering alternative formats, providing assisted access and making sure our communication is clear, simple and easy to understand.

## Review

This policy will be reviewed every year to make sure it continues to meet STAIRs, that published information is accurate and accessible, and that we continue to improve transparency, inclusion, record keeping and assurance.

## Annex Two

## STAIRs Flowchart

