



## **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY II**

## **KARIN HOUSING ASSOCIATION CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY STATEMENT**

The Association in the course of its work collects and keeps information in respect of tenants, other users or ex-tenants and applicants. Any information provided by a tenant or an applicant, or by a third party about a tenant or applicant should be treated in the strictest confidence. Information will not be passed onto a third party without the permission of the person concerned, or unless the Association is legally obliged to do so.

It is important that all Officers and Management Committee Members of the Association respect the confidentiality of information held. The Association acknowledges that it is housing management staff have the most direct access to personal information and it is to housing management that requests for information are generally made by outside bodies. However, the confidentiality Policy and Procedure applies to all Association staff in order to protect the confidential nature of the information kept by the Association. The type of information gathered and kept by the Housing Management Department which must be treated as confidential includes:

- Name and Address
- Details of current and past circumstances
- Details of involvement of other voluntary and statutory agencies
- Financial situation, including rent account details
- Health Details
- Details of other members of the household.
- Support and rehabilitation information

The release of any such details held by the Association must be carried out in compliance with the procedure that accompanies this policy in order to protect the confidentiality of the information.

### **Procedure**

1. Information may be disclosed to Local Authority Housing Benefit Section and the Benefits Agency if it is in connection with either a tenant's current claim for housing benefit or a claim for direct deductions from ongoing benefits.

The information detailed below may be given by Housing Officers or Central Services Administrators. Before imparting this information over the telephone, positive identification of the caller is to be made i.e. the officer must be certain that they are who they say they are. If any doubt exists then the officer must take the name and telephone number of the enquirer and ring back.

- Housing Benefits
- address and name of tenants
- commencement and termination of tenancy dates
- current rent levels, details of rent increases and the make up of the rent
- amount of arrears for direct payments
- Benefits Agency
- address and name of tenants
- details of rent
- details of rent arrears

2. Information may be disclosed to other agencies with the written permission of the tenant. This information should not be given on the telephone. It is the responsibility of the officer who is disclosing the information to ensure that the Association is in receipt of the individual's written permission. Details of the type of information that may be given to other agencies under what circumstances are given below. Building Societies For the purpose of a reference for a tenant intending to purchase their own home, the following information may be given with permission.

- name and address of tenants
- commencement of tenancy dates
- state of rent account
- Local Authorities & Other Public Landlords
- For the purpose of referrals, transfers and exchanges, the following information may be given with permission.
- name and address of tenants
- commencement of tenancy dates
- state of rent account
- household composition
- reason for wanting to move
- conduct of tenancy
- Local Authority Council Tax

The Association is obliged to provide information to local authorities in order to help them identify the 'liable person'. The request must be in writing and can only be used for Council Tax purposes. The Association should not supply details of the tenant's family.

- name and address of tenants
- commencement of tenancy dates

**Information will generally not be** given to the Police unless tenants approve in writing or where a serious crime is involved. All enquiries from the Police should be directed to the Director of Housing Services Social Services

Information will not be provided to Social Services without the permission of the individual, unless the officer has concerns about the well being of the tenant or any member of the household, in which case they must refer the matter to the Director of Housing Services.

**Utility Companies.** Permission necessary for disclosure of information, however, officers may forward letters from these companies to the tenant or ex-tenant if requested to do so by the company.

### **Debt Collecting Agencies**

Information will not be given unless this is in compliance with the Associations arrears and former tenant arrears/debt policies..

Relatives or friends of applicants, tenant or ex-tenant

It is essential that officers take great care in dealing with relatives or friends, especially so in cases of domestic violence or harassment.

Written permission must be obtained from the tenant, ex-tenant or applicant before any information is passed on. If a relative or friend is acting on behalf of the tenant on tenancy matters, the tenant must advise the Association of this in writing.

### **Other tenants or applicants**

Officers must not discuss/disclose information regarding one tenancy or application with another tenant or applicant.

**3. It is in generally** the tenants' files or application form, which records the confidential information. Officers must ensure that confidential information is not left on desks or lying around the office when they are out of the office.

**4. In reports to Committee** on tenancy matters, the tenant will be identified by a reference number and not their names or address

**Approved my Board committees October 2006.**

Person Responsible for the review of this policy:

Date of this review:

Date Board approved:

Date next review is due:

Ibrahim Mohamoud

21<sup>st</sup> October 2008

21<sup>st</sup> October 2008

21<sup>st</sup> October 2011