

Openness & Accountability Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Association is committed to being open and accountable in its work. This policy has been adopted so that residents, employees and the wider community can be aware of how the Association works and makes decisions.
- 1.2 The Association recognises the legitimate interest of those who are affected by its activities and the way it conducts its business. This includes:
- Residents and their representative bodies
 - Those who want to become residents
 - Other customers and service users
 - Employees and their representative bodies
 - Local authorities and commissioning bodies
 - Partner organisations and agencies
 - Contractors and suppliers
 - Regulators
 - Anyone living in the neighbourhoods where the Association works
 - Wider communities affected by the work that the Association does
 - Organisations working for the benefit of the neighbourhoods where the Association operates and the communities affected by its work
- 1.3 The Association accordingly acknowledges that information about the way that it works, the decisions it makes and its performance will be important in supporting the interests of these groups, helping it to work in partnership and to be more widely accountable.

2 Disclosures

- 2.1 The Association will disclose matters which it considers will support the above principles including:
- The Association's mission and values
 - The Association's objectives and aims
 - The standards set by the Association (often in partnership with residents) and those set for it by regulators
 - The policies adopted to guide decision making in terms of service delivery to residents
 - The procedures adopted for implementing those policies
 - Annual performance information on the scope and effectiveness of activities
 - Matters considered by board members and the decisions made except where the information is:-

- restricted by the Data Protection Act
- restricted by statute, common law duties or contractual undertakings
- a matter which should remain confidential for personal, policy or commercial reasons

2.2 The Association will make such information available in accessible formats and free of charge. It reserves the right to charge for excessive information requests.

3 Access to Meetings

3.1 Meetings of the Board, committees, working groups and employees are generally not open to the public. Any person(s) wishing to observe a meeting for a legitimate reason may at the discretion of the chair of the meeting be invited to attend. This is subject to the request being received by the Chief Executive at least two days before the meeting is scheduled to take place.

3.2 Observers will not be permitted to obtain papers relating to confidential matters nor remain present during consideration of such items.

3.3 As part of the Association's approach to succession planning and recruitment it may agree to the observation of meetings by people who are considering applying to become board members.

4 Accountability to Residents and other Stakeholders

4.1 The Association has and will continue to implement strategies for the active promotion of its accountability to residents, other stakeholders and the wider community.

4.2 In furtherance of this approach the Association will:

- Publish a minimum of three residents' newsletters a year, including information about its activities and its performance.
- Produce a range of accessible leaflets about its work and policies.
- Involve residents in reviewing, monitoring and developing services taking their views into account.
- Publish performance plans and reports to enable residents to assess value for money.
- Regularly gauge resident satisfaction through the use of surveys, focus groups and other recognised techniques.
- Report the outcomes to board members as well as publishing feedback for residents.
- Develop action plans to address areas of lower satisfaction.
- Attend and address meetings of resident groups, its local authority partners and any other organisations upon request to give an account of its work and performance.

4.3 Whilst there are no ring-fenced places on the Board for Residents, there are no exclusions to them applying and being selected if they have key skills required by the Board. In order that residents understand the role and can develop their capabilities before applying, the Association will ensure that interested residents are given the

support and training they require to become board members and to then fulfil the duties and responsibilities that they have to the best of their ability.

- 4.4 The Association has also established a residents' body, known as the Residents' Voice, with responsibilities for scrutinising the work of the Association. The Association aims to ensure that the Residents' Voice has the capacity, both collectively and through its individual members, to be able to conduct reviews and report on its findings; to effect meaningful change and influence decision making; and ultimately to hold the Board to account for what it does. The Board will work closely with the Residents' Voice in furtherance of its compliance with regulatory requirements and expectations.
- 4.5 The Association will also use the Residents' Voice and a range of local resident and a community groups to involve residents at a more detailed level, working with it to help develop strategies, policies and standards. This provides greater insight into the needs, demands, expectations and aspirations of residents. The Board will take the views of residents groups into account when making decisions.
- 4.6 The Association also actively supports training and development for residents to further their skills, knowledge and understanding of the business so that they may participate in the Residents' Voice and the range of residents' groups.

5. Review

- 5.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with relevant changes in the law, regulatory standards, codes of practice, or the constitution, whichever is the sooner. Updates or recommendations for changes will be presented to the Board.