



Choice Privacy Notice

Introduction

Choice Housing Ireland Limited (“Choice”) is a not for profit housing association that owns and manages over 12,000 homes throughout Northern Ireland. We are responsible for collecting, processing, storing and safe-keeping personal and other information as part of our business activities.

We are registered as a Data Controller with the Information Commissioner’s Office and manage personal information in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”).

We take the confidentiality and security of your information very seriously. This Privacy Notice explains how we meet our obligations under the GDPR and relevant Data Protection legislation.

Our Privacy Notice covers the following areas to explain our approach to Data Protection:

- What is personal data
- Data Protection Principles
- Lawful Basis for Processing
- What personal information we collect
- How we collect information about you
- Who we collect information on
- How we use your information
- Sharing your information
- International transfers
- Protecting personal information
- Retention of Personal Data
- Your Rights as a Data Subject
- Changes to our privacy notice
- How to contact us

What is Personal Data?

Personal data is information relating to an identified person or to a person that we can identify (directly or indirectly) from that data alone or in combination with other identifiers we possess or can reasonably access.

Data Protection Principles

We will comply with the data protection principles when gathering and using personal information as set out in our data protection policy and related procedures which may be provided upon request.

Lawful basis for processing

The legal bases on which Choice will process your personal data are:

1. For the performance of a contract or to take steps to enter into a contract, for example, when entering into a tenancy agreement with you or when offering you a tenancy based on your housing application received from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (“NIHE”);
2. Public task/official authority/legal obligation, for example it is necessary for us to process your data in order to comply with the Housing (NI) Orders;
3. Our legitimate interests except where they are overridden by the need to protect your personal data. Our legitimate interests are the provision of housing services and the effective management of Choice;
4. The processing is necessary to protect your vital interests or another person (for example giving information to the police or health care professional in an emergency situation);
5. You have consented to the processing.

Where consent is the legal basis for processing you can withdraw consent at any time by contacting us at enquiries@choice-housing.org

What personal information we collect

We may collect, process and store information such as:

- Names, date of birth, National Insurance numbers, photographs, contact details
- References from landlords or support providers
- The details of other family members or people living in our properties
- Rent payments made
- Income and Expenditure estimates
- Repairs requested
- Application or referral forms
- Tenancy Agreements
- Physical, mental health or other conditions
- Support Contracts
- Support Plans
- Complaints about our services
- Responses to surveys or involvement initiatives
- Allegations of Anti-Social Behaviour
- Convictions, proceedings and criminal acts
- Correspondence to and from our residents, service users, other agencies or advocates
- Recordings of telephone calls made to and from the organisation
- CCTV images (if you live or visit a Choice scheme that has CCTV in operation)

Some of the information we collect about you may include Sensitive Personal Data (this is known as “Special Category Data” under the GDPR). Sensitive Personal Data is information revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or similar beliefs, trade union membership, physical or mental health conditions, sexual orientation, biometric or genetic data and Personal Data relating to criminal offences and convictions.

The processing of any “sensitive” data will fulfil one of the lawful bases referred to above but will also fulfil one or more of the following conditions for processing sensitive or special category data:-

1. The processing is necessary for the purposes of carrying out the obligations and exercising specific rights of the controller or of the data subject in the field of employment, social security and social protection law;
2. The processing is necessary for the establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims or whenever courts are acting in their judicial capacity;
3. The processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest;
4. The processing is necessary for the purposes of preventive or occupational medicine, medical diagnosis, the provision of health or social care or treatment or the management of health or social care systems and services;
5. The processing is necessary to protect your vital interests or another person where you are physically or legally incapable of giving consent.

It is important that you notify us of any changes to your personal information.

How we collect information about you

We collect information in a variety of ways, including:

- When you apply for a home
- When you sign a tenancy agreement
- Through on-going contact with you and other agencies during a tenancy
- When you access services by logging onto our website
- When you terminate your tenancy
- If you lodge a complaint
- When you are involved in legal proceedings commenced or defended by Choice
- When providing advice to you, for example, in relation to social security benefits

When you apply to become a Choice tenant, we may request and retain any references necessary to assess your application. This may include, but is not limited to, information from other landlords, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (“PSNI), the Probation Service, Support Services, Social Services, and Health Services.

Who we collect information on

We collect personal information about:

Tenants: This includes current, former and potential tenants, who live in our properties or access our support and other services as well as other family members who are part of the household together with any visitors to the property.

Anyone who makes a complaint or enquiry and visitors to our website and offices.

How we use your personal information

We use your personal information for responding to your enquiries, providing services to you and managing our relationship with you in helping us to:

- manage allocations and lettings
- manage tenancies
- receive rent and service charges
- provide a repairs and maintenance service
- offer welfare benefits advice
- provide support services
- provision of additional services/assistance e.g. employability/digital inclusion
- resolve disputes
- prevent and detect crime
- investigate complaints
- engage with tenants to get feedback on our services
- target tenants impacted by welfare reform

See the section above in relation to the legal bases on which we process your personal data.

Sharing your information

Your personal information will be kept secure and confidential. As part of our role as your landlord we may share information within the Choice Group (to include our subsidiaries and associated companies) and with the following organisations:-

- Maintenance Contractors who carry out repairs to your home;
- Out of hour telephone service contractors
- Local Authorities
- NIHE
- Government Departments
- Social services
- PSNI
- Probation Service
- Other landlords
- Utility companies
- Courts
- Our professional advisors
- Printers / Mailing Companies
- NIFRS
- Support agencies
- Health services

International Transfers

It is unlikely that we will transfer your personal details outside of the EEA. If we do need to transfer your data to a country outside the EEA we will take appropriate steps to ensure the security of that data.

Protecting Personal Information

We are committed to ensuring that your information is kept secure. We will apply appropriate technical and organisational measures to prevent unauthorised or unlawful processing of Personal Data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to Personal Data. We also have procedures in place to deal with any suspected data security breach. We will notify you and the Information Commissioner of a suspected data security breach where we are legally required to do so.

Where it is necessary to share personal data with any other agency or organisation as referred to previously, the sharing of data will be governed by a contract which will include strict data sharing and confidentiality protocols.

To help us ensure confidentiality of your personal information we will ask you (and any of your representatives) security questions to confirm your identity when you call us and as may be necessary when we call you. We will not discuss your personal information with anyone other than you, unless you have given us prior written authorisation to do so or where we have received a clear verbal instruction from you where written authorisation is unable to be obtained.

Retention of Personal Data

We keep your information during the duration of your tenancy and following termination however this is retained for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal information is processed. Personal data may be retained after you are no longer a tenant in order for follow up issues to be resolved, for example, rent arrears, where there is a legitimate interest in retaining your personal data.

We have a Retention Schedule which sets out how long we keep different types of information for. This is based on National Housing Federation guidance, legal requirements and best practice. A copy is available upon request.

Your Rights as a Data Subject

The right to be informed

We will be open and transparent about how and why we use your personal information.

The right of access

You have a right to ask us what personal information we hold about you and to request a copy of your information. This is known as a 'Subject Access Request' ("SAR").

We have a subject access request form you can use to assist you with making your request. To ensure we are releasing data to the right person we will require you to provide us with proof of your identity and of your address when making your request.

To help us respond, please be as specific as you can be about the information you would like to see. There is no fee payable however we are able to charge a reasonable fee, based on the administrative cost of providing the information to you, where a request is manifestly unfounded or excessive and particularly if it is repetitive.

Upon receipt of any appropriate fee and proof of identity, the information will be provided to you without delay and within one month of receipt of the SAR.

Where any requests are complex or numerous, the period of compliance will be extended by a further two months however we will inform you within one month of receipt of your SAR if this is applicable and we will provide further details in relation to why an extension is required.

The right of rectification

You can ask us to rectify your personal data if it is inaccurate or incomplete. Please help us to keep our records accurate by keeping us informed if your details change.

The right to be forgotten

In some circumstances, you can ask us to delete or remove personal data where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing. We will need to consider the circumstances of any such request and balance this against our need to continue processing the data. Our response will also be guided by, amongst other factors, the provisions of our retention policy.

The right to restrict processing

In some circumstances you can ask us to restrict processing, for example:

- if you disagree with the accuracy of personal data
- If you object to the processing which is necessary for the performance of a public interest task or which is necessary for the purpose of our legitimate interests and we are considering whether our legitimate interests override those held by you.

We will consider your request in accordance with the relevant legislation.

The right to data portability

You have the right to have data provided to you in a commonly used electronic form where the processing is carried out by automated means.

The right to object

You can tell us if you object to our processing of your personal data:

- based on legitimate interests
- for the purpose of direct marketing (including profiling)
- for the purposes of research and statistics
- where the processing is carried out in the public interest or the exercise of official authority.

We will consider your request in accordance with the relevant legislation.

The right not to be subject to automated decision-making including profiling

You can ask us to review any decisions that are determined by automated means. You can also object to our use of your personal data for profiling.

Changes to our Privacy Notice

We may update this Privacy Notice from time to time, to take account of changes or updates to processes. We will publish an up to date copy of the Privacy Notice on our website which will be kept under regular review.

How to Contact Us

If you'd like to talk to us about your rights, you can contact us at enquiries@choice-housing.org. Alternatively, if you want to raise a complaint about our processing of your data or would like to seek an independent view, you can contact the Information Commissioner:

The Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland
3rd Floor
14 Cromac Place
Belfast
BT7 2JB