

NEXT STEP HOMES LIMITED

OPENNESS AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

1. Preamble

The association is committed to openness and accountability in the conduct of its affairs. It recognises that as a publicly funded and accountable body, there are a wide variety of people with a legitimate interest in the conduct of its business. To that end, therefore, it will take a number of steps to maximise the amount of information reasonably available to people about the association.

2. Measures

In order to achieve a degree of openness and accountability, the association is committed to the following actions:-

- a) The association will produce an Annual Report every year which will contain information on the association's structure, activities and performance in all key areas. This Annual Report will be sent to as wide a group of partners, funders and regulators as possible and will be available on request from the association at no charge at any time.
- b) The association is committed to ensuring that all tenants, sharing owners and applicants are informed as to the nature of the association, the policies which the association operates which affect them and the ways in which they might best avail themselves of those services and policies.
- c) The association is committed to the production of at least one Newsletter per annum which will be circulated to all tenants and sharing owners which will contain amongst other things details of the association's activities, policies and alterations in policies as it affects them. All such policies will be available upon request to all tenants, sharing owners and applicants.
- d) Membership - As part of its Membership Policy, the association is already taking direct action to extend its membership to encourage the participation not only of tenants and sharing owners but of other interested groups in the membership and management of the association.
- e) Performance Audit - In the event of a performance audit being carried out by the association, the completion of the audit will be referred to in the first available Newsletter and the summary of the report will be made available to any party who requests it.
- f) Attendance at Meetings - Physical constraints of space have made it difficult for the association to actively encourage attendance as observers by any other than a few staff. The association shall however review the position in line with its Participation Policy and seek to investigate ways in which those interested might be able to attend meetings.

- g) Annual General Meeting - Recognising that the Annual General Meeting, apart from its importance in the business year of the association, represents a formal structured way of communicating with its membership, the association will seek to use the occasion as a means of more effective communication with its members, its partners and its funders.

3. Confidentiality

Subject to the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act, all Committee and Sub-Committee meetings will be open and the subject matter and decisions of such Committees will be available to all who express an interest unless the matters referred to are confidential. The circumstances in which the matters might be regarded as confidential are as follows:-

- a) Information regarding the status or financial position of an individual tenant, sharing owner, applicant or other person with whom the association has dealings;
- b) Information regarding the personal status, remuneration, discipline or conditions of employment of a member of staff;
- c) Information which, if disclosed prematurely, might affect the association's legal or financial position or affect the conduct of negotiations on its behalf;
- d) Information transmitted to the association by a third party under commercial confidence;
- e) Information, the disclosure of which would be "protected" in terms of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998; and
- f) Any other information which if made public might prejudice the legal or financial position of the association, one or more of its tenants, sharing owners, staff or partners.

4. Review

The effectiveness of this policy will normally be reviewed and amended if necessary every 3 years.

Date Approved by Committee of Management: 27.06.07

Date Due for Review by Committee of Management: June 2010