

PRIVACY NOTICE – HOUSING SERVICES



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT?

Watford Borough Council is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information.

This privacy notice describes how we collect and use personal information about you when you register with the council because of you are, or are threatened with, homelessness or apply to join the Housing Register or assist the council with housing or housing-related research and consultation.

Watford Borough Council is a “data controller”. This means that we are responsible for deciding how we hold and use personal information about you. We are required under data protection legislation to notify you of the information contained in this privacy notice. It is important that you read this notice, together with any other privacy notice we may provide on specific occasions when we are collecting or processing personal information about you, so that you are aware of how and why we are using such information.

DATA PROTECTION PRINCIPLES

We will comply with data protection legislation. This says that the personal information we hold about you must be:

1. Used lawfully, fairly and in a transparent way.
2. Collected only for valid purposes that we have clearly explained to you and not used in any way that is incompatible with those purposes.
3. Relevant to the purposes we have told you about and limited only to those purposes.
4. Accurate and kept up to date.
5. Kept only as long as necessary for the purposes we have told you about.
6. Kept securely.

THE KIND OF INFORMATION WE HOLD ABOUT YOU

Personal data, or personal information, means any information about an individual from which that person can be identified. It does not include data where the identity has been removed (anonymous data).

In order to investigate a homeless application, we will collect, store, and use the following categories of personal information about you:

- Personal contact details – name, address, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses
- Gender
- Date of birth
- Employment
- Health information, where applicable
- Ethnic origin
- Religion
- Genetics (if applicable)
- Biometrics (if used for ID)
- Sexual orientation
- Financial
- Criminal convictions (not spent)
- Car details and registration number
- Education information
- Business information
- Next of Kin

For consultation and research about housing and housing-related issues we will collect, store and use the following categories of personal information about you, where relevant:

- Gender
- Ethnic origin
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Housing tenure
- Post code
- Health information
- Criminal convictions

Please see the council's website www.watford.gov.uk for a detailed list of information that may be collected. Search for "How we use your data – Housing".

HOW IS YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION COLLECTED?

We collect personal information about you from:

- Our online registration forms accessed via our [Housing Customer Portal](#) (on our website www.watford.gov.uk search for “Housing Customer Portal”).
- Online and paper surveys used from time to time for consultation and research about housing and housing-related issues
- Experian
- Land Registry
- Health providers
- Housing Association partners
- Other Councils
- Private Landlords
- Home Office
- Department for Work and Pensions
- HMRC
- Voluntary Agencies
- Ministry of Justice/ Office of the Public Guardian

HOW WE WILL USE INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

We will only use your personal information when the law allows us to.

The lawful basis for processing your personal data will be:

- Processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation to which the controller is subject

The condition for processing special categories of data will be:

- Your explicit consent

The situations in which we will process your personal information are listed below.

- To assess your homeless application and your support needs.
- To provide you with accommodation and support.
- To fulfil any legal obligations
- To request your participation in a customer survey to improve services
- To request your participation in research or consultation about housing or housing-related issues

If you fail to provide certain information when requested, we may not be able to comply with our legal obligation meaning that your application may not be successful.

DATA SHARING

We will share your personal information with third parties where required by law, or where it is necessary to fulfil our legal obligation.

Your personal information may be shared with and processed by:

- Housing Association partners
- Independent Housing Reviews Services
- Other Councils
- Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors
- Education establishments
- National Probation Services
- Health providers
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Home Office
- Private Landlords
- Lettings Agents
- Legal representation
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- Ministry of Justice/ Office of the Public Guardian
- Third Sector/Voluntary Agencies (eg, New Hope, OneYMCA, GROW)
- Police
- Employers
- Land Registry
- Fire Brigade
- Adult Social Care
- Other Government Departments
- Greater London Authority
- Regulatory Bodies
- Utility regulatory bodies and Companies

A full list of agencies with whom your personal information may be shared with and processed by is available on the council's website www.watford.gov.uk (search for "How we use your data – Housing").

All of the Council’s third-party service providers are required to take appropriate security measures to protect your personal information in line with our policies. We do not allow our third-party service providers to use your personal information for their own purposes and they may only process your personal information for specified purposes and in accordance with our instructions.

Personal information gathered through housing and housing-related research and consultation will be aggregated so it is not possible to identify individuals and quotes used in reports derived from research and consultation will be anonymised.

The Council may also use your information for the purpose of performing any of its statutory enforcement duties. It will make any disclosures required by law and may also share your information with other bodies responsible for detecting/preventing crime including fraud or auditing/administering public funds.

DATA SECURITY

We have put in place appropriate security measures to prevent your personal information from being accidentally lost, used or accessed in an unauthorised way, altered or disclosed. In addition, we limit access to your personal information to those employees and third parties who have a business need to process it. Third parties will only process your personal information on our instructions and they are subject to a duty of confidentiality.

Information from your homeless application is held on a secure server, hosted by the software providers in the United Kingdom and/or European Union.

The council uses the European Union’s Survey tool, EUSurvey, to gather information for housing and housing-related research and consultation purposes. EUSurvey is [GDPR compliant](#). We have put in place procedures to deal with any suspected data security breach and will notify you and any applicable regulator of a suspected breach where we are legally required to do so.

DATA RETENTION

We will only retain your personal information for as long as necessary to fulfil the purposes we collected it for, including for the purposes of satisfying any legal, accounting, or reporting requirements.

To determine the appropriate retention period for personal information, we consider the amount, nature, and sensitivity of the personal data, the potential risk of harm from

unauthorised use or disclosure of your personal data, the purposes for which we process your personal data and whether we can achieve those purposes through other means, and the applicable legal requirements. In some circumstances we may anonymise your personal information so that it can no longer be associated with you, in which case we may use such information without further notice to you.

Your personal information is retained for six years after your last contact with the Housing team, at which point all of your information provided will be deleted. Information collected for housing and housing-related research and consultation will be kept for not longer than 5 years whilst data that is anonymised will be kept indefinitely. You can read the Council's Retention Policy [here](#).

RIGHTS OF ACCESS, CORRECTION, ERASURE, AND RESTRICTION

Your duty to inform us of changes

It is important that the personal information we hold about you is accurate and current. Please keep us informed if your personal information changes.

Your rights in connection with personal information

Under certain circumstances, by law you have the right to:

- **Request access** to your personal information (commonly known as a “data subject access request”). This enables you to receive a copy of the personal information we hold about you and to check that we are lawfully processing it.
- **Request correction** of the personal information that we hold about you. This enables you to have any incomplete or inaccurate information we hold about you corrected.
- **Request erasure** of your personal information. This enables you to ask us to delete or remove personal information where there is no good reason for us continuing to process it. You also have the right to ask us to delete or remove your personal information where you have exercised your right to object to processing (see below).
- **Request the restriction** of processing of your personal information. This enables you to ask us to suspend the processing of personal information about you, for example if you want us to establish its accuracy or the reason for processing it.

If you want to review, verify, correct or request erasure of your personal information, object to the processing of your personal information, or request that we transfer a copy of your personal information to another party, please contact the Data Protection Officer in writing. No fee usually required. You will not have to pay a fee to access your personal information

(or to exercise any of the other rights). However, we may charge a reasonable fee if your request for access is clearly unfounded or excessive. Alternatively, we may refuse to comply with the request in such circumstances.

What we may need from you

We may need to request specific information from you to help us confirm your identity and ensure your right to access the information (or to exercise any of your other rights). This is another appropriate security measure to ensure that personal information is not disclosed to any person who has no right to receive it.

No fee usually required

You will not have to pay a fee to access your personal information (or to exercise any of the other rights). However, we may charge a reasonable fee if your request for access is clearly unfounded or excessive. Alternatively, we may refuse to comply with the request in such circumstances. We may need to request specific information from you to help us confirm your identity and ensure your right to access the information (or to exercise any of your other rights). This is another appropriate security measure to ensure that personal information is not disclosed to any person who has no right to receive it.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW CONSENT

In the limited circumstances where you may have provided your consent to the collection, processing and transfer of your personal information for a specific purpose, you have the right to withdraw your consent for that specific processing at any time. To withdraw your consent, please contact the Data Protection Officer. Once we have received notification that you have withdrawn your consent, we will no longer process your information for the purpose or purposes you originally agreed to, unless we have another legitimate basis for doing so in law.

DATA PROTECTION OFFICER

The Council's Data Protection Officer (DPO) is responsible for overseeing compliance with this privacy notice. If you have any questions about this privacy notice or how we handle your personal information, please contact the Data Protection Officer, Bahzad Brifkani, telephone 01923 226400, email: legalanddemocracy@watford.gov.uk, or write to Democracy and Governance Service, Watford Town Hall, Hempstead Road, Watford WD17 3EX

You have the right to make a complaint at any time to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), the UK supervisory authority for data protection issues whose contact details are:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow, Cheshire,
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545 745

<https://ico.org.uk/>

CHANGES TO THIS PRIVACY NOTICE

We reserve the right to update this privacy notice at any time, and we will provide you with a new privacy notice when we make any substantial updates. We may also notify you in other ways from time to time about the processing of your personal information. This Privacy was last updated in November 2019.