

Privacy Notice

Durham County Council Regeneration, Economy and Growth

Housing Solutions

Who we are and what we do?

Our Privacy Notice describes how we use your personal data to help you with your housing situation. By 'personal data', we mean things like your name, place of birth, date of birth and health conditions.

Durham County Council is collecting your data, so we're called the data controller. We collect it to provide you with the service you want and to comply with any obligations we have.

Our Housing Solutions service provides a range of housing based services across

County Durham, including the following areas of activity:

- Home Improvement Agency projects
- Private Sector Initiatives (note, we have a separate privacy notice for private landlords and letting agents)
- Housing Regeneration
- Gypsy & Roma Traveller site management
- Housing (providing advice and help with being homeless and the threat of being homeless, including issues surrounding Welfare Reform)
- Family Intervention Project (intensively supporting families in need)
- Armed Forces outreach support
- Refugee resettlement

For example, we offer help to people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, or who want advice about housing options and various tenure types. We also work in partnership with housing associations to develop and regenerate communities, and to help homeowners improve their homes.

For more about how we can help, visit www.durham.gov.uk/housing

What type of personal information do we collect and how do we collect it?

Whose data do we collect?

We collect data on everyone who asks Housing Solutions for advice or a service (or both).

During contact and assessment, we will ask questions about:

- your personal details (eg name) or company/organisation details
- your contact details

Subject to the specific service you are requesting we may also ask about:

- your date of birth
- your current home and/or your housing history
- your housing and support needs
- your personal circumstances
- your housing preferences
- your financial circumstances (including income and savings)
- your current employment
- your criminal record
- your medical information
- references from your previous and current tenancies

- proof of identity (for example NI Number, passport, Birth Certificate)

How we collect your Personal Data?

We may collect your Personal Data in a number of ways, for example:

- face to face meetings
- online
- by telephone
- emails
- text messages
- letters or paper forms
- electronic referrals

What is our power to obtain and use the personal data?

We will rely on the following reasons for processing personal data and additional special category data below:

A. Lawful basis for processing personal data under Article 6 GDPR

The processing is necessary for us to perform a task in the public interest or to perform our official functions. This includes the task of administering Durham County Council's duty to allocate housing under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017).

B. Special category data under Article 9(2) GDPR

We may collect special category data from you with your explicit consent. You do not have to answer any questions about ethnicity and sexuality (you can refuse to answer or state 'prefer not to say'). If you choose to answer these questions, we will treat this as consent. At any time, you have the right to withdraw your consent to us having this special category data and it will not affect the service we provide to you.

However, if you choose to withhold your health data, we may not be able to offer our full services and we will record your action to withhold it on our IT system (on the date consent is refused). If you withhold your health data, we may not be able to assist you into a more suitable home, or assist to make your current home more suitable for your health needs. If you have submitted a homeless application we may need your health data to assess you as having a 'priority need' – if you do not consent to us having this data then we may find we have limited duties in assisting you with rehousing.

C. The Data Protection Act 2018 provides a basis to process criminal offence data (as required by Article 10 GDPR).

What is your personal information used for?

By collecting your data, we aim to:

1. offer advice that is relevant to the circumstances you have contacted the service about
2. see whether you are eligible for help by law or qualify for a service
3. assess your housing need or situation
4. assess any support needs you have
5. improve your housing circumstances or home
6. identify and prevent fraud by matching your data with data sets collated by Durham County Council's Corporate Fraud Team and other local councils and housing associations
7. detect safeguarding issues
8. run the local authority's Gypsy Roma Traveller Pitch Register, Allocations policy and subsequent pitch tenancies

We will usually save your information using a secure IT system, depending on the service.

The 'Abritas' IT system (owned by Civica) is used by:

- Private Sector Initiatives
- Gypsy & Roma Traveller site management
- Housing (providing advice and help with being homeless and the threat of being homeless, including issues surrounding Welfare Reform)
- Family Intervention Project (intensively supporting families in need)
- Armed Forces outreach support
- Refugee resettlement

'Civica App' (also owned by Civica) is also used by:

- Private Sector Initiatives

The data processor is Civica, which is an ISO 27001 certified company with regular audits. It has technology and processes in place to secure all data.

If you apply for a home improvement loan, your information will also be stored on a system called Sentinel, provided by Anchor Computer Systems.

Will your personal information be shared?

We will share your data with other organisations but only to help you, for example with benefits, training and employability.

If the Home Improvement Agency administers loans to help you improve your home or install adaptations (or both), it will share your information with contractors, architects, mortgage and other lenders, banks and building societies, the Land Registry Office and solicitors. Your details may also be shared with Call Credit for credit referencing purposes to check the viability of lending.

We will also share information with the police and the fire service to detect and prevent crime and in emergencies.

Data-sharing agreements

We make data-sharing agreements with third parties if we regularly need to share data with them. Such agreements further specify how both parties will process your data and ensure transparency in how it is handled. We currently have data-sharing agreements with:

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Pacifica Home Services Limited (which carries out administration functions as an installer on the Government Energy Efficiency Scheme run by the regulator OFGEM. This scheme happens under the Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligation) Order 2014).

- Advice in County Durham (a regional web portal used to refer customers to relevant services)
- The Department for Housing, Levelling up and Communities.

Sharing information with DLUHC

If you come to us for help with homelessness or the threat of homelessness, the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) requires your information also. To process the data lawfully, we collect your personal data under the public task basis stated in section A above (to fulfil our functions, in this case providing housing services). We share this data with DLUHC under the public task basis (to fulfil its function as a government department, in this case to reduce homelessness).

DLUHC aims to find out whether:

- housing services prevent homelessness
- people return for help or move (or both) regularly
- homelessness programmes, such as Housing First, and the temporary accommodation provided during Covid have reduced homelessness, and rough sleeping in the long term.
- there are other causes of homelessness, and whether such outcomes as poor health occur because of it.

Any rough sleepers identified within County Durham, and any related information, will be passed to a third sector organisation for the purpose of verification as part of DLUHC's data analysis. This information will also highlight potential areas for client support.

DLUHC want to specifically collect data on all people asking for help with homelessness and rough sleepers accommodated during Covid.

To do this, DLUHC wants to link information about you and others in your household to other information, including your homelessness application and past and future information on your use of services and benefits. **DLUHC will keep your personal information for five years.**

DLUHC will use your personal information to identify data collected as part of your assessment and link it to information held by other government departments:

- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – to see what benefits you have received and whether you have been employed.
- Ministry of Justice (MoJ) – to see what contact you may have had with the criminal justice system.
- Department for Education (DfE) – to see when your child has been in school, how well they are doing at each Key Stage and whether they are a 'child in need'

How do we keep your personal information secure?

The security of your personal information is important to us. The records we keep about you are secure and are confidential within the Council. The Council have a range of procedures, policies and systems to ensure that access to your records are controlled appropriately.

Examples of our security include:

- Encryption, meaning that information is hidden so that it cannot be read without special knowledge (such as a password).
- Controlling access to systems and networks allows us to stop people who are not allowed to view your personal information from getting access to it.
- Training for our staff allows us to make them aware of how to handle information and how and when to report when something goes wrong.

How long will we keep your personal information?

After we deliver a service to you, we have to keep your information as a business record of what was delivered.

The type of service you receive will determine how long we have to keep your information. Generally, our service retains your information for 7 years – this includes homelessness cases and Gypsy Roma Traveller information.

However, our Housing Regeneration team keep your information for 12 years and information obtained through home improvement loans and grants are kept for 6 years. Our [corporate retention guidelines](#) show how long we keep all information for different services.

Is your personal information processed outside the EU?

We do not process your personal information outside the EU.

Marketing

At no time will your information be passed to organisations external to us and our partners for marketing or sales purposes or for any commercial use without your prior express consent.

What if you do not want to be contacted by email, telephone or text?

If you share your contact details with us, we will only email, call or text you about the housing query or request you have submitted to us. We do not share your contact details for marketing purposes.

What if you do not want to be contacted by post?

Please contact us and tell us not to send post to your home address. You can also ask us to update your correspondence address if you would like post delivered elsewhere.

What are your information rights?

Your Information Rights are set out in the law. Subject to some legal exceptions, you have the right to:

- have any inaccuracies corrected;
- have your personal data erased;
- place a restriction on our processing of your data;
- object to processing; and

If you wish to exercise your information rights, please contact our Data Protection Officer at DPO@durham.gov.uk or alternatively write to:

DPO
Floor 4, Room 143-148
Durham County Council
County Hall Durham DH1 5UF

You also have the right to request a copy of the personal information council holds about you. To do this, you can apply on line or download an application form from the [DCC website](#) or you can contact the data protection team at inforights@durham.gov.uk

Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

If you give us information to assist you with housing under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and we share it with the DLUHC, you can contact DLUHC's Knowledge and Information Team about seeing or withdrawing your data by emailing DLUHC's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@communities.gov.uk

Further Information

Our Data Protection Officer (DPO) provides help and guidance to make sure we apply the best standards to protecting your personal information. If something goes wrong with your personal information, or you have questions about how we process your data, please contact our Data Protection Officer at DPO@durham.gov.uk.

If we have not been able to deal with your complaint, you can also contact the [Information Commissioner's Office](#):

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

Telephone: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745

Fax: 01625 524 51

