



# St Luke's Housing Society Limited – Useful Information

## Protecting Personal Information and Confidentiality

### Why is this an issue?

You have a basic right as a Tenant that St Luke's Housing Society (SLHS) will respect your personal information. We will not share private or personal information unless:

- we have your permission, or
- there is a safety or safeguarding issue (and then only with the relevant authorities), or
- we are legally required or permitted to do so.

We also have to comply with legislation, or we will actually be breaking the law. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) replaces the Data Protection Act in May 2018. This is dealt with elsewhere as it sets out very specific rules that we must comply with.

### What sort of information are you talking about?

SLHS holds basic information about all Tenants including date of birth, GP details, telephone numbers and emergency contact details.

We also hold other personal information on most Tenants so that we can support them in their tenancy and provide assistance in the event of an emergency. For instance, we often know some financial details, details of executors, medical conditions and history and various other details.

Disregarding our legal obligations we firmly believe that the information you give us is so that we can provide the best possible service to you – whether on a routine or emergency basis. We only hold information to allow us to do our work as a sheltered housing provider.

### Can you give me some examples?

SLHS's duty of confidentiality applies to any information that is not in the public domain. For instance if you are on the birthday list, then it is OK for us to tell somebody your birthday if they ask because you have freely allowed that information into the public domain.

If we happen to know that you have told several people, maybe at a coffee morning, that you are off to Bournemouth for a fortnight - we would probably say you were on your holiday. You have put that information into the public domain, but really it is not appropriate for staff to share the details. You can do that when you get back from holiday - if you want to.

If something unexpectedly happened to you and you were e.g. taken into hospital or arrested by the police, we would not be able to share that information - unless we had your permission to do so. It is not up to staff to guess whether any particular Tenant would like that information shared.

### **But surely you know my neighbour would share that information with me?**

The answer is – yes, we know they probably would. But it is their information to share, not ours. Staff must maintain high standards of confidentiality unless there is a proper basis on which to share information.

### **So will I be in trouble if I share information about my neighbour?**

If your neighbour has freely given you information, they have entrusted you with it. They might have told you that they would like you to keep the information private – but then it is up to you. If you break a confidence you might lose a friend but you are not breaking the law.

Also, if information is in the public domain there is no reason that you should not share it. But do take care – sometimes information can change at each time of telling, and you might not have quite the right story.

### **I want you to share my information – what should I do?**

You can tell us as part of your Support Plan, or you can give us written and signed authorisation. Please think carefully though – you need to specify exactly what information you would like to share, and with whom. For instance, you might want us to let people know about a hospital admission, but not any details about why. Think about whether you have one or two neighbours who you trust to pass on the information for you. Remember, they are less constrained than staff are in passing on details.

### **What about staff information?**

Staff also have the right to expect their employer and colleagues to respect their personal information.

### **It feels so unfriendly – it never used to be like this...**

It is not meant to be unfriendly in any way. Staff are bound by different rules than you are as an individual. Hopefully this information will give you confidence that your information is secure when you share it with SLHS; and help you to think about what you might want to share, and how, in the future.