

# Community Housing Cymru DISQUS Forum

Policy V1.0

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08/11/2022

## Background

DISQUS is a discussion platform / forum that has been chosen by Community Housing Cymru (CHC) as a communication and collaboration method with its members, which will allow users to learn, share and discuss topics related primarily to the housing sector. It will be embedded into CHC's website for ease of use and will contain several discussion boards, with this number likely to increase in future. Like any technology based 'chat', its effectiveness relies on an understanding of what constitutes acceptable conduct within the forum by its members. This will be a moderated forum. Therefore, users should be aware of the following guidelines.

## Rules of Conduct

CHC reserves the right to remove any contribution that does not meet these rules of conduct:

1. Comments and contributions to forum threads or posts should be descriptive, succinct, and relevant to the discussion or forum topic.
  - 1.a. To better facilitate conversation, moderators may move off-topic threads to another appropriate forum, close threads or delete off-topic posts at their discretion. We will notify the user.
  - 1.b. To maintain quality of discussions, contributions that do not provide a substantive purpose or relevance may be removed.
2. CHC encourages members to have open and candid discussions and debates. CHC will not censor members for expressing an opinion within the limits of these rules of conduct. However, all communications should be civil and polite. Members should treat each other with respect and consideration for all points of view.
3. The forum may not be used to post, transmit or provide hyperlinks or pointers to material that is knowingly false and/or defamatory; misleading, inaccurate, abusive, vulgar, hateful, harassing, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening or invasive of

a person's privacy; that otherwise violates any law; or that encourages conduct constituting a criminal offense.

4. Users are encouraged to discuss and share business knowledge and experiences related to the housing sector and beyond if appropriate. If participants share information on Disqus, other members are able to see it so members must not post anything that is confidential or not to be shared. Chatham house rules do not apply.

5. To protect the privacy of members, and the privacy of others and to comply with GDPR, members may not include others' personal information in any of the forum sites. However, you may choose to make your own personal information public if you wish.

6. Advertising: Unless directly relevant to a post, forums should not be used to advertise or promote businesses, products or services within the discussion boards.

7. Intellectual property: Forums and blogs may not be used to post material that is protected by copyright, trademark or other proprietary right without the express permission of the owner(s) of said copyright, trademark or other proprietary right.

8. Abusive and harassing behaviour or any actions that violate these rules of conduct may result in suspension of your ability to post to forums and other member-contributed areas. Account suspensions may be appealed to a Moderator.

9. Private discussions: Sometimes, a discussion thread strays off into a friendly dialogue or even a heated debate among a very small number of users. For these exchanges, we ask that you take these discussions outside the forum.

## Member Engagement

Although forums can be useful in regards to sharing information and having access to support and advice between CHC and its members, it is not a mandatory requirement for users to join the forum(s). There is also no requirement for participants to respond outside of their working hours, and this applies to all members of the forum. If a participant does choose to respond outside of working hours this will be of their own volition and not an expectation of the forum. We will acknowledge tagged enquiries that

indicate that they expect a response within 2 working days. Full responses may require more time depending on complexity of enquiry and capacity of staff.

## Confidentiality / Data Protection

Each participant has a responsibility to ensure that the device they use to access the forum is secured i.e. password / pin protection as a minimum and the forum is not left open for others to see. If a participant allows other 'non participants' to view the content of a forum, then this will be considered a breach of confidentiality and the matter will be investigated further. The rules governing the use of information are similar to paper records, e-mails and telephone calls. There is a responsibility by everyone involved to adhere to the data protection principles. When a member's participation in the forum ends e.g. leaving their organisation, the user's account will be removed from the forum which prevents access to historical posts.

## Complaints / Grievance

There are clear rules and a policy in place; however, there could be an occasion where a forum member is offended by comments made by other participants and wishes to complain. The complainant must not respond or engage in any discussion which they are offended by. They will need to approach the moderator of the forum (CHC) via [enquiries@chcymru.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@chcymru.org.uk) to ensure they are aware of the situation and the relevant administrator will then investigate further and take any action deemed reasonable and proportionate, some examples include:

- Reiterating the forum rules to all participants
- Informally discussing with relevant participants to ensure there isn't a repeat of any inappropriate discussion
- Removing relevant participants from the forum (depending on the context of the situation)
- Contacting the participant's organisation if deemed necessary

End.