



BTR Code of Practice

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**A set of proposed
principles developed on
behalf of the BTR sector by the
Association for Rental Living (ARL)
and The Good Economy**

March 2024





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Welcome to the proposed principles for the BTR Code of Practice.

As the representative body for the institutionally backed, purpose-built rental living sector, members and wider stakeholder groups asked the Association for Rental Living (ARL) - formerly UKAA - in late 2022 to develop a Code of Practice for the sector which would define the standards to which all BTR operates.

Following extensive engagement and consultation with ARL members and stakeholders across the entire BTR sector, the ARL has identified seven

principles of a new Code of Practice setting the sector apart from the Buy to Let/Private Rented Sector (PRS), and communicating the culture of BTR.

The ARL is now calling for the BTR sector to road test how these principles will be applied, implemented, and measured.

The consultation runs until 31 December 2024, so you have plenty of time to consider your feedback.

Principles

Signatories to this Code commit to:

- 1.** Embed professional standards across all stakeholders, prioritising 'safety-first' and nurturing customer loyalty.
- 2.** Adhere to high quality standard specification and design of homes and places.
- 3.** Actively respond to the climate crisis with responsible environmental policies and practices.
- 4.** Adopt fair, flexible and responsible terms which promote lasting relationships.
- 5.** Cultivate community as core to BTR.
- 6.** Adopt a responsible, transparent culture and robust corporate governance.
- 7.** Promote adoption of this Code.



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1.

Embed professional standards across all stakeholders prioritising ‘safety-first’ and nurturing customer loyalty.

Signatories will:

- 1.** Ensure recognised exacting standards of health, safety and security are hallmarks of all activity, protecting employees and external stakeholders.
- 2.** Manage and/or oversee property management teams that adopt a responsive and accessible culture, accountable for meeting institutional quality.
- 3.** Operate or subscribe to the ARL recognised qualification and continuous professional development programmes, appropriate to the seniorities/roles of all property management employees e.g. IRPM programme.
- 4.** Ensure all work is carried out by suitably qualified people and require achievement of appropriate equivalent standards from all outsourced suppliers.

Rationale:

- Demonstrate the professionalism of the service offer through high management standards.
- Provide assurance that property management teams have attained and maintained expected technical competences.
- Provide and promote CPD for property management staff.
- Promote residential property management as a career option with appropriate pay, recognition, and promotion opportunities.
- Demonstrate proactive management of sub-standard performance so employees who fail to pass the relevant exams or meet the requirements of the programmes should not be permitted unaccompanied interface with customers until they have done so.



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2.

Adhere to high quality standard specification and design of homes and places.

Signatories will:

- 1.** Deliver quality BTR homes by aligning with recognised standards of design & specification, always prioritising safety, security, health & wellbeing and actively pursuing liveability and amenity.
- 2.** Create homes, places and communities that are adaptable, flexible and resilient.
- 3.** Design building management & maintenance programmes to improve asset operational efficiency.
- 4.** Reduce operational and embodied carbon in design and material selection.
- 5.** Minimise any negative impact on biodiversity and natural resources and seek any positive gains.
- 6.** Set equivalent environmental expectations through supply chains..

Rationale:

- Highlight the ambition of BTR to raise the bar across the rented sector to deliver quality, well-being focused schemes.
- Awareness of the respected Future Home Standard as a minimum benchmark for lowering carbon emissions in use.



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3.

Actively respond to the climate crisis with responsible environmental policies and practices.

Signatories will:

- 1.** Demonstrate a clearly identified published approach to decarbonisation, minimisation of the use of natural resources, and circular economy principles.
- 2.** Adopt a Net Zero target by 2050 (if not earlier), underpinned by a clear pathway including a 'retrofit first' approach to legacy assets where practicable.
- 3.** Measure, monitor, manage and benchmark energy, waste and natural resource use performance.
- 4.** Educate, advocate and incentivise all key stakeholders about their responsibilities with respect to the climate crisis.
- 5.** Achieve institutional quality sustainability/ environmental standards.

Rationale:

- Proactive awareness of new and emerging regulatory and policy requirements at local and national levels.
- Drive forward operational energy efficiencies of assets.
- To provide clarity to suppliers and contractors on their responsibilities.
- Promote positive engagement with customers on the topic.



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4.

Adopt fair, flexible and responsible terms which promote lasting relationships.

Signatories will:

- 1.** Adopt fairness and flexibility as hallmarks of tenancy terms e.g. offer variable term lengths (at least) 3 years, tenant only break clauses, no hidden fees, fair and transparent rent increases.
- 2.** Take a responsible perspective to revenue generation which fosters stewardship over short-term financial gain.
- 3.** Publish relevant documentation in plain English, and in a suitable range of accessible formats eg tenancy agreements/complaints procedure.
- 4.** Publish a Customer Charter that adheres to the ARL minimum standards*.
* Customer Charter standards to be developed.
- 5.** Ensure customers are treated fairly, consistently and inclusively.
- 6.** Identify and engage with at-risk customers and offer appropriate support.

Rationale:

- Provide security of tenure for customers.
- Be open and transparent in communications, including addressing any issues for customers.
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement across the sector.
- Enable benchmarking across operators and geographies.



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5.

Cultivate community as core to BTR.

Signatories will:

1. Develop homes and foster vibrant scheme communities which encourage connection and generate a sense of belonging.
2. Curate targeted customer engagement programmes aimed to enhance lifestyles across mixed demographic, interests and needs.
3. Engage with the local community to ensure places are contextually relevant for the long term, meeting underserved local needs as far as possible and respecting cultural heritage and ancestry.
4. Prioritise meaningful economic and social opportunities that support local businesses, organisations and communities.
5. Measure, monitor and manage schemes' social risks and benefits for customers and communities.

Rationale:

- Support and promote placemaking.
- Distinguish Code signatories from providers who may negotiate down local affordable housing requirements, or provide sub-standard offerings.
- Enhance health, happiness and wellbeing across a mixed customer base in BTR schemes.
- Enhance customer offer through the promotion of access to local retailers.
- Support data collection and sharing.



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6.

Adopt a responsible, transparent culture and robust corporate governance.

Signatories will:

- 1.** Ensure robust governance structures are in place to ensure accountability and transparency including adherence to this Code with performance overseen at Board level.
- 2.** Adopt integrated systems for risk management, performance assessment, communication, leadership, employee competency curriculum and recommended ISO Standards.
- 3.** Adhere to best practice standards for employee relations including reward (at least equivalent to) real living wage with personalised sector training programmes and career paths.
- 4.** Build a corporate culture which promotes wellbeing, workplace diversity, equity and inclusion and empowers innovation with regular employee surveys to turn policy into action.
- 5.** Promote best practice governance standards across supply chains.

Rationale:

- Promote transparency and integrity.
- Align with best practice standards regarding employees, suppliers, and customers.
- Adopt a culture of continuous improvement.
- Promote quality jobs, including Real Living Wage accreditation.



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7.

Promote the adoption of this Code.

Signatories will:

1. Educate and advocate to improve BTR standards in line with the Code's principles.
2. Reflect the Code in their corporate values and socialise the Code within their organisations.
3. Embed Code expectations within their organisations and across all stakeholders.
4. Advertise the kitemark on published material.

Rationale:

- Articulate and promote the distinctiveness of BTR offer.
- Encourage all parties to mutually support one another in pursuit of the Code's Principles.
- Aim to achieve consistency and predictability across the BTR sector.



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To feedback on these proposed principles
please register at

<https://thearl.org.uk/btr-code-of-practice/btr-code-of-practice-principles-form/>

To ask for more information about the
Code email: info@thearl.org.uk



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