

Information Security Forum

Information Pack

HouseMark's Information Security Forum is a place for key people from housing associations to come together to discuss and collaborate on issues around cyber security and governance. Importantly, the Forum will be linked to the cyber security experts in central government via the WARP (Warning Advice and Reporting Point) mechanism. We know there's nothing quite like it out there for housing associations now, so it's an exciting time to get involved.

Why does the housing sector need this Forum and WARP?

We know communities working with digital technologies are all vulnerable to security incidents of one form or another. By bringing these communities together, trust is built up amongst its members and the sharing of good practice is promoted. This 'community of trust' is also more likely to share incidents with each other, resulting in shared learning and a stronger community more resilient to cyber-attack.

Based on this collaborative premise, the first WARP was created in April 2003. Today, there are numerous WARPs spread across the country – all well-established and providing the perfect vehicle for information security professionals to work together. HouseMark's Information Security Forum is the first WARP for housing associations in the UK.

Good information security is a business enabler and as compliance continues to evolve, Forum members will need to play a key role in advising their own organisations of the most appropriate ways of working. The Forum will provide the essential advice and insight from lessons learnt to ensure they are best placed to support the changing needs of their organisation.

What are the benefits of the Forum and WARP?

The Forum and WARP operating model deliver three functions and benefits for Forum members:

1. WARNINGS

The Forum will contain content and information that warns members about current threats to its community. This could include software vulnerabilities, malware outbreaks or hacking attacks. This information is delivered via guest speakers, Forum member sharing experiences and information and access and signposts to key sharing platforms to ensure they can access threat intelligence provided by those working in the cyber security industry – both public and private sector.

2. ADVICE

Being part of the Forum community means that there is always someone on hand to talk to if you need advice. As our members will all be working in the same field, it's likely you will have similar challenges. The Forum provides the ideal opportunity for members to present and showcase work and projects that they are delivering and get valuable feedback and help from others in the field.

3. REPORTING

We know valuable lessons are learnt from reporting and confidentially sharing details of security incidents. Being part of the Forum, you will benefit from peer support, ideas sharing and the opportunity to prevent similar incidents in your organisation – learning from others about triggers, resolutions and preventative measures.

How will the Forum be delivered?

The Forum blends a mixture of facilitated meetings and secure online workspaces to support effective knowledge exchange and support. Together, we meet eight times a year.

There are two parts to every meeting. An open session sees supplier and guest speaker presentations, discussion and analysis of the latest issues, news and project updates from engaged organisations or members of the group and covers a wide variety of assurance activities. The closed session allows members to share current projects and issues including details of any information security incidents. This format supports secure sharing of sensitive technical or organisational information, allowing requests for, and offers of, assistance to be made, building trust amongst the members.

Other WARPs have used a sponsorship model to facilitate the hosting of their forum meetings. This promotes close working relationships with suppliers and often results in procurement deals for the members, as well as the opportunity to contribute to the development of products and services. This is something we will explore as the Forum evolves.

Who is involved in the Forum?

Organised by HouseMark, the Forum is led by HouseMark associate Matt Smith. Matt is an expert in Information Security and currently manages the London Councils' WARP. He has worked in cybersecurity and information governance for over 15 years and is part of an extensive network of expert practitioners and suppliers. Matt is security cleared (SC)¹. He organises the meeting, prepares meeting agendas and sources speakers. He also provides a central contact point for all members.


To ensure Forum meetings deliver the needs of members, a member Chair is appointed to anchor the Forum, introduce the presentations, discussions and closed sessions. The Chair is the 'public face' of the Forum and WARP and is responsible for strategic direction and development.

Forum membership is open to any professional, working in a housing association, whose role covers all, or part, of what is normally described as:

- Information Security / Cybersecurity
- Information Assurance
- Information Management
- GDPR / Compliance

How much does it cost to become a Forum member?

For existing HouseMark members, the Forum costs £3,000 + VAT per year. For non-members, the price is £4,500 + VAT.

 SC 'Security Cleared' determines that a person's character and personal circumstances are such that they can be trusted to work in a position which involves long-term, frequent and uncontrolled access to SECRET assets