

ARCO

# ARCO's Standards and Compliance Framework

October 2025



Setting Standards for  
Retirement Communities

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*This document is pending approval of the Standards Committee*

## 1 Introduction

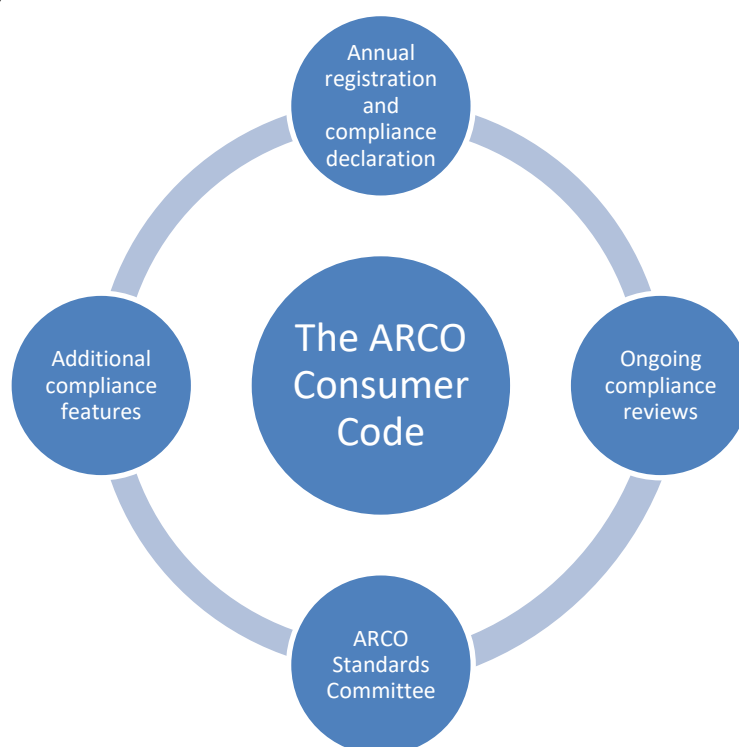
Since September 2015, ARCO and its members have maintained a robust Standards and Compliance Framework. Adhering to this is a condition of membership.

We believe that a system of ensuring higher standards within the integrated retirement community (IRC) sector is vital for the future growth of the sector; that it gives consumers confidence in our members' offer and assures stakeholders that IRC operators are committed to high standards in a sector that will play a key part in the provision of housing, care, and support for our ageing population.

This document sets out the principles of ARCO's ambitious programme of self-regulation.

## 2 What does ARCO's Standards and Compliance Framework consist of?

ARCO's self-regulatory framework consists of five strands (including the key element of the Consumer Code):



1. The ARCO Consumer Code, including developing and providing compliant Key Facts documents for all registered IRCs.
2. An annual process of registration and agreement to be bound by ARCO's Standards and Compliance Framework.
3. An annual programme of compliance reviews against the ARCO Consumer Code.
4. The Standards Committee that oversees the Standards and Compliance Framework.
5. Additional compliance features including mystery shopping of member schemes, and targeted support to members when compliance issues arise.

It is a condition of ARCO membership that organisations commit to compliance with the principles of the Standards and Compliance Framework.

## 3 How do the elements of ARCO's Standards and Compliance Framework operate in practice?

### 3.1 The ARCO Consumer Code

- The ARCO Consumer Code spells out the standards that ARCO expects its members to meet. In 2024-25 the Code was approved by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's Approved Code Scheme.

- The Code sets the requirements for ARCO Approved Operator status. It focuses on transparency in the marketing, sales and lettings process, so that customers are fully informed about the IRC offer, property, services and fees and charges. The Code also covers complaints handling and resident relations, including an independent dispute resolution for disputes under the Code, provided by the Property Ombudsman.

### **3.2 Annual process of registration and declaration of compliance with the Framework**

It is a condition of membership that annually, all members will:

- Provide details on each IRC operated by their organisation which meets the eligibility criteria for ARCO membership, including all communities currently under construction and/or which are being actively marketed before opening. ARCO-registered communities must meet *all* of the following criteria:
  - (a) Be primarily for older people.
  - (b) Offer self-contained accommodation that can be occupied with security of tenure.
  - (c) Enable residents to take advantage of personal care that is delivered flexibly, usually by staff based on the premises.
  - (d) Have staff onsite and available at the community 24 hours a day.
  - (e) Make meals available in restaurants or dining areas.
  - (f) Offer communal facilities and encourage an active social programme in the community.
  - (g) Aim to offer people a home for life and to enable them to 'age in place'.
- Certify that they will operate all of their ARCO-registered IRCs according to the principles set out in the ARCO Consumer Code.
- Agree to be bound by the principles of the Standards and Compliance Framework.
- Certify that all compliance recommendations made in the previous period are being implemented across all of their registered communities.

### **3.3 Ongoing programme of compliance reviews**

- Members will be subject to a programme of regular compliance reviews aimed at establishing whether members and individual member communities comply with the ARCO Consumer Code.
- Members will receive a report that sets out necessary actions to achieve compliance for the relevant standards year, along with highlighting areas where the member is already compliant and those where they are exhibiting particularly good practice.
- In order to obtain Approved Operator status for the relevant standards year, members need to respond to the report and set out how they will address the compliance actions.
- Members will also be expected to certify that they will implement compliance recommendations across their portfolio.

#### **3.3.1 Number of schemes reviewed for full members**

- The number of schemes reviewed will depend on the size of the member organisation.
- The schemes to be reviewed will be selected by ARCO. The number of schemes reviewed each year for full members will be as follows:

| Number of communities | Number of schemes reviewed |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1-5                   | 1                          |
| 6-10                  | 2                          |
| 11-15                 | 3                          |
| 16-20                 | 4                          |
| 21-25                 | 5                          |
| 26+                   | 6                          |

Organisations which do not fit regular parameters may need to undertake further scheme reviews – this will be determined by the Standards Committee on a case-by-case basis. Examples include organisations with multiple brands or that have recently undergone mergers.

### 3.3.2 Prospective members

For prospective members, those in the process of building (to operate)/actively marketing their first integrated retirement community or communities, a series of reviews will need to be undertaken during the build of their communities to ensure that ARCO's standards in marketing and selling/letting are met. The reviews will follow the format below:

1. An Enabling Compliance review before the community opens to residents (this is an in-depth review, designed to support operators new to ARCO).
2. A further review of the community to be conducted shortly after it opens to residents.

After achieving compliance on these reviews, the Standards Committee may then grant ARCO Approved Operator status. If granted Approved Operator status the organisation may apply to the Board for full membership of ARCO.

### 3.3.3 New (provisional) members

- New members need to register and declare compliance with the Standards and Compliance Framework.
- Provisional members will then be reviewed under the Consumer Code; the number of schemes reviewed will be determined by the number of communities that they operate, according to the table at 3.3.1 above. One will be an Enabling Compliance review.

- Until they have been signed off as complying with the Consumer Code, become Approved Operators and granted full membership by the ARCO Board, they will remain provisional members.

After achieving compliance on these review(s), the Standards Committee may then grant ARCO Approved Operator status, and the organisation may apply to the Board for full membership of ARCO.

#### 3.3.4 Themed reviews

ARCO may decide from time to time to undertake themed reviews in areas in which particular issues appear to arise. These decisions will be taken in consultation with the ARCO Standards Committee.

### 3.4 The ARCO Standards Committee

- Except when sitting as a disciplinary panel, the ARCO Standards Committee is made up of four or five representatives from member organisations and an independent Chair. It operates according to the ARCO Standards Committee Terms of Reference.
- The Standards Committee will determine whether to grant Approved Operator status for that standards year for a member, following a recommendation made by ARCO.
- If a member is not happy with a recommendation, they can ask for the issue to be brought to the Standards Committee for decision.
- The disciplinary powers of the Standards Committee in the event of breaches of the Code referred to it by ARCO (or by the Property Ombudsman arising out of its dispute resolution scheme) are set out at section 9 of the Consumer Code.
- Disciplinary decisions of the Standards Committee will be published in accordance with CTSI requirements.

### 3.5 Additional features to support compliance with the Consumer Code

- ARCO will undertake mystery shopping of all members, carried out by an independent mystery shopping provider. This will look at both customer service and compliance performance. Individual reports will be provided to members to identify instances of good practice and any areas where improvement is needed.
- In addition, ARCO will monitor the success of the Consumer Code through the annual collection and publication of data on Key Performance Indicators. This is a requirement of our membership of the Approved Code Scheme.
- E-learning, guidance resources and webinars will be provided by ARCO to members to assist them in complying with the Code.

Targeted support will be offered to members where compliance issues arise and support is needed, at ARCO's sole discretion. **For further information on the ARCO standards programme please contact [consumercode@arcouk.org](mailto:consumercode@arcouk.org) or visit our website's Standards and Regulation section.**