

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 – 2022



Our Commitment

Argyll Community Housing Association Group is committed to provide equal opportunities across all services and to avoid discrimination. This strategy is intended to assist Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) and Argyll Homes for All (AHFA) to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this strategy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

This strategy can be made available in other formats, for example in large print, audio-format or Braille: the document may also be available in other languages, in full or summary form, as appropriate.

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

Introduction from the Chair of ACHA's Board of Management:

Welcome to our second ACHA strategy for Gypsy/Traveller services. ACHA is in a unique position as we are the only Scottish Housing Association that owns sites and provides pitches for Gypsy/Travellers, and we see it as a privilege to provide services to Gypsy/Travellers.

This strategy aims to outline the services we'll provide for our Gypsy/Traveller site tenants and explains how we will deliver them in the period 2019 – 2022.



James Milne,

Chair of ACHA's Board of Management



Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

Contents

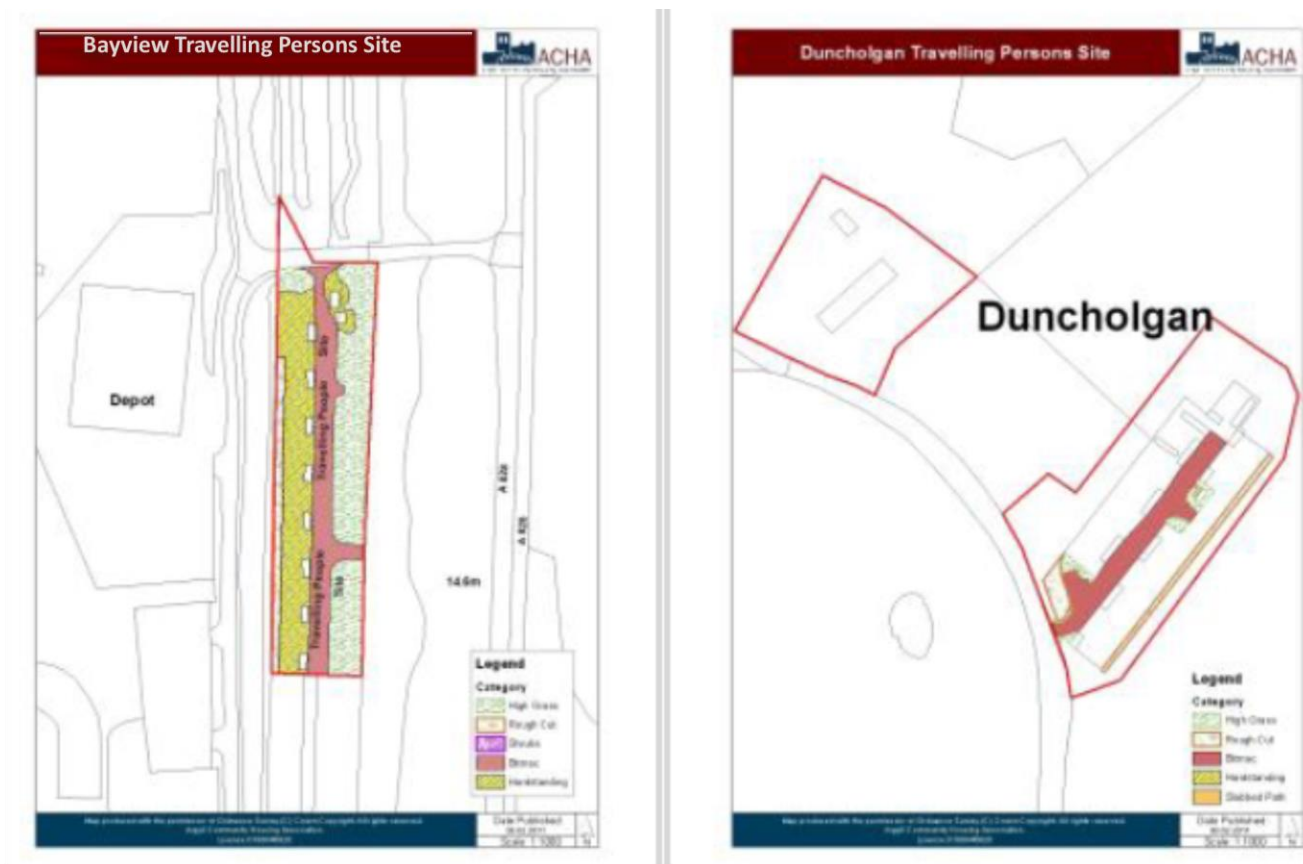
Section 1 - Context	4
Section 2 – The Law, Good Practice And Links To Other ACHA Policies And Strategies.	5
Section 3 - Our strategy Aims and Objectives	6
Section 4 - Implementing our Strategy objectives	6
4.1 “Improving Gypsy/Travellers sites” (May 2015).....	6
4.1.1 Section 1- Minimum Standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites;.....	6
4.1.2 Section 2- Core rights and responsibilities for site tenants.....	9
4.2 Consultation and Participation.....	9
4.3 Working with other agencies	10
Section 5 - Performance Management	11
Section 6 - Development and Training	11
Section 7 - Positive Action Initiatives	12
Section 8 - Review of the strategy	12
Section 9 - Appendices	12

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

Section 1 - Context

- 1.1 The Scottish Government uses the term “Gypsy/Traveller” for people in the Travelling communities, and that term is therefore used throughout this strategy.
- 1.2 Argyll Community Housing Association Ltd (ACHA) has two operational Gypsy/Traveller sites. Bayview, near Oban, has eight pitches and Duncholgan, near Lochgilphead, has 14 pitches. Each pitch contains an area of hard standing and an amenity unit offering a bathroom and storage facilities. Pitches are let via the HOME Argyll allocations Policy, which is a common housing list for all applicants wishing to be rehoused in Social Housing in Argyll & Bute - available at <http://www.homeargyll.co.uk>.



1.3 In the 2011 Scottish census, 4,200 people recorded their ethnic group as “White Gypsy/Traveller”. The highest number of Gypsy/Travellers was recorded in Perth and Kinross (400 people; 0.3% of the total population of that area), followed by Glasgow, Edinburgh and Fife. 40% of those who recorded their ethnicity as White Gypsy/Traveller in the 2011 census were ages under 25 years, compared to 29% of the whole population. It should be noted that bodies such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission believe that the census figures undercount the number of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland, and the actual figures are higher.

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

1.4 In Argyll and Bute, the 2011 census recorded that there were 96 Gypsy/Travellers living throughout Argyll and Bute, which is 2% of the Scottish total. This indicates a Gypsy/Traveller population increase in Argyll and Bute of 43 individuals.

Section 2 – The Law, Good Practice And Links To Other ACHA Policies And Strategies.

2.1 In order to effectively deliver the aims and objectives of this Strategy, ACHA will meet the requirements of:

- ACHA Complaints Policy
- ACHA Repair and Maintenance Policy
- ACHA Group Communications and Feedback Strategy
- Argyll & Bute Council Local Housing Strategy (2016-2021)
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Equal Opportunities legislation
- Guidance and provisions as detailed in the Scottish Government Publication “Improving Gypsy/Travellers sites” (May 2015)
- Health & Safety Policies
- HOME Argyll Allocations Policy
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Performance standards as required by the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Site licences as issued by Argyll & Bute Council
- Tenant Participation Strategy
- The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH)
- The Equality Act 2010 (particularly recognising that Gypsy/Travellers are recognised as an ethnic group under the definition of “race” within the Act)
- The terms of the ACHA tenancy agreement

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

Section 3 - Our strategy Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 ACHA aims to improve, develop and manage quality and efficient services to Gypsy/Travellers living on our sites.
- 3.2 To ensure that service users have multiple opportunities to participate in and influence the way services are delivered.
- 3.3 To meet internal and external performance standards.

Section 4 - Implementing our Strategy objectives

4.1 “Improving Gypsy/Travellers sites” (May 2015)

ACHA has undertaken a number of changes and improvements to our sites and tenancy agreements to meet the requirements of the Scottish Government’s Guidance “Improving Gypsy/Traveller Sites” (May 2015).

This guidance for site providers, has two main sections:

4.1.1 Section 1- Minimum Standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites;

The guidance states that the following standards must be met:

Energy Efficiency

Amenity blocks on sites should meet an appropriate energy efficiency standard.

Ideally site tenants should be able to choose their own energy supplier. However, this may not always be possible therefore when a site provider has a choice of energy suppliers, affordability for site tenants should be one of the criteria the site provider applies in deciding who to appoint.

Facilities and Amenities

It is important that good quality facilities and amenities are provided to site tenants. This standard therefore covers things such as:

The provision of a wholesome water supply

A suitable number of electrical sockets

Adequate food storage space.

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

Good quality fittings, and basic requirements such as the need for a toilet and wash-hand basin.

Safety and Security

Sites should be safe and secure. This includes safety measures such as:

Electrical and gas inspections at regular and planned intervals (annually for gas and 5 yearly for an electrical system).

Adequate smoke alarms/detectors should be provided in the amenity units.

The requirements of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 must be met.

Appropriate road safety measures should be in place, with speed limits and other measures as necessary (for example to reflect the fact that many sites will have young children living on them).

Lighting should also be provided for common parts of sites (such as roads and children's play areas).

Many sites include a barrier that can be used to limit access to a site. Site providers should consult with site tenants about whether and when such barriers are used. If a barrier is used it is important that arrangements are made for emergency access to the site at all times (e.g. for emergency services). The outcome of consultation with our site residents has indicated that barriers are not required.

Site providers should discuss with site tenants the possibility of fitting fences around pitches, with gates. This can add to a feeling of security for site tenants, and can be a sensible measure for the safety of young children.

Maintenance and repairs

There should be regular, planned, maintenance of the site and its facilities. This should include maintenance of shared areas, amenity blocks, and hard standings.

On-going maintenance should be a normal part of the service site tenants receive in return for the pitch fees they pay.

Unused pitches should be kept clean and tidy, to create a more pleasant living environment for site tenants. Caravans that are clearly abandoned should be removed from a site.

Site providers should apply the same timescales for repairs on Gypsy/Traveller sites as they do to repairs for social housing tenants. Site tenants should be given information that sets out the timescales for repairs, and how to report a repair. Site

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

tenants should be included in any consultation by a site provider on repair timescales in their area.

ACHA provides a comprehensive repairs service to all tenants as detailed in our Repairs and Maintenance Policy - available at <https://www.acha.co.uk/news-policies/>.

The Scottish Secure Tenants (Right to Repair) Regulations 2002 contains provisions for the Right to Repair Scheme to cover the rights of all tenants on a Scottish Secure Tenancy (available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/right-repair/>). Qualifying Repairs normally reflect the type of repair which might affect health, safety or security of the tenant and their household or property. Tenants of our Gypsy/Traveller Sites do not have a Scottish Secure Tenancy, however, ACHA is committed to providing equality of service and regards repairs as a contractual right. The level of repairs service to all tenants of our Gypsy/Travellers Sites is the same as house tenants, thereby ensuring that our Gypsy/Traveller tenants also have the Right to Repair.

Fair Treatment

Every tenant and other customer will have their individual needs recognised, treated fairly with respect, and receive fair access to housing and housing services

The allocation of site pitches and the termination of tenancy agreements will be carried out in a fair and transparent manner

Rents and services charges should provide value for money

A formal complaints procedure is in place

Requests for adaptations to site pitches or amenity blocks will be considered sympathetically. ACHA is committed to ensuring that tenants of Gypsy/Travellers Sites have the opportunity to remain in their chosen accommodation should their health deteriorate. Where adaptations are required ACHA will work with Social Work and Health colleagues to provide appropriate installations.

Staff or contractors visiting the site will respect the culture of Gypsy/Travellers.

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

4.1.2 Section 2- Core rights and responsibilities for site tenants.

This section of the guidance states that Gypsy/Travellers sites should meet the minimum standards, as outlined in section one of the guidance and also details other rights and responsibilities for tenants.

Tenants should have tenancy agreements that reflect these core rights and responsibilities.

The tenancy agreement will cover the rights and obligations of both the tenant and ACHA as landlord.

ACHA must ensure that it endeavours to meet the satisfaction and performance expectations of our service users and the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

Further to the guidance, ACHA prepared a new lease for our tenants that takes account of the model core rights and responsibilities.

4.2 Consultation and Participation

4.2.1 ACHA consults with all tenants on a number of issues including: proposed rent increases, changes to service delivery and major repairs work. In addition, we also carry out annual satisfaction surveys with tenants living on our Gypsy/Travellers sites. The results of this survey are used to report on our performance in terms of the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and are also fed back to tenants living on our sites.

Copies of our Gypsy/Travellers survey outcome reports can be viewed on our website at <https://www.acha.co.uk/services-gypsy-traveller/>.

4.2.2 ACHA has a Tenant Participation Strategy which outlines the variety of ways our tenants can get involved in helping decide how services should be delivered. Information is available at <https://www.acha.co.uk/get-involved-tenant-participatio/>.

4.2.3 ACHA has also developed a Group Communication and Feedback Strategy with the primary aim of improving communications for our customers. Information is available at <https://www.acha.co.uk/resources/Communication-Customer-Strategy-2016-201.pdf>.

4.2.4 We understand and recognise that our Gypsy/Traveller tenants and customers may have different and diverse cultural needs from other service users and our staff and contractors will take these into account during the delivery of services to them.

4.2.5 Staff will attend sites regularly, be available for meetings with tenants and will work closely with them to ensure that issues are dealt with as quickly as possible.

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

4.2.6 As a result of previous consultation with tenants an annual bespoke Gypsy/Traveller newsletter is produced which includes articles written by or at least influenced by our tenants themselves. Copies are available at <https://www.acha.co.uk/resources/Gypsy-Traveller-Newsletter-2016-V2.pdf>.

4.3 Working with other agencies

4.3.1 ACHA embraces the opportunity to work with other agencies who can help us improve services for our Gypsy/Travellers. We work with Argyll & Bute Council who monitor demand requirements for Gypsy/Traveller sites as part of the Local Housing Strategy. The Council are also responsible for the issue an enforcement of the Site Licences which cover a number of safety requirements for our two sites.

4.3.2 From time to time issues arise, outwith our sites, in relation to unauthorised encampments.

In April 2017 the Scottish Government published “**Guidelines For Managing Unauthorised Camping By Gypsies/Travellers In Scotland**”.

This guidance states that Unauthorised camping, or camping without seeking permission, has been part of the way of life of Gypsies/Travellers for centuries. As an expression of their cultural identity, it can occur even where sufficient authorised sites have been provided. Unauthorised camping requires sensitive and proportionate handling by all concerned and can be a difficult issue to resolve. This is mainly because different and often conflicting sets of rights, responsibilities and expectations are involved. It is also the aspect of Gypsy/Traveller presence that can be the focus of the greatest friction with the settled community. On the one hand, Gypsies/Travellers living in unauthorised encampments lack basic amenities, can find it hard to access health and education services for their families and can be subjected to verbal and sometimes racist abuse and discrimination. On the other hand, local residents and businesses in some areas have reported experiencing noise, anti-social behaviour and other nuisances from encampments.

These guidelines have been prepared to assist local authorities and local police to develop policies on unauthorised camping. ACHA does not have a responsibility for unauthorised encampments, but from time to time may work with Council colleagues to visit encampments and offer assistance with applications for housing or pitches.

4.3.3 We also regularly liaise with MECOPP who employ staff to work with carers within the Gypsy/Traveller community in West Argyll. (MECOPP, Maritime House, 8 The Shore, Edinburgh, EH6 6QN).

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

Section 5 - Performance Management

- 5.1 We will provide details of our repairs performance at our Sites annually in a newsletter made available to all our Gypsy/Traveller Site tenants. This will include information on Right to Repair payments.
- 5.2 We will provide the results of our Annual Survey to all Gypsy/Traveller Site tenants and publish them on our website. The results will also be provided to our Board of Management.
- 5.3 We will report to the Scottish Housing Regulator on our results for the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

Indicator 36 – For those who provide Gypsy/Traveller sites – Average weekly rent per pitch (including the total amount of rent set for all pitches during the reporting year, and the total number of pitches).

Indicator 37 – For those who provide Gypsy/Traveller sites – Percentage of Gypsy/Travellers satisfied with the landlord's management of the site

- 5.4 As per the 2015 Site Standards ACHA will implement a twice yearly informal inspection of the sites, to identify necessary maintenance and repairs to ensure common parts of the site are kept in good condition, including any common areas, paths and roads.

Section 6 - Development and Training.

- 6.1 ACHA operates a local service provision arrangement, and we will ensure that local staff managing our Gypsy/Traveller sites are trained to resolve any issues timeously and effectively.
- 6.2 We will provide training to our Board of Management, if requested, on our Gypsy/Traveller Site provision and the provision of our Gypsy/Traveller Strategy.

Organisational Strategy

Gypsy/Traveller Strategy 2019 - 2022

Section 7 - Positive Action Initiatives

- 7.1 In recognising that our Gypsy/Traveller tenants may have some cultural differences from other tenant groups, we aim to ensure the services we provide are not only equitable but also adaptable to meet any specific needs.
- 7.2 As a direct result of feedback from our tenants, a bespoke annual Gypsy/Traveller newsletter is produced and issued to our Gypsy/Traveller tenants.
- 7.3 We will also continue with annual Gypsy/Travellers satisfaction surveys in order to ensure that the services we provide are meeting the needs of our tenants.

Section 8 - Review of the strategy

- 8.1 A full review of the strategy will take place, following consultation with service users and other relevant parties, in 2022.

Section 9 - Appendices

Appendix 1 ACHA Gypsy/Travellers Strategy Information Poster

ACHA will...



Tell you every year how we performed against our repairs standards



Provide you with a Gypsy/ Traveller newsletter every year



Make sure you know how to complain if you need to do so



Ask your views on any proposed rent rise



Treat you with fairness and respect



Carry out twice yearly site inspection, along with tenants



Ask what you think about our services in our Annual Tenants Satisfaction survey and publish results



Make adaptations to your pitch to help you, if required



Complete repairs within timescales set out within our repairs policy. Give you compensation if we fail to meet Scottish Government standards

To find out more about ACHA

and the services we provide you can visit our website:

www.acha.co.uk

To contact us, give us a call on:

0800 028 2755

Or email

achacustomerservicecentre@acha.co.uk