



Gypsy Traveller Strategy 2025-2030

Our Commitment

The Argyll Community Housing Association Group is committed to providing equal opportunities across all services and to avoid discrimination. This strategy is intended to assist ACHA and AHFA in putting this commitment into practice. Compliance with this strategy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

If you need this policy in another format, for example larger print, audio format, Braille, Dyslexia friendly or in another language, please contact us.

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Foreword from Board Member Jan Brown

1.1 I am pleased and proud to present Argyll Community Housing Associations Gypsy Traveller Strategy covering the period 2025 to 2030. I am delighted to introduce our vision for our gypsy traveller residents, sites and the associated action plan for the next 5 years. 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.

Gypsy/Travellers have a rich cultural heritage and longstanding ties to Scotland. This strategy recognises their distinct identity and the importance of ensuring that their housing needs are met with dignity, respect, and understanding.

As a housing association, we are committed to promoting inclusive communities where everyone feels safe, valued, and heard. This strategy is a step towards ensuring that Gypsy/Traveller families have equal access to quality housing and support.

This strategy has been shaped by listening to Gypsy/Traveller voices. Their insights, experiences, and aspirations have guided our approach, and we remain committed to working in partnership to deliver meaningful change.

We recognise the barriers Gypsy/Traveller communities have faced in accessing appropriate housing and services. This strategy outlines practical steps to address these challenges and build trust through transparency and action.

This is not just a document—it’s a commitment. We look forward to continuing our journey with Gypsy/Traveller communities, local partners, and stakeholders to create a future where everyone has a place to call home.

Introduction

- 2.1 The Scottish Government uses the term Gypsy Traveller to describe a distinct group of people who regard the travelling lifestyle as being part of their ethnic identity. That term is used throughout this strategy.
- 2.2 Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) is in the unique position that we are the only Scottish Housing Association that owns Gypsy/Traveller sites and provides pitches for Gypsy/Travellers. ACHA owns two Gypsy Traveller sites - Duncholgan which is 2 miles outside of Lochgilphead and Bayview which is 6 miles outside of Oban in Benderloch.
- 2.3 Duncholgan Gypsy Traveller site contains 7 pitches and Bayview contains 4 pitches.
- 2.4 Each pitch contains an area of hard standing and an amenity unit offering a bathroom and storage facilities. Pitches are let via the HomeArgyll allocations Policy, which is a common housing list for all applicants wishing to be rehoused in Social Housing in Argyll & Bute - available at www.homeargyll.co.uk
- 2.5 ACHA also has 3 cottages in Lochgilphead which are specifically for leasing to gypsy/travellers, where there is demand.
- 2.6 ACHA's policies and services such as repairs, allocations, estate management, Anti-Social Behaviour, apply equally to all our residents including those living in our gypsy traveller sites. Our Gypsy travellers also have leases based on the Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement and takes account of model core rights and responsibilities.
- 2.7 This strategy aims to outline the services ACHA will provide for our Gypsy Traveller site tenants, other Gypsy Travellers living in our properties and gypsy traveller applicants on the Home Argyll waiting list, ensuring that they are efficient and good quality, meeting the needs of the community and provided in a non-discriminatory way taking into account cultural requirements and explains how we will deliver them in the period 2025-2030.

It also aims to describe how we will work with our gypsy traveller tenants and other agencies to improve and sustain community relations and improve the lives of our gypsy traveller tenants in a manner underpinned by improved communications, respect and understanding. This Strategy can be read in conjunction with ACHA's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights Policy, Repairs and Maintenance Policy, and Customer Involvement Strategy to ensure a consistent and integrated approach.

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Context

- 3.1** The Scottish Governments Housing to 2040 vision commits to improve and widen access to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation.
- 3.2** Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy Travellers Scottish Government Action Plan 2024 to 2026 is divided into 5 sections which include:-
- Accommodation and planning
 - Education
 - Health
 - Social Security, work and combatting poverty
 - Empower Communities
- 3.3** Argyll and Bute Council holds the lead statutory responsibility for improving the lives of Gypsy/Traveller communities. This includes delivering strategic actions to remove barriers to education for children and young people, enhance access to and experiences of healthcare services, support access to benefits, and actively tackle prejudice and discrimination. These duties are central to the Council's role in driving forward inclusive, equitable outcomes for Gypsy Traveller communities across the region.
- 3.4** ACHA is responsible for the day-to-day management of our Gypsy/Traveller sites—including the provision and maintenance of accommodation and associated landlord services. While we work in partnership with other agencies, our focus within this strategy is on the responsibilities that fall within our remit.
- 3.5** According to our records only 19 of our tenants identify as gypsy traveller, this includes the residents of our gypsy/traveller sites. This is unlikely to accurately reflect the true position due to under reporting and a reluctance to self-identity, often due to concerns about discrimination.
- 3.6** In Scotland's Census 2022 – 84 residents across Argyll and Bute identified as gypsy/traveller.
- 3.7** There are no private gypsy traveller sites in Argyll and Bute and over the last 5 years there have been no applications to develop any either.
- 3.8** Within Argyll and Bute there have been periodic instances of roadside stopping and unauthorised encampments reported across the area. These are generally short stays by transient gypsy/traveller households and resolve themselves. There is insufficient evidence to suggest a requirement for the provision of transit sites or negotiated stopping places at the present time.



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- 3.9** In September 2023 ACHA carried out a satisfaction survey of our gypsy traveller site residents and this showed that only 42.86% of our site residents were satisfied with our management of their site. We need to improve this. The satisfaction rate from the previous year was 75% which indicates that the drop in satisfaction is linked to concerns regarding the current condition of our sites and the need for major improvements, which are reliant on us receiving funding.
- 3.10** Current demand for our gypsy traveller sites is low. At the time of writing this strategy there are 0 applicants on our waiting list for Duncholgan and 2 applicants for Bayview. This does not suggest a requirement to substantially extend our existing sites or to build any new sites in the next 5 years.
- 3.11** What Our Gypsy Travellers say: - In 2022 ACHA began consultations with residents on improvements to our 2 gypsy traveller sites, with the intention to apply for funding from the Accommodation Fund. Our residents told us that the following were important to them:-
- Good lighting
 - Easy to clean surfaces
 - Good wifi
 - Improved drainage
 - Improved traffic control for safety reasons.
 - Site to be accessible for all and a home for life
 - Provision of an enclosed field for children to play
 - Amenity units to be placed at the back or sides of pitches
 - Improved access road to site
 - Safe walking/cycling route into town



Customer Involvement & Participation

4.1 The involvement of our Gypsy Traveller tenants in the design, delivery, and evaluation of our services is essential to ensure that their specific needs are met. This section of the strategy will focus on fostering meaningful engagement, empowering the community to collaborate and creating sustainable relationships. Below are the key elements of customer involvement:

4.2 ACHA engage Gypsy Travellers in the design and development of services and investments plans. This includes holding focus groups, conducting surveys and hosting workshops where community members can provide input on service design, accessibility and effectiveness.

4.3 ACHA consults with Gypsy Travellers on a number of issues including: proposed rent increases, changes to service delivery and major repairs work. In addition, we also carry out satisfaction surveys with tenants living on our Gypsy Travellers sites. The results of these surveys are reported to our Gypsy Traveller tenants along with what actions we will take as a result of their feedback to ensure ongoing communication and transparency.

ACHA's Customer Involvement Strategy outlines the variety of ways our tenants can get involved. When Gypsy Travellers are involved in decision-making, services become more reflective of their needs and helps strengthen the voice of their community. Information is available at www.acha.co.uk/get-involved-customer-involve

4.4 Benefits of Customer Involvement for Gypsy Travellers include

- Better services: By having a say, Gypsy Travellers can help shape services to be more relevant and responsive to their specific needs.
- Improved housing conditions: Active involvement in planning and consultations can result in better accommodation options and improved living conditions.
- Stronger community support: When the community comes together to advocate for change, it can create a more supportive environment for everyone.
- Increased visibility and representation: Engaging with services and agencies increases the visibility of Gypsy Traveller issues, helping to address challenges like discrimination and exclusion.





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- 4.5** There can be challenges and barriers to Customer Involvement such as:
- Cultural barriers: Gypsy Travellers may face discrimination or may feel that their needs are not understood by service providers.
 - Language barriers: Gypsy Travellers may speak Romani or other dialects and may not always have access to services in their preferred language.
 - Lack of trust: Due to historical mistreatment and marginalization, there may be a lack of trust between Gypsy Travellers and authorities or service providers.
 - Geographic Mobility: Many Gypsy Travellers live in caravans and may face challenges in access services that are more stationary or fixed to a particular location.
- 4.6** Overcoming these barriers requires a commitment from both Gypsy Traveller communities and service providers to ensure better communication, understanding, and respect. We are committed to working collaboratively across Argyll and Bute to build engagement and overcome the barriers faced by the Gypsy Traveller Community.
- 4.7** Partnership working is a key aspect of progressing improvements in the services and accommodation we provide and in improving the lives of gypsy travellers. In addition to working closely with the Scottish Government, ACHA are a partner in the Gypsy Traveller working group lead by Argyll and Bute Council, which has representatives from all services within the Local Authority as well as members from Police Scotland, Scottish Fire Service, Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project (MECOPP) and representation from the Gypsy Traveller community. The Group takes forward actions to improve the lives of gypsy travellers within Argyll and Bute.
- 4.8** In 2024 achievements of the Group involving ACHA included resurfacing of the road to Duncholgan gypsy traveller site and also clearance and improvements of the path from Duncholgan into Lochgilphead.
- 4.9** ACHA also work closely with MECOPP and meet on a regular basis at our Gypsy Traveller sites. We include MECOPP in meetings we hold with our Gypsy Traveller residents and also consult them on issues involving our gypsy traveller residents.
- 4.10** We utilise a variety of communication methods from regular onsite visits, face to face meetings, printed materials, visual tools to ensure accessibility for all Gypsy Travellers tenants.

Ambitions

Improving Our Existing Gypsy Traveller Sites

- 5.1** It is our intention to upgrade the existing Gypsy Traveller sites at Bayview, Oban and Duncholgan, Lochgilphead to create culturally appropriate, inclusive, and sustainable living environments. The upgraded site will be designed to meet the specific needs of the Gypsy Traveller community while fully complying with planning regulations, environmental standards, and health and safety requirements. The design and construction approach will be in line with the Scottish Government's Interim Site Design Guide for Gypsy/Traveller sites.
- 5.2** ACHA has appointed a design team to develop proposals for both sites. Subject to securing funding, we intend to commence a phased refurbishment programme across the financial years 2026/27/28. The design team will work in close collaboration with tenants, ensuring they are kept informed and engaged throughout the investment process. Tenant satisfaction will be actively monitored, and feedback will be captured to help shape and improve the outcomes of the project.

- 5.3** ACHA have engaged closely with the Scottish Government to obtain funding to carry out major improvements to our gypsy traveller sites.
- 5.4** ACHA have been consulting our residents since 2022 in relation to the site improvements that they would like to see. We appointed Architects who produced a design concept based on these consultations.
- 5.5** The Scottish Government have confirmed that project funding for site improvements will be made available through the More Homes Programme. ACHA have appointed a multidisciplinary design team to develop the proposals for both sites. Resident consultations will be carried out to establish accommodation preferences and decant requirements. It is anticipated that work will begin at Bayview within financial year 26/27 and at Duncholgan within financial year 27/28.
- 5.6** We will strive to provide accommodation that will be built to a high standard in line with other public housing. The accommodation will be durable, sustainable, flexible, safe, secure, digitally connected, warm, economic to run and value for money. We aim to provide accommodation with the layout and facilities that meet the needs of residents and provide for different family sizes, allow for movement within the site and which is suitable for elderly and disabled residents also.
- 5.7** We will improve our sites so that they are pleasant places to live and include attractive outdoor spaces, communal facilities and appropriate facilities for children and young people and that contribute to the health and wellbeing of our tenants.



Ambitions

Improve Customer Satisfaction, Relationships and Engagement

- 5.8** Staff or contractors visiting the site will respect the culture of Gypsy/Travellers. We aim to widen our knowledge and understanding of the gypsy traveller community through working closely with our tenants and partners. Our staff will receive regular training on gypsy/traveller culture and values. We are liaising with MECOPP to provide this training due to their specialist knowledge of gypsy traveller culture.
- 5.9** We will celebrate gypsy traveller culture within our organisation and on our sites.
- 5.10** Our Staff will continue to visit our gypsy traveller sites on a regular basis and engage and communicate with residents.
- 5.11** We will continue to build relations with MECOPP, working with them to take forward improvements to our gypsy/traveller sites, engagement with our residents and meeting with them regularly at each site.
- 5.12** We will involve our gypsy traveller residents in planning any future service developments which may be relevant to them and always try to provide what they require.
- 5.13** We will manage our sites closely in engagement with our residents to ensure that they are maintained in a clean, tidy and safe condition.

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Enabling Equality of Opportunity

- 5.14** Our staff will carry out bi-annual maintenance inspections of our sites which residents are invited to attend. This is to identify and resolve any maintenance or repairs issues that may not have been reported to us through the usual routes and to discuss any improvements required by our residents. This helps to breakdown any barriers to reporting and ensures any issues are resolved quickly.
- 5.15** ACHA have our own welfare rights service and our welfare rights officers will visit our gypsy traveller sites on a regular basis or when required to provide advice and assistance on benefits, breaking down barriers that our gypsy traveller residents may face in accessing benefits.
- 5.16** We are actively engaging with the Scottish Government to access funding to improve the WiFi on our gypsy traveller sites. We are committed to ensuring that our residents are digitally included with good access to online services, education and opportunities.
- 5.17** We will ensure that our gypsy traveller residents are aware of our formal complaints policy and understand how they can make a complaint.

Action Plan

Progress on this action plan will be monitored by the Housing and Neighbourhood Services and Property Services Management Teams, with six-monthly updates provided to the Senior Management Team and annual performance reports presented to the Board and the Equality and Human Rights Working Group.

Short Term – 0 to 1 years, Medium Term – 1 to 3 years, Long Term – 3 to 5 years

Outcome	Actions	Timeline
Improvement of properties and Condition of our sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointed multi-disciplinary design team to develop proposals for both sites. Further resident consultations to be carried out to establish accommodation preferences and decant requirements. Apply for funding through the More Homes Programme from 2026. Develop a contingency plan to prioritize improvements if partial funding is secure. Submit a Formal funding request to the Scottish Governments Affordable Housing Supply Programme and submit information for a technical appraisal no later than January 2026 for approval in April 2026. Repeat this process in 2027. 	<p>Short Term</p> <p>Short Term for Bayview and Medium Term for Duncholgan</p> <p>Short Term to Medium Term</p> <p>Short Term</p> <p>Short Term to Medium Term</p>
Improve customer satisfaction, engagement and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a deeper understanding of gypsy traveller needs and culture amongst our staff through provision of training. Collaboration with community groups already trusted within the community such as MECOPP as a way of engaging with the gypsy traveller community. Proactively provide advice and guidance on any changes to services or legislation that may influence our residents through face to face and easy to read correspondence. Work with partners such as the local authority and MECOPP to provide clear advice and guidance on any changes they need to be aware of. 	<p>Short Term to Long Term</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Outcome	Actions	Timeline
Improve customer satisfaction, engagement and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure improvements to the sites align as much as possible with resident feedback. • Our staff visit the sites on a regular basis to meet and engage with residents. We provide regular updates on progress with our plans to improve the condition of the sites. • We will work with partners to increase awareness and understanding of the community through community events and the gypsy traveller working group. 	<p>Short to Medium Term</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Enabling Equality of Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACHA operates its own Welfare Rights service, which visits our Travelling Persons sites regularly or as needed. This service helps to ensure that any barriers our residents face in accessing benefits are identified and removed, supporting financial inclusion and wellbeing. • Our staff conduct bi-annual inspections of our sites to identify any necessary repairs or maintenance issues. These visits also provide residents with the opportunity to raise concerns directly, helping to remove any barriers to reporting and ensuring that issues are addressed promptly and effectively. • We are actively engaging with the government to secure funding aimed at improving Wi-Fi connectivity across our sites. This investment will help ensure that our residents are digitally included, with better access to online services, education, and opportunities. • We are committed to ensuring that Gypsy/ Traveller communities are meaningfully involved in shaping the services that affect them. Through regular consultation and engagement, we provide opportunities for residents to influence the design, development, and delivery of services to better reflect their needs and priorities. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Short to Medium Term</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

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Scottish Housing Regulator

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