



Ayrshire North Community Housing Organisation
 Relates to Communities Scotland Performance Standard: GS2.1, GS3, AS1.1,
 AS1.2, AS1.4

Approved by Board: 2 November 2004
 Prepared by: J Munro
 Issued: 3 November 2004
 Review Date: October 2006

Subject: Allocations Policy

1. Introduction

ANCHO operates in the area served by North Ayrshire Council. North Ayrshire has a population of some 135,000 in some 62,321 dwellings. The population is declining slowly. However, in the period up to 2007, the number of households is projected to rise by 6.7%, with the fastest growth in Irvine and Arran. It has a relatively old age profile. Implications of this are:

- A slowly declining total population;
- Increasing numbers of older people;
- Increasing numbers of single person households;
- Growing needs for supported accommodation.

The local housing market demonstrates high demand for quality affordable rented accommodation. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 has resulted in a sharp rise in the number of homeless presentations to North Ayrshire Council.

ANCHO's Internal Management Plan highlights that our Mission Statement is "**to contribute towards meeting housing need**". The implications for the Association are that:

- Our allocation policy needs to give weight to housing need, so ensuring that people who are actually or potentially homeless or who are very badly housed have high priority;
- We need to cooperate closely with North Ayrshire Council to optimise use of the social housing stock and to support community sustainability;
- ANCHO needs to cooperate with specialist housing providers of supported accommodation. This includes use of information technology to extend the time which elderly people can live in otherwise suitable existing housing;

- The shortfall of housing can be addressed to some extent by allocations but it can only be addressed fully through a development programme.

2. Aim

ANCHO will ensure that all allocations of properties meet legal requirements. The aim of the Policy is to meet the housing needs and, as far as possible, the aspirations of applicants and contribute to ensuring the best possible use of the social housing stock in North Ayrshire. The Policy also aims to meet Communities Scotland Performance Standards by improving social inclusion and creating a balanced community.

3. Objectives

The aim of the Policy will be achieved by:

- Establishing systems that allow housing need to be accurately assessed.
- Being fair, efficient and non-discriminatory in allocating tenancies.
- Establishing systems that maximise the choice and empowerment of applicants.
- Entering into a Nominations Arrangement with North Ayrshire Council.
- Establishing appropriate procedures for the administration of the policy.
- Creating a balanced community encompassing a range of household types, backgrounds, ages and employment status. This will reflect the wider demographic balance in North Ayrshire (See appendix 1).

4. Principles

The Policy is based on the following principles

- The waiting list, including transfers, will be open to all applicants aged 16 or over.
- There will be equality of priority for applicants' equivalent circumstances, regardless of tenure, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, gender, sexuality, disability, age, religion or other belief.
- It will be fair and accountable.
- There will be a clear audit trail as to why allocations are made.
- It will be easy to explain and understand.
- Applicants' information will be dealt with confidentially.

5. Legal Requirements

ANCHO is required by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to:

- Have rules that govern:
 - Admission to the housing list.

- The priority for allocation of dwellings.
- Transfer of tenants to other Landlords.
- Exchanges of houses.
- Circulate these to Communities Scotland and local authorities in whose area the organisation has properties to let.
- Have rules available for examination and on sale at a reasonable price.

The other legislation that affects the way in which we must operate to allocate vacancies includes:

- The Race Relations Act 1976.
- The Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection)(Scotland) Act 1981.
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- Human Right's Act 1998.
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Access to Personal Files Act 1987.
- The Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965.

6. Equal Opportunities

ANCHO will not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, creed, religion, ethnic or national origins, sexual orientation, or on the grounds of marital status or sex in allocating its houses. Applicants will be asked to provide details of their ethnic origin and any disability on the application form so that this can be monitored. Provision of the information is voluntary and at the applicant's discretion.

ANCHO is committed to meeting our equal opportunities obligations under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Information about the Allocations Policy will be made available in a range of formats, and translations can also be made available on request. ANCHO will also ensure that Equal Opportunities Performance Indicators are measured and reported to the Management Board. Equal opportunity objectives will also be an integral part of our Equal Opportunities Action Plan and Housing Services Action Plan.

7. Eligibility

ANCHO accepts applications from any persons, or person aged over 16 years of age, who are in housing need.

8. Choice and Information

ANCHO is committed to empowering applicants by giving applicants maximum choice in the allocations process. There is no limit to the number of areas that applicants can choose. Similarly, there is no limit to the number of offers of properties that an applicant can reject.

ANCHO is also committed to providing high quality information to allow applicants to make informed choices. Information will be provided in a range of plain language formats. Information regarding the Allocations Policy can also be made available in a range of formats including tape, large font and Braille.

9. Suspensions and Exclusions

In line with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 we are committed to open access to our waiting lists and we will not unreasonably suspend applications. Suspended applicants will not be eligible for an offer of accommodation from ANCHO. In the following limited cases applications will be suspended:

An applicant, or transfer applicant, owes rent arrears or another tenancy related debt (e.g. rechargeable repairs) that is equivalent of more than one month's rent and no repayment arrangement has been kept to for at least three months. Debts of more than five years will be disregarded.

An application will be suspended if an applicant has been evicted, or a Court Decree has been granted from a previous tenancy for anti-social behaviour within three years. Similarly, the applicant is or has been subject to an Anti-social behaviour order within the last three years.

ANCHO is committed to minimising suspensions and they will be reviewed bi-annually. All correspondence to applicants will detail what action can be taken to end the suspension particularly in regard to debt related suspensions. All suspended applicants will also have the right of appeal to the Director, and further recourse to our Complaint's Procedure.

In cases of applications suspended because of anti-social behaviour we will consider offering a tenancy with a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy provided the applicant is receiving tenancy support.

Applicants who are experiencing domestic abuse or harassment/racial harassment will not have their application suspended as a result of a debt. They will however be advised to contact their landlord to make an arrangement to repay the debt. In the case of applicants who owe money as a result of a Housing Benefit overpayment we will investigate the cause of the debt and will not unreasonably suspend the applicant. The applicant must demonstrate that he/she made a reasonable effort to prevent the overpayment of Housing Benefit arising.

10. Removal from the Waiting List

ANCHO will review our waiting lists at least annually to ensure information is accurate and up to date. Where an applicant fails to respond to the review letters his/her application will be removed from the appropriate waiting list.

Applicants who wish to have their name removed from the waiting list should request this in writing.

11. Complaints

Where an applicant is dissatisfied with the way this policy has been implemented, he/she will have the right to appeal. In the first instance, complaints should be made to the Director. Should an applicant wish to pursue the complaint further, our formal Complaints Policy should be followed.

12. Abuses by Applicants

An applicant who is offered a tenancy and who knowingly lies, gives false information or withholds relevant information will have the offer of the tenancy withdrawn. Where a tenancy is granted as a result of false or misleading information ANCHO reserves the right to take action to recover the tenancy.

13. Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

Schedule 7 of the Housing Association (Scotland) Act 2001 places restrictions on the allocation of tenancies, transfers and mutual exchanges to an employee, former employee, Management Board Member and former Board Members. Close relatives of any of the affected groups are also covered by the legislation. Allocations to an affected individual must meet the following criteria:

- It must be demonstrated that the allocation fully meets with our published allocation's criteria.
- The affected individual had no involvement in or influence over the process by which the allocation was granted.
- The Management Board or Sub-committee approve the granting of the tenancy and this is recorded in the minutes.
- Details of any let are entered into the appropriate Register of Interest that will be held in our office, where it is available for public inspection. The register includes the following information:
 - ***The name of the person involved;***
 - ***The relationship or connection to ANCHO;***
 - ***The address of the property concerned;***

- ***The date of the governing body meeting at which the decision to grant a tenancy was made.***

All applicants will be required to declare whether to the best of their knowledge they are related to a current or former Board/ Staff Member.

14. Nominations Arrangement

ANCHO wishes to work in partnership with the local authority and has a Nomination Arrangement with North Ayrshire Council. The arrangement allows for up to 50% of net lets to be made to applicants nominated by the Council. All nominations will be assessed in accordance with our Allocation's Policy to determine if a let can be made.

15. Tackling Homelessness

ANCHO is committed to tackling homelessness through our Allocations Policy. We have also established a Homeless Protocol to allow us to meet the statutory requirements of Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

16. Waiting Lists

A Housing List, including transfer applicants, is currently held for the North Ayrshire Area, according to the type and size of property required, and in order of priority as determined by the points system. The lists will be reviewed annually. Applicants indicating a change of circumstances will have their application form reassessed and will be advised of their new points' level. Applicants who do not return review forms within the advised time will have their application form removed from the housing and transfer list.

17. Reporting

Reports on all lets and number of applicants will be made to the Client Services Sub-Committee. Full analysis together with targets for the next year will be provided to the Client Services Sub-Committee Committee as part of the annual review of the Allocations Policy.

18. Lettings Plan

The Client Services Sub-Committee as part of its yearly review will set out a Lettings Plan. This will indicate the likely level of lets and how they are to be allocated across different housing lists. For example, the number of nominations from North Ayrshire Council, direct applicants and transfers.

19. Difficult To Let/Low Demand Properties

ANCHO historically has had a number of difficult to let properties. We are committed to a flexible approach in tackling difficult to let void properties. Where a property, in a difficult to let area, has been rejected three times by applicants, or has been void for more than 30 working days, staff will be allowed to offer the property to an applicant who is under-occupying the property or who has no housing need. Where a property is allocated on this basis it will be reported quarterly to the Client Services Sub-Committee.

20. Administration and Procedures

We are committed to processing applications as quickly as possible. Applications will be processed within 5 working days provided no additional information is required.

When applications are made, staff will advise the applicant in writing of their prospects for re-housing within our stock. The applicant will be made aware that this is only an indication of their prospects for re-housing.

We are committed to a clear audit trail to confirm that the Allocations Policy is achieving its objectives. Responsibility for implementing the policy is delegated by the Client Services Sub-committee to the Housing Services Manager. Offers of new tenancies require approval by two members of staff, including a senior member of staff. The Housing Services Manager will oversee this process and will be responsible for ensuring a clear audit trail. Board members are not involved in the Allocation's procedure, but will receive regular reports on the outcome of the policy.

All offers of tenancies will be made in writing. The applicant will be invited to view the property before signing a tenancy.

Applicants' requirements and circumstances will be checked prior to any offer of accommodation being made. If an applicant fails to respond to an offer of tenancy within three working days, the property may be re-offered to the next suitable applicant.

Where a property is being allocated and two applications have identical housing need points the application from the person who has been in housing need the longest will take priority.

21. HOUSE/FAMILY SIZES

The following applicants will qualify for the under noted houses sizes:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------|
| - | single applicants | 1 or 2 apartments |
| - | elderly/ couple, no children | 2 apartment |

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| - couples/single parents, 1 child | 3 apartments |
| - couples/single parents, 2 children under 10 yrs | 3 apartments |
| - couples/single parents, 2 children where one or both is over 10 years | 4 apartments |
| - couples/single parents, 3 children | 4 apartments |
| - couples/single parents, 4 children | 4 or 5 apartments |
| - any larger family | 5+ apartments |

22. AREAS OF CHOICE

We have established areas of choice available to applicants which reflect natural communities and boundaries within the area. The areas of choice established are shown at Appendix 2.

Applicants will be permitted to select any Area of Choice from the list provided. We will also allow applicants to pick individual streets to ensure maximum choice.

23. AMENDMENTS

Applicants must keep their application up to date by informing ANCHO of all changes in their circumstances immediately these occur.

Should they fail to do so, or should they falsely declare their circumstances, we may withdraw the offer of an allocation.

Changes of applicant address (other than the applicant having been re-housed by ANCHO) will be dealt with as new applications.

All other changes in circumstances will be dealt with as amendments to the existing application.

All applications will be subject to annual review in relation to the applicants continued need for re-housing, circumstances and choices.

24. National Mobility SCHEME and HOMESWAP

ANCHO participates in the national H.O.M.E.S. (to be known as H.E.M.S. from 2005) mobility scheme and publicises it. We are committed to supporting the scheme that allows people who are housed adequately but need to move for social, health or employment reasons.

As landlord with over 500 properties in management, we have an annual target of 4% of net lets to be made available to H.O.M.E.S. applicants as part of its Lettings Plan.

ANCHO also supports the HOMESWAP initiative administered by H.O.M.E.S. We will assist tenants wishing to participate in the national mutual exchange scheme. In line with this, we will not unreasonably withhold permission for a mutual exchange through the scheme.

25. Training

Prior to implementation of the Policy, training will be provided to all relevant staff.

26. Consultation

As part of the Policy review and implementation process, we will consult with tenants, housing applicants and key stakeholders.

27. Confidentiality

All information contained within applications will be treated in the strictest confidence and access will be restricted to relevant staff only. When the Board is required to discuss a case, a reference number will be allocated and identity of the applicant will not be revealed.

28. Review Period

To allow training, information and marketing issues to be adequately addressed, the Policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or in the light of changes in legislation.

Appendix 1

Points System

Lacking Amenities

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------|
| - No bathing facilities | 5 points |
| - No piped water supply | 5 points |
| - Water heating facilities | 5 points |
| - Inside w.c. | 5 points |
| - No kitchen | 5 points |

Property Condition

- Where an applicant's house is affected by rising and/or penetrating dampness -10 points

-Where major repairs are needed such as roof renewal or rewiring-10 points

Proof of water penetration will be required.

Overcrowding Points

The number of apartments needed by a household is calculated as follows:

- 1 bedroom for each couple (living as man and wife, including same sex couples)
- 1 bedroom for every other person aged 10 or over
- 1 bedroom for each pair of children under 10
- 1 bedroom for each remaining child under 10

-Families who are forced to share accommodation or to live apart will be assessed in terms of the family's circumstances and the accommodation which is currently occupied.

Where more than one person is residing in bed-sit accommodation they will be entitled to overcrowding points appropriate to their family size

Five points will be awarded per room that the applicant is over-crowded.

Under-occupancy

Five under-occupancy points are awarded to applicants for each room that is under-occupied by a householder. Points in this category will not be given to applicants who live care-off family and friends.

Sharing Amenities

Where an applicant is not the householder, but shares the use of amenities such as toilet, kitchen and living area -5 points will be awarded.

Tenure

- Imminently Homeless 40 points

Applicants who can demonstrate that they are in imminent danger of losing their own accommodation i.e. through ending of a short assured tenancy or short Scottish Secure Tenancy. Similarly, where an applicant is residing with a violent partner following the breakdown of a relationship.

-Insecurity of Tenure 20 points

Where an applicant has no legal right to stay indefinitely or it is impractical to remain in their accommodation.

Tied accommodation
 Temporary accommodation,
 Women's Aid accommodation
 Marital breakdown.
 Short Scottish Secure Tenancy or Short Assured Tenancy
 Living Care-off family and friends
 Living as a lodger

Living in a Caravan 10 points
 Where an applicant lives in a caravan all year round.

Medical Priority

Applications for medical points are assessed by an independent Community Medicine Specialist, and are on the basis of a self-assessment form completed by the applicant. The level of points awarded by the Community Medical Specialist will reflect the applicant's medical condition and the impact of current housing condition.

Grade 0- 0 Points
 Grade 1- 4 Points
 Grade 2- 8 Points
 Grade 3- 12 Points
 Grade 4- 16 Points
 Grade 5- 20 Points

Medical points may be awarded either to the applicant or to any individual who is part of his/her household. Where two members of the household are awarded medical points, only the highest priority points will be taken into consideration in calculating the overall number of points of the housing application.

Unsuitable Accommodation

One-off award of 10 points

Applicants who reside in accommodation that is unsuitable for their needs:

- Families in multi-storey accommodation with children under 10 years. Families with children under 10 years in maisonette or tenement accommodation without gardens or adjacent play facilities.

Support

Where support is required from or offered to an individual on medical grounds or in order to provide care in the community support 15 points

Documentary evidence will normally be required.

Special Cases

Special Case points will be awarded only in extreme cases where an applicant requires urgent re-housing. Although physically their current property may be suitable, there may be other reasons why the applicant requires to be re-housed urgently.

80 points

An example, where Social Points can be awarded is where an applicant requires re-housing following an incident of sexual abuse against them or a family member, and the perpetrator continues to live in the area. In these cases, documentary evidence such as Police Reports or Social Work reports will normally be required. Similarly, cases where there is extreme harassment, racial harassment and domestic abuse that is life threatening.

Cases where applicants are awarded Special Case Status will be reported to the Client Services Sub-committee. This will allow the Board to monitor how often this is used, and will potentially highlight any gaps/shortcomings in the Allocations Policy.

Harassment/ Abuse

The Association recognises that people have a right to a life free from violence and abuse. The Association is committed to dealing sympathetically with harassment including any form of racial harassment or domestic abuse.

A.N.C.H.O. accepts that harassment can take many forms including verbal and physical harassment from family members and neighbours. Harassment and abuse can also take the form of harassment based on race, religion, sexuality, mental health issues, learning and physical disability. Where an applicant or family member has suffered harassment the application will be awarded 40 points. Life threatening harassment will be dealt with under the Special Case status of the policy.

Access To Children

Where an applicant requires a property larger than his/her needs due to access arrangements to his/her children, documentary proof will be required. This will be either a copy of a Custody/Court Order, lawyer's letter, letter from former spouse/partner confirming the arrangement..

Unborn Children

Where an applicant is expecting a child, and the birth of the child will result in overcrowding, the appropriate points will be awarded when the application is submitted or revised. This will require confirmation by a doctor or hospital consultant.

Moving Nearer Employment

A one-off award of 15 points for applicants who live more than 15 miles from their place of work.

APPENDIX 1			
	North Ayrshire	Scotland	
Total Resident Population	135,817	5,062,011	
% Males	47.3	48.05	
% Females	52.7	51.95	
Age	North Ayrshire	Scotland	ANCHO
% 0-4 years	5.38%	5.47%	7%
% 5-15 years	14.66%	13.73%	23%
% 16-29 years	15.89%	17.46%	16%
% 30-44	22.18%	22.97%	19%
%44-59	20.20%	19.29%	16%
% 60-74	14.67%	13.98%	9%
%75 and over	7.02%	7.09%	10%
	North Ayrshire Council	Scotland	
Household Type			
One Person Household	15.99%	17.90%	
Lone Parent Household	12.29%	10.50%	
Married or Cohabiting Couple with Dependent Children	19.49%	19.50%	
Married or Cohabiting Couple with no Dependent Children	24.09%	23.50%	
Pensioner Household	24.18%	23.50%	
Other	3.95%	5.20%	
	ANCHO		
% All adult	4%		
% One person Household	18%		
% One person Household- pensioner	29%		
% Single parent	25%		

% Couple with children		13%		
% Couple with non-dependents		3%		
% Couple no children		7%		
Ethnic Origin	North Ayrshire		ANCHO	
White Scottish	92.50%		96.20%	
Other White British	5.20%		2%	
White Irish	0.80%		1%	
Other White	0.90%		0.60%	
Indian	0.20%		0%	
Pakastani	0.10%		0%	
Bangladeshi	0%		0%	
Other South Asian	0%		0%	
Chinese	0.20%		0%	
Caribbean	0%		0%	
African	0%		0%	
Black Scottish or other black	0%		0%	
Any Mixed Background	0.10%		0.20%	
Other Ethnic Group	0.10%		0%	
Economically Active	Scotland		North Ayrshire Council	
Self Employed	6.60%		5.86%	
Full Time Student	3.03%		2.54%	
Unemployed	3.97%		5.75%	
Part Time	11.12%		10.88%	
Full Time	40.25%		36.96%	
Economically Inactive	Scotland		North Ayrshire Council	
Looking after home/family	5.51%		6.44%	
Retired	13.89%		15.25%	
Student	4.28%		3.66%	
permanently sick/disabled	7.44%		8.51%	
The figures for North Ayrshire Council and Scotland are from the 2001 Census.				
The ANCHO figures are taken from the 2002 Tenant Satisfaction Survey.				

APPENDIX 2

AREAS OF CHOICE

- Irvine East
- Irvine North
- Vineburgh
- Woodlands
- Castlepark
- Dreghorn
- Springside
- Kilwinning Town Centre
- Kilwinning Corsehill
- Kilwinning Woodwynd