

## Accessible Housing Allocations Policy

The Accessible Housing Allocation Policy has been developed with input from Ceredigion County Council its Partner RSLs and the wider community. It sets out the allocation policy that runs in tandem with the Accessible Housing Register. For the purposes of clarity an Accessible Housing Register (AHR) is a mechanism for matching people in need of an accessible home, with the available accessible housing in their area of choice. This allocations policy sets out who is eligible for accessible housing and how their eligibility and needs are assessed. The AHR includes the housing stock.

The Accessible Housing Allocations Policy (AHAP) has been drafted in accordance with International, National and Local Strategic aims and objectives, and legislation:

### The Equalities Act 2010

The Equalities Act 2010 supplies legislation to ensure no person who identifies with a Protected Characteristic faces discrimination. It makes clear the role of reasonable adjustments in fulfilling the Act and additionally the incumbent Public Sector Duties to ensure Public Bodies:

- Prevent discrimination
- Promote Equality of Opportunity
- Foster Good Relations

### UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities sets out the fundamental rights owed to disabled people, most notably for this policy in *Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community*

‘Parties to this Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that’:

- a. Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;
- b. Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;

c. Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.

## Social Model of Disability

The Accessible Housing Allocations Policy has been drafted in line with the social model of disability. It is based on the premise that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. The policy has been developed as a tool to help remove barriers – most notably housing barriers - that restrict life choices for disabled people. The underlying goal is to ensure that Social Housing can support disabled people to be independent and equal in society, and ensure that all members regardless of the community, regardless of impairment or difference, can exercise equal access, choice and control over their housing options.

## Framework for Action on Independent Living

The Welsh Government's framework for Action on Independent Living has an overarching Outcome to achieve *an enabling society in which disabled children and adults enjoy the right to independent living and social inclusion.*

The Accessible Housing Allocations Policy aims to make positive steps in realising the objective by inputting into some of the following goals:

1. Having access to good quality and accessible information and advice.
2. Improved access to independent advocacy services.
3. Improved access to adapted and accessible housing.
4. Having more control over their lives by being able to make choices in the care and support they receive
5. Having access to technology that supports independent living.
6. Better access to public transport.
7. Improved access to buildings, streets and public places.
8. Increased employment rates for disabled people.
9. An increase in the number of disabled people having access to a Centre for Independent Living<sup>6</sup> in Wales.

## Ceredigion for All; Single Integrated Plan 2013 -17

The Policy has been formulated to achieve the priority outcomes articulated in the Single Integrated Plan focusing on *Independent Living* namely:

- People in Ceredigion live in safe and affordable homes and communities
- People in Ceredigion are able to live fulfilled lives.

## Housing for All: A Local Housing Strategy for Ceredigion

Challenge D – *To have county-wide services and housing stock that enables people to maintain their independence in an affordable and sustainable way. Taking into account the changing demography of the County.*

- Provide sustainable housing options for older people through corporate working
- Establish a corporate approach to addressing housing suitability for all client groups
- That new housing supply meets the identified needs of the County.

## Overarching Allocation Policy Objectives

Whilst the policy is aimed at catering in the most useful efficient and person-centred way for people who require accessible and/or adapted housing, it aligns with the high level aims of Ceredigion's Common Allocation Policy, namely:

- To strengthen the role that social housing has in community sustainment, especially in a rural county such as Ceredigion.
- To work to deliver housing to people most in need, whose housing options cannot be met outside of the Social Housing sector
- To streamline the Housing register application process for customers and partner agencies, with a view to managing peoples' expectations of, and aspirations towards Social Housing.

### 1. Strengthening Communities

The Accessible Housing Allocations Policy seeks to strengthen communities through a number of policy statements:

- Recognise an applicant's local connection with Ceredigion or the adjacent community councils in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Powys, thus ensuring that the housing resources in Ceredigion are targeted at people from the County
- Seek to maintain and strengthen applicants' independence and resilience by providing a mechanism for acknowledging the importance of maintaining a local connection to a specific locale within the County.
- Promote the equality of opportunity for disabled people to secure employment by recognising a firm offer of employment as a local connection criterion.
- Recognise the Health, Social Care and Support requirements necessary for disabled people to live an independent and socially inclusive life, through the identification of community and service links.

### 2. Delivering on Housing Need

The Accessible Housing Allocation Policy builds upon the legislative framework imposed by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the 'reasonable preference' categories therein. In addition the policy aims to ensure poor standards of housing

are not the driver to apply for Social Housing, and that the system allows for a proactive approach to raising housing standards in Ceredigion rather than expecting the Social housing Sector to be the only solution.

- Recognise applicants with the greatest need through the use of one or multiple 'reasonable preference' categories.
- Ensure that poor housing standards in the private sector are addressed through the application process, and alleviate the demand for Social Housing in general.
- Enable applicants to downsize into appropriate sized housing, and thus mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform.
- Actively assist the Social housing stock in the County to meet the needs of the wider population by providing an avenue for social tenants to secure suitable adapted and supported accommodation whilst freeing up larger accessible housing units they currently occupy to address other need.

### 3. Managing Expectations

An integral part the Accessible Housing Allocations Policy aims to provide applicants with a clearer understanding of the likelihood and timescale of their obtaining a social rented adapted/accessible house and offer a fairer and simpler method of prioritising applicants. This policy underpins the wider remit of being clear on the standards expected of applicants, both in prior behaviour and intent. The proposed policy will:

- Use a banding system, rather than points, to offer a clear message to applicants as to their position on the list, and reduce the occurrence of 'point chasing'.
- Introduce an element of 'time-waiting' to ensure a fairer system of allocation based on like for like need.
- Offer a clear message about the availability of adapted and accessible housing in the specific areas in the County, to aid applicants make informed decisions about their choices and aid the development of additional housing based on credible market data.
- Take into account persistent anti-social behaviour that would be serious enough to preclude an applicant or a member

### Integrating Allocation Policies

The Accessible Housing Allocations Policy has due regard to the specific needs of a section of our community. It is acknowledged that this is one option not the only option that should be made available to disabled people, and as such applicants are able to apply for inclusion on one or more registers in accordance with their specific eligibility criteria. The AHAP is one of four specific policies and allocation policies namely the Common Allocation Policy, the Affordable Housing Policy, and the Older Persons Allocation Policy

## Housing Stock and Area of Choice

In recognition of the greater need to acknowledge the health, social and support needs of disabled people, and to promote the equality of opportunity to enjoy a socially inclusive independent life, applicants shall be able to choose areas of choice based on support needs, health and social care needs, and employment needs. It is possible that applicants will have a limited catchment area that suits their requirements or that their areas of more numerous than the three choice maximum stipulated under the Common Allocations Policy. As such applicants under the AHAP can apply for a maximum of 10 areas. Applicants with a limited options due to their impairment, shall be granted an additional six months 'value' for their banding.

## Eligibility Criteria

- The policy enables people – individuals and families - who require adapted and/or accessible housing, to be identified and their specific accessibility needs to be understood, categorized (for the purposes of the Accessible Housing Register) and catered for. The policy covers applicants who have a physical impairment that requires adapted housing, and housing that is accessible to applicants with other mobility issues. This includes sensory impairment such as sight loss, and hearing loss. The allocations policy does not include learning Disabilities or mental health disabilities, However applicants with multiple disabilities, including physical impairments are eligible for inclusion.
- The AHAP shall cater for children and young people through a whole household approach to housing need. The eligibility criterion states that one or more people in the household must meet the physical or mobility requirement.
- Applicants will have their needs and requirement assessed in line with the Common Allocation Policy banding procedure. This will take into account their position in regards to the 'reasonable preference' categories. The following banding shall be applied:
  - Applicants in Bands A – C are in the position to be considered in the first instance, for accessible and/or adapted housing (.This is a result of them satisfying one or more reasonable preference categories, or fulfilling the criteria for an agreed locally agreed target group).
  - Applicants in Band D – E are eligible for other forms of Affordable Housing options, as well as Accessible Housing, but do not qualify under a reasonable preference category. As such applicants will be made aware of the additional options available. This does not preclude applicants from accessible and/or adapted housing, but acknowledges that there is greater need.
  - Applicants who are in the Reduced Preference band (F) are entitled to an annual review of their circumstances, to enable any changes in

circumstance (i.e. local connection criteria, and arrears account) to be adjusted as per the policy.

- Applicants who have rent arrears involving a partner Landlord shall rely on their confirmation that repayment terms have been met consistently within the previous 12 months. The terms of repayment are at the discretion of each Registered Social Landlord.
  
- Part of the wider allocation procedure is the use of 'Housing Impact Assessment forms' that detail the Health, Social Care and Support needs of all applicants and is the basis for assessment for 'reasonable preference' and banding decisions in the first instance, and as a system to understand the adaption and accessibility needs of the applicant.
  
- Applicants will be assessed on the following criteria, mirroring the categorisation of the stock used in the Accessible Housing register:
  - Full Wheelchair - Applicants require a fully adapted property
  - Part wheelchair - applicants require a property that meets some wheelchair accessibility standards
  - Lifetime homes - Applicants require a property that meet the Lifetime Homes standards
  - Step free - Applicants require a property that does not have any steps into, or inside the home
  - Max three steps – Applicants require a property with a maximum of three steps into, or inside the home.
  - Applicants require a property with a specific adaptation (see list of possible adaptations)
  
- Applicants will receive both a banding decision, and an accessible/ adapted housing criteria decision (as above).
  
- Applications received under the AHAP will be verified by an Occupational Therapist to confirm all applications are eligible under the policy, and to ensure all applicants receive advice and assistance at an early stage.