

Partnership Agreement



Our Partnership

This partnership agreement sets out the commitment of partner organisations – Fyne Homes, West Highland Housing Association, Dunbritton Housing Association, Argyll Community Housing Association and Argyll and Bute Council - to jointly develop a Common Housing Register for Argyll and Bute.

We subscribe to the Scottish Executive's definition of a Common Housing Register as:

A group of landlords devising a single application form by which anyone seeking housing in their area can register their need and specify their housing preference. Participating landlords then prioritise and select applicants from the single pool of applicants.

The central components of a Common Housing Register are:

- Shared housing information and advice available to applicants
- A single access route available to applicants
- A common database of all applicants seeking housing

Our Vision

Our vision is to develop a Common Housing Register which will result in the following benefits:

- **benefits for applicants** – the central aim of the Argyll and Bute CHR is to simplify and maximise access to housing for applicants, and develop a user centred approach to the application process.
- **joint working arrangements** – we aim to develop positive working relationships through working in partnership to develop the Common Housing Register.
- **strategic planning** – through a central database of applicants, and joint working arrangements, we believe that the development of a CHR will facilitate effective planning and enable us to meet housing need more effectively in the Argyll and Bute area.

Our Goals

This partnership has been established with a number of key goals to take forward the development of a Common Housing Register:

- to work together, and with other stakeholders, to develop co-ordinated housing information and advice provision in Argyll and Bute
- to develop a joint application form which enables applicants to apply to all partners using one form
- to harmonise application and allocation procedures to provide applicants with a simpler route to access social rented housing
- to establish systems of data management which enable the above objectives to be achieved
- to endeavour to establish an operational Common Housing Register by August 2006

Our Principles

Following a workshop with all partners, we have developed a number of principles upon which the development of the Argyll and Bute Common Housing Register will be based:

- **simplicity** – we aim to deliver a Common Housing Register which achieves our goals in a simple and straightforward manner, and has at its core the central aim of simplicity for applicants
- **service improvement** – we aim to ensure that the CHR improves the quality and scope of service we are able to offer to applicants and tenants
- **partnership working** – we aim to develop the CHR through effective joint working arrangements, with each partner respected as an equal participant
- **equal opportunities** – we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all clients and potential clients, and will develop the CHR in a way which effectively meets the needs of all client groups, regardless of age, sexual orientation, religion, gender, ethnic origin, disability or any other characteristic
- **involvement** – we will ensure that applicants and tenants are involved throughout the process of developing our CHR, to ensure that the service is shaped to the needs of our service users

Our Common Housing Register Model

Following our initial discussions, we are committed to developing a Common Housing Register which follows the model outlined below:

- **Housing Information and Advice:**
 - we will use the Common Housing Register structures as a basis for strengthening existing housing information and advice arrangements with a view to providing a holistic service to households seeking access to affordable housing in Argyll and Bute
 - we will link with other organisations to develop a multi-agency approach which enables individuals to obtain housing information and advice from a wide range of sources
- **Gathering Applicant Data:**
 - we will work together to develop a comprehensive application form that is customer focused for use by all landlords
 - we will work together to develop a single framework enabling all supplementary information to be gathered by any landlord and shared between partners
- **Data Management and Administration:**
 - we are committed to sharing administration duties within the Common Housing Register
 - we will work together to harmonise policy and procedures to ensure the process of application and allocation is simple and streamlined for applicants
 - we are committed to implementing an ICT solution which enables us to effectively meet the goals of the Common Housing Register

Achieving Our Vision

To ensure that our vision is achieved, we are committed to supporting the development of a CHR through:

- participating in partnership meetings and working group meetings to discuss the development of the CHR
- providing relevant information required for the development of the CHR
- jointly developing and taking forward an action plan for the establishment of the CHR

In order to take forward our vision, a number of decisions will require to be taken at partnership meetings and working groups. At all times we will attempt to discuss options in order that a reasonable consensus can be achieved and partners are unanimous in their decisions. We recognise that this will involve a process of negotiation and compromise, and will approach all decisions from the basis of *aiming*

to improve the situation of those seeking housing and requiring housing information and advice.

Making Decisions

Decisions regarding the development of our CHR will all be made at Steering Group or Working Group meetings. The Steering Group will comprise of representatives from each of the partner organisations – up to a maximum of four representatives per organisation. Each of the CHR partners commits to always having at least one representative in attendance at Steering Group meetings.

At key stages throughout the process we will open up attendance at the Steering Group to include Committee Members, in order to keep Committees involved in the process.

When decisions require to be taken at Steering Group meetings, we will aim to make decisions on a consensual basis. However, we recognise that there will be occasions where views differ and a decision will require to be made on the basis of a vote. In these circumstances, each **partner** present will have one vote. On the rare occasion where partners are unable to send any representative, they will be allowed to inform the facilitator of the meeting (CHR Co-ordinator/ lead partner) of their position on issues, and their vote lodged in this way. This cannot be done more than once a year, and thereafter partners not in attendance will forfeit their right to vote.

Where a vote is tied, the vote of all five partners will be sought in order to resolve the issue.

The Steering Group may delegate responsibility for some decisions to ‘Working Groups’ focussed on particular issues. Decisions at Working Groups will be taken on the same basis as Steering Group decisions. When delegating responsibility, the Steering Group will produce a written statement of delegated authority, which states the matters for which the Working Group will have responsibility, and the Steering Group’s commitment to abide by Working Group decisions.

Our Commitment

We commit to working together to develop a Common Housing Register in Argyll and Bute by May 2006. This CHR will involve co-ordinated, holistic housing information and advice provision; a common database of applicants and a common form for gathering applicant data. The CHR will be developed through an equal partnership between all participating organisations.

Fyne Homes _____

Argyll Community Housing Association _____

Dunbritton Housing Association _____

West Highland Housing Association _____

Argyll and Bute Council _____