

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE ÁTHA CLIATH THEAS

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY FOR RIGHTSIZING AND ALLOCATION OF
AGE FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION

For consideration at the meeting of South Dublin County
Council on 14th December 2020

Contents

Policy for Rightsizing and Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation 3

1. Context..... 3
2. County Age Friendly Strategy..... 3
3. Age Friendly Housing Supply..... 4
4. Rightsizing, Research, Underoccupancy and Housing Demand..... 4
5. Eligibility for Age Friendly Accommodation..... 5
6. Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation 5
7. Community List 6
8. Community List: Discount on Purchase / Financial Contribution 7
9. Promotion of Rightsizing and Incentives 8

Appendix 1: Relevant Sections of Current Allocations Scheme..... 9

- Amendment 1: Age of Priority for Older Persons 9
- Amendment 2: Specific Section on Older Persons 9
- Amendment 3: Section on Financial Contribution Scheme 10

DRAFT

Policy for Rightsizing and Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation

1. Context

Between 2011 and 2016, the population of South Dublin County grew by more than 13,500 people to 278,749 (Censuses 2016, CSO). This population growth represented a 5.1% increase which was the 8th highest increase of all local authority areas in the country. According to the Census reports, 11% of South Dublin County's residents are 65 years old or older representing one of the largest increases (34.1%) in this cohort nationally. There were 92,363 homes recorded in the County in the 2016 census, of which approximately 9,500 were the Council's social housing stock. Based on 2016 Census data, Tallaght and Clondalkin in particular have potential for substantial projected increases in the number of older persons, although it is projected that all parts of the County will see increases, particularly for those aged 75 and over.

People in Ireland are living longer and healthier lives due to improvements in healthcare and lifestyles. Life Expectancy at 65 is rising faster in Ireland than anywhere else in the EU. By 2041, one in every four people in Ireland will be over the age of 65 with almost 8% of people aged 80 or more. This presents particular challenges including providing suitable age friendly accommodation in local communities and supporting older people who wish to remain in their homes for as long as possible and remain active in their communities. Meeting this challenge is underpinned by Ireland's approach to the WHO Age Friendly Cities Initiative through Age Friendly Ireland and Local Authorities. This has propelled a greater awareness and appreciation of the needs of older people through age friendly policies and strategies.

2. County Age Friendly Strategy

The Council's recently adopted County Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2024 recognises the need to provide appropriate housing options to meet the needs of our ageing population. We must be fully aware of the needs of older people and best practice in the location, design, management and supports in our older persons' housing developments, allowing older people to live in mixed demographic communities interacting with others of different ages. As part of the implementation of the strategy, the Council is committed to:

- Delivering a range of older persons housing developments across the County utilising the expertise of our Age Friendly Housing Technical Specialist along with best practice in design, location and supports to best meet the needs of older person rightsizing owners and tenants, and housing applicants.
- Completing a rightsizing research study with Age Friendly Ireland and updating our Rightsizing policy through the Housing SPC to maximise the potential to provide accommodation for older people in integrated, demographically mixed settings.
- Developing the concept of a "Wellness Village" with strategic healthcare, academic and housing partners, as a model for future older persons supported accommodation.

- Continuing to provide housing adaptation grants and advise/assist older people on making their homes safe, energy efficient and how good design can make a difference when adapting homes to address age related frailties.

3. Age Friendly Housing Supply

Currently, the Council has 365 homes designated for older persons with a further planned supply of more than 200 and several additional sites undergoing feasibility studies and concept design.

Our planned and prospective supply of age friendly housing is strategically designed to be age appropriate to support independent living for longer as well as being within easy reach transport, healthcare, retail, and other key services and supports for older persons within existing communities. This is critical when considering the prospective tenants' needs and the attractiveness of such accommodation. This supply will allow older people in the County to explore options for living independently complemented supports for ageing in place including housing adaptation grants.

4. Rightsizing, Research, Underoccupancy and Housing Demand

Rightsizing recognises that the needs of the older persons are diverse and that few older people reside in a property that supports ageing in place. It should provide the opportunity for better quality of life for older persons by offering them the access to homes that will meet their evolving needs their needs now and into the future.

The Council participated with Age Friendly Ireland in Research on Rightsizing for Housing Options for Our Ageing Population to address a knowledge gap on the perceptions and attitudes of older people to right-sizing. Following a process of consultation and using case studies, key recommendations of the research included: promotion of a greater awareness of rightsizing options; providing rightsizing incentives including support towards relocation costs, having dedicated support staff in this area as well as facilitating rightsizing moves between local authorities.

In addition to this research, the Council has undertaken an occupancy study of our social housing tenancies and stock that has highlighted the significant potential for rightsizing amongst our tenants. Analysis showed that approximately 12% of current tenancies are comprised solely of households of one or two persons, all aged 55 or older, and with no other declared occupants, living in three or four-bedroom homes. This breaks down into approximately 700 homes with single occupancy by an older person and almost 500 additional homes occupied by two older persons. This data is being matched to proximity to services to inform potential future locations for additional age friendly housing. It will also inform the promotion of rightsizing opportunities given the very limited number of applications for housing transfers on rightsizing grounds in the County received to date.

There is significant demand for social housing in South Dublin with almost 7,000 households on our housing list, of which almost 700 are households solely comprising one or two persons

aged 55 or over who would be eligible for age friendly housing. Significantly, more than 1,250 other households require three or four-bedroom homes almost matching the currently under occupied portion of existing housing stock. Successful operation of our rightsizing policy would have the potential dual benefit of providing age-appropriate accommodation to current tenants in underoccupancy while also enabling more efficient use of existing public and private housing stock in the County by freeing up larger properties for larger households.

5. Eligibility for Age Friendly Accommodation

The categories of applicant eligible for Council owned or supported designated age friendly/older persons' accommodation, **all of whom must be aged 55 or older**, are:

- One or two adult person households, with no dependent children, assessed as having a housing need and included on the Council's housing list in accordance with the Council's Allocations Scheme, including any person with priority for allocation on homeless or medical grounds.
- Current tenants of a Council home or an Approved Housing Body home, with no other persons living in their current property and who have been included on the Council's transfer list on rightsizing grounds, i.e., wishing to move to accommodation that more appropriately meets their housing need
- Current owners of a private home, who have been included on the Council's Community List

An application for Age Friendly Accommodation whether through the housing, transfer (rightsizing) or community lists may be cancelled:

- If it is found to be based on false, withheld, invalid or otherwise incorrect information.
- on estate management grounds and/or if the applicant(s) have a prior record of anti-social behaviour (all applicants will be subject to relevant Garda and/or estate management checks and may have their application deferred or refused based on same)
- if the tenancy record is not satisfactory in relation to rent account, property condition etc.
- if an applicant(s) for the Community List is the owner of multiple properties

6. Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation

The Council's Allocations Scheme currently defines Older Persons as being 65 or older and would not allow any priority for applicants approved for the Community List (previously called the Financial Contribution Scheme). Upon adopting this draft Policy, appropriate amendments to the Allocations Scheme, as outlined in appendix 1, will be approved.

Allocations for Age Friendly Housing will be based on the following:

- Eligible applicants for age friendly housing will be prioritised on a Time on List Basis. The relevant date for this basis will be the date upon which an approved application is included on the relevant list.
- Up to 10% of homes in new age friendly housing developments will, at first allocation, be made available to applicants from the Community List (this will increase to up to 50% of homes for community led housing age friendly housing developments)¹
- All other homes in new age friendly housing developments will be used to meet new social housing demand and rightsizing transfer applications.
- Casual vacancies in age friendly accommodation will generally be made available in the same ratios as outlined above.
- Rightsizing applications from applicants with local connections to the area where age friendly accommodation is located will be prioritised for at least 75% of rightsizing allocations where possible
- Rightsizing/transfer applications will be prioritised from older persons in homes that are wheelchair accessible and/or specially adapted for medical purposes where this home is no longer required to meet the needs of the household currently residing there.
- A maximum of 25% of allocations in age friendly housing developments should be provided for persons aged 55 and over, but under 65 years old, until the end of 2022 when it will be subject to further review.

Nothing in this policy shall prevent the Chief Executive from approving an allocation in exceptional circumstances.

7. Community List

Recognising the potential need for age friendly housing amongst older persons that own private homes within a community, applications from older persons in their privately owned accommodation who wish to move to Council owned or supported designated age friendly accommodation will be considered for inclusion on a Community List subject to the following:

- The applicant(s) must be resident in South Dublin County, or demonstrate a local connection, and be eligible for older person's accommodation
- The applicant agrees to the Council purchasing their property directly or, at the sole discretion of the Council, provides a financial contribution in lieu, from the net proceeds of the private sale of the property.
- The relevant property for sale, if being acquired by the Council, must be: located in South Dublin County, suitable to meet existing housing need and will be subject to

¹ For more information on community-led housing please see: <https://urbact.eu/community-led-housing-key-ingredient>. H3 Objective 3 in the current County Development Plan 2016-2022 supports community led housing developments for older people in established areas on lands designated with Zoning Objective "OS" (To preserve and provide for open space and recreational amenities), where the quality and quantum of remaining public open space is deemed to be adequate and the amenities of the area are preserved.

acquisition limits as determined by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

- At certain times within the Council’s sole discretion, the Council may refuse to accept further Community List applications including where current demand exceeds by 100% or more the potential supply scheduled to become available within the next 12 months.
- Applicants will be included on the Community List upon the date of completion of a formal written agreement for:
 - the Council to purchase their property
 - or
 - the applicant to provide a financial contribution to the Council from the net proceeds of the private sale of their property.
- Applicant(s) shall only be eligible for the allocation of one age friendly home and may be required to complete a pre-tenancy course before any allocation.
- Refusal of two offers of accommodation will result in cancellation of an application.
- Applicants will be required to become tenants of South Dublin County Council (or an Approved Housing Body) upon allocation of an age friendly home and will be required to sign a tenancy agreement and pay differential rent accordingly.

Any persons wishing to apply for inclusion on the Community List are strongly advised to get independent financial and legal advice to fully understand the terms and conditions involved.

8. Community List: Discount on Purchase / Financial Contribution

The relevant discount on purchase to the Council or financial contribution to the Council for inclusion on the Community List under this policy is as follows:

Age Category	Council Discount on Purchase	Financial Contribution to the Council on Sale
55-64 years	40% discount on the market value	1/2 of net proceeds of sale
65-69 years		1/3 of net proceeds of sale
70-79 years	30% discount on the market value	1/4 of net proceeds of sale
80 year and over		1/5 of net proceeds of sale

A joint application, where the applicants’ ages fall into two different categories, will have the % discount or financial contribution calculated pro-rata accordingly.

Net proceeds shall exclude the discharge of any bona fide mortgage or charge on the property, legal fees incurred and/or other expenses solely related to the sale of the property.

The appropriate financial contribution must be paid, or a legally binding agreement must be in place to pay the contribution, in advance of an applicant moving into their new home.

9. Promotion of Rightsizing and Incentives

It is recognised that the decision to move home is a significant one, especially due to emotional attachments and when deciding to move to older persons' specific accommodation that may be smaller in size than previous accommodation. This means that enhanced awareness of the benefits of rightsizing is key to the success of this policy along with guided assistance and support throughout the process of rightsizing.

We will achieve this through a range of measures including:

- Appointing Age Friendly Housing Officer(s) to promote rightsizing opportunities and support potential tenants throughout the application and moving process.
- Maximise promotion of voluntary rightsizing opportunities to existing tenants
- Promotion of the terms of access to the Community List
- Ensure potential tenants are provisionally allocated to new developments at any early stage to accommodate consultation and input into design
- Hold open days, featuring testimonials from current tenants, to showcase age friendly housing to prospective tenants.
- Facilitate and integrate supports and care opportunities in new developments
- Supports for decluttering, belongings transfer/removal, transfer of utilities/services and small adaptation works for new tenants.
- Provide additional bedroom space to facilitate medical or other supports for tenants where necessary
- Facilitate debt management solutions where rent arrears are a barrier to rightsizing

Appendix 1: Relevant Sections of Current Allocations Scheme

As referenced above, some sections of the current Allocations Scheme will require amendment to implement the aspects of this draft Policy for Rightsizing and Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation.

- **Amendment 1: Age of Priority for Older Persons**

Current text in Allocations Scheme:

“Priority

The Council may set aside for persons of such category or categories as the authority may decide, a proportion of the dwellings becoming available to the authority for allocation and priority may be afforded to the specified categories in the allocation of these dwellings.

In certain circumstances, THE ORDER OF PRIORITY UNDER THIS ALLOCATION SCHEME MAY BE DISREGARDED IN RESPECT OF applicants that satisfy the following criteria subject to the availability of suitable accommodation at the time:

- Households living in dangerous premises on whom a requisition under Section 3 (9) of the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1964 has been served.
- Displacement (resulting from acts of the Local Authority).
- Households rendered homeless through no fault of their own or evicted through no fault of their own on foot of a Court order, who are regarded by the housing authority as homeless the meaning of section 2 of the Housing Act 1988.
- Exceptional /compassionate grounds.
- Medical grounds
- **Persons aged 65 or over in respect of Older Persons accommodation.**

Such applicants may be given an allocation of available accommodation based on time on the list and subject to the availability of suitable accommodation at the time.”

Proposed amendment:

The highlighted text above to be replaced with:

- Persons aged 55 or over in respect of older persons’ accommodation (in accordance with the Policy for Rightsizing and Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation).

- **Amendment 2: Specific Section on Older Persons**

Current text in Allocations Scheme:

“Older persons who are Council tenants may apply to downsize larger homes to more suitable accommodation. Tenants can apply to be included on a list to be considered for smaller or properties designated as an Older Persons Dwelling.

Approved social housing applicants who are 65 or over are not eligible to apply through CBL but are considered for accommodation designated as an Older Persons Dwelling as it comes available. However, an applicant can apply for inclusion on CBL when they reach 65 years of age. Each application will be considered.”

Proposed Amendment:

The section above to be replaced with:

“Existing Council tenants, aged 55 or older, may apply for a move to specific older persons’ accommodation in accordance with the terms of the Policy for Rightsizing and Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation.

Approved social housing applicants, aged 55 or over, will be considered for specific older persons’ housing accommodation in accordance with the terms of the Policy for Rightsizing and Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation. However, such applicants can also apply for inclusion on Choice Based Letting for applications for other accommodation where appropriate.

Approved applicants under the Community List, aged 55 or over, will be considered for specific older persons’ housing accommodation in accordance with the terms of the Policy for Rightsizing and Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation.”

- **Amendment 3: Section on Financial Contribution Scheme**

Current text in Allocations Scheme:

The Council will operate a Financial Contribution Scheme where Older Persons, who are owners of private dwellings and who find their existing dwelling too large for their needs, may apply for accommodation in designated Older Persons Dwellings subject to the payment of a financial contribution scheme as follows:

Applicant’s Age	Financial Contribution
60-64 years (on medical grounds only)	1/2 of net proceeds of sale
65-69 years	1/3 of net proceeds of sale
70-79 years	1/4 of net proceeds of sale
80 years and over	1/5 of net proceeds of sale

Applicants under this section will not be prioritised ahead of Older Persons on the Housing or Transfer Lists but will be included on the list from the date of approval. Applicants under this section must offer their existing dwelling to the Council for purchase in the first instance.

Proposed Amendment:

The section above to be replaced with:

“The Council will operate a Community List for access to older persons’ accommodation by such persons currently in ownership of private accommodation in accordance with the Policy for Rightsizing and Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation.”