

CORK CITY COUNCIL

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION
PROGRAMME

2009 TO 2013

**HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
DIRECTORATE**

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 In 1998 the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act was enacted. The Act was designed to support a legislative framework to facilitate the Government's commitment to Travellers as documented in An Action Programme for the Millennium and Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness. Under the terms of this Act, Cork City Council (then Cork Corporation) was required to prepare a five-year Traveller Accommodation Programme. This Programme covered the period 1st January 2000 to 31st December 2004. It was prepared for the Local Traveller Accommodation Committee and approved by Council on 14th January 2000. A second programme was prepared and approved for the period 2005 to 2008.

1.1.2 Under the terms of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 it is required that local authorities take reasonable steps to secure the implementation of these programmes for their functional areas. In addition the Act stipulates that these programmes must be subject to periodic review.

1.1.3 To assist with the preparation and implementation of these programmes the Act provides for a notification and consultation process. This process operates in the first instance at the public level. It offers an opportunity to participate in programme formulation and provides a forum for commenting on draft programmes. The second level at which the process is facilitated is at that of City Council level. At this level the Act provides for the establishment of local consultative committees while at the third level namely national, it requires that a statutory body be established.

1.1.4 The current Accommodation Programme expires on 31st December 2008. All Local Authorities have been instructed to prepare a new Traveller Accommodation Programme for a five-year period covering 1st January 2009 to 31st December 2013. This third programme should be considered as complementary to and an extension of the previous 2000 to 2004 and 2005 to 2008 programmes.

1.2 Traveller Accommodation Policy Previous National Initiatives.

1.2.1 The first comprehensive investigation of Travellers issues was undertaken by the Commission on Itinerancy in 1963. This commission was given the brief of guiding the future socio-economic development of the Travelling community and in doing this, it worked closely with concerned parties. An essential element of this work was a first hand investigation of the handling of Travellers issues in other European countries and having undertaken such visits, the Commission made recommendations regarding issues as diverse as public health and community integration.

1.2.2 Its recommendations relating to housing were premised on the belief that the absorption of Travellers into the general community was the only way to solve the "Traveller Problem". To do this, it recommended that provision be made for Travellers to settle, should they wish. Additionally, it stated that priority should be given to Traveller families in providing accommodation while finally, it stressed that this accommodation should be interspersed throughout the community (Oireachtas, 1963).

1.2.3 In 1983, the policies and services introduced by the Commission on Itinerancy were reviewed by the Report of the Travelling People Review Body. This review's findings revealed that the Commission's commitment to Travellers had waned in recent years. The area in which this faltering was most evident was in accommodation, which showed that while significant improvements had been made in meeting the needs of special interest groups, consideration of Traveller needs had diminished. In overcoming this discrepancy, the Review Body stressed that future planning must not attempt to engineer an integration between the Traveller and settled communities. This settlement process, it stated, was a complex one and one that must be catered for and respected. Second, the Review called for local authorities to implement Traveller accommodation programmes. Finally, it noted that machinery should be established to monitor these programmes and that this monitoring should be progressive. (Oireachtas, 1983).

1.2.4 Despite the official thrust of Government policy in both the 1963 and 1983 documents, by 1985 the first report of the Committee to monitor the implementation of Government Policy on Travelling People noted that little action had been taken. In the light of these findings, this report re-iterated the importance of accommodation. It drew attention to the urgency of increasing the accommodation programme as outlined in the Government Policy Statement of July 1984 and was instrumental in augmenting the Government's commitment under the Programme for Economics and Social Progress 1991 (Oireachtas, 1991).

1.2.5 In 1993, the Programme for Competitiveness and Work enunciated once more the Government's commitment to an ongoing programme of Traveller accommodation, which in turn saw the programme for the Partnership Government of Fianna Fail / Labour offer assistance in 1993. This programme was subsequently capitalised upon by the Task Force on the Travelling Community in its interim and final reports of 1994 and 1995 respectively. These reports committed to solving the weakness in local authority accommodation systems

and in so doing, constitute the blueprint in the next millennium. (Oireachtas, 1995)

1.2.6 To facilitate the government's commitment to the travelling community under these programmes, the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas. Among other obligations the Act placed an obligation on Local Authorities to prepare and implement local traveller accommodation programmes.

1.2.7 The terms of this Act required local authorities to take reasonable steps to secure the implementation of these programmes for their functional areas. In addition the Act stipulated that these programmes should be subject to periodic review.

PROGRESS DURING THE PERIOD 2005 TO 2008

2.1 General Traveller Welfare

2.1.1 The 2000 to 2004 and 2005 to 2008 Plans considered the issues relevant to provision of Traveller accommodation in the Cork City area within the context of the broader environment of Traveller health, education, discrimination and employment. The plan acknowledged the intrinsic linkages between each of these elements and dealt comprehensively with each aspect.

2.1.2 The analysis, policy and initiatives set out in the previous plan in relation to health, education and discrimination remain valid in the continuum of the new plan. Whilst recognising that the primary responsibility for these aspects rested with other relevant agencies, the Plan nonetheless recommended a holistic and integrative approach in which Cork City Council would be fully involved and supportive.

2.1.3. During the period of the two previous plans Cork City Council, through its officials, has been proactive and reactive to the overall needs of the Traveller community. Through its commitment to the Traveller Inter Agency Working Group it has developed strong links with the other relevant agencies and fostered a cooperative and constructive approach to issues and needs that have arisen in the aspects of Traveller welfare that are ancillary to the accommodation needs.

2.2 Defined Accommodation Types

2.2.1 The 2000 to 2004 and 2004 to 2008 Plans identified the following accommodation types:

Standard Housing: In the context of the Plan, this would be defined as a house within a housing scheme owned by, or built by or for Cork City Council. These houses would generally be within the urban functional area of Cork City, or if not, then immediately adjacent to it.

Group Housing: This would refer to a small development or scheme of houses constructed specifically for Travellers. Generally a group of families would be identified prior to construction. The group could be related families or alternatively a group of families that had been living proximate to each other previously.

Halting Site: Halting Sites consist of a number of hardstand areas, specifically for the permanent location of Traveller caravans or mobile homes. Each such bay would be large enough to accommodate 2 to 3 caravans and would have a service block providing separate cooking and washing facilities. A bay is allocated to each family on a permanent basis. During the currency of the 2005 to 2008 Plan, there were 3 halting sites in Cork city located at Hollyhill, Spring Lane and Carrigrohane Road.

2.2.2 In terms of the specific accommodation types referred to, significant progress has been made towards achieving many of the objectives of the 2005 to 2008 plan. This progress is summarised hereunder.

2.2.3 Standard Housing

The following Table indicates both the numbers of offers of standard housing that have been made to Traveller families and the number of Traveller families that have been accommodated in standard housing during for each year over the period of the 2005 to 2008 plan:

NO OF FAMILIES ALLOCATED STANDARD HOUSING ACCOMMODATION 2005-2008

YEAR	2005	2006	2007	2008	TOTAL
OFFERS MADE	20	14	11	11	55
TENANCIES ACCEPTED	12	8	4	6*	30

(* This figure is up to August 2008 only)

The 30 families accommodated in standard housing between January 2005 and August 2008 represents a significant achievement, and approximates to 65 % of the demand for standard housing identified in the assessment of housing need established in conjunction with the 2005 to 2008 Plan.

It should also be noted that 55 offers of accommodation were made during the period.

It should be further noted that the demands of some of the Traveller families who require standard accommodation are for geographic areas where there is a scarcity of City Council properties and which are areas of high demand across the entire waiting list. This will inevitably lead to a slow down in the allocation of standard housing in the future.

In addition to the new offers of standard housing accommodation outlined above, it should be noted that a number of Traveller families that were already accommodated in standard housing at the beginning of the last Traveller Accommodation Programme in 2005, were also transferred to alternative standard housing, consistent with their changing family circumstances, during the currency of the previous Plan.

It was a specific objective of the previous Plan to encourage Travellers to avail of the various schemes available to promote home ownership. In this regard, a further significant achievement during the period of the previous Plan was that 4 Traveller families succeeded, with the assistance of Cork City Council, in purchasing their own homes.

2.2.4 Group Housing

Cork City Council is committed to group housing as an essential element of Traveller housing. Progress has been made with one family grouping for the development of a group housing scheme. Discussions are on going with these families and a site has been identified. It is proposed to develop this scheme during the currency of the 2009 to 2013 programme.

2.2.5 Halting Sites

Estate Management on halting sites has been consolidated resulting in regular meetings of residents of halting sites and council officials, caretaking and maintenance staff. This has resulted in a tangible improvement in the management of halting sites by encouraging a partnership approach to the management of the sites.

2.2.6 Accommodation For Transient Travellers

There has been a marked decrease in transient families visiting Cork in recent years. Cork City Council has reviewed its commitment to creating a transient halting site and is now researching the concept of using space adjacent to its existing halting sites to accommodate occasional transient families. Space capable of being developed as transient bays is available on Hollyhill and Carrigrohane halting sites.

2.3 Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

This committee, consisting of 8 City Councillors, 4 Traveller representatives and four City Council officials continues to meet on a two monthly basis and is fully resourced by the city council.

The functions of the committee are

- ❖ To advise in relation to the preparation and implementation of any accommodation programme for the functional area of the City Council.
- ❖ To facilitate consultation and liaison between Travellers and Cork City Council in relation to accommodation policy, needs and initiatives.
- ❖ To advise on the management of accommodation for Travellers.

During the period 2005 – 2008 the committee has taken a keen interest in and supported the work of the Inter Agency Group for Travellers.

2.4 Caravan Loans & Emergency Caravan Replacement.

In accordance with the terms of Circular Letter No.TAU 1A/2000 Cork City Council has administered the loans and grants scheme available to travellers to enable them to purchase their own caravans. During the currency of the 2005 to 2008 Plan, 35 loans were made available to Traveller families to assist them in replacing or providing new caravans.

The City Council has also facilitated the replacement of caravans/mobile homes which have been damaged by storm or fire by contributing 50% of the purchase cost of a replacement caravan/mobile home. The Department contributes the balance of the cost by way of grant.

2.5 Traveller Employment Initiative Programme

Under the auspices of the Inter Agency Group a programme was embarked upon in 2007 to employ 12 Travellers within Cork City Councils Housing and Community, Roads and Transportation, and Recreation Amenity and Culture Directorates as Temporary General Operatives. 28 applicants were interviewed by officials of FÁS and Cork City Council, 19 were deemed suitable and positions were offered to the first 12 candidates. They commenced work on the 5th of December. Of the twelve Travellers that started the scheme 9 were offered extensions to the initial 6 month contract. The decision on which Travellers were to receive extensions was based on review meetings with Cork City Council and FÁS officials.

This programme was deemed to be very successful by the participants, Cork City Council and FÁS and highlights the successful inter-agency approach being adopted by agencies within the Cork City Area.

2.6 Traveller Inter Agency Scheme.

2.6.1 Background

In July 2005 Cork City Council were asked to bring together representatives from the key public agencies and other relevant groups in order to develop an action plan for the delivery of Traveller specific services in an integrated way. It was agreed that the approach used in the preparation of Cork City's Development Board's 'Integrated strategy for the children 0 – 5 in disadvantaged urban areas' would be used as a template for the development of Traveller integrated plan. This approach is outlined below;

1. (a) Map the current range of services delivered to the target group
- (b) Identify priorities and service gaps which should be addressed by the plan
2. Convene planning meeting of all relevant organisations
3. Agree framework plan, including broad goals and objectives
4. Develop detailed actions to complete plan.

The first stage in the development of the plan was to establish the current range of service delivery to the Traveller Community. All relevant agencies were written to and asked to identify any areas of work in which their organisation was involved, that impacted on the chosen target group. These groups were also asked to identify any perceived service gaps or weak linkages between organisations delivering services to Travellers and to identify what they perceived

as the priority needs of the target group. Following this exercise a planning meeting of the relevant organisations was convened. The purpose of this meeting was to;

1. Review the current level of targeted services for Travellers in the City
2. Discuss and prioritise service gaps
3. Agree a framework for the plan
4. Agree outline actions for inclusion in the plan.

In reviewing the services provided, it was agreed that the CDB's Social Inclusion Measures Working Group be asked to establish the level of financial resources available for Traveller specific services in Cork City. It was also agreed to prioritise the following four areas for action:

1. Youth Issues
2. Education
3. Accommodation/Health
4. Enterprise/Employment/Training.

It was decided to establish working groups to develop actions under each of these headings. (The membership of these groups is included at the end of each action). When actions had been devised the larger steering group was reconvened at which these actions were considered and a plan agreed. The actions outlined in this plan are not intended to be a definitive list and will be added to over time as the plan is implemented and other needs/opportunities arise.

2.6.2 Inter-Agency Representation

The following organisations are represented on the Steering Committee;

- ❖ City of Cork VEC
- ❖ Comhairle
- ❖ Cork City Childcare Company
- ❖ Cork City Council
- ❖ Cork City Partnership
- ❖ Cork Traveller Women's Network
- ❖ Department of Education and Science (Regional Office)

- ❖ Department of Social and Family Affairs
- ❖ Fás
- ❖ An Garda Síochána
- ❖ HSE (Southern Region)
- ❖ Traveller Visibility Group (TVG).

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION POLICY

3.1 Introduction

In meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers, Cork City Council has over time formulated various policies. These policies had different emphases. They have reflected demands pertinent to specific time periods and in so doing, have worked towards giving effect to strategic initiatives.

Cork City Council is required under section 10 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 to design a policy in relation to meeting accommodation over the next 5 years.

In doing this it recognises the cumulative effect of its current policy. Additionally, it acknowledges the need to appraise the past in order to adequately cater for the future.

In order to do this, firstly this Chapter evaluates previous policies and their legacies and then details the City Council's future policy, which will then form the basis for the strategic initiatives and implementation measures outlined in Chapter 5.

3.2 Historical Cork Corporation / Cork City Council Policy Statements.

Following consideration of the report of the Commission on Itinerancy Cork City Council (then Cork Corporation) issued a policy statement in 1964. To meet the requirements of this report it was thought necessary to establish an advisory committee. The Committee was to assist the then Corporation in measures to promote Traveller rehabilitation. Additionally, it sought to help with the absorption of Travellers into settled existence and to liaise with government departments.

To help with the re-settlement of Traveller families the statement next called for the setting up of a local voluntary Committee. The policy statements fourth step was to exhort the Corporation to acquaint Travellers with the medical services available to them. Its fifth step was to provide special educational facilities.

As a consequence of undergoing rapid economic and social change, which affected the Travelling Community, the Corporation issued a new policy statement in 1983. This policy primarily sought to improve the well being of Travellers. In doing this it promoted the benefits of housing in acquiring economic, social and cultural development. Additionally, it respected the wishes of those choosing to remain on the road and so offered assistance in support of the dignity of this form of lifestyle.

As well as promoting accommodation, the 1983 policy sought to ensure the availability of adequate education. In formulating such a programme it stressed the need to compliment Travellers traditional skills while in the area of health care it emphasised the need to address matters specific to Travellers. The 1983 policy statement also referred to the overall welfare of Travellers and sought to

ensure a still more comprehensive welfare service, while it also concentrated on hostility and called for a progressive course of public education (Oireachtas 1983)

Recognising that Travellers could no longer be catered for in an adjunctive manner, by the mid 1990's the Corporation espoused an integrated policy. This policy first looked at mechanisms for facilitating improvement in relations with the settled community. These mechanisms were designed to reduce conflict; ultimately they were intended to merge into a strategy for reconciliation.

The culture of the Travelling Community was the next issue to be addressed by the 1995 policy. It recognised the importance of Traveller culture, whilst it also dealt with discrimination and specifically requested equal status legislation.

In addressing accommodation the 1995 policy proposed a national strategy. The need to bridge the gap in service provision was again echoed in its provision for health and education while finally its concentration on the economy examined opportunities for Travellers to participate (Oireachtas 1995).

The previous *Traveller Accommodation Plan 2000 to 2004* and *2005 to 2008* adopted an accommodation policy of provision of Traveller specific accommodation with maximum integration between Traveller and settled communities. In relation to health and education it recommended proactive support for the prime service providers in these areas. It also espoused policies regarding improvements in working relations and promoting social inclusion by supporting equality legislation and good practice.

3.3 Travellers Sub-Committee.

In the late 1960's Cork Corporation established an itinerant's Sub-Committee. The rationale for the sub-committee originated from the 1963 Commission on Itinerancy.

This Committee was a Sub-Committee of Cork City Council's Housing Committee, comprising of City Council officials and elected members.

In the early 1970's it expanded to include voluntary bodies and subsequently representatives from the 2 tigeen sites at Spring Lane and Model Farm Road. This coincided with the appointment of a Social Worker for Travellers/ Housing Welfare Officer who would work specifically with Travellers.

The Corporation established the first halting site at Ballinure in Mahon and was later instrumental in the 10-year plan, which resulted in the construction of the 4 sites at Mahon, Spring Lane, Hollyhill and Carrigrohane.

Following the enactment of the 1998 Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee was put in place. The Committee which comprises of elected members, Council Officials and Traveller representatives, meets on a bi-monthly basis and carries the following responsibilities:

- ❖ advises in relation to the preparation and implementation of any accommodation programme for the functional area of the City Council

- ❖ advises on the management of accommodation for Travellers
- ❖ provides liaison between Travellers and members of Cork City Council.

3.4 Cork City Council Traveller Accommodation Policy.

In formulating a policy for dealing with future Traveller accommodation needs, it is proposed that the policy should cover a number of interlinked issues in a holistic and integrated manner.

Firstly the policy should attend to housing provision. It should ensure that not alone is provision appropriate and on-going but also that it is managed effectively. Secondly, the policy should address the issue of health. Here it should facilitate access to adequate care and information. In relation to education, the policy should ensure access to education across the full spectrum. Finally, the issues of social inclusion and the working relationship between Travellers and the City Council must continue to be addressed.

In compliance with these guidelines, Cork City Council has formulated the policy objectives outlined hereunder.

3.4.1 Accommodation:

The high level policy goal will be to provide for the identified Traveller accommodation needs within the currency of this plan, in a manner which facilitates, as far as possible, both the accommodation preferences of individual families and family groups and the integration of Travellers into the social, economic and cultural fabric of the city.

In relation to provision of **standard housing for Travellers**, the objective will be to allocate houses in all locations of social housing city wide in accordance with the adopted scheme of letting priorities, whilst as far as possible taking account of individual families preferred areas of choice.

In relation to provision of **Traveller group housing**, the objective will be to provide such housing in areas where demand exists. In accordance with the guidelines and policy contained in the 2004 City Development Plan, Traveller specific accommodation may be sited in any location considered suitable for residential development.

In relation to **halting sites as permanent accommodation** for Travellers, the objective will be to retain the current number of spaces at the three existing halting sites at Carrigrohane Rd, Spring Lane and Hollyhill as long as demand continues. Cork City Council will continuously review the standard of accommodation provided and will refurbish and upgrade these sites as required following consultation with the residents of the halting sites.

In relation to accommodation for transient Travellers the objective will be to develop 6 to 8 bays in total, adjacent to existing halting sites to cater for the needs of transient Travellers. All of these bays will be serviced with water, electricity and sewage services.

It will be the policy of Cork City Council in developing Traveller specific accommodation, to consult with Traveller interests generally through the auspices of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and also as

required with specific Traveller groups. Public consultation will be in accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Cork City Council will provide pre-tenancy information, training and support to Travellers awaiting accommodation, along with post tenancy back up services to recently accommodated Traveller families.

3.4.2 Health

In support of the local health and welfare authorities, Cork City Council will:

- a) Maintain a database of Traveller health status in association with the health authorities
- b) Support and perform a public information role informing Travellers of available health services and provisions
- c) Work in co-ordination with the Health Service Executive to improve Traveller living environments
- d) Support regular visits by Public Health Officers to Traveller settlements to ensure those services are being utilised to the maximum.

3.4.3 Education

In support of the local education authorities, Cork City Council will:

- a) Maintain a database on Traveller's education requirements and needs in association with the educational authorities
- b) Perform a public information role informing Travellers of available educational services and provisions
- c) Support the Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers efforts to foster and promote opportunities for Traveller parents and their children to engage in a process of educational development which aims at maximising participation and attainment levels and helping combat racism while promoting interculturalism
- d) Liaise with post Leaving Certificate and Third level institutions to input into the admissions, training and placement procedures for Travellers.

3.4.4 Social Inclusion

To promote social inclusion of Travellers, Cork City Council will strive to:

- a) Support and implement equality legislation within Cork City Council
- b) Promote a strategy for reconciliation and conflict resolution
- c) Support Traveller organisations
- d) Support traditional Traveller skills and economy through liaison with the relevant statutory and voluntary bodies.

3.4.5 Working Relationships

To improve working relationships between various state organisations, voluntary groups, Traveller representative organisations and Travellers generally, Cork City Council will - in conjunction with the other agencies - promote a holistic and integrated service approach to meet Traveller needs.

3.5 Conclusion

The nature and practice of Cork City Council's Traveller accommodation policy has differed through time. In the 1960's Travellers were catered for in an adjunctive fashion. In the 1980's Travellers were still in the main being planned for away from the mainstream.

Towards the end of the 1980's cultivated by a more informed appreciation, policy orientation no longer just centred on physical provisions but widened to encompass social and cultural elements.

This re-emphasis became more pronounced in the 1990's, at which point Cork City Council promoted an integrated policy. This policy acknowledged Travellers as an inherent part of the system and has set the tone for future initiatives.

It is hoped that the policies outlined above will continue and enhance this holistic and integrated approach to Travellers.

ASSESSING TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION NEEDS

4.1 General

4.1.1 Part II, Section 6 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, stipulates that Local Authorities undertake an assessment of Traveller accommodation requirements as part of their accommodation programme. This assessment forms the basis of the programme. Its findings should direct future policy on accommodating Travellers and should additionally assist in the formulation of strategic initiatives.

4.1.2 Section 2.1 of the 2005 to 2008 Plan set out the historical background to the assessment of Traveller needs.

4.1.3 The need for, the background to and the programme for preparation of the new Plan has been discussed at the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, on which Travellers are represented, during late 2008.

4.1.4 In addition a notice was placed in a national newspaper on 11/07/08 informing the public generally that Cork City Council were commencing the process of re-assessing Traveller Accommodation needs and the preparation of a new Traveller Accommodation Programme to cover the period 2009 to 2013. Preliminary submissions were invited to assist in compiling the Draft Plan, which itself would in due course be available to the public by way of a consultation and information period of 2 months.

On 11/07/08 written notification was sent to 27 bodies in accordance with Section 8 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 informing them of the City Council's intention to prepare a draft Accommodation Programme covering the period 2009-2013.

4.2 Basis of Assessment

4.2.1 In assessing the demand for Traveller accommodation in Cork City, reference has been made to the following sources of information:

- (a) The March 2008 statutory Triennial Assessment of overall Housing needs in Cork City, prepared by Cork City Council and submitted to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- (b) The November 2007 annual returns in respect of Traveller Accommodation prepared by Cork City Council and submitted to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- (c) Data in relation to Traveller families contained in Cork City Council's housing waiting list

- (d) In order to supplement the information available from the above sources and specifically in connection with the assessment of needs required to formulate this plan, Cork City Council also undertook a survey of Traveller accommodation needs by way of a questionnaire distributed to Traveller families.

4.2.2 The 2008 Triennial Assessment.

It is a requirement to consider the most recent statutory Housing Assessment when preparing the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

The March 2008 statutory triennial *“Assessment of Social Housing Need”* was based on then current Housing data and assessed Traveller accommodation needs as per the following table:

Accommodation Type	No of Families in Need
STANDARD HOUSING	46
GROUP HOUSING	11
HALTING SITE ACCOMMODATION	15
RURAL HOUSING	0
Total	72

The total of 72 families would have included families that had not been accommodated up to 28th March 2008.

4.2.3 The November 2007 Annual Census

The November 2007 *“Annual Count of Traveller Families and their Accommodation Position”* summarised the Traveller accommodation position as at 28th Nov 2007 as per the following table:

Accommodation Type	No of Families Accommodated
STANDARD HOUSING	193
GROUP HOUSING	9
AUTHORISED HALTING SITES	67
TRANSIENT SITES	0
UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS	16
TOTAL	285

4.2.4 The Survey

In accordance with the timetable set by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government for Local Authorities in relation to their 2005 to 2008 Traveller Accommodation Programmes, the survey was carried out over the months of March to August 2008.

A questionnaire was drawn up, in consultation with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. Traveller families in the target groups were visited where possible and asked to fill out and / or assisted in completing the questionnaire.

A Temporary Housing Welfare Officer was employed to conduct the survey to ensure a high level and standard of completion.

Recognising the build up of experience and expertise within the Traveller Accommodation Unit of the City Council it was resolved to undertake an in-house analysis of the raw data on which the policies, strategies, initiatives, recommendations and targets of this programme are based

4.2.5. Survey Coverage

In order to gain as broad and comprehensive a profile of Traveller accommodation needs as possible, the survey covered all of the 113 Traveller families in the following categories, dispersed throughout Cork City Council's area:

- ❖ Travellers living on Halting Sites.
- ❖ Traveller families registered on the City Council's housing waiting list.
- ❖ Any roadside families resident in Cork during the 3 month period of the survey.

4.2.6. Survey Response

The following table shows the response rate in the 4 categories:

CATEGORY	SURVEYS ISSUED	COMPLETED	REFUSED*	NO CONTACT*	GONE***	HOUSED IN COUNTY
Halting Sites	53	46	3	4	0	0
Group Housing	20	19	1	0	0	0
Waiting List	31	14	5	10	2	0
Roadside	10	8	0	0	2	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	114	87	9	14	4	0

Notes:

* When contacted by the surveyor these families refused to participate in the survey.

** Despite a number of attempts to contact these families they failed to respond.

*** Were not resident in the City Council area when the survey was being undertaken and thus could not be contacted.

As can be seen, contact was made with 96 out of the total of 114 families, representing an overall contact rate of 84%.

Similarly, 87 questionnaires were completed out of the total targeted group of 114 families, representing an overall response rate of 76%. This response rate is considered to be quite satisfactory and the data analysis based on the returns can thus be considered to be accurate, credible and reliable.

4.2.7. Survey Results

(a) Type of Accommodation Preference

Of the 87 completed responses obtained from the survey the following table gives a breakdown of the expressed preferred accommodation:

TYPE	NO OF FAMILIES
STANDARD HOUSING	43
GROUP HOUSING	17
HALTING SITE ACCOMMODATION	12
OTHER	15
TOTAL	87

The questionnaire clearly identified the available accommodation types, already defined in the introduction above, as being either standard housing, group housing or halting site.

(b) Families on Unauthorised Sites

There were 8 families living on unauthorised sites at the time of the survey, 8 families responded.

(c) Number of Children in 12 to 18 Year Age Group.

In order to give an indication on the likely number of new Traveller families that might be formed and have an accommodation need in the period 2009 to 2013, the questionnaire sought information on family size, composition and specifically number of children living with parents but in the 12 to 18 year age bracket.

4.3. Assessment of Traveller Accommodation Needs

4.3.1 Supplementary information was obtained by way of the Questionnaire Survey described above. The targeted group amounted to 114 families. 9 families refused to respond and 14 families are still in the Cork area could not be contacted and accordingly their accommodation needs, if any, can only be speculated.

Based on these survey figures, it can be reasonably implied that the questionnaire survey indicated that, in September 2008, approximately 85 to 90 families either require accommodation or would like a change in the accommodation already provided. This estimate would be considered consistent with the requirement estimated in the March 2008 *Assessment of Housing Need*. Allowing for new family formation as indicated by the numbers of young adults in the 12 to 18 year age bracket, of say 3 to 4 new families per annum, the overall Traveller accommodation requirement for the 2009 to 2013 period is thus estimated to be approximately 100 to 110 families.

4.4. Accommodation Need

4.4.1. Requirement for Standard Housing

Of the 87 families who responded to the questionnaire survey 15 families indicated that they did not require change to their accommodation or their preference was for accommodation outside the range of Cork City Council's provisions.

This left 72 families who required accommodation (or a change to their existing accommodation) and of these, 42 families, equivalent to approximately 58%, indicated a preference for standard housing.

Application of this percentage to the overall assessment of Traveller accommodation of 100 to 110 families would indicate a standard housing requirement over the five year period 2009 to 2013 of 58 to 64 units.

It must be recognised that our success in housing Traveller families in standard housing over the duration of the two previous plans has resulted in a situation where the remaining families are expressing preferences for very specific geographical areas of very high demand and of very low social housing units or for houses outside the city urban areas.

It should be noted that in the past, a small number of families have been housed outside of the City boundary. This option is no longer available to Cork City Council. Families who desire housing exclusively in the County area are advised to apply to Cork County Council. The Housing Welfare Officer for Travellers will liaise with her counterpart in the County in relation to their needs.

4.4.2. Requirement for Group Housing

Of the maximum of 87 families who required accommodation 17 families, equivalent to approximately 20%, indicated a preference for Group Housing.

This response is unusually high and may reflect the success of the Meelagh Estate Scheme built during the lifetime of the previous Accommodation Programme.

Application of this percentage to the overall assessment of Traveller Accommodation of 100 to 110 families would indicate a group housing requirement over the five year period 2009 to 2013 of 19.5 to 21 units.

Of the 17 families, 2 do not form a sufficiently large network of compatible families to be viable, 3 expressed interest in this form of housing for the first time, and of the remaining 12 one has surrendered their tenancy and left the city.

This leaves realistically 11 families, all members of one extended family on one halting site, some of whom have consistently expressed interest in standard housing.

Given that the reality is that these schemes only work on the basis of extended family networks of compatible families and the difficulty of identifying suitable sites, it is proposed therefore to meet the need for group housing during the lifetime of this programme by building one scheme of 6 to 8 units.

4.4.3. Requirement for Halting Site Accommodation

Of the maximum of 87 families who required accommodation, 12 families, equivalent to approximately 14%, indicated a preference for halting site accommodation.

Application of this percentage to the overall assessment of Traveller accommodation of 100 to 110 families would indicate that when Traveller families have achieved their stated preferred accommodation types, the residual requirement for permanent halting bay accommodation would be in the order of 14 to 15 bays.

Following completion of the Mahon Group Housing scheme in November 2004, there remain 55 families living in halting bay accommodation, incorporated into the 3 remaining halting sites at Hollyhill, Spring Lane and Carrigrohane Rd., along with the 3 halting bays included in the Mahon Group Housing site.

This need can be accommodated by the vacancies arising as other tenants leave halting sites and would indicate that the existing provisions of Halting Site accommodation is sufficient.

Taking account of the achievable rate of allocation of standard housing, the timeframe for planning, design and construction of group housing schemes, it is probable that there will be a continuing demand for retention of a significant proportion of the existing halting bay accommodation during the period 2009 to 2013. Accordingly it is considered prudent to retain the existing 37 bays for the duration of the programme.

This ongoing need will, however, be reviewed as progress is made in relation to the development of further Group Housing and the allocation of standard housing. In the event of this need reducing during the 2009 to 2013 period, consideration may be given to utilisation of some of the existing halting site bays to accommodate transient Travellers. Such usage would require a high level of effective management and control to ensure compatibility with remaining permanent halting site residents.

Halting Sites will also be refurbished as required during the period 2009 to 2013 to ensure improved standards of accommodation for residents.

4.4.4. Requirement for Accommodation for Transient Travellers.

There has been a marked decrease in the number of transient families staying in Cork City in recent years. Those that visit, in our experience, tend to be relatives of families already settled in Cork City. These families normally wish to stay close to their relatives on the existing Halting Sites within the City boundaries. In view of this, Cork City Council will research the concept of using space within the curtilage of its existing halting sites to accommodate transient families.

4.4.5. Summary of Estimated Requirements 2009 to 2013

Based on the foregoing analysis, the estimated requirements for the defined types of Traveller accommodation over the period of the Programme are summarised in the following table:

Accommodation Type	Estimated Requirement
STANDARD HOUSING	56 to 61 units
GROUP HOUSING	6 to 8 units
PERMANENT HALTING SITE	37 bays*
Bays	12**

* The requirement for this number of halting Bays refers to the retention of the number of permanent bays already in existence.

** This demand will be met by natural rotation as existing tenants of Halting Sites are housed or leave.

Of these 12 families, three are seeking a family specific halting site to the exclusion of all other Traveller families in a very specific location. There is no guarantee that this need can be met. The remaining 9 families are requesting halting site accommodation adjacent to a group housing scheme where there is no available site and are refusing to contemplate halting site accommodation anywhere else in the city. These potential families are young and further discussion will have to be held to seek ways to meet their housing need.

STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the strategies and measures deemed necessary to achieve and implement the policy objectives of the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

5.2 Housing Provision and Support

5.2.1 Voluntary Sector

The primary organisation in relation to provision of Traveller accommodation in Cork City to date has been the Housing Department of Cork City Council. Cork City Council acknowledges the support of other state agencies, such as the Department of the Environment and Local Government, the Health Service Executive and a number of voluntary organisations, such as St. Vincent De Paul.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the involvement of Housing Associations and Voluntary bodies in the area of social housing. Voluntary housing agencies have developed considerable expertise in providing and managing social housing with particular emphasis on special needs housing.

Cork City Council will actively seek the involvement of such approved organisations to explore opportunities both in terms of direct provision of accommodation and also in relation to the management and operation of both existing and proposed Traveller specific accommodation. The process of seeking this involvement will include both discussions with voluntary bodies with whom Cork City Council is already working regarding special housing needs, as well as a public advertisement seeking expressions of interest.

Direct provision of Traveller accommodation by the voluntary sector would be fully supported by Cork City Council under either the Capital Assistance Scheme or the Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme.

5.2.2 Database of Accommodation Needs

The Travelling community represents a dynamic group and in charting its housing requirement, the City Council executes annual censii. These censii detail statistics on the number of Travellers resident in the City Council area. Additionally, they relay information on various accommodation types as well as on mobility patterns. In the main, these surveys are brief. While they do relay vital information, the City Council recognises the need for more comprehensive information to assist in meeting current needs, providing for future needs and in liaising with other authorities regarding Traveller issues.

A more comprehensive database will be developed, which will be of assistance in implementing the scheme of letting priorities. In this instance, it will also help in creating a more transparent system and one in which any extenuating circumstances can receive due consideration.

5.2.3 Standard Housing

Provision of standard housing for Travellers will be in accord with the Scheme of letting Priorities adopted by the City Council. Within this framework and in response to the identified need for standard housing, it is proposed that a minimum of 8 new tenancies per annum should be achieved over the duration of this Programme. This target takes cognisance of identified Traveller needs within the context of competing demands arising from the overall social housing needs within Cork City.

Whilst as far as possible Travellers will be accommodated in their area of family or community links, limitations exist in regard to availability of housing stock in particular locations. Unrealistic expectations leading to non acceptance by Travellers of offers of housing may hinder progress in achieving the yearly target for new tenancies.

5.2.4 Group Housing

Cork City Council will consider the needs of families on Carrigrohane and Spring Lane Halting Sites who expressed an interest in Group Housing with a view to determining the feasibility of appropriately sized schemes. Locations and sizes of such group schemes will depend on the specific demand and family groupings. It is proposed that a total of the order of 6 to 8 units of group housing would be developed during the period of the Programme. Consultation with Travellers will be through the auspices of the Local Traveller Accommodation Committee.

Specifically, discussions have been initiated in 2008 with residents of the Hollyhill Halting Site with a view to proceeding with a development of group housing in this area.

Annual targets would be to carry out consultation, planning and design work in 2009, with a view to the provision of approximately 6 to 8 units of group housing in 2010/2011.

It should be noted that any Traveller specific accommodation may generally be considered on lands zoned for Residential, Community and Local Services Uses, or at any other location where housing is deemed an acceptable use. This approach is in accordance with paragraph 5.42 of the Cork City Development Plan 2004. Public consultation regarding such developments will be in accordance with the appropriate Planning Approval process.

5.2.5 Halting Sites

The assessment of needs indicates that, over the duration of the Programme, the overall requirement for permanent stay halting site accommodation will remain steady.

Consideration will be given to utilisation of any spare capacity on permanent halting sites, should this arise, as accommodation for transient Travellers, whilst recognising that it may not be suitable in all circumstances.

Accordingly, insofar as would be compatible with possible on site or adjacent development of group housing schemes, the three existing permanent halting sites will be retained for the duration of the Programme.

Facilities and conditions on halting sites will be continuously monitored via liaison with the residents through estate management structures. Where required, refurbishment and enhancement works will be carried out. Initially the priority in this regard will be at the Spring Lane halting site, in view of refurbishment works already carried out in 2000 and 2004 at Carrigrohane Rd. and Hollyhill sites.

Consultation with Travellers regarding refurbishment and enhancement work at halting sites will take place through the auspices of the Local Traveller Accommodation Committee and via strengthened estate management structures.

5.2.6 Accommodation For Transient Families.

The Traveller Accommodation Act 1998 gives statutory recognition to transient sites as one of a range of accommodation options for Traveller families.

It is recognised that adequate management and control structures are important in ensuring the successful operation of such accommodation.

Cork City Council will consider the creation of bays for transient Travellers within the curtilage of its existing halting sites. Therefore it is envisaged that planning and design work will be completed in 2010 with a view to completion in 2011.

Annual Targets for Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013

Type	Number of units				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Standard Local Authority Housing	11	11	11	11	11
Traveller Group Housing	0	0	6/8	0	0
Halting Site Bays	0	0	0	0	0
Transient Bays	0	6	0	0	0
Halting Site Refurbishments	0	0	0	0	0
Group Housing Refurbishments	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	17	17/18	11	11

5.2.7 Management and Maintenance of Traveller Accommodation.

Management of Traveller specific accommodation will be based around pro-active estate management and tenant participation practices. The existing structures involving periodic meetings between residents, housing staff, Traveller housing welfare officer, caretaking and maintenance staff will be continued and extended to all Traveller specific accommodation.

In addition Cork City Council will encourage the involvement of voluntary organisations, approved under section 6 of the Housing Act 1992, in the management and operation of Traveller accommodation.

In devising an appropriate management regime for the proposed accommodation of transient families, Cork City Council will have regard to experience gained by other authorities and organisations both in Ireland and abroad if necessary.

5.2.8 Assistance in Providing Accommodation

Cork City Council will encourage Travellers, by way of information and support in dealing with outside agencies, to avail of measures such as Shared Ownership, Annuity Loans and other mechanisms to provide their own accommodation or to purchase standard housing provided to them by Cork City Council under tenant purchase initiatives.

5.2.9 Monitoring and Review Procedure

Progress with implementation of the Programme in terms of accommodation provision will be continuously monitored by officials throughout the duration of the Programme. The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will be kept fully informed of progress at the regular monthly meetings.

At the end of each calendar year a formal review of progress with reference to the targets contained in the Programme will be drawn up and submitted to the Committee. This will enable assessment of the appropriateness of the measures implemented and afford an opportunity, if required, for corrective action or consideration of changed circumstances that may have arisen.

5.3 Promoting Traveller Health

Cork City Council will co-operate with the Health Authorities in informing Travellers of the medical services of which they can avail. Cork City Council will also liaise with the Health Service Executive at Abbeycourt House in this regard. This facility represents the centre for health services in Cork. It co-ordinates a multi-disciplinary approach to care and through it, the City Council will promote and support the following services:

- Medical Card Service
- Mother and Infant Care Services
- Pre-School and National School Children Support
- Child Care Workers
- Well Woman Service

- Child Care and Family Support Service

In reference to medical cards, Cork City Council will direct Travellers to the Health Authorities who can then inform them of their entitlements. The Social Worker for Travellers will continue to work in close contact with the Community Welfare Officers who administer services to Travelling Community. That will include the services available to low income mothers under the Health Act, 1972. Here, Cork City Council will encourage participation in ante and post-natal entitlements. While in relation to early school-going children, the health examination and treatment service will be promoted. The Well Woman service will also receive publicity. Finally, the service offered under the Child Care and Family Support Services will be emphasised.

5.4 Housing Welfare Service

Cork City Council provides a Housing Welfare Officer/Social Worker to work with families, individuals, or groups that are members of the Travelling Community. This service is available to all Travellers living in the Cork City Council area whether they are accommodated or living on the roadside.

Cork City Council housing welfare service provides help, guidance and advocacy in seeking accommodation. The service also provides on-going support, counselling, facilitation, and mediation for Traveller families and individuals. The service works with Traveller groups, community groups and statutory agencies, including other City Council offices and Directorates to provide a socially inclusive environment.

5.5 Social Inclusion

Cork City Council recognises the need to promote social inclusion in relation to members of the Travelling community. In order to maintain progress in this area the City Council will take cognisance of its strategies as envisaged in the Cork City Council Social Inclusion Plan 2007.

5.6 Promoting Working Relationships

In establishing effective working relationships with Travellers, Cork City Council will work with all Agencies in adopting an holistic and integrated approach with Travellers. In applying this approach to meeting Travellers needs, Cork City Council will encourage Travellers and their representatives to participate to the full in all aspects of the decision-making process.

To ensure the maximum exchange of information and feedback, Cork City Council will facilitate the establishment of meetings between the Travelling community and the City Council to discuss matters of concern. It will also support and encourage interaction among Travellers to address policy issues, which affect them. In addition Traveller participation and representation on the Consultative Committee will be fully supported.

In recognising the statutory position of the Consultative Committee, the City Council will work to maximise its impact on meeting Travellers needs. The Committee will continue to meet on a regular basis. The Committee, in accordance with the Act, will use its powers to seek independent consultation with

outside bodies and interested groups to promote the overall objectives of provision of Traveller accommodation and general welfare.

An essential element of this work is to encourage a dialogue between Local Authorities nationally with a view to establishing a supportive national network. This network will enable Local Authorities to share experiences, both of successes and failures, and strategies in dealing with Traveller issues, with a view to broadening their expertise.

5.7. Employment and Education

Cork City Council recognises the provision of accommodation for Travellers is within its remit and brief. The survey covered all aspects of this but Cork City Council also is cognisant of the fact that accommodation is only one factor that impacts on a person's life.

Following on from this, the survey included questions regarding a person's employment and education background, including that of older children.

While not surprising, it is still disturbing to find that almost 100% of the Travelling men were unemployed with only a small percentage of women employed in FAS Schemes. Likewise older children were also almost 100% unemployed. Again this was slightly different along the gender lines.

As regards education or more importantly school leaving age, the average school-leaving age among older Travellers was 12 to 14 years.

While it is recognised that almost all Travellers now transfer to second level and many go on to complete the Junior Cert, it was found that older Traveller children's average school leaving age is still around age 14-15 years.

In our experience this has direct implications on young Travellers ability to secure employment. Cork City Council recognises that other agencies both statutory and voluntary would have expertise in addressing these issues. Yet the Council is committed to working with these groups to increase opportunities in both education and employment for young Travellers.

5.8 Traveller Employment Initiative.

In relation to Traveller employment, Cork City Council in cooperation with F.A.S., initiated a very successful employment scheme which initially employed 12 Travellers as temporary general operatives within various Directorates of the City Council. Extended contracts were given to 9 of the 12. The scheme was perceived by all sides to be extremely successful and will, it is hoped enhance the permanent long term employment prospects of all who participated.

CONCLUSION

6.1 The Cork City Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 to 2013, whilst drawn up in response to a legislative requirement, is guided by the experience of the last 9 years of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and is grounded on an assessment of Travellers' accommodation requirements compiled from a number of different sources.

6.2 This Programme is part of a continuum spanning the first two programmes, covering the period 2000 to 2004 and 2005 to 2008, and future plans. This continuum is designed to meet the ongoing accommodation needs of the Travelling community in the Cork City area. However the current Programme recognises that the needs and expectations of Travellers, as with society in general, are dynamic and subject to change, both as a result of intrinsic lifestyle factors and in response to general societal changes.

6.3 Whilst endeavouring to deal with Traveller accommodation and general wellbeing in an holistic and integrated fashion, the primary focus of the Programme is directed at accommodation provision and related issues. The Programme outlines policies, strategic initiatives and implementation measures that will cater for Traveller accommodation needs in the short to medium term, yet which are appropriate, achievable and measurable.

6.4 The Programme recognises that consultation both with the Travellers themselves as recipients of the service and with the wider community both through elected representatives on the Local Consultative Committee and through the procedures inherent in the Planning Approval process, will foster acceptance of the initiatives and developments proposed and minimise difficulties in implementing proposals. Involvement of Travellers in the process should counteract a perception of exclusion and promote pride and a sense of attachment to accommodation provided.

6.5 Ultimately it is expected that the provision of satisfactory accommodation resulting from the success of the Programme, coupled with improvements in health, education, employment and working relationships will facilitate Traveller inclusion and full participation in the social, economic and cultural fabric of Cork City.