

# **Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 - 2018**

**HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES  
DIRECTORATE**

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## Foreword

The Traveller Accommodation Programme is a 5-year plan. This is Cork City Council's fourth Traveller Accommodation Programme, replacing the 2009 – 2013 Programme which expired on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2013. Under Section 10 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, Cork City Council is required to prepare an Accommodation Programme for a 5-year period, beginning on a date specified by the Minister and thereafter in respect of each succeeding 5 years or each such shorter period as the Minister may direct. Accordingly, the Minister has directed that the next Accommodation Programme should be for a period of 5 years. The new Programme will run for the period 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2018.

Cork City Council is facing into extremely challenging times as a public service provider and this is reflected in meeting Traveller Accommodation needs. The current budgetary and financial constraints are impacting on Capital and Revenue Programmes, across the public sector. The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018 will present Cork City Council with significant challenges to meet the needs of Traveller specific accommodation. Since the adoption of the previous Traveller Accommodation Programme in 2009, the funding available for Housing Capital Programmes has declined significantly. The national allocation available for Traveller specific Capital projects in 2009 was €32m. In 2012 this was reduced to €5.67m and in 2013 this figure was further reduced to €4m. As a direct consequence of these significant reductions, expectations will have to be realistic in the drafting and implementation of the plan. Cork City Council will have to ensure maximum efficiency and value for money in its attempts to meet Traveller specific accommodation needs over the duration of the five year Programme. Cork City Council will pursue all avenues of funding in the implementation of its Traveller Accommodation Programme.

The input and co-operation of key stakeholders will be key to meeting the significant challenges over the duration of the 5 year Programme.

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004. It was prepared for the Local Traveller Accommodation Committee and approved by the City Council on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2000. A second Programme was prepared and approved for the period 2005 to 2008 while the third Programme covered the period 2009 to 2013.

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. Refer also to paragraph 4.2.9

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 public level. It offers an opportunity to participate in the 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. Under section 19 (1) of the Act the Minister shall appoint a committee to be known as the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to advise the Minister in relation to any general matters concerning accommodation for travellers and any matter referred to it by the Minister.

### **1.2 Policy Statement**

In accordance with Section 10 (2) (c) of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 it is the policy of Cork City Council to provide Traveller Specific accommodation, standard housing and access to voluntary & private rented sector accommodation to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers living in the Cork City Council administrative boundary. This is in accordance with the assessment of need carried out under the provision of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

In addition to local policy, this Programme will have due regard to the relevant national policies, taking into consideration any requirements as set out by legislation, Departmental guidelines and Circulars.

### **1.3. Statement Strategy**

Cork City Council is the implementing authority for Cork City for the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018. The Traveller Accommodation Unit within the Housing and Community Directorate has been designated to deal with all matters arising from the implementation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

This section is responsible for ensuring that all parties concerned with Traveller accommodation are kept informed with regard to the development of proposals for permanent Traveller specific accommodation in this Programme.

This Programme will address the need to maximise usage of existing resources including occupancy of existing accommodation, management and maintenance of existing Traveller specific accommodation and establishing structures to encourage greater resident participation in building active and inclusive communities.

## PROGRESS DURING THE PERIOD 2009 TO 2013

### **2.1 General Traveller Welfare**

**2.1.1** The 2000 to 2004; 2005 to 2008 and the 2009 to 2013 Programmes 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 previous Plans 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 three 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 previous three Programmes identified the following accommodation types:

Standard Housing: In the context of the Plan, this is defined as a house within a housing scheme owned by, 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.

Private Rented Housing: Private rented accommodation would cover a number of options available to members of the Travelling community. Renting in the private market with the potential to qualify for a rental allowance is one option. An alternative option would be to apply for The Rental Accommodation Scheme. This scheme specifically targets those in receipt of rental supplementary welfare from the Department of Social Protection for a period of 18 months or more. Such persons may be deemed to have a long-term housing need and be invited for interview to assess their eligibility to enter the scheme. A further option would be to access the Voluntary Housing sector, as a means of accommodation type.

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 2009 to 2013 Programme, there were 3

authorised 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, some progress has been made towards achieving many of the objectives of the 2009 to 2013 Programme. This progress is summarised hereunder.

2.2.2(a) 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 for each year over the period of the 2009 to 2013 plan:

*NO. OF FAMILIES ALLOCATED STANDARD HOUSING ACCOMMODATION 2009-2013*

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Tenancies Offered</b>	9	19	12	7	6
<b>Tenancies Accepted</b>	4	11	9	2	1

*These figures are up to and including December 2013.*

The 27 families accommodated in standard housing between January 2009 and August 2013 represents approximately 45.5% of the demand for standard housing identified in the assessment of housing need established in conjunction with the 2009 to 2013 Plan. The gradual slowing down of offers during the 5 year period is attributable to the downturn in the economy which has resulted in fewer properties available for letting. 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 has inevitably led to a slow down in the allocation of standard housing during the period. Due to the economic climate, there are more and more housing related demands on the City Council, best reflected in the increased numbers on the housing waiting list.

In addition Traveller housing transfer applications have been processed.

2.2.2. (b) Private Rented Housing

Due to the changes introduced into the Triennial Assessment of Needs issued to Local Authorities in February 2013 the Traveller category has been removed. All Traveller applicants were reassigned to 'the most appropriate basis of need. The Social Housing (Assessments) Summary Regulations 2013 which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2013 sets out the basis of need for Social housing support. It includes provisions for specific accommodation requirements (classification of Need) under the schedule for the Summary of Social Housing Needs.

2.2.2. (c) Group Housing

Cork City Council is committed to Group Housing as an essential element of Traveller housing. Progress has been made in this area with the families resident on St. Anthony's Park Halting Site. A contract has been entered into to build a Group Housing Scheme for these families on an adjacent site. The Group Housing Scheme will consist of 16 family units replacing the 12 bay halting site.

#### 2.2.2. (d) Halting Sites

St. Anthony's Park: Consists of twelve bays and is based in the Hollyhill area of Cork City. This Travellers site, historically a transient stop, developed into a permanent halting site during the 1970's. Funding has been secured from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to replace the existing halting site with a new sixteen unit Group Housing scheme. This involved a lengthy and extensive consultative process. It is anticipated that this will be constructed and completed within the timeframe of the plan. This is a mixed unit development consisting of nine bays and seven houses. A new Community building will also be constructed as part of the new development. This Halting Site is also referred to later in this Programme at 3.4.1.

Spring Lane: A significant clean up of the halting site and its perimeter was carried out in 2009 by the City Council at a cost of €120,000. Three new welfare units were installed onto the site to upgrade two existing welfare units and provide an additional unit for the periphery families. A ponding issue on the site was highlighted by the residents and Cork City Council carried out works to rectify this matter. This Halting Site is also referred to later in this Programme at 3.4.2.

Carrigrohane Halting Site: After the flooding of November 2009, Carrigrohane Halting Site was cleaned and repaired. All of the mobile homes were replaced after consultation with the families. Subsequently, the replacement mobile homes were plumbed into the sewage system to afford greater convenience. This Halting Site is also referred to later in this Programme at 3.4.3.

#### 2.2.3 Estate Management

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.

#### 2.2.4 Accommodation for Transient Travellers

The 2009 to 2013 Programme stated that there had been a marked decrease in transient families visiting Cork in recent years. This trend has continued in the last 5 years.

### **2.3 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 period of the 2009 to 2013 Programme, the level of non repayment of caravan loans reached an all time high of 68% and, as a result, the scheme was not viable economically and had to be suspended. Any resumption of this scheme will be dependent on significant increases in levels of repayment of outstanding loans.

The City Council has 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 of the Environment, Community and Local Government contributes the balance of the cost by way of grant.



## **2.4 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 2009 – 2013 the committee has taken a keen interest in and supported the work of the Traveller Inter Agency Group and it has met regularly.

## **2.5 Traveller Inter Agency Group**

### 2.5.1. Background

In July 2005, Cork City Council brought 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.

Regular meetings of the Traveller Inter-Agency Group have taken place during the life of the most recent Programme. These meetings are currently chaired by the Minister of State at the Department of Health and Department of Justice, Equality and Defence with responsibility for Disability, Older People, Equality and Mental Health.

#### 2.5.2 Inter-Agency Representation

The following organisations are represented on the Steering Committee:

- ❖ Cork City Council
- ❖ Cork Education & Training Board (formerly City of Cork VEC)
- ❖ Cork City Childcare Company
- ❖ Cork City Partnership
- ❖ Cork Traveller Women's Network
- ❖ Department of Education and Skills (Regional Office)
- ❖ Department of Social Protection
- ❖ FAS (SOLAS)
- ❖ An Garda Síochána
- ❖ HSE (Southern Region)
- ❖ Traveller Visibility Group (TVG)

## *Chapter Three*

### **ASSESSING TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION NEEDS**

#### **3.1. General**

3.1.1. 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.

3.1.2. Notice of intention by Cork City Council to undertake a new Traveller Accommodation Programme from 2014 to 2018 was posted to all interested bodies on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 2013. In addition, a notice was placed in a national newspaper on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 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 in accordance with Departmental Guidelines.

In October 2013 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 2014-2018.

#### **3.2. Basis of Assessment**

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

- (a) The November 2012 annual returns in respect of Traveller Accommodation prepared by Cork City Council and submitted to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- (b) Data in relation to Traveller families contained in Cork City Council's housing waiting list.
- (c) In order to supplement the information available from the above sources, specifically in connection with the assessment of needs required to formulate this plan, Cork City Council undertook an analysis of Traveller accommodation needs. This process involved an extensive analysis incorporating interviews with families on St. Anthony's Park and Spring Lane Halting Sites throughout 2012 and 2013. A survey was conducted of residents of Carrigrohane Halting Site and Meelagh Group Housing Scheme in August 2013.

### 3.2.2. The November 2012 Annual Census

The November 2012 “Annual Count of Traveller Families and their Accommodation Position” summarised the Traveller accommodation position as per the following table:

<b>Accommodation Type</b>	<b>No. of Families Accommodated</b>
STANDARD HOUSING	352
GROUP HOUSING	9
AUTHORISED HALTING SITES	67
TRANSIENT SITES	0
UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>433</b>

Having due regard to the experience and expertise within Cork City Council’s Traveller Accommodation Unit, it was resolved to undertake an in-house analysis of the data on which the policies, strategies, initiatives, recommendations and targets of this Programme are based.

### 3.2.3. Analysis Coverage

In order to gain as broad and comprehensive a profile of Traveller accommodation needs as possible, the analysis covered all of the 78 Traveller families dispersed throughout Cork City Council’s area. The following areas covered were:

- ❖ Travellers living on Halting Sites.
- ❖ Travellers living in Group Housing
- ❖ Any roadside families residents/families living in unauthorised halting sites in Cork during the 3 month period of the survey.

### 3.2.4. Analysis Results

<b>Surveyed**</b>	<b>Total No. Surveyed</b>	<b>Remain as is</b>	<b>Standard Housing CCC</b>	<b>Group Housing</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
Spring Lane	20	7	10	0	1	2
Carrigrohane Straight Rd	24	2	8	14	0	0
St. Anthony’s Park	16	0	0	16	0	0
Meelagh GHS	14	5	7	2	0	0
Misc*	4	0	1	3	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

\*Families on Unauthorised Sites

There were 5 families living on unauthorised sites at the time of the survey, 4 families’ housing applications were analysed.

\*\*Number of Children in 13 to 17 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 2014 to 2018, the questionnaire sought information on family size, composition and specifically the number of children living with parents in the 13 to 17 year age bracket. This was included in the needs assessment.

### **3.3 Assessment of Traveller Accommodation Needs**

3.3.1. Based on the analysis it was established that, in September 2013, approximately 62 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*.

### **3.4 Accommodation Needs**

Given the extensive analysis of applicants in all categories and the recognised antipathy of family groupings on sites to share accommodation with other families on other sites, the analysis of housing need is structured on a site by site basis.

#### 3.4.1 St. Anthony's Park

<b>Surveyed</b>	<b>Total No. Surveyed</b>	<b>Remain as is</b>	<b>Standard Housing CCC</b>	<b>Group Housing</b>	<b>Refurb. Halting Site</b>	<b>Other</b>
St. Anthony's Park	16	0	0	16	0	0

A Group Housing Scheme is proposed to be constructed which will accommodate 16 family units. Funding has been secured from the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government to construct the new Group Housing Scheme. An additional four units will be built on the current halting site which has twelve bays. There are currently a number of potential new families in St. Anthony's Park halting site. Over the lifecycle of the Programme this will prove a very challenging area, to meet the future demands of these young adults. Given the curtailment in the National Capital Programme it is unlikely that any further capital expenditure for group housing schemes will be available during the lifetime of this Programme. The needs of these young adults therefore may have to be met by other resources, as appropriate.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2013 at an Estate Management meeting of the residents of St. Anthony's Park, a request was made asking Cork City Council's Traveller Accommodation Unit to survey the young adults to assess their future accommodation needs. The Traveller Accommodation Unit made staff available at two different stages in the Knocknaheeny Youth Centre to give the young adults of St. Anthony's Park halting site an opportunity to complete questionnaires, highlighting their future accommodation needs. In addition, young adults with an appropriate guardian were invited into City Hall during office hours to fill out questionnaires assessing their future accommodation needs in the privacy of an interview room, if they felt it more appropriate.

Despite the Traveller Accommodation Unit's best efforts, no resident turned up on either occasion to express their desired future accommodation needs or called into City Hall to complete the necessary questionnaires.

A survey was further circulated to the young adults of St. Anthony's Park Halting Site to complete outlining their preferred future accommodation needs. Again, despite best efforts to encourage the tenants of St. Anthony's Park to interact with the process there was no engagement by the young adults or their parents/legal guardians. No surveys were returned from any of the young adults.

#### 3.4.2. Spring Lane Halting Site

Surveyed	Total No. Surveyed	Remain as is / Refurbish	Standard Housing CCC	Group Housing	Other	No opinion
Spring Lane	20	7	10	0	1	2

An analysis of the above returns would indicate that –

- 35% of those surveyed wish to remain as is in a refurbished Halting Site.
- 50% wish to be housed in standard accommodation.
- 5% requested to be offered a standalone site to meet their accommodation needs.
- 10% expressed no opinion when queried.

Similar to St. Anthony's Park Halting Site, a survey was circulated to the young adults of Spring Lane Halting Site to complete outlining their preferred future accommodation needs. Again, despite best efforts to encourage the tenants of Spring Lane to engage with the process there was no engagement by the young adults or their parents/legal guardians. No surveys were returned from any of the young adults.

There is an ongoing issue with difficulties on the Spring Lane Halting Site. Many families are currently living opposite the ten official bays. They are accessing family member's welfare units, water supply and electricity supply for day to day services.

Cork City Council over the lifecycle of the Programme endeavour to carry out upgrade works on the Spring Lane Halting Site. Much of this work is dependent on funding being made available by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government. A funding application to address the short to medium term issues has been submitted to refurbish the existing halting site. Priority was emphasised in upgrading the electrics onsite. This funding bid was successful in late 2013. It is envisaged having an electrical contractor appointed in 2014 to conduct the works. The remainder of the funding application is under active consideration by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government.

#### 3.4.3 Carrigrohane Halting Site

Surveyed	Total No. Surveyed	Remain as is	Standard Housing CCC	Group Housing	Refurb. Halting Site	Other
Carrigrohane Straight Rd	23	2	7	14	0	0

There are twelve established families on this site along with a further thirteen future / possible families when we take into account the young adults. All but one of the families/future families have been surveyed and eight families have indicated that they require standard housing, fourteen families require Group Housing and 2 wish to remain as is.

An analysis of the above results would indicate that: -

- 9% wish to remain as is.
- 30% wish to be housed in standard housing.
- 61% wish to be housed in group housing.

One family did not respond to the survey but has previously consistently expressed a requirement for standard housing.

#### 3.4.4. Meelagh Group Housing Scheme

Surveyed	Total No. Surveyed	Remain As Is	Standard Housing CCC	Group Housing	Refurb. Halting Site	Other
Meelagh GHS	14	5	7	2	0	0

An analysis of the above returns would indicate that –

- 36% of those surveyed wish to remain as is.
- 50% wish to be housed in standard accommodation.
- 14% requested group housing.

This Group Housing scheme consists of 3 bays and 9 houses. Four of these houses are currently vacant. These four properties were surrendered/abandoned.

Currently there are eight established families on this site along with a further six future / possible families when we take into account the young adults. Of those surveyed, five families are content to remain living on the Group Housing Scheme.

#### 3.4.5 Private Rented Sector

Thirty families were interviewed in this category over the last 8 months. This represents approximately 28% of Travellers in private rented accommodation. All of these applicants expressed a desire for standard social housing accommodation. It is safe to say that this represents the preference of the vast majority of Travellers in private rented accommodation. The November 2012 annual census identified 108 families on the social housing waiting list.

Due to the changes introduced into the Triennial Assessment of Needs issued to Local Authorities in February 2013 the Traveller category has been removed. All Traveller applicants were reassigned to “the most appropriate basis of need”. In accordance with this practice the Traveller Accommodation Unit confined its analysis of need to the applicants living on Traveller Specific accommodation and unauthorised sites.

The Social Housing (Assessments) Summary Regulations 2013 which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2013 sets out the basis of need for Social housing support. It includes provisions for specific accommodation requirements (classification of Need) under the schedule for the Summary of Social Housing Needs.

#### 3.4.6. Requirement for Accommodation for Transient Travellers.

There has been a marked decrease in the number of transient families in Cork City in recent years. Experience has shown that of those that do visit, they 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/Group Housing Scheme within the City boundaries. Cork City Council allows such family visitors on City owned Halting Sites/Group Housing Scheme, recognising the transient culture of the Travelling community. However, Cork City Council does not consider that there is a need for a transient site within its limited administrative boundary.



## **STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES**

### **4.1 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.

### **4.2 Housing Provision and Support**

#### **4.2.1 Voluntary Sector**

The primary organisation in relation to provision of Traveller accommodation in Cork City to date has been Cork City Council. The City Council acknowledges the support of other state agencies, such as the Department of the Environment, Community 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 or any other appropriate scheme.

#### **4.2.2. Database of Accommodation Needs**

The Travelling community represents a dynamic group and in charting its housing requirement, the City Council executes annual censuses. These censuses 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.

#### **4.2.3. Standard Housing**

Cork City Council will endeavour to meet the needs for the provision of standard housing for Travellers. This will be addressed having regard to the extensive housing waiting list which continues to increase in the current economic climate. A report to the Housing and Community Functional Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014, stated that the number of eligible applicants on the City Council's housing waiting list as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013, amounted to 7,896.

The proposed Choice Based Letting Scheme will provide an opportunity for applicants seeking social housing support which includes Traveller families to place expressions of interest on vacancies being advertised for which they are eligible. If families insist on seeking offers of accommodation only in areas where vacancies rarely occur these targets will not be achieved.

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.

The family that wishes to be housed outside the city boundary will be advised to apply to the relevant housing authority.

#### 4.2.4 Group Housing

Cork City Council will consider the expressed requirements of Travellers for group housing. The desire for further Group Housing schemes will have to be balanced against the possibility of funding in the present climate, the identification of suitably compatible family groupings and the identification of suitable sites.

St. Anthony's Park: A scheme of 16 units is proposed to be built at Hollyhill to accommodate the families from St Anthony's Park Halting Site at a cost of approximately €4m. Cork City Council has secured this money from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to complete the scheme. This has been a significant achievement given the current National Traveller Specific Accommodation capital allocation contraction as highlighted in the foreword to this Programme. Cork City Council envisage the completion of the new St. Anthony's Park Group Housing scheme during the life of this Programme and the closure of the existing St. Anthony's Park Halting Site. The City Council will endeavour to work with the young adults on the current halting site and explore all accommodation options open to them in a proactive way. However with the cut in capital funding for Traveller Accommodation, meeting the young adult's needs will be challenging.

Meelagh Group Housing Scheme: Cork City Council aims to reactivate the current vacant properties and allocate them to Traveller families. This will be a challenge that will have to be overcome in the current operating and financial environment.

#### 4.2.5 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.

Spring Lane: Cork City Council will also be looking at formulating a plan during the life of this Programme in the medium to long term to address the difficulties currently on the Halting Site. This is contingent on it being resolved with the Draft City Development Plan 2015 – 2021.

Carrigrohane Straight Road: Cork City Council, over the period of the Programme, will work with the families whose choice is Group Housing to develop a bid to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and will aim to submit this for funding during the lifecycle of the five year Programme. This is contingent on it being resolved with the Draft City Development Plan 2015 – 2021.

#### 4.2.6. Unauthorised Halting Sites

During the life of this Programme, Cork City Council will also be looking at formulating a medium to long term plan for dealing with the long term unauthorised halting sites in both Corcorcan's Quay and Nash's Boreen while seeking to have the families accommodated on existing or proposed site(s). This is in accordance with the Social Housing (Assessments) Summary Regulations 2013 which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013 and which sets out the basis of need for Social housing support.

This is contingent on it being resolved with the Draft City Development Plan 2015 – 2021 and may involve consultation with Cork County Council in this regard.

#### 4.2.7. Homeless Support

Cork City Council recognises the need to provide both families or individuals in crisis with emergency accommodation and assistance. This support is provided through Cork City Council's Homeless Section and associated support services.

#### 4.2.8. Management and Maintenance of Traveller Accommodation

Management of Traveller specific accommodation will be based around proactive 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.

#### 4.2.9. 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 House Purchase Loans to provide their own accommodation or to purchase standard housing.

#### 4.2.10. Monitoring and Review Procedure

In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 Cork City Council shall review its Traveller Accommodation Programme at least once each three year period or at such time as the Minister may by direction specify from time to time. The Minister has under Section 17 (1) of the 1998 Act directed that a review of the next accommodation programme should be carried out no later than the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2016. Cork City Council is legally obliged to adhere to this directive.

Further to this, progress with implementation of the Programme in terms of accommodation provision will be continuously monitored throughout the duration of the Programme. 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 Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative 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.

#### **4.3 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 Plans.

#### **4.4 Promoting Working Relationships**

In establishing effective working relationships with Travellers, Cork City Council will work with all Agencies in adopting a 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.

#### **4.5 Horse Forum**

A Horse Forum was established and first met in September 2011. The intention of the forum is to reduce the impact of horses on communities in Cork City, to respond to issues / concerns in relation to the welfare of horses across the City, through partnership and cooperation with relevant agencies. The Horse Forum includes representatives from both Cork City and County Councils, An Garda Síochána, The HSE, The CSPCA., the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine, Traveller Representative Groups and Horse Owners. The forum met five times between September 2011 and April 2013.

Within the course of these meetings the concept of developing a Horse Project was suggested. Horse related matters are being considered by the Horse Forum and outcomes are awaited.

## **CONCLUSION**

**5.1** The Cork City Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 to 2018, whilst drawn up in response to a legislative requirement, is guided by the past experience of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and more recently by the Traveller Interagency Group. The Programme is grounded on an assessment of Travellers accommodation requirements compiled from a number of different sources.

**5.2** This Programme is part of a continuum spanning the first three Programmes, covering the period 2000 to 2004; 2005 to 2008 and 2009 to 2013. 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 and economic challenges.

**5.3** 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 build a climate of positive social inclusion while also promoting a sense of pride and attachment to the accommodation provided.

**5.4** 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.