



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Traveller Accommodation Programme

2019 – 2024

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

There were 30,987 usually resident Travellers enumerated in Census 2016, an increase of 5.1% on the 2011 figure (29,495).

County Galway had the highest number of Travellers with a total of 2,647 Travellers living in the county, an increase of 6.7% on the 2011 figure (2,475). A breakdown of the figures for the county shows that 1,301 were male and 1,339 were female.

Travellers were more urbanised than the general population with almost 8 in 10 (78.6%) living in cities or towns (of 1,500 or more), compared with 62.4% of the total population. Among towns with 1,500 or more persons nationally, Tuam had the highest number of Travellers with 737 persons, while Ballinasloe had 500 or more Irish Travellers in 2016.

Traveller households were more likely to be multiple family, 4.2% compared with 1.3% of the general population, but less likely to be one-person households, 11.0% compared with 23.6%.

Traveller households had a lower home ownership rate than the general population with 1 in 5 (20.0%) households owning their home compared to over two-thirds (67.6%) for the general population. The number of Traveller households who owned their home outright increased by 22.8 per cent to 1,133 in 2016.

Of the 6,016 Traveller households who were renting their home, the majority (65.5%) were renting from a local authority, an increase from 3,317 to 3,938 households. There were 1,835 Traveller households renting from a private landlord in 2016, a decrease from 2,257 in 2011.

In County Galway, 2,190 Travellers were in permanent private accommodation (up from 2,131 five years earlier) and 312 in temporary private accommodation (up from 245).

The number of Travellers households living in caravans or other mobile or temporary structures increased by 10.3 per cent between 2011 and 2016 after falling substantially between 2006 and 2011. Nearly two in five Traveller households (39.1%) had more persons than rooms compared with less than six per cent of all households.

The number of Travellers recorded as homeless in 2016 was 517 compared to 163 in 2011, an increase of 217%, compared to an increase of 81% for the general population.

1.1 Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 requires that each Housing Authority adopts a Traveller Accommodation Programme for its functional area. The Traveller Accommodation Programme outlines the accommodation requirements of the Traveller Community over a five-year period from 2019 – 2024. Under the 1998 Act Galway County Council has certain obligations in relation to the preparation, adoption and implementation of a Traveller Accommodation Programme.

In summary, Galway County Council is required to:

- Prepare and adopt an Accommodation Programme to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in County Galway.
- Allow for public input to the preparation and amendment of the Programme.
- Have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights in carrying out our functions.
- Include objectives concerning Traveller Accommodation in the County Development Plan.
- Take appropriate steps to secure implementation of the Programme.

The Traveller Community was officially recognised by the Irish State as an ethnic minority in March 2017. Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD in his address to Dáil Eireann noted that the Traveller Community has their own unique heritage and culture and that it is reasonable to identify as both a Traveller and Irish.

This policy and its implementation underline the commitment of Galway County Council to meet the accommodation needs of members of the Traveller Community throughout the functional area of the Council.

2.0 EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT

In the preparation of this Programme, the Galway County Traveller Interagency Group and the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee agreed to develop an equality and human rights statement to reflect our commitment to equality and human rights.

The statement was developed by a sub-group drawn from Galway County Council and the Traveller organisations represented on the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. It addresses our obligations under the Irish Human Rights Equality and Commission Act 2014 to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights in carrying out our functions.

2.1 Our Values

Our commitment to equality and human rights is motivated by a particular set of values, that have been established as shared values in motivating the work of the Galway County Traveller Interagency Group. They are the values of:



Values: Objectives, Processes, and Issues

2.2 Dignity

Dignity is about respecting and valuing people and their individual human worth.

The **Traveller Accommodation Programme** seeks to meet standards that enable dignity for individual Travellers, respond to their needs, and provide for real choices.

The **Traveller Accommodation Programme** aims to be delivered in a manner that is fair, offers options, and enables Travellers to understand and make informed choices.

We are, therefore, concerned to ensure that the following **equality and human rights issues** are addressed through the commitments made and programme implementation:

- Living in sub-standard accommodation.
- Experiencing discrimination, harassment, and stereotyping.
- Failure to respond to and take account of stated needs and requirements.
- Lack of access to the information and capacity required for making informed choices.

2.3 Diversity

Diversity is about acknowledging and planning by design for the particular identity, situation and experience of specific groups in society.

The **Traveller Accommodation Programme** seeks to reflect and respond to Traveller cultural preferences and to enable Travellers express their cultural identity.

The **Traveller Accommodation Programme** aims to be delivered in a manner that explores cultural preferences, affirms Traveller identity, and makes adjustments for cultural difference, and that takes account of diversity within the Traveller community, including disability, gender, age and family status.

We are, therefore, concerned to ensure that the following **equality and human rights issues** are addressed through the commitments made and programme implementation:

- Failure to acknowledge and plan by design for the diversity of a community.
- Failure to acknowledge and plan by design for diversity within a community.
- Lack of provision for or failure to make the necessary space for diversity.
- Lack of data on Travellers and absence of an ethnic identifier.

2.4 Participation

Participation is about people having a say in decisions that impact on them and having a capacity to do so effectively.

The **Traveller Accommodation Programme** seeks to enable Traveller ownership of and pride in the programme itself, and their participation in the structures, processes, and associations that play a role in managing housing and accommodation provided.

The **Traveller Accommodation Programme** aims to be delivered in a manner that empowers Traveller participation in informing the programme and its delivery, ensuring it meets their needs and requirements.

We are, therefore, concerned to ensure that the following **equality and human rights issues** are addressed through the commitments made and programme implementation:

- Exclusion from having an input into decision making, as individuals or collectively as a group.
- Barriers to participation, including financial costs, lack of transport, and inappropriate models for organising participation.
- Lack of encouragement, information and capacity to enable effective participation.
- Not being listened to or contributions made in consultation processes not being valued.

2.5 Inclusion

Inclusion is about securing outcomes for people that reflect their individual choices and for groups that are on a par with the wider society through a mixture of targeted and general services.

The **Traveller Accommodation Programme** seeks to deliver on the targets set for meeting current and future accommodation needs and to enable Travellers to be a welcome part of sustainable communities.

The **Traveller Accommodation Programme** aims to be delivered in a manner that promotes community building, and mobilises interagency supports.

We are, therefore, concerned to ensure that the following **equality and human rights issues** are addressed through the commitments made and programme implementation:

- Inadequate provision of accommodation.
- Insecurity in accommodation.
- Isolation due to locations that limit access to economic and social supports and opportunities.
- Exclusion from being part of the community.
- Poverty and social exclusion.
- Stereotyping and perceived notions of needs and aspirations.

This Statement

This equality and human rights statement will be:

- Used as a standard in our ongoing work in the provision of accommodation to the Traveller community.
- Applied as a proofing instrument in our annual review and business planning on Traveller accommodation.
- Applied as an evaluation tool in the mid-term review of the Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- Referred to on an ongoing basis to identify actions required to ensure that the issues identified continue to be addressed in the provision of Traveller accommodation.
- Used in reports on implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme to establish progress on the issues identified.

3.0 REVIEW OF TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME 2014-2018

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018 was developed in the context of many factors including, the suspension of the housing construction programme nationally and, the curtailment of the Voluntary Housing Programmes. On this basis, proposals requiring significant capital investment, including a longstanding proposal relating to the provision of group housing at Craughwell Halting site, were not included in the Programme.

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018 was also developed prior to the auditing of fire safety in local authority provided Traveller accommodation, that was undertaken in the aftermath of the fire tragedy in Carrickmines, Dublin on 10th October 2015. The Report relating to the audit was published in September 2016 and proposed a series of actions, to bring the accommodation in line with appropriate fire safety standards, together with a parallel programme of community fire safety.

It was considered appropriate, in the context of the emerging availability of funding, to avail of the Mid-Term Review, to amend the Programme to support significant capital projects. These projects included the proposal to redevelop Craughwell Halting Site and other projects relating to the necessary enhancement of Traveller accommodation.

The Mid-Term Review was also availed to embed the issue of fire safety in Traveller accommodation in the Programme. This reflects the priority the Council affords the issue of fire safety and reflects the responsibilities of the Council and those of the residents of Traveller accommodation to enhance and maintain appropriate and necessary fire safety standards.

By unanimous decision of Galway County Council, at a meeting of Plenary Council held on the 19th December 2016, it was agreed that amendments to the Galway County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme were required to incorporate the additional housing need identified and to reflect the requirement for capital investment in new and existing Traveller accommodation and appropriate fire safety standards.

The allocation of funding by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government for the Traveller Accommodation Programme is on the basis of proposals for individual Traveller-specific projects. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts and commitment of the Council, it was not possible to avail of the full allocation of funding for a small number of Traveller-specific projects during the period 2014 – 2018.

The anticipated timeframe for the redevelopment of Craughwell Halting Site was impacted by a direction from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to revisit the project proposal to undertake a value engineering exercise and reduce the footprint of the units. This process and subsequent stage approvals delayed the project proceeding to site in 2018 as originally envisaged. It is intended to commence works on site in 2019 and accordingly the allocation of funding for the project will be drawdown in 2019 instead of 2018.

It was necessary to suspend the improvement works at the Capira Temporary Halting Site due to the unauthorised occupation of the site presenting significant safety, health and welfare concerns. Due to the suspension of works, it was not possible to drawdown the funding within the timeframe envisaged. It is intended to recommence the works, on site as soon as it is safe to do so, and this will allow the balance of funding to be drawdown.

The lack of cooperation by a number of tenants and unauthorised occupiers at Creggaun Group Scheme continued to prevent the Council proceeding with urgent and necessary works to address significant fire and safety concerns at the site and substandard accommodation. The Council was not able to award the contract for the works and enable funding to be drawn down until such time as the tenants and unauthorised occupiers avail of the alternative accommodation being provided by the Council. This will afford the contractor access to the site to undertake the necessary works and allow for the funding allocation to be drawn down.

Notwithstanding the various challenges that presented in undertaking works to allow available funding to be drawdown, significant progress was achieved in advancing a range of necessary projects. The Council with the cooperation of all stakeholders is committed to building on this progress over the period 2019 -2024.

3.1 Housing Need Targets & Delivery 2014 – 2018

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018 contained an assessment of the number of Traveller households requiring accommodation within the lifetime of the Programme. The Programme identified a requirement of 173 accommodation units to meet the then current and projected need, comprised of a current need of 48 and a projected need estimated at 125 accommodation units.

The Mid-Term Review identified additional housing need and accordingly the targets for both 2017 and 2018 were amended to meet the accommodation needs of a total of 255 households over the period of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018, representing an increase of 82 on the need identified in the initial Programme.

While there are variances across the various accommodation types, Galway County Council exceeded its overall targets in the programme with the accommodation needs of 262 households met during the period 2014 – 2018.

Targets & Delivery 2014 - 2018

Accommodation Type	Target 2014- 2018	2014 Delivery	2015 Delivery	2016 Delivery	2017 Delivery	2018 Delivery	Total Delivery
Group Housing Scheme - Existing	15	1	4	1	1	0	7
Permanent Halting Site Service Block - Existing	18	3	5	1	3	1	13
Local Authority Standard Housing	54	11	12	11	22	21	77
Rental Accommodation Scheme/Long Term Leasing	8	6	0	0	0	0	6
Purchase by Galway County Council	7	2	3	0	2	0	7

Voluntary Housing	9	2	4	1	7	13	27
Purchase by Travellers	3	1	0	0	0	0	1
Housing Assistance Payment/ Private Rented Accommodation with/out Rent Supplement	141	14	0	34	44	32	124
Totals	255	40	28	48	79	67	262

3.1.1 Group Housing Scheme & Permanent Halting Sites

The targets for Group Housing & Permanent Halting Sites were not fully met, reflecting the availability and acceptance of units and/or bays that became available for reletting due to casual vacancies during the period of the Programme.

3.1.2 Rental Accommodation Scheme / Housing Assistance Payment

The targets for the Rental Accommodation Scheme were not met, due to the general decline in properties available under the scheme, however, the introduction of the Housing Assistance Payment has made a significant contribution to meeting housing need.

3.1.3 Local Authority Standard Housing

The targets in relation to the provision of Standard Local Authority Housing were exceeded over the period of the Programme, clearly demonstrating Galway County Council's capacity and commitment to respond to the stated housing preferences and needs of the Traveller Community in the allocation of units available due to casual vacancies.

3.1.4 Home Ownership

Approximately 80 Traveller families are home owners in the County and support and information continues to be available to individuals and families who choose this option. Information re Traveller families purchasing houses in the open market is not available to the Housing Unit.

3.2 Challenges in Delivery 2014 - 2018

3.2.1 Creggaun, Ballinasloe

During the period of the 2014 – 2018 Programme, alternative housing was offered to families in caravans at Creggaun, Ballinasloe however, to date, not all families have accepted the offer of accommodation. As a result, overcrowding and unauthorised dwellings, are the cause of serious concern. The alternative accommodation remains available and the Council will continue to engage with the families to address their accommodation needs and related fire safety issues on the site.

3.2.2 Fire Safety

The Report on the Programme to Review & Enhance Fire Safety in Local Authority Provided Traveller Accommodation, from the National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management, published in September 2016, proposed a series of actions, to bring the accommodation in line with appropriate fire safety standards, together with a parallel programme of community fire safety.

In the context of the review, the Council undertook an audit of Local Authority provided Traveller Accommodation. This audit identified a series of works required to enhance fire safety. These works were undertaken during 2017 and 2018.

The development and delivery of an appropriate community fire safety programme was a priority action for the LTACC and was reviewed as a standing item at each meeting of the Committee. However, securing the active participation and support of residents, including their attendance and participation at various fire safety awareness and training programmes, proved particularly challenging during the period 2016 – 2018. This is a cause of significant concern to Galway County Council and the LTACC. The Council and LTACC will continue with its ongoing efforts to secure full engagement and participation in the development and delivery of the fire safety programmes.

A further audit of Local Authority provided Traveller Accommodation will be undertaken prior to the Mid-Term Review of the TAP.

3.2.3 Homelessness

There was a notable increase in Traveller families presenting as homeless and at risk of homelessness during the period of TAP 2014 – 2018. The Council with the support of COPE Galway and Galway Simon assisted with the provision of emergency accommodation, support and transition services. The appointment of a HAP Place-Finder also assisted with securing accommodation in the private rented sector.

3.2.4 Unauthorised Access/Dwellings

Unauthorised access at a number of Traveller Accommodation sites, resulted in damage to Council property and presented significant ongoing challenges in the management and maintenance of such sites during the period of the Programme. The presence of unauthorised dwellings also contributed to overcrowding on sites, giving rise to concerns in relation to fire safety.

3.2.5 CCTV

CCTV was provided at a number of Traveller Accommodation sites during the period 2014 – 2016 and was an effective tool in the management of the sites. Unfortunately, incidents of vandalism of the CCTV systems resulted in additional costs and the loss of CCTV systems.

4.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Galway County Council's Mission Statement is "To provide civic leadership and effective democratic representation, while leading on sustainable economic, social, cultural and community development and delivering co-ordinated, effective and good value services, aimed at realising the full potential of the County of Galway".

Our Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 reflects national and EU equality legislation and aims to achieve the core values of the Mission Statement of Galway County Council and the values of the Equality & Human Rights Statement. Galway County Council recognises Travellers' identity as an Ethnic minority since March 2017 when the then Taoiseach announced the recognition stating: *"I hope that today will create a new platform for positive engagement by the Traveller community and Government together in seeking sustainable solutions which are based on respect and on an honest dialogue."*

It is the policy of Galway County Council to meet the housing needs of Travellers using the range of accommodation options available to the Council. This provision takes place in consultation with the Traveller community, the settled community and with the various other statutory and voluntary agencies delivering services to Travellers as required.

Galway County Council will continue to prioritise the provision of Traveller Accommodation in accordance with the objectives and targets of the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

4.1 Equality & Human Rights

Galway County Council is committed to meeting its obligations under the Irish Human Rights Equality and Commission Act 2014 to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights in carrying out our functions.

The Statement detailed in this Programme reflects this commitment and has guided the development of the Programme and will be used as a standard in our ongoing work in the provision of accommodation to the Traveller community, applied as a proofing instrument in our annual review and business planning on Traveller accommodation and applied as an evaluation tool in the mid-term review of the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

4.2 Long-Term Accommodation

The Council will have regard to the full range of accommodation options available in the provision of long-term accommodation for Travellers including Standard lettings in Local Authority Estates, Group Housing, Residential Halting Sites, Voluntary Housing, Long Term Leasing and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)/Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 set out the manner in which a housing authority will determine a household's qualification for social housing support and the description and classification of its housing need. All applicants for social housing support must be assessed in accordance with these regulations and the Council's Allocation Scheme.

4.3 Transient Sites

The incidence of roadside or unauthorised encampments is relatively infrequent in Galway with no discernible pattern arising. The numbers involved are relatively small. It is considered that transient

accommodation suitable to meet the needs of nomadic families would best be provided on a regional basis with appropriate caretaking, maintenance and management services delivered.

Galway County Council is committed to working in partnership with other local authorities on a regional basis in relation to transient sites.

4.4 Temporary Dwellings & Unauthorised Encampments

Temporary dwellings and unauthorised encampments present difficulties in relation to health and safety and can be hazardous to road users. Galway County Council will consult with relevant parties to address issues arising. The Council will however utilise powers available under the legislation to remove caravans/temporary dwellings when deemed appropriate and necessary.

4.5 Emergency Accommodation

Existing procedures for meeting emergency housing needs will continue to be used for Travellers as with all other Homeless applicants. This may include sourcing temporary emergency accommodation where a bona fide housing need has been established and in exceptional circumstances.

4.6 Voluntary Housing

Galway County Council will further assist and encourage Voluntary Housing Bodies to make more housing units available for Travellers in the life of this Programme.

4.7 Tenancy Agreements

It is the policy of Galway County Council to enforce the terms and conditions of tenancy/licence agreements. In the interests of all tenants living in the area/on the site, each tenant has a responsibility to ensure that the terms of the tenancy agreement are met in full.

All Travellers will be expected to attend and fully participate in pre-tenancy irrespective of accommodation type.

It is expected that tenants will cooperate with all staff. The duties of the caretaking service, where provided, will be clearly explained and it is expected that all tenants of the site will co-operate fully and comply with instructions relating to health and safety and the management and maintenance of the site.

4.8 Transfer and Succession Policy

Existing tenants/licenced occupiers of Galway County Council accommodated in standard local authority accommodation, Group Scheme Dwellings, Permanent Halting Site accommodation or households accommodated in dwellings under the Rental Accommodation Scheme, the Long-Term Leasing Scheme or Housing Assistance Payment can apply for a transfer to alternative local authority accommodation. Each transfer application will be assessed on its own merits having regard to the particular household circumstances, and in accordance with the Council's Transfer Policy.

Galway County Council will not consider transferring a tenant because of unsatisfactory relations with a neighbouring tenant or because of dissatisfaction in general with the estate or the neighbourhood.

Tenants seeking a transfer must also comply with all the general provisions of their tenancy/licence agreement, including the requirement to have a clear rent account.

On the death of a tenant, the tenancy may be transferred to the tenant's partner/spouse or to a member of the tenant's immediate family normally resident in the dwelling at the date of the tenant's death. In determining whether or not the tenant's immediate family was normally resident in the dwelling on the date of the tenant's death, details included on the previous Rent Assessments will be taken into account. The entitlement to make an application for a succession of tenancy will not apply where Galway County Council is satisfied that the applicant for succession deliberately took up occupancy in the dwelling for the sole purpose of obtaining tenancy in these circumstances.

4.9 Surrender of Tenancy

Where tenants surrender their existing local authority accommodation, other than in an approved transfer situation, their tenancy will be terminated and they will, in accordance with relevant legislative provisions, no longer be eligible for reassessment for inclusion on the housing waiting list and/or to access the Rent Supplement Scheme for alternative private rented accommodation, on the basis that their housing need has previously been addressed by the local authority. In any such circumstances tenants will be informed of the serious implications of surrendering their tenancy before a surrender of tenancy form will be accepted by Galway County Council. Where former tenants proceed to surrender their accommodation, they will be deemed responsible for meeting their accommodation needs from their own personal resources.

In the event that properties are abandoned by a tenant and the property is not occupied by the household as their normal place of residence for extended periods of time, proceedings will be initiated to recover possession of such properties and the properties will then be re-allocated to qualified applicants on the Housing Waiting List in accordance with the Council's Allocations Scheme.

4.10 Inter-Agency Approach

It is the policy of Galway County Council to adopt an inter-agency approach in the provision of services and accommodation to Travellers. This approach is critical, particularly in relation to addressing any special needs accommodation and support requirements. The HSE Public Health and Occupational Therapy services are central to this process.

4.11 Fire Safety

It is the policy of Galway County Council to maintain appropriate fire safety standards at Local Authority provided Traveller Accommodation. It is recognised that fire safety is a shared responsibility of both the Council and its tenants. The Council will undertake works, deliver a community fire safety programme and seek to address unauthorized dwellings and overcrowding, to meet appropriate fire safety standards. The active participation and support of tenants, Local Traveller Development/Support Groups and other relevant stakeholders will be required to both meet and maintain appropriate standards of fire safety and in the management and maintenance of the sites.

4.12 Control of Horses

Persons who own or have under horses under their charge, are obliged to comply with the requirements of the Control of Horses Act, 1996 Control of Horses Bye-Laws and animal welfare legislation.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF NEED / PROJECTED NEED 2019 - 2024

In accordance with Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988, as amended, and Section 6 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, Galway County Council assessed and identified the accommodation needs of Traveller families to be met during the period of this Programme, from 1st January, 2019 to 31st December, 2024.

This assessment relates to existing accommodation need and the projected need estimated to arise across the range of Traveller Accommodation options, including group and standard housing, long term leasing, rental accommodation scheme, HAP (Housing Assistance Payment) scheme and halting sites.

5.1 Submissions to TAP 2019 – 2024

Five submissions were received and the contents were discussed at LTACC meeting on October 18th 2018. They have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024. The Draft Programme also reflects the consultation with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and with individual Traveller families in relation to their accommodation needs. The Draft Programme also reflects the current and projected accommodation need, taking into consideration the following

- Traveller Households as per Annual Count November 2017/2018.
- Housing Needs Assessment 2018.
- New housing applications from Travellers received in 2018.
- Meetings with individual Traveller households.
- An estimate of new family formations.

5.2 Independent Review and Verification Exercise

Galway County Council with the agreement of the LTACC invited independent experts to assist in a review and verification exercise in relation to the preferences identified by Travellers in their application for social housing support. This exercise was conducted in partnership with the Galway Traveller Movement and the Western Traveller Intercultural Development group.

The verification exercise started with an initial examination of the data already gathered by Galway County Council on Traveller social housing preferences which was made available to the independent experts for the purpose of the exercise. This involved 51 applications for social housing support. In all cases, the preference indicated was for standard housing – rented local authority accommodation in the words of the application form.

Travellers who had completed social housing support application forms were invited to meetings to confirm their stated preferences. The meetings were organised over two days in four locations. Overall twenty individual or family interviews were held.

The meetings opened with presentations from Galway County Council and one of the Traveller organisations. This served to explain the purpose of the meeting and the process that would be followed. The independent contractors then interviewed the applicants individually and confidentially in an adjacent room.

The interview:

- Identified the stated preference of the individual or family involved in terms of housing and location.
- Discussed the reasons for the stated preference.
- Discussed the individual's or family's understanding of the Traveller specific accommodation types: Traveller halting site and Traveller group housing.
- Verified with the individual or family that they were satisfied with their stated preference or whether they wished to have anything changed.

Key Results

Of the twenty individuals and families interviewed:

- Sixteen interviewees confirmed a preference for standard housing, rented local authority accommodation, in line with the preference stated in their original application forms and confirmed their original stated preference for location.
- Two interviewees confirmed a preference for Traveller group housing in line with the preference stated in their original application forms and confirmed their original stated preference for location.
- Two interviewees indicated a preference for Traveller group housing. They were not able to confirm the preference they stated on their application form. Their original preference and any change would need to be confirmed, on the basis of the understanding of Traveller group housing. It was understood as: a cul-de-sac type setting where a group of Travellers were accommodated; housing with a yard for parking a caravan and with a shed; and involving a compatible extended family as neighbours.

Halting Sites

None of those interviewed expressed a preference for Traveller halting site accommodation. Those interviewees currently living on halting sites spoke negatively about their conditions. Issues of cold and dampness in living in a caravan/trailer was raised in relation to the halting site in Tuam. This might be an influencing factor on people's choices. However, only one interviewee expressed any interest in such accommodation and this interest was limited and such accommodation was not their first preference.

Group Housing

The majority of interviewees had limited or no understanding of what Traveller group housing entailed. It should be noted that, even when group housing was discussed and clarified, interviewee preferences did not change. Where there was understanding of, and preference for, group housing, it was understood as: a cul-de-sac type setting where a group of Travellers were accommodated; housing with a yard for parking a caravan and with a shed; and involving a compatible extended family as neighbours.

Private Rented Accommodation

Many interviewees expressed urgency and anxiety in relation to the precarity of their situation. This precarity was often related to insecurity in the private rented sector. Discrimination in the private rented sector was also identified as an issue.

Housing List (Record of Qualified Households)

The income cap was identified as problematic in catching out people who were still dependent on schemes and social welfare related incomes. Regulations governing the housing list, whereby a person comes off the housing list if they leave provided accommodation, were identified as problematic in the specific circumstances faced by Travellers where people indicated they had been left with no option but to vacate local authority provided/supported accommodation because of violence or because of unhealthy conditions.

5.3 Annual Traveller Count 2017 & 2018

Accommodation type	Households 2017	Households 2018
Standard Local Authority Houses	231	240
Group Housing	50	55
Houses purchased with LA assistance	55*	33
Purchased without LA assistance	14*	12*
RAS	15	20
Rent Supplement & Housing Assistance Payment	172	97*
Private Rented without Rent Supplement	5*	5*
Voluntary Housing	19	28
Affordable Housing	4	0
Families Sharing involuntarily	30	25
Families on Serviced Halting sites	16	21
Other Families (Unauthorised)	18	18
Total	628	554

(*) Estimate

The figures from the Annual Traveller Count show that Galway's Traveller population has increased significantly, from 382 households in 2002 to 547 households in 2012 and to 573 in 2016 and to 628 in 2017 – the apparent reduction in 2018 is considered to be due to multiple issues.

The exercise in projecting need is problematic given that there are so many variables for consideration. New family / household formation during the period 2019 - 2024 is anticipated to be in the region of 40 units. It is of note that with the reduction in Social Welfare rates for persons under 24 years old some young couples will have difficulty maintaining an independent tenancy.

The absence of an ethnic identifier was problematic in collating data and reliance was on the knowledge base in Housing regarding who are Travellers as well as information from Traveller groups.

It is noted that approximately 10 applicant Traveller families will need accessible housing.

5.4 Joint Application Area with Galway City Council

Thirteen families on the City Council Housing list, currently residing on the Galway City Council 'Temporary' Halting Site in Carrowbrowne, also previously expressed an interest in accommodation in the County.

It is noted that Galway City Council intends to close this site over the lifetime of this TAP and provide alternative accommodation for all families. The City Council are considering sites for a number of families in both the 'Transient' and 'Temporary' sites that will free up halting site accommodation. In addition, a site for the development of culturally specific traveller accommodation is being considered. Proposals for same are due to be brought forward for part 8 planning in 2019 by Galway City Council.

5.5 Targets 2019 - 2024:

The Projected Need over the 5-year period of this Accommodation Programme is for 40 households which added to existing need gives a total estimated need of 111 homes.

Accommodation Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2024	Total
Group Housing Scheme – Existing	1	1	1	1	1	5
New Group Housing	0	6	0	0	0	6
Permanent Halting Site Service Block - Existing	1	3	1	1	1	7
Local Authority Standard Housing	7	9	11	11	11	49
Rental Accommodation Scheme / Long term Leasing	1	0	1	0	1	3
Voluntary Housing	2	2	3	2	3	12
Purchase by Travellers		1		1		2
Housing Assistance Payment/ Private Rented Accommodation with/out Rent Supplement	5	7	5	5	5	27
Totals	17	29	22	21	22	111

The proposals in this Programme attempt to address the net need, as assessed, together with the projected need as estimated and also address the expressed preferences of most of the existing approved applicants for Standard Local Authority/RAS/Long Term Leased/Private Rented accommodation/ Housing Assistance Payments rather than Traveller-specific accommodation.

5.6 Accommodation Requirements & Provision

Recognising Travellers' distinct culture and needs, Galway County Council has provided Traveller specific accommodation in Ballygar, Loughrea, Tuam, Abbeyknockmoy, Craughwell, Portumna, Clontuskert and Athenry, in consultation with local Travellers and Traveller Support Groups. The Assessment of Needs 2018 combined with the independent assessment for this Draft TAP has not identified any requirement for additional Traveller specific accommodation from County applicants.

A small number of households wish to continue to be accommodated on the existing halting sites and group schemes. In addition, a requirement for Group Housing in Craughwell is being met. This project is currently being advanced by the Council and it is anticipated, that subject to the necessary funding approval, the project will be completed in 2020.

Capital investment has upgraded and enhanced facilities at a number of existing sites, including Capira Temporary Halting Site and Tuam Halting Site. The Council has submitted an application for further funding to the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government for the upgrade and enhancement of other Group Housing Schemes.

The expressed accommodation preference of the majority of Traveller housing applicants is for standard local authority housing or private rented accommodation. Accordingly, it is anticipated that the overall housing need will be met over the period of this Accommodation Programme predominantly through the provision of standard Local Authority Housing and through Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

The delivery of outputs under the Rental Accommodation Scheme, the Long Term Leasing Scheme and the Housing Assistance Payment is dependent on units being available in the private housing market and the willingness of the landlord/agent to engage in these Schemes. Given the extent of the Traveller population, and the level of general demand in some locations, households will have to consider a broader range of locations, within a reasonable distance, in terms of meeting their accommodation needs.

Galway County Council has over 3,000 approved applicants on the housing waiting list and allocations will be according to the Housing Allocation Scheme. It is expected that Approved Housing Bodies will continue to make a significant contribution, in terms of accommodation units, to this five year programme.

Travellers who are able to purchase their own homes will be encouraged to do so and grants and subsidies will be provided subject to availability of funds.

6.0 STRATEGY STATEMENT

Section 10 (2) requires that an accommodation programme should specify a strategy for securing the implementation of the programme.

6.1 Implementing Authority

Galway County Council is the authority responsible for implementing the Traveller Accommodation Programme. The Council co-operates and co-ordinates with other agencies to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers. In particular, a number of groups have an important role to play in securing the implementation of the programme including: -

- The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- The Housing, Recreation and Culture Strategic Policy Committee
- Local Traveller Development/Support Groups
- Health Services Executive West
- Tusla Child and Family Services
- An Garda Síochana
- Department of Social Protection
- Department of Education and Skills
- Voluntary Housing Groups

It will be the responsibility of Galway County Council to seek the co-operation of the above groups to ensure the implementation of the Programme. Progress in relation to the Plan will be monitored by the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the Department of the Housing, Planning and Local Government.

6.2 County Development Plan

Provisions contained in the Galway County Development Plan 2016-2021 are sufficient to realise the Traveller accommodation objectives set out in the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 - 2024. The LTACC will be afforded the opportunity to provide input to the development of the Galway County Development Plan 2022+ with a view to ensuring that the provisions therein are sufficient to continue to support the realisation of the objective of this Programme.

6.3 Development of Proposals/Implementation of Programme

The Council will avail of the full range of housing options having regard to expressed accommodation preferences and working within the existing budgetary constraints on capital funding and staffing resources. In relation to standard housing the need will be met, through the housing construction programme, through casual vacancies arising in existing local authority housing stock and subject to resources, a limited number of acquisitions. The Long-Term Leasing Scheme, Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), will also be utilised as a means of addressing long term housing needs. It is anticipated that the Approved Housing Bodies will continue to make a significant contribution to responding to the identified housing needs and preferences.

It is acknowledged that there are issues in relation to the availability of private rented accommodation. Assistance will be given to Approved Housing Bodies in the provision of Traveller Accommodation through the available voluntary housing funding channels. It is considered that there is potential for this approach to result in increased supply of suitable accommodation and any proposal for the establishment of an

Approved Housing Body with a focus on Traveller Accommodation will be Galway will receive favourable and due consideration subject to Departmental funding and guidelines.

Galway County Council will continue to engage with Galway City in the context of applicants with common applications in the City and the County.

6.4 Financial Resources

The successful implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024 will continue to be dependent on the provision of funding (capital and revenue) from the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government.

The Council will continue to utilise available funding to provide, upgrade and enhance Traveller specific accommodation. A priority of this programme, will be the redevelopment of the Craughwell Halting Site to facilitate a Group Scheme, in accordance with the stated preference of the residents. The completion of the upgrade to Capira Temporary Halting Site and to Creggaun Group Housing Scheme will also be progressed as priority projects.

The Council will continue to commit resources and prioritise fire safety on all sites. The Council is also committed to advancing necessary upgrades and improvements to Group Housing Schemes on a priority basis within the limits of available funding and in consultation with the LTACC and residents.

6.5 Management and Maintenance of Accommodation

The effective management and maintenance of accommodation is crucial. Traveller accommodation will be managed on the same basis as all other housing stock. Galway County Council will endeavour to ensure maximum tenant participation to manage and maintain accommodation schemes to a high standard.

Heat, Dampness and Mould was referenced in three submissions received. All Housing staff visiting Council properties are equipped to advise on the consequences of inadequate ventilation and / or heat. Structural issues causing damp are rare and present in a very different pattern. Staff will advise maintenance team if a technical inspection is merited. Further emphasis will be put on the issues of heating and ventilation in pre-tenancy training in future.

6.6 Back Up Services and Support

The Council's Housing Unit employs two fulltime caretakers to deal with maintenance issues in relation to Traveller specific accommodation units. Supports also include a Traveller Liaison Officer, two Social Workers and a Senior Social Worker. In addition, the staff of the Housing Department are available to deal with issues arising. New housing applicants are assessed by the Housing Unit and information and advice is available to applicants as required on the range of housing options available.

The Council has recently strengthened tenancy support through the adoption of a Tenancy Sustainment Strategy. This model is proving effective and will continue to be rolled out to all existing and new tenants.

The continual provision of emergency homeless accommodation to those assessed as having a genuine need. The HAP Place-Finder will continue to assist those at risk of or experiencing homelessness to secure accommodation in the private rented sector.

6.7 Tensions within the Traveller Community

In the Independent Review and Verification Exercise, the reason most frequently given for the stated preferences for standard housing, over Traveller specific accommodation, related to tensions within the Traveller community. All emphasised that there were good and bad people in the Traveller community as in any community. The concentration of Travellers on particular estates or parts of estates was challenged as poor practice.

In implementing the Traveller Accommodation Programme, the Council is committed to reviewing with the LTACC the approach to allocations and the community development interventions required for a greater dispersed community.

6.8 Traveller Identity

In the Review and Verification Exercise many interviewees articulated a pride in their Traveller identity. It was recognised that cultural change presents significant challenges for a community, especially where that community is under pressure. It can be easy for community members to identify those elements of the culture that have gone, but more difficult to establish the new forms for a shared culture that would underpin the pride they have in their identity. This is a process that is necessary for future wellbeing and a process that needs active and innovative support.

6.9 Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

In accordance with the provisions of Section 21 and 22 of the 1998 Act a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee has been established. The Committee meets regularly to advise Galway County Council on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers.

The Consultative Committee plays an important role in the development and review of the Traveller Accommodation Programme. The views of the Committee have been taken into account in the preparation of this Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme. Implementation of the Programme will be monitored by the Committee and issues arising addressed.

The strategy for implementation of this Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019- 2024 will continue to focus on the following areas:

- **Ongoing review:** The Council will review this Programme on an ongoing basis through the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC). These reviews will include all issues associated with the accommodation of Traveller families.
- **Interagency approach:** many other statutory and semi-state agencies have responsibilities in relation to Traveller accommodation and all its associated needs. The Council will engage fully with these agencies in the implementation of this Programme and this approach is currently working well in terms of tenancy sustainment.
- **Ensuring mutual respect and community harmony.** The recognition and respect of all stakeholders for each other is central to the successful integration of Travellers into the community. The Council's monitoring and support of Estate Management, Resident Associations and tenancy agreements support this position.

- **Promoting voluntary housing:** The Council is committed to the objective of utilizing this scheme to provide additional Traveller accommodation units. This assistance will take the form of provision of advice at all stages of the application process, provision of sites for housing if available and required, and provision of funding (if available) under the Capital Assistance Scheme or Capital Advance and Leasing Finance as appropriate.
- **The management and maintenance of units:** the Council carries out pre-tenancy training for all its tenants, and their rights and obligations under the Tenancy Agreement are clarified at this stage. The Council employs two Caretakers to facilitate access to Traveller-specific accommodation, and to report any maintenance issues, breaches of tenancy, and anti-social behaviour at these sites. In addition, the Council employs four Housing Liaison Officers and a Traveller Liaison Officer, who are involved in implementing estate management initiatives, and also deal with breaches of Tenancy Agreements. In particular, there is a focus on tenant participation in the management and maintenance of estates, through the establishment of Residents Associations in all Council Estates. The Council's Social Workers work closely with the Traveller community, to assist them in meeting their housing and associated welfare needs, liaising with other State Agencies as required.
- **Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour** is a huge drain on human and financial resources therefore strict adherence to Tenancy Agreements is required for all tenants. It is proposed to continue to avail of the existing CCTV in estates, including Traveller Specific Accommodation, and to extend the use of CCTV, within the limits of available funding, to allow for appropriate action to be taken against offenders identified by means of the CCTV systems.

7.0 REVIEW:

Section 17(1)(a) of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, provides that a relevant housing authority shall review its Accommodation Programme at least once in each three-year period, or at such time as directed by the Minister. Any amendment to the Accommodation Programme proposed following any such review must be made within seven months and is subject to the same procedures and requirements, including public consultation.

The Minister has, under section 17(1) of the 1998 Act, directed that a review of the Accommodation Programme should be carried out no later than 31st December 2021.

The equality and human rights statement will be applied as a proofing instrument in our annual review and business planning on Traveller accommodation. It will be applied as an evaluation tool in the mid-term review of the Traveller Accommodation Programme, referred to on an ongoing basis to identify actions required to ensure that the issues identified continue to be addressed in the provision of Traveller accommodation and used in reports on implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme to establish progress on the issues identified.

8.0 CONCLUSION:

The Council has an excellent record in the provision of accommodation and integration of Traveller families into the community, and with the continued commitment of the Council and the assistance of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and Traveller Inter-Agency Group, it is hoped that this success will continue, subject to the availability of all required resources.

The targets set out in this Programme have been developed having regard to the existing and projected need for Traveller accommodation. The delivery of this Programme requires a commitment from all stakeholders to work together and is also dependent on the availability of necessary funding. The success of the programme also depends on Travellers and support agencies recognising the current constraints on accommodation provision and accepting that applicants will have to be flexible about locations if their housing need is to be met.

The Council recognises that the provision of appropriate associated supports is also a critical factor in ensuring that the accommodation solutions delivered for individual families are successful. We will continue to work closely with Travellers, their representatives, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, Traveller Support Groups, and other relevant agencies in this regard. We will also continue to actively seek, in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate, to identify and access potential funding opportunities to progress initiatives in relation to Traveller development, support and integration.

The Council is also committed to further investment in existing sites and group schemes during the period of the TAP 2019 – 2024. This investment programme will be informed by the stock survey currently being progressed by Galway County Council.