

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

2019-2024

Carlow County Council

**The Relevant Housing Authority for Carlow County Council in accordance with
The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998.**

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Section 1

Introduction and Legal Framework

Under the provisions of the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998, Carlow County Council is required to prepare, adopt and implement a new Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) to meet the accommodation needs of the County's indigenous Traveller community; those families considered as resident and on Carlow County Council's Housing List for social housing support in the County during the preparation of this proposed plan for 2019-2024 in respect of the County and Town Local Authority areas.

This Traveller Accommodation Programme will cover the period from 1st January, 2019 to the 30th June, 2024.

Directions under the Act in relation to the preparation of the new Traveller Accommodation Programme are contained in Circular 35/2018 together with a 'Memorandum on the Preparation, Adoption and Implementation of Local Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2019-2024' issued by the Minister in July 2018. The Minister has specified that the latest date for the adoption of TAPs is the 30th September, 2019.

In summary, the Memorandum covers the various provisions of the 1998 Act which govern the Housing Authority's duties in relation to preparation, adoption and implementation of accommodation programmes and related matters. These provisions;

- require relevant housing authorities, in consultation with Travellers and representative bodies, to prepare and adopt, by a specified date, an accommodation programme to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in their area;
- allow for public input to the preparation and amendment of such programmes;
- oblige relevant Housing Authorities to take appropriate steps to secure implementation of programmes, and
- require planning authorities to include objectives concerning Traveller accommodation in their county/city development plans.

Carlow County Council will refer to the administrative area of County Carlow for this Programme as prescribed in Section 5 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of Carlow County Council to provide sustainable, quality social affordable and cost-effective housing to meet current and future accommodation need. Within available resources, it is Carlow County Council's policy to provide group and standard housing options as well as halting sites, temporary/emergency accommodation and single instance houses for the accommodation of Traveller households, who are indigenous to County Carlow, in accordance with the Assessment of Need carried out under the Traveller Accommodation Act. Such options are, where feasible, provided in recognition of the need for Traveller-specific accommodation by some households.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC)

Membership of the LTACC consists of Traveller representatives, Traveller Development Groups, Elected Representatives of the Council and Council officials. The role of Carlow's Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee is to provide a forum where Traveller Accommodation issues and policy can be addressed in a timely and co-ordinated manner and where policy decisions can be made.

Consultation Process:

The formal consultation process has been outlined in Circular 35/2018 and the 'Memorandum on the Preparation, Adoption and Implementation of Local Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2019-2024' issued by the Minister in July 2018.

Carlow County Council has also consulted directly with local individuals, families and groups to establish current and projected need.

Section 2

Progress Achieved During Traveller Accommodation Programme 2013-2018

Statistical Data, Census 2016:

County Carlow occupies an area of 896 square kilometres. As of Census 2016, Carlow has a population of 54,532. The National Census 2016 return for Travellers identifies that there are 636 people who identified as Travellers in County Carlow. There is a variance with the data obtained in the 2016 Annual Traveller Count, in which a total of 257 households were listed as Traveller. Most households comprise of more than two people.

The TAP 2014-2018 was adopted by the Members of Carlow County Council in October 2014 on behalf of Carlow County Council in accordance with Section 5 of the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998.

During the 2014-2018 period, significant progress was made in Co. Carlow in meeting Traveller Accommodation demand and dealing with significant Traveller Accommodation issues, bearing in mind the constraints in resources at Local and National levels.

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 requires that each Housing Authority adopts a Traveller Accommodation programme for its functional area. In October 2014, Carlow County Council adopted a five-year programme for the period 2014-2018. The accommodation aim of the programme for this period was to accommodate 25 families in Local Authority/RAS accommodation and 35 in other forms of private rented accommodation, supported by rent supplement, as appropriate. The following Table sets out the targets and achievements by November 2018;

TABLE 1

Type of accommodation required	Target No. of families	Achieved to October 2018
Rural single instance purchase	3	4
Local Authority	22	22
Voluntary	0	3
RAS	0	2
Other Private Rented	35	35
Total	60	66

Families Accommodated by type as per Annual Count 2013 and 2018 for Co. Carlow

During the lifetime of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018, the following units of accommodation were provided by Carlow County Council as per the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998:

Standard Accommodation

Twenty-two tenancies were accepted by Traveller households during the 2014-2018 Programme. Standard Local Authority housing remains the preferred accommodation solution among Traveller applicants in Carlow.

Group Housing Scheme

Carlow County Council has two Traveller-specific group housing schemes at St Brigid's Place, Hacketstown Road, Carlow and Ardristan, Tullow. Both facilities have been expanded to their capacity, with the re-designation of the Caretaker properties in both schemes to family homes.

Household-Specific Accommodation:

Funding was secured for the adaptation and refurbishment of three single instance properties in the County for Traveller families to date during the current TAP. Funding was also obtained for the purchase and adaptation of a further property to address special needs within a household.

Living with Family

The number of Carlow Traveller households living with family rose to seventy-seven by November, 2018.

A shortage of affordable private rented accommodation in the housing market has led to a national problem, and the effects are reflected among Carlow Traveller households, where there is a stronger dependence among affected individuals for family support. The cultural aspiration among young single Travellers to remain at home until marriage remains evident. As with the wider population, relationship breakdown has increased, contributing to the number of Traveller family members returning home.

The rise in the number of households living with family has continued to date. While the support offered by such arrangements is important, families regularly report experiencing difficulties associated with overcrowding and multi-family living.

RAS Accommodation

The number of Traveller households living in RAS accommodation decreased from four to two during the lifetime of the last Traveller Accommodation Programme. This was the result of a reduction in the number of available RAS properties and an increase in Social Housing allocations towards the end of the Programme.

Accommodation by Voluntary/Approved Housing Bodies

Over the 2014-2018 Traveller Accommodation Programme there was an increase in the number of Traveller households accommodated by Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) since 2015. The increase resulted from the manner in which funding for housing was released. Carlow County Council worked closely with AHB partners over the last Traveller Accommodation Programme to meet minimum quotas for Traveller accommodation and will continue to do so during the lifetime of the 2019-2024 Programme.

Halting Sites

Significant resourcing was required over the lifetime of the 2014-2018 Programme towards the maintenance of Bestfield Halting Site. Remedial work and re-purposing of four bays to two houses has led to an increase from four to seven households accommodated during the timeframe of the Programme

Transient Need

The programme additionally allowed for the provision of two transient units during the period to cater for the temporary accommodation in appropriate circumstances. These transient bays have been provided at the Bestfield Halting Site. During the last Programme, the Transient Bay was used to accommodate families while building work was completed on new houses on the site.

There was a rise in the number of households living temporarily on illegal roadside sites within the County during the last Programme period. Temporary provision was limited by the location of the transient bay.

Families Accommodated in County Carlow

During the lifetime of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018, the following units of accommodation were provided by Carlow County Council as per the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998:

TABLE 2

Accommodation Type	Traveller Households 2013:	Traveller Households 2018:
<i>Standard L.A. housing</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Homeowners</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Group Housing</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Rural Single Instance</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Living with Family</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Private Rented</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>104</i>
<i>RAS</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Voluntary Housing</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Halting Sites</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Roadside</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Emergency Accommodation</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>6</i>
Total	221	336

Families Accommodated by type as per Annual Count 2013 and 2018 for Co. Carlow

Section 3

Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024:

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 aims to meet the level of need identified within this programme while at the same time recognising the resource constraints that currently exist nationally. Additionally, this Programme recognises that as with the previous TAP for Co. Carlow, the general trend in terms of accommodation need, is for standard social housing.

While Traveller specific accommodation will be provided, where possible, in accordance with expressed wishes of Traveller households on Carlow County Council's Housing List, the main source of accommodation units over the lifetime of this plan will be standard social housing in its current context, which includes RAS, standard local authority accommodation, leased accommodation and HAP and AHBs.

Assessment of Traveller Accommodation Need 2019-2024:

Under Section 6 of the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998, as amended by Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, an Assessment of Needs has been conducted by Carlow County Council. The Housing Needs Assessment process of 2018 has informed this assessment. The table hereunder sets out the likely need over the term of the Programme:

Estimated Traveller Need 2019-2024;

TABLE 3

Accommodation Category	Current Need	Total Estimated Need to 2024
Households requiring Standard Social Housing	122	180
Households requiring Traveller Group Housing	0	3
Households requiring Rural Single Instance Housing	35	55
Households Requesting Halting Site Accommodation	0	3
Households requiring Transient Accommodation	1+ 2 seasonal bays	2+ 2 seasonal bays
Total Households Estimated in Need of Accommodation 2019-2024	160	245

As with the wider housing list, a significant proportion of accommodation need is met through the private rented market with social housing supports. Carlow County Council will continue to actively promote the available range of social housing options for Traveller families which are set out hereunder:

Standard Local Authority Housing

Standard Local Authority accommodation remains the preferred accommodation option for Traveller households in Carlow. Resource limitations experienced by Local Authorities between 2010 and 2014 resulted in an increase in the number of households requiring standard Social Housing. Capital funding streams have again emerged since 2015, initially through “Section 10” projects by Approved Housing Bodies.

While it will take time to address accumulated housing need, Carlow County Council has implemented a programme of purchase and building which will meet needs over the next four years.

Carlow County Council will endeavour to maintain a minimum policy of “one in ten” as per previous Accommodation Programmes.

Group Housing Scheme

Group housing has provided a very positive, culturally sensitive accommodation solution to family groups in the past. Such developments have been successful in the past in Carlow, however, as new relationships have formed and extended families grown, difficulties have arisen. Currently there are no households seeking group housing as an accommodation option. This is not a phenomenon unique to Carlow; rather, it appears to concur with a growing preference among Traveller households for either standard housing estates or single instance accommodation. Carlow County Council will continue to monitor interest in group housing as an accommodation option.

Single Instance Accommodation

There are currently thirty-five families who have expressed a preference for single instance accommodation. It is estimated that the number of households requiring rural single instance accommodation will increase to fifty-five.

While it may be unlikely that the Council will obtain the resources to purchase fifty-five units of single instance accommodation during this Programme, it will endeavour to provide such accommodation where funding is available.

Living with Family

The number of applicants living with family has risen for the third Programme period. As stated previously, the main reason for individuals remaining with family are associated with the shortfall between rents and rent allowance, the lack of available properties, the wish to remain at home until marriage and family members returning home due to relationship breakdown. Resulting overcrowding has strained otherwise strong family bonds. Carlow County Council will endeavour to support instances where extended family members seek to remain together, however it will continue to monitor such instances to minimise the likelihood and effect of overcrowding.

RAS, Private Rented and Lease Options

In the 2018 Traveller Count, there were 104 households in private rented accommodation, making it the primary source of Traveller accommodation in the County. Carlow County Council will continue to facilitate use of private rented accommodation where possible through its HAP and RAS schemes. Where households have been assessed as ineligible for inclusion to Carlow County Council’s Housing List but have a Housing Need (as defined in Section of the Housing Act, 1988) the Council will work with the Department of Social Protection to ensure access to assessment for Rent Allowance.

The number of households in receipt of Rent Allowance has decreased during the 2014-2018 Traveller Accommodation Programme, as tenants transferred over to the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Scheme. HAP tenancies are now the standard system of rental supplement and will continue as such into the future. Leasing options remain experimental to date. The Council will continue to monitor Leasing arrangements to assess its appropriateness as a potential Traveller accommodation solution.

Voluntary Housing, or Approved Housing Bodies (AHB's)

The number of Traveller families accommodated by Voluntary Housing bodies has been relatively low since the commencement of Traveller Accommodation Programmes, however the number of households has risen from two to nine during the last two Programmes. Further inclusion of Voluntary Housing Agencies is required in the provision of accommodation for Traveller households. Carlow County Council will continue to engage Voluntary Housing Associations/AHB's in securing a range of accommodation options for Traveller households.

Halting Sites and Transient Need

Carlow County Council provided six long-term Halting Bays and one transient Halting Bay in its Traveller Accommodation stock since the commencement of Traveller Accommodation Programmes in 1998. While Halting Bays and sites have served a purpose, they have not proven successful. All Halting Site/Bay tenants have requested alternative, housed accommodation away from Halting sites.

On the other hand, one extended family of three households moved out of housed accommodation into an unofficial rural Halting Site during the 2014-2018 Traveller Accommodation Programme, due to the lack of freedom to keep livestock and horses. When asked about their long-term accommodation preferences, households on that site stated that they would like a Halting Site or small-scale group house in a rural area, where they could have their horses and livestock, without what they saw as the difficulties of urban/housing estate life.

In surveying the households to establish accommodation type and need for the duration of the 2019-2024 Programme, families questioned specified that they did not want transient halting bays in the County. There is an ongoing need for transient accommodation in Carlow unrelated to any existing site or group scheme.

Carlow County Council will monitor and evaluate such evolving attitudes towards specific types of accommodation and will work with the families, groups and the Traveller Accommodation Committee to address emerging need.

Proposed Accommodation 2019 – 2024:

In framing the proposal for meeting the accommodation needs of travelling families over the period 2019-2024, Carlow County Council must note the shortfalls accrued over the past two Accommodation Programmes.

Since 2010 the Table below indicates the proposed accommodation from 2019-2024:

Accommodation Programme 2019-2024:

TABLE 4

Type of Accommodation	No. of families
Rural single instance/ Specific Need	50
Estate / Group housing /Voluntary	110
Other/ Private rented / RAS / Leased	80
Halting/ Transient Accommodation	5
Total	245

Carlow County Council will endeavour to meet these requirements over the period of the programme. The policy of offering one in ten vacancies to traveller families will continue where appropriate.

Section 4

Challenges

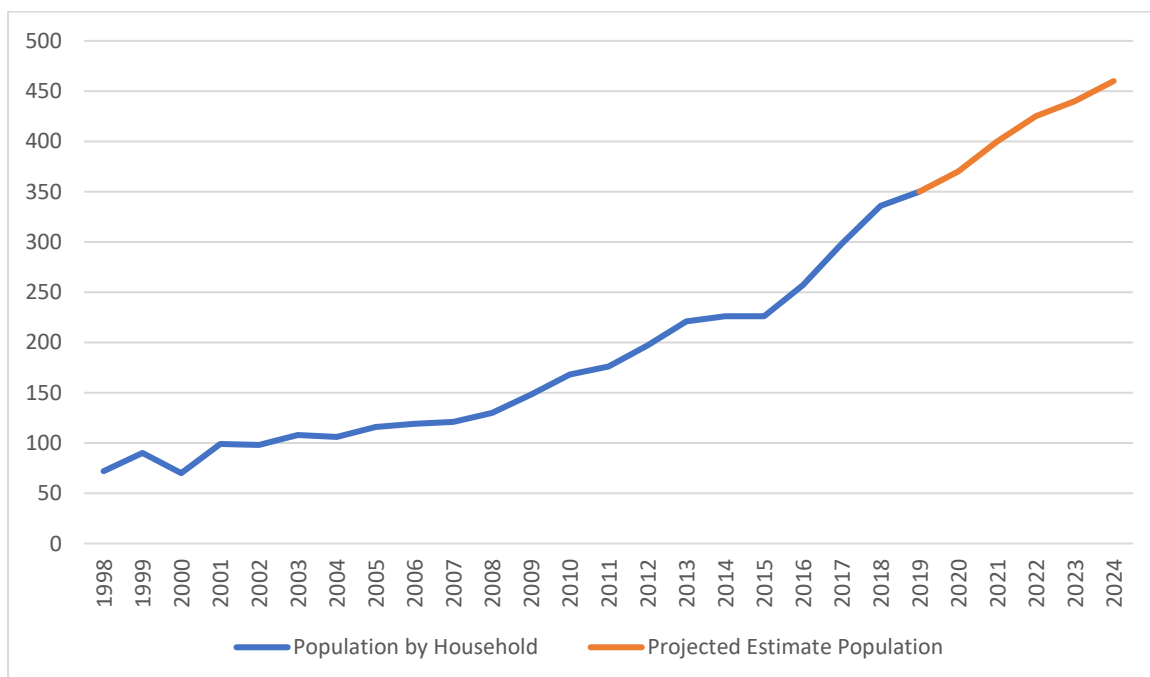
Over the three Traveller Accommodation Programmes to date there have been continuous significant increases in household numbers. The rise in the number of Traveller Families in Carlow between 2014 and 2018 has been forty-six percent. A portion of this is explained by the dependants of applicants and tenants becoming eligible for inclusion to the Council's annual census, relationship breakdown and households returning to Carlow.

Growth in the number of Traveller households in Carlow is outlined below. Based upon the figures and current household make-up, it is likely that Carlow's population of Traveller households will increase by between:

TABLE 5

1998 - 2002		26.50%	
2003 - 2008		20.00%	
2009 - 2013		42.00%	
2014-2018		48.50%	
2019-2024	336-485 (estimate)	40.00%	

Percentage of growth in Traveller Households by Programme (including estimate to 2024)



The increase in household numbers 1998-2018 (including estimated figure by 2024)

The Council will continue to monitor developing accommodation need associated with population growth and provide accommodation support within resources.

Consultation Process

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 requires that an extensive consultation process underpins the preparation and implementation of the TAP. All TAPs are required to be prepared and implemented in consultation with other local public bodies, Travellers - directly and via Traveller Support Groups, the LTACC and the wider public.

Notice of the intention to carry out the Assessment of Need and to prepare a Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme was given\ to:

- LTACC members;
- Housing, Community, Recreation & Amenity Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
- Carlow Traveller Interagency Group
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Health Services Executive

Notice was also published in the local press. The closing date for receipt of submissions prior to the publication of the draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018 was the 14th of December, 2018 and following the draft publication, the closing date was the 6th August, 2019. Submissions were made from the following individuals, groups and organisations;

1. William and Margaret Connors
2. William Connors
3. William and Bridget Cash
4. Carlow Traveller Forum
5. Health Service Executive – Traveller Health Office
6. Forward Steps Resource Centre, Tullow
7. Health Service Executive – Traveller Mental Health Co-Ordinator
8. St. Catherine’s Community Services Centre

Appendix 1 – Relevant Department Circular and Memorandum

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government Circular 35/2018 and attached Memorandum on the Preparation, Adoption and Implementation of Local Authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes refers.

Appendix 2 – Operational Issues relating to Housing Applications and Provision of Accommodation:

Management and Maintenance of Traveller Accommodation

To ensure that the accommodation and its surrounding area are maintained in good condition and that tenants successfully and peacefully co-exist with other households, it is essential that satisfactory arrangements are put in place for the management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation. Regular Caretaker support is available to assist in the management and maintenance of existing Group Schemes and Halting Sites. Measures such as pre-tenancy training, Estate Management and Tenancy Sustainment support will continue.

Allocation of Accommodation:

Allocation of Traveller Accommodation will take place, having regard to the criteria outlined in the current Allocation Scheme and the availability of resources. In the case of bays on the Halting Site or units in a Group Housing Scheme, the compatibility of families will be considered and consultation on this issue will take place with other families in the development. The Council will also have regard to Estate Management issues, however in all instances the Council reserves the right to allocate the unit as it sees fit. Transfer applications will be considered from the following:

- Mutual transfers between agreeing parties with the approval of the Housing Officer
- Mutual transfers between agreeing parties who satisfy the Local Authority guidelines for transfers
- For persons with disabilities, due regard will be made to accommodation which would be more suitable to their needs
- For the effective use of housing stock
- To overcome overcrowding
- In exceptional circumstances where the Local Authority deems it the most appropriate course of action

Transfer Applications will not be considered regarding tenants who are in arrears of rent or who have failed to keep to the terms of the tenancy agreement in relation to anti-social behaviour or the upkeep and maintenance of the dwelling occupied by them. This is in accordance with the relevant local authority Allocation Scheme adopted by the Council. In such instances, it is important for tenants to contact Carlow County Council to address such difficulties.

It is recognised that many families on halting sites will want to move to more permanent accommodation. Such families who apply for transfers will be considered for any suitable vacancy that arises, subject to compliance with the above paragraph.

Unless there are pressing reasons accepted by the Council Housing Officer, a refusal of a reasonable offer of a house in an area of their choice will result in no other offer being made for a period of one year.

Acceptance to Housing List

To be considered for a place on a Housing List, an applicant must complete and return a Housing Application Form, along with the required documentation. The Local Authority will assess each application and decide on qualification for inclusion in the housing list. In instances where an applicant has difficulty reading or understanding the Application Form, assistance will be given. Once an applicant is placed on the Housing List, they are entitled to accommodation support.

Indigenous Requirement

Carlow County Council, as other Local Authorities, requires all applicants to provide proof of residency in Carlow for a minimum period of six months prior to eligibility for acceptance on its Housing List.

Connection with the area outlines instances where an applicant has a direct link with the County, principally where the applicant is from Carlow and is returning or has immediate family such as one or both parents established in Carlow.

If a person must live in Carlow for work or training, their application may be considered on that basis, subject to provision of suitable proof by the applicant.

Tenancy Agreements

A Standard Tenancy Agreement will apply for all accommodation types, unless otherwise deemed necessary. The conditions of the Tenancy Agreement are fully enforced. Prior to commencing a tenancy, each tenant will be made fully and comprehensively aware of the terms and conditions.

Appendix 3 – Glossary

Group Housing Scheme: A scheme of two or more houses specifically built for members of the Travelling Community.

Transient Site: A transient halting site is a site providing basic facilities for short-term use by families pursuing a nomadic way of life or visiting relatives.

Transitional Site: A site providing basic facilities for families awaiting permanent accommodation.

Halting Site: A permanent halting site is a site with individual bays, with a full range of services provided in a small structure on each bay.

Single (Instance) House or Site: House or site on it's own grounds and not part of a larger scheme.

RAS: Rental Accommodation Scheme

LTACC: Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Traveller Interagency Group: Established in Carlow in 2006 - part of a National initiative to ensure co-ordinated service delivery across a broad range of sectoral areas to local Traveller communities