



Limerick County Council.

Traveller Accommodation Programme. 2009 - 2013

Adopted by Limerick County Council
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Index

Introduction	Page 2
Plan 2005-2008	Page 3
Legislation & Policy	Page 4
Policy Statement	Page 5
Assessed Need/Projected Need	Page 9
Performance, Monitoring & Measurement	Page 11
Strategy for Implementation	Page 12
Implementation Measures	Page 15
➤ Bruff Electoral Area	
➤ Castleconnell Electoral Area.	
➤ Kilmallock Electoral Area	
➤ Newcastle Electoral Area	
➤ Rathkeale Electoral Area	
Summary	Page 20

Introduction

Limerick County Council is committed to providing quality services to all citizens of the county. The provision of Traveller Accommodation and associated support services is a central part of the Housing Services Programme. There are currently 247 families* living in permanent accommodation provided by the Local Authority in county Limerick.

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 requires that each Housing Authority adopts a Traveller Accommodation programme for its functional area and on 28th February 2005 Limerick County Council adopted a 4 year programme for the period 2005-2008.

Limerick County Council, in preparing the programme for 2009-2013 undertook an extensive consultation process with all stakeholders. This involved meetings with Travellers themselves, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the Housing Strategic Policy Committee and members of the Council. Contact was made with other relevant bodies including the Health Services Executive, adjoining Local Authorities, Traveller and Local Development Organisations and other groups that have an interest in the provision of Traveller Services. By way of advertisements in the local press, written submissions were sought from members of the public and any other groups that might wish to make a contribution towards the preparation of the programme.

The active involvement of Travellers and other agencies on the Traveller Inter-agency Group for County Limerick also assisted in the development of this programme.

This process has resulted in the development of an accommodation programme for the period 2009-2013 which it is hoped will address the accommodation needs of Travellers in County Limerick.

*Dept of the Environment ,Heritage &Local Government Annual Count of Travellers – Nov 2007

Section1

Programme 2005-2008

The Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 2005-2008 was adopted on 28th February 2005 and was reviewed, pursuant to Section 17 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 in 2007. It is envisaged that the targets set out in the programme (92 families to be provided with permanent accommodation) will be achieved by the end of the programme despite significant challenges.

During the period 2005 to June 2008

- 85 families have been provided with permanent accommodation.
- Four major capital projects were completed:
 - 7 Bay Halting Site and Community Centre in Castletroy
 - 14 Bay Halting Site and Community Centre in Clondrinagh*
 - 17 New House Development for Travellers in Rathkeale.
 - 2 bay Halting Site in Kilmallock.
- In addition to these major capital works temporary halting site services were provided to seven families in Kilmallock, Clonmacken and Boher.
- Refurbishment works to Traveller Specific Accommodation was completed during the period of the programme. These works were carried out to:
 - to the 11 Bay Halting Site, Rathkeale
 - to the communal area of Deel Court, Group Housing Scheme, Rathkeale.
- The local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee met on 11 occasions. (Feb 2005 - July 2008)
- A new Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will be established in 2008 which will be in place for the duration of the new programme.

** Following a ministerial order made on the 1st March 2008 under sections 3 and 31(3) of the Local Government Act 1991 an alteration to Limerick City boundary occurred and the newly constructed 14 bay Halting Site at Clondrinagh is now within the functional area of Limerick City Council.*

- Increased resources were provided for Traveller tenants during the period of the plan. These include Traveller specific pre-tenancy training, on site meetings, family support work and the delivery of on site inter-agency services.
- Improved Traveller participation and representational structures were established via the inter-agency strategy for Traveller Services, on-site meetings and community development work with tenants.

Section 2

Legislation & Policy

The accommodation programme for the period 2009-2013 has been prepared in accordance with the provisions set out in the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

The plan will be implemented having regard to all relevant housing and other legislation and will take into consideration the requirements of relevant policies and departmental guidelines and circulars.

It is the intention of Limerick County Council when implementing the accommodation programme that where possible agreement by all stakeholders will be achieved. In any event, actions implemented will be on the basis that they meet the accommodation needs of families having regard to local community needs and circumstances.

Section 3

Policy Statement

- It is the policy of Limerick County Council to provide appropriate accommodation for indigenous Traveller families who request it, and who, pursuant to generic housing legislation and the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 are considered to be in need of accommodation.
- Applications must be made by means of the standard application form for accommodation and all applications will be considered. Advice and assistance will be provided to applicants and/or their representatives if requested by the applicant to address any difficulties that may arise in completing the application process.
- Applicants for accommodation will be assessed and considered in the context of this programme and Limerick County Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities.
- Indigenous families are those who originally come from the administrative area of Limerick County Council and have been resident in the area for twelve months or more prior to application. It is necessary that one of the applicants come from the administrative area of Limerick County Council.
- It is also the policy of this Council that where feasible the preferred option in terms of the type of accommodation requested will be considered. If this is not possible, other accommodation options will be considered and may be offered to individual families. If this is refused by individual families, without good reason, their application for accommodation may be given a reduced priority. In circumstances where three offers of accommodation have been refused the applicants may be removed from the waiting list.
- Limerick County Council will implement this programme based on proper consultation with individual families, members of the public and community based voluntary organisations where appropriate, other statutory agencies, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the voluntary sector and other relevant bodies. Regard will be given at all times to the statutory obligations of Limerick County Council and to the feasibility of recommendations and suggestions made in relation to the implementation of the programme.

- Applicants must meet the requirements outlined above and if applying from the roadside or an unofficial site they must provide evidence that they have pursued other accommodation options. If other options are available as interim solutions Limerick County Council has to be satisfied that a family's decision to opt for the roadside or an unofficial site is reasonable taking individual circumstances into account. If Limerick County Council is satisfied that applicants have no other option, an application from a roadside or an unofficial site will be approved if the applicants are considered to be in need of assistance and meet the other qualifying criteria.
- In circumstances where families vacate Local Authority accommodation and re-apply for accommodation all factors will be taken into consideration when assessing the new application. Limerick County Council has to be satisfied that the reasons given for vacating previous accommodation are reasonable, in the family's best interest and were not for the sole purpose of securing alternative accommodation.
- It is the policy of Limerick County Council that priority will be given to the provision of permanent accommodation for indigenous families and that the provision of sites with limited facilities as defined in Section 29 Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act will be considered only in exceptional circumstances as determined by Limerick County Council.
- Sites with limited facilities as defined in Section 29 Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 will not be provided, if an offer of accommodation is refused, or to families who already have been accommodated or who have the resources to provide their own accommodation save in exceptional circumstances as determined by Limerick County Council.
- It shall be the policy of Limerick County Council that consideration will be given to the provision of transient sites in consultation with adjoining local authorities.
- Having regard to the special circumstances in Rathkeale, specific site provision will continue to be provided in Rathkeale to meet the needs of local families who lead a transient lifestyle and for those who reside permanently in the town. Provision of accommodation in Rathkeale will be for local Rathkeale families only.
- It is the policy of Limerick County Council that Travellers themselves must take primary responsibility for their economic activities including horse husbandry and care. Where it is possible and feasible to do so consideration will be given to supporting Travellers in the pursuit of legitimate economic activities.
- Persons who own horses are obliged to comply with the requirements of the Control of Horses Act 1996, animal welfare legislation and the Control of Horses Bye - Laws 1998.

- It is the policy of Limerick County Council to adopt an inter-agency approach in the delivery of Traveller services. New accommodation provision and/or support services will be provided as part of the inter-agency strategic approach to service delivery.
- Limerick County Council will assist families prior to and after the allocation of accommodation and training will be provided in conjunction with Limerick County Council's pre-tenancy training programme. The Council in conjunction with the Health Services Executive will develop further the family support system to assist such families and Traveller families will be assisted and encouraged to participate in tenant participation programmes.
- Traveller accommodation will be managed on the same basis as the Council's policy for the maintenance and the management of its housing stock.
- Accommodation provided will be to a high standard and maintenance of this accommodation will be provided in accordance with the Council's policy in relation to the general housing/accommodation stock.
- The requirements of National Guidelines will be considered in the construction, maintenance and management of Traveller accommodation.
- Tenants will be required to meet their responsibilities as outlined in the tenancy agreement entered into between themselves and the Council and the "Tenants Handbook". Traveller tenants will be afforded the benefits and requirements of the Councils' Tenant Support Policy.
- Tenants will be provided with support as part of the Council's Tenant Support Services to participate fully in their own living environment and have a meaningful input in the development of this environment.
- It is the policy of Limerick County Council that failure on the part of tenants to comply with the requirements of the tenancy agreement, including the provisions relating to anti-social behaviour, may lead to such tenants being required to surrender their accommodation. If necessary legal proceedings may be initiated including an application for an exclusion order.
- Travellers who present as homeless will be afforded the supports and services contained in the Homeless Strategy for County Limerick.
- Unauthorised encampments will be dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation as appropriate. Prior to families being asked to move or vacate an area which is not authorised for caravan parking the Housing Department will investigate the

circumstances of the family to establish if they are included in the accommodation programme.

- Nothing in this section will prevent consideration being given to the approval of an application for accommodation from Traveller families who have resided in the functional area for two consecutive years or more.

Section 4

Assessment of Need/Projected Need

An assessment of accommodation need was undertaken in March 2008 as prescribed under Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988. This statutory assessment of need assesses all applicants seeking assistance with accommodation. The net accommodation need for County Limerick at the end of March 2008 was 1124* families.

The number of approved Traveller family applicants seeking assistance with accommodation in March 2008 was 46 families which represents 4.2% of the overall need. This compares very favourably with the position at the previous statutory assessment of need in March 2005 when Travellers represented 14.5% of the net need.

The 46 families currently seeking assistance with permanent accommodation indicate the type of accommodation sought and the preferred location. The living conditions of the families range from living on the roadside in a caravan to living in private rented accommodation. A comparative analysis of the data from the two latest assessments of need demonstrate a significant change in the living circumstances of those waiting for permanent accommodation. See table 1.

Table 1

Living circumstances of Traveller Applicants		
	2005	2008
Roadside/Unauthorised Site	20	7
Private Site /Yard	20	10
Sharing with relatives	15	4
Official Halting Site	25	6
Private Rented	7	19
Other	4	0
Total	91	46

45 families have stated a preference for housing. Housing has been traditionally the preferred option for most Traveller families in County Limerick and this is reflected in the number of Traveller families living in housing. Limerick County Council acknowledges the preference of some families for Halting Site accommodation and where feasible and possible will provide Halting Site accommodation. Only one young family has applied for halting site accommodation in this assessment. In the previous programme, 23 new permanent halting site bays were provided by Limerick County Council at three different locations. This addressed the accommodation needs of families seeking halting site accommodation during the 2005-2008 Plan.

*Preliminary figures-Assessment of Need, March 2008

The projected need has also been considered in the preparation of this plan. The Task Force on the Travelling Community (July 1995) states that projections indicate an increase of 4% per annum in the Traveller population. However experience gained from the previous programmes indicates that the increase in accommodation need is much greater than this. Having considered all factors it is estimated that 45 additional families will be in need of assistance with accommodation during the period of this programme.

Summary:

Current Need	46 Families
Projected Need	45 Families

Section 5

Performance, Monitoring and Measurement

Accommodation provision:

It is planned that 65 Traveller families will be provided with permanent accommodation over the period of the programme. The assessed need demonstrates current requirements and consideration is also being given to projected need.

Therefore, the target of 13 families will be offered permanent accommodation each year during the period of the plan. This target is based on current need and projected need and the fact that applicants are on average on a waiting list two years or more before being provided with permanent accommodation.

Targets will be monitored monthly by the housing department and will be returned annually as a national performance indicator.

Monitoring Returns will be submitted to the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

Annual progress reports will be presented to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee.

Tenancy Support/Sustainment

All Traveller tenants will be offered pre-tenancy training prior to the allocation of accommodation.

Community Sustainment workers will be employed and will assist Traveller tenants to participate in residents associations.

Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

At least four meetings to be held annually.

Annual reports on the activities of the committee to be submitted to the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee.

Section Six

Strategy

Limerick County Council will, within the period of this five year programme, endeavour to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers who are approved accommodation applicants. Accommodation, Social Work services and accommodation supports will be provided in an integrated manner that is inclusive and reflects the needs of the Traveller community.

The accommodation programme will be implemented in conjunction with the Inter – Agency Strategy for Traveller Services for County Limerick. The desired outcome of this plan is not only the provision of quality accommodation for members of the Traveller community but that benefits will be gained in all aspects of their lives, thus improving their quality of life.

Tenant support and community sustainment is a guiding principle in the delivery of social housing/ social accommodation in County Limerick and will be at the core of implementation of this programme. The requirements of local and national policies, most notably “Delivering Homes –Sustaining Communities” will be central in the delivery strategy of the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

Limerick County Council will actively promote the full range of social housing options for Traveller families which are set out hereunder:

- Standard Local Authority Housing
- House Purchase Programme
- Group Housing
- Shared Ownership Scheme
- Residential Caravan Sites
- Caravan Loan and Grant Scheme
- Annuity Loans/Traveller Grant for purchase of a house.
- Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme
- Housing Aid for Older People
- Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability
- Rural Cottage Programme
- Improvement Works in Lieu of Re-housing
- Affordable Housing Scheme
- Voluntary or Co-operative Housing
- Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will meet at least four times annually and its business will be regulated by standing orders. A written annual report on the activities of the committee, progress made and issues arising will be prepared and presented to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee and to the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

Policy issues pertaining to Traveller Accommodation will be considered by the committee and where necessary reports will be presented on these issues to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee.

Officials of Limerick County Council will ensure that applications for funding from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government will be made and that Traveller Accommodation needs will be included in the Housing Action Plan for County Limerick.

Consideration will be given to the accommodation needs of Traveller families when preparing the Council's Housing Strategy for the County. Likewise the issue of Traveller accommodation and the provisions of this programme will be taken into account when making the County Development and Local Area Plans.

Limerick County Council will develop and deliver its accommodation programme in an integrated manner and will consult and liaise with other service providers via existing structures such as the County Development Board, Traveller Health Unit, etc.

Limerick County Council will propose and participate on a working group at regional level to consider the issues, including site provision pertaining to transient families in the region.

The provision and management of accommodation for Travellers by the voluntary housing sector will be encouraged and supported by Limerick County Council.

Needs will be assessed and prioritised on a geographical basis within the county but families will be encouraged to consider areas other than their first preference with a view to creating a balance in the Council's housing settlement policy and improving the options available to applicants themselves.

On the basis of the assessment of need and projected need, proposals will be contained in this accommodation programme with the intention of addressing these needs as far as is possible, bearing in mind the availability of resources to do so, legal requirements and restrictions, co-operation from applicants, and, where possible, community support.

The Traveller Accommodation Programme adopted by Limerick County Council will be reviewed within three years from the time it has been adopted or at any other time as directed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

A review of the programme can be carried out at any time if considered necessary by the Housing Authority.

Support will be given to community based initiatives that will facilitate Travellers and the settled community to work more closely together and will enable Travellers to have an active role in their local communities. Additional resources will be sought by Limerick County Council to assist meaningful Traveller participation in their living communities.

Families who own their own property will be encouraged to improve these properties if necessary and the Council will actively use the appropriate statutory provisions to deal with areas of dereliction.

Section Seven

Implementation Measures

a) Bruff Electoral Area *

Traveller families residing in the Bruff electoral area have been accommodated in housing, (Standard Housing and Shared Ownership) and in Halting Site Accommodation. Since the adoption of the last programme in 2005 there have been changes to the electoral area boundary following the making of the Limerick City Boundary Alteration Order in March 2008. As a result of this a new 14 bay Residential Caravan Park is now under the management of Limerick City Council and a number of families are now resident in the City Council's administrative area.

The assessment of need in March 2008 for the Bruff Electoral Area indicates that there are three Traveller families seeking accommodation and they have applied for housing.

The accommodation needs of these families will be addressed by the provision of housing in their preferred area during the period of this plan. This assistance is likely to involve the provision of standard Council housing or the advancement of loans by the Council to these families to acquire their own houses.

Having considered the projected need in this area there are a number of younger Travellers in the area who may seek assistance with accommodation over the next five years. All new applicants will be assessed and will be considered for accommodation if considered to be in need of assistance.

There has been a pattern of roadside parking by Traveller families between the city environs and Patrickswell/Mungret area. The issue of transient needs requires a regional consideration of the issues involved and Limerick County Council will be proactive in promoting such considerations during the period of this programme.

** Following publication of the Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2008 it is probable that the Minister for the Environment Heritage & Local Government will make an order changing the boundary and name of this electoral area.*

(b) Castleconnell Electoral Area

The assessment of need for the Castleconnell electoral area indicates that there are four families seeking accommodation from Limerick County Council at the time of the assessment of need in March 2008.

The preferred accommodation options are as follows:

Standard Local Authority Housing	2 families
Halting Site Provision	2 families
Total	4 Families

A family residing in Cappamore area has applied for housing and their application will be considered when suitable housing becomes available. An applicant residing in the Ballysimon Road area has applied for housing and this application will also be considered if housing becomes available.

Limerick County Council is committed to meeting the long-term accommodation needs of a family residing in temporary accommodation in Boher.

An application for halting site provision has been received from a member of the extended family grouping residing on the permanent halting site at Newcastle, Castletroy. This application will be considered in the context of the existing facility at Newcastle, Castletroy.

A new 7 Bay halting site at Newcastle, Castletroy was completed during the period of the last plan and this is occupied on a permanent basis. The families resident on the site have responded positively to the improved accommodation and a number of on-site services are provided by different Agencies. The families have asked that the halting site accommodation at Newcastle, Castletroy be upgraded to housing. This entails the construction of bedroom accommodation to the existing accommodation units on site.

It is proposed in this programme, subject to funding being available that the units be extended to include bedroom accommodation. This may also facilitate the accommodation needs of younger extended family members living on the site.

There has been a pattern of roadside parking by Traveller families in the Castletroy, Annacotty and Lisnagry areas. The issue of transient needs requires a regional consideration of the issues involved and Limerick County Council will be proactive in promoting such considerations during the period of this programme.

(c) Kilmallock Electoral Area

The assessment of need for the Kilmallock Electoral Area indicates that there are five families seeking accommodation. The five families have applied for housing and will be considered for housing should suitable housing become available.

It is proposed that during the course of the 2009 - 2013 Traveller Accommodation Programme, the five families who applied for standard Council housing will be considered for housing should suitable housing become available in the area.

Families who own their properties and who are considered to be in need of assistance with accommodation will be assisted to improve or develop these properties where deemed appropriate.

Where appropriate, families will be assisted to purchase their own houses via Shared Ownership, Annuity Loans or Affordable Housing Schemes.

(d) Newcastle Electoral Area

The assessment of need for the Newcastle Electoral Area indicates that there are 15 families seeking accommodation. At the time of the assessment, these applicants stated that their preferred accommodation option was for standard Council housing.

Nine families wish to be housed in Abbeyfeale and six families wish to be accommodated in Newcastle West.

It is proposed that these families will be provided with accommodation during the period of this plan should suitable housing become available in the area.

Where appropriate families will be assisted to purchase their own houses via Shared Ownership, Annuity Loans or affordable housing schemes.

(e) Rathkeale Electoral Area

The assessment of need for the Rathkeale Electoral Area indicates that there are 19 families seeking assistance with accommodation. All the applicants have expressed a preference for housing

Their preferred areas are as follows:

Rathkeale	14
Askeaton	4
Pallaskenry	1

Askeaton

Housing has been the preferred option of the families in the Askeaton area and during the period of this plan Limerick County Council will endeavour to address these needs. Consideration will also be given to the emerging accommodation needs bearing in mind the age profile and population of the local Traveller community.

An integrated housing plan, in consultation with all stakeholders will be completed. It is envisaged that this plan when completed will form a blueprint for accommodation delivery for Travellers in Askeaton. The families preference for housing will be central to this and all feasible housing options will be explored ranging from standard housing to group housing.

Rathkeale

A range of accommodation has been provided for Traveller families in Rathkeale. Home ownership continues to be the primary provision and this is likely to continue. However not all local families are in a position to provide accommodation from their own resources and at the time of assessment, 14 families were seeking assistance with accommodation.

The approved applicants will be considered for tenancies of Council houses that become available for letting from time to time and halting site accommodation. Other social housing options will also be considered by the Council in order to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers in Rathkeale.

Limerick County Council will assess its current land bank in the area and consider the suitability of these lands for group housing to meet current and projected needs of local Traveller families.

It is important to note that the provision of accommodation for Travellers in Rathkeale always demands special consideration bearing in mind the significance of the town to the Traveller way of life, the ability of some families to possibly provide their own accommodation, the transient lifestyle of many of its Traveller residents and the overall impact of this issue on the town and the local community.

Families who can provide their own accommodation will be encouraged to do this and where appropriate will be offered assistance and support by the relevant sections of the Council.

Limerick County Council will offer advice and support to Travellers who wish to provide private housing developments in the town of Rathkeale.

Short stay halting site accommodation in the existing halting site will continue to be provided to local Travellers who lead a transient lifestyle .

One family has applied for housing in Pallaskenry and this application will be considered for standard housing should suitable accommodation become available in the area.

Section Eight.

Summary

This programme outlines the existing and projected need for Traveller Accommodation in County Limerick for the period 2009 to 2013. It outlines the policies in relation to Traveller Accommodation, strategy for implementation, targets and the review processes.

Limerick County Council will work with Travellers, Traveller Representatives, Local Communities and other agencies to deliver the programme and provide high quality accommodation for members of the Travelling community.

The programme is based on consultation and a recognition of the needs of the Travelling Community, the views of local settled communities and the statutory requirements of various legislation.

The implementation of this programme requires a commitment from all involved to work together and to commit to agreed proposals. The proposals contained in the programme are also subject to the necessary funding being available.

