



COMHAIRLE | CLARE
CONTAE AN CHLÁIR | COUNTY COUNCIL

(DRAFT)

Traveller Accommodation Programme

2025 – 2029

July 2024

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1: INTRODUCTION

County Clare is situated on the west coast of Ireland, it is known as ‘The Banner County’. The national census figures in 2022 list the population of Clare as 127,938 which is an increase of 8% from the previous census in 2016.

Clare has four Municipal Districts, Ennis, Shannon, Killaloe and West Clare. Ennis is the largest town in the county, and in Munster, with a population of 27,923 according to the 2022 Census.

The number of Irish Travellers living in the State and counted in Census 2022 was 32,949, an increase of 6% from 30,987 in the 2016 census. Irish Travellers make up less than 1% of the population which means that six out of 1,000 people in the State were Irish Travellers. The proportion of Irish Travellers in the population varied from county to county and 1,010 of these are resident in Co. Clare. Clare’s annual count which was carried out in November 2023 indicated that there are 226 Traveller household’s resident in the county.

According to the 2022 census the average persons per Traveller household is 4.54% and that 90.7% of private Traveller households lived in permanent accommodation with 9.3% in temporary accommodation.

Clare County Council has prepared this Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. This plan aims to meet the accommodation needs and the projected need that will arise during the period of the programme, for Traveller families in the county over the 5-year period; 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2029.

2: LEGISLATION

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 came into effect on the 10th of September 1998. Its primary purpose is to provide a comprehensive legislative framework which requires housing authorities to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers normally resident within their administrative areas. The provisions of the Act play an integral part in promoting social inclusion and equality and counteracting discrimination that may be experienced by members of the Traveller community. The Act further provides for a comprehensive and planned response by Housing Authorities in meeting the varying accommodation needs of the Traveller community, a process underpinned by a thorough consultative process with all concerned interests.

Sections 21 and 22 of the Act provide for the establishment of a Local Traveller Consultative Committees (LTACC) in each Local Authority to advise on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers, including the preparation and implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programmes. The membership of the LTACC comprises of elected members, officials and local Traveller representatives.

The provisions of the 1998 Act are reflected in the structure of this Traveller Accommodation Programme

In December 2023 Mr. Kieran O'Donnell, Minister of State for Planning and Local Government issued Circular 46/2023 with Guidelines for the Preparation, Adoption and Implementation appended which requires housing authorities to prepare and adopt a 5-year Traveller Accommodation Programme from 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2029. The adoption of the plan is a reserved function and the latest date for the adoption of the Traveller Accommodation Programme is 31st December 2024.

Under these guidelines Clare County Council is required to:

- prepare and adopt a Traveller Accommodation Programme to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of the Travelling Community in Clare.
- conduct an assessment of need,
- allow for public consultation on the preparation of the programme with relevant stakeholders, including external agencies and the general public,
- establish a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) to facilitate consultation with Travellers,
- Secure the implementation of the new programme,

3: POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of Clare County Council to provide quality accommodation based on the distinct needs and circumstances of Travellers who are deemed qualified for, and in need of, social housing supports in accordance with - The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, as amended.

Under the Planning and Development Acts, County Development Plan and Local Area Plans must include objectives for the provisions of accommodation for Travellers. Clare County Councils policy is set out in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and is as follows:

Clare County Council recognise the specific requirements of providing accommodation for the Traveller community. It also recognises its role in empowering and facilitating the Travelling community so that it can provide for its own accommodation to a greater degree. Under the Housing Acts 1966-1997 Local Authorities are responsible for the provision of accommodation, including serviced caravan sites, for the travelling community. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act (1998) places a statutory obligation on Clare County Council to prepare and adopt a Traveller Accommodation Programme, subject to periodic review, which meets the existing and projected needs of the Traveller community in the County. The current programme is the Clare County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024. Clare County Council has provided housing for Traveller communities in Ennis, Ennistymon and Shannon

Objective 5.10 of the County Development Plan is: *To provide appropriate housing accommodation for the Traveller Community in accordance the Clare County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024 and any subsequent programme adopted by the Council.*

Clare County Council will comply with the General Data Protection Regulations in the administration of these functions.

Further this Council will ensure compliance with the Children First Act, with policies and procedures implemented to protect our most vulnerable tenants, appropriate staff training has been provided in this regard.

On 1st March 2017, there was a statement of recognition by the Irish State, of Travellers as an Ethnic Group. Clare County Council recognises Travellers' identity as a minority ethnic group and is committed to promoting equality and inclusion for Travellers living in Clare. Nothing in this Programme shall prevent the Chief Executive from exercising the powers conferred under Section 24 of Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 and Section 138(4) & (5) of the Local Government Act 2001 in an emergency situation.

3.1 Provision of Accommodation

The Council recognises Travellers' identity as a distinct group with their own customs, traditions and culture. It is the policy of Clare County Council to provide suitable accommodation for Traveller households in its administrative area, in accordance with the Assessment of Need carried out under the Act, in compliance with the laws of the State.

- It is the Council's policy to provide non-transient Traveller specific accommodation only for the county's indigenous travelling community. For this purpose, the Council will regard a Traveller household as indigenous where the household has been permanently resident in the county for at least three years. All other housing options are available to the travelling community and are covered under Section 8 – Additional Housing Supports.
- It is the Council's policy to consult with Travellers and their representatives, based on Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government Guidelines, about their accommodation needs, and to provide, based on demand, where appropriate, Traveller specific accommodation.
- It is the Council's policy that, where feasible, the preferred option in terms of accommodation type requested will be considered. If this is not possible other accommodation options may be offered to individual households. If this reasonable accommodation offer is refused, without good reason, their housing application may be given reduced priority in line with statutory provisions.
- It is the Council's policy that, Traveller families will only be considered for single instance housing in exceptional circumstances – Priority 1 medical need as determined by the HSE or in situations where other forms of Traveller specific or standard accommodation have proven particularly unsuitable.
- Clare County Council reserves the right to refuse to provide accommodation to any household irrespective of ethnicity, if the following was deemed the case:

- By their own act, deed or commission have deprived themselves of adequate accommodation
 - Were proven to be involved in serious or on-going anti-social behaviour
 - Good estate management would be compromised, if accommodation was provided.
- It is the policy of the Council that Travellers themselves must take primary responsibility for their economic activities including horse husbandry and care. Persons who own horses are obliged to comply with the requirements of the Control of Horses Act, 1996 and Local Government Bye-Laws 1998 and 2013.
 - It is the Council's policy to levy charges on tenants /occupants of Traveller Accommodation facilities. The scale of charges to be levied will be reviewed on an annual basis in conjunction with the Council's Differential Rent Scheme.

Applicants for social housing support, including Traveller specific accommodation are required to submit a valid housing application together with all required documentation in accordance with the Social Housing Assessment Regulations, 2011 as amended. Advice and assistance will be provided to applicants, if requested, to address any difficulties that may arise in completing the application form. Specific family circumstances e.g. disabilities will be considered in determining the most appropriate social housing solution.

The full range of social housing supports available will be used to achieve optimum accommodation solutions for Travellers included in the Programme and approved for permanent accommodation.

When allocating properties Clare County Council will have regard to the provisions of the Clare County Council Social Housing Allocation Scheme 2021, which sets out the basis for allocation of social housing support to qualified households. Separate waiting lists will not operate for the Travelling community and all qualified applicants for an area of choice will be considered, when a property arises, taking into account the following:

- Applicant type
- Qualification Category
- Length of time on Housing Waiting List
- Previous Offers made (if applicable)
- Previous Tenancy (if applicable)
- Requirement for housing on medical grounds
- Requirement for ground floor bedroom/bathroom

- Estate Management - Consideration of applicant and community profile factors
- Status of Current Tenancy – HAP, RAS, NTQ
- Tenancy Sustainment – Requirement for support

The sequence of priorities as listed in the Social Housing Allocations is applied, as follows:

(a)	Homeless persons as defined by Section 2 of the Housing Act, 1988 and referred via the Homeless Action Team of the council.
(b)	Households living in accommodation that is unfit for human habitation as defined in Section 66(2) of the Housing Act, 1966, and the Second Schedule of that Act, or is materially unsuitable for their adequate housing, where there is no evidence of the tenant having contributed to the condition of the dwelling
(c)	Households in accommodation, the extent to which it does not meet their requirements, arising from the enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment of a household member.
(d)	Households who require accommodation on exceptional medical or compassionate grounds
(e)	Households living in overcrowded accommodation within the meaning of Section 63 of the Housing Act, 1966
(f)	Households identified by the Housing Welfare Officer(s) or Housing Professional Social Worker(s) who have a requirement for accommodation for exceptional reasons
(g)	Households who are involuntarily sharing accommodation with another person and having a reasonable requirement for separate accommodation
(h)	Households who are not, in the opinion of the council, reasonably able to meet the cost of the accommodation which they are occupying or to obtain suitable alternative accommodation
(i)	Households not included in any other specific category above, who have been assessed and approved for social housing supports

4: STRATEGY STATEMENT

4.1 Implementing Authority

Clare County Council is the implementing authority for the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025 – 2029 and has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Programme in its functional area. Specific responsibility for the provision of suitable, cost effective, good quality accommodation and the implementation of the programme lies within the Housing Department.

4.2 Provision of Accommodation

The Government's current Housing Programme Housing For All - A New Housing Plan for Ireland (2021 – 2030) is designed to improve Ireland's housing system and deliver more homes of all types for people with different housing needs. Clare County Council aims to provide accommodation that responds to the different needs of Travellers by utilising the various forms of social housing delivery. These include direct provision through the capital build programme; acquisitions by the Council and Approved Housing Bodies; re-letting of vacant units; houses sourced through private developers 'Part V' obligations; houses sourced through various leasing and rental accommodation schemes; and, private rented accommodation supported by Housing Assistance Payment.

The identification of suitable sites for provision of Traveller Group Housing continues to be a challenge. Sites owned by the Council may be used for this purpose together with the acquisition of additional sites if required and subject to the availability of funding.

4.3 Resourcing the Programme

The Department currently provides funding towards the provision of Traveller Specific accommodation. The successful implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025 – 2029 will be subject to the appropriate level of funding being made available by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The Council is also required to provide funding from its Revenue Budget for housing maintenance and routine maintenance requests on the Social Housing stock.

Clare County Council will continue to engage with the Department to secure funding for the provision of the various social housing options.

All staff employed in the Housing Department are involved in the implementation of the programme as necessary and when required. This includes both technical and administrative staff and includes assessment and allocations staff, estate management team, the homeless action team, together with the staff employed in the maintenance and management of accommodation as required.

4.4 Traveller Liaison Officer

We have a Traveller Liaison Officer who is available to assist and advise members of the Travelling community in relation to all matters associated with Local Authority Housing. Their role is to act as the main point of contact and co-ordinate Clare County Council's arrangements for the provision of accommodation-related services to members of the Travelling Community and deal with any day-to-day complaints/queries arising.

The Traveller Liaison Officer advises Traveller households on their housing applications and liaises with the Housing Assessments Officer and/or Housing Officer in relation to identifying the most appropriate housing option to meet individual needs.

They work in collaboration with the wider community, including existing residents of local authority housing estates, in conjunction with Estate Management. They identify, develop, and maintain contacts with individuals, agencies and professionals involved in the provision of support services to Travellers to include working with Travellers Groups and Organisations.

4.5 Co-operation with Approved Housing Bodies

Clare County Council has a strong working relationship with various Approved Housing Bodies for the delivery of social housing options. Clare County Council has worked closely with Cena Culturally Appropriate Homes Limited (CENA) in researching data on traveller households to help this Accommodation programme. This Council and CENA will continue to work together during life cycle of the Programme where opportunities arise for provision of suitable housing solutions.

4.6 Allocation of Accommodation

Allocations of social housing tenancies are made in accordance with the Clare County Council's Social Housing Allocation Scheme. This scheme is used in the allocation of standard Council housing units, casual vacancies, long and short-term lease properties and nominations to properties owned by Approved Housing Bodies.

Clare County Council use a system called Choice Based Letting (CBL) that allows a household on the housing waiting list to make decisions regarding where they live and tenure choice (council, voluntary housing and leased homes). Each applicant is given a unique Username and Pin to access the website when they are approved to be included on the housing list. As properties become available for letting, they are advertised on this site and qualified households can submit their expression of interest in the properties advertised on the website.

Prior to making an offer of accommodation a review of the household's eligibility and need for social housing is carried out. An allocation offer is made to the household with the greater priority in accordance with the Allocation Scheme.

Traveller specific housing and specially adapted wheelchair accessible units are not allocated through CBL

4.7 Interagency Consultation and Collaboration

The Council will continue to work with other agencies concerned in the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme including Irish Traveller Movement, Voluntary / Approved Housing Bodies, Health Service Executive, Tusla, An Garda Síochána, Education Services, Social Welfare Services, Clarecare, Clare Local Development Company, Clare Public Participation Network, MABS, adjoining local authorities and any other agency identified as the need arises.

The Council will also set up interagency fora to deal with major issue arising in particular areas as the need arises.

4.8 Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC)

The role and distinct expertise of LTACC membership is recognised in relation to the successful implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme. In cases of specific urgent or crisis situations arising and where deemed necessary, the Chairperson (or any committee member) of the LTACC may convene emergency meetings in such situations.

4.9 Monitoring Arrangements

The implementation of the programme will be monitored as follows:

- Progress report will be presented at each meeting of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.
- A quarterly progress report on the programme will be presented to the Social Directorate Strategic Policy Committee.
- Through the Annual returns to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

These reports will include an update on the number of households accommodated and the number of units and type of accommodation provided.

A statutory review of the Traveller Accommodation Programme will be carried out after two years taking into account the most recent annual census and appropriate amendments may be incorporated into the Programme. The Minister has, under section 17(1) (a) of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, directed that a review of the accommodation programme 2025-2029 should be carried out no later than 30th June 2027.

5: ASSESSMENT OF NEED

5.1 Preparation of the new Programme

The notification of our intention to prepare a Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme issued on 10th January 2024 to adjoining housing authorities, the HSE, approved housing bodies, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and other local representative groups, community and interest groups as well as Elected Members.

Nine submissions were received in response to the notification, all of which have been considered in the context of the preparation of the Draft Programme. The submissions were received from the following:

- Cathal Crowe TD
- Clare Public Participation Network
- CLDC
- Novas
- Traveller Health Services (HSE)
- Clare Traveller Community Development Project
- Irish Traveller Movement, National Traveller Women’s Forum & Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre.
- CENA
- Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness

Not all recommendations contained in the submissions relate directly to the provision of accommodation/housing for the Traveller community as some refer to a wider approach of inclusion and interagency collaboration.

5.2 Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC)

Under Section 21 and 22 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC) were established to facilitate consultation between Housing Authorities and Travellers and to advise on any

aspect of accommodation for Travellers, and to advise on the preparation and implementation of any accommodation programme.

The Clare LTACC plays an active and pivotal role in both the preparation and implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme in County Clare. Following the Local Election in June 2024, a new Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will be established for the next five years, and implementation of the new programme will be monitored by the Committee.

5.3 Traveller Accommodation Programmes

Previous Traveller Accommodation Programmes in Clare have resulted in the delivery of the following Traveller specific accommodation in the County:

Location	No of units House/Apt	Serviced Bay	Vacancies
Ballymaley, Ennis	1	5	1 extra bay being delivered in 3 months
Ballaghboy, Ennis		7	2 Vacant Bays.
Ballaghafadda, Ennis	6		1 Vacant House
Knockanean, Ennis	6		2 Vacant Houses
Watery Road, Ennis	6		1 Vacant House
Beechpark, Ennis	3	3	1 Vacant House & 3 Vacant Bays
Ballymurtagh, Shannon	1 House & 2 apartments	6	1 Vacant Bay
Deerpark, Ennistymon	6		2 Vacant Houses
Ballymacraven, Ennistymon	6		2 Vacant Houses
Glen North, Ennistymon	6		2 Vacant Houses
TOTAL	43	21	11 Houses & 7 Bays Vacant

There are a total of 64 units of Traveller specific accommodation in County Clare consisting of 41 Houses, 2 Apartments and 21 Bays. Of these 11 houses and 7 bays are currently vacant.

5 of these vacancies are due to fire damage and require extensive refurbishment works. The remaining 11 vacancies are a mixture of refurbishment works required/ ongoing at present and in some cases, there are no interested parties currently. A number of these vacancies are due to some applicants refusing to consider properties in certain locations due to certain circumstances e.g. feuding and family interaction. Some young Traveller couples want to remain in caravans/ mobile homes on the grounds of family property which is not permitted.

5.4 Estate Management

All council housing stock, including Traveller specific accommodation, is managed in accordance with the Council's policy for the Management and Maintenance of rented housing stock. The Council has an estate management unit, who are available to meet with tenants and tenant associations on a regular basis to deal with issues that may occur.

Together with this all tenants are required to sign a tenancy agreement which outlines the terms and conditions of the tenancy including tenant responsibilities for maintenance, anti-social behaviour etc. Each tenant has a responsibility to ensure that the terms of the tenancy are met in full, and the Council will ensure that the terms are enforced.

Estate management also includes securing the interest of tenants in the enjoyment of the house and the avoidance, prevention and abatement of anti-social behaviour in the housing estates in accordance with Clare County Council's Antisocial Behaviour Strategy.

Anti-social behaviour impacts negatively on local residents, the wider community and Clare County Council staff. Anti-social behaviour such as, but not limited to, criminal damage, waste dumping etc, places unacceptable burdens on the financial resources of the Council. Therefore, Clare County Council shall, in the interests of good estate management, use all legislative powers at their disposal to control anti-social behaviour on the part of all of its tenants and applicants approved for social housing support. Equally, any verbal abuse, threats or intimidation of Council staff will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in consultation with An Garda Siochana.

5.5 Homelessness

The establishment of Homeless Action Teams (HAT) in each Local Authority area across the Mid- West has been central in dealing effectively with Homelessness and has had a major impact in terms of improving the level and quality of services available to persons who are homeless.

Clare Homeless Action Team (HAT) is located in Clare County Council, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare. This team was established in 2019. Individuals and Households can contact the Homeless Action Team where an assessment of needs will be completed as set out in Section 2 of the Housing Act.

This service provides a wide range of support services including Assessment and Placement, Tenancy Support Services, HAP Supports, Housing First, Youth Housing Support and Accommodation Resettlement.

The HAT Service provides an appointment led service that is managed in order of priority to ensure those most in need are supported with the most appropriate accommodation placement available, advice or information.

It must be noted that there has been a significant increase in presentations to the Homeless Action Team from the Travelling Community. This increase includes young married couples seeking Emergency Accommodation. The primary reasons for referring to the Homeless Action Team from young traveller couples appear to be that they are seeking to reside independently from their parents and also claiming overcrowding as a concern. While it is understandable that couples desire to reside independent of their parents, this desire does not qualify as being in need of emergency accommodation.

Overcrowding is not considered a direct emergency homeless accommodation requirement. Persons in such situations will not be the main tenant of the property but named as an occupant, they should be encouraged to apply for housing directly because of the overcrowding (ensure this is highlighted on their Housing Application). As per the Clare County Council Allocation Scheme 2021, 5th Priority is designated to Overcrowding as defined in Section 63 of the Housing Act 1966.

The move on from Emergency Accommodation can often be difficult and complex due to certain family groups refusing to engage in areas outside of specific streets/roads/housing estates. Accompanied with this is the difficulty in placing some families in services due to feuding and dispute issues with other residents in services. Families appear to be staying in Emergency Accommodation until their personal and specific location or house is provided to them and this level of expectation is simply not attainable.

5.6 Unauthorised Encampments

Unauthorised encampments present difficulties in relation to health and safety and can be hazardous to road users. The Council will however implement its procedures to ensure a co-ordinated response, when temporary dwellings / unauthorised encampments are identified, in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation as appropriate:

- Section 10 of Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992 as amended by Section 32 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998
- Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2002
- An Order of the District Court
- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)
- Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act 1948
- The Roads Act 1993
- Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 (as amended)
- Public Health (Ireland) Act, 1878 as amended by Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992.

A temporary dwelling means any tent, caravan, mobile home, vehicle, other structure or thing (whether on wheels or not) which is capable of being moved from one place to another, and is or was used for human habitation, either permanently or from time to time or was designed, constructed or adapted for such use. Public place means any street, road or other place to which the public have access whether as of right or by express or implied permission and whether the subject to or free of charge and any property or other land owned or occupied by or leased to a public authority. A Council Official will investigate the circumstances of the household in the temporary dwelling and take appropriate action.

5.7 Transient Sites

Under Section 10 39(C) of the Act, a relevant housing authority in preparing an accommodation programme, must take into account the needs of transient Traveller families. Given the numbers and pattern of movement of Traveller families in Clare the provision of a transient site within the County is not considered necessary. That said, the provision of transient accommodation must be pursued on a national/regional basis with transient accommodation provided as part of a coordinated network of sites throughout the country. In this regard the Council will continue to liaise with neighbouring authorities to determine the need for the provision of transient accommodation within the mid-west region.

5.8 Fire Safety in Traveller Accommodation

To ensure fire safety on Traveller-specific sites, Clare County Council implements several critical measures. We conduct regular inspections, repairs, and replacements of smoke and fire alarms in houses, as well as fire hose reels in mobile home bays. Damaged gas and oil boilers, along with electrical fixtures, are promptly addressed. We also remove rubbish accumulations that pose fire hazards and ensure that mobile homes and caravans are adequately spaced to prevent fire spread. Despite the provision of refuse collection services to all residences, including transient encampments, outdoor fires from rubbish burning remain a significant resource drain for the fire service. Electrical fires are also prevalent, often due to unauthorised mobile homes and caravans drawing power from household sockets using extension leads causing overloading or public lighting columns. When carrying out our duties, Clare County Council strictly adheres to the National Directorate for Fire Safety and Emergency Management's Guide to Fire Safety in Existing Traveller Accommodation to mitigate these risks.

6: IDENTIFICATION OF NEED

6.1 Methodology

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009 requires Housing Authorities, for the purposes of preparing a programme, in respect of their functional area, to make an assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers who are assessed under Section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 as being qualified for social housing support, including the need for sites.

The Council are required to carry out an Annual Estimate of Traveller families and their accommodation status each November. The returns for 2023 are detailed in Table 4.2.1 below. The count indicated that 226 Traveller families were living in County Clare on the specified date of 24th November 2023 and has helped inform the preparation of this current Programme.

In addition, a collaborative approach between Clare County Council, Clare Local Development Company and Cena (Approved Housing Body) was established to identify the accommodation needs of the Clare Travelling community.

Consultation with Traveller households across the County was carried out by a team of fieldworkers. The team of fieldworkers were made up of Travellers, the majority of whom were based in Clare, and all of whom had participated in a three-month long training programme delivered by Cena. The team of fieldworkers was supported by staff from Cena, staff from Clare Traveller Community Development Programme, and Clare County Council Traveller Liaison Officer.

The aim was to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of accommodation needs within the Traveller community in Clare. The fact that Travellers were enabled to engage directly with members of their own community meant that responses to the needs assessment were more detailed and more informed.

By using this process, it enabled Clare County Council to:

- ***Gain a more accurate picture of needs and aspirations regarding accommodation.***
A more in-depth discussion with families and individuals led to more informed and considered responses than would not have been possible through the more traditional form-filling exercise.

- ***Understand more about long-term aspirations or more sustainable responses to accommodation needs.*** With many Traveller households living in emergency and/or unsuitable accommodation, it was important to get feedback on what might be more long-term and permanent solutions. Direct engagement with families allowed this conversation to take place, enabling people to think beyond the critical short-term needs and towards what might be appropriate for the longer-term and for future generations. It also gave the opportunity for people to consider options on an informed basis by understanding more about what is possible and feasible.

- ***Create a resource for future planning and delivery of Traveller accommodation.*** It was seen as being important, from the outset, that results from this process would feed directly into the planning of future accommodation provision. All results were entered into a dedicated database, and this has been used by Clare County Council in planning the next Traveller Accommodation Programme. It must be acknowledged, however, that the accommodation needs identified cannot be fully addressed within the timeframe of just one Traveller Accommodation Programme but the results from this process (making full use of the database) will continue to inform Traveller Accommodation Programmes into the future.

6.2 Survey Outcomes and Main Points

Survey Process

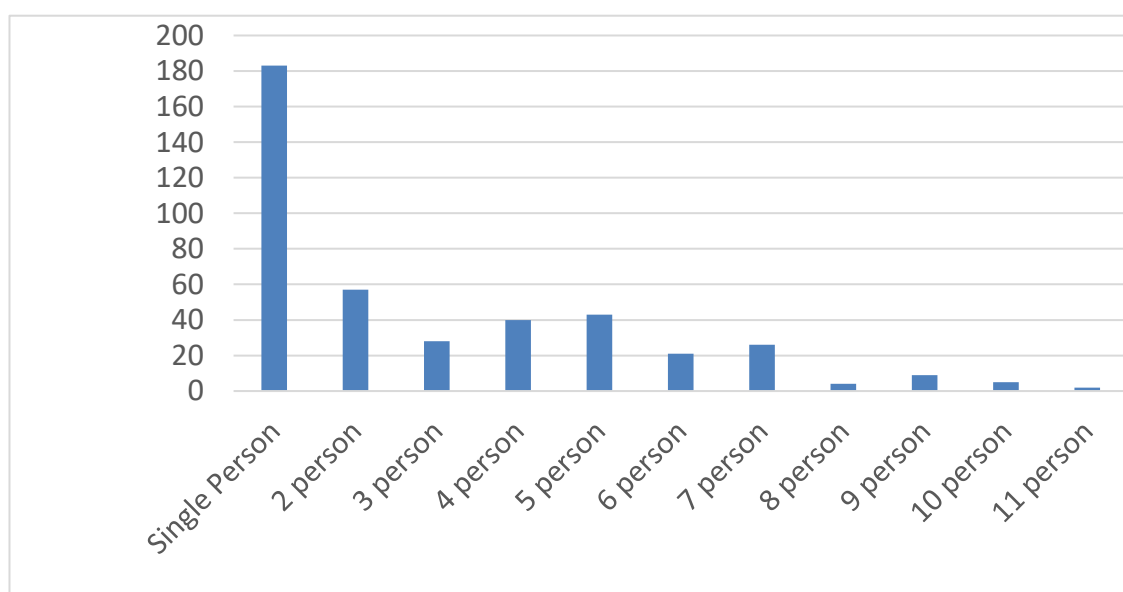
All households were invited to give feedback by means of a survey (Appendix 1). The survey gathered information on

- Family size, age profile etc
- Characteristics of their current accommodation, including:
 - Nature of tenure
 - Length of time in the accommodation
 - Instances of overcrowding where relevant
 - Major issues or challenges associated with structure or conditions
 - Any association with Traveller culture (including animal-keeping, caravans, sheds etc)

- Health challenges that might exist - especially where these (such as disability for example) might have a bearing on future accommodation needs.
- Their relationship with housing services and housing provision – particularly whether, and how long, households are on the local authority housing or transfer lists.
- Their preference in relation to future accommodation, including whether this is:
 - In rural or urban areas
 - In areas they see as possible or preferable and areas they see as being problematic
 - In individual household setting or part of broader extended family situation
 - In houses rather than more traditional site, group housing or ‘camp’ settings.
 - In situations where aspects of Traveller culture can be promoted and maintained.

Information from both the Annual Housing Needs Assessment and the National Annual Traveller Count in November 2023 was also used. Existing group housing scheme sites were surveyed also to ascertain occupancy, in particular those in unauthorised accommodation on the sites. Also, illegal encampment sites were surveyed to determine their Traveller accommodation requirements.

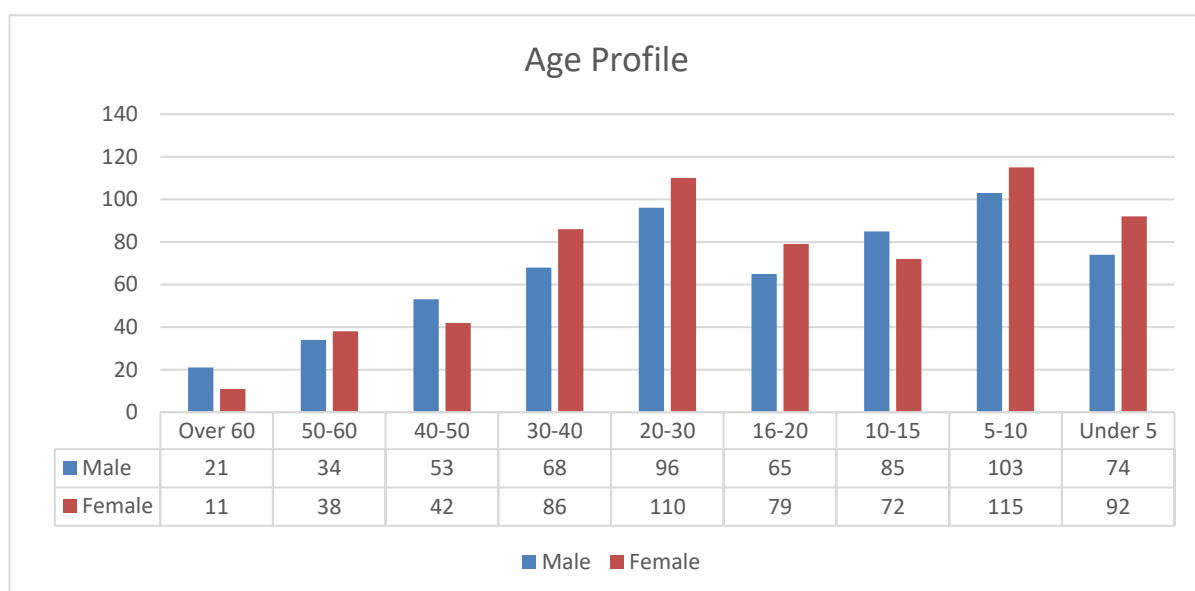
Household Size



Research work carried out as part of the collaborative programme identified 497 Traveller Households in Clare. 180 of these are single households with 317 family units with more than one person.

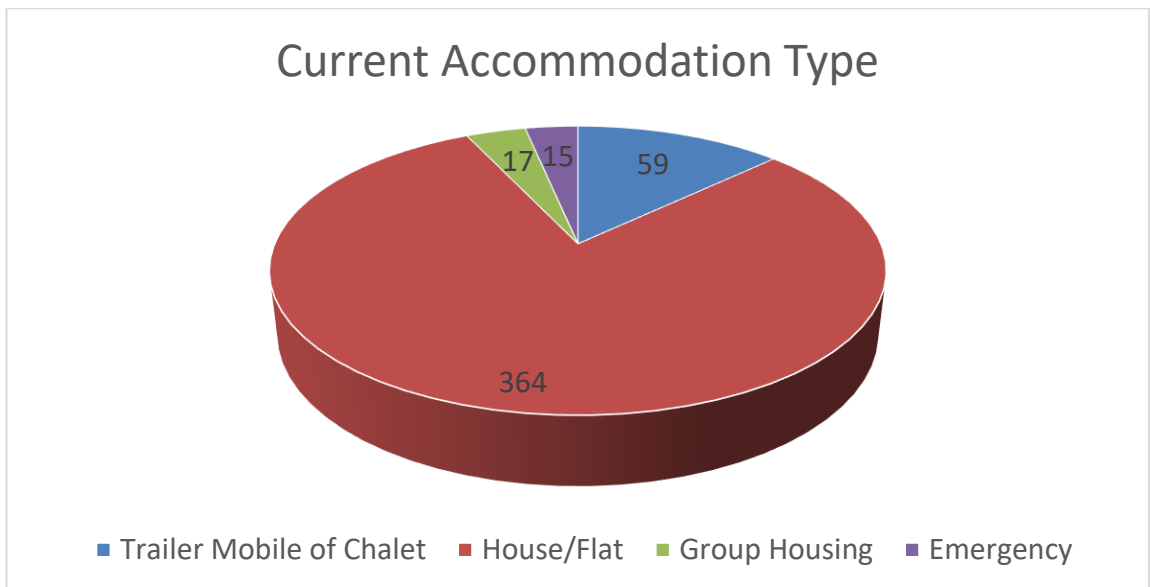
Age and Gender

1224 individuals have identified as Travellers consisting of 645 females and 599 males. [Census 2022 figures reported 1,010 travellers in the county.]685 of this cohort are agreed under 20 and when analysed further 144 of the U20s are aged 15+ and it can be expected that 20 of these they may be seeking accommodation during the next TAP, either individually or as new family units.



Type of Current Accommodation

The majority of Travellers are currently living in a house or apartment/flat as a Council Tenant. 40% of all households were in occupation of their current accommodation for 5 years or less.



The vast majority of Travellers have identified a house as their preferred type of future accommodation. 72% wish to live in a town while the remainder wished to be near a town and a small minority expressed a desire to be further out of town. Ennis, Shannon, Ennistymon and Lahinch areas are the most preferable among the Travelling community.

Other interesting facts from the survey:

- A small minority (less than 1%) of households expressed a preference for more traditional Traveller accommodation which was almost equally divided between Traveller Specific Group housing and site-based accommodation i.e. mobile/trailer/bay on site.
- 22% of all households had at least one person with a diagnosed disability and 45% of these referred to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety etc.
- Very strong Cultural desire to have space for a touring caravan, shed, to keep animals or workspace.
- 39% of all households keep one or more dogs and other expressed a desire to keep chickens or horses.

6.3 Identified Need

The process to ascertain true need for Traveller accommodation is difficult as historically there was no way to ascertain ethnicity of a housing applicant., data on hand with the Council cannot be readily verified. In 2022 an amendment to Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, allowed for collection of data where a household wished to be identified as a Traveller, and this data will be captured in Summary Social Housing Assessment nationally in 2024. As this applies to new applications there is still difficult in assessing of applications prior to 2022.

At the time of drafting there were 43 open applications on iHouse who have identified as “Traveller”. Further analysis of iHouse shows nett need of known traveller households 77. Of these we have identified 64 households seeking standard social housing, 9 seeking Group Scheme Housing as a preference with 4 seeking Serviced Bays. However, it must be noted that when discussing needs with the households in question their preference can change regularly.

In additional the Annual Estimate of Traveller families returned for 2023 identified 226 Traveller households residing in County Clare as follows:

Table: Accommodation of Traveller families based on Annual count November 2023

No. of Families	Accommodation Type
116	Standard Local Authority Social Housing
5	Voluntary Housing
31	Traveller Group Houses
15	Serviced halting site
9	RAS & Leasing
28	Sharing with relatives
9	Unauthorised sites
2	Privately Owned
11	Emergency Accommodation
226	Clare County Council Annual Traveller Count

6.4 Projected Need

The exercise in projecting need is at best a guess as there are so many variables for consideration. The Council's ability to cater for projected need is through the provision of all available social housing supports subject to approval of housing need.

It is considered that the provision of standard housing supports and the existing vacancies in the group housing schemes will in the main provide for the projected need of the Traveller community.

6.5 Reported Disability Need

22% of all households surveyed had at least one person with a diagnosed disability and 45% of these referred to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety etc. Disability need will be considered, as the need arises, during the lifetime of this programme based on the individual merit of the case and we will work with agencies and households to ensure needs are correctly identified re same. These will also be supported through Housing Disability Steering Group which is chaired by the Social Directorate Director of Services.

6.6 Total Need for inclusion in Traveller Accommodation Programme

The following need for Traveller accommodation has been identified for inclusion in the Programme.

Families in need of Permanent Accommodation July 2024

2024 Social Housing Assessments : Nett need is 77 households

Projected future need to 2029 : Best estimate is 20 new households

It is noted that there is a large cohort of singles aged between 15 and 20 but it is not expected that this will automatically result in increase in housing need as need can continue to be met in family surrounding once age of 18 is reached.

Taking into account the data collated the overall need for the lifetime of this programme is accommodation for 97 Traveller families. This equates to approximately 3% of overall housing need for the county at this time. During lifetime of current TAP there were 85 new tenancies for Traveller families, 5% of total allocation in the period 2020 to 2024.

7: MEASURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Annual Targets

As the programme will be driven mainly by the Social Housing Programme it is difficult to estimate the number of families who will be allocated accommodation during the lifetime of this programme. Clare County Council must be cognisant of the following external conditions which may impact on its ability to meet the identified housing need:

- The development of the private rented market in order that the pressure on rental properties is eased and the supply of housing in the County become more readily available. The development of private housing schemes will also directly increase the Council's housing stock, through the acquisition of Part V properties.
- The availability of affordable properties through the private rental market, from which HAP, RAS and leasing options are met.
- The continuation of funding for construction projects and the acquisition of social housing units.
- The allocation of Group Housing and Halting Site vacancies will be retained for Traveller applicants.
- Unexpected external factors and constraints in the construction industry.

It is intended based on current information and statistics available to meet the anticipated need in the 2025 – 2029 Traveller Accommodation Programme is as follows:

Table: Accommodation Required 2025-2029

Service	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
LA & AHB Direct provision	8	9	9	9	9
HAP/RAS/Leasing	2	3	3	3	3
Group Scheme voids/ refurbs/ redevelopments	10	4	5	5	5
Serviced bay Mobile Home Loan Scheme	2	2	2	2	2
Total	23	18	19	19	19

7.2 Standard Social Housing

This Council will continue to allocate properties as they become available in line with our scheme of letting priorities. Traveller households who have expressed interest for standard social housing will be considered in their area of preference. Current projections for 2025 to 2026 are for delivery of 320 new homes and this will continue to rise as further developments come on stream.-Ref Clare County Council Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026.

7.3 Traveller Group Housing

This Council has invested considerably in refurbishment of existing group schemes during the period 2019 to 2024 and intend to continue with refurb programs and with developments and expansion of existing sites where feasible. It must be noted that there remains a high vacancy rate in Traveller Specific Accommodation, and it is important that need is identified for these prior to investing resources on refurb of same. A number of properties returned to stock during current TAP remain vacant, despite the high need for traveller specific accommodation. The following works are proposed under this programme:

Table: Proposed works on existing Traveller Specific Accommodation

Location	Description	Timeline
Ballaghboy, Quin Road, Ennis.	Provision of new welfare units to two bays with minor bay improvements.	2025
	Demolition and removal of unused portion of site, subject to funding availability. (Q4 2025) Potential redevelopment of site at later date to be examined	2027
St. Michael's Park, Ballymaley, Ennis	Refurbishment of bay one to five, plus one house to provide for existing occupants of the site.	2025
St. Anthony's Grove, Kildysart Road, Ennis.	No works identified at present	-
Knockanean Tulla Road, Ennis	Vacant fire damaged property to be renovated if need identified and agreed.	-
St. Endas Park, Beechpark, Ennis	Refurbishment of a bay at this location to cater for existing occupants.	-

1-6 Watery Road, Ennis	One vacant house. No works identified at present. Can be planned when need identified and agreed	2026
St. Helen's Park, Ballymurtagh, Shannon.	Master planning for site redevelopment underway, replacing six bays with seven houses and constructing five additional units to cater for existing demand on site. This is to be developed in three phases, the first of which (4 new units replacing two existing bays) is anticipated to be delivered by Q4 2025. Other phases to follow, funding dependent.	2025 2028
Ballymacraven Kilfenora Road, Ennistymon.	Two vacant houses. One to be rebuilt following a fire to provide existing need on site. The second to be renovated subject to need identified and agreement. The Wastewater treatment plant at this estate is to be renovated.	2025 2028
St. John's Park, Deerpark, Ennistymon	Two vacant houses to be refurbished. Plan to construct two additional bays is progressing.	2025
Glen North, Ennis Road, Ennistymon	Two vacant houses at the site. One to be refurbished to cater for need onsite. Second will be refurbished if a need is identified and agreed.	2025 2028

7.4 Ongoing Assessment of Needs

This Council has worked closely with CENA and Clare Local Development Company [CLDC], Traveller Community Development Programme in preparing data sets for informing this TAP. It is recognised that it is key that this interagency work continue, and Clare County Council are committed to working with CLDC and through the LTACC to ensure that traveller households in need of support are assisted in application process to ensure that our Social Housing Assessment Needs reflects the real needs within the traveller community. This ongoing assessment will be key to ensuring the mid-term review of this TAP can reflect accurately on delivery to date and needs for remainder of TAP and allow for adjustments as required.

8: ADDITIONAL HOUSING SUPPORTS

There are a range of other housing supports available to Travellers in addition to social housing provision as follows:

8.1 HAP – Housing Assistance Payments

A Traveller household who is approved for social housing support may seek accommodation in the private rented sector and apply for rent support under the HAP scheme. As this is a form of social housing support the accommodation needs are met, however, the HAP recipient can elect to remain on the transfer waiting list and be considered for standard social housing support as outlined previously.

8.2 RAS – Rental Accommodation Scheme & Leasing

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and Leasing is now also accepted as a mainstream social housing support offering a high standard of accommodation with medium term security of tenure and on a differential rent basis.

8.3 Local Authority Home Loan

A Local Authority Home Loan is a government backed mortgage for first time buyers (with the exception of applicants qualifying under the "Fresh Start" principle and those who have inherited a residential property). Applicants must meet the terms and conditions of the Local Authority Home Loan Scheme and be unable to get a loan from a bank or building society. It can be used to purchase a new or second-hand property or for self-build. A Local Authority Home Loan provides up to 90% of the market value of the property. The maximum loan amount available in Clare is €300,000.

8.4 First-time House Purchase Grants for Travellers

A grant of €3,810 is available to Travellers who purchase a private house for themselves, for the first time. The grant is paid by the local authority and must be claimed within 3 years of the purchase. The grant is not available to Travellers who are tenants of a local authority house or any other house where the local authority has provided support by way of discounts, e.g. the Tenant Incremental Purchase scheme.

8.5 Caravan Loans Scheme

The Department introduced a Nationwide Pilot Caravan Loan Scheme in 2022 under Section 25 of the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998. The scheme is to support the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation through local authorities to provide preferential loans to Travellers to purchase their own caravan/mobile home on halting sites for use as their primary residence.

The loan is available to approved applicants for social housing support for the purchase of a new or second-hand caravan/mobile home. The maximum loan available is €40,000 and the repayment period is up to 7 years. The local authority must satisfy itself that the caravan to be purchased will be located on a bay provided by the local authority and that the applicant(s) can make the loan repayments and that the loan will be repaid. To date we have granted 3 loans under this scheme. At the time of preparing the Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme this scheme is under review with the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage

8.6 Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme

The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase scheme is available to tenants in receipt of social housing support for at least 10 years, who meet the eligibility criteria, to purchase their house at a discount based on household income. The scheme does not apply to all properties e.g. apartments, houses specially designed for older people or provided for people with disabilities, Traveller group housing, caravans, mobile homes or other homes that can be moved, or houses provided under Part V are not available to purchase.

Please also note that properties which have been constructed or acquired by the Council from the 1st January 2016 are not available for purchase under this scheme.

8.7 Grants for People with a Disability

Grants are available to assist in the carrying out of works which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability who has an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment. They are available to both tenants of council houses and to private house owners. Applications will be considered in accordance with the terms and conditions of the scheme and are subject to funding availability. Tenants should note that the Council will always consider the most cost-effective option to address the housing needs of the disabled person, which includes transferring to a more suitable dwelling.

8.8 Housing Aid for Older Persons Grant

The Scheme of Housing Aid for Older People is available to assist older people 66 years of age (or over) living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs or improvements carried out. Grants assistance is means-tested, is provided on a priority basis and is subject to funding availability.

9: CONCLUSION

It is expected that the provisions of this Traveller Accommodation Programme will serve to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers over the period 2025 – 2029. In order that the Programme continues to reflect the accommodation needs, a review will be undertaken in 2027.

Local Authorities have responsibility to ensure that accommodation is provided for the Traveller community. The Traveller community in turn has responsibilities in relation to the community at large. It is expected that the Council, the settled community and the Traveller community will mutually recognise these responsibilities and will work together to achieve the objectives of this Programme. Other statutory bodies and semi-state agencies have responsibilities in relation to the Traveller community also. The Council expects that these will participate in the implementation of this Programme in a co-ordinated way to build on the benefits that accommodation delivered under this programme will bring.

Achievement of the objectives outlined in this Programme will present a real challenge to Clare County Council. The most effective means of implementing the Programme will be through a process of partnership with the Traveller community and widespread consultation with all interested parties. The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee will also have an important role to play in the process and in monitoring and advising on progress. It will provide, in particular, a structured forum for dialogue between Travellers and the Council. The importance of traveller engagement within the LTACC is crucial to its success over the coming years and the Council is working with Clare Traveller Community Development Programme to ensure improved representation for the period of incoming TAP.

The Council is confident that the approach set out in this Programme to address the provision of suitable accommodation and living conditions for Travellers has potential to succeed subject to the following:

- Central Government commitment to providing the necessary capital resources.
- The availability of a five-year structured programme setting out clear, focussed accommodation targets and objectives and a practical approach to implementation and achievement of these objectives.

- An ethos and acceptance by all parties that consultation must be meaningful and relevant.
- The availability of requisite staff in Clare County Council.
- A successful estate management forum process.
- A pro-active Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.
- A good working relationship between the Local Authority and Traveller community in the county

Finally, The Council acknowledges the significant contribution of all relevant stakeholders in the successful implementation of the Traveller Accommodation programme together with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the Members of Clare County Council who have a pivotal role to play in its implementation.

Appendix 1

ACCOMMODATION NEEDS ANALYSIS: COUNTY CLARE TRAVELLER FAMILIES

Note: Personal information collected by Clare County Council in this survey will only be used by Clare County Council Housing Directorate to inform policy and practice in addressing the accommodation needs of Travellers. The protection of your personal data is a key priority for the Council and your data will be processed in line with our Privacy Policy which is available on our website.

Name of Interviewer _____

Interviewee Name /iHouse Ref _____

Address of Home Being Interviewed:

1. Tick whether this is a:







- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| HOUSE | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| APARTMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| FLAT | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MOBILE OR CHALET | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| TRAILER | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HOMELESS HUB | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| OTHER TEMPORARY OR EMERGENCY | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Summary of Current Household Composition

Household Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Over 60yrs									
50-60yrs									
40-50yrs									
30-40yrs									
20-30yrs									
16-20yrs									
10-15yrs									
5-10yrs									
Under 5yrs									
Total in Household									

 Female
  Male

3. How long has the family been living there?

- LESS THAN 1 YEAR 
- 1-5 YEARS 
- 6-10 YEARS 
- 11-15 YEARS 
- 16-20 YEARS 
- OVER 20 YEARS 

If living on a site or group housing, how long have you lived in that place?

4. Are there any physical disabilities in the family?

YES
NO

IF YES:

What kind of disability? _____

Has this been diagnosed? _____

Who on the list above has the disability _____

5. What is the age of the dwelling (whether a house or a trailer or mobile)?

LESS THAN 1 YEAR
1-5 YEARS
6-10 YEARS
11-15 YEARS
16-20 YEARS Over 20 Years

6. How many bedrooms?

ONE
TWO
THREE
FOUR
FIVE MORE THAN FIVE

7. Is there access to

Running water	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Toilet	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Shower or bath	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Mains Electric	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Any comment on this? _____

8. Are they on the list for housing?

Housing List	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	How long? _____
Transfer List	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	How long? _____

9. Status of tenure:

- In an authorised tenancy (Paying Rent)
- Unauthorised
- Council tenant
- AHB tenant
- Private rented tenant
- Home Owner

10. Any maintenance or structural problems with the home?

11. Is there adequate provision for fire/smoke alarms:

- YES
- NO

12. Does the family have animals?

- HORSES How many? _____
- DOGS How many? _____
- CHICKENS How Many? _____
- OTHER What and how many? _____

13. Where does the family see their future in terms of adequate accommodation?

- House
- Mobile
- Trailer or Chalet
- Modular

14. Would the preference be for:

- Living separately and independently in their own family home
- Living in a group situation with other families related to them
- Living separately but close enough to other families related to them

15. What is the preference in terms of location:

- In a town/city
- On the outskirts or close to town/city
- More distant rural location (say how far away from town)

Are there any areas they definitely will not go? (NAME)

Are there any areas they most definitely prefer? (NAME)

16. Are there cultural-linked needs in any future home. How important would the following

be:

Space for a touring caravan

Space and facilities for animals

Shed

Space for carrying on work

WHEN ALL FAMILIES COMPLETED ANSWER THE FOLLOWING ABOUT THE SITE:

1. Are there problems with flooding?

2. Are there basic services being supplied to a satisfactory level? (ESB, water)

3. Are communal facilities up to standard (for example, huts, sheds, communal toilets etc)

4. Is there overcrowding (too many homes or homes too close to each other?)

5. Are refuge services being supplied?

6. Are there problems re location of the home close enough to services (eg schools, shops, health services etc?)

Observations/ Notes:
