



Comhairle Chontae Laoise
Laois County Council

**Traveller Accommodation Programme
2019-2024**

Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998

	Page
Section 1: Introduction	
Background.....	3
Structure of Traveller Accommodation Programme.....	5
Legislative Background.....	6
Implementation of previous Programmes.....	8
 Section 2: Policy Statement	
Provision of Accommodation.....	9
Homelessness.....	10
Estate Management	10
Temporary Dwellings.....	11
 Section 3: Strategy Statement	
Provision of accommodation.....	12
Implementing Authority.....	12
Resourcing the Programme.....	12
Co-operation with Approved Housing Bodies.....	13
Allocation of Accommodation.....	13
Estate Management	14
Monitoring Arrangements.....	15
 Section 4: Assessment of Accommodation Needs	
Assessment Methodology.....	16
Assessment Findings.....	19
 Section 5: Measures for Implementation	
Standard Social Housing Accommodation.....	26
Traveller Group Housing.....	26
Halting Site Accommodation.....	27
Additional Accommodation Supports.....	28
 Section 6: Consultation	
Notice of Intention.....	31
Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.....	32
Public Consultation.....	32
 Section 7: Conclusion	 33

Section 1: Introduction

Background

County Laois is an important and busy county in a prime location in the centre of Ireland occupying an area of 1720 square kilometers. The improved roads and motorway networks place the County at easy access to airports, major cities and provide residents with significant and diverse economic, social and cultural opportunities. Consequently, this creates a strong basis for the future successful development of the county and its main towns. County Laois has a population of 84,697 as of census 2016. The County has two large towns – Portlaoise (population of 22,050) and Portarlington (population of 8,368); and it also contains a number of substantial towns and villages including Mountmellick, Mountrath , Graiguecullen, Rathdowney .

A total of 196 Traveller households are estimated to reside within County Laois according to the local authority annual count carried out in November 2018. Census 2016 recorded a total of 780 individual Travellers in County Laois comprising 401 males and 379 females. It must be noted that the Traveller population can be under-reported, as many Travellers do not disclose their Traveller identity, often for fear of discrimination. For example, the All Ireland Traveller Health Study enumerated the Traveller population in the Republic of Ireland at just over 36,000 (individuals) in 2010, which is significantly higher than the current census data (30,987 Traveller individuals), so the actual numbers of Travellers in Laois and the State may be higher than that reflected in the census data. Census 2016 did indicate however that in County Laois, the largest number of Travellers, was in the 0-14 age group.

According to Census 2016, 58% of Travellers usually resident and present in Ireland were aged under 25, compared with just 33% of the general population, and there were just 932 Travellers aged 65 and over. Census also shows that 23% of Travellers, aged 15 to 24, were married compared with just 1% of the general population in the same age group. While 10,653 Travellers in Ireland were included in the labour force the vast majority 8541 (80.2%) were unemployed compared with 12.7% being unemployed in the general population. Almost 1 in 8 Travellers in Ireland stated that they were unable to work due to a disability, which was almost three times the rate of the general population. Irish Traveller households tend to be much bigger than the general population households - more than 1 in 4 Irish Traveller households had 6 or more persons compared with less than 1 in 20 households in the State overall, according to Census 2016. The socio-economic profile of the Traveller population is an important factor in determining accommodation needs. According to 2018 local authority annual count the majority (65%) of Traveller households in Laois avail of permanent accommodation i.e. standard social housing, Traveller Group Housing, Halting Site Accommodation or are owner occupiers. 15% of households avail of private rented accommodation and 10% share accommodation with family or friends. 10% of the households live in road side caravans or homeless emergency accommodation / hubs.

In terms of Traveller Specific Accommodation, there are 2 Traveller Group Housing Schemes (in Mountmellick and Portarlinton) and one halting site in Clonminam , Portlaoise.

Laois County Council is the single local authority for County Laois. Since the implementation of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, County Laois has three Municipal districts for local government which are:

- Portlaoise Municipal District
- Portarlinton/Graiguecullen Municipal District
- Borris in Ossory/Mountmellick Municipal District

The local authority provides a broad range of services including housing provision, road design, construction, maintenance and improvements, water services, promotion of economic development and emergency services.

Structure of Traveller Accommodation Programme

The programme is divided in seven sections and the contents of each section is described below

Section 1

This section outlines some socio-economic facts about County Laois, deals with the legislative framework which governs the requirements for all Housing Authorities to develop a Traveller Accommodation Programme, and outlines progress under the previous Programmes.

Section 2

This section sets out Laois County Council's Policy in relation to meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers.

Section 3

This section sets out a Strategy Statement which details Laois County Council's approach for securing the implementation of the programme.

Section 4

This section deals with the assessment of existing and projected need for Traveller accommodation during the lifetime of the Programme.

Section 5

This section details the measures for implementation and the proposals for the forthcoming five years.

Section 6

This section outlines the purpose of LTACC and the requirement and importance of consultation.

Section 7

This section outlines the conclusions and summarises the significant information contained in the programme.

Legislative Background

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 came into effect on the 10th of September 1998 and the primary purpose of the Act 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.

A summary of the main provisions of the 1998 Act is outlined as follows:

- To provide that each housing authority must prepare and have adopted a programme of Traveller accommodation in their area.
- Adoption of a Programme is a reserved function. However, in the event of the members failing to adopt a Programme within the specified timeframe, the County Manager is required to adopt the Programme by way of Managers Order.
- To provide for an extensive public notification and consultation process in respect of the preparation of a Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- To require housing authorities to take reasonable steps to secure the implementation of Traveller Accommodation Programmes.
- To provide for the establishment of a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to facilitate consultation with Travellers.
- The requirement of local authorities to include objectives concerning Traveller accommodation in County and City Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

Laois County Council is therefore required to prepare and adopt a new Traveller Accommodation Programme and the Minister directed in Circular 35/2018 that the next Traveller Accommodation Programme should be for the period from 1st July 2019 to 30th June 2024.

A summary of key dates and actions is outlined in the table below and it is highlighted that the Minister has specified the 30th of September 2019 as the latest date by which the accommodation programme must be adopted.

Date	Action
August 2018	Give one months notice to stakeholders before making assessment of need
September / October 2018	Conduct assessment of estimated existing and projected need during the period of the programme and types of accommodation required
November / December 2018	Analysis of the results of needs assessment
January / March 2019	Preparation of draft Traveller Accommodation Programme
01 April 2019	Publish Notice in newspapers that Draft programme is available for inspection and submissions and circulate the draft programme to stakeholders
31/05/2019	The latest date for receipt of written submissions on draft programme
01/07/2018	Submission of draft programme to Council members for adoption (3 months before the latest date for adoption i.e. 30/09/2019)
30/09/2019	The latest date for adoption of the programme
21/10/2019	Latest date for adjournment of Council meetings
21/11/2019	If there is failure to adopt the programme by elected members a further 1 month is allowed before the programme, as may be modified, is adopted by Managers Order
Following adoption	Publication and submission to the Minister of the adopted programme.
31/12/2021	A review of the 5 th Traveller Accommodation Programme must be carried out not later than 31/12/2021

Implementation of previous Programmes (2000 – 2018)

The first four Traveller Accommodation Programmes have mainly included provision of standard social housing. Whilst 33 Traveller Group Housing units were included in the previous programmes only 6 (18%) were provided. The main reasons for the planned Traveller Group Housing Schemes not progressing are the below;

- the intended tenants had left the administrative area
- the intended tenants chose another accommodation option
- Difficulties in acquiring suitable sites.

Halting site accommodation for one bay is provided in Portlaoise.

The implementation of the first four programmes is summarised in the below table;

Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2000 – 2018									
Programme	SSH		GHS		HS		Total		
	Target	Provided	Target	Provided	Target	Provided	Target	Provided	
2000 – 2004	17	72	5	0	5	32	27	104	
2005 – 2008	35	58	5	0	0	0	40	58	
2009 – 2013	31	22	6	6	0	0	37	28	
2014 – 2018	41	48	0	0	0	0	41	48	
Total	124	200	16	6	5	32	145	238	

Section 2: Policy Statement

The overall aim of Laois County Council housing policy is to enable every household, where a housing need has been established, to have available to them an affordable dwelling of good quality, in a good environment as far as possible, at tenure of their choice, and in location of their choice, in so far as possible.

Laois County Council recognises Travellers' identity as an indigenous minority ethnic group. It is the policy of the local authority, within the resources available, to directly provide accommodation to Travellers in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

Provision of Accommodation

Applicants seeking social housing accommodation, including Traveller Specific Accommodation, are required to submit housing applications and relevant documents in accordance with Housing Regulations 2011. Where the applicant has particular family circumstances or a disability, the Council will consider such issues when assessing the housing need. It is the policy of the Council to consult with Traveller applicants regarding their

accommodation needs and requirements to provide, where appropriate, Traveller Specific Accommodation. However, this may not always be available to each applicant and therefore other available options will be explored and offered. The Council will also not accept responsibility for providing accommodation for Traveller families (including traders) who from time to time move into the area. Also the Council will decline to assist those applicants who have adequate accommodation available to them in another local authority area.

The allocation of properties will be based on the Council's Allocation Scheme which sets out the priorities and procedures for allocating social housing units. The Allocations scheme recognises the need to achieve a balance in allocating housing units between the accommodation needs and preferences of applicants, the well-being of existing tenants and the community as a whole and the need to make best use of publicly funded resources.

There are a full range of housing options available in the provision of accommodation for Travellers, including:

- Standard Social Housing Accommodation
- Traveller Group Housing
- Traveller Halting Site Accommodation
- Private house ownership
- Private Rented Accommodation with support of HAP

Homelessness

Individuals or families who present as homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless can avail of the services of the Homeless Section. This may include sourcing temporary emergency accommodation where a bona fide housing need has been established.

Estate Management

A well-maintained housing stock and the attractive appearance of a housing estate enhance the quality of life and the social well-being of tenants. All Council housing stock, including Traveller Specific Accommodation, is managed on the same basis.

A tenancy agreement outlining the terms and conditions is required for all tenancies and all tenancies are subject to the payment of differential rent. In the interests of all tenants living on the site or estate, the Council will rigorously enforce the contents of the tenancy agreement. Each tenant has a responsibility to ensure that the terms of the tenancy agreement are met in full. Estate management also includes securing the interest of the tenants in the enjoyment of the house and the avoidance, prevention and abatement of anti-social behavior

in the housing estates. Laois County Council operates an Anti-Social Behavior Strategy for addressing anti-social behavior emanating from Council owned dwellings and estates. Anti-Social Behavior emanating from the privately owned dwellings or from tenants of the private rented sector is not a matter for the local authority. Complaints in this regard should be made directly to the landlord or An Garda Síochana.

Temporary Dwellings

The Council has a procedure to ensure a co-ordinated response, when temporary dwellings 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
- District Court Order record no. 41E98
- 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.

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 Officer will investigate the circumstances of the household in the temporary dwelling and take appropriate action.

Section 3: Strategy Statement

Provision of Accommodation

Laois County Council aims to provide accommodation that responds to the different needs of Travellers utilising various forms of social housing delivery. These include direct provision through the capital programme and purchase 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 schemes and private rented accommodation supported by Housing Assistance Payment. The current Rebuilding Ireland Plan is aimed at tackling our country's housing shortage and will result in a dramatic increase in the delivery of homes nationwide. Under this plan Laois County Council aims to provide 840 social housing units to applicants approved for social housing during the period 2018 – 2021.

The identification of suitable sites for provision of Traveller Group Housing is a challenge for the Local Authority. Sites owned by Laois County Council may be used for this purpose and additional sites may be acquired, if required, subject to availability of funding.

Travellers who wish to undertake the provision of their own accommodation may access supports such as home loans and grants.

Implementing Authority

Laois County Council is the implementing authority for the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024. The housing section of the Council is responsible for the provision of suitable, cost effective and, quality accommodation and the implementation of the programme.

Resourcing the Programme

The delivery of social housing units is subject to the appropriate level of funding being made available by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Funding is currently available through the Social Housing Capital Investment Programme (SHCIP) which provides funding for capital projects, acquisitions including Part V and Compulsory Purchase Order acquisitions.

The Department of Housing Planning and Local Government currently provide full funding for the provision and refurbishment of Traveller Specific accommodation. The delivery of the new Traveller Group housing schemes and refurbishment of the existing schemes in this programme will be subject to the availability of funding from the department.

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

The Council utilises the expertise of its staff such as technical and administrative staff, housing finance staff, assessment officers, tenant liaison officers, anti-social behaviour investigation officers and social workers in housing provision, maintenance and management of accommodation, as required.

Co-operation with Approved Housing Bodies

Laois County Council has a strong working relationship with various Approved Housing Bodies operating in the county for the delivery of social housing options. The approved housing bodies deliver social housing, in partnership with the Council, through capital projects, acquisitions and leasing and are funded through Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP), Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF).

Allocation of Accommodation

Social housing accommodation is allocated in accordance with Laois County Council's Allocations Scheme. The Council also nominates applicants from Council's housing list for the tenancies of the Approved Housing Bodies.

Special needs dwellings and old persons dwellings are allocated to housing applicants based on their specific needs. Traveller Group housing is provided, within the available resources of the Council, to Travellers who have requested and agreed to be accommodated together.

Estate management

Maintenance is a fundamental aspect of estate management principles. The Council is responsible for the maintenance that are required to sustain the main structure of the property such as structural, plumbing and electrical and heating repairs and for some estate infrastructure such as internal roads, footpaths and alleyways. The maintenance is carried through reactive maintenance and planned maintenance. Tenants are expected to take care of the property and gardens and be responsible for all day to day minor repairs.

Whilst the Council has the primary responsibility for maintenance and management of its housing stock and estates, the tenants of the Council are encouraged to develop a sense of ownership and where feasible to actively participate in the estate management through resident committees. The successful tenant participation can bring about vast improvements in the quality of life for residents of local authority housing estates and can help to prevent the deterioration of an estate. The Council's tenant liaison officers are tasked to manage the tenant and landlord relationship and enhance tenant participation.

Laois County Council employs a Tenant Liaison Officer to investigate complaints of anti-social behaviour emanating from Council owned dwellings and estates and to address incidents of anti-social behaviour. Laois County Council also co-operates with An Garda Síochána and other agencies in addressing anti-social behaviour.

Rents are calculated based on the Differential rents scheme taking into account the total household income and household composition. Tenants are encouraged to use Household Budget Deduction, Bank Standing Order, Direct Debit or An Post Payment Card as their rent payment method. Laois County Council expects all tenants to have rent account without arrears at all times. All rent accounts are monitored and tenants with rent arrears are encouraged to meet with the rents section to discuss how the matter can be best resolved.

Tenants' responsibilities and obligations are outlined in the Tenancy Agreement and further information is provided in the Tenant's handbook. All new tenants are required to attend pre-tenancy training where tenants' rights, responsibilities and the Council's obligations are clarified. Where Tenancy Agreements are being broken repeatedly, Laois County Council will issue Tenancy Warnings and initiate eviction proceedings, if required.

Monitoring Arrangements

The implementation of the programme will be continuously monitored and the below monitoring arrangements are in place;

- Records for the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation programme are kept by the housing section and progress reports are provided in the monthly Housing Team meetings
- Progress report will be presented in each meeting of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Progress report will be presented to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee at the end of each year of the programme
- Annual returns to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government are provided through LGreturns system
- Review of the Traveller Accommodation Programme will be carried out in 2021 and will be completed by 31/12/2021

Section 4: Assessment of Accommodation Needs

Assessment Methodology

A review of 49 housing applications was carried out to determine the housing requirements of all applicants.

Projected Need

The projected need was estimated based on the available information regarding household composition and ages of the household members of housing applicants, tenants of local authority and approved housing bodies, and owner occupiers. The below categories of individuals were included

- Adult children living with parents who had not applied for social housing
- Adults living with relatives who had not applied for social housing
- Children of tenants, housing applicants, owner occupiers etc. who would reach the age of 18 during the duration of the programme i.e. 01/07/2019 to 30/06/2024

Transient sites

The records for temporary dwellings for the past five years were reviewed to establish possible need for transient sites for Traveller households who occupy a caravan on the road side, yard, field, private land etc. while temporarily visiting the county.

Current accommodation position

The majority of the 49 applicants live in private rented accommodation (43%) or share accommodation with family or friends (29%). 26% live in temporary dwellings (road side caravans) or homeless emergency accommodation / homeless hubs and therefore can be considered having very unstable living conditions. 2% are in temporary institutional settings .

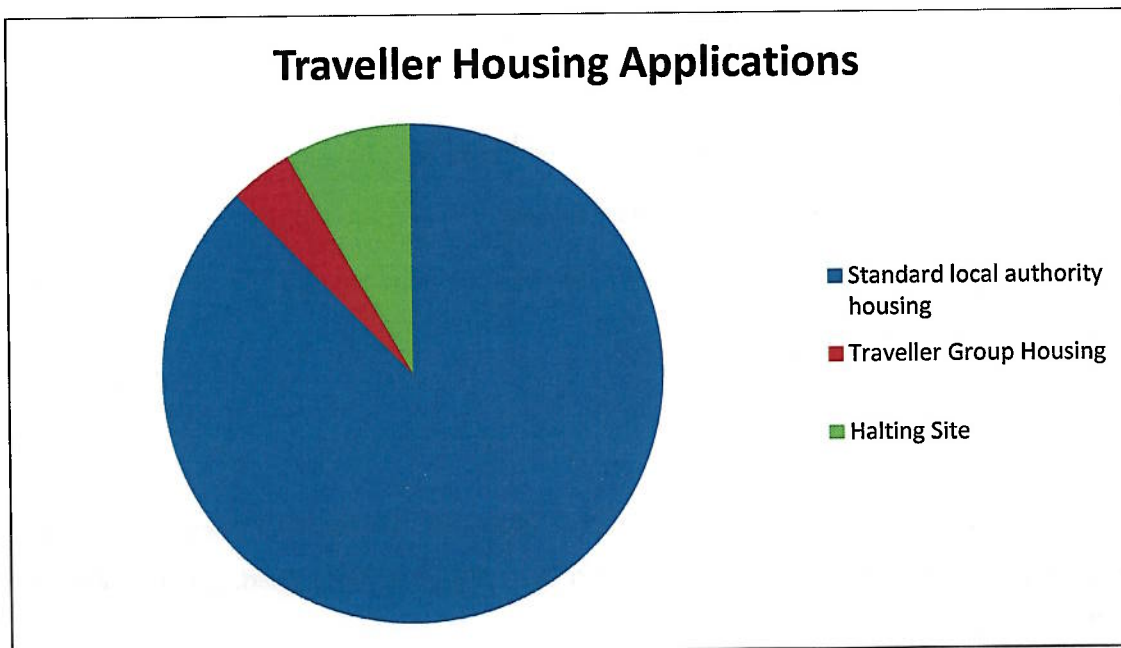
Reported Disability need

Information regarding inclusion in the disability category in the housing waiting list was obtained from the I-house system. 15 (30%) of 50 applicants reported having a particular housing need due to a disability or a medical condition

Requested Accommodation

In connection with the assessment of housing applicants the following is a breakdown of the Housing requirements :

The majority 43 (88%) of the 49 applicants requested standard social housing only. 2(4%) requested Traveller Group housing only and 4 (8%) halting site accommodation.



The above indicates that whilst there is some interest for Traveller Group Housing the majority of the Traveller applicants prefer standard social housing accommodation.

Projected need

The estimation of the projected need indicates accommodation need for 238 households during the duration of the programme. Whilst it has not been possible to establish the accommodation preference of these 238 individuals, it is envisaged based on the housing applicants strong preference for standard social housing, that the majority would consider standard accommodation.

Section 5: Measures for Implementation

Standard Social Housing Accommodation

The majority of standard social housing vacancies are allocated through the Scheme of Letting Priorities based on the points allocated to the applicant.

Traveller Group Housing

Whilst 2 families have expressed interest for group housing, it is not envisaged that there will be any additional Traveller Group Housing Schemes over the lifetime of this Programme.

Halting Site Accommodation

Four applicants requested Traveller Halting Site Bays. There will be a capacity increase for Oakpark halting site in Portlaoise from its current one bay to four bays to accommodate the extended family of the existing residents of the Halting site.

Further need for halting sites in Laois will be reviewed during this programme.

Transient sites

Most encampments of transient Traveller families have been relatively small and short-term stays. Whilst the existing halting site in Portlaoise has not been used for short-term accommodation of transient Traveller households, provision of a second site in county Laois is not currently required.

Additional Accommodation Supports

In addition to social housing provision there are various housing supports available to Travellers, for example:

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

HAP is a form of social housing support provided by local authorities. Under HAP the housing applicant will be required to find their own accommodation in the private rented sector. Where the applicant is eligible and approved for HAP, their local authority will pay, on their behalf, their monthly rent to their landlord. In return the applicant will be required to pay a contribution towards rent to the local authority. This will be a differential rent based on their household weekly income, in a similar way to the differential rents charged for all local authority

housing. Once the applicant is in receipt of HAP their housing needs will be met and they will not be on the local authority's housing list. However, they will be able to apply for transfer to other forms of social housing

Homeless Services

Travellers who are homeless or are at risk of becoming can avail of the services of Council's homelessness section. These services include provision of emergency accommodation and supports to secure alternative accommodation.

Re-building Ireland Home Loan

A person that is unable to get a loan from a building society or bank, may be eligible for a local authority mortgage. A Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is a Government backed mortgage for first time buyers. It is available nationwide from all local authorities. A first time buyer can apply for a Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan to purchase a new or second-hand property, or to build their own home. The loan is a normal Capital and Interest-bearing mortgage which is repaid by direct debit on a monthly basis. A first time buyer can borrow up to 90% of the market value of the property. Maximum market values of the property that can be purchased or self-built in county Laois is currently €250,000

First-time House Purchase Grants for Travellers

A Traveller, who has purchased a private house for themselves, for the first time, can apply for a grant of €3810. The Grant is paid by the local authority and must be claimed within 3 years of the purchase. The grant is not awarded to Travellers who seek to purchase their local authority house or any other house where the Local Authority has provided assistance by way of discounts, for example, affordable housing, incremental purchase scheme.

Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme

From time to time Council operates a scheme that gives local authority tenants the opportunity to buy their homes and get a discount on the price of the house based on their income. An incremental purchase charge, equal to the discount, will be placed on the house and will remain in place for 20, 25 or 30 years. The charge will be reduced each year by 2%. If the house is resold before the end of the charge period, the value of the outstanding charge on the house must be paid back to the Council. The tenant who buys their Council house must continue to live in the house for as long as they own it. Some properties do not qualify for sale, for example houses designated for older people or people with a disability, Traveller Group Housing, long-term leased and Rental Accommodation Scheme units, apartments and flats.

Adaptations to a Council House for a person with a disability

A tenant can apply for adaptations to a Council house for the purposes of carrying out works that are reasonably necessary to render a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability. The Council will always consider the most cost-effective option to address housing needs of the disabled person, which includes transferring to a more suitable dwelling. Provision of adaptation works is subject to survey, feasibility, and budget.

Disabled Persons Grant for private house owners

Grants are available for people with a disability, who are private house owners, to assist in the carrying out of works which are reasonably necessary for the purpose of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability. Grant assistance is means-tested and will be provided on a priority basis and is subject to budget.

Housing Aid Grant for Older people

Housing Aid for Older People, who are private house owners, is available to assist older people living in poor housing conditions where works are deemed necessary to make the house habitable for the applicant or weather proof in extremely urgent cases. Grant assistance is means-tested and is provided on a priority basis, which will be determined from information supplied on the application form and following an inspection from a Council official. Grant assistance is subject to budget.

Housing Transfers

Tenants of the Council can apply for transfer to more suitable accommodation in certain circumstances such as over-crowding, under-occupancy, and disability. Also a tenant of approved housing body can apply for transfer within the AHB housing stock. In situations where the approved housing body is unable to provide suitable accommodation the tenant can submit application to the Council.

Section 6: Consultation

Accommodation Programmes are required to be prepared and implemented in consultation with other local public authorities, community groups and other bodies, Travellers both directly and via the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC), Traveller Support Groups in the area, if any; and the public in general.

The purpose of this consultation process is to ensure that the interests of all concerned with or affected by proposals for Traveller Accommodation are considered and to facilitate a planned and comprehensive response by housing authorities to the accommodation needs of Travellers.

Notice of intention

Notice of the intention to prepare the new Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 1st July 2019 to 30th June 2024 and to carry out an assessment of existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers was given to the below bodies;

Offaly County Council	Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
Tipperary County Council	Clanmil Ireland
Kildare County Council	STEER Housing Association
Kilkenny County Council	Hail Housing Association
Carlow County Council	Tuath Housing
Irish Traveller Movement	Cluid Housing Association
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre	Foscadh Housing Association
Laois Traveller Action Group	North & East Housing Association
Midlands Prison	Oaklee Housing
Health Service Executive	Respond Housing Association
	Co-operative Housing

Submissions were received from 5 individual housing applicants , Mountmellick Youth Development Centre, Laois Traveller Action Group, HSE Midlands , HSE Traveller Mental Health Service and Irish Traveller Movement .

Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC)

The role assigned to Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee is to

- Advise in relation to the preparation and implementation of any accommodation programme for the functional area of the appointing authority concerned,
- Advise on the provision and management of accommodation for Travellers, and
- Provide a liaison between Travellers and members and officials of the appointing authority concerned.

The membership of the Laois County Council's LTACC comprises 12 members; 3 elected members, 5 Travellers/representatives of Traveller bodies and 4 Council officials. The LTACC was notified of the intention to prepare a new Traveller Accommodation Programme and to carry out an assessment of existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers and were also consulted in this regard. The assessment report and draft Traveller Accommodation Programme were submitted to LTACC for consideration.

Public Consultation

Section 9(1) of the Act requires local authorities to publish in not less than one newspaper circulating within the functional area of that relevant housing authority stating its proposal to adopt, amend, replace the accommodation programme with regard to submissions received in writing in relation to the Draft Programme. The Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 was made available for inspection in accordance with statutory requirements by all appropriate bodies, Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the general public. Submissions were invited in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

Section 7: Conclusion

The majority of Travellers in county Laois have had a strong preference for standard social housing for a long time and this trend continues. Consequently, the past Traveller Accommodation Programmes have mainly included standard social housing provision and Laois County Council has exceeded its the targets in regard to provision of standard social housing during 2000 – 2018 in the 2014-2018 plan. The provision of 37 units of standard social housing during the course of this programme (2019 – 2024) is envisaged to be achieved through allocation of newly built and casual vacancies of the Council and Approved Housing Bodies. The standard social housing will be allocated through our Scheme of Letting Priorities. The existing Oakpark halting site will be increased by 3 bays. **In total 40 units of accommodation will be provided over the lifetime of the Programme.**

Whilst there has been some interest for Traveller Group Housing in the past many of the intended Group housing schemes did not materialise due to various reasons. Whilst 2 applicants of various family composition are seeking Traveller Group Housing it is not deemed to be realistic to achieve completion of new group housing schemes during the course of this programme.

There are challenges such as securing sites for Traveller Group Housing, Laois County Council receiving the necessary capital resources and the possible changes in accommodation needs over the course of the programme. It is hoped that these challenges can be overcome through a process of partnership with the relevant agencies, Travelling community and the interested parties and general public. It is important that the members of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee play a pro-active role, in particular, creating a formal structure for dialogue between the Travelling Community and Laois County Council.

In order to ensure that the programme reflects the accommodation needs of Travellers a review of the programme will be carried out in 2021. Considering the accommodation needs of Travellers and other circumstances the targets of the programme can be amended following the review, if required.
