

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NTACC

The National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) reported on the progress of local authorities 5-year Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAPs). This report drew attention to a number of areas...

- ✓ "Traveller count" (the method and count format) varies, and is difficult to establish comparisons
- ✓ Not all Local Authorities had set annual targets and reviewed progress with members of the LTACC
- ✓ There is a need for greater monitoring of local authorities, i.e., a National Traveller Accommodation Agency or greater powers to NTACC to oversee the implementation of TAPs

For the full text of the NTACC report, go to:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,14966,en.pdf>



“Wider issues, such as health, mental wellbeing, education and employment, cannot be properly addressed **until accommodation is dealt with.**”

“Between 2006 and 2013, local authorities failed to spend €50 million allocated by the Department of the Environment for Traveller accommodation. **‘Underspending’ on Traveller housing is an ongoing issue**, with local authorities’ own targets on provision continually being missed.”

– Irish Times, Holland, 17 October 2015

Following the fatal Carrickmines tragedy...

Traveller accommodation has gained more national media attention.

The same concerns exist across Cork and Kerry ...



This position paper has been developed by Traveller led community organisations from Cork and Kerry and sets out the main issues.

For further information about the Traveller accommodation crisis in Cork and Kerry, please contact any of the following agencies:

Cork Traveller Women's Network
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Traveller Visibility Group Ltd
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West Cork Travellers Centre
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Travellers of North Cork (TNC)
tel: 022.71035 and 022.71032
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Kerry Travellers Health and Community Development Project
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Southern Traveller Health Network
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FEBRUARY 2016



HOW THE NEW GOVERNMENT CAN STOP THE CRISIS IN TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION



...yet local authorities **have failed** to deliver suitable accommodation and to fix dangerous overcrowded conditions. Frustrations from lack of progress (over 15 years) continue to escalate.

1 Recognise Traveller ethnicity by the Irish State.

This is a priority. The UN and the Oireachas Justice Committee back the State's recognition of Traveller ethnicity. Recognition would strengthen the cultural rights of the Traveller community. We call for immediate recognition of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group by the Irish State.

Travellers are an Irish ethnic minority. There are approximately 600 Traveller families in Cork City, 410 in Cork County and 400 in Kerry.

There is a strong link for many Travellers between accommodation and identity.

2 Create a new, independent National Traveller Accommodation Agency.

Government reports have called for a national Traveller Accommodation Agency from as far back as 1995. Development of Traveller accommodation is currently the responsibility of local authorities (via national funding). After 17 years, this system has failed to provide culturally appropriate homes to meet the needs of the community. **We call for the establishment of a new independent agency that can ensure delivery on the ground.**

3 Increase and monitor the Traveller Accommodation Budget.

The National Traveller Accommodation Budget has been cut from €40 million to €5.5 million in 2016. **We call for an urgent increase to the budget to meet the current accommodation crisis. We also call for a system of monitoring and sanction for local authorities who fail to deliver accommodation linked to budgetary allocations.**

4 Ensure collaborative decision making around Traveller accommodation.

Although Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs) have been set up under the Traveller Accommodation Act 1998, their decision making is controlled by local authorities. Travellers on these committees are often unheard, not given equal access to information and frustrated by lack of progress. LTACCs functioning is sloppy: these committees have no links to other strategic council committees and despite government policy, do not produce annual reports on their work. **We call for independent regulation for LTACCs to ensure openness, effective delivery of accommodation and a commitment to real partnership. We also call for meaningful consultation and resident engagement in the creation of new and management of existing Traveller accommodation.**

5 Monitor the 5-year Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) at a national level.

In Cork City, County and Kerry the TAPs have been inadequate throughout the last 15 years. Delivery of accommodation through the TAPs was hindered by insufficient needs assessments lack of clear targets, (despite statutory obligations) and failure to implement plans. **We call for a national monitoring and sanction system for local authority TAPs.**

6 Ensure culturally appropriate options.

The option of Traveller Specific accommodation (halting site, group housing or standard housing) is not consistently catered for by councils – as it should be according to the Traveller Accommodation Act. At present, there are no clear routes for Travellers living in standard housing or in homelessness to move to Traveller-specific accommodation (a continuation of the old, discredited 'settlement policy'). Traveller projects are concerned that many families have been forced into standard housing due to a lack of Traveller specific accommodation.

7 Implement recommendations of the NTACC Review of the Traveller Accommodation Act.

Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 as far back as 2004. It made a body of recommendations to strengthen the Act, which have not yet implemented by local authorities.

8 Support Traveller nomadism.

Nomadism is an important aspect of Traveller culture. The Criminal Trespass Act (2002) has been disproportionately used against Travellers practicing nomadism and seasonal travelling – yet no transient halting sites were created. This law has also been inappropriately used by local authorities, against vulnerable homeless Travellers living on the roadside, (Cork City, 2014). **We call on the creation of a national network of well managed, serviced, transient Traveller halting sites to provide facilities for nomadic families. We further call on the repeal the Criminal Trespass Act (2002).**

9 Uphold the DoE's directive around fire and safety checks.

Following the Carrickmines tragedy, the Department of the Environment directed all local authorities to undertake fire and safety audits of Traveller accommodation without delay. This work must be carried out in partnership with Traveller residents and local Traveller Organisations. Reviews should not be used as a means to push Traveller families into standard housing (or to be evicted). Local authorities should be obliged to provide emergency Traveller-specific accommodation, if a site cannot be made safe. **We call for immediate fire and safety audits of all Traveller accommodation and the provision of appropriate emergency accommodation.**

10 Plan effectively around the needs of Travellers experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness is a major crisis nationally. Travellers face additional barriers to securing suitable social housing and private rented homes. Many Traveller families are trapped 'couch surfing', in severely overcrowded houses, or living in caravans in parents' yards and driveways or other unauthorised areas without facilities. These families are not being recognised by the current system. Travellers seeking homes or have also been negatively affected by the 'habitual residence' condition, which discriminates against any families moving around. Travellers are also routinely refused emergency accommodation on the basis that "they made themselves homeless", i.e. left the county to travel for a period of time, literally being punished for practising their culture. The particular impact of the housing crisis on Traveller families needs to be officially acknowledged. **We also call for an end to evictions of families who have had to move caravans onto the road site due to homelessness and a commitment to providing supports for these families.**

GOOD QUALITY TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION...

Travellers are an indigenous ethnic minority with long shared history, cultural values, language, customs and tradition. **Nomadism, the importance of the extended family, the Traveller language and a preference for self-employment are aspects of Traveller culture.**

The Traveller Accommodation Act makes provision for Traveller families to access:

- Traveller specific accommodation (halting site or group housing scheme)
- Standard local authority accommodation

There is a strong link for many Travellers between accommodation and identity. Recognising culture is essential in planning good quality Traveller specific accommodation.

Good quality, Traveller-specific accommodation ...

- ✓ Is developed in close consultation with the community.
- ✓ Recognizes the strong sense of community and the needs and compatibility of extended family groupings.
- ✓ Recognizes for the population structure of the Traveller community.
 - With over 40% under the age of 15, plan for changing family structures.
 - Traveller families also tend to be larger than non-Traveller families.
- ✓ Considers provision work space for traditional economic activities such as scrap collecting and Christmas Tree sales.
- ✓ Caters for certain members of the Traveller community who keep animals including horses (where required). Horses and horse ownership are an integral, cultural trait of many Travellers. Legal, responsible Traveller horse ownership needs to be supported by the state, via supporting horse projects, stabling and access to grazing land. It also needs to be facilitated where required alongside the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation.
- ✓ Provides adequate parking space for vehicles used by the family and visitors.
- ✓ Provides community facilities and play space.

