

Louth Local Authorities

Traveller Accommodation Programme

2009-2013

Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998

Adopted by:

Louth County Council 19 January 2009
Dundalk Town Council 27 January 2009
Drogheda Borough Council 2 March 2009

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION, POLICY AND STRATEGY

1. Introduction

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 requires each relevant Local Authority to prepare and adopt a Traveller Accommodation Programme initially in respect of a 5 year period and thereafter in respect of each succeeding period of 5 years or such shorter period as the Minister (for Environment, Heritage and Local Government) may direct.

A Traveller Accommodation Programme must be prepared in accordance with the requirements set out in the Act and also in accordance with such directions as may be given by the Minister.

Each of the Louth Local Authorities adopted a Traveller Accommodation Programme covering the 4 year period 2005-2008.

The Minister has now given a direction that a new Accommodation Programme be adopted by each relevant housing authority not later than 30th April 2009 in respect of the 5 year period 2009-2013.

Section 7 (2) of the Act provides that a relevant housing authority may adopt a programme jointly with one or more relevant housing authorities. On that basis this programme shall be a joint programme for the 3 Louth Local Authorities.

Joe McGuinness
Director of Services

2. Consultation Procedures

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, and the directions given by the Minister, place particular emphasis on the need to engage in appropriate consultation with relevant bodies and the public generally in drawing up and adopting a Traveller Accommodation Programme.

Sections 6, 8, 9 and 15 of the Act provide for the giving of specific forms of notice in this regard.

In providing accommodation under this Programme the Local Authorities will comply with whatever statutory requirements are currently in force in relation to public consultation, such as the provisions of Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001.

Nothing in this programme shall prevent the Local Authorities from forthwith providing accommodation for any traveller family in a situation where the Local Authority considers that an emergency situation exists for the purposes of:

- (a) Section 138 (4) of the Local Government Act, 2001
- (b) Section 179 (6) (b) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 or
- (c) Section 24 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998.

3. Policy Statement

It is the policy of Louth Local Authorities, within the resources available to them, to provide adequate accommodation for all Traveller families for whom they are deemed to have responsibility (see Section 6). In implementing this policy the Local Authorities will endeavour to ensure:

- I. That all Traveller families secure accommodation of a type, standard and location acceptable to them in as far as possible, and in doing so the local authorities will consider all available options as to type of accommodation in this regard including serviced caravan parks (temporary and permanent), group housing schemes, conventional local authority housing options and any other form of accommodation considered suitable, including emergency accommodation.
- II. That there is consultation with Travellers themselves, Traveller representative groups, statutory and voluntary agencies, the local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, elected members, the public generally and any other interested persons or bodies in relation to identifying the needs to be met in this Programme.
- III. That there is effective liaison with the various statutory and voluntary agencies in order to facilitate the provision of an adequate range of back-up services and facilities for Travellers particularly in the areas of health, education, training, social development and employment opportunities, both for Travellers who have already been provided with accommodation and those awaiting such accommodation.
- IV. That in providing accommodation, the distinctive needs of individual Traveller families are taken into account.
- V. That unauthorised encampments are eliminated within the County using the various statutory provisions available to the local authorities and described in more detail later in this plan.
- VI. That in carrying out this programme accommodation will be provided on a priority basis.

4. Strategy Statement

- (i) Responsibility for implementing this programme will rest with Louth County Council, Dundalk Town Council, Drogheda Borough Council and in doing so the local authorities will liaise with and seek the assistance of the appropriate statutory and voluntary bodies.
- (ii) The provision of accommodation for Travellers such as caravan parks, group housing and conventional housing will in the first instance be carried out directly by the local authorities using the normal practice of design, tendering, construction etc or by its own direct labour if appropriate in certain circumstances. Where a voluntary body is willing and able to undertake the provision of accommodation in appropriate circumstances the local authorities will assist and encourage such body in whatever way possible including availing of the various capital assistance and other grant schemes available for this purpose. Likewise where individual Traveller families are willing to undertake the provision of their own accommodation the local authorities will seek to encourage and assist them in this regard.
- (iii) In implementing the provisions of this programme the local authorities will seek to achieve understanding and acceptance of the respective needs, rights and legitimate concerns of both Travellers and the general public.
- (iv) In accordance with the provisions of the Traveller Accommodation Act there will be ongoing consultation with the traveller community. Progress on the implementation of this programme will be continuously monitored by the Local Authorities in consultation with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the Housing Strategic Policy Committee.

A report will be presented at each meeting of the Consultative Committee outlining progress on achievement of the annual targets set out in the implementation section of the programme for each Local Authority and the Local Authority will consider any recommendations made by the Consultative Committee in this regard.

In addition a report outlining progress in implementation will be presented to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee at the end of each year of the programme.

- (v) In undertaking the provision of accommodation under this programme the local authorities recognise the need to put in place effective strategies for the future management and maintenance of such

accommodation and appropriate measures will be implemented in this regard including the application to such accommodation of the local authorities policies and practices for good estate management and tenant participation and in particular the following policy documents:

- (a) Statement of Policy on Housing Management for Rented Local Authority Housing Stock (Section 9 of Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992).
 - (b) Louth Local Authorities – Estate Management in Housing Area – Tenant Participation (December 1997).
 - (c) Louth Local Authorities – Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (Adopted 2004)
- or any amendments to the above.

5. Unauthorised Encampments

In conjunction with the provision of a range of good quality and properly managed accommodation the Council will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that unauthorised encampments are eliminated as far as possible. To achieve this, the Council will avail of the statutory powers available, particularly under Section 10 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992 as amended by Section 32 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 and also where appropriate the following:

- 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.

6. Responsibility for Providing Accommodation

Louth Local Authorities will accept responsibility for the provision for accommodation for the following categories of Travellers:

- (a) Travellers identified in the Assessment of Needs carried out in September 2008 as being in need of accommodation or in any future assessment of needs carried out during the lifetime of this programme.
- (b) New family units or households formed during the lifetime of this plan comprising family members of these households at (a) above.
- (c) New Traveller families who move into the area of the local authorities during the lifetime of this plan and who satisfy the local authorities that they have a genuine need to be accommodated in the area and who do not have accommodation available to them in the area of any other local authority.

The local authorities will not accept responsibility for providing accommodation for Traveller families (including traders) who from time to time move into the area and whom the Council are satisfied have adequate accommodation available to them in other areas or who would appear to the local authorities to possess the means to provide such accommodation.

Louth Local Authorities reserve the right to refuse to provide accommodation for any family

- a) who, by their own act, deed or commission, have deprived themselves of adequate accommodation,
- b) who is involved in serious and on-going anti-social behaviour,
- c) in the interest of good estate management.

PART 2

7. Past Achievements, Assessment of Need and Implementation Issues

This part sets out details of: -

- Progress achieved in implementing the current Accommodation Programme.
- Assessment of Needs carried out for the purposes of the new Accommodation Programme 2009-2013.
- Implementation measures designed to meet the needs identified in the Assessment.

Louth Local Authorities

8. Progress on Implementation of 2005-2008 Programme

Target	Outcome	Comments
<u>Social Housing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 46 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families left the County Area just after the programme commenced • 3 offers of Social Housing were refused
<u>Group Housing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part VIII completed for other 2 houses but construction delayed due to illegal encampment
<u>Special Traveller Grant</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 	
<u>Halting Site</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Halting Site – Basic Facilities • New Halting Site – permanent – 1 • Halting Site Vacancies – 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided • Not provided • 14 provided 	

Louth Local Authorities

9. Assessment of Need 2008

There are **371** traveller families living in Louth County Council area (September 2008). They are accommodated as follows:

Type of Accommodation	Number of families
Social Housing	165
Group Housing	20
Voluntary Housing	12
Privately owned/assisted by Special Traveller Grant	43
Privately rented	84
Privately owned	33
Halting Site	4
Sharing with Relatives	7
Unauthorised encampment	3
Total	371

A statutory assessment of housing need under Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988 (as amended)) was carried out by Drogheda Borough Council, Dundalk Town Council and Louth County Council in September 2008.

98 Traveller families were identified as needing accommodation. They are located as follows:

Current Accommodation	Number of families
Private rented accommodation	84
Sharing with Relatives	7
Halting Site Basic Facilities	4
Unauthorised encampment	3
Total	98

The **98** families identified requested the following type of accommodation.

Requested Accommodation	Number of families
Social Housing	87
Group Housing	9
Halting Site	2
Total	98

Based on the actual accommodation needs of **98** units and a projected increase of **31** new family formations it is envisaged that **129** units of accommodation will be required during the lifetime of the programme 2009-2013.

In Dundalk, there is a long established tradition of Travellers opting for local authority housing and the majority of Travellers identified in the assessment of need are second and third generation and are currently accommodated in private rented accommodation or sharing with family members. The housing needs of the Travellers identified in the assessment will be addressed in line with the scheme of letting priorities. The profile of the Traveller applicants in terms of age, status, family size, does not differ from the general profile of all housing applicants.

In Drogheda, Travellers are now opting for Social Housing and the majority of families identified in the assessment of need are currently accommodated in private rented accommodation or are sharing with family members. Most families in Drogheda are now opting for private rented accommodation with an increased number of families returning from England. The housing needs of travellers identified in the assessment will be addressed in line with the scheme of letting priorities.

Similarly in County Louth, Travellers are now opting for Social Housing to meet their accommodation needs. The housing needs of travellers identified in the assessment will be addressed in line with the scheme of letting priorities.

Louth Local Authorities

10. Implementation Measures 2009 – 2013

The assessment of needs September 2008 showed a requirement for **98** units of accommodation.

The options for provision of accommodation will include:

- Social Housing
- Group Housing
- Halting Site
- Special Traveller Grant
- RAS

and the entire range of housing options outlined in the Plan for Social Housing.

(i) Social Housing:

The assessment of need identified **87** applicants currently on the Housing List requesting Social Housing. These applicants are coming generally from a background of Social Housing and are mainly third generation families. It is proposed to accommodate **64** Traveller families during the period of this Programme 2009 – 2013.

(ii) Group Housing:

The assessment of need identified **9** applicants interested in Group Housing. It is envisaged that this need will be met by providing 2 new units of accommodation at the existing Group Housing Scheme at Cement Road, Drogheda and 2 units in the County Area. As the other applicants do not wish to live together, further discussions will have to take place on how their accommodation needs will be met.

(iii) Halting Sites:

It is considered that there is sufficient capacity within the existing halting sites in Dundalk and Drogheda for the requirements of County Louth.

(iv) Special Traveller Grant:

The Department of Environment operates a scheme whereby Travellers can avail of a grant to purchase their own house as a first-time buyer.

Louth Local Authorities will continue to encourage and process further applications as requested.

(v) **New Family Formation and Families moving in the area**

The needs arising from new family formation referred to in Section 6(b), and from new families moving into the area referred to at Section 6(c) will be assessed as and when they arise and until then it will not be possible to be specific about the type of accommodation required. When such needs are identified and established the Council will provide the necessary accommodation from the range of options referred to at Section 10.

In Drogheda Borough Council the number of traveller families has increased from 33 (September 2004) to 75 families (September 2008). This is mainly due to families returning from England who had previous connections with Drogheda and the trend for these families is to utilise the private rented sector.

(vi) **Assistance to Travellers:**

Where appropriate full encouragement and assistance will be offered to Travellers who might be in a position and willing to provide accommodation for themselves by availing of the range of initiatives contained in the Government's policy document *Social Housing – The Way Ahead*. Likewise where any voluntary organisation is willing to undertake the provision of accommodation full assistance and encouragement will be given.

(vii) **Annual Targets**

(No. of units of accommodation)

	Social Housing	Group Housing	Halting Site
2009	11	0	5
2010	16	4	0
2011	12	0	0
2012	14	2	0
2013	13	0	0
Total	66	6	5

Appendix I

Louth Local Authorities

**Louth County Council
Dundalk Town Council
Drogheda Borough Council**

Re: Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013

1. Notice of Intention to prepare new Traveller Accommodation Programme for period 2009-2013

2. Notice of Intention to carry out an assessment of existing and projected accommodation needs

I wish to inform you that in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 Louth County Council (being the relevant housing authority specified under the Act) intend to prepare a new Traveller Accommodation Programme for the period 2009-2013. This plan will cover the functional area of Louth County Council, Dundalk Town Council & Drogheda Borough Council.

Louth County Council also intends to carry out an assessment of existing and projected accommodation needs for Members of the Travelling Community in their functional area.

If you or your Group/Organisation wish to make a submission in respect of same, you are now invited to do so. Submissions should be made in writing and forwarded in a sealed envelope marked "Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013" and addressed to the undersigned to be received no later than 4pm on Friday 10 October 2008.

Signed: Joe McGuinness
Director of Services

Appendix II

Louth Local Authorities

**Louth County Council
Drogheda Borough Council
Dundalk Town Council**

Preparation of Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013

Housing Act 1988 (Section 9) and Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 (Section 9)

Notice is hereby given that the above local authorities have prepared a Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme covering the five year period 2009-2013.

The Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 is available for public inspection in the Housing Offices of the above authorities between the hours of 9.30am and 4.30pm. The Programme will also be available on www.louthcoco.ie

Submissions in relation to the proposed Draft Programme may be made in writing to Mr Joe McGuinness, Director of Services, County Hall, Millennium Centre, Dundalk, Co Louth. Closing date for submissions is 4.00pm on 22 December 2008. Submissions may also be made online, through our website at www.louthcoco.ie/Econet

Joe McGuinness
Director of Services

Appendix III

List of Bodies Notified

- Monaghan County Council
- Meath County Council
- Louth Community Care, HSE
- Clanmil Housing Association
- Respond!
- Louth Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Cluid Housing Association
- Louth Traveller Support Group
- Oaklee Housing Association
- Foscadh Housing Association
- Drogheda Women's Refuge & Childrens Centre Ltd.
- Drogheda Homeless Aid Association Ltd.
- Dundalk Women's Aid
- Dundalk Simon Community
- Dundalk Travellers Committee
- Louth Primary Health Care
- Dundalk Employment Partnership
- Drogheda Employment Partnership