



**MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE MHAIGH EO**

**TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION
PROGRAMME
2019 – 2024**

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME

2019 – 2024

Introduction

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on Local Authorities to prepare and implement a Traveller Accommodation Programme. The programme will specify targets to be met during the period 2019 - 2024.

The previous programme was adopted on 10th March 2014. Over the Period of the Programme 2014 - 2018 a total of one hundred and Twenty four families been accommodated with the support of Mayo County Council **Forty Seven** families have been accommodated in Local Authority dwellings, **Thirteen families** have been accommodated through Mayo County Council's Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), **Ten families** have been accommodated through voluntary bodies a total now of thirty three and a further **fifty four** families have been accommodated through HAP and Private rented that were assisted by Mayo County Council Traveller Accommodation Liaison Officers.

The number of Traveller family's resident in the County has increased from three hundred and seventy-three on 1st October 2013, to four hundred and seven in November 2018 due to new family formations and families returning to the County.

Since 2018 the number of Traveller families on the roadside has increased from Thirty to thirty-two and the number of Traveller families in private rented accommodation has gone from one hundred and forty-four to one hundred and thirty.

SECTION (01). BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 amends and extends the existing Housing Acts and places a statutory obligation on Housing Authorities, including Mayo County Council in relation to, inter alia, the following;

- To prepare and adopt by a date specified, in consultation with Travellers, a Traveller Accommodation Programme to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in the County;
- Allow for public input to the preparation and amendment of such programmes;
- Obliges Housing Authorities to take appropriate steps to secure implementation of programmes.
- Requires Planning Authorities to include objectives concerning Traveller accommodation in their Development Plans.

In accordance with Section 7 of the 1998 Act, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government has directed that the forth Traveller Accommodation Programme will be prepared and adopted by the specified date of **30th September 2019** . The Minister has also directed that a review of this Traveller Accommodation Programme should be carried out not later than **31st December 2021**.

Section 10 of the Act specifies that the Programme will cover the five year period, 2019 – 2024.

To facilitate consultation with Travellers on the preparation and implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme and to progress the implementation of the Programme, the Council, in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1992 has established a Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, which was duly set up in November 2004. The Committee includes representatives from the Traveller community, Local Elected Representatives and officials of Mayo County Council. The membership of the Committee is given at **Appendix 5**.

In accordance with Section 8 of the Act, on 2 April 2019 notice of intention to prepare a draft Traveller Accommodation Programme was advertised in three local newspapers and issued to specified bodies. Six submissions were received and were considered in the preparation of this draft plan.

On the basis of the Assessment of need and projections on population increase for the period 2019 - 2024, a draft Programme has been formulated to meet the Council's statutory obligations.

Section 10 of the Act specifies that the new Programme will cover the five year period, 2019 - 2024.

The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024 must adopted by the members of Mayo County Council by the 30th September, 2019.

SECTION (02). POLICY

(02.1) General Policy

It is the Policy of Mayo County Council to provide for the accommodation needs of Travellers, as far as is reasonable and feasible, using the full range of housing options available to the Council. In the provision of accommodation, priority will be given to members of the Traveller community who were born in Mayo and who have lived in the county continuously, or who, having returned to the county, have lived here for a continuous period of one year, or who, having moved into the county, have lived here for a continuous period of not less than three years.

(02. 2) Corporate Objectives

(02.2.1) Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024

In Mayo County Council’s Corporate Plan 2014 – 2019 advancing the implementation of the provisions contained in the Traveller Accommodation Programme is listed as a Corporate Strategy. This Strategy is included to ensure the delivery of a Corporate Objective, which is ***‘to ensure that every Mayo family can live in a dwelling of good standard, located in an acceptable environment, at a price or rent they can afford.’***

The existing Corporate Plan will expire in December 2019 and the next Plan 2019 – 2024 will take on board the implementation of the new Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024

(02.2.2) Social & Economic Committees

Under the new Social and Economic Committees that will be established to replace the County and City Development Boards a county local and community development plan will be put in place. It will set down key priorities for future development from 2019 to 2024.

It will assist in the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme by continuing the support for the Traveller Inter-Agency Forum which comprises of the key stakeholders at a local level working in Traveller Development.

The Traveller Inter-Agency Forum will have its work plan outlined by the County Social and Economic Committee which strongly supports the Traveller Accommodation Programme.

(02.2.3) Draft County Development Plan 2020 – 2026

The Draft County Development Plan states that ***‘it is an objective of the Council to take reasonable steps to secure the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme in the County’***.

Under current legal provisions, the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024 will automatically become part of the Development Plan 2014 - 2019 and the new 2020 – 2026 plan. Following its adoption, the adoption of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024 will automatically be incorporated into the County Development Plan 2020– 2026

(02.3) Accommodation Policy

Mayo County Council's Policy in relation to the accommodation matters is as follows;

(02.3.1) Accommodation

The Council recognises and will have regard to the distinct cultural identity of Travellers in the provision, maintenance and management of accommodation for the Traveller community.

(02.3.2) Allocation

Accommodation in Social Housing will be allocated transparently and equitably on the basis of need and in accordance with the Council's scheme of Letting Priorities and having regard to; good estate management practice, achieving a social mix within areas, compatibility of families, anti-social behaviour, social and previous accommodation history and house size requirement.

In relation to achieving good estate management and achieving a social mix, the Council will, In keeping with the wishes of the vast majority of Traveller families, avoid an overconcentration of traveller families in any one housing estate. It is considered by the Council that a reasonable balance in this regard currently exists within social housing estates in the County. It will be the policy of the Council to ensure that this balance is maintained.

(02.3.3) Casual Vacancies

Casual vacancies in social housing and transfers within the existing Council housing stock will be assessed on the basis of the Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities, having regard to the considerations outlined at (02.3.2) above.

(02.3.4) Design

The Council will have regard to the specific housing needs of Travellers in the design of Social Housing Schemes in as far as is practicable.

(02.3.5) Horses

It is recognised that the keeping of horses is a tradition, which continues to be practiced by some Traveller families. Such families will be required to make their own arrangements for the acquisition of land for grazing purposes and be prepared to pay for the rent or purchase of this land. It is not the policy of Mayo County Council to provide land for the accommodation of horses, and, the keeping of horses on local authority housing developments is strictly forbidden.

(02.3.6) Group Schemes / Single Houses

The programme will also provide housing for Traveller families through the development of Group Schemes specifically developed for Traveller families and through the development or acquisition of single instance housing as appropriate, where funding is available. There are on-going developments with these Schemes at present.

(02.3.7) Accommodation Alternatives.

The Council will actively encourage and facilitate Travellers who wish to avail of privately funded accommodation through Incremental Purchase Schemes

(02.3.8) Voluntary Housing

The Council will promote and support the provision of housing for Travellers by Voluntary Housing Associations through direct build and leasing options. The L.T.A.C.C will explore the opportunity to expand provision in this area with Voluntary Housing bodies.

(02.3.9) New Family Formations

As with all families, new families forming within the County will be expected to make reasonable efforts to secure accommodation from within their own resources.

(02.3.10) Returning Families.

As with all families, families returning to live in the County will also be expected to make reasonable efforts to secure accommodation from within their own resources.

(02.3.11) Private Rented Accomodation/Housing Assistance Payment (H.A.P)

Mayo County Council, through the Traveller Accomodation Liaison Officers will continue to assist and support families in securing private rented accommodation where reasonable accomodation is available. The provision of private rented accomodation will be one of the methods used by the Council to meet the targets set in this Programme.

It is envisaged that access to private rented accommodation will be provided via a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) on a phased basis during the lifetime of this programme. HAP will be a social housing support. Traveller Accommodation Liasion Officers will assist families in accessing this scheme.

Every effort will be made to ensure the families have access to rent supplement and to sustain families availing of the scheme. As with all Applicants who are currently availing of RAS/HAP, they can go onto the Mayo County Council Transfer List.

(02.3.12) R.A.S & Leasing

These schemes have made significant progress since the last programme. The Rental Accommodation Scheme (R.A.S) and Leasing is now accepted as a main stream social housing support offering a high standard of accomodation with medium term security of tenure and on a differential rent basis. The Traveller Accommodation Liasion Officers will assist Families in accessing these schemes.

(02.3.13) Refusal of Housing Offers

It is the policy of Mayo County Council to set a limit regarding the offering of local authority accommodation following refusals. Mayo County Council will allow **Two** refusals of reasonable offers of accommodation, recognising and taking into account any personal issues.

(02.3.14) Transient Accommodation

Mayo County Council continue to accord priority to providing for the accommodation needs of Traveller families within the County. Mayo County Council will keep under review the long term sustainability of transient accommodation in Mayo.

(02.3.15) Halting Sites

There is currently one seven Bay Halting Site in Castlebar, which is being maintained to the national standards with a full time Caretaker.

The assessment of need carried out in March, 2018, recorded no need for a additional halting site accommodation during the course of the 2019 – 2024 plan as only one family has shown preference for halting side accommodation. Mayo County Council will keep under review the long term sustainability of Halting Sites in Mayo.

(02.3.16) Unauthorised Encampments

The Mayo Authorities in their role as Planning Authorities and as Sanitary Authority cannot tolerate unauthorised encampments in areas where such encampments could give rise to risk of unacceptable conditions. The Authorities, therefore, while taking into account the rights and well-being of Travellers, will institute enforcement action through the Courts, where necessary, to have such unauthorised encampments removed. This course of action will be initiated in cases where, public health, public order, traffic hazard, loss of amenity or where private, commercial or residential interests are being significantly affected/compromised; or where completion of essential public works is being hindered.

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002, which amends the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994, deals with the matter of trespass and enforcement of this legislation is dealt with by the Gardai.

Sympathetic consideration will be given to the merits of each individual case and the Local Authorities will have regard to the legal, housing, planning, enviornmental, social, technical and other constraints within which they must operate.

(02.3.17) Homeless

Due to the housing crisis, Travellers are 11 times more likely to become homeless and 50 times more likely to be discriminated by landlords. There are 5 times the number of families sharing facilities since legislation came into effect (Source: Irish Traveller Movement Submission).

Homelessness is now a common experience for many Traveller families, a particularly fast-growing trend across all local authorities. Mayo County Council is taking account of this in this Plan.

SECTION (03). ASSESSMENT OF NEED

Section 6 (as amended in 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. We will also look at bringing units unoccupied back into use. The engagement of Mayo Traveller Support Group is acknowledged and appreciated.

(03.1) Current Need

In June 2018 an assessment of need was undertaken by Mayo County Council in consultation with all relevant bodies. The information identified in that assessment has been updated to May 2019.

Appendix 04 outlines the number of families who will be in need of accommodation over the course of the 2019 - 2024 programme.

At Present, all Traveller Families who meet the criteria of the current Traveller Accommodation Programme have indicated their preference for accommodation in either Standard Housing or in specifically designed Group Housing. Only one family in County Mayo has indicated a preference for Halting Site Accommodation.

(03.2) Projected Need

The targets and projections of the Traveller Accommodation Plan 2019 - 2024 are based on the Assessment of Need carried out on 11 June 2018.

In determining the projected need, regard was had to the following:

- C.S.O Census 24th April 2016 – Irish Travellers Classified by age groups in County Mayo. This figure shows that there are 143 Travellers between the age of 14-19 residing in Mayo. Nearly 6 in 10 Travellers are under 25 years of age. (CSO)
- Information collated by Mayo Traveller Support Group regarding possible family formations and numbers.

There will be a review of the figures on an Annual basis over the lifetime of the programme from 2019 - 2024, and any adjustments required to deal with developments during the preceding year will be incorporated at the time of the annual review. Revised targets for the following years will be set, based on the outcome of the annual review.

(03.3) Traveller Families Residing in Private Rented Accommodation and on the Roadside and Sharing Involuntarily.

At present there are approximately four hundred and seven Traveller Families residing in County Mayo. One hundred and thirty-eight families are residing in private rented accommodation and seventeen are resident on the roadside and fifteen on temporary unauthorised sites and gardens.

SECTION (04). IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

(04.1) Implementing Authorities

Mayo County Council is the body responsible for the implementation of the proposals contained in this Programme.

Mayo County Council will ultimately drive the accommodation programme 2019 – 2024.

To ensure effective delivery of the Programme we envisage a comprehensive partnership approach involving all of the agencies which have a role to play in the areas of Traveller Accommodation, including;

- Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Social & Economic Committee
- Health Service Executive
- Mayo Traveller Support Group
- Voluntary Housing Bodies
 - Sonas
 - Respond!
 - Cluid
 - Local Voluntary Housing Associations
- An Garda Siochana
- Local Community Groups
- Residents Associations.
- Local Development Programme Companies
- Dept of Education
- Dept of Social and Family Affairs
- Dept of Environment, Community & Local Government.

Mayo County Council will work in co-operation with these groups and other stakeholders to secure the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024.

(04.2) Programme Delivery

It is the intention of Mayo County Council to communicate the requirements of the Programme and to co-ordinate efforts within the County to ensure the success of the plan for the statutory period 2019 – 2024.

The Council will similarly promote the provision of Traveller specific accommodation by Voluntary Groups operating in the County.

While the content of the Circular 26/2013 Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 from the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government regarding funding has been noted in the preparation of the programme, access to capital funding from the Department will be required to provide accommodation in circumstances where options such as private rented, RAS and Leasing are not appropriate to meet needs.

There will be an annual review of progress on the implementation of the Programme in addition to the statutory review after three years.

In implementing the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024, Mayo County Council's Nuisance and Anti Social Behaviour Policy will be rigorously enforced. Unauthorised encampments will be dealt with, with the assistance of the Garda Siochana under trespass legislation, and with recourse to the Courts where necessary.

In implementing the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024, Mayo County Council will actively promote an integrated multi agency approach to providing support services to the Traveller Community. The Council will assist Voluntary and Statutory agencies in this work, in as far as is practicable.

(04.3) Communication

In accordance with the requirements of the legislation and with directives issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, notice of the carrying out of the assessment of need and of the intention to prepare the draft Accommodation Programme was given to the following bodies:

- Members of Mayo County Council Housing SPC
- Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Health Service Executive
- Voluntary Housing Groups
- Adjoining Local Authorities
- Community and Enterprise Section, Mayo County Council.

In addition, public comment was invited by advertisements in the local press.

A total of six Submissions were received. The response to these Submissions are contained in Section 6 of this Draft Programme.

Mayo County Council would like to acknowledge the work and effort put in by those Bodies who made Submissions.

SECTION (05). MANAGEMENT OF ACCOMMODATION

(05.1) Policy

Mayo County Council will encourage and facilitate the participation of Travellers in the management and maintenance of Traveller specific Accommodation. The Council will have regard to models of good practice in the maintenance and management of Traveller accommodation to inform this initiative.

(05.2) Anti Social Behaviour

Mayo County Council adopted an Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour Statement of Policy and Procedures in 2019.

Anti-Social Behaviour is defined in section 1 of the Housing (miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1997 as follows.:

- (a) The manufacture, production, preparation, importation, exportation, sale, supply, possession for the purposes of sale or supply, or distribution of a controlled drug (within the meaning of the Misuse of Drugs Acts, 1977 and 1984).*
- (b) Any behaviour which causes or is likely to cause any significant or persistent danger, injury, damage, loss or fear to any person living, working or otherwise lawfully in or in the vicinity of a house provided by a housing authority under the Housing Acts, 1966 to 1997, or a housing estate in which the house is situated and without prejudice to the foregoing, includes, violence, threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment or serious obstruction of any person.*

Mayo County Council will not tolerate anti-social behaviour in any of the housing developments for which they have responsibility.

Where instances of anti-social behaviour occur, appropriate action will be taken to deal with the tenant involved in such behaviour. The sanctions will be as outlined in the anti-social behaviour policy adopted by the Councils and may include the ultimate sanction of eviction.

A tenant evicted from Council accommodation due to anti-social behaviour will be deemed to have rendered himself or herself homeless within the meaning of Section 11 (2) (b) of the Housing Act 1988 and may not be provided with another home by the Council until such time as the Council is satisfied that the evicted tenant and his/her family are capable of living and agreeable to live in the community, without causing further anti-social behaviour.

Applicants on Mayo County Council's housing list, who have previously engaged in anti – social behaviour will render themselves ineligible for local authority housing for a probationary period of five years.

SECTION (06). SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Mayo County Council received six Submissions, in response to the Notice of Intention of the Preparation of this Draft Programme, advertised on Tuesday 2 April 2019 in three Local papers.

The six Submissions, which have been considered in the formulation of this draft Programme, were received from the following interested parties:

- **Irish Traveller Movement**
- **Mayo Women's Support Group**
- **Traveller Health Unit, Health Service Executive**
- **Mayo Traveller Support Group**
- **EHO HSE West, Castlebar**
- **Cllr Joe Mc Hale**

The full Submissions are available for inspection at the Offices of Mayo County Council, Station House, Swinford.

SECTION (07). CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The estimated number of units of accommodation required to meet the needs of the Traveller Community for the period 2019 - 2024 is one hundred.

Accommodation is provided for Members of the Travelling Community throughout County Mayo through five principle methods;

- Privately owned and financed
- Local Authority developed accommodation
- Private Rented accommodation / HAP
- Rental Accommodation Scheme accommodation
- Accommodation developed by Voluntary Groups.

It is the intention of Mayo County Council to use all of these methods of accommodation to reach the projected targets for additional units of accommodation required in the period 2019 - 2024. **Table 01** hereunder outlines the proportion of accommodation to be provided by each method.

Implementation Strategy – T.A.P 2019 - 2024

TABLE 01

Year	New Build/Acquisition	Casual Vacancies	Private Rented/H.A.P	RAS/Leasing	Vol. Groups & Other	Total
2019	2	4	5	1	1	13
2020	8	4	5	2	1	20
2021	8	4	5	2	1	20
2022	8	4	5	2	1	20
2023	3	4	5	2	1	15
2024	2	3	6	1		12
5 Year Programme	31	23	31	10	5	100

Private Housing:

Mayo County Council will continue to assist members of the Traveller Community to source finance to purchase accommodation privately, both by way of direct housing loan and by way of the Incremental Purchase Scheme and the Home Choice Loan Scheme.

Consultation:

In the delivery of units of accommodation at local level, consultation will be entered into with the families. Due regard will be had to their housing need and expressed preference of accommodation type, in as far as is practicable.

Review:

In order for the Traveller Accommodation Plan 2019 - 2024 to be effective it must be capable of ongoing modification and improvement over the period of the Programme. There will be an annual review of progress and a re-assessment of need which will be carried out at the same time as the Annual Count of Traveller Families in November each year. This will update the need as of 1st December in each year, and will set revised targets for accommodation provisions for the remaining years of the Plan, as required.

APPENDIX 1**Number of Families Currently Residing in County Mayo – 31/12/18**

Municipal Districts	L.A.	Local Authority Group Scheme + L.A. Halting Site	RAS / SOCIAL Leasing initiative	Private Rented / H.A.P.	Voluntary Groups	Privately Owned	Sharing	Unauthorised Encampments/ Private Yards	Totals Number of families on date of count
Total in County	123	17	21	109	32	47	22	34	405
Ballina	42	2	14	29	29	29	7	9	161
Castlebar	26	8	5	35	3	4	5	6	92
Claremorris	47	7	1	44	0	14	9	18	140
West Mayo	8	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	12
Totals	123	17	21	109	32	47	22	34	405

Appendix 02

Projected Target Over T.A.P 2019 – 2024

Municipal Districts (M.D.)	Projected Need TAP 2019 - 24	Local Authority Casual vacancies (over 5 years)	Ras/ Social Leasing Initiative (5 years)	Private Rented/HAP (Over 5 years)	New Build/ Acquisitions over (5 years)	Voluntary Housing over (5 years)
Total	100	23	10	31	31	5
Ballina M. D. Ballina, Ballycastle Killala, Crossmolina Knockmore	29	6	3	10	8	2
Castlebar M.D. Castlebar, Balla	30	7	3	9	9	2
Claremorris/ Swinford M.D. Claremorris, Kilkelly Charlestown Foxford Knock Kiltimagh Ballinrobe, Ballindine Ballyhaunis Swinford Bohola	36	9	3	10	13	1
Westport/ Belmullet MD Westport/ Achill Newport Louisburgh	5	1	1	2	1	

Appendix 03

TARGETS ACHIEVED OVER 5 YEARS OF TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME 2014 - 2018

Municipal Districts	T.A.P. 2014 – 2018 5 year target	Achievement over 5 years 2014 - 2018	Local Authority /Casual vacancies	Private Rented / HAP	RAS	New Builds /Acquisitions	Voluntary Groups & Other
Ballina	31	69	10	30	11	9	9
Castlebar	36	21	7	9	1	3	1
Claremorris	49	31	12	15	0	4	0
West Mayo	4	3	1	0	1	1	0
Total		124	30	54	13	17	10

The figures presented in the Table above, show the total number of families who were accommodated under each of the five principle methods during the lifetime of the TAP 2009 – 13 at 204. The Table suggests the target of 120 was exceeded by 4 over the lifetime of the TAP 2014 – 18.

Transfers within the Local Authority housing stock or families moving address within a town were not included in the progress figures

- Families moving between the various towns in County Mayo and presented for assistance were counted as a new family in that particular town.
- Families who left the County for a considerable period to reside elsewhere were included in the figures on their return to the County.
- Families appointed as Local Authority, Voluntary or RAS tenants previously resided in private rented accommodation, some of which would have been sourced and accounted for during the 2014 – 18 period.

Appendix 04
Basis of Projected Need
T.A.P. 2019 - 2024

Municipal Districts	Location				Projected Target Over
		Roadside	Private rented & Sharing	Projected Need (Coming of Age)	T.A.P 2019 - 24
Ballina	Ballina	9	7	13	29
Castlebar	Castlebar	6	5	19	30
Claremorris	Claremorris	3	1	1	5
	Ballinrobe	2	2	2	6
	Ballyhaunis	1	2	3	6
Swinford	Swinford	4			4
	Kilkelly				0
	Kiltimagh		1		1
	Charlestown	8	3	3	14
	Foxford				0
Westport/ Belmullet	Westport	1	1	3	5
TOTAL		34	22	44	100

Appendix 05

Membership of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Cllr. M. Smyth
Cllr. J. Caulfield
Cllr. M. Loftus
Cllr. B.K. Gavin
Cllr. R. Finn
Cllr. J. Munnelly

Mr. Tom Gilligan D.O.S Housing, Roads and Services Department.
Mr. Simon Shevlin, S.E.O Housing.
Mr. Gary Smyth, Traveller Accommodation Liaison Officer.
Mr. Joan Finnerty Traveller Accommodation Liaison Officer
Mr. Orla Hughes, Social Worker
Ms. Edith Geraghty M.T.S.G.
Mr. Paddy Maughan
Ms. Mary Collins
Mr. Keith Maughan
Ms. Winnie Maughan
Ms. Donna Muldoon