

Case study

Traveller participation in decision
making on housing issues, Ireland

October 2009

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Introduction

This case study¹ is part of a series of case studies on specific housing initiatives for Roma and Travellers. It is intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of lessons learned within the context of the larger research project on housing conditions of Roma and Travellers in the EU.²

This study focuses on Traveller participation in decision making, in particular through Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs) and the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) as part of an overall policy framework for Traveller accommodation in Ireland. There are many aspects of the case study in Ireland that will be of interest to authorities in other Member States who may wish to adapt them to their local circumstances. These include:

- The importance of an overall framework for Traveller/Roma accommodation policy at a national and local level;
- The legacy of multiple discrimination that has had an impact on Traveller accommodation, but which is beginning to be addressed by recent policy;
- The importance of effective participation and equality of Travellers in decision making at national and local level and the challenges involved in this process, particularly at local level;
- Gaps remaining between agreed policy at national level and implementation at local level;
- The importance of offering a range of choice and options in Traveller accommodation, including the option between Traveller-specific accommodation and general housing;
- The innovative nature and good practice being developed in recent years by some local authorities in Ireland with respect to Traveller accommodation in contrast with previous policy.

The methodology for the case study includes qualitative information from a wide range of sources, including semi-structured interviews undertaken with 20 respondents in March and April 2009. Those interviewed included representatives from central and local government, Travellers and representatives of NGOs working with Travellers at both a local and national level. Of the 13 people representing organisations, five are Travellers. A further

¹ This case study, financed and edited by the FRA, was developed by Ms Ronnie Fay, Mr Martin Collins and Ms Tatjana Peric on behalf of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), Budapest, and Pavee Point Travellers Centre, Dublin.

² Additional information on the housing situation of Travellers and Roma in Ireland gathered within this project can be found in the RAXEN NFP Ireland (2009) *Thematic Study on Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers*, available at: <http://fra.europa.eu>.

seven Travellers were interviewed for this study including five women and two men of varying ages, including three grandparents and four parents. Of the seven Travellers interviewed, four were from South Dublin and three were from County Meath.

The first stage of the research included a desk review of existing legislation, reports and analysis of data related to the overall accommodation conditions of Travellers in the Republic of Ireland. This was followed by a review of similar data related to the two case study areas, South Dublin County Council and Meath County Council. New primary data was gathered through face to face interviews with some of the key stakeholders. Further stakeholders were also identified through this process and subsequently interviewed in person or by telephone.

1. Background information

1.1. Historical and social background

Government policy in relation to Traveller accommodation in Ireland has often been shaped in reaction to periods of crisis. In the early 1960s a crisis resulted from large number of Travellers occupying road-sides, their migration to urban areas as a result of the demise of the need for many of their traditional, largely rural economy skills and trades and the increasingly visible poverty of many Traveller families. The Report of the Commission on Itinerancy³ resulted in an increase in Travellers living in standard (local authority) housing and the creation of very large overcrowded temporary official sites with very poor conditions.⁴

By the early 1980s it was increasingly apparent that much of the approach and accommodation policy solutions advocated by the 1963 Commission had failed. There were still hundreds of Traveller families living by the side of the road. Some local authorities in major urban areas had developed very large temporary sites with 40 or more families for those refusing to move into general housing. In many cases, these sites were surrounded by rat infested earth banks and had limited or no access to basic utilities, including running water, hot water and adequate refuse collection.⁵ The continuing crisis in Traveller accommodation was a key factor in leading to the creation of the Travelling People Review Body⁶ in 1983 which is now largely recognised as stop-gap measure lacking in ambition and adequate consultation with Travellers.⁷

The groundbreaking Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995)⁸ was the first government initiative that involved the active participation of a new type of Traveller organisations whose work was based on principles of community development, anti-racism and support for a new, emerging leadership within the Traveller community. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 was the principal accommodation outcome from the Task Force and established a policy framework for Traveller

³ Commission on Itinerancy (1963) *Report of the Commission on Itinerancy*, Dublin: Stationary Office.

⁴ For summary of key policy and legislative developments, see Annex 1 of this study.

⁵ Pavee Point (1994) *Still No Place to Go*, available at: <http://www.paveepoint.ie/publicationsAccommodation.html> (18.05.2009).

⁶ Travelling People Review Body (1983) *Report of the Travelling People Review Body*, Dublin: Government Stationery Office.

⁷ Pavee Point (1994) *Still No Place to Go*, available at: <http://www.paveepoint.ie/publicationsAccommodation.html> (18.05.2009).

⁸ Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, Dublin: Stationary Office.

accommodation which persists to the present. Parts of the 1998 Act were updated following a review in 2004.⁹ The key institutional elements of the 1998 Act are outlined in section 1.3 of this study.

1.2. Housing situation of Travellers

The existing data on the housing situation of Travellers in Ireland indicate that in 2007, of the 8,099 Traveller families accommodated across the state, a little less than a quarter (22 per cent) were living in Traveller specific accommodation (halting sites or group housing). Almost half (45 per cent) were accommodated in non-Traveller specific housing (i.e. standard social rented, voluntary and co-operative housing). A third (33 per cent) was in other accommodation types (i.e. private rented housing and unauthorised sites).¹⁰ Key trends in Traveller accommodation in recent years are summarised as follows:

- The numbers of Travellers living in permanent accommodation, especially local authority housing and group housing have been increasing in recent years;
- Only around one quarter of the Traveller population live in Traveller-specific accommodation and the number of families accommodated on halting sites is decreasing;
- In relative terms there is little change in the numbers of Traveller families living in unauthorised/unregulated encampments since 1963.¹¹

In 2007, the number of Traveller families living in regulated (authorised) accommodation was 7,505 (93 per cent) of the total 8,099 Traveller families in the Republic of Ireland.¹² This includes Travellers in Traveller-specific housing (halting sites and group housing schemes) and non-Traveller-specific housing (standard local authority, private and voluntary housing).

A 2008 government funded report also highlighted that 33 of the 40 (82.5 per cent) halting sites or group housing schemes surveyed had some form of

⁹ National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (2004) *Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. Report by the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal.*

¹⁰ Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (various years) *The Annual Count of Traveller Families*, Dublin: Stationary Office, available at: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/StatisticsandRegularPublications/HousingStatistics/FileDownload,15291,en.XLS>.

¹¹ K. Treadwell-Shine, F. Kane and D. Coates (2008) *Traveller Accommodation in Ireland: Review of Policy and Practice*, Dublin: Centre for Housing Research, p. 30, available at: http://www.housingunit.ie/_fileupload/Publications/Traveller_Accommodation_in_Ireland_-_Review_of_Policy_and_Practice_54631618.pdf.

¹² Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2008) *The Annual Count of Traveller Families*, Dublin: Stationary Office, available at: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/StatisticsandRegularPublications/HousingStatistics/FileDownload,15291,en.XLS>.

environmental hazard nearby (electricity pylon, telephone mast, dumps, major roads, industrial pollution). Thirty-one of the 40 (77.5 per cent) halting sites or group housing schemes surveyed had either out-dated or no emergency equipment at all.¹³

The two locations covered by this case study are South Dublin County Council (SDCC) and Meath County Council. Until the 1998 Act, much of the Traveller accommodation in South Dublin was temporary and of a poor standard.¹⁴ There were constant evictions and illegal encampments, yet no recognition that such illegal encampments were a result of inadequate accommodation provision in the area.¹⁵ Since 1998 there have been major improvements in Traveller accommodation in the SDCC region and improved relationships between SDCC and local Traveller organisations.

In County Meath, many of the Traveller halting sites were badly in need of major refurbishment, including St. Patrick's Park in Navan, County Meath. The relationship between Traveller organisations and Meath County Council (MCC) varied from good engagement to fractious disputes. Travellers sometimes had to resort to public protests to highlight the poor standards in accommodation. Relationships between Travellers and the local authority (MCC) have improved considerably in recent years.

1.3. Institutional responses to the situation

The key institutional responses arising from the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 are as follows:¹⁶

- The establishment of a National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) to monitor and advise the Department of the Environment to ensure that local authorities carry out their statutory duty to plan and deliver Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs);
- The establishment of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs) to monitor and advise on TAPs at a local authority level;

¹³ K. Treadwell-Shine, F. Kane and D. Coates (2008) *Traveller Accommodation in Ireland: Review of Policy and Practice*, Dublin: Centre for Housing Research.

¹⁴ The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, is available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0033/index.html>.

¹⁵ Irish Traveller Movement and Pavee Point (1992) *No Place to Go. Travellers Accommodation in Dublin: Report on a Crisis Situation*. Irish Traveller Movement and Pavee Point (1994) *Still No Place to Go. A survey of Traveller Accommodation in Dublin*, available at: <http://www.paveepoint.ie/publicationsAccommodation.html> (18.05.2009).

¹⁶ The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, is available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0033/index.html>.

- The requirement of all local authorities in Ireland to draw up five (now four) year renewable TAPs.

Administrative responsibility for Traveller accommodation resides with a Traveller Unit within the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOEHLG).

In the year 2000, the NTACC and the DOEHLG commissioned an evaluation of LTACCs, which concluded that: '[a] substantial minority of members of LTACCs were dissatisfied with many aspects of their LTACC. Those dissatisfied were primarily from the Traveller representative member group'.¹⁷ Issues of concern included lack of clarity of terms of reference and reluctance of local authorities to comply with them, short notice of meetings, perceived inaccuracy in the minutes, lack of a clear work programme and the need for intercultural training for staff.

As a consequence of the evaluation 'Guidelines for the Operation of LTACC' were drawn up by the NTACC/DOEHLG. These guidelines, published in 2001, covered issues such as terms of reference, Traveller representative selection, communication and training, methods of operation, conduct of meetings and use of subgroups.¹⁸

When the operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act was reviewed in 2004, continuing concerns about the operation of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees and concerns about the lack of targets under the TAPs were among the key issues highlighted.¹⁹

The 2004 Review of the 1998 Act considered the impact of the 2000 evaluation and the 2001 guidelines as positive developments, but expressed continuing concern about some LTACCs: 'The view was expressed that the 2001 guidelines, while addressing issues raised at the time, have had little practical impact on the operation of a number of LTACCs. In certain cases, Travellers feel that their opinions are not seriously considered.'²⁰ Other issues which continued to be highlighted in the 2004 review included the need for better attendance by all members, the need for more regular meetings, the impartiality of chairpersons, continued concerns about the selection of Traveller representatives and the low profile of some LTACCs.

It was recommended in the 2004 review that:

¹⁷ National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees and the Department of the Environment and Local Government (2000) *Evaluation of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees*, p. IV.

¹⁸ National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees and the Department of the Environment and Local Government (2001) *Guidelines for the operation of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs)*.

¹⁹ National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (various) *Annual Reports 1998-2004*.

²⁰ National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (2004) *Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998*, p. 57.

- LTACCs should present annual reports to their local authorities;
- The appropriate director of services in the local authority should report to the LTACC;
- Annual reports of local authorities should reflect the work of LTACCs.²¹

A representative of the NGO Pavee Point emphasised the need for patience in respect of Traveller accommodation: 'It is not going to deliver everything that you want within a short space of time. It is hard work, it is difficult, it is tedious and it is painful at times but it is the only process, the only structure in town, we have to engage with it in spite of its limitations and just work with it'.²²

²¹ National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (2004) *Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998*, pp. 60-61.

²² Interview with Pavee Point representative, 12.02.2009.

2. Location 1: South Dublin County Council

2.1. Project description

The **title of the initiative** is South Dublin County Council Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) and South Dublin County Council Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP).

The **institution leading the implementation** is the South Dublin County Council, a local government authority.

Type of initiative: The two most important elements of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, in respect of the implementation of Traveller accommodation in Ireland at a local level, are the Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) and the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs).²³

Objectives of the project/initiative: The SDCC TAP 2009-2013 is the third Traveller Accommodation Programme developed by South Dublin County Council since the enactment of the 1998 Act. The two previous programmes covered the periods 2000-2004 and 2005-2008. The latest TAP sets out a framework for Traveller accommodation in the South Dublin County Council area for the period 2009-2013, focusing on providing Traveller-specific accommodation, in particular, group housing and halting sites. The county council states in the TAP: 'Traveller Accommodation had been extremely difficult in the past mainly due to the resistance of some sections of the community to such developments. The negative perception of Traveller developments is somewhat overcome where properly developed and managed sites are provided. The difficulties experienced through unauthorised encampments have been addressed and this situation is reinforced by the success of the permanent developments that have been provided to date in the county'.²⁴ The SDCC further stated in its third TAP, the hopes that '[t]he objectives of this new Programme will deliver significant benefits to the county and all sectors of the community of South Dublin.'²⁵

Description of main activities: The TAP seeks to end unauthorised encampments with an adequate supply of professionally managed Traveller

²³ See also section 1.3 of this study for fuller explanation of rationale for LTACCs and TAPs.

²⁴ South Dublin County Council (2009) *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*, available at: <http://www.southdublin.ie> (15.03.2009).

²⁵ South Dublin County Council (2009) *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*, available at: <http://www.southdublin.ie> (15.03.2009).

specific accommodation 'to cater for the Traveller population normally resident in the county'. The council notes in its latest TAP as result of the three TAP programmes 'it would be fair to state that the county has been generally free of unauthorised encampments'.²⁶ The role of the LTACC is set out in the SDCC TAP 2009-2013 and is consistent with the role set out in the guidelines to local authorities and set out in the legislation.²⁷ The role of LTACCs is to:

- Advise in relation to the TAP;
- Advise on the management of Traveller accommodation;
- Provide a liaison between Travellers and members and officials of the local authority.

Timeframe and target group: In relation to the SDCC TAP 2009-2013 and the work of the LTACC, the target group is 'indigenous' Travellers, i.e. Travellers perceived to have had a long connection with South Dublin, but also 'including those that have moved away and are seeking to return but which are not on another local authority's waiting list'.²⁸

With regards to its **location**, SDCC is a largely urban area and one of the most populous areas of Ireland. Extending from the suburbs of Tallaght to Clondalkin on the western fringes of wider Dublin city, the council manages the local government area which has a population of 246,935 people. This corresponds to 21 per cent of the population of the wider Dublin city area and 6 per cent of the entire population of the State. Tallaght is the principal town of the council area and is about 13 km from Dublin City Centre.²⁹ (See map in Annex 2.)

Travellers have lived in parts of South Dublin for decades and indeed centuries, as reflected in the place names associated with traditional halting sites. Much of the South Dublin area was primarily rural and interspersed with villages, which have now become suburbs of wider Dublin, although considerable parts of the area remain rural. Until recent years, the South Dublin County Council had a poor reputation³⁰ in relation to Traveller accommodation policy and fractious relationship with Travellers. In recent years, this reputation has improved and SDCC is now increasingly recognised as one of the local authorities most committed to implementing national legislation aimed at improving conditions for Travellers, including in the area of accommodation.

²⁶ South Dublin County Council (2009) *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*, available at: <http://www.southdublin.ie> (15.03.2009).

²⁷ Ireland/Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998. Section 21 (2) and (3).

²⁸ South Dublin County Council (2009) *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*, available at: <http://www.southdublin.ie> (15.03.2009).

²⁹ D. Silke, M. Norris, F. Kane and B. Portley (2008) *Building Integrated Neighbourhoods. Towards an Intercultural Approach to Housing Policy and Practice in Ireland. Part One: An Overview*, p. 145. Dublin: National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism.

³⁰ See Irish Traveller Movement and Pavee Point (1994) *Still no place to go. A survey of Traveller Accommodation in Dublin*.

Total budget: Taken as an example, the finance provided to the SDCC for capital funding in 2005 by the central government (DOEHLG) for their TAP amounted to around 8.5 million EUR on Traveller-specific accommodation.³¹ This represents 23 per cent of the total capital spending for the whole of the Republic of Ireland in 2005 in this field, indicating that SDCC was one of the most active local authorities in the country in providing Traveller accommodation during this period.³² In the SDCC, the current TAP covers the period 2009-2013. To date there has been no ceiling placed on the amount of capital funding that can be drawn down by local authorities from the DOEHLG, however this may change in the context of the economic recession in Ireland that began in 2007/8. SDCC financial data also shows that group housing is the favoured form of Traveller accommodation for the SDCC, although there has also been considerable investment in halting sites.

2.2. Main elements

There is considerable evidence of the South Dublin County Council (SDCC) seeking to implement the **partnership approach** to Traveller accommodation which is set out in the 1998 Act. This is evident in the work of the LTACC in other relevant initiatives on Traveller issues, including inter-agency cooperation to improve all services to Travellers. These initiatives have sought to involve key stakeholders, including Travellers, local politicians and key service providers in the area who work with Travellers. This is evident in both the LTACC and the Traveller inter-agency group in South Dublin which focuses on the spectrum of issues facing Travellers in South Dublin.

Name, location and type of partners: Membership of the LTACCs is set out in the legislation and includes local authority officials, local elected councillors and representatives of Travellers and Traveller bodies, with councillors not exceeding half of the committee.

The membership of the SDCC LTACC is as follows: Five councillor representatives including the mayor of SDCC and the chair of the LTACC; also there are Traveller representatives and NGOs (six) mainly drawn from Tallaght and Clondalkin and youth services (two).

The extent of **innovation and creativity** evident in the SDCC has been considerable. To understand the extent of improvement and innovation it is necessary to understand the challenges in Traveller accommodation prevalent until the early/mid 1990s. Reports by Traveller NGOs during this period

³¹ See Annex 1, Table 2 of this study.

³² Centre for Housing Research (2008) *Traveller Accommodation in Ireland: Review of Policy and Practice*, pp. 90-94, available at: http://www.housingunit.ie/_fileupload/Publications/Traveller_Accommodation_in_Ireland_-_Review_of_Policy_and_Practice_54631618.pdf.

consistently highlighted the poor conditions of Traveller accommodation. The conditions of sites in Dublin prompted the national Traveller organisations to publish two surveys relating to conditions, including photographs.³³ The quality of recent Traveller accommodation is best illustrated by the photographs in Annex 2 of this study.

Evidence of a **multifaceted approach** to other policy areas including accommodation is found through a linked initiative, the Traveller Service County Management Group (TSCMG), which coordinates the interagency strategy. Representatives in the TSCMG include: South Dublin County Council; Department of Education and Science; Department of Social and Family Affairs; FAS; Garda Síochána; Health Service Executive; Co. Dublin Vocational Education Committee and the Probation and Welfare Service. A further example of interagency cooperation and the participation of Travellers is the All-Ireland Traveller Health Strategy.³⁴

Evidence of **promoting a non-discriminatory approach**: The SDCC has used the 1998 Act to address some of the historic discrimination faced by Travellers trying to access adequate quality, culturally appropriate accommodation. A representative of Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project (TTCDP) contended that it was sometimes the case that local politicians used Traveller accommodation issues to secure their election. One such candidate was actually nominated to serve on the LTACC with the sole purpose of ensuring the Traveller accommodation was not developed in her area. The councillor subsequently was not re-elected.³⁵ The local authority officials in the SDCC noted that there were no problems in relation to the adoption of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013 by councillors in the South Dublin County Council following only a half hour debate. Only four submissions were received concerning the proposed programme.³⁶ These developments would indicate that there is considerably less political controversy linked to Traveller accommodation provision in the SDCC than would have been the case a decade earlier.

The **participation of Traveller representatives** in South Dublin LTACC has been generally positive, but this has not always been the case. A representative of CTDG has been involved in the SDCC LTACC for three years and contended that: 'It was bad at the beginning, but it has improved a lot since then'. She said that 'Travellers have been fighting for 20 years for health and accommodation issues in Clondalkin and we are only beginning to see results

³³ Irish Traveller Movement and Pavee Point (1992) *No place to go. Travellers accommodation in Dublin: Report on a crisis situation*. Irish Traveller Movement (1994) *Still no place to go. A survey of Traveller Accommodation in Dublin*.

³⁴ The All-Ireland Traveller Health Study is detailed in RAXEN NFP Ireland (2009) *Thematic Study on Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers*.

³⁵ Interview with the Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project, Tallaght, 25.03.2009.

³⁶ Interview with two representatives of the local authorities, Tallaght, 06.04.2009.

now'.³⁷ Traveller representatives acknowledged that the LTACC has resulted in significantly more **interaction** between Travellers and the local authority.

The lack of tailored initiatives in both locations for Traveller **women, children, elderly people or persons with disabilities** was consistently remarked upon by the representatives of Travellers in this study. In particular, the issue of the lack of play facilities and spaces, in both the older and many of the newer sites was emphasised.

A Traveller woman contended that the site was a danger to children: 'There is no gate to the site and there is a very busy main road [Belgard Road]. Young children have sometimes got out on to the road. It is a miracle no one has been killed.' The site is 35-years-old and there is one road in the site and cars in the site are also a continual hazard to young children.³⁸

Officials from South Dublin County Council acknowledged the problems in Belgard Road, Tallaght, and contended that the overcrowding on the site would be reduced as soon as possible – reducing the number of families from eight to four – and the site would be refurbished. Unfortunately none of the neighbouring property owners were willing to cede land to make the site bigger.³⁹ A TTCDP representative contended that it was hoped that a local college would sell some land to allow some better facilities and design, but they recently declined to do so despite considerable space. She said most sites in Tallaght did not have any green areas, never mind play facilities. Additionally, the representative further contended that the unofficial policy for Travellers with a disability appeared to be to move them into standard housing rather than make changes to existing accommodation. This may result in the loss of extended family support for the person with the additional need, even though the council is well intentioned. Similar issues affect elderly people.⁴⁰

The lack of accommodation for single people from the Traveller community was also highlighted as a major problem. It was noted that this was also a problem for the general population.

The **difficulties and limitations** of the LTACC and TAP in South Dublin County Council include concerns from Travellers in Clondalkin that the pace of development of Traveller-specific accommodation has been stronger in Tallaght than Clondalkin. This was refuted by officials from the SDCC. There is also concern from Traveller organisations about the absence of Travellers on the interagency group established by the council to coordinate all Traveller services. A further concern articulated by Traveller NGOs is the lack of enough facilities for young people on the sites. In response to this point, SDCC officials

³⁷ Interview with the Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, Clondalkin, 25.03.2009.

³⁸ Interviews with Traveller respondents, 07.04.2009.

³⁹ Interview with two representatives of the local authorities, Tallaght, 06.04.2009.

⁴⁰ Interview with a representative of the Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project, Tallaght, 25.03.2009.

point to the number of parks with play facilities in the area which are available to everyone. There are also no transient halting sites in the SDCC, and officials from the SDCC say they are hoping to progress this under the 2009-2013 plan but other local authorities need to do the same.

There are few **evaluations or impact assessments** in the South Dublin area, other than one undertaken in Clondalkin⁴¹ by a Traveller NGO.⁴² However there are parts of the Council's administrative area where the pace of change appears to NGOs to be slower than other areas: in particular, Clondalkin, where Traveller representatives have analysed the second TAP and have found gaps between what has been promised and what was delivered, and they noticed greater progress in Tallaght; this is, however, refuted by officials working in the SDCC.

The framework provided by the 1998 Act has provided the basis for the **mainstreaming of policy and practice** throughout Ireland. Three reports published by the independent Centre for Housing Research have highlighted the policy and practice in the South Dublin County Council.⁴³

The fact that the LTACC in South Dublin has been in operation since 2000 and the SDCC is now beginning to implement its third four-year Traveller Action Programme is evidence of **sustainability**. The 1998 Act framework predates but is consistent with overall government housing policy in Ireland which emphasises sustainability. The overall housing policy framework in Ireland is outlined in the Social Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008, providing the legislative underpinning for reform measures and new programmes, detailed in the Housing Policy Statement *Delivering Homes Sustainable Communities*.⁴⁴

With regards to **transferability**, there is considerable potential for the good practices from Ireland to inform Traveller/Roma accommodation policy in other countries. This is not to gloss over the ongoing difficulties and challenges in Ireland, including issues related to pace of implementation and the fact that some local authorities have been more effective than others in delivering on their responsibilities under the 1998 Act.

The **most important lesson learnt** is the central importance of an overall policy framework developed at national government level which includes:

- Traveller Accommodation Programmes;

⁴¹ Clondalkin Travellers Development Group (2009) *Strategic Accommodation Plan. Working towards change. Strategies to contribute to the delivery of the South Dublin Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*.

⁴² Note that the operation of the LTACCs was reviewed in a report in 2000 and 2004 (see section 1.1.) but no information on individual LTACCs was included in the report.

⁴³ See the three publications by the Centre for Housing Research in the Bibliography of this study.

⁴⁴ The policy is available at:
<http://www.environ.ie/en/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,2092,en.pdf> (16.01.2009).

- Effective consultative mechanisms at national and local levels;
- Establishment of guidelines on good practice and technical specifications where appropriate on all aspects of Traveller accommodation;
- Having a multifaceted programme that includes Traveller specific accommodation and access to general (social and private rented) housing;
- Importance of setting targets and indicators through which to measure progress;
- Partnership approaches and the effective participation of Traveller representative organisations;
- Effective and resourced Traveller nongovernmental organisations at both a local and national level and the partnership between settled people and Travellers within Traveller NGOs;
- Integration of Traveller accommodation needs into the overall Housing Departments of local authorities rather than as an ‘add-on’/completely separate unit;
- Need for a multifaceted/interagency approach that also addressed education, employment, health and other issues in an integrated approach with accommodation strategies.

2.3. Reflections

A representative of the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) singled out South Dublin along with Sligo and Cork as one of the local authorities which have been most active in building good LTACCs and TAPs: ‘They have done very well where they have taken the guidelines, they have supported the Traveller organisations to engage fully within the process, Kilkenny is another one, that has done quite well around looking at being culturally appropriate in terms of delivery of accommodation that incorporates Traveller traditions such as horses.’⁴⁵ He also emphasised that there are other local authorities which have not made the same effort.

A representative of Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project contended that the South Dublin County Council would be widely recognised throughout the country as one of the leading Councils in relation to the LTACC and the implementation of the TAP. While acknowledging this progress she also emphasised that this was also the implementation of the 1998 Act, including Traveller participation as the statutory duty of local authorities. To

⁴⁵ Interview with the Irish Traveller Movement, Dublin, 13.02.2009.

some extent the SDCC stands out because other local authorities in Ireland have been much poorer in implementing their responsibilities under the 1998 Act.⁴⁶

However despite these very significant improvements there are also concerns of gaps and weaknesses in the SDCC TAP. A representative of Clondalkin Travellers Development Group (CTDG) also acknowledged the positive developments in relation to the participation of Travellers in structures established by the SDCC. However, he contended that a recent report published by CTDG outlining concern about the pace of Traveller-specific accommodation in that part of the SDCC was not well received by the council. He expressed concern that Clondalkin has historically received less attention than Tallaght with respect to Traveller accommodation.⁴⁷ The contention that Clondalkin received less attention than other parts of the SDCC was refuted by officials in the SDCC who outlined some of the initiatives that have taken place.⁴⁸

The report concludes that, 'There has been some progress in relation to provision of Traveller accommodation in Clondalkin. Fifty-one units of Traveller accommodation were provided. Forty of these units were sourced from the re-development of two existing sites and two new sites were secured during the lifetime of the second TAP. Two new developments are under construction and are due to be delivered. However, 62 per cent of the TAP in this area remains to be delivered'.⁴⁹

In relation to standard housing the report concludes: '72 families are living in local authority and private rented housing. Some of these families' needs may not be fully catered for as a result of lack of provision of new accommodation or poor accommodation on some emergency or temporary sites that forced these families to take up the option of housing'.⁵⁰ This is a view supported by interviews with CTDG and TTCDP representatives. They contend that while some Travellers are pro-actively opting for standard housing, others are taking such accommodation because of the pace of providing Traveller-specific accommodation.

Officials in the SDCC refute some of the main findings of the CTDG report. In particular, they take issue with the lack of acknowledgment of the progress that has been made in Traveller accommodation in the SDCC in general and

⁴⁶ Interview with a representative of the Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project, Tallaght, 25.03.2009.

⁴⁷ Interview with a representative of the Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, Clondalkin, 23.03.2009.

⁴⁸ Interview with two representatives of the local authorities, Tallaght, 06.04.2009.

⁴⁹ Clondalkin Travellers Development Group (2009) *Strategic Accommodation Plan. Working Towards Change. Strategies to contribute to the delivery of the South Dublin Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁰ Clondalkin Travellers Development Group (2009) *Strategic Accommodation Plan. Working Towards Change. Strategies to contribute to the delivery of the South Dublin Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*, p. 13.

Clondalkin in particular. They also contend that the data in the report does not take into account the fact that many Travellers are opting for general housing.⁵¹

A Traveller woman contended that most of her children are now living in standard accommodation with their families as they could not get into the Belgard Road site. She is also frustrated that the site is overcrowded, with eight families housed instead of the five intended, the fact that there are no green spaces or places for the children to play on the site, as well as that the group houses are without central heating.⁵² The difficulties of redeveloping the site were acknowledged by TTCDP and officials in SDCC (see section 2.2.7 for further discussion).

In relation to the level of consultation with Travellers the CTDG report states: 'A key issue that has emerged during the implementation of the TAP was the expectation that Travellers and SDCC on what constitutes consultation about Traveller accommodation remains significantly different. "SDCC staff considered consultation to mean that Travellers were communicated with early on in the process so that they were informed as to the location and projected time-frame for the delivery of units. Travellers expected to be involved as equal partners from the design stage onward, with their views being solicited so as to be taken into account". The LTACC should examine and adopt the guidelines produced by the NTACC on effective consultation in relation to the development of Traveller accommodation and implement its recommendations.'⁵³

A TTCDP representative contended that if there is to be effective partnership and consultation, it must be properly resourced. TTCDP has no dedicated accommodation worker and has thus been unable to do much more than respond to emergency accommodation issues. This means that the TTCDP representative is the person from Tallaght on the SDCC LCTACC; this contrasts with CTDG which has two accommodation workers (with a job-share equivalent to one person). TTCDP had resources for one year from the council to employ someone to develop a Traveller tenant participation initiative, but the funding was not renewed.

While the new Traveller specific accommodation is of a high standard, the Stocking Hill site near Lucan in the SDCC was highlighted by two civil society representatives as a particularly good example, while acknowledging there were still some deficiencies. Play facilities for children were identified as particularly

⁵¹ Interview with two representatives of the local authorities, Tallaght, 06.04.2009.

⁵² Interview with a Traveller respondent, 07.04.2009.

⁵³ Clondalkin Travellers Development Group (2009) *Strategic Accommodation Plan. Working Towards Change. Strategies to contribute to the delivery of the South Dublin Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*, p. 17. Quoting A. Deane (2008) *A Report on Traveller Accommodation Programme in Clondalkin*, Clondalkin: Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, p. 9.

positive elements in all the interviews carried out for this study and in Traveller NGO reports.

3. Location 2: Meath County Council

3.1. Project description

The **title of the initiative** is Meath County Council (MCC) Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) and Meath County Council Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAP).

The leading institution in implementation is the Meath County Council, a local government authority.⁵⁴

Type of initiative: The two most important elements of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, with respect to the implementation of Traveller accommodation in Ireland at a local level are the Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) and the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs). (See also section 1.3 of this study for fuller explanation of the rationale behind the LTACCs and TAPs.)

With regard to the **objectives of the project/initiative**,⁵⁵ the MCC TAP 2009-2013 is the third Traveller Accommodation Programme developed by the local authority since the implementation of the 1998 Act. According to Meath County Council's Four Year Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013, the following factors have been taken into consideration in the provision of Traveller accommodation over the coming years, subject to the necessary funding being made available: 'Currently, there are 81 Traveller applications for standard local authority housing and 4 registered on the waiting lists for halting site accommodation. There is a separate record of those who are currently under age, but will require a bay on a halting site when they marry in future years. Of the 81 applications assessed under the 2008 HNA [Housing Needs Assessment], 49 of the families showed a preference for standard local authority housing while 32 stated a preference for Traveller-specific accommodation.'

The Meath TAP highlighted the following issues in relation to the **description of its main activities**:

- 'Remedial works proposed for existing sites; [...]
- Providing replacement conventional halting sites due to the changing nature of existing sites as part of remedial works schemes [...];'

⁵⁴ Meath County Council, available at: www.meath.ie (10.11.2009).

⁵⁵ Meath County Council (2009) *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*, available at: <http://www.meath.ie> (15.03.2009).

- The need to cater for an anticipated growth in the Traveller population in Meath, including group housing schemes: ‘Group Housing Schemes may be needed to cater for the growing future need. Consultation has begun with numerous Traveller families who expressed an interest in same;
- [...] Consideration is to be given to remedial works on housing estates where Traveller families reside including Clogherboy, Townparks, Reask & Alexanderaide in Navan and at Church View, Athboy; [...]
- Initiatives with Voluntary Housing Bodies will continue to be promoted as a means of addressing the housing needs of the Traveller community;
- Subject to the availability of funding, applications under the Caravan Loans Scheme will continue to be considered as such a scheme has proved beneficial to the Traveller Community in the past;
- Financial assistance in the form of rent deposit or advance payments will be allocated to indigenous Travellers where specified conditions are met.’⁵⁶

The **timeframe** for the third TAP in County Meath is 2009-2013. The **location** is the Meath County Council, the primary unit of local government in County Meath, one of the largest counties in Ireland situated in the midlands/east of Ireland. County Meath is largely rural in character but with a number of small and medium sized towns, which are Ashbourne, Duleek, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Navan and Trim. The population of Meath is 162,831 which is 3.8 per cent of the total population of the state.⁵⁷ The Traveller specific accommodation is located in just two areas of County Meath, in the town of Navan, which is also the administrative centre for the local authority, and the town of Trim. The vast majority of Travellers in County Meath are in Navan, while there are only four families in Trim.⁵⁸ The number of Traveller families living on the side of the road in the early 1990s in Meath was highlighted in the Irish Parliament.⁵⁹ There was a better history of interaction with the Traveller community than in South Dublin but there were also marches at this time to highlight the poor conditions of Traveller-specific accommodation. The **target group** is Travellers who have been living in the Meath area for at least three years, although consideration is to be given to those who have lived on a ‘transient site if need arises’.

The **total budget** provided to MCC for capital funding by central government (DOEHLG) for their TAP in 2005 (as an example) is 1,304,708 EUR. The budget details (outlined in Annex 1, Table 3 of this study) indicate that Meath County Council strongly favours the refurbishment of existing halting sites as its main approach to Traveller specific accommodation. In contrast to the South

⁵⁶ Meath County Council (2009) *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*.

⁵⁷ Central Statistics Office (2007) *Census of Population*, available at: <http://www.cso.ie/statistics/popofeachprovcounty2006.htm> (07.03.2009).

⁵⁸ Irish Traveller Movement (2009) *Traveller Accommodation Survey*.

⁵⁹ Minister of State at the Department of the Environment (1993) *Seanad Éireann - Volume 138 - 08 December, 1993. Adjournment Matters - Halting Sites*, available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/S/0138/S.0138.199312080009.html> (03.03.2009).

Dublin County Council, the Meath County Council has not developed many group housing schemes.

3.2. Main elements

With regards to **partnership/cooperation**, a representative of the Navan Travellers Training Centre (NTTC), who has been a member of the Meath LTACC since it was established, is one of four representatives on the LTACC. He is also a member of the Meath County Development Board (CDB) and other social inclusion initiatives. The NTTC is the only active local Traveller organisation in County Meath. This representative has noticed significant improvements and consultation with Travellers over the past fifteen years: 'We used to have to march and protest to highlight the problems facing Travellers in Meath, but there has been great progress in recent years in consulting with Travellers. That is not to say that everything is rosy, there is still room for improvements.'⁶⁰ He expressed his overall opinion on Traveller accommodation in Meath as the following: 'Generally, Traveller accommodation in Meath is not that bad. There are about 200-250 Traveller families in County Meath, mostly in Navan. There are three halting sites. The Athboy halting site was recently refurbished and it is state of the art. There was substantial consultation and a committee established to oversee the initiative. There were some mistakes – I think if they were doing it again, they should move the families out while work is in progress. The build quality is good and there are play facilities for children. The five group housing schemes in Meath are also built to a good standard'.⁶¹

Name, location and type of partners: The role of the LTACC is set out in the legislation and the Meath TAP 2009-2013. The LTACC includes local authority officials; local elected councillors and representatives of Travellers and Traveller organisations. The LTACC is chaired by a local councillor and the Vice Chair is a Traveller. It meets five to six times a year. In addition to the local councillor and Traveller (as chair and vice-chair) the MCC LTACC is composed of five other councillors, three representatives of the Traveller support group and three and senior officials.

There are mixed views on the extent of **innovation and creativity** in MCC. Whilst most would acknowledge steady progress in the standard and provision of Traveller accommodation in recent years and in particular recent refurbishments of existing halting sites, there is some concern of the movement towards Travellers living in standard housing. A representative of the LTACC acknowledges that a lot of Travellers now opt for general housing rather than Traveller specific accommodation. When asked the reasons for this he felt it

⁶⁰ Interview with a representative of the LTACC and the Navan Traveller Training Centre, Navan, 24.03.2009.

⁶¹ Interview with a representative of the LTACC and the Navan Traveller Training Centre, Navan, 24.03.2009.

was largely a matter of choice, rather than lack of bays on sites or group housing scheme; according to the respondent, there were actually some vacant bays on Traveller sites in Meath. He also noted that in one local housing estate a Traveller was now the chair of the local residents association, something that would not have happened 15 years ago, but that other Travellers were attempting to disguise their identity out of fear that they would be singled out.⁶²

Evidence of **multifaceted approach** to the wider range of policy issues including accommodation is evident in Meath. Following the publication of the High Level Senior Officials Group Report in 2006,⁶³ the interagency approach was mainstreamed to cover all local authorities in Ireland including Meath. Meath County Council has recently published its own interagency strategy.⁶⁴ Under the strategy four 'issue' subgroups were established on:

- Health and Accommodation;
- Education, Youth and Childcare;
- Justice and Equality;
- Employment, Training and Enterprise.

A local authority representative also emphasised the importance of ensuring there is an overall interagency management strategy in relation to all services to Travellers, and this integrated approach is evident in new sites such as Athboy, County Meath and the forthcoming developments in St Patrick's Park [halting site] in Navan. She stated: 'We are working closely with Travellers in St Patrick's and it is likely we will move all the families out while the site is re-developed.'⁶⁵

Evidence of promoting a non-discriminatory approach: In its Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013, Meath County Council has highlighted the following: 'Meath County Council recognises Traveller Culture and is committed to promoting equality and inclusion for Travellers. It is the policy of the Council to provide a high standard of living accommodation based on the needs and the family circumstances of Traveller families in so far as is possible'.⁶⁶ This contrasts with previous years when local councillors were more vociferous in their opposition to Traveller accommodation. The change in

⁶² Interview with a representative of the LTACC and the Navan Traveller Training Centre, Navan, 24.03.2009.

⁶³ High Level Officials Group on Travellers (2006) *Report of the High Level Officials Group on Travellers*. A useful summary of this report is provided in the following document: Press Release: Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (21.03.2006) *Government Approves High Level Group Report on Travellers*, available at: <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR07000893>.

⁶⁴ Meath County Council (2007) *Meath Interagency Strategy for the Traveller Community, 2007-2009*, available at: <http://www.meath.ie/LocalAuthorities/Publications/CommunityPublications/> (15.05.2009).

⁶⁵ Interview with a local authority representative, Navan County Meath, 26.03.2009.

⁶⁶ Meath County Council (2009) *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013*.

approach seems to have been forced by the central government's decision to cut funding to local authorities that did not fulfil obligations towards Travellers. In response to a question from a County Meath senator relating to unauthorised Traveller encampments, the Minister of State at the time stressed; 'I expect housing authorities to face up to their responsibilities. I want to see a stepping up of the programme throughout the country next year so that authorities who play their part in meeting the accommodation of Travellers in their own areas will not suffer from the lack of action by a few authorities'.⁶⁷

Evidence of **involvement of Travellers** and the **interaction between Travellers and the local authorities** was similar to that witnessed in SDCC but acknowledged to be generally more limited in scope.

With respect to the specific focus on **children** called for, the recent refurbishment of the St Patrick's Park halting site in Navan was widely praised by Traveller representatives, including the provision of a children's playground and the promise by the Traveller interagency in Meath to develop library facilities on the site. Some concern was expressed that this latter development might be affected by cutbacks in public expenditure.⁶⁸ Traveller **women** in Navan are also involved and employed in undertaking part of an All-Ireland Traveller health study.

Difficulties and limitations were highlighted by a number of Traveller representatives. The general assessment that Traveller accommodation in Meath is satisfactory was generally acknowledged by all those interviewed for this study. However major challenges remain. The most pressing needs identified were the need to refurbish the scheme in Trim and the St Francis halting site in Navan.⁶⁹

Of further concern is that one of the last three remaining halting sites, Winetown, is going to be redeveloped as a group housing scheme, as expressed by a Traveller respondent: 'I know that this is what the Travellers [in the site] want. But I am concerned that there will be less choice for Travellers in the type of accommodation that they want. I think that having a range of choices of Traveller accommodation in Meath has meant that there will be less choice in the long term'.⁷⁰ This concern is shared by other Travellers: 'It is good to see the very good refurbishment in St Patrick's Park but the general trend in Meath is towards group housing schemes. I am a bit concerned that this could reduce the options for Travellers in the long run.'⁷¹ Another difficulty highlighted was

⁶⁷ Minister of State at the Department of the Environment *Seanad Éireann - Volume 138 - 08 December, 1993. Adjournment Matters - Halting Sites*, available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/S/0138/S.0138.199312080009.html> (03.03.2009).

⁶⁸ Interviews with Traveller respondents, 25.03.2009 and 26.03.2009.

⁶⁹ Interviews with Traveller respondents, 25.03.2009 and 26.03.2009.

⁷⁰ Interview with a representative of Navan Traveller Training Centre, Navan, 24.03.2009.

⁷¹ Interviews with Traveller respondents, 25.03.2009 and 26.03.2009.

the lack of a transient site in Meath, which is a requirement under the 1998 Act. However, Travellers have mixed views on having a transient site in Meath.

Impact assessments in relation to Traveller accommodation are limited to a review of progress after each TAP and inclusion in the next TAP of issues not addressed. A representative of the National Traveller Women's Forum was involved in the Meath County Council LTACC in the first and second TAP. She is more pessimistic about the progress in partnership with Travellers in recent years and major issues raised in relation to the progress made under the second TAP by a submission from 35 Traveller women to the LTACC.⁷² The following were some of the issues highlighted in the submission: clear and specific targets and timeframes for implementation in the second TAP; lack of choice and chances of obtaining Traveller-specific accommodation; and difficulties in getting repairs carried out.

There is less evidence of policy and practice in MCC having an **impact on relevant law and national policy**. For example, policy and MCC is significantly less featured than SDCC in a recent review of policy and practice and representatives from MCC have not been involved in national initiatives to the same extent as SDCC (such as the High Level Officials Group).⁷³ There is therefore less potential for transferability and **mainstreaming** of the lessons learned in MCC (see also section 3.3. of this study). For a discussion on the initiative's **sustainability**, and **transferability** potential see section 2.2.

The **most important lesson learned** from the Meath location is again the central importance of an overall policy framework developed at national level, which includes:

- Traveller Accommodation Programmes;
- Effective consultative mechanisms at national and local levels;
- Establishment of guidelines on good practice and technical specifications where appropriate on all aspects of Traveller accommodation;
- Having a multifaceted programme that includes Traveller specific accommodation and access to general (social and private rented) housing;
- Importance of setting targets and indicators through which to measure progress;
- Partnership approaches and the effective participation of Traveller representative organisations;

⁷² Interview with a representative of the National Traveller Women's Forum, Galway, 26.03.2009.

⁷³ Centre for Housing Research (2008) *Traveller Accommodation in Ireland: Review of Policy and Practice*, pp. 90-94.

- Effective and resourced Traveller NGOs at both local and national level and the partnership between settled people and Travellers within Traveller NGOs;
- Need for a multifaceted/interagency approach that also addresses education, employment, health and other issues in an integrated approach with accommodation strategies;
- MCC needs to be more active in highlighting the positive developments that have taken place in relation to Traveller accommodation in recent years; there is also a need for key stakeholders in the LTACC to be more active in participating in shaping national initiatives in relation to accommodation. In short, their approach is more insular than it should be and the Council could look more closely at good practice coming from other local authorities, in particular the success of the group housing schemes in the SDCC.

3.3. Reflections

The 1998 Act and its key local components (TAPs/LTACCs) have made a significant impact on improving Traveller accommodation in Meath. The act has meant that local councillors who were opposed to Travellers' sites suddenly found themselves in a position where the council has had to develop a TAP, 'whether they have liked it or not'.⁷⁴

In relation to consultation, a civil society representative contends that the standard of consultation and partnership while generally good could sometimes be overly dependent on the individual officials involved: 'There needs to be more effort to institutionalise good practice, rather than relying on individual personalities.' Others interviewed for this study contend that Traveller services in Meath needed to be mainstreamed within all the services of the council.⁷⁵

A representative of the National Travellers Women's Forum was involved in the Meath County Council LTACC in the first and second TAP and she is less happy with the pace of developments in Meath in recent years, although she acknowledges the progress that has been made. There have been some good examples of consultation by Meath County Council. The National Travellers Women's Forum representative pointed to the development of St Patrick's Park halting site during the design phase which was inclusive of all families and allowed support to families (community development and architect support directly). However she contended that the refurbishment plans for two halting

⁷⁴ Interview with a representative of the Navan Traveller Training Centre, Navan, 24.03.2009.

⁷⁵ Interviews with Traveller respondents, 26.03.2009.

sites, St Patrick's and St Martin's, in 2007 did not provide any support for families during the consultation phase.⁷⁶

A representative of the local authority spoke of the significant improvements that had taken place in recent years in County Meath. She emphasised the 1998 Act as being very important: 'It gives statutory responsibility to local authorities to ensure Travellers are accommodated. It sets out how the council has to consult with Travellers'.⁷⁷ The LTACC meets 5-6 times per year and the participation is fairly good. She feels there is a very good relationship with Travellers on the Committee: 'There have been significant improvements in accommodation to Travellers in the Meath area in recent years. The Council's approach is to develop small scale group housing or halting sites which facilitate integration into the local community in a way that was not possible with larger isolated sites'.⁷⁸

In relation to local opposition to Traveller specific accommodation, the local authority representative added: 'There will also be a degree of local opposition. High profile incidents of Travellers returning home from England for weddings or funerals can sometimes generate negative views.' However she also contended that in contrast to years gone by, there was considerably less controversy about Traveller accommodation in County Meath: 'There were no real problems with the adoption of the Traveller Accommodation Programme three or four weeks ago. Some Councillors expressed some concern about the possibility of a transient site, but that was all'.⁷⁹

There are no transient halting sites in either the SDCC or MCC. The local authority in Meath contends that Travellers are divided on the need for such a site and interviews with Travellers and service providers appear to support this contention.⁸⁰ 'I would say among the Travellers I work with about 60 per cent want a transient site and about 40 per cent do not'.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Interview with a representative of the National Traveller Women's Forum, Galway, 26.03.2009

⁷⁷ Interview with a representative of the local authority, Navan County Meath, 26.03.2009.

⁷⁸ Interview with a representative of the local authority, Navan County Meath, 26.03.2009.

⁷⁹ Interview with a representative of the local authority, Navan County Meath, 26.03.2009.

⁸⁰ Interviews with three Traveller respondents and one non-Traveller respondent, 26.03.2009.

⁸¹ Interview with a representative of an NGO, 26.03.2009.

4. Lessons learned

In conclusion, the framework for Traveller accommodation set out in the 1998 Act has significantly improved the quality and extent of Traveller accommodation in Ireland, although there remains much to be done. Key dimensions of the framework provided by the 1998 Act are the LTACCs and TAPs, which this study examines.

The first location of this case study, the South Dublin County Council (SDCC), has been widely recognised as one of the most successful local authorities in implementing its responsibilities under the act. This provides a contrast with the record of the same local authority in the 1980s and 1990s when it was recognised as one of the worst local authorities with respect to Traveller accommodation.

There was also a tension between Traveller groups and the Meath County Council (MCC), the second location of this case study, in the 1980s and early 1990s. These tensions have considerably lessened since the passage of the 1998 Act; and while MCC has perhaps not been at the cutting edge of innovation and design, steady progress has been made in Traveller accommodation in the county. Most Traveller representatives concur that Traveller accommodation in Meath has, for the most part, improved but emphasise there are some pockets of poor accommodation in general that need to be addressed urgently.

The improvement in performance of the SDCC and the MCC in respect of Traveller accommodation and the excellent quality of some developments, particularly group housing in the SDCC and site refurbishment in MCC, is also a consequence of other factors, including:

- The role of national Traveller organisations in the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community which defined the approach taken in the 1998 Act and in the subsequent NTACC;
- The growth in capacity and effectiveness of the Traveller Unit in the DOEHLG;
- The greater professionalisation in the Housing and Planning Departments of local authorities in Ireland;
- The exposure of corrupt practices by local politicians in land rezoning (reclassification of land) issues that blighted urban planning in the 1980s and 1990s in Ireland;
- The role of successive governments in not providing a ceiling on the level of capital funding that local authorities were able to acquire with respect to Traveller specific accommodation: In 2005, for example, the total capital

funding provided by the DOEHLG for Traveller accommodation was approximately 36 million EUR.⁸²

This is not to say that there have not been problems with the LTACCs and TAPs, some of which have been highlighted in official reviews and the work of Traveller NGOs. Problems highlighted within this study include:

- Some Traveller NGOs believing the pace of provision has been quicker in some parts of the local authority area than others;
- The need for greater Traveller participation in the interagency groups established to improve Traveller service coordination in the SDCC;
- There are other local authorities in Ireland which have not been as successful as the SDCC and the MCC in fulfilling their commitments under the 1998 Act.

The evidence emerging from this study would suggest that it is important that central and local government in Ireland sustain the momentum gained under the 1998 Act, even in times of an economic recession. Particularly Traveller NGOs need to be in part or substantially resourced by public funds at both local and national level to ensure an effective Traveller participation in decision making. While significant progress has been made in recent years, considerable challenges remain to achieving equality in Traveller accommodation in Ireland.

The study also shows the importance of measuring performance across local authorities to allow the development of evidence based policies. The new indicators devised by the Centre for Housing Research could be adopted for being used by the DOEHLG.

Finally it is important to note in the present economic climate that the analysis in this study would suggest that resources for Traveller NGOs at both local and national level should not be reduced as a result of the economic recession in recognition of the continuing legacy of disadvantage and multiple discrimination experienced by Travellers over many years.

⁸² Centre for Housing Research (2008) *Traveller Accommodation in Ireland: Review of Policy and Practice*, pp. 90-94.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Statistical data and tables

Table 1 – Summary of main legislative and policy initiatives impacting on Traveller accommodation in Ireland 1963-2008

Date	Act/initiative	Main aims / Focus on law/initiative
1963	Reports of the Commission on Itinerancy	The first government initiative on Traveller accommodation in Ireland. It advocated absorption (assimilation) of 'itinerants' (Travellers) into standard housing and temporary sites for those refusing standard housing. Travellers were largely absent from the work of the commission.
1983	The Report of the Travelling People Review Body	Concluded that 'absorption' was not an adequate solution to Traveller accommodation needs and proposed 'integration' instead. Serviced halting sites continued to be provided reluctantly and only for those Travellers refusing to go into standard housing. The 1983 report is now widely recognised as lacking in ambition and vision.
1995	Report of the Task Force on the Travelling People	The groundbreaking report was informed by active participation of Travellers and Traveller groups, in particular Pavee Point (1985) and Irish Traveller Movement (1990).
1996	A National Strategy for Traveller Accommodation was adopted	A dedicated Traveller Accommodation Unit was established in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. A National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Group was set up under the aegis of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
1998	The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act was enacted	Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees were subsequently established in each local authority area.
1999	The National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC)	NTACC established on a statutory basis.
2000	Traveller Accommodation Plans (TAPs)	Each local authority adopted the first of their recurrent five (later four) year Local Traveller Accommodation Action Plans.
2000	Evaluation of Local Traveller	Published by NTACC/DOEHLG.

	Accommodation Consultative Committees	
2003	High Level Officials Group established	Under auspices of Cabinet sub committee on social inclusion. South Dublin County Council one of two local authorities represented on the group.
2004	Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998	
2005	Second Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP)	Each local authority adopted their second five-year Local Traveller Accommodation Action Plans.
2006	High Level official's group report	Recommends establishment of interagency groups under the auspices of city/county development boards (part of the local authority).
2007	Pilot local interagency initiative	Interagency groups established in Meath and South Dublin.
2008	Circular on consultation guidelines for Traveller-specific accommodation circulated	
2009	Third Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP)	Each local authority adopted their third and current four-year Local Traveller Accommodation Action Plans 2009-2013.

Table 2 – Capital funding allocated by the central government (DOEHLG) to South Dublin County Council for Traveller specific accommodation in 2005

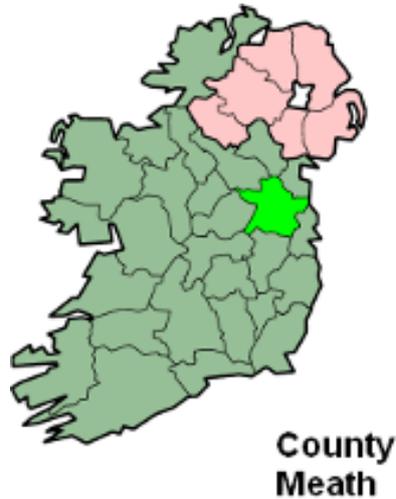
Year: 2005	Halting sites	Group housing	Caravans grant	% total capital grant for all local authorities in Ireland
Capital funding	3,461,132 EUR	5,077,375 EUR	15,231 EUR	23.1%

Table 3 – Capital funding allocated by central government (DOEHLG) to Meath County Council for Traveller specific accommodation in 2005

Year: 2005	Halting sites	Group housing	Caravans grant	% total capital grant for all local authorities in Ireland
Capital funding	1,304,708 EUR	0 EUR	0 EUR	3.5%

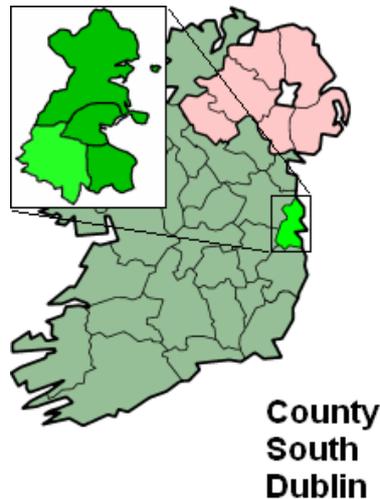
Annex 2 – Maps and photo documentation

Map 1 – Map of Ireland indicating the location of County Meath



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:IrelandMeath.png> english wikipedia⁸³

Map 2 – Map of Ireland indicating the location of County South Dublin



Source: *Map of County South Dublin, Combination of images from Wikipedia Commons, 06.02.2007, Creator: M-le-mot-dit, Permission: Creative Commons ShareAlike 3.0*⁸⁴

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Photo 1 – Examples of recent group housing and halting site schemes in South Dublin⁸⁷



Site at Daletree Place showing the old site that has been closed and new integrated group housing development as part of the community.

Photo 2 – Hazel Hill group housing scheme, SDCC



Photo 3 – Belgard Park halting site Tallaght, SDCC⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Photographs reproduced by kind permission of South Dublin County Council. No photographs from County Meath available.

⁸⁸ Not to be confused with older Belgard Road site referred to in this report.



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