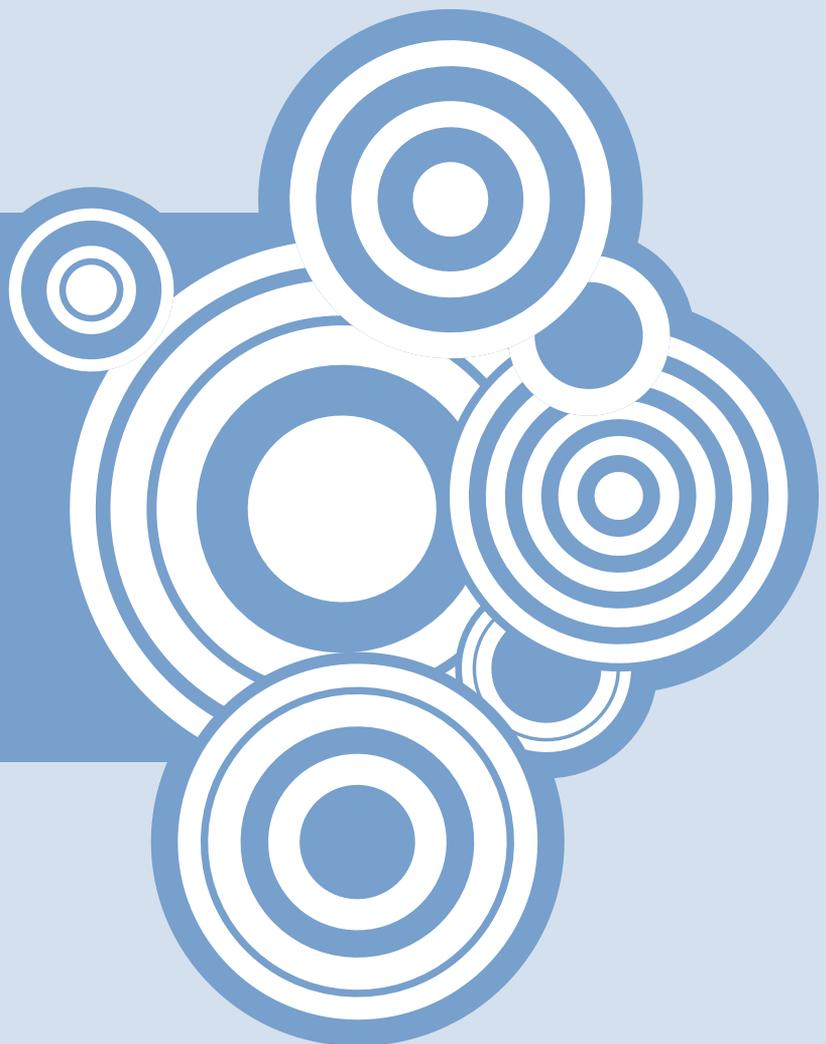# Irish Traveller Movement

*Feasibility Study for the Establishment of a Traveller led Voluntary Accommodation Association*

**Building a better future for Traveller Accommodation**

**Gráinne O' Toole**
**2009**

IRISH TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

**Preface**

Jim O'Brien, Chairperson of the Irish Traveller Movement

As chair of the Irish Traveller Movement I welcome research which shows that Travellers and Traveller organisations are once again at the forefront of developing innovative ideas in order to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers. Accommodation remains one of the key issues for Travellers as it impacts on every facet of our lives.

The report looks at the barriers that Travellers face in the delivery of accommodation. It points the way to how Travellers engagement with this process and their willingness to take the lead in generating responses is fundamental to delivering culturally appropriate accommodation.

I would like to thank the researcher, Graínne O'Toole, the peer researchers Charlie McDonagh, Mary Connors, Brigid Myers and Martina Nevin who have done such a great job in bringing Travellers together and creating spaces for Travellers to discuss what a Traveller-led voluntary accommodation scheme might look like. I would also like to thank the ITM Accommodation Working Group for their active participation and the support of the ITM accommodation workers Bridget Casey, Bridget Connors and Collette Spears.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for funding this research. ITM looks forward to working with the Department and other relevant organisations to make the findings of this report a reality by working together to develop and deliver a Traveller-led voluntary accommodation programme.

**Foreword**

The voluntary and co-operative housing sector is a valued partner in the delivery of social housing and in meeting the special accommodation needs of certain groups including the elderly, persons with an intellectual or physical disability, the homeless and Travellers. The Capital Assistance Scheme provides funding of up to 100% of the approved cost of the accommodation provided and this can include standard accommodation as well as serviced residential sites for Travellers. However, only a minority of Approved Housing Bodies have so far provided specific accommodation for Travellers and this generally includes standard houses or small Traveller-specific group housing schemes.

The Feasibility Study for the establishment of a Traveller-led Approved Housing Body shows that the central involvement of Travellers in the planning and design, siting and implementation of projects for Traveller-specific accommodation can bring added value and better outcomes overall in terms of choice, empowering Travellers and giving them ownership of the task of finding effective solutions to Traveller accommodation issues.

Travellers have engaged at national and local level through the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the local consultative committee's which influence and shape the content of Traveller Accommodation Plans at local authority level. There are high levels of competence and experience on accommodation issues within Traveller groups locally and within the wider representative organisations. This will stand them in good stead as they go about the task of advancing the proposal to establish a Traveller led Approved Housing Body. The Department and the Irish Council for Social Housing will give every assistance in this regard.

Jim Ganley
Principal
Voluntary and Co-operative Housing

# Irish Traveller Movement: Feasibility Study for the Establishment of a Traveller led Voluntary Accommodation Association

## Table of Contents

# Irish Traveller Movement: Feasibility Study for the Establishment of a Traveller led Voluntary Accommodation Association

## 1. Introduction

This report details the findings from a feasibility study carried out to determine if the establishment of a Traveller led Voluntary Accommodation Association (TVAA) is a viable option. The remit of the study was to assess the feasibility of setting up a TVAA as a complementary mechanism to deliver a diverse range of Traveller accommodation.

The study findings show that all of those who participated in the consultation process were in favour of a TVAA being established. Part of the reason for this consensus is that all of the stakeholders to the process acknowledge that the need for culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation is still significant and will grow substantially in to the future. In light of this an additional provider is to be welcomed. Also, it was emphasized that innovative models for the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation need to be developed to encourage better practice in this area.

The National Traveller Accommodation Strategy has been in place for ten years and the third set of Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) was recently adopted. Whilst there has been some progress in the provision of Traveller accommodation nationally, it is widely accepted that the delivery and management of Traveller accommodation is a difficult area and has been undermined by a host of problems.

Commonly cited barriers to provision during the consultation process for this study were:
- prejudice against Travellers,
- lack of commitment to provision of culturally appropriate accommodation,
- lack of innovation in the design, management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation,
- lack of power at national level to ensure full delivery at local level,
- the trespass law which is blocking Travellers right to be nomadic,
- zoning, planning objections and lack of suitable land banks.

Alongside this good models of practice were identified and key elements that contributed to the success of Traveller accommodation include:
- high level of involvement by Travellers in all aspects of the development of their own accommodation,
- development of accommodation with established groups and/or family groupings,
- resourcing of Traveller involvement,
- clear lines of communication between all stakeholders,
- respect and provision for Traveller culture, and
- clear and effective management and maintenance practices.

In this context, it is anticipated that a TVAA could be a key mechanism to develop new thinking and contribute to the debate on best practice in the design, development and management of Traveller accommodation. It was highlighted that social housing providers should continue to play their role in the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation in line with their

legal obligations. However, it is recognised that new players such as the Voluntary Housing Sector and a TVAA have a lot to offer by way of complementing the current system.

This report is set out in nine sections as follows:

**Section 2** provides a description of the Irish Traveller Movement and its role in relation to Traveller accommodation.

**Section 3** provides information about Irish Travellers, sets Traveller accommodation issues in context and summarises key Traveller accommodation trends.

**Section 4** outlines the terms of reference for the study.

**Section 5** describes the methodology employed to carry out the study.

**Section 6** provides an overview of the voluntary housing sector in Ireland, a description of the voluntary housing initiatives examined in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK and the key lessons they identified from their work.

**Section 7** details the findings from the consultation process from the Traveller sector perspective, the local authority perspective and from the perspective of the Voluntary Housing Sector.

**Section 8** details the analysis of the findings from the process.

**Section 9** concludes and puts forward short and longer term recommendations.

**Section 10** details a business plan and the model for the establishment of a TVAA.

## 2. Irish Traveller Movement (ITM)

### 2.1 Profile of the ITM

The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) is the national network of organisations and individuals working with the Traveller community.

ITM was established in 1990 and now has over seventy Traveller organisations from all parts of Ireland in its membership. ITM consists of a partnership between Travellers and settled people committed to seeking full equality for Travellers as an ethnic group in Irish society. This partnership is reflected in all of the structures of ITM.

The ITM was formed to be a national platform, through which Travellers and their organisations are enabled to:

- Highlight the issues faced by Travellers and to press for real solutions.
- Debate ideas and formulate and promote culturally appropriate initiatives.
- Provide those active at a local level with support and solidarity.
- Develop alliances at national level.
- Challenge the many forms of individual, structural and institutional racism with which Travellers have to deal.

The key activities of ITM include:
- supporting the work of Traveller organisations,
- developing a Traveller input into policy arenas,
- representing Traveller interests on national advisory committees and policy fora
- developing joint work with other community and voluntary organisations, the statutory sector and the private sector.

### 2.2 Role in relation to Traveller accommodation

One of the key areas of work carried out by the ITM is Traveller accommodation. ITM employs two National Traveller Accommodation Workers to support the work of its members on accommodation issues. These posts are funded by the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Environment and Local Government (DoEHLG). Key aspects of this work are:

- Providing ongoing support and assistance to groups nationwide on a range of accommodation issues.
- Implementing training for Traveller representatives on the Local Traveller Accommodation Committees.
- Organising regional seminars to update groups on developments in Traveller accommodation.
- Supporting and resourcing the ITM Accommodation Working Group (AWG).
- Ongoing telephone and personal support provided to local groups on accommodation issues.

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- Servicing and supporting the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) and its sub committees, including, supporting Traveller sector representation.
- Promotion of best practice, in consultation and design of Traveller accommodation through seminars and workshops with Traveller organisations and local authorities.
- Responding to policy issues in relation to Traveller accommodation.
- Inputting into the development of the TAPs.
- Contributing to national Traveller accommodation policy development.
- Producing relevant and timely information on Traveller accommodation issues.

### 3. **Travellers and Traveller Accommodation in Ireland**

**3.1 Irish Travellers**

*'Travellers long shared history, cultural values, language, customs and traditions make them a self-defined group, and one which is recognisable and distinct. Their culture and way of life, of which nomadism is an important factor, distinguishes them from the sedentary (settled) population.'*[1]

The 2006 Irish Census counted 22,435 Irish Travellers which represents 0.5 percent of the total national population (Central Statistics Office, 2007). However, Traveller organisations estimate that there may be up to 30,000 Travellers with a further 1,500 Travellers in the North of Ireland. [2] The recent All Ireland National Traveller Health Study which is due to be published shortly, will provide a more accurate picture of the numbers of Travellers living in Ireland today as the study proactively targeted Travellers living in all types of accommodation.

One of the key issues facing Travellers that remains to be addressed is their recognition as an ethnic group. This is a source of concern from a Traveller perspective as a poor and incomplete analysis of the problems facing Travellers will invariably lead to poor solutions being designed to address the issues facing the community. *'Traveller ethnicity is a key factor that has to be taken in to account in identifying and responding to the needs of the Traveller community. Culture and identity will shape the needs of a group. Policies and programmes that respond to the needs will only be effective to the extent that they take in to account the culture and identity of the group concerned.'*[3]

At a European and International level, various conventions, that Ireland has ratified, recognise that Travellers are a distinct ethnic group.[4] At a national level this position is supported by various bodies and academics. However, the Irish government does not officially recognise Travellers as an ethnic group and refer to Travellers as a cultural group. Therein, there is a conflict between the International and European position and the Irish governmental position which impacts on the delivery of policies, programmes and services that effect Travellers lives.

A recent study on Traveller accommodation commissioned by the DoEHLG and carried out by the Centre for Housing Research, explores this issue and highlights the tensions that exist as a result of the divergence of opinion that *'may contribute to some confusion and lack of clarity for local authority practitioners and other stakeholders at local level.'*[5]

One implication emerging from this approach for Traveller accommodation is that any provision that is required to meet Travellers specific cultural needs may be interpreted as being a 'cultural

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[1] Irish Traveller Movement @ www.itmtrav.ie
[2] Pavee Point Website www.pavee.ie
[3] Equality Authority, Traveller Ethnicity, An Equality Authority Report, 2006, p9.
[4] Council of Europe: Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the United National International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racism and Discrimination
[5] Housing Policy Discussion Series, Traveller Accommodation in Ireland: Review of Policy and Practice, Centre for Housing Research, 2008, p8.

choice' rather than by virtue of a right that is legitimately based on ethnicity as enshrined in European and international law. Therefore, specific cultural requirements are understood as *'lifestyle choices'* which can affect how such requirements are responded to and the implementation of the TAPs.

There is no discord in the recognition of the need for fully serviced culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation. Yet many Travellers living on the roadside or unauthorised encampments '*have to endure living in intolerable conditions, with approximately one third having to live without access to the basic facilities of sanitation, water and electricity.'*[6] Despite a National Traveller Accommodation Strategy that has been in operation for ten years, progress is not what would have been expected at this juncture. '*In relative terms there is little change in the number of Traveller families living in unauthorised/roadside encampments since the time of the 1963 Commission on Itinerancy report.'*[7]

The linkages between proper accommodation and better health, educational, employment, social and other outcomes are well documented. The fact that Travellers rate poorly on all social indicators in comparison with the settled community such as poor educational attainment, high unemployment and poor health status is also widely known. For example, the 2006 Census showed that only 13.8 percent of Travellers over the age of 15 years are in employment compared to a national average of nearly 60 percent. To further compound this situation Travellers experience discrimination and racism on a daily basis at an institutional and individual level. The provision of and access to a quality home within a sustainable community setting is deemed critical to ensuring that Travellers health, well being, access and participation in a range of other services is achieved.

The National Traveller Health Strategy states: '*Travellers are particularly disadvantaged in terms of health status and access to health services. Generally speaking, they suffer poor health on a level which compares so unfavourably with the settled community that it would probably be unacceptable to any section thereof. Travellers die at a younger age than the population in general. Among the most important factors contributing to this situation are social exclusion, the influence of a harsh living environment and racism. This Strategy identifies how health planning and health services can play their part in the wider policies which are aimed at eliminating these factor.'*[8]

While many initiatives and strategies have been put in place to progress the issues facing Travellers, '*it is clear from the resources and energy that has been pumped into Traveller issues since 1995, both by the Government and Traveller representatives, that the challenge of making Ireland a fairer place for Travellers is not an easy one. As Travellers represent only 0.06% of the population this lack of progress can be frustrating. The blockages that prevent those resources from resolving a relatively small but complex problem need to be identified and removed.'*[9]

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[6] www.itmtrav.ie
[7] Housing Policy Discussion Series, Traveller Accommodation in Ireland: Review of Policy and Practice, Centre for Housing Research, 2008, p32.
[8] Department of Health and Children, Traveller Health a National Strategy, 2002-2005, p4.
[9] Second Report of the Committee to Coordinate and Monitor the Recommendations of the Report of the Travelling Community, Government Publications, p56.

## 3.2 Traveller accommodation in context

The framework for Traveller policy issues are embodied within the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) which contains a series of key recommendations in relation to a range of Traveller issues, including accommodation.[10]

Since the publication of the Task Force report progress has been made on Traveller accommodation issues. The National Traveller Accommodation Strategy was introduced which has a legislative basis. This strategy provided for the introduction of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 which enshrines in law the requirement of local authorities to provide culturally appropriate accommodation in all its forms, including halting sites, group housing schemes, standard houses and transient accommodation.

Due to the introduction of the 1998 Act, local authorities, following a consultation process are now required, to prepare and adopt accommodation programmes to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in their areas. The first TAPs covered the period 2000–2004, the second programmes ran from 2005-2008 and the third run from 2009-2012.

The 1998 Act also provided for the establishment of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees comprising of elected representatives and officials of the local authority, Travellers and Traveller organisations. Their role is to *'advise in relation to the preparation and implementation of any accommodation programme for the functional area of the appointing authority concerned.'*[11]

At a national level, the legislation required the establishment of the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) whose role is to advise the Minister in relation to *'the most appropriate measures for improving, at local level, consultation with, and participation of, Travellers in the provision and management of accommodation, and general matters concerning the preparation, adequacy, implementation and co-ordination of Traveller accommodation programmes.'*[12]

A number of national mainstream policy initiatives, such as Towards 2016; The Framework for Social Partnership and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 reaffirm the governmental commitment to the implementation of the local authority TAPs. Also, the publication by the DoEHLG of its statement on Housing Policy in Ireland focuses on the importance of creating sustainable communities which are defined as *'places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe*

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[10] The progress to which the report's recommendations are being implemented is monitored by the Monitoring Committee for Progress on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community.

[11] Section 21(3) of Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

[12] This group includes representatives of the Irish Traveller Movement, Pavee Point, the National Travellers Women's Forum, the County and City Managers association, County Councillors, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

*and inclusive, well-planned, built and run, offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.'*
[13]

Traveller accommodation is also targeted as part of the policy, in particular, actions to improve the management and maintenance procedures and practices, efforts to improve the delivery of targets under the TAPs and the development of methods for self-supporting approaches to meeting housing needs by Travellers themselves.The National Development Plan commits a level of resources to implement these plans. However, given the current economic climate the funding for many of these initiatives may be subject to cuts.

Central policy and legal frameworks underpinning all of the above developments and which are pertinent to the provision of Traveller accommodation is the National Action Plan against Racism (NAPR) and the Equality Legislation. The NAPR advocates the integration of intercultural and anti-racism approaches into all policy areas. It specifically includes a commitment *'to ensure greater progress is made in the implementation of local authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes.'*[14] The Equality legislation protects Travellers and other groups against discrimination in the provision of goods and services including Traveller accommodation provided by the local authorities. These are key areas that need to be integrated and applied to the TAPs and Traveller accommodation services.

In terms of overall monitoring of progress of Traveller issues including, Traveller accommodation provision, the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee (NTMAC) is an oversight committee drawing together all the relevant bodies with a responsibility for Traveller issues.[15] The NTMAC, established by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform, comprises representatives of Government Departments and other public bodies, Traveller Organisations and a number of individual Traveller representatives, as well as other social partners. Its role is:

1. *'To serve as a forum for consultation on current issues of national importance affecting the Travelling Community.*
2. *To identify issues of national importance to the Traveller Community which might not be dealt with adequately through existing mechanisms.*
3. *To suggest appropriate responses to issues identified under 2 above, in cooperation with relevant state agencies and other stakeholders.*
4. *To monitor developments in the position of Travellers in Irish Society generally and with particular reference to issues identified at 2 above.*

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[13]Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities (2007), p7.
[14] Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (2005) The National Action Plan Against Racism, Planning for Diversity, Objective 6.3, p 127.
[15] Following the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) a committee to monitor implementation of its recommendations, the Traveller Monitoring Committee (TMC) was established by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform. It comprised Government Departments, Traveller Organisations and other social partners. In December 2005, the TMC produced its Second and final Progress Report. The NTMAC has replaced this committee.

5. *To report to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, every two years, identifying key issues of ongoing concern.'[16]*

The NTMAC works in cooperation with the High Level Group which was set up under the aegis of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. Its remit is to ensure that the relevant statutory agencies involved in providing the full range of services to Travellers would focus on improving the integrated practical delivery of such services. There is no Traveller organisational representation on this committee.

The High Level Group in its report in 2006 noted the following key issues in relation to Traveller accommodation:

- '*The increasing trend of Travellers accessing private rented accommodation and the significant number of Travellers who meet their own accommodation needs privately,*
- *The improved provision of transient halting sites is a matter of priority and this is being studied by the NTACC.'[17]*

As a result of the High Level Group's Report, the County and City Development Boards[18] were requested to establish Traveller Interagency Groups that would bring the relevant stakeholders together and draw up Integrated Service Plans with Travellers. The local County and City Traveller Interagency Committees are one of the outcomes of this process.

### 3.2.1 Key trends in Traveller accommodation

According to the 2006 Census, *two out of every five Travellers were aged less than 15 years compared with one in five for the population as a whole. Older Travellers (i.e. those aged 65 and over) accounted for just 2.6 percent of the total Traveller population compared with 11% for the general population. The distinctive age structure of the Traveller Community resulted in a median age of 18 as compared with a national figure of 33.'[19]* The young age of the Traveller population indicates that the demand for Traveller accommodation will continue to increase in the future.

The annual count figures submitted by local authorities to the DoEHLG from the years 2004 to 2008 show that there was a steady increase of approximately 400 Traveller families from the period 2005 to 2008 (see Table below). During this time, there was a steady decline of Traveller families living in Traveller-specific accommodation (halting sites or group housing schemes) and in 2008 less than a quarter of all families counted lived in this type of accommodation. Alongside this, there was a consistent increase in the number of families accommodated in standard social

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[16] Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Press Release, Minister Fahey announces New National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee, April 2007.

[17] Report of the High Level Group on Traveller issues, Dept. Of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, March 2006, p4

[18] County/City Development Boards were established in each county and city in Ireland in early 2000. The CDBs are led by local government and are also representative of local development bodies together with the State agencies and social partners operating locally. CDBs bring together the key players at local level to engage in a process of long-term planning for each county or city.

[19] Central Statistics Office, Press statement 2006 Census- Volume 5- Ethnic or Cultural Background (including the Irish Traveller Community)

rented housing and in 2008, 45 per cent or nearly half of all Traveller families were accommodated in this type of accommodation.

There was a significant increase in the number of Traveller families opting for private rented housing with an increase of over one thousand Traveller families in the period, nearly twenty percent of all families.  It is notable that there was no significant decline in the number of families living on unauthorised sites e.g. roadside encampments. In 2004, 601 Traveller families were living on unauthorised sites which increased to 629 families by 2006 and declined slightly by 2008 to 524 families. There was a steady increase of Traveller families providing accommodation out of their own resources. There was no evidence from the figures of any significant progress made with regards to provision for nomadism.

At the end of 2008, 869 Traveller families (those families living on unauthorised sites and sharing housing) remain to be properly accommodated. Also, 1,516 families were accommodated in private rented housing whose needs may change in to the future. These factors coupled with the high numbers of Travellers reaching the age of 18 years and forming their own families, will result in an increase in demand for Traveller accommodation over the next four years.

| Total Traveller Families Recorded as Accommodated from 2004-2008 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accommodated by or with Local Authority Assistance | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
| Halting sites | 1,321 | 1,203 | 1,131 | 1,140 | 1,035 |
| Group Housing Scheme | 582 | 606 | 642 | 677 | 691 |
| Total Traveller Specific Accommodation | 1,903 | 1,809 | 1,773 | 1,817 | 1,726 |
| Standard Housing | 2,753 | 2,878 | 2,941 | 3,071 | 3,211 |
| Private Rented | 376 | 403 | 433 | 444 | 444 |
| Voluntary Bodies | 74 | 87 | 104 | 104 | 119 |
| Total Non-Traveller Specific Accommodation | 3,203 | 3,368 | 3,478 | 3,619 | 3,774 |
| Total Traveller Families Accommodated with Local Authority Assistance | 5,106 | 5,177 | 5,251 | 5,436 | 5,500 |
| Accommodated without Local Authority Assistance | | | | | |
| Unauthorised sites | 601 | 589 | 629 | 594 | 524 |
| Own resources | 464 | 478 | 485 | 489 | 513 |
| Private Rented | 486 | 696 | 935 | 1,143 | 1,516 |
| Sharing Housing | 335 | 326 | 391 | 437 | 345 |
| Total Number of Families Accommodated without Local Authority Assistance | 1,886 | 2,089 | 2,440 | 2,663 | 2,898 |
| Total Number of Traveller Families | 6,991 | 7,266 | 7,691 | 8,099 | 8,398 |

Source: The Annual Count (Prepared by the DoEHLG, 2009)

**In summary, key trends in Traveller accommodation are as follows:**

- The number of Travellers living in permanent accommodation, especially standard local authority housing is increasing.
- There is a steady and significant increase in the number of Travellers living in private rented housing.
- Fewer numbers of Travellers are now living in Traveller-specific accommodation, and the number of families accommodated on halting sites is decreasing.
- There is a high percentage of the Traveller population under 18 years which indicates that Traveller accommodation needs will not decrease and will grow into the future.
- There is no evidence of any significant progress made regarding the provision of transient accommodation.
- There are still a considerable number of Traveller families living on the roadside and who remain to be properly accommodated.

## 4. Terms of Reference for the Study

### 4.1 Overall brief

The brief for the study was to assess the feasibility of establishing a TVAA through:

- Examining various voluntary housing association models,
- Exploring possible models for the development of a TVAA model with the membership of the ITM,
- Developing a clear rationale for this complementary model of accommodation delivery,
- Examining the benefits and barriers to the development of TVAA including planning legislation and delivery of Traveller specific accommodation,
- Drawing out the implications of engaging in this type of initiative for ITM,
- Designing a model of operation including organisational, management and legal structures,
- Proposing a vision, ethos and principles for the TVAA, including how it would design, develop and manage Traveller accommodation,
- Examining potential employment opportunities for Travellers in the delivery and management of the accommodation,
- Examining sustainability strategies for the TVAA and identify the resources required, including potential funding sources,
- Developing recommendations on the most suitable model possible and a step by step approach including timeframes on how this model would be established.

### 4.2 Project objectives

- To carry out desk research to explore existing voluntary housing models at national and European level.
- To carry out field work and examine existing developments/models of voluntary housing.
- To train a small group of Travellers in community research methods who will assist in the study.
- To design and implement a consultation process with Travellers and Traveller organisations.
- To liaise with planning authorities and the DoEHLG.
- To carry out discussions with the ITM Central Group regarding implications of model.
- To assess opportunities for employment of Travellers within a TVAA.
- To identify potential funders.
- To produce a final report with recommendations.

## 4.3     Phases of the study

In order to deliver on the above, the study was delivered in four phases as follows:

**Phase One:**

This involved the following actions:

- collecting and agreeing the baseline information such as stakeholders to be contacted and their level of involvement and the Voluntary Housing Models to be examined,

- designing the consultation process,

- designing and disseminating a communication strategy for the project,

- developing and agreeing an action plan for the project,

- agreeing reporting procedures.

**Phase Two:**

This phase of the project involved conducting field work and interviews to explore existing models of voluntary social housing provision in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK to inform the consultation process.

**Phase Three:**

The third phase was concerned with the implementation of the consultation process to examine the viability of a TVAA with Travellers and Traveller organisations, Local authorities, the DoEHLG and the Voluntary Housing Sector.

**Phase Four:**

The final phase involved the final design of a TVAA model and the presentation of the final report.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 The approach

The study was conducted over a three month period and involved an intense planning and consultation process. The methodology used to undertake the work was informed by a community development approach. This approach ensured that Travellers were centrally involved and supported to actively participate in and inform all stages of the process. Alongside this other key stakeholders such as Voluntary Housing Associations and Cooperatives and other housing projects in Ireland (Voluntary Housing Sector), Northern Ireland and the UK, Local authorities and the DoEHLG were facilitated to engage in the process at appropriate levels.

The work was guided by the following principles:

- Collective action
- Participation and inclusion
- Empowering and enabling approach
- Starting where people are at
- Process and task
- Solidarity not charity
- Equality
- Evaluation and accountability.

To realise this strategy the methodology as outlined in 5.2 was employed.

### 5.2 Fieldwork and the consultation process:

The following actions were undertaken:

- Desk Research and field work was carried out to identify and explore existing Voluntary Housing Sector models in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK. An ethnic led voluntary housing group, a mainstream voluntary housing group and a mainstream housing group were targeted in the UK context to give as broad a view as possible. The Voluntary Housing Sector organisations participated in the following ways:

  - Completion of questionnaires
  - Face to face interviews
  - Telephone Interviews

- Two questionnaires were developed to guide this process; one targeted at the Voluntary Housing Sector in Ireland and the other targeted at the Voluntary Housing Sector in the UK. Eleven interviews were carried out with the Voluntary Housing Sector and Housing Initiatives as outlined in the Table below. The majority of the organisations interviewed had undertaken work with Travellers. A detailed description of each is contained in

section six. Three voluntary housing initiatives and one statutory body were contacted on a number of occasions but there was no response.[20]

| Voluntary Housing and Cooperatives & Housing Initiatives | Undertaken work with Travellers |
|---|---|
| Irish Council for Social Housing | No |
| National Association of Building Cooperatives | No |
| Respond! | Yes |
| Clúid | Yes |
| Focus Ireland | Yes |
| North & West Housing LTD | Yes |
| Rooftop Housing Group | Yes |
| Innisfree Housing Association | No |
| Habitat for Humanity Ireland | No |
| Northern Ireland Housing Executive | Yes |
| Hackney Homes | Yes |

- Two Traveller group housing voluntary accommodation schemes were visited and a focus group was held with tenants living in one of the schemes.

- A TVAA background document was developed with the analysis of the various models set out. This was presented to the focus groups for discussion.

- A team of four Travellers were recruited, trained and supported to assist in conducting the consultation process. This involved planning the process, agreeing roles, confidence building exercises, and undertaking and reviewing the process.

- A steering group was established to advise on the research and the consultation process. This involved members of the ITM and the DoEHLG. The steering group met twice and provided advice to the consultant on all aspects of the project.

- Twelve focus groups were organised with Travellers and Traveller organisations, peer researchers and current tenants of a voluntary housing association scheme as follows:
  → Two preliminary focus groups were held with the ITM Central Group and the AWG to examine the rationale and implications of the development of a TVAA in which 21 participants attended.
  → Eight focus group were held with Travellers, with various levels of involvement within Traveller groups, in the following locations; Dublin, Cork, Tullamore, Carlow, Cashel, Ennis, Derry and Galway in which 64 people participated. This ensured a range of views were captured.

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[20] These were a mainstream model with best practice on green and energy saving polices, an ethnic led voluntary housing association, a voluntary housing association who works with Irish Travellers and a local authority who employ a Traveller to manage a halting site. Due to the lack of response other housing associations were targeted

→ Two further focus groups were held with ITM; one with the Central Group and the other with the AWG. All Traveller and Traveller group participants in the research were invited to the AWG meeting to explore findings and shape the recommendations for the final report. There were a total of 16 participants in both sessions,

→ 9 individual interviews were carried out with Travellers living in different types of accommodation,

→ 3 individual interviews were carried out with settled residents living near Traveller accommodation,

→ Interviews were conducted with two National Traveller Representatives on the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee who are also Representatives of two National Traveller Organisations; Pavee Point and the National Traveller Women Forum,

→ An Interview was conducted with the Irish Traveller Movement Britain for their advice on models of best practice.

A target was set to ensure that 100 Travellers and Traveller organisations inputted into the consultation process. This was achieved as there were 113 inputs from Travellers and Traveller organisations in to the process with a total of 97 participants.[21]

- Interviews with key personnel within relevant agencies were held and a questionnaire was designed to guide the interviews as follows:

→ Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government/ Voluntary Housing Section and the Traveller Unit,

→ Four Local authorities were interviewed as follows; Meath County Council, Louth County Council, Cork City Council and Dublin City Council. The local authorities were selected on the basis of highest voluntary housing sector build in 2007 and 2008 and with the highest numbers of Travellers accommodated in Voluntary Housing Schemes. This criterion was set down to ensure the personnel would have recent experience of the VHS and Traveller integration into existing schemes,

→ One county manager was interviewed to provide a boarder view regarding the scope and role of a TVAA and its relationship with the TAPs and the National Traveller Accommodation Strategy.

## 5.3 Analysis of the process:

There was a high level of engagement from all stakeholders in the study and a willingness by all to give their advice, information and their support to the project. One of the most striking aspects of the consultation process was the 'can do' attitude of most of the stakeholders interviewed. The progressive attitude of the voluntary housing sector and the local authority personnel who deal solely with the voluntary housing sector was particularly notable. They were interested in addressing issues, problem solving and ultimately providing the best accommodation possible to the communities in which they work. They ultimately believed that anything could be achieved

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[21] 8 people attended 2 consultation events and 4 people attended three consultation events.

with commitment and will and saw the value in new thinking and new innovation to address Traveller accommodation issues.

In respect of the Traveller sector, the idea of a TVAA created significant interest and enthusiasm. The sector believes that the Traveller accommodation issues can be solved with real will at a political and institutional level. The sector were instrumental in shaping the key recommendations that emerged to ensure that a TVAA, if established, is done so on a solid footing with the capacity to produce results and thereby contributing to building a better future for Traveller accommodation.

## 6. Fieldwork

This section provides an overview of the voluntary housing sector in Ireland, a description of the voluntary housing initiatives examined in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK and the key lessons they identified from their work.

### 6.1 Brief overview of the Voluntary Housing Sector

In the late 1980s and early 1990s government policy began to promote the development of housing associations and co-operatives in Ireland to achieve the following:

- to promote new systems of housing management
- to encourage a greater diversity of suppliers of social rented housing.

The '*provision of rental accommodation by the voluntary and co-operative housing associations and other approved voluntary organisations has become an increasingly important part of the overall response to national housing needs.*'[22] In Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities, the government's housing strategy, the contribution that the voluntary housing sector make is further reinforced with areas for future development mapped out. These areas include the provision of special needs housing, managing homes through Part V arrangements and involvement in the Rental Accommodation Scheme. It is recognised that support will be required to underpin delivery through the provision of additional sites and land and streamlining of funding arrangements including, the provision of 100% funding for projects where all the beneficiaries have been assessed as in need of social housing.[23]

The Voluntary Housing Sector had a turnover of around 266 million in 2007 and provided 1,685 new homes in that year. This sector is responsible for about a quarter of all social housing output each year. To date 104 Traveller families have been accommodated by the voluntary housing sector mainly in their mainstream housing provision. In 2007, Clúid Housing Association developed a group housing scheme with ten Traveller families in South Dublin and in 2008, Respond! completed a group housing scheme with six families in Kildare. The Voluntary Housing Sector is a significant resource that Travellers could access in the future to meet their accommodation needs.

The Voluntary Housing Sector is involved in a range of housing activities such as:
- building new homes and the provision of services to tenants,
- the provision of housing to specific groups e.g. older persons, persons with disabilities and the provision of services such as visiting health professionals and recreational activities, full time warden, caretaker or other support staff,

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[22] Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Governmental Memorandum, Capital Funding Schemes for the Provision of Rental Accommodation by Approved Bodies (VHU:2/02), 2002, p6.
[23] Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities, Statement on Housing Policy, 2007, P54-55.

- provision of specialist services e.g. accommodation to women and children experiencing domestic violence and homeless hostels,
- the provision of general need housing which is very similar to standard local authority housing,
- the management of homes under the Rental Accommodation Scheme,
- the management of estates on behalf of local authorities,
- the management of affordable housing schemes.

Some of the challenges facing the sector include the following:
- complex funding arrangements which can slow down projects and
- the lack of adequate numbers of suitable building sites.

Revised arrangements for the appraisal and approval of projects under the Capital Funding Schemes have recently been issued by the DoEHLG and are currently being reviewed by the local authorities and the voluntary housing sector.

The Irish Council for Social Housing have also called for the need for a Land Management Plan to be initiated which ensures that 10,000 – 12,000 sites are designated for both voluntary and co-operative housing projects for the period between 2006 and 2010 and direct access for the voluntary housing sector to the National Finance Agency.[24] They believe that these and other measures would support the increased output of the sector in line with targets set out in the Partnership Agreement-Towards 2016.

**Funding schemes**

The Capital Funding Schemes have been crucial to the development of the voluntary housing sector. Local authorities have a key administrative role in the operation of these Schemes. Each local authority has a designated administrative officer who has direct responsibility for the implementation of the Governmental Memorandum, Capital Funding Schemes for the Provision of Rental Accommodation by Approved Bodies (VHU:2/02) and the operation of all aspects of the Capital Funding Schemes in a co-ordinated way.  The Capital Funding Schemes are as follows:

**Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS)**

The CAS enables voluntary housing bodies to provide accommodation to meet special housing needs such as those of the elderly, people with a disability, homeless, returning emigrants or smaller families. The voluntary housing association or co-operative is responsible for allocating the tenancies in cooperation with the local authority. 75% of all houses allocated must be to prospective tenants from the local authorities housing list. The remaining houses can be leased to people nominated by the voluntary housing body or by the local authority as determined by the association or co-operative. Rents are determined having regard to tenant's means and the cost of managing and maintaining the dwellings. There is no management and maintenance allowance granted under this scheme.

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[24] Irish Council for Social Housing, Background Paper and ICSH Preparation for negotiation of new Social Partnership Agreement Irish Council for Social Housing – Priority Areas.

**Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme (CLSS)**

The CLSS is accessed by voluntary housing bodies to provide houses for rent to meet the needs of low-income families. This is a loan from the Housing Finance Agency via the local authority and repayments are subsidised by the DoEHLG. There is a management and maintenance allowance attached to this scheme. The rent formula is based on the local authority differential rent schemes and is income related.

Both the CAS and the CLSS can be accessed to fund the building of housing in one project.

The revised funding arrangements, as referred to earlier, set a range of criteria and stages for approval of projects under the Capital Funding Schemes. These new arrangements will have implications for smaller voluntary housing bodies and co-operatives seeking to establish themselves, as the level of detail required to establish projects is considerable and requires technical skills and expertise.

**Traveller accommodation budget**

The Traveller accommodation budget is administered by the DoEHLG and is used to fund Traveller accommodation. It is drawn down by local authorities on submission of detailed accommodation plans. While not part of the voluntary housing scheme budget it is a source of income that has been used by the voluntary housing sector in developing Traveller accommodation.

**Criteria for gaining approved status from the DoEHLG**

Section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992 enables local authorities to provide assistance to approved voluntary housing bodies to provide housing. Halting sites are also included as a form of housing provision within the meaning of the Act.[25]

Section 6 (6) of the Act empowers the Minister to grant approved status to voluntary housing bodies to provide housing and other services. The criteria for approved status are as follows:

- A housing body must be incorporated under any of the following legislation:
  - Limited companies by guarantee registered under the Companies Acts, 1963 – 2001,
  - Societies registered under the Industrial & Provident Societies Acts, 1893 – 1978,
  - Trusts incorporated under the Charities Acts.
- The bodies primary functions are to:
  - 'Relieve the housing needs, or poverty or hardship or the welfare of Travellers,
  - the provision and management of housing,
  - seek to provide housing accommodation and related services for families,

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[25] Section 6 (11) of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992 states "housing accommodation" includes sites for caravans within the meaning of section 13 of the Act of 1988.

single persons, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, homeless persons, Travellers and other disadvantaged persons'.[26]

- The bodies must have:
  - o provisions prohibiting the distribution of any surplus, profit, bonus or dividend to members and
  - o require that the assets of the body only be used to carry out its functions

An approved body must:
  - o have a board of not less than five individuals who cannot have any vested interest of significance for the construction of houses for the approved housing body, or in the supply of goods and services to the approved housing body.
  - o ensure that adequate financial accounting and control procedures are adopted to monitor capital income and expenditure in respect of the development of housing projects.[27]

**National Support Structures and Bodies**

**Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG)**

The DoEHLG has established a Voluntary and Co-operative Housing Unit in their Department which is dedicated to supporting and developing the voluntary housing sector as an important player in social housing in Ireland.

**The Housing Forum**

The Housing Forum was set up under the social partnership process and comprises government departments, housing providers and social partners. It allows social partners to have an input into policy development and is chaired by Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal. It has an overarching role and linkages with the Working Group on Voluntary and Co-operative Housing and will be making appropriate linkages with the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

**Working Group on Voluntary and Cooperative Housing**

The Working Group on Voluntary and Cooperative Housing was established to facilitate the development of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector. Members of the group include representatives of the voluntary and co-operative sector, local authorities and the DoEHLG.

The DOEHLG directly fund the national support bodies to housing associations and Co-operatives which are the Irish Council for Social Housing and National Association of Building Co-operatives respectively.

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[26] Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Governmental Memorandum, Capital Funding Schemes for the Provision of Rental Accommodation by Approved Bodies (VHU:2/02), 2002, p10.
[27] Source, IBID, p11.

**Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH)**

ICSH was formed in 1982 by housing and hostel organisations in Ireland to act as a national representative, promotional, information, advisory and training federation in relation to non-profit and voluntary housing associations. ICSH is funded by the DoEHLG for its support work with member housing associations and ICSH does not directly build accommodation. It offers a range of services to members such as:

- advise on housing association formation, legal requirements, tax compliance, the planning process, capital funding schemes, housing management procedures, governance, financial planning and responsibilities of social housing landlords,
- Legal registration service to guide new housing associations through the legal processes of incorporating a housing association and a group insurance scheme,
- Three certificate courses which are accredited by the National College of Ireland and are mapped to the National Qualifications Framework through FETAC.

**National Association of Building Co-operatives (NABCo)**

NABCo was set up in 1973 by members of local cooperatives. NABCo is funded by the DoEHLG for its support work with the Cooperative Movement and also is an approved body in its own right, which enables it to build accommodation. The introduction of the funding schemes enabled NABCo to develop a network of rental housing co-operatives. It undertakes the following:

- *'represents the common interests of housing co-operatives in regard to public policies, legislation,*

- *seeks to expand the contribution of co-operative housing towards the relief of national housing needs,*

- *arranges access to building land, planning, financing and construction of new co-operative housing projects,*

- *provides information, advice, guidance, education and training about the formation of housing co-operatives,*

- *promotes proper management standards, provides support services and co-ordinates the organisation of the Co-operative Housing Movement.'[28]*

**6.2 Voluntary Housing Sector Initiatives Examined**

To inform the consultation process a number of case studies were undertaken with the voluntary housing sector across the country, in Northern Ireland and the UK. The information gathered was utilised to determine what functions, if any, a TVAA could have. Also, in the Irish context voluntary housing associations and networks views were sought on the value and contribution that a TVAA could make to the delivery of Traveller accommodation. These are detailed in section seven.

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[28] For further information visit www.nabco.ie

Three models were examined for the purposes of this study; Housing Cooperatives, Housing Associations and a Home Ownership Model. The following gives a brief description of each model:

### 6.2.1    Housing Cooperatives

Housing Co-operatives are a distinct form of not-for-profit mutual housing associations working to relieve housing needs for community benefit.  The members are the tenants of the housing services provided by their co-operatives. The Co-operative idea is based on the principles such as:
- Self Help,
- Common Need,
- Joint Effort,
- Working Together,
- Mutual Benefit.

Housing co-operatives operate under management committees or boards of directors elected from their members. They offer:

- security of tenure with subsidised income-related rents,
- housing for those member/tenants who are prepared to share responsibility for the general upkeep and care of housing estates or apartment blocks within the co-operative housing organisation system.

Applicants for membership must be registered on the local authority housing waiting lists and participate in the education and training programme for each new local housing co-operative. There are now over 20 rental housing co-operatives, generally ranging in size between 15 and 80 dwellings.

To increase its effectiveness, efficiency and share resources, the Co-operative Movement formed Area based Co-operative Housing Societies. These are networks of local housing cooperatives that have their own management committees and put forward representatives on to the Area based Housing Society. These Housing Societies may develop new projects for ownership or rental housing, provide housing management and maintenance services, and work in partnership with NABCo to expand the Co-operative Housing Movement in order to address housing needs.

**Key lessons:**

**Ethos:** A community development ethos informed by self help is the driving force behind the co-operative movement. The distinct difference between a Co-operative and the Housing Association model is that members are the tenants and the management committee are members with some people brought on with specialist skills. This ethos ensures a key interest in enhancing capacity of members as users of services through taking on and sharing responsibilities and decision making.

**Funding and Governance:**  NABCo are dependent on the DoEHLG for funding and because of the high amounts of public money involved in developing housing it is vital to have strong

governance and accountability systems in place. It is important to have good rent collection systems as rents are a key source of revenue. The new funding requirements are complex and it can be a difficult territory to navigate.

**Developing projects:** There is a considerable amount of bureaucracy involved in developing housing and it can take a long time to establish developments. For example, it can take 2-3 years minimum to finalise a project.

**Building member involvement:** Members are involved in the management of their own estates and housing officers are employed by local co-operatives to assist local management committees in all aspects of the management of the estate.

 A formal mediation model does not operate as the system in place is based on mutual respect which tenants buy into when the tenancy is signed.

### 6.2.2   Voluntary Housing Associations

Voluntary Housing Associations are independent non-profit making organisations that provide rented housing for people who cannot afford to buy their own homes or special groups, such as older people or homeless people.

Voluntary housing associations are formed to address a local housing need and many associations also offer non-housing services such as support, social activities and welfare advice. Many housing associations support the development of tenant committees whereby tenants can input in to the development of their estates/schemes.

In order to be accommodated by a housing association, a person must be registered on the local authority housing waiting list in their area.

Housing association tenants have the same rights as local authority tenants except housing association tenants do not have the right to buy their homes. Currently this issue is being examined by the DoEHLG to assess the scope for home ownership to be introduced.

The ICSH now represents over 300 affiliated housing associations and other voluntary organisations involved in housing or hostel services, providing accommodation of over 19,000 homes. The ICSH seeks to encourage and assist the development of a range of housing and related services which complements the role of the local housing authorities and meets the different and changing needs of various groups of the population such as the elderly, homeless, people with disabilities or families on low incomes.

**Clúid Housing Association**

Clúid was established in 1994. It is a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status, and is approved by the DoEHLG as a Housing Association. Its mission 'is to design, build and manage high quality social rented housing and facilitate the creation of homes and sustainable

communities for those in housing need'.[29] Clúid currently has 3,180 units in management and a further 525 on site. Its work includes:

- 'Providing housing for people with low incomes and housing for people with a particular need in addition to a housing need. This may include for example, elderly people or people with disabilities,
- management of its own stock,
- property management services for affordable housing owners,
- management of RAS and local authority stock, and
- management of special needs projects'.[30]

Clúid is managed by a team of 9 full-time staff who report to a voluntary board of directors. The directors bring expertise in a number of fields to the association including housing policy, housing association management, research, construction, law, finance & human resources. There are four offices located in Cork, Dublin, Sligo and Waterford and a total staff compliment of 79 people.

The association sees a significant role for itself in the following:

- *'working with housing authorities to fulfill their targets under their housing strategies and action plans and in assisting in the development of mixed tenure housing schemes,*
- *transfers of housing from local authorities to Clúid where part of an estate has deteriorated to a level where a new start is required,*
- *managing contracts from the local authorities to undertake property management and estate management services.'[31]*

**Key lessons:**

**Refining focus:** Over the years Clúid have refined their vision and focus. Key to their vision is providing high quality housing and a high quality management service. Central to this work is good governance and accountability for public money and to tenants.

Clúid do not provide community development supports any more as they made a conscious decision that they needed to be focused to deliver high quality housing services as this is their remit and expertise. Clúid refer tenants to existing community development organisations to support their tenant's involvement in local projects. Also, if tenants have support needs Clúid will refer those tenants to those agencies or organisations who have the expertise in that area.

**Streamlining structures:** The Board of Directors is professionally focused with the required skill set. Clúid have moved away from a local volunteer model in favor of a businesslike approach. The Board of Directors has specific expertise in housing and meetings are run in a business like fashion. The Board's key function is to protect the best interest of the company and guide the direction of the organisation. Clúid do not have tenants on the board of the organisation as there is no desire from tenants to be involved at this level. Also, tenant involvement is supported at estate level which focuses on good estate management and addressing housing issues.

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[29] www.cluid.ie
[30] www.cluid.ie
[31] www.cluid.ie

**Challenges in the set up phase:** The biggest challenge that Clúid faced in the early days was lack of finance. A Housing Association only starts to build up revenue through rental income and this comes only when the housing stock is built up. The first few years were difficult and required voluntary effort and commitment.

**Funding:** Clúid are now funded one hundred percent by the DoEHLG for building of schemes. They are not funding led and believe in providing what they can within existing funds. Their main income comes from rent from their tenants. They also raise revenue through managing affordable schemes.

**Management issues:** Ensuring sufficient resources for the repair programme is a key management issue. Rent collections are a critical revenue to ensure that repair and other management supports can be effectively provided. Clúid have low rent arrears as they deal with arrears issues quickly and provide any supports that are needed to tenants. Regular inspections of repairs are required as this prevents the properties deteriorating.

The key requirements sought from tenants of Clúid are the peaceful enjoyment of their home and respect for neighbours. Clúid's approach is partnership with tenants and promoting independence. To ensure they are managing effectively, Clúid, conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys and focus groups with tenants. They also encourage regular feedback from their estates through tenant liaison with Clúid's housing officers.

**Specific focus on Travellers:** Clúid carried out a group housing development of ten houses with a Traveller family in partnership with South Dublin County Council. The family approached Clúid independently and from this Clúid engaged with the council on their behalf. The county council secured the site and planning for the scheme as part of a Part V Development. The council owns the scheme and Clúid manage it. As it was a council development they took on the opposition issues so Clúid did not have to deal with this.

The development was a very positive experience as there was a high level of involvement and ownership by the family of the scheme. Clúid were committed to the development and to the high level of consultation that was engaged in. This resulted in a high level of input by the families into the design of the scheme. From Cluid's experience they recommend a high level of involvement of Travellers in the design and development of their homes. If this is achieved there is a greater likelihood that the scheme will meet their needs thus ensuring that they remain on the scheme.

The scheme is not integrated but is a 'stand alone' development at the request of the family. The Traveller families wanted to manage the scheme, once built, but when they realised what was involved in the management and maintenance, they requested that Clúid manage the scheme on their behalf.

**Respond!**

Respond! was established in 1982 and is Ireland's largest non-profit Housing Association. Respond! is a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status, and is approved by the DoEHLG as a Housing Association. Respond! are a volunteer led organisation with a Board of five volunteer directors, including one Executive Director. The board is supported by a Senior Management Team comprising a Managing Director, Company Treasurer, Head of Operations and Legal Manager.

Respond! currently employs more than 350 people across the organisation in a variety of departments. The staff manages all aspects of housing design, production, management and maintenance, as well as providing community development, childcare, family supports and other services to the community. Respond! have built more than 4000 homes nationwide and have a further 1,500 under construction. They provide homes for traditional families, lone-parent families, the elderly, the homeless and persons with a disability. In 2007, Respond! launched its Traveller accommodation and support policy to inform the development of their work with the Traveller community over the coming years.[32] They have also employed a support worker to resource this policy.

Respond! aims to:

- *'Establish and maintain vibrant, socially integrated communities rather than simply providing just shelter or accommodation,*
- *Advance education among residents of estates,*
- *Promote other charitable purposes beneficial to the community,*
- *Prevent and relieve hardship and distress amongst those who are homeless and amongst those in need who are living in adverse housing conditions'.[33]*

**Key lessons:**

**Board vision:** Respond! focus on the provision of homes but also on a range of community development programmes and support services. They have a significant reach and are committed to addressing issues with tenants on their estates at all levels through; the provision of community centres, community development officers who support the development of community enablers from their tenants who then lead and develop tenant groups, childcare centres on some sites and employment programmes.

**Management:** It was emphasised that rent collection is important to maintain a level of income that can be used to repair dwellings but also provide the range of services required to build sustainable communities.

Community involvement on their estates is central to their work. On most estates they have an estate officer and a community development officer to support tenants. To address any conflicts

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[32] Respond! Beyond the Starry Sky, Traveller Accommodation and Support Policy, 2006.
[33] www.respond.ie

that arise on the estate, they meet and work with families, examine the cases and solutions to the problems and address issues as they emerge. They do not have a mediation role and will enforce evictions in severe cases only, as a last resort to fulfil their duty of care to other residents.

**Traveller specific focus:** Respond! have developed a Traveller strategy and policy and approximately 50 Traveller families live in their general housing schemes.

Respond! recently undertook training on Traveller issues to inform their approach to the work with Travellers. It is their belief that a visionary approach should be adopted in the work with Travellers to ensure that their distinct cultural needs are provided for appropriately. For example, the lack of provision for horses for some Travellers on schemes will result in them not taking up the accommodation or not staying in the accommodation. Respond! are committed to finding solutions to the needs of Travellers that meet their cultural requirements.

Respond! have just completed a group housing scheme for six Traveller families in Kildare. The scheme is integrated into a larger development of social and private housing. The local authority handed the land and scheme over to Respond! to develop and manage. As the local authority secured the planning for the development in advance Respond! did not have to deal with planning objections. The funding for the Traveller development came from the Traveller accommodation budget within the DoEHLG.

The involvement of families in the planning and development of the design is critical and due to the families input the space allocated to each house was greater than would normally be provided. Working with a small group of families (already established group) contributes to the success and ease of transition for the families to the scheme. Respond! believe that the development of small schemes with Travellers, integrated with other housing is the way forward.

**Focus Ireland**

Established in 1985, Focus Ireland aims *'to advance the right of people-out-of-home to live in a place they call home through quality services, research, and advocacy.'[34]* Focus have recently developed a national brief and now operate in a number of counties in Ireland.

The objectives of Focus Ireland are to:

- *'respond to the needs of people out-of-home and those at risk of becoming homeless, through a range of appropriate high quality services*
- *provide emergency transitional and long-term accommodation for people out-of-home*
- *campaign and lobby for the rights of people out-of-home and the prevention of homelessness.'[35]*

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[34] www.focusireland.ie
[35] Ibid

Focus Ireland employ 286 people to provide the range of services and supports to address the stages of homelessness. Focus Ireland's Housing Association is an approved housing body addressing poor housing conditions and homelessness through the direct provision of supported housing. As part of their five year strategy the Association seeks to acquire 800 new homes by 2010.

**Key lessons:**

**Approach**: The work is rooted in a social justice and human rights approach. It advocates that a solution to a problem can always be found in any situation. This problem solving approach is key to their ethos.

**Value base:** Key elements of the success of their supported housing projects are:

- the determination to succeed,
- the value system upon which the work is based which is a non-profit, people first, ethos and
- a passion for people's right to a home in a sustainable setting.

**Policy and procedures**: It is important to put in place staff and policies first before tenants move into the accommodation. Where an organisation operates on a national basis ensuring that polices are clearly understood and localised so that the staff can pass these on to tenants is essential. For example, Focus Housing interview prospective tenants for vacant houses who have the right of appeal if he/she is not successful in securing the vacancy.

**Tenant involvement**: Building capacity of the tenants is a central aspect of the work. Supporting people to take ownership of their accommodation and input in to its management is the way forward and contributes to sustainability of accommodation.

**Integration:** It is advisable to use an integrated approach in developing the TVAA. This will involve drawing on a range of skills and bringing in experts to respond to needs as they arise. For example, academics, corporate people. Focus Ireland operate a businesslike approach to their work and for example, have a fundraising section to raise the finance needed to deliver on all their projects.

**Support structures:** There is a need to ensure that the support framework is in place to respond to tenant's needs. This involves knowing what the needs are and responding to these in-house or through working in partnership with other agencies and organisations.

**Traveller specific focus**: Focus Ireland managed the development of a group housing scheme with Travellers for Fingal County Council. This involved working with Travellers on all aspects of design of the site and in the subsequent management of the site. The county council owns the site and Focus was the housing management and support provider to the scheme. The site was designed and developed and managed successfully in the early days.

However, in the general area an issue of conflict arose which 'spilled over' into the scheme and interfered with the effective running of the scheme. The conflict resulted in many of the families moving out of their accommodation and Focus requesting that the council take back the management of the scheme. The conditions for all involved, due to the conflict, were untenable.

For Focus it highlighted the need to know the local politics in order to be able to play an effective preventative role. The importance of not ghettoising Travellers into the one area was also highlighted as this area has a high concentration of Travellers in a number of schemes and on the roadside.

In terms of the successful elements of the scheme the full involvement of tenants in all aspects of management of their accommodation and clear allocation policies and procedures are crucial. For example, tenants were consulted on who should fill a vacancy and their views taken on board. The final decision in the case of this scheme, rested with the local authority as they allocated accommodation in accordance with their scheme of letting priorities. Also, drawing on the leadership within the community and supporting their capacity to make their own decisions regarding the management of their accommodation works well. For example, establishing community consent regarding a range of management issues, including, how to deal with anti-social behaviour worked effectively on the scheme.

Regarding the design of Traveller accommodation testing out design and integrating cultural rituals onto the design brief is an important approach in working with Travellers.

### 6.2.3   Home Ownership Model: Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is an international, not for profit, nondenominational Christian housing organisation. Habitat set up in Ireland five years ago due to the fact that 50,000 Irish people are on the housing list. It seeks to eliminate housing poverty and provide a 'hand up' to families through promoting home ownership and independence. Habitat works locally in communities around the world to select and support homeowners, organise volunteers and coordinate house building.

Habitat is able to make housing affordable to low-income families because:

- *'Houses are sold through a no-profit mortgage,*
- *Individuals, corporations, faith groups and others provide vital financial support,*
- *Homeowners and volunteers build under trained supervision.'*[36]

Homeowners are selected based on their need for housing, their ability to repay a mortgage and their willingness to work in partnership with Habitat. Habitat requires prospective homeowners to commit their time to assisting Habitat in building their home. This is called 'sweat equity' and whatever skill you have to offer is valued and utlised. Trained staff supervise Habitat house construction and educate volunteers and partner families.

Habitat would welcome the opportunity to work with Travellers in the future on such schemes.

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[36] www.habitatireland.ie

**Key lessons:**

**Values:** Habitat for Humanity is driven by its values to promote independence and address housing poverty. It seeks to do this through promotion of a home ownership model and through involvement of prospective home owners in the design and development of their house.

Habitat works to ensure that it is creating independence for people in the long term which cuts out management costs.

**Supporting success:** Habitat provides supports as required on an ongoing basis over the life of the mortgage. If a home owner is having difficulty meeting mortgage payments, Habitat will assist with this and support the person to overcome any difficulties.

**Innovative approach:** Habitat builds homes appropriate to the local environment utilising local materials and the skills of all those involved in the process.

### 6.2.4    Housing Associations in Northern Ireland and the UK

**Mainstream Housing Associations:**

**North & West Housing LTD**

North & West Housing LTD operates in the North and South of Ireland and is registered with the Department for Social Development in the North and the DoEHLG in the South.

North & West were set up in 1965 and in 1977 registered as a housing association. In the 1990s, due to government grant aid, their organisation and housing developments have grown significantly.

North & West provide a range of housing types and support services to meet housing needs identified in those local communities within which it operates. The accommodation and services include:

- General needs accommodation for families and single people,
- Purpose built accommodation for the elderly,
- Supported housing for people with disabilities including those with mental health difficulties, learning disabilities and those who are physically disabled,
- Support services for vulnerable groups which include luncheon club facilities, transportation services and domiciliary support,
- Resource centres under the management of local communities.

**Key lessons:**

**Neighbour Charter:** To prepare the ground work for a greater ethnic mix in the future and to ensure integration is created North & West are developing a neighbourhood charter that

promotes equality, respect and integration within its housing projects. All tenants will be asked to sign up to the charter as part of their tenancies.

**Challenges:** Key challenges faced by North & West at their early stage of development were; establishing their governance systems; lack of finance and the employment of the CEO at the right time for the development of the organisation proved to be a critical factor.

**Holistic approach**: They employ a holistic approach that focuses on providing quality homes but also seeks to build a community. To achieve this they provide a 'floating support service' to new tenants who need support and leave when this is no longer required. If they cannot directly provide they seek support from an outside service. They also employ tenant participation workers who assist communities to establish their own tenancy groups and apply for funding to develop their activities.

**Traveller specific focus:** North & West developed a 10 group housing scheme with Travellers in Derry which opened in the summer of 2008. They are currently developing a one group housing scheme in Belfast with mixed family groups which will accommodate 16 families.

The development in Derry was a very positive experience with a high level of ownership created with the family. This was achieved as North & West were committed to a high level of consultation and resulting input by families into the design of the scheme. Intensive supports were provided to Travellers to ensure their full participation in the design and development of the group housing scheme. In the initial stages two dedicated staff was made available at all times to address any issues. Also, the CEO was very involved at design stage. They believe this is the appropriate approach to working with Travellers and it has been successfully applied. The scheme is not integrated but is a stand alone on the request of the family.

The housing association undertook training on Traveller issues, provided by the Traveller group, which informed their communication with Travellers. The scheme design put a significant emphasis on cultural needs and as a result provides a lot of space for caravan and work vehicles which Travellers are very satisfied with.

The scheme is self managed with residents managing the day to day relationships on site. North and West provide back up to deal with repairs or any other issues as requested by the residents.


**Rooftop Housing Group**

Rooftop are a community based not for profit housing group providing 5,155 affordable homes and services primarily to people living in towns and villages throughout the Midlands. They were established in 1994 when Wychavon District Council transferred 4020 homes to their ownership. They work primarily in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire where there is a high demand for all types of housing and insufficient supply. Building more affordable homes in the area is a priority. They plan to have over 6150 homes by 2013.

Their relationship with their residents underpins everything they do. Rooftop work with customer panels to make sure that a better environment for all their customers is created. Their key objectives are:

- Services: To develop, deliver and sustain excellent services to all their customers.
- Community needs: Working with partners to contribute toward the creation of cohesive and inclusive communities; developing new build and refurbishment schemes that respond to housing needs identified by national and regional strategies that are environmentally sustainable.
- Making best use of resources: To make best use of their financial and human resources to support and deliver excellent services and homes for customers and the community.[37]

**Key lessons:**

**Traveller specific focus:** The primary reason that Rooftop began to engage with Travellers is that they were receiving complaints about Traveller tenants in their general housing stock. On investigation they discovered that the majority of these complaints were based on and fuelled by prejudice and myth.

Rooftop are redeveloping a halting site with the Local Authority of 15 pitches (Bronsgrove Road) and building 4 pitches beside it that are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. This will enable the needs of people with disabilities and older people on the existing site to be met.

Research was conducted into Travellers needs which identified that certain groups wanted to live close together and wanted small manageable 12-14 bay halting sites. The need for more sites in the future in sensible and suitable locations was identified as a critical factor in advancing this issue.

Travellers were supported to engage in the redevelopment through daily meetings or visits to ensure Travellers views were heard. This specifically involved Rooftop through its staff:
- Building the confidence of tenants through direct engagement,
- Supporting tenants to lay out their expectations clearly,
- Providing support,
- Conducting on-going consultation and reviews of the process.

A tenant's group will be developed for the site. Two representatives from this group will be invited to join a customer panel which includes tenants from a number of Rooftop's schemes. This will promote integration and engagement of tenants.

There will be an office on the halting site for key services that Travellers required. The services will liaise with Travellers at the office. An agreement has been reached with services and the local authority to provide contact hours at the office. Networking played a significant part in securing these supports and intensive resources were committed to achieve this.

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[37] For more information about Rooftop visit www.rooftopgroup.org

A specific letting policy for the site is being developed to respond to needs. This is to ensure that future lettings add to the sustainability of the scheme. In order to draw up the lettings policy a profile of the tenants' needs is developed based on:

- o how many young people are on the site,
- o location of the schools they are attending,
- o tenants views on good lettings policy,
- o support needs,
- o health needs.

This policy is used in a positive way to ensure that placement of tenants contributes to the cohesiveness of the scheme and that the right type of supports are available e.g. age, health, and disability needs.

Rooftop brings partners together to support the development of the site as the need to address prejudice from a community perspective is prevalent.

**Ethnic Minority Housing Association: Innisfree Housing Association**

Innisfree was first registered as a housing association in 1985. It grew from the campaigning zeal of a small group of individuals who were driven to do something about the poor health and housing conditions of the local Irish community in Brent. Innisfree has grown substantially and now owns over 400 homes mainly in North & West London and they have a development pipeline of another 100 properties.[38] They provide the following:

- o Family homes,
- o Scheme for Irish Elders and
- o Supported housing for vulnerable single people.

The Irish roots of the organisation are also reflected in the make-up of the staff team, the Board of Management and its committees. The main requirements for Board membership are specific knowledge and understanding of Irish people and commitment.

**Key lessons:**

**Importance of community involvement at all levels:** Innisfree is Irish-led and to achieve this the Irish community is involved in all levels of the organisation. For example, 75% of the board is Irish and 90% of all of its tenants are Irish.

**Gathering tenant's view of performance:** Tenants' views of the performance of Innisfree are tested through surveys and other means on a regular basis and the results of these are published.

**Overcoming prejudice**: One of the key barriers faced by Innisfree is the level of hostility towards the Irish community. Innisfree overcome this challenge through undertaking independent evidence based research that demonstrates the diverse needs in the community.

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[38] For more information about Innisfree visit www.innisfree.org.uk

**Management practice:** Putting in place good management systems is critical. Having such systems in place ensures a low turnover of tenants and encourages and supports tenants to get involved.

**Management Company: Hackney Homes**

Hackney Homes was launched in April 2006 and is responsible for managing council homes in Hackney. This includes managing council housing, collecting council housing rental, repairing and maintaining council homes. Hackney Homes are a not-for-profit organisation and focus on providing services to the community. Their mission is *'to achieve balanced, sustainable communities and neighbourhoods, which celebrate their diversity and share in London's growing prosperity, to enable a good quality of life for all.'*[39]

The organisation is an arm's length management company (ALMO) – a model that has been adopted by a number of other local authorities to improve housing and service to the community. They have both tenant and community representatives on their Board and have a stated commitment to working with the community and ensuring this filters through all their work.

Hackney Homes employ a Traveller Service Development Officer who is responsible for overseeing all consultation on major developments concerning Travellers. Hackney Homes managed two sites at Waterden Crescent which accommodated 20 families. These sites were relocated to three smaller sites due to the development of the Olympic Development Park. Hackney Homes, the London Development Agency, the Council's Planning department, the London Gypsy and Traveller Unit and the families at Waterden engaged in a consultation process to ensure the relocations happened as smoothly as possible. The three smaller sites have been developed and are a mix of pitches/bays and bungalows.

**Key lessons:**

**Focus on project delivery:** Hackney Homes established an advisory group to the project with all key stakeholders that sets targets and outcomes for all aspects of delivery.

**Involving the community:** Travellers were centrally involved in the design and development of the units. Intensive work was carried out to support their transition from Waterden to the new sites. Hackney Homes met with Travellers regularly in the initial phase and undertook the following:
- o Provided a checklist of options on design and fit out which facilitated the consultation process and set parameters about what was possible to negotiate. The main approach was to let the families themselves decide on design elements within the parameters set and at all times ensuring fairness and equity,
- o Families were also facilitated to visit the sites during construction and their inputs taken on board at all stages,

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[39] www.hackneyhome.org.uk

- A key driver is a commitment to giving people what they want and do the best job possible using a community development approach,
- The Service Development Workers engaged with the family every day as the development progressed. This was essential to ensure good communication at all stages of the project,
- Developing one to one relationships with Travellers enabled Hackney Homes to become aware quickly of the support needs. A care and support plan was developed with each family which included aspects such as changing schools, budgeting and developing new links with services. Also, a floating support service is provided to assist families in the transition phase. Two and half posts are in situ, with one worker to every ten families offering five hours a week to each family.

**Training:**   The Irish Traveller Movement UK was commissioned to carry out training to all Departments at Hackney Homes to inform communication and development work with Travellers.

**Building relationships:** Hackney Homes worked with the local community to bridge the gap and deal with opposition. This involved meeting with a range of groups such as parish councils and inviting people on to the developments to celebrate when they were finalised.

**Management issues:** Management issues are addressed quickly as they arise. Small sites are easier to manage and now tenants have a direct telephone line where they can report repair issues to Hackney Homes.

Traveller units are let on a points system through the council scheme of letting priorities. If a vacancy arises it will be let from the council's housing list. Hackney Homes want to develop a better system to ensure the sustainability of the accommodation. However, they used to operate a local letting agreement for Traveller accommodation that enabled tenants to have a say in how vacancies are allocated but this did not work as it created conflict between families. This is an area they will be seeking to address in the future.

## 6.3    Key learning from the case studies

The following outlines the overall key learning from the case studies.

**Traveller involvement in the development of their own accommodation**

The central involvement of Travellers in the development of their own accommodation is a key recommendation made across all of the case studies. The majority of voluntary housing groups interviewed had undertaken work with Travellers. All of them has a positive experience of working with Travellers and believed that the essential reason for this was that they committed resources to work with Travellers intensively in the development of the schemes. They made staff available at all stages to ensure the inclusion of Travellers and adapted to meet Traveller requirements.

**Involvement of tenants on the management boards**

A number of the voluntary housing groups include the community/tenants at all levels of the organisation, including at management level.  These organisations are built on the ethos of involvement of the community and tenant participation. A critical part to creating independent living and ensuring that the work is focused on the community is the involvement of the target community in all levels of their organisations. For example, 75 percent of the board membership of the Innisfree Housing Association is drawn from the Irish community. Likewise the Cooperative Movement creates a range of opportunities for the membership to be involved in the running of their schemes and inputting into the direction of the Movement. This is part of their strategy to promote ownership and independence.

Some groups have moved away from this approach in favour of a more specialised skillset on their boards. The reason for the latter was that the business of building homes, securing funding, lands etc requires a specialised skillset and this was the type of expertise they needed to advance their work. They believe that the more meaningful ways of including tenants is at estate level.

**Tenant participation and community development**

All of the voluntary housing sector organisations interviewed emphasised the importance of tenant participation and the need for resources to be allocated to support this work. It was acknowledged that tenants are best placed to provide the insights to their needs and design the strategies, services and responses that could effectively meet these needs.

Some of the organisations identified that the focus on tenant participation, in its truest sense, serves to ensure that the management structures and other decision-making processes worked to create a sense of ownership by tenants. This central involvement and participation of the tenants is a critical factor in creating ownership of the accommodation which creates a better environment and enhances the sustainability of schemes.

Some organisations have community development strategies built in as part of their work and see their brief as broader in terms of supporting the community to engage in the wider society. In an Irish context Respond! is particularly notable in this regard. They seek to address a range of issues affecting the communities in which they work. For example, Respond! has developed community participation and mobilising strategies and put in place childcare and community facilities to support the community in tackling employment issues.

Some organisations have opted out of developing community development strategies as they identified that this would be beyond their brief and expertise. Also, overlap with other groups motivated them to refocus their resources on housing and housing management. They adopt a partnership approach with other groups who are implementing community development strategies.

**Provision of support services**

All of the organisations highlighted the need to provide a range of support services to meet the needs of tenants. The focus is on a holistic approach that addresses the needs of tenants. Having an effective range of services or access to these is importance to addressing any issues emerging for tenants but also for their neighbours and creates an environment whereby the sustainability of the accommodation is greatly enhanced.

Most organisations provide a 'floating support service' whereby support is provided when needed to tenants at any stage in their tenancy and removed once it is no longer needed. If there are supports that cannot be provided through the housing association, due to lack of expertise, they will source these services from other organisations.

In the context where Travellers were being moved from one location to another for the development of an accommodation scheme, intensive supports were provided to ensure that this transition was a positive experience. One group developed individual support plans with each family, provided five hours per week contact time for each family to ensure all their needs were met such as money matters, changing schools and access to other services.

**Management of voluntary accommodation**

Key to the success of effective management of accommodation is clear policies and procedures, clarity with tenants on their rights and responsibilities, the rights and responsibilities of the housing association and acting quickly to address issues as they emerge. Voluntary Housing Associations identified that they could manage effectively as they are close to the community and have a housing officer linking with tenants on their schemes on a daily basis.

In the case of the Co-operative Movement they support their tenants to set up their own management committees and get involved actively in the maintenance and management of the schemes. This includes making key decisions about the development of the housing schemes and the responses required to meet the needs of tenants.

All of the organisations highlighted that effective rent collection is a key factor in ensuring the sustainability of the schemes and as such collections ensure that repairs and other management supports that are required can be delivered. All of the organisations are dependent on this source of income. In one of the eleven organisations interviewed they had allowed a considerable amount of rent to accrue in one of their schemes but steps had been taken to redress this through the employment of rent collection officers. Responding holistically and quickly to rent arrear cases is considered best practice as this approach does not allow for large sums to be built up which creates added pressure for all parties.

In all of the cases severe anti-social behaviour which led to eviction occurs in a small number of cases. This is rare and incidents of anti-social behaviour are dealt with by the appointed housing officers. The housing officers will encourage tenants to address issues as they arise and will not involve themselves in minor matters.  In more serious cases the housing associations will

intervene, provide informal mediation and address the situation. If the behaviour becomes more serious and requires court proceeding they will follow procedure in this regard. The sector believes dealing with issues early and providing the supports that are required, act as preventative measures so that cases of severe anti-social behaviour are rare.

**Key lessons in relation to the development of Traveller accommodation are:**

- Intensive work with Travellers is required to develop the accommodation design, build relationships of trust with Travellers and 'get to know the community'. Resources need to be committed to achieve this.
- A holistic approach should be applied based on values that commit to doing the best job possible and putting the needs of Travellers first.
- Expectations and boundaries regarding the level of resources available and design issues should be determined and agreed from the outset.
- Specific programmes are required to support transition to new accommodation where Travellers are moving to a new area or from the roadside in to accommodation.
- Clear and realistic timeframes are required and letting Travellers know what is involved and the time it takes to advance a development.
- Consultation with Travellers on the management and letting agreements and ensuring that tenants are clear on these agreements will contribute to successful management of accommodation.
- All management problems can be addressed with good relationships, being close to the community and ensuring that issues are addressed quickly.
- Tenant participation initiatives are important to ensure Travellers have a voice.
- Traveller led can be achieved through ensuring Travellers are involved in all levels of the organisation and at all stages of the developments in a paid and voluntary capacity.
- It is important to have a support dimension to the work which can provide specific supports to tenants as needed and link tenants with local services e.g. the floating service model
- To be credible and reflect the real needs and issues of Travellers it is necessary to carry out evidence based work through conducting independent research to make the ongoing case for resources.

The information gathered from the fieldwork stage was presented to the consultation process with the Traveller sector to inform their thinking regarding the type of model and functions a voluntary accommodation association could undertake in a Traveller context, if they deemed that the establishment of a TVAA was a feasible option.

## 7.   Study Findings

There was a high level of consensus from all stakeholders that the setting up of a TVAA was both needed and a welcome development as a complementary measure to bring innovation and new thinking to the design and provision of Traveller accommodation. The majority of barriers to the establishment of a TVAA were identified by Travellers and Traveller organisations. Whilst other stakeholders, the local authorities and all housing associations, envisaged barriers being experienced by a TVAA, they were confident that these could be overcome with a TVAA that is well structured and has clear policies and procedures in place.

The following provides details of the key study findings from a Traveller and Traveller organisational perspective, from a local authority perspective and from the Voluntary Housing Sector perspective.

### 7.1   Traveller perspective

### 7.1.1   Reaction to the fieldwork

The information gleaned from the fieldwork phase was fed into the consultation process with the Traveller sector. The key reaction to the information presented was to take on board the good practice elements from the models presented but not to limit a TVAA to one type of model. It was agreed that 'one cap will not fit all' as the Traveller community is a diverse grouping with a diverse set of needs.

It was recommended to draw on all of the models in shaping a TVAA. For example, the model used by Habitat for Humanity should be utilised for the benefit of Travellers interested in home ownership and in the building of Traveller accommodation. This can be achieved through working closely with Habitat to meet Travellers' needs in this category. Likewise it was acknowledged whilst some Travellers would buy into a Co-operative model this would not be attractive to all groups. Working with NABCO and supporting Travellers to access this model was deemed to be the appropriate approach in utilising this model.

The overriding factors to inform the model identified were to ensure that Travellers are actively involved and lead up a TVAA and work strategically and utilise other models in existence for the benefit of Travellers. These were considered to be the most significant factors to be applied to the TVAA model.

### 7.1.2   Rationale for a TVAA

**Experience and expertise:** It was highlighted that it is an opportune time to establish a TVAA. As Travellers and Traveller organisations have been engaging in the National Traveller Accommodation Strategy for ten years, this has enabled this sector to develop a range of expertise and experience that could inform the development of a TVAA.

**Partnership:** The emphasis on partnership and working closely with all bodies who have a responsibility for Traveller accommodation was emphasised as paramount throughout the process. It is envisaged that a TVAA will be a small part of the overall picture whose role will be to complement existing provision and not a panacea to deal with all Traveller accommodation issues. It was highlighted that a TVAA should work from an integrated partnership approach and develop new relationships with the voluntary housing sector and local authorities in pursuing the delivery of Traveller accommodation.

**Innovation:** It was identified that a TVAA could have a significant leverage effect in that it could led the way in innovation and best practice in the design, development, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation that would encourage others to follow.

**Adding value:** What added valued will a TVAA bring to the voluntary housing sector if mainstream housing associations are now willing to provide Traveller accommodation? While existing housing associations who participated in the study have recently provided group housing schemes to three Traveller families in the South and North of Ireland, this was a new development and did not necessarily mean they were in a position to provide the full range of Traveller accommodation to meet a range of needs.

In addition, the significant way in which a TVAA adds value is that it will be Traveller-led which will ensure that Traveller groups and Travellers are central in seeking solutions to Traveller accommodation issues. The uniqueness and added value of this model was acknowledged given the level of ownership that such an approach will create.

**Traveller participatio**n: A key issue is that the level of frustration amongst Travellers is high as they articulated that the delivery of Traveller accommodation has not been progressed at a rate that would have been expected at this stage. A stark feature of this frustration is the lack of voice that Traveller feel they have in dealing with local authorities. Every focus group identified that Travellers 'having a real say' and being able to build a meaningful relationship with an accommodation provider is a central factor for the rationale for the development of a TVAA.

**Promoting culturally appropriate provision:** There is a huge fear that culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation is on the verge of being phased out as reflected in many of the draft Traveller Accommodation Programmes. Many of the new programmes reflect a preference for standard housing in local authority estates and the private rented sector. Travellers and Traveller groups identified a number of reasons for this trend as follows:
- Poor examples of halting site provision in existence leading to Travellers not opting for that type of accommodation,
- Poor choice provided by local authorities,
- Many Travellers believe that Traveller specific accommodation will never actually be built in a realisable timeframe, therefore accepting the offer of a house is the only realistic option,
- Poor management of  halting sites making them unattractive places to live,
- Increasing importance of compatibility among Travellers so opting for standard houses on their own,
- Poor options to access caravans for long term living,

- Increased powers to move Travellers under the trespass legislation.

All those who participated in the focus groups identified that the number of Travellers identified in the Traveller Accommodation Programmes as being in need of accommodation is grossly underestimated. This was evidenced as a result of their participation in the National All Ireland Traveller Health Study. Many local Travellers were peer researchers for the study and see a significant discrepancy between the figures they gathered of the numbers of Travellers in their respective areas and the numbers represented within the Traveller Accommodation Programmes. A needs analysis is required to assess the level of Traveller voluntary accommodation that is needed. Such information will be vital to the development of the work of a TVAA. This work will ensure that the demand from Travellers for voluntary accommodation reflects the real needs.

Overall the development of a TVAA was welcomed by all those who participated in the process. It was highlighted that a TVAA will provide more accommodation options to Travellers, employment opportunities to Travellers and increase the opportunities for Travellers voice to have a real impact in Traveller accommodation developments.

### 7.1.3   Benefits of a TVAA

**The main benefits of a TVAA were identified as follows:**

**Traveller-led model:**   A TVAA will be Traveller led thus creating a mechanism where Travellers can be fully involved in the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation that meets their needs. A TVAA will be able, over time, to contribute to addressing Traveller accommodation needs in an integrated way and create more choice for Travellers in where and how they live. For example, the whole area of Travellers self managing their own accommodation on behalf of the TVAA was recommended as a model that could be developed and implemented.

The development of the TVAA will cultivate and bring forward Traveller involvement at all levels which will be key to creating ownership and trust with the community. As one of the functions of the TVAA will be to create a Traveller led structure, resources will be required and set aside at all times to achieve this. As a result real collaboration and the employment of Travellers can be achieved within the development of the TVAA and its work.

**Prejudice free, Traveller- focused service:**   It was identified that the high level of prejudice and racism that exists towards Travellers both within the system and in the boarder community is a key barrier to the provision of Traveller accommodation. In this context, a TVAA would be prejudice free so this immediate barrier would not be present. Also, it would have a strong analysis and commitment to Traveller issues which would ensure it was well placed to address prejudice and racism in a strategic way.

Travellers want an accommodation service that respects their culture, listens to them and has a commitment to address their needs in a culturally appropriate way. The success of the TVAA will be its ability to build trust with the community which will be measured by both the quality of the

relationships which it develops with Travellers but also its capacity to delivery on the commitments entered into.

**Innovation and best practice:** A TVAA's sole focus will be the development of Traveller accommodation and as such it will be in a position to develop models of innovation and best practice in the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation that would encourage others to provide it effectively. It was recognised that a TVAA could undertake refurbishment of existing Traveller accommodation, manage existing accommodation and could take over vacant properties and adapt these to meet Travellers needs. Building a range of accommodation that is innovative, energy efficient, sustainable, provides green areas and is child centred should be the focus of a TVAA in order to add value.

It was emphasised that a TVAA will have a unique opportunity to be creative and imaginative in developing new concepts around Traveller accommodation design.

**Development of new relationships:** The TVAA's role as a provider of accommodation would enable it to form and develop new working relationships with the local authorities and housing associations and led the way in the provision and management of high quality, sustainable Traveller accommodation. In contrast, it has not been always possible for Traveller organisations to develop effective working relationships with the local authority as their role is to lobby and campaign for better Traveller accommodation provision. As a result of this role they sometimes come into conflict with local authorities which invariably places strains on the relationships.

It was recognised that the TVAA would ultimately complement the role of ITM. The ITM is committed to lobbying and supporting Traveller organisations to bring about change in the Traveller accommodation situation and the TVAA would be committed to providing Traveller accommodation. Where the TVAA experiences blockages in delivery, ITM can lobby for changes in this area.

### 7.1.4   Barriers for a TVAA

Traveller and Traveller organisations presented the most barriers to the development of a TVAA throughout the consultation process. However, they also provided a considerable amount of solutions to addressing these barriers. Whilst all other agencies and bodies envisaged that a TVAA would experience a number of barriers they were not as deeply felt and they were all confident that these could be overcome with proper systems, structures and strategies in place.

The following are the key barriers identified by Travellers and Traveller organisations:

**Poor relationships:** The relationship between the TVAA and local authorities is a key factor that will determine the success of a TVAA in delivering Traveller accommodation. Concern was expressed regarding the willingness of local authorities to work with a TVAA due to prejudice and lack of a commitment to the delivery of Traveller specific accommodation.

**Undermining the role of Traveller organisations:** In cases where the relationship between a local authority and a Traveller organisation is strained, the local authority could dismiss the role of the Traveller organisation and opt to deal with the TVAA instead, thus retaining its Traveller involvement element without dealing with the issues present.  This scenario would seriously undermine the position of the Traveller organisation.

**Land, funding and planning:** As a TVAA would be dependent on the local authority for funding, land, and support for planning permission, Traveller and Traveller organisations were sceptical as to how a TVAA could deliver in practice. In some local areas, local authorities had already failed to deliver fully on the TAPs and factors such as lack of availability of land, local opposition and funding are frequently quoted as reasons why delivery cannot be achieved. In this context there are serious questions as to how a TVAA could overcome these barriers where the local authority has failed to do so.

**Prejudice:** A fear raised by all those who participated was the level of opposition to Traveller accommodation that can, despite safeguards, be evident within the planning system. As such a TVAA will need to establish its track record and show itself to be a trusted organisation in order to address prejudice to Traveller developments at community level.

**Avoiding Traveller accommodation responsibilities:** A common concern expressed was that a TVAA could provide an excuse to let other agencies 'of the hook'. The responsibility for Traveller accommodation being pushed on to the TVAA without proper supports and resources was envisaged as a key problem for a TVAA. The likely outcome of such a scenario is that the TVAA would be set up to fail and as a result would be open to severe criticism.

**Management of Traveller accommodation**: A range of concerns were raised in relation to the management of Traveller accommodation as follows:

- How would vacancies that arise on a Traveller accommodation scheme be managed?

- As the TVAA needs to address management issues how would a TVAA deal with difficult anti-social behaviour and what would be the implications of this for Travellers?

- Creating Traveller ownership with regards to a scheme can be negative if policies are not clear. For example, tenants believing it is 'their halting site' can act as a block to others occupying the site,

- Dependency has been created among some Travellers where bad practices such as non payment of rent have been allowed to persist,

- How can compatibility between family groups be taken in to account in the management of Traveller accommodation without giving certain families 'a license' to keep other people out of accommodation?

- Developing Traveller-led strategies as to how people can live together is key to ensuring that compatibility is not used as a barrier to developments,

- Dominant tenants making letting decisions does not led to fairness,

- Most families want to live in extended family groups or with families that they have a relationship with but how do you support sustainability of these relationships on Traveller accommodation as relationships are not static over time,

- How can you deal sensitively with internal conflict?

As reflected above, there were diverse views and unresolved questions on Traveller accommodation management issues. Some participants identified that Traveller tenants should have a say in how accommodation was allocated beside them whilst others articulated that this was inappropriate. For example, if a person does not get allocated accommodation where Traveller tenants have a sat in allocation, this could create conflict.

There is a need for more discussion on these issues with a view to developing a workable consensus. Likewise the whole issue of relationships is a complex one and certainly one approach will not address all issues. However, all participants agreed that a TVAA could develop responsive and sensitive management structures backed up by appropriate polices that could address issues effectively. More consultation work is required to develop an effective response to this.

**Lack of a right to buy:** The lack of the right to buy inherent within the social housing scheme was raised as a barrier for Travellers. However, in some areas this was not raised as an issue as Traveller felt other Travellers do not have aspirations to buy. The need to provide a range of options for Travellers in different circumstances was highlighted otherwise the use of a TVAA would be not attractive for some Travellers.

**Nomadic provision**: The delivery of transient accommodation was identified as problematic. Firstly, most local authorities have stated they will not be addressing this at local level. Two of the local authorities interviewed stated that Travellers themselves do not want transient sites in their areas. However, the discussions held through this consultation process shed light on this. Many Travellers who participated in the focus groups expressed a concern when asked about the role of a TVAA in delivering transient sites. Transient sites for Travellers conjures up images of large encampments located on the edge of town, poorly serviced, poorly managed which end up creating conflict in local areas. However, when the question was rephrased and Travellers asked if a TVAA could have a role in delivering 'pull in pull out' areas all over the country, the view shifted and there was a significant interest in recommending that the TVAA explore this option to provide for nomadism.

**Creating expectations**: There was a significant anxiety that the development of a TVAA would create unrealistic expectations among Travellers about what can actually be provided. Also, the question was posed that given that Traveller accommodation needs are significant, how would a TVAA select who it should work with first?

**Inadequate Local TAPs:** To be eligible for funding a TVAA would have to work off the local authority housing and accommodation lists. It was identified that working off the TAPs is problematic as there are significant questions as to whether such programmes meet families' needs for the following reasons:

- Numbers are underestimated in the new TAPs,

- The evident shift in Travellers moving to standard housing and private rented is not in all cases an informed and free choice. The movement is based on no other realistic options being presented,

- Poor management of halting sites informing Travellers options,

- Traveller specific accommodation not being presented as an option that can be delivered in a reasonable timeframe,

- Culturally appropriate accommodation is being phased out as many schemes do not allow for a touring caravan or economic space,

- Private rented is being pushed as an interim measure but in the longer term it is the costly option.

**Cost of Traveller accommodation**: The issue of the cost of Traveller accommodation was raised and the need to be realistic about what can be achieved in the context of ensuring value for money. It was asserted that Traveller accommodation costs more to build, which seemed to be a shared perception amongst those who participated in the consultation process. However, why Traveller accommodation should cost more than an equivalent standard unit of housing was queried as the level of quality is not always assured for the higher level of unit cost of Traveller accommodation.

It was recommended that the unit cost for a halting site and group housing be broken down and compared with standard housing. This would enable an assessment of the real cost of Traveller accommodation to be determined. There are concerns that if the cost of Traveller accommodation is increasing, value for money could be used as a reason for not providing Traveller accommodation in the future.

### 7.1.5   Addressing the Barriers

The following provides a range of solutions to address the identified barriers:

**Work with willing local authorities:** A TVAA should work with local authorities who are willing to engage with a TVAA and have a high demand for Traveller accommodation as a strategic starting point. Once the TVAA demonstrates that is can deliver, other local authorities will come on board.

**National Government support:** While a TVAA will have commitment and will in seeking to address the key barriers to Traveller accommodation, it will not have sufficient power in its own right to overcome the difficulties that invariably arise in building Traveller accommodation. As such, the support of National government will be required in addressing difficulties, particularly where problems cannot be addressed at local level.

In the initial pilot phase, a TVAA could consider working on delivering a scheme where the local authority secured the land and planning for Traveller accommodation and handed over the development and management of the scheme to a TVAA. This will alleviate any difficulties and enable a TVAA to build up its expertise in the first instance.

**Addressing unrealistic expectations**: The use of a community development approach to the work of a TVAA will ensure that strong relationships of trust are built with Travellers. One of the key elements of a community development approach is starting where people are at and working through a process to reach agreed solutions to the issues identified. Clear and realistic expectations at the outset and ongoing communication were identified as critical elements that will ensure the success of a project.

A TVAA should communicate effectively and clearly its role in relation to Traveller accommodation to Travellers and more broadly. This will ensure unrealistic expectations are not raised. For example, the role of a TVAA is not to pursue the delivery of all Traveller accommodation but rather to demonstrate good practice and innovation and thus encourage others to deliver in conjunction with it.

**Developing strategic partnerships**: One of the key elements that will contribute to the success of the TVAA is its ability to develop effective and strategic partnerships with a range of bodies. Travellers envisage that a TVAA will work closely with the voluntary housing sector and local authorities to support the delivery of Traveller accommodation. It was anticipated that once a TVAA works in an integrated way it would mitigate the risk of becoming isolated.

**Risk Mitigation**: It was recognised that a TVAA must start small and build its track record. It should focus in the early stages on developing pilot Traveller accommodation schemes. Part of the set up phase of a TVAA should focus on developing criteria for the selection of the pilot areas. It was identified also that this would assist in managing any unrealistic expectations, if Travellers are involved in setting the criteria for selection of pilot areas.

**Identifying needs:** A TVAA should carry out a needs analysis for voluntary housing schemes with Travellers in each local authority area in the longer term. It was acknowledged that while the TAPs have just been developed the may not be sufficient to work off in any event. For example, some TAPs set out a clear role for the voluntary housing sector but not all programmes carry this detail. In conjunction with the DoEHLG, Housing Associations and local authorities, a TVAA should map out Traveller voluntary accommodation needs in the longer term.

**Addressing management issues:** Further thinking and discussion is required to develop a workable consensus on management issues including addressing conflicts as they arise. It is important that a TVAA has clear management policies and procedures in place and that this work is developed in conjunction with the Traveller community.

In the set up phase of the TVAA a consultation process leading to the development of an agreed set of management policies and procedures should be carried out. This should include developing different ways of dealing with conflict such as a Traveller strategy in dealing with conflict as it emerges in an accommodation context.

The recently published Traveller accommodation study commissioned by the DoEHLG and carried out by the Centre for Housing Research sets a number of indicators for the management of Traveller accommodation. It recommends the development of national standards for the

management of Traveller accommodation. This work should be built on and utilised in developing best practice in the management of Traveller accommodation.

**Partnerships with local groups:** The TVAA should work in partnership with local Traveller groups to address issues of integration and sustainability of accommodation. Traveller organisational input at local level will be an invaluable resource to the work of the TVAA.

**Tenant Participation:** The TVAA should develop practices to support Travellers tenants in their homes through the development of tenant participation programmes and tenancy committees to ensure that issues emerging for Travellers are addressed and that Travellers contribution to the TVAA is central.

**Addressing nomadic provision**: In the longer term, the TVAA should work with a range of partners to examine the establishment of a network of 'pull in, pull out' areas on a national basis.

**Caravans for long term living:** The TVAA could examine options to access caravans for long-term living, building on work already completed by the NTACC in partnership with the relevant stakeholders.

**Cost of Traveller Accommodation**: In relation to the cost of Traveller accommodation a recent study commissioned by the DoEHLG and carried out by the Centre for Housing Research on Traveller accommodation found that the unit cost of Traveller accommodation was causing concern to a number of local authority officials and they queried whether it was value for money. This concern arose from the perception that unit costs are higher than for standard social rented units. A number of reasons were cited for this difference such as lower densities, the requirement for on-site maintenance with relevant facilities for staff, provision of additional facilities for horses and the provision of facilities for economic activity.

The research highlights that there have been a number of instances where the cost per unit of Traveller accommodation has exceeded €300,000 and in comparison the estimated cost of a standard unit is €208,000 in Dublin and €145,000 in the rest of the country. The authors highlight that given the '*paucity of relevant data it is difficult to estimate the number of instances where the above differential has occurred and the extent to which Traveller accommodation is likely to be more expensive*'.[40] They also note that 'as most Traveller families are larger than those in the settled community, and as such costs per individual/unit may compare favourably with other social housing costs'.[41] It is important that such as analysis is undertaken at national level and if gaps are exposed that recommendations are made to ensure that Traveller accommodation is value for money and quality outcomes are being achieved for the level of investment.

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[40] Housing Policy Discussion Series, Traveller Accommodation in Ireland: Review of Policy and Practice, Centre for Housing Research, 2008, p69.

[41] IBID

### 7.2 Local Authority Perspective

### 7.2.1 Rational for a TVAA

All local authorities interviewed had a long history of working with the voluntary housing sector and identified that they had good relationships with them. In the main they found that the longer running voluntary housing associations were very easy to work with as they were highly organised and presented well researched and thought out schemes based on identified need. In their view this is the overall formula that will ensure a voluntary housing association operates effectively.

As a cautionary note one local authority emphasised the importance of building relationships early with the local authority otherwise tensions can arise where a housing association develops a scheme and include the local authority at the later stages.

All the local authorities agreed that setting up a TVAA is a good idea from a national perspective for the following reasons:

- In some areas there are significant Traveller accommodation needs, so an additional provider would be welcome,
- It was acknowledged by some local authorities that the voluntary housing sector manage more effectively  than local authorities as they are smaller and community based, so can respond to the needs of tenants more effectively,
- The social and developmental aspect to the work of voluntary housing sector is invaluable in ensuring the sustainability of housing schemes,
- In the view of two local authorities interviewed there was no need at present for a TVAA in their areas as their Traveller Accommodation Programmes are showing that Travellers are seeking standard housing but they did not rule out changes in the future,
- The high cost of private rented accommodation, that more Travellers are now opting for, is a clear rationale for the need for a TVAA to provide more options and alternatives to Travellers that are more cost effective.

### 7.2.2 Benefits of a TVAA

The key benefits of a TVAA identified were:

- Meeting Traveller accommodation and social needs and providing more choices for Travellers,
- Managing Traveller accommodation well as a TVAA would be close to the community,
- Could meet a number of Travellers needs e.g. accommodation and economic space which would encourage Travellers to stay in the accommodation that a TVAA would build,
- Would have insight and expertise in dealing with opposition to Traveller accommodation

- A TVAA would have a greater understanding of the cultural requirements of Travellers and a better relationship as trust and rapport would be easily built between the TVAA and Travellers,
- A specific focus on Traveller accommodation would be a real benefit,
- A TVAA could build new relationships at local level with a range of agencies,
- A TVAA would be a useful resource for Travellers to 'tap into' and gain support and solutions to their accommodation needs,
- A TVAA would generate learning from its work and feed this into a range of fora,
- The TVAA could generate employment for Travellers in the following:
  - Negotiation and developing projects
  - Consultation and mediation
  - Caretaking and management
  - Maintenance of schemes
  - Financial management of schemes
- A TVAA could be a cost effective option in the future as the need for Traveller accommodation will increase with new family formations and families wanting to move out of private rented accommodation.

### 7.2.3 Barriers facing the TVAA

**The following are the key barriers identified by local authorities that a TVAA will face:**

- The requirements of the funding schemes are quite complex and a high level of expertise is required to deal with this which may not be available to the TVAA in the early stages,
- Planning issues are a critical barrier to the development of the work of a TVAA. The Part 8 Process will generate considerable opposition from the general community which can be difficult to overcome,
- Sourcing suitable sites was raised as a specific issue that will face a TVVA. Traveller halting site accommodation must be designated specifically in the County Development Plan to comply with the Planning and Development Act, 2000. Where halting sites are not included and may need to be, it will be difficult to obtain suitable sites and secure the necessary zoning,
- The lack of commitment to Traveller accommodation at senior management level in some local authorities is a serious barrier to progressing the work of a TVAA. It was emphasised that the relationships with local authorities and the TVAA will be critical in advancing the work and this will be difficult where the commitments are not in place at the highest level in the local authority,
- All local authorities identified that the provision of transient accommodation will not be met at local level and requires a national response for the following reasons:
  - No need identified,
  - Difficult to justify spending money on transient sites when the needs for permanent accommodation are high,
  - No models of good management for transient provision so the idea has been abandoned,

- o Most counties are struggling to provide for permanent families therefore it is not realistic to expect them to cater for additional families,
- o Transient bays are provided on existing sites but suitable land is not available in urban areas for such developments,
- o Land use and zoning are critical factors in the location of transient sites,
- o Issues regarding the management of vacancies on such sites.
- Opposition from the local community and politicians, the NOT IN MY BACK YARD syndrome is a real difficulty. Although the planning system provides a forum to deal with objections, the view was expressed that prejudice is inherent in the system and can seep through. Also, support from within the council can never be assured so this needs to be expected,
- Prejudice toward Travellers influences the delivery of accommodation. For example, one council indicated that they would not be in a position to advance the TAP until after the local elections,
- Land availability in urban areas and the identification of suitable sites were identified as significant challenges.

### 7.2.4 Addressing the Barriers

The local authorities were confident that many of the barriers facing the TVAA could be overcome and the key element that will determine the success of the TVAA is it determination and commitment to succeed. One local authority stressed that controversial housing developments had gone ahead in the past and are working well in the community. The reason for this is voluntary associations were rigorous and committed to the achievement of the project. Nonetheless, local authorities were also realistic about the barriers that are faced in delivering Traveller accommodation and in a number of cases stressed the need for Departmental support at national level and strong linkages with the NTACC and the NTMAC to overcome any difficulties.

Key strategies suggested for overcoming the specific barriers are as follows:

- The TVAA should seek to engage with the DoEHLG, the NTMAC and the NTACC to ensure it has the governmental and national support required to be in a position to deliver,
- The TVAA should second experts from established organisations within the voluntary housing sector to brief and train them on the financial and other procedures,
- The TVAA could set up a team of experts from the early stages that it could use for its schemes such as a quantity surveyor, a solicitor who focuses on conveyancing and an architect, or use the teams of existing housing associations,
- The TVAA should ensure that it develops strategic, logical project proposals that are based on identified need, in suitably zoned locations, are value for money and meet building design requirements,
- The TVAA should take a cautious approach in the early stages as securing successes will be key to its future development,
- To overcome planning difficulties a local authority could set up a project for the TVAA and put in place the land and planning. The TVAA could develop and build the accommodation and manage the units. The TVAA should also examine Part V opportunities whereby

developers hold 20 percent of the land on their developments for social housing. There can be opportunities in integrated developments of this nature,

- The TVAA should develop clear strategies for dealing with objections. This will involve thinking of all the possible arguments against the Traveller development and preparing answers to these; engaging with all the players from the early stages, conducting consultation at all points to keep the community, including the Traveller community, fully informed,

- The TVAA should adopt a problem solving approach, work with a range of agencies and focus strategically on delivery,

- In addressing land shortages a TVAA can:
    - Identify suitable sites and work with the local authority to purchase them
    - Purchase sites from developers
    - Advertise for the need for sites
    - Seek donations of sites from religious orders or others

- In addressing management issues that may arise on Traveller accommodation, the following strategies were recommended:
    - All of the local authorities highlighted the need for good policies and procedures regarding the management of Traveller accommodation. The development of tenant courses that provide tenants with information and supports is an essential element to building sustainable tenancies,
    - Dealing with management issues early is critical to addressing any management problems,
    - Engaging Travellers at the design stage of developments was highlighted as good practice as it creates ownership and reduces the likelihood of any management problems on the Traveller scheme,
    - A community development element to the work with tenants was recommended to support tenant involvement and address any issues they are experiencing,
    - Developing good linkages with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees, Traveller Interagency Groups and Local authority staff is important to gain support for the work of a TVAA,
    - In relation to economic space all local authorities agreed if a good plan to include economic space was presented this could be supported. A key argument in this regard is that if it will encourage tenants to stay longer in accommodation it would be of real benefit. There was an acknowledgment that Travellers who own horses, for example, could be facilitated to rent land. Likewise if incubation units were proposed for a site and funding was secured from an enterprise grant for this, there was no reason as to why the local authority could not support this,
    - TVAA should do a cost analysis to the state of accommodating Travellers in private rented and show what it could save in providing Traveller accommodation.

### 7.3   Irish Voluntary Housing Sector Perspective

#### 7.3.1   Rational for a TVAA

All organisations interviewed in the voluntary housing sector in Ireland welcomed the opportunity to work with a TVAA in building Traveller accommodation, developing joint management projects and training.

The sector were asked if they would advise on a TVAA being established or would it be appropriate for the Traveller sector to work with existing housing associations/co-operatives to provide accommodation. The sector identified that it would be important for a TVAA to initiate and build its own projects as this would ensure it had full control. Establishing a Traveller dimension to existing housing associations would not allow it the focus, ownership and control that it would need to develop effective responses to Travellers needs.

The voluntary housing sector believed the rational for a TVAA was based on the following reasons:

*   There is a general lack of expertise in the development and management of Traveller accommodation in the voluntary housing sector, a gap which could be addressed by a TVAA,
*   Whilst some existing voluntary housing associations are willing to provide group housing they do not have plans to provide the range of Traveller accommodation in the short to medium term, therefore, there is a clear role for TVAA in this regard,
*   A partnership approach in working with a TVAA on a range of projects could be developed given the high level of need,
*   The potential is significant due to the diverse needs. The TVAA should focus on culturally appropriate accommodation but also specific needs e.g. elderly provision/ domestic violence etc.,
*   Greater choice for Travellers is important,
*   TVAA would be free of prejudice  so could achieve  a significant amount,
*   A TVAA would have a commitment to put in place partnership approaches with Travellers on the development of accommodation and management systems.

#### 7.3.2 Benefits of a TVAA

The key benefits are:

*   A TVAA could meet some of the needs as Traveller accommodation needs are significant.
*   A TVAA would provide greater choice for Travellers,
*   A TVAA could develop best practice in the design and management of Traveller accommodation which ensures that everyone wins,
*   A Traveller led VAA is a unique approach which would ensure ownership by Travellers and that Traveller expertise could be tapped into,
*   A TVAA could lead the way in all forms of provision of Traveller accommodation and encourage others to provide,

56

- As a TVAA would be prejudice free, Travellers could rely on a friendly and committed service.

### 7.3.4    Barriers facing the TVAA

The key barriers identified were:

- The willingness of local authorities to work with Travellers will vary from area to area depending on commitment to building diverse forms of accommodation,
- If the TAP in an area is weak and non reflective of the real need, it will be difficult to build in those areas and show a real need,
- A TVAA will be working off the local authority lists to be eligible for funding so how could transient accommodation be developed as this provision is not included currently in the programmes,
- Support for halting site provision is weak in some areas so local authorities would be reluctant to support its development,
- Due to the recession funding for projects may be difficult to secure,
- Planning issues such as objections to Traveller accommodation is a significant barrier,
- Land availability is an ongoing challenge and in particular sourcing suitable sites for Traveller accommodation.

### 7.3.4 Addressing the Barriers

- All of those interviewed recommended that ITM should prepare the ground work for the TVAA and develop the necessary expertise so as to be a fully functioning voluntary accommodation association when funding comes back on stream. They envisaged that the following work would be required in the lead in stage:

  o   Develop the model including practices, policies and systems,

  o   Support Travellers to undertake training in Housing Management and be ready to take up roles in the TVAA,

  o   Consult widely with Travellers on management and other polices,

  o   Build relationships with local authorities and the Voluntary Housing Sector,

  o   Develop its support role to the Voluntary Housing Sector,

  o   Develop and deliver joint training with the ICSH on the management of Traveller accommodation,

  o   Undertake a mapping exercise of the Traveller needs for voluntary social housing,

- Existing voluntary housing associations will work with TVAA and provide Traveller accommodation themselves. They are willing to build group housing and would move in

to halting site provision if they had the 'know how' regarding specific management issues that arise on halting sites; a TVAA could provide such supports,

- As Traveller accommodation needs are significant and some local authorities with a large need will want to work with TVAA. The TVAA should start work with willing local authorities and pilot projects in the initial stages,

- A TVAA could lead the way in best practice in the management of Traveller accommodation. Local authorities do see the value in Voluntary Housing Sector managing their stock and they think they are better at it as they are smaller and more in touch with tenants,
- Planning objections can and have been overcome with good strategies and communication. However, the TVAA could develop a pilot with a local authority where they have the land and planning in place for Traveller accommodation,
- Where there is low availability of land in a council area, the voluntary housing group can identify suitable land and the council can buy it. This cost is factored into the grants from the DoEHLG,
- As ITM is already a lobbying voice, it could complement the work of and work closely with a TVAA,
- A TVAA should develop real partnerships and ways of working with Traveller organisations at local level,
- A funding stream for transient accommodation should be negotiated nationally and ring-fenced,
- A TVAA should not limit its focus to the provision of specific forms of accommodation but should examine the provision of a range of services and specialised accommodation to Travellers e.g. sheltered housing.

## 8. Analysis of the Findings

There is a high level of consensus that a TVAA should be established from all of the stakeholders involved in the consultation process. The key reasons for this are:

- A TVAA will be Traveller led which would be unique and as such could tap in to a range of expertise and relationships to develop innovative ways of designing and delivering Traveller accommodation,
- A TVAA will be free from prejudice and will have one hundred percent commitment to the provision of Traveller accommodation in all its forms. It would not shy away from providing halting sites and investigating with other stakeholders the provision of nomadic accommodation,
- Traveller accommodation need is great and is likely to increase in the future due to new family formations so an additional provider is to be welcomed,
- A TVAA could provide expertise and support to the Voluntary Housing Sector in the design and delivery of Traveller accommodation and could concentrate on delivering best practice in the design and management of accommodation that would encourage others to follow,
- A TVAA could develop new relationships with local authorities given its role as a service provider which would open up new possibilities for the Traveller sector,
- Travellers would have full control over the developments that the TVAA initiates and could develop agreements with other providers to deliver a range of other accommodation to Travellers,
- A TVAA would enable the Traveller sector to have dedicated resources to build a focus on Traveller accommodation provision,
- A TVAA could open up opportunities for provision for nomadism to be advanced.

The main fears and reservations regarding the establishment of a TVAA were raised by the Traveller sector which is realistic given the difficulties that emerge in building Traveller accommodation. Some local authorities also highlighted that the barriers to delivery of Traveller accommodation are significant and require strategic responses.

It was the general view that a TVAA should be sufficiently supported with the necessary resources and governmental support. The need for cross departmental endorsement for the role and work of a TVAA will be critical to give the TVAA the support it needs to deliver Traveller accommodation. In this context, it is envisaged that it is an opportune time to test a new initiative and a new approach to Traveller accommodation with Travellers leading on this.

Whilst many reservations were highlighted so were many solutions. Starting small, communicating effectively the role of a TVAA, piloting initiatives, and reviewing and evaluating its work was highlighted as the key approach that would mitigate against any risks that may emerge. If a TVAA is experiencing insurmountable barriers to delivering on the pilot schemes it can highlight this and communicate this widely. This would then indicate a significant problem to its development, outside of its control, that would have to be addressed at a governmental level.

The importance of being clear and realistic about what can be achieved was emphasised. Clarity of the role of TVAA and communicating this was highlighted as a key element that needs to be progressed. The TVAA will be a complementary initiative with a capacity to deliver a small number of Traveller accommodation projects. It is imperative that it is seen in this context and not used as a mechanism for other bodies to renege on their legal commitments.

The level of frustration regarding Traveller accommodation issues displayed within the Traveller sector was evident throughout the process. The view that Traveller accommodation will never be effectively delivered was commonly held. To being to address these problems the TVAA will create new opportunities for a range of new relationships to be developed with local authority officials who deal with the voluntary sector and the voluntary housing sector. This could garner new support for Traveller accommodation delivery. Also, demonstrating and communicating best practice will encourage involvement in this area.

The possibilities of establishing a new Traveller accommodation project has created a sense of new hope and generated a lot of discussion. It highlighted the level of expertise that can be tapped into in the development of a new approach and innovation in this area of work. Alongside this the need for realism was emphasised at all stages. In the early stages the impact of a TVAA will undoubtedly be limited but with strategic approaches and effective use of its resources, its work could and should have a significant influence and leverage to encourage best practice in the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation.

## 9. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 9.1    Conclusions

Undoubtedly the delivery and management of Traveller accommodation presents an ongoing challenge for all those involved. It is important not to underestimate the scale of the barriers that present themselves in the delivery of Traveller specific accommodation. It is within this context that a TVAA would be operating and its commitment to the delivery of the full range of Traveller accommodation, the uniqueness of the model and the development of a range of strategic relationships with other providers will not be sufficient to create the necessary conditions that will enable a TVAA to carry out all its functions. Put in context, if one considers that no voluntary halting site scheme has been built in Ireland and the development of nomadic provision has not been addressed; this is the scale of the challenge that will face a TVAA.

In order to ensure that a TVAA has a chance of real success support will be required from national and local level to secure delivery. A real partnership between the TVAA and the DoEHLG, the NTACC and the NTMAC will be required to support a TVAA in the early days to establish itself and develop the necessary relationships to implement its work programme. For example, the national structures will be instrumental in inviting local authorities to work with a TVAA on the provision of a halting site and creating the necessary incentives to make this a reality.

To lay the foundations for a TVAA a lead in period will be required that needs to be supported by the DoEHLG. This lead in period will enable the ITM to put in place the necessary policies, procedures and structures for a TVAA that will ensure that it has the capacity, expertise and resources to carry out its functions. For example, developing good practice guidelines for the management of Traveller accommodation is an area of work that requires particular attention and a national consultation process should be carried out to inform best practice.

The good will of the voluntary housing sector and their willingness to undertake projects with Travellers also needs to be harnessed given the substantial role they play and will continue to play into the future. A TVAA needs to approach this work strategically to ensure sustainable and productive relationships are formed that can deliver real outcomes to Travellers.

The possibilities of what a TVAA can achieve are significant but starting small, building experience and working in a collaborative way with other social housing providers will ensure that its risks in to the future are minimised. Also, in the early days ensuring the conditions are right for the development of its first pilot schemes will be critical to harnessing the successes it will need to build its work for the future.

**9.2     Recommendations:**

**Short-term Recommendations**

In the next 18 months the ITM should secure funding from the DoEHLG to employ a project coordinator and a development worker to lay the ground work for the development of the TVAA. This will include:

- establishing the board and structures for the TVAA to gain approved status,
- conducting a national consultation to develop best practice for the management of Traveller accommodation,
- conducting a skills audit to inform a Traveller employment strategy for the TVAA,
- laying the ground work to conduct two Traveller accommodation pilot schemes, a halting site and a group housing scheme including the development of criteria for the pilots,
- developing a range of strategic relationships with the local authorities, Voluntary Housing Sector, DoEHLG, NTMAC, NTACC and other stakeholders,
- developing training and other supports for the voluntary housing sector on Traveller accommodation issues as required.

A interdepartmental group consisting of the DoEHLG, the Department of Justice Equality and Law reform, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht affairs, Department of Health and Children, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, ITM, representatives from the Local Authority Sector, and the Voluntary Housing Sector should be established as a sub committee of the NTMAC to support the development of the work of the TVAA.

To advance the Pilot Schemes the DoEHLG with the above sub-committee should consider and implement specific incentives for local authorities to undertake the pilot work with the TVAA. This will involve local authorities sourcing land and planning for the construction of a halting site and a group housing scheme.

**Long-Term Recommendations**

- The TVAA should review and share the learning from the pilot schemes and feed its work into a range of policy fora,
- The NTMAC sub-committee should undertake a needs analysis of the level of demand for Traveller voluntary housing in each local authority area,
- The TVAA should develop a strategy for future provision and implement same;
- The TVAA should implement its Traveller employment strategy,
- The TVAA should develop agreements with a range of social housing providers to meet Travellers needs,
- The TVAA should work with a range of stakeholders including the NTMAC sub-committee to advance the issue of nomadic provision,
- The TVAA should seek representation on the DoEHLG Voluntary Housing Working Group.

## 10.Business Plan: The Emerging Model- A Step By Step Approach

The implementation of the following plan is based on securing the necessary resources.

**Vision**
The vision for the TVAA is the ideal outcome that the TVAA and others are working towards.

> An Ireland where all Travellers are accommodated in culturally appropriate accommodation that meets their needs and achieves Travellers right to a home within a sustainable community setting of their choice

**Mission**
The TVAA's mission is what the TVAA will seek to achieve on a day-to-day basis in order to contribute to the achievement of its vision.

To establish and develop a TVAA that leads the way in innovation and best practice in the design, delivery and management of culturally appropriate accommodation to Travellers and builds strategic relationships with other social housing providers to achieve its vision.

**Aims:**
- To develop a Traveller led model for the delivery and management of Traveller accommodation that will support Travellers to take a lead and participate in all levels of the TVAA including creating opportunities for the employment of Travellers,
- To design and deliver with Travellers a range of culturally appropriate accommodation (standard housing, group housing, halting sites, provision for nomadism) that meets their needs and is innovative, child centred, energy efficient and sustainable,
- To develop management systems, including self management, for Traveller accommodation that have the flexibility and capacity to meet the needs of Travellers and ensure sustainability of Traveller accommodation,
- To provide a range of services that support Travellers to live and participate fully and independently in the community in which they live,
- To develop a range of key relationships with social housing providers, Traveller organisations and other relevant stakeholders to support the implementation of Traveller accommodation across a range of options.

**Objectives:**
- To establish a TVAA that is Traveller led and ensures the participation of Travellers at all levels, including the employment of Travellers
- To work with other stakeholders to identify the Traveller accommodation need for voluntary accommodation in each local authority area

- To develop, design and deliver a number of pilot culturally appropriate accommodation schemes with Travellers in the short term to develop a track record and models of best practice
- To develop and deliver best management practices in ensuring Traveller accommodation is sustainable
- To provide support services to Travellers in accommodation, as required, to support their needs and their integration into the community
- To share learning and best practice developed and feed this practice into a range of fora
- To work with a range of social housing providers to deliver a range of options to Travellers to meet their accommodation needs

**Functions**
- To test new approaches and develop innovative work with Travellers on the provision of Traveller accommodation
- To ensure that Travellers full participation and employment is achieved in the, development, design, management and delivery of all the work of the TVAA
- To build strategic partnerships with a range of housing providers to work towards and support their development and provision of Traveller accommodation
- To develop flexible and sustainable management policies and procedures for Traveller accommodation
- To provide a range of services to support Travellers to live independently within their homes and communities
- To lead the way in best practice in the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation
- To work with other relevant stakeholders to implement an effective national response to the nomadic needs of Travellers

Over the next 18 months, the ITM will lay the foundations for the establishment of a TVAA that will have the requisite structures, systems policies and resources to fully establish itself as an independent entity at the end of the lead in period. This will be dependent on securing the necessary resources from the DoEHLG.

To achieve this, five key areas of work with clear objectives and dedicated staff resources will be advanced, in order to ensure that the objectives are met. These areas are:

- **Establishing the TVAA:**
  - This will involve putting in place the structures, procedures, polices and staffing for the TVAA.

- **Initiating Traveller accommodation pilots**
  - This will require the development of the pilot schemes and criteria. It is recommended that two pilot schemes, a group housing scheme and a halting site be developed. The criteria for selection of the schemes should be designed in consultation with Travellers and Traveller organisations and other stakeholders, nationally.

- **Best practice management guidelines**
  - This will involve conducting a national consultation process with Travellers and Traveller organisations, local authorities and the Voluntary Housing Sector to develop best practice guidelines on the management of Traveller accommodation upon which a TVAA will base its policies.

- **Development of strategic relationships:**
  This will include the following:
  - Promoting the role and vision of a TVAA with a range of stakeholders, e.g. voluntary housing sector, local authorities, county and city managers and county councillors,
  - Ensuring national support for the development of Traveller accommodation through the voluntary housing sector,
  - Working with a range of stakeholders to examine joint work that can be undertaken with accompanying agreements for action,
  - Providing training in management of Traveller accommodation.

- **Development of an employment action plan for the TVAA:**

  This will require the following:
  - A skills audit should be undertaken with Travellers nationally to assess levels of interests, skills and experience in the design, building, management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation and from this an employment action plan will be developed,
  - Training should be put in place to support the employment of Travellers in the TVAA.

**Key Activities**

- Secure funding and recruit a project team (Project coordinator and a Development worker) to undertake the work on its behalf.

- Develop and implement a communication strategy for the TVAA.

- Promote the TVAA amongst the membership of the ITM, NTWF, Voluntary Housing Sector, Local Authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

- Set up the board and company structure for TVAA, including, recruiting board members, drafting company documents, briefing, and training.

- Develop a strategy and work plan with the board for the work of the TVAA.

- Work with Irish Council for Social Housing to establish the structures and protocols for the effective operation of the TVAA.

- Work with an established Voluntary Housing Association to put in place effective financial and other procedures.

- Working with established Voluntary Housing Providers to put in place a technical team e.g. architect, quantity surveyor, legal supports.

- Secure Voluntary Housing Status from the DoEHLG.

**Targeted outcomes for 2011**

- Staff recruited

- TVAA promoted and its role effectively communicated

- New relationships with a range of stakeholders developed

- Board structures established

- Protocols and policies in place

- Status secured

- Necessary training undertaken

**Long term goals for 2014**

- To ensure that an effective Traveller led structure is in place

- To ensure that the infrastructural requirements for the effective running of the TVAA are in place such as staffing, office and financial systems

- To develop a strategic plan for the TVAA

## Initiating Pilot Traveller Accommodation Projects

**Activities**
- Design the criteria for the selection of the pilot schemes in consultation with the membership of ITM and local authorities. Two pilot schemes will be developed; a halting site and a group housing scheme

- Select pilot areas

- Identify and work with families to be involved in pilots

- Develop a partnership structure with all stakeholders in the areas to work on the development and implementation of the projects

- Recruit a technical team for the projects

- Develop the project proposals and the designs for the pilots

- Identify suitable land for the projects and begin the process of securing planning permission, if not already secured

- With the respective local authorities, secure funding for the projects through the relevant schemes and begin to implement the relevant processes

**Targeted outcomes for 2011**
- Criteria for selection of the pilot areas developed

- Pilot areas selected

- Key relationships developed in pilot areas

- Families to be accommodated identified and work commenced

- Ground work prepared for the projects

**Long term goals for 2014**
- To develop and complete the pilot schemes

- To review and document the process highlighting best practice.

- To share the learning from this work

- To develop a strategy for the future provision of Traveller accommodation determined including refurbishments, management of existing sites and adapting existing vacant buildings to meet Travellers needs

- To develop and begin the process of implementation of a long term accommodation strategy

**Establishing best practice guidelines in the management of Traveller accommodation**

**Key Activities**
- Develop a strategy to consult widely on effective management practice for Traveller accommodation
- Implement a national consultation process
- Develop and agree a set of guidelines for the effective management of Traveller accommodation
- Agree management practice and tenant policies for the TVAA based on these Guidelines
- Develop training on best practice for the management of Traveller accommodation
- Implement training on the guidelines for board and staff of TVAA and other Housing providers

**Targeted outcomes for 2011**
- A national consultation process implemented
- Polices for effective management developed
- Training designed and delivered with a range of stakeholders

**Long term goals for 2014**
- To ensure that effective policies for the management of Traveller accommodation are in place
- To develop and deliver high quality training modules on management

| | |
|---|---|
| **Developing strategic relationships with social housing providers** | |

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| Key Activities | ▪ Promote the role and vision of the TVAA with a range of stakeholders, e.g. voluntary housing sector, local authorities, county and city managers and county councillors |
|---|---|
| | ▪ Work with the DoEHLG, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, the Department of Rural Community and Gaeltacht Affairs, NIHE, NTACC and the NTMAC to ensure national support for the development of Traveller accommodation through the voluntary housing sector |
| | ▪ Work with the ICSH, Cluid, Respond!, NABco, Habitat for Humanity and other voluntary housing providers to examine joint work that can be undertaken with accompanying agreements for action |
| | ▪ Engage with local authorities to examine joint projects with accompanying agreements for action |
| Targeted outcomes for 2011 | ▪ Agreement for joint work, as appropriate, secured |
| | ▪ Work on the delivery of Traveller accommodation promoted with a range of stakeholders |
| | ▪ National supports in place to support the work of the TVAA |
| Long term goals for 2014 | ▪ To ensure a greater range of accommodation provision to Travellers |
| | ▪ To support the Voluntary Housing Sector to deliver on Traveller accommodation |
| | ▪ To identify Traveller Voluntary Accommodation needs in each local authority area building on the TAPs and THS in partnership with VHA, Local Authorities and the DoEHLG that will feed in to the longer term accommodation strategy for the TVAA |
| | ▪ To examine provision for nomadism on a national scale in partnership with all stakeholders |
| | ▪ To progress the issue of caravans for long-term living |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Developing a Traveller employment action plan** | |

***Key Activities***

- Training Travellers in Housing management to ensure Traveller employment opportunities are created from the outset

- Undertaking a skills audit to assess the level of interest, skills and experience in the building sector, management and maintenance amongst the Traveller community

- Put in place a strategy to employ Travellers in response to the audit within building and maintenance schemes with the support of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment

- Explore mentoring and apprenticeship schemes to support Traveller involvement supported by FAS

***Targeted outcomes for 2011***

- Travellers trained in housing management

- Travellers employed in the TVAA

- Employment action plan in place

- Support for the Employment Action Plan secured from the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment

- Mentoring and Apprenticeship schemes developed in partnership with FÁS

***Long term goals for 2014***

- To secure Traveller employment at all levels of the TVAA with training and supports provided as required

- To ensure that employment opportunities for Travellers are created in the development of accommodation schemes

- To develop mentoring and apprenticeship schemes for Travellers on all aspects of the design, delivery and management of Traveller accommodation

- To evaluate and review practice

## TVAA Approach and Principles

The TVAA will ensure that its work is informed by a community development approach. A community development approach will facilitate the active participation and inclusion of Travellers within the TVAA's work and will be committed to contribute to bringing about change in the accommodation situation of Travellers in a way that is shaped and led by the Traveller community.

This means that a number of fundamental principles will be operated from, as identified through the consultation process:

> ➤ *Participation and inclusion/Traveller led TVAA:* The effective participation and inclusion of Traveller individuals at all levels of the TVAA is central to its approach and reflected in Board, staffing and active participation of Travellers at all levels.

> ➤ *Respect for human rights: Promoting Diversity and Equality:* Travellers rights are human rights and the provision of accommodation services needs to reflect their distinct culture and ethnicity. TVAA will respect diversity and ensure that its services meet the needs of Travellers in different circumstances such as Travellers with a disability and older Travellers, to achieve this principle.

> ➤ *Partnership:* The TVAA is a partnership between Travellers and non-Travellers who are committed to achieving the full delivery of culturally appropriate accommodation to Travellers that respects their ethnicity. Working in solidarity with Travellers and the Voluntary Housing Sector will ensure that the organisations can build and be part of a broad alliance of organisations pursuing better accommodation for all.

> ➤ *Process of working:* The process or approach to the work is as important as the outcome, to ensure that there is ownership, input and full participation by Travellers. This involves ensuring that there are structures and meaningful consultation mechanisms in place for the participation of Travellers in the work of the TVAA with the necessary resources to support this work.

> ➤ *Social Change:* Working for social change, the TVAA seeks to ensure that the accommodation it delivers is supportive of Travellers ethnicity and it feeds these lessons in to national Traveller accommodation policy arenas to bring about real equality of outcomes for Travellers.

> ➤ *Evaluation and Accountability:* Reviewing all of its work will be a critical approach of the TVAA. This will enable it to take a critical look at its work to examine its effectiveness and inform the direction of future work. Accountability of funding and polices will be a key part of this process.

These key principles will be reflected in the way the organisation carries out its work.

**Organisation and Infrastructure**

The section below outlines the staff, facility and systems requirements to enable the successful implementation of the business plan over the coming two years.

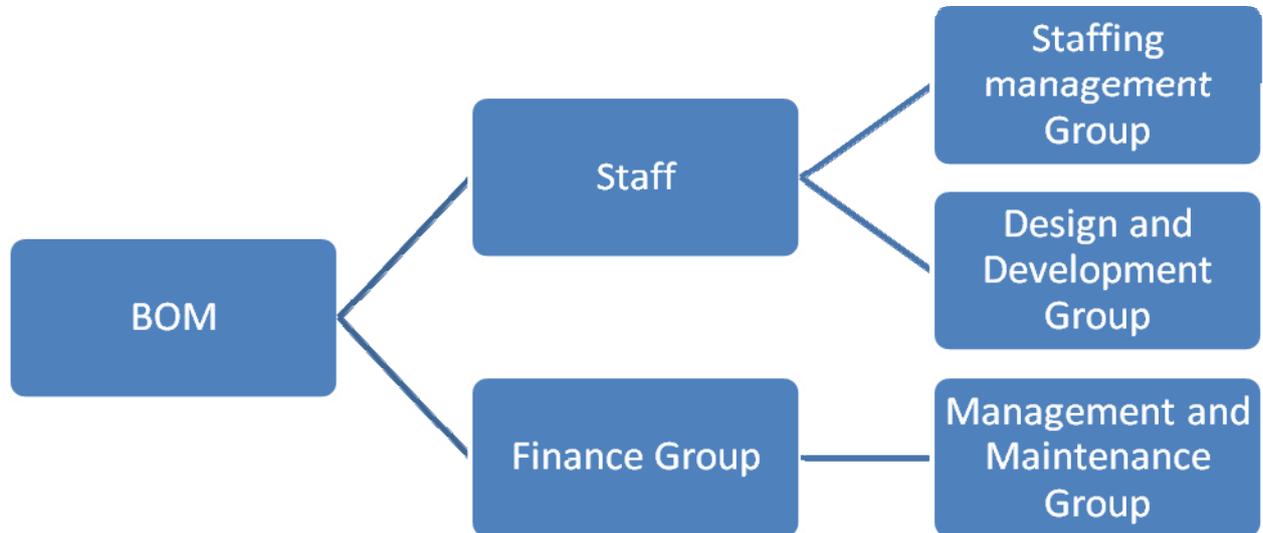**Staff structure and key staff roles**

Initially two new full-time posts will be created within the staff structures of the ITM. Once the board of the TVAA is established the following structures will be implemented as detailed in the Table below.

The Board of the TVAA will be made up of 18 representatives as follows:
- 5 Traveller representatives drawn for the regional networks of the ITM
- 1 accommodation worker from the ITM team
- 2 Travellers representatives from the National Traveller Women's Forum
- 1 representative from Pavee Point
- 2 representatives from Voluntary Housing Sector
- 1 person with a financial background
- 1 person with a building background
- 2 persons from the local authority drawn from the Office of Local Authority Management
- 1 person with training expertise
- 2 tenant seats

All sub-structures will have a minimum of two members of the Board of Directors, tenants, staff and other expertise as deemed appropriate. The following diagram describes the overall structure of the TVAA:

**Governance**

The composition of the board should have a majority of Travellers. There should be an option of co-opting members to the Board if gaps in expertise are identified.

**Role of the Board**

The role of the Board of Directors of the TVAA should include the following:

- Support the innovative leadership of the organisation

- Develop and oversee the strategic direction for the organisation

- Develop, review, approve and monitor the strategic plan on an ongoing basis

- Approve and monitor performance against business plan targets

- Review financial performance against targets

- Ensure that policies and procedures are adhered to and implemented

- Monitor legal, ethical, risk and environmental compliance

- Appoint the Director and plan for succession after the lead in period

- Ensure that the finance records are audited in accordance with accepted accounting standards and policies

- Approve the financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the organisation

- Hold an annual general meeting

- Hold board meetings on a regular basis

- Share responsibility for board decisions

**Sub-Committees**

Sub-committees are directed by the board and should include appointees who are not members of the board but have necessary expertise.  Sub-committees should be evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis.

The following sub-committees should be established to support the work of the board

- Staffing Committee - to ensure best practice in employment and staffing policy & practice is developed and implemented.

- Finance Committee - to monitor financial performance against agreed plans and budgets.

- Management and Maintenance Committee – to oversee the development of policies and practice for the TVAA, including managing the national consultation process on the management of Traveller accommodation.

- Design Committee – to monitor, promote and develop best practice and innovation in the design of culturally appropriate accommodation to Travellers.

## Staff recruitment and development

In the short term the two new staff will operate under the auspices of the ITM and its structures. In the latter phase of the lead in period, the TVAA will need to recruit its staff and establish its recruitment, staffing induction, planning performance and review policies and procedures. It is anticipated that the TVAA will need to recruit a Director and two accommodation officers in the early stages to advance its work programme.

## Internal infrastructure

In the short term the staff employed by the ITM for the lead in period will be based in the ITM office as appropriate. In the longer term the TVAA will need to consider a location for an office base and proceed to establish one.

## Staff and Infrastructure Plan

The roles of Director, accommodation officers, finance and administration will need to be recruited towards the latter stage of the lead in period.

The table below outlines the plan the organisation will follow in recruiting for new positions and establishing the infrastructure for the TVAA.

| | 2009 | | 2010 | | 2011 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Recruitment Plan** | **Q1** | **Q2** | **Q1** | **Q2** | **Q1** | **Q2** |
| **Director** | | | | | █ | |
| **Accommodation Workers x 2** | | | | | █ | |
| **Financial Officer** | | | | | █ | |
| **Administrative Officer Part-time** | | | | | █ | |
| | | | | | | |
| **Infrastructure Plan** | **Q1** | **Q2** | **Q1** | **Q2** | **Q1** | **Q2** |
| **Develop policies and protocols** | | █ | | | | |
| **Implement hard systems (IT, reporting systems)** | | █ | █ | | | |
| **Establish the Board and gain status approval** | | | █ | | | |
| **Secure office space** | | | | █ | | |
| **Establish office** | | | | | █ | |

## Budget Projection

The following details the financial projections for the lead in period for the TVAA

|  | 2009 | 2010 |
|---|---|---|
| **Salary Costs** | **For 6 mths** |  |
| **Project Coordinator** | 23,000 | 46,000 |
| **Development Worker** | 22,000 | 42,000 |
| **Staff-Related Expenditure includes Pension 5%, PRSI 12.5% and Travel)** | 9,875 | 19,400 |
| **Establishment / Capital Expenditure** |  | 20,000 |
| **Running Costs** | 3,500 | 7,000 |
| **Project Costs** | 29,500* | 20,000** |
| **Recruitment Cost** |  | 5,000 |
|  |  |  |
| **Total** | **€87,875** | **€159,400** |

*Includes the costs of developing the best practice guidelines on the management of Traveller accommodation and a training budget for Travellers in Housing Management

** Includes the Employment Skills Audit. The Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment will be approached for this funding.

**Sources of Funds**

The ITM has established good funding relationships with the DoEHLG and will approach the Department for support for the piloting of the TVAA. Currently there are no constraints on approving new Approved Housing Bodies. However, given the current economic climate there are considerable constraints on the availability of capital funding. As a TVAA will be piloted first it would have to be considered separately in any event. Notwithstanding the capital funding position, the TVAA should be submitted as a capital funding project for piloting under the funding schemes.