



24<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Note for clarifications on Circular 06/2020 and examples of good practice

I refer to Circular 06/2020 which issued on March 18<sup>th</sup> from the Traveller Accommodation Support Unit (TASU) in the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government. The circular advised local authorities that the Department has funding available for essential mitigation works aimed at reducing the risk of Covid-19 spreading in traveller specific accommodation.

Since then local authorities have put a number of arrangements and preventative measures in place to provide, among other things, services to previously un-serviced sites which will facilitate better sanitation and social distancing.

The Department would like to acknowledge local authorities' swift response in implementing these measures. The Department would also like to acknowledge the valuable assistance of the National Traveller organisations during this emergency.

The Department recognises that, in these challenging times, finding and implementing solutions is not easy and that in some cases it has required an enormous amount of flexibility by both the local authorities and the residents of the sites. During the crisis the focus is firmly on "life safety" and the first choice solution is not always possible. This may mean a Traveller who has a preference for Traveller specific accommodation accepting standard accommodation on a temporary basis or it may mean a local authority opening a site temporarily or providing services to an unauthorised site.

Since the circular was issued some questions have arisen in regards to its interpretation and implementation. We have also received feedback from many local authorities in regards to solutions that they have put in place.

In response we are issuing the attached clarifications (appendix 1) and examples of good practice (appendix 2) which we hope will be of assistance to local authorities. This note will also be copied to the members of the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to assist the national Traveller organisations to provide clarity on the types of measures that may be taken.

Please continue to provide valuable feedback on measures taken and on challenges you are facing as you put these in place. The Traveller Accommodation Support Unit will do all we can to assist.

Kind regards,

Rosemarie Tobin





## Appendix 1: Clarifications on Circular 06/2020

### Assessment of need

As with all local matters, in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers in their areas. The Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding. It is therefore up to local authorities to assess the adequacy of provisions on sites (both authorised and unauthorised) and implement measures as necessary, taking into consideration advice from the HSE, fire safety guidelines, local area plans, public procurement guidelines and any other considerations relevant to their area. The Department will provide support by way of appropriate funding and advice where necessary.

### Application Process

In response to feedback from local authorities the Traveller Accommodation Support Unit (TASU) introduced some changes to the application process to make this as efficient as possible (email *TAU Covid Funding Application Process* 14 April 2020). However, if local authorities would prefer to use the standard format they are very welcome to do so. Local authorities are asked to make the application before committing to any measure and the TASU will respond within 24 hours. Funding will be recouped as claims are received in line with the new Covid-19 application process.

### Measures that may be funded by the Department

As stated above it is up to the local authorities to identify the most appropriate measures to be taken in each case and all applications for funding will be considered on a case by case basis. The TASU are available to talk through any potential solutions. To provide clarity in this regard please see below examples of measures for which the TASU has approved funding:

- Additional mobiles (or touring caravans if more appropriate) to allow for self-isolation/ cocooning or to alleviate overcrowding. (The provision of funding for additional mobiles is as set out under circular 46/2016. However, in some circumstances, the Department will consider extra funding where required on a case by case basis)
- Setting up additional temporary sites or reopening vacant bays to allow for self-isolation/ cocooning or to alleviate overcrowding (this has been done on a case-by-case basis where it is feasible, appropriate and safe to do so).
- Provision of additional facilities, including for unauthorised sites or for mobiles located outside of family members' homes, where it is deemed appropriate by local authorities. This includes portaloos, water tankers, additional waste collection electricity supply.
- Provision of hand sanitiser/ hygiene packs for sites with limited facilities.
- Provision of additional cleaning services including clearing rubbish.



## Appendix 2: Examples of Good Practice

As noted above each area will assess on a case by case basis the best approach to deal with issues as they arise and no one solution will work across all sites. The below are examples of initiatives or actions that have been taken by some local authorities that have proved successful. It is hoped that sharing this will be useful to local authorities.

- Holding LTACC meeting by conference call and setting up regular calls for the duration of the crisis.
- Providing a single point of communication for people who are awaiting a test or results for covid 19 or are having difficulties in self-isolating or cocooning.
- Reassuring families who are being offered alternative accommodation that any process to remove their mobiles/ evict them will not be permitted for the duration of the crisis.
- Reassuring families or individuals who are not authorised to be on sites currently that there will be no ramifications if they approach the LA, and that assistance will be provided to them.
- Ensuring there is clarity for families, where alternative accommodation is offered, what exactly is being offered and whether is it being offered as a permanent accommodation solution or a temporary solution for the duration of the crisis.
- Engaging with the Traveller Mediation Service to intervene where compatibility issues arise among Traveller families [http://travellermediation.ie/?page\\_id=33](http://travellermediation.ie/?page_id=33).
- Engaging with the local Traveller representative group or the Irish Traveller Movement where reasonable offers of solutions and alternative accommodation are being refused.
- Where HAP is being offered as a solution, recognising the difficulty for many Travellers in accessing HAP and providing assistance through the Tenant Liaison Officer.