

# Beyond the Starry Sky

## Respond! Traveller Accommodation and Support Policy



"Building Integrated  
Communities"



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**By**

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## Foreword

Currently, in Ireland, if one were to speak of accommodation for Travellers, there is most likely to be a negative reaction. People will be concerned about where the intended accommodation is likely to be located and even the most rights-conscious of people may be tempted to resort to “nimbyism”, not in my back yard.

The Traveller community is seen, and oftentimes portrayed, as “a problem” in themselves. Reactions will vary from a common view of “why should they receive any special treatment when they are going around in their new cars and caravans”, to the less common view of “they have a human right to a decent home and this should be guaranteed them no matter what”. The moral high ground can be claimed from either perspective.

Respond! eschews moral high grounds in the matter of Traveller accommodation. There is clearly an issue surrounding the implementation of the State’s policy in the provision of accommodation appropriate to the needs of Travelling people. Despite many efforts to provide such accommodation, particularly over the last decade, there is still a large shortfall in such provision and evidence as well of inappropriate and un-resourced provision. These have serious results on Traveller children and families, especially those who do not have independent economic or social resources of their own. It behoves society in general and the Traveller community in particular to acknowledge this reality and to seek ways of addressing it appropriately, to the satisfaction of all.

The resourced settlement of Travellers is an issue of integration. Without a coherent strategy of integration in accommodation, education, employment, health and social interaction, there can be no true settlement which will both meet the needs of the Traveller community and also secure the interests of the wider community.

Setting out the elements of integration is the task Respond! has set itself in this Policy Document. Respond! considers acting with both the settled and Traveller communities can harness the good-will and professional resources of the appropriate state and communal sectors and that we can at least set out a path towards the wholesome integration of both communities, while assuring each of their legitimate interests.

We welcome co-operation and partnership with all who can assist in this endeavour.

May God bless this work.

Patrick Cogan, ofm.  
Managing Director.



# Contents

Acknowledgement .....	1
Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction .....	7
Traveller Culture.....	8
Education.....	11
Employment.....	16
Creating Integrated Communities .....	18
Design Considerations .....	20
Building Good Relations.....	22
Social Inclusion .....	26
Traveller Health.....	29
Taskforce on the Travelling Community (1995).....	30
Progress to Date.....	31
Traveller Accommodation Strategy (1997-2008).....	33
Meeting the Need.....	34
Types of Accommodation .....	36
Implementation .....	38
Conclusion.....	41
Bibliography .....	42



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Ned Brennan  
Respond! Housing Association  
October 2006



# Executive Summary

For nearly a quarter of a century Respond! Housing Association has dedicated its work to combating disadvantage, poverty and social exclusion. In the most recent strategic review of the priorities for the future, the Directors of Respond! have identified the provision of good quality accommodation and support services for Traveller families as one of their key priorities for the coming years, as Travellers have been generally identified as one of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in Irish society.

The purpose of this document is to set out our framework to accelerate the delivery of good quality, appropriate accommodation and support services for Traveller families, in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders and the main points of the document are highlighted within the summary.

## **Respond! History:**

Since its establishment in 1982 Respond! has gained 24 years of experience in community development, housing provision, estate management, education and training. Respond! has developed by influencing social change in providing social and affordable accommodation for people in need.

## **Housing:**

Respond! currently manages 3,000 units of accommodation across the country. In addition, 1,500 units are also under construction at the moment. All units within Respond! are of the highest quality, cost effective and are sustained by government and private support.

We recognise our responsibility with regard to Traveller Accommodation and will take into account the culture and identity of Travellers in the design and implementation of our accommodation policy.

## **Inter-Agency Participation:**

Through inter-agency participation a broad spectrum of knowledge will be cross linked with support from all the professionals in education, health, employment and training, which include statutory, voluntary and Traveller organisations. The active participation and encouragement by all agencies is vital to ensure the successful development of Traveller Accommodation and its support structure as this in itself will promote inclusion, anti-racism, integration, equality and fairness through the understanding of the issues and the promotion of Traveller culture.

## **Traveller Culture:**

The importance of the extended family, language and the economy are all part of the Traveller identity and culture, as is home space that is also used as working space. Types of work include tarmac laying, upholstery, guttering, furniture selling and horse trading.

Recognition of Traveller culture is paramount to the completion of a harmonious integrated community, and if it is ignored, either accidentally or deliberately, through oversight or lack of reflection, policies may run aground and will not produce the desired effect. Focus on a consultation process which is holistic in its approach and which includes a bottom-up approach, will sanction the successful development of Traveller accommodation as approved in the Accommodation Act 1998 and the Department of Environment & Local Government recommendations.

**Traveller Accommodation:**

Different Traveller accommodation types are highlighted within this policy document which includes group housing, halting sites, transient sites and estate housing. In relation to the delivery of Traveller accommodation there are a number of difficulties and obstacles within society to the building and acceptance of Traveller Accommodation nationally. These can be over-come by adhering to the Guidelines set by The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Task Force on the Travelling Community.

**Media:**

The role of the media is a prime source of information in relation to all aspects of news. The media has a very important role to play in the portrayal of Travellers in a negative or positive fashion. We hope to encourage the media to represent, in a constructive and positive light, the provision of Traveller accommodation.

**Education:**

The Education Act 1998 formalised the rights of all children to education which included access to schools, parents having the right to be consulted about their child's education and involvement in school management.

The Department of Education and Science recognises the value of Traveller visiting teachers in promoting participation. Their accessibility to the school and family has promoted a positive learning experience and the support of a welcoming intercultural approach to learning. The positive school environment greatly enhances confidence and empowerment of the individual. Positive consultation between educators and parents is recognised as the way forward, while practical experiential learning through community development and vocational education appears the way forward for some adult Travellers.

**Employment:**

Respond!'s policy in relation to employment promotes equality and fairness for all in recruitment, advertising, interview, opportunity of promotion, training and continuous education.

### **Health:**

Traveller Health is significantly worse than the health of those in the settled community.

The 1987 Health Research Board Study shows:

- The infant mortality rate for Travellers was 18.1/1000 live births compared to a national figure of 7.4.
- At birth, male Travellers can expect to live 9.9 years less than settled men.
- At birth, female Travellers can expect to live 11.9 years less than settled women.
- Male Travellers have over twice the risk of dying in a given year than settled males. For female Travellers the risk is more than 3 times.

The National Traveller Health Strategy was launched in 2002, and acknowledges factors influencing Traveller health.

- Poor living conditions: one in four Travellers have no piped water or electricity.
- Racism and discrimination: 17% of Travellers have difficulty registering with a doctor. It also found that only a small number of GPs provided services to Travellers.
- Health promotion: a lack of education and training materials that are relevant and meaningful to Travellers has contributed to a low uptake of health services by Travellers.

Respond! propose to work with the relevant agencies in the promotion of health awareness amongst Traveller families within their housing schemes.

### **Community Development:**

Respond! is committed to the promotion of community development strategies on its estates as a vehicle for enhanced participation and the empowerment of the individual. In keeping with its strategies, community development involves engaging people with shared interests within their society who come together to improve, change or develop a process for growth in their community.



## Introduction

Respond! was established in 1982 from a Franciscan ethos. Respond! is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. In 1984 Respond! was approved by the Department of Environment and Local Government as a Housing Association. Over the last 24 years Respond! has been at the forefront in the provision of high quality, low cost housing under a variety of governmental and private schemes.

The Directors of Respond! in their most recent review of the priorities for the organisation, have reiterated their commitment to the future provision of good quality accommodation for Traveller families and support services as one of the key priorities over the coming years. Respond! believes this programme is best delivered based on the multi-disciplinary team model of working in co-operation with an inter-agency of support services for Travellers by linking in with the recommendations of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues.

Respond! as a national Housing Association is in the unique position to deliver on the provision of accommodation for Traveller families throughout its network of Regional Offices in Waterford, Dublin and Galway and its sub-offices in Limerick, Cork, Ennis, Tullamore, Navan, Dundalk, Drogheda, Kilkenny and Wexford.

The organisation currently manages and supports 3,000 units of accommodation, 700 for elderly and special needs tenants and 2,300 for families. In addition, 1,500 units are currently under construction. The work of the organisation is supported by a strong team of designers, architects, engineers, legal, financial, community development and estate management staff.

In Irish society, Travellers are recognised as one of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Having regard to this fact, Respond! Directors promote an inclusive and diverse society. The Respond! Traveller Accommodation and Support Programme advocates the delivery of good quality accommodation, promotes and supports the rights of Traveller families to access education, healthcare and to build good relations with the rest of the community.

Respond! is of the view that the delivery of these services, including housing, education, healthcare and employment, can only be achieved through adopting a multi-disciplinary approach encompassing all service providers. This programme advocates the building of capacity and the development of social inclusion measures to combat social exclusion and disadvantage within the Traveller community. Respond! recognises and supports the rights of Traveller families to their distinct and nomadic identity.

## Traveller Culture

Everyone has a culture, which is a package of customs, traditions, symbols, values, phrases and other forms of communications by which we belong to as a community. The belonging is in understanding the meaning of these cultural forms and in sharing values and identity. Culture is the way we learn to think, behave and do things.

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) in *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* state that:

“Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour, acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially attaches values.” (1)

The Travelling People Review Body which reported in 1983 captured the concept of cultural difference in its definition of Travellers:

“They are an identifiable group of people, identified both by themselves and other members of the community (referred to for convenience as the “Settled” community) as people with their own distinctive lifestyle, traditionally of a nomadic nature but not habitual wanderers. They have needs, wants and values which are different in some ways from those of the settled community.” (2)

The more recent Report of the Second Commission on the Status of Women in January 1993 gives further affirmation of the culture of the Travelling community. They state that:

“Travellers have their own culture and a strong sense of community, facts which are often unappreciated in the settled community.” (3)

At European Community level, clear affirmation of the distinct culture of the Traveller community was affirmed in the Resolution of the Council on School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children which states that:

“Gypsies and Travellers currently form a population group of over one million persons in the community and that their culture and language have formed part of the community’s cultural and linguistic heritage for over 500 years.” (4)

The Resolution goes on to recommend consideration for the history, culture and language of the Gypsies and Travellers in teaching methods and materials.

### **Uniqueness of Traveller Culture:**

Traveller nomadism, the importance of the extended family, the Traveller language and the organisation of the Traveller economy will provide visible or tangible markers of Traveller culture. The Council of Europe Report "Gypsies and Travellers" which was prepared by J.P. Liegeois, highlights the importance of Traveller nomadism. The report states:

"Nomadism is neither entirely the product nor the producer of culture; it is a basic component which confers on the whole a market flavour." (5)

The Traveller nomadism, as with its counterparts across Europe, takes a range of forms. It includes those who are constantly on the move, those who move out from a fixed base for a part of any year, and those who are sedentary for many years and then move on. Traveller nomadism contributes to the social organisation of the community as it provides for contact and communications within a dispersed community. It plays an important economic role in providing Travellers with access to markets broad enough to make marginal economic activities viable. It also plays a psychological role which is described as follows in the Council of Europe Report "Gypsies and Travellers":

"Nomadism is more a state of mind than actual situation. Its existence and importance are frequently more psychological than geographical." (6)

Nomadism is, as described, a feature of the Traveller economy. A number of other features also serve to highlight the distinct nature of the Traveller economy and to make this another area where cultural difference is viable.

These features include:-

1) **Flexibility.** Travellers move from one economic activity to another as opportunities for profit emerges. This contrasts with the more specialised, career-orientated approach dominant within the "Settled" community.

2) **Self-Employment.** This is contained in the Council of Europe report "Gypsies and Travellers." This emphasis on self-employment is described as:

"One of the most marked elements which make up the identity of Gypsies and Travellers." (7)

3) **Income basis.** The Traveller economy is based on immediate payment for goods or services provided. This contrasts with the focus on jobs and job creation within the "Settled" community.

4) **Home base.** The extended family is the basic economic unit within the Traveller economy. Home space and working space tend to be one and the same.

Another manifestation of Traveller culture is Traveller language that is called Gammon or Cant. Studies of the language have revealed a vocabulary that is used in a somewhat simplified English grammatical structure. Some of the vocabulary consists of Irish words that have been transformed or disguised.

Research into Traveller language has interpreted the manner in which the language has developed as a product of a nomadic group, the members of which are only in intermittent contact with each other. In this way, the vocabulary is well developed while the grammar is borrowed from the majority "Settled" community. The development of a grammar requires a fixed stable community.

#### **Traveller Identity:**

The recognition of Travellers' culture and identity has an importance for Travellers and their status in Irish society. Identity and belonging is vital to everyone and is equal to physical wants and needs. Identity and a sense of community cannot be ignored because identity is fiercely cherished by everyone and community is vital for everyone's sense of belonging.

Frederico Mayer, the Director-General of UNESCO, emphasises the importance of culture in stating:

"All thinking and all action concerning Gypsies and Travellers must be based on an essential parameter: culture, its existence, its dynamics, its past and its future. When this parameter is ignored, be it through oversight, lack of reflection, or deliberately, policies run aground and actions do not produce the desired effects." (8)

Cultural difference therefore is a key element to be taken onboard in policy design and in the procedures by which resources are made available. The Council of Europe report "Gypsies and Travellers" highlights the consequences of failure in this regard and concludes:

"The forced process of settling, frequently carried out under poor conditions, means less psychological, social and economic adaptability. When travel becomes just a dream for the Traveller, despair and its effects set in (illness, break-up of family, aggressiveness and delinquency). The result is a crisis in the society of Gypsies and Travellers." (9)

The important contribution of cultural diversity to the well-being of a society should also be acknowledged. Cultural diversity provides a society with a broader range of perspectives and frames of reference. Cultural diversity in a context of mutual respect means that communities with different cultures can provide different approaches and solutions to common problems.

Cultural diversity allows for communities with different cultures to contribute to each other's well-being. An example of this is in the field of Irish traditional musical heritage. In the past, Travellers have contributed to musical expression within the settled community through:

- Bringing songs, tunes and dances from town to town
- Making and repairing musical instruments
- Their particular style in playing instruments such the fiddle and the Uilleann pipes

## Education

The Survey on Traveller Education Provision (2005) set down the following fundamental principles and broad objectives that should be underlined and applied in the development and provision of education services at all levels (pre-school, primary, secondary, third level and adult) to Travellers:

- Equality of opportunity must exist so as to ensure that Travellers shall have full access to education and are enabled to reach their full potential.
- The principle of anti-discrimination should inform all education provision.
- Acknowledgement of, and respect for, cultural diversity and multi-ethnicity should inform all education provision.
- The principle of affirmative action should be applied to Travellers in education.
- Rule 10 of The Rules for National Schools (1965) should be applied to all schools, at primary and second levels. This states that:

“no child may be refused admission to a national school on account of the social position of their parents, nor may any pupil be kept apart from the other pupils on the grounds of social distinction.” (10)

- There should be full parental involvement in decision-making and in the development of education provision for their children.
- The principle of integration should be applied except in exceptional circumstances.
- All of these fundamental principles and broad objectives form the basis of the various recommendations in respect of access by Travellers to the education system, and their treatment in that system, and these principles shall form the foundation of an enlightened Traveller.

### **Traveller Education:**

Respond! supports the rights of Traveller Children to appropriate and adequate education. Respond! over the past 10 years has been at the forefront in the provision of estate based pre-school and after-school education for children. Respond! will champion the recommendations of the action plan for educational inclusion as part of this policy.

#### **1. School Attendance**

It is important to emphasise the rights of Traveller children to appropriate and adequate education as emphasised in the Survey of Traveller Education Provision (2005). Despite a significant improvement in recent years, lack of regular school attendance remains a problem within the Traveller community, particularly with pupils who have to live in unsatisfactory (poor) living conditions i.e. without adequate washing or other amenities.

Attendance can be interrupted by Traveller culture e.g. some pupils attending weddings, funerals, horse fairs, etc. Visiting teachers are a central link between the student, parent and the school; they reinforce and promote the advancement of pre-primary and especially post-primary education continuance.

## **2. Parental Involvement**

Traveller parents have a fundamental role to play in the educational development of their children. Traveller parents should be encouraged and supported in undertaking this role and with this objective in mind, we should focus on the provision of pre-school, primary and post-primary level delivery of educational programmes.

Traveller parents should be facilitated to enrol their children in schools rather than this being done by the visiting teacher. Attention needs to be given to developing a range of ways that would permit ongoing direct contact between teachers and Traveller parents. Traveller parents should be particularly targeted so as to encourage their involvement in open days or similar events before problems arise. The lack of direct communication is evident in the low level of knowledge that can be displayed by Traveller parents as to what is happening or being done for their children in school. The method of communication between parent and school must be accessible. A welcoming space in school needs to be created to support and encourage the interface between Traveller parents and teachers.

## **3. Traveller Nomadism**

Nomadism continues to be a significant feature of the Traveller way of life. There is a clash between this aspect of the Traveller way of life and the way in which the present school system is organised. The education system was designed with "Settled" people in mind. However, the Irish Traveller Movement suggests that, with some modification, it could begin to cater more adequately for those who are mobile. For example, Parents/Guardians keeping school records and the recognition of nomadism by Department of Education and Science.

## **4. Intercultural Education and Travellers**

The concept of intercultural education is new in Ireland. Because of the widespread perception of Ireland up to more recent years as a fairly homogenous society, the need to cater for diverse cultures had not been high on the educational agenda. The Irish Traveller Movement published a policy document called "Education and Travellers", requesting intercultural education in all education and training systems. It stated that:

"Intercultural education implies an education that promotes interaction and understanding among and between different cultures and ethnic groups on the assumption that ethnic diversity can enrich society." (11)

As far back as 1993 the Report of the Special Education Review Committee stated that:

"Schools should adopt an inclusive, intercultural approach to curriculum development so as to ensure that their school plan, class programmes and teaching material reflect a positive attitude to the special customs, traditions and lifestyles of minority groups, including the children of Travellers." (12)

### **Education Strategy:**

Respond! supports the principles and strategies as set out in the Action Plan for Education Inclusion in 2005 by the Department of Education and Science, "Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools".

#### **1) Action Plan for Educational Inclusion**

This Action Plan provides a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage. It will also put in place a new integrated School Support Programme that brings together and builds upon ten existing policy interventions and initiatives for schools and school communities with a concentrated level of disadvantage.

The new Action Plan represents a shift in emphasis away from individual initiatives, each addressing a particular aspect of educational disadvantage, to a new plan adopting a multi-faceted and more integrated approach. This is the first time that an integrated educational inclusion strategy has been developed for 3-18 year olds in Ireland.

#### **2) Visiting Teacher Service for Traveller Education**

The Report of the Special Education Review Committee (1993) highlighted that there are 40 visiting teacher posts for Travellers, they are located throughout the country and work with approximately 8,000 Traveller children in pre-school, primary and post-primary schools. Visiting teachers work collaboratively with all educational partners to facilitate the realisation of achieving equality of access, equality of participation, equality of educational status and equality of outcomes for Traveller learners.

#### **3) Pre-schools for Travellers**

There are 48 pre-schools for Travellers located throughout the country. In addition some Traveller children attend community childcare facilities and early start pre-schools. Attendance at pre-schools gives young children a valuable educational experience and prepares them for primary education as noted in The Report of the Special Education Review Committee (1993).

Respond! endorses the establishment of recognised mother and toddler groups as the most appropriate and accessible introduction to pre-school education for all. Respond! promotes social inclusion through community development as a priority and is proactive in pre-school development, homework clubs and after-school development in its community centres.

#### **4) Primary and Post-Primary Education**

It is important to stress that Traveller students enrolled in both primary and post-primary schools are entitled to the same education provision as all other students. Traveller students are also entitled to learning support and resource support in the same way as other students in response to identified educational needs.

The Survey of Traveller Education Provision in Irish Schools (2005) accords that the following additional resources have been provided to assist with the education of Traveller pupils in primary schools: -

- 540 resource teachers for Travellers are in place in primary schools throughout the country to provide additional learning support to Traveller students.
- An enhanced capitation grant is provided for each Traveller student enrolled in primary schools that have the services of a resource teacher for Travellers.
- A number of schemes and programmes to combat disadvantage are in place, for example, "Giving Children an Even Break" and "Home/School Community Liaison Scheme".

#### **5) Post-Primary Initiatives**

The Report of the Special Education Committee (1993) has led to a transfer rate of 85% in 2004 to post-primary school. There are approximately 1850 Traveller students in mainstream second level schools at present out of a possible 4000 i.e. 46% of all Traveller students of post-primary age. The following additional resources have been provided to assist with the education of Traveller students in post primary schools:

- The provision to each post-primary school of an additional 1.5 ex-quota teaching hours per week for each Traveller student enrolled.
- A supplementary capitation grant is available for each Traveller student enrolled at post primary level.
- A visiting teacher service (40 visiting teachers at present) is available to Traveller families throughout the country and the provision of a number of schemes and programmes to combat disadvantage have been developed.

#### **6) Third Level Access**

The National Office for Equality of Access to Higher Education, which was established in 2003, has recently published "Achieving Equality of Access to Higher Education in Ireland – Access Plan 2005-2007". The National Office will develop and agree national and institutional targets for each under-represented group. Travellers are a target audience of this plan.

**7) Adult and Further Education**

33 Senior Traveller Training Centres were in operation at the end of 2004 throughout the country. These centres provide a programme of general education, vocational training, work experience and guidance, counselling, and psychological services. The majority of attendees are aged between 18 and 45 years. The programme's "No Upper Age Limit" has attracted adults who may have previously had negative experiences of mainstream education.

Trainees are paid a training allowance while involved in the centres. All adult literacy programmes are open to Travellers and of the 33 Vocational Education Committees, 19 have specific adult education programmes for Travellers as part of their overall suite of literacy options.

## Employment

Respond! will promote the opportunity for Travellers to access mainstream employment. We will be guided by the Equality Studies Unit of the Equality Authority's "Travellers Experience of the Labour Market Programmes" (2003). This report highlights the experiences of Travellers accessing and participating in the employment market and details the barriers Travellers experience in entering labour market programmes and suggests Best Practice Guidelines in overcoming obstacles to employment/training participation. It is important to highlight the following:

- Identification of the participants will determine the design, delivery and outcome of the programme.
- Attracting the participants involves influencing those who will benefit most in the labour market, noting that Travellers have a variety of perceptions about programmes that affect their lifestyle or that include loss of benefits. Overall, they have had negative experiences of such programmes.
- Selection of participant and programme has to be an accurate match to ensure a positive outcome for all.
- To sustain participation of Travellers on a programme, it is critical to meet Travellers particular needs, most notably in the areas of hours of attendance and childcare.
- Monitoring outcomes and bridging the gaps: there is a real need for formal evaluation of programmes and clarification of where responsibility lies for ensuring Traveller progression into contracted employment.
- Getting the message across can only be achieved through consultation and through noting concerns, perceptions and potential barriers that Travellers have identified, (Respond! will promote programmes through interface contact).
- Outreach interaction with residents of halting sites, meetings with Traveller groups, radio advertising etc.
- Implement job skills programme assessment.
- Flexible working hours.
- Promote training within an audio/visual remit.
- Vocational training i.e. parenting, childcare places/courses (foundation level to level 6).
- Staff support/mentoring/monitoring outcomes (link with community development).

A lack of Traveller participation in labour market programmes result from:

- A lack of recognition of the Traveller culture in the planning and delivery of programmes
- A lack of additional support during programmes
- A lack of follow-up and development on completion of programmes

In relation to the employment of the Traveller community, Respond! recognises South Dublin County Council's pilot as a best practice model and hopes to emulate it. The Council set up a pilot Traveller employment scheme in 2005/2006 due to high unemployment in the Traveller community. They drew on their own HR experience and inputs from Pavee Point Travellers and other Traveller Groups.

General Operatives were employed on a temporary basis and those who successfully completed the FETAC accredited training continued employment on a permanent contract. Clerical Officers were also recruited, training was ongoing and participants were employed as temporary clerical officers. With experience, new skills were acquired and participants were successful in clerical officer competitions and are now employed on permanent contracts.

The success of the project was due to a number of factors including:

- Leadership in prioritising Traveller employment: This in turn motivated goodwill from people at all levels of the organisation.
- Good management: The time spent overcoming problems decreased over the lifetime of the project.
- Good relations with local Traveller organisations (tension was present due to outstanding accommodation issues). The Traveller groups have a role in the identification of potential participants to training and employment.
- Selection processes identified people with competencies or abilities to develop to do the job.

Their achievements include having 10 to 12 employees working in the Parks Department and Administration. In addition South Dublin County Council hopes to double the number of Travellers it employs to 20 within the next number of years.

#### **Recruitment:**

Respond! aims to promote equality of opportunity to access jobs by members of the Traveller community by:

- Developing and implementing a company wide recruitment strategy through the media in a more visual/audio format.
- Review retention supports towards continuous employment within Respond! to prevent drop out.
- Review job promotion strategy within Respond!
- Develop a strategy based on competencies rather than academic qualifications.
- Advertise positions with Traveller organisations or agencies supporting Travellers i.e. Women and Men's groups, FÁS, Health Service Executive, Department of Education and Science support programmes.
- Develop induction/mentoring/support programmes to ease transition from unemployment or part-time employment to full-time employment.
- Continually review legislation and upgrade employment practice.
- Work in partnership with FÁS to advertise positions in the media and employment agencies.
- Promote childcare employment and ensure that access to childcare places, training and qualification are in place.

## Creating Integrated Communities

### **Pre and Post-Tenancy Training:**

Respond! are committed to the principle that any housing and support programme for social housing tenants, including the Traveller community, must include tenancy training, community development and estate management training, together with a programme to develop support services focused on children, education, health services and other needs.

### **Building Communities:**

Respond! recognises the need to provide tenant participation and estate management training. This model will be revised to be inclusive of the Traveller Community with the aim of supporting community living in order to aid integration into communities. All prospective Respond! tenants are required to participate in this training. In particular, we note that while women and children are accessing education and training, the same is not true for Traveller men. We are aware that the development of training and education programmes for Traveller men should be reflective of their specific needs, while also recognising their skills. The development of education and training services specific to the cultural needs of Traveller men, women and children is essential if the programme is to evolve successfully.

According to the report from the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995), Traveller women have played particular and significant leadership roles within their own community and representing their own community. A number of Traveller women have been accorded various national awards and commendations. Traveller women have produced widely acclaimed poetry, art and crafts. However, the central contribution that women make to the well-being of the Traveller community is largely unrecognised.

Traveller women through the years have had primary responsibility for rearing, often large families, in appalling conditions. Traveller women have played crucial roles in maintaining Traveller culture and identity. In recent years Traveller women, in comparison to Traveller men, have shown themselves to be more openly accessing education and training. As a result of their openness, Traveller women are now being employed by a wider range of agencies and organisations.

### **Community Development:**

Respond! provides community development on all its estates and is founded on the principle of when people with shared interests within their society come together to improve, change or develop a process for growth in their community.

**Respond!** community development staff will:

- Work to facilitate dialogue between all people concerned with community development
- Engage people and organisations to participate in a creative way and note that feedback might indicate change may have to occur in the short or long term
- Include all people in planning, implementation and evaluation work with others towards social change
- Listen to and respect the views and experience of organisations and/or target communities
- Establish commitment and agree the goal that binds the community together

**Obstacles to Integration:**

In relation to general education and training, there is relatively good attendance at primary level while attendance falls away considerably at post-primary level. This fall off is systematic due to a lack of belief in the power of education.

**Respond!** recognises that participation in training and education generally is undermined by the following factors as illustrated in the Survey of Traveller Education Provision (2005):

- Erratic attendance at school is a major drawback to student success.
- Some parents referred to difficulty in helping their children with homework as they had poor literacy skills.
- The lack of parental involvement supports the development of a negative view of school and the lack of relevance of the education system.
- Some schools are refusing admission or making it difficult for Traveller children to access education by delaying tactics or telling parents that their children will not do well in their school (hence some schools are not taking their share of minority groups).
- There are fears and concerns that mainstream education undermines Traveller culture.
- Lack of facilities and supports to study.
- The lack of a culture that fosters and promotes education and training.
- Lack of welcome and understanding teachers in schools.
- Visiting teachers report that the 13-16 age group are considered adult at home and are allowed to make many of their own decisions. So when a child does not want to wear a uniform it is because he or she will be jeered for being “babies” by others. When they do not want to attend school, or sent home if they do not wear the uniform, they in turn move to “Youth reach” where no uniform is needed.

We are committed to working with the Traveller community to overcome the above fears and perceptions, by delivering Traveller friendly pre-school programmes and supporting older children in the primary, post-primary and third level school systems.

## Design Considerations

### **Accommodation Design and Delivery:**

Respond! believe that there is a need for a multi-disciplinary approach to the provision of accommodation and other support services for Travellers. The location and design of the accommodation is one of the essential elements in pre-determining the successful development of the project.

There is a close link between accommodation and identity. The design of Traveller specific accommodation should reflect the distinct culture and identity of Travellers. These issues were a focus for "The President Robinson Awards" for Design of Traveller's accommodation. In her preface to the publication for this award President Robinson wrote:

"When you apply a sense of excellence to a housing problem, when you try to design a home for someone else, I think that you are forced to imagine their lives. Through that act of imagination, the inheritance of the Traveller's – and their particular housing need - cease to be the objects of suspicion and become the objects of great interest and sources of instruction." (13)

The Council of Europe Report "Gypsies and Travellers" note the importance of linking the design of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation to the way in which Gypsies and Travellers use their living space:

"At present, there is too great a gap between the spontaneous occupation of space by Gypsies and Travellers and institutional dwellings on organised sites. Many of these are avoided by those who are able to do so. Sites felt to be acceptable, where the gap between spontaneous and institutionalised dwellings has been reduced, quickly become known and favoured, particularly since in a hostile environment the possibility of finding a place in which to rest and be free gives a sense of security." (14)

Respond! accords with the principles set out by the Task Force on the Travelling Community (2000) in relation to the guiding criteria for the design and provision of Traveller accommodation as follows:

- Acknowledge the distinct needs and identity of members of the Traveller community.
- Cater for the work patterns of the Traveller family.
- Take note of the needs and compatibility of extended family groupings, and the different population structure of the Traveller community. With over fifty percent under the age of eighteen, make provision for changing family structures.
- Contribute to improving relations between Travellers and the "Settled" community.

- Include proper landscaping to ensure the site is not only functional but also pleasant to live on and aesthetically pleasing to look at.
- Have adequate public lighting for security and safety purposes.
- Ensure an appropriate balance between personal privacy and communal needs.
- Allow for the integration of the family caravan with the accommodation facilities provided for each family, as well as adequate parking space for vehicles used by the family.
- Provide facilities for play space and communal needs.
- Be accessible and appropriate for Traveller tenants with disabilities.

In addition to the above, Respond! recommends the following design criteria:

- Regard should be given to the Traveller practice of using living space and work space as the one.
- Provision of transient sites with economic work space.
- Designers should bear in mind the fact that Traveller families tend to be larger than "settled" families.
- Cater for certain members of the Traveller community who keep animals.
- Provide adequate parking space for visitors to avoid conflict between neighbours.
- Have regard to the preference of Travellers to live, work and sleep at ground floor level.
- Have regard for defined boundary structures between houses.
- Provide for community building that incorporates mother and toddler groups, childcare facilities/training, after-school provision, drop-in health provision, youth club facilities and kitchen facilities for possible catering training. In addition, outside facilities for training and management of ground maintenance, site/accommodation caretaking training, fire prevention etc.
- Regard should also be given to full facilities i.e. medical service, education, etc.

#### **Planning and Inter-agency Co-ordination:**

There is a strong prerogative when planning a project to ascertain the existence of the necessary supportive programmes to provide the ongoing care and support for Traveller families. A successful housing strategy is dependant on good analysis, planning and the development of strong relationships between partner agencies involved in the accommodation and support of Traveller families. At a minimum this should include the following bodies; the Local Authority, Health Service Executive, education authorities and local statutory and voluntary support agencies. In addition the local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (L.T.A.C.C.) are available to advise on any aspect of accommodation for Travellers.

## Building Good Relations

The relationship between the Traveller community and “Settled” communities in Ireland is complex. It is influenced by a number of factors noted in the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) such as:

- A lack of contact and knowledge on the part of each community about the other.
- Minimal contact contributes to the formation of barriers of prejudice based on fear and ignorance. Contact is largely confined to economic transactions and statutory service providers.
- Conflict and tension are other characteristics of the relationship between the two communities. Conflict can arise where communities with different cultures share limited resources. This can be accentuated where these resources are not designed in a manner that accommodates cultural difference.
- The lack of provision of appropriate accommodation for Traveller families.

Actions by some Travellers which give rise to hostility in the local “Settled” population include:

- The illegal occupation of lands for living purposes by some Traveller families without due consideration for the use of the land by other residents.
- Using land in a manner that alienates the local community (rubbish, scrap cars, grazing horses) and damages the local environment.
- Unruly behaviour from time to time of large numbers of Travellers on special occasions tends to create fear among the “Settled” community that this type of activity will be a regular occurrence in every proposed halting site.

Social exclusion and discrimination of Travellers by the “Settled” community include:

- Incidents including refusal of service in hotels, public houses and other establishments.
- Reluctance to share facilities with Travellers, hostility and aggression against Travellers and the segregation of Travellers in the provision of facilities.
- A lack of understanding by the “Settled” community of Traveller’s distinct culture.

Recently it was stated in “Are you a Country Man”,  
“that the local pubs appear to close down during funerals in the hope that the Travellers will move on to another town.” (15)

One publican acknowledged that:

“fear by some publicans in regard to having their property damaged was the reason access to pubs was restricted.” (16)

To overcome some of these prejudices and lack of understanding, Respond! considers that some of the following measures may be useful:

**1) Improving Relationships**

It is essential for the success of any strategy for reconciliation and improving relationships to ensure that the Statutory Authorities gear their efforts and provide sufficient resources to uphold the rights of Travellers as citizens. The foundation for improved relations between the Traveller and "Settled" communities is the provision by the relevant Statutory Authorities of good living conditions and a permanent base giving Travellers the opportunity to avail of education, healthcare and other statutory services.

In time, these improved conditions should lead to better health standards, improved levels of school attendance and greater job opportunities, and effectively lead towards the closure of the gap in living standards between the "Settled" and Traveller communities, as well as removing many of the current causes of friction between the two.

**2) Fostering Understanding**

In order for any process of bridge building to succeed, the "Settled" community will have to accept that their fears and rejection of all Travellers are extremely negative and discriminatory. As part of a two-way process of reconciliation, the "Settled" community must take responsibility for addressing social exclusion experienced by Travellers. The sedentary community must recognise that objecting to, and thus obstructing the provision of proper services to Travellers, is counter-productive.

Such objections contribute to the creation of unsightly, unsanitary and inappropriately placed Traveller camps that upset communities and also seriously affect the health, living conditions, social and educational prospects of the Traveller community.

**3) Respectful Recognition**

To improve the relationship between the Traveller communities and "Settled" communities through the development of mutual understanding and support requires an adjustment in attitude towards one another and an acceptance of each others' cultures.

To achieve this goal every opportunity must be taken to increase levels of contact between Travellers and the "Settled" community, particularly at community level.

Local community and voluntary groups should be utilised to increase contacts between the Traveller and "Settled" community in an effort to enhance, understand and develop rapport. There is also the need to create new relationships between Traveller communities and "Settled" people.

This will involve raising awareness in inter-cultural skills and anti-racism promotion.

The process requires supporting Travellers to develop contacts with "Settled" people in a range of settings such as schools, churches, hotels, youth clubs, women's groups, community groups and other social settings e.g. concerts, weddings, pubs, libraries, health and fitness centres, boxing clubs, handball clubs, trotting clubs, etc.

This will involve Travellers in supporting "Settled" people on their issues and vice-versa.

#### **4) Increasing Meaningful Contact**

The Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) highlights that:

"it is important that attention is given to the process by which increased contact can be achieved.

The identification of common ground in terms of common interests, issues and concerns provides the best basis for good quality contacts. The objective of quality contact will also require that increased contact is based on mutual respect for cultural diversity and not on the notion of assimilation of one community by the other.

This in turn requires that groups prepare for contact by developing their knowledge of each other and by developing their skills in relating across cultural boundaries.

These conditions should be thus created for both groups to enter into, and set the terms for new relationships on the basis of equality. Without adequate preparation to the manner in which these contacts are developed, there is a real danger that increased contact will merely serve to confirm negative perceptions already held by each group." (17)

#### **5) Consultation**

Provision of Traveller Specific Accommodation by Respond! will include embarking on meaningful co-operation of resources between Traveller communities/organisations, local authorities and voluntary bodies in relation to the accommodation of Traveller families, as is mandated by the High Level Group to local authorities.

This process will involve the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (L.T.A.C.C.) and other suggested agencies as recommended by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

#### **6) The Role of Traveller Organisations**

The past few decades has seen significant growth in the number of Traveller organisations. This growth has been accompanied by a change in the nature and role of these organisations.

This change is noted within the document Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995). It can be seen in a number of areas including:

- A shift in focus has taken place, from a welfare approach inspired by charity, to a more rights-based approach inspired by a partnership process, in seeking to improve the living circumstances and general welfare of Travellers.
- There has been an increase in Traveller participation in Traveller organisations. This increase is related to the more developmental approaches and work methods that have evolved within Traveller organisations.
- The recognition of the importance of the concept of culture, ethnicity and racial discrimination has entered into the debate about the situation of Travellers. This has resulted in a redefinition of the Traveller situation in terms of cultural rights, as opposed to simply being a poverty issue.
- The emergence of a range of more confrontational relationships with statutory bodies is evident. These relationships were preceded by earlier consensus around a welfare agenda. The present thrust is now towards a new partnership based on a common understanding of the cultural needs of Travellers and of the urgency to respond to these needs.

## Social Inclusion

It is well recognised that the Traveller community is the most marginalised and socially excluded group in Irish society. Respond! in this policy document will advance the social inclusion measures recommended by the National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004.

In particular, enabling Traveller Families to:

- Achieve an acceptable standard of living
- Access equal opportunity
- Overcome poverty and social exclusion
- Challenge discrimination and exclusion
- Access good quality training, education and employment
- Advocacy provision for equality issues

Respond! will use its expertise in the delivery of good quality pre-school education, tenancy training and accommodation. In relation to the provision of Traveller accommodation, houses/sites should be designed to meet the accommodation needs of the Traveller families that will assist in combating segregation and exclusion, while promoting social integration and inclusion.

### **Conflict Resolution:**

Reconciliation strategies, combined with changing policy context and improved living conditions for Travellers, will greatly improve relationships between Travellers and "Settled" people. However, conflict resolution strategies will continue to have relevance at particular moments of tension or where incidents have taken place or seem likely to take place. Conflict resolution has much to offer reconciliation strategies by ensuring that moments of tension do not lead to violence or a hardening of attitudes or responses.

### **Mediation:**

Mediation services should be made available to deal with genuine disputes that may arise from time to time between the Traveller and "Settled" communities and between Traveller and Traveller. The Community Relations Service in the United Nations has developed a model of mediation which is based on three principles, namely:

- mediation is an informal process to resolve disputes and is not judgemental
- the mediator acts as a facilitator and not a problem solver
- the parties are responsible for the ultimate resolution of the dispute

A mediation service is available from Pavee Point Travellers Centre, Dublin. The Local Traveller Consultative Committee (L.T.A.C.C.) is also available to meet with representatives of local groups and Travellers to discuss any difficulties that may arise in relation to provision of Traveller Accommodation.

### **The Role of the Media:**

The media is a prime source of information for people as stated within The Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) and therefore has an important role to play in addressing relationships within a culturally diverse society.

The media can challenge or reinforce racist images, attitudes and behaviour. In a situation of minimal contact, "Settled" people obtain most of their information about Travellers from the media. Travellers are often portrayed negatively and stereotypically in the media. Travellers can often be portrayed as a problem or a threat. Media reports focus on events relating to crime, violence and conflict and they also tend to be reactive to events with less concentration on a pro-active approach to issues and events involving members of the Travelling community.

The Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) highlights the principles of The National Union of Journalists "Guidelines on Race Reporting" that provide some useful principles and practical suggestions that should inform all. In relation to Travellers, the guidelines state that the word Gypsy or Traveller should only be mentioned if strictly relevant or accurate and that reporting on Traveller issues should be balanced, seeking Travellers views, as well as those of other members of the community.

The Guidelines also recommend journalists to:

- Resist the temptation to sensationalise issues involving Travellers, especially in their relations with "Settled" communities over issues such as housing, settlement programmes and schooling.
- Try to give wider coverage to Traveller's lives and the problems that they face.
- Strive to promote the realisation that the Traveller community is comprised of full citizens of Great Britain and Ireland whose civil rights are seldom adequately vindicated, who often suffer much hurt and damage through misuse of media and who have a right to have their special contributions to Irish and British life, especially in music and craftwork and other cultural activities, properly acknowledged and reported.

The media can play a pivotal role in assisting in the development of harmonious relations between the Traveller and "Settled" communities through accurate and positive reporting of activities in the Traveller community in a manner aimed at promoting good relations.

### **Training:**

The future training priorities of Respond! for Travellers is to develop access to:

- Caretaking training/employment at Respond! centres.
- Community development and accommodation management training.
- Traveller cultural awareness training plus access Equality Authority directives in relation to the employment of Travellers.

- Training/education support.
- Anti-racist training for service providers which Respond! feels should be obligatory at all levels, including senior management. The Task Force on Travelling Community 2005 recommends that Codes of Practice should be drawn up in partnership with Traveller Organisations.
- Educational programmes that would help Travellers reach their full potential whether it is in academic, vocational or manual employment opportunities. Respond! supports and fosters such programmes.

### **Equality:**

When Respond! sets up its Equality Forum it will be guided by the principles of Equality as set out by the Equality Act 2004 and enunciated by the Equality Authority. With regard to accommodation, the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004 prohibit discrimination in relation to accommodation to a member of the Travelling community.

### **The Role of Respond!:**

Respond! has gained considerable experience over the past twenty four years from its work in communities. This experience could be deployed to work with communities on the ground in an effort to assist in breaking down barriers between the Traveller and "Settled" citizens. Respond! has developed extensive training and education programmes that could be used for these purposes.

In relation to the roll out of a Traveller Accommodation and Support Programme, Respond! is in the unique position to co-ordinate the targeted programme of a multi-disciplinary team. Respond! notes the recommendations in the document Towards 2016 in particular:

"Focusing on helping adults from disadvantaged communities including those in rural areas, to acquire basic literacy, numeric, information technology skills and tackling barriers/disincentives to lifelong learning."  
(18)

The parties will work to ensure that life-long learning provision is flexible and addresses the various needs of learners.

## Traveller Health

Respond!, through its Traveller Accommodation and Support Programme, aims to improve and enhance the health of Traveller families and is cognisant of the principles set out in the National Traveller Health Strategy.

The National Traveller Health Strategy was launched in 2002, and acknowledges factors influencing Traveller health:

- Poor living conditions: one in four Travellers have no piped water or electricity.
- Racism and discrimination: 17% of Travellers have difficulty registering with a doctor. It also found that only a small number of GPs provided services to Travellers.
- Health promotion: a lack of education and training materials that are relevant and meaningful to Travellers has contributed to a low uptake of health services by Travellers.

In the recent data of Traveller health, the situation has deteriorated in relation to the mortality of infants. This is highlighted in the Second Progress Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (2005), this indicates:

“That the differential in sudden infant deaths between Traveller families and the “Settled” community has increased to twelve times the average.” (19)

It also noted:

“that drug abuse is an increasing factor for Travellers as well as the rest of Irish society.” (20)

Presently a report from the Rapid Assessment Research project on drug issues in the Traveller community is being finalised.

In relation to accommodation, a joint committee was set up in 2004 to discuss issues of common concern in relation to the environmental health of halting sites and the respective roles of the social work services of the health boards and the local authorities.

A Travellers’ All-Ireland Health study will indicate the appropriate actions required in improving Traveller health, this is expected to commence in 2006.

## Taskforce on the Travelling Community (1995)

The delivery of housing services to the Traveller community lacked focus and understanding of the needs of Travelling families in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1993 a Task Force on the Travelling community was established, the terms of reference of which included the formulation of a recommendation to address the significant level of Traveller accommodation needs. Research by the Task Force on the Travelling Community identified 1085 Traveller households on the roadside and 257 on temporary sites.

The main recommendations made by the Task Force in relation to Traveller accommodation were as follows:

- The provision of 3,100 units of additional accommodation consisting of 900 houses (standard and group housing), 1,200 services sites and 1,000 transient sites by the year 2000.
- The design of this accommodation should reflect the distinct needs and identity of Travellers through making provisions for work patterns and extended family groupings.
- A network of transient sites should be provided across the country with site bays having access to electricity, running water, sewage disposal and refuse collection.
- The establishment of a Traveller accommodation agency as an independent statutory body. The agency would be tasked to draw up, in consultation with Local Authorities, a plan for Traveller accommodation to achieve the target of provision of such accommodation by 2000.
- Each Local Authority should establish a Traveller tenant accommodation committee to involve Travellers in the development of accommodation strategies.
- In addition to direct provision of accommodation by Local Authorities, the Traveller accommodation agency should investigate the possibility of accommodation provision by Travellers/Traveller organisations.
- Section 8 of the Housing Act 1988 should be amended to include group housing and halting sites within the general assessment of housing needs which Local Authorities are required to produce every three years.
- Local Authorities should review, and where necessary amend, their Development Plans to allow the provisions of Traveller specific accommodation in all land zones.
- Adequate Traveller accommodation should be developed across the country to combat the drift of Travellers to the Eastern Region and Dublin in particular as a result of inadequate facilities in other locations.
- Legislation and procedures should be amended to increase the powers of Local Authorities in tackling anti-social behaviour among tenants and illegal camping.

## Progress to Date

Progress on the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on the Traveller community is monitored by a committee established by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 1998. The committee consists of representatives of the Traveller community, relevant Government departments and the social partners.

In its first report in the year 2000, the Monitoring Committee noted that considerable progress had taken place in the establishment of the legislative, administrative and financial framework necessary for the implementation of the Task Force on the Travelling Community Report between 1995 and 2000 and the establishment of mechanisms for consulting Travellers.

Table 1 indicates the number of Traveller families living in Local Authority and Local Authority assisted accommodation and unauthorised sites in Ireland. The numbers have increased from 3,705 families in 1990 to 5,766 families in 2005. This increase in the number of Traveller families must be borne in mind when analysing the progress in implementing the Traveller accommodation programme.

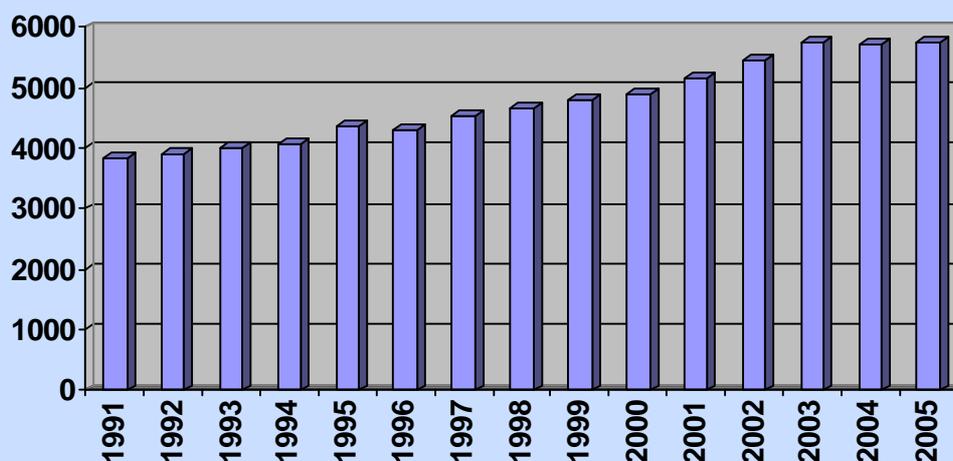


Table 1: Number of Traveller families in Local Authority Accommodation in the Republic of Ireland (1990-2005)

Source: Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Table 2 outlines the accommodation situation of Traveller families at the end of 2005. As can be seen from this table, over half of Travelling families were accommodated in standard houses, either standard local authority housing or voluntary and co-operative housing provided with local assistance from the local authorities.

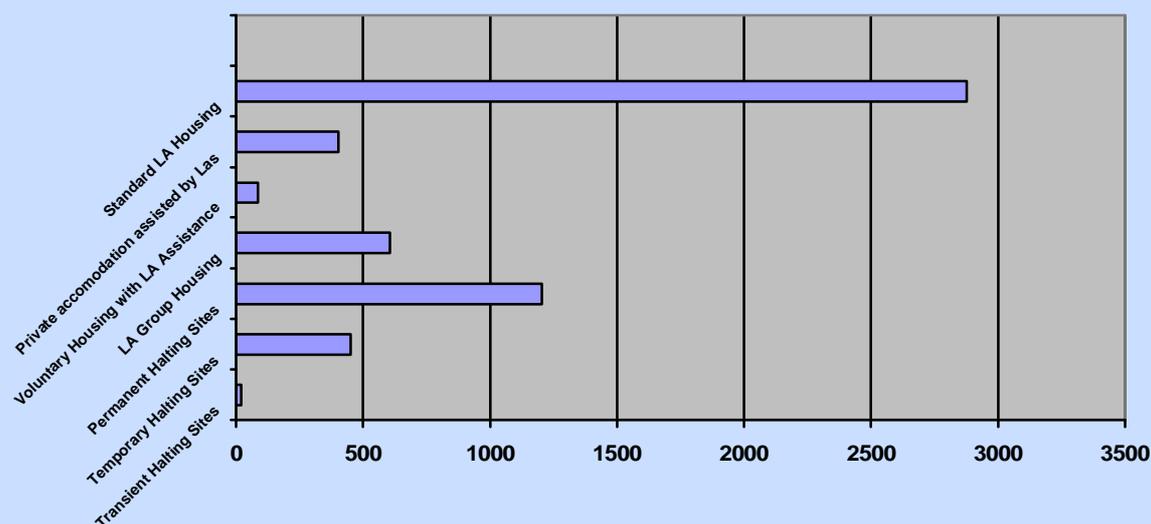


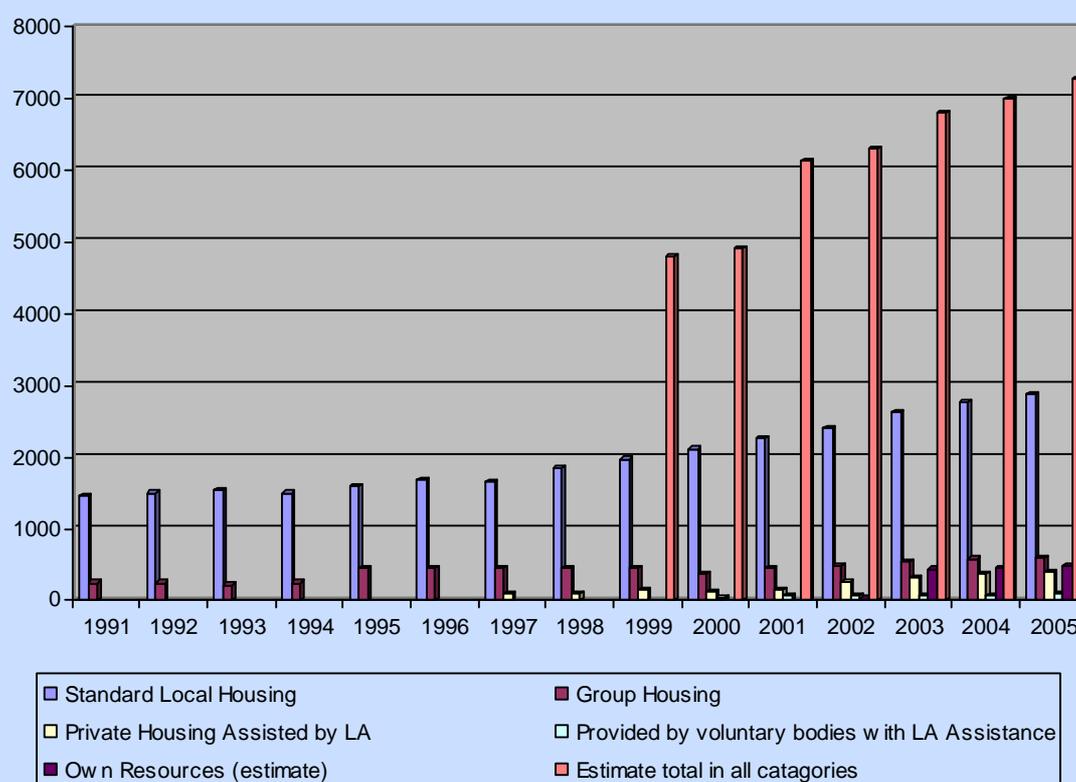
Table 2: Accommodation of Traveller families, 2005

Source: Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

# Traveller Accommodation Strategy (1997-2005)

During the period 1997–2005 there has been an increase in the number of families accommodated by, or with, the assistance of Local Authorities from just 1,900 Traveller families in 1998 to nearly 2,750 Traveller families in 2005.

Table 3 demonstrates the new source of Traveller accommodation since 1998 that is now beginning to play a significant part in the delivery of accommodation, including voluntary housing with local authority assistance and private housing with local authority assistance. These accounted for a total of 1,238 Traveller families that were offered accommodation in the period 1997-2005. It also sets out the information in relation to the quantum of accommodation need for Traveller families. The estimated accommodation need in 2000 of 3,785 families has been reduced to 2,556 in 2003 through the provision of accommodation for 1229 Traveller families.



**Table 3: Accommodation Provision (1991-2005)**

Source: Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

# Traveller Accommodation Strategy (2005-2008)

## Meeting the Need

Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2005-2008 Analysis of Gross Need and Targets set by Local Authorities						
Local Authority Category	Local Authority	Current Demand (2005-2008)	Future Demand (2005-2008)	Gross Demand (2005-2008)	Targets (2005-2008)	Difference
City Council	Cork	71	15	86	71	-15
	Dublin	98	71	169	182	13
	Galway	136	52	188	67	-121
	Limerick	53	26	79	39	-40
	Waterford	47	30	77	59	-18
<b>City Council Total</b>		<b>405</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>-181</b>
County Council	Carlow	20	0	20	20	0
	Cavan	20	5	25	25	0
	Clare	64	24	88	94	6
	Cork North	30	36	66	70	4
	Cork South	48	13	61	65	4
	Cork West	12	14	26	30	4
	DLR	65	0	65	65	0
	Donegal	47	10	57	47	-10
	Fingal	110	28	138	138	0
	Galway	80	56	136	113	-23
	Kerry	63	24	87	87	0
	Kildare	45	14	59	58	-1
	Kilkenny	16	8	24	43	19
	Laois	50	7	57	57	0
	Leitrim	15	14	29	23	-6
	Limerick	91	30	121	91	-30
	Longford	24	69	93	78	-15
	Louth	65	6	71	70	-1
	Mayo	63	55	118	118	0
	Meath	55	5	60	44	-16
	Monaghan	25	12	37	50	13
	North Tipperary	39	20	59	39	-20
	Offaly	97	16	113	110	-3
	Roscommon	67	14	81	52	-29
	Sligo	66	24	90	48	-42
	South Dublin	196	102	298	230	-68
	South Tipperary	46	20	66	41	-25
	Waterford	17	0	17	17	0
	Westmeath	25	30	55	41	-14
	Wexford	111	20	131	111	-20
	Wicklow	58	24	82	112	-30
<b>County Council Total</b>		<b>1730</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>2430</b>	<b>2187</b>	<b>-243</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>2135</b>	<b>894</b>	<b>3029</b>	<b>2605</b>	<b>-424</b>

Table 4: Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2005-2008

Source: Traveller Accommodation Unit, Department of Environment and Local Government

Demand	Number of Units
Current demand	2135
Future demand	894
Gross demand	3,029
Target demand	2,605

However, some local authorities still have a relatively high need.

County Council	Number of Units
South Dublin County Council	298
Dublin City Council	169
Fingal County Council	138
Cork City Council	86
Cork County Council	153
South Tipperary County Council	66
North Tipperary	59
Kilkenny County Council	24
Waterford City Council	77
Waterford County Council	17
Wexford County Council	131
Limerick City Council	79
Limerick County Council	121
Mayo County Council	118
Galway City Council	188
Galway County Council	136
Carlow	20
Cavan	25
Clare	88
Donegal	57
Kerry	87
Kildare	59
Laois	57
Leitrim	29
Longford	93
Louth	71
Meath	60
Monaghan	37
Offaly	113
Roscommon	81
Sligo	90
Westmeath	55
Wicklow	82

**Table 5: Current Total Need**

**Source: Traveller Accommodation Unit**

(These numbers are provisional, the Department of Environment and Local Government is currently examining information provided by the Local Authorities)

## Types of Accommodation

Respond! favours the provision of purpose-designed and purpose-built permanent accommodation for Traveller families and is willing to assist local authorities in meeting their need. We also favour the provision of a series of transient halting sites to meet the needs of Traveller families' distinct lifestyle.

Respond! will adhere to the "Guidelines for Group Housing for Travellers" (2002) and "Accommodating Transient Traveller Families", provided by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and we accept the principles as set out by the Irish Traveller Movement whereby the key feature of Traveller culture must be respected:

- That extended families live together
- That Traveller families tend to be larger
- That living space and work space tend to be one and the same
- That Travellers practice varying degrees of nomadism

Respond!'s programme for the provision of Traveller accommodation focuses on the following:-

### **1) Group Traveller Accommodation**

This type of accommodation will meet the preference by Traveller families for the extended families to live together.

### **2) Conventional Estate Housing**

Respond!'s experience has indicated that this type of accommodation should only be offered to Traveller families who have a preference for estate living so long as the necessary structures are put in place to prepare and support these families in this type of house.

### **3) Specifically designed housing as part of an Integrated Scheme**

This type of accommodation provides the opportunity to meet the specific needs of Traveller families such as the provision for extended families living together and the requirement of larger accommodation units to meet the need that Traveller families tend to be larger. Respond! favours the delivery of this type of accommodation on a cluster basis as part of an integrated development. The cluster model allows Traveller families a level of independent living and creates the synergies for mutual support.

In the past number of years Respond! has worked with local authorities across the country in the delivery of integrated housing developments. Integrated schemes consist of social, affordable, private, and houses for elderly and disabled clients. These integrated housing schemes provide accommodation for families, single parents, elderly and disabled clients. Residents of these housing schemes are supported by the inclusion of community buildings that provide a wide range of services from pre-schools to education and training programmes.

#### **4) Transient Sites**

This type of accommodation provides for the lifestyle needs of some Traveller families. The provision of good quality, specifically designed, permanent Traveller accommodation and a series of transient halting sites will ameliorate the need for Traveller families to park on the roadside or on unofficial halting sites which have been the main issues of division and conflict between the Travelling community and the "Settled" community over the last 30 years.

The transient sites must be well-designed with the requirements of the end users in mind. A study of the movement patterns of Traveller families will inform the process of choosing sites at the various locations around the country. It is essential that the transient sites are built to the highest standards, fully serviced and maintained properly.

The Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) research noted that in the 1994 census, a network of transient sites would have to provide a total number of units greater than the number of transient households and suggested a factor of 1.25 to 1.5 units per household might need to be adopted.

It also recommended that a network of transient sites be provided across the country in each Local Authority administrative area.

To bring a level of order to the management of the Transient sites, Respond! recommends that the sites are let on a pre-booked basis. Further inquiry and consultation with Traveller Groups on the needs of a transient site will be completed before implementation.

# Implementation

## **Target Counties:**

Respond! aims to target the provision of Traveller accommodation for those counties with the highest need. The delivery of accommodation will be based on a cluster model as follows:

- Dublin City, South Dublin and Fingal County
- Cork City and County
- Limerick City and County and Galway County
- Mayo County
- Wexford Borough and County
- Waterford City and County

## **Traveller Accommodation Cluster Forum (T.A.C.F.):**

For each of the above clusters Respond! recommends the establishment of a Traveller Accommodation Cluster Forum (T.A.C.F). These cluster groups will work in partnership with Local Authorities, Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (L.T.A.C.C.), Traveller bodies and other agencies to assist the Local Authorities in meeting their targets as set out in their Traveller Accommodation Plans.

The Forum would be made up of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals from the following organisations:

- Respond! Housing Association
- Local Authorities
- Health Service Executive
- Education interests
- FÁS
- Gardaí Síochána
- L.T.A.C.C.

This multi-disciplinary team would be charged with researching and developing a Traveller Accommodation and Support Plan for the cluster that will identify:

- The families to be accommodated
- Group housing
- Traveller Accommodation in Integrated Schemes
- Transient halting sites
- Education/employment/health support plan
- Suitable sites to meet the accommodation need

Consultation with local residents regarding the development of schemes will enlist the support of local organisations working on the ground involving "Settled" sedentary people, who can contribute to the process of relationship building through such actions as:

- Setting out their opposition to acts of exclusion and violence against Travellers.
- Raising awareness within the local “Settled” community through providing opportunities for people to explore issues of cultural difference, equality, discrimination and racism.
- Identifying and pursuing common issues in partnership with Traveller groups and supporting them on their issues.
- Providing training at local level on intercultural skills and anti-racism.
- Resolving issues of conflict amongst Travellers and between Travellers and “Settled” Communities.

#### **Pre-tenancy Training:**

Respond! regards pre-tenancy training as the most important precursor to estate living. Pre-tenancy training is essential to prepare tenants to live harmoniously together. The pre-tenancy training course is the first step in creating an appreciation of the importance of tenant participation and estate management. It covers the following areas:

- What is anti-social behaviour?
- Equality, fairness and anti-racism training
- Estate living
- Tenancy agreements
- Landlord’s responsibility
- Tenant’s responsibility
- Dealing with conflict
- Defusing difficult situations
- Conflict resolution and mediation
- Developing programmes for community building
- Mixed Courses: Tenants and Residents of Adjacent Estates

#### **Post-Tenancy Community Development**

When families settle into their houses and estates, Respond! seek to engage residents in developing post-tenancy community development programmes. The programmes are aimed at establishing structures on estates to harness tenant’s ideas and needs in a meaningful manner.

As part of post-tenancy community development, a needs analysis is undertaken to ascertain the tenant’s needs on the estate. Some of the following areas are explored as part of post-tenancy community development depending on the identified needs of the estate:

- The establishment of estate structures
- Residents association
- Environmental committee
- Community building management group
- Childcare committee
- Committee skills training
- Developing pre-schools services
- Capacity building training
- Conflict resolution training
- General education and training

The focus of post-tenancy community development is to establish structures on estates to ensure harmonious estate living and provide programmes to support tenants and their children. This will be further developed to include the Traveller community who wish to access Respond! Traveller accommodation.

As a tenant of Respond!, the all-in holistic package generally includes:

- Community centre
- Community development support
- Tenant management board
- Child care support strategy
- Development of elderly support

## Conclusion

If the Traveller accommodation strategy is to be developed successfully there is an essential requirement for a multi-disciplinary approach to providing not only accommodation but also education, health, training and social support for Traveller families. Any housing strategy is doomed to failure if it is not underpinned by and supported by the above.

The Traveller accommodation and support structures require participation at national, regional and county level and should incorporate a wide range of expertise from health professionals, educators, employment/training sectors, national and local Traveller organisations.

If the proposed delivery framework is to be successful in the implementation of the Traveller accommodation and support structures, it is essential that there is political buy-in at local, regional and national level by County Councillors from the very early stages.

Respond! recognises that where Traveller accommodation is properly designed with the needs of the end users in mind, and based on meaningful consultation and discussion with Traveller families, such developments will be very successfully achieved.

Respond! is confident that a properly resourced and supported programme for the delivery of accommodation for Traveller families, as outlined above, will accelerate the supply of good quality, purpose designed accommodation for Traveller families who are on the road sides, in unofficial sites or unsuitable halting sites, within the lifetime of the current Traveller Accommodation Programme (2005-2008).

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