



# **Feasibility Report on Tenant Participation Pilot Project for Traveller Specific Group housing at Bóithrín na Saoirse, Circular Road, Galway**

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**An Roinn Tithíochta,  
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Department of Housing,  
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# 1. Foreword

I welcome this feasibility report on a pilot tenant participation project for Traveller specific housing in Galway City.

Galway City Council is committed to fostering strong, inclusive, and sustainable communities, and a key part of this commitment is ensuring that tenants have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the management and maintenance of their homes. This report was commissioned by Galway City Council through Dormant Accounts Funding.

This feasibility report, authored by researchers Professor Padraic Kenna of University of Galway and Cecilia Forrestal, Consultant and former Human Rights Co-Ordinator for the Community Action Network, provides a strong, ethically grounded, and human rights based approach to accommodation services and represents an important first phase in a longer term programme of work. The report builds on the strong collaborative approach demonstrated in delivering the five award-winning Traveller homes at Bóithrín na Saoirse.

Through consultation with local authority personnel and tenants at Traveller specific accommodation, the report identifies both the opportunities and challenges in advancing tenant participation and highlights the need to embed cultural respect, dignity, autonomy, and human rights at the core of all participation structures.

Galway City Council welcomes the recommendation to pilot a tenant participation project across Traveller specific accommodation in the city. This pilot will support the development of a practical, culturally responsive, and sustainable framework for tenant involvement, complementing—rather than duplicating—the valuable work already undertaken by organisations supporting the Traveller Community.

I look forward to working closely with the University of Galway, Traveller tenants, and Traveller representatives as this project progresses, and thank the authors and contributors for their engagement and contributions to this research.

Meaningful engagement requires time, investment, and a willingness to learn, and this pilot provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships, deepen mutual understanding, and work collaboratively toward shared goals for the benefit of the wider community.

If successful, the project has the potential to benefit more than ninety families living in Traveller specific accommodation in Galway City, while also generating insights to inform future policies and practices.

**Leonard Cleary**

**Chief Executive, Galway City Council**





## 2. Summary

Galway City Council provides a range of accommodation for over four hundred Traveller households in the city and has recently completed a new Traveller-specific housing estate in Circular Road, Galway. The Council recognises the Traveller Community as a minority ethnic group and works to ensure that the cultural needs of Travellers are met as far as is practicable.

The city council have commissioned a Feasibility Report on establishing a Pilot Project on Tenant Participation in one Traveller Specific Accommodation Project in Galway City. This is in line with the city council's commitment to equality and human rights, and the values of dignity, autonomy, participation, inclusion, social justice, and environmental justice, as set out in the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029 Policy Statement.

Irish housing policy resolutions and reports on estate management since 2001 have promoted tenant participation in Local Authority housing<sup>1</sup>. The Galway City Council Tenants Handbook includes a section on Tenant Participation, which also refers to Traveller Specific Accommodation:

Galway City Council recognises the importance of resident and tenant participation in estate management and is committed to working in partnership with residents and tenants to promote estate management in their estates<sup>2</sup>.

Indeed, effective tenant participation is widely recognised as being essential to good social housing management and maintenance, to sustainable communities and to community safety. The benefits of effective tenant participation include realising the human rights of tenants, gaining insights and input from tenants to improve housing management and maintenance, promoting strong communities, reducing social isolation, empowering tenants, building skills and community support, as well as developing more open, inclusive governance of housing<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 5. Good Practice Recommendation No. 1. Norris, M. Managing Partnership: Enabling Tenant Participation in Housing Estate Management (DoELG, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Galway City Council, (2025) Tenant Handbook, (Version 5) p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> UN Economic Commission for Europe, #Housing2030 (UN, 2021) 42-43.

Tenant participation is defined as “the effective involvement of tenants, both directly and via representative associations, in housing management decision making, policy formation and changes, performance improvement, and community projects at local and national levels.” Levels of participation range from mere information provision, at one end of the scale, to “co-production” of the management and maintenance of the accommodation, at the other end, including joint approval of estate budgets.

The human right to a home involves rights of central importance to the individual's identity, self-determination, physical and moral integrity, maintenance of relationships with others, and a settled and secure place in the community. The notion of home is viewed as much more than a physical setting or building. Today, home is associated with safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. It is intertwined with health, child development, poverty/wealth, and opportunity in general. While these higher order policy considerations are important, poverty and costs of home maintenance for tenants (those which are the tenant's responsibility, such as painting and minor repairs) remain significant issues for tenants.

Research shows that some of the barriers experienced by tenants in tenant participation include under-resourced structures that may incur personal costs to tenants, a culture of power imbalances, perceptions of lack of influence, lack of training and time, and personal barriers. There may also be a general lack of knowledge of how tenant participation would work in practice, particularly in differentiating individual internal housing maintenance issues from common estate management and maintenance issues. There is a need for training on meeting and committee skills for Local Authority tenants, including Traveller tenants, without which any effective tenant participation framework cannot operate.

Detailed consultation was undertaken with Galway City Council staff working with Travellers in August 2025 and with tenants of the Traveller-specific housing in October 2025, where key issues were raised.

This pilot project on tenant participation will be new for all participants and will require significant support and training for both tenants and city council staff, to ensure success. Tenants should be supported to become leaders for the project.

Meaningful tenant engagement requires sufficient resourcing supported by a realistic budget, including for ongoing training, events budgets, and communications. One report,

(Appendix Five) suggests the involvement of an external, independent organisation to provide essential advice, expertise, and training. **Building effective engagement takes time and it is important to adopt an incremental approach and to offer opportunities that are realistic and achievable within defined timeframes, are what tenants want, and can be resourced.**

The Pilot Project on Tenant Participation would complement and **not replicate or duplicate** any of the valuable work being done with Travellers in Galway city by other agencies and organisations.

Its primary focus will be on the issues of management and maintenance of the Traveller specific accommodation, as set out in the tenancy agreement between tenants and the city council as landlord. This will build dialogue and cohesiveness, generate innovative solutions based on a shared understanding of challenges, and develop an enhanced learning approach to addressing ongoing issues. While the individual tenants will have issues of repairs or maintenance, the emphasis of this process is on the estate-wide and communal issues.

**A Culturally Appropriate Tenant Participation Model for Traveller Specific Accommodation must be based on the following principles:**

- Cultural Respect and Recognition
- Relationship and Trust Building
- Flexible and Informal Participation Methods
- Empowerment and Capacity Building
- Representation and Advocacy
- Language, Literacy, and Communication Support
- Site-Specific Decision Making
- Anti-Discrimination and Safeguarding
- Monitoring, Feedback, and Adaptation (See Appendix 2 below)
- Health & Safety
- Dignity At Work Principles

Finally, this Tenant Participation Pilot Project could develop a Traveller Tenant Participation Charter co-designed with residents (as set out in Appendix 6 below) and support funding for on-site projects (e.g., youth engagement, site beautification) that double as participation platforms.

**One significant issue is the need to respect the privacy of Traveller families.**



# 3. Background to the Pilot Project

**Edel Killarney, Traveller Accommodation Unit, Galway City Council**

The Tenant Participation Pilot Project emerged from engagement with Empowering Tenants – Protecting Human Rights (2022<sup>4</sup>), which outlines a human rights-based framework for tenant participation in local authority housing management. During the preparation of the Galway City Council Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025–2029, the council identified the potential to explore how this model could be applied within a Traveller accommodation context.

Recognising the relevance of the proposed framework to Traveller-specific accommodation, Galway City Council is the first local authority to examine the structured application of this model within Traveller Accommodation services and to document learning arising from the process. The pilot is exploratory in nature and is intended to inform future policy and practice, supporting informed decision-making on whether and how tenant participation structures could be sustainably embedded in estate management practice.

The pilot builds on the positive work already undertaken by caretakers on Traveller accommodation sites, particularly their role in day-to-day site management, relationship-building, and liaison between tenants and council services. It also reflects learning from the design and delivery of the Bóithrín na Saoirse group housing scheme, where meaningful engagement with Traveller families facilitated by CENA, Traveller led Approved Housing Body, contributed to positive outcomes and a strong sense of ownership.

The scope and methodology of the pilot were informed by discussions with Professor Pádraic Kenna, University of Galway, and Cecilia Forrestal, Community Facilitator and Former Human Rights Co-Ordinator with the Community Action Network (CAN), a human rights-based organisation. These discussions helped to ground the project within an established human rights and participation evidence base. The active support of the senior management team was a critical enabling factor in the delivery of the project, facilitating

<sup>4</sup> Community Action Network, Centre for Housing Law, Rights and Policy at University of Galway and Southampton University, Empowering Tenants, Protecting Human Rights, April 2022 Available at <https://www.housingagency.ie/sites/default/files/RSPs/CAN%20CHLRP%20University%20of%20Southampton%202022%20Empowering%20tenants%20protecting%20human%20rights.pdf>

cross-departmental engagement and supporting an evidence-informed approach to service development. Funding provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage through the Dormant Accounts Fund was essential in enabling the commissioning of this feasibility research.

The pilot responds to a range of national and local policy commitments on tenant participation. In 2019, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission recommended that Galway City Council establish appropriate mechanisms for Traveller tenant participation in estate management, developed in collaboration with Travellers and Traveller organisations. The pilot also supports implementation of commitments within the Council's Equality Action Plan (2021), the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee protocol, and the Estate Management Strategy, and aligns with longstanding Department of Housing guidance on supported tenant participation.

Effective involvement in housing management and maintenance decisions is identified throughout the pilot as central to dignity, equality, and respect. Accordingly, the pilot is grounded within a human rights framework, drawing on the PANEL principles of Participation, Accountability, Non Discrimination, Empowerment, and Legality. The pilot seeks to translate these principles into practice through the creation of safe, structured spaces for dialogue, clear communication mechanisms, and a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities in estate management.

Phase One of the pilot produced a set of defined outputs that inform this feasibility report. Phase Two will focus on testing the report recommendations and examining how participation can be embedded into estate management practice. Independent oversight will support evaluation, learning, and future policy development, with a view to informing a sustainable, human rights-based approach to tenant participation within Traveller accommodation managed by Galway City Council.

## 4. Recommendations

- A dedicated city council staff member with knowledge of housing management and maintenance issues and systems, to be assigned with clear responsibility as Traveller Tenant Participation Liaison Officer. This postholder would progress the Tenant Participation Pilot Project, arrange meetings and act as liaison between ALL city council departments and the Traveller Tenant Participation meetings – involving attendance at meetings and reporting back at a group level on issues raised at previous meetings.
- The role of caretakers for Traveller-specific accommodation and the number of these staff currently employed by Galway City Council should be reviewed, with a view to expanding this role to encompass more comprehensive ‘estate management’ type responsibilities and increasing staffing levels in order to improve management and maintenance standards<sup>5</sup>.
- Traveller tenants to nominate a liaison person to represent them between meetings with the city council liaison person.
- Agreed budget for the ongoing meetings and support to be set aside in advance each year to cover staff costs and tenant expenses.
- Training on tenant participation to be made available to Galway City Council staff and to tenants in Traveller - specific housing on how the tenant participation framework would operate – as well as identifying the meeting skills training needed. This may also involve facilitation on the management and maintenance responsibilities of BOTH the landlord (city council) and tenant. While the individual tenants will have issues of repairs or maintenance, the emphasis of this process is on the estate-wide and communal issues.
- Training on skills for effective meetings, including roles, committee procedures, and skills, as well as training on cultural issues should take place immediately so that there is a shared understanding of the nature of the tenant participation engagement.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, Traveller Accommodation Expert Review Programme Board Update, November 2025, page 20

- Arrange four facilitated tenant participation meetings, initially over 6 months, with a view to establishing clarity on all sides on the types of issues which would be addressed in the tenancy participation, and how these would be dealt with in the process. There must be an agreed agenda and meeting arrangements, including who would act as chairperson, who would take minutes, and how the issues would be progressed between, and at, the next meetings.
- After the four initial meetings an evaluation of the Tenant Participation Pilot Project should take place, identifying any challenges, achievements, and good practices.
- Maintain information sharing and exchange of good practices with the Network of Traveller Accommodation Officers across Local Authorities and the Housing Agency. To begin this, we recommend a joint information exchange event between relevant staff working on Traveller tenant participation from the Galway City Council, Cork City Council and Offaly County Council, as well as Traveller tenants involved in tenant engagement projects from the three areas.

## 5. Context

In Galway City, in 2023, it is estimated that 457 Traveller households lived in accommodation provided directly by or with the assistance of Galway City Council, including on unauthorised sites. Some 63% lived in Local Authority standard housing, with 4% living in Local Authority Group Housing and 14% living in Halting Site Accommodation<sup>6</sup>. The Galway City Council Estate Management Strategy 2019 sets out how Galway City Council manages its tenancies and estates, including halting sites. A Traveller Specific Estate Management Strategy was planned for Traveller specific accommodation to be implemented during the period of the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029<sup>7</sup>.

The Tenants Handbook of the city council includes a section on tenant participation, which also refers to Traveller specific accommodation.

Galway City Council recognises the importance of resident and tenant participation in estate management and is committed to working in partnership with residents and tenants to promote estate management in their estates<sup>8</sup>.

Galway City Council recognises the Traveller community as a minority ethnic group and works to ensure that the cultural needs of Travellers are met as far as is practicable. The city council is committed to an equality and human rights approach in its provision and management of Traveller accommodation, in line with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights.

The city council's commitment to equality and human rights is motivated by a shared set of values including Dignity; Autonomy; Participation; Inclusion: Social Justice and Environmental Justice. The city council will have regard to a range of strategies that promote equality and inclusion of the Traveller community<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Galway City Council, (2025) Tenant Handbook, (Version 5) p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Galway City Council (2024) Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029, pp. 14-16 and see Appendix 1 below. Available at:

<https://files.galwaycity.ie/gccfiles/?r=/download&path=L0RlcGFydG1lbnRzL0hvdXNpbmcvUHVibGljIEVuz2FnZW1lbnRzL1RyYXZlbGxlcjBBY2NvbW1vZGF0aW9uIFByb2dyYW1tZSAyMDI1LTlwMjkgQURPUFRFRFC5wZGY%3D>

The Traveller (Housing Accommodation) Act 1998 provides that the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee may advise the Minister on the “most appropriate measures for improving at local level, consultation with, and participation of, Travellers in the provision and management of accommodation”<sup>10</sup>. While there is ongoing consultation with Travellers on accommodation, there has been less development of the full participation of Travellers in the management of Traveller specific accommodation<sup>11</sup>.

The Final Report of the Joint Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community (2021) recommended that:

Research on the design of culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers should be carried out without delay, and should take into account Traveller household sizes, cultural considerations such as animal keeping, and future proofing to allow for future generations to remain living in proximity. Travellers must be engaged with and consulted throughout the process<sup>12</sup>.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Equality Review carried out by Galway City Council in respect of Traveller-specific accommodation in 2019 stated that the City Council had identified in its then current Traveller Accommodation Programme that tenant participation strategies, as per the Estate Management Strategy, would be developed in collaboration with Travellers and Traveller organisations in relation to Traveller-specific accommodation<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>10</sup>Section 19.

<sup>11</sup>Reports of National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/publications/national-traveller-accommodation-consultative-committee/#research-reports>

<sup>12</sup>Final Report of the Joint Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community  
Final Report of the Joint Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community (2021) p. 71/2.

<sup>13</sup>IHREC, An account of the Equality Review carried out by Galway City Council in respect of Traveller-specific accommodation (2019) [https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2022/08/Galway-City-Equality-Review-IHREC\\_Final.pdf](https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2022/08/Galway-City-Equality-Review-IHREC_Final.pdf), p. 21. The Equality Review noted that while this was positive, there was no reference to inclusion of Travellers in tenant participation strategies in social housing estates.



The Terms of Reference for the Operational Sub-Committee of the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (March 2025) include in its purposes:

To promote best practice in the provision of housing and accommodation for the Traveller community<sup>14</sup>.

As well as the time commitment and skills development, implementing these policy objectives into a meaningful and effective Traveller Tenant Participation Project will require a commitment from all sides to a learning process and a high degree of mutual trust.

<sup>14</sup> Galway City Council, Traveller Interagency Group - <https://www.galway.ie/en/community-tourism-arts/community-development/traveller-interagency-group>

## 6. Pilot Project on Tenant Participation

Galway City Council is preparing this Feasibility Report on a Pilot Project on Tenant Participation in one Traveller Group Housing scheme. The Bóithrín na Saoirse site in Circular Road was developed by Galway City Council after extensive design consultation with the Technical Team, Engineers, Clerk of Works, Traveller families and CENA, and tenants have now taken up residence.

A tenancy information meeting on 26 February 2025 involved presentations from the Housing Estate Liaison Officers and other relevant city council staff as well as a Community Garda. Key issues in relation to tenancy agreements were discussed. This included points of contact between tenants and city council staff, forming a resident/tenant's group, estate management issues, and the terms of the tenancy agreement. The distribution of responsibilities in relation to repairs and maintenance between the tenant and the city council (landlord) were outlined, as well as procedures for dealing with emergencies. Other issues included neighbour nuisances, anti-social behaviour, noise pollution, parking, control of dogs, subletting, bins and waste management, fire safety plans, information on appliances such as air-to-water systems and other environmental issues.

The tenancy agreement forms the basis of the tenant participation process setting out the obligations and responsibilities on both parties as landlord and tenant.

## 7. Definitions of Tenant Participation

The various approaches to local authority tenant participation are set out in the report - Empowering Tenants: Protecting Human Rights: Effective Tenant Participation in the Management of Local Authority Housing (2022) by Community Action Network, Centre for Housing Law, Rights and Policy at University of Galway and Southampton University<sup>15</sup>. This Report outlines the benefits of Tenant Participation:

Effective tenant participation is widely recognised as being essential to good social housing management and maintenance, to sustainable communities and to community safety. The overall benefits of effective tenant participation include realising the human rights of tenants, gaining insights and input from tenants to improve housing management and maintenance, promoting strong communities, reducing social isolation, empowering tenants, building skills and community support, as well as developing more open, inclusive governance of housing<sup>16</sup>.

Tenant participation is defined as:

...the effective involvement of tenants, both directly and via representative associations, in housing management decision making, policy formation and changes, performance improvement, and community projects at local and national levels.

This report advocates a bottom-up human rights-based approach to tenant participation and emphasises the PANEL principles as a means of explaining in concrete terms what a human rights-based approach means in practice.

- Participation - Tenants should have the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect their rights.
- Accountability - There should be independent monitoring of how tenants' rights are being affected, as well as remedies when things go wrong.
- Non-discrimination - Tenants and their households should be treated irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other personal characteristic.

<sup>15</sup> Available at: <https://www.housingagency.ie/sites/default/files/RSPs/CAN%20CHLRP%20University%20of%20Southampton%202022%20Empowering%20tenants%20protecting%20human%20rights.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> UN Economic Commission for Europe, #Housing2030 (UN, 2021) 42-43.

- Empowerment - Tenants should be assisted to understand their rights and be fully supported to take part in developing policy and practices which affect their lives.
- Legality - Tenant rights should be set out in legislation or bye-laws where possible.

The definition adopted in the report is ‘effective tenants’ involvement, both directly and via representative associations, in housing management and maintenance decision making, policy formation and changes, performance improvement, and community projects at local and national level.’

Tenant participation may take a variety of different forms including the provision of information and advice, consultations, tenant panels, service specific groups, tenant and resident associations, involvement in management, strategic decision-making, governance arrangements’ as well as involvement in the design and implementation of policy. These various forms represent different levels of participation. Giving information and engaging and consulting with tenants represent a more limited top-down form of participation. By contrast, tenant-led scrutiny, and co-production of decisions on estate management and maintenance tend to be viewed as higher forms of participation.

A foundational theory in this approach is Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation which outlines graduated forms of participation culminating in partnership and citizen control at the pinnacle of participation<sup>17</sup>. This conceptual “ladder” sets out the graduations of participation from non-participation to shared control and resident/tenant decision-making over resource allocations issues.

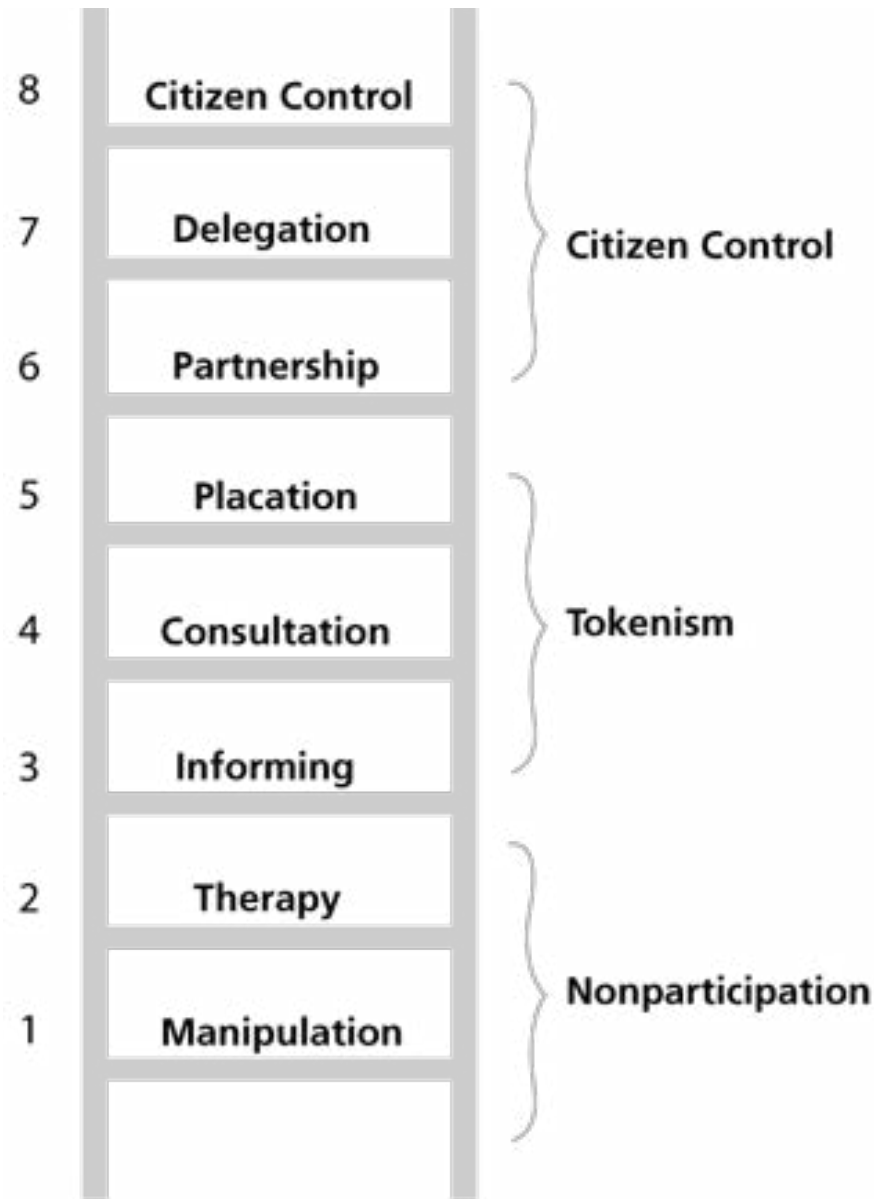
The higher level of participation can amount to “co-production” of the housing/ accommodation environment:

Co-production concerns power differentials and “goes well beyond the idea of “citizen engagement” or “service user involvement” to foster the principle of equal partnership. It offers to transform the dynamic between the public and service workers, putting an end to “them” and “us.” Instead, people pool different types of knowledge and skills, based on lived experience and professional learning.

<sup>17</sup>Arnstein, S.R. ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’ (1969) 35(4) Journal of the American Planning Association, 216-224.

<sup>18</sup>Community-led Housing London, Coproduction in Housing and Regeneration – A Framework for Communities and practitioners, (2022) p. 4. <https://www.communityledhousing.london/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CLHLondon-Coproduction.pdf>

## 8. Arnstein's Ladder of Participation



## 9. Potential Barriers

Some of the barriers experienced by tenants in relation to tenant participation have been identified in research<sup>19</sup>. Landlord-dependent factors include:

- Institutional atmosphere that discourages engagement
- Lack of engagement options
- Under-resourced structure that may incur personal costs to tenants
- Culture of power imbalances

Tenant-dependent factors include:

- Perceptions of lack of influence
- Practical barriers such as transport and childcare.
- Conflict of interest for board membership
- Concern they do not have skills (e.g. finance/budgeting/meeting skills)
- Lack of training and time
- Personal barriers (e.g. age, disability, language)
- Consultation fatigue

The pilot project will address these potential barriers in the first meetings and seek ways of overcoming these while also seeking to create conditions for greater collaboration, and respecting dignity at work principles. It will establish with city council staff and Travellers the key aspects of housing and estate management and maintenance which are appropriate for tenant participation and the level of influence over housing management and maintenance which will be shared between city council staff and Tenants. Central to this is a clear understanding of the landlord and the tenant obligations in terms of management and maintenance and repairs, such as painting, minor repairs etc. Clarity must be established around individual tenant complaints – especially in relation to internal housing issues such as repairs, and estate management and maintenance issues which includes common maintenance and repairs issues. Other issues which tenants may have raised with the city council may not be within the remit of the tenant participation process, but new issues can always be considered for inclusion, where common interests exist.

<sup>19</sup>Irish Tenant Engagement Network (ITEN), Tenant Engagement: Insights from best practice in Europe. Developing an evidence-based framework for tenancy engagement in Ireland (ITEN, 2024) p. 12.



## 10. Avoid duplication or replication of work of other organisations or agencies

It is important to recognise the distinct and separate roles of the various people and agencies working and advocating for Travellers in Galway. These include the Galway Traveller Movement, Western Traveller and Intercultural Development Project, Traveller Interagency Group, and the valuable work of the Traveller Community Health Workers. Many other agencies play key roles, in healthcare, education, policing and environmental issues.

Tenant participation builds on the management and maintenance of the Traveller specific accommodation. The tenancy agreement forms the basis of the relationship between tenants and the city council, and as such it also forms the basis of Tenant Participation Pilot Project.

This point is significant, as there are already several organisations and frameworks which address wider issues such as discrimination, city council policies on assessment of needs, provision of accommodation, homelessness, education, health care, policing, and socio-economic development.

This tenant participation model would complement and **not duplicate or not replicate** any of the work of these agencies or organisations. Its focus is on the tenant participation in the management and maintenance of the Traveller specific accommodation. This will build dialogue and cohesiveness, generate innovative solutions in a shared understanding of challenges, and develop an enhanced learning approach to addressing ongoing issues.

It involves a series of steps towards the addressing and creating solutions to every issue on the agenda of regular in-person meetings and subsequently reporting and evaluating the effectiveness of each decision and outcome. The proposed agenda is set out in Appendix 4 below.

As such, it is important to distinguish what issues will be and what **issues will not be considered** in the operational meetings of the Tenant Participation Pilot Project. This will define the focus of meetings and the content of the AGENDA for meetings. It will require getting agreement on the issues to be discussed, and followed, and agreement on the issues which are **not within the terms of tenancy agreement** which is the basis of the

tenant participation. This does not in any way preclude invitations to the meetings being extended to any other organisations and agencies to present information on their work, or for the tenant participation meetings to apply for funding, take part in community activities as a group, and support Travellers and tenants in other ways. The examples from Cork City Council (described below) illustrate how tenant participation can grow from dealing with issues of management and maintenance to wider aesthetic and development projects.



# 11. People's Homes and Right to Housing

There are many institutional drivers for tenant “engagement” or participation, including preserving the value of the properties or assets, savings in management and maintenance costs, treating tenants as consumers or service users, or in some cases regulatory obligations<sup>20</sup>.

Here, however, the central focus of effective tenant participation is a recognition that every action taken ultimately impacts on tenants’ enjoyment of their homes. Today, the notion of home is viewed as much more than a physical setting or building. In contemporary societies, home is associated with safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

Housing/accommodation and home are intertwined with health, child development, poverty/wealth, and opportunity in general<sup>21</sup>. ‘Home’ can be seen as a physical structure; as a territory - implying security, control, and rootedness; as identity; as a social and cultural phenomenon; and as a base for relationships. Home also acts as a geographical space from which a person or household can access other services and amenities and is regarded as necessary for the enjoyment of all human rights. International human rights law regards ‘home’ as involving ‘rights of central importance to the individual’s identity, self-determination, physical and moral integrity, maintenance of relationships with others, and a settled and secure place in the community.’<sup>22</sup>

The Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019 set out in detail the standards for all rented houses, including standards on the structural condition. Rented houses must be maintained in a proper state of structural repair which “means sound, internally and externally, with roof, roofing tiles and slates, windows, floors, ceilings, walls, stairs, doors, skirting boards, fascia, tiles on any floor, ceiling and wall, gutters, down pipes, fittings, furnishings, gardens and common areas maintained in good condition and repair and not defective due to dampness or otherwise.”

Thus, the management of a Traveller-specific accommodation location engages the right to home on many different levels, and this approach must remain central to the pilot project.

<sup>20</sup> The Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority requires AHBs to actively seek input from tenants and provide regular opportunities for engagement on service provision.

<sup>21</sup> Fox O’ Mahony, L. *Conceptualising Home: Theories, Laws and Policies* (Oxford, Hart 2007).

<sup>22</sup> *Connors v the United Kingdom*, European Court of Human Rights (App No 66746/01) 27 May 2004, §82.

## 12. Support and Budget

The Tenant Participation Pilot Project arrangements will be new for all participants in Galway and will require significant support and training for both tenants and city council staff, to ensure success. A recent report recommended that tenants should be supported to become leaders for the project<sup>23</sup>. This includes allowing tenants to become spokespeople for the project and ensuring the entire process, in particular the structural changes, are tenant-led. Tenants should write the strategy, set goals, and be involved in monitoring implementation. Training on committee skills and reporting arrangements should also be provided to make this process effective.

Meaningful tenant engagement requires sufficient resourcing supported by a realistic budget, including for ongoing training, events budgets, and communications. One recent report suggests the involvement of an outside, independent organisation to provide essential advice, expertise, and training<sup>24</sup>. In that report it was found that independent oversight helped build trust between all parties and furthered the collaborative approach.

There is considerable merit in having a specialist and dedicated city council staff member to act as liaison person between the tenant participation meetings and all departments of the city council. This will require buy-in at the highest management levels and a resolution confirming the importance of the regular group feedback and engagement at tenant participation meetings.

All this will require an openness to look at and commit to new ways of working, building relationships of cooperation and trust, as well as recognising that these relationships will evolve. In other words, looking to LEARN from the ACTIONS taken as a means of enhancing the overall and long-term goal of advancing tenant participation in decision-making in the management of the Traveller specific accommodation. This enables the capacity building of both parties to the pilot project – i.e., city council and tenants of Bóithrín na Saoirse, Circular Road, to participate in this collaborative approach, working and putting together the agreed common aims and actions.

<sup>23</sup> Dowdall, A. Housing Agency Insights: Developing a Tenant Engagement Culture and Structure: The Case of Circle VHA (2022). [https://www.housingagency.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/2022%20Housing%20Agency%20Policy%20Insights\\_Issue%202.pdf](https://www.housingagency.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/2022%20Housing%20Agency%20Policy%20Insights_Issue%202.pdf)

See also Appendix 7 below.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

## 13. Consultation for this Feasibility Report

Following initial online meetings with Edel Killarney, Michael Forde and Maria Fallon-Ward of the city council, consultation meetings were held with city council staff on 11 August 2025, and with tenants from Bóithrín na Saoirse, Circular Road on 30th October 2025. Consultation meetings were also held with Brian Dillon of CENA - an AHB which specialises in providing Traveller-specific accommodation, Deirdre O' Regan Traveller Accommodation Unit, Cork City Council, Andrew Guy, and Elaine Byrne of the Housing Agency, as well as Siobhan Hayden and Bernadette Hanley of Offaly County Council.

The agenda for the city council and Traveller meetings included:

- Background to the project
- Shared exploration on what a successful project would look like
- Previous experience of tenant participation - what has worked well to date, what have been the challenges
- Tenant participation in action – agenda, supports, and challenges

Those who participated in the meeting at City Hall in August were:

- Elizabeth Fanning - Director of Services, Galway City Council
- Edel Killarney - Traveller Accommodation Officer
- Róisín Bourke - Traveller Liaison Officer
- Maria Fallon Ward - Administrative Officer for Estate Management
- Edward Conlon - Housing Estate Liaison Officer
- Catherine Fahy - Senior Social Worker
- Rowan Johnson - Assistant Engineer – Maintenance
- David Finan - Assistant Staff Officer – Estate Management

### **Outcome of Consultation with Galway City Council Staff and Traveller households**

There is a shared desire for a more effective, collaborative relationship between the city council and tenants. All parties talked about the need to explore a better way of working and engaging in relation to the ongoing management of the new estate. Lack of trust, bureaucracy, and poor relationships, sometime characterised by disrespect and trauma, were highlighted as significant issues in the past. Quotes from meetings included:

- Relationship building is essential – change is required – Council staff member.
- There is a big contrast between the experience of how we related in the past and now - Traveller
- Change how we engage and build up a culture of trust - mistrust, trauma are issues over generations – Council staff member
- Explore another way of working and learn from it – Council staff member

Everyone noted a shift in relationships now, fuelling a hope that change could be possible:

- Can really see and feel a shift in the council and the way we are treated – Traveller
- The meetings to date have been very positive – Traveller
- Recent meetings have been very positive – Council staff

All talked about the desire for a culture of trust, respect, and a joint approach to making the new estate one where people could flourish. The importance of being able to name issues as they emerge and apply a joint problem-solving approach to their resolution was emphasised.

The very positive experience in the design and building of the new homes contributes to this hope. Travellers have a real sense of ownership, appreciation, and pride in their new homes. They participated in a meaningful way in the design process and now wish to do the same in the ongoing maintenance of the estate.

- The design experience with CENA and the architect was excellent - Traveller
- We are delighted with our new homes and with our little community – Traveller

Travellers initially experienced some confusion as to who the landlord would be but are very clear now that it is the city council, and wish to build an inclusive, participative engagement with them. The city council staff are keenly aware that this new development gives a very good opportunity to build collaboration and ensure that the quality and satisfaction with the accommodation is continued.



## **Learning from the Past about what works in terms of Traveller Tenant Participation/ Engagement:**

Both the council and Travellers identified a similar number of things that have worked in the past. These include:

- Having one person as the main contact in the estate works for the council and similarly, having one person as the main contact within the council works for the Travellers.
- The caretaker role has been invaluable for both.
- Regular estate management meetings, ideally in person, work for both parties and help to build good relationships of trust.

The city council staff noted key positive features of how they are working internally:

- Regular Traveller Accommodation Programme meetings
- Traveller Accommodation Unit set up with all staff dealing with Traveller issues, meeting once per month
- Quick responses from each other to queries and open communication
- Attention paid to staff safety, always
- Collaboration with other services as required
- Awareness that more training is required and a willingness to engage in facilitation, negotiation, mediation, and Traveller Awareness training

## **Proposals for the future**

Travellers suggested core elements of a tenant participation approach that would work for them, including:

- Regular in person meetings between the Traveller families in Bóithrín na Saoirse and the council. These should take place every six weeks initially to establish an agreed method of engagement and build relationships of trust. Ideally, the meetings should be independently facilitated and minutes taken.
- Both the council and the Travellers should contribute to the agenda. The agenda should reflect a review of previous minutes and follow up decisions and requests, immediate concerns to be discussed, short term and long-term issues to consider.
- Travellers were very clear that the tenant participation meetings would focus on the management and maintenance issues and attendance at meetings of organisations with a wider remit or advocacy role was not necessary.
- In considering agenda items, the following were named as potential agenda items if the meetings were to take place in the near future:

#### Immediate:

- Nominate a named person in the council and a Traveller to be the main contacts
- Safety of children. Ramps to prevent children (especially those with special needs) running out onto the road
- Painting of rear walls
- Signage
- Response to phone calls

#### Short Term:

- Dealing with emergencies
- Resourcing and putting in place a secure play facility
- Building a Grotto
- Input from other agencies as deemed appropriate and timely
- Long Term:
- Allocations and how they will be done into the future
- Rent

The city council staff suggested waste management, fire safety, anti-social behaviour, and interagency co-operation as issues that may need attention from time to time.

### **Summary of meetings with CENA**

CENA is a Traveller led Approved Housing Body, based in Doon, Co. Limerick. It has had support and funding from The Housing Agency and The Irish Council for Social Housing. Their model is a Traveller-led holistic one, with Travellers centrally involved in the design, delivery, and management of their own homes. CENA employs Traveller Liaison Officers and seeks to have Traveller self-determination as a guiding principle from start to finish. Their approach is to develop sustainable accommodation solutions, participation in home and in community, with effective housing management and effective landlord /tenant solutions. CENA seeks to work in partnership to address poor relationships between Travellers and local authorities.

CENA involvement in the design and building phase of Bóithrín na Saoirse was seen as a huge success, and CENA would be very open to the idea of a partnership in this, and in using the learning from it for application in other sites.

## Consultation with Deirdre O' Regan, Traveller Accommodation Unit, Cork City Council

The Traveller Accommodation Unit at Cork City Council has been working with Travellers to develop some innovative approaches. Deirdre O' Regan described how there is an expectation that tenant participation/engagement is another avenue for raising maintenance and repairs issues, and that sometimes this leaves no space for discussions on wider issues affecting all tenants. There is a pressure to respond to immediate needs.

A Traveller Tenants Committee was established which addressed many tenant issues in a communal way. Among these was the production of a Traveller Tenancy Handbook in an accessible format, covering such issues as the division of responsibilities between the landlord and the tenant for repairs in mobile homes and in group housing schemes. The objective of the handbook is to provide an accessible, visually engaging resource that encourages better engagement with tenancy information. It was developed as part of the Traveller Accommodation Unit's Traveller Tenancy Participation Programme, a Traveller Liaison Officer-led initiative, funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund. This is the result of a collaborative, partnership-driven approach, involving input from the Traveller community, the Traveller Accommodation Unit, Housing Maintenance and Traveller organisations to ensure it is culturally appropriate and accessible. This is one of several initiatives applying a Traveller-led Community of Care model, focusing on long-term solutions that support the well-being, empowerment, and growth of the Traveller community within their living environments. The assistance of an independent socially engaged practitioners was seen as hugely valuable for this and other projects on tenant engagement<sup>25</sup>.

The success of this approach was illustrated in one common sanitation issue, which was handled in a collective way, with a technical survey being commissioned, and collective action undertaken afterwards to resolve the issue.

<sup>25</sup>The project involved direct contributions from members of the Meelagh Women's Traveller Committee, the St. Anthony's Park Women's Project, and students from the Irish Traveller community attending St. Aidan's Community College from Spring Lane and the wider community. Creative producer Eve Olney and artist Annie Forrester collaborated closely with these community members, with Cork Traveller Women's Network and the Traveller Visibility Group providing advisory support in the process.

Projects on training and support to assist Travellers in tenancy sustainment and development of their community in Traveller-specific group housing schemes and Traveller Halting sites, and a series of workshops focused on creative methods of upskilling and self/ community care are also underway. This includes a home furnishing and maintenance upskilling programme. A report described how the level of engagement from the committee members varied depending on the creative activity, with self-care oil blending, soap making, and jewellery making being the most popular. Participation was particularly strong, and there was a real sense of enthusiasm and investment in the creative process.

A Participatory Budget Programme was undertaken regarding planning for planting and improving and maintaining a site, including the development of a central green area as a “garden of remembrance,” honouring family members of the community who had passed on.

The need for training services on committee and meeting skills for Travellers was raised, as well as the need for training on issues around home maintenance and DIY skills. This can be a major issue for low-income households, and those with disabilities, where the tenancy agreement places onerous responsibilities on tenants. Indeed, a collective tenant’s approach to some of these issues could be valuable activity for the tenant participation approach.

### **Consultation with Siobhan Hayden and Bernadette Hanley of Offaly County Council.**

There is a long-established tenant engagement practice with Travellers in Birr with Offaly County Council going back some 30 years. Regular meetings are held through an independent third party - Birr Travellers and Settled Peoples Group, with an independent chairperson. Issues relating to site design and management and maintenance can be raised, although there is no official tenant participation group, as such.

This approach has managed to move the discussions beyond individual repairs and maintenance issues towards looking at common issues affecting all tenants, and such issues as aesthetics, with funding applications for planting and other estate improvements. On the Tullamore site a meeting room for tenants was developed and meetings are being held between tenants and the county council staff, although there is not a formal tenant participation organisation.

There is a good level of consultation and co-production of the management, maintenance, and overall estate management issues. This moves beyond the narrative of rights and responsibilities to a shared vision of the estate. The objective is for tenants on the Traveller-specific site to see themselves and address common issues through tenant participation, and the empowering effect this has on tenant lives was emphasised.



# **Appendix 1. Galway City Council, Traveller Accommodation Plan 2025- 2029. Section 2. Policy Statement**

- Galway City Council recognise the Traveller Community as a minority ethnic group and will work to ensure that the cultural needs are met in so far as is practicable.
- Galway City Council is committed to an equality and human rights approach in its provision and management of Traveller accommodation, in line with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Duty) to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights. The council's commitment to equality and human rights is motivated by a shared set of values including Dignity; Autonomy; Participation; Inclusion: Social Justice and Environmental Justice.
- Galway City Council will have regard to a range of strategies that promote equality and inclusion of the Traveller Community including the recommendations included in the reports of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community and the DHLGH Traveller Expert Review Group, the National Action Plan against Racism, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. The council await further direction from the DHLGH on the role of Local Authorities in the implementation of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2029.
- Galway City Council aim to provide high-quality Traveller accommodation for the city councils Traveller households who meet the criteria to qualify for social housing and in accordance with its Scheme of Letting Priorities.
- Applications for accommodation to Galway City Council will be considered in line with the housing legislation and regulations. Advice and assistance will be provided to social housing applicants and/or their representatives, if requested by the applicant, to address any difficulties that may arise in completing the housing application process. An Easy Read Guide, for completing the housing application is available on the Galway City Council website and has been made available to the Galway Traveller Movement to support their members.
- Galway City Council when allocating and managing accommodation, will have regard to the provisions of its adopted Scheme of Letting Priorities 2017, Estate Management



Strategy 2019, Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2018 in addition to estate management issues, an appropriate social mix within areas, compatibility of families, anti-social behaviour, and house size requirements.

- Galway City Council will have regard to the Galway City Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021 – 2026 that aims to respond to the on- going and changing housing needs of people with a disability. This includes members of the Traveller community with a disability who are residing or seek to reside in Traveller Specific Accommodation. The council will continue to review the needs of Traveller applicants with a disability requirement under the four categories: Mental Health, Physical, Sensory and Intellectual Disability, this includes families who have a child with a disability. The Housing and Disability Steering Group (HDSG) was established to support the implementation of the Galway City Council Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability. The Housing and Disability Steering Group now has subgroups in situ with key external agencies to progress collaborative solutions.
- The council will assist and encourage Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) in the provision of standard and Traveller specific accommodation schemes to Traveller households.
- The council will work closely with homeless service providers, the LTACC and with Travellers who are assessed as homeless to address their accommodation needs through appropriate social housing supports.
- Each tenant of Galway City Council must sign a tenancy agreement which sets out the conditions of tenancy and establishes a legal relationship between the tenant and the local authority. Each Tenant will be supplied with a Tenancy Handbook.
- The council will not permit unauthorised encampments on its lands and will serve notice to families, as appropriate. Galway City Council commits to working in partnership with those families and other agencies to support them in relation to their accommodation needs.
- Galway City Council will continue to consult with Travellers, Traveller organisations and the Local Traveller Consultative Committee on issues relating to Traveller accommodation.
- Galway City Council will support initiatives to enhance participation and inclusion, to assist in the development of strong sustainable communities.

# Appendix 2. Elements of a Culturally Appropriate Tenant Participation Model for Traveller Specific Accommodation

## 1. Cultural Respect and Recognition

- Acknowledge and value the distinct identity, traditions, and nomadic lifestyle of Travellers.
- Avoid assimilationist approaches—ensure participation allows for the continuation of cultural practices (e.g., travel, family arrangements, horse-keeping).
- Include cultural celebrations and traditions as part of community activities.

## 2. Relationship and Trust Building

- Long-term engagement, consistent and transparent communication which will build trust over time.
- Liaison officers or tenant engagement staff who are either from the Traveller community or have deep cultural understanding.
- Ensure respectful, consistent communication—avoid one-off or tokenistic consultations.
- Develop culturally sensitive conflict resolution mechanisms.

## 3. Flexible and Informal Participation Methods

- Use face-to-face, informal approaches—kitchen-table conversations, drop-ins, or on-site visits work better than formal meetings.
- Be aware of literacy barriers—use verbal communication, images, and video instead of dense written materials.
- Schedule engagement around community routines (e.g. avoid times of year when many may be travelling for family or cultural reasons).

## 4. Empowerment and Capacity Building

- Training and education opportunities on rights, advocacy, and housing policies.
- Encourage and support leadership development programmes for young Travellers.
- Support new tenant-led initiatives that reflect cultural values and community priorities.

## **5. Representation and Advocacy**

- Support Travellers to become tenant representatives through mentorship and capacity-building.
- Create space for Traveller-only groups to discuss concerns in a safe environment before joining wider forums.
- Partner with trusted Traveller advocacy organisations to co-facilitate participation.

## **6. Language, Literacy, and Communication Support**

- Use plain English (and Irish if requested) in all materials.
- Offer audio or visual alternatives (videos, voice notes).
- Provide one-to-one support to help tenants understand tenancy rights, site rules, and how to participate effectively.

## **7. Site-Specific Co-Design and Decision Making**

- Involve tenants in shaping the rules, layout, facilities, and any future improvements of the site.
- Respect traditional family structures when making decisions about allocations or pitch layouts.
- Planning for future family accommodation needs.

## **8. Anti-Discrimination and Safeguarding**

- Zero tolerance for racism or discrimination from staff, neighbours, or wider forums.
- Ensure that Traveller tenants feel safe and respected when participating alongside other tenants or in public meetings.

## **9. Monitoring, Feedback, and Adaptation**

- Collect feedback in culturally appropriate ways (e.g., informal chats, trusted intermediaries).
- Act on what tenants say and report back clearly and quickly.
- Use this feedback to adapt participation methods over time to improve inclusivity and effectiveness.

# Appendix 3. Proposed Draft Agenda for Tenant Participation meetings (subject to ongoing amendment with the agreement of the parties)

**Draft Agenda: Firstly, decide who will be attending the meeting from tenants and City Council**

**Monthly or Six Weekly Meetings Initially**

- 1. Appointment of chairperson and minute taker.
- 2. Introductions and apologies for absence.
- 3. Reading of minutes of last meeting.
- 4. Matters arising not on Agenda.
- 5. Issue 1. ....
- 6. Issue 2. ....
- 7. Issue 3.....
- 8. Issue 4.....
- 9. Invited Speaker/presenter.
- 10. Any Other Business.
- 11. Review of this meeting, how do participants feel it addressed relevant issues?
- 12. Date of next meeting.

**Other issues which are of concern to tenants, but are within the remit of some other organisation or agency, and therefore would not be suitable for this agenda of the Tenant Participation Meetings:**

**Issue 1. ....**

**Reason.....**

**Issue 2. ....**

**Reason.....**

**Issue 3.....**

**Reason.....**

# **Appendix 4. Good Practice Recommendation No. 1. Norris, M. Managing Partnership: Enabling Tenant Participation in Housing Estate Management (DOELG, 2001)**

## **Statements of Policy on Tenant Participation in Housing Estate Management – Checklist of Contents**

### **Strategic Objectives and Management**

- The strategic objectives of the tenant participation service
- Specific aims for the development of tenant participation in housing estate management
- Timescale for the achievement of these aims
- The management structure of the tenant participation service
- The staffing structure of the tenant participation service

### **Tenant Participation Practice**

- Statement of policy on the initiation of tenant participation projects
- List of the aspects of housing management and of estate management which are appropriate for tenant participation
- Statement of the level of influence over housing management which will be afforded to tenants
- Details of policy and procedures for promoting equal opportunities in tenant participation

### **Tenant Participation**

- Policy and procedures for providing information to tenant on the housing management and tenant participation services
- Policy on the provision of tenant participation training to individual tenants and members of tenant's associations
- Policy on the provision of grant aid for the running costs of tenants associations
- Policy on the provision of premises or capital grant aid to tenants associations

## **Customer Care and Performance Monitoring**

- Procedures for the strategic evaluation of the tenant participation service
- Procedures for assessing customer satisfaction with all elements of the tenant participation service
- Procedures for making a complaint about the tenant participation service
- Procedures for addressing customer complaints, including target response times and policy on the provision of compensation
- Procedures for assessing the performance of the tenant participation service

## **Appendix 5. Lessons learned - from Dowdall, A. Housing Agency Insights: Developing a Tenant Engagement Culture and Structure: The Case of Circle VHA (2022)**

This case study demonstrates that a structure and culture of tenant engagement can be developed in a meaningful and measurable way with significant benefits for both tenants and housing providers. Tenants' voices can be included in the structure of housing organisations, and this has impacts on service delivery and organisational culture, with a greater emphasis on two-way participation, equality, and empowerment.

Lessons for AHBs or Local Authorities seeking to improve tenant engagement include:

1. The support of senior management and board from the outset is essential: Effective tenant engagement emerges from the interaction of bottom-up activism and top-down leadership. CEO and Board support is essential to success by ensuring that engagement is embedded within organisation-wide processes.
2. Not to rely solely on existing staff and structures: The process requires an acknowledgement that new structures and staff roles may be required to develop meaningful tenant engagement.
3. Embrace technology and online resources: Covid originally delayed plans, but the move online ultimately allowed more accessibility. Website improvements and the new tenant app can provide more emphasis to engagement.
4. Continued tenant recruitment: To ensure tenant engagement structures maintain momentum, ongoing recruitment is key. The diversity and representativeness of tenant groups should be considered, and their role clearly defined. Ensuring they are neither too formal nor informal will maximise recruitment.
5. Support tenants to become leaders for the project: This includes allowing tenants to become spokespeople for the project. But it also means ensuring the entire process, in particular the structural changes, are tenant-led. Tenants should write the strategy, set goals, and be involved in monitoring implementation.



6. Building effective engagement takes time: It is important to adopt an incremental approach and to offer a menu of opportunities that is a) realistic and achievable within defined timeframes, b) what tenants want, and c) can be resourced.
7. Meaningful tenant engagement requires sufficient resourcing: Objectives must be supported by a realistic budget. This can include a dedicated Tenant Engagement Officer but also resourcing to embed engagement across the whole organisation. This includes ongoing training, events budgets, IT equipment, and communications.
8. The involvement of an outside, independent organisation: This provided essential advice, expertise, and training. Most importantly, it also brought independence and moderated between tenants and Circle VHA. Independent oversight helped build trust between all parties and furthered the collaborative approach.

# Appendix 6. Outline of Tenant Participation Charter for Local Authority Traveller Accommodation

This Charter sets out our shared commitment to support, enable, and respect meaningful tenant participation for all residents of the Travellers site. We recognise the unique cultural identity and rights of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities and aim to create a respectful, inclusive environment where all voices are heard.

## 1. Our Principles: We believe tenant participation should be:

- Culturally Respectful – Honouring the traditions, values, and way of life of Traveller communities.
- Inclusive – Welcoming all tenants and residents, regardless of age, gender, literacy level, or travel patterns.
- Voluntary – Participation is always by choice and without pressure.
- Empowering – Supporting tenants and residents to have a real say in decisions that affect their homes and community.
- Trust-Based – Built on open, honest relationships between tenants and the housing provider.

## 2. Our Commitments: We will:

- Provide culturally appropriate information in plain language and alternative formats (e.g. audio, visual).
- Offer multiple ways to participate, including informal chats, home visits, and community events.
- Respect traditional family and site structures in how we engage and make decisions.
- Support the creation of a Tenant Voice Group, with opportunities for Traveller residents to lead.
- Offer training, support, and resources to build confidence and skills in participation.
- Actively address discrimination and ensure safe spaces for participation.
- Give feedback and updates on how tenant input has shaped decisions.

### **3. Participation can be in many ways:**

- Sharing your views in informal discussions with site staff or liaison officers.
- Joining group meetings (formal or informal) about site rules, improvements, or services.
- Taking part in co-design workshops for changes to the site or services.
- Giving feedback through surveys, suggestion boxes, or community gatherings.

### **4. Working in Partnership:** We will work in partnership with:

- Tenants/residents and their families.
- Traveller liaison officers and trusted community/healthcare workers.
- Local and national Traveller advocacy groups.
- Local authority staff.

### **5. Review and Accountability:** This Charter will be:

- Reviewed annually with input from Traveller tenants.
- Updated as needed based on feedback or changes in the law or community needs.
- A living document that reflects our ongoing commitment to improving Traveller tenant participation.

Signed

#### **On behalf of the local authority:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **On behalf of the tenants:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Role (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 7. Cork City Council – Irish Traveller Tenancy Handbook



# IRISH TRAVELLER TENANCY HANDBOOK



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## Notes

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An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage



**OLLSCOIL NA  
GAILLIMHE**  

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