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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

‘How do Travellers experience the housing assessment of needs process – culturally appropriate?’

Helena Cullinane

CARL Research Project

in collaboration with

Cena

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Date completed:	30/04/2021

What is Community-Academic Research Links?

Community Academic Research Links (CARL) is a community engagement initiative provided by University College Cork to support the research needs of community and voluntary groups/ Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These groups can be grass roots groups, single issue temporary groups, but also structured community organisations. Research for the CSO is carried out free of financial cost by student researchers.

CARL seeks to:

- provide civil society with knowledge and skills through research and education;
- provide their services on an affordable basis;
- promote and support public access to and influence on science and technology;
- create equitable and supportive partnerships with civil society organisations;
- enhance understanding among policymakers and education and research institutions of the research and education needs of civil society, and
- enhance the transferrable skills and knowledge of students, community representatives and researchers (www.livingknowledge.org).

What is a CSO?

We define CSOs as groups who are non-governmental, non-profit, not representing commercial interests, and/or pursuing a common purpose in the public interest. These groups include: trade unions, NGOs, professional associations, charities, grass-roots organisations, organisations that involve citizens in local and municipal life, churches and religious committees, and so on.

Why is this report on the UCC website?

The research agreement between the CSO, student and CARL/University states that the results of the study must be made public through the publication of the final research report on the CARL (UCC) website. CARL is committed to open access, and the free and public dissemination of research results.

How do I reference this report?

Author (year) *Dissertation/Project Title*, [online], Community-Academic Research Links/University College Cork, Ireland, Available from: http://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/completed/ [Accessed on : date].

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Notwithstanding the contributions by the University and its staff, the University gives no warranty as to the accuracy of the project report or the suitability of any material contained in it for either general or specific purposes. It will be for the Client Group, or users, to ensure that any outcome from the project meets safety and other requirements. The Client Group agrees not to hold the University responsible in respect of any use of the project results. Notwithstanding this disclaimer, it is a matter of record that many student projects have been completed to a very high standard and to the satisfaction of the Client Group.

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Declaration



Title of Dissertation:

'How do Travellers experience the housing assessment of needs process – culturally appropriate?'

Student Number: 17732311

Student Name: Helena Cullinane

I declare that the content of this dissertation is all my own work. Where the work of others has been used to argument my research, it has been referred to accordingly.

Signed: Helena Cullinane Date: 30th/April/2021

Abbreviations

AHB	**Approved Housing Body**
AITHS	**All – Ireland Traveller Health Study**
CARL	**Community Action Research Links**
COIA	**Commission of Itinerancy Act**
CSO	**Central Statistics Office**
DHPLG	**Department of Housing Planning and Local Government**
ECSR	**European Committee of Social Rights**
ERG	**Expert Review Group**
ESRI	**Economic Social Research Institute**
ITM	**Irish Traveller Movement**
LA	**Local Authority**
LTACC	**Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee**
NGO	**Non-Governmental Organisation**
NTACC	**National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee**
TAP	**Traveller Accommodation Programme**
THTAA	**The Housing (Traveller) Accommodation Act**
TVAA	**Traveller Visibility Accommodation Association**
UCC	**University College Cork**

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Title

'How do Travellers experience the housing assessment of needs process – culturally appropriate?'

1.1 Introduction

This project was undertaken as a CARL project in conjunction with Cena and UCC. A CARL project is a unique program in UCC which provides independent research support to community organisations; the research is undertaken by students in collaboration with community partners (UCC, 2021).

This chapter will introduce the reader to the research topic and give the context of this study. It will give the background to the research subject and describe the rationale behind choosing the topic. The aims and objectives of this research will be outlined. A brief history and description will be given of Cena, who is the community partner for this study. The theoretical perspective the study was conducted from will be introduced as community participatory research. The aim of the research is to document the different experiences the participants have had while having their needs assessed for housing by the Council[1] and Cena, respectively.

[1] The term council will be used in a general sense to refer to local authorities which incorporate City and County Councils and not one specific council; the generic term is used interchangeably between participants and the literature

1.2 Background

Irish Travellers are a traditionally nomadic ethnic minority in Ireland who have been part of Irish society for centuries (ITM,2019; Pavee Point 2021; Joyce et al.,2020). Travellers have a shared identity of traditions, language, and culture and are also known as Minceirí in their own language; Cant. Cant is a language spoken by Travellers; it is also known as De Gammon by Irish Travellers or Shelta by academics (Joyce, et al., 2020). In March 2017, the Irish state formally recognised Travellers as an ethnic group. Traveller ethnicity is based on a shared nomadic tradition that differentiates Travellers from the settled population. Travellers have distinctive culture, traditions, and a long-shared history that makes Travellers a self-defined group. Nomadism is regarded as the most important characteristic that distinguishes Travellers from the settled population (ITM, 2019). Pavee Point (2021) put the current figure of Travellers living in Ireland as 36,000, which roughly equates to 1% of the population. The last census in 2016 put the figure of self-identified Travellers living in Ireland at 30,897 (CSO, 2017).

Travellers are among the most marginalised and excluded groups in Irish society. Moreover, as an ethnic minority, Travellers experience relentless and enduring racism and discrimination from wider society (Department of Justice, 2016). This continuing discrimination has detrimental impacts on Travellers accessing housing, employment, and health services (Pavee Point, 2021). In the 1960's, the Irish state adopted a policy of 'assimilation' with respect to Travellers. It attempted to separate Travellers from nomadism and their culture and identity; "The Irish state persistently and explicitly denied recognising Travellers separate ethnicity and pursed assimilationist policies designed to eradicate Travellers differences" (Joyce, et al., 2020, p. 1). Traveller activist groups such as ITM and Pavee Point argue little has changed since the 1960's as Government policy continually fails

to deliver culturally specific accommodation for Travellers (Irish Traveller Movement; Pavee Point; National Traveller's Women's Forum, 2020).

Policy and legislation have committed to the delivery of Traveller specific housing ever since 1998. THTAA (1998) legislated that Traveller's housing needs are unique and must be catered for by LA. In the intervening years, there has been a consistent lack of delivery by LA of Traveller specific accommodation with a continued annual underspend of the Traveller accommodation budget by LA (Holland, 2020). Pavee Point (2020) and the ECSR (2021) concluded that Ireland is violating the human rights of Travellers by continuing to provide Traveller housing that is substandard and that does not address Travellers' cultural needs (Holland, 2021). Pavee Point reiterate this by saying Travellers have no alternative other than live in "intolerable conditions with a third of Travellers not having access to basic sanitation facilities" (Pavee Point, 2021, p. 8). Pavee Point highlight the "persistent and deteriorating accommodation crisis among Travellers" (Pavee Point, 2021, p. 5) and underline that the current housing crisis in Ireland is disproportionately affecting Travellers. Travellers represent 11% of the homeless population despite representing 1% of the overall population; "15% of all Travellers are homeless which is equivalent to 709,632 people in the general population" (Irish Traveller Movement, 2021, p. np). Travellers face discrimination accessing housing, which has exacerbated the housing crisis for Travellers (The Housing Agency, 2021).

The persistent under-delivery of culturally appropriate homes by LA for Travellers has led to an enormous shortfall in Traveller specific accommodation, with only 12% of Travellers currently living in a caravan or mobile home (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020). The finding of the ERG (2019) recommended an urgent overhaul of all Traveller housing policies to address the lack of delivery of culturally appropriate homes for Travellers. It further recommended

that a AHB, such as Cena, to be utilised in delivering Traveller specific housing that is conducive to Travellers' identity and culture.

1.3 Cena

> The mission of Cena is to lead the way in innovation and best practice in the design, delivery, and management of culturally appropriate accommodation to Travellers and build strategic relationships with other social housing providers (ITM, 2019, p. NP).

The word Cena means home in the Irish Traveller Minceir language of Cant. Cena is a Traveller-led AHB that was established by the ITM in 2011 as the Traveller-led Voluntary Accommodation Association; it was since renamed Cena. Cena believes in providing accommodation that is diverse and reflects the distinctive Traveller culture and ethnicity. The participation of Travellers in all levels of Cena's service delivery is a fundamental principle of Cena. Cena's core belief is Traveller housing, for Travellers by Travellers (Cena, 2021). Cena is an organisation that strives for social change and has a future-orientated dimension in the delivery of Traveller specific housing. The organisation believes that Traveller housing is a process rather than an event, and that Travellers' cultural needs must be integrated with accommodation. Cena encapsulates the self-determination approach to accommodation needs assessment and respects the importance of Travellers' cultural links to nomadism, keeping animals and living with extended family who share the same cultural values and beliefs.

1.4 Rationale

I have had a great interest in Traveller culture and ethnicity for some time. When the opportunity arose to undertake a CARL project on such a meaningful topic it was a great honour, while also being beneficial to Cena my community partner to have this research

conducted. One of my professional placements involved working closely with several Traveller families. That work offered me the opportunity to become familiar with Traveller traditions, build relationships with Travellers, and learn about issues that were affecting their Traveller ethnicity. During my work, I saw the disproportionate effect the housing crisis was having on Travellers in the area the placement was situated.

As a social work student, the core values of social justice and empowerment are fundamental to me; therefore, this research was an opportunity to partner with an organisation whose values aligned with my own. Domain 1 of CORU's standards of proficiency for social work highlights that social workers must "demonstrate a commitment for social justice and human rights and promote equality without prejudice in a culturally competent, anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive manner" (CORU, 2014, p. 8). The systemic marginalisation and racism directed at Travellers in Ireland (Pavee Point, 2021) is a subject that I feel strongly about. This research allowed me an opportunity to assist the community in a meaningful way that will contribute to the delivery of culturally appropriate housing by Cena.

1.5 Research Aims and Objectives

1.5.1 Research Aim

The aim of this research project is to document the different experiences of Travellers while being assessed for accommodation needs by the Council and Cena. By detailing the different experiences, it will enable Cena to further develop its assessment of needs process in collaboration with Travellers. Cena's goal is to deliver Traveller led housing and to ensure this is done with a culturally sensitive approach (Cena, 2021). This research hopes to enrich Cena's understanding of the assessment of needs process by sharing the findings of the 'lived experiences' of the participants. The overarching aim is to add to Cena's knowledge base on

the importance of culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers. Moreover, the findings will assist Cena in future proposals with LA around Ireland.

1.5.2 Research Objectives:

The key objective of this research is to engage in a meaningful way with the participants involved in the study. This will be done through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, that will ensure the voice of the participants is represented throughout the research. The data will be analysed from themes that are uncovered from the interviews conducted; the different experience types between the two-housing assessment of needs process will become clear through the analysis of the data. Cena will be given the findings of the research and will use the information to continue expanding their culturally appropriate assessment of needs process.

1.6 Research Questions:

The following questions were selected by the researcher as suitable to help fulfil the aims and objectives of this research:

1) *What are the different experiences with the two assessment models?*
2) *Are both assessment models culturally appropriate?*
3) *Do both assessment models address the long-term accommodation needs of Traveller families?*

1.7 Theoretical Perspective

CARL aims to enhance understanding among policymakers, education and research institutions and enhance the transferrable skills and knowledge of students, community representatives and researcher (UCC, 2021). CARL gives this study a distinct quality of partnership and collaboration with a community group. CARL aims to link academia with the

community whilst enabling groups to conduct research, who may otherwise be unable to do so (UCC, 2021). “CARL’s mission is to provide independent participatory research support in response to concerns experienced by civil society” (UCC, 2021, p. np).

1.7.1 Community-Based Action Research Project

Bates et al., describes community-based research as research that tries to connect communities with third level organisations and establish “A collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognises the unique strengths that each brings” (Bates, et al., 2014, p. 7).

With CARL’s ethos in mind, this research will be carried out from a qualitative perspective. The research will be a community-based action research project and will have participation from Travellers throughout. “Community-based action research seeks to change the social and personal dynamics of research so that the research process enhances the lives of all those who participate” (Stringer, 2007, p. 21). Moreover, the Traveller voice will be kept central to this piece of research, and Traveller culture and ethnicity will be respected by the author throughout. Social justice and respecting Travellers’ right to self-determination are at the core of this research.

Stringer (2007) suggests that community-based research has an objective of forming “collaboratively constructed descriptions and interpretations of events that enable groups of people to formulate mutually acceptable solutions to their problems” (Stringer, 2007, p. 97).

This research will also be conducted whilst being cognisant of social work values and ethics. A person-centred approach will be used while conducting this research to ensure the participants are central to this study. Dominelli (2002) makes the point that to truly empower

a community and work from a person-centred approach one must let the community participate in creating their own narrative.

1.8 Conclusion & Chapter Outlines

This chapter outlined the research aims and objectives and described the context for this research project. It gave a brief explanation of Traveller ethnicity and identity and gave a background to Traveller accommodation policy while naming some of the contemporary challenges faced by Travellers in Ireland. Finally, the research questions were introduced, and the theoretical perspectives used by the researcher while conducting the study were explained.

1.8.1 Chapter Outlines

The following four chapters of this study will be as follows:

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Chapter two will offer a comprehensive literature review relating to Traveller policy and Traveller specific accommodation in Ireland. It will offer the reader a broad analysis of relevant literature pertaining to Traveller accommodation in Ireland to give the study perspective.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Chapter three will detail the methodology utilised in collecting and analysing the research data. It will explain the methods used and give the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the researcher. Finally, the chapter will explain the analysis methods used to deduce findings.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis & Findings

Chapter four will describe the findings of the study. It will explain the findings by using the themes that were identified during the data analysis. The themes will be given context by grounding the findings in pertinent literature.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion & Recommendations

Chapter five will bring a conclusion to the research paper. It will discuss the findings from chapter four and give recommendations considering the research findings. The chapter will recommend areas where future research is needed and give reflections on the learning the researcher had throughout the process of conducting this study.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will give a comprehensive analysis of literature pertaining to Traveller housing in Ireland. Moreover, it will attempt to critically examine the literature to create a context for this research. The review will focus on a body of text which is best placed to answer the research questions. A large portion of the material included in the review was completed by NGOs. These NGOs are involved in many submissions to the Irish government regarding Traveller policy on housing, health, and accommodation. They are an invaluable source as they can include primary research concerning Traveller housing and the assessment of needs process. Online peer-reviewed journal articles, relevant legalisation, Oireachtas committee reports, and online newspaper sources were also assessed.

The review will begin by looking at the social environment for Travellers today in Ireland. The literature highlights how precarious the situation is for Travellers that are living in accommodation unsuitable to their needs. The literature will show poor-quality housing is having negative health implications for Travellers and that Travellers are more likely to live in inadequate housing than any other cohort. It will then attempt to analyse the legislation and policy affecting Travellers since the 1960's in Ireland. By giving the trajectory of policy and legislation, the lack of effective Traveller policy will become clear to the reader. Finally, the current housing context will be shown, and the literature will emphasise why Traveller specific housing delivery is so vital. Moreover, why the assessment of needs process must be a Traveller led collaborative process.

2.2 Social Context and Current Housing Context

> The widening of the health gap between Travellers and the wider population is a clear example of the cumulative disadvantage where the situation for Travellers later in life results in the accumulation of the effects of earlier disadvantage in housing and prejudice (ESRI, 2017, p. xi)

The 2016 census in Ireland reported that there is 30,987 Travellers living in Ireland. This was a 5.1% increase since the 2012 census (CSO, 2017). In 2015 3,876 Traveller families were without permanent accommodation. Traveller housing has long been a contentious subject in Ireland. Traveller organisations such as Pavee Point have been vocal for many years about what they say are the deplorable third world conditions Travellers are living in (Pavee Point, 2019). The EU commission in 2016 condemned the Irish government for its consistent failing in delivering adequate housing for Travellers. Furthermore, they stated that the gap between Traveller accommodation conditions and those of wider society are having negative outcomes for Travellers and this is a form of discrimination (Holland, 2016). In 2021 the ECSR found that the human rights of Travellers continue to be violated due to the inadequate housing provided to Travellers by LA. This report also mentioned that there remains a substantial shortfall of Traveller accommodation in Ireland (Holland, 2021).

The reality for many traveller families is that the serviced halting sites provided by city and county councils are overcrowded, not fit for purpose, and lack basic facilities. The ITM (2019) reiterates this by saying there are over 3000 Traveller families living in substandard and impermanent conditions. Specifically, they write how there are 927 families living on shared accommodation sites which are overcrowded.

A report by the ESRI (2017) found that the gap in quality between Traveller accommodation and that of the general population needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency by

policymakers. In the report the ESRI analysed a specific group of data from the 2011 census, they discovered that Travellers are more likely to live in overcrowded spaces than non-Travellers and there was a need for improvement of sewage and water facilities at serviced halting sites. The report concluded that the housing conditions for Travellers were of far inferior quality to that of the general population.

2.2.1 Traveller Homelessness

In a submission to the Oireachtas, Pavee Point said that Travellers have been largely forgotten in the wider conversation about the homeless crisis (Pavee Point, 2016). Previously Pavee Point (2015) have raised the issue that government figures on homelessness do not include Travellers living in shared accommodation and they also feel that the term shared accommodation sites is"a euphemism for Travellers living in chronic overcrowding conditions long term" (Pavee Point, 2019, p. np). Pavee Point (2019) highlight how serious the situation is by saying there are 159 Traveller families living in serviced areas where they only have access to a cold-water tap, sometimes families are doubling and tripling up on these sites as they are unable to access secure accommodation (Pavee Point, 2019).

There are a disproportionate number of Travellers homeless in comparison to the overall population. Travellers represent just 1% of the overall population and they represent 9% of the homeless population (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2021). Traveller children make up 12% of the homeless children figures despite being only 1% of the population. Moreover, 25% of homeless children living in emergency accommodation outside Dublin are Travellers (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020). The ITM (2019) argue that the homeless numbers are significantly higher than reported as they suggest the annual Traveller count has not been carried out effectively in many years, so it is extremely difficult to have accurate data. Pavee Point agree with this and say that the national count is inconsistent and calls for a reliable count and data collection model to be implemented (Pavee Point, 2015).

The ERG (2019) was an independent working group established by the DHPLG to carry out an extensive review of Traveller accommodation provision in Ireland. The findings of the ERG were intensely critical of the current housing provision for Travellers in Ireland. Moreover, the ERG highlighted the urgency needed to address the Traveller homeless figures. The ERG said there is an extremely high rate of homelessness among the Travelling population and stated that 90% of the Travellers are living in crisis accommodation rather than long term culturally appropriate alternatives (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019).

2.2.2 Health Implications

The health implications for Travellers resulting from poor quality accommodation are noteworthy as they are referred to in many reports. The subject was studied in detail in the AITHS (2011). The AITHS is the most in-depth piece of research done involving Traveller's health, accommodation, and access to services to mention a few. The study incorporated surveys, questionnaires, and many interviews. The report made stark findings in relation to Traveller housing, it determined that Travellers are living in extremely poor housing conditions and this is having negatives outcomes for their overall health. It concluded that if Travellers were living in better conditions there would be many positives for overall health and wellbeing. The AITHS discovered that 7.6% of Traveller sites have no access to running water and that over 77.3% have no play areas for children, moreover that many temporary sites are near main roads. In the report it mentioned how the living conditions of Travellers are contributing to such conditions as stress, disease, and infections. Pavee Point (2011) wrote a detailed report on the findings of the AITHS saying that they welcomed the report, but it shows the difficulty Travellers experience in accessing basic services while trying to live in a more culturally appropriate way. Moreover, the Pavee point director Martin Collins

said the AITHS "represents a humanitarian crisis. This crisis is effecting Traveller's health, education and access to employment," (Pavee Point; 2011, p. np).

2.3 Legislation and Policy

2.3.1 Commission of Itinerants Act 1963 and 'Assimilation Policy'

The first legislation relating specifically to Travellers was the COIA (1963). It must be said the literature is deeply critical when discussing the COIA. The Act, arguably, has a discriminatory narrative and is seen by some as the first systemic attempt to 'assimilate and settle' Travellers (Crowley, 2005). The ITM in a review of the Act (2015) called it a policy of assimilation and settlement. Many of those who have written about the Act agree that the policy of the time had a parlance of absorption and contained many racist comments and deeply offensive views about Travellers. In the review of the Act the ITM argues how the housing issues facing Traveller's todays stem from the 'assimilation' policy of 1963 and how it referred to Travellers as unskilled people who needed to be absorbed into society. Also, they say little has changed for Travellers since 1963 only government rhetoric. In a report carried out by the Housing Agency it found that "since the Commission of Itinerants Act levels of unmet accommodation needs and disadvantage among Travellers and discrimination against this community remain high" (The Housing Agency, 2021, p. 11). Interestingly, Williams (2019) says that there is roughly the same number of Travellers now living in unauthorised halting sites as there were in 1963 which she says shows the little progress that has been made in providing Traveller specific housing. Norris & Winston (2005) mention how it is also suggested in the act that being a Traveller was a choice rather than a culture or ethnicity.

Crowley (2005) argues that the current discriminatory narrative about Travellers was set by the Act and it also said that because Travellers did not conform to societal norms that they

were not good citizens and not 'Irish'. Gutting (1994) reiterates this point by saying the government set about 'improving Travellers' and absorbing them into wider society. Helliner (1995) has written extensively covering the topic of Traveller assimilation policy, when writing about the 1963 act she notes how Travellers were experiencing a period of change at the time, Ireland was moving away from the largely agrarian society we traditionally were.

2.3.2 The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998

THTAA (1998) was broadly welcomed by Travellers and Traveller organisations at the time of inception (Williams, 2019). It was the first housing Act that specifically looked at Traveller housing needs and explicitly said that Travellers voices must be built-in to the delivery of Traveller housing. It was also the first Act that acknowledged Traveller housing needs as unique to the Travellers and should be delivered in consultation with Traveller housing bodies.

The Act placed a statutory responsibility on LA to deliver Traveller specific housing and stated that an assessment of needs must be carried out prior to Traveller housing allocation. Traveller specific accommodation can include a caravan, mobile home, or a serviced bay at a council managed halting site. The Act created the TAP which set targets for LA on the delivery of Traveller housing.

The ITM (2019) describes TAP as a failed policy that was never going to sufficiently deliver Traveller appropriate accommodation. It also notes that capital funding for the TAP has been cut many times since 2008. Between 2008- 2011 the TAP allocation was reduced from 70million – 4million. Pavee Point highlights the funding cut in their strategic plan by stating that in 2015 when the Irish economy was no longer in recession or under austerity the TAP programme had not had its funding allocation restored (Pavee Point, 2015). The ITM (2021) stated the enormity of the TAP underspend by detailing how €69 million euro was unspent

since 2000 by LA. Likewise, in 2017, 2018 & 2019 over half the allocated TAP monies were sent back and 10 LA did not spend any of the allocated funding (Irish Traveller Movement, 2021).

The Act also said that reviews on delivery must be carried out by National and local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC & LTACC) and stated that each LA must publish a 5-yearly plan on their Traveller housing strategy and delivery (Department of Housing, 1998). The National Traveller Inclusion Strategy (2016) raises the issue that there is enormous pressure put on the NTACC and the LTACC to oversee fairness of delivery but points out how difficult this is as they have no legal powers to act on decisions the committee makes. Additionally, the strategy says that there is the need for strict monitoring of the TAP and the allocation of funding and budgets needs to be stringently controlled. The ERG (2019) was also critical of this and said the TAP monitoring is ineffective and this has led to the implementation gap that exists between what the LA say they intend to deliver and what materialises. Furthermore, one of the key recommendations of the ERG was to overhaul the TAP and allow the NTACC to have powers to intervene on allocation and delivery locally and nationally.

Williams (2019) gives a critical review of THTAA (1998) by saying it was a very welcomed piece of legislation at the time, but it has failed in the aim to deliver adequate Traveller housing. Williams claims that the lived experience of Travellers in Ireland demonstrates the failure of THTAA to effectively respond to Traveller specific housing needs, moreover Williams criticises the consistent lack of provision through the TAP over the past two decades.

The lack of delivery of the TAP is a common critique throughout the literature on the THTAA. The author found that almost every submission, report and paper included the point

that the consistent failure of the TAP had led to the accommodation crisis Travellers are experiencing today.

Pavee Point say, “Local authorities are either unable or unwilling to deliver on Traveller accommodation” (Pavee Point, 2015, p. np). Pavee Point condemns the failed implementation of the TAP in many publications on their website and in submissions made to Government. The ERG analysis of the TAP clearly shows the shortfalls in the implementation of the TAP. The report states that in some counties the Councils did not draw down any money from the TAP year on year and that there is a pattern in the discrepancy between planned Traveller housing units and annual delivery within County Councils. The ERG report concluded its scathing analysis of the TAP by recommending an immediate overhaul of the programme. The ESRI (2017) reiterated the failed implementation of the TAP by writing how they found the responsibility had been given to LA to provide Traveller specific housing, but this had not been implemented and no party appears to be accountable for this failure.

Social justice Ireland (2019) spoke critically about the TAP implementation gap and writes how the gap has resulted in a housing delivery that completely undermines policy intention. The paper also raises the issue of the funding not being drawn down year on year, and how no action has been taken to remedy this. The paper says the main reason given by LA for non-delivery of housing is the inability to secure planning permission. It writes how the objections to planning are coming from the settled community and T. D’s who sit on the NTACC and the LTACC. In a submission to the Seanad (2019) social justice Ireland goes further by suggesting T. D’s sit on LTACC to purely to oppose planning for Travelling specific housing. In 2019 the ERG supported this claim in a statement to the Oireachtas. Also, a key recommendation in their 2019 report was to immediately remove part 8 of the THTAA and allow planning to bypass council members (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019). Similarly, The Seanad Committee on Traveller Housing (2020) called

for the abolishment of part 8 of THTAA and describes it as a barrier to the provision of Traveller specific accommodation.

Pavee Point (2019) echoes this by claiming when suitable homes are found for Traveller families that there is often opposition from residents and councillors and this results in the housing not going ahead "we should not cave to nimbyism based on racism and discrimination" (Pavee Point, 2019, p. np). Mac Gréil writes about this topic extensively in his book (2010), he says the hostile attitudes from the settled population about living next-door to Travellers is exacerbating the problem and further entrenching the systematic discrimination and marginalisation of Travellers.

2.4 Current Housing Context

Research has shown that there is a consistent lack of implementation of Traveller housing policy. Norris & Winston (2005) concluded that the cumulative effect from the Traveller housing policies failing to meet output has resulted in Travellers living in accommodation that does not fit current policy and is wholly unsuitable to their needs. However, it must be said there has been a shift in government policy on Traveller housing, it is now acknowledged by government that accommodation for Travellers must be culturally appropriate. Williams (2019) notes how the conversation has changed and how policy going forward must place Traveller culture and their right to nomadism central to policy decisions. The ITM has written extensively about recognising and facilitating nomadism for Travellers. One relevant submission that sums up the subject very well is *Progressing the Provision of Traveller Accommodation to Facilitate Nomadism* ((The Irish Traveller Movement, 2016).

In a survey carried out by a collaboration of Traveller NGO's including ITM, Pavee Point and the National Traveller Women's Forum Collective (2020) it was found that: a prohibitive factor in Travellers assessing appropriate housing was the perceived lack of knowledge

within the AHB's and the LA about what Traveller housing needs are. Another finding of this survey was how Travellers feel the failure by the LA to spend the monies allocated on the TAP is a form of discrimination against their people. It was also noted that the Travellers surveyed had a lack of trust in the housing system as they feel the system has continuously ignored their needs and cultural identity (Irish Traveller Movement; Pavee Point; National Traveller's Women's Forum, 2020).

The ERG (2019) said that Travellers overwhelmingly told them how they feel decisions are being made for them in terms of housing and this is deepening their hardship, moreover they feel pressured to take whatever type of housing is offered to them as they see no alternative. The ERG (2019) found that that an overhaul of the assessment process in Traveller housing must be carried out, moreover collaboration is essential in the delivery of culturally appropriate sustainable housing for Travellers. The ERG recommended Cena as an AHB that can assist in such a process. As spoken about in the introductory chapter, Cena is a Traveller led organisation that develops Traveller specific housing in a culturally sustainable way. The ERG (2019) said Cena can meet cultural housing needs with a long-term approach. Cena believes in creating a space to let Travellers explain their individual housing needs and does not make assumptions or prescribe housing for them.

ITM (2019) say that Travellers today prefer to live in culturally appropriate and Traveller specific accommodation like halting sites or group housing schemes where large families can live together based on shared identity. But the reality is that many Travellers are forced to live in overcrowded rental accommodation as it is their only option. The last available census in 2016 showed that there is a high level of reliance among Travellers on social housing and the Housing Accommodation Payment (CSO, 2017).

2.5 Conclusion

This review has shown that the relevant literature demonstrates consensus on how policy has failed to address the cultural needs and basic housing needs of Travellers to date in Ireland. Moreover, it shows how Travellers remain disproportionately marginalised in terms of housing. Years of rhetoric by consecutive governments as Pavee Point (2019) puts it has entrenched the housing inequality faced by Travellers. Housing assessment and allocations must be conducted in a culturally conducive way that acknowledges Travellers' cultural capital as an ethnic minority.

This review gave an overview of the current social and accommodation context by drawing on the relevant literature. By looking at reports and submissions to name a few it became clear how serious the accommodation crisis is for Travellers.

It then moved along to look at legislation and policy on Traveller accommodation such as the COIA (1963) and the THTAA (1998). By analysing the literature of these Acts, the literature stated how the 1963 Act had many negative impacts for Travellers and is criticised by the literature. Secondly, the THTAA and the TAP were critiqued by the literature.

Finally, the current context was looked at and many sources agreed that culturally appropriate Traveller housing must recognise Traveller's ethnicity and identity to Nomadism, keeping animals and touring, this is seen as fundamental to Travellers in rebuilding their trust in the housing allocation system.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will detail the methodology used while conducting this research. It will begin by discussing and describing the approach used by the researcher. It will justify why this approach was used over and above others. Moreover, the ontological and epistemological position of the author will be outlined. The methodology used to collect the data will be shown and the reasons why this technique was selected will be discussed. Finally, the data analysis approach applied will be explained and why this type of analysis was utilised will be shown. Any limitations to this research will also be outlined.

3.2 Qualitative Research

The research presented in this report is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research "Adopts an interpretative approach to data, studies 'things' within their context and considers the subjective meanings that people bring to their situation" (Vaus, 2001, p. 30). According to Bryman (2012), qualitative data is used to develop an insight into a participant's experience, therefore, it was decided that a qualitative approach would be adapted while undertaking this research. Qualitative research was selected as the most pertinent approach, owing to the aims of this study being to document the lived experience of the participants and how they view the assessment of needs process from their own personal experiences with Cena and LA.

3.3 Ontology

Ontology "refers to the nature of social phenomena and the beliefs that researchers hold about the nature of social reality" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 118). Bryman (2012) explains how it is important for the researcher to be aware of their ontological position while carrying out social research. This research will take a constructionist position "That asserts that social phenomena

and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors" (Bryman, 2012, p. 6). By taking such a position it will allow the participants share their beliefs and views from their own cultural perspective.

3.4 Epistemology

"Epistemology refers to the way that humans create their knowledge about the social world" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 119). Epistemology has two fundamental positions: positivism & interpretivism. An interpretivist approach has been used for this research as this lets the participants give an account of their own social reality, which will give the study an insight into their interpretation and perspective of their social world. According to Denscombe (2010), social reality is subjective and is constructed by people; "it is a social creation, constructed in the minds of people and reinforced through their interactions with each other" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 121).

3.5 Methods

The following subsections refer to the qualitative investigative methods utilised in the research approach. "Qualitative approaches are incredibly diverse, complex, and nuanced" (Holloway & Todres, 2003, p. 347).

3.5. 1 Semi Structured Interviews

"Interviews are the most commonly used data collection method, and the semi-structured format is the most frequently used interview technique in qualitative research" (Kallio, et al., 2016, p. 7). Bryman (2012) also comments how interviews are one of the most broadly used methods in qualitative research "The semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions" (SAGE , 2021, p. np). In agreement, Bryman (2012) notes that semi-structured

interviews include an interview guide with open-ended questions rather than a formalised set of interview questions. This method of data collection was the most suitable, as the researcher wanted to facilitate a natural conversation where relevant topics may arise organically. Open-ended questioning facilitated this objective and outcome, while the interview schedule could be utilised to steer the conversation back on topic, if needed.

A meeting was held in the planning-stage of the research with my community partner Cena, to decide how best the research should be conducted. This was imperative to fully understand the research objectives Cena envisioned from the project and ensured all parties agreed with the methodology. The consensus was that semi-structured interviews would best reflect the participants story and enable an understanding into the interviewee's experience between the two assessment models.

Three semi-structured interviews were carried out. An interview schedule and guiding questions were used as prompts to guide conversation, if needed, while not compromising the integrity of the discussion. The data collection was carried out while Ireland was under Level 5 Covid-19 restrictions, this required all interviews to be conducted online as per government and UCC guidelines. It was agreed with Cena that the interviews would take place via Microsoft Teams, and lasted from 50 to 90 minutes.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. Thematic analysis is an approach used to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis allows the researcher to be flexible when analysing the data and offers an "organic method to the coding and theme development process" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 299). The flexibility offered by thematic analysis allowed the researcher to

be adaptable in their approach to data collection, research questions and later pattern identification. Holmqvist & Frisen (2012) purport that the flexibility offered by thematic analysis is very suited to the qualitative researcher. Braun & Clarke (2006; 2017) offer how thematic analysis can give meaningful understanding into the 'lived experience' of the participants, not just offer a summary of the data. The main objective of this research, aimed to learn of people's lived experience of the accommodation assessment process, therefore thematic analysis was very pertinent to this research.

The researcher followed Braun & Clarke's (2006) '6 step guide' to thematic analysis, which allowed the data to be coded by themes that emerged naturally throughout the process. The author used an inductive approach which allows "…the themes to be strongly linked to the data collected" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 29). The data was transcribed using Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Stream. Moreover, it was imperative to the process that the researcher familiarised themselves with the data collected and reviewed it before starting the coding and defining of themes. The data collected was coded by identifying popular patterns and later deduced five key themes that will be introduced in the findings chapter.

3.7 Sample

"Qualitative research uses non-probability samples for selecting the population of the study" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 15). Purposive sampling was the approach taken to select the participants for the interviews. Purposive sampling means that "the sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central theme of the study" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2006, p. 49). Bryman (2012) explains purposive sampling as targeted selection of participants to ensure their characteristics are relevant to the research questions.

The interviewees were a mix of male and female Travellers who had children. All three were over 18 years of age. This allowed for the data to be reflective of a range of experiences amongst Travellers.

3.8 Limitations

It is important to name any limitations that arose during the research process "All research designs have their limitations, and a good researcher recognises those limitations and gives an account of them" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 108).

A noteworthy limitation was Covid-19, and the level 5 restrictions the country was under during the time of the research. The ban on travelling outside your 5km limit and the restriction on people meeting required that the interviews had to take place online. It was originally intended that the researcher would travel to the Cena office to conduct the interviews.

The dissertation was a substantial undertaking for the researcher but has a limited scope and wordcount, thus limiting the researcher in the aims and objectives of the study. Meetings were held with the author's academic supervisor and community partner to ensure the goals of the research were achievable within the wordcount, while also fulfilling the research commitments with the community partner, Cena. This study represents a small cohort who belong to the same ethnic group. The small sample size was deemed sufficient for the research undertaken.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

"Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency" (Bryman, 2012, p. 144). The researcher felt it was paramount to carry out the research in a manner that upheld the 'UCC Code of Research' principles for best practice. "UCC is committed to ensuring the highest standards of integrity in all aspects of our research, founded on basic principles of good research practice to be observed by all researchers and

research organisations" (UCC, 2019, p. 5). All participants were treated with respect and dignity. Moreover, the participants' cultural identity and ethnicity, as Travellers, was respected by the researcher throughout the process.

3.9.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview taking place. The consent form was sent to the community partner to forward to participants along with an information sheet about the research (See Appendix A1 & A2). The researcher contacted all interviewees prior to the interview to reiterate the purpose of the interview and aims of the research. All interviewees consented to the interview being recorded and it was explained on commencement of the interview that they could terminate the interview at any juncture.

3.10 Anonymity and Confidentiality

According to UCC's 'Code of Research' confidentiality and respecting the privacy of individuals is paramount; "Confidentiality/anonymity must be protected through implementation of appropriate safeguards" (UCC, 2019, p. 7). The participants names have been anonymised throughout the study to ensure their identity is protected. All records and data will be retained for a period of 13 months as per UCC's Records Management Framework (UCC, 2020).

3.11 Timescale

Stages of Research	Starting Date	Completion Date
Planning the Research	November - December	December
Carrying out the research	January - February	March
Interviews	March	March
Analysis	March - April	Early April
Writing Dissertation	April	30th April

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter gave a detailed overview of the methodology and approaches that were applied to the research. It explained the use of qualitative data and the different analytical methods used to generate findings. The chapter highlighted that all research was undertaken while implementing best practice and conforming to the UCC Code of Research for upholding the integrity of the research and respecting the participants. The following chapter will discuss the analysis and findings in detail.

Chapter 4 - Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will detail the data analysis and findings of the research conducted by the author. It will identify key themes that were extrapolated from the research, will discuss the themes, and will draw on relevant literature to contextualise the findings.

The findings were collected from three semi-structured interviews with Traveller participants. The participants were aged between 25-50 and included a mixed cohort of men and women to provide greater opportunity to complement the data with a variety of opinion. The research was qualitative, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data; "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning with qualitative data" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 2). The participants will be called participant A, B & C throughout the research to provide for anonymity. The five main themes that were developed are: loss of Traveller identity; Perceived Council prejudice; lack of Traveller housing policy & TAP underspend; homelessness; and positive experiences of Cena.

4.2 Loss of Traveller Identity

> *The council can't keep pushing Travellers into houses where we are oppressing our identity (B)*

According to Pavee Point (2021), Traveller identity is "based on nomadic tradition and this sets Travellers apart from the sedentary population or 'settled people'" (Pavee Point, 2021, p. np). The loss of Traveller identity was very apparent to the researcher from the interviewees; it was a common thread through all interviews with the matter being highlighted numerous times. The loss of Traveller identity is having a damaging impact on Travellers and the sense

of loss felt from being unable to live their traditional way of life is having negative repercussions for the community (Joyce, et al., 2020).

Participant A spoke about the loss of Traveller identity they felt when being left with no choice but to leave their wagon 40 years ago and settle in an unofficial halting site:

> *Back then the Council used to terrorise the Travellers on the roads as they didn't want us to be seen(A).*

They explained how being forced to settle was:

> *…separating you from your soul when taking us from our land* (A).
>
> *…we were left; with no choice what else could we do?* (A).
>
> *The Council refuse to take culture into account and force people into losing their identity* (C).

Participant B felt very strongly about the loss of Traveller identity,

> *…you have nothing, you can't keep any horses, you feel depressed and enclosed* (B).

Participant C stated

> *I had lived all my life in a caravan touring, but we had to find a yard to settle in as the council were hassling us* (C).
>
> *My father said he would die before he would move into a house, so we found the old Council yard and settled there. We want to keep our identity and live in a caravan not a house, we could have moved into one of them 20 years ago* (C).

The analysis showed that all three participants felt that the council are trying to assimilate Traveller identity by not delivering Traveller specific housing;

> *…the council ensure our identity is lost and makes our lives a living hell* (A).

Participant B explained how they were so desperate to get out of homelessness that

> *We had to give up our horses and dogs and leave our identity behind (B).*
>
> *It makes you feel like shit having to hide your identity, you're ashamed of who you are* (B).

4.2.1 Loss of Nomadism

A distinguishing characteristic of Traveller culture and identity is nomadism and touring; a report by The Housing Agency (2021) highlighted the importance of nomadism to Travellers as it is an integral part of their cultural history as an ethnic minority. The theme of Nomadism arose throughout the interviews and notably was remembered by the participants as a past concept, not something that can be done now. Trespassing laws such as the (Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (2002) were described by participant A as having an obliterating effect on nomadism.

The profound sense of loss associated with no 'touring' became apparent as participants A & C both spoke about a much happier time when they were nomadic

> *We were happy at the time being nomadic, things were simpler, and we used to work the land* (A).

Participant C remembered the days when they could tour in their wagon as

> *…the good old days (C).*
>
> *…now the Council won't let you pull up anywhere with the trespassing laws (C).*

4.3 Perceived Council Prejudice

As discussed in Chapter three, there is an abundance of literature documenting the structural prejudice Travellers have purportedly experienced by the Council (Pavee Point, 2021; The

Housing Agency, 2021). Housing Ireland state there is a power imbalance between local LA and Travellers, and this is causing the systemic prejudice and maltreatment of Travellers by LA (The Housing Agency, 2021).

All the participants in this study described how they felt the council showed them prejudice during the housing assessment process;

> *As a Traveller you have no voice to advocate, you are treated like you are uncivilised and subhuman by the local council and racist comments made because you are a Traveller are not hidden* (A).
>
> *They don't even try not to be racist towards us* (C).

Participant B reinforced this point by asserting that

> *I would try my best to hide my identity when we would go to the Council because I'm a Traveller* (B).

Participant C told the researcher about their experience of being 'harassed' by the council

> *…they wanted us out of the yard and offered us a house, but we wanted to stay in our caravan we weren't bothering no one, we won the right to stay after a high court case was taken by my father, the housing liaison officer even went to our school to tell the teachers we won't be back as we were moving away, that is how much they wanted us gone* (C).

Participant C said the Council have a lack of cultural understanding and have an unwillingness to deliver Traveller housing from their experience. Furthermore, they described to the researcher the pressure they feel from the Council to live in a house;

> *They still can't understand why we don't want a house; they even sent the priest up to Mammy and Daddy since Covid to put pressure on them to take a house because they*

are getting older, they will do anything to get us out of sight into a house, they don't understand our culture (C).

4.4 Lack of Traveller Policy Implementation & TAP underspend

From the analysis the theme of lack of Traveller policy implementation became clear. Each interviewee said how the lack of implementation of Traveller housing policy is one of the biggest issues they have experienced with LA. They all conveyed their frustrations at their perceived absence of political will to tackle the issue of Traveller specific accommodation.

Moreover, participant C conveyed their anger at the Council for the yearly underspend on the TAP

I hate talking about the Council they boil my blood, they frustrate me so much, you'd be surprised the amount of Traveller housing money sent back every year, it is ridiculous (C).

The Seanad committee supported this finding by noting there was an overall 48% underspend on Traveller accommodation by LA in 2018 (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020).

Another interviewee spoke of the TAP underspend by the council

They are always assigned money to our site but don't come out

and fix up what needs to be done instead they send the money back, they send engineers out every year with plans to build us a house and every year we tell them we want to stay in our caravan and keep our animals in the yard (C).

Participant B feels that the Council do not have a policy to house Travellers

We asked the council to help us so many times when we were evicted, we explained the poor living conditions we faced but were not helped in any way (B).

The Council don't listen to Travellers they never do repairs as they don't care of the condition of the housing people live in (C).

4.5 Council's Policy of Assimilation

The term assimilation has been used when speaking about Travellers since the 1960's when it became Government policy to attempt to assimilate and settle Travellers into 'wider society'. The COIA (1963) set out the Government's plans for the assimilation of Travellers. According to a Seanad report, the assimilation policy remained until the 1990's (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020). The report also acknowledged how "the historical attempts of the state to assimilate the Traveller community have harmed Travellers" (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020, p. 15).

The strong theme of assimilation became clear through the analysis. The data showed each participant used the word, 'assimilate', when asked about the Council and their Traveller housing assessment process. The word assimilation was used many times throughout the interviews, and the interviewees all described how they felt that the council is trying to assimilate their people.

Policies on Traveller housing do not matter because there is no political will to deliver, only to assimilate (A).

The council makes Traveller's lives so difficult that we will either become so dysfunctional as a people that we will cease to exist or die (A).

The council's only goal is to get Travellers out of sight, and they only wish to assimilate Travellers (C).

If they keep going the way, they are there won't be any Travellers left in 15 years (C).

The council only want to settle Travellers into houses, and this is causing so much damage to the community (A).

Participant C mentions how they feel as though the council's only policy now is to assimilate Travellers and how they believe little has changed since the 1960's

...they are making it so hard for young Travellers that their only choice is to settle(C).

4.6 Homelessness

It is widely known that Travellers are disproportionately affected by the current housing crisis (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020). A recent ECSR report stated that Travellers are overrepresented in homeless figures in Ireland and that Traveller children make up 12% of homeless children but Travellers are only 1% of the overall population, thus highlighting how serious the problem is (Holland, 2021). The data analysed reflected the discourse around Traveller homelessness. It emerged as a theme as the interviewees each spoke of the constant worry about accommodation and homelessness.

When asked is accommodation a worry participant B replied

Housing is a huge worry; I could be homeless tomorrow (B).

All interviewees raised the issue of Traveller homelessness. Participant A referred to homelessness

…as a massive problem among the Travellers, when young Travellers get married, they have no place to go (A).

…there is no room in halting sites, Travellers are homeless in cars and hotel rooms across the country (A).

Participant A also suggests that Traveller homeless figures are far higher than reported as adult children are living with their parents

There's no room on halting sites people are fighting for a bit of ground, the council know what they are doing with their policies trying to get rid of us (A).

...the majority of young Traveller men and women are camped on the side of the road or outside their parent's front door just surviving (B).

All three participants highlighted how they believe homelessness is a huge issue for Travellers

…accommodation is a massive issue with the amount of homeless (A).

The Council know the severity of the situation but don't care (B).

Participant B told the researcher their story of becoming homeless because of racial prejudice by a private landlord, they were left with no choice but to move to a halting site nearby and live in a caravan

We were homeless for 8 months we ended up living in a halting site with two small kids (B).

It was a horrible rough patch where we had to live in awful conditions with no running water or electricity and it was full of dirt and rubbish (B).

They explained how the council would not assist them in getting housed

We weren't a priority because we were staying in the caravan (B).

The interviewee told the researcher the anger they felt when recalling this period

The Council don't want to house Travellers at all, we would go down to the council and my wife would be crying because of the conditions we were in, and the housing liaison officer would not meet us (B).

They also explained that if they did not find their own private accommodation, they would still be homeless

If I didn't have the drive and get up and go about me, we would still be homeless on the halting site (B).

4.6.1 Mental Health Implications

Participant A told the researcher how they felt that the racial prejudice they experience daily has a damaging effect on their mental health;

If you tell the most confident and strong person over and over again, they are worthless they will eventually believe it (A).

A subtheme that was determined from the findings was the mental health implications from unstable accommodation. The issue was raised by the interviewees at different junctures. All three participants felt that mental health problems in the Traveller community are exacerbated by the lack of suitable Traveller accommodation.

Interviewee B spoke of the depression they went through during the time they were homeless

I went through a bad depression questioning everything and asking myself how I ended up homeless just because I am a Traveller (B).

My mental health was really affected from the terrible living conditions (B).

…a lot of people are struggling with their mental health on halting sites (B).

4.6.2 Poor Living Conditions

All Councils are allocated money annually under the TAP to carry out repairs to existing halting sites and serviced halting sites. In most counties much of this money is handed back to central Government despite the inadequate conditions Traveller families find themselves living in (Irish Traveller Movemnet, 2021). The ECSR recently reported that the human rights of Travellers continue to be violated by LA because of the inadequate housing that is

being provided “Traveller sites are in poor condition, lack maintenance, rat infested and are badly located” (Holland, 2021, p. np).

Poor living conditions was a subtheme that arose in the analysis. One participant described Council halting sites as

> *…they are miserable and overcrowded they are like concentration camps its depressing* (A).

Participant C made it clear that living conditions are difficult

> *It is tough living in these conditions in the winter with no water and proper electricity with the children, you have to get up in the dark to light the fire and go out in the rain to fill the tap* (C).
>
> *We lack the basic necessities, but I want to show our children our way of life and our identity* (C)
>
> *All I have asked the council for is the bit of concrete out the front so we don’t get flooded in the winter and to do the electrics and wiring* (C).

Participant B reiterated the poor living conditions on halting sites by saying

> *…your not really living your surviving without basic necessities* (B).

4.7 Positive Experiences of Cena

The ITM describes culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation by saying

> Travellers today prefer to live in what is called “culturally” appropriate accommodation such as halting sites or group housing schemes where large extended families live together based on Travellers shared identity (Irish Traveller Movemnet, 2021, p. np).

A prevalent theme that was uncovered is the positive experiences the participants have had with Cena and their model of culturally appropriate housing. The need for the delivery of Traveller specific accommodation was clear from the findings and the desire for the delivery to be fulfilled by Cena was evident throughout the data.

4.7.1 Culturally Appropriate Housing

The interviewees were asked to describe, in their experience, what was the biggest difference in the accommodation process between Cena and the Council? All participants had positives replies when referring to Cena

> *Cena delivers culturally appropriate homes for Travellers* (B).
>
> *It is simple Cena delivers Traveller accommodation* (C).

Participant C said their experience is that Cena is trying to help Traveller's access appropriate housing not to assimilate them.

> *Cena are delivering housing and will continue to deliver Traveller specific accommodation* (A).

Participant A highlighted that

> *...Cena unlike the Council want Traveller identity to be part of the housing process and wants to build specific accommodation on the ground that will empower Travellers to keep their identity* (A).

These findings are in line with Cena's 2021 annual report that notes how

> *Cena strives to make sure that the traveller community are supported to ensure that high quality homes are made available to all traveller families while continuing to acknowledge traveller's ethnicity and culture as a priority (Cena, 2021, p. 2).*

All three interviewees said Cena respects Traveller identity

…they want Travellers to keep their identity and ownership of their accommodation (A).

Participant B says from their experience with Cena

That the most important part for Cena is to keep the person's identity and not have to hide who they are (B).

This data showed how the participants felt there is hope now that Cena are delivering culturally appropriate Traveller housing

It is getting better with Cena (B).

4.7.2 Advocacy and 'Being listened too'

It was clear through the analysis that the subtheme of being listened too and advocacy were positive experiences associated with Cena. It was a common theme that the participants felt listened to by Cena

They sit down and listen to us Travellers and our needs and they care about our culture continuing and keeping our culture alive (C).

It was said that by Cena listening to Travellers' needs that it leads to a partnership between Cena and Travellers. Participants A & C both underlined the fact that Cena's housing process is housing for Travellers, by Travellers and with Travellers.

Cena educate people about different housing types available and options they have, you don't get that with the Council (C).

Participant A detailed how

The results are positive when you work in collaboration with a person whereas there is no humanity in the way the Council treat Travellers looking for accommodation (A).

Cena are amazing because they deliver culturally appropriate houses where Travellers can be themselves (A).

4.7.3 Cena Delivery

It was noteworthy also that delivery emerged as a subtheme as all participants had experience with Cena delivering Traveller specific accommodation. Speaking about four Traveller specifics homes recently completed by Cena participant B said

These are the first four homes in Ireland that have been built specifically for Travellers to meet there housing and cultural needs in partnership with Travellers (B).

It was also noted by two participants that Cena keeps links with the families they deliver homes too and ensures the property is meeting the family's needs and is well maintained. There is also a Traveller liaison officer who is a point of contact should the families have any issues with the accommodation.

4.7.4 Cena Advocacy

Participant C detailed a positive experience they had with Cena. They asked Cena to become involved and advocate on their behalf with the Council to get their caravan plumbed and wired electrically.

The Council would not engage with Cena despite their best efforts trying to help us

Cena listened to me and my family and tried to educate the council about our culture, Cena took my concerns into account (C).

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the themes that arose during the researcher's analysis of the semi-structured interviews carried out with the three participants. The main themes of loss of

Traveller identity; perceived council prejudice; lack of Traveller policy implementation & TAP underspend; council's policy of assimilation; homelessness, positive experiences of Cena were discussed using the participants views while also using relevant literature. The next chapter will give recommendations on these findings and will give conclusion to the research.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion, Recommendation & Reflections

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will conclude this research report. Concluding comments and observations on the findings will be provided. Recommendations will be given by the author considering the findings, and recommendations will be made for further research that may be required in this area. Finally, the researcher will offer a concluding reflection on the undertaking of this research project.

5.2 Key Findings

The findings of this research are very important as they offer a window into the seriousness of the accommodation crisis the participants of this study are facing and show the negative implications it is having for Travellers cultural identity and health. This research further evidenced the serious consequences for Traveller culture and loss of identity in the accommodation crisis. The significance of the accommodation problem cannot be underestimated, and the findings, concluded from this research, showed a culturally appropriate accommodation solution is available from Cena. The evidence shows the positive influence Cena is having on the delivery of culturally suitable accommodation and this must not be overlooked by policymakers and LA.

Importantly, this research evidenced that the participants believe that the LA did not deliver their housing needs assessment in a non-discriminatory manner. By documenting the participants' lived experiences of the housing assessment process, it will allow Cena to expand their housing delivery in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way.

5.2.1 Perceived Prejudice

The findings of this research indicated that the participants felt discriminated against when trying to access accommodation from the Council. The findings demonstrated how the participants felt they encountered racial prejudice from the council when having their needs assessed for accommodation:

I feel the council do not listen to me or take me seriously because I'm a Traveller (C).

I have never experienced anything but discrimination from the council (A).

The council try to supress and oppress Travellers (B).

5.2.2 Lack of Delivery & Lack of Political Will

The findings from this research showed how the interviewees suggested there is a lack of delivery of culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation by the Council. The researcher completed a comprehensive literature review as part of this study. Much of the findings aligns with the consensus viewpoints expressed in the available literature. There was consensus among the literature that there is a lack of political will from LA and Government to implement Traveller specific housing policy. The results of this research were consistent with the literature with the participants, all stating a lack of political will to deliver Traveller specific housing. THTAA was reviewed comprehensively by the author and the shortcomings of the act have been well documented throughout this study. The findings of the research identified that the participants found this to be a failed policy that is not fulfilling its legal obligations set down in the Act. The literature overwhelmingly called for implementation of the ERG's recommendations for an urgent overhaul of the TAP; However, there has been no work done to date to rectify these recommendations of the TAP (Holland, 2021). The author argues that there must be political will at all levels to solve the Traveller accommodation

crisis. Moreover, the State must start looking at working collaboratively with Travellers in addressing their housing needs (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019). As the ERG suggested organizations such as Cena must be used to deliver Traveller led housing.

5.2.3 Assimilation Policy

One of the eminent findings of this research was how all interviewees believed that the Irish State is trying to assimilate their people. The view expressed by each participant in this study was that the Government wishes to settle their people in houses that do not allow Travellers to live in a culturally appropriate manner. As discussed in previous chapters, the Irish Government adopted a policy of assimilation with respect to Travellers in 1963, and the interviewees each argued how they feel this policy remains today due to the lack of Traveller specific housing. Based on the findings from the resources reviewed for this study and the data analysed it could be proposed that the lack of Traveller policy implementation and the lack of delivery of Traveller accommodation is compounding this point of view.

5.2.4 Mental Health & Loss of Identity

A key finding, consistent with the reviewed literature, was the detrimental impact the lack of Traveller specific accommodation is having on Travellers' mental health. The participants all highlighted how the loss of identity and lack of nomadism is having adverse impacts on Travellers' mental health. It was seen from the findings that the level of deprivation experienced by Travellers exacerbates mental health difficulties. This finding has serious implications as the suicide rate among Travellers is 7% greater than that of the settled population (Joyce, et al., 2020). The interviewees detailed the mental health implications of the poor living conditions they had faced. These finding are significant as the seriousness of

the mental health problems among Travellers is well documented (Department of Justice, 2016; Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020; Joyce, et al., 2020).

5.2.5 Cena

It is clear from the data that culturally appropriate accommodation is of critical importance to Travellers. To be given the opportunity to live in a way that is conducive to their ethnicity and identity is imperative to Traveller culture.

This research showed the positives of a Traveller led AHB like Cena. Overwhelmingly, the participants stated that Cena is the only hope they have of Traveller specific housing being delivered. The evidence suggested that Cena's core value of cultural appropriateness is very important to Travellers. The data from this research, and other available resources, has shown that there is a gap in delivering culturally appropriate homes for Travellers, but Cena is suggested by the participants as the answer in delivering housing that meets their cultural needs. It was derived from the analysis that Cena delivers homes in collaboration with Travellers and listens to the cultural needs of those involved. It would appear from the findings that loss of identity is causing Travellers significant problems; therefore, Cena's model of housing assessment must be considered for expansion.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Implement ERG Recommendations

The seriousness of the accommodation crisis faced by Travellers cannot be understated. The severity of the problem and the negative implications the lack of Traveller accommodation is having on the group has been documented in this research. Based on the participants opinion in this study the lack of delivery of Traveller accommodation is perceived as prejudice against Travellers. The findings of the ERG (2019) called for the urgent delivery of Traveller specific accommodation to address the homeless crisis amongst Travellers. The ERG named

Cena as an AHB that will deliver culturally appropriate homes for Travellers. Significantly, the ERG recommends Cena as an AHB that works in partnership with Travellers to develop housing that addresses their needs. This author recommends urgent action to be taken on the relevant political levels to deliver suitable housing for Travellers.

5.3.2 Listening & Collaboration

The results of this study are consistent with the literature when finding that listening to Travellers' individual housing needs is crucial to the delivery of culturally specific housing (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019). For the researcher, it was profound when the participants explained how they felt listened to by Cena. It appears simplistic, however, the research showed it gave the interviewees' a great sense of identity. By listening to Travellers' specific needs and cultural identity, Cena is collaborating with Travellers, and this is what is needed to empower Travellers. The evidence shows the powerful nature of collaboration. To empower Travellers and to advocate for their housing needs, they must be listened to and treated with the respect they deserve by the LA and Government.

5.3.3 Anti-discriminatory Practice

The need for anti-discriminatory practice in LA housing was evident from the findings. All staff should have sufficient training on Traveller culture and ethnicity to ensure there is culturally appropriate understanding (The Housing Agency, 2021). Travellers should feel understood and welcome when being assessed for housing. A review carried out by the housing agency on the role of social work in LA housing recommended that all council staff should be trained in anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice (The Housing Agency, 2021). There was a mention of such training in the THTAA, but it has yet to materialise.

5.3.4 Cena's Housing Delivery

It is strongly recommended by the author that Cena be used for the delivery of Traveller specific accommodation to ensure that Travellers are listened to and treated with the respect and the cultural sensitivity that is deserved. Moreover, the research showed the positive experiences the participants had with Cena, due to having Travellers working at every level of their service delivery. It is housing by Travellers for Travellers. The participants reported that they were treated equally, and their culture was respected in every interaction with Cena. The data shows the benefits of respecting Traveller culture while carrying out the assessment of needs process. Therefore, it is recommended that Cena expands its delivery of accommodation services.

5.4 Further Research

This piece of research laid the foundational strands for future research between CARL and Cena. This research project was limited in its scope due to word count. However, the findings are significant and will help Cena inform future decisions about their housing assessment process. Future research should build on the lived experiences of Travellers accessing culturally appropriate accommodation and compare the differences in housing delivery between Cena and the Council.

5.5 Reflections & Concluding Comments

This piece of research was very meaningful to me as it is a CARL project. It derived a great sense of purpose knowing that it will help Cena expand its work. This research journey has taught me and provided me with a newfound awareness of Travellers as a distinct group in Irish society. On commencing this research, I thought I was knowledgeable about Traveller culture and identity, but the literature I reviewed and the participants I spoke with gave me

another insight and perspective. In my opinion the marginalisation Travellers experience and the difficulty faced in accessing the basic services is fundamentally unfair and the situation needs to drastically change. The interview process had a profound effect on me, to listen to the real-life stories of the perceived systemic discrimination and resilience is something I will not forget. It must be said that the main takeaway from the interviews was the resilience shown by the participants and their love for their culture, people, and identity. The passion in how they spoke about empowering their people to overcome adversity and thrive despite the discrimination and racism they felt was remarkable.

I will be forever grateful for the people who shared their story with me, and to Cena for allowing me to contribute to their excellent work, albeit in a small way.

Maa'ths – Thanks

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Chapter 7 – Appendices

A1 Interview Consent Forms



This research is being carried out by Helena Cullinane from University College Cork on behalf of CENA as a Community Action Research Links (CARL) project, the project aims to document the different experiences in the assessment of needs process in Traveller specific accommodation between Cena and the council.

I agree to be interviewed as part of the project outlined above. The purpose of the project has been explained to me and I understand it. I am participating voluntarily. I give permission for my interview to be recorded. I understand that the recording and transcript of the interview will be kept in a safe place and only the researcher will have access to them.

I am aware that excerpts from the interview may be used in reports, publications or other forms of communication arising from the project. Unless stated otherwise, my name and other identifying details will be kept anonymous in any reports, publications or other communications arising from the project. This means that my name would not be attached to them or made available to the public or to other researchers.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time whether before it starts or during the interview. I understand that I do not have to answer any questions I do not wish to answer.

Signature of Interviewee_____ Date: _____

Name (block capitals) _____

A2 Interview Schedule & Questions

Interview Schedule:

1. Build rapport

2. General questions - Past types of accommodation and cultural suitability of the accommodation, condition of accommodation

3. Past accommodation local authorities and experience

4. Needs assessment with local authorities and the outcome of the need's assessment with the local authority and the subsequent cultural suitability of the housing for the short term/long term.

5. Accommodation with Cena and the experience needs assessment with Cena and the experience for yourself, the outcome of the need's assessment with Cena and the subsequent suitability of the of the housing for the short/long term.

Part One: Build rapport. No need to record.

Welcome, build rapport, explain about CARL project and why I chose to do this one and explain a little of what the purpose of the research is.

Profile questions: Record on paper**.**

- Name, Age, Martial status, number of children, where do they live now and who do they live with?
- Can you tell me about what type of housing you live in now?

Reaffirm: 'Do I have permission to record the interview?

Part Two: Begin recording interview: Past Accommodation, General Questions

- What types of accommodation you have lived in in the past?
    1) Would you say that accommodation was suitable for yourself and your family? (if needed).
    2) Generally, do you feel your past accommodation was of a good standard? (if needed).
- In general, would you say accommodation is something you worry about?

Part Three: city/county council: (*I am going move on to talk about your experiences with the city/county council*).

- Could you describe the experience you had in applying for accommodation in the past with city/county council housing?
    1) Did you find the experience of accessing city/county council housing an easy or difficult process? (If needed).
- Did you feel that the city/council took your cultural identity into consideration? If so how?
    1) Prompts: Traveller culture and Traveller accommodation needs.
- Potential follow-up Q: Were you asked about nomadism or touring during the need's assessment?
- For you as a Traveller, what was the most important part of the assessment process?
- Did you feel listened to throughout the assessment process?
- What type of accommodation were you housed in by the city/council; short-term or long term? (If needed).

Part Four: Cena (*I am going move on to talk about your experiences with the Cena*).

- Could you describe the experience you had in applying for accommodation in the past with Cena council housing?

- Did you find the experience of accessing Cena housing an easy or difficult process? (If needed).

- Did you feel that the Cena took your cultural identity into consideration? If so how?

    2) Prompts: Traveller culture and Traveller accommodation needs.

- Potential follow-up Q: Were you asked about nomadism or touring during the need's assessment?
- For you as a Traveller, what was the most important part of the assessment process?
- Did you feel listened to throughout the assessment process?
- What type of accommodation were you housed in by the Cena; short-term or long term? (If needed).

Part 5: Closing section (*I am going to finish up soon, I have some final questions)*

- In your experience, what did you feel was the biggest difference in the assessment of needs process between Cena and the local authority?

    1) Positive/negative neutral

- Do you think where you are now living adequately addresses your accommodation needs?

    1) What works well/what be better.

- As a member of an ethnic minority group what would you say is the biggest problem in assessment of accommodation needs overall? Do you feel Traveller's feel are fairly represented? (If needed).
- If there is anything further, you would like to add?

A3 Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET



Purpose of the Study. As part of the requirements of my undergraduate degree at UCC, I must carry out a research study. The study is concerned with Cena and the assessment of needs process in the delivery of Traveller specific housing.

What will the study involve? The study will involve being interviewed by the researcher. There will be between 5-10 questions and the interview will focus on the experience of accessing Traveller specific housing suitable to Traveller culture and needs. Also, it will focus on the difference in experiences between accessing housing with the relevant Local Authority or Cena.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked because your experience in this area can provide this study with data which will be valuable and will help answer the research questions.

Do you have to take part? You do not have to take part. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form which you will be given a copy of to keep if you wish. After signing the consent form, you will still have the right to withdraw at any point before or during the interview. During the interview you can stop at any point and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You will also have the right to ask for your data to be withdrawn and destroyed for up to two weeks after the interview concludes.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity will be assured. For example, I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis or any other publication arising from the collected data.

What will happen to the information which you give? The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study, available only to me and my research supervisor. Recordings and transcripts will be securely stored as encrypted and password protected files. On completion of the project, your data will be retained for minimum of a further ten years and then destroyed.

What will happen to the results? The results will be presented a dissertation. They will be seen by my supervisor. The dissertation will also be read by a second reader, and an external examiner. It may be read by future students on the course. The study may be published, in part or in whole, in research journals or in book form. Excerpts from the study may also form part of public presentations given by the researcher to interested groups.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? Negative consequences for you in taking part are not anticipated. However, it is possible that talking about your experiences in this way may cause some distress.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you subsequently feel distressed, you should contact the appropriate listed below:

1) **AWARE**: Aware is a national charity that provides advice and support on matters relating to depression and mental health. They operate a Free-phone support line, Monday-Saturday, 10am-10pm 1800-80-48-48 as well as 24hr email support at supportmail@aware.ie.
2) **SAMARITANS**: Samaritans are a well known, international, charitable organisation that provide a friendly listening ear via many methods including a 24hr/365 day per year free-phone service on 116123, an email service at jo@samaritans.org and numerous local branch drop-in centres.
3) **CITIZENS INFORMATION SERVICE**: The Citizens Information Service is a national, voluntary-led, service that provides information on a broad range of matters. They operate more than 215 drop-in centres across the country along with a national helpline at 0761074000 Monday to Friday 9pm-8am and a dedicated website at www.citizensinformation.ie/en/.
4) **POSITIVE OPTIONS:** Positive options offer advice for people who may be dealing with a crisis pregnancy. Their website can be found at the following address: www.positiveoptions.ie where they provide contact details for a range of services by area.

Who has reviewed this study? Approval for this study has been given by the research supervisor.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me:

Helena Cullinane

XXXXXXXXX

117732311@umail.ucc.ie

Academic Supervisor:

Dr Joe Whelan: joseph.whelan@ucc.ie

If you agree to take part in the study, I will ask that you please sign the provided consent form.