

**“GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS IN LEEDS**

**- Making a Difference”**

**An Exploratory Study  
on the Health Needs of Gypsies and Travellers**

**FINAL REPORT  
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Travellers Health Partnership (THP) was formed in December 1999 following the Annual General Meeting of South Leeds Health for All when a Traveller highlighted the gaps in statutory and voluntary service provision for Travellers. The THP consists of professionals working directly with Travellers (*from Leeds Community and Mental Health Trust, Travellers Education Service, Citizens Advice Bureau, Park Lane College and Leeds City Council Travellers Services Team*), Travellers, South Leeds Health for All, and latterly South Primary Care Group.

The primary aim of the Travellers Health Partnership was to explore the health needs of Gypsies and Travellers who live in Leeds. However, the forum also provided an opportunity for networking and collaboration between professionals who work with Travellers, and was unique in that there was Traveller participation.

‘Gypsies and Travellers’ are an ethnic group, ie are identified as such even if they now live in houses or on permanent caravan sites. Gypsies and Travellers have lived in Leeds for about 500 years. They live in houses, on local authority caravan sites, by the roadside or on their own land. There are currently two adjacent caravan sites at Cottingley Springs, with a total of about forty plots, which provide a home to about forty Travelling families. There are no transit sites in Leeds. Problems due to the lack of official sites were exacerbated by the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act which removed the local authority’s legal obligation to provide sites, and made trespass a criminal offence. Stopping by the roadside or on unused land therefore became very difficult, and planning legislation made it difficult for Gypsies and Travellers to obtain planning permission for living on their own land (Saunders et al 2000).

In 1969 there were said to be over 200 Travelling families, many of whom now live in houses. The twice yearly count by the Department of Environment does not include Travellers who live in houses, so it is not possible to ascertain how many Gypsies and Travellers now live in Leeds, and the areas in which they live. The Citizens Advice

Bureau and Travellers Education Service provide a service to this community Leeds-wide. The health visiting service is limited to Travellers who live on Cottingley Springs Caravan Site or the roadside, and the Adult Education Service provides a very limited service.

It is against this background that the research project was developed. A small grant was first obtained to hold a Travellers Fayre in March 2000. Apart from 'fun' events, such as face painting for children, jewellery making for young women, and a bric-a-brac, clothing and toys stall, interest and uptake at health education and promotion stalls was significant. These included eyesight-testing, hearing tests, dental hygiene, chiropody, aromatherapy, and fitness. Following the success of the Travellers Fayre, and the successful application for a grant from the Joint Consultative Committee Special Grants Programme, and Health Action Zone, this research project commenced in May 2000.

The Travellers Health Partnership formed the steering group for this study, which consisted of two parts, Phase 1 and 2. Phase 1 consisted of interviews with Travellers and professionals who work (worked) with Travellers, and the reporting of the process of evicting a Travelling family from Cottingley Springs Caravan Site (see Appendix A). Phase 1 was completed in January 2001. During the process of the eviction, the Department of Housing had withdrawn from the THP and was unable, therefore, to contribute to directing the research process. Following the presentation of the draft report of Phase 1 to the stakeholding organisations, and the response of the Director, Department of Housing, the study entered Phase 2 in order to incorporate the response of senior officers of the Council and provide a balance in perspectives.

## **1.1 Aim and Objectives**

The aim of the research was “To explore the health needs of Gypsies and Travellers who live in Leeds”.

The objectives were:

To identify factors reported to influence the health of Gypsies and Travellers who live in Leeds

To identify health needs

To identify gaps in service provision

To recommend changes which could facilitate health improvement

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Much of the literature on the health of Gypsies and Travellers has already been reviewed and analysed by many professionals and academics. As described by Hawes (1997) the health of this minority community is “a patchy and ill-understood phenomenon whose complexity is matched by its marginality to the mainstream health structures”.

### **2.1 GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS**

Liegeois (1994) confirms that the original Gypsies came from the East. It was not until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that linguistic science discovered that Gypsy language was an Indian language, derived from popular dialects close to Sanskrit. The migration of Gypsies from India took place between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, in a number of waves and the study of linguistics gives an idea of the routes taken over the course of these migrations. In the UK the first recorded appearance of Gypsies was over 500 years ago.

In law, the term (traditional) Travellers refers to people who have a long generational history of a nomadic way of life, and whose sole place of residence is a caravan, bus, tent, or other form of moveable structure. The 1960 Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, later amended by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, provides a legal definition for persons of nomadic habit of life that covers Gypsies and other groups of people who are nomadic by habit or choice, and who travel for the purpose of making a living, eg Irish Travellers. This definition also includes Gypsies and Travellers who now reside in houses due to circumstances including ill-health (Brown, Allen et al 1999), but does not include the newer Travellers, eg New Age Travellers.

In the U.K. it was not until 1989 that Gypsies and (traditional) Travellers were recognised as an ethnic minority group in their own right under the terms of the Race Relations Act 1976. Modern literature on nomadic and itinerant people is largely concerned with Gypsies and (traditional) Travellers, rather than newer Travellers, and



in this literature review “Gypsies and Travellers” refer to the former legally recognised minority ethnic group.

In 1984 a count by the Department of Environment in England showed over 9,600 trailers, with 7-8,000 families, which accounted for a population of about 30-50,000. In 1991 the count was 55 – 60,000 persons in England, Wales and Scotland living and travelling in caravans. When including those living in permanent accommodation of one kind or another, this brings the count to a minimum of 90,000 Gypsies and Travellers in the U.K. (Liegeois 1994).

### **2.1.1 Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds**

Saunders et al (2000) mention the long history of Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds. The first written record of Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds is in the Parish Register of Leeds Parish Church in 1572, when “*Elizabeth, childe of Anthony Sinawleye the Egyptian*” was baptised. Today the legacy of Gypsy and Traveller encampments in Leeds dating back to the seventeenth century can be still found in street names, such as Gypsy Lane near Middleton Woods, Gypsy Wood Close in Colton and Blackman Lane off Woodhouse Lane. ‘Van towns’ also existed from the late nineteenth century up to the 1930’s. Brickfields at Armley, for example, had one hundred and fifty vans, tents and huts on the ground between Armley Town Street and Stanningley Road (Saunders et al, ed. 2000). Hunslet and Holbeck have a history of Gypsy and Traveller yards from the early nineteenth century, and Holbeck continues to this day to be home to a large number of Gypsies and Travellers living in houses.

## **2.2 LIFESTYLE, CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS**

Although recognised as a minority ethnic group, Gypsies and Travellers have never constituted an homogenous group. According to Acton (1974) they are “a most disunited and ill-defined people” for whom as many as eighteen different names exist, including Romanies, tinkers, didecois and mumpers. While some writers insist that Gypsies and Travellers possess distinctive cultural norms and values (eg Crout 1987),

others argue that they have a “continuity rather than a community of culture” (eg Hawes 1997).

Some fixed links have been identified: nomadism as a ‘state of mind’ (Liegeois 1986), the importance of kinship and extended family groupings with considerable intermarriage, a strict sexual morality and a matriarchal culture that delineates male-female roles clearly, and through which social control is exercised (Hawes and Perez 1995). According to Liegeois (1986) the strength of the people lies in the very diversity of their life, and their absorption or borrowing from the cultural environment in which they find themselves is achieved without weakening the essential and distinct collective identity. For up to 500 years they have maintained a cultural and community identity, and economic and social independence from the majority of the population.

The concept of cleanliness and pollution is a significant one. To the Traveller the outer body is the public self, which can be exposed to the ‘polluted outer world’, but it also provides a protective covering for the inner self, a pure sanctuary of one’s being. Professionals (eg Windess 1987) all give witness to this belief, manifested, firstly in the very high standard of personal hygiene. Clothes may be dirty from the outdoor lifestyle, but the daily washing routine is an essential part of the day. Secondly, caravans are cleaned scrupulously at least once a day, and different bowls and towels are used for different washing purposes.

The Travelling community has many cultural beliefs, values and practices in relation to marriage. Girls often marry at 16-17, and boys at 18-19 years of age. The majority are married by the age of 22. Marriage to non-Travellers (Gorgious) is discouraged as they believe that it will threaten the purity of the race. Marriage between first (or even second cousins) was prohibited amongst the Romanies (Okely 1983, cited Moreton 1988), but this is not so with other Travellers.

Traditionally the men go out to work and make all the financial and major decisions, including when to move on to another site (Jackson 1990). Stuck on sites on the outskirts of the city, women spend their days gathering in each other’s trailers, smoking, chatting and watching television, apart from washing and cleaning.

Extended families share sites and are supportive of each other. These factors ameliorate the problems of income and living space, and the sheer physical effort involved in caring for a large number of children (Lawrie 1983).

Children are highly valued, never abandoned or abused. However they are integrated with the economic lifestyle from an early age. Boys learn to recognise different metals and help with scrap breaking. Many will have learnt basic driving skills long before they reach 17 years of age. Girls help with cleaning and minding younger children. Young children play outdoors and become hardened to an outdoor life. Children do not attend secondary schools regularly, partly due to the irrelevance of most of the general curriculum for their lifestyle. Talking about sex, reproduction and pregnancy are associated with certain taboos in the culture, so sex education in schools, especially in mixed groups, is not acceptable. Specialist health visitors do not teach family planning to young girls without parental permission (eg Jackson 1990).

Children are also seen as an 'economic investment', and birth control is not openly encouraged. However, despite poor literacy women are increasingly well-informed and are becoming aware of the risks of morbidity and mortality both to themselves and their children through too many poorly spaced pregnancies. Many women use contraception without telling their husbands (Moreton 1988, Jackson 1990).

Roadside Travellers camp on any spare land available. The length of stay can be as short as a week, due to eviction, and is not usually more than three months. When travelling, car batteries and generators supply electricity, and calor gas is used for cooking. Water comes from stand-pipes, garages, and cooperative public houses. Sanitation is primitive, and refuse is not collected.

Those that live on a caravan site pay rent for a pitch which consists of a tarmaced surface, a brick shed with a storage room, washing and toilet facilities. Most Travellers have two trailers. The big mobile home is very smart, with its display of Crown Derby china and cut glass, and is used mostly for sleeping. The second smaller trailer is referred to as the 'kitchen trailer', and is the day time living space – used for cooking, gathering with friends and where children are free to come and go.

The absence of the settled population's concept of time is widely known. Regular time-keeping is an anathema to the mode of life. Ages and birthdays are often unknown, and days of the week undifferentiated, except for Sundays.

Friction and incompatibility exists between different extended families and this has implications, for example, for education and community development, in a community that has to live in close proximity (Patterson 1982). When travelling they frequently do so in extended family groups, for protection from what is often a hostile environment. As in the settled community, Travellers from Irish descent maintain close links with Ireland and often return for family events, particularly weddings and funerals.

## 2.3 ENVIRONMENT

### 2.3.1 Location and Condition of Sites

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH 1995) has indicated that exposure to risks of ill health for Travellers is significantly influenced by the standard of amenity provision on sites. Risks identified include water and food borne diseases, infectious viral and bacterial diseases, which spread more easily in crowded conditions, personal infestation, vermin, accidents, refuse accumulation, contaminated land and fire hazards.

Feder (1994) and others highlight the fact that settled people take for granted basic facilities, such as running water, sanitation, rubbish collection and postal service. For Travellers, several studies (eg Hyman 1989, Feder 1994, O'Dwyer 1997, Carlisle & Hutton 1997) report on poor, dilapidated and hazardous site conditions, and the considerable contrasts between sites even within the same local authority area (Clarke 1998).

Residents on local authority sites report skin problems, with queries about the building materials used, the land on which the site stands, proximity of rubbish tips, the sewage and drainage systems, and irregularity of refuse collection. Unofficial sites tend to be without services, and health, safety and fire hazards become an increasing problem (Children's Society 1998). Bancroft et al (1996) recommended that local authority sites should be more accessible for disabled Travellers as over 25% of their study cited illness or disability as restricting their mobility.

In Cardiff (Keeble 1996) the independent consultation with Travellers on two official sites and one private site, in housing and on a roadside site, revealed immediate concerns on both official sites with conditions, including cleanliness, uncontrolled dogs and speeding vehicles, lack of security and the level of site disrepair. The need for play space for children was identified. Mothers often presented with mental health issues and parental stress where there was no play space (eg London Irish Women's Centre 1995, O'Dwyer 1997). Feelings of loss were expressed by children when they were given notices of

eviction and then moved. Feelings of fear arose when eviction was enforced, especially in the presence of police (Children's Society 1998).

Rents for pitches are high (eg £77.28 per week in Belfast) (Molloy 1998) although only inclusive of a tarmaced surface and amenity block. Families have to buy or rent their own caravan and could thus be faced with paying two sets of rent. The excessively high rent encourages dependence on housing benefit, rather than employment.

The physical isolation of sites from mainstream society intensifies social exclusion (Carlisle & Hutton 1998), with its concomittant effects on health. The 1968 Caravan Sites Act deplored the 'hole and corner sites, excessively close to sewage plants, refuse destructors, traffic-laden motorways and intersections, main railway tracts, and other features contaminating the environment by odour, noise, fumes and so on'. However this legislation has been superceded by the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act which removed the funding for and duty on local authorities to provide official sites.

Feder's (1994) study confirmed that in the absence or inadequate provision of basic facilities, immediate concerns over environmental health issues take precedence over health education issues. As a specialist health visitor, Peck (1983) described how a Traveller mother needed help with immediate problems, such as getting the "smashed windows replaced in the trailer, sufficient money to buy food and use the launderette, and above all a stopping place for the trailer without fear of harassment from the local residents or the local authority", rather than hear about preventative medicine.

In view of the environmental problems which took precedence over other issues, innovative specialist health visitors (eg Peck 1983) convened support groups made up mainly of professionals, to form a pressure group to support Travellers against victimisation. The groups were for professionals of all disciplines whose work brought them into contact with Travellers, to discuss issues and problems. Meetings included representatives from the police, environmental health, education, social services, the city and county councils.

### 2.3.2 Planning Permission, Housing and Alternative Schemes

Apart from site conditions, specialist health visitors (eg Crout 1987) have discovered that Travellers' problems are often related to the shortage of official sites and the difficulty in obtaining planning permission for private sites. Mental health issues, eg depression, anxiety, suicide, nightmares (often about stairs in houses), and other mental and emotional problems, that required medication, were common with Travellers who were forced to go into culturally inappropriate accommodation (eg bed and breakfast accommodation and other housing).

In Dublin, Task Force (1995) recommended the immediate improvement of the accommodation situation of Travellers as a pre-requisite to the general improvement of health status. McGrath (1996) confirmed that well-designed transit sites and Group Housing schemes improved health amongst the new residents – reduced accident rate, fewer medical and hospital consultations, improved women's health and children's school attendance.

### 2.3.3 Public Policy

The concept of ethnic cleansing has begun to be utilised to describe the actions and attitudes of contemporary British society to Gypsies and Travellers. Hawes and Perez (1995) examined the way in which public policy responds to minority groups of many kinds and throws light on the process of policy making. Layers of ambivalence and contradiction are said to exist, which is not always apparent in the political life of an advanced democracy.

The cooperative and liberal approach, beginning in the 1960's, to policy on Gypsy and Traveller issues was said to be the "one interval in 500 years of hostility, in which the concept of civil rights for Travelling people was accepted, when serious efforts were made to provide caravan sites, to offer easier access to education and to deliver basic national health services to those without a static address." (Hawes and Perez 1995).

However, after 25 years, this framework for social provision, particularly of legal sites, was dismantled in a process beginning in August 1992 when the Department of the Environment issued a consultation document on the future direction of policy on the provision of Gypsy sites (Hawes and Perez 1995). The basis for a fresh approach was that the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, which placed a mandatory duty on local government to provide sites, had not worked. However, the failure was seen by researchers to be one of political will rather than of policy relevance. Over 33% of local authorities had failed to find local sites, due to the fierce opposition of local residents. A number of MPs were also said to sense opportunities in electoral popularity with a more draconian approach.

Although the proposals advised local authorities to consider education, health and housing needs, the aim of the policy change, in the long term, was to encourage Gypsies and Travellers to transfer to traditional housing (DoE 1992). The impact of this would be an alteration of the fundamental lifestyle of Gypsies and Travellers in a way which would remove them as a distinctive culture.

The consultation culminated in the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, which not only removed the duty of local authorities to provide sites, but withdrew 100% of central funding for those authorities who wished to do so. Instead, Gypsies and Travellers were encouraged to settle in houses or to purchase their own sites. However, the relaxation of green belt usage was simultaneously withdrawn (DoE, circulars 28/77 and 57/78) and, considering the history of intense local opposition, the difficulties which Gypsies and Travellers might face in obtaining planning permission were not addressed. Instead, local authorities were given significantly increased powers to combat illegal stopping.

The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into U.K. law from October 2000 bodes well for Travellers on a number of issues, not least on planning and environment issues. The policies of Local Authorities are being reviewed, to conform to the Human Rights Act. The rights contained in the Convention are currently being tested in a number of cases and judgment is expected shortly (Jones 2000). Apart from highlighting the rights of Travellers, Jones (2000) also suggests a number of approaches



which local planning authorities could take to enable Travellers to obtain planning permission, initially through supplementary planning guidance and subsequently through Unitary Development Plans and Local Plans.

In the declaration that came out of the European Conference against Racism and Intolerance at Strasbourg, October 2000, Travellers are included as a specific minority group facing racism, along with Gypsies. The declaration commits the 41 Member States of the Council of Europe to take steps to prevent and eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other intolerance.

The Traveller Law Reform Bill (cited Traveller Times Dec 2000) makes “important amendments to remove discriminatory statutory provision, for instance, in relation to education plans and grants; widening housing grants to include caravan sites ..., and strengthening security of tenure on Traveller sites”. The most significant innovation is said to be “the extent to which it seeks to remove from the political stage decisions concerning site provision and site toleration”. All the amendments remain to be tested. However, if site provision and toleration will no longer depend on “political will” for their enforcement, if there is increased security of tenure on Traveller sites, and housing grants are extended to include caravan sites, this represents new hope for the Gypsy and Traveller lifestyle.

#### 2.3.4 Summary

It can clearly be seen that the availability of well-designed and well-run sites, and the availability of transit sites is a significant factor in the health status of Travellers. Basic amenities include laundry facilities, play areas, running water, electricity, flush toilets, refuse collection, amenity huts and postal deliveries. A significant finding from specialist health visitors is that for Travellers, their immediate concerns over environmental conditions take precedence over health improvement issues.

Public policy changed drastically with the implementation of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, despite research findings and much campaigning to alert policy makers. This has resulted in fewer official and transit sites, with poor conditions, and what appears to be excessive rent for what is provided. Difficulties in obtaining planning permission for private sites compound what seems to be a 'way out' for some Travellers. Murray Hunt, barrister, goes so far as to say that the current U.K. accommodation and planning law and policy regime offers Travelling people a Hobson's Choice between criminalisation and assimilation (cited Traveller Times Dec 2000). Being forced to move into a house is an enormous cultural change and the stress of living in culturally inadequate accommodation results in mental health problems for some Travellers.

The idea of Travellers' support groups to support Travellers against victimisation and to facilitate inter-agency collaboration appears to be a 'working solution', but the question remains, 'what needs to be changed on a national and local level to improve environmental conditions for this community in the longer term?'

Hawes and Perez' (1995) research illustrates the process by which prejudice becomes policy in the history of Gypsies and Travellers living in the U.K. However, the wide-ranging implications of four recent pieces of legislation/declaration/literature may yet prove to be the turning point for Gypsies and Travellers in their plight to live their traditional way of life. These include:

- the implementation of the (U.K.) Human Rights Act 1998 from October 2000
- the (U.K.) Traveller Law Reform Bill 2000
- the declaration of the European Convention against Racism and Intolerance, October 2000
- the Parekh Report (2000) of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain.

## 2.4 HEALTH

In the 1980's many areas developed mobile clinics to take services to Travellers at official camps and on the roadside. Some success has been shown with care that involves children (eg immunisation uptake) and to some extent pregnant women (eg bookings for birth), but in general, there is no significant improvement in the health of Travellers. They are said to overuse the crisis services, are poor at keeping appointments at outpatients departments, antenatal clinics and surgeries.

Thiederman (1986) argues that “a breakdown in cross-cultural communication and understanding which stems from the tendency of professionals to project their own culturally specific values and behaviours .... has contributed significantly to non-compliance...” Similarly Taylor (1991) and others challenge the ethnocentric assumptions behind attempts to change or explain low uptake of services, and argues that care must be offered in a way acceptable to Travellers' own culture, beliefs and traditions. Few workers are said to have specific knowledge or skills relating to the various groups of Travellers (Streetly 1987).

The complex issues that have a major impact on the health of Travellers can be grouped under two main categories: environmental conditions and health behaviour (Taylor 1991, Vernon 1994). Other issues involve general practitioner services, lack of follow-up care, specialist health visitor services, and community development.

### 2.4.1 Environmental conditions (eg Pahl and Vaile 1986, Streetly 1987, Bannon 1992)

Inadequate site provision means that families park illegally near busy roads, on waste ground and other unsuitable sites, live with uncertain water supply and no sanitation. This results in road traffic and other accidents, especially with children: burns and scalds from open fires, and faulty wiring are prevalent; skin conditions are not infrequent. Inadequate or non-existent sanitation on the roadside means that even the Romanies, with their strict

codes concerning hygiene, succumb to the inevitable gastroenteritis (eg Lawrie 1983, Taylor 1991).

Post offices refuse to deliver letters to temporary or illegal sites, which makes attendance at hospital clinics unlikely even if Travellers remain in one area, eg in winter. This leads to misunderstandings with health professionals (Streetly 1987, Bannon 1992).

Eviction features largely in the life of Travellers on unofficial sites. Sadler (1993) points out that eviction around the time of childbearing may have life-threatening effects on Traveller women and may affect their long-term physical and mental health. A report published by the Maternity Alliance (Durward 1990) revealed that of 43 local authorities questioned, 16 said they would evict pregnant women close to birth, and 15 said that they would evict mothers of newborn babies. Bancroft et al's (1996) survey revealed 48% of the sample had been evicted or moved on while pregnant.

Official statistics have also shown that the stillbirth rate amongst Traveller women is 17 times the national average and 12 times that among women in Social Class V. Infant mortality is 5 times the national rate, and twice as many babies are born with low birth weight, under 2.5 kg (5 lbs) (Pahl & Vaile 1986, Barry et al 1989, Vernon 1994, Barry 1996). Traveller women are more likely to have suffered from a serious disease over a 5 year period. Morbidity and mortality rates show that the overall health of Travellers is poor compared to the general population. For example, asthma concerned 30% of Traveller parents compared with 11% of inner city and 4.5% of affluent parents (Anderson 1997).. Life expectancy (especially males) is said to be about 48 years (Vernon 1994, Barry 1996, Bromley 1996, Anderson 1997).

A study in Brent (O'Dwyer 1997) identifies the (often involuntary) move into housing as a major factor in the breakdown of mental health and child-coping mechanisms, due especially to isolation from tight family networks and support structures.

Wilson (1988), Vernon (1994) and others argue that only when adequate site provision, including amenities, are addressed will the health of Travellers really improve. Yet, the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act removed the duty of local authorities to provide sites, and withdrew 100% of central funding for local authorities to provide sites. As reviewed under the section on public policy, while on the one hand the 1994 Act encourages Travellers to purchase their own sites, on the other hand other clauses create difficulties for Travellers, eg, the restrictions on the use of green belt land. While government Guidance advocates consideration of health, education and social needs prior to roadside evictions, they are nevertheless some considerations amongst many others.

## **2.4.2 Health Behaviour**

### **2.4.2.1 Accidents**

The rate of accidental injury has been reported to be higher than that of children in Social Class V (eg Beach 1999). Apart from the hazards of living on the roadside, young children are often barefoot and injuries range from cuts, bruises, burns and blisters to fractures, and accidents happen from living and playing in the restricted space of a caravan. Babies and toddlers are often left in the care of sisters as young as 7-8 year olds. According to Raper (1986) accidents are accepted by Travellers as a routine part of life and help is not always sought immediately.

### **2.4.2.2 Infections and infectious diseases**

Due to overcrowding, infections and infectious diseases spread easily, especially upper respiratory tract infections and otitis media in children. Treatment is often not sought at an early stage. Lawrie (1983) recommends that an aural examination is performed when a Travelling child is seen by a doctor. Impetigo, chronic skin conditions, ear, nose and eye problems are common and persistent. Infestation with lice, scabies and threadworms is not as common as might be expected, and is probably more a reflection of overcrowding than poor hygiene.

#### 2.4.2.3 Womens Health

Women are susceptible to problems that relate to their reproductive systems, from having poorly spaced and multiple pregnancies and starting a family from a young age. Gmelch et al (1975) report on Irish Traveller women who have eleven children before their 27<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Rustom (1990) however reports that sheer physical exhaustion has made some women space their pregnancies, and some women use birth control without their husband's knowledge. The responsibility for contraception is entirely left to the women. Birth control is not openly encouraged (Jackson 1990) but despite limited literacy the women are well informed, and increasingly aware of morbidity and mortality risks both to themselves and their children through too many poorly spaced pregnancies (Moreton 1988). Some health care workers have devised ways of indicating indirectly the use of birth control in health records so that follow up care can be provided discreetly.

Traveller women put their families first in most matters and often neglect their own health. Becoming more trailer bound, focused mainly on child care and their rigorous cleaning routine can lead to depression and obesity. Smoking is widespread. The lack of services and activities for children and young people has been reported to have a negative impact on the mental health of mothers (O'Dwyer 1997).

#### 2.4.2.4 Mens Health

Traveller men accept the health visitor's role with women but seldom consult on their own health problems. However the health visitor is often the first person to pick up and advise on men's health problems when their wives express concerns. Alcohol abuse happens, and premature death from cardiovascular disease is more prevalent than in the surrounding working class population (eg Crout 1987, Wilson 1988). Other problems include psychiatric problems, domestic violence, marital disharmony and breakdown (Crout 1987, Vernon 1994, Cardiff Gypsy Sites Group 1998).

#### 2.4.2.5 Child Health

Children are susceptible to problems such as tetany and developmental delay. Streetly (cited Taylor 1991) found that some Travellers have non-vaccine-related strains of the polio virus (Self 1982, Bell et al 1983, Streetly 1987)

The children are also susceptible to genetically inherited conditions due to intermarriage (eg Barry et al 1989). The Romanies have strict rules about marriage and are encouraged to marry from within their tribe; Irish Travellers also tend to inter-marry frequently. Without easy access to health services, there is a delay in diagnosing genetically inherited conditions, and families may not know the services which are available, eg provision of incontinence pads and aids. Furthermore, families need advice and assistance in relation to the care of the unwell child, eg how to read a thermometer.

Very few babies are breast fed due to lack of privacy and lack of freedom. Travellers also seem to think that breast feeding is an economic necessity, rather than a healthy option. Most babies are fed on modified milk, but some give cows milk from birth, while others are changed to it at 3 months. Babies also tend to be weaned by adding cereal to bottles as early as one month, and most are eating family foods by six months. Lawrie (1983) points out that it is important to respect tradition, and not intervene with feeding practices unless they are overtly dangerous. Mothers like to have their babies weighed.

#### 2.4.2.6 Dental disease

Lawrie (1983) discovered the appallingly high rate of dental caries, caused by constantly eating sweets and the absence of tooth brushes. Dental health was identified as an area where Traveller children were disadvantaged, treatment being sought for acute pain rather than preventative care (O'Dwyer 1997).

#### 2.4.2.7 Diet

All trailers have ovens but the women rarely use them. They learned to cook from their mothers and cannot read recipes. It is difficult to change practice.

#### 2.4.2.8 Concept of 'pollution'

This has already been described and in relation to health care, means that childbirth, along with death, therefore must occur outside the trailer to avoid contamination. There is a low uptake of family planning (especially barrier methods) cervical cytology and routine antenatal care, partly because of the requirement of internal examinations.

#### 2.4.2.9 The perceived 'benefits and costs'

The health beliefs model (cited Taylor 1991) explains how individuals will demonstrate (positive) health behaviour depending on their perception of the value of the particular goal and the likelihood of actions achieving that goal. Costs and benefits are weighed before there is change in health behaviour. For example, Travellers may allow children to receive immunisation because children, prior to puberty, are seen as immune to the rigorous pollution beliefs, and the benefits include free milk, nappies and help with welfare rights; a hospital delivery for a pregnant woman provides a convenient solution to the threat of 'polluting' the trailer.

### **2.4.3 General Practitioners**

Some Travellers are reticent about registering because of past experience and of being refused registration at more than one surgery. The difficulty in find GPs who are not hostile and who will try to understand Travellers and their lifestyle has been consistently reported (eg Streetly 1987, Black Country 1992, Bancroft et al 1996). Some GPs refuse to attend when they are called to a site, some have been known to arrive with police escort. It has also been asserted (Black Country 1992, Feder 1994, Dorset 1998) that Travellers have 'more' health problems and this may contribute to their difficulty in being accepted by a GP. The implication is a need for 'Traveller-friendly' GPs to be identified. In some areas, eg Cardiff Gypsy Sites Group (1998), progress has been reported with the service offered by GPs, compared to the previous decade.

### **2.4.4 Lack of follow up care**

Problems also arise from the lack of follow-up care. For example, post-gastroenteritis intolerance can occur, caused by damage to the intestinal mucosa by the organism.



Limb deformity may follow a fracture, or a post-operative complication may present.

#### **2.4.5 Specialist Health Visitor**

In 1987 the Council for the Education and Training of Health Visitors (cited Crout 1987) identified the specialist health visitor as “the only community health worker with a brief to work at community and family level to implement policy change”. Until then, with very few exceptions, there were no specialist health visitors for Travelling families throughout England and Wales (Self 1982, Peck 1983, Save the Children Fund Survey 1979 cited Lawrie 1983). There was no continuity of contact and past records were rarely available. The unpredicted appearance of a group of Travellers in an area usually placed a strain on services and needs could not always be met.

As a specialist health visitor, Rustom (1990) found that “the rewards and job satisfaction far outweigh the failures encountered”. What follows is a summary of the ingredients of an approach that seem to have contributed to the most successful projects:

1. It is vital that a relationship of trust and respect is built up before any health promotion activity is carried out – this could take several months.
2. Be aware of and respect the significant influence of traditional, customary patterns and beliefs in all matters, eg from childrearing and cooking to hygiene
3. The extended role of the health visitor, to cover, for example, family planning, midwifery, district nursing services as well as generic health visiting and health education; to be able to initiate treatment for simple conditions (eg Wilson 1988, Jackson 1990). The specialist health visitor has even been known to accompany clients to their first hospital appointments, in order to show them the way, and offer support when facing hospital bureaucracy.
4. Be prepared to offer care, advice and support on the spot – rather than make future appointments. Work quickly and intensively with families and be able to offer as many services as possible, as contact is often short-term.
5. Find ways of assessing that is not only time-related. For health professionals, so much is bound up in units of time, eg “How long have you had this pain?” The accepted

concept of time is little understood or appreciated by Travellers, although the individual may attempt to show an understanding as a matter of personal pride.

6. Patient held health records for all age groups are essential.
7. Build up a network of health visitors who work with Travellers in the county.
8. Multi-agency liaison, networking, collaboration and support are essential because roles of professionals overlap.

The achievements of the specialist health visitor and measures of success have included an increase in immunisation uptake and ante-natal care, an awareness of the problems of intermarriage and the need for genetic counselling, reduction in low birth weight babies and reduced perinatal mortality rates.

On the other hand, Taylor (1991) argues that success has been limited to immunisations and booking births, and that Travellers continue to exhibit 'negative' health behaviour despite mobile health clinics on site. Anthropological studies offer some explanation, and Taylor advocates the use of the health beliefs model (Becker et al 1988) in order to provide care that is acceptable to the cultural beliefs and values of Travellers.

Culture is regarded as a major 'modifying factor' in both health and illness behaviour. The following are two significant influences on Travellers' uptake of health services:

Taylor (1991) and others emphasise the great value in learning about ethnic cultures in order to deliver quality health care, and the importance of consulting the 'consumer' about what they perceive as their needs, rather than trying to change behaviour according to the values of the dominant 'provider' group. For example, Streetly (1987) and Peck (1983) found that unless the immediate problems of the Travellers were met they were uninterested in health care.

Apart from a culturally sensitive service and improved environmental conditions, factors which have restricted access to NHS services include (O'Dwyer 1997, Carlisle & Hutton 1998):

- lack of knowledge regarding often complicated access procedures
- low levels of literacy, and lack of materials and interventions aimed at this population
- discrimination by service providers - anxiety about approaching service professionals

#### **2.4.6 On-Site Primary Health Care**

What has been reported to be most effective (eg Self 1982, Wilson 1988, Rose 1990) has been on-site service, ie a mobile clinic offering full primary health care services, which demonstrates adaptability and flexibility in service provision, and a better understanding of the lifestyle, traditions and needs of Travellers. Mobile clinics have been equipped with reception, consultation and examination facilities, offering the following services:

- Health education – including diet, teeth, family planning, alcohol use, smoking, accident prevention, with facilities for showing slides, videos, etc.; health promotion for adolescent girls, including pre-pregnancy care and contraception
- Child health – immunisations, developmental checks, vision tests, monitoring height and weight
- Ante and post-natal care
- General Practitioner services
- Dental and chiropody services

#### **2.4.7 Community Development Model**

Matthews (1998) argues that Travellers (and other socially-excluded minorities) are not helpless victims and must not be treated as such. ‘Social exclusion’ refers to any marginalised group .... “poverty, but also poor health, social ostracism, discrimination, widespread illiteracy and school failure, deplorable living circumstances, denial of cultural identity, unemployment, economic dependency, powerlessness and lack of participation as citizens” (O’Connell 1994). Matthews describes social exclusion as a process, rooted in systematic neglect through unhealthy public policy or complete lack of policy. Issues cannot be treated in isolation, for example, increasing access to health care does not address how people become ill in the first place and can contribute to internalisation of

powerlessness of those it purports to help. It can perpetuate power dynamics and institutional racism (Wallerstein 1992).

In 1977 the World Health Organisation (cited Matthews 1998) advocated the hypothesis that health was primarily about politics. Matthews argues that it is not merely the unfair distribution of resources that produces social inequalities, but rather powerlessness emerges as a broad-based risk factor for disease.

Matthews (1998) reports on a pioneering project in Dublin which developed a community development model of working, which included Traveller participation, consultation and active involvement, along with collective action and mobilisation for social change. One of the key principals was multi-dimensionality. Project leaders (which included Travellers) helped a group of Traveller women to identify their health needs at a personal and community level. This model relocated power away from health care professionals toward the Traveller women, who then ceased to be passive and became effective agents for change. A community development model appears to address the relationship between inequalities of power and ill health.

#### **2.4.8 Summary**

A wide range of literature on the health needs of Gypsies and Travellers has been written over the last 30 years, with much consensus over main issues. Firstly, poor environmental conditions in the form of inadequate site provision is a major contributing factor to the poor health status of this minority community. The state of affairs has significantly worsened since the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act relieved local authorities of the responsibility to provide sites for Travellers, and whose aim seems ultimately to be to move Travelling people into houses, thus putting an end to a cultural way of living. Travellers have not 'obliged', except when health and circumstances have made travelling impossible, with the result that access to health care has deteriorated despite the concerted efforts of dedicated health visitors. The change from living in a caravan all their lives to adapting to

a house dwelling has become a major factor in the breakdown of mental health and child-coping mechanisms.

The rate of accidental injury, number of infections and infectious conditions, prevalence of dental disease, condition of women's, men's and children's health, and the difficulty of providing follow up care highlight the need for health education, improved access to health care, and extended roles of professionals. In particular there seems to be a need for a more flexible and imaginative way of taking services to Travellers, and to identify GPs who can work well with Travellers. Professionals working with Travellers identify that given the poor environmental conditions, getting help with immediate problems are the main concerns of Travellers. Unless immediate problems are met, Travellers are not interested in discussing or changing health behaviour.

Taylor (1991) challenges the ethnocentric assumptions behind attempts to change practice, or explain low uptake of services, and advocates a health beliefs model for service provision, based on Travellers' own cultures, beliefs and traditions. The literature on Travellers' anxiety about approaching health professionals and those who work in the system, lack of knowledge about how to negotiate the system and literacy needs, indicates a need for inservice training on inter-culturalism and negative stereotyping of Travellers (Pavee Point 1998).

Matthew (1998) takes this further by advocating a community development model for health care in which Travellers identify their needs and are empowered to become effective agents of their own change. Whatever form health service provision takes, it would seem that a health beliefs model and social empowerment model (which addresses the relation between inequalities of power and ill health) need not be mutually exclusive. The literature indicates that a multi-dimensional approach is the way forward.

## 2.5 EDUCATION

Travellers tend to view self-employment rather than waged labour as an ideal, and skills are transferred across generations (Bancroft et al 1996, Plowden 1967). Some Travellers feel that they would not get jobs, no matter how well-educated they might become, due to discrimination (Carlisle & Hutton 1998). Parents' own unhappy experiences of school (DES 1983) influences school attendance. However, the urbanisation of Travellers has slowly accentuated their need and aspirations for a formal education (Paris et al 1995), and more parents are seeing the value of a mainstream education to enable their children to cope better in an increasingly bureaucratised world (Min of H and Local Govt 1967).

Nevertheless, parents and children alike do not see the point of formal education which goes beyond literacy and numeracy (Bancroft et al 1996, Carlisle & Hutton 1998). In N. Ireland census data showed a 100% participation rate in primary school compared to 43% at secondary level (Paris et al 1995). Other studies (Bancroft et al 1996; Liegeois 1998) show that regular attendance is low, especially at secondary level. It has been suggested parents may not want their children to progress further to higher education for fear of separation from their families and culture.

Reiss (1975) suggests that mass non-attendance should be seen as the symptom of a whole syndrome of causes rather than as culpable or obstinate behaviour exhibited by Travellers. A central factor in considering the education of Travellers' children is site provision (DES 1983, STEP 1996).

Travellers' nomadic lifestyle and culture is incompatible with conventional provision of education (Cardiff 1998). Scottish Traveller Education Project (STEP 1996) found that the type of accommodation lived in has an impact upon receipt and experience of education. Those in houses or permanent sites are able to attend a local school of their choice, whereas those on unauthorised sites or short-term authorised sites have little or no access to schools. Parents have had to remove children mid-lesson in order to avoid being separated due to an eviction (DES 1983).

Once at school, name-calling, bullying and negative attitudes on the part of school staff, parents and children are major factors that inhibit attendance and learning for Traveller children (eg Southwark 1992; Carlisle & Hutton 1998, Plowden 1967; Children's Society 1998; Liegeois 1998). Some report that this seemed less of a problem for children who were able to spend a stable period of time settling in. In 1996 Ofsted found that attitudes and relationships between Travelling communities and schools had markedly improved, but in 1999 Ofsted highlighted the high levels of prejudice and hostility experienced by Travelling children.

Both Ofsted (1996) and the Children's Society (1998) report negative attitudes of schools, frequently manifested in the refusal to admit Travelling children or delay in admission procedures, and the imposition of difficult or discriminatory conditions. In some cases, threats and acts of violence have been sufficient to deter Traveller parents from placing their children in the school.

“In many ways the situation of Travellers' children mirrors many of the factors which influence the education of children from other ethnic minority groups – racism and discrimination, myths, stereotyping and misinformation, the inappropriateness and inflexibility of the education system and the need for better links between home and school” (DES 1985). Ofsted (1999) focussing on Bangladesh, Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Gypsy Traveller pupils found Travelling children to be most at risk in the education system.

In Ireland (O'Boyle 1990) it was found that the curriculum did not take into account the separate ethnic status of Travellers or accommodate their history and culture. Teachers had not received training to teach in a multi-cultural situation. Liegeois (1998) reports on the gulf between the aspirations and values of the school and Travellers themselves, yet DES (1985) acknowledged that ways must be found to reconcile the concerns and aspirations of the Travelling community and the mainstream education system in a more

positive manner. Children were encouraged to “settle down” and in effect to cease being Travellers.

As far back as 1975, Reiss suggested that it was impractical, and probably unethical, to ignore the stigmatised image and threatened minority status of Travellers when considering social and educational policies. There was concern expressed that many primary age children were at least three years behind the norm in core subjects, and that the curriculum was mono-cultural (Task Force 1995).

Occupational skills are not usually acknowledged by the formal education system. For example, an 11 year old Traveller child could mend an engine but could not read (Carlisle & Hutton 1998). Some were perceived as having low levels of educational skills but had a level of intelligence and competence in life skills not usual in settled children of similar age (DES 1983). Okely (1994) found that skills of Travellers are often underestimated or overlooked because of over-emphasis on illiteracy and lack of formal (secondary) education. Teachers should stop stereotyping and having low expectations. A number of Traveller children have above average ability (DES 1983).

Travellers have problems accessing pre-school education (Early Years 1996) because of waiting lists and their nomadic lifestyle. Service providers are also reluctant to give places to Traveller children because of sporadic attendance and fear of alienating other parents. When sites are situated in rural areas this poses more problems as pre-school education is usually fee-paying. Ofsted (1999) reports that few had received pre-school education and teachers expectations were unreasonably low.

Provision for children with Special Education Needs varied. Four schools in Scotland provided for Travellers with Special Education Needs. 35 Local Education Authorities in England and one in Wales were undertaking education-related research – but none concerned SEN. SEN provision for Traveller children in Northern Ireland was not quantified (DfEE 1994).



In 1986 Liegeois estimated that 85% of Travellers were non-literate in England and Wales (70% under the age of 30). In Ireland the figure stood at almost 90%.

A report in London (London Irish Women's Centre 1995) found that a high level of work was undertaken by education departments with Travellers in comparison with other council departments.

Research in Cardiff (Travellers Law Research Unit 1999) involving Travellers, Traveller organisations and service providers reveals the worrying message sent to settled people by central government and the media, ie that it was acceptable to treat Travellers with prejudice, thereby blocking access to sufficient and quality service in areas such as education. This research also recommended that every Local Education Authority should have a Traveller Education Policy and a means of evaluating and monitoring it.

### **Summary**

Issues affecting the education of Travellers are manifold. Firstly, Travellers' own beliefs regarding the value of education beyond basic literacy and numeracy. Secondly, the issue of inadequate site provision significantly influences the uptake of education services. Thirdly, the literature reveals that mainstream education:

- does not allow for the Travelling lifestyle and culture, ie unequal access
- does not respond to the concerns and aspirations of the Travelling community
- does not acknowledge, value or celebrate occupational skills
- equates intelligence with achievement in formal education, and therefore has low expectations of Traveller children
- needs to include Travellers' culture in inservice education on racism, discrimination, myths, stereotyping and misinformation
- needs to give a higher profile to antidiscriminatory policies and procedures

Finally, what is most worrying is the message given by central government and the media that Travellers are not considered to be citizens worthy of respect and who have equal opportunities.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

Collaboration is a key word in education, health and social care, and its value is recognised, but it is also acknowledged that collaboration does not ‘just happen’. Collaboration happens when trust is established, especially when working with vulnerable groups who have a history of being marginalised. Many professionals are ‘lone’ (Traveller) workers within the organisation which employs them. The development of the multi-agency group, the Travellers Health Partnership, provided opportunities for networking and closer collaboration. It was the decision of the group to participate fully in the research, as well as to direct the research process.

The methodology for this exploratory study contains elements of ethnographic, action and participatory research processes. In the ethnographic approach, the researcher is immersed in the community being researched, or amongst whom the research is conducted, and observes (Morse and Field 1995). In order to be accepted by the Travelling community, the researcher established rapport and developed trusting relationships by immersing herself in the Travelling community at a time when the community was taken up with an issue which had an impact on the whole community (see Appendix 1). Likewise, the researcher participated in the meetings of the Travellers Health Partnership at a time when the group was establishing a working relationship and exploring the boundaries of working in partnership.

The purpose of action research is to assist people in extending their understanding of their situation, and resolving the problems that arise. Action research therefore starts with the concerns or problems of a group (Stringer 1996). The grassroots orientation uses stakeholding groups as the primary focus of attention and source of decision-making, and it requires research facilitators to work in close collaboration with stakeholders to formulate structures that put decision-making power in stakeholders’ hands (Hart & Bond 1995). The monthly meetings of the Travellers Health Partnership enabled the group to direct and take responsibility for the research process.

Action research seeks to stimulate people to change by addressing current issues of concern. There were two main issues in which the group was involved. The first, which took up the first four months of the research, was the eviction of a family from the caravan site. The second issue was the response of the Director, Department of Housing, to the draft report of Phase 1 of the research. The response of the group was that the research process should enter Phase 2 in order to incorporate the perspective of senior officials from the departments in Leeds City Council which provide a significant service to Travellers.

The increasing popularity of the participatory research approach in health studies (De Koning and Martin 1996) arises out of the recognition of the gap between the concepts and models professionals use to understand and interpret reality and the concepts and perspectives of different groups in the community. Many factors, cultural, historical, socio-economic and political, which are difficult to measure, are acknowledged to have a crucial influence on the outcomes of interventions and efforts to improve the health of people.

The emphasis in the participatory research approach (similar to the action research approach) is on generating knowledge to include the perspective of the researched, in this instance Travellers. The purpose is to help to identify local needs and priorities, place issues in the context of people's lives and give direction to programme development and service provision. As full members of the Travellers Health Partnership, Travellers participated in directing the research process. To obtain the different perspectives on health needs and the factors which influence the health of Travellers, both Travellers as well as the grassroots professionals who work with Travellers were interviewed.

### **3.1 Research Setting**

Monthly meetings of the Travellers Health Partnership were held at the offices of South Leeds Health for All. Minutes were taken by a member of the group, and circulated to all the partners.

There were four types of venue for meeting with Travellers, which corresponded to where the individual was living at the time: Cottingley Springs Caravan Sites A and B, unofficial sites (roadside Travellers), houses and land owned by Travellers. Having first obtained the permission of Travellers, the researcher shadowed the Health Visitor for one day, and was introduced to some of the residents of the caravan site. The researcher then visited the Travellers who were members of the Travellers Health Partnership in their home (houses). Immersion in the community continued through following the eviction case, and following a family's experience of harassment. Interviews with Travellers were conducted in the home of the individual, in the abovementioned venues.

Interviews with grassroots professionals and the senior officials of the Council were conducted in their offices.

### **3.2 Identification of Research Participants**

The Travellers Health Partnership directed the research process. Members of the group were as follows:

- Two Travellers and a friend of a Traveller
- Health Visitor\* and her manager, Community and Mental Health Trust
- Adult Literacy Teacher\*, Travellers, Park Lane College
- Manager\*, Travellers Education Service, Leeds City Council
- Manager\* and one worker, Travellers Services Team, Leeds City Council (absent during the process of the eviction)
- Travellers Advice Worker\*, Citizens Advice Bureau
- Manager, South Leeds Health for All
- Locality Manager, South Primary Care Group (joined the group later)

#### Phase 1

The group decided that the five grassroots professionals (indicated above \*) would be interviewed for their perspective. As the current Health Visitor and Travellers Advice Worker were very recently in post, it was decided that an attempt would be made to

interview their predecessors, and the Volunteer Advice Work who had a longer experience of working with Travellers. The individuals were contacted, and within the timescale of Phase 1 of the research, a convenience sample was interviewed.

The abovementioned grassroots professionals provided some names of Travellers, from the four types of living accommodation, who agreed to be interviewed. The researcher was immersed in the community and also discussed interviews with other individuals. Some names were suggested by other Travellers. Individuals were contacted and a convenience sample, from each of the four types of living accommodation, was interviewed within the timescale of Phase 1.

Through following the process of the eviction, the family being evicted were interviewed for their perspective. With the consent of the family, their legal papers were made available by the family's solicitor, who was also available for comment.

## Phase 2

The Director of Housing, Leeds City Council, identified the following individuals from Leeds City Council to be interviewed for their perspective:

- Director and Assistant Director, Department of Housing
- Director or Assistant Director, Department of Planning and Environment
- Council Officers, Legal Services Department
- Chief Equal Opportunities Officer, Equal Opportunities Unit

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The process and method of data collection was in the order as detailed below.

## Phase 1

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the professionals who currently work with Travellers. The same interview schedule was used for each person (see 4.2) and was completed in 60-75 minutes. The interviews were tape-recorded. With the exception of the Manager, Travellers Services Team, the interviews were completed within the first 3

months. Due to the sensitivities and conflict over the time of the eviction, the Manager, Travellers Services Team, Department of Housing, withdrew from Travellers Health Partnership until the eviction proceedings were completed. The individual was interviewed after the eviction.

The interviews with the professionals who used to work with Travellers were tape-recorded, and when face-to-face interview was not possible, the interview was conducted via electronic mail. The interview schedule mentioned above (see 4.2) was used.

Again, due to the pre-occupation of the Travelling community with the eviction, the semi-structured interviews with Travellers were conducted after the eviction. The same interview schedule (see 4.1) was used with each individual. The interviews were tape-recorded and were completed in 60-90 minutes.

Data were collected on the eviction process from the Traveller who lead the campaign to try to stop the eviction, from Travellers and visitors on site at the time, including the media, from the family's legal papers and through their solicitor. The interview with the family who had been evicted was conducted after the eviction.

### Phase 2

Appointments were made with the senior officers of the Council for Phase 2 interviews. The interview schedule was faxed to the individuals prior to the interview. Apart from the interview with the Assistant Director, Department of Planning, consent was obtained for the interviews to be tape-recorded, and each interview was completed in 60-70 minutes. It was not possible to arrange a face-to-face interview with the Assistant Director, Department of Planning, within the timescale of Phase 2, and the response of this department to the interview questions was given in writing.

### **3.4 Method of Analysis**

Thematic analysis is an analysis where the researcher identifies themes and patterns through listening to tapes and reading transcripts (Holloway 1997). It involves the search for and identification of common threads that extend throughout a set of interviews, which can initially be abstract and difficult to identify. The themes are frequently concepts indicated by the data, rather than concrete entities directly described by the participants. They become more apparent when the researcher steps back and considers “What are these people trying to tell me?” (Morse and Field 1995).

In this study, the tape-recorded interviews were first transcribed. The researcher then read and re-read the transcripts to hear what the interviewees were trying to convey, allowing “the concepts” or “common threads” to emerge. The concepts or themes from all the interviews were then listed, and colour-coded. Each interview transcript was then read and re-read, and the relevant colour indicated along the margins, according to the theme of each paragraph. Themes were then grouped in broad categories.

Due to the limitation of time, it was not possible to show the draft of the analyses of the interviews with Travellers and grassroots professionals (first draft, Phase 1) to all twenty interviewees for validation of themes. The analyses (first draft, Phase 1) were shown to four interviewees (three professionals and one Traveller) who confirmed that the content reflected what they had said and their overall experience. It was agreed that the second draft of the report would be sent to all stakeholding organisations for comment prior to the final report being agreed by the Travellers Health Partnership, and a summary considered for general circulation.

## **RESULTS - PHASE 1**

The beginning of the research coincided with Leeds City Council's process of evicting a Travelling family from Cottingley Springs Caravan Site, and the preoccupation of the Travellers Health Partnership was with the issue of the eviction. The researcher followed the process (from the point of view of the family and other Travellers) through observation, talking to different Travellers and other individuals involved, as well as reviewing the family's legal documents, with the family's consent. Due to the tensions and conflict at the time, the individual from the Department of Housing withdrew from the Travellers Health Partnership after the first meeting in December 1999 (and rejoined the group in October 2000). "The Story of an Eviction" can be seen in Appendix A.

At the same time as following the process of the eviction, ten grassroots professionals (other than the individual from the Department of Housing) were interviewed. The eviction happened on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2000. The interview with the individual from the Department of Housing took place in September 2000, the analysis of which is included in the analysis of the interviews with other grassroots professionals.

Due to the tensions within the Travelling community during the process of eviction, and their preoccupation with the issue, the interviews with the nine Travellers happened after the eviction, between September – November 2000.

The results from Phase 1 are as follows:

- **4.1**                    **From the Perspective of Travellers**
- **4.2**                    **From the Perspective of Professionals**
- **Appendix A**        **The Story of an Eviction**



#### **4.1 RESULTS - FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRAVELLERS**

The literature review reveals that poor environmental conditions significantly contributes to the poor health of Travellers. Reports (eg Crout 1987, Feder 1994, Dublin Task Force 1995) confirm that environmental problems take precedence over health education issues. In order to identify health needs and the factors reported to influence health, Leeds Travellers were interviewed on individual / family physical and mental health problems, and their views were obtained on their environmental conditions.

A total of eleven Leeds Travellers were interviewed, giving the experience of eleven families, and in some cases, of extended families. All of the interviewees had lived on Cottingley Springs Caravan Site at some point. Three of the interviewees currently live on Cottingley Springs Caravan Sites A and B, one on the roadside, four in houses and three on their own land.

The interviews were largely unstructured, thus providing the opportunity for Travellers to tell their story in their own way, in accordance with their oral tradition. The aim of the interviews was to cover the following issues:

- How long each had lived in their present abode
- How they found life where they were
- What services were used and their perceptions of them
- Any particular health problems and access to health care
- If they had a choice, where/how would they live
- If they still travelled and how often
- What they thought would improve the life of Travellers in Leeds

Given the time limit of one hour allowed for each interview, and the animated response of interviewees on issues which matter to them, some issues (eg environmental concerns) were covered more thoroughly than others. The following themes emerged from analysis of the data:

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#### **4.1.1 Lifestyle**

Most of the Travellers interviewed have lived in Leeds “*all my life*” on the roadside and official caravan sites. Some are attached to Cottingley Springs caravan site because of family, “*that’s what bonds us to this caravan site – a lot of connections, the grandparents and the graveyard*”. However, it is the perception of some Travellers on Cottingley Springs that everyone needs to be “on the dole” because of the cost of renting a plot.

Some find they cannot live on the caravan site because of the problems that come from a number of people living in close proximity, and the lack of space for their trade. There are many young families on the caravan site and some Travellers find they need more peace and quiet. They have “*got out*”, managed to make a living, live simply and are no longer dependent on Social Security. According to one Traveller, it costs about £50-60,000 to buy their own site, but having their own site enables them to earn their own living, doing jobs for which they are skilled – be this horse breeding, tarmac-ing or tree felling. Contrary to general perception, they do want to earn their own living and take pride in their work. “*I’ll do any sort of work, I don’t steal. I have all the equipment, chain saws, etc. When I cut a tree, I go to Bradford where there is a tip - £18 a turn. I don’t tip it just anywhere*”.

Some lived in houses for some periods, *“I went into a house when my husband passed away, for the children’s sake, schooling; also we were all over – a couple of days here and you had to move on, sometimes at night. That was a hard life”*. By choice most would prefer to live in a caravan, *“we like it open, in a house once you close the door, that’s it and we can’t live like that”*. Some have bought their own land. Others have moved into a house for medical reasons or when widowed, *“I cannot drive, so what can you do? Living here I can get to the bus stop, go into town and keep my independence. I would live in a caravan tomorrow if I could but I won’t put on my children”*. They are clear that *“you’ve lived your life, and you have to let your children live their life. Once they’re married, that’s their life.”* Others say, *“if I had a choice I would like to be free and travel around. This is the only year I have not gone travelling – my health is getting worse. My son is hyperactive but when he’s down on the site playing with the children, he’s no problem”*.

Certain areas in Leeds, eg Holbeck, has a history of Travellers as residents and they feel safe there. *“I don’t think that around here anybody would break into our houses. There are too many Travellers around here, so they don’t bother us.”* Travellers who live in a house take equal pride in their house. Much time and effort is put into cleaning and renovating the house and garden, including building a drive where necessary. Those who do not live in Holbeck and who suffer harassment from neighbours are willing to start again in another area, despite having put in a lot of time and money in making their home beautiful.

When Traveller women are married they remain very mindful of the needs of their parents, especially if one parent has been widowed. Unmarried elderly brothers are also cared for, as well as elderly non-Traveller neighbours, *“the old lady next door, she’s 90, I check if she’s had something to eat and I always give her Sunday dinner”*. Older Travellers who live in houses remain very aware of convention and *“I get washed before I come down, comb my hair and get dressed. I would never dream of sitting in my nightclothes downstairs – I’d be frightened (embarrassed) of our boys coming to see if I’m OK (and there I am not dressed)”*.

Even Travellers who live in houses or have their own sites like to travel in the summer months, *“all I want is a few days off just to see my friends”*. *“I’m happy with my own plot, we go away three month a year, but this year I just had a bit of a problem (family bereavement) and I’m off the site to get myself right”*.

Travellers are philosophical about the way *“some people get on and some people don’t”*, even amongst Travellers. They are honest in their interactions and therefore try to avoid confrontational situations. They can see that residents in houses do not always get along, *“as with any other street, they don’t all get on with each other either.”*

A low literacy level is common amongst Travellers because most only want to learn basic reading, writing and numeracy skills needed for their lifestyle, but there are those who have gone further with their education, are assertive and know their rights. *“I went to school so ... does not scare me. Some of the other lads who never went to school, you mention ... and it terrifies them”*. *“I know the law and am not afraid to go to court if I have to”*.

Other Travellers have seen their daughters finish school and get jobs in offices and trade, while the sons stay self-employed. It is with pride that some Travellers speak of their children’s achievements, *“People give me credit because they’ve never been in any trouble, and they’re all good workers”*. Those who get jobs are realistic about keeping their Traveller identity hidden until they are accepted and known for their commitment. However, some Travellers who have been very successful in professions continue to hide their Traveller identity, much to the anger and sorrow of relatives. The cost of integration is their own roots and identity.

Many Travellers are born-again Christians and are actively involved in conventions and church. *“Me mam used to tell fortunes, but I’m a born-again Christian. If you have faith and trust in the Lord and Saviour, you won’t go wrong. If you have faith of a mustard seed, you can move a mountain”*. When asked how one person became a Christian, the

reply was, *“one day I was down alone, and I seen people with a lot of smile on their faces. So how did they get their shine? I walked into the church, I walked away a few times, and one day I give my life to Jesus”*.

Contrary to the perception that Gypsy parents let the children run wild, some Travellers find it hard to keep control when there are several children. Others who have been widowed say *“the father in me wanted to stop them doing it, and the mother in me wants to let them – so I went half way. Now I tell my children that they are now parents and they’ve got to try and understand the children’s side of it, and give a little way, like I did”*.

Older Travellers report that *“when I was young, girls and boys were kept out of school when they were 12 because we don’t believe in the biology classes. Gypsies don’t believe in sex outside of marriage. It’s happening now but we don’t like it. A bit like the Moslems. We don’t talk about women’s things when there’s men around. The girls and boys in a family are separated once the girls start a period”*.

The reality is that Travellers in general believe that the Gypsy lifestyle is dying out because of the lack of sites, transit sites and racial discrimination leading to violence against Travellers. *“As I am here, I can see the Gypsy life being finished. Everybody will be settled. My grandad said that. In some countries skinheads are killing Gypsies – that’s what they’d like to see here”*. However, Travellers are also critical of each other. *“If a Gypsy had a complaint against another Gypsy, they should sort it out between one another, not take it to the Council. They are telling on each other and some tell lies to get people convicted for nothing. Gypsies should mind their own business”*.

Some are aware that Travellers need to be more united, while others are aware that Travellers talk a lot but when it comes to action for real change, they do not want to get involved. *“We could do with change. If we stuck together, we would. Going to court costs a lot of money”*.

### 4.1.2 Travellers' contribution

Most Travellers have family members who have fought in the war. *“My grandfather fought in the Second World War; one of his brothers died fighting”. “Some of my uncles fought in that war and in the last one and died, for to stop people like Hitler and Mussolini, that other people may live as one.” “During the war we were in Barnsley. Me Dad was in the army.”* These memories also bring up resentment and anger because *“that’s all right when they want you, you can go die for this country, but otherwise they don’t care where you live. I just don’t think it’s right”*.

### 4.1.3 Modern times – Travellers change

Travellers are aware that in other areas of the country, eg Darlington, Travellers help to run caravan sites. While Travellers in Leeds would like that, some acknowledge that *“there’s a lot more goes on in Leeds than in Darlington”*. They mean trouble. Even on Cottingley Springs Caravan Site it has been known that some people take other people’s caravans or possessions. *“We used to be able to go out and leave our trailers open ... now you have to lock everything up.” “It is also not safe to go travelling and stay on your own with just a couple of caravans now – there’s too much going on.”*

Even on Cottingley Springs, *“it wasn’t like this in the olden days. Now everybody keeps itself to itself. When I come up me door’s shut. That lady may pop in and the lady over there may say hello and if we’re walking, we’ll have a talk.”*

When asked what has made Travelling people change, the perception is *“modern times”*. Some think it is *“marrying out of your own people; they don’t know your way, your culture. If your son married someone else, we’d have to train them, eg our washing customs, the different bowls for different things.”* Other reasons include, *“it’s the new travellers that have come out of houses that have done damage to us.”*

Travellers are tolerant of other Travellers and when there are problems they may help each other, but that does not mean that they agree on customs and lifestyle. For

example, the difference between English and Irish Travellers is often remarked on, and many seem to think that the *“Irish don’t get on with the English. Some have a different way of bringing up children. I brought mine up strict .. but a lot of these just don’t see it.”*

#### **4.1.4 Relationship with Public Authorities and Services**

4.1.4.1 General Practitioner Surgeries – a number of the Travellers who were interviewed were satisfied with the service from their GP, some of whom go out of their way to help. However, this satisfactory state of affairs did not ‘just happen’ and, for some, only came about after repeated attempts to address discrimination experienced with reception staff. Some Travellers have had difficulty registering with a doctor when they gave the caravan site as their address. When a ‘Traveller-friendly’ GP has been identified by Travellers, they do their best to stay with the GP even though they may be living out of the GP’s catchment area.

4.1.4.2 Cottingley Springs Site Management – Travellers feel that Site A and B are too close – too many families in close proximity, giving rise to many problems. Travellers say that they had not been consulted when the caravan site was built. *“When them sites were made, they should have been designed by a Gypsy man, well not designed as they’re not scholars, but they should have asked them for what needed to be on the site eg a play area for children”*. Many Travellers would like to see Travellers having more of a say in running the site. *“Give them the freedom to look after their own site – we are human beings and it is our culture.”*

Of the two sites A and B, site A is reported to be more settled, but there are comments like *“you are not free to do what you like”*, and about the caravans being closer than what is stipulated in regulations. On the site many of the families are related and this helps them feel safe and connected. Travellers on Site A *“all know one another”* and some feel the site *“nearly runs itself; we don’t have no trouble really.”* Since Site A was

upgraded, they do not seem to have as much trouble with repairs, but acknowledge that it depends on whether the warden can contact a housing officer.

A lack of equity is also perceived between Site A and B: *“whatever Site A wants done, it’s done straight away, but whatever we want, we never get.”* Travellers on Site A do not seem to have trouble getting permission for visiting caravans to pull up for a short time.

It is the perception of some Travellers that site management favour ‘English’ Travellers, *“it is easier for English Travellers to get a plot”*, and are prejudiced against Travellers of Irish origin: *“they want to get as many Irish people off as they can”*. There is much feeling that *“if your face don’t match or your voice don’t match, then you don’t match. You can be as nice as pie to ... and all of them, but they can then shit in your doorstep”*. Some Travellers feel strongly that *“they should change the site management because they’re all prejudiced against Irish Travellers”*. Irish Travellers in Leeds are incensed at this attitude because they are often born and bred in England. They are not, however, ashamed of their Irish roots.

Travellers are also critical of each other: *“when we were on Site B, it was a pleasure to go on it. Look at it today. Look at what they have done to it”*. The view is that the Council should clean up the site and get it better organised and offer places to all Leeds Travellers who have nowhere to go.

An independent report was commissioned by the Council on conditions on Site B. According to one Traveller, this was the result of actions taken by some Travellers, and which eventually lead to the plans to upgrade the site. Residents were consulted, and plans were agreed, in all to take 3 years to upgrade the site. Some Travellers cannot understand why it will take so long, as it did not take 3 years to upgrade Site A. They have had letters, giving dates, but do not believe it: *“we have had other letters.”* There is also much anxiety over what will happen to residents while the site is being redeveloped.



There are about 11 empty plots on Site B and Travellers cannot understand why the Council seem to be “*blocking so many sheds*” when so many people are “*on the road*”. “*They have the power to put people on, but they keep them on the road instead.*”

There is a great deal of nervousness and anger reported by some Site B residents of site management who “*snoop around people’s homes*” and “*who used to just enter people’s caravans without permission*”, but also acknowledgement that “*this has calmed down a lot since the eviction*”. Residents feel harassed by the warden who is said to patrol the site every 10-20 minutes and which, according to Travellers would not be expected even of a security guard., and does not serve any useful purpose.

Repairs are also a major problem on Site B. The procedure is time consuming and, according to Travellers, there does not seem to be any attempt to make it more efficient. Site A does not seem to have the same problem and Travellers on Site B comment that “*when the warden’s shed got set alight once, the next day they were out fixing it, putting up metal windows. But these empty sheds are dangerous and they don’t do nothing about it.*”

From the experience of residents, once a family/person was out-of-favour site management seemed to “*hound*” other family members on site, and this has led to depression and anxiety. Some report being accused unjustly of offences on site. Others feel nervous when site management at random stop visiting cars for their registration, and question who and why they were visiting. Residents feel that this is “*not on*”, as site management do not know if the visitors were welcome in the first place, or who they actually visited. This unease stems from the Licence Agreement which makes the Licencee responsible for the actions of their visitors, and which was understood by Travellers to lead to the recent eviction of a family from the site (see Appendix A).

Alongside dissatisfaction with the management of the caravan site, there is much fear and anger. This seems to be related, first of all, to the extension of the role of the Eviction

Enforcement Officer to include site management; past experiences of eviction have generated much distrust. Secondly, the negative experiences some Travellers have had with different members of the Travellers Services Team. Some Travellers feel strongly the current site management needs to be changed because *“they try to keep people as prisoners.”*

CAB are often called upon to investigate and question on behalf of Travellers the allegations cited by management as reason for eviction. Travellers feel the threat of eviction hangs over them and the fear has escalated since the recent eviction.

4.1.4.3 Management of unofficial sites – Travellers who live on the roadside or in fields find it hard to do without electricity and water. Those who have lived on a site find it very hard to have to uproot every few days: *“you just want to stay in one place, have peace, get your children to school and you want to be left alone.”* Contrary to public opinion, these Travellers find it hard to have to *“force entry into some camps – but what else can we do? We can’t park in the middle of a major road.”* Those who live on the roadside are aware that *“the Council want to keep us in one place”*, rather than have them move from camp to camp because of the litter.

Travellers report that other people (Travellers and non-Travellers) often come onto unofficial sites and *“tip and dump their rubbish and we get blamed”*. However, they feel that those responsible for roadside Travellers do not believe them. Travellers who now live in houses have also seen this done and when challenged, the people say *“they’re only gypos”*.

4.1.4.4 Local Housing Offices – It is Travellers’ experience that when neighbours complain about them the Council acts very quickly, whereas when they complain the Council often takes no action or takes much longer to respond. According to Travellers, there is a lack of equity in the way the Council deals with Travellers and non-Travellers, and most Travellers are not aware of how they can get more accurate information or how

to question decisions. Often they adopt a “wait and see” attitude, but are simmering with anger and frustration at what is perceived as inequity and felt as powerlessness.

Travellers who live in houses report difficulties with local housing offices when they seek help. For example, when they have reported harassment by neighbours and received unsatisfactory help, and have asked to see the Race Relations Officer, they have been told that that office did not have one, without then being given information on the Council’s complaints procedure or how to contact the Council’s Racial Harassment Enforcement Team.

It is the experience of Travellers who have fought or tried to fight their own battles against discrimination and had their problems reported by the media, that their good relationship with their local housing office changed following the media coverage. Their papers have been “*lost*” and they have been sent to enquire at many different offices. It became difficult to get rehoused for one family and for another impossible to rent from private landlords. When given the explanation that it is difficult to be rehoused in popular areas because of the demand, Travellers interpret this as “*because of my people, what I am might drag down the area*”. However, Travellers are becoming increasingly aware and pro-active about addressing problems, often getting help from CAB. They are often willing to go to court as they feel they would get a fairer hearing. However this is not always possible to those who are not eligible for legal aid, or when the issue does not come under the criteria for legal aid.

Most Travellers do not read or write sufficiently confidently to put their complaints in writing. Not only do they not receive any help from local housing offices to put pen to paper in order to record the complaint, but say that the fact that there is no written record of the original complaint is later held against them. They also have a hard time trying to obtain information.

Local housing offices do not seem to have facilities that take into account parents who may have to bring their children with them, and that some of these children may have

medical conditions which make it difficult for them to be quiet and still. Instead of facilitating the situation Travellers have found staff in local council offices insensitive and punitive towards them.

Travellers complain that the way that the Housing Department assesses the space/number of rooms that a family needs does not seem to take into account the Travelling culture. For example, a Travelling family with four children feel they only need a 3-bedroom house, but the Council has put them on the waiting list for a 5-bedroom house. Travellers are often unable to address the difference in perception of their needs in such a way that does not alienate officials and, at the same time, convinces the Council to accommodate their needs. They therefore go from pillar to post while trying to find housing, while properties seem to remain unoccupied.

4.1.4.5 Department of Planning and Environment – some Travellers who own their own land and who apply, through the usual channels, for permanent planning permission experience great difficulty, in spite of apparently fulfilling all the Council's requirements and providing proof thereof. Applications have taken years to process, without resolution one way or another and, according to Travellers, this has seriously affected their health. Some have developed heart problems, while others suffer from depression and have had major accidents as a result of living with the stress of "*not knowing*".

The lack of equity and long delay experienced by Travellers is also described by Travellers as racial discrimination, although this has been vehemently denied by Council officers when challenged by Travellers. According to Travellers, "*there are rules for some and rules for others*". Travellers find that the issue of 'greenbelt land' is often quoted. However, they can see that Cottingley Springs caravan site, other non-Traveller caravan sites and much land used by commercial firms are all on greenbelt land. Decisions on the use of land appear to be inconsistent to Travellers.

4.1.4.6 Local Councillors – Travellers are increasingly aware of the political aspect in which they feel disadvantaged. *“We are not voters; when middle class voters complained of the mess in Temple Newsam, MPs went out to see it; our people are losing their homes and the MP won’t come”*.

4.1.4.7 The Police and Courts – Travellers who have been into trouble with the law through protecting their family from harassment find a lack of fairness in the way they (who had no previous record) are dealt with, compared to, for example, the neighbour who had a record of violent behaviour. They are angry that the police *“just told us to lock our doors and go to bed”*, without charging the aggressors. When Travellers have asked for the officers’ names and numbers, they have been told *“shut up or I’ll have you locked up.”* Travellers also report that the police have also been involved in taunting them.

During the eviction the police were seen to have a total lack of respect for other Travellers on the site and one Traveller said, *“I’m never going to have respect for them again because (of what they did)”*.

When roadside Travellers park on private industrial estates, the police have been known to drive through the estate several times a day. Travellers feel intimidated by this, and it does not encourage them to report harassment, eg by other Travellers.

4.1.4.8 Schools – Getting children accepted by schools can be difficult for Travellers. Travellers have experienced schools attempting to withdraw the offer of a place, and have had to take their case to tribunals. While media attention has helped, it is often an on-going battle, not only to have the Travelling culture respected in school, but to avoid being *“kicked out”* or life made so stressful that the parents willingly withdraw their child. Some parents persist with the *“battle”* in the knowledge that they could face the same discrimination elsewhere.

Traveller parents have faced difficulties and embarrassing situations in school with the insensitivity of teachers, even after having discussed the problem with the headteacher. They do not always receive information in the form that they can understand and have to be vigilant for what they might be missing in terms of instructions and information. While acknowledging that some teachers are “*brilliant*”, other staff show a lack of understanding and respect for the culture, and have even been known to say “*we do not want you and your little boy in this school*”. The constant vigilance takes its toll.

Young Travelling children have been bullied and beaten up by other school children, which has deterred school attendance. When a Traveller complained about the discrimination against his son at school, he found himself being accused of swearing at the caretaker and threatening violence, and being banned from school grounds. He felt that his son was then targetted for harassment for simple things like walking on the grass.

4.1.4.9 Public Transport – Travellers who have lived on Cottingley Springs caravan site have had to move into houses, partly due to problems with transport: “*I’d be in a caravan tomorrow, but what can you do? I can’t drive and the buses don’t stop for you outside the caravan site. I used to walk to the bus stop at the bottom and pretend that I wasn’t a Gypsy so that the buses would pull up for me*”.

It is general experience that, apart from the taxis that take children to school, taxis cannot always be relied on to pull into the caravan site. This means that Travellers can take a taxi home and it may stop at the end of the lane, they cannot always get a taxi to collect them from their plot, even to take a sick child to the hospital. An older Traveller points out that Travellers have been known to run off and not pay for the taxi, but the reality is that when she needs a taxi very early in the morning, eg to catch a train, she goes to stay overnight with a relative who lives in a house.

#### 4.1.5 Relationship with others

4.1.5.1 The Government - Travellers feel angry with the Government, yet quote and hold on to Jack Straw's comment that Councils should be lenient with ethnic minorities (said to be made when refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo arrived in the UK). Others fear that what happens in other countries could happen here: "*skinheads are killing Gypsies – that's what they'd like to see here*".

4.1.5.2 Neighbours - Travellers who stop on unofficial sites have been known to have been threatened by farmers in neighbouring fields who "*spray cow dirt at or in the direction of the caravans*". In order to avoid damage to their caravans and further unpleasantness, they "*move on*".

Holbeck is an area where Travellers have a history and they feel "*at home*" and "*safe*" in their houses. In other parts of Leeds, some Travellers experience harassment from neighbours, from intimidating and threatening behaviour to actual assault. Travellers do not experience the police as being particularly helpful, often taking the side of the neighbours, who can have a history of violent behaviour. Travellers do not feel protected by the police, and can even feel intimidated by the behaviour of the police. For example, when asking for the name and identification of the officers, one Traveller was told to "*shut up or I'll have you locked up*". Due to harassment by neighbours Travellers have had to move away for several months in order to cope, but at the expense of the children's schooling. Living in such circumstances has led to a relapse in one person's medical condition and a diagnosis of depression in another. In one case, the harassment only stopped after the concerted efforts and persistent actions of the Travellers Education Service, CAB, the Health Visitor, and the researcher (Travellers Health Partnership) acting as advocate, scribe and providing active support over a period of 2-3 months.

4.1.5.3 General Public - Travellers report that *“life for us isn’t that easy”*. People who do not know anything about the Travelling way of life often approach Travellers and taunt them *“Who is the king of the Gypsies?”*. They do not necessarily feel intimidated, but experience this as demeaning and lacking in respect for the changes that have taken place in Gypsy lifestyle.

Older Travellers find it less distressing when confronted with discrimination by the general public. They are proud of their heritage and, for example, when faced with being called a *“gypo”*, calmly say so to the abuser. However, they admit that when they were young they would have been *“up in arms”*.

4.1.5.4 Other Travellers - Travellers on unofficial sites can experience harassment from non-Leeds Travellers who come in the summer months. They do not feel able to approach the police for help on these security issues, and instead *“move on – what can you do? Just hope they don’t follow but they do sometimes so we just have to keep moving”*.

4.1.5.5 Employers – Travellers report that they or their children find it difficult to get jobs once they are recognised as Travellers. As a result, younger Travellers often give a relative’s house address, and only reveal their Cottingley Springs address when they have been recognised as *“a good worker”*. A Traveller explains, *“the problem is prejudice. Some of the finest doctors are black people. When it all comes down, they are afraid to give them the education because they could take over – they work hard. It’s all about giving people the chance”*.

#### **4.1.6 Health Problems**

Practically all the Travellers interviewed had experienced chronic physical or psychological health problems in their family. The main problems which emerged were anxiety, depression, heart conditions, arthritis, asthma and other chest problems, diabetes



and kidney problems. Travellers' problems are complex, and a resolution in one area can have a detrimental effect on another problem.

#### 4.1.6.1 Anxiety

Travellers live with a large amount of anxiety. The eviction of a family from Cottingley Springs was seen by Travellers to be against the advice of health, education and social work professionals, and caused much anxiety amongst Travellers. *"I am worried because you don't know when they might come for you. When they can evict ... that easy, what could they do with us?"* Witnessing the actual eviction of the family provoked much fear in others: *"when the police are allowed to do that to kids ... God knows what they'll do to them when they get them in the back of the police van."*

Following the eviction, the family was anxious about the health of the baby who is under the care of a specialist and requires regular medication that needs refrigeration. *"If he's not seen to or neglected because we have no water or electricity, he'll be very ill"*.

Travellers on the roadside may use a small generator for the evening, but cannot afford to run a generator all day for the refrigerator.

The random stopping of visitors to the site by wardens, to take their car registration and questioning them on who they were visiting, was perceived as threatening and anxiety-provoking. Travellers on the caravan site are responsible for the actions of their visitors and can be evicted as a result of disrupting behaviour by their visitors. The fear is that *"there is an awful lot of strange Travellers that have moved into the town for the summer – they can just say they're coming to see someone when the person does not even know them. They might say that just to get onto the site."*

Travellers who have been awaiting permanent planning permission for years are constantly looking over their shoulder, watching what they say to people trespassing on their land for fear of Council officers making an unannounced inspection. These Travellers find themselves vigilant over every little detail and find themselves constantly justifying – to themselves - what they are doing with ordinary day-to-day living.

Older Travellers who live on their own in a house feel nervous about being on their own and depend on having other Travellers who live nearby. *“Me cousin’s wife lives next door but one, and we pop into each other’s house; me brother comes down about 9 o’clock.”*

Some Travellers admit that because of past experience in hospitals, the anxiety of being in a hospital or doctor’s surgery changes their personality and they cannot control their anxiety. *“I am not a violent person, but in a hospital or GP surgery, I just lose it. I have seen a psychologist but it has not resolved.”*

According to the story of one Traveller, the pressure and anxiety of being a one-parent family takes its toll, especially when chronic illness and disability in the parent complicates the issue. Some Travellers seem to prefer to attend the surgery rather than call a doctor out unnecessarily, but the surgery’s perception can be that *“I’m always popping in, and say they cannot just make time when I pop in. As far as I know, a child has always got to be top priority and you can always bring a child in as an emergency.”*

Anxiety and the need to protect one’s family can lead to dilemmas, and real or imagined fears: *“I have heard that this woman may be prejudiced against Travellers, and she is in contact with my son in school; I don’t know what to do about it, even though my son likes her.”*

Some Travellers attribute their health problems to the environment in which they live – the constant battle against discrimination and poor access to medical care in some parts of the country. Others, especially men, are aware that their chronic health problems, eg arthritis, may be due to their reluctance to seek medical help in their younger days despite much persuasion by the wife. However, some also point out that difficulties with access to GPs while travelling have been a deterrent to seeking medical help

#### 4.1.6.2 Depression

The anxiety caused by the eviction of the family caused one person who had recovered from depression to relapse: *“I can’t sleep and I’ve lost half a stone in weight.”* This person fortunately had a sympathetic GP who, apart from giving antidepressant medication, referred the person for counselling.

Forced to live on unofficial sites and having to move every few days takes its toll and affects the mental health of Travellers. *“I can’t travel anymore; it’s getting to me; I want to be settled for me children and for meself. When you’re getting on in age you don’t want to be dragged up and down, having to shift early or late at night. We haven’t the energy anymore.”*

One Traveller who faced harassment from neighbours developed depression. *“She has felt suicidal and she feels like a prisoner in her own home, a dog chained up.”*

Fortunately the person had a sympathetic GP who, apart from prescribing anti-depressant medication also listened and monitored her condition.

Travellers who are still waiting for the Council to make a decision about permanent planning permission have become depressed from the sheer uncertainty of having to wait for years.

#### 4.1.6.3 Stress and Chronic Ill Health

When a Traveller who was removed from the GP’s registered list of patients complained to the Health Authority, the response was that there had been a breakdown of communication and the person was assigned to another doctor. Sheer persistence and assertiveness won the day and Traveller received apologies from GP practice managers. However, the need to be constantly on one’s guard is very stressful.

According to one family who suffered harassment from neighbours, the husband developed a major health condition which required surgery, which then led to complications and chronic ill health. *“He was recovering slowly and was told not to*

*work. He was eventually discharged and did not need any further medication, but this stress has made him ill again. He has a hernia and pains in his head, and has lost 2 stone”.*

#### 4.1.6.4 Heart conditions

The members of two families living with the uncertainty of whether they will obtain permanent planning permission and, if not, the threat of being evicted from their own land and being put on the road have developed heart problems. They see their physical ill health and the stress of waiting for years as inter-related. One person had a heart attack and another developed a leaking valve. *“When me mam came up here she said she would not be able to stand the aggravation. You wake up in the morning, someone is walking on your land, and you don’t know what to do – smile at them, look at them, or what; don’t know if they are Council officials or what.”* Others feel angry but tell themselves: *“you can’t afford to be angry”*.

#### 4.1.6.5 Other

Some Travellers suffer from asthma and chest conditions, which is not helped by having to travel and live by the roadside or in fields.

Older Travellers seem to have less trouble accessing medical care and find they are treated well in hospitals and do not have problems relating. *“They only have to look at us, they know we are Gypsies but we have no problems.”* However, some Travellers hear about tragic stories of how other Travellers have died, seemingly from lack of medical attention and they attribute this to discrimination of their Travelling lifestyle.

One Traveller said that *“I have no problems with my health, but I used to drink a lot. Even if I had, what can they do for you? Everyone has to die; quick as you’re born you’re on the way to dying, so why worry. Just go on the best you can.”* Others are not so philosophical and depend on sympathetic GPs. There are some GPs who are sympathetic, and some even go out of their way to help their patients.

According to one Traveller, their GP would like to bring a mobile clinic to the caravan site. There are, however, other Travellers who have great difficulty: *“my granddaughter went to a doctor with her baby and once she said where she lived, he would not register her as he would not go out there. Same for my grandson.”* Travellers also choose their GP for easy reach, eg by one bus rather than two, even though the second may in fact be nearer geographically.

#### **4.1.8 Legal help, advocacy and assertiveness**

Some Travellers believe that the Council *“don’t like us because we are jumping ahead, we have our own solicitors”*. Others feel positive that *“we will have our own lawyers in time when our kids can read and write – and we’ll be able to fight our own battles. Leeds City Council can defeat us now, but in time we’ll defeat them.”* Meanwhile, Travellers use the services of CAB in many situations. One Traveller explained how it was only when CAB helped them gather evidence which clearly disproved claims made by the Council did the Council reconsider and defer making a decision.

Some Travellers are not afraid to go to court. Some welcome this as it would give them a chance to express their concerns and be heard. However, only those on income support are eligible for Legal Aid, which makes it difficult for those who are not eligible and cannot afford it, and this adds to their stress and anxiety. Some Travellers have only had their problem resolved by going to the European Court: *“In Leeds courts people are trying to put us down as shit, in European Court there’s just more understanding.”*

There are few, but nevertheless some Travellers who are aware of how the system works and are able to be their own advocates, with some support. This is time consuming but they feel passionate about addressing any perceived injustice or discrimination, whether this is with the Housing Department, schools, boards of governors or in a GP surgery. Some are clear that their fight for equal opportunities is not always for their own personal

benefit, but for the wider Travelling community, and they use the services of the Ombudsman.

Other agencies, in particular CAB and the Travellers Education Service, have spoken up for Travellers and have been present at hearings, to give moral support. This has been particularly important to Travellers because, for example, one said: *“the school had legal advice the whole way, I had nothing.”*

#### **4.1.9 Education**

The manager of the Travellers Education Service is highly regarded by Travellers and there was much distress at his suspension (see pg 136), particularly as Travellers could not obtain any information. *“The children all love Mr. Peter, half the grown ups call him Mr. Peter. We are really upset over him.”*

Contrary to what people think, some Travellers love learning: *“I loved school and like to listen to history – I was so interested but I used to cry going to school because I’d be the only Traveller, so I never learnt to read in school. I learnt when I was 14, from a comic. I wanted to learn then.”* Others say, *“we all learnt to read and write; me brothers and sisters could talk French – they did languages in school.”* *“We had our schooling. Me mam and dad couldn’t read or write. I buy my books – I love me papers. I got three papers today. I didn’t know anything about politics, but I’ve learnt by watching the programmes on the telly, and reading the paper.”*

Those who have been educated know their rights, *“some of the other lads who never went to school, you mention ... and it terrifies them. I went to school, and I know the law so ... does not scare me.”*

Travellers are proud of their creativity and adaptability. For example, having a driving licence is essential and those who did not go to school learn enough from elders to pass

the driving test. *“My grandchild was going for her driving test. Her husband can read so he learned her. For my nephew who was going for his test, I learned him by drawing the signs, pointing them out as he’s driving and telling him what they mean. We did that every night until he got them right.”*

Despite the attitude of some schools and teachers, Travellers do not necessarily want to move their children. *“If I moved ... to another school, the same thing could happen and we’d have to start all over again.”* Others have had to take their children out of school because of harassment, *“the children have not been to school for about 12 months, since the harassment started. He was beaten up once just outside of school grounds.”* This is compounded by other problems the family may be facing, eg harassment from neighbours, depression and anxiety.

The biggest problem for Travellers now is the education of those who are on the roadside, through eviction or lack of availability of official plots. They cannot send their children to school even if a taxi is sent for them: *“they don’t know where to send the taxi because we are moved on every few days. Because of all the hassle that is going on, the children have no education”*. Travellers are aware that parents can be taken to court if their children do not go to school, and they question whether they could take the Council to court for *“keeping us on the road”*, the result of which is the children are deprived of schooling.

#### **4.1.10 Housing**

4.1.10.1 Rent - Travellers question the rent paid for plots on the caravan site – about £94 a week for two caravans, with poll tax, electricity and water rates excluded. Yet *“there is nothing here, just an empty piece of ground with a shed”*. Travellers provide their own living abode, ie the caravans. A second caravan is paid for in addition to the basic rent and Travellers question this, *“When you are in a house and want to put a*

*trailer in your garden or drive, it does not cost you any extra money.” Travellers are aware that they pay more for their licence than tenants pay for a Council house.*

4.1.10.2 Licence Agreement - Travellers feel very strongly that having a Licence Agreement for residents of the caravan site is discrimination against Travellers.

*“Council tenants have a rent book and a Contract of Tenancy which protects them, whereas Travellers on the site only have a Licence, which means they cannot defend themselves in court”. The recent eviction was cited (see Appendix A). Furthermore, compared to Council tenants who have a choice of area, Travellers living on the caravan site have no choice as there is really only one site. “Leeds City Council prides itself on equal opportunities and equal rights, but it stops when it comes to Travelling people. When a Council tenant applies for a transfer they get a complete list of areas to choose from, but when it comes to the Travelling people on the caravan site they have no choice”.*

4.1.10.3 Transit Site – all Travellers highlight the need for transit sites, *“a temporary caravan site for people to pull on and off when they want.”* A transit site would also allow visitors to Leeds to have a stopping place and enable relatives to visit their families in Leeds. They agree that a transit site needs to have running water, electricity and skips and that Travellers would pay to use it.



## 4.2 RESULTS - INTERVIEWS WITH PROFESSIONALS

A total of nine professionals who work or worked with Travellers in Leeds were interviewed. In organisations where there was more than one professional currently working with Travellers, a key person was interviewed. Professionals, from the Citizens Advice Bureau and Leeds Community and Mental Health Trust, who used to work with Travellers in Leeds were contacted and a convenience sample was interviewed. Interviews were conducted with the following nine professionals:

- Health Visitor, Leeds Community and Mental Health Trust
- Adult Literacy Teacher, Travellers, Park Lane College
- Manager, Travellers Education Service, Leeds City Council
- Manager, Travellers Services Team, Leeds City Council
- Travellers Advice Worker, Citizens Advice Bureau
- Volunteer Advice Worker, Citizens Advice Bureau
- Three previous Travellers Advice Workers, Citizens Advice Bureau

The following questions were asked of all interviewees:

- How long have you worked (did you work) with Travellers in Leeds?
- What is (was) your role?
- What is (was) your experience of Travellers as people?
- What is (was) your experience of Travellers as citizens?
- What needs have you identified (did you identify)?
- What makes (made) your work difficult?
- What helps (helped) you in your work with Travellers?
- What is (was) your experience of other professionals' attitude to Travellers?
- What do you think the Travellers Health Partnership needs to address with statutory and voluntary service providers? What questions need to be asked?
- Do you think you are making (have made) a difference, and if so, how?

Most professionals spoke energetically about their work with Travellers and were very concerned about the problems which Travellers reported to them. One individual became so distraught that the interview had to be terminated. There was a general similarity in the views of most professionals, with the exception of one person. In order to safeguard confidentiality, especially in view of the sensitivities and complexities

surrounding the report, the perceptions of this person has been removed, by agreement, from the report.

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#### **4.2.1 Lifestyle and culture – Travellers as people**

There are many different lifestyles amongst Travellers – some travel a whole circuit in the course of a year, other families are more static, going to traditional fayres and visiting relatives. Others are yet more sedentary, while there are those who go off for the summer months, from April to October. Most professionals who work with Travellers are aware that they have “*different*” ways of looking at life – eg time and dates. Travellers could seem unreliable, but the reality is that life is unpredictable, especially for those on the road. However, they are perceived to have the ability to “*move on and adapt to a different place*”.

Like everyone else, Travellers are individuals, of all ages, education, economic means, nationality, experience and character types, etc. They are intelligent and resourceful. They have a strong sense of family and extended family groups tend to live together. In Cottingley Springs there are big extended families and most residents are related in some way. The Travelling culture is one with very sharply defined gender role stereotyping

which often leaves women caravan-bound and “*baby bound*” and girls, from early adolescence in some families, are expected to conform to this traditional role model.

Eight professionals found the Travelling culture very interesting and enriching. *“I love working with them; they are very honest, upfront and amazingly perceptive of other people and what’s going on around them, trying to work out where you’re coming from; they pick up quicker than you imagine.”*

*“Travellers contribute a lot: their rich cultural history, their desire to work and earn a living, rather than claim benefits. People think they are bunch of scroungers, which is not true. They are mostly very hardworking people and want the opportunity to do things for themselves, which they are often denied. Like other nomadic people their work must be such that they can take it from place to place, and they adapt their skills to do whatever is needed eg building work, tree surgery, and television repair.”*

Eight workers find Travellers open, welcoming and friendly to people who are offering a genuine service to them, especially if they are following in the footsteps of a much respected worker. *“They welcome people who work well with them.”* Nevertheless, Travellers are perceived to be cautious about what they divulge until mutual confidence is built up. The *“machoism of (some of) the men can be difficult”*. Some workers have found their stereotypes challenged.

Others have worked with Travellers for a number of years and highly respect and value this community. *“They are very generous, have a good sense of humour and are very hospitable when you are in their homes. I’ve never felt threatened.”* *“Although they live quite sheltered lives and don’t mix with non-Travellers, they have very open-minded views on things, which is very refreshing.”*

Eight workers stress that, like any other community, there are *“good and bad, and Travellers cannot be judged by what a few do”*. Society tends to stereotype them, eg *“that they are dirty”*. In fact, *“they are probably obsessively clean (in their own*

home)”. *“They all seem to have a strong sense of what they believe to be right and wrong – what they do and what the person in the next trailer is doing. They are on top of each other on the site, and aware of each other so keeping up appearances is important.”* However, professionals are not naïve; they do not think that Travellers are “*angels*”, but know just how *“many Travelling people are scrupulously honest and horrified that people think they are liars and underhand.”* They also feel strongly that *“it is not fair to label people like that. Travellers are forced to live on the fringes of society, and it is not surprising that some of them feel they are having to do things to survive or get by which are not entirely within the law or within convention.”*

According to some professionals, people know Travellers for leaving their rubbish around, *“but they do not really know them.”* For example, *“they do not know that Travellers do not have the same opportunities for education, health care, that they get moved from pillar to post, are attacked, stoned and shot at. When they are evicted, police and Council work closely and can appear at any time of the day or night.”* *“The career opportunities of Travellers are curtailed – unless we give everyone the opportunity to become good citizens we are never going to have an equal society. We will have ghettos and ghetto mentality feeds violence.”*

The way Travellers communicate was highlighted. For example, *“they can seem to be shouting at each other”*. Some professionals perceive that it is in their culture to talk *“loudly”*, and to them this is not shouting or arguing. However, when this happens in a public setting, misunderstandings can occur, eg with receptionists - *“that’s where you get a mismatch of cultures”*.

Nevertheless workers acknowledge that the Travelling community can be very violent with each other, with *“very primitive fighting in interfamily feuds”*. This has made it difficult for Travellers to organise for concerted action, eg politically: *“There is intimidation within the site and feuding makes it difficult to organise things. Families may be competing with each other for reasons that are not always known”*. However, it was also pointed out that Travellers are a community with very strong feelings. They

are a very strongly identified group, with their own languages, very independent and self-sufficient. *“They can be volatile with each other, but then something happens and the feuding stops and they are friends again.”*

The increase in violence, especially on Cottingley Springs Caravan Site was explained by one professional to be partly a result of current legislation which has taken away Travellers’ cultural way of settling disputes – *“traditionally Travellers have overcome disputes and strong disagreements by travelling, the dispute is forgotten in time and they come together again after a time”*.

Some professionals notice the reduction in roadside Travellers and think that the Travelling lifestyle may be dying out because *“it is too difficult”*. Since the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act and *“up until a year ago, there was a lot of trenching by the local authority of all the regular sites: Holbeck Park, Kirkstall, Morley, Cross Green, which resulted in a great reduction in the number of roadside Travellers”*. Professionals feel sad that the Travelling lifestyle is disappearing. *“There are hardly any Travellers on the road and they are being rehoused, which is not natural for them. The lack of sites mean they have to either fit in or disappear.”*

*“Travellers may appear strong, but they are not. They don’t know their rights. For example, someone tells them to move on or questions what they are doing, they comply. They will stand up for themselves sometimes, eg if they feel they are being insulted and can be loud and threatening with it, but they don’t know how to take the Council on”*.

## **4.2.2 Travellers’ Relationship with Public Authorities and Services**

### **4.2.2.1 Health Visitor**

Travellers tend to consult different professionals (who already work with them) on health issues. The role of the health visitor spans the whole community and the person therefore needs to have a broad range of experience, be multi-skilled, and flexible and adaptable enough to respond as opportunities present themselves. This was thought to be particularly so with adult health advice and with the men.

#### 4.2.2.2 Doctors

Several professionals report that Travellers have poor access to GPs, even if they are registered. *“GPs do not make home visits on site when they are on call, although it is not said directly. So they use Casualty.”* Apart from inappropriate use of the Accident and Emergency Department, Travellers *“often do not attend to little things like rashes and cuts, for which they do need advice and treatment before it gets worse.”*

*As rapport and trust is established, Travellers talk about “what’s going on with their lives” and “the problems that emerge include marital problems, how doctors treat them and their confusion over what could be quite serious health problems”.* It is obvious to some professionals, from the way health problems are described some times, that Travellers have misinterpreted what the doctor told them. But *“Travellers feel they are so low down the scale that they can’t go and ask for clarification, especially if they can’t read or write”*, which in turn increases stress and anxiety.

#### 4.2.2.3 Central and Local Government

According to some professionals, it is not always easy for Travellers to address discrimination because *“discrimination law does not protect them very well”*. For example, the Licence Agreement for the caravan site is widely quoted as a sign of institutional racism. Most professionals would like to see it changed to become a Tenant’s Agreement, with rights similar to other Council tenants. Although the Licence Agreement comes under legislation and therefore central government, some professionals are surprised that some people working for the Council think that *“Travellers already have special privileges because they have a site.”*

Some professionals feel that local Government *“pay lip service about rights, differences in culture, social exclusion, but that is all it is.”* *“The Council judges Travellers on the behaviour of one or two Travellers, and makes decisions based on that judgement. They*

*could do better trying to find out about the Travelling culture, what Travellers need and want.”*

Travellers are seen by most professionals to be treated as third class citizens and workers feel quite embarrassed at times at how badly they are treated. *“When they have to resort to the roadside they have no water, electricity, sanitation – basic needs are not met. Even on the caravan site there are problems with repairing basic amenities.”*

Most professionals agree that Travellers are one of the most disadvantaged communities in Britain, and that the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act has increased this marginalisation. *“Expectations amongst Travellers about their rights are low.”*

#### 4.2.2.4 Management of Cottingley Springs Caravan Site

Professionals acknowledge that there have always been problems on Cottingley Springs. Site A was the first site and the families have been there for about 13 years. *“Site B was a knee jerk reaction to the new laws that came out and was built over a huge area with about 36 plots. It has now been reduced to 20 plots, but from day one it has had its problems, despite the space. Site A has 20 families living on top of each other and there’s no problems”.*

According to some professionals, it was as a result of the publicity generated by the now disbanded tenants group about the appalling conditions on Site B, that the Housing Department commissioned a report from an architect and community development worker. The aim was to develop proposals for improving conditions. The architect and community development worker also explored the problems of service provision on the sites, social issues due to its isolation, and the problems with the management structure. It was reported that all the families were enthusiastic about the project.

According to some professionals, the Housing Department did not accept the critical assessment of problems on the site, and the report was only accepted after it was *‘toned down’*. The recommended upgrading and renovations have since been accepted and are

currently planned for Site B. Unfortunately, the momentum that led to these changes could not be sustained due to the pressure of work of all professionals involved, and the tenants group no longer functions. However, the experience affirms the belief of professionals that advocacy *“empowers people by raising their expectations and provides support when they are attempting to exercise their rights.”*

It is the perception of some professionals that Cottingley Springs Caravan Site B is a poverty trap because of the rent charged. Despite the very poor conditions, Travellers are having to pay rent *“which they would pay for a good-sized house”*. Most licencees receive Income Support. The rent charged by the Council does not encourage Travellers to be self-employed, and the size of the plot is not big enough for the equipment that Travellers need to store for tree work, tarmacing and car repairs.

The Council is said to have a poor record of responding to requests for repairs, even of essential amenities like toilets, and are seen to *“pursue their own agendas that have nothing to do with the rights and welfare of Travellers.”* According to professionals, there are too many similar experiences for what Travellers say, to be discounted, but *“it is very difficult to prove it.”* Many professionals are concerned that *“they get so used to it that they don’t complain any more, but every so often I’ll get hints of what is not right and I wonder what is going on”*. However, it was also acknowledged by some professionals that the newest member of the Travellers’ Services Team *“has made life easier, with her firm but fair approach”*.

Most professionals hear disturbing accounts of how Cottingley Springs caravan site management is said to treat Travellers, *“I was told that they are constantly photographed and conversations taped when they talk to the wardens. That is an infringement of human rights, and it feels morally wrong to me. Travellers feel disempowered and they don’t feel they can actually do anything about it.”*

There are reports of eviction proceedings against Travellers on issues for which a Council tenant would not expect to be evicted. For example, one man was accused of *“fiddling*



*the electric meter, which is usually an issue for the police. However, there was an attempt to evict the person/family: “would you expect to be evicted from your home if you were fiddling the electric meter? It’s a very harsh way of dealing with people. There is very little evidence of negotiation and mediation when there are problems”. There is serious concern amongst most professionals that the role of eviction conflicts with the role of site management, which is currently invested in the same individual: “you would not expect an eviction officer to negotiate, would you?”*

Professionals who have experience of working with other client groups find that the Council’s response to Travellers is far worse than with other client groups. *“It is discrimination really and Travellers end up expecting to be neglected.”*

#### 4.2.2.5 Management of Roadside Travellers

Since the implementation of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, the Guidance states that the responsibility lies with the Council to consider human rights issues – eg the need to investigate the needs of children, taking into account marriages, births, funerals, broken down vans, etc. but, according to some professionals, this is often not the case. Instead of trying to accommodate Travellers, the Council is seen by many professionals to focus on evicting roadside Travellers and building trenches to prevent them from stopping in parkland and industrial estates, where local people would not be disturbed.

#### 4.2.2.6 Department of Planning and Environment

Some professionals are aware that the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act made roadside stopping illegal, and withdrew central funding for developing sites, the rationale being that the public should not have to subsidise Travellers’ lifestyle, and that Travellers should buy their own land and build. There were Planning Objectives for local Councils to identify areas where Travellers would be able to buy land for development. Again, it is the perception of some professionals that the objectives have not been achieved.

Many professionals think that because Travellers in Leeds go back over 500 years, the Council has a responsibility to Travellers. They are frustrated that Leeds City Council does not identify areas where Travellers can buy and develop and, and that the Council's argument is related to Green Belt policies, etc. This has not however stopped Travellers from buying land and setting up, often without Planning Permission, due to delays in the Council. Some professionals have been involved in Planning Appeals.

According to many professionals, Travellers would like to be able to run the places where they live; many would like to have their own land to be able to develop for their large extended families, *“but the Council is not interested in helping them in this regard.”* *“The Council seems to be more interested in putting Gypsies in the middle of nowhere. Forming a ghetto is not their traditional way of life.”*

#### 4.2.2.7 Equal Opportunities Unit

Some professionals have complained, on behalf of Travellers, to the Equal Opportunities Unit of the Council. It is perceived by these professionals that the complaint was just passed back to the department about whom the complaint was made, and there was no satisfactory resolution. There is concern about what is perceived as the Council's unwillingness to *“investigate itself on equal opportunities issues”*.

#### 4.2.2.8 Other professionals

Some professionals say, of other professionals who do not work with Travellers, that: *“Most people have a stereotypical image of what a Traveller is. People use the term ‘Gypsies’ in a way that does not conjure up a positive image. It is general ignorance because they do not come across Travellers in their everyday lives.”*

In relation to people who work directly with Travellers, some professionals describe *“two camps”*. Firstly, *“extremely committed and creative professionals, such as the Education team, advice workers, health visitor and Adult Education Worker”*. In contrast, the impression of several professionals is that within parts of Leeds City Council there is *“the attitude that Travellers are a problem to be dealt with, rather than a*

*dynamic part of Leeds.*” There is also an impression that there is a “*poor attitude of doctors surgeries near Cottingley Springs, with many families reporting problems registering or getting access to health care.*” Some professionals are shocked by the accounts of clients’ experiences at the Benefits Agency, or local housing offices. For example, at a local housing office, when a Traveller called in to purchase an electricity token, the person at the counter was said to have turned to a colleague and asked “*Do we serve Gypsies here?*” before then refusing to serve the Traveller.

#### 4.2.2.9 In General

Most professionals agree that Travellers do not trust “*authority*”, and expect there to be discrimination: “*they don’t expect to be treated fairly at all and there is some justification for that*”. “*If you are marginalised and don’t think you get a fair deal, you are less likely to have respect for society and its laws*”.

It is perceived that the result of discrimination and lack of acceptance is often a disinclination and lack of ability to integrate with the rest of society. For example, this is reflected in Travellers’ inability to cope with the usual way to access some services. For example, “*they could go into (x), find they have to wait and can’t cope with waiting even 10 minutes. They walk out or they get irate with the receptionist who gets irate in return. Travellers then think they are treated like that because they are Travellers. They can’t cope with waiting and need almost immediate attention.*” Some professionals find “*you have to constantly remind them that you are working with them to help them cope with procedures, etc.*” Another reflection of being a marginalised group is shown in “*some families being demanding and interested in getting all they could out of the system, while unwilling to do their bit for themselves.*”

Some workers find it confusing that while Travellers want their rights, some do not have the concept of other people’s rights too, or the concept of compromise. “*Some Travellers can be very racist against the rights of Bangladeshi people who live nearby.*” One person pointed out that this is a symptom of some people in disadvantaged

communities – ie they consider that their rights should come before those of other minorities or the general public.

*“Some Travellers seem to be unaware of how antisocial their behaviour might be.”* It was pointed out by another worker that this can be the behaviour of some people in disadvantaged groups who feel that they have nothing to lose, or who are trying to attract attention to their cause. *“If their own rights to respect, non-harassment are continually violated at every turn, every day, from childhood up, in schools, in the post office, in the employment office, in health centres, by the police, by passers-by – it is not surprising that an attitude of ‘you treat us like scum, we’ll act it out for you’.”* However, the result of antisocial behaviour is often an increase in their sense of exclusion. *“This is a community pushed to the limits by a vast section of the settled community”.*

### **4.2.3 Relationship with Others**

#### **4.2.3.1 The Public**

Most professionals find that there is indirect discrimination. For example, *“Travellers find it hard to get basic services (housing, education, etc) because of who they are.”*

Public houses have been known to make Travellers very unwelcome, even though there may not be a sign *“banning”* Travellers.

Professionals think that the media’s attitude towards Travellers needs to be changed. For example, *“in Heartbeat, people are warned to be careful because Travellers have moved in”.* *“I think we’ve got to change the way the rest of society looks at the Travelling community – that they have a positive role to play, promote greater understanding of their lifestyle and culture.”* Others feel that the public needs to know *“what it’s like not to be able to get a doctor for your child, and have to go to hospital miles away; what it’s like to feel that no one else is interested in you.”*

Some professionals were *“shocked”* by the extent to which non-Travellers – even ones who on other issues would be quite radical, were *“prejudiced and really racist”* when it

came to Travellers. *“Travellers feel hatred, are very sensitive to despising attitudes and then reciprocate in the same way.”*

#### **4.2.4 Health**

*“A lot of Travellers suffer ill health because of the conditions they live in – on the roadside, caravan site and living in a caravan.”* Older Travellers seem to have illnesses that are cold and damp related. *“Caravans are not always that warm in the winter, and going in and out constantly does not makes it easy”.*

##### **4.2.4.1 Disability**

Professionals are not aware of any provisions for disabled Travellers living in caravans, eg ramps, disabled toilets, wider doors in sheds to accommodate wheelchairs, etc. It is not known what agencies, such as DIAL, can offer disabled Travellers. Many Travellers are said to suffer from impaired hearing.

##### **4.2.4.2 Domestic Violence**

Travellers do not talk about domestic violence directly and certainly not until they have built up a relationship with the worker. Nevertheless several workers are aware of the presence of domestic violence. Travellers who have used women’s refuges have not stayed very long as they could not cope with the structure. Some professionals were *“angered by the way women are subjected to domestic violence and at the seeming lack of solidarity between them”*, but understood that this could be due to *“fear”* in a community where there is potential for a lot of violence.

##### **4.2.4.3 Mental health problems**

Several workers find that the incidence of mental health problems is high. *“Men have mental health problems – perhaps as a result of lack of education opportunities, environmental problems, unemployment. There are alcohol problems.”* *“I have also experienced many of the women being very ‘ground down’ and depressed and they can’t get out of that. The flip side to that is that they will bounce back from some things very*

*quickly. Very up and down sometimes.” “Depression, and if it’s not depression, then they’re not functioning properly”.*

However, Travellers have their way of dealing with problems and often what they need is not the same as what professionals might think. *“The direct approach is not always what’s needed.”* Some professionals think that groups sessions organised for specific issues would not necessarily facilitate discussion, and that it is often indirectly that Travellers ask for advice and tentatively broach issues of concern.

#### 4.2.4.4 Health Bus

Due to the turnover in staff there was a time when there was a reduction in dedicated health visiting provision. This had an impact on other professionals working with Travellers. The availability of a health bus going onto the caravan site is finally being realised after discussions which started 1-2 years ago.

#### 4.2.4.5 Family Planning

*“There is a great need for sex education, although this does not come out directly.”*

Usually it *“crops up”* in the conversation and is always on a one-to-one basis. Workers think that working in groups would not facilitate discussion in this area.

#### 4.2.4.6 Child Health

Travellers clearly do not neglect their children. They are very protective, loving and can *“almost smother their children”*. If anything, *“they seem to spoil them; children drink sugary drinks from milk bottles at a late age and dental hygiene is atrocious.”*

### 4.2.5 **Legal aid, advocacy and assertiveness**

The role of advocacy is not the sole domain of CAB; other professionals are involved in advocacy in different ways, such as reading and writing letters, making complaints, and enquiries on behalf of Travellers. *“Like many oppressed groups Travellers have an*

*instinctive sense of justice*". However, their knowledge of their rights is not always based on accurate information. *"It could vary from ignorance to fantasy – some of the rights they insist on are fictitious but firmly backed by 'evidence' that 'so and so did that'. Nevertheless, what is based on hearsay is often firmly believed."*

#### 4.2.5.1 Cottingley Springs Caravan Site

As a result of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, and the reduction of the number of roadside Travellers, a lot of advice work is centred around *"getting as much money for Travellers as possible – a lot of it is benefits work, claiming Disability Living Allowance, making sure Income Support is claimed, Social Fund"*. Gradually advice work has gravitated to Cottingley Springs. Some statistics provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau are included in Appendix B.

It is perceived that Travellers' fear of eviction is such that they are very hesitant to challenge the Council when it seems that the Council may have made a mistake. It is the perception of some professionals that there are cases where families would have been *"wrongly"* evicted, were it not for the advocacy of professionals.

Once again, there is concern amongst most professionals that the person who was, in effect, the eviction officer was appointed manager of the caravan site. *"Three evictions proceedings happened straightaway"* but were prevented through intervention by other professionals. Some feel that the appointment is *"indicative of the politics and attitude of the Council with regard to Travellers – that Travellers need an enforcer and that they need policing."* The concern is that the Council seems to be interested in the policing and control side *"almost to the exclusion of the welfare of Travellers"*.

It is the experience of advice workers that they deal mainly with women *"mainly because women organise the money – housing benefit, child benefit, lone carers. Sickness and disability benefits are common."* *"They also needed general advice on housing and consumer issues, representation at appeals and tribunals"*.

#### 4.2.5.2 Literacy

*“As a group with low levels of literacy and what can be seen as a somewhat chaotic lifestyle (itinerant, evictions, living in very small spaces, etc) Travellers are up against huge hurdles with bureaucracy which puts so much store by evidence, and documents. Often such things have invariably been washed away in the rain, lost, stolen, etc. and that does not win the sympathy of civil servants!”*

#### 4.2.5.3 Social Policy

Professionals acknowledge that *“for a group which does not experience much respect, the fact that they know that I respect them is probably more important than anything else.”* Nevertheless, as rewarding as the work with individuals is, several professionals feel that without working on *“the wider picture”*, all they do is *“apply a band-aid”* to the problems, which does not change things, and which also makes the workload *“overwhelming”*. *“There are times I feel I have failed against the odds.”*

Working on social policy is about *“working for change”*. Professionals are clear that unless the Travelling community were helped to assert their rights for accommodation, health care, etc, advocacy alone could ultimately *“encourage dependency, rather than empower the community.”* However, working on social policy issues is specialist work and very much depends on the experience and skills of the people in post at any given time. Some professionals feel that they were able to include community development and support to a certain extent. Those who feel that they had the opportunity to work on social policy issues to tackle discrimination and disadvantage report that the most effective occasions were those when there has been collaboration between CAB, the Travellers Education Service, the health visitor and some officers from the Local Authority. Indeed, some professionals who worked with Travellers feel that they made very little difference *“except on social policy. I do think that CAB became more aware of Travellers’ issues.”*

While some professionals would like to be able to present the conditions and problems faced by Travellers to, for example, the Social Exclusion Unit of the Council, others



would like to work at promoting a more positive image of Travellers to the Local Authority.

#### 4.2.5.4 Conflict

Most professionals' find that their advocacy role inevitably puts them in conflict with other services providers and sometimes even within their own organisation. For example, questioning the lack of access to GP services could put professionals in conflict with the Health Authority.

#### 4.2.6 **Education**

Most professionals recognise that Travellers have aspirations, but the prejudice and discrimination that they face as a community frustrates them to the extent that more often than not, *"they give up and turn in on themselves again."* Many Travellers do not read and write; they have a distrust of the educational system and think they will suffer discrimination, and that if they get involved in contentious issues, their children may be *"excluded"*.

It is not in the tradition of Travellers to go to school, but professionals think that Travellers now understand the importance of some education for their children. However, for roadside Travellers, the problem of getting to school is insurmountable when they are moved on continually. Some professionals point out that *"school may be the only time when they meet non-Travellers and people from other cultures on a regular basis. Once they are 16 they are on their own."*

On a more positive note, a project in which one professional (who used to work with Leeds Travellers) was involved in the very initial stages was taken up and successfully developed by another worker. The 'Family Learning' project which encourages mothers to learn alongside their children won an award and is now well-established. The new

approach has helped to build confidence, as well as enable mothers to learn new skills and broaden their experience, while young children are cared for in the creche.

There are 10 hours a week allocated to teach adult literacy. This happens on a one-to-one basis in houses or trailers. Well-established and popular, this service is limited by resources. Although there is a waiting list, it is perceived that a group approach would not “*work*”, due to space and interpersonal dynamics.

#### **4.2.7 Housing**

Most professionals identify Travellers’ needs to be “*predominantly for control over how and where they live.*” Some report that “*The families who have their own yards are much more self-sufficient, and healthier than families on Cottingley Springs.*” This was particularly marked in one couple who changed from being dependent on social security and taking anti-depressant medication to being able to make a simple living and discontinuing the medication.

##### **4.2.7.1 Transit sites**

According to some professionals, Leeds is considered to be a “*major centre*”, at the end of the M1 and mid-way to Scotland, and traditionally Travellers have always stopped in South Leeds. Now there are no longer places where they can stop legally. There does not seem to be any clear reason why the Council is unable to provide transit sites, with basic amenities including refuse collection, sanitation and all that is available for people in houses. Some professionals go so far as to think: “*Unwilling to provide – that is basically the attitude of Leeds City Council. They just want everyone to go into a house.*” “*There are some Councillors that are more sympathetic, but when it comes down to hard votes and politics, people do not want Travellers in their back garden.*”

#### 4.2.8 What helps you in your work?

Many professionals say that *“I feel like I am in a very privileged position. I don’t think there are many people that Travellers have respect for and trust.” “Travellers are so grateful for whatever little I do for them, and they don’t take it for granted. Getting to know individuals and families is very enriching for me.”* Some are uplifted by the contact: *“I may be a bit sad before I get on the site, but once I start working with them I really enjoy myself”*, while others feel that what helps them is the knowledge of *“great and continuing need”*.

Professionals feel that the Travelling culture is different from theirs and find that a *“sense of humour, and genuine interest and enjoyment in their fascinating culture”* are important pre-requisites for working with Travellers. They are also *“disgusted with the way Travellers are treated and the circumstances that have forced them into the position that they are in now: it is sad that their lifestyle is disappearing.”*

Many professionals say that it is the Travellers themselves who helped them in their work: *“they were my teachers, the source of my in-service training”*. *“I built up a close relationship with my clients and this made all the frustrations of the job tolerable.”*

However, the path forged by predecessors is also acknowledged, as is the backing of some management, and networks with other local professionals, Travellers themselves and Traveller groups in other parts of the country.

Professionals agree that it is important to be flexible and adaptable when working with Travellers as the culture is so different and the need to build trust is even more important with a community that is so marginalised. There is very little ‘training’ for this work and professionals depend on a good handover and advice from predecessors and other professionals who have more experience. The multi-agency Travellers Health Partnership is a source of support, learning and *“good for bouncing off ideas.”*

Some professionals find themselves supported at work in their own team or organisation, although most have to be *“fairly self reliant”*. All workers acknowledge that other professionals who have worked with Travellers for a longer period are a valuable resource for newcomers. *“Working with some good people, seeing some things come together and seeing progress.” “Seeing change and seeing Travellers having the confidence to stand up for themselves, more knowledge of their rights, etc.”*

#### **4.2.9 What makes your work difficult?**

*“Deeply racist attitudes and actions of others, especially ‘establishment figures’ – police, medical (doctors or, more especially, their receptionists), some Council departments and the general public.”*

*“There seems to be complete denial within the Housing and Social Services departments that Travellers are still marginalised and discriminated in every area of their lives, from accessing basic health services to having a choice about where and how they live.”*

Some professionals find that some local authority staff become very hostile towards agencies who are working to improve Travellers’ options, choices and experiences.

*Most professionals describe the need to be prepared to broaden the scope of their role. Rewarding as this may be, it is time-consuming, for example to help a Traveller to “chase a GP for test results, chase up hospital appointments, etc.” However, all professionals are prepared for this: “I don’t feel I should cut people short when they are opening up to me.”*

#### **4.2.10 The Way Forward**

##### **4.2.10.1 Health Education and Social Policy Personnel**

While most professionals felt supported by their managers, several highlighted that they felt their post was ‘under-established’ in terms of hours or number of workers, and it was

difficult to get their service increased. For example, many felt that there needed to be extra funding for health education, for developing the social policy aspect of working with Travellers and for community development.

There is much passion and commitment in most of the professionals who work with Travellers and the question has been asked, *“Can we discuss things without letters of complaint flying around, and people being scape-goated”*.

#### 4.2.10.2 Community Development

Most professionals are interested in trying *“to promote a community that mostly do not have literacy skills and who because they are family-based, do not necessarily organise very well together unless they have a common purpose.”* The work of Paolo Friere was quoted by more than one person, and his developmental model (training leaders, etc) which has been developed successfully within the Travelling community in Dublin.

However, they are aware that they cannot start organising things for Travellers.

*“Travellers have to want the initiative, and any facilitator must have the right frame of mind, otherwise the group falls apart.”*

Another professional insists that *“The only way forward would be, from the beginning, to put any project envisaged into their hands.”* *“What is needed is to create the spaces where Travellers can identify what they need, can negotiate with the settled community and do it themselves. It is long term and messy, but I think it is the only way.”* Other professionals are very aware that Travellers’ fear of eviction and victimisation often prevent them from being acting together as a group.

#### 4.2.10.3 Building confidence and promoting a positive image

Some professionals are now trying to approach problems in a different way. For example, writing the book ‘Gypsies and Travellers in their own words’ and the launch of the book was the first time that Travellers as a community were invited to a civic reception at the Civic Hall. Several professionals acknowledged that that was *“an historic and a moving occasion”*. The project of the book itself was a way of working

with Travellers for their voice to be heard – for people who read it *“to have a better understanding of their culture and the chaos created by racism”*. Others ask the question, *“how have we learnt from the MacPherson Report following the death of Stephen Lawrence?”*

Increasing the work on adult literacy and building on projects such as Travellers Family Learning are cited as ways of building confidence and giving Travellers themselves positive experiences.

#### 4.2.10.4 Housing and Leeds City Council

*“In the spirit of the 1994 Act, if the Council is not going to allow roadside stopping or stopping in bits of land that no one else is using, then they must provide a plan for transit sites and also allow Travellers to buy and develop their own land – and consider how they can use Housing Benefit for renting land.”* Travellers would have the space to do their own work.

Most professionals agree that at Cottingley Springs there are too many people living in too confined a space. Some say that *“Site B needs to be moved. Site A is more settled now.”* Others acknowledge that *“there will always be social problems on the caravan site”* but also insist that *“until families have control over where and how they live, other aspects such as health and education will be neglected.”*

Most professionals think that the wardens could be a very good link, but *“Travellers feel that the people who are managing the site do not like them and are racially discriminated against them.”* On the other hand, one professional thinks that all agencies should acknowledge the role and authority of site management who are better able to see the whole picture.

It is the perception of most professionals that the Council needs to state its policy on involving Travellers in decision-making, especially in relation to site management and alternative accommodation. *“How does the Council operate their equal opportunities*

*policy? How does the job description of the (eg) Asian Liaison Officer compare with the Travellers' Liaison Officer? Is there an eviction role for the Asian Liaison Officer?"*

A number of professionals find it incredible that within the Council different departments do not seem to collaborate with each other.

#### 4.2.10.5 Health Care

Some professionals feel that the health authority needs to address "*the issue of accessing health care*", especially in relation to General Practitioners.

## RESULTS - PHASE 2

When the first draft of the report was presented to the stakeholding organisations on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2001, the Director of Housing expressed serious concerns about the accuracy and bias of the first draft. As previously mentioned, much of the research process had coincided with the process of eviction of a family from Cottingley Springs Caravan Site. According to the Director of Housing, the Department had not attended THP meetings during the time of the eviction, “*because they found themselves at odds with the rest of the group*”. Therefore, although a key member of the team of ‘grassroots’ professionals (from the Department of Housing) had been interviewed, the Department did not have a part in directing the research process.

At the THP meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2001, the stakeholding organisations, apart from Leeds City Council, welcomed and accepted the first draft, including the recommendations, as it pertained to their individual services. However, it was agreed that the research process would enter Phase 2 in order to include the perspective of the relevant departments within Leeds City Council.

As requested by the Director of Housing at a meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2001, it was agreed that the following senior officers of Leeds City Council would be interviewed, as a matter of urgency, for their response to the first draft and to contribute to the research process:

- Director and Assistant Director, Department of Housing
- Director and Assistant Director, Department of Planning and Environment
- Council Officers, Department of Legal Services
- Chief Equal Opportunities Officer, Equal Opportunities Unit

A total of four interviews were conducted with five of the above officers by 26<sup>th</sup> March 2001. It was not possible to interview, face-to-face, the officers from the Department of Planning within the timescale agreed for Phase 2, and the Assistant Director, Department of Planning gave a written response to the interview questions.



The first draft was reviewed and amended, where appropriate, by the researcher in the light of the queries concerning accuracy and points for clarification. This part of the research was concluded and is reported as Phase 1 of this report. The findings of Phase 2 consists of the perspective of senior management of Leeds City Council, and is reported as follows:

- **4.3**                    The response of Phase 2 interviewees to the first draft
- **4.4-6**                The response of Phase 2 interviewees to questions based on the recommendations made in the first draft (see Appendix D).
- **Appendix A**        Revised to include the perspective of the Department of Legal Services on “The Story of an Eviction”

### **4.3 RESULTS - RESPONSE TO FIRST DRAFT**

#### **4.3.1 Overall response**

#### **4.3.2 From the perspective of the Department of Housing**

#### **4.3.3 From the perspective of the Department of Planning and Environment**

#### **4.3.1 Overall response**

There was considerable disquiet expressed by Council officers with the first draft of the report (first draft, Phase 1). The opinion was that the first draft lacked “*balance and rigour*”, for several reasons. Firstly, it was felt that the report was “one-sided”. The perceptions of the different Council departments involved had not been presented. It was considered that it was not sufficient to interview a grassroots Council officer from one department when several departments were involved. Furthermore, considering the bias of the first draft, there were questions about the sample (of people interviewed) and how this was obtained.

It was felt that the researcher should have checked the accuracy of the comments made by Travellers and professionals. There was concern that “*there hadn’t been any contact to validate the comments*”, and conclusions were drawn from “*matters given in anecdotal, and perhaps misinformed, reports*”.

#### **4.3.2 From the perspective of the Department of Housing**

##### **4.3.2.1 The relationship between health, housing and environment**

While one officer acknowledged that “*health and housing are integral to each other*”, another strongly felt that, by including housing and environmental issues, the report had gone beyond the remit of addressing the health of Travellers. “*Looking at the recommendations, what is it going to do to improve the health of Travellers? I think a lot of those are management issues, which we are already addressing, and*

*which does not come over in the report. There are many other issues that could have been addressed, which would have made a difference to Travellers health. For example, having a dedicated Health Visitor on site. We provide an education service on site, what about health provision, health education? I don't think the management issues in Housing would contribute significantly to the health of Travellers."*

#### 4.3.2.2 Review of conditions on Cottingley Springs Site A and B

According to the Department of Housing, the review was commissioned "*because we wanted to improve conditions at Cottingley Springs – (the review was) a management action to achieve that*", and not because "*we have been somehow forced into doing something*", as it has been expressed.

The first draft reported that "*the Housing Department would not accept the critical assessment of the problems on the site, and the report was only accepted after it was toned down.*" According to Council officers, "*there is always an initial report back, and then you discuss issues, discuss what you want to prioritise, discuss how you want the report to be formatted and set out, and that was the first report. We then came up with a final report, which met the brief and from that we organised an executive summary which we then circulated.*"

The Department of Housing point out that it was not a case of the independent report "*eventually*" leading to the decision to upgrade the site. "*It sounds as though we'd been putting in as much delay as possible. That wasn't the case. It was a very thorough and inclusive consultation exercise with the residents. Effective consultation takes time. It has not taken 3 years to upgrade Site A because the work done has been nothing like the level that we are proposing for Site B. Again, from the reporting, there is clearly no understanding on what work has been done on Site A.*"

#### 4.3.2.3. Wardens on Cottingley Springs Caravan Site

Some Travellers have said that they feel harassed by the warden patrolling the site every 10-20 minutes. The Department clarifies that the warden does not "*patrol the site every 10-20 minutes, the warden does walk around the site, and that's part of the staff's role down there, in terms of talking to the residents, getting repairs from the*

*residents, dealing with electricity and enquiries, checking on health and safety – that is part of the role.”*

#### 4.3.2.4 Multicultural relationships

According to the Department of Housing, the perception of some residents that site management favour English Travellers is *“totally unfounded”*. The caravan site is made up of *“English, traditional Irish Travellers, Leeds people who have lived in Leeds all their lives, and there is a mix of ethnic background”*. One Council officer suggests that *“if you walked into a pub one Saturday night and had the same conversation, you would get the same perception probably about the Irish community in general.”*

#### 4.3.2.5 Public transport (cf 4.1.5.9)

One Council official’s view is that it is not true that *“taxis will not pull on to the site”*. The perception of the Department is that, in addition to the taxis that take children to school, *“taxis are there regularly every week ... if you were on the site you will see that taxis do come on and off.”*

### **4.3.3 From the perspective of the Department of Planning and Environment**

The Department pointed out that, *“although complex, planning is also an open process, conducted against the published framework of national and local policies, with a variety of mechanisms for appeal and scrutiny built into the planning system.”*

While appreciating that Travellers may have wished to avoid the identification, the Department felt this also made it impossible to identify and clarify issues in specific cases. Therefore, whilst acknowledging the feelings of the Travellers interviewed, and although concerned about some of the perceptions reported, the Department does not consider that *“any substantiation of discrimination has been demonstrated.”*

#### 4.4 RESULTS - INTERVIEW WITH DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

The Director and Assistant Director of Housing were interviewed on issues related to the recommendations made in the first draft of the report (see Appendix D).

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##### 4.4.1 Dual role of Travellers Services Manager

The Council brought together the roles of eviction and site management about two years ago, *“with good intent”*. *“Even though we were working for the Council, we were doing it separately in two different departments. They were separate; one part of the role was with another department of the Council, which caused much more problems than there are now. The decision to bring the roles together was to get a more transparent, joined-up, holistic and integrated approach to Travellers services.”*

*“There was lack of information, communication, knowledge and expertise (when the roles were separate); we wanted to try to bring those together because in working with families, it’s critical to have that information together – and expertise across the board as well - about families who might then apply to come to live on Cottingley Springs.”*

*“I think it was easier for residents on the site to see somebody distant who was dealing with Travellers who weren’t resident on the site. I think it’s about relationships, being clear about roles and responsibilities.”*

The Director of Housing stressed that of all the services offered to Travellers, *“two of the hardest edges were those performed by the Department – and that’s eviction from illegal sites and the management of the existing site - where we are required to take a*

*harder line with individuals who are going beyond what is reasonable behaviour on the site.”*

Other professionals are said *“to manage the complementary side of the effects of where harder actions are taken, and there may well be times when there will be conflict. I think part of the dissatisfaction is where some of the professionals have not been happy to be at the end of some of our hard decisions – and therefore blame the structure, the organisation and the individual. I think there will inevitably be conflict, and it’s an easy criticism to make.”*

The Department explained that the same applied with Council tenants who live in houses. *“I can understand that residents see that the person coming to report their repairs could be the person who, if they breached their licence agreement, could also be the person who instigates eviction proceedings against them, but it’s no different in the Housing Offices of the Council – the same person has responsibility for the ‘dual role’. It is the Neighbourhood Manager’s decision to see a tenant about their application for rehousing, repairs, any other issue, and who could also authorise the eviction and see the family about that as well. It’s no different.”*

The Department would like to reinforce the message to residents that *“if they meet their obligations and we meet ours, then there is nothing to fear”*. *“I think you can always do more to explain that people don’t have any reason to be afraid or frightened, provided they adhere to the terms of the licence agreement, and don’t cause a nuisance or harassment to anybody else on the site.*

Site A residents are not seen to *“fear”* the dual role in the same way, *“because they are much more settled and have a more established relationship with all the staff, whereas on Site B it’s more transient.”* As Site B residents have not been settled on the site for as long, or who are more transient, *“they have not established that relationship with the staff down there to be able to build up that trust and relationship that needs to be.”*

The Department also pointed out that *“we are reviewing the Licence Agreement, which is with our Legal Advisers at the moment. We need to go back to the residents*

*and consult on that, so that's another opportunity there to consult – to say that this is the licence agreement that you have; providing we each have our responsibilities and obligations, providing we each meet those, then there is nothing to fear.”*

#### **4.4.2 Relationship with Travellers**

The Department is not convinced about the “widespread criticism and fear” because of the convenience sample and the source of the sample. However, *“if we have lost the trust in the structure across the whole of the Travellers community, rather than a partial sector of that community, and I am concerned that there is lack of trust between the professionals, then we need to review how we offer the service in the future. We should not be so internalised that we can't step back and rethink how we do it. But I would want first of all to make sure that the basis of the criticisms is well founded, and I have not seen the basis under which I can accept that at present.”*

The Department is aware of private organisations that manage Traveller sites in other local authorities.

It was felt that the criticisms *“may well be from a narrow section of the community who have been on the wrong end of some hard action in terms of eviction, or lack of access to the site. I can understand that and it's natural.”* However, the Department also acknowledges that *“if the point is that those judgements need to be more transparent, and more accountable, which I think is part of the direction of some of the recommendations, then I'm happy that we look into that. While I accept and trust the judgement of my officers to be fair ... the debate may well be that when those decisions are taken whether there should be some checks in the system which allow that decision and judgement to be cross-checked.”*

On the question of a Community Development Worker who does not have a management role, and whose role is partly to liaise between Travellers and the Council, the Department is clear that *“if we are building ourselves out of a position of mistrust then I think it needs either a fundamentally different way of delivering the service, and that may not be us, it may be another organisation. Or it may well be that we can try and rebuild the trust between existing organisations and Travellers by having some form of community development worker.”*

The Department is *“quite happy for any proposal which helps the Council to move towards providing a positive and developing service for Travellers in Leeds”* and *“if there is a way of enhancing our services to make that customer interface better.”*

However, if the role of the community development worker includes arbitration, the view of the Department is that such a worker cannot be *“just another worker at the same level, ie not just an intermediary”*. *“If the suggestion is some form of arbitration to resolve conflict, then that may well have to be resolved in a structural way, perhaps within the Council, by somebody who is responsible for all the Travellers services within the Council, of which our services are just a part. The arbiter has got to take responsibility for the decisions that are taken as a result of the arbitration.”* The implication is that in the event of any investigation into serious accidents or injury, by the courts, coroner, or Health and Safety Executive, that may occur following decisions taken on arbitration, the arbiter would have to be able to take responsibility for the final decision. The Department is taking that responsibility at present and reiterates that *“we are sometimes unpopular because of the decisions that we take”*.

*“These conflicts have been there, they are going to be there in the future, and it will be about not being able to say yes all the time to all the families. And some people I think feel as though that is possible.”*

#### **4.4.3 Cottingley Springs Caravan Site**

##### **4.4.3.1 Repairs**

The Council has a 95% rate of completing urgent repairs within the Government time limit. It was clarified that emergencies, such as gas leaks and major bursts, come under the category of ‘urgent repairs’, and are completed within 24-48 hours. Other repairs come under ‘priority’ or ‘general’ and, similarly, there are standards which the Council attempts to meet. ‘Priority repairs’ are less urgent repairs, and are completed within 4 days. Routine or ‘general’ repairs take up to 6 weeks. The Department’s view is that *“what some people feel is an emergency may not be an emergency in our terms. That is set out in the Licence Agreement, so Travellers should know what to expect.”* The list of what comes under which category is available, and the



Department has *“a monitoring system in place which records when that repair was reported, the status, and when it’s completed.”*

It was also acknowledged that *“if our customers say that our systems and processes are not working, then we should review them. That is a judgement for the manager of the site, and the Contracts Manager.”* If there is a need for additional resource then the Contracts Manager is expected to consult with the Director or Assistant Director of Housing. However, the Director of Housing is *“not aware at this moment in time that the processes of repairs are such that we aren’t able to respond. I think there is a significant issue regarding the improvement of the site, which is different from the day-to-day repairs.”*

#### 4.4.3.2 Planned Improvements

On the question of the cost and efficacy of the present system for supplying electricity to the site, according to the Department, this was reported in the review completed by the architects. The plans for Site B include *“working towards getting each plot with its own supply and Travellers will be billed independently for it, just as people are in houses. This has come from the residents and they know now that that is going to happen.”*

*“We have just heard that we haven’t got the funding from the Government for the more rapid improvement to the site. The improvements are part of a plan that we are working towards in stages because of our financial limitations at the moment. The staff, like any other management in the Authority, will work within the budget that they’re set, unless a health and safety issue arises.”*

#### 4.4.3.3 Licence Agreement

The Licence Agreement and a Contract of Tenancy *“do not have the same status legally because they are not around the same tenure: one is about a dwelling house, and the other about land.”* The Department is currently reviewing the terms of the Licence Agreement, *“to try to align it more in terms of the language of the Tenancy Agreement. And to be clear and upfront about what’s expected: what Travellers can expect from us and what we expect from them. There is an ongoing list of what they*

*can and can't do in terms of the management and everyone's quiet enjoyment of the site – same as it does in the terms of a Tenancy Agreement.”*

In terms of terminating a Licence Agreement, the Department explains that *“you give 4 weeks' notice in exactly the same way as a Tenancy Agreement, and representation is right through for both. In terms of difference, it is a difference in the law. A tenant with a secure tenancy can appear for themselves in court (or they can have a solicitor). In terms of a licence, that has to go through a legal representative – that is the law.”*

#### 4.4.3.4 Rent

The rent charged is *“reflective of the cost of the running of the site.”* *“The site has been subsidised over many years.”* The rent is higher than Council housing, because of the cost of managing the site, particularly staffing, refuse collection and repairs. *“I've seen, for example, huge quantities of conifers after somebody has carried out a job somewhere and dumped on the site.”* *“There is an inordinate amount of dumping and refuse. There isn't any way feasible to manage a site with less people. There is also a much higher incidence of repair, vandalism, graffiti.”* Site A now has 'wheely-bins', which is part of the improvement planned for Site B. *“There is a skip, but there is dumping all over the site of different types of rubbish and waste.”*

#### 4.4.3.5 Roles and Boundaries of Site Management

In Phase 1 Travellers reported experiences of members of the team *“snooping around people's houses, taping conversations, taking photographs, walking into sheds without permission, etc.”* The Department has discussed these comments with the team.

On the issue about staff 'just walking into people's caravans', the Department is clear that *“that's not right, and if that happens then that member of staff is acting out of hand. It's about treating people with respect – it's people's homes and all our staff know that, and they wouldn't just walk in uninvited. I think this is sometimes the problem – that something might have happened at some point in time, but then becomes 'well, this happens'.”*

It was explained that a dictaphone is used on site to report repairs. *“He goes around and rather than writing things down, often it’s wet or raining, he uses a dictaphone as an aide-memoire – as a lot of our managers do when they’re out doing inspections. It’s certainly not used for tape-recording conversations”.*

*“In terms of taking photographs, yes that did happen once. And the member of staff no longer works on the site, and he was told that it was inappropriate at the time. But again, there may be occasions when we do have to take photographs because if we are going to court, eg if there is a burnt out car on site, if somebody’s left gas bottles in a dangerous place and we’ve asked them to remove them and they’ve not moved them, or dumping of rubbish, then yes we might need to take photographs on site, as we do for other evidence that we gather when we are preparing cases for court – you need that documentary evidence. I’m sure it is resented but sometimes we have to do that. I can understand Travellers saying they don’t want this to happen, because it does not leave any defence in terms of the evidence presented.”*

When asked if it would be possible to see the document which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the team, opinions seem to differ. One official said that it would not be a problem for residents to talk to staff about this, and for staff to respond to questions verbally. *“What would they want to see? As I said, we intend to set up very clearly in the revised Licence Agreement what Travellers can expect from us, and what we expect from them in terms of behaviour, quiet enjoyment, respect for neighbours, keeping kids under control, etc. We will be consulting with the residents on that, and there will be opportunity then for the team to explain what their individual role is, what the department’s role is and what the Council’s role is.”*

*“Each time there is a new resident, staff go through the existing Agreement, what the rules are, etc with the new resident. They don’t just give them something in writing. They go through it with them.”*

Another person’s understanding was, *“in terms of the roles, that’s whatever is in the job description of the individual members of the team. The roles are set down so there is a clarity there. In terms of the boundaries of their powers of investigation on site, if there is anti-social behaviour going on, then I would expect there to be investigation of that anti-social behaviour by the team. In terms of the boundaries of*

*what's acceptable in terms of the investigations, there are clearly protocols that we have to work to. I think it would be an intrusion if somebody walks in unannounced through an unlocked door. Increasingly from the Human Rights Act those boundaries are being clarified through the test cases. If there are grounds for complaint about whether we've overstepped boundaries, then I would expect those to be able to be made to a person other than the team itself. If we aren't making clear enough where people can direct those complaints, then that's a fault on our side. Perhaps it is advertising where you can complain to, and do we do that well enough?"*

The Department of Housing are part of the Traveller services that are offered by Leeds City Council. *"We are not responsible for all the Traveller services offered by other parts of the Council. I think there may well be perhaps an uncertainty about the role and boundaries of other parts of the Council's services in terms of where do other people's roles stop and finish. It may well be, as we hopefully get to the point where we move forward together, that we have a little bit more sharing about what roles are, and particularly the managers of those individuals about what they see as being reasonable in terms of the way other officers carry out their duties – probably room for clarity on a number of sides."*

#### 4.4.3.6 Relationships on site

When asked what could be done to change the situation, as described by the Department, regarding vandalism, dumping, graffiti, the Department explains, *"it's what we're trying to do – trying to increase people's respect for property, to improve facilities, encourage ownership. It's difficult when there is that turnover of residents – people don't feel the ownership or responsibility because they move on."* Site B is said to be a more transient site, with people coming and going. *"Some people have lived on Site B for a number of years, but over time. They have had period off the site, so they have not been there permanently, or have that relationship"* Furthermore, *"there are families from different ethnic backgrounds, and not all of them get on with each other. The residents on Site A have lived together as a group for a number of years – so it's a more settled, tolerant community."*

*“I hope that through the improvements that are going on, there will be some ownership there. Again, how would you answer that question in a different environment on an estate? Some of it has got to come from the people themselves.”*

The Department had carried out a *“door-to-door survey to establish what’s needed”*, and this led to the study that was commissioned from an architect. *“We do consult and there are many different views on the site.”*

There used to be a *“Women’s Group”*, rather than a *“Tenant’s Group”*, with different representatives for different issues, *“but it wasn’t a regular group with one objective in mind. We’ve tried to encourage that and to get Travellers to meetings, but it’s the same as for other areas where it’s difficult to have any tenant representation – I think there’s got to be some issue or topic that brings people together. When that has been dealt with, the group doesn’t have a common interest.”*

Over the years, the Department have tried a number of initiatives and ways of getting people to meet, but have found that *“I don’t think you can expect people to want to come together in a group – some people don’t want to do that. They want to receive a letter, a visit or phone call. They don’t want to be part of a group that meets in a formal structured way. Travellers are put off by that. I think that for whatever issue you want to consult on, you have to ask people how they want to be consulted or involved, if indeed they do at all.”* It is hoped that with the improvements planned for Site B, the new office block will provide a meeting room on site.

#### **4.4.4 Staff training**

All Council staff have an induction which includes *“customer care, equal opportunities ...all the core elements of what is expected of staff who work for the Department.”* The Traveller Services Manager participates regularly in *“inter-Authority type seminars looking at best practice”*, and is currently completing a professional qualification in Traveller services management organised by the Chartered Institute of Housing. The Gypsy Council is said to have input into this training course.

In relation to some of the comments made by interviewees in Phase 1 about “*a fair and firm approach*” the Department’s response is: “*If people are saying that there is a new member of the team who is bringing a different approach that is fair and firm, by implication the other members of the team may well be being firm, but someone’s suggesting that they are not being fair.*” Again, according to the Department, this comes under the realm of ‘complaints’ and would like to know about “*instances whereby there is demonstrable illustration that somebody’s behaviour is unfair*”, so that this can be investigated by “*a member who is above the team*”. Another view is that “*I’m sure that she does come across as firm but fair – she is a woman, and that might be where the difference is, in terms of a more feminine style. Equally, I’m sure that the other members of the team are firm but fair.*”

#### **4.4.5 Transit Site**

The Department does not have plans for a transit site. According to one officer, “*I am not aware that we’ve ever been asked. There has been pressure for us to open additional permanent sites over the years, but not for transit sites. We aren’t such an unreasonable, hard Authority that we don’t tolerate, for instance, when there are weddings and funerals. It is not uncommon for there to be the arrival of a large number of vans on a site within Leeds for the duration of the event. As long as we know that, I think there is an understanding in Leeds in terms of a number of areas which are used, we allow that, we tolerate that, provided there are no fights. Those sites are known in the Travelling community. However, if a group chooses to go to a site which inevitably will cause more local difficulties (particularly if it’s near to other houses), then there may well be action taken, but in the main the Travelling community know the areas where they can come in and stay.*” Similarly, according to another officer, “*Travellers do come and stay in Leeds; they know pretty much where to go ... there are places in Leeds where Travellers will camp when they come to Leeds.*”

If the Department received a request for a transit site, they would consider it. The request would be expected to come via the Travellers Services Team as they have contact with Travellers, but “*it would then be about identifying somewhere for that to happen. That would be the Department of Planning.*”

#### **4.4.6 Other Sites**

*“The debate over the last 5-10 years has mainly been the provision of additional permanent sites in Leeds. More recently, in the last 3-5 years, discussions have been about Travellers providing their own sites in smaller locations where they might buy a bit of land.”* The issue of Travellers ‘renting’ land for small family sites was considered to be for discussion with the Department of Planning.

#### **4.4.7 Collaboration between Council Departments**

*“Departments tend to be historically fairly independent of each other in terms of providing their core service, but when there is a need for departments to work together, interdepartmental working groups have been set up to deal with those issues. And usually quite successfully. I think there is a culture within the Authority that if there is an interdepartmental problem, we meet on it – and that works very well.”*

#### **4.4.8 Multiagency collaboration**

The Department leads a multiagency group that meets every 3 months. According to one officer, *“We carry on and do our best. We’ve got terms of reference for the group, and you just need to build on that.”* The Department’s expectation is that *“that shouldn’t be the forum for raising the issue of, for example, individual repairs – that should be done on an operational basis. That’s why we have done the terms of reference – to know what’s expected of all the parties. If then people feel that’s not an appropriate vehicle for them to be able to fulfill their role, they have to make that decision.”* According to the Department, the forum is not for strategic planning either. *“It is about improving services to residents at Cottingley – to bring people together who provide services at Cottingley.”*

When asked about “working in partnership, ie for the whole group to draw up the terms of reference together”, the Department explained that *“the terms of reference went in as a draft for comment, amendments and suggestions. It wasn’t us saying ‘this is it, take it or leave it’, other professionals had time to take it away. I think it is important to be clear about the terms of reference – there were a lot of issues coming through that weren’t about Cottingley, and it wasn’t the remit of the people or the group to address those.”* The view was that if other professionals had different

issues, *“they would have to agree within their own organisation what to do about it first.”*

*“I think, certainly in terms of Cottingley, we’ve done more than any other agency in trying to get views together, to consult. In terms of the policy and procedure review, we’ve tried to be inclusive and consult with other agencies, like CAB, but the working relationships aren’t good. And that affects the level of interagency work that you can do.”*

According to another officer, if tensions and conflict are not managed very well, *“that may well because we have different levels of representations on that. At the moment it’s an informal group. If a formal structure will help to deliver better quality, in a more integrated way, and we can concentrate on services, rather than tensions and conflicts, then I would agree with that. If that means that we have to have a department (within the Council) taking the lead to have responsibility for Travellers Services then that may well be a way forward. I am not sure which Department that would be – it may well be that the Equal Opportunities Unit can perform that role.”* It was acknowledged that the multiagency group led by the Department *“tends to be defensive, and because of that I suspect the meetings are not moving forward in a positive way. I am not sure we collectively have managed the tensions and conflicts.”*

In general there is support that *“multiagency work should be about sharing the way forward for working with individuals and families.”* But it was also acknowledged that *“it would be naïve if we didn’t accept that some tensions cannot be resolved within the multiagency group – because at times we have to take actions when there may be a threat to individual or community safety, and we are not always popular for that.”*

*“I think people have got to understand how hurtful some of the comments being made about the Department, the Council and certain individuals are – in the way the first draft has come across. The sooner we can put the tensions, particularly between the different professionals, behind us, the better.”*



*“I think every individual has got to make sure that they understand other people’s perspectives, and demonstrate that they are doing their best within their core responsibilities area. I suspect that there needs to be at a minimum, somebody, probably within the Council, who will take responsibility and accountability across all of the areas of services for Travellers. We don’t have that at the moment. The residential part of the service in some way is seen to be the lead department, and we are only one part of the service. If we remain as we are, what doesn’t move forward is co-ordinated integrated services for Travellers because there will continue to be tensions. That probably needs somebody else to take an overview.”*

#### **4.4.9 Advocacy**

The Department’s view is that advocacy is not just for day-to-day problems, but the wider picture, for example, about community development, education of adults, health education. *“I don’t see any problem with an organisation(s) being advocates on behalf of Travellers. But I think that advocacy should be more than just about solving individual problems with one party of the system. I think advocacy is about trying to move the service forward together. The different needs of individual households, whether they be health, accommodation, education, we should endeavour to act as advocates on behalf of that family as a whole. I think all parts need to step back, look at their role and activities – what they are doing and how successful they are, rather than just concentrating on perhaps being critical of another party. That is wasted energy.”*

*“Let’s take the issue of education – of youngsters and families. I accept that accommodation is basic to the health of the household, but within that situation, how do we assist families with youngsters who may well be causing some of the antisocial behaviour. I think if we were more successful, some of those youngsters would be attending school, or educated by whatever route – that would ameliorate some of the behaviour which we have to deal with later.”*

The Department acknowledges that their relationship with CAB is difficult. They feel that their staff have worked hard to improve relationships with CAB, *“but there have been a number of changes in different people, so where relationships have been built,*

*when people leave you start again. I think there are difficulties around the two roles of acting in an advocacy role for individuals, and our department acting in the best interests of all the residents on the site – and for other residents when there are illegal encampments. People want them removed immediately and the rubbish cleared away. Everyone is entitled to quiet enjoyment. That in itself brings difficulties on Travellers issues around collaboration.”*

*In relation to the tensions in multiagency working, the view is that “for instance, with CAB who represent (people and issues) against us, when we are taking legal action – then those are inevitable tensions. In the same way that I would say that we aren’t always right, CAB have got to say that they aren’t always right. There’s got to be an acceptance that we’re each playing particular roles within the responsibilities that we have to deliver and there will be times when we don’t agree. Whether there is a different way other than through the courts about the resolution of some of those conflicts, we haven’t come to how we move that forward.”*

## 4.5 RESULTS - INTERVIEW WITH DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

The Assistant Director, Department of Planning and Environment, was interviewed on issues related to the recommendations made in the first draft of the report.

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### 4.5.1 Planning for land use

*“Decisions on planning applications are taken in the context of national and local planning policies and guidance. The Council’s Development Plans are produced through a lengthy, open and participative process, leading to formal adoption.”*

Leeds’ first Unitary Development Plan (UDP) has been through a *“lengthy process of consultation, Public Inquiry and Revision.”* Each proposed change has been *“subject to publication and a statutory period for objections to proposed changes”* and the UDP is expected to be adopted in the summer of 2001.

The needs of Travellers are *“addressed in the UDP through Policy H16 and supporting text in the Housing chapter”*. At the time of the draft, in 1991, there were 56 pitches at Cottingley Springs. The UDP acknowledges that *“attempts to identify additional sites acceptable both to the Travellers’ community and to local residents remain unresolved. Meanwhile, unauthorised sites remain a problem, creating local environmental issues and offering inadequate facilities for the Travellers themselves.”*

According to the Department, the proposed change, to reflect comments received on the consultation draft and the publication of DoE circular 1/94: Gypsies Sites and Planning, had been circulated to representative bodies, including *“The Romany Institute, the National Romani Rights Association, the National Gypsy Council and, at local level, the Leeds Travellers Support Group. No objections were received.”*

In the modifications to the draft UDP recommended by the UDP Inspector, and accepted by the Council, the point was made that “local authorities would continue to have discretionary powers to provide sites for Travellers” but that “the Government proposes to remove financial assistance for the provision of these sites.” Therefore, the implications of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 would “lead to more Travellers applying for planning permission and then buying their own sites to develop and manage. More private sites could release pitches on local authority sites for Travellers most in need of public provision. In the longer term, the Government’s proposals are likely to result in a move towards smaller, self-contained Travellers’ sites, based on the extended families which form a stable base of the Leeds’ Traveller population.”

A second point was made that Circular 1/94 *“advises that planning applications for Travellers should be treated in the same way as other developments, and that the special consideration which was previously afforded to Gypsy sites in the Green Belt should be removed. In combination with a number of other strict amenity considerations raised by the Circular, this is likely to mean that identifying sites will prove even more difficult than it is at present. As a result, Travellers will continue to rely on local authority provided sites for the foreseeable future.”*

According to the Department, it is clear from Circular 1/94 that Gypsy caravan sites are not among the land uses normally considered acceptable in the Green Belt, and the Council’s UDP Policy reflects this view. *“Very special circumstances would need to be demonstrated to secure a planning approval in the Green Belt”*. The *“very special circumstances (shown in Appendix F) indicate that such circumstances are very much the exception. The notion here is that, for some sites, there may be highly relevant and material considerations that justify varying from the normal policy stances. It is a matter of balancing all the issues and considerations and reaching a judgement.”* National Guidance on Green Belts and the control of development within them is contained in the Government’s Planning and Policy Guidance for England (PPG2). Cottingley Springs Caravan Site was established prior to Circular 1/94, and therefore *“in a different policy context to that which currently exists.”*

The UDP acknowledges that “waiting lists” for Cottingley Springs are long, that the local environmental problems caused by a number of unauthorised sites “have resulted in inadequate facilities for the Travellers themselves”. It is also stated that attempts to identify additional sites are still in progress, “but in addition to this the City Council is now encouraging Gypsies and travelling show people to come forward with their suggestions for sites”

The UDP also acknowledges that:

“The City Council will continue to search for suitable permanent, temporary stopping and transit sites to provide accommodation for Travellers and Travelling showpeople, and will encourage suitable private sites to be advanced, in order to provide a balanced distribution throughout the district which will supplement existing provision in South West Leeds.”

The criteria for suitable sites are that they are:

- i. Acceptable to the Travellers’ community itself
- ii. Within easy reach of community and other facilities
- iii. In locations where the environment provides acceptable living conditions, and where the development will not have unacceptable environmental consequences

However, sites for Travellers will not normally be acceptable in the Green Belt, on playing fields and other sites identified for open space purposes, the best agricultural land or where they could have a detrimental effect on a site of nature conservation interest.

The UDP states the three different categories of site accommodation required by the Travelling population, and that all sites “ideally should have drained and stable surface areas” :

- a. Residential sites, for a settled population, with full amenities, to include additional space for caravans, cars and lorries, and work spaces
- b. Temporary Stopping Sites, connected to seasonal work
- c. Transit Sites, for Travellers briefly passing through an area, with full basic amenities

The Department points out that *“UDP Policy is criteria based rather than site specific. Future reviews of the UDP may consider whether it would be preferable for specific sites to be identified in the Plan. It is worth noting that it is possible for individuals or organisations to put forward specific site allocation proposals for consideration through the Inquiry process.”* The UDP plans for 10 years, and the next Review is said to be due within the next 5 years. However, *“in Leeds we are seeking to complete an early Review, given the length of time it has taken to bring the current plan to adoption”*.

#### **4.5.2 Applications for Planning Permission**

*“The Council’s target for dealing with planning applications is to decide 65% of applications within 8 weeks. Usually around 90% are approved, but some applications are withdrawn that would otherwise be refused.”*

The Department clarified the several routes that are open to an applicant who is aggrieved at a decision, for example, in the event of a refusal:

- A right of appeal to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions
- A right of appeal to the Secretary of State if the Council does not determine a planning application within 8 weeks
- The Council’s formal complaints procedure. Any allegation of discrimination is said to be taken very seriously and pursued if evidence is shown.
- The Local Government Ombudsman service, which is available to any person who believes they have suffered from maladministration on the part of the Council.

#### **4.5.3 Transit Sites**

The proposed modification to the Council’s UDP, made by the UDP Inspector and accepted by the Council states that:

- *“The Council is committed to continuing and extending its provision of sites for Travellers, in addition to responding positively to applications for private sites.”*
- *“The City Council will continue to search for suitable permanent, temporary stopping and transit sites to provide accommodation for Travellers and travelling showpeople, and will encourage suitable private sites to be advanced, in order to*

provide a balanced distribution throughout the district which will supplement existing provision in South West Leeds.”

The Department clarifies that *“the UDP Policy recognises the need for transit sites but does not place the responsibility for providing them solely on the Council. I would suggest that both this department and the Department of Housing Services would need to be involved in any discussions about the development of a transit site from an early stage.”*

#### **4.5.4 Family and Group Sites**

Similarly, the Department recognises the need but, as for transit sites, does not think that the responsibility for providing them rests solely with the Council, and would need to involve the Department of Housing Services in any discussions. The Department clarified that *“Planning permission would be likely to be required, subject to the existing land use. It is not necessary to own the land in order to apply for planning permission. But clearly, legal rights would need to be acquired in order to be able to implement any planning permission if such rights did not already exist.”*

#### **4.5.5 Working with Travellers**

There are no specific persons in the Department nominated to work with Travellers, but *“all staff receive Race Awareness training. Planning officers are able to contact the Travellers Liaison Officer in the Department of Housing Services and/or the Council’s Equal Opportunities Unit as and when the need arises.”* It was also pointed out that *“the Director of Planning and Environment takes a personal lead on equality issues in the Department”*.

#### **4.5.6 Independent Travellers Organisation**

Whilst *“unsure how this would differ from existing organisations”*, the Department acknowledges that *“such an organisation may assist in addressing the development needs of the community. I believe that a number of difficulties arise from , or are compounded by, poor communication.”* The Department is clear that *“anything which helps to build and maintain communication channels should prove helpful, to Travellers and to organisations such as this department.”*

## 4.6 RESULTS - INTERVIEW WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES UNIT

The Chief Equal Opportunities Officer was interviewed on equal opportunities issues, and those in relation to Travellers are reported.

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### 4.6.1 Role of the Unit

The officer clarified the role of the Unit as “*an organisational consultancy*”, which offers advice, consultancy and support to Council departments in “*developing policies and procedures and approaches that further equal opportunities*”. According to the officer, the Unit is much smaller than it used to be, with about 14 members of staff who work on policy issues around race, gender and disability. Therefore, “*we have to prioritise ... and best practice is by definition often a compromise that best meets a multitude of people’s needs within our resources.*”

The Unit works with all departments on the production of an Equality Action Plan, and “*some of the monitoring comes through the Equality Action Plans*”. “*We don’t have a policing or investigative function. I don’t think you can operate as organisational consultants offering advice on the one hand, and on the other hand take on that policing role. The two don’t work together well, so we don’t tend to take that on.*”

It was stressed that the work of the Unit should not be “*under-estimated*”. The Unit is said to be “*pro-active*”, working strategically within the Council to “*integrate equality principles into everything we do. We are working on corporate policy – racial harassment, implementation of the recommendations from the Lawrence Enquiry, Race Relations (Amendments) Act 2000, CRE standards, etc*”. According to the Unit, working strategically has changed things. “*We certainly get a much better ownership now of equality issues at a senior level in the organisation. We’ve got people who are*



*advocating and leading in work that they're doing on equality issues because they see it's important."*

The political dimension was acknowledged: *"I don't think we can have a discussion like this without acknowledging that there are political dimensions to all sorts of equal opportunities issues, and there is a pecking order to issues. There is a strong support for equality issues in Leeds. Some issues are politically more sensitive than other issues. That is what we have to bear in mind."*

#### **4.6.2 Individual case work**

It was also clarified that the Unit does not work on individual cases or complaints, and does not have an *"arbitration role"*. *"There are proper complaints procedures that individuals should use."* On receipt of a complaint, therefore, the Unit refers the complaint back to the department against whom the complaint was made, and tries to bring the two parties together, *"In complaints investigations, most of the time our role would be to advise management."* The understanding is that there are external agencies which offer advice and support to the complainant around service delivery issues. Although individual case work is not within the role of the Unit, officers have *"on an informal basis, gone further than our policy and remit suggests that we ought to. This has been the case with several Travellers-related issues over the last 12 months."*

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses what this study has identified about Leeds Travellers, the issues which are important to them, which are perceived to impact on their health, and the different perspectives within these issues.

Holman (1998) describes journalists and academics as “wrong writers” who often present an unbalanced image, for reason of being “outsiders” who make brief forays into (situations), while (the people themselves) are not allowed to contribute or control what is said. Action and participatory research approaches value the perspective of the researched, and place issues in the context of their lives. In this study the experience of Travellers was given ‘voice’, alongside the perspective of grassroots professionals and senior management officials of Leeds City Council. However, the results cannot be generalised for the whole Travelling community, as it was only possible to interview a limited sample within the resources of the study. When the word ‘Travellers’ is used in relation to the results, it refers to the Travellers who were interviewed for this research.

When reporting the findings, the researcher did not comment on the veracity of what was reported by any of the parties, but simply presented the different perspectives. Much that has been revealed in national and regional studies support many of the findings from the perspective of Travellers and most grassroots professionals, but the limitations and shortcomings of this study are covered in Section 5.4.

The main problems concerning health care were in relation to health access and health education. These were reported in the first draft of the report, and were accepted by health care providers. The Travellers’ health bus, which was recently completed, the interest of the South Primary Care Group, and the collaboration between the different health care providers provide much scope for the creative development of primary health care services for the caravan site. The involvement of the Health Promotion Department since the presentation of the first draft of the report also augurs well for the future.

In Phase 2, in the attempt to provide a balance of views, senior management officials in Leeds City Council responded to the perspective of Travellers and grassroots

professionals. It is important to note that Travellers and other professionals have not, in turn, had the opportunity to comment on the perspective of the Council. This, together with the fact that a senior official in the Council decided ‘who should be interviewed’, means that there is likely to be a strong bias in favour of the Council. This needs to be borne in mind when considering the results in Phase 2.

In general, the results show that senior Council officers seem to be concerned with the strategic development of the service, while Travellers and most grassroots professionals are animated by operational, day-to-day issues. There is considerable mismatch in perceptions. Without a multiagency forum for sharing and discussing operational issues, particularly problematic ones, the difference in perspectives results in conflict and tension between some departments and organisations.

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## **5.1 Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds**

The literature reveals that Gypsies and Travellers have lived in Leeds (and the U.K.) for at least 500 years. This study shows that many families have lived in Leeds for all of their lives. Most have tried to live in a house at some time in their lives, with varying degrees of success. Changes in the law and public policy since 1994 have made it very difficult for Travellers to keep their culture, of living in caravans and travelling, alive (cf 2.3.3-4, 4.5.1). Living behind four walls and closed doors is alien to a nomadic people, and those who now live in a house find they have to keep their front door open when they are at home (cf 4.1.1).

As indicated in the literature (cf 2.1), it is a mistake to believe that Gypsies and Travellers form a homogenous group. Like any other community, there are different lifestyles. However, what is common is their identity as a nomadic people. This

research shows that even those who live in houses continue to ‘travel’, whether this is by day using public transport, or in their cars and caravans for longer distances. Some travel a whole circuit in the course of a year, while others only travel to traditional fayres, in the summer or to visit relatives (cf 4.1.1, 4.2.1.1).

Some of the literature reviewed emphasises Travellers’ traditional customs, but this research shows that, even for Travellers, times change (cf 4.1.3). While traditional customs remain very important, it is hinted, with some sadness, that marriage between Travellers and non-Travellers and between Travellers from different backgrounds has changed some traditions. For example, ways of bringing up children. “*Modern times*” is another explanation given. Nevertheless, some customs do not change, such as, the rituals for cleaning, and these play a significant part in daily life. However, there is often a mismatch of standards of cleanliness between private and public/shared property.

The way that Travellers communicate and solve interpersonal problems was emphasised in the research, although this does not appear in the literature. Travellers are passionate people and they often talk loudly (cf 4.2.1.1). This can be misinterpreted as aggression and lead to misunderstandings. Travellers do not all ‘get on’, like any other community. On Cottingley Springs, “*there are families from different ethnic backgrounds and they do not all get on*” (cf 4.1.3, 4.4.3.6). However, on Cottingley Springs caravan site it is not always possible to avoid those with whom they are likely to come into conflict, neither do they have the choice to move to another site in Leeds, and the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act has made travelling difficult. “*Traditionally Travellers have overcome disputes and strong disagreements by travelling, and the dispute is forgotten in time*” (cf 4.2.1.1). As a result, it seems that fighting has become a more common way to settle disputes.

The experience of the adult education teacher is that a one-to-one approach when teaching literacy skills is effective. This individual approach has also enabled women to discuss issues which they would not otherwise discuss (cf 4.2.1.5), and has revealed diverse needs and potential. Is it a question of a lack of confidence and self-esteem, which makes group work too risky, or is it a need to safeguard privacy when living in the environment of caravan sites, where there is very little privacy?

## 5.2 Health

### 5.2.1 Medical Conditions

Government statistics show that Travellers have a significantly poorer health status than the rest of the population (cf 2.3). The main adult health problems reported in this study were anxiety, depression, stress, chronic ill health, heart problems, asthma and arthritis. These conditions have also been revealed in other national/regional studies (cf 2.4.2.3-4). This study did not reveal women's health problems in relation to child birth, family planning, domestic violence or alcohol. As indicated in the interview with professionals, Travellers do not, normally, discuss such personal issues until a relationship has been established (cf 4.2.1.5, 4.2.4.2-3, 4.2.4.5). Neither was it within the scope of this study to compile a profile of all health problems, including those of children.

### 5.2.2 Health Access

Despite the work of dedicated Health Visitors and the advocacy of many professionals over the years, access to health care remains a problem in Leeds (and nationally). Access to general practitioners (registration, reception at surgeries, and home visits) is a particular problem, which may partly explain the high uptake of the services of the Accident and Emergency Department. Apart from the problem with access, some Travellers, for various reasons, find it difficult to contain their anxiety when negotiating mainstream services, and this may add to their problems.

The literature shows that in many other regions, on-site Primary Health Care Services have been developed for caravan sites, with dedicated General Practitioners and other health professionals using a health bus (cf 2.4.6). Some Leeds Travellers themselves seem to support this approach (cf 4.1.6.5). With the interest of the South Primary Care Group in this research, and the new Travellers health bus that belongs to Leeds Community and Mental Health Trust, this may be a way forward to improving access to GPs. From the reported experience of Travellers, there is also a need to provide some training for staff in GP surgeries on relating to Travellers (cf 4.1.4.1, 4.2.2.1).

Other publications have identified the health visitor as the first contact which many Travellers, including the men, have with health providers. (2.4.2, 2.4.5-6).

Traditionally, the role has been the care of children under 5 years old. The turnover

of the post in Leeds has been high in recent years, and the post is half-time. Given the culture of travelling, the complex problems of this client group, and the central role of the health visitor, it is difficult to see how a half-time post allows for health surveillance and education of both children and adults (cf 4.2.10.1). With the availability of the health bus, there is the additional need to drive the development of on-site primary health care services.

### 5.2.3 Connection between Health and Housing

According to Travellers, many of their health problems are related to or aggravated by poor environmental and housing conditions (cf 4.1.4.5, 4.1.6.1-2, 4.1.6.4-5), and this is reflected in the literature reviewed (cf 2.3-4). It is not clear if there is agreement within the Department of Housing that “*health and housing are integral to each other*” (cf 4.3.2.1), and what influence this difference of opinion may have on interventions and efforts to improve the health of Travellers.

## 5.3 **Factors influencing health**

The different and conflicting perspectives referring to caravan sites are detailed in Appendix E.

### 5.3.1 Housing Issues (see Appendix E)

Both Travellers and most grassroots professionals complain that the only two official sites in Leeds are side-by-side, which in effect does not give Travellers any choice of where to live, nor the possibility of moving when there is interpersonal conflict.

Furthermore, it was felt that the two sites were overcrowded, with too many families living in close proximity in caravans, and this causes problems. The Department of Housing (DoH) acknowledged the on-going debate for additional sites (cf 4.4.6), and pointed out that Site A did not have problems, even though it had the same number of plots as Site B.

All parties acknowledge that Site A is more settled and therefore have fewer problems. The DoH point out that it is the relationship of trust and respect between staff and residents, and between residents, that has been built up over years on Site A that create the more peaceful living environment (cf 4.4.1). Some Travellers feel that site management discriminate against Irish Travellers (cf 4.1.4.2), but the DoH insists

that this is “*totally unfounded*”. The mix of ethnic background on both sites is cited by the Council (cd 4.3.2.4). According to the DoH, Site B has a more transient population and residents therefore have not had time to build the same relationship with staff and between themselves.

The findings show that Travellers (within the study) and most professionals have a number of criticisms about the management of the official and unofficial sites (cf 4.1.4, 4.2.2, Appendix E), which include discrimination, harassment, and a lack of consistency in responding to requests for repairs. There is a lack of information or understanding of information and confusion about roles and boundaries, the improvements for both sites, how the rent is decided and the licence agreement vs contract of tenancy.

The DoH’s perspective is very different (cf 4.3.2, 4.4, Appendix E), for example, that some of the criticisms have already been addressed in the planned improvements to Site B, and that there may be a need to make the Council’s complaints procedure more widely known and accessible. The DoH is very concerned that the criticisms are from a biased section of the Travelling community, that it may be from Travellers who have been on the receiving end of the “*hard line*” that the DoH has to taken with some individuals/families “*who are going beyond what is reasonable behaviour on the site*”, in order to manage both sites for the “*peaceful enjoyment of all*” (cf 4.4.1, 4.4.2). The DoH, therefore, is not convinced that the criticisms are “*well-founded*”. The shortcomings of the study are acknowledged. Due to the resources allowed for the study, the convenience sample of interviewees in Phase 1, ie both Travellers and grassroots professionals, may have resulted in a bias against the Council.

It was also pointed out, by the DoH, that, given their responsibility to manage services for the whole Travelling and non-Travelling communities, while other professionals are working with individual cases, conflict is inevitable at times. According to the DoH, it is not possible to “*say yes*” to everyone all of the time, but some professionals think that this is possible (cf 4.4.2). It has been suggested that all professionals should concentrate on their core services, and respect the role of other agencies, rather than waste energy being critical of another party (cf 4.4.9).

The conflicts and tensions within the multiagency group lead by the DoH do not allow the group to move forward. It has been said that this is due to there being different levels of representation in the group (cf 4.4.8). Apart from the grassroots Traveller Services Team, the Department of Housing has a Contracts Manager and the Assistant Director closely involved. The other professionals are all fieldworkers, and are mostly the only professional within their employing organisation working with Travellers.

If the criticisms are “*well-founded*”, and the Department has lost the trust of the whole Travelling community, the DoH will review the service, including the use of private organisations to manage the caravan sites (cf 4.4.2). As it stands, the DoH is saying that they would like to find a way to rebuild trust and move forward together, with Travellers and other professionals.

In all of the above, the DoH has had the opportunity to respond to the comments made by Travellers and professionals. What would be the response of Travellers and other professionals to the perspective of the DoH? A dialogue between the Department of Housing, Travellers and other professionals was not within the scope of this study.

### 5.3.2 Planning and Environmental Issues

From the interviews with Travellers and grassroots professionals, the provision of land-use for Travellers is reported to be very inadequate. Apart from the adjacent caravan sites housing about 40 families in total, there is:

- a waiting list for Cottingley Springs
- roadside Travellers and “*blind eye sites*”
- no transit site
- evidence of trenching of unused land where roadside Travellers could stop
- difficulty in obtaining permanent planning permission for Traveller-owned land,
- and
- there seems to be a reluctance to explore extended family/group sites.

Although the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act removed the duty from local authorities to provide sites, and withdrew the funding for sites, it did not remove their power to do so (LAG 2000). The UDP states that “local authorities would



continue to have discretionary powers to provide sites for Travellers”. Leeds City Council built two adjacent caravan sites, which cancels the benefits of having two sites, which include choice, and the possibility of change, especially when there is interpersonal conflict (cf 4.1.10, 4.2.1). The lack of ‘political will’ is cited, by some professionals, as the reason for having two adjacent sites and no transit sites (cf 4.2.7.1). Others feel that the Council is “*unwilling to provide*” (cf 4.2.7.1), and Travellers feel that their culture is dying out because of the lack of sites (cf 4.1.1).

The Department of Housing acknowledges the debate about providing additional permanent sites and family sites, but insists that they have not had any requests for transit sites. According to the Department of Housing, if they received a request they would consider it, but that it would be up to the Department of Planning to identify the land (cf 4.4.5).

According to the Department of Planning and Environment, a number of representative bodies were consulted on the draft Unitary Development Plan (UDP) in 1993 (cf 4.5.1), and that no objections were received to the final modifications adopted in August 2000. Indeed, the UDP has clearly identified the three categories of sites required by Travellers, and the Council’s commitment to search for suitable sites. The criteria for ‘suitable sites’ is also clear (cf 4.5.1). However, it also acknowledges that the “attempts to identify additional sites acceptable both to the Travellers’ community and to local residents remain unresolved”, and that waiting lists on Cottingley Springs are long. It is also implied that the environmental problems caused by unauthorised sites have not promoted the image of Travellers to society at large (cf 4.5.1). However, the UDP does state that attempts to identify sites are still in progress and that the Council is now encouraging Travellers to “come forward with their suggestions for sites”.

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges the need for both transit and family/group sites, but “*does not think that the responsibility for providing them rests solely with the Council*” and that any discussions would need to involve the Department of Housing from an early stage (cf 4.5.3-4).

The issue of additional permanent sites, temporary, transit and family/group sites is clearly complex. There does seem to be a ‘political’ element to the provision of

sites – how does the Council balance the issue of the right of Travellers to live their preferred way of life (ie on caravan sites), with the opposition of local residents? There is the question of local residents’ experience of Travellers on unauthorised sites, which leaves a negative image of Travellers as a whole. The perspective of Travellers and some professionals is different (cf 4.1.4.3, 4.2.2.8).

It is also unclear who the Department of Planning and Environment is referring to with regards to responsibility for providing these sites, when the modifications to the Council’s draft UDP states that “ ..... *this is likely to mean that identifying sites will prove even more difficult than it is at present. As a result, Travellers will continue to rely on local authority provided sites for the foreseeable future*” (cf 4.5.1).

The Department of Planning and Environment points out that the Circular 1/94 “Gypsy Sites and Planning” has made it clear that “planning applications for Travellers should be treated in the same way as other developments”, and that “Gypsy caravan sites are not among the land uses normally considered acceptable in the Green Belt.” As the Department of Planning and Environment has accepted that “this is likely to mean that identifying sites will prove even more difficult than it is at present” (cf 4.5.1), where does this leave Travellers who are applying for planning permission to live on their own land? Is it also a question of competing with “*other developments*”, and are these well-organised groups, such as house builders and the aggregates industry?

In the face of the complications, from the comments of the Departments of Housing and Planning and Environment, it seems that the case of site provision is “falling between two stools”, and Leeds Travellers do not currently have a local representative body. For example, how is the “search for additional sites” actively continuing, and is there Traveller representation? How are Travellers actively being encouraged to come forward to help identify sites? The UDP has been in draft for about 10 years and is only now nearing adoption. What about the Travellers who bought land in the Green Belt and who have been waiting for permanent planning permission over this period, ie before the UDP was finalised? Are Travellers advised when they are purchasing land in the Green Belt that they have very little, if any, chance of obtaining planning permission, and about changes in policy. Travellers have very

limited literacy skills. Not all Travellers can afford legal fees, are eligible for Legal Aid, know about the different routes of appeal available and how to access them. The Department of Equal Opportunities makes clear that in the event of complaints, their role is to advise Council management and Travellers are expected to access outside bodies for their support. CAB provides one part-time Advice Worker, and there is currently no Travellers organisation in Leeds.

From the literature reviewed and the results of this research the environment in which Travellers live is reported to have an important effect on their health, their motivation to consider health improvement measures, the education of their children and their possibility for earning a living. However, current law, planning and policies seem to offer Travelling people “a Hobson’s Choice between criminalisation and assimilation” (Hunt cited Travellers Times Dec 2000). All of the above confirms what (national) researchers have pointed out, and Leeds Travellers themselves have stated, ie that national and local policies are forcing Travellers to abandon their traditional way of life.

### 5.3.3 Advocacy

The need for advocacy has been reported by both Travellers and grassroots professionals. The literature shows that in some other counties there are organisations, sites and self-help groups run by Gypsies and Travellers. In the last year, a Traveller has joined the Council’s Race Equality Advisory Forum and is an active participant. However there is a marked absence of any corporate action taken by Leeds Travellers. While professionals acknowledge that Gypsies and Travellers, like others, have “*good and bad*” amongst themselves, Travellers in Leeds acknowledge that relationships within the community in Leeds are complex, and has made it difficult for them to organise themselves (cf 4.1.1, 4.1.3). Grassroots professionals currently have specific roles, whether this is education, health or housing. CAB resources only allow for a part-time Travellers Advice Worker. There is no provision for community development for a community that finds it difficult to organise themselves.

Long-term discrimination and marginalisation experienced by any community has consequences for society as a whole. The anti-social behaviour of some Travellers,

and the lack of motivation to integrate with the rest of society has been acknowledged by some professionals (cf 4.2.1.2), even though some of the same professionals indicate a need to understand the reasons, eg *“if you are marginalised and don’t think you get a fair deal, you are less likely to have respect for society and its laws”* (cf 4.2.1.2.4).

The Department of Housing stresses that advocacy is not just for day-to-day problems, but the wider picture, for example, about community development, education of adults and health education (cf 4.4.9). A low level of literacy makes it significantly more difficult for Travellers to communicate, negotiate and relate with the settled community, in particular with public services and authorities – and vice versa (cf 4.2.5.2, 4.5.6). There is one very part-time adult education teacher that works on individual adult literacy needs, and one part-time health visitor who works mostly with the under five year olds. There is no organisation that works with Leeds Travellers on their development needs. It has been suggested that a way forward is to explore a community development model which *“creates spaces where Travellers can identify what they need, learn to negotiate with the settled community, and eventually do it for themselves”* (cf 4.2.10).

As the Council’s Equal Opportunities Unit has discovered, working strategically changes things (cf 4.6.1). There have been efforts by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to influence social policy. However, with changes in staff in the last seven years, a part-time Travellers Advice Worker and one volunteer to cover the whole city, what can be done is limited. CAB statistics (see Appendix B) show that the bulk of the service provided by the Advice Worker is on helping clients to obtain benefits. This means that other roles, which could result in more long term benefits, eg influencing social policy, do not have the same priority. Advice workers feel that without working on the *“wider picture”*, all they do is *“apply a band-aid”* to problems, which does not change things, and which also makes the workload *“overwhelming”* (cf 4.2.5.3). Other than CAB’s statistics, there does not seem to be any monitoring of Travellers issues. Nationally, the Census does not collect information on Travellers as a specific ethnic group.

It is clear from the research that advocacy is a role in which all professionals who work with Travellers are engaged. This has implications for the workload,

particularly for 'lone' professionals, eg the Health Visitor. The literature indicates that unless environmental, housing and other immediate problems are addressed, Travellers are not motivated to address the need for positive health behaviour and education. Apart from the need for more imaginative ways to deliver health services, and to increase motivation for health improvement, the need for community development has to be considered, because the reality is that with the resource limitations experienced by all statutory services, it may not be possible to first achieve ideal conditions.

Most of the professionals who were interviewed considered Travellers to be one of the most marginalised communities in society, were viewing situations from the perspective of Travellers, and therefore were critical of, for example, the Council. However, the possibility of bias is acknowledged, as five Travellers Advice Workers, past and present, were interviewed. As advocates, the role of CAB Advice Workers is to do their best for their client, and this, inevitably, puts them in conflict with the Council, whose role is to look at the wider picture. The Department of Housing have acknowledged that their relationship with the CAB is difficult, that the number of staff changes has not helped, and that this is what makes multiagency working difficult (cf 4.4.9). CAB have not had the opportunity to respond, and a dialogue between the Department of Housing and CAB was not within the scope of this study.

#### **5.4 Limitations and Shortcomings of the Study**

Given the complex issues and the sensitivities surrounding some of the issues, this community study was an ambitious project to undertake within the limited resources available. The timescale did not allow for a more balanced and rigorous exploration of the complex issues which emerged.

The project commenced at a time of great tension and conflict within the Travelling community, grassroots professionals and a major service provider, namely Leeds City Council, because of the process leading to the eviction of a Travelling family. This was perhaps not the best time to commence a project which required multiprofessional collaboration.

The possibility of a bias, due to practical and convenience sampling of stakeholders for interview must be considered. As five Travellers Advice Workers (present and past) were interviewed, it is likely that Phase 1 contains a bias towards the perception of the Citizens Advice Bureau. As previously mentioned, Phase 2 contains a strong bias in favour of the Council, as the Director of Housing identified the six senior officers for interview. Before their interviews, these Council officers also had the opportunity to consider the perspectives of Travellers and grassroots professionals. The Department of Social Services was not identified for interview, and their perspective could have contributed to the whole picture.

The process of identifying Travellers for interview did not include the Department of Housing, who withdrew from the Travellers Health Partnership during the abovementioned process of eviction. Although the nine Travellers interviewed covered the four different types of Travelling lifestyle, they were a practical and convenience sample, ie out of a number of names proposed by the multiagency group and some Travellers, those who made themselves available within the timescale were interviewed. Finally, it was only possible to interview nine Travellers within the time available.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

What is 'health' and what are 'health needs'? Many different definitions can be found, to encompass the different world views, from the biomedical perspective to ones that encompass the broad range of factors that have an impact on life. In this study, the perspective of most grassroots professionals is that health is not simply a focus on medical conditions and interventions, but also on the many factors, cultural, historical, socio-economic, environmental and political, which are reported to have a crucial influence on health. Travellers themselves have not been concerned with definitions, have not made differentiations and, in telling their story, have been concerned primarily with those issues that have an impact on the quality of their life. The opinions of others may differ, and perhaps it is not as important to focus on 'who is right', or 'what is the truth', as it is to find ways to move forward together. National statistics, after all, have shown that the health of Gypsies and Travellers is often worse than Social Class V (cf 2.4.1).

It has been acknowledged that the findings of this research cannot be generalised, due to the limitations and shortcomings discussed. Nevertheless this study has raised complex issues, which are specific to the life of Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds. Many of these issues are related to access to health care, and housing and environmental issues, rather than specific health problems/needs. Housing and environmental issues show interagency and different perspectives in conflict. There may be different agendas but once again, it seems important to move beyond the debate about 'who is right'.

Since the first draft of Phase 1 of the report, some of the stakeholding organisations have accepted the need for more resources, and are actively exploring possibilities, eg the use of the Health Bus by different service providers. The recommendations of the first draft of Phase 1 were reviewed in the light of the additional information gathered in Phase 2. There are resource implications to be considered in some of the recommendations, but the final recommendations are made in the spirit of the desire to "move forward together", to improve the health of Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds.

## **FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. *CONSIDER WAYS OF IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE, eg:***

- Develop and evaluate on-site Primary Health Care Services, eg using the Travellers Health Bus
- Provide dedicated / specialist GP services
- Increase the establishment of the Health Visiting post.
- Widen the role of the Health Visitor, to include the possibility of working with Travellers other than Cottingley Springs residents and roadside Travellers
- Develop health education services for Travellers, in appropriate and accessible format
- Evaluate the effect of any changes made

### **2. *CONSIDER WAYS OF IMPROVING INTERAGENCY AND INTERDEPARTMENTAL WORKING, eg:***

- Set up a forum where operational issues can be discussed, trust and collaboration developed
- Acknowledge the expertise and experience of professionals who have had a number of years of working with Travellers in Leeds, and involve them in planning, in particular, staff within the Travellers Education Service.
- Acknowledge areas of conflict and initiate a dialogue that includes both management and grassroots professionals, eg between the Department of Housing and the Citizens Advice Bureau
- Collaborate in joint strategic planning
- Evaluate any actions taken to improve interagency working

### **3. *CONSIDER WAYS OF IMPROVING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TRAVELLERS AND STATUTORY ORGANISATIONS, AND INVOLVING TRAVELLERS IN PLANNING SERVICES eg:***

- Include Traveller participation in planning, in ways other than attending meetings
- Disseminate information to Travellers about new and changing services, in a variety of ways
- Key service providers, including Social Services, to monitor Travellers issues



- Plan a conference on Leeds Travellers issues, to include Travellers and key service providers
- Identify and change practices that are not ‘user-friendly’
- Identify and change practises that do not give ‘value for money’
- Include Traveller participation in in-service training/induction for staff
- Develop ways to ensure community participation in the management of Cottingley Springs Caravan Site
- Improve communication on Cottingley Springs Caravan Site, in such a way that goes beyond the ‘giving of information’, in particular in relation to the details of the planned improvements, rent, repairs, licence agreements
- For Departments of Planning and Environment, and Housing to set up a committee to plan for additional official sites, with the participation of Travellers and their representatives
- For Departments of Planning and Environment, and Housing set up a committee to plan for a transit site and group/family sites, with the participation of Travellers and their representatives
- Evaluate any changes made

**4. CONSIDER WAYS OF ENABLING TRAVELLERS TO MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY, eg**

- Develop an independent Travellers’ organisation, eg with 3-4 workers and secure funding for at least 3 years. The role of the organisation could be:
  - For community development
  - To influence the development of social policy
  - Advice and advocacy, especially assistance with written communication, form-filling, planning applications and complaints
  - To collaborate with statutory and voluntary organisations to develop training for staff working with Travellers
  - To promote the cultural richness and identity of Travellers
- Increase the establishment of service provision in CAB and adult literacy

**5. CONSIDER AREAS WHERE MORE INFORMATION IS NEEDED BEFORE FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE MADE, eg**

- Carry out a census with Travellers in Leeds
- Compile a profile of the physical and mental/emotional health of Travellers

## Appendix A

### THE STORY OF AN EVICTION

#### *From the perspective of Family X*

The **family (X)**, who consists of **Mr X (the husband)**, **Mrs X (the wife)**, and their four children (aged 14, 13, 10 and 6 months) had lived on Cottingley Springs caravan site for about 13 years, except for about 18 months when they tried to live in a house at a time when the caravan site was rife with trouble. On 20<sup>th</sup> March 2000 the Council filed for a Possession Order of Plot 35 on Cottingley Springs caravan site B, following termination of Mr X's licence (Notice to Quit, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2000). The Council cited Mr X's alleged breach of Clause 18 of the General Regulations of the Licence Agreement:

“No nuisance is to be caused by the occupier, his guests, nor any member of his family to any other person, including employees of the Council, the occupiers of any other plots on the site, or occupiers of any land or building in the vicinity of the site.”

Under the law, the Council does not have to prove the breach of the licence term to terminate the licence, and thus satisfy the right to claim summary possession of the plot and evict the occupants. All the Council needs to do is to terminate the licence and turn the occupant into a trespasser: “We own the land; you're there without our permission; and we want you to leave.”

Eviction proceedings then start, and whilst there is a Court hearing the only issues are whether the Council owns the land and whether the licence has been terminated. The family does not have the right to give evidence and have witnesses give evidence, or to cross examine witnesses for the Council, as to the allegations of nuisance that gave rise to the alleged breach of the licence agreement and its termination. The family is left virtually defenceless. In the case of family X, the proof was contained in the witness statement of the Traveller Services Manager. Travellers who live on the caravan site owned by Leeds City Council are not tenants. The law draws a

significant distinction between Council “tenants” - residents of Council houses – and “licencees” such as Travellers renting a plot on the Council site. The significant difference is that if a Council tenant is accused of causing a nuisance they cannot be evicted without a full Court hearing with all the evidence tested and the Court considering whether eviction is justified. There is no such right to licencees faced with identical accusations.

Actions taken to request that the Council reconsider the whole situation, consider alternative means to resolve the problems, and ultimately prevent the eviction encompassed a whole range of the population. All residents of caravan site B and other Travellers, professionals working with family X, the Travellers Health Partnership, Leeds Race Equality Council, the Gypsy Council, the Roman Catholic Bishop, a Foreign Office Minister and MP for Leeds West, as well as family X and their Solicitor, all exhorted Leeds City Council to reconsider. Radio Leeds, Yorkshire Evening Post, Carlton TV, BBC Look North provided sympathetic media coverage of the campaign.

The campaign and all legal routes taken to prevent the eviction came to an abrupt end when Leeds City Council steadfastly refused to reconsider and the Leeds County Court ruled that the Council was acting within the law, and did not have to present a case in order to terminate a licence. According to the law, Mr & Mrs X did not have the right to a hearing on the issues of the allegations of nuisance or as to their responsibility for other people’s nuisance, and were therefore refused the right to appeal. The only basis of an appeal would have been if the Council did not own the land or if the licence had not been terminated. Obviously an appeal was bound to fail. Mr & Mrs X and their four children were evicted on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2000.

In the six weeks following eviction, that is, up to mid-September 2000 the family stopped at five different sites which were also occupied by other Travellers. Three were on land belonging to the Council, and two were privately-owned land. Each time one family moved on, the others followed as there is a safety in numbers. They, and the other Travellers, moved from the first site after one week, when presented with a Court Order by the Council. The move from the second site was after a threat by a neighbouring farmer to spray them with cow dirt, and they had to move

from the third and fourth due to potential trouble from non-Leeds Travellers and football teams.

By November 2000 family X have had to move on from at least twelve sites, and they continue to live on the roadside, following unsuccessful attempts to rent private houses, and applications to both housing associations and the Council for a 3-4 bedroom house. The children have not been able to attend school since January 2000, and the baby and Mrs. X have missed many hospital appointments. As roadside Travellers the family do not receive any mail and live without electricity, sanitation or running water.

**Possible needs identified:**

Independent mediation when there are serious problems between the Council (landlord) and Travellers (tenants)

Community development work

A tenant's association in Cottingley Springs caravan site

Review of policies and legislation in relation to the Licence Agreement

Accessibility of the Council's policies and procedures

Traveller representation on committees and groups set up by statutory bodies.

As a result of contacting Leeds Race Equality Council, T, Traveller, is now a member of the Racial Equality Advisory Forum

**Table 2**      **The Story of an Eviction – a chronological account**  
*(from the perspective of Family X)*

<b>31.1.00</b>	Notice to Quit served on Mr. X.
<b>Feb 00</b>	Letters to the Travellers Services Manager and the Solicitor from professionals working with the family X: Social Services, Travellers Education Service and Health Visiting. These letters expressed serious concern of the effect of eviction on the health, educational and welfare needs of the family, with particular emphasis on the health problems of the baby and Mrs. X.
<b>4.4.00</b>	<p>The solicitor, acting on behalf of Mr &amp; Mrs X submitted a statement in support of Mr &amp; Mrs X's application for a Stay of Proceedings, pending an application for Judicial Review of the decision of Leeds City Council to evict them. There were questions concerning the Council's grounds for possession - scant evidence and no evident rationale to the decision; that there was no indication that any alternative approach had been made to resolve problems. There was also said to be no evidence of the nature of any enquiries nor the outcome of any investigations into the needs of the family X or the effects of eviction on the family. The Council was said to fail to take into account all relevant matters, and in making the decision, there was no reference to any policy of Leeds City Council or any structured framework within which reasoned decisions were made.</p> <p>Family X's application to have the Council's decision judicially reviewed criticised the Council's procedure: the Council terminated the licence without informing the licencees of the allegations, giving the opportunity to respond to the allegations, and for failing to inform them of the results of the needs assessments. This was said to constitute a breach of Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights, where Article 8(2) permits public authorities to restrict Article 8(1) rights only where "(a) ... they are ... procedurally fair" and "(c) they are necessary and proportionate".</p>
<b>14.4.00</b>	The Council's application for possession was adjourned pending Judicial Review.
<b>12.5.00</b>	Family X's application for permission to apply for Judicial Review was refused. The Council had responded (to the court) on each of the points made by the family X and their solicitor. Although the accuracy of the Council's response was disputed by Mr & Mrs X, they were not given a hearing. The Contracts Manager had based her decision to service Notice to Quit on "the entitlement of other site residents to peaceful enjoyment of their homes, and to their safety."
<b>18.5.00</b>	<p>Having previously discussed their concerns with their relevant managers, professionals working directly with Travellers wrote a letter to ask for support and help in preventing the eviction. This letter was written under the auspices of the Travellers Health Partnership, then called Justice for Travellers, and was sent to a number of people in influential positions.</p> <p>Breach of Clause 18 of the Licence Agreement was based on the Housing Department "blaming Mr &amp; Mrs X's eldest sons who had left the site and now live elsewhere for all kinds of trouble on the site." Apart from the health and humanitarian issues, the group argued that "parents cannot be expected to take responsibility for nor should be blamed or victimised for the actions of their adult sons, who no longer live with them". Furthermore, "the family do not read and write and so cannot easily respond to the lists of dates and times of alleged activities".</p>
<b>May 00</b>	Travellers on Cottingley Springs Caravan Site B organised a petition signed by every plot holder, supporting family X, and speaking out against the eviction. The petition, which was sent to the Department of Housing, stated:

	<p>“We are all appalled at the actions of the Council to evict Mr &amp; Mrs X and their four young children from their home. They are friends and neighbours and they are Leeds Travellers and part of our community and we want them to stay here and not be thrown onto the road with nowhere to go. They are good people and do not deserve this treatment. The management have got this all wrong and show how out of touch they are with our community”.</p>
<b>16.5.00</b>	<p>Mr &amp; Mrs X’s solicitor wrote to the Director General of the Office of Fair Trading to request that the unfair terms of the Licence Agreement be considered, and for immediate injunctive action to be taken. The Unfair Contract Terms Unit’s reply on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2000 explained the circumstances and considered that “immediate injunctive action would not be appropriate”. The reply explained that the Director General “cannot help individual consumers in their private disputes”, and that “his powers are limited to protecting consumers in general by seeking to prevent the continued use or recommendation of any particular unfair term, or similar term, in the future”. Although the Unfair Contract Terms Unit could not help family X, the Office undertook to “consider the terms and conditions of Leeds City Council’s Caravan Plot Licensing Agreement under the Regulations”, and to respond to the solicitor when this had been completed. (By 12 February 2001 the Office of Fair Trading confirmed “we are still pursuing the complaint”.)</p>
<b>27.6.00</b>	<p>Leeds County Court confirmed, in writing, to Mr &amp; Mrs X’s solicitor the decision to refuse Mr &amp; Mrs X’s application for Judicial Review of the Council’s decision to evict. If Mr &amp; Mrs X undertook to ‘keep the peace’ and maintain ‘good behaviour’ Leeds City Council would not take possession until 14<sup>th</sup> July 2000. Permission to appeal was refused.</p> <p>Family X’s case was heard in County Court twice, once in High Court and was finally referred back to County Court: the basis of the application concentrated on the unlawfulness of the decision to terminate the licence, and it failed because according to current legislation, the Council does not have to present a case in court in order to terminate a licence agreement.</p>
<b>July 00</b>	<p>With the consent of Mr &amp; Mrs X, <b>T (a Traveller)</b> started a campaign to attempt to stop the eviction. Posters and fliers were handed out outside Civic Hall and the Town Hall on 10-11<sup>th</sup> July 2000. T wrote to Eric Bowen (Director of Housing), Paul Rogerson (Chief Executive, Leeds City Council) and copied his letter to MPs in Leeds, Councillors, David Blunkett (Minister of Education), as well as the Prime Minister. Other letters were written to Mrs. Cherie Blair, Alastair Darling, Councillor Bradley, Bishop David Konstant, the Guardian, and Yorkshire Evening Post. E also contacted Radio Leeds, Carlton TV, the Guardian and Yorkshire Evening Post.</p> <p>Despite the support and advocacy of the above, the Council refused to delay the eviction or to further investigate matters. The final avenue open was to apply to Councillor Nash, Chair of the Scrutiny Board of the Department of Housing for an investigation of the handling of family X’s case by the Department of Housing. Mr &amp; Mrs X wrote to Councillor Nash, as did T, to no avail.</p>
<b>7.7.00</b>	<p>T went to Leeds Racial Equality Council to ask for the help of John Roberts. John Roberts wrote to the Director of Housing, MPs and Bishop David Konstant.</p>
<b>14.7.00</b>	<p>With the help of other site residents, Mr &amp; Mrs X erected a barricade, using an old trailer and small trucks. All the residents turned up in support of family X, Radio Leeds gave hourly coverage. The Travellers Services Manager was seen to serve Mr &amp; Mrs X with the Eviction Order but they refused to accept it. This was witnessed by all site residents, Radio Leeds and BBC Look North reporters. “There was heated exchange but no problems. Riot police stood guard in the background! The Traveller Services Manager, the bailiffs and the police said that they would be back on Monday.”</p>

	<p>John Roberts, Leeds Racial Equality Council, came on site, and talked to Mr &amp; Mrs X. He also talked to their neighbours about the judge implying in his judgement that there were people on the site community who were against Mr &amp; Mrs X – “but it’s clear that all the neighbours support family X; our view is that they should deal with the two sons, and not persecute the whole family”.</p>
<b>17.7.00</b>	<p>The Traveller Services Manager, with another member of his team, bailiffs and the police arrived to find the barricade in situ. Mr &amp; Mrs X refused to move, and were informed that Pudsey police would be consulted prior to their return later that morning.</p> <p>Radio Leeds were again present on the caravan site. The reporter explained that his job “is to cover short stories and try to get a flavour of what’s going on.” He had interviewed Mr &amp; Mrs X and others on the site, and had 3-4 different reports on them and their experiences – his job was “to reflect that and see today what happens”. John Roberts came to lend his support.</p> <p>The police returned in the afternoon to say that their role was to “negotiate and keep the peace”. The police were said to have advised Mr &amp; Mrs X of their three options: leave voluntarily, be physically evicted or to ask for an extension. As “asking for an extension” was understood to mean “give us a few more days”, Mr &amp; Mrs X informed the police that they were not moving and were awaiting the response of the Scrutiny Board (which they did not receive). The police left, advising of their intention to return the following day to continue negotiations. Radio Leeds continued to give hourly coverage that there was a “stalemate” between the Council and family X and that Mr &amp; Mrs X had asked the Scrutiny Board of the Department of Housing for a public investigation.</p> <p>Site residents painted banners on boards saying “Stop Unfair Eviction” “We won’t move” “Stop Eviction, Ethnic Cleansing” “Justice for Travellers”.</p>
<b>17.7.00</b>	Ann Bagehot, The Gypsy Council, wrote to Paul Rogerson.
<b>18.7.00</b>	The Traveller Services Manager advised Mr & Mrs X that it was “out of his hands” and that it was “over to the police and bailiffs”. The police returned to continue to persuade family X to leave voluntarily. They refused but agreed to consider it if they were offered another site.
<b>20.7.00</b>	<p>The police returned and informed Mr &amp; Mrs X that Leeds City Council had found them a plot at the Bridlington Site. Mr &amp; Mrs X were advised by other Travellers to get this confirmed in writing by both Councils before they moved off Site B. Mr &amp; Mrs X decided that they would prefer to stay in Leeds and asked the police to set up and mediate at a meeting between themselves and the Director of Housing.</p> <p>An independent filming crew had been alerted to family X’s problems and arrived to film their story.</p>
<b>21.7.00</b>	Ann Bagehot, The Gypsy Council, wrote again to Paul Rogerson to request a stay of execution of the eviction of family X, “until a proper hearing is undertaken” and to ask for a copy of the Council’s “legal papers that led to the decision to evict.” The letter also highlighted that the European Convention on Human Rights was retrospective and that “if family X are being evicted as licensees for example – that could be challenged under the Convention as there are no other sites in Leeds”. It also stated that “if family X are evicted on to the side of the road, the Council will have to take emergency action to find them <u>local comparable</u> (not housing) accommodation because of the children in school and Mrs. X’s mother in hospital”. The Gypsy Council asked for “a considered, properly organised hearing, where their lawyer can help them present their case, ask and answer questions, bring witnesses and put their point of view across.”



	<p>Mrs. X received a written statement from Sandfield House Nursing Home that “a lady and a gentleman from Leeds City Council” called to make enquiries about the condition of Mrs. X’s mother, after being told by Mrs X that her mother was very ill.</p> <p>Yorkshire Evening Post interviewed Mr &amp; Mrs X.</p> <p>T received an acknowledgement from Councillor Nash, Scrutiny Board, of his letters and that it was receiving attention. Mr X had not received a reply to his letter to the Scrutiny Board.</p>
<b>22.7.00</b>	YEP published an article on Mr & Mrs X’s story.
<b>24.7.00</b>	Travellers Health Partnership tried, unsuccessfully, to enlist the help of a Councillor to set up a meeting for Eric Bowen and Paul Rogerson to meet with Mr & Mrs X.
<b>26.7.00</b>	The High Sheriff advised Mr & Mrs X that they would be forcibly evicted on Friday, 28 <sup>th</sup> July. Radio Leeds and Radio Aire were alerted.
<b>27.7.00</b>	<p>BBC Look North and Carlton TV Leeds were alerted about the imminent eviction.</p> <p>Yorkshire Evening Post reported that John Battle “Minister urges rethink over Gypsy eviction”: asking the leader of the Council and the Director of Housing to “call a halt to this process and allow some time to look at the letters, etc coming in supporting family X, and to reassess the case in the light of the human rights issues raised.”</p> <p>In the face of the imminent eviction, it was said that an MP had contacted the police who confirmed that their role in the eviction itself was law and order, that if there was a danger of things getting ‘out of hand’, then the police would call a halt to the Sheriff’s proceedings.</p>
<b>1.8.00</b>	Family were forcibly evicted from Cottingley Springs Caravan Site B by the bailiffs, backed by more than 50 police officers, police helicopter, and dogs. During the eviction, the Manager, Travellers Education Service, who was off duty and on site to witness the eviction, was served with the letter suspending him from duties pending investigations.
<b>Jan 01</b>	<p>Application has been made to the European Court of Human Rights.</p> <p>(It is important to note that this case pre-dated the coming into force of the Human Rights Act. The Council, AND the Court, are now duty bound to consider and act in accordance with ECHR Articles. It remains to be seen whether this causes the Court to take into account whether a possession order is reasonable or not, regardless of the limited issues that need to be proved for summary possession, and also whether the Court will determine that a decision by a Council to use summary possession procedure is unlawful where in so doing the occupant’s rights are unfairly curtailed. If Mr &amp; Mrs X’s solicitor was defending the same action now, he would have these additional arguments to make.)</p>

## **THE STORY OF AN EVICTION**

*From the perspective of the Department of Legal Services,*

*Leeds City Council*

Following the first draft of the report, two Council officers from the Department of Legal Services (DLS) were interviewed for their perspective on the possession proceedings. It was not within the scope of this study for Family X and their solicitor to comment or respond to the Council's perspective.

The Council had cited Clause 18 as the reason for starting possession proceedings – *“because we wanted to point out exactly why we were issuing those proceedings, we did not have to under the law.”*

### Refused right of appeal

According to the family's solicitor, presentation of the family's case was in progress until the final hearing when the Council pointed out that they were applying for Possession Order, having terminated the licence, and the family were trespassing. The family could not appeal because according to the law, they were trespassing once their licence had been terminated, and there was no arguing against that point in law.

According to the Council, *“At the very first hearing in Dewsbury Court, that point that “the licence had been terminated, they were there without licence and without our consent, which made them trespassers” had already been made. The only reason the judge didn't make a decision on that day was because the family's solicitor applied for a ‘Stay of Proceedings’ in order to go to the High Court. The purpose of the High Court Judicial Review was to look into how we came to the decisions, and whether we had taken everything properly into account or not, and acted in accordance with our policies.”*

*“When the High Court decided that we had taken the right things into account and acted in accordance with our policies, we took the case back to the County Court again, to consider this question of “you're trespassing, does the Council have a right to possession”, and to ask that a Possession Order be granted. So to say that the final hearing was different to the*

*other hearings just wouldn't be right. The last hearing was actually the hearing that had been adjourned from the beginning."*

*"At the final hearing, they asked for leave to appeal but were refused. The Circuit Judge at that time had actually considered everything – the fact that they'd asked for judicial review, the terms of the Licence Agreement, etc. - and he refused the right to appeal at the final hearing because he said that they did not have an arguable case. They were not refused the right to appeal because they didn't have a right to a hearing."*

### Right to be heard

*"To suggest that they did not have an opportunity to put their case across is just not correct – before they were refused the right to appeal the final decision, the case had been down the County Court, the High Court, and back to the County Court again. All their evidence was put forward in (written) sworn affidavits, and answered in our (written) evidence, and then put forward verbally by their barrister and answered by our barrister, so they were legally represented from the very beginning. The judge actually said that his decision to refuse right of appeal at the very last hearing was because "he really feels there wasn't a reasonable chance of success" – which is the test applied on any application for leave to appeal. The decision was not because they weren't entitled to be heard.*

*"What they didn't have a chance to do is verbally put forward their case and be questioned on it, and for us to verbally put forward our case and be questioned on it. Their barrister was able to point out to the judge where they thought the problems were with our case, and he did, so they certainly had all those opportunities and took them up more fully than any other case than I have ever seen."*

*"The two sets of proceedings – County Court and High Court – are completely separate. They involve the same family but legally are two separate proceedings. At the second County Court hearing, they asked the Court again to adjourn proceedings while they went to the Director General of Fair Trading. The judge then adjourned the second County Court hearing, until the final County Court hearing which took place in York. So the three County Court hearings were the same hearing, based on the same court documents, ie the original claim, but the first two had been adjourned because of something they had raised and which the judge decided had to be looked into."*

*"If it was that simple, and we do do these types of proceedings, which is called Order 24. We do quite regularly, eg with people who are squatting on tenants' properties. Now to do one*

*on a council house where someone is squatting, we could probably get over and down with within 14 days. This case took 8 months.”*

*“It seems right to say that when somebody is a trespasser you are entitled to possession and the court will give you that order. In that sense, it’s right that you can’t challenge it, but that’s leaving aside the fact the Council is a public body. Had that been private land, then that would not have been possible. A private landlord can just terminate the licence and apply for Possession Order. The decisions of a public authority can be challenged in a High Court Judicial Review and it was in this case. The High Court, having taken into account all the evidence, found our decision to be lawful. The County Court then found against them because it was our land and we had the right of possession.”*

### Informing the family of allegations

*“It is not true that ‘the Council terminated the licence without informing the licencees of the allegations, or giving the opportunity to respond to the allegations.’ The affidavits that we filed with the High Court: the Travellers Services Manager’s affidavit – on the back of it were all letters that had been sent out to the family about the behaviour. The judge considered this in High Court, ie the letters we had sent, how the family had responded to the allegations of nuisance, and he specifically found that they had had a chance to answer the allegations.”*

*“It has to be said that legally if we had done what they say we did, ie terminated the licence without telling them what the allegations were, legally that would have been quite correct. We could have done that, but because we are a public authority, we have to account for decisions, and we chose not to do it that way. We chose to tell them why we were doing things. And then they made a legal challenge to our decision-making process.”*

*“The judge actually said that ‘the applicants had known by meetings and oral complaints, and have had the opportunity to answer these complaints’, before we actually served Notice to Quit. In High Court, the judge quoted “Evidence from site security officer, eg when he had spoken to the first applicant, he was met with the reply ‘I don’t want you coming round here again, complaining about my children.’ On another occasion, site security officer was met with a shovel when trying to speak to the applicant about his children’s behaviour.” The judge found that although we tried to speak to them, and give them the chance to answer the allegations, they chose in their own way not to.”*

The Council explained that the judge hears the written evidence and response in writing from both sides, and then makes a ruling. *“The things that the site security officer said, we would*

*have filed in written evidence, and they would have had a chance to respond to that via their solicitor in writing. I have no doubt from the paperwork that had been filed, that their solicitor had gone through what we've said with them in great detail – so they would not have had a chance to respond verbally to what the judge said, but they did have a chance to do so in writing. They did not try to cover that at all – about the shovel, and about not talking to us.”*

The minutes of a meeting in July 1999 of the then CAB Travellers Advice Worker, with the Contracts Manager and the Traveller Services Manager show that “ *one of the things discussed was the family's behaviour and allowing the sons on site. Even at that meeting, both of these matters could ultimately result in a Notice to Quit being served on the whole family.*”

### Prohibition Order vs Injunction

From the perspective of the family, the Council had banned their sons from the site, but had not served an injunction to prevent them from going on the site. According to the Council, “*We actually served a Prohibition Order (a caution letter) on one of the sons and his friend, but they ignored it. We couldn't get an injunction because we didn't know where they lived – so we couldn't serve it. We could only give them a letter, saying we're the landowners and we don't want you on our property.*”

A Prohibition Order was handed to the sons when they appeared on site, but there is a timescale for issuing an injunction. “*With an injunction, you first have to take it to Court, the Court gives you a hearing date, and you've got to serve that on the person so many days before the hearing date. Because we couldn't say when they were likely to turn up on site, we couldn't guarantee that we could give them papers so many days before a Court hearing. That's always been difficult. We have looked into this time and time, and there's no other way of doing it. If we had known they were going to be on site on a particular date, we could have gone and got the paper work ready, but we don't have that information.*”

“*However, the family gave us a sworn undertaking that they wouldn't encourage their elder sons to come on. We accepted that they could not physically prevent them from coming on, but the undertaking was not to encourage them to come on. And there was a list of different people that related to family or friends – that they also would not encourage them to come onto site. We had evidence that they breached that undertaking almost straightaway - it's hard to prove they encouraged them on site, but there was clear evidence that they were actually encouraging them to stay on site by the actions that they did. We did not use this*

*information in the end – we were going to go back to court for breach of the undertaking, but we didn't.*”

### Allegations of Nuisance

*The problem “wasn't only the elder sons. There was also evidence in the affidavit about the behaviour of the younger children on site as well. Just general nuisance things on site, which they shouldn't have been doing, and they had been warned about – climbing on shed roofs, throwing stones, getting into sheds that had been shuttered. Apart from anything else, it was dangerous and if they had an accident, we'd have been in trouble.”*

*The Council clarified that “it's no different with Council tenants in houses – the tenancy agreement does make council tenants responsible their family and their visitors. The nuisance term is from the Housing Act for Council tenants.”*

### Appealing to the Director General of Fair Trading

*“The Director General of Fair Trading said he couldn't be involved in individual disputes, but the judge who heard the case could be and was and had considered it – in the final hearing. So, it's not accurate that that avenue was closed because the Director General could not be involved in individual disputes.”*

### Judicial Review and Roadside Travellers

*Roadside Travellers have the same right to Judicial Review of the Council's decisions in relation to Council-owned land. “We dealt with a case, when they were on one of our industrial estates – it took about 2 ½ years from serving the Notice to Quit to actually regaining possession. The other thing which that case highlighted was, we could be reviewed every time we made a new decision – review our original decision, then review our decision not to wait a little bit longer. I think there was some issue in that case about some members of the family being ill, so they asked us if we would not evict them, if we would allow them to stay a little bit longer.”*

### Enquiries at the nursing home

*The Council felt that the point about Council officers making enquiries at the nursing home should be taken in context. “We were anticipating that, as a good public authority, we should take into account these things. The lady told us that her mum was ill, so we thought we ought to take that into account before pressing ahead, so enquiries were made in that sense, not in the sense that they seemed to have been reported, that we were making sure they couldn't*

*claim that. It wasn't meant in that sense. I might be wrong, but I thought they had been told at the time that they could go check if they wanted."*

*"We had to check, not because we did not believe, but because we would then have to take that into account in deciding whether to press ahead with the eviction. Having got the Order, it's not as simple as just going to enforce it. If circumstances change we have to take that into account as a public body. And any decisions that we make on the changed circumstances are reviewable as well."*

### Interventions by others

*"From our point of view, all these people who were coming in at the end and asking us to reconsider, they did not really have an appreciation of what we'd been through to get to that point. A lot of points that were raised had already been considered by one of the judges in one of the hearings. It wasn't that we did not listen to these representations, we checked each one to see whether or not they were matters that had already been considered. Our department was heavily involved in checking those responses."*

*"John Roberts came into the frame fairly late on and I am not sure if he had the full picture. We can't speak for him, but he certainly didn't from our point of view."*

### Human Rights Act

*"At the High Court Judicial Review, the family solicitor did also include human rights issues in his application, although Act had not come into force. But the judge, when he summed up, said that if October had been moved forward and it had been heard with the Act being in force, his decision would still be the same, because he would have to balance the needs of all the other residents on site as well. So the Human Rights Act was considered by the judge."*

The Council had heard that the family's solicitor had made an application to the European Court but *"it's not an application against us. We presume it's an application against the government to say that the entire law in relation to Licence Agreement breaches the Human Rights Act – not anything that Leeds City Council did. We have not been served with any papers, and we would know about it by now if we were party to the case. There is no human rights point against us – all we have done is what the law said we should do. So we can only presume the Human Rights point is that the law is not compatible generally with human rights."*

The Council acknowledges that there is a difference between a Contract of Tenancy (for Council tenants) and a Licence Agreement. *“By law that Tenancy attracts security, which means that you can only terminate it on certain specified grounds, and there would be a Court hearing if it is opposed, where the evidence would not be written. It would be oral. And they have security of tenure so you can’t terminate it without a Court Order. With a licence you can terminate it just by issuing a Notice to Quit and it’s terminated. Then if they don’t move off voluntarily, then you’ve got to seek an eviction, but legally that’s a separate process to ending the licence. We don’t, as we said, have to say why we terminated the licence. We just give them 28 days notice. This is obviously different to someone who is in a Council house. That is not a policy decision, it’s the law. You can’t give Travellers on plots of land, security of tenure.”* The nuisance clause is the same for both types of agreements.

The Council was asked if the Human Rights Act would affect the Licence. *“It does because whether or not the licence is compatible with human rights, the terms of the licence definitely have to be compatible. But insofar as they have a licence agreement, the terms of them should not infringe their rights – and we have done quite a lot of work on that. We have gone back and reviewed the entire licence agreement – as we’ve done with a lot of agreements in the Council. There are some proposals to change some of the licence terms to make them compatible with the Human Rights Act – but it will still have a nuisance clause in it, and it will still be a licence.”*

Travellers are being consulted via CAB, their advocates. *“The very rough draft of the new licence agreement has been sent out to all interested groups. We had a very long letter back from the CAB asking us to take into account various points – and we have a meeting next week to go through CAB’s response to see whether or not we can take on board what they’re saying. Some of them we won’t be able to take on board because they’re asking for security and we can’t give that. However, whether it is a Licence or Tenancy Agreement we have to be seen to be acting reasonably.*

*“I don’t think it would make any difference anyway in terms of the nuisance clause because in relation to tenants in houses, the law was changed in 1996 with the Housing Act. The Act sets out those grounds on which we can seek possession and sets out the nuisance grounds. It also says that you’re responsible for your family and visitors. That Act and the Guidance that goes along with it, specifically make it clear that a Council can rely, not upon direct evidence from neighbours, but professional witnesses in terms of housing officers and police. So even if we could have gone down that procedure, the same evidence would have been presented.*



*We have had Possession Orders on tenants in council housing with security of tenure, in similar circumstances.”*

### Post-eviction

*This family had been moved on several times since the eviction, and not always by the Council. “After they were moved off the caravan site, they moved onto another bit of land, a council-owned playing field fairly nearby (near the cemetery). They joined a group of roadside Travellers who were already on that land. We told those roadside Travellers that they were there without licence or consent. They were there for a funeral - we usually leave them till it’s over. We got the court order, but we did not go to court to enforce it because they said they were leaving voluntarily. However, once the family who had been evicted joined them, we had to go back to court again because the family’s solicitor wanted to apply for a Judicial Review hearing about our decision to move them off the playing field. And they did not get the adjournment they wanted.”*

### Evictions

*“We have specific policy guidelines from the DETR on when you should ‘tolerate’ their presence. Often what happens is we have an Order for Possession, but because of certain circumstances, eg they say they will move in a day or so, we don’t enforce that order. An eviction as we did, is very very rare. We can’t remember when the last one was.”*

*“They were only forcibly evicted because they would not comply with the Court Order. It did not leave us much choice, after 7 months. It wasn’t pleasant and not something that we would wish to do again.”*

### The day of the eviction

*“We were actually on site during the eviction. We got a call from the bailiff saying that the police had requested our presence on the site. What we actually said, in terms of people getting onto the site, was because we had a lot of equipment being moved around to physically shift the caravan, we said that we didn’t want anybody on site who didn’t have reason to be there. That meant anyone who did not live on the site. It was a difficult enough as it was – we did not want anybody getting injured. We were asked to give that information on behalf of Leeds City Council to anybody who enquired – and that included the Manager of the Travellers Education Service. It was actually me who told him that he wasn’t allowed on the site. We did not want anybody on site who was not legally allowed to be there, just because of the situation.”*

### Photographs

“The part where the Travellers Services Manager took photographs – he was actually asked to do that because we needed to plan the eviction. We did a risk assessment for the eviction in conjunction with the police and bailiffs, and that was required for their insurance. The photos were to assess how we were going to approach.”

### Homeless

*“Before the eviction, on 9.6.01 the solicitor did write to me that the Travellers Liaison Officer had visited and had said that a Homelessness Officer would be intending to see the family on Monday 2 pm. I then wrote back on 13.6.01 to inform him that, with regards the homelessness officer, his clients were not willing to give any information at all to the lady that visited regarding their needs for housing accommodation.” “There was a letter from their solicitor setting out their needs – instead of us doing an assessment of their needs, which is what we’re legally obliged to do.”*

*“After the eviction we actually had someone from housing to go down to do an assessment, to see if it were housing or what help they would want.” The family had said that the person from housing did not return. According to the Council, “I would be very surprised if that were the case. Their solicitor has a very high profile for housing work, and has been known to review the very fact that we don’t turn up to assess people properly. Against the background of all this litigation, had we failed to do an assessment, that would have been mentioned in court and might have resulted in separate court proceedings against us. The housing officer did return, but basically they did not want any help.”*

**STATISTICS OF TRAVELLERS ADVICE WORKER,  
CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU**

**Categories for social policy statistical recording**

B0	Benefit debts: overpayment of benefit	R0	Relationship debts: maintenance arrears, informal loans from family/friends, repayment of
B1	Discrimination/intimidation (in the administration of benefits)	R1	Section 17 payments
B2	Income support	R2	discrimination/intimidation (in personal affairs)
B3	Housing benefit	R3	Children
B4	Community charge benefit	R4	Separation
B5	Family credit	R99	Death and bereavement
B6	Social fund		Other relationship issues
B7	Sickness benefits		
B8	Disability benefits		
B9	Unemployment benefit		
B10	Retirement pension		
B11	NI contributions		
B12	Child support		
B13	Council tax benefit		
B99	All other benefits		
C0	Consumer debts: mail order, HP/credit sale, loans, rental arrears, insurance premium arrears	T0	Tax debts: all tax arrears
C1	Discrimination/intimidation (in consumer affairs)	T1	Discrimination/intimidation (in tax matters)
C2	Goods and services	T2	Income tax
C3	Credit and finance	T3	Council tax/rates (NI)
C4	Insurance	T4	Community charges
C99	Other consumer issues	T99	Other taxes
E0	Employment debts: overpayment of wages, repayment of training costs when leaving job	U0	Utilities debts: arrears of electricity, gas, telephone, water rates
E1	Discrimination/intimidation (in employment)	U1	Discrimination/intimidation (in the supply of utilities)
E2	Schemes for unemployed people and training	U99	Other utilities issues
E3	Self-employment business		
E4	Terms and conditions of employment		
E5	Dismissal		
E6	Redundancy		
E99	Other employment issues		
H0	Housing debts: mortgage and rent arrears	XC	Community care
H1	Discrimination/intimidation (in housing)	XE	Educaiton
H2	Actual homelessness	XH	Health
H3	Threatened homelessness	XI	Immigration
H4	Housing costs (excluding arrears)	XN	Nationality
H5	Housing conditions	XM	Miscellaneous
H6	Environmental and neighbour issues	XS	Signposting
H7	Security of tenure (from April 1996)		
H99	Other housing issues		
L0	Legal debts: non-payment of court fines/ costs		
L1	Discrimination/intimidation (in legal affairs)		
L2	Legal proceedings		
L3	Legal aid		
L4	Compensation for accidents and injuries		
L99	Other legal issues		

**MARCH – AUGUST 2000**

If a client returns to CAB or the issue comes up again, and it is exactly the same issue then this is classified as a 'repeat'. If the issue is slight different, then this is 'new'.

**New Categories**

<b>Month</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Total</b>
March	76	10	0	16	11	4	7	1	19	144
April	38	3	1	10	1	1	3	2	15	73
May	25	0	0	10	3	3	0	3	8	52
June	58	8	0	11	4	2	3	3	22	111
July	56	8	0	31	8	2	5	2	25	137
August	65	1	0	18	3	0	1	1	10	99

**Repeat Categories**

<b>Month</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Total</b>
March	58	9	0	3	8	1	0	6	3	117
April	60	10	0	25	3	0	9	2	12	127
May	44	8	0	24	1	3	1	1	12	75
June	22	6	0	20	0	0	4	6	11	69
July	26	3	0	14	3	1	0	0	6	56
August	14	1	0	6	1	0	0	2	5	29

**Workload Categories**

<b>Month</b>	1 = signposting	2 = listening ear	3 = information	4 = negotiation with outside bodies	5 = representation work
March	0	0	60	53	2
April	0	0	38	56	1
May	0	0	24	57	0
June	0	0	56	64	0
July	0	0	51	70	0
August	0	1	35	43	0

**STATISTICS FROM  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT**

**Twice Yearly Count of Gypsy Caravans**

**January 1999 – July 2000**

**1. Unauthorised Sites (without planning permission))**

		Tolerated				Not tolerated			
		Jan 1999	Jul 1999	Jan 2000	Jul 2000	Jan 1999	Jul 1999	Jan 2000	Jul 2000
<b>A. Sites on Gypsies own land</b>	No. of caravans	7	4	11	4	0	0	0	0
	No. of families	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	No. of adults	11	4	8	3	0	0	0	0
	No. of children (0-16)	8	3	7	0	0	0	0	0
<b>B. Sites on land not owned by Gypsies</b>	No. of caravans	6	0	8	0	11	11	0	4
	No. of families	4	0	3	0	2	3	0	3
	No. of adults	7	0	5	0	14	10	0	12
	No. of children (0-16)	0	0	0	0	19	8	0	1

**2. Authorised Sites (with planning permission)**

	Council				Private			
	Jan 1999	Jul 1999	Jan 2000	Jul 2000	Jan 1999	Jul 1999	Jan 2000	Jul 2000
No. of caravans	80	50	47	48	0	0	0	0
No. of families	41	32	35	33	0	0	0	0
No. of adults	86	64	64	64	0	0	0	0
No. of children (0-16)	58	44	40	47	0	0	0	0

**Appendix D****FIRST DRAFT****RECOMMENDATIONS****To the Department of Housing**

1. To separate the dual roles of the Traveller Services Manager in eviction and site management.
2. To review the roles and boundaries of the Traveller Services Team.
3. To review the policies and procedures of site management, eg repairs, purchase of electricity tokens.
4. To identify and change policies which discriminate against Travellers, especially the Licence Agreement, rent for plots, and eligibility for Housing grants.
5. To encourage and support the establishment of a Residents Association on Cottingley Springs.
6. To ensure Traveller representation on the Housing Department's Advisory Group or equivalent.
7. To collaborate with Travellers, and the Departments of Planning and Environment to explore the establishment of a Transit Site and family/group sites.
8. To collaborate with Travellers to develop training for all staff, to include cultural sensitivity.
9. To make a commitment to inter-departmental and multi-agency collaboration, that also provides opportunities for mutual questioning and challenge.
10. To make annual accounts of site management, policies and procedures accessible.

**To the Departments of Planning and Environment**

1. To ensure Traveller representation on the Departments' Advisory Group or equivalent.
2. To identify and change policies and procedures which discriminate against Travellers.
3. To set objectives for responding to planning applications.
4. To collaborate with Travellers, and the Department of Housing to explore the establishment of a Transit Site and family/group sites.
6. To make policies and procedures accessible.
7. To collaborate with Travellers to develop training for all staff, to include cultural sensitivity.
8. To make a commitment to inter-departmental and multi-agency collaboration that also provides opportunities for mutual questioning and challenge.

**To Travellers Education Service / Department of Education**

To make a commitment to inter-departmental and multi-agency collaboration that also provides opportunities for mutual questioning and challenge.

**To Leeds City Council**

1. To develop joint strategic planning with the Health Authority and Primary Care Groups.
2. To support the development of an independent Travellers organisation.
3. To make a commitment to inter-departmental and multi-agency collaboration that also provides opportunities for mutual questioning and challenge.

**To Citizens Advice Bureau**

To increase the establishment of the post of the Travellers Advice Worker, or consider a separate post for influencing the development of Social Policy.

**To Park Lane College**

To increase the establishment of the post which provides adult literacy education to Travellers.

**To Health Care Providers**

1. To provide dedicated / specialist GP services.
2. To provide on-site Primary Health Care Services, eg using the Health Bus.
3. To increase the establishment of the health visiting post, or consider a separate post for health education and promotion.
4. To widen the role of the Health Visitor to include all Travellers in Leeds.
5. To identify and change policies and procedures which discriminate against Travellers.
6. To collaborate with Travellers to develop training for all staff (especially GP surgeries), to include cultural sensitivity.
7. To ensure Traveller representation on Advisory Groups.
8. To make a commitment to inter-departmental and multi-agency collaboration that also provides opportunities for mutual questioning and challenge.
9. To develop joint strategic planning with Leeds City Council.
10. To support the development of an independent Travellers organisation.

**To South Leeds Health for All and Travellers Health Partnership**

Develop an independent Travellers organisation, with 3-4 workers and secure funding for at least 3 years.

The role of the organisation would be:

1. Community development
2. To influence the development of Social Policy
3. Advice and advocacy, including providing a 'scribe' for Travellers.
4. To collaborate with statutory and voluntary organisations to develop training for all staff on cultural sensitivity.
5. To promote the cultural richness and identity of Travellers.

## Appendix E

Caravan Sites -  
Different Perspectives (of those who were interviewed)

<i><b>Perspective of Travellers</b></i>	<i><b>Perspective of most Professionals</b></i>	<i><b>Perspective of the Department of Housing</b></i>
The only <b>two official sites</b> are <b>adjacent</b> to each other – no choice (cf 4.1.4.2)	The only two official sites are adjacent to each other – no alternative when there is interpersonal conflict	
<b>Travellers not consulted</b> originally when planning the layout and amenities for Cottingley Springs (cf 4.1.4.2)		The independent review leading to upgrading of both sites has been a long process of consultation. There are different views amongst Travellers on site (cf 4.4.3.6)
<b>Overcrowding</b> , on Cottingley Springs, leading to problems (cf 4.1.4.2)	Overcrowding, leading to problems (cf 4.2.2.3)	Number of plots have been reduced from 36 – 20; Site A has no problems with same number of plots (20).
<b>Site A</b> is more settled, fewer problems	Site A is more settled, fewer problems	Site A is more settled, have built relationship with staff and with each other, so fewer problems
<b>Lack of equity</b> between how <b>Sites A and B</b> are managed – discrimination against Irish Travellers (cf 4.1.4.2)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>“totally unfounded – there is a mix of ethnic background”</i> on both sites (cf 4.3.2.4)</li> <li>- Site B residents more transient, so have not built relationship with team or with each other</li> <li>- could be the criticism of Travellers who have been on the receiving end of ‘hard line’ actions taken by the Dept (cf 4.4.2)</li> </ul>
<b>Independent review</b> of conditions on Sites A and B following action by some Travellers (cf 4.1.4.2)	Review came about from publicity generated by the then tenants group. Council rejected assessment until it was <i>“toned down”</i> (cf 4.2.2.3)	Review commissioned <i>“because we wanted to improve conditions ...not because we were forced to”</i> (cf 4.3.2.2)
<b>Site B</b> needs to be cleaned up and better organised (cf 4.1.4.2)	<i>“from Day 1 it has had problems”</i> (cf 4.2.2.3)	2 ½ - 3 years ago many problems – since dual role of Travellers Services Manager, ie new management, <i>“things have changed 100%”</i> (cf 4.2.2.3)



<b><i>Perspective of Travellers</i></b>	<b><i>Perspective of most Professionals</i></b>	<b><i>Perspective of the Department of Housing</i></b>
<p><b>Site management</b> “snoop around” and “used to just enter .. without permission” (cf 4.1.4.2)</p>	<p>“people are photographed and conversations taped – infringement of human rights” (cf 4.2.2.3)</p> <p>What are roles and boundaries of the team on site?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Photographs: happened once and was inappropriate, and member of staff no longer works on site, otherwise photographed only to provide evidence when needed.</li> <li>- Conversations are not taped, site management use dictaphone as aide-memoire to report repairs</li> <li>- Acknowledge that “walking into caravans uninvited” should not happen: may have happened just once in the past, but made to sound like it happens regularly (cf 4.4.3.5)</li> <li>- Roles and boundaries as set out in job description, Travellers can also discuss with staff on site. Management go through licence agreement with each new resident</li> </ul>
<p><b>Warden</b> patrols the site 10-20 min – residents feel harassed (cf 4.1.4.2)</p>		<p>Wardens do not ‘patrol’ – they walk around the site, part of role to be available for residents to report problems, health and safety checks, also to build relationship (cf 4.3.2.3)</p>
<p>System of <b>repairs</b> inefficient and inconsistent (cf 4.1.4.2)</p>	<p>Poor record of repairs; “basic needs are not met” (cf 4.2.2.2).</p> <p>Newest member of team’s firm but fair approach has made it easier (cf 4.2.2.3)</p>	<p>Overall improvement of site (which has been planned) is different from day-to-day repairs. If system is not working then should be reviewed, but not aware that Dept is unable to meet demands for ordinary repairs. There are emergency, priority and general categories for repairs – and targets for each (list is available). What people think of as emergency, may not be under emergency category. (cf 4.4.3.1)</p>

<i><b>Perspective of Travellers</b></i>	<i><b>Perspective of most Professionals</b></i>	<i><b>Perspective of the Department of Housing</b></i>
<b>Dissatisfaction with site management</b> , fear and anger (cf 4.1.4.2)		If relationship of trust is lost in the whole community, must “ <i>rethink how we do it</i> ”, including consider outside management of site, but Dept of H not convinced ‘dissatisfaction’ is from everyone, ie that it is only from a biased sample. Dept is open to rebuilding trust and want to move forward together (cf 4.4.2)
<b>Dual role of Travellers Services Manager</b> – generates fear and mistrust (cf 4.1.4.2)	Conflict of interest	Had many more problems on site when role was separated and in two depts. Integrated role pools essential knowledge and expertise. No different on housing estates. There is nothing to fear “ <i>if they meet their obligations and we meet ours</i> ”. Site A does not have this problem.
<b>Rent at Cottingley</b> higher than for Council houses (cf 4.1.10.1)	High rent → poverty trap; poor conditions for high rent (cf 4.2.2.2)	Rent is reflective of cost of managing the site, esp staffing required, refuse collection, repairs, vandalism, graffiti
<b>Licence Agreement</b> – discriminates against Travellers (cf 4.1.10.2)	Sign of “ <i>institutional racism</i> ” (cf 4.2.2.2)	Under the Law, licence agreement does not have same status as tenancy agreement – cannot be changed by local authority. But Dept of H is reviewing terms of licence agreement and consulting Travellers via CAB (cf 4.4.1)
Cannot rely on <b>taxis and buses</b> to stop (cf 4.1.5.9)		Not true – “ <i>taxis are there regularly</i> ” (cf 4.3.2.5)

<b><i>Perspective of Travellers</i></b>	<b><i>Perspective of most Professionals</i></b>	<b><i>Perspective of Department of Housing</i></b>
<b>No transit sites</b> (cf 4.1.4.2, 4.1.10.3)	Leeds is traditional stopping place, now no legal stopping places; unclear reason why no transit site; political issue (cf 4.2.7.1)	Different opinions: (i) difficult to identify site acceptable to Travellers and local population, (ii) no need, as there are 'blind eye' sites, Dept of H is tolerant (iii) there has never been a request, (iv) if requested we would consider, but it's up to Dept of P&E to find site.
<b>Unofficial sites</b> – outsiders dump rubbish (cf 4.1.4.2)	No amenities - embarrassed that Travellers are treated as third class citizens (4.2.2.3); Council focuses on evicting and trenching, rather than accommodating (cf 4.2.2.4); No legal stopping places	- Acknowledges number of legal stopping places has diminished. - It is not only 'outsiders' that dump rubbish, but also those who stop on unofficial sites

**Appendix F****DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE GREEN BELT***“Very Special Circumstances”*

Construction of new buildings for purposes of agriculture and forestry; essential facilities for outdoor sports and outdoor recreation, essential facilities for the park and ride sites shown on the proposals map; and other uses compatible with green belt purposes;

Limited extension alteration or replacement of existing dwellings;

Limited infilling and redevelopment of identified major existing developed sites;

Limited infilling in villages and limited affordable housing for local community needs;

Re-use of buildings, where all the detailed criteria of Policy GB4 are satisfied.

Change of use of land for purposes which do not compromise green belt objectives

Cemetries

*National guidance on Green Belts and the control of development within them is contained in PPG 2*

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