

# Travellers and the Homeless Act

## Introduction

This survey was carried out by Eric Avebury, President of the Advisory Council for the Education of Romanies and Travellers, between August 6 and September 6, 2003. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Ms Esmée Russell of The Children's Society in obtaining the information from local authorities, and the encouragement and advice of Ms Alison Harvey of the Children's Society on the conduct of the study.

The Government acknowledges that Gypsies and Travellers are the most socially deprived group in Britain, but the Social Exclusion Unit has no plans to examine their plight. Other priorities have been seen as more important, as the Prime Minister said in reply to a letter three years ago, and that is still the position. Local authorities are not obliged to provide somewhere for Travellers to live, since the repeal of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 nine years ago, and only 4% of Travellers who apply for planning permission on their own land succeed. The number of Traveller families with nowhere to live is increasing, and passed the 3,000 mark in January 2003.

S 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 provides that local housing authorities may

- (a) carry out a homelessness review for their district; and
- (b) formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review

The first strategy is to be published within the period of twelve months beginning with the day on which S 1 comes into force, i.e. July 30, 2003, and a copy is to be provided (on payment if required by the authority of a reasonable charge) to any member of the public who asks for one.

S 175 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 provides that

A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but-

- (a) he cannot secure entry to it, or
- (b) it consists of a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted both to place it and to reside in it.

This means that any Traveller who is on an unauthorised site is by definition homeless, now that 'tolerated' sites are no longer recognised.

The ODPM Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities makes it clear that where a local authority has Travellers living in an unauthorised encampments, it must consider whether a pitch in an authorised site is reasonably available, and if not, what other form of suitable accommodation is available<sup>1</sup>[1]:

**APPLICANTS WHO NORMALLY OCCUPY MOVEABLE ACCOMMODATION  
(E.G. CARAVANS, HOUSEBOATS)**

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<sup>1</sup>[1] [www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_homelessness/documents/page/odpm\\_home\\_601514.pdf](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_homelessness/documents/page/odpm_home_601514.pdf)

11.40. Under s175(2) applicants are homeless if their accommodation is a caravan, houseboat, or other movable structure and they do not have a place where they are entitled, or permitted, to put it and live in it. If a duty to secure accommodation arises in such cases, the housing authority are not required to make equivalent accommodation available (or provide a site or berth for the applicant's own accommodation), but they should consider whether such options are reasonably available, particularly where this would provide the most suitable solution to the applicant's accommodation needs. These circumstances will be particularly relevant in the case of Gypsies and travellers, whose applications must be considered on the same basis as all other applicants. If no pitch or berth is available to enable them to resume occupation of their moveable home, it is open to the housing authority to discharge its homelessness obligations by arranging for some other form of suitable accommodation to be made available.

### **Conduct of the study**

The purpose of this survey was to contact the 157 local authorities which had unauthorised encampments in their area, according to the January 2003 ODPM count, obtain a copy of their homelessness strategy, either via their website, by email or as a last resort by asking them to send a hard copy, and record any paragraphs dealing with Travellers.

In conducting the survey, the first step was to look at each local authority's website, to see whether users could find details of homelessness services via the A-Z of council services, found on almost every local authority site.

If that procedure did not find a direct link to the homelessness strategy, a search was made using the term 'homelessness'.

If no page was discovered on the website, a telephone call was made to the section dealing with homelessness wherever a direct number was found on the website, otherwise to the council's main switchboard, and a request was made to speak to someone about the homelessness strategy. Having identified such a person, it was first confirmed that the strategy was not on the website, and the person was then asked to email a copy of the strategy to the researcher. If for any reason this could not be done, a hard copy was requested by post.

The best way for local authorities to comply with the duty to provide a copy of their strategy, at minimum cost to themselves, is to put the strategy on their website, and the survey was intended to show the extent to which they had followed this route.

### **Results**

Of the 157 local authorities surveyed, 5 had not yet published their strategy by the first week in September, and quite a few more had missed the deadline of July 30. The attitude towards compliance with the publication requirement of the Act was casual. Strategies of all the remaining 152 authorities were checked.

Of these, 61 (40.1%) had no link to a page dealing with homelessness on their A-Z finders.

101 authorities out of the 157 surveyed (64.3%) had not placed the strategy on their websites.

Of the 152 authorities whose strategies were checked, 107 or 70.4% of the respondents did not mention Travellers.

Most officials dealing with homelessness are unaware of their Council's homelessness strategy and did not have a copy of it. In almost every telephone conversation with a local authority, where the person who wrote the strategy was out or on leave, nobody else seemed to have access to it.

Hardly any of the strategies refer to the local authority's Race Equality Statement or the Race Relations (Amendment) Act itself, which imposes a duty on all local authorities to ensure that in the delivery of their services they promote racial equality. Not one mentions the advice from the Commission for Racial Equality in 'Ethnic Monitoring: a guide for public authorities', which recommends that authorities introduce new categories, where an authority wishes to know how its services affect an important minority not covered by the Census. One authority does comment on the fact that Travellers are not identified in the Census, and the authorities which did have regard to the ethnic make-up of their population mostly used the Census figures. Only a handful of authorities acknowledged Gypsies as a numerically important minority on their area.

Many of the authors of the Strategies appear to be unaware of S 175 of the Housing Act 1996, which specifically identifies Travellers on unauthorised sites as homeless, although it is referred to in the ODPM's Code of Guidance para 11.40.

Some local authorities worked closely with Shelter in preparing their Reviews, and they said Travellers were not emphasised by Shelter. This appears to be true, judging from the literature produced by Shelter about the Act, and the absence of material about Traveller homelessness on the Shelter website.

There is no apparent attempt by Districts within a county or region to adopt a common look and feel on their websites, and very few districts within a county had coordinated their homelessness strategies as they affect Travellers. One or two mentioned the necessity for an area wide plan, but only one authority put their strategy in the context of the national shortage of accommodation for Travellers.

Some local authorities give their own definitions of homelessness, which do not always correspond with the 1996 Act .

One or two authorities produced outstanding strategies, thoroughly assessing the situation and needs of Travellers, and these might be useful for others, when conducting their reviews. Many authorities said they intended to conduct the first review much sooner than the five years required by the Act.

There is no sign in any of the strategies of consultation with local or national Travellers organisations, or of advice being given by the authority's own Gypsy or Traveller officers

In one county a Partnership Review was conducted, looking at the needs of Travellers, but this was not reflected in the strategies of individual authorities.

Some of the comments made by officers, when told the purpose of the survey, are as follows:

- 'Our Travellers are not identified as Roma'.
- 'Some homeless Travelers have settled in housing'.
- 'Customer consultation takes place with Gypsy/Travellers through art based events'.
- 'You have highlighted a gap'.
- 'Homeless Travellers are dealt with by the Enforcement Team'.
- 'Travellers are not seen to be a particular problem'.
- 'We deal with Travellers in our Supporting People strategy'.
- 'We have a separate policy on Travellers'.
- 'Travellers in relation to homelessness are not a major problem'.
- 'There is a Traveller Liaison team'.
- 'There is a Travellers Hotline to report Travellers who are on the wrong property'.
- 'The Council intends to carry out an assessment of the housing needs of Travellers'.
- 'Our consultants ... are going to do a Needs Survey of 4,000 households in which respondents will be asked whether they are of Traveller origin'.
- 'Travellers were not considered in the Review, so they aren't mentioned in the Strategy'.
- 'Travellers were dealt with in the Review, but it was found that no action needs to be taken about their homelessness'.
- 'Travellers are not covered because there is a county-wide group looking at the problem, and this council's strategy focuses on families going into B&B, which doesn't apply to Travellers'.
- 'Its not an issue for us because they get moved on'.

## **Conclusion**

Local authorities which experience unauthorised encampments of Travellers need to recognise the fact that any person living on an unauthorised site is homeless in law. This may extend beyond the 157 authorities dealt with in this study, since others may have Travellers on unauthorised sites at different times of the year.

The approach by different authorities to this problem varies widely. The ODPM should consider whether some guidance would be useful on how to formulate strategies as regards Travellers.

Neighbouring authorities in a county, and perhaps more widely, should consider developing common strategies for preventing homelessness of Travellers.

Local authorities should be encouraged to conduct the first review of their strategies much earlier than the five years in the Act.

Local authorities should engage in consultation with Traveller organisations on how to prevent Traveller homelessness.

Local authorities should acknowledge that Travellers belong to ethnic minorities, and that the services provided for them have to be considered in the light of obligations imposed by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

Clause 61 of the Anti-social Behaviour Bill, which is to be considered shortly by the Lords, gives a police officer power to direct homeless Travellers to remove their caravans from unauthorised sites if it appears to the officer that there is a pitch on a managed site within the local authority's area for those caravans. There is no requirement that the authority should make those pitches available to the Travellers so removed, and if the site is under refurbishment, or the people already on the site belong to a different and mutually incompatible group, there may be good reasons for not doing so. If Clause 61 is approved by Parliament, it will affect the policies of local authorities, and should be reflected in their strategies.

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## **Appendix: Strategies for Travellers' Homelessness**

The following are the paragraphs dealing with Travellers in each of the local authorities homelessness strategies that mention them.

### **Halton**

The Council has established a post with responsibility for issues relating to the needs of Travellers families. Halton has a static site with 22 pitches for Gypsies. The residents of the site have requested to be known as Gypsies rather than travellers. The site has the benefit of a resident warden on site and a Gypsy Liaison Officer who visits daily.

Contact has been made with Sure Start and Connexions Services who both have an input with families living on site and Halton College provide outreach work to the site to enable residents to access educational facilities.

### **Preston**

Travellers

7.24 Contacts with services have usually been around the issues of domestic violence and harassment and consequently it is felt that needs are catered for through these routes. There is a site in the City but this has well established residents. Occasionally we have re-housed families and even provided emergency accommodation.

### **Harrogate**

Homeless Strategy Action Plan: "To monitor the housing and support needs of all groups of homeless people including...Travellers".

### **Hull**

#### **4.5. Travellers**

4.20.1. The ODPM category of Travellers also includes the settled Gypsy Community who live on one of the four settled sites in Hull at Bankside, Bedford Street, Newington Street and Wilmington. The Wilmington site has 20 pitches; the other three have a total of 45 pitches. The total number of people living on the site is 244 of which over half are aged under 25.

4.20.2. The Gypsy Community have the same support needs as the other settled communities and are represented in all client groups e.g. elderly, learning disabled, young and vulnerable etc. They have additional support needs related to their feelings of isolation, their experience of harassment, prejudice and public opinion.

4.20.3. The Newington Street Site is located in a residential area; the other three are in the middle of an industrial area with two sites very close to refuse sites. The Whole System Event for the Gypsy and Traveller Community held in 2001 identified the following areas of concern:

- The sites are thought to be in undesirable and possibly dangerous- locations due to their location in industrial areas and proximity to refuse sites
- The sites are far removed from amenities such as schools, leisure facilities and public services
- The sites were in need of refurbishment
- The needs of vulnerable groups need to be taken into account including children, older people and people with disabilities
- Restrictions causing lack of choices.

4.20.4. An independent participatory appraisal research exercise commissioned by Hull and Holderness Community Health Trust reported a need for:

- Staff that can give support without prejudging
- Life long and family learning support
- Support for the community so that it can, with help, overcome its problems.

4.20.5. A site occupants' questionnaire issued as part of the Best Value review revealed that with regard to their ethnicity:

- 42% regarded themselves as Travellers
- 34% as Gypsies
- The remainder as Romanies, Gypsy Travellers, British Travellers, Scottish Gypsy, Geordie Traveller and Human Beings.

4.20.6. Kingston upon Hull City Council Social Services department provides the Gypsy Liaison Service. It utilises a Gypsy Liaison Officer, a Support Officer and four site wardens. This service is currently under review.

4.20.7. The Best Value Review of Services to Caravan Dwellers action plan identifies the following actions which are relevant to housing related support services:

- A review of the staffing structure of the Gypsy Liaison Service
- Improve access to mainstream services
- Deliver site improvements.

#### **Liverpool:**

Summary of objectives: "Examine the appropriateness of homelessness services for... travellers" p 39

#### **Leeds:**

“The LCC Homeless Service will publish customer guidebooks relating to..... traveller services” p 26

## **York**

Travelling families comprise the most significant ethnic group in York. Three travellers' sites in York provide 55 pitches, a significant number of which contain more than one household. The number of unauthorised encampments fluctuates but has been in single figures since 1994. There are also a number of travelling families settled into general housing. Support is provided on all three sites and there is a Traveller Education project. The Personal Medical Services project provides primary health care services for this customer group, especially targeting child health and women's health issues.

### Key Review Findings 3

- .....
- .....
- support and facilities are required for travellers and further consultation with this group of customers is needed;

## Leicester City

### 5.12 GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

History of Gypsy Site provision in Leicester:

1965	Research into unauthorised camping in the city of Leicester.
1972	Meynells Gorse Site Built with 15 pitches.
1984	Meynells Gorse Extended by 4 pitches.
1989	Meynells Gorse Extended by 1 pitch.
1994	Whole Site Demolished and rebuilt the 20 pitches.
2003	Meynells Gorse Extended by 1 pitch.

#### Unauthorised Camping Policy

This policy is aimed at managing unauthorised encampment by Travellers in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Locally, sensitive management of unauthorised encampments is encouraged on the basis that

- Needless eviction does not work.
- Sometimes the move is only 100 yards or just into the next district.

Before eviction several routes are pursued:

- Decisions taking into account health, education, or welfare factors.
- Seek to negotiate time Gypsies require on unauthorised encampment.
- Need to balance the needs of the settled community with the needs of the Gypsies.
- Consult with Police and land owning department.

The Authority has legislative duties which are taken into account before an eviction can take place. This includes the Homelessness Act and Childrens' Act.

## Newark & Sherwood:

“Travellers are not a homogeneous group. Within the term ‘Travellers there are a number of different groups who hold different status within law. Newark has one of the largest Romani Gypsy communities in England.

A person or household are homeless if they have no where to legally park their caravan under the terms of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII

There are ‘pitches in Nottinghamshire, particularly in Newark and Ollerton, on private sites.

Travellers will apply as homeless if they need to.

Domestic violence levels are high, based on an analysis of information given at homeless interviews.

The specific needs of older travellers need to be considered when they are unable maintain their current lifestyle.

The experience of agencies is that most travellers will gravitate towards the town of Newark, but they will move around the neighbouring districts.



Currently there is no area wide policy around travellers or their needs”

“Action:

....

...

Consider the development of an area wide/multi agency policy around travellers and their needs”

### **Rushcliffe:**

The issue of travellers was raised by the Inter-Agency Steering Group as a concern for all of the Boroughs within this study. Consultation revealed that

- A person or household are homeless if they have no where to legally park their caravan under the terms of Housing Act 1996 Part VII
- There are no ‘pitches’ in South Nottinghamshire
- Travellers will apply as homeless if they need to
- Domestic violence levels are high
- The specific needs of older travellers need to be considered when they are unable maintain their current lifestyle
- The experience of agencies is that most travellers will gravitate towards the City, but they will move around the Boroughs

Currently there is no area wide policy around travellers or their needs. A joint response to the needs of travellers is necessary.

### **Herefordshire**

Undertake research to establish the extent of the support required by Travellers who are choosing to move into the county’s social housing stock.

As previously identified Herefordshire appears to have a much higher than average Traveller population, currently estimated at 5% and consisting of both ‘New Age’ Travellers and Romany Travellers.

### **North Shropshire**

Develop joint working arrangements with groups working with asylum seekers, travellers and BME groups when required.

### **South Northants**

5.7: Targeted work with people who leave Travelling Communities

According to Environmental Health, travelling encampments within South Northamptonshire are few and far between. In fact the last ‘Traveller Count’ in July came back with zero travellers in the district. However, findings from the Homelessness Review, suggest that this is a group whose needs should be considered further within the Homelessness Strategy.

Action point 30: Pursue support from the CADS unit for a targeted piece of work with travellers. This relates to those excluded from travelling communities due to drug problems who then become homeless.

Action point 51: On a countywide basis and in partnership with the Supporting People Team, explore potential for specialist tenancy support service for travellers who are seeking to move to permanent housing. This may need to be linked to the forthcoming County Travellers Unit.

## **Solihull**

### 5.5.16 Travellers

(i) What is the nature of homelessness?

Solihull has a significant number of 'Romany Gypsies' of English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish background. The land that their caravans occupy is in the south and rural areas of the borough, is privately owned and permission has been granted. There are no recent records of any applications for assistance under homelessness legislation from this client group.

## **Stratford on Avon**

There is a Council run site for travellers in this District. Very few, if any, travellers became homeless although some of them are on the housing Waiting List

## **Bromsgrove**

### TRAVELLERS

There is currently only one applicant awaiting accommodation to site their caravan in the District Council's Caravan site.

## **Malvern Hills**

### 5.11 Travellers

Some homeless clients are from a travelling background. Some may have been made homeless from a particular site or some may have abandoned social housing for different reasons.

The Council does not have responsibility for developing or maintaining purpose built sites. However, together with other Local Authorities in the County, the Council has signed up to a single agreed policy towards travellers. The Policy both actively supports the County Council's traveller site provision programme, and ensures adequate management of such sites. At present, in Malvern, there is one site containing 5 units of accommodation. There are currently 9 people waiting to be accommodated on this site.

It was evident from the Review that more information was needed on traveller homelessness and the housing needs of this client group in general, especially in rural areas.

### OBJECTIVE

To understand the social and housing situation for travellers in the district and their likely support needs.

### ACTION POINT:-

To carry out research into the housing needs and aspirations of travellers to ascertain both future support and accommodation needs.

## **South Cambridgeshire**

Travellers are the largest single ethnic minority group in South Cambridgeshire

## **Colchester**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gypsy and Travelling communities are at risk of becoming homeless because of the shortage of places to site caravans and other mobile homes. The shortage is both national and local.

Gypsies and Travellers are less likely to apply to the council as homeless. This means there is little evidence about the size of the problem.

## **THE NATIONAL PICTURE**

Estimates for the population of Gypsies and Travellers in the United Kingdom range from 90,000 to 120,000.<sup>2</sup> Most are in England.

Because of the lack of information about the number of Gypsies and other travellers who live in houses or flats, there are uncertainties about these figures.

Research carried out by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham between April 2001 and September 2002 concluded that:<sup>3</sup>

- There are around 320 caravan sites in England owned by local authorities.
- These sites provide about 5,000 pitches.
- Between 1,000 and 2,000 extra residential pitches will be needed over the next five years.
- Between 1,000 and 2,000 extra pitches on transit sites or stopping places will also be needed to accommodate 'nomadism'.
- One of the main barriers to site provision is resistance from the local, settled community
- Compared with other forms of social housing higher staff-to-resident ratios are usually needed.
- Problems can arise from the way rent officers set local reference rents for Housing Benefit applications for county council sites. In some cases this can cause large differences between the pitch fee charged and the amount of Housing Benefit paid.

In April 2003 the government issued guidance suggesting that councils should develop a local strategy to deal with unauthorised camping.<sup>4</sup> The guidance states that the strategy should aim to:

- Balance the rights and needs of resident communities with those of Gypsies and Travellers
- Manage unauthorised encampments in an efficient and effective way
- Set out proposals to meet Gypsies' and Travellers' needs by making adequate and appropriate site provision
- Ensure proper working relationships between the agencies involved.
- Address issues of social exclusion in the Gypsy and Traveller communities

## **THE LOCAL PICTURE**

A 16-pitch residential caravan site opened at the Hythe in Colchester in 1980 and closed in 2002. At the moment there are 11 other council sites in Essex.

Most sites in Essex have waiting lists and the Hythe site was originally well used. Several tenants had to be relocated from the Hythe by Essex County Council after it was vandalised.

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<sup>2</sup> The Provision and Condition of Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister - October 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Managing Unauthorised Camping - Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – April 2003.

The Gypsy Liaison Service at Essex County Council has advised that there is a need for permanent pitches in Colchester to meet the wishes of those tenants who were relocated from the Hythe to return to Colchester.

The council also has to consider the needs of 'transient' or 'nomadic' travellers who may 'camp' in the borough from time to time. These 'unlawful encampments' can occur on highway land, car parks, industrial estates, 'green lanes', parks and recreation areas.

The council has figures about 'unlawful encampments' dating back to January 1999. The average size of an encampment is measured by the number of caravans. This means that the number of occupants cannot be identified.

The average presence in Colchester is between 6 and 8 caravans at any one time. Their average stay is less than 28 days.

Occasionally there can be large encampments for short periods of time. For example, in 2003 there were two encampments in Hillyfields and Stain Park, in Colchester, that involved over 50 caravans.

Like elsewhere, planning permission for private sites in Colchester can also be an issue. Gypsy and Traveller families may own considerable amounts of land around the country but they very often fail in planning applications to get permission to use their land to live on.

### **Site provision**

In March 2003 the council set up a Travellers' Sub-Group to look into the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and in particular the issue of site provision. The group has consulted stakeholders and particularly the police and Essex County Council.

In July 2003 the sub-group made the following recommendations about site provision:

- The immediate development of a permanent replacement site for 12 caravans.
- Consider the development of a transit or stopping place for 6 to 8 caravans that is linked to a network of similar sites in the region.
- Consider producing a basic guide to planning issues in Colchester for Gypsies and travellers.

To find a new permanent site as soon as possible the council has employed a consultant, CDN Planning Ltd, to come up with a shortlist of potential sites.

### **Progress**

Since March 2003 the council and its partners have made the following progress.

#### **Baseline projects (those only at the planning stage)**

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The sub-group's recommendation to have a transit site has been agreed.

#### **Pipeline projects (those just underway)**

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CDN Planning has come up with a shortlist of 4 potential locations for a replacement site that can accommodate 12 caravans. Consultation with stakeholders and members of the public started in July and will continue throughout August 2003.

The council's cabinet will make a final decision about the most suitable site on 3 September 2003.

### **Support services**

Although Gypsies and travellers can use the support services available to all members of the public, in practice many are unlikely to do so. Cultural factors and issues around social exclusion are thought to be the main reasons for a reluctance to use conventional services.

As a result, the Gypsy and travelling community are more reliant on specialist services that do not always have a local base. Some of the specialist services available to Gypsies and travellers are listed below:

- Advisory Council for the Education of Romanies and Other Travellers (ACERT) – Harlow, Essex.
- East Anglia Gypsy Council – Peterborough, Cambridgeshire
- Gypsy Council for Education, Culture, Welfare and Civil Rights (GCEWCR) – Aveley, Essex.
- Gypsy Traveller Health Information Service – Burnham Market, Norfolk.
- National Association of Gypsy Women – Rayleigh, Essex.
- National Association of Health Workers with Travellers – Oxford, England.
- National Association of Teachers for Travellers – Braintree, Essex
- National Gypsy Council – Warrington, Cheshire.
- National Romany Rights Association – Cambridge.
- Roma Refugee Organisation. – London
- Romany and Traveller Family History Society – South Chailey, East Sussex.
- Romany Guild – London
- Traveller Education Team Wigan Education Support Service – Leigh
- UNITE (Unified Nomadic Integrated Transnational Education) – Hockley, Essex.

## **CONCLUSION**

The work being carried out by the council and its partners should eventually lead to an overall increase in site provision. This should reduce the number of Gypsies and Travellers who are faced with homelessness in Colchester.

Once the sites have been developed it should be easier to find out the support needs of Gypsies and Travellers so that these can be met locally and regionally.

## **Wyre Forest**

### 5.12 Travellers

It is unclear how many travellers have presented as homeless as records are not kept, but the Wyre Forest Housing Strategy Update 2002 includes in its objectives the aim to carry out an assessment of the housing needs of travellers.

*We aim to ensure that the numbers and needs of travellers presenting as homeless are recorded and considered.*

### 6.2.2 Accessible information

It is important that all of the community is aware that information, advice and assistance is available, including hard to reach groups such as .....travellers.

## **East Cambridgeshire**

### Needs of Travellers

11. The Ormiston Childrens Trust carry out a lot of work with travellers in Cambridgeshire. A lottery grant has funded the provision of an Advocacy Service, due to start in August 2003. The need for additional services will be investigated through the Traveller Implementation Group, on which East Cambridgeshire District Council represents the Housing Authorities.

29. Key priority areas relate to..... tackling social exclusion, directing resources and initiatives towards the needs of the Council's priority groups such as .....travellers

42. According to the Census, East Cambridgeshire has a non-white population of just 2.1%. The largest ethnic population in the district is of Travellers, although they are not counted as a distinct ethnic group in the census and their numbers are therefore uncertain. For information on Travellers please see Strategic Objective 5.3.

### Strategic Objective 5.3

To ensure that support is available to the most vulnerable people.

HOW?

Travellers - The Council employs a Traveller Liaison Officer (TLO) who can provide support to settled travellers in addition to those living on sites and unauthorised camps. The Housing Advisors will liaise with the TLO to ensure that support is provided when needed. The TLO will also engage the Multicultural Education Officer and health visitors if needed.

ACTION POINT: To ensure that the Traveller Liaison Officer is aware of the housing needs of travellers and that support is coordinated accordingly.

ACTION POINT: To represent the Cambridgeshire district housing authorities on the Traveller Implementation Group and ensure the needs of travellers are captured in the Supporting People programme.

## Fenland

### 5.5 Provision for Travellers

Fenland has the largest population of Gypsy travellers of any district in England. There are 5 permanent Council-owned caravan sites, supplemented by a significant number of private sites. However, in 2002/3 there were 220 unauthorised encampments in the district, and even though only one had to be resolved by Court action, the authority is mindful that there appears to be unmet need. Development of further Council-owned sites will be dependent on the availability of Government funding and lack of planning constraints."

### 4.6 All people from black and minority ethnic groups

The 2001 census showed that the overwhelming majority (98.6%) of Fenland residents consider themselves to be White British. From a housing point of view, the most significant minority group in Fenland are travellers. Although the number of travellers re-housed here through the homelessness route is relatively small, there are issues around the need to respect cultural differences, particularly when caravan dwellers are made homeless, e.g. through eviction from an unauthorised site. This raises issues over the type of temporary accommodation (currently bricks and mortar) which should be offered to this group. The Council will evaluate the desirability of developing short term transit sites for the travelling community.

### ACTION POINTS - PEOPLE FROM BLACK AND MINORITY GROUPS

Task	By Whom	By When
Agree the best way of avoiding homelessness among travellers without access to a legal site for their caravan	Fenland DC	December 2005
Ensure that equal opportunities policies are implemented and updated in respect of services to all black and minority ethnic groups	Fenland HP	Ongoing

Targeted approach to meeting the needs of specific groups	8.Determine the best way of avoiding homelessness among travellers without access to a legal site for their caravan	Fenland DC	Potential capital costs of developing new sites	December 2005
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## London Borough of Bromley

Bromley has the largest settled community of Travellers in the UK, including 2 fixed sites in the Cray area. The Council is working closely with the Bromley Traveller Project and Avalon Housing Association to explore the housing needs of this community. Initial indications are that floating support, focusing on tenancy sustainment would be appropriate.

## **South Bucks**

Causes of homelessness in SBDC?

Not enough site provision for Travellers.....  
Lack of emergency and Direct access accommodation  
Lack of knowledge by Service users  
Lack of joined up working.

Lewes

There is currently no specialised provision for travellers

## **Test Valley**

Para 4.1.48

There are no authorised Gypsy or Travellers sites in Test Valley and the number of Gypsies recorded in the borough is relatively low, few seek housing advice or assistance with housing. Of those that require assistance the Council's Gypsy and Family Liaison Officer and Housing Service provide an effective outreach service visiting and assisting with applications.

Findings

There were 35 encampments recorded between January 2002 and January 2003. Of these approximately 17 separate groups or families are represented. Not surprisingly most encampments are in rural areas with more in the south of the borough than in the north.

Most encampments remain on site for less than one month.

Within mixed family/friend groups where several adults and children were on the same encampment, the average number of adults was 6 and average number of children in mixed groups was 5.

Para 5.2.5

The Council in meeting its duties under the Race Relations Act must consider the accommodation needs of Gypsies and travellers.

Establish multi-agency procedures for meeting the accommodation needs of nomadic groups to ensure that a more comprehensive approach is taken in assessing the issues affecting them.

Produce a procedure guide for managing applications for assistance under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness 2002) and applications for permanent housing in partnership with the Environment and Health and Planning Services.

Enter into cross boundary discussions with neighbouring authorities.

## **Preston**

Travellers

7.24 Contacts with services have usually been around the issues of domestic violence and harassment and consequently it is felt that needs are catered for through these routes. There is a site in the City but this has well established residents. Occasionally we have re-housed families and even provided emergency accommodation.

## Southampton

### 6.17 Travellers

6.17.1 Southampton City has a Corporate policy on Gypsies and Travellers which recognises and accepts their right to live a nomadic way of life. It aims to empower Gypsies and Travellers to access all council services and other forms of assistance provided by the council.

6.17.2 Applications for council accommodation are accepted from Gypsies and Travellers who are resident at the council-maintained site at Kanes Hill. Homelessness applications will be accepted from Gypsies and Travellers, currently living in a “moveable structure” and if a statutory duty to rehouse applies, conventional housing will be offered. For those who wish to reside in a caravan advice and assistance will be offered to help to obtain a place on a suitable permanent site.

6.17.3 In 2002/3 nomadic groups stopped on 16 sites in the city. There were an estimated 70 adults and 88 children. Nomadic groups of travellers wishing to stay in the city for only a short time, i.e. 1 week to 3 months have no emergency stopping place or transit site where they can safely stay. The city is working with other local authorities in the region to locate suitable sites.

## Tonbridge & Malling

The largest BME group in the Borough is the Gypsy/traveller fraternity. There are two official Gypsy sites in the Borough; Cold Harbour Lane, Aylesford and Windmill Lane, West Malling, both of which are managed by KCC’s Gypsy Liaison Unit. There is also a tolerated site at Hoath Wood. Instances of applications under the homelessness provisions are rare.

## Surrey Heath

The Council is currently involved with traveller sites where action is being taken. There is good internal liaison between departments that need to be formalised.’

Action	Cross Reference	Time scale	Target/ Outcome	Resources	Lead
Identify internal responsibilities (Housing, Planning, EH) and develop procedures for ensuring all duties are met in a co-ordinated way	Objective 2	Year 1	Produce procedures and monitoring processes	Within existing resources	Surrey Heath Borough Council

### Surrey Cross County Action Plan

NEEDS IDENTIFIED	Action	Timescale	Resources	Lead
Travellers	Ensure access to information about travellers’ sites	3 years 2003-06	Within existing resources	SCC/Borough Districts

## Mid-Sussex

In partnership with other housing authorities in West Sussex, develop effective protocols and procedures with other relevant agencies for cross boundary issues, namely:

.....



With West Sussex County Council a protocol for addressing the needs of travellers and Gypsies

## **Carrick**

“Whilst the absolute number of individuals in at risk groups, for example, travellers or teenage parents may be low, the level of resources and dedicated provision available to address their needs is also very low.” P21

### **“Action Points-Travellers:**

- Link with the County Inter Agency Traveller Forum to prepare for and consider the impact of new legislation arising from the Traveller Law Reform Bill
- In conjunction with Social Services, the Local Education Authority, Primary Care Trusts and voluntary organisations supporting travellers, participate in any review the provision of suitable accommodation and support services for these groups.” p 24

## **Bristol**

### **19.4 Gypsies and travellers**

The current picture

- No formal monitoring of Gypsies and travellers using homelessness services or applying for housing currently exists. However, we are aware that some 15 to 20 families applied for homeless assistance from the Kings Weston Lane transit Gypsy site in the last two years. Many Gypsy families who try to adapt to housing accommodation are not able to sustain a tenancy for any significant length of time. After a few months or even weeks they are back on the roadside until another crisis may force them back to homelessness. This is often a costly cycle both in terms of costs for the local authority and also costly both in monetary and emotionally for the family.

Current services

- In terms of appropriate accommodation the City Council has one transit site of 20 pitches at Kings Weston Lane, Avonmouth. Each pitch can only accommodate one family. Each family can only stay for up to 13 weeks in a year.
- The council has an aspiration to develop a site currently in its ownership for residential use. However this has proven difficult to deliver to date
- A Gypsy and Traveller Co-ordinator is employed by the City Council and works within Neighbourhood and Housing Services
- There is a health visitor for travellers covering the whole of Bristol, but the service only deals with those on official sites and unauthorised encampments
- There is a traveller education service covering the whole of Bristol which runs along the same lines as the health service
- The Avon consortium traveller education service supports schools where travelling children have newly entered offering advice and temporary classroom support. This service also has an Education Welfare officer that does outreach work with travelling families

Key Gaps

- It is estimated that there is a need for in the region of 30 additional pitches on residential sites in Bristol.
- There is a need to develop targeted tenancy support to those families who are in emergency accommodation and newly housed
- There is a need to undertake more research into the hidden needs and conditions of Gypsy and travelling families

Action Plan

- There is a need to develop 30 additional pitches for Gypsies/ travelling families in the city

## **North Cornwall**

‘Developing a travellers site, to meet the likely requirements of The Travellers Law Reform Bill. Consideration of the likely requirements of the Bill and the role of the local authority in facilitating development of a travellers site and planning a response to this’ p 33

## **Kerrier**

Cornwall Health for Homeless

Kerrier District Council and the Central Cornwall Primary Care Trust have worked in partnership to progress a Primary Medical Services Pilot for healthcare services for homeless people – Cornwall Health for Homeless..... it has been decided that initially the service will be targeted at single homeless people, rough sleepers and travellers.

Inter-agency Gypsy and travellers forum

Kerrier sits on this forum to consider the housing needs of Gypsies and travellers in the Kerrier district.

Apart from the above, the following occurs in The Leicestershire Partnership's **A Review of Homelessness July 2003**:

#### 6.13 Homeless services for Travellers and Gypsies

There are no temporary stopping places in any of the four districts and the shortage of sites in the area causes accommodation problems and unauthorised encampments have been recorded in Hinckley and Bosworth, Blaby and North West Leicestershire. Figures for 2002 are indicated below.

District	Numbers of caravans	Numbers of children involved
H&B	43	53
NWL	42	Over 45
Blaby	3	2
O&W	0	0

Homelessness is as much of an issue in the area for people who have opted for a nomadic or semi-nomadic life-style as it is for those requiring permanent housing and should be viewed as an accommodation need. It is estimated that 90% of traditional stopping places, such as green lanes, have been blocked off or in some other way made inaccessible in the last 20 years. Gypsies have high infant mortality rates and low life expectancy.

The Good Practice guidance<sup>5</sup> advises local authorities to build planning aspects into their overall Traveller strategy. Site provision, they conclude is an essential corollary to tackling unauthorised encampments and urge local authorities to identify clear and realistic criteria for suitable locations as a basis for site provision policies and identify land in their ownership, or land which is leased, suitable to facilitate transit site provision.

## South Gloucestershire

### 19.4 Gypsies and travellers

The current picture

- No formal monitoring of Gypsies and travellers using homelessness services or applying for housing currently exists. However, we are aware that some 15 to 20 families applied for homeless assistance from the Kings Weston Lane transit Gypsy site in the last two years. Many Gypsy families who try to adapt to housing accommodation are not able to sustain a tenancy for any significant length of time. After a few months or even weeks they are back on the roadside until another crisis may force them back to homelessness. This is often a costly cycle both in terms of costs for the local authority and also costly both in monetary and emotionally for the family.

Current services

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- A Gypsy and Traveller Co-ordinator is employed by the City Council and works within Neighbourhood and Housing Services
- There is a health visitor for travellers covering the whole of Bristol, but the service only deals with those on official sites and unauthorised encampments

<sup>5</sup> Managing Unauthorised Camping – Issued by the Home Office and DETR in 1998 and revised in 2000

- There is a traveller education service covering the whole of Bristol which runs along the same lines as the health service
- The Avon consortium traveller education service supports schools where travelling children have newly entered offering advice and temporary classroom support. This service also has an Education Welfare officer that does outreach work with travelling families

#### Key Gaps

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- There is a need to undertake more research into the hidden needs and conditions of Gypsy and travelling families

#### Action Plan

- There is a need to develop 30 additional pitches for Gypsies/ travelling families in the city