



The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP  
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP  
Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth

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4 August 2022

## **Re: Energy cost crisis and the impact on Gypsies and Travellers**

Dear Mr Kwarteng and Mr Hands,

We write to you as organisations working with Gypsy and Traveller communities, to inform you about some of the specific issues Gypsy and Traveller communities are experiencing during the cost-of-living crisis and soaring energy prices, and to urge Government to take steps to address these.

To provide some context, there are around 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, and approximately a quarter of these families live in caravans or other mobile structures. This can be on local authority sites, private sites or living nomadically (on roadside camps or on the waterways for liveaboard boater communities).

During a time when millions of households are experiencing fuel poverty, it is crucial for Government to recognise the astronomically high energy costs for living in mobile homes, caravans and on boats. Organisations working with Gypsy and Traveller communities, such as ours, continue to hear from families about the crippling impact of rising energy prices.

Arrangements for energy use for those living in caravans or mobile homes are invariably different to those living in bricks and mortar accommodation and are disproportionately high. These arrangements for energy use and subsequent inflated costs, have long been an issue for Gypsy and Traveller communities. A [2013 Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment](#) conducted in Leeds highlighted that, compared

[gypsy-traveller.org](http://gypsy-traveller.org)

with 'settled' energy consumers, Gypsies and Travellers living on sites were paying on average 42% more.

One of the key issues underpinning this is that many site owners (including local authorities) choose the electricity supplier, meaning site residents cannot shop around for the best energy price and often have to pay an additional handling charge. Many other site residents have prepayment meters, which as you will know, are generally a more expensive source of electricity.

Another issue which exacerbates fuel poverty for Gypsies and Travellers living on sites or roadside camps is the cost of gas cylinders. Sites are often not connected to a mains gas supply so need to rely on gas cylinders, which are comparatively more expensive. A gas cylinder currently costs between £70-£85 and would last roughly five to seven days in the winter months for a family of four. That's approximately £400 a month on gas alone. According to [British Gas in April 2022](#), for a five bedroom house with a family of four to five, the average monthly cost for gas was £81.93. The exceptionally high energy costs mean Gypsies and Travellers are at greater risk of experiencing fuel poverty, an issue that will be exacerbated in the face of rising prices.

We were encouraged to see the announcement on 29 July, committing to address the exclusions from the Energy Bills Support Scheme. We are concerned about the thousands of Gypsy and Traveller families living on sites who do not have their own domestic electricity contract or direct relationship with an energy supplier. Some sites have a commercial contract whilst many other Gypsy and Traveller site residents pay the site owner for energy, who then pays the energy supplier. Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that the Energy Bills Support Scheme £400 grant reaches all of these households, and we are keen to hear the details on how this will be achieved. We are happy to provide you with further information on ensuring the scheme is as inclusive as possible and reaches some of the most marginalised communities.

It is important for the Department to consider not only those that live on Gypsy and Traveller sites, but also those living on roadside camps or in boats on the waterways, whose electricity supply comes from using generators. Whilst they are not sourcing electricity from an electricity company, petrol or diesel is needed to power a generator, which has also seen dramatic price increases.



In order to assist the Department in developing an inclusive scheme for supporting families through the energy cost crisis, we would be happy to facilitate a meeting with community representatives and organisations working with Gypsy and Traveller communities. This would help the Department gain a better understanding of the disproportionate impact of the energy cost crisis on Gypsy and Traveller communities in order to explore options to address this. Beyond the current energy costs crisis, there is a much wider issue around Gypsy and Traveller site design for energy efficiency and consumer choice, which we would like to draw your attention to.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Mann  
Director  
Friends, Families and Travellers

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