



MOVING FOR
CHANGE

Lost in transit: Gypsy and Traveller people's experiences of transit site provision (or its absence)

**Summary report
with a Community Advocacy Statement by Violet Cannon**

Report compiled by Friends, Families and Travellers,
on behalf of Moving for Change and partners

September 2026



YOU CANNOT EVICT PEOPLE INTO NOWHERE

By Violet Cannon

There is a sentence repeated throughout this report in different forms:

There is nowhere to go.

It is said by parents trying to keep children safe. By people returning from work to find an eviction under way. By older people whose bodies can no longer withstand constant movement. By families attempting to remain close to hospitals, schools and relatives. By people whose culture includes travelling, but whose country has steadily removed almost every lawful place where they might stop.

The words are simple. The system behind them is not.

For decades, Gypsy and Traveller communities have been discussed as though roadside stopping is a behavioural problem: something caused by individuals refusing to comply, rather than by governments and local authorities repeatedly failing to provide somewhere lawful, safe and suitable to go.

This report disrupts that account.

Of the 362 local authorities responding to earlier Freedom of Information research, 332 had no locally owned or managed transit sites or pitches. In this research, 42% of participants said they had stopped roadside because they had no choice. Eighty per cent had little or no experience of transit provision in the previous year, largely because no suitable provision existed. Sixty-five per cent had experienced eviction, while more than 84% reported discrimination.

These are not isolated failures. They form a system.

First, traditional stopping places were closed or restricted. Then the statutory duty to provide sites was removed. Planning routes became increasingly difficult, unaffordable and hostile. Finally, stronger enforcement powers were introduced against families stopping on land without permission.

The state withdrew the places, restricted the alternatives and then criminalised the consequences.

That is why this cannot be treated simply as an accommodation report. It is about power: who is permitted to move, who is permitted to stop, whose home is recognised as a home and whose presence is continually treated as a disruption requiring removal.

The violence of constant removal

An eviction is often described administratively: a notice served, a direction issued, an encampment cleared.

Those words conceal what actually happens.

Children are woken and frightened. Medication and hospital appointments are disrupted. Parents lose work because they must return urgently to move their homes. Trailers are towed despite mechanical problems. Older and disabled people are forced back onto the road. Families move into another district, where the same process begins again.

A welfare check conducted only as a prelude to eviction is not welfare. Asking whether someone is vulnerable, while offering no safe alternative and proceeding to remove them, does not resolve that vulnerability. It records it.

This report found that 60% of participants had never received a welfare check while living roadside. Others described checks as inconsistent, meaningless or little more than a letter attached to a gate.

When a person repeatedly says they are frightened, ill, exhausted or unable to access medication, and the institutional response is still “move”, the problem is not a lack of information.

It is a lack of value being placed upon that person’s life.

Provision must not become another form of control

Building transit sites alone will not be enough if they are badly located, prohibitively expensive, unsafe or designed without the people expected to use them.

Some existing sites have been placed beside industrial activity, waste facilities, dangerous roads or other environmentally harmful land uses. Others impose deposits, additional utility charges or conditions that make them inaccessible. A site may technically exist while remaining practically unusable.

The report’s finding that 94% of participants wanted community involvement in site design should not be interpreted as a request for one final consultation after the important decisions have already been taken.

Co-production must begin before land is selected. Gypsy and Traveller people must share power over location, design, management, charges, access arrangements and the rules governing length of stay.

Safe stopping does not need to mean one uniform model. A functioning national network should include permanent transit sites, smaller serviced stopping places, seasonal provision, negotiated stopping and temporary use of suitable “meanwhile” land. Provision should follow real travelling routes and family networks rather than administrative boundaries that communities do not travel according to.

From evidence to obligation

We have been researched enough to establish that the problem exists

Local authorities assess need. Charities publish reports. Communities share painful experiences. Recommendations are written, welcomed and revisited. Yet families continue to be moved from

one unsuitable place to another because nobody has accepted enforceable responsibility for creating the alternative.

This report must therefore be used for more than awareness.

National government should restore a clear duty to ensure sufficient permanent and transit provision. Every local area should have a published and funded plan, developed with communities and accompanied by delivery dates. Authorities should be required to identify a suitable alternative before taking enforcement action, except where there is an immediate and evidenced risk that cannot be managed. Water, sanitation and refuse support should be provided wherever families are temporarily stopping, and night-time evictions should end. Progress should be measured not by how quickly an encampment disappears, but by whether families have somewhere safe and lawful to go.

Gypsy and Traveller communities have not failed to fit within the system.

The system has been designed around settled lives, settled homes and settled assumptions—and then used to punish those whose culture does not fit neatly within them.

No family should have to become invisible to feel safe. No older person should spend their final years being pushed between roadsides. No child should learn that home is somewhere the authorities can order away within 48 hours.

Transit provision is not a special favour.

It is infrastructure. It is prevention. It is equality. It is the practical foundation upon which the right to continue a nomadic way of life depends.

Most importantly, it is somewhere to go.

Violet Cannon
Chief Executive Officer at Proud Gypsy Traveller CIC
and Chair at Moving for Change

REPORT SUMMARY

Why this matters

Between January and April 2025, **119** Gypsy and Traveller people across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland shared their experiences of transit site provision—the temporary, short-stay sites intended to support people travelling for work, family or cultural reasons.

These testimonies, gathered through 106 peer-to-peer interviews and 13 online surveys, paint a consistent picture: transit provision is **scarce, inconsistently managed**, and **frequently absent altogether**, leaving people cycling through **repeated evictions** with knock-on harms to health, education, safety and security.

92%

of local authorities surveyed had no transit sites or pitches of their own.

80%

of participants had little or no transit provision available to them in the past year.

65%

of participants have experienced an eviction.

84%+

reported experiencing at least one form of discrimination.

"Been moved on many times over the last few years. If there had been a transit site in the area, we would have moved onto it straight away. In Warwickshire, we have been moved on over 30 times..."

— Research participant

On the ground

Provision is scarce and hard to find

A prior Freedom of Information exercise found that of **362 local authorities surveyed, 332 (92%) had no local-authority-owned or managed transit sites or pitches**, and only 31 (9%) had any transit provision at all. Where provision did exist, **39% of those authorities reported police using powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to direct people onto site**, and **50% charged residents extra fees on top of deposits of £100–£500**. Since the Act removed councils' duty to provide sites in 1994, only 30 socially provided sites have been built across the local authorities surveyed in England.

This scarcity is reflected directly in participants' lives: **42%** said they were parked roadside for lack of any choice, and **only 18% had ever used a transit site, with just 26% having done so in the past 12 months. Only a third of respondents had been able to remain in one area for a year or more.**

Evictions and welfare checks

65% of participants have experienced eviction, and welfare checks (which are legally required before enforcement action) are inconsistently applied: **60% of respondents had never received a welfare check while living roadside**. Where checks did happen, many described them as a box-ticking exercise carried out only once eviction was already underway, rather than genuine engagement.

"They are meant to do welfare checks, but they don't do them until the last day or day after..."

"Welfare checks [are] just a letter on the gate saying call us...or if we move on, they come and say are you okay?"

Compounding harm: health, education and discrimination

Insecure, roadside living was repeatedly linked to disrupted access to schooling and healthcare. Families reported being refused GP registration and school places without a fixed address, and one participant described being pressured to accept bricks-and-mortar housing after a suspected heart attack rather than being allowed to return home. Over **84% of participants reported experiencing at least one form of discrimination**, described by many as a routine part of daily life, from being refused service in shops and restaurants to threats of violence.

"I am 78 with heart and blood pressure problems. My wife is 72 with dementia and arthritis, she can't walk. For 6 years, we can't get a transit or permanent site. We can't get a doctor, nor medication, no help." — Romany Gypsy participant

What the absence of provision means

The Caravan Sites Act 1968 placed a duty on councils to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers. That duty was removed by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which also introduced stronger eviction powers. In England, specific guidance on assessing accommodation need (GTAA's) was withdrawn in 2016 and replaced with a general duty to merely "consider" need, leaving **75% of participants saying they had never even been asked to take part in a needs assessment**. Wales places a statutory duty on councils to both assess and meet need under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014; no equivalent statutory framework exists in Scotland or Northern Ireland. The result across Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a patchwork with **no consistent duty to deliver**.

What good practice looks like

Not all provision fails. Participants spoke positively of transit sites in **Walsall** and **Middlewich**, both praised for on-site management that resolved problems quickly. 94% of participants believe communities should be involved in designing sites, with co-production rather than consultation after the fact being central to what participants consistently say makes provision work.

"Middlewich transit site in Cheshire had a site manager on site and was very helpful. Any problems would be fixed and sorted immediately..." — Research participant

Recommendations

Immediate actions to reduce harm

- Ensure emergency access to water, sanitation, waste disposal and healthcare for people living roadside; introduce local authority protocols for temporary amenities where no site is available.
- Make evictions a genuine last resort: require authorities to identify suitable alternatives first, prohibit night-time evictions, and standardise welfare checks so they are meaningful rather than a pre-eviction formality.
- Publish accessible, up-to-date information on site availability, costs and facilities, with clear points of contact for families seeking a place to stop.
- Begin immediate engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities to rebuild trust, and roll out anti-racism and inclusive-services training for frontline staff.

Structural and legislative change

- Develop a national network of transit sites and safe stopping places that reflects real travel routes and community networks, and expand negotiated stopping models.
- Introduce and enforce minimum national standards for site design, safety and management.
- Embed co-production in policy and provision, with formal structures for Gypsy and Traveller communities to shape local and national strategy.
- Remove address-based barriers to GP registration and schooling, and expand mental health support that reflects the cumulative impact of insecurity and discrimination.
- Reissue clear national guidance on conducting Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments (GTAAAs), developed in consultation with the communities they assess.

The bottom line

Nothing in this research is radical: participants are asking for **safe**, **looked after** places to stop, **timely** and **respectful** treatment, and a **say in how provision is designed**. The evidence points not to a lack of understanding of the problem, but a persistent lack of action. Closing this gap is a matter of policy delivery, not new discovery.

To view the full *Lost in transit: Gypsy and Traveller people's experiences of transit site provision (or its absence)* report, scan the QR code:





MOVING FOR CHANGE

movingforchange.org.uk

Registered company
no. 12418885

Generously supported by:

