

HOUSING AND SUPPORT NEEDS ANALYSIS

GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

Wigan Social Services Document control		
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1.0 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND TARGETS

Travellers are not a homogenous group. They comprise most commonly in Britain of at least two specific ethnic groups, Roma and Irish Traveller, and can include, entertainment travellers, show people, and non ethnically aligned travellers, (sometimes referred to as New Age travellers).

Information around the accommodation and support needs of gypsies and travellers in Wigan is limited, however a major research and consultation exercise is being undertaken during 2007 in partnership with all the Greater Manchester authorities which will both inform the Supporting People Strategy and assist in the development of Wigan's Gypsy and Traveller Strategy.

There is a new statutory requirement under s225 of the 2004 Housing Act for Local Authorities to produce an Accommodation Needs Assessment (ANA) for Gypsies and Travellers and 2004 Housing Act, and a strategy addressing those accommodation needs.

We do not already have reliable base line information in order to be able to discharge this duty. As there is a degree of discreet movement among Gypsies and Travellers around the M62 Manchester circular road area, there is seasonal movement and a risk of double counting in conducting such assessments, a Greater Manchester Group was brought together to investigate the benefits of conducting the ANA across the Greater Manchester Boroughs. Through this group we are about to commission consultants to undertake the Accommodation Needs Assessment on our behalf that fulfils the following aims:

- A clear and quantifiable profile of Gypsy's and Travellers who live currently or have accommodation needs in the borough.
- An understanding of their needs in terms of current accommodation
- A clear understanding of their needs and aspirations in terms of further accommodation choices.
- A forecast of the population profile over the next 15 years
- As far as is possible an analysis of the impact of changing accommodation provision on the population.
- Enables each of the authorities to develop a Strategy to meet Gypsy and Travellers accommodation needs.
- In addition, in line with the ethos of the Local Authority to actively involve its citizens in meaningful inclusion in the decisions and developments that effect them. We will require that the ANA utilises the Gypsy and Traveller community fully as both partners and participants in the research.

When looking at the possible ways of gathering data about a chiefly nomadic group we will take in to account the requirements of the government in relation to the Assessment. These include gathering information in relation to:

- Those people who live on council owned or run gypsy and traveller sites
- Those people living on privately owned sites
- Those people living on sites without planning permission , but which are tolerated
- Those people illegally encamped on the side of the road or on waste ground.
- Those people of Gypsy or Traveller ethnic origin who are living currently in housing, (either rented or owned).

Adverts have been placed and contractor is to be appointed in January 2007. Negotiation to take place at interview shortlist stage around timetable for undertaking work. It is envisaged that the ANA will be complete during 2007, however similar regional work commissioned by the NWRA due to be published in July 2006 is still awaited.

On completion of the ANA, meetings of the Gypsy and Traveller Strategy group will be arranged with a view to developing Wigan's strategy.

2.0 CURRENT SUPPLY

2.1 CURRENT SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROVISION

There are currently no specialist services funded by Supporting People for Gypsies and Travellers. There is however other specialist provision in the borough:

Sites:

There are currently 5 authorised caravan sites in the borough:

- 2 Residential / Transient (1 Council owned, 1 privately owned)
- 3 Showman's sites (all privately owned)

The Council owned site is managed by Wigan and Leigh Housing who are an 'arms length management organisation' who also manage the Council's housing stock.

Services:

- The Specialist Health Visiting Team for Homeless and Vulnerable People comprises a Specialist Health Visitor, dedicated G.P., Community Nursery Nurse, admin support and is about to recruit a C.P.N. The team supports homeless people, asylum seekers and travellers on unauthorised sites.
- The Traveller Education Team, which consists of six staff, comprises Support Teachers, Teaching Assistants and an Education Liaison Worker. They provide support to all Traveller children and their families to access educational opportunities and those schools and their staff which enroll Traveller pupils.

2.2 CURRENT LEVEL OF PROVISION: REGIONAL AND NATIONAL COMPARISON

Owing to the low level of provision throughout the country the ODPM has not released any comparative data, however information is available about the national picture: there is a total of 1,035 units which accounts for £1,122,349 Supporting People Grant

3.0 WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF NEED?

3.1 PREVALENCE FIGURES

National Gypsy and Travellers Count

Count of gypsy families (Wigan):

Date	Total	Unauthorised encampments	Authorised sites: Council	Authorised sites: private
Jan 07	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jul 06	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jan 05	44	0	16	28
Jul 04	43	0	16	27
Jan 04	43	0	16	27
Jul 03	35	0	10	25
Jan 03	35	0	15	20
Jul 02	41	0	13	28

In the Jan 05 count of families the Bickershaw Caravan site (Council) consisted of 23 adults and 22 children. 81% are English Gypsy and 19% Irish Traveller. The Little Lane Caravan site (Private) consisted of 39 adults and 29 children. This information is no longer collected, hence 'N/A' appears above.

3.4 HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Gypsies and Travellers can live in large extended families with a number of children. Not surprisingly with this size of family access to important services such as health and education is crucial, especially when Gypsies and Travellers are known to have poorer health and have a life expectancy which is shorter than the national average

Gypsies and travellers have significantly poorer health than the general population, with women living 12 years less than women in the general population, and men 10 years less⁴. Studies highlight a higher incidence of stillbirths, peri-natal and infant mortality, and a higher incidence of childhood accidents⁵. Living conditions on unregulated sites are often unsafe, without basic water & sanitation or safe play areas, are insecure, and people face constant eviction and persecution. Children may not be immunised and often miss out on education and school medicals. Caravans may be damp and poorly ventilated, with condensation and smoking contributing to chest complaints. Access to services may be limited due to difficulties communicating with health staff because of attitudinal and cultural barriers. Walk in centres are often used to access healthcare, so people present for care without an available medical history. However, when offered is support, travellers are often enthusiastic; the Homeless and Vulnerable Persons Health Team recently undertook an immunisation programme that targeted travellers and requested further health promotion activities on site.

Gypsies and travellers similar problems to the rest of the community, e.g. domestic violence, mental health problems and alcohol abuse, but no information is available on the take up of support in these services.

Formal education is viewed as important within the Gypsy and Traveller community, but Gypsy and Traveller children receive poorer exam results than the wider settled population⁶, and there is a low level of literacy amongst the Gypsy and Traveller community, than the broader population.

Traveller Education Team

The Traveller Education Team, which consists of six staff, comprises 1.6 f.t.e. Support Teachers, 1.4 f.t.e. Teaching Assistants and 1 f.t.e. Education Liaison Worker. They provide support to all Traveller children and their families to access educational opportunities and those schools and their staff which enrol Traveller pupils.

The support provided will usually be a mixture of:

- Support for the enrolment and induction of Traveller pupils into schools
- Support for schools and families in maintaining Traveller pupils' attendance
- Advice and support for school staff with materials and strategies for working with Traveller pupils
- Additional teacher/teaching assistant support, where appropriate
- In-service training and education about aspects of Traveller culture
- Support for the development of distance learning packages

All children referred to the Team have an initial assessment of their learning needs which leads to a negotiated package of support for the child, the school and its staff.

In addition to work in schools the Team is providing access to educational/study opportunities through on-site provision on the Bickershaw Caravan Site. We also maintain links with a national network of Traveller Education Services in an effort to support continuity of education when children are travelling.

Barriers to Education

Traveller groups are recognised as the most significantly under-achieving pupils in the education system. One of the greatest difficulties for the Team is trying to provide access to education for Traveller children whose families reside in unauthorised encampments. Considerable effort is put into finding school places which are not taken up because the families are evicted/moved on. This results in the children losing an opportunity to learn, the attainment gaps increasing and the Team and schools investing time and effort with no beneficial outcome for anyone.

In the last academic year (2005/6) the Team visited 13 unauthorised encampments totalling 150 caravans. Only 11 school places were able to be organised before the families were moved on. Of those places arranged only 6 were taken up.

Many families do not take up the offer to arrange a school place because they know they are likely to be moved on very quickly. As a result of this speed of movement the Team has now adopted a policy of providing workpacks for children on unauthorised encampments. Parents are given details so that they can contact the Team if they find they are able to stay in the area and wish us to arrange a school placement.

In addition to the children of families who are highly mobile, we are aware that there are school-age children and young people resorting to the area that we know little about who consequently are not accessing the education to which they are entitled.

The number of young people whose parents opt to withdraw from the mainstream education system for "Education at Home" continues to increase. This choice is often made through concern at the influence of the culture of the settled community, especially at secondary level, but also because the young people become part of the family working unit. The Team provides advice to parents and monitors the provision but both the quality and quantity of learning is very variable. We have also made "study space" available through our on-site provision. Appendix 1 contains more detailed information about pupil numbers and attendance.

3.5 DIVERSITY

Gypsies and Travellers are recognised ethnic groups under The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Authority have a duty to ensure that our policies and procedures do not impact on them in a discriminatory way. The definition does not include New Age Travellers or other people leading a nomadic lifestyle who are not part of the distinct ethnic groups of Romany Gypsies or Irish Travellers.

3.6 CONSULTATION

On completion of the ANA, the Gypsy and Traveller Strategy group will develop a strategy that attempts to address needs identified. The group currently comprises officers from Housing Strategy and Planning Policy (joint lead), Supporting People, Public Health (PCT), Specialist Health Visitor, Planning Enforcement, Traveller Education Team and Environmental Health. Whilst this group comprises a good spectrum of specialists, representation by Gypsies or Travellers is a significant gap. It is hoped that in undertaking the ANA, representatives of the gypsy and traveller community may be identified who would be willing to participate in ongoing strategy development. It is acknowledged however that as Gypsies and Travellers are not a homogenous group, individuals can not be considered to represent agreed leadership or a group held view point.

Consultation has been undertaken in the past, but in an ad-hoc fashion. In October 2004, The Housing Advice Development Worker visited the Council's Gypsy Site and spoke to 3 Travellers. Although they know where and how to access advice & other services, they may have difficulty accessing education & health services, and are amenable to these types of services being provided at the site:

- 66% of the Travellers consulted had used the Citizens Advice Bureau to access advice, commonly for 'form filling', but one person stated she had used the bureau for a consumer issue.
- 66% of the Travellers mentioned different Council departments that they had accessed for services (Social Services, Environmental Health)
- 100% of the Travellers consulted stated that they would use local agencies & services rather than specialist Traveller advice lines.
- The majority of the adults support/advice needs appear to be around literacy issues
- A portacabin has been placed on the site for children's play and educational purposes. All of the Travellers said that this was a good service and wanted it to continue as it was sometimes difficult to get a child into a local school if they had been moving around and the local school was currently full
- At an earlier consultation event regarding the refurbishment of the site a health visitor had been present and had provided toothbrushes for the children. One person said that she thought the provision of health services was a good idea.

Stakeholder consultation

Most of the data and commentary for this Housing and Support needs analysis has been provided by Gypsies and Travellers Strategy Group who will be key in the development of the strategy once the ANA is complete.

4.0 CURRENT PROVISION: ARE CURRENT SERVICES MEETING LOCAL NEEDS AND PRIORITIES?

National research² states there is a need to provide additional pitches for gypsies and travellers. In support of this, legislation has been introduced which requires local authorities to undertake Accommodation Needs Assessments and strategies to address needs identified.

There is no current specialist Supporting People provision and whilst gypsies and travellers are eligible to access other floating and accommodation based support services, no data is available on whether they do.

5.0 GAPS AND PRIORITIES

- The key priority is to **Improve our understanding of need**.
- This can only be done through **improved consultation and engagement**. Whilst the GM study aims to do this in 2007, this is not a 'one off' Assessment; it will need to be refined upon and renewed on a regular basis, over the coming years
- Once we have achieved the above, we will then be in a position to **produce a Gypsy and Traveller strategy**, which is likely to include issues around improving access to services and improving access to and developing services.
- Given the apparent increase in prevalence of unauthorised encampments and that authorised sites rarely have vacancies, there is a potential need for a temporary transit site as part of a Greater Manchester approach and more land for pitches in the future.

6.0 KEY STRATEGIC PLANNING GROUP

- Gypsies and Travellers Strategy Group (chair: Housing Strategy)

7.0 USEFUL DOCUMENTS

¹ Doyal et al (2002), The Health of Travellers in South West Region: a review of the data sources and a Strategy for change

² Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in England, 2002, Niner revealed that there is a 1000 – 2000 residential pitches will be needed over the next five years, and 2000 – 5000 pitches will be needed for nomadism, (transit sites)

³ ACERT Research, Williams, 1999

⁴ Crawley H. (2003) Moving Forward : The provision of accommodation for Travellers and Gypsies. Institute for Public Policy Research

⁵ Pahl J. Vaile M. (1986) Health and Health Care among Travellers. Canterbury : University of Kent Health Services Research Unit

⁶ Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils, 2005, DfES.

- Annual Report of Homeless and Vulnerable Persons Team, M. Somers, Specialist Health Visitor, 2006.
- Gypsy & Traveller Health – report of health Visitor on issues in Wigan, Denise Fedigan, 2005
- ODPM Planning Circular 01/2006, “Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites”.
- ODPM Gypsy and Traveller Unit, 2006, “Local Authorities and Gypsy & Travellers – Guide to responsibilities and Powers”.
- ODPM Gypsy and Traveller Unit, 2006, “ Guide to Effective Use of Enforcement Powers - Part 1: Unauthorised Encampments”.
- ODPM Gypsy and Traveller Unit, 2006, “Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments – Draft Practice Guidance”.
- ODPM proposed definition of the Term 'Gypsies and Travellers' for the Purposes of the Housing Act 2004 to apply in the context of regulations issued under sections 225 and 226 of the Housing Act 2004.
- Commission for Racial Equality, May 2006 “Common Ground: Equality, good race relations and sites for Gypsies and Irish Travellers”
- LGA May 2006 “Report of the LGA Gypsy and Traveller Task Group”

8.0 RELEVANT LINKS

- Gypsy & Traveller Law Reform Coalition www.travellerslaw.org.uk/
- Traveller Law Research Unit of Cardiff University. <http://www.cf.ac.uk/claws/tlru/bill.html>
- Friends, Families and Travellers: www.gypsy-traveller.org
- The Gypsy Council: www.thegypsycouncil.org/
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust: www.jrct.org.uk/

9.0 ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE	TASK	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	PROGRESS
Needs Assessment	Undertake Accommodation Needs Assessment	Housing Strategy Team via AGMA	Mid - End 2007 (est)	Interview process being undertaken by Stockport Council. Now at 2 nd shortlist stage (Jan 07)
Strategic planning	Produce a Gypsy and Traveller Strategy via the G&T Strategy group	Housing Strategy / Planning Policy teams	End 2007 - Mid 2008	Strategy Group has formed, initial meetings held. Awaiting completion of ANA and NWRA commissioned regional study.
Capital investment	Identify the capital investment required for Bickershaw site and bid for funding.	Public Health (Wigan Council)	Mid 2007	

Pupil Numbers, Enrolment and Attendance

Pupil Numbers

The School Census counts pupils enrolled in school in mid-January. The pupils below will include some families settled in housing but it is believed that some families will not register their children as being of Gypsy or Traveller heritage. HM Inspectors who have visited the area have suggested that there could be a significant number of Traveller families who are settled in houses in Wigan.

In the five years of the census for which this information has been collected the figures are:

Year	Gypsy/Roma	Irish Travellers
2003	32	17
2004	26	9
2005	26	29
2006	25	29
2007	33	27

For the years which we have had the Traveller census categories, the numbers of pupils supported by the Team in each term is shown in the table below. These figures will include pupils who did not appear in the census figures and some pupils counted in the census will not have needed the support of the Team.

Term	Pupils supported	Total for year
Autumn 02	45	58
Spring 03	52	
Summer 03	49	
Autumn 03	46	50
Spring 04	41	
Summer 04	30	
Autumn 04	50	63
Spring 05	55	
Summer 05	49	
Autumn 05	58	63
Spring 06	50	
Summer 06	49	

The graph below shows numbers supported each year over the last 10 years and the average attendance recorded.

