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# Looking Back, Moving Forward

Assessing the housing needs of  
Gypsies and Travellers in Essex

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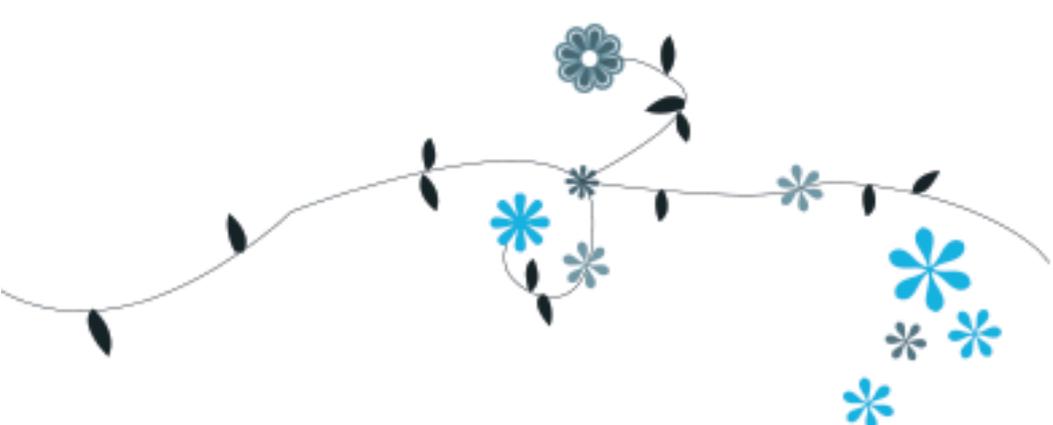
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# Glossary of Terms

The following terms are used in this report and may need some clarification. Note: for the purposes of this report Gypsies and Travellers are generally referred to as such.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Amenity block	Building on a site where kitchen and bathroom facilities are located
Bricks and mortar	Permanent mainstream housing
Gypsy	Members of Gypsy or Traveller communities. Usually used to describe Romany (English) Gypsies originating from India. This term is not acceptable to all Travellers
Gaujo	Term used by mainly English Gypsies to refer to members of the settled community
House-people	Term used by mainly Gypsies and Travellers to refer to members of the settled community
Mobile home/Chalet	Legally classified as a caravan but not usually moveable without dismantling/or lorry
New (Age) Travellers	Fairly recent groups of Travellers with varied origins
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Pitch/plot	Area of land on a site occupied by immediate family/single unit
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
Roma	Travellers mainly from Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Poland)
Showmen/Showpeople	Travelling people who work in the circus/fairs
Settled Community	Reference to non-travellers (those that live in houses)
Site	Authorised place of residence for Gypsies and Travellers. Authorised sites have planning permission and can be owned and rented out by the local authority or privately owned by Gypsies and Travellers
Trailer	Moveable caravan
Transit site	Site intended for short stays
Traveller	Member of travelling community. Often used to refer to Irish Travellers. This term is generally acceptable to all Gypsies and Travellers
Unauthorised Development	This refers to land owned by Gypsies and Travellers without planning permission
Unauthorised Encampment	Stopping on private/public land without permission (e.g. at the side of the road)

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## Section 1: Introduction & Background to the Research

The Housing Act 2004 placed a duty on local authorities to develop and implement strategies to address the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities. In order to develop such strategies it is necessary to understand these populations and assess their accommodation needs. Since each group in society presents certain challenges and dilemmas in this type of assessment, specialist approaches for consultation and data collection need to be applied. To this end, a flexible qualitative approach was adopted in order to negotiate a more appropriate methodology with this historically under-researched group.

It is considered good practice for several authorities to commission such work jointly, as Essex Planning Officer's Association has done, and this complies with the ODPM's increasing emphasis on a regional strategic housing approach. Further support for this approach centres on this very heterogeneous group not generally recognising local authority boundaries in a geographical sense. To this end base line information will be provided at county level in order to assist future decision making.

## Section 2: Aims & Objectives of the Study

The study has the overarching aims of providing reliable evidence to inform the allocation of sites for Gypsies and Travellers in forthcoming development plans across the East of England region and to include this, historically little known about community group, in needs assessments. Further, there are a number of objectives as follows:

- To gather information on current tenure types and aspirations/future needs and tenure preferences for caravan dwelling/movement between housing and caravans;
- To ascertain attitudes to current site provision (council and private provision); presence on unauthorised encampments;
- To gather data on household composition and demography including patterns of extended family living;
- To identify migration patterns and transient settlement patterns;
- To gather information on employment trends and barriers to access of training and education opportunities;
- To identify health care needs and access to appropriate services;
- To gather data on educational requirements, accessibility and peer group integration;
- To gather information to ascertain the expected rate of new household formation and composition;
- To ascertain the degree to which Essex Councils' housing waiting and transfer lists reflect housing need; and
- To determine the degree to which local authority Gypsy site waiting lists reflects site accommodation needs.

## Section 3: Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research study developed and grew as the research team responded to the needs of the research commissioners and the implications that working with Gypsies and Travellers had on the research process. As the research progressed it became increasingly clear that using established needs assessment methodology (an essentially 'quantitative' approach) where a survey/questionnaire is used and administered by trained members of the target client group (i.e. Gypsy and/or Traveller community interviewers)<sup>1</sup> was inappropriate in this context. Gypsies and Travellers are a relatively under-researched group and this means that they are, in the main, unfamiliar with traditional survey approaches and are suspicious of bureaucracy. This, coupled with low literacy levels and unfamiliarity with the process of assessing accommodation related needs, precipitated the development of a more appropriate methodology.

Our approach evolved out of consultation with key stakeholders including Gypsy Services, Traveller Education, local authority departments and Gypsies and Travellers themselves. As Gypsies and Travellers have a particular oral culture that influences the way they understand and explain the world around them, and in line with the draft guidance to emerge from the ODPM<sup>2</sup>, a semi-structured interview format (a 'qualitative' approach) for gathering flexible data was adopted.

Due to the scope and complexity of the study objectives, the research was undertaken in 3 distinct stages.

### **Stage 1: Secondary information review and scoping exercise**

This first stage comprised a review of the available literature and secondary sources obtained from government (central and local), community and academic bodies on Gypsies and Travellers. This provided an historical, social and political context to the situation of Gypsies and Travellers in Essex and across the UK. This stage, in conjunction with findings from the initial interviews, was a vital component in informing the development of the remainder of the research programme. In addition, this first stage facilitated key consultations with a number of stakeholders around the development of a specialised methodological approach with the Gypsies and Travellers in Essex.

### **Stage 2: Focus groups with service provider stakeholders**

The second stage involved gathering the views of service providers and draws on their experience and perceptions of what the issues were for Gypsies and Travellers. This stage also identified access mechanisms to Gypsies and Travellers. To this end, a total of five focus groups were undertaken with planning and housing professionals, site managers and professionals working across a range of provider agencies from across the County. This stage was imperative for disseminating information on the scope and range of the project and also to achieve a level of trust so that access to a wide range of Gypsies and Travellers living throughout the Essex area was facilitated.

<sup>1</sup> See for example Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit (2005) Good Practice Guide. The University of Salford

<sup>2</sup> Draft guidance for needs assessments with Gypsies and Travellers. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)



### Stage 3: Semi-structured interviews with Gypsies and Travellers

Attracting willing participants across a range of ethnic groups to engage in face-to-face interviews about their experiences of accommodation and their future needs and aspirations posed a number of challenges to the research team. We were aware of the potential problems that could occur if trust in the project was not generated during the early stages. As a result, members of the research team began the sustained process of building relationships with key stakeholder professionals and Gypsies and Travellers themselves throughout the Essex area. In addition to stakeholders from the Council, we made and fostered links with various Gypsy and Traveller support and advocacy groups throughout the County. As well as easing access to potential participants, this also fulfilled a vital function of negotiating the most appropriate and effective way of involving participants in the research. Involving stakeholders and key informants in the formulation of the methodology proved an invaluable step as these individuals acted as advocates for the research, ultimately fostering increased levels of trust in the project.<sup>3</sup> As a direct result of this, attracting willing participants from the Gypsy and Traveller communities became, for the most part, unproblematic. This process began in May 2005 and was completed in November 2005.

The sampling technique used was purposive rather than a purely random sample (which was not feasible given the lack of accurate information concerning the size of the community), necessitated by the involvement of key gatekeepers to the Gypsy and Traveller community. In line with our approach and the Draft Guidance issued by the ODPM, a semi-structured and open-ended interviewing approach was utilised and administered by a face-to-face method. This was implemented on both an individual and focus group basis with the aim of gathering robust qualitative data from which theoretical rather than statistical generalisations could be made. In total the research team interviewed 72 Gypsies and Travellers (64 with heads of 'households') of varying ethnic backgrounds, gender, ages and accommodation situations, with an additional 3 interviews with Showpeople.<sup>4</sup> Key to the achievement of this data was the need for the research team to be flexible as the interviews were rarely<sup>5</sup> conducted on time or in familiar research environments.

<sup>3</sup> Certainly, the involvement of independent researchers should have facilitated this.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1 for details.

<sup>5</sup> It was not uncommon to conduct interviews in stationary cars, walking, outside etc.



The selection of interviewees was in part driven by their availability and in part by whom the research team had secured access to.<sup>6</sup> Each participant was verbally informed as to the aims and scope of the research project and the concepts of confidentiality and anonymity within the confines of this project were explained as fully as possible.

The format of the interview schedule was developed and piloted in conjunction with the steering group and covered the following issues:<sup>7</sup>

- Current tenure types and aspirations/future needs and tenure preferences for caravan dwelling/movement between housing and caravans;
- Attitudes to current site provision (council and private provision); presence on unauthorised encampments;
- Migration patterns and transient settlement patterns;
- Employment trends and barriers to access of training and education opportunities;
- Health care needs and access to appropriate services;
- Educational requirements, accessibility and peer group integration; and
- Household composition and demography including patterns of extended family living.

In addition, a quantitative data collection instrument was used alongside the qualitative questionnaire to gather relevant demographical data.

## Data analysis

Given the nature of our approach, which is essentially and for the large part qualitative, the data has been analysed thematically to develop theoretical generalisations to meet the project aim of providing information about the current experiences of Gypsies and Travellers in Essex and to provide some contextual information to understand, in greater depth, the projections for future site need and allocation.

<sup>6</sup>Our aim here was to produce a relevant range of cases that will enable us to make strategic claims. We are not claiming to be directly representative of the Gypsy and Traveller population in Essex – this is impossible as a sampling frame does not exist from which to select. Our theoretical sample is valid and robust in that groups have been selected on the basis of the research question. In other words our sample builds in the relevant characteristics and criteria – in this case experiences across tenure/circumstance/gender/ethnicity/location were gathered. Thus, we have generated data of the appropriate order from a relevant range of sources and can ultimately present a multi-vocal position in that a range of perspectives will be represented.

<sup>7</sup>See Appendix 2 for details of the interview schedule.

## Section 4: Literature Review

### Introduction

Following the Housing Act 2004, local authorities have been preparing to develop and implement strategies to respond to the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities living in their areas. Underpinning the development of these strategies is the requirement to understand the population and assess the housing need of those who are resident in the locality. Arguably, each group in society presents certain challenges and dilemmas in needs assessments, with each requiring particular strategies for consultation and data collection. However, it is becoming increasingly accepted that consultation with Gypsies and Travellers require particular specialised approaches.<sup>8</sup> It is also widely accepted that any assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers has to acknowledge that although a small minority in UK society, Gypsies and Travellers have distinctive cultures, lifestyles and characteristics which inevitably impacts upon their accommodation needs, housing experiences and aspirations.

The distinctiveness of Gypsies and Travellers has been extensively explored by a wide and extensive literature base that has sought to investigate the complex relationship between Gypsies and Travellers and the social and political fabric in which they live. As such, any attempt to review this literature is liable to be problematic as, in the face of established knowledge, the writers may be accused of over-simplifying these complex issues. However, it is the intention of this review to present the 'key' themes of this knowledge base in order to explore the social, historical and legislative backdrop that assists in better understanding the accommodation and related needs of Gypsies and Travellers at both a national and a local level.

There is a growing literature base that has highlighted the damaging effects that rapid social change and the current socio-political situation is having on Gypsies and Travellers. On average, women from Travelling families live 12 years less than those in the general population, with men from Travelling families living 10 years less. This divergence appears to reflect the difficulties and health risks that many Gypsies and Travellers experience in work, lifestyle, health and social care. Although there is some knowledge about the health needs of women from Travelling families<sup>9</sup> less is known about the health needs of Gypsy and Traveller men.<sup>10</sup>

Research has also indicated that Gypsy and Traveller children are seriously disadvantaged in the education system. Between 10,000 and 12,000 Traveller children of secondary school age are not registered at school and the average attendance rate for Traveller pupils is around 75%.

<sup>8</sup>Niner, P. (2003) Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England. ODPM. London.

<sup>9</sup>Lewis, G. and Drife, J. (2001) Why Mothers Die 1997-1999: The Fifth Report of the confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths in the United Kingdom. London: RGOG.

<sup>10</sup>Acknowledgement is made to Parry, G., Van Cleemput, P., Peters, J., Moore, J., Walters, S., Thomas, K and Cooper, C. (2004) The Health Status of Gypsies & Travellers in England. Report of Department of Health Inequalities in Health Research Initiative Project 121/7500.

This rests well below the national average and is the worst attendance rate of any minority group. It is clear therefore, that the needs of Gypsies and Travellers cannot be considered in isolation from the wider context of health, education and social care.

## The numbers of Gypsies and Travellers

In order to make sense of the significance and relevance of work with any population it becomes unavoidably necessary to highlight the 'numbers' of those individuals concerned. However, when such a population is Gypsies and Travellers, providing an accurate picture of the numbers involved is complicated by their nomadic lifestyle and compounded by a lack of rigorous and reliable recording procedures.

There have been many estimates of the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers living in the UK but the total numbers of individuals classified as Gypsies and Travellers remains unknown, due to infrequency in data collection and inconsistencies. In 1994 it was posited that the number of Gypsies in the UK was in the range of 90,000 to 120,000,<sup>11</sup> with the Liberal Democrats in 2003 placing a larger estimate of Gypsy and Traveller numbers in England at 200,000 to 300,000.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it has been estimated that the Gypsy and Traveller population can be equated to that of Britain's Bangladeshi population (280,000).<sup>13</sup>

The 2001 Census did not include Gypsies and Travellers as distinct ethnic groups in their data collection and many other agencies do not collect data on numbers. The only official source of information we have is the twice-yearly caravan count which has been in operation since 1979. This is co-ordinated by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in England, and the Gypsy Traveller count which is coordinated by the Scottish Executive in Scotland. In England the count is collated twice-yearly and carried out by the local authorities. The July 2004 count showed that there are around 15,000 Gypsy and Traveller caravans in England. However, data on the numbers of individuals this includes is non-existent. For indicative purposes only it has been suggested that an arbitrary multiplier of 3 persons per caravan would give an approximate total population of around 41,000 living in caravans.<sup>14</sup> By including those Gypsies and Travellers that are thought to live in housing gives an estimate of around 82,000 for England. These figures are provided here as estimates only as the Caravan Count has been widely criticised for being both inconsistent and inaccurate,<sup>15</sup> with some highlighting that local authorities may purposively under-enumerate Gypsy caravans in order to minimise the apparent need

<sup>11</sup> Liégeois, J. P (1994) Roma, Gypsies, Travellers. Council of Europe Press.

<sup>12</sup> Liberal Democrats (2003) Gypsies and Other Travellers: Policy Development Paper (Liberal Democrats) <http://www.libdems.org.uk/documents/PDP7Travellers.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Commission for Racial Equality (2004) Gypsies and Travellers: A strategy for the CRE, 2004-2007. London: CRE.

<sup>14</sup> Niner, P. (2003) Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England. ODPM. London.

<sup>15</sup> Sites Ibid.



for site provision,<sup>16</sup> while others have argued that the possible absence of New Travellers may contribute to inaccuracies in the count.<sup>17</sup> It appears, therefore, that there are major problems in obtaining estimates of Gypsy and Traveller numbers. An ODPM report into the caravan count system brought forward a number of key findings including:<sup>18</sup>

- The relevance and the purpose of the count is not clearly understood by those involved in its practice as the policy context has changed since the count was introduced in 1979;
- The counts are not completely accurate; accuracy varies between local authorities and items of information;
- Non-involvement of Gypsies/Travellers themselves in the count process contributes to mistrust; and
- Despite fears about accuracy, the count is valuable because it effectively provides the only source of information on the numbers and distribution of Gypsy caravans and families.

Gypsy and Traveller organisations have long pressed for the widespread inclusion of distinct and consistent ethnic categories for Gypsies and Travellers within national and local monitoring systems, so that the size of the communities and the full scale of their potential needs are on record. One of the obstacles affecting this has been Gypsies and Travellers themselves, who can see little evidence that it will benefit them to co-operate, even if they could overcome their distrust of ethnic classification and their suspicions of the way the data might be used. The Commission for Racial Equality has a role in supporting, encouraging and advising local authorities and other organisations to include Gypsies and Travellers in their research and monitoring exercises. The CRE have published their policy strategy to guide their work with Gypsies and Travellers<sup>19</sup> which sets out their objectives for this group and discusses their intention to work towards fostering confidence in data collection opportunities and encouraging transparency in such a process.

Other problems associated with quantifying the Gypsy and Traveller population appears to centre on the absence of a suitable method and tool for gathering such data. However, any attempt at gathering data on the Gypsy and Traveller population appears inevitably confounded by problems of definition and classification.

<sup>16</sup>Warrington and Peck (2005) Gypsy and Traveller Communities: accommodation, education, health, skills and employment – An East of England perspective. The Ormiston Children and Families Trust.

<sup>17</sup>Green, H. (1991) Counting Gypsies. HMSO.

<sup>18</sup>ODPM (2003a) Counting Gypsies and Travellers: A Review of the Gypsy Caravan Count System. Housing Research Summary, No. 206.

<sup>19</sup>Commission for Racial Equality (2004) Gypsies and Travellers: A strategy for the CRE, 2004-2007. London: CRE.



## The definition and classification of Gypsies and Travellers

It has become clear from the literature base that there is no simple definition of a Gypsy or Traveller. As the number of Gypsy and Travellers has increased over time so has the diversity and ultimately the complexity of these communities. In England there are three broad groupings of Gypsies and Travellers comprising; traditional English (Romany) Gypsies estimated to be around 63,000 through Britain and recognised as an ethnic minority group,<sup>20</sup> traditional Irish Travellers estimated to be around 19,000 in Britain and also recognised as an ethnic minority group,<sup>21</sup> and New Travellers, for whom there is no statistical information. There are also smaller numbers of Welsh Gypsies and Scottish Travellers<sup>22</sup> and a small but increasing number of Roma who have arrived over the years from Central and Eastern Europe mostly as refugees and asylum seekers, most of whom are not seeking accommodation on sites.<sup>23</sup>

Many of these ethnic groups have been in England for a number of centuries with Romany Gypsies first being recorded around the sixteenth century. Irish Travellers are thought to have more ancient origins than the Romany Gypsies and probably came to England during the 1800s (in response to the potato famine) with their numbers

increasing, relatively recently, from the 1960s onwards. New Travellers, or New Age Travellers, can be an extremely diverse label with their reasons for travelling encompassing a range of economic, environmental, social and personal reasons.<sup>24</sup> Their numbers have increased over time as many New Travellers have built up a tradition of travelling supported by socialisation with a generation of children being raised within this lifestyle.<sup>25</sup>

However, although ethnic divisions is one way in which we can identify and understand the Gypsy and Traveller population; for a Gypsy or Traveller self-identification, within these broad groupings, appears to be punctuated by complexity. It appears that it is not uncommon for individuals themselves to blur and merge their identities depending upon their parent's ethnicity, country of origin and present surroundings.<sup>26</sup> For a Gypsy/Traveller, ethnic boundaries can both shift and merge over time depending upon marriage (whether individuals marry Travellers from other ethnic groups) and/or the maintenance of a 'travelling lifestyle' (characterised by nomadism). There are often cultural factors which symbolise the differentiation between Gypsies and Travellers such as; distinctive hygiene practices; labour market and employment preferences;

<sup>20</sup> Kenrick, D. and Clark, C. (1999) *Moving On: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Niner, P. (2004) *Accommodating Nomadism? An Examination of Accommodation Options for Gypsies and Travellers in England*. *Housing Studies*, (19), 2, 141-159.

<sup>23</sup> Refugee Council (1999) *Unwanted Journey: Why Central European Roma are fleeing to the UK*. Refugee Council.

<sup>24</sup> Webster, L and Millar, J. (2001) *Making a Living: Social Security, Social Exclusion and New Travellers*. Bristol. The Policy Press

<sup>25</sup> Niner, P. (2004) *Accommodating Nomadism? An Examination of Accommodation Options for Gypsies and Travellers in England*. *Housing Studies*, (19), 2, 141-159.

<sup>26</sup> Power, C. (2004) *Room to Roam: Britain's Irish Travellers*. Available online - <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2005/feb/Room-to-Roam-England's-Irish-Travellers.pdf>

distinctive economic practices; and the centrality of kinship.<sup>27</sup> It is this ancestral and cultural link to the Gypsy and Traveller identity but also the practice and/or ideal of nomadism, which is recognised as a constant in the common self-definition of a Gypsy or a Traveller. However, over time it appears that nomadism, in the lives of Gypsies and Travellers, has been transformed into more a 'state of mind'<sup>28</sup> rather than a defining feature of everyday life for Gypsy and Traveller groups,<sup>29</sup> as many Travellers increasingly alternate between periods of sedentarism and nomadism.<sup>30</sup> Although the principle of nomadism is important for all Gypsies and Travellers it is unclear as to what proportion of movement is driven by the desire for freedom or employment and what proportion of movement takes place in response to the rapid social change that has occurred around Gypsies and Travellers, particularly in relation to non-tolerance policies and the practices of local authorities.<sup>31</sup>

Regardless, it is the concept of nomadism that is prevalent through the legal definition of a Gypsy.<sup>32</sup> Here a Gypsy is seen as 'persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin', but actively excludes 'showpeople' or people engaged in travelling circuses who travel together. The ODPM circular 01/2006 provides a definition of 'Gypsies and Travellers' as being,

'Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such. '

To this end, our discussion of the Showpeople included in the study is attached as an appendix (see Appendix 1).

<sup>27</sup> See Fraser, A. (1995) *The Gypsies*. Oxford. Blackwell; Okley, J. (1983) *The Traveller-Gypsies*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>28</sup> Parekh, B. (2000) *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*. Profile: London.

<sup>29</sup> Liégeois, J. P (1994) *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*. Council of Europe Press.

<sup>30</sup> Hawes, D. and Perez, B. (1995) *The Gypsy and the State: The ethnic cleansing of British society*. Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies.

<sup>31</sup> Crawley, H. (2004a) *Moving Forward: the provision of accommodation for Travellers and Gypsies*. IPPR

<sup>32</sup> As stated in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 s24, and amended by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 s80.

## **Gypsy and Traveller accommodation – past and present policy<sup>33</sup>**

In 1968 the Caravan Sites Act was introduced primarily to provide a solution for the large number of Gypsy families living in extremely poor conditions, highlighted by a national census commissioned in 1967. This had revealed a surprising extent of poverty amongst Travellers as more than half of those surveyed occupied sites with no amenities and only one-third had access to rubbish disposal and mains water supplies.<sup>34</sup> Prior to this, the 1960 Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act had introduced increasingly stringent planning controls resulting in families having to move off agricultural land into lay-bys and car-parks.<sup>35</sup> In response to the findings of 1967 section 6(1) of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 a mandatory duty was introduced on Local Authorities to provide 'adequate accommodation for Gypsies residing or resorting to their area'. In practice, London Boroughs had to provide 15 pitches but in Essex, no local authorities achieved 'designation' and many provided in excess of 20 pitches.

Between 1970 and 1994, the Caravan Sites Act 1968 placed a duty on local authorities to provide adequate accommodation for Gypsies residing in their area. An amount of central government subsidy was made available for site provision after 1979 following the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980. Up to 1994 much of the existing network of sites were created under the 1968 Act.<sup>36</sup>

More recently, the most significant piece of legislation for Gypsies and Travellers and for those involved in site provision and the planning system has been the changes introduced as part of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. This act removed the obligation on local authorities to provide and maintain public caravan sites. In place of this, Gypsies and Travellers were encouraged to buy their own land to seek planning permission for their own accommodation. This was intended to provide Gypsies and Travellers with a 'level playing field' for planning applications. The accompanying circular (DoE 18/94) made it clear that local authorities were expected to retain and maintain existing sites, and added that local authorities could still use the 1960 Act to provide new sites where needed. However, in practice the removal of duties to provide sites brought about a halt to the expansion of site provision for Gypsies and Travellers. A planning circular (1/94) highlighted that local authorities were advised to give practical help to Gypsies and Travellers wishing to acquire their own land for development.

<sup>33</sup> Here we offer an overview of the significant turns and implications of policy and legislation for a more detailed look at the legislation and guidance relating to Gypsies and Travellers in the UK see: Niner, P. (2003) Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England. ODPM. London.

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Housing and Local Government (1967) Gypsies and Other Travellers. London: MHLG.

<sup>35</sup> O'Nions (1995) The Marginalisation of Gypsies. <http://webjcli.ncl.ac.uk/articles3/onions3.html>

<sup>36</sup> Horton, M. (2004) The Health and Site Needs of the Transient Gypsies and Travellers of Leeds. Leeds: Marion M Horton Associates.



The intention embedded in the 1994 Act to encourage the seeking of planning permission and ownership of land by Gypsies and Travellers was shown to have been unworkable, since many local authorities failed to identify appropriate sites and/or to grant planning permission.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the ODPM have argued that in complicating this practice, 'Gypsies and Travellers, wanting a more settled life-style, have bought land where they could, rather than where it was most appropriate'.<sup>38</sup>

In 1997 the then Department of Environment and the Regions (now ODPM) and the Home Office issued joint guidance to local authorities and the police on unauthorised encampments. This guidance stressed the importance of taking a strategic approach in managing unauthorised camping, discussed 'toleration' of encampments and good practice relating to evictions. The guidance stressed joint-working between agencies (local authorities, police and other bodies) and the need to involve other stakeholders including Gypsies and Travellers and members of the non-traveller settled community. In 2000, amendments were made to both Circular 18/94 and to the 'Good Practice Guide'. These amendments largely dealt with advice of the 'toleration' of encampments and drew distinctions between unauthorised camping where there were no problems and no criminal offence, and where there is anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Over the next few years increased focus was made upon the planning responsibilities that local authorities have towards Gypsies and Travellers in supporting the creation of sites, and providing funding to help local authorities towards improving and refurbishing a number of Gypsy sites. In July 2000, the ODPM announced the Gypsy Site Refurbishment Grant. This was a 'challenge' fund of £17 million over the three years from 2001/2. An additional 8 million was available for 2004/5 with a further 8 million for 2005/6.

It has been consistently argued that the 1994 Act started a process which has resulted in the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers significantly out-weighting the number of authorised places. Research conducted during 2002 for the ODPM into the provision, extent and use of the local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites in England concluded that improvements were needed to accommodate the number of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK. In particular this study concluded that:<sup>39</sup>

- There are around 320 caravan sites in England owned by local authorities;
- These sites provide approximately 5,000 pitches;
- An estimated 1,000 to 2,000 extra residential pitches will be needed over the next five years;

<sup>37</sup> Government research shows that 90% of planning applications made by Gypsies and Travellers are refused.

<sup>38</sup> Gypsies and Travellers – The Facts. ODPM.

<sup>39</sup> Niner, P. (2003) Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England. ODPM. London



- An estimated 1,000 to 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;
- Statutory duty and central subsidy may be needed to 'encourage' local authorities to make provision;
- Compared with other forms of social housing management, site management is more intensive and requires higher staff-to-resident ratios; and
- Problems can arise from the way rent officers set local reference rents for Housing Benefit applications for council sites. In some cases this can cause large differences between the pitch fee charged and the amount of Housing Benefit paid.
- 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; and
- Address issues of social exclusion in the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

In further formalising the Government's position on Gypsies and Travellers, the Housing Act 2004 was introduced. In summary, the measures relating to Gypsies and Travellers contained within Part 6 of the Housing Act 2004 include the following:<sup>41</sup>

Over the past decade Gypsies and Travellers residing on unauthorised developments has been increasing with the 2003 figures showing an increase of 40% on the previous year. As such, in April 2003, the Government issued guidance suggesting that councils should develop a local strategy to deal with unauthorised camping.<sup>40</sup> The guidance states that such a strategy should aim to:

<sup>40</sup> ODPM (2003b) Guidance on Managing Unauthorised Camping. ODPM. April 2003

<sup>41</sup> Source - ODPM (2004) Factsheet 16: Gypsies and Travellers.  
[http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_housing/documents/page/odpm\\_house\\_033542-01.hcsp](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_033542-01.hcsp)

- Extend the meaning of a 'protected site' in England to include county council sites providing accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and in respect of Scotland to include regional councils. The result is that the occupiers of these sites are entitled to a minimum period of notice before they can be evicted. Possession can only be obtained by a court order and they will be covered by the provisions in the 1968 Act concerning harassment and illegal eviction. This brings county council-owned Gypsy and Traveller sites into line with sites owned by other types of local authority;
- Provide the courts with the power to suspend eviction orders against those occupying local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites and allows for these suspensions to last for a period of up to 12 months;
- Require local authorities to undertake regular assessments of the needs of 'Gypsies and Travellers' either living in, or resorting to, their area, under the Local Housing Needs Assessment process as set out in Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985. Special emphasis is placed on local authorities assessing the needs of those 'Gypsies and Travellers' who live in, or "resorting to" an area. This will allow them to consider both the need to provide appropriate temporary accommodation for 'Gypsies and Travellers', as well as permanent accommodation;
- Require local authorities to develop a strategy to meet the needs of 'Gypsies and Travellers', in line with Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003, and to take any such strategy into account when they are exercising their other functions, such as planning, education and social care. Local housing authorities must also take into account any guidance issued by the ODPM when carrying out their 'Gypsy and Traveller' needs assessment and when developing their strategy;
- Allow for regulations to be issued which define 'Gypsies and Travellers' for the purpose of this section. This will allow the Secretary of State to consult on the definition and provides for the possibility of the definition changing over time if necessary. This paragraph also states that 'accommodation' in this Section means sites on which caravans can be stationed, in addition to bricks and mortar housing; and
- Allow for the Secretary of State to issue guidance on carrying out needs assessments and the preparation of housing strategies.

The 2004 Act has created a duty on local authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and develop strategies to meet these identified needs.<sup>42</sup> These strategies have been encouraged to be developed at a regional level and should feed into other functions such as planning, education, social care and housing/accommodation. This initiates the realisation of effective joint working to resolve the multifaceted and complex problems experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, a process recommended by a recent report by the Institute for Public Policy Research.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup>An issue currently being researched by Jo Richardson (De Montfort University) in her JRF funded research on 'Contentious Spaces: The gypsy/traveller site issues'

<sup>43</sup>Crawley, H. (2004) Moving Forward: the provision of accommodation for Travellers and Gypsies. IPPR

## Developing strategies, good practice and assessing housing need of Gypsies and Travellers

The ODPM has identified good practice across the country in working with Gypsies and Travellers.<sup>44</sup> This appears to exist where there are working arrangements between relevant bodies that have been formalised into protocols or service level agreements. However, this is exclusively concerned with firming up on enforcement on unauthorised encampments. As has been indicated the only recent legislation to deal with issues relating to Gypsies and Travellers has been the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 which both extend the powers of the police and local authorities to move Travellers and Gypsies on, with only recent inroads made to trying to resolve the lack of legal sites for Gypsies and Travellers. Such working arrangements detail the respective responsibilities of signatories, lines of command and communication, and may include performance targets, for example on response times. Examples given of this good practice include:

- Derbyshire has a good practice guide for unauthorised encampments: Joint protocol between Derbyshire County Council, Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group, Derbyshire Constabulary and the NHS;
- Devon has joint Policy and Practice Guidelines relating to people of nomadic lifestyle residing in or resorting to Devon: Devon County Council and Devon & Cornwall Constabulary;
- Essex has a joint protocol for managing unauthorised encampments in Harlow: Essex County Council, Harlow District Council and Essex Police;

- Kent has a protocol for the management of unauthorised encampments: Kent County Council, district and unitary councils, Kent County Constabulary; and
- In a few areas (for example Milton Keynes) arrangements for joint working between the local authority and police are still closer in a jointly staffed 'unit'. Advocates refer to the consistency of approach possible through true joint working; it avoids unnecessary duplication of effort; it means that there is less possibility of people being referred backwards and forwards between organisations. In such a structure it is important that reporting lines and accountability arrangements are carefully thought through.

<sup>43</sup> Crawley, H. (2004) Moving Forward: the provision of accommodation for Travellers and Gypsies. IPPR

<sup>44</sup> Gypsies and Travellers – The Facts. ODPM



## Concluding remarks

The provision of more legal sites has been seen as the most effective way of reducing tensions over Gypsy and Travellers with the settled community and improving the life chances of individuals from Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds.<sup>45</sup> However, the current lack of needs assessments conducted with Gypsies and Travellers means that at the moment, as ODPM research has shown, there is a lack of appropriate and legal places for Gypsies and Travellers to stop. As a result, the claim is that many Gypsies and Travellers have been 'forced' into 'bricks-and-mortar' social housing, which many desire to leave.<sup>46</sup> As such, people have therefore been locked into a circular existence as places on sites become fewer their absence from them means that their needs (and aspirations) are often overlooked.

Overall, the attention and focus upon Gypsies and Travellers and their accommodation needs has, since the introduction of the Housing Act 2004, shifted back to attempts to resolve some of the long-standing and increasingly problematic issues. At present, the options open to Gypsies and Travellers to improve their accommodation situation appear limited, by both the demand for places on authorised sites (both council and private) and the problematic nature of new sites being approved. The Housing Act 2004 has returned some of the responsibility to provide stability to this situation back to the localities in which Gypsies and Travellers live. This responsibility however, rests not only with the local authorities and their communities but with the larger regional network that these areas inhabit. A range of authorities have however already commissioned and carried out needs assessments, which explore the current and projected accommodation issues of Gypsies and Travellers in their areas, including both the Northern Ireland Executive and Communities Scotland. Therefore, where there is 'good practice' in terms of joint working to resolve the complex issues of unauthorised developments and encampments, this same spirit of joint working is being encouraged to apply to identifying and fostering new possibilities for authorised developments to reduce local tensions, improve life chances and to meet the often complex housing, health, social and educational needs of these diverse Gypsy and Traveller communities.

<sup>45</sup> Crawley, H. (2004b) Britain as the deep south. The Guardian, January 20th

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

## Section 5: Essex: The Context

Gypsies and Travellers have long featured in the population of Essex County. Each local/unitary authority has a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Policy and there is a countywide joint protocol for managing unauthorised developments. As with many areas across the United Kingdom, over the years the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers within Essex has been in constant flux. It is unclear, however, how much of this has to do with traditions of nomadism, the search for work and

employment and/or the effects of being moved on from settling on unauthorised land. According to the most recently available Caravan Count data for the Region<sup>47</sup> there is a reported total of 1159 caravans based across the area to which the study relates. This figure includes 442 on unauthorised developments, 349 on authorised council sites and 368 caravans on authorised private sites. Table 1 shows this by each local/unitary authority.

Table 1: Count of Gypsy caravans as of 19th July 2005

Local/Unitary Authority	Total	Unauthorised encampments	Authorised council sites	Authorised private sites	Mean of last 5 counts (July 03-July 05)
Basildon	350	172	34	144	339
Braintree	96	43	42	11	74
Brentwood	39	21	0	18	32
Castle Point	2	2	0	0	6
Chelmsford	142	60	34	48	142
Colchester	22	11	0	11	22
Epping Forest	162	51	22	89	166
Harlow	65	0	65	0	49
Maldon	39	0	39	0	51
Rochford	16	14	0	2	14
Southend-on-Sea	0	0	0	0	0
Tendring	29	29	0	0	20
Thurrock	130	31	89	10	155
Uttlesford	67	8	24	35	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>1159</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>1150</b>

<sup>47</sup>The 19th July 2005 Caravan Count.

[http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_housing/documents/page/odpm\\_house\\_028937.xls](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_028937.xls)



What emerges from this data is that there are a large number of caravans occupying unauthorised developments across the County as a whole with a large proportion (172) of these located within the Basildon district. The smallest numbers of unauthorised developments are found within Maldon (0), Southend-on-Sea (0), Harlow (0) and Castle Point (2). In addition, Basildon appears to have the largest number of caravans accommodated on authorised private sites (144) with a number of other authorities claiming no authorised private sites (Castle Point, Harlow, Maldon, Southend-on-Sea and Tendring). Data indicates that caravans on authorised council sites range from 89

across Thurrock to no site provision in Brentwood, Castle Point, Colchester, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea and Tendring. The caravans are distributed across 14 authorised council sites within the County.<sup>48</sup>

### Essex in Context

According to the Caravan Count the East of England region is the area with the highest recorded number of caravans in England. The share of both the Region and England as a whole attributed to Essex County can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2: Percentage of Essex share of sites and pitches by East of England region and total for England as of 19th July 2005.**

	Total	Unauthorised encampments	Authorised council sites	Authorised private sites
Essex County	1159	442	349	368
England	15711	4067	6458	5186
% of which is Essex County	7.4	10.9	5.4	7.1
East of England	3983	1201	1382	1400
% of which is Essex County	29.1	36.8	25.3	26.3

There are a number of trends that table 2 shows regarding the accommodation characteristics and how they differ when compared across Essex County, the East of England and England as a whole.

1. There appears a trend for there to be disproportionately more caravans classified as unauthorised in Essex than is characteristic of the East of England region or England as a whole.
2. Essex County also appears to host over a third of the unauthorised developments across the East of England region.

3. When compared to the total for England as a whole, the proportion of unauthorised developments across Essex equates to the combined number of those that are seen as authorised (both council and private) sites.

Overall, from such data there appears to be a large number of Gypsies and Travellers that are staying on sites in and across Essex on an unauthorised basis. This appears to be unevenly distributed across the various local/unitary authority boundaries (see table 1).

<sup>48</sup> Gypsy sites provided by local authorities in England 19th July 2005.  
[http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_housing/documents/page/odpm\\_house\\_028938.xls](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_028938.xls)

## Section 6: The Gypsy & Traveller Perspective

As part of stage 3 of the research, 64 interviews were undertaken with Gypsy and Traveller 'household heads' and 8 young people across Essex County. Originally, these interviews were to take place during the winter months, but, given that a large number of Gypsies and Travellers staying on the unauthorised encampments faced imminent eviction, we began these in July 2005 and completed in November 2005.

### Respondent characteristics

#### Summary

Among those interviewed (72 in total), eight were young people as opposed to heads of household (64). Eight out of ten were women and the largest proportion was in the age range 30-39.

Those from unauthorised developments represented the largest group, followed by those living on local authority sites and privately owned sites. Interviews with a small number of those Gypsies and Travellers either living in houses or staying at the side of the road were also undertaken.

The largest proportion (41 out of 64) described themselves as Irish, while 17 were English and smaller numbers described themselves as Romany or from a mixed ethnic background.

Individuals from a range of household sizes were interviewed ranging from single person and single parent households to those consisting of couples with children.

Only around one in ten of those interviewed stated that they would consider living in a house.

### Gender and age

Of the 64 interviews with household heads, 52 (81%) were women, 7 (11%) were men and 5 (8%) were couples, with the 30-39 aged group being the largest at 42% of the whole. We found the female Gypsies and Travellers easier to access than the men once contact had been made and they were generally amenable to being interviewed by a female researcher. Often the men were out at work when we visited the sites and it was also suggested that there may be historical reasons why they were reluctant to speak to 'authorities': they may have preferred to remain anonymous so they would not be recognised as Gypsies or Travellers when seeking employment.



Table 3: Gender and age of respondents

Age group	All		Male	Female	Couple
	No.	%			
20 – 29 years	18	28.0	-	17	1
30 – 39 years	27	42.0	2	22	3
40 – 49 years	8	13.0	1	6	1
50 – 59 years	5	7.5	1	4	-
60 – 74 years	5	7.5	2	3	-
75 years and over	12.0	1	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7 (11%)</b>	<b>52 (81%)</b>	<b>5 (8%)</b>

Samples were taken from privately owned unauthorised developments (69%), privately owned authorised sites (6%), local authority sites (28%), Gypsies and Travellers living in houses (3%) and at the side of the road (2% unauthorised encampments). Across Essex County, 38% of all Gypsies and Travellers live on private unauthorised developments, that is they own the land but do not have planning permission to stay on it; 30% live on Local Authority authorised sites and 32% live on private authorised sites (with planning permission).

We gained access to the Gypsies and Travellers initially via the Traveller Education Service and Gypsy Services although ‘snow-balling’ occurred following contact with the Travellers themselves and we found that people were willing to come forward and discuss their accommodation needs.

### Tenure

Table 4: Tenure

	No.	%
LA site	18	28.0
Own land with planning permission	4	6.0
Own land without planning permission	39	61.0
House	2	3.0
Side of road	1	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Ethnicity

Gypsies and Travellers from English (27%), Irish (64%) and a small number of Romany (3%) backgrounds were included. Some Traveller households described themselves as ‘mixed’ (6%): these were English/Scottish, English/Welsh, Welsh/Scottish and Scottish/Irish. In general, the English Gypsies and Irish Travellers did not mix, nor did

they express a wish to, so future provision would need to take account of this. Also, a number of the people we spoke to indicated that they preferred the term ‘culture’ rather than ethnicity.



**Table 5: Ethnicity**

Ethnic group	No.	%
English	17	27.0
Irish	41	64.0
Romany	2	3.0
Mixed	4	6.0
All	64	100.0

#### **‘Household’ size**

Of those interviewed, 9 (14%) were single person ‘households’. We use ‘household’ here to denote the immediate family, living on the same pitch (mother, father and children). Often however, the extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles etc) live on the same site, particularly on the privately owned sites and in some circumstances on the same pitch; 1 interview (1%) with a couple without children (although the female was expecting a child); 27 (42%) were couples with children and 28 (43%) were single parent families, so 86% of our sample as a whole were ‘households’ with children.

The average household size of our sample was 4, compared with 2.3 for the house-dwelling population (General Household Survey 2002) and average caravan occupancy was 2 persons. In general Gypsies and Travellers marry and have children younger than the settled population and often have larger families. Although there are exceptions, generally boys and girls in the same households occupy separate caravans for cultural reasons and usually the parents also have a separate caravan.

**Table 6: ‘Household’ size**

Single person	9	(14%)
Couple / no children	1	(1%)
Couple with children	27	(42%)
Single parent	28	(43%)

#### **Attitudes towards house-dwelling**

A key issue addressed by the project was to ascertain the attitudes of Gypsies and Travellers in Essex towards house-dwelling. Of those interviewed, only 7 (11%) said they would consider living in a house, while the majority (89%) said they would not. A more detailed examination of this will be included below on a tenure by tenure basis.

**Table 7: Would you live in a house?**

Yes	7	(11%)
No	57	(89%)

## Perspectives from unauthorised developments

### Summary

Among those staying on unauthorised developments it was found that:

- The largest group were Irish;
- They were no longer actively travelling, having bought land in the County. In all cases, planning permission had been sought and refused. The desire to have their children educated and the lack of places to stop were put forward as the main reasons for adopting a more settled lifestyle;
- There was a general dislike for local authority sites due to the inability to influence the type of residents, concerns about the location of such sites, the potential for being evicted and the desire to remain separate from other Gypsies and Travellers;
- They were generally positive about where they were living in terms of the sites and access to services (education and health);
- There was a general reluctance to provide any details about their income levels and economic activity; and
- The main aspiration was to remain living within close kinship networks on relatively small scale sites as opposed to moving to a house.

Of all the interviewees, the majority lived on privately owned land where planning permission had been refused (61% of the total sample) and the majority of these Travellers were of Irish heritage (95%). We interviewed people from a number of small developments across the county and from a large development (in Basildon) that has attracted a good deal of media attention.

Respondents were asked a number of questions about their travelling patterns, aspirations and future intentions and these are outlined below.

## Travelling patterns

The vast majority of these Travellers had settled in a caravan on a pitch since purchasing land in Essex and no longer pursued an active travelling lifestyle, although they still perceived themselves as 'Travellers' in cultural and ethnic terms. This is an important point as there can be misconceptions about the 'Traveller' status of those Gypsies and Travellers who are no longer nomadic and it is worth noting that cultural behaviour and traditions still apply when people are staying on a pitch.

This group had bought land in Essex and applied for planning permission which had been refused, often on the grounds that the land was green belt. In some cases the status of the land was being contested, for example on one site the Travellers claimed that the land was brown field since it had previously been used as a scrap yard. A further problem facing many of this group was that often they bought the land first and applied for planning permission retrospectively. To clarify, planning permission becomes harder to secure when it relates to developments carried out before the date of the planning application and in such sensitive areas as greenbelt. Also, there is a higher number of applications refused and dismissed on appeal when it has already been built. Many respondents made the same comment regarding the nomadic way of life: 'the travelling life is over' and indicated that they wanted their children to be educated as it was no longer possible to make a living from travelling. Historically Gypsies and Travellers have been able to support themselves by getting employment on a casual basis in the agricultural industry. However, this is in decline and does not afford the same opportunities today. Further, all of the people we spoke to described how it had become increasingly hard for them to maintain a life on the road: it is difficult for them to stop anywhere now and they face being moved on by the police and sometimes experience harassment and intimidation from the public. In Essex there is a 'Travellers' Code' which allows small groups (usually no more than 3 caravans) to stop on land for up

to 28 days provided there is no disturbance to the public and the land is left tidy afterwards. This can be problematic for the Irish Travellers as they tend to travel in larger groups which cannot comply with the code. Further, a stipulation is that the land that has been occupied for the 28 day period cannot be occupied again for another 3 months, so options for groups of active Travellers are limited.

However, a number of our respondents from this group suggested that if travelling were feasible (i.e. there were places to stop) they would like to do so for short periods but that they did not want to give up where they lived. This was a point that was made often and forcefully, although these Travellers maintained a Traveller identity and still lived according to these cultural norms, the nomadism historically associated with travelling communities appears to be in decline. It became apparent that this is largely due to changes in the external environment (i.e it is difficult for Travellers to travel anymore) and particularly because of the perceived need for children of future generations to be educated. The quote below illustrates how times have changed for Gypsies and Travellers in Essex:

*'Things have changed over time for Travellers...people can't move around as much these days You used to be able to stop somewhere for a bit...you could get a bit of work, stay on farmers land...but that's gone now...you get moved on by the police in an hour.'*



### Attitudes towards local authority sites

Few people from this sample had previous experience of staying on council owned sites. Those that had were rather negative about the restrictions imposed and the inability to have their extended family with them on the site and there also appeared to be a perception among some of the Irish Travellers that the council owned sites were mainly for the English Gypsies. When asked whether they would consider living on a local authority site in the future, particularly where their own futures were in the balance in terms of facing eviction, no-one said that they would and indicated that they would prefer to go back on the road rather than be split up from their families. A number of reasons were given for not wanting to live on a council run site and these are summarised below:

- Not having control over who lives there – people from this group felt it was important to be surrounded by family or at least ‘known’ people for the safety of the children and for harmonious relationships;
- The possibility of facing eviction at short notice – here the Travellers seemed to be saying that they would feel insecure on a council run site as they could be asked to leave at any time without enough time to make alternative provision. Pitches on council run sites are let on licence which means that there is not the level of tenure security afforded to social rented housing;
- Not liking the locations – it was felt by many that the location of the council sites were poor in terms of not being safe due to being too close to busy roads or unpleasant due to being close to industry;
- Not wanting to mix with other Gypsies and Travellers – as indicated above there seemed to be a tendency for particular ethnic groups to want to stay ‘with their own kind’ and there was the fear that integration would be forced upon them if they lived on a council site;
- A number of respondents from this sample did not feel that council provision was necessary given that they had purchased land as advised; and
- A further comment made was that there was no point applying to council site waiting lists as it was known that there is a lack of available pitches.



The quotations below exemplify these points further:

*'I don't want to live on a council site... they don't seem to appreciate individual choices... you can't choose who you live next to.'*

*'I think council sites are ok if you are stuck but the thing is you never own them you are just keeping it for somebody else and you can be put off the site straight away if anyone complains about you.'*

*'I have been on the waiting list for a pitch but I have never heard anything about it...hardly any pitches come empty anyway so there's not much point applying.'*

### Satisfaction levels

When asked about satisfaction levels with where they lived and the amenities, respondents expressed very high levels of satisfaction and strongly maintained that they wanted to stay where they were (i.e. on the land they had bought). Although in some cases respondents were resigned to the fact that they would eventually be evicted, enormous reluctance to leave the developments was expressed. On these developments the Gypsies and Travellers had installed hard-standings, often roads and a range of other facilities, for example electricity, telephones and water. Gas was usually provided in bottled form. On most of these developments council tax was levied and rubbish was removed by the council. In general people were very happy with the environments that they had created and on the smaller developments acceptance by local communities was also cited as a positive factor. In fact, at one development we were shown a petition with 300 signatures from the settled community in support of the planning application (which had been refused). Examples were given of Gypsies and Travellers socialising with the settled community in local venues.

A recurrent theme raised by the people we spoke to from the unauthorised developments was feeling thwarted, in that they had 'done the right thing' by purchasing their own land but not being legally allowed to stay on it. The comment below illustrates this point further:

*'We bought the land so we could stop living in lay-bys and industrial estates and have more security in our lives. A lot of money has been put into the site and we are going to lose everything...we did what John Major told us to do, buy our own land but look at us now...about to be evicted and what will we do where will we go?'*

## Future aspirations

As indicated above, the people in this group expressed a strong desire to stay on the land that they had purchased. There were a number of Travellers from the private unauthorised developments who suggested that they would be willing to enter into 'land swap' arrangements with the council and others indicated that they would be happy to be allowed to stay on the land with a license, even if planning permission was not granted. The people we spoke to generally did recognise the issues around land values increasing when planning permission was granted and did not feel that it was appropriate or fair that they should gain in this way. However, immediate concerns were about future living arrangements and the security of their families.

In general, those interviewed from the private unauthorised developments indicated a preference for small scale sites, living with immediate family, as being the most appropriate. It was also suggested that acceptance by the settled community was much more likely if these sites were small scale. However, at this large development, interviewees expressed the desire for the whole community to stay together for safety and security reasons, particularly as eviction was imminent. In fact it was suggested that this development had become so large for the protection of the community in the face of hostility from other (settled) communities. The key issue here seems to be that there are variations among Gypsies and Travellers themselves as illustrated by one interviewee below:

*'It's important for people to know that all travellers are different...just like every community is diverse so is the travelling community...that's why I want to live with the people I know.'*

## Attitudes towards house-dwelling

This issue was of particular interest to the research commissioners and is linked to the discussion above relating to the status of 'non-travelling Travellers'. Almost all of the people we interviewed from the unauthorised developments had never lived in a house, nor would they consider it under any circumstances and this was expressed very forcefully as below:

*'I would never want to live in a house. I couldn't stand the thought of being so close to people in a little box.'*

*'Living in a house within the community makes travellers vulnerable to harassment and bad feeling from the community .. this has happened to us.'*

*'I'm wary about living in a house because I've never done it... it would be like me saying to you 'go and live in a caravan' – how would you cope?'*

*'Living on a site is like travelling but not travelling. Living in a house is like being a different person. The lack of freedom and the lack of people around you mean that you have to become a different person.'*

It became very clear to us that house-dwelling and settling on a pitch in a caravan were perceived as very different things, and the only circumstances in which most Gypsies and Travellers could consider living in a house was if it was in fact like living in a caravan: in other words, a house with no stairs, with easy access to the outdoors and not enclosed by other buildings. Also, although the people we spoke to did not classify themselves as 'active travellers', the fact that they lived in a caravan or chalet and could potentially travel appeared to be very important to them.

#### Access to education

Access to services in general was good amongst this group and practically all of the children of school age from the unauthorised developments were attending school. As indicated earlier, the desire to 'settle' so the children could be educated was raised numerous times. Also, there were a number of children from this sample who had health problems and learning difficulties and evidence was provided to demonstrate that since stopping on the developments and having access to appropriate services that these needs had been addressed and accommodated. The theme of the children's education securing the futures of all Gypsies and Travellers was recurrent and is better expressed by quotes from the people themselves below:

*'My parents never had the chance to go to school, they were sent out to earn money. I went a bit but can't read properly. I want my children to have the chances I didn't.'*

*'Times are changing... it's important that the children learn to grow up with the modern ways and learn the ways of the settled community to get on in life.'*

#### Health services

As suggested above, a number of incidences of poor health were recorded in both the elderly and child populations and the research team saw a good deal of evidence of this. On one development a woman told us about the problems she had faced getting access to doctors while on the road and how this led to her having cancer which went undiagnosed for 4 years. She has been on the development for 2 years now and has been treated since then but her initial prognosis was not good given the amount of time that had elapsed.

Access to health services was considered to be good since settling on the sites and this was put forward as one of the main reasons (along with education) for wanting to remain there. Almost all of the Gypsies and Travellers we spoke to told us of difficulties in accessing health services before they settled on the encampments and the comments below elucidate these experiences:

*'I've had bad experiences with doctors' receptionists in the past but now it's much better...we've got a good doctor here and we get treated the same as everybody else...because we're Travellers...on the road...you don't get the same help.'*

*'Some people on the road still don't go to the doctor's because they don't know what their rights are.'*



## Income levels

We asked all respondents about their levels of income and whether they received any benefits. However, we found it extremely difficult to get people to disclose this and consequently it was not possible to gather information on income levels or whether or not benefits were received. Some people did indicate that they received some welfare benefits but were not forthcoming about which type and also in some circumstances where the researchers felt that there would be an entitlement to benefit these were not claimed as the family were cited as the main form of financial support.

With regard to income, therefore, we cannot say definitively what the levels are among our group although it was clear that there is variability among Gypsies and Travellers in these terms, with some groups being better off than others in ways not wholly dissimilar to the settled population.

## Findings from young people

We asked young people about their experiences of living on the development, whether they liked it, if they were in school, how they found it and how they were seen by house-dwelling children. Of the young people interviewed on the unauthorised developments (4 in total), all expressed a strong desire to stay where they were and not travel. Only one of the young people from this sample had experienced life on the road and did not want to go back to it. In fact, all of the young people indicated that they did not want to travel for any longer than a holiday. They were all very keen to talk about school with the oldest, who had been on the road and started school late, indicating that at first he was reluctant to be in the class with younger children but that he had now nearly caught up to his own age and was enjoying it. On some of the smaller sites, children had friends from the settled

community whom they visited outside of school and felt accepted by them. Their comments below illustrate this:

*'I love school and teachers...my teacher is the best teacher I've ever had. I mix with the other kids and they are nice to me as well. When we were travelling I missed out on school and if we travelled again I miss out again.'*

*'I don't want to be living on the roadside...mothers and fathers can keep their kids at school and get them friends and keep them. We want to be friends with neighbours but they don't want to be friends with Travellers. I don't know why. We don't want to be a bother to anyone we just want to get along with everyone.'*

*'We bought this land, it's ours. We've got the papers. The farmer who has the next field is a nice man and he lets us put our horses on his field. Our neighbours here don't mind us. Why can't we stay? You've got a house and can live in a house. We've got no house or home and all we are trying to do is make a home. We don't live in a house because we couldn't have our family and friends all around us and we couldn't visit all the time. You can't travel if you are in a house...I am happy when I am travelling but I don't want to lose my home here.'*

The case study of 'Mrs A' below adds further clarity to the issues raised by people living on the private unauthorised encampments in Essex.



### Case Study 1

Mrs A is a 60 year old Irish Traveller who has recently been widowed. She lives with her 28 year old daughter in a chalet on land she and her family bought three years ago. Mrs A has 3 other daughters (all married with children) also living on the development. All of her grandchildren attend the local school. She has applied to the council twice for planning permission but this has been refused on the grounds that the land is green belt (which she contests) and she has faced eviction since May of this year. Prior to stopping here she travelled around Essex with her extended family for the last 20 years mainly staying at the side of the road. The whole family want to stay on the land to be together. She told us about numerous occasions where she has been moved on by the police and describes the situation for Travellers now as follows:

*'We can't stop anywhere now without being moved on by the police...nobody wants travellers near them so they move us on straight away...sometimes even after only an hour. I can't face all that any more, not at my age... what are we supposed to do? Where are we supposed to go? There is nowhere for us that's the truth. It took us years to save up to buy this we can never afford to do anything like that again. We thought we were doing the right thing buying this land, that's what we were told to do but now look at us.'*

She is extremely worried about what will happen to her if evicted and feels that this is having a detrimental effect on her physical and mental health

*'...and anyway who will move this chalet for me if they want me to go? I've no husband to help me now. I've been backwards and forwards to the doctors these last few months, high blood pressure, nerves and such like...I've always been a strong one up to now...'*

## Private sites – themes emerging from authorised sites

### Summary

From our sample, those Gypsies and Travellers living on authorised sites tended to:

- Describe themselves as being of English origin;
- Have prior experience of travelling around Essex and, in some cases they had been on the sites for up to 23 years;
- Have generally given up a nomadic lifestyle due to a lack of places to stop and the desire for a more settled lifestyle;
- Suggest that access to services in the locality, (including on-site provision) was good, although attendance at school by some of the children was variable;
- Have integrated to some extent with the local settled community and been accepted by them;
- Prefer small scale sites; and
- Have a generally negative perception of council owned sites.

Of those interviewed that owned their own land and had planning permission, one was Irish and the remainder (3) were English. Again, access to this sample was initially via the Traveller Education Service which eventually 'snow-balled'. It should be noted however, that the proportion of the total (6%) does not reflect the proportion Essex wide (23% on private authorised sites).

Again, respondents were asked a number of questions about their travelling patterns, aspirations and future intentions and these are outlined below:

The Gypsies and Travellers in this sample had experience of travelling around Essex prior to settling on the sites and they all regarded Essex as 'home', although they may not have been born there. This was an interesting issue. Practically all of the Gypsies and Travellers we interviewed in Essex regarded it as home, often their children had been born here and they had been travelling around the county prior to settling. Often in Gypsy and Traveller families each family member could have been born in a different place so the application of the concept of home differs from the settled house dwelling population. Among our sample the length of residence on these sites ranged from 2 to 23 years.

## Travelling patterns

Only one of these Gypsies and Travellers described themselves as pursuing a nomadic lifestyle and this centred on holidays. Similar to the respondents from the private unauthorised developments, this group of people suggested that they no longer travelled, mainly because there were no stopping places and they were often harassed to move on from the side of the road. See the quotes below for elucidation.

*'You can't really travel anywhere anymore, there's simply nowhere for you to stop.'*

*'We don't want the hassle of always being worried about when they'll move us on.'*

*'We'd love to travel but how can we? There's nowhere to stop any more.'*

## Access to services

Access to services such as health and education were generally perceived as being unproblematic since being settled on a pitch, although attendance at school was variable with some children being educated at home. The reasons put forward for this were:

- Not wanting children to be influenced by drugs and alcohol: there were fears among Gypsies and Travellers that schools were potentially dangerous places in this respect; and
- Once children reach their teens there are cultural taboos about boys and girls mixing together, it was suggested that if they were educated at home then the parents could control their environment more effectively.

The quote below illustrates these points:

*'I don't want my son mixing with drugs and all that sort of thing...I'd rather him be taught at home so he doesn't get into bad ways.'*

## Integration with settled community

There was evidence that these Gypsies and Travellers did to some extent mix with the settled community and appeared to be accepted by them, for example some of the children had friends from the house dwelling community, even of different ethnic backgrounds.



*'We know the local people and they know us and it's fine.'*

*'We've been here a long time and have got some friends who are house-people.'*

*'My older brother is friends with some Asian people who live locally.'*

#### **Accommodation preferences**

Overwhelmingly, the preference among this group was for small scale sites. People from this sample indicated that living in large groups would not be their choice. Also, similar to the findings from the private unauthorised developments the perception of council owned sites among those that had stayed on these was poor, with one person commenting:

*'You don't know who you'll be next to or what will happen and you can't be with your family.'*

Further, none of the people we interviewed here would consider local authority site provision as an option for them in the future, as indicated below:

*'I couldn't live next door to someone I didn't know...you can't choose who you live with I wouldn't like that.'*

*'I don't want to live on a council site, I wouldn't be in control they could put me off when it suited them.'*

#### **Satisfaction with site/amenities**

All of the interviewees from this sample expressed a wish to stay where they are currently and reported high levels of satisfaction with the sites and the amenities that they had provided themselves. These included water, electricity, telephones, sewage facilities and tv satellite dishes in some cases. This comment from one of the women we interviewed sums this up well:

*'We love it here, it's ours and nobody can tell us we have to go.'*

#### **Income levels**

As with the earlier samples it was difficult to get an accurate picture of income levels but none of these people claimed to be on benefits.



Mrs B's case study below illustrates some of the issues above in more detail:

### Case study 2

Mrs B is English, 48 years old and married with 3 sons. Her husband (aged 50) and her two eldest sons (28 and 23) are tarmac layers and are currently working in France. They often work abroad in France, Denmark and Belgium. The family bought the land 23 years ago and have planning permission to stay and they have 6 caravans and a chalet. Mrs B describes herself as being from Essex and her husband from Kent. All three of her sons were born in Essex. The youngest son is being tutored at home although he won't sit any GCSEs. The family still travel for holidays (in England and abroad) although they often attempt to disguise the fact that they are travellers to avoid harassment.

*'My husband always tells me to put on my posh voice when we go anywhere, we stay in hotels sometimes. The men mainly travel to work but we sometimes all go together for holidays. People are usually nice to us but sometimes they seem to know who we are. Once in Menorca while we were standing at a bus stop a couple came up to us and asked us if we were travellers.'*

Mrs B was in the minority who would consider house-dwelling.

*'I would live in a bungalow but it would have to be on its own, not surrounded by lots of other people I wouldn't like that...and I wouldn't like stairs either.'*

Mrs B also told us that she lived on a council run site many years ago but she did not like it.

*'It was fine until they let all sorts of the wrong people on it, then it went downhill. We didn't like the fact that we had no say who they let on.'*

## Perspectives from Local Authority sites

### Summary

The issues identified through the interviews with those living on local authority sites included:

- That the majority described themselves as English;
- A recognition that the travelling lifestyle was limited and in most cases 'over' except for 'vacations' during school holiday periods, in part reflecting concerns about prolonged absence from their pitch and the possibility of losing the right to remain there;
- Access to on-site and off-site services was seen positively. Attendance at school was variable with bullying being cited as a particular problem for some of the children;
- Welfare benefit dependency was widespread among our sample although there was a reluctance to provide detailed information concerning their entitlement;
- House dwelling was not seen as a viable option;
- Few had experience of using other sites in the County
- Affordability, coupled with a recognition that renting a pitch was more convenient, precluded them from purchasing their own land; and
- While there was an anticipation that children would remain with them on the site, it was recognised that this would depend on the space available and the future aspirations of children.

A vital part of the data collection for understanding current accommodation provision and needs for Gypsies and Travellers across Essex was the inclusion of those living on council sites. This group comprised 28% of the total sample. Access to the sites included in the research was gained through Essex County Council Gypsy Services. The majority of the people consulted defined their heritage as English Gypsies, although one of the sites was inhabited by Irish Travellers only and two of the interviewees defined their ethnicity as Romany.

There are fourteen active council owned sites across Essex County, with seven in the north (Uttlesford, Colchester (temporarily closed), Harlow (2), Braintree (2) and Chelmsford) and eight in the south (Thurrock (3) Maldon (2), Chelmsford, Basildon and Epping Forrest) and these accommodate approximately 200 families. Each site keeps an individual waiting list and it is estimated that between 10 and 15 pitches become vacant across the whole of Essex each year. Preference is generally given to second generation travellers although not everybody is accepted on to the waiting list.

While each individual raised a number of issues that were both unique to their particular experiences they also encapsulated some commonality about life on council sites. These issues are highlighted below:

## Travelling patterns

There was a general consensus that the travelling lifestyle that Gypsies and Travellers had previously had and had been known for was limited now and for some "over". Those that 'travelled' did so for holidays with peak times for such travelling being during the children's' break from school. However, much of the limited amount of time they spent travelling was attributed to the risk of losing their pitch on the site, as was the case if they were away from the site for more than 6 weeks in one go.

The quotes below illustrate this:

*'We don't travel anymore but if we could we would, there is just nowhere to stop.'*

*'We only travel in the summer when the kids are off school.'*

*'We don't want to lose our pitch so we don't really go off much now.'*

*'I haven't travelled since pulling on here years ago.'*

## Access to services

All of those we spoke to reported that they had not experienced any problems in accessing the services in the local area. Everybody had access to a doctor and dentist and some services are brought to the sites. Site managers (Gypsies and Travellers themselves) usually have good links with the wider community and can facilitate access if necessary. It is worth noting that nobody on the council run sites felt that they lacked any service that they needed and all indicated that they would know where to go for help if necessary. See the comments below for further evidence of this:

*'We've got doctors and everything here even a library comes.'*

*'If we need anything we ask X [the site manager], she'll either sort it out or find out who can.'*



## Satisfaction with site/amenities

There was general agreement that the service standards on the site were good. In the main people were happy with the sites and the amenities (all sites have amenity blocks with cooking and washing facilities with mains electricity and hard standings for their caravans). A couple of people on one of the sites reported that the amenity blocks could be bigger (they did tend to be smaller on this site than on the others). The vast majority of people wanted to remain on the site where we interviewed them. The quotations below illustrate this well:

*'We feel very safe on this site...we have had hassle from house-people before...but it's secure here.'*

*'We'll stay here 'cos there's everything we need.'*

*'We're not going anywhere... we like it here.'*

## Benefits and income levels

Again, as with the earlier samples it was difficult to get an accurate picture of income levels, although it did appear that among the people we interviewed from the council sites there was a higher incidence of benefits being claimed than elsewhere.

In fact, all the people consulted confirmed that they were in receipt of benefits although they refrained from detailing which benefits these were.

Generally the respondents were reluctant to discuss their personal current/past income levels and those of their partners.

## Attitudes towards house-dwelling

House dwelling was seen by most of those consulted to not be a viable option for their lifestyle, and similar themes were raised as above (see below for comments).

*'To live in a house would feel like a prison to me.'*

*'I couldn't imagine living in a house, I would feel trapped.'*

*'I would never live in a house...I like to be outside.'*

A small proportion of this sample had previously lived in a house and had not found it suitable for their needs and a similar number said they would consider house dwelling, with one respondent indicating that she had recently applied to the council for a house.



## Experience of other sites

The vast majority of those we spoke to told us that this was the only experience of living on a site they had had. Prior to this they had generally lived at the side of the road. One had been on a site in Cambridge prior to the Essex site and another had been travelling around the Northampton area and had experience of house dwelling. All the others had always stayed within the boundaries of Essex County when travelling.

## Health

All of those interviewed reported generally good health. All were registered at the local health centres and had very positive experiences in their relationship with the healthcare staff there when the services had been accessed, as the quote below illustrates:

*'We've all got a doctor and a dentist here. Before we pulled on here if one of the kids was ill we would've gone to the hospital, A&E and it's so difficult having to do that.'*

## Attitudes towards purchasing land

This was another issue of particular concern to the commissioners of the research and we were keen to ascertain whether renting a pitch on a site was a precursor to purchasing land. We found that in general most people living on the council run sites did not see themselves buying their 'own' land in the future. The main reasons centred on:

- The expense – as indicated above, high levels of benefit dependency among our sample were reported which would generally preclude them from doing this; and
- The convenience - some individuals thought that renting a pitch was more convenient for their needs, see below:

*'I wouldn't want the hassle of owning land even if I could afford it.'*

*'I'll never buy land of my own...what's the point anyway? You can't get planning permission to stay on it I'd rather stay here.'*

*'I'm happy renting my pitch I've no intention of buying land of my own.'*

## Future aspirations

When we asked about how people envisaged what their 'households' would look like in the future, responses from the individuals consulted made it difficult to make any firm conclusions. Most people expressed a general preference to have their children living close by them but could not be certain that this would happen, particularly if the site was unable to accommodate them in the future. So, the idea of their children remaining on the site with them seemed complicated by the space available on the site and the free-will of their children, as the following quotes indicate:

*'It's up to my children where they live when they grow up. Of course I'd like them to stay close by me but I won't force them they have to do what they want don't they?'*

*'My children will want to move away when they grow up but I can't stop them.'*

*'I don't know what the children will do when they grow up, I'd like them to stay here, the girls probably will but the boys will have to go away to find work.'*

*'What I'd really like is for the kids to be here on the site with me. Who knows they might if there's a pitch for them.'*

## Education

With regard to the children on the council run sites, there seemed to be variable attendance in school. Some children were attending the local schools, although a small number from one site had been withdrawn because of bullying issues from non-travelling children. The families concerned were not confident that the school was able to resolve the situation and feared for the safety of their children and decided that they did not want to put them at risk. Some of the others were not presently attending a school but waiting for places at a Catholic school.

In addition there were various reports indicating links with the local Traveller Education Service. See the quotes below for further detail:

*'He [the son] went to the local school but there are no other travelling children there and he got picked on so I took him out.'*

*'My youngest children go to school but the oldest one doesn't any more.'*

*'I'm waiting for a place in the Catholic school I don't want my son to go to the other one.'*

Mrs C lives on a council run site:

### Case Study 3

Ms C is an English Gypsy and is 34 years old. She is separated and has 4 sons aged 17, 13, 9 and 7 years of age. She has 2 caravans on her pitch and has lived on the site for 6 years. She was travelling around Essex before pulling on to the site 6 years ago. The main reasons she likes living on the site are to get access to health care and education for her children. She has never been to school herself and welcomes the opportunity for her youngest sons to be educated and go on to get jobs. She is in receipt of income support.

*'My older boy missed out really as we were always at the side of the road, he can't read or write and neither can I but I want the young ones to get a good education and they can do that while we're here.'*

## Perspectives from house dwelling travellers

### Summary

Two travellers currently living in houses were interviewed.

The general findings suggest:

- A recognition that living in a house caused a sense of 'mixed identity' for their children, having a traveller heritage but having to conform to the customs and expectations of the settled community;
- A tradition of having lived in Essex all their lives and only touring during the holiday periods;
- A reluctance to return to the travelling lifestyle and a desire to maximise educational and life chance opportunities for themselves and their children;
- An expectation that their children will, themselves, ultimately end up living in houses;
- A negative experience of local authority sites due to issues of anti-social behaviour among other travelling families;
- A sense that they felt integrated within the wider settled community, although they expressed a reluctance to acknowledge their ethnicity to their neighbours; and
- The two young girls interviewed were positive about their educational experiences and had aspirations for living in 'bricks and mortar' and working in a city.



One of the sections of the Gypsy and Traveller population that we were keen to include in the report were the perspectives from those individuals who were currently living in houses, commonly referred to as “bricks and mortar” accommodation. Access to participants who were living in houses was facilitated by the Traveller Education Service. Those that were interviewed (2 respondents, 6% of the total) during the course of the fieldwork identified their ethnicity as English Travellers and both were married to members of the ‘settled’ community. One interviewee was an owner-occupier while the other lived in an RSL property. Neither respondent was in receipt of any benefit and one of these women was in part-time employment. For the most part, these two women had assumed the behaviour, ostensibly at least, of the settled (house-dwelling) population.

The emerging issues from the interviews with these individuals covered the following:

#### **Identity issues: being a Traveller and living in a house**

There was some notion that living in a house meant that their traveller identity had been split in two. This was particularly the case when talking about the children, as the children were seen to be under a great deal of pressure to understand their heritage as a Traveller within the family home but “live as” a member of the settled community whilst at school. There was evidence among this group of keeping their identity hidden from the house-dwelling population for fear of being rejected if discovered. This echoes a concern raised earlier about how Gypsies and Travellers can in fact become vulnerable when they settle in a house. The quotes below illustrate this point further:

*‘I feel like I have to live two lives, one as a traveller and one as a member of the settled community, due to racism and discrimination from the [settled] community.’*

*‘I’m a traveller, been born and raised as one but I live in a world where if they knew what I was, up at the school, I couldn’t take my kids there. So I have to teach my kids our way and your way so they learn to be able to mix with your kind.’*

*‘We really need help off the settled community, off the council, to help us stay and build a secure environment for our families. No one wants to travel around and face constant questions about where they are going to be the next day.’*

*‘I’ve not thought about my children’s future but I’ve told them not to tell people that they are travellers... as they will get called names if [the settled community] knew that they were.’*



### Travelling patterns: past and present

Both interviewees reported that they had remained within Essex all of their life and predominantly within just two of the areas within the county. As with the other groups of Gypsies and Travellers, both still travelled with a touring caravan during the main summer school holidays to see friends and family throughout the UK. Popular locations for this group were the New Forest and Lincolnshire.

However, both participants considered that the “heyday” of travelling was now over, commenting:

*‘The travelling lifestyle is very hard for the kids and very scary ...especially if you are knocked up in the middle of the night or people start throwing stones at your caravan.’*

*‘Things have changed over time for travellers...people can’t move around as much these days.’*

*‘I want my kids to be settled and not having to be asked to move on whenever you stop.’*

*‘We take a caravan away when we get chance to have a holiday during the kids holiday from school and go... to the New Forest and Lincolnshire mainly.’*

### Future aspirations

Neither respondent expressed any intention of either living in a caravan again or being an ‘active’ traveller. One participant did express a desire to live in a ‘unit’ which was in their own grounds and detached because of the freedom this offered them and the enjoyment of the countryside. However, this individual added that this was not possible in the foreseeable future as it was an expensive choice.

Similar to the other groups of Gypsies and Travellers, both from the house-dwelling sample wanted to remain stationary in order to give their children a degree of stability and to maximise their educational chances and improve their life opportunities.

Both thought that their children, when adults, would end up living in houses as, although they had stayed in caravans for holidays the children had always remarked how much more they preferred the house environment and that this was ‘normal’ for them, as indicated below:

*‘I think the kids will live in a house when they get older... they enjoy going off in the caravan with us and their Aunties for holidays but they can’t wait to get back home.’*

*'Time is changing...it's important to know where they have come from as Travellers but they need to live like settled people in order to get on.'*

### Education

Both participants reported that their children were in the local schools and that these children were performing at either average or above average in their school work. They indicated that they were integrated well, but that they did not 'admit' to being Travellers for fear of bullying and rejection. One respondent commented:

*'Education is really important and my children are in the top sets for all their lessons I really encourage that because we just want good things from them and for them to get on.'*

*'The kids are ok at school but they really just want to go out and get jobs now. They have had bad experiences at school and they are all highly strung ... running around like wild-things. It's hard for the kids to integrate into the school with other kids they are not like ... they just want to be separate and go out and fend for themselves.'*

### Experience of local authority sites

Both had lived for periods on a number of Local Authority sites and their experiences of these sites were largely negative. The reasons for this revolved around new and disruptive families arriving on the sites and behaving badly and in some cases threateningly and/or criminally. The quotes below illustrate this further:

*'I don't want to live on a site where you are too close to other families ...I think that the closeness causes arguments between families. I will never go on a site again...I never feel safe on a site ...because of the threat of being burgled or my daughters being attacked.'*

*'They could be more considerate – they don't seem to appreciate individual choices...one site may have family on and we would want to stay with them...not on another different site but there's no flexibility in the way they are created and managed.. .I found living on council sites quite restrictive.'*

### Access to services

Both respondents from this sample had experienced good access to a range of local services including education and healthcare in the communities in which they lived. See the quotes below for further clarification:

*'We've had no bad experiences at the GP's but we haven't told them that we are Travellers...there may be problems if they were ever to find out.'*



### Integration with settled community

There was a general feeling that they were 'accepted' by the local community but they were not forthcoming with local people they knew about their ethnic heritage. In fact, they kept their ethnicity a secret. One interviewee had experienced severe bullying in school whilst a child from being a 'known' traveller, commenting:

*'I feel that living in housing within the (settled) community leaves travellers vulnerable to harassment and bad feeling by the community.'*

### Young people's perspectives

Two interviews were undertaken with the daughters (aged 12 and 16) of one of the house-dwelling respondents. They both reported that they enjoyed school and had many friends there but significantly had not told them that they are travellers. In the future both young people said they would like to live in a house or flat, preferably in London and both wanted to work in the city in computers.

### Perspectives from Travellers living at the side of the road (unauthorised encampments)

This group was particularly difficult to access mainly due to their transient stopping patterns and also ethical considerations. The Project Team felt it appropriate to interview Gypsies and Travellers only after they had granted permission and had been introduced from known personnel (from Gypsy Services at Essex County Council). One interview was carried out in August and another that had been planned was aborted for safety reasons (there was conflict with the settled community in this case). Two additional trips were planned during the summer but cancelled at the last minute as the Travellers had moved on. In November a final trip was planned but again cancelled as at the time there were only two Travellers at the side of the road across Essex and they both worked so were unavailable for interview. The findings from the interview that was carried out are outlined below in the form of a case study.

#### Case Study 4

Mr and Mrs D, English Travellers are aged 21 and 26. They have no children but Mrs D has recently discovered that she is pregnant. They live in a caravan and have been at their current stopping place for a week and intend to stay as long as they can. They travel all year round in Essex, moving on whenever they are asked to. They have previously stayed on a council owned site but were forced to move by other Travellers. They can't afford to buy land of their own and would not stay on another council owned site. Instead, they have applied to the local authority for a flat and hope to be re-housed in bricks and mortar.

## Section 7: The Stakeholder Perspective

### Introduction

As part of stage two of the research, five focus groups were held with stakeholders/professionals working with Gypsies and Travellers across Essex County as follows:

- The managers of the council run sites;
- Planning Officers;
- A range of representatives from agencies working together to provide services to Gypsies and Travellers;
- Housing Professionals; and
- The Traveller Education Service (TES)

Attendance at both the planning and housing focus groups was considered to be poor.

### Site managers

#### Summary

Issues arising during the focus group discussion with site managers included:

- Recognition of the poor perception among the general public towards Gypsy and Traveller sites, although exceptions were noted;
- The provision of council owned sites was not uniform across the County;
- An estimated 10-15 pitches become vacant each year and a restricted waiting list is at each site with preference being given to second generation Gypsies and Travellers;
- Residents are allowed to travel for a period of up to six weeks without losing their pitch;
- Housing benefit covers only part of the pitch rental fee. Some Gypsies and Travellers also rent their caravan and so staying on local authority sites can be expensive;
- There was felt to be an insufficient number of local authority sites across Essex and it was felt that such provision would be equally required in the future;
- While full on-site services are available (such as refuse collection), any problems on site can result in such services being withdrawn;

- The provision of local authority sites can be seen as comparable to the provision of social housing for those unable to buy their own land;
- Access to services was generally perceived as being good;
- An element of conflict between different Gypsy and Traveller groups was noted, especially between the Irish and English; and
- The granting of planning permission for those who had bought their own land was not necessarily seen as the solution due to inflated land costs and rather there was a preference for granting licenses (from non-planners).

## Introduction

This focus group was held on 28th June 2005 at Essex County Hall. Attendance was high as it followed the monthly site managers meeting and was also attended by the senior site manager and the manager and deputy of Gypsy Services. Attendees were asked a range of questions regarding the issues surrounding council run sites across Essex and services generally for Gypsies and Travellers.

## Perceptions of council run sites

In general it was felt that public perceptions of Gypsy and Traveller sites were poor, although there were exceptions, for example sites in Maldon and one in Harlow were considered to be accepted by local communities and Gypsies and Travellers on these sites fairly well integrated. Focus group members indicated that in general the public's view of Gypsy and Travellers across Essex was a negative one, some areas were thought to be worse than others where anti Gypsy and Traveller feeling was particularly strong.

## Levels of throughput/turnover/vacancies

There are fourteen active council owned sites across Essex County, with seven in the north (Uttlesford, Colchester (temporarily closed), Harlow (2), Braintree (2) and Chelmsford) and five in the south (Thurrock (3) Maldon (2), Chelmsford, Basildon and Epping Forrest) and these accommodate approximately 200 families. Each site keeps an individual waiting list and it is estimated that between 10 and 15 pitches become vacant across the whole of Essex each year. Preference is generally given to second generation travellers although not everybody is accepted on to the waiting list. Site managers pointed out that there can be issues with resident mix on the site and that this needs to be managed carefully to enable the sites to be sustainable. Residents are allowed to travel for up to six weeks without losing their pitch, which is let on license. Housing Benefit can be claimed if eligible although the full cost of the pitch fee is not paid, a reference rent of £23 per week applies which means that the remainder needs to be paid by the licensee (the average weekly rent is £40).



### Problems with authorised sites

Focus group attendees unanimously felt that the biggest problem with the sites was that there are simply not enough of them. The number of pitches that become vacant each year is very small and this limits the numbers of families that can be catered for. Also the location of some of the sites was not seen to be particularly good. A further issue for Gypsies and Travellers stopping on these sites was the potential cost: as indicated the full rental amount is not paid by housing benefit and not all travellers own their own caravans, some rent from a private company which can make living on a site very expensive.

### Facilities on sites

All sites have a full range of amenities and services including post, refuse collection etc. On some sites however, post is delivered to the site manager rather than to individual pitches and the general consensus was that services tend to be cut if there are any problems. For example, an incident at the Chelmsford site earlier in the year meant that rubbish was no longer being collected.

### Site occupation as precursor to purchasing land

Generally it was not felt that stopping on a council site was a stepping-stone to buying land. It was felt that the role of the council owned sites was similar to the role of social housing, in that those that could afford to buy did and those that could not needed this type of provision. It was strongly emphasised that there would always be Gypsies and Travellers who needed this type of provision in Essex.

### Access to services

In general, access to education services was considered to be good and the majority of residents on the sites had access to doctors, dentists etc. Site managers usually have good links with the wider community and can facilitate access to any services that are needed.

### Issues for Gypsies and Travellers in Essex

A number of site managers raised the issue of conflict between the different groups of travellers across Essex, particularly between the English and the Irish. This raises issues about the effective management of the council run sites with a precarious balance being struck. Focus group attendees felt that the settled community receive more help than Gypsies and Travellers do. It was also suggested that granting planning permission was not necessarily the solution to the Gypsies and Traveller's problems: the subsequent increase in land cost can be problematic and to resolve this, it was suggested that the way forward could be issuing licence agreements.



## Planning

### Summary

Among those who participated in the planning focus group, the following issues were highlighted:

- The submission of planning applications for Green Belt land was seen as problematic in that the Gypsies and Travellers were treated in the same way as house-dwellers and the planning system is not necessarily responsive to the needs of Travellers (from a planning perspective);
- Certain local authorities (e.g. Basildon) were seen as establishing more provision for the Gypsy and Traveller community than others. The provision of additional sites was seen as resource intensive and often in opposition to the views of elected members;
- There is a need for greater direction from Central Government concerning the allocation of land for Gypsies and Travellers to overcome the problems associated with opposition from elected members and the wider settled community;
- The difficulties surrounding the definition of a Gypsy and Traveller, especially those who had purchased their own land and 'settled' and how this then differentiated Gypsies and Travellers from the wider settled community from a planning perspective;
- General opposition exists among the general public towards Gypsies and Travellers; and
- A number of joint working initiatives across agencies exists, although this was seen as more problematic in terms of transience.

## Introduction

This focus group was held on 21st July 2005 at Chelmsford Council Offices. However, despite the high profile of planning issues for Gypsies and Travellers in Essex, the level of publicity surrounding this needs assessment and invitations to the focus group being extended well in advance of it being held (at a well attended launch event on 21st June) attendance was low. Further, opportunities were given for planners to convey their views by other means if unable to attend but none were forthcoming. Only 4 of the 14 boroughs across Essex were represented at this focus group: Colchester, Rochford, Chelmsford and Basildon. Currently, there are sites in Basildon and Chelmsford but no sites in Colchester and Rochford. Participants were asked a range of questions regarding the issues surrounding planning for Gypsies and Travellers across Essex and these are outlined below.

## Experiences of dealing with travellers across Essex

When asked about experiences of dealing with travellers across Essex, Planning Officers cited the following issues as being the most pertinent:

- Retrospective planning applications;
- The occupation of green belt land; and
- Problems with the planning system.

With regard to retrospective planning applications, one Planning Officer commented that the vast majority of Gypsies and Travellers did this and this was a major issue in whether permission was granted or not. This difficulty is compounded further by most of these planning applications being on green belt land. The problem here for Gypsies and Travellers seem to be that they are only able to afford to buy land without planning permission and this is often green belt. This means that immediately they are in an untenable position regarding planning guidance as retrospective planning applications are not viewed favourably and neither is the occupation of green belt land. One Planning Officer commented that planning guidance is applied equally, to both Travellers and the settled population while another added that there is a balancing act between catering for the needs of travellers and wishes of house-dwellers. A further point made was that the planning system itself is not geared up to making provision for Travellers and they do not in fact fare equally from it as a result: in other words, although it could be argued that Gypsies and Travellers are treated the same as the settled population this actually means that they are not treated equally.

## Issues across Boroughs and Districts

It was noted that Basildon District Council has made more provision for Gypsies and Travellers than any other in Essex and that there is an unwillingness to release any more land until the other Boroughs and Districts act. A further comment centred on the difficulties in developing new sites for Gypsies and Travellers: this process is consuming in terms of both time and money as it involves employing consultants and dealing with political opposition from elected members. A discussion about the political situation in Essex then ensued and centred on the issue of land allocation decisions. These decisions are made by elected members (who are subjected to being voted in by the electorate) and it was felt that, ultimately, settled populations did not want to have Gypsies and Travellers living near them. All Planning Officers agreed that decisions regarding the allocation of land for site development or for sale needed to be imposed from above, by central or Regional Government which would supersede any borough level decision making and overcome the problems outlined above. It was also noted that smaller, single plot developments were more likely to gain planning permission than larger sites.

### Mediating between the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and the settled population

An issue raised by Planning Officers was 'when is a traveller not a traveller'. A discussion of the issues facing active travellers and those that wished to settle on a pitch was generated and Planning Officers questioned whether there are differences here. It was mentioned that when Travellers change their behaviour and adopt a more settled lifestyle, the public's perception is that they are no different from them and should not be granted – as they see it – additional privileges in terms of space and occupation of green belt land. All indicated that they would welcome guidance on these definitions.

An example of effective mediation between the settled community and Travellers in Essex was given in Basildon where there is a very large unauthorised development. Here mediation has involved explaining the local council's position regarding planning permission to the Travellers and also representing the travellers' position to the ODPM and local politicians. It appears that the settled population do not fully understand the needs or lifestyle of Travellers.

### Obstacles to site development/approval of planning applications for Gypsies and Travellers

One of the biggest obstacles cited was the public's negative perception of gypsies and travellers and a 'NIMBY' mentality and this feeds into the attitudes of elected members representing constituencies. One Planning Officer commented that they had found that as travellers get older they seemed willing to move into bungalow type accommodation but would want larger plots surrounding this than normal and it is hard to justify this as most people would prefer this.

### Scope for flexibility within the planning system

All Planning Officers felt that the current system could be flexible but that this largely depended on individual circumstances and each situation. One Planning Officer commented that although the scope to be flexible is statutorily in place, again there are huge obstacles facing local councils from elected members. Thus, there is little political incentive for councils to engage in land swap, for example as local politicians resist making provision for Gypsies and Travellers to keep the wider electorate happy. Again the need for such decisions to be imposed from a higher level was reiterated. It was argued that planning laws did not need to be any more flexible but rather decision making mechanisms needed an overhaul. If this did not happen, it was suggested that no real decisions would be made and the needs of Gypsies and Travellers would not properly be addressed.



## Joint working

Planning Officers gave a number of examples where joint working across agencies has worked successfully. It was also noted that joint working is difficult to develop where sites were transitory although there are no such sites in Essex currently. Planning Officers currently dealing with Gypsies and Travellers felt that they have good relationships as have other statutory and voluntary providers, but, the problem was perceived to be some utility services will only go on sites with police escorts which does not foster good relations.

## The needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Essex

For Gypsies and Travellers, the overarching need here was identified as having land of ones own and being able to live in peace on this land.

## Multi-agency

### Summary

The discussion among members of the multi-agency focus group tended to centre upon:

- The difficulties of engaging in a dialogue with Gypsies and Travellers, especially when the families were not settled;
- The lack of detailed appreciation of the cultural issues associated with Gypsies and Travellers among some service providers;
- The provision of services to the Gypsy and Traveller community was sometimes hampered by the attitude of the settled community as often they are seen as 'separate' from the settled community. The lack of accurate information was also regarded as an obstacle; and
- There is a need to change perceptions of the normality of house-dwelling vis a vis a travelling lifestyle and the associated view that Gypsies and Travellers were 'deviating' from this. The consideration of granting licences was also regarded as a positive step.



## Introduction

This focus group was held on 21st July 2005 at Chelmsford County Hall following the monthly multi-agency meeting. There were a range of agency representatives from Essex Gypsy Services, Traveller Education Service, the Health Service, the Police and Library Services. In total there were 14 attendees. Participants were asked a range of questions focusing on the obstacles/barriers to providing services to Gypsies and Travellers in Essex, the main priorities for service providers, any conflicting priorities between agencies and future priorities for action.

## Obstacles and barriers to providing services to Gypsies and Travellers in Essex

The main obstacles identified included the need to appropriately communicate with Gypsies and Travellers. This was seen to be problematic where families were not settled and therefore more difficult to access and deliver services to. It was also mentioned that it was important to balance the offering of help, support and service provision to these groups without pressurising the families concerned. Lack of awareness of the needs and cultural issues facing Gypsies and Travellers was also cited as being problematic, although within the focus group a number of agency representatives confirmed that they had undertaken cultural awareness training to overcome gaps in knowledge.

## Main priorities for service providers

It was clear that agencies represented at this focus group had a remit to work together and that the constraints and drivers affecting them were now a known quantity. The main obstacle to providing effective services across Essex appears to be the impact of the settled population's attitude towards Travellers, with negative feeling being very strong in some parts of Essex. It was suggested that although this anti traveller feeling should not get in the way of Gypsies and Travellers receiving appropriate services it would probably influence where Gypsies would settle. Attendees of this focus group felt that as long as Gypsies and Travellers were seen as 'other' from the larger settled population they would never be fully accepted and that it should be a priority to make future sites for Gypsies and Travellers more integrated with house-dwelling communities.

## Conflicting priorities between agencies

When asked to identify any conflicting priorities between the different agencies, no specific mention was made, although it was suggested that lack of accurate information could mean that appropriate services might not be delivered.

## Future priorities for action

Attendees at this focus group felt that it was important to change perceptions of Gypsies and Travellers and not see house-dwelling as the norm and Gypsies and Travellers as deviating from this. It was suggested that on a very practical level there was a need for more sites and the identification of suitable land. Regarding the issue of planning permission some agency representatives suggested using licences rather than planning permission to overcome the problem of huge increases in value.

## Housing

### Summary

From a housing profession perspective, the main issues identified in the focus group discussion included:

- The generally negative stereotypical view of Gypsies and Travellers by the settled community and elected members which sometimes made service provision problematic;
- Certain local authorities were seen as taking a more positive stance towards Gypsies and Travellers while others were seen as not taking their share of the responsibility;
- The need for housing staff to have a greater awareness of culture and lifestyles associated with Gypsies and Travellers to assist in an understanding of the needs of this community; and
- Potential service improvements such as:
  - greater guidance from Central Government concerning the role and responsibilities of local authorities;
  - greater emphasis on Gypsies and Travellers being seen as part of the wider community and not annexed to it;
  - greater clarity on how to assess the needs of Gypsies and Travellers;

- a more responsive approach to homelessness among this community with equality in terms of a desire to live on a 'pitch' as opposed to living in a house;
- greater education among officers and elected members about Gypsies and Travellers to combat negative stereotypes; and
- the provision of specific funding of the Housing Association sector to meet the needs of this community.

## Introduction

This focus group was held on 22nd July 2005 at Chelmsford Council offices and was attended by 6 housing professionals representing, 5 authorities: Chelmsford, Uttlesford, Harlow, Epping Forest and Basildon (2). However, that leaves 9 authorities that were not represented. Representation was fairly poor given the publicity surrounding this research and further opportunities given to give feedback. Participants in this group were broadly asked about perceptions of local authority provision for Gypsies and Travellers across Essex and their suggestions for improvements to services in general.

## Local Authority provision for Gypsies and Travellers across Essex

The discussion began with each housing professional being asked to comment on levels of provision for Gypsies and Travellers across authorities and attitudes towards Gypsies and Travellers. It was noted that, in the main, public perceptions of these communities often embody negative stereotyping and this can make service provision problematic. Basildon was seen as providing the most sites within Essex and being the most responsive to the issues facing Gypsies and Travellers. However, within this borough officers were concerned that other authorities were not taking their share of responsibility and were effectively leaving Basildon to deal with this, an unfair burden. Brentwood was seen to avoid the issue of dealing with Gypsies and Travellers to a large extent and elected members were seen to focus on disquiet from the settled community to justify not making any provision. Little was said about other boroughs, although housing professionals suggested that housing staff needed to have a better understanding of the culture and lifestyles of Gypsies and Travellers and have some indication of their levels of housing and related needs. The needs of Gypsies and Travellers were not seen as wholly dissimilar to the settled population, although rather than bricks and mortar,

hard-standings were needed and it was suggested the housing system needs to be more flexible in dealing with this.

It was generally felt that there are two types of authority in Essex, those that recognise the moral and legal obligations towards Gypsies and Travellers (like Basildon) and those that hide behind it being a politically sensitive subject and avoid catering for this group by promoting their relocation to authorities that fall into the first definition.

## Suggestions for improving service provision

When asked about suggestions to improve service provision for Gypsies and Travellers across Essex the following issues were highlighted:

- Central Government needs to respond to the 'political cowardice' of local government by stipulating that local authorities must provide sites at particular locations;
- Gypsies and Travellers should be seen as a community within the wider community and not one that is outside of it;
- Some mechanism for identifying the location preferences of Gypsies and Travellers needs to be developed to inform future decisions;
- There needs to be greater clarity on how to assess the needs of Gypsies and Travellers;
- There needs to be some relaxation in planning guidance so the needs of this group can be better catered for;



- Homeless applications by this group should be able to relate to pitches rather than bricks and mortar;
- Gypsies and Travellers need to be higher on the political agenda in some boroughs;
- Since there is a lack of information on this group, following the county wide needs assessment there should be local level assessments which will allow local authorities to have a base line set of data;
- Officers and elected members need to be educated to combat negative stereotyping which pervades thinking on Gypsy and Traveller issues; and
- It was also suggested that the Housing Corporation should allocate funding to Housing Associations to cater for the needs of this group.

## Traveller Education

### Summary

For those providing the Traveller Education service to the Gypsy and Traveller community, it was felt that:

- This service was the main service provided to this community, often acting as a mediator between the community and other service providers, which could involve them working outside their prescribed remit;
- A range of barriers exist for Gypsies and Travellers in accessing services, such as a lack of awareness, low literacy levels, the lack of outreach work and a lack of information about their needs; and
- Potential improvement to the service provided should centre around ensuring that the community was fully conversant with planning procedure and law, an increased emphasis upon multi-agency collaboration and encourage greater reporting and monitoring of discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers.



## Introduction

This focus group was held on 1st November 2005 at TES offices in Braintree. Attendees included 4 outreach workers, 7 teachers and 1 manager. As in the previously discussed focus groups, participants were asked about a range of issues relating to Gypsies and Travellers across Essex and for suggestions for improvements to services in general.

## The role and remit of the Traveller Education Service

It emerged that those working for TES felt that this service was seen as 'the main service' for Gypsies and Travellers in Essex and often they became intermediaries between Gypsies and Travellers and other service providers. Further, they often found themselves becoming involved in issues and work not strictly within their remit as it was often assumed that they were the county's Travellers' service.

## Barriers to Gypsies and Travellers accessing services

The main barriers to Gypsies and Travellers accessing services in Essex were identified as follows:

- Lack of awareness of existing services among Gypsy and Traveller communities;
- Low literacy levels;
- Lack of appropriate accommodation advice and assistance services;
- Lack of outreach work;
- Attitudes of staff/racism and negative stereotyping of Gypsies and Travellers;
- Lack of understanding of systems and protocols;
- The poor perception of Gypsies and Travellers by the settled community;

- Lack of understanding of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers;
- No provision for Gypsies and Travellers embedded in existing services;
- Lack of coordination between service providers leading to Gypsies and Travellers falling through the net or services being duplicated; and
- Lack of collation of records/information on Gypsies and Travellers

## Suggestions for improvements to service delivery

A number of issues were raised and discussed here and a summary of this discussion is listed below:

- Raise awareness of planning legislation/procedure among Gypsy and Traveller communities;
- Regulate agencies purporting to assist Gypsies and Travellers in planning applications;
- Develop and build on good working relationships with other agencies to move towards effective joint working;
- Control the local press that instigates bad feeling towards Gypsies and Travellers; and
- Encourage Gypsies and Travellers to complain and act when they are discriminated against.

## Section 8: Implications & Conclusions

The final section of this report will summarise the key findings and relate these to the objectives of the report under the following headings:

- Current tenure types and aspirations;
- Attitudes to council and private provision;
- Migration patterns and transient settlement patterns;
- Employment/education/health; and
- Household information/demography and future household projections.

### Current tenure types and aspirations

For the purposes of this study samples were taken from privately owned unauthorised developments (61%), privately owned authorised sites (6%), local authority sites (28%), Gypsies and Travellers living in houses (3%) and those stopping at the side of the road (2%). In terms of the distribution of tenure for Gypsies and Travellers across the whole of Essex, 38% live on unauthorised developments. 30% on local authority sites and 32% on authorised private sites.

Future aspirations varied according to tenure: those on the private sites (both authorised and unauthorised) expressed a preference for owning their own land and in the main did not want to rent from the local authority, while those from the local authority sites in general did not wish to purchase their own land. It is clear, therefore, that there is a need for both council run and privately owned sites (with planning permission) in Essex and estimated figures and projections are discussed in detail below.

A small minority (11%) of the whole sample indicated that they would consider house dwelling as an option and again the implications of this in terms of provision is discussed below. At present a number of housing authorities in Essex do not keep records of homeless applications from Gypsies and Travellers (Rochford, Harlow,

Chelmsford, Castlepoint, Uttlesford, Colchester and Epping Forrester). Further, it is unlikely that waiting lists for social housing (which historically have not monitored applications from these communities by ethnicity) or indeed council run sites would be an accurate indicator of unmet need given the large proportion of Gypsies and Travellers who would not apply for this type of provision, feeling that there would be no point due to scarcity.

### Attitudes to council and private provision

Those living on council run sites in the main expressed high levels of satisfaction with local authority sites and felt that these met their needs, while those on private encampments (authorised and unauthorised) expressed a preference for living on their own land and indicated that they preferred to be in control of whom they lived next door to.

## Migration patterns and transient settlement patterns

As outlined in the report, only a tiny minority of Gypsies and Travellers in Essex indicated that they wished to pursue an active travelling lifestyle (2 respondents in total). The vast majority, across tenure, expressed a wish to be settled on a pitch and travel for short periods/holidays. It did emerge however, that although nomadism was becoming rarer for Gypsies and Travellers in Essex if more transitory sites/stopping places were available they would be likely to travel more. In the main, Gypsies and Travellers in Essex have 'settled' in a caravan and stay on land that they have purchased or rent from the council. There was limited reporting of travelling outside of the Essex area and again this was described as 'holidays'. Almost all of the Gypsies and Travellers we spoke to regarded Essex (rather than the borough they lived in) as 'home' and the place they intended to stay.

## Employment/education/health

As indicated earlier in the report, in general Gypsy and Traveller women do not work. It also proved to be extremely difficult to get income and benefit details so we do not have a full picture here. In general, the men were involved in tree-topping, tarmac laying and groundwork. Access to health and education tended to be good where Gypsies and Travellers were settled on a pitch, but we found that more children were home educated on the council run sites.

## Household information/demography and future household projections

### Estimating household formation and composition 2006-2016

In this section we produce a formula based on a number of data sources to ascertain the expected rate of new household formation and composition. Because of the nature of the quantitative data pertaining to Gypsy and Traveller households this can only be our best estimate. We have attempted to be as transparent as possible regarding the basis of our estimates and use our qualitative data to provide context around these projections.

### Methodology and assumptions for the projections

The bi-annual Gypsy Caravan Count forms the basis of our projections and as has been pointed out elsewhere<sup>49</sup> regardless of the shortcomings of this data there is, at present, no other data source available. It should be noted that using the Gypsy Caravan Count as baseline data is likely to demonstrate an under-estimate rather than an exaggeration of the actual expected growth rate for these communities.

<sup>49</sup> Niner, P. (2003) Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England. ODPM. London.



An overarching aim of the project was to ascertain the likely growth in Gypsy and Traveller household formation for the whole Essex area. In order to achieve a baseline and an understanding of the situation we have used the data obtained from the last 5 Caravan Counts<sup>50</sup> in

conjunction with the data obtained as a result of our research: namely the average caravan occupancy level (2 persons) and the average household size (4 persons).

Below is our formula for estimating the levels of household formation:

#### Formula for estimating current household formation level

Caravan count x average caravan occupancy level = Estimated Gypsy and Traveller population.

Estimated Gypsy and Traveller population ÷ average household size = Number of Gypsy and Traveller households

**Table 8: Current Gypsy and Traveller household composition and numbers**

Caravan count <sup>51</sup>	1,150
Average caravan occupancy level <sup>52</sup>	2
Estimated current Gypsy and Traveller population	2,300
Average household size <sup>53</sup>	4
Number of Gypsy and Traveller households	575

#### Formula for estimating future household formation levels

Current number of Gypsy and Traveller households + estimated rate of local future household increase = Estimated number of future Gypsy and Traveller households.

Projected increase in Gypsy and Traveller households x average household size = Estimated population increase.

Estimated population increase ÷ average caravan occupancy level = Projected number of additional caravans

Projected number of additional pitches = Projected number of additional caravans ÷ 2

<sup>50</sup> In order for the projection to be trend based we have used the last 5 caravan counts in each authority as a basis to extrapolate a mean figure of Gypsies and Travellers accommodated in Essex at any one time over the last 2 years.

<sup>51</sup> From July 2003 - July 2005 including unauthorised encampments, authorised council sites and authorised private sites (see table 1).

<sup>52</sup> Based on the self-reporting of the participants in our research.

<sup>53</sup> Based on the self-reporting of the participants in our research



**Table 9: Gypsy and Traveller household projection for Essex for 2006-2011**

Current number of Gypsy and Traveller households (2006)	575
Estimated future household increase (4.95%) <sup>54</sup>	603
Projected increase in Gypsy and Traveller household numbers for 2006-2011	28
Future population increase	112 individuals
Additional caravans by 2011	56
Additional pitches by 2011	28

**Table 10: Gypsy and Traveller household projection for Essex 2011-2016**

Projected number of Gypsy and Traveller households (2011)	603
Estimated household increase for Essex 2011-2016 (5.16%) <sup>55</sup>	634
Projected increase in Gypsy and Traveller household numbers for 2011-2016	31
Future population increase	124 individuals
Additional caravans by 2016	62
Additional pitches by 2016	31

**Table 11: Summary of total projections by 2016**

Total projected increase in Gypsy and Traveller households by 2016	59
Total projected increase in Gypsy and Traveller population by 2016	236
Total projected increase in Gypsy and Traveller caravans by 2016	118
Total projected increase in Gypsy and Traveller pitches by 2016	59

**Points to consider:**

- We have chosen to base our projection upon the last 5 caravan count data returns in order to ascertain trend data. This holds certain assumptions however, namely that the count has been performed with exactly the same reliability and validity as has previously been the

case and that significant events have not occurred (i.e. the closure of large sites, the sudden growth in numbers of caravans). As can be seen by Table 1 the number of Gypsies and Travellers has remained relatively constant over this five-year period with only a 9 caravan (18 person/4.5 household) difference.

<sup>54</sup> Growth rate taken from that applied to the settled community in Essex by ODPM (2004) Interim 2002-based Projection of Households in England (ODPM Website).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

- It has to be stressed that the caravan occupancy we have used here is based upon the findings of our research. Although we interviewed a number of households who had large numbers of people living in caravans, particularly in those caravans that were large or chalet style accommodation, the average occupancy level was 2 persons. It should be noted that a significant proportion of our sample comprised single person 'households' (14% ) and single parent families (43%) which may reduce overall average occupancy levels. Also, it may be the case in certain areas that the occupancy level may be higher than others which impacts upon the total Gypsy and Traveller population for that area.
- In addition, the household composition we have used is based upon an average of the households that took part in the research. Participants in the research often represented households of 6 or more people. At the same time it was not uncommon for participants to be a part of a 2 person household or even an individual living on their own.
- In order to ascertain the expected rate of new household formation we have used as a baseline the projected growth rate that has been applied to the settled community within Essex 4.95% (2006-2011) and 5.11% (2011-2016). This growth rate takes into account trend-based projections of natural change (births and deaths) marital composition and 'settled community' migration. However, we are unable to deliver an accurate rate for the particular lifestyle characteristics for Gypsies and Travellers (larger families, early marriage, shorter life-spans and nomadism). As a result this increase should be taken to be representative as only a minimum projection. During the course of our qualitative data collection we have consistently found that Gypsy and Traveller family norms facilitate household formation at a faster rate than settled community as children marry younger (often 16-18) and obtain their own accommodation separate to their parents.
- The projection for pitches equates to both the Local Authority policy of caravan to pitch ratio and to the mean number of caravans found during this research project. However, it needs to be highlighted for planning purposes that applications for private sites may require larger, or smaller, caravan to pitch ratio than is outlined here – depending upon the applicant's individual needs.

### Understanding aspirations

The numbers noted above assume that the future number of Gypsy and Traveller households will continue to live in a range of accommodation options including authorised council sites, authorised private sites and unauthorised encampments. However, living on unauthorised encampments will not be a sustainable solution for Gypsy and Traveller households for the foreseeable future.



**Table 12: Current distribution of Gypsies and Travellers in the Caravan Count**

Unauthorised developments	442 caravans	38%
Authorised council sites	349 caravans	30%
Authorised private sites	368 caravans	32%

**NB:** Future projections are based on estimated proportional increases in population up to 2016. It needs to be acknowledged that the 442 caravans on unauthorised developments will need immediate provision.

**Table 13: Projected increase in Gypsy and Traveller caravans by 2016 and reported aspirations for accommodation.**

Unauthorised developments	0 caravans	0%
Authorised council sites	317 caravans	25%
Authorised private sites	811.5 caravans	64%
Housing – bricks and mortar <sup>56</sup>	139.5 ‘potential’ caravans	11%

Our research has shown that the vast majority of households currently classified as living on unauthorised encampments would aspire to owning their own land and

achieving planning permission to do so. However, a small number (11%) of those we interviewed reported aspirations for living in bricks and mortar type housing.

<sup>56</sup> Our data collection indicated that 11% of the participants interviewed showed aspirations to live in bricks and mortar housing – as long as their cultural needs were taken into account in the design and location of such a dwelling. If we take this 11% and project it onto the accommodation options we can see that the equivalent of 126.5 caravans could be absorbed by bricks and mortar housing options. In addition, little at the present time is known about the aspirations for those Gypsies & Travellers currently accommodated in bricks and mortar housing – for these individuals and households it is likely that there may be aspirations to travel at some time in the future and so consideration would need to be made of this when planning for any future provision.

# Appendix 1: Travelling Showpeople

## Introduction and background

As indicated earlier in the report, Showpeople are not included in the official definition of Gypsies and Travellers. This reclassification therefore means that the needs and aspirations of this culturally distinct group will not feed into any regional decisions affecting Gypsies and Travellers as a whole.<sup>57</sup> Regardless, it was agreed at the project's inception, that since Showpeople form a significant minority in one authority in Essex (Thurrock) that we would address these issues separately.

Traditionally, the sites Showpeople are accommodated on are known as 'winter quarters' as traditionally the nature of employment of Showpeople (fairs, circus etc.) often requires lengthy and sustained periods of absence. However, as the employment opportunities for Showpeople are changing there is a need for permanent occupation by some family members, for security, social, economic and educational reasons. Many established winter and permanent quarters have been lost in recent years to redevelopment schemes causing other sites to become overcrowded and increasing the number of pitches classified as 'unauthorised'.

Within Thurrock there are 3 travelling Showpeople sites, established over many years, with a total provision of 168 caravans across the Borough but with recent permission giving additional capacity (42 caravans). Collectively the plots on these sites do not adhere to the Showmen's Guild Good Practice Standards for plot provision. Adjoining the Buckles Lane site in South Ockendon is currently a large area of land in the Green Belt where approximately 50 families are accommodated. This land had temporary permission for three years to March 2004. The site was an unauthorised development that was granted temporary permission following a Public Inquiry. The site has received a further temporary permission due to expire in March 2006. As outlined in Thurrock's Unitary Development Plan<sup>58</sup> there are currently no plans for further site development until need has been demonstrated.

## Methodology and findings

In line with the main Gypsy and Traveller study the issues relating to Showpeople in Essex was explored during a focus group with Planning Officers and subsequently interviews were conducted with a number of travelling Showpeople in Thurrock.

<sup>57</sup> Government advice however, set out in the Department of the Environment Circular 22/91, indicates that local planning authorities should consider the needs of travelling Showpeople for permanent quarters and make appropriate provision in local plans.

<sup>58</sup> See [http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/planning/strategic/pdf/udp\\_p2\\_c06.pdf](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/planning/strategic/pdf/udp_p2_c06.pdf) for more information.

## Findings from Planning Officers focus group

This took place on 17th November and was attended by 4 authority representatives. The key issues raised in the meeting are summarized below:

Officers described how it is likely that the number of both Showpeople and Gypsies and Travellers in this borough is under-counted since most unauthorised encampments are not included and pitches rather than caravans tend to be quantified. This ultimately has implications for the accuracy of the caravan count for Gypsies and Travellers. It was posited however, that the January 2006 will have rectified some of these inaccuracies and that currently the count does not accurately represent the levels of provision made by the council

Within Thurrock there are 3 Travelling Showpeople sites. The officers discussed the increase in the number of unauthorised developments adjoining one of these sites which has doubled the number of people living in the immediate area. There are ongoing issues regarding the sale of land to Showpeople on this site and issues relating to the transfers of deeds to Showpeople here. The other 2 council sites however, based in mainly urban areas, experience comparably few problems of unauthorised development.

It is recognised by the Planning Officers that although the Buckles Lane site was originally intended for temporary use, in winter when the fairs were closed, it has become increasingly common for it to be occupied all year round by frail older people, children staying with grandparents and attending the local school and increasingly by adults who are finding alternative work as fair work diminishes

## Findings from Showpeople

Although some of the issues arising from the interviews with Showpeople were similar to those that had arisen during the course of the study at large with Gypsies and Travellers there were some idiosyncrasies with the lifestyle and experience of Showpeople.

## Demographic information

A small sample of 4 people were interviewed all were between 40 years and 60 years, 3 males and 1 female. Each interviewee lived on land they owned with planning permission. The people interviewed had lived on the site between 6 and 7 years although they had all been in this particular area for the last 20 years working in the fairs and circuses.

## Living patterns

Similar to some of the Gypsies and Travellers accounts detailed earlier in the report the people interviewed tended to live on a pitch with their immediate family with their extended family members often living elsewhere on the same site. Additionally, all those we spoke to had previous experience of travelling and stopping at the side of the road, currently however, there was a strong desire for settlement on a pitch with those we interviewed tending to stay on the site for the majority of the year and travelling for short journeys/holidays when not working with the travelling fairs.



## Travelling patterns

All the people interviewed here had a long history of being travelling Showpeople although they suggested that there was a limited future in this and that alternative ways of earning a living would have to be found. One interviewee had already diversified into other combatable work supplying facilities to support large outdoor events.

## Pitch size

One of the most striking issues of travelling Showpeople was the difference in pitch size in comparison to those held by Gypsies and Travellers. The pitches of Showpeople were substantially larger than their Gypsy and Traveller counterparts due to their reliance upon large machinery and transportation for their employment and lifestyle, with space for a large number of accommodation units (trailers/chalet style accommodation).

## Satisfaction with amenities

Dissatisfaction with the cost of mains electricity (£14 per day) was expressed and the use of the septic tank for sewage treatment. The Showpeople reported satisfaction with mains water and bottled gas supplies. All residents paid council tax (Band A) and had rubbish removal etc which they said they were happy with.

## Attitudes towards house-dwelling

All of the people interviewed here said that they would consider living in a house but would not like to live on an estate near to people that they do not know. The preference would be for single storey accommodation (i.e. a bungalow) surrounded by land – ideally on the land they now inhabit.

## Integration with settled community

The people interviewed reported being accepted by the settled community since Showpeople had been around for so long but some misgivings were expressed about living too close to house-dwellers. These centred on concerns about drug taking and the potential adverse influences on their children.

## Attitudes towards other Travellers

There seemed to be strong negative perceptions of some of the other Travelling groups and a reluctance to be associated with them – thus asserting their identity as Showpeople, rather than Gypsies or Travellers.

## Future aspirations

Generally these Showpeople expected their children to live close to them, on their own pitch when they were old enough to have families of their own. There was also a strong desire to remain a part of the Showpeople lifestyle either in the provision of rides and stalls or some kind of compatible enterprise.

## Appendix 2: Gypsy and Traveller interview schedule



Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed (**show id badge**)

My name is ..... and I'm carrying out interviews Travellers and Gypsies to find out what it's like living in Essex. Your answers will help plan better services in the future. The interview shouldn't take any longer than 20 minutes and I won't be asking your name or anything that can identify you to anyone else. Everything you tell me will be kept confidential.

Date

Interviewer name

Gender of respondent

Would you describe yourself as a Traveller or Gypsy ?

What is your ethnicity?

Is it ok to start the interview?

Location (describe e.g side of road / field)

Area / County



## **Present circumstances**

How long have you been here?

Do you own your pitch here?

If yes have you applied for planning permission?

What happened?

Where were you before coming here?

Do you own a pitch anywhere else?

How long will you stay here? What do you think about it?

Why will you move?

Where will you move to?

Have you stopped on any council owned sites?

Where?

What did you think of them?

## **Travelling patterns**

Tell me about your travelling patterns in a typical year

How long do you spend in Essex? Where do you stay? Where else do you stay? At what times of year? How often do you move?

Have you ever applied to a Waiting List for a pitch on a site? What happened? Why not?

Do you get any help with things like this? What kind? What do you think of it? What else do you need?



### **Future intentions**

Are you looking to buy your own land in Essex? If yes where? If no why?

Have you spoken to planning authorities / agents about this? What was this like? Have you spoken to any Gypsy / Traveller groups about it?

What do you feel about living in a house?

Have you ever applied to the council for a house?

### **Satisfaction levels - amenities**

What facilities does your pitch have?

Do you share any of these with other families?

### **Your family / household?**

What do you live in caravan, (mobile home, trailer)? How many on your pitch?

Tell us about the people in your household (i.e. who is on your pitch?) How many adults / children and their ages? Do all your family travel with you? Where will your children live when they grow up? When will this be?

### **Employment details**

What jobs do the adults do? Where do they work?

Is there anywhere you would say that you come from?

What is important to you when deciding to stop somewhere?

### **Health**

Does any of your family have any health problems? Tell us about them? How easy is it to get to doctors/dentists/hospitals? When was the last time you / your family visited any of these?

Do you or your family get any support? Do you need any?

## Education

How are your children educated? Tell us about your experiences with schools / education in Essex?

Do you have contact with the Traveller Education Service? What do you think of them?

Would you mind providing me with some information about each of the adults living in the household?  
Please begin with yourself

	ADULT								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>AGE</b>									
16 – 24 years	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
25 – 39 years	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
40 – 49 years	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
50 – 59 years	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
60 – 74 years	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
75 years or over	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
<b>GENDER</b>									
Male	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Female	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>WORKING STATUS</b>									
Full-time employment	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Part-time employment	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Retired	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Unemployed	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Long-term sick/ disabled	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Student 16 or over/Trainee	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Housewife/ Househusband	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Other not working	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8

Does anyone in your household receive any of the following welfare benefits? (Multi-code)

Income support	1
Council Tax Benefit	1
Housing Benefit	1
Child Tax Credit	1
Working Tax Credit	1
Jobseekers Allowance	1
National Asylum Support Service/Home Office	1
Training and education grant	1
Supporting People Grant/Subsidy	1
State retirement pension	1
Widows pension	1
Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance	1
Other benefits or pension from the Government	1
.....	
Occupational pension	1
None of these	1



Bearing in mind that your answer is confidential, would you mind telling me the amount of your household's total income. Please use net income from all sources (i.e. after deductions for income tax and national insurance) but exclude any housing benefit you receive.

	MONTHLY INCOME	ANNUAL INCOME
1	No income	No income
2	£217 or less per month	£2,600 or less per year]
3	£218 - £433 per month	£2,601 - £5,200 per year
4	£434 - £650 per month	£5,201 - £7,800 per year
5	£651 - £867 per month	£7,801 - £10,400 per year
6	£868 - £1,080 per month	£10,401 - £13,000 per year
7	£1,081 - £1,300 per month	£13,001 - £15,600 per year
8	£1,301 - £1,733 per month	£15,601 - £20,800 per year
9	£1,734 - £2,167 per month	£20,801 - £26,000 per year
10	£2,168 - £3,033 per month	£26,001 - £36,400 per year
11	More than £3,033 per month	More than £36,400 per year
12	Don't know	
13	Refused to say	

Is there anything else you'd like to mention?

Is there anything you'd like to ask us?