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Merseyside Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment : Final report

Brown, P, Scullion, LC and Condie, J

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Merseyside Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment

Final report

Philip Brown, Lisa Hunt and Jenna Condie
Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit
University of Salford

February 2008



About the Authors

Philip Brown and Lisa Hunt are Research Fellows and in the Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford. Jenna Condie is a Research Assistant in the Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford.

The Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit is a dedicated multi-disciplinary research and consultancy unit providing a range of services relating to housing and urban management to public and private sector clients. The Unit brings together researchers drawn from a range of disciplines including: social policy, housing management, urban geography, environmental management, psychology, social care and social work.

Study Team

Core team members:

Dr Philip Brown
Dr Lisa Hunt
Jenna Condie

Community Interviewers:

John Coffey
Joe Hurn
Ann Smith

Steering Group

Rob Farnos	Liverpool City Council
Maire Gollock	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Steve Guy	Liverpool City Council
Sue Hooper	Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Lisa Newman	Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Michael O'Doherty	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Samra O'Neil	Liverpool City Council
Jim Ohren	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

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Special thanks are also due to all those who took the time to participate in the study, helped organise the fieldwork and provided invaluable information and support in the production of this report. We are particularly indebted to Jane Hunter and the other team members at Irish Community Care Merseyside as well as Angela Fell at Sefton Voices for their assistance and advice.

Particular thanks must, of course, go to the many Gypsies and Travellers who found the time to talk to us and answer our questions in a full, honest and patient manner. It is hoped that this report is able to accurately reflect their experiences and needs.

This report is based on research undertaken by the study team and the analysis and comment thereafter does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the research commissioning authorities, or any participating stakeholders and agencies. The authors take responsibility for any inaccuracies or omissions in the report.

Executive Summary

The Study

Recent legislation and guidance from the government has indicated a commitment to taking steps to resolve some of the long standing accommodation issues for members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. This legislation has an overarching aim of ensuring that members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities have equal access to decent and appropriate accommodation options akin to each and every other member of society. As a result, a number of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) are now being undertaken across the UK, as local authorities respond to these new obligations and requirements.

This research and report were commissioned by four authorities within Merseyside (Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council and Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council¹) in June 2007. The study was conducted by a team of researchers from the Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit at the University of Salford. The study was greatly aided by research support and expertise from members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. The study was managed by a Steering Group composed of members representing the commissioning authorities.

The assessment was undertaken by conducting:

- A review of available literature, data and secondary sources;
- A detailed questionnaire completed by housing and planning officers;
- Consultations with key stakeholders; and
- A total of 72 interviews with Gypsies and Travellers from a range of tenures and community groups.

Background

Following the Housing Act 2004, local authorities have been preparing to develop and implement strategies to respond to the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities living in their areas as part of their wider housing strategies and the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS). Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) are designed to provide the evidence needed to inform these strategies. However, as well as presenting evidence and information on accommodation needs at an immediate local level the evidence collected and analysis produced has a wider regional role. The assessment of accommodation need and pitch requirements are also to

¹ For ease, these are referred to only by the borough or city name throughout this document

be fed into the Regional Planning Body (RPB), in this case the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA), for inclusion into the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RSS then specifies pitch numbers required (but not their location) for each local planning authority (LPA) in light of the GTAA's conducted and a strategic view of need, supply and demand across the region is taken. The local planning authority's Development Planning Document (DPD) then identifies specific sites to match pitch numbers from the RSS.

Main Findings

Local Gypsies and Travellers and accommodation provision

There is no one source of information about the size of the Gypsy and Traveller population in the Study Area. Our best estimate is that there are at least 396 local Gypsies and Travellers

There is only one form of accommodation provision, socially rented provision, for Gypsies and Travellers in the Study Area. There are no authorised private sites and no unauthorised developments. There were also no yards for Travelling Showpeople in the Study Area.

There are **2 socially rented sites** in the Study Area (Liverpool and Sefton) together providing 30 pitches. These sites accommodate 123 individuals. Residents on both sites have access to a water supply, electricity, rubbish collection, amenity blocks and WC. The sites have different management arrangements; the Liverpool site is owned by Liverpool City Council and managed by a dedicated site manager, the Sefton site is owned by Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council and managed by a warden, who is a member of the Gypsy and Traveller community, who lives on the site. Residents on the sites expressed ambivalent to negative views towards their sites, particularly in relation to the design and location as well as the size of pitches.

Unauthorised encampments

The Caravan Count in January 2007 recorded 0 caravans on unauthorised encampments (on land not owned by Gypsies and Travellers). Records kept by the local authorities show that the Study Area experienced around 22-27 encampments over the previous full calendar year (2006). Most authorities saw this as broadly reflective of previous years with only Wirral stating that their number was unusually high as a result of an event that particular year. According to the authorities the average encampment size was just over 5 caravans. Most encampments stayed for a relatively short period of time with the average duration being just under 1 week. There was generally an even spread of encampments with around 4/5 encampments in each of the four authorities per year.

No authority currently has a formal written policy for managing unauthorised encampments.

The number of interviews which occurred with households on unauthorised encampments over the fieldwork period was incredibly low – with only 2 interviews achieved. This was due to an abnormally low number of unauthorised encampments featuring in the areas over the fieldwork period (June-October 2007). Both of these households wanted residential accommodation in the Liverpool area.

Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar housing

The inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers in local authority housing and homelessness strategies is the exception rather than the rule at present. No local authority was able to reliably quantify the number of Gypsies and Travellers in social or private bricks and mortar housing. It is estimated that there are at least 70 Gypsy and Traveller households in bricks and mortar housing although it is also believed that this may be a significant underestimate.

A total of 49 households living in bricks and mortar housing across the Study Area were interviewed. Almost a fifth of respondents were owner-occupiers, more than half were council tenants, with the remainder either RSL or private tenants. Around two-thirds of households still retained a trailer. The vast majority of respondents viewed their home either positively or ambivalently. Almost a third of respondents had lived in their accommodation for 5 years or more, and half had lived there for between 1 and 5 years. Only one respondent was planning to leave their accommodation in the future.

A fifth of all respondents had lived in a house at some point in the past.

Characteristics of local Gypsies and Travellers

The survey of Gypsies and Travellers identified some of the important characteristics of the local population.

Household size is significantly larger than in the settled/non-Traveller population at 4 persons across the whole sample

A significant minority of the sample (18%) were households over 60 years of age.

Young families are the predominant household type in the Study Area as a whole. There are more couples in bricks and mortar housing than on site based accommodation – these couples tend to be older at 60+ years.

More than half of respondents felt they were 'local' to the area they were residing in. 'Family connections' was the main reason given when respondents were asked why they were living where they were.

The local population consists almost entirely of Irish Travellers (60%) and Romany Gypsies (English) (31%) with much smaller numbers of others who described themselves as Welsh Gypsies/Travellers, Scottish Gypsies/Travellers or the more generic 'Traveller'.

Around a fifth of respondents had school age children who did not regularly attend school or receive home education.

The Gypsy and Traveller population was largely sedentary. However, around two-fifths of households on sites travelled during the year – mostly seasonally – with two-thirds of bricks and mortar households travelling at some point every year.

Respondents tended to travel to numerous locations across the UK. Appleby Fair was a particular draw as was various destinations along the route of the M62.

Gypsies and Travellers and housing-related support

Both Liverpool and Wirral receive Supporting People funding for BME groups who can provide support to Gypsies and Travellers if needed – particularly around homelessness.

The kind of housing-related services Gypsies and Travellers expressed an interest in receiving assistance with included: services around harassment, accessing health care, accessing legal services, claiming benefits, support with planning, filling in forms, finding accommodation, and accessing legal services.

Accommodation preferences and aspirations

All households were asked whether there was anyone living with them who were likely to want their own accommodation over the next 5 years. Overall, 20 households reported that there was, which equated to 29 individuals who will require their own accommodation by 2012.

There was support for the creation of additional long-stay residential sites within the Study Area with a quarter of respondents interested in moving to a new residential site – this included half of the households who were currently accommodated on sites within the Study Area. Respondents voiced a preference for residential sites with a pitch capacity of around 20 pitches.

Just over one in ten of respondents wanted to see the development of more transit/short-stay sites in the Study Area. Interest was mainly shown from households from bricks and mortar accommodation which suggested that the creation of more authorised short-stay accommodation would enable an increase in family visits to the area and help to maintain the tradition of travelling as well as providing support to individuals who are 'settled' in more permanent accommodation. It was said that such sites should be around 10-20 pitches in size with a large number of people expecting to use the site for between 1-4 weeks.

Respondents were asked to comment on a range of differing accommodation/tenure types in order to ascertain their preferences. The clear preference was for a small private site which they/their family owned, followed by a family owned house, followed by a site owned by the local authority. Living on a site owned by a private landlord or a Gypsy/Traveller was the least favoured option – this highlights the importance that good management plays in sites.

Accommodation need and supply

Nationally, there are no signs that the growth in the Gypsy and Traveller population will slow significantly. The supply of additional authorised accommodation has slowed since 1994, but the size of the population of Gypsies and Travellers does not appear to have been affected to a great extent. Instead, the way in which Gypsies and Travellers live has changed, with increases in unauthorised accommodation, innovative house dwelling arrangements (living in trailers in the grounds of houses), overcrowding on sites and overcrowding within accommodation units (trailers, houses, chalets, etc.).

The 'models' for assessing the requirement for additional residential pitches, for Gypsies and Travellers, have developed significantly over the past few years. The calculation used here is an adaptation of the example provided by the CLG.² The calculation for years 1-5 (2007-2012) takes account of need arising from the following indicators: expiry of temporary planning permissions, household growth, need from unauthorised developments, movement between sites and housing, need from closing sites, and need from households on unauthorised encampments. On the supply side the calculation takes account of: pitch vacancies on socially rented sites, unused pitches, and known/planned developments of sites/pitches. These calculations are estimates based on information drawn from: local authority information, knowledge of key stakeholders, survey findings and assumptions based on the professional experience of the study team and consistencies from other GTAA's.

Additional requirements beyond 2012 are based on estimated household growth. This is assumed to be a 3% increase each year following commonly accepted assumptions as to the growth of the population.³

² CLG (2007) *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments – Guidance*. London: HMSO.

³ Household growth rates of 2% and 3% a year were suggested as appropriate in Pat Niner, *Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England*, ODPM, 2003. A 3% growth rate was also used in the recent report from Communities and Local Government (2007) *Preparing Regional Spatial Strategy reviews on Gypsies and Travellers by regional planning bodies*. HMSO.

Transit requirements (2007-2012) are calculated by the average number of households on unauthorised encampments seeking a transit/short-stay pitch in the area; an allowance for vacancies is included in order to manage their operation effectively. No further transit provision is estimated to be required beyond 2012 on the assumption that the level of travelling will not increase in the foreseeable future and other surrounding local authorities will also have developed appropriate transit options.

The table below summarises estimated requirements. The split between local authorities is indicative only and based on evidence of **'need where it arises'** and this reflects the current uneven distribution of the Gypsy and Traveller population across the Merseyside sub-regional area. The numerical results of this apportionment should not necessarily be assumed to imply that those needs should actually be met in that specific locality.

It is recommended that decisions about where need should be met be strategic, taken in partnership with local authorities, sub-regional bodies and the North West Regional Assembly – involving consultation with Gypsies and Travellers and other interested parties – which will take into account wider social and economic planning considerations such as equity, choice and sustainability.

Table i: Residential accommodation need arising from existing district level Gypsy and Traveller populations

Authority	Current provision	Additional residential pitch requirement (2007-2012)	Additional residential pitch requirement (2012-2016)	Total additional residential pitch requirement (2007-2016)	Total additional transit pitch provision (2007-2016)
Knowsley	0	4	1	5	10
Liverpool	14	11	3	14	
Sefton	16	12	4	16	
Wirral	0	9	1	10	
Study Area	30	36	9	45	10

Note: For pragmatic reasons these figures have been rounded up to the nearest whole pitch

Recommendations

The overarching recommendation resulting from this assessment is that the authorities across the Study Area engage pro-actively to meet the accommodation needs that have been identified as a result of this assessment and that a strategic joined-up approach is taken. More specifically a number of recommendations have been made for the Partner Authorities – these can be found in the main report.

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⁴ Rounding these numbers to the nearest whole pitches means that there is some inevitable discrepancy between the total need identified at the broader Study Area level and the need identified more locally

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Glossary

The following terms are used in this report and may need some clarification. It is noted that a number of the terms below are often contested and debated. It is not the intention of the authors to present these terms as absolute definitions, rather the explanations provided are those the authors used in this assessment as their frames of reference.

Term	Explanation
Amenity block/shed	On most residential Gypsy/Traveller sites these are buildings where basic plumbing amenities (bath/shower, WC and sink) are provided at the rate of one building per pitch.
Authorised local authority site/Registered Social Landlord site	An authorised site owned by either the local authority or a Registered Social Landlord.
Authorised Private site	An authorised site owned by a private individual (who may or may not be a Gypsy or a Traveller). These sites can be owner-occupied, rented or a mixture of owner-occupied and rented pitches.
Bricks and mortar	Permanent mainstream housing
Caravan	Mobile living vehicle used by Gypsies and Travellers. Also referred to as trailers.
Chalet	In the absence of a specific definition the term 'chalet' is used here to refer to single storey residential units which resemble mobile homes.
Country People/Buffers	Term used by Irish Travellers to refer to settled people/non-Travellers.
Doubling-up	To share a pitch on an authorised site
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
Gypsies and Travellers (as used in this assessment)	Consistent with the Housing Act 2004, inclusive of: all Gypsies, Irish Travellers, New Travellers, Show People, Circus People and Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar accommodation. Can also include Roma and boat dwellers if there is evidence of a need, suppressed or otherwise, for pitch accommodation.
Gaujo/Gorger	Literal translation indicates someone who is not of the Romany Gypsy race. Romany word used mainly, but not exclusively, by Romany Gypsies to refer to members of the settled community/non-Gypsy/Travellers

Mobile home	Legally classified as a caravan but not usually moveable without dismantling/or lorry
Pitch/plot	Area of land on a site/development generally home to one licensee household. Can be varying sizes and have varying caravan occupancy levels. Often also referred to as a plot, particularly in relation to Travelling Showpeople. There is no agreed definition as to the size of a pitch.
Pulling-up	To park a trailer/caravan
Settled community/people	Reference to non-Travellers (those that live in houses)
Site	An authorised area of land on which Gypsies and Travellers are accommodated in trailers/chalets/vehicles. Can contain one or multiple pitches.
Stopping place	Locations frequented by Gypsies and Travellers, usually for short periods of time.
Supporting People	A funding programme which provides grants in order to assist in the provision of housing related support to develop and sustain an individuals capacity to live independently in their accommodation.
Suppressed/concealed household	Households, living within other households, who are unable to set up separate family units and who are unable to access a place on an authorised site, or obtain or afford land to develop one.
Trailer	Term commonly used by Gypsies and Travellers to refer to a moveable caravan but can be applied to chalets, static caravans or tourers.
Transit site	Site intended for short stays. Such sites are usually permanent, but there is a limit on the length of time residents can stay.
Travelling Showpeople	Commonly referred to as Showmen, these are a group of occupational Travellers who work on travelling shows and fairs across the UK and abroad
Unauthorised Development	This refers to a caravan/trailer or group of caravans/trailers on land owned (possibly developed) by Gypsies and Travellers without planning permission
Unauthorised Encampment	Stopping on private/public land without permission (e.g. at the side of the road)
Yard	Term used by Travelling Showpeople to refer to a site

List of Acronyms

CLG	Communities and Local Government
CJPOA	Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DPD	Development Plan Document
GTAA	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
LGA	Local Government Association
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NWRA	North West Regional Assembly
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
RHB	Regional Housing Board
RHS	Regional Housing Strategy
RPB	Regional Planning Body
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
SHUSU	Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit
TES	Traveller Education Service

Note: Over the last few years the main Governmental department largely responsible for Gypsy and Traveller related issues (in particular regarding housing and planning) has been subject to certain degree of reform. This can cause confusion. The main changes are summarised below.

Until 2001 the **Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)** was the responsible department for these issues. In 2001 responsibility was passed to the **Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR)**. In 2002 the **Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)** took control of these issues (within which the Gypsy and Traveller Unit was founded) with this being replaced by the **Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)** in 2006.

1. Overview

This report presents the findings of an assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers across Merseyside. The research and report were commissioned by the four authorities within Merseyside (Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council and Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council⁵) in June 2007. The study was conducted by a team of researchers from the Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit at the University of Salford. The study was greatly aided by research support and expertise from members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. The study was managed by a Steering Group composed of officers representing the commissioning authorities.

Background and study brief

Enshrined within the Caravan Sites Act 1968 was a duty upon local authorities to provide sites to Gypsies and Travellers residing in and resorting to their boroughs. As a result of the measures contained within the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, this duty was removed. Over the subsequent years, coupled with continued migration, travelling patterns and household formation, this has meant that the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers requiring authorised places to live/stop far exceed the number of authorised pitches available. In addition to the lack of available authorised pitches, Gypsies and Travellers have also found gaining planning permission a major obstacle to providing sites for themselves and their families. Those Gypsies and Travellers who can afford to buy land are frequently in breach of planning laws when they attempt to develop that land for residential use. Subsequently, they find themselves subject to enforcement action and often evicted, frequently resorting to the use of further unauthorised land/accommodation.

Under Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985, local authorities are required to consider the various accommodation needs of the local population and to carry out periodic reviews in order to provide relevant and appropriate provision to meet these needs. Recent legislation (Housing Act 2004 and Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) and guidance (Circulars 01/2006 and 04/2007) from the government indicate a commitment to taking steps to resolve some of these long standing issues for members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. This legislation has an overarching aim of ensuring that members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities have equal access to decent and appropriate accommodation options akin to each and every other member of society.

Following the Housing Act 2004, local authorities have been preparing to develop and implement strategies to respond to the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities living in their areas as part of their wider housing strategies and the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS). Gypsy and

⁵ For ease, these are referred to only by the borough or city name throughout this document

Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs) are designed to provide the evidence needed to inform these strategies. However, as well as presenting evidence and information on accommodation needs at an immediate local level the evidence collected and analysis produced have a wider regional role. The assessment of accommodation need and pitch requirements are also to be fed into the Regional Planning Body (RPB), in this case the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA), for inclusion into the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RSS then specifies pitch numbers required (but not their location) for each local planning authority (LPA) in light of the GTAAs produced and a strategic view of need, supply and demand across the regions taken. The local planning authority's Development Planning Document (DPD) then identifies specific sites to match required pitch numbers from the RSS.

Each DPD is subject to examination in public, and one of the tests of soundness will be whether it is founded on robust and credible evidence: data received from GTAAs are fundamental in providing such an evidence base for the RHBs and RSSs.

The regional dimension is intended to ensure that all local authorities contribute to resolving the current shortage of authorised site accommodation in a strategic manner, which helps redress current imbalances in the pattern of provision, and enhances the sustainability of the Gypsy and Traveller site network. Such a strategic approach will contribute to meeting the Government's objective⁶ that 'Gypsies and Travellers and the settled community should live together peacefully', and to the greater social inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers who are amongst the most excluded groups in the population.

The vast majority of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs) across England are either completed or in progress. Guidance from Communities and Local Government (CLG) requires that all GTAAs are completed by early in 2008.

In order to comply with the CLGs emphasis on taking regional strategic approaches, and also recognising the diverse characteristics of the Gypsy and Traveller populations, it is considered good practice for several authorities to commission such work jointly. Thus, for the Merseyside authorities this study aims to generate a robust sub-regional understanding of the current provision, gaps and accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers across the Study Area.

⁶ ODPM (2006) *Local authorities and Gypsies and Travellers: Guide to responsibilities and powers*, ODPM, p. 5,
http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/400/LocalAuthoritiesandGypsiesandTravellersGuidetoresponsibilitiesandpowersPDF223KB_id1163400.pdf

Aims of the assessment

The main aim of the assessment was to produce an accommodation needs assessment capable of desegregation to district level with a comprehensive assessment of existing and future accommodation and wider service needs within each area. Within this broad aim there were several objectives:

- To produce detailed information about local Gypsies and Travellers in relation to their demographic profile, household formation, current accommodation needs, accommodation related service and support needs and barriers to accessing services.
- To assess the current and potential future accommodation needs within the Merseyside Study Area
- To generate reliable estimates of future accommodation need.

A note on terminology

Gypsies and Travellers

Defining Gypsies and Travellers is not straightforward. Different definitions are used for a variety of purposes. At a very broad level the term 'Gypsies and Travellers' is used by non-Gypsies and Travellers to encompass a variety of groups and individuals who have a tradition or practice of nomadism in common. More narrowly both Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised minority ethnic groupings.

At the same time Gypsies and Travellers have been defined for accommodation and planning purposes. The statutory definition of Gypsies and Travellers for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment required by the Housing Act 2004 is:

- (a) persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan; and*
- (b) all other persons of a nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, including:*
 - (i) such persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependant's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently; and*
 - (ii) members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such).*

There is a separate definition for planning purposes as specified in ODPM Circular 01/2006 which offers a narrower definition and excludes Travelling Showpeople.

This assessment has adopted the Housing Act 2004 definition and has sought to be inclusive in the Gypsy and Traveller groupings. More specifically this assessment sought to include all Gypsies and Travellers (including New Travellers) living in caravan based accommodation or bricks and mortar housing. As the Housing Act 2004 definition indicates, we have also sought to include Travelling Showpeople living on their permanent base within the Study Area.

Housing/accommodation need

Crucially, for Gypsies and Travellers, the definition of housing need is varied slightly to acknowledge the different contexts in which members of these communities live. The general definition of housing need is “households who are unable to access suitable housing without some financial assistance”, with housing demand defined as “the quantity of housing that households are willing and able to buy or rent.”⁷

In recognising that in many cases these definitions are inappropriate for Gypsies and Travellers, the guidance on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments refers to distinctive requirements that necessitate moving beyond the limitations of the definition for both caravan dwellers and those in bricks and mortar housing. For caravan dwelling households, need may take the form of those:⁸

- who have no authorised site on which to reside;
- whose existing site accommodation is overcrowded or unsuitable, but who are unable to obtain larger or more suitable accommodation; and,
- who contain suppressed households who are unable to set up separate family units and are unable to access a place on an authorised site, or obtain or afford land to develop one.

In the context of bricks and mortar dwelling households, need may take the form of:

- those whose existing accommodation is overcrowded or unsuitable (including unsuitability by virtue of psychological aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation).

This assessment has used a definition of accommodation need which encompasses all the circumstances detailed above.

⁷ODPM (2006) Definition of the term 'Gypsies and Travellers' for the purposes of the Housing Act 2004. Consultation Paper, February, London: HMSO.

⁸ CLG (2007) *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments – Guidance*. London: HMSO.

Outline of the report

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) are a relatively new tool to assist local authorities and stakeholders to understand and gain knowledge on the needs, experiences and context of a collection of individuals who have usually not featured, or only on the margins, of other similar assessments. The information available pertaining to Gypsies and Travellers is often spread across a wide range of issues and held by a diverse group of departments and agencies. Thus, the collection and collation of this information entails a systematic process and this is reflected in the structure of this report.

Chapter 1 sets the background to the needs assessment, the aims of the assessment and a comment on the terms 'Gypsy and Traveller' and 'Housing/accommodation need'.

Chapter 2 presents details of the methodological process and research methods involved in the assessment as well as a commentary on the sampling strategy and sampling issues.

Chapter 3 sets the legislative and policy context for the assessment at a national, regional and local level.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide some detailed analysis of the local Gypsy and Traveller population by looking at the bi-annual Caravan Count for the area and the characteristics of the sample involved in the assessment.

Chapter 6 looks at the findings relating to authorised social and private Gypsy and Traveller sites in relation to management information, geographical location and resident views.

Chapter 7 examines the findings relating to planning and the unauthorised development of Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Chapter 8 provides an analysis of unauthorised encampments including a detailed exploration of the views of households on unauthorised encampments.

Chapter 9 looks at Gypsies and Travellers in private and social bricks and mortar housing, with particular attention to local authority policies relating to Gypsies and Travellers in housing, numbers in housing and views from the housed Gypsy and Traveller population about their accommodation.

Chapter 10 brings together a range of findings to explore housing/related services and how they are provided for, experienced and viewed by Gypsies and Travellers; chapter 11 explores education, employment and health issues.

Chapters 12 and 13 examine the accommodation histories and aspirations of the Gypsy and Traveller population.

Chapter 14 looks at the specific findings in relation to Travelling Showpeople.

Chapters 15 – 18 bring together data on the supply of, and need for, Gypsy and Traveller residential and transit pitches, and pitches for Travelling Showpeople. These chapters comment on the type, level and broad location of the accommodation needed.

Finally, Chapter 19 sets out some recommendations based on the assessment for future work on site provision, housing policy and other policy and practice areas.

2. The Assessment Methodology

Draft practice guidance for local authorities undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments was released by the ODPM (now CLG) in February 2006 with final guidance released in October 2007. Specialised guidance on assessments was felt to be required as many local authority housing needs assessments were failing to assess or identify the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The Guidance explains why assessments are needed, how authorities might go about conducting an assessment, and issues to consider. The Guidance is non-prescriptive in terms of methods, but suggests that Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments incorporate a number of components. Such components include existing data sources; the experiences and knowledge of key stakeholders; and, the living conditions and views of Gypsies and Travellers.

This assessment was undertaken in three distinct stages:

- Stage one – collation and review of existing secondary information
- Stage two – consultation with service providers and other stakeholders
- Stage three – survey with Gypsies and Travellers across the Merseyside Study Area.

Each of these stages is described in more detail below.

Stage one: Collation and review of existing secondary information

This first stage comprised a review of the available literature and secondary sources obtained from government (central and local), regional, community and academic bodies. This provided an historical, social and political overview of the situation of Gypsies and Travellers in Merseyside. More specifically this included the collection, review and synthesis of:

- The bi-annual Count of Gypsy and Traveller caravans.
- Local plans, Regional and Core Strategy documents and other literature relevant to Local Development Frameworks. Housing Strategies, Homelessness Strategies and Supporting People Strategies were analysed, as were local authority allocation and monitoring procedures.
- Various records and data maintained and provided by the local authorities. Information was obtained on: socially rented sites; resident demographics; waiting lists; unauthorised sites (developments and encampments); housing; and, planning applications.

Much of this information was collected via an extensive self-completion questionnaire sent to each authority, and joint-working between housing, planning, health and education was required in order to provide a completed questionnaire. Two versions of the questionnaire were developed. Version A was sent to authorities thought not to have a local authority site (from information from the bi-annual Caravan Counts). Version B went to authorities with a local authority site, and additionally asked for information about the nature of the site and its management. All four local authorities completed this questionnaire.

Stage two: Consultation with service providers and other stakeholders

The second stage involved gathering the views of various service providers and other stakeholders and drew on their experience and perceptions of the main issues for Gypsies and Travellers in Merseyside. This stage was a vital way in which initial findings could be checked and set in context by the qualitative experience of stakeholders.

A number of one-to-one consultations were held with a variety of stakeholders. This included people who were recommended to the research team by the Steering Group, as well as people the research team identified during the course of the assessment.

These discussions were largely structured around three broad issues:

- The particular experiences that certain professionals have in relation to the accommodation and related needs of Gypsies and Travellers across Merseyside;
- The current working practices of different professionals in relation to Gypsies and Travellers across Merseyside; and,
- Stakeholder perspectives on what the priority needs are for Gypsies and Travellers across Merseyside.

Where required, these discussions were more focused upon clarifying information provided during Stage one.

Stage three: Survey with Gypsies and Travellers

One of the most important aspects of the assessment was consulting with local Gypsies and Travellers. The survey took place between June and October 2007.

In all cases consultations took the form of face-to-face interviews in order to gather information about their characteristics, experiences, accommodation and related needs and aspirations. The survey with Gypsies and Travellers is discussed below under three sections: sampling strategy and response rates; questionnaire design; and, fieldwork and interviewers.

Sampling and response rates

Sampling Gypsy and Traveller households for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments is always problematic given the absence of accurate information concerning the size and location of the communities. As such, the sampling technique for the assessment was purposive rather than strictly random and differed depending upon the particular accommodation type currently inhabited by Gypsies and Travellers in Merseyside.

- For households on socially rented sites, we compiled a sample frame from information provided by the local authorities about all known sites within Merseyside. A quota was set for interviews of at least 50% of the occupied pitches. Repeat visits were made to locations in order to achieve interviews if households were away from the site, it was not convenient for the household in question, or the fieldworkers ran out of time.
- For households on unauthorised encampments, local authority officers from all authorities were encouraged to inform the fieldwork team when and where encampments occurred during the fieldwork period. We also contacted various organisations working within the Study Area to inform us about the presence of unauthorised encampments and encouraged our Community Interviewers to use their networks in order to link with households on unauthorised encampments in the area. The fieldwork team were only made aware of one encampment over the fieldwork period.
- Information from the local authority indicated that there were no private sites or unauthorised developments in the Study Area.
- As the population of Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar housing is relatively hidden from official records there was no sample frame from which to identify people. Therefore, in order to engage with housed Gypsies and Travellers, the fieldwork team relied on two main methods: introductions through organisations working with Gypsies and Travellers; and, contacts of the Gypsy and Traveller Community Interviewers on the fieldwork team. The fieldwork team employed professional judgement in order to achieve a sample from bricks and mortar housing which broadly reflected the known population concentrations of housed Gypsies and Travellers across the Study Area.

A total of 72 Gypsy and Traveller households were involved in the assessment within the boundaries of the authorities comprising the Merseyside Study Area.

Table 1 below shows the target and achieved household interviews for each accommodation type. As can be seen most targets were achieved and exceeded with the exception of unauthorised encampments. In general, the exceeding or otherwise of targets tends to be a reflection of the difficulty in setting initial quotas for interviews in the current climate of information paucity on Gypsies and Travellers. In terms of unauthorised encampments the fieldwork team were not aware of any other encampments that occurred. However, this is not the same as saying the area is not attractive or a draw for people who would reside on unauthorised encampments within the Study Area. There were no households on private sites, unauthorised developments or Travelling Showpeople accommodated on yards within the Study Area at the time of the study.

Table 1: Achieved household interviews by target

Type of accommodation	Target (No.)	Achieved (No.)	%
Socially rented sites	15	21	140
Private authorised sites	0	0	N/A
Unauthorised developments	0	0	N/A
Unauthorised encampments	8 ⁹	2	25
Housed	30	49	163
Travelling Showpeople	0	0	N/A
Total	53	72	136

Table 2 below illustrates how the assessment sample relates to the known number of pitches and estimated population by accommodation type. As can be seen, over two-thirds of the pitches on socially rented sites are represented which reflects a general willingness to be involved in the assessment by community members but also the support provided by officers and others in publicising the Study. Also, as discussed above, the exceeding or otherwise of other targets is generally a reflection of the difficulty in setting initial quotas for interviews in the current climate of information paucity on Gypsies and Travellers.

⁹ This target was set based on information about the number from the caravan count as of July 2006 which showed 14 caravans (approx 8 households) within the Study Area.

Table 2: Sample in relation to local Gypsy and Traveller population

Type of accommodation	Number of sites			Number of pitches/households		
	Total	Sample	%	Total	Sample	%
Socially rented sites	2	2	100	30	21	70
Private authorised sites	0	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
Unauthorised developments	0	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
Unauthorised encampments	NA	NA	NA	8 ¹⁰	2	25
Housed	NA	NA	NA	70 ¹¹	49	70
Travelling Showpeople	0	0	N/A	0	0	N/A

Table 3 below shows this response rate by local authority area. Most of the interviews were carried out in Sefton and Liverpool. It remains unclear if the spread of the sample reflects the actual concentrations of the Gypsy and Traveller population. However, it is worth noting that each district has Gypsies and Travellers living within their administration in some form of accommodation.

Table 3: Number of achieved interviews by local authority area

Type of accommodation	Local authority area				Total
	Wirral	Liverpool	Sefton	Knowsley	
Socially rented sites	-	10	11	-	21
Private authorised sites	-	-	-	-	-
Unauthorised developments	-	-	-	-	-
Unauthorised encampments	-	2	-	-	2
Housed	10	12	20	7	49
Total	10	24	31	7	72

In terms of the gender split between interviewees, we spoke to 40 women (56%) and 32 men (44%). The greater presence of women in the sample reflects a general finding from Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments, which seems to imply that women are most likely to speak to researchers/interviewers and/or are more available during office hours. In recognising this, however, we endeavoured to engage in fieldwork outside of normal working hours and worked with a male Community Interviewer. We believe this assisted in engaging with a large number of male respondents than would otherwise be the case.

¹⁰ This estimate is based on the number of encampments in the area the previous July (2006) and divided by a 1.7 caravan to household ratio.

¹¹ This is based on the operational experiences of the fieldwork team and community interviewers who were aware of a number of additional households not interviewed as part of the study who lived in housing within the Study Area. This is however likely to be an underestimate.

Overall, we believe that the findings for the assessment are based on reliable and reflective response rates from accommodation types, geographical areas and gender within the Merseyside Study Area with the exception of a relatively low representation from households on unauthorised encampments.

Questionnaire design

All interviews with Gypsy and Traveller households utilised a structured questionnaire with a mixture of tick-box answers and open-ended questions. This mixed approach enabled us to gather quantifiable information, but also allowed for a certain degree of contextualisation and qualification by the more narrative responses. There were two questionnaires; one for site accommodation and one for bricks and mortar accommodation. Each survey contained the following sections:

- Current accommodation/site/encampment;
- Experience of travelling;
- Housing and site experiences;
- Household details;
- Services; and,
- Future accommodation preferences/aspirations.

Following consultation with Gypsies and Travellers and experience of previous GTAAs, questions around income and benefits were excluded as these were seen to potentially jeopardise the ability to achieve interviews in the Study Area due to the alienation that such questions can cause with the communities.

The questionnaires used in the assessment are available in a separate document entitled 'Survey Instruments'.

Fieldwork and interviewers

In addition to SHUSU fieldwork staff, and of crucial importance to engaging as effectively as possible with the Gypsy and Traveller population, was the involvement of Gypsy and Traveller Community Interviewers. In total, three members of the Gypsy and Traveller community were involved in the assessment as Community Interviewers. They were all from outside Merseyside, but had excellent links with the Gypsy and Traveller community across the Study Area. Two of the Community Interviewers had worked with the study team on previous assessments so were experienced interviewers familiar with the interviewing process and questionnaires used. The third person was identified and trained during the course of this assessment.

In order to standardise our fieldwork approach, each interviewer underwent an intensive training course on interviewer skills, and was provided with support from the core study team members during their interviewing activity. Each questionnaire that was returned was subject to quality control and appropriate feedback was given to the interviewers.

As well as the Community Interviewers members of the Study Team also engaged with Gypsies and Travellers. By taking this dual approach we found we were able to access a range of people that would otherwise have not been included in the assessment, such as 'hidden' members of the community (older people or people living in bricks and mortar housing), those people who were uncomfortable talking to non-Travellers as well as those people who wanted to speak to people from outside their own community.

Broadly speaking, SHUSU staff had particular success interviewing people on local authority sites and unauthorised encampments, whereas the Community Interviewers had much better responses with households in bricks and mortar accommodation.

Where possible, on local authority sites, interviewers were introduced on site by local authority or officers or other 'gatekeepers' who work with Gypsies and Travellers in the area.

Group discussions

In addition to the survey of Gypsies and Travellers, which can be constraining by its more structured nature, we endeavoured to convene a number of group discussions with community members in order to better explore, in greater depth, specific issues. The success of convening such groups was limited. However, with the assistance of Irish Community Care Merseyside (ICCM) we managed to facilitate a group discussion with young Travellers from Liverpool. The aim of this discussion was to better understand the current experiences and views of young people but also to better understand and plan for their preferences and aspirations for accommodation. Four people attended this group; all were female, of varying ages but were drawn from both bricks and mortar and site accommodation.

3. National, Regional and Local Policy Context

For the most part Gypsies and Travellers are affected by legislation in much the same way as members of the non-Travelling communities. However, it is the policy areas of housing and planning that have particular implications for Gypsies and Travellers. In recognising that there is a significant lack of accommodation options for the various Gypsy and Traveller groups, a plethora of documents have been published over the last 18 months, which directly affect specific policies towards Gypsies and Travellers. This section looks at the relevant national, regional and local planning policies affecting Gypsies and Travellers at the time of the assessment.

National policy

The main document detailing the broad aims of the currently policy towards the accommodation and planning objectives for Gypsies and Travellers is Circular 01/06. In particular, this specifies that the aims of the legislation and policy developments are to:

- ensure that Gypsies and Travellers have fair access to suitable accommodation, education, health and welfare provision;
- reduce the number of unauthorised encampments;
- increase the number of sites and address under-provision over the next 3-5 years;
- protect the traditional travelling way of life of Gypsies and Travellers;
- underline the importance of assessing accommodation need at different geographical scales;
- promote private site provision; and,
- avoid Gypsies and Travellers becoming homeless, where eviction from unauthorised sites occurs and where there is no alternative accommodation.

An overview of the process and system for ensuring adequate provision is implemented for Gypsies and Travellers was detailed in Chapter 1 of this report.

In September 2007, revised planning guidance in relation to the specific planning requirements of Travelling Showpeople was released in Circular 04/07. This replaces Circular 22/91 and aims to ensure that the system for pitch assessment, identification and allocation as introduced for Gypsies and Travellers is also applied to Travelling Showpeople.

The Gypsy and Traveller Sites Grant provides capital funding for improving and increasing Gypsy and Traveller site/pitch provision by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords. From 2006-08 a national total of £56m has been made available, managed by the Regional Housing Boards or equivalents. In the North West, a total of £2.8m has been agreed over the 2006-08 period. In addition, a total of £97m has been made available for the 2008-11 period with the North West proposed allocated being £6m. Since 2006, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have been able to set up and manage Gypsy and Traveller sites. Both local authorities and RSLs are eligible for funding under the Gypsy and Traveller Sites Grant.

Since the introduction of the Housing Act 2004, it has been made clear that Gypsy and Traveller accommodation need and requirements should feature in local authority Housing and Homelessness¹² Strategies. Authorities have been informed that, in line with their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the needs and way of life of Gypsies and Travellers must be considered when considering accommodation applications.

The Government is also planning two Bills for the next session of Parliament which could impact upon Gypsies and Travellers - the Housing and Regeneration Bill and the Planning Reform Bill. Both these Bills could offer significant amendments to how accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers is provided.¹³

Regional policy

In terms of regional planning policy, Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13) (March 2003) did not mention Gypsies and Travellers. The North West Plan (the draft regional spatial strategy) which was submitted for consultation in 2006, noted within section 9 'Living in the North West – Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society' that:

'There is also the requirement to assess the housing needs of gypsies and travellers in the Region. In this respect, the Assembly, in partnership with the Regional Housing Board, is proposing to undertake research on the future requirements of gypsies and travellers, in order to inform a future review of both RSS and the Regional Housing Strategy.'

The Regional Spatial Strategy is currently being revised and a Partial Review is intended to commence in late 2007. The Partial Review will look at a number of issues including the apportionment of pitch requirements amongst local authorities. The Review will be informed by the results of each Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment completed across the North West.¹⁴

¹² See Homelessness & Housing Support Directorate (2006) Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, CLG.

¹³ See the Traveller Law Reform Project for more specific issues and concerns <http://www.travellerslaw.org.uk/pdfs/housingregeneration.pdf>

¹⁴ In the absence of completed GTAA's for Greater Manchester, Cumbria and Merseyside the North West Regional Assembly are being informed by the findings of the regional GTAA

In recognising that each sub-region was working under different time scales to produce GTAAs the North West Regional Assembly commissioned a regionally focused GTAA.¹⁵ Table 4 below shows the estimated sub-regional pitch requirements from this GTAA.

Table 4: Summary of Residential Pitch Requirements: North West Region and Sub-regions: 2006 to 2011 Area Estimated requirement

Area	Estimated pitch requirement
Cheshire Partnership	79-112 + 17 pitches for Travelling Showpeople (TS)
Cumbria	12 + 16 pitches for TS
Greater Manchester	87 + 149 pitches for TS
Lancashire	126-147 + 7 pitches for TS
Merseyside	28
North West Region	332-386 + 189 pitches for TS

In line with ODPM Circular 01/2006, the Interim Statement urges local authorities in areas with proven need to act to make provision in advance of the full regional planning process, and to use the various available powers to ensure sites are developed.

Local Plans and Core Strategies

Both Knowsley and Sefton's current development plan includes a policy towards Gypsy and Traveller sites. Wirral indicated that they had no policy. Liverpool did not provide any information.

Sefton, Knowsley and Wirral all stated that there were no relevant policies for Gypsy and Traveller sites in current or emerging Development Plan Documents under the new planning system. Sefton did acknowledge that the need to consider locations for Gypsy and Traveller sites forms part of their Core Strategies – work to produce the Core Strategies is underway. Liverpool did not provide any information

Sefton, Knowsley and Wirral all indicated that there were no sites/locations considered as suitable for Gypsy and Traveller development. Liverpool did not provide any information. There was also no information from authorities on what sorts of areas would be deemed suitable for Gypsy and Traveller site provision or the criteria that would satisfy a successful planning application.

¹⁵ Brown, P et al (2007) North West Regional Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment. SHUSU. The University of Salford (2007).

4. Gypsies and Travellers in Merseyside: The current picture

This chapter looks at the bi-annual Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count in order to present what is known about Gypsies and Travellers within the Merseyside Study Area. In particular, this section presents information on the size and spatial distribution of the Gypsy and Traveller population.

Caravan numbers and trends from the Caravan Count

The Caravan Count is far from perfect, but at present it remains the only official source of information on the size and distribution of a population that remains relatively unknown. Although a number of local authorities are able to provide very accurate information for the Count, generally speaking the Count needs to be treated with caution, but when tempered by locally held knowledge it can be extremely useful as a broad guide. Furthermore, it provides a vital starting point in the attempts of local authorities to ascertain levels of need given the general absence of increased provision since 1994.

According to the most recent Caravan Count, there were a reported total of 49 caravans across the Study Area all of which were located on socially rented sites; 20 caravans in Liverpool and 29 caravans in Sefton.

Table 5 summarises caravan numbers for the Study Area by type of site for January and July in 1994 and 2007.

Table 5: Merseyside Study Area summary of caravan numbers 1994 and 2007

Type of site	January			July		
	1994	2007	% change	1994	2006	% change
Social Rented	27	49	+82%	28	43	+54%
Private	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
Unauthorised – all	48	0	-100%	0	14	N/A
Total	75	49	-35%	28	57	+104%

In terms of the Caravan Count comparison over time, there is an indication that:

- Overall caravan numbers have both increased between 1994 and 2006/7 (July) or decreased (January).
- This increase is accounted for by increases in caravans on social rented sites with the decreases accounted for by the presence of unauthorised caravans in the Study Area.

The charts that follow illustrate Study Area changes in caravan numbers by type of site over time.

Figure 1 shows caravans on social rented sites. This shows a peak in caravan numbers from January 1994 to January 2007. This fluctuation is possibly due to the closure of Tara Park in Liverpool which subsequently reopened after refurbishment.

Figure 1: Caravans on Socially Rented Sites 1994 to 2007

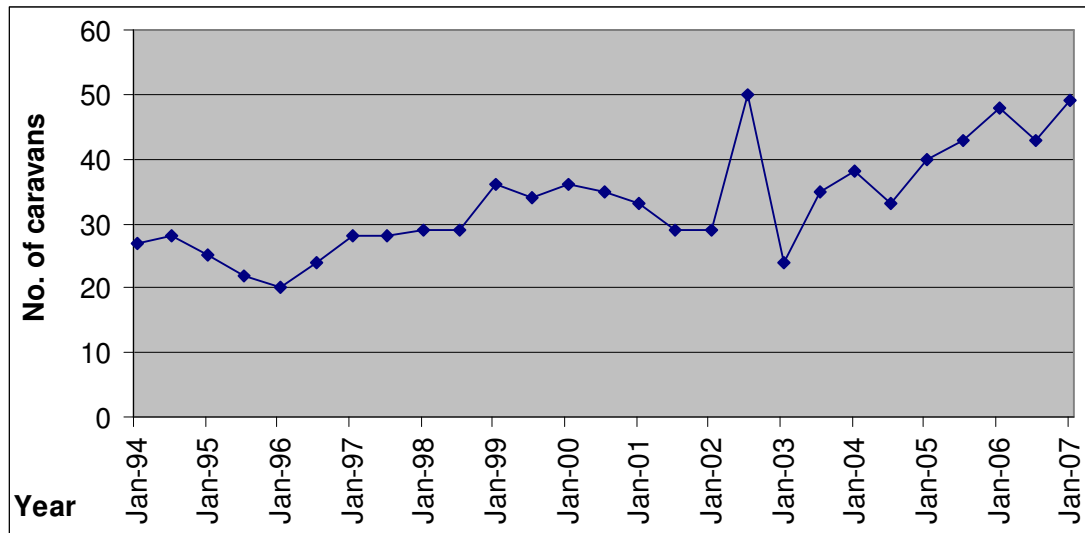


Figure 2 shows the number of caravans on unauthorised sites. As can be seen the numbers of caravans on unauthorised sites has been subject to a certain level of fluctuation. It appears as though the last count is not entirely reflective of the proportion of transit campers who have tended to reside within the Study Area over time.

Figure 2: Caravans on Unauthorised Sites 1994 to 2007

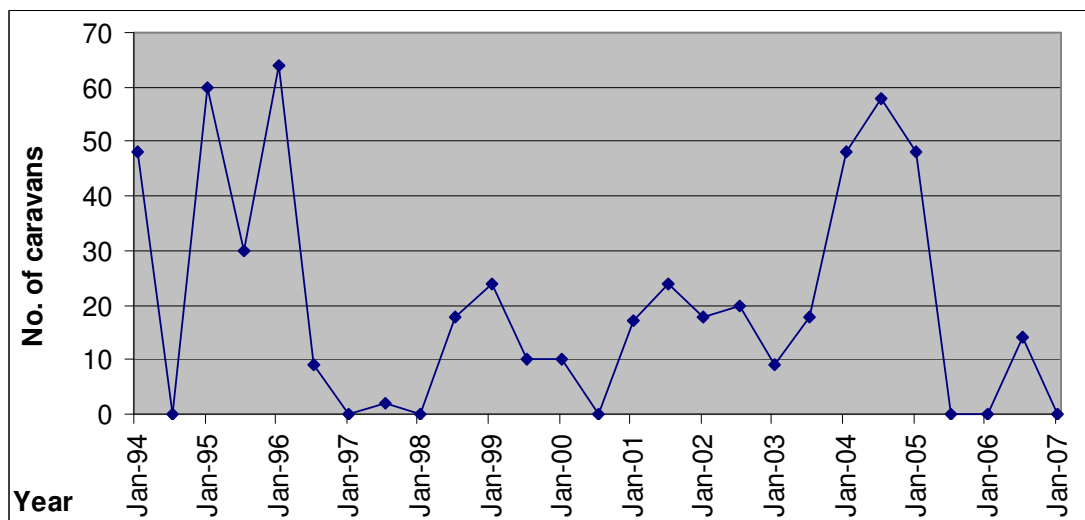
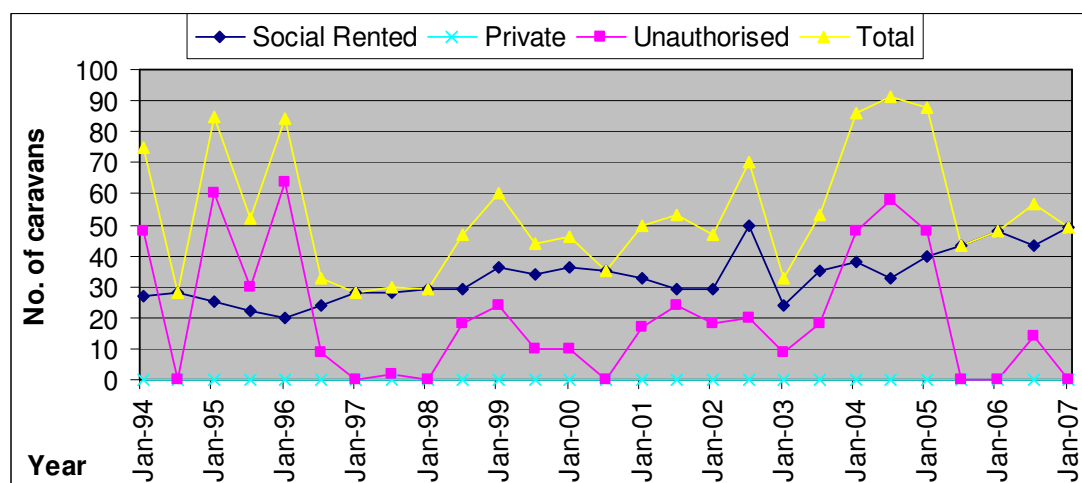


Figure 3 brings the figures together on the number of caravans on all types within the Study Area and adds a total line. As this illustrates the number of caravans on unauthorised sites has, at times, been in excess of the number of caravans on socially rented sites.

Figure 3: Caravans on all sites 1994 to 2007



Geographical Patterns

Table 6 shows the distribution of caravans between local authorities in January 2007

Table 6: Distribution of caravans by local authority (January 2007)

Type of site	Local authority				
	Study Area	Knowsley	Liverpool	Sefton	Wirral
Social Rented	49	0	20	29	0
Private	0	0	0	0	0
Unauthorised Gypsy-owned land	0	0	0	0	0
Unauthorised – other land	0	0	0	0	0
Total	49	0	20	29	0

As this table shows Liverpool and Sefton both have the highest, and only, number of caravans which is solely due to the Socially Rented sites in those areas.

Table 7 illustrates the number of caravans by type of site between local authorities in January 1994. Looking at how the provision appeared in 1994 shows that Liverpool and Sefton were still the only local authorities to provide authorised site provision to Gypsies and Travellers; there was also a significant presence of caravans on unauthorised sites.

Table 7: Distribution of caravans by local authority (January 1994)

Type of site	Local authority				
	Study Area	Knowsley	Liverpool	Sefton	Wirral
Social Rented	27	0	21	6	0
Private	0	0	0	0	0
Unauthorised (all land)	48	0	48	0	0
Total	75	0	69	6	0

5. Size and Characteristics of the Local Gypsy and Traveller Population

This chapter aims to provide some information on the demographics of the sample involved in this accommodation assessment, and uses this to make some indication of the overall size and composition of the Gypsy and Traveller population in the Merseyside Study Area.

Demographic and household characteristics

Characteristics of Gypsy and Traveller communities are often hidden or not widely known. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments present an ideal opportunity to get to know more about the community at large, particularly in terms of living circumstances, age, Gypsy and Traveller groups and household composition. The following aims to provide some information about the composition of Gypsy and Traveller households in the sample.

Age of interviewees

The age profile of the sample can be seen from Table 8. The 25-39 age group were the most consulted during the assessment, forming 39% of the total sample. This was followed by the 40-49 age group (21%) and then the 60-74 age group (15%). In total, 18% of the sample was over 60 years of age.

Table 8: Age of interviewees

Age Group	No.	%
16-24	8	11
25-39	28	39
40-49	15	21
50-59	8	11
60-74	11	15
75-84	2	3
Total	72	

Household size

In total, the survey sample accounts for 286 members of the Gypsy and Traveller community in the Merseyside Study Area. The average household size for the whole sample is 4 persons – significantly larger than the household size of the non-Traveller population, and larger than the household size found in the many other GTAAs. However, this hides a range in household sizes as indicated in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Household size distribution

Household Size	No.	%
1 Person	6	8
2 Persons	17	24
3 Persons	7	10
4 Persons	16	22
5 Persons	9	13
6 Persons	9	13
7 Persons	3	4
8 Persons	4	6
9 Persons	1	1
Total	72	

There were significant differences in the size of households in relation to their current accommodation type as well. As can be seen from Table 10, respondents from the socially rented sites tended to have the largest households followed by those living in bricks and mortar housing (3.9), followed by those households on unauthorised encampments – however, this is drawn from only two households so generalisations should be made cautiously.

Table 10: Average household size by accommodation type

Accommodation type	Average household size
Socially rented sites	4.2
Bricks and Mortar	3.9
Unauthorised encampments	3.0

Household type

Table 11 shows the household type by type of accommodation. Families have been classified as follows:

Family type	Definition
Single person -	1 adult
Couple -	2 adults, no children or young adults
Young family -	1 or 2 adults, 1 or more children aged up to 16 years; no young adults
Older family -	All adult family with 1 or more children classified as 'young adults' (over 16 years but living within another household)
Mixed family -	Family with children under and over 16 years
Other -	3 or more adults, none classified as young adults

Table 11: Household type by type of accommodation

Household type	Socially rented sites	Bricks and mortar	Total
Number in sample	21	49	70
	%	%	%
Single	12	6	8
Couple	12	29	24
Young family	41	47	46
Older family	18	10	12
Mixed family	18	8	11

Table 11 shows that:

- Young families are currently the predominant household type in the Study Area.
- The household type characteristics are similar for both accommodation types in the Study Area.
- There are more couples in bricks and mortar housing than on the socially rented sites – these couples tend to be older at 60+ years.
- Older and mixed families live in the area which may suggest some demand for separate accommodation from concealed households.

Marital status

In total, 68% of the interviewees were married with a further 7% living with their partner. The remainder described their marital status as either single (17%), widowed (6%) or divorced (3%).

Table 12: Marital status of the interview sample

Marital status	No.	%
Married	49	68
Single	12	17
Living with partner	5	7
Widowed	4	6
Divorced	2	3
Total	72	

Local connections to the Study Area

When asked, over half of households felt that they were local to the area where they were currently accommodated (56%). See Table 13 for a breakdown by current accommodation type.

Table 13: Local to the area?

Accommodation type	No. households local	% of total sample
Socially rented sites	17	81
Bricks and Mortar	21	46
Unauthorised encampments	2	100

As Table 13 shows, the households on both unauthorised encampments considered themselves local to the area and 8 in 10 households on the socially rented sites considered themselves local. However, just under half of the households in bricks and mortar housing thought of themselves as being local to the area they were currently living. Table 14 below looks in further detail at why households claimed they were in the Study Area.

Table 14: Reasons for residing in the Study Area (figures in % of sample)

Reason	Accommodation Type			Total
	Bricks and mortar	Unauthorised encampment	Socially rented site	
Family lives here	61	100	62	63
Family/community event	39	-	-	26
Other	12	-	47	22
Schooling	10	-	-	7
Place of birth	6	-	5	6
Work	2	-	-	4
Only place I could find	-	-	10	3
Holiday	-	-	-	0

The presence of family in the Study Area was the major reason why households were residing where they were. This was particularly the case on unauthorised encampments (although the small sample size needs to be considered) however, this is broadly consistent with findings from other GTAAs. Family connection was also a significant factor for households on socially rented sites and bricks and mortar housing. Interestingly, 39% of households in bricks and mortar housing reported living where they were as a result of some form of family or community event – unfortunately this was not expanded upon. No households said they were in the area due to a holiday. In terms of ‘other’ reasons they resided where they did this included: ‘liking’ the area, having family in a residential care home, ‘travelling about’ and not liking the area they were in previously.

Thus, from these findings a significant number of Gypsies and Travellers on sites and in housing can be seen to ‘belong’, in some way, to the Study Area.

Gypsy and Traveller groups

The largest single group in the sample were Irish Travellers (60%) with half as many respondents from the Romany/Gypsy (English) community taking part (31%). Three Welsh Gypsies/Travellers and three Scottish Gypsies/Travellers took part. One respondent described themselves as the more generic ‘Traveller’. Irish Travellers were interviewed in all local authority areas but Romany Gypsies were only interviewed in Sefton and Wirral.

Table 15: Interviewees by Gypsy and Traveller group

Gypsy and Traveller groups	No. of households	%
Irish Traveller	43	60
Romany/Gypsy (English)	22	31
Welsh Gypsy/Traveller	3	4
Scottish Gypsy/Traveller	3	4
Traveller (not specified)	1	1
Total	72	

The size of the local Gypsy and Traveller community

For most minority ethnic communities, presenting data about the size of the community in question is usually relatively straightforward (with the exception of communities who have large numbers of irregular migrants and migrant workers, etc. amongst them). However, for Gypsies and Travellers, one of the most difficult issues is providing accurate information on this population (see Chapter 4). As a result, we have used information provided by the local authorities and others, together with our survey findings, in order to provide a best estimate as to the size of the Merseyside Gypsy and Traveller population (see Table 16) at the time of the assessment. Due to their mobility levels this estimate does not include households on unauthorised encampments.

Table 16: Estimated Study Area Gypsy and Traveller population

Type of accommodation	Families/ Households (based on 1 pitch = 1 household)	Individuals	Derivation
Socially rented sites	30	123	Actual number from local authority records.
Housing	70 ¹⁶	273	Number of families involved in the survey and an estimate based on operational experiences multiplied by average household size from the survey (2.9)
Total	100	396	

We estimate that there are at least 396 Gypsies and Travellers in the Study Area, although the estimate for housed Gypsies and Travellers is likely to be a significant under-estimate.

¹⁶ This is based on the operational experiences of the fieldwork team and community interviewers who were aware of a number of additional households not interviewed as part of the study who lived in housing within the Study Area. Due to a lack of information this is likely to be an underestimate of the total population in bricks and mortar accommodation across the Study Area.

6. Socially Rented Site Provision: Findings

A certain degree of caution needs to be taken when extrapolating the characteristics, trends and needs of the Gypsy and Traveller population from the Caravan Counts and other such data alone. In order to provide more specific information on the local Gypsy and Traveller population, this chapter draws upon the survey completed by local authorities on site provision, stakeholder views and knowledge, and the views of Gypsies and Travellers who occupy these sites.

Socially rented (local authority) sites are the sole form of authorised provision in the Merseyside Study Area. There are 2 local authority sites: Broad Lane (Sefton) and Tara Park (Liverpool). These provide a total of 30 pitches, all of which are residential pitches. There are no transit pitches. There was 1 vacant pitch at Tara Park, Liverpool, which was expected to be let within a month at the time of the assessment. There has been no change in the number of pitches on these sites over the past 5 years. Table 17 below summarises pitch occupancy levels at the time of the survey.

Table 17: Local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites at February 2007

Pitch details	Local authority site	
	Broad Lane (Sefton)	Tara Park (Liverpool)
Total pitches	16	14
Residential		
All	16	14
Occupied	16	13
Vacant	0	1
Transit		
All	0	0
Occupied	0	0
Vacant	0	0

Table 18 below summarises the details of the site residents on the two sites. Together these sites accommodate some 123 people, of whom 60 (34%) are children aged up to 16.

Table 18: Details of site residents by local authority site

Details of site residents	Local authority site	
	Broad Lane (Sefton)	Tara Park (Liverpool)
Site population	68	55
Number of children	33	27
% children	49%	49%
Average persons per occupied pitch	4.3	4.2
Doubled-up pitches	0	4
Number of living units	3 static caravans 13 trailers/tourers	14 chalets 8 static caravans 7 trailers/tourers
Ethnic groups among site residents	English Gypsy	Irish Traveller
Pitch occupancy in year	75% - 100%	75% - 100%
% of site residents lived on site 5+ years	60% - 90%	40% - 60%

Significant points to note from Table 18 are:

- The average number of persons per occupied pitch is nearly the same on both sites – this also concurs with the information received during the course of the survey of Gypsy and Traveller households.
- The proportion of children/young people among the site population is relatively high, making up nearly half of the population on both sites.
- The sites are not ethnically mixed – and each site accommodates a different ethnic group.
- Although both sites have the same pitch occupancy rates, the Broad Lane site appears more stable than Tara Park in terms of the proportion of long-standing residents.
- There is some evidence of need from ‘doubled up’ households on Tara Park, who would ideally like a separate pitch or house of their own.

Residents’ views:

All respondents on the socially rented sites provided details about how many living units (caravans/trailers) they had. Ten respondents (48%) had 1 trailer, 10 respondents (48%) had 2 trailers and just 1 respondent had 3 trailers. Generally speaking the respondents from the site in Sefton had fewer trailers than respondents from Liverpool.

The average number of living units (trailers) was 1.6 per household. The majority of respondents felt that this did not provide them with enough space for their needs (67%). The respondents from the Liverpool site were more likely to require more space (80% of respondents there) with 55% of respondents on the site in Sefton requiring more space. There were various reasons given for requiring more space including: the need for larger

caravans (50%), just to have more space (36%), parking (21%), and to have visitors (7%).

When asked, on a five-point scale from very good to very poor, how they viewed their neighbours on the sites the vast majority (81%) thought their relationships with neighbours were either very good or good, with the remainder (4 respondents) viewing their neighbours in a negative light. All 4 households who viewed their neighbours negatively were accommodated on the site in Liverpool.

The majority of households we spoke to on the socially rented sites had been on their site for reasonably lengthy periods of time; 33% for five or more years, 62% for between 1 and 5 years. Just 5% had been on the site for less than 12 months. Residents on the site in Sefton had been on their site for longest when compared to Liverpool's residents.

No respondent on these sites had a base elsewhere.

Site ownership and management

Within the Study Area sites are owned and managed as follows:

- **Liverpool:** owned and managed by Liverpool City Council. The site is managed by a dedicated site manager.
- **Sefton:** owned by Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. The site warden is a member of the Gypsy and Traveller community who is resident on the site.

The authorities were asked to provide details of any aspects of site provision, design or management which they think works well and worth sharing with others. No details of good practice were provided around site provision, design or management; however, Liverpool highlighted good practice with regards to community engagement, talking specifically about the role of the Traveller Education Service and Irish Community Care Merseyside, who engage Gypsy and Traveller children and young people in local activities.

Irish Community Care Merseyside (ICCM) is a registered charity, which identifies and responds to the needs of both the Irish and Irish Traveller communities across Merseyside. They offer a range of front-line information, advice and outreach support services including welfare benefits advice and advocacy, support around homelessness, seeking more appropriate accommodation, poor health, drug or alcohol misuse, cultural and social isolation. The focus of work revolves around linking the Irish community into services, opportunities and entitlements and ensuring that mainstream services respond appropriately to the needs of the communities.

ICCM was critical of Liverpool’s recent stance on Gypsy and Traveller issues as although multi-agency working used to take place – there was a view expressed which suggested that the local authority was now making unilateral decisions without consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

Residents’ views:

We asked respondents to comment, on a five-point scale from very good to very poor, on the management of the sites. The response was mostly positive: 62% thought that the management was very good; 33% thought that the management was good; just one respondent thought site management was poor (Liverpool respondent).

Site facilities and quality

In order to gather information on what was provided on each site and the general quality of the site, a series of questions were asked about the facilities and the local area (see Table 19 below).

Table 19: Facilities on local authority sites and assessment of quality by the local authority

Site facilities and quality	Broad Lane (Sefton)	Tara Park (Liverpool)
Site facilities	Amenity unit per pitch Meeting room Children’s play area	Amenity unit per pitch Site office
Facilities in amenity units	Bath and shower WC with direct entry from outside Space/plumbing/provision for laundry Effective heating	Shower only WC with direct entry from outside Space/provision for cooking Space/plumbing/provision for laundry Space for eating/sitting (day room) Effective heating
Quality of surroundings /environment	Average	Average
Location and access to schools/shops	Poor	Good
Site condition and maintenance	Average	Good
Any known disputes etc over last year?	Disputes between residents	Disputes between residents, intimidation, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour

Adverse comments from local authority officers suggest that there may be some concerns about the two sites:

- **Sefton:** the site is generally isolated from shops, bus stops and schools. It is situated at the end of a single-lane access un-adopted lane, which has no pavement or street lighting. Consultation with various stakeholders revealed that there was a general concern about the isolating nature of the site, particularly with regards to transport links, access to services and safety on the lane.

There are also some concerns about conflict and disagreement between residents and the live-in site warden. This issue has been raised in consultation with other key stakeholders, and there have been alleged instances of intimidation whereby residents are felt to have to conform to certain ‘cultural norms’ of the warden. The site warden’s duties are currently being reviewed in an attempt to resolve these issues¹⁷.

- **Liverpool:** There was no specific information provided about the instances of intimidation disclosed however the procedure followed in such eventualities was described, this takes the following steps: a verbal warning, issue of a written warning, then a notice to quit letter.

Residents’ views:

Site residents were asked, on a five-point scale from very good to very poor, what they thought about a number of aspects of their site including: size of pitch; design of site; location; and, facilities on site. There was a spread in responses to these issues, however the majority of respondents on the sites viewed this issues quite negatively particularly the size of pitches and design of the sites. The location was also viewed as being quite poor. Almost half of respondents viewed the facilities on the sites in a positive light (Table 20).

Table 20: Views on the site (in %)

Issue	Very good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very Poor
Size of pitch	10	14	10	24	43
Design of site	14	19	5	10	52
Location of site	19	19	5	24	33
Facilities on site	29	19	19	24	10

The general view of the sites appears to concur with the perceptions of the local authority officers on some issues (i.e. the location of the Sefton site). A number of the residents on the Liverpool site mentioned that the wall surrounding the site and the nature of the lack of green space on the site created an unpleasant environment for the site.

¹⁷ From the consultations as part of this assessment, negative comments about the Warden were not expressed to the Research Team by site residents. However, this may have been influenced by the presence/proximity of the Warden whilst consultations were undertaken.

Experiences around access to basic facilities were sought from those we spoke to on the two sites (see Table 21 below). As can be seen, most households we spoke to had access to the services we enquired about. Although all households had access to a shed not all of these structures were heated. There was a lack of kitchen facilities, laundry facilities, space for eating/sitting and fire precautions for a number of people on the site in Sefton, and to a lesser degree the site in Liverpool. No respondent on the Liverpool site reported access to somewhere safe for children to play.

Table 21: Access to facilities on socially rented sites (% of sample have access)

Facilities	Liverpool	Sefton
Water	100	100
Electricity supply	100	100
Rubbish collection	100	100
Shed (%heated)	100 (90)	100 (45)
WC	100	100
Shower	80	100
Postal service	90	100
Bath	20	100
Kitchen facilities	90	27
Laundry	90	46
Eating/sitting space	90	46
Fire precautions	90	46
Somewhere for children to play	0	82

All residents were asked to comment on whether they had any concerns around health and safety and security issues on the sites – a total of 57% of people had such concerns. Although concerns were raised on both sites there were more respondents on the site in Sefton who raised concerns than on the Liverpool site.

When asked, a few people expanded upon the concerns they had. In terms of the Liverpool site such comments included:

“The cars speed at night time.”

“The council need to clear out underneath the shed.”

“We’ve got cameras now so that’s good but there’s loud music at night, we can’t get any sleep.”

“Need to take the mould off the plots, to stop people falling on the ramps”

“There’s too much starch in the concrete, it hurts your eyes and the pitch gets loads of moss on it.”

In terms of the site in Sefton the main concerns revolved around drainage and its potential link to the incidence of ill health on the site, such comments included:

“It’s unsafe really there’s holes around sheds and a rat problem at night”

“You can’t get taxis, it’s a nightmare. It’s frightening walking down the lane as there are men on the golf course. You always get all types down the lane and it doesn’t help that there’s no street lighting”

“The drainage smells terrible. There’s lots of sickness and diarrhoea here”

“The drains need sorting and water testing and the grey tap needs testing. The lane needs widening as well”

“They are testing the water because the children are coming down with sickness and the drainage is poor”

It is acknowledged that Sefton has previously responded to concerns and have recently been successful in receiving funding from the Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant in order to invest in facilities on the site. It is anticipated that this may respond to some of these concerns

There were specific comments raised in relation to the site in Liverpool where a number of people, particularly the young people we spoke to, were concerned about a ‘massage parlour’ that had recently opened near the site. This was seen to have attracted a number of men and vehicles to and around the site causing distress to residents. The local Police had recently been involved but despite this there was a level of concern about the implications this establishment was having on residents. The young people we spoke to were particularly concerned as they reported already feeling isolated from socialising in the City centre and the presence of the ‘massage parlour’ meant their families did not allow them to be out on the site alone, particularly in the dark.

Travelling and visitors

One of the ways in which rules on sites can help or hinder Gypsy and Traveller ways of life is the restrictions placed upon absence for travelling and ability to accommodate visitors on the site in caravans. Table 22 summarises the authorities approach to this.

Table 22: Permitted absence and visitors

	Broad Lane (Sefton)	Tara Park (Liverpool)
Normal maximum absence allowed in a year	3 weeks	2 weeks
Rent payable during absence?	Full rent/licence fee	Full rent/licence fee
Can licensees have visitors with caravans overnight?	No	No. Visitors are allowed to stay providing there is room on those pitches; however, no caravans/trailers are allowed to come on
Circumstances	N/A	N/A

Thus, absence is permitted for very short periods on both sites. No visitors are permitted to bring trailers/caravans and stay on the sites. There were no circumstances in which visitors would be permitted to do so. It is thought that this is due to the availability of land/space on this site rather than particularly stringent site rules.

Residents' views:

Respondents on the sites reported a limited amount of travelling; with 29% travelling seasonally, 10% travelling once every year and 62% reporting that they never travelled. Considering the restrictions placed on travelling from the sites this finding is not surprising.

When asked to comment on why they hadn't travelled recently, the vast majority of those who responded talked about either being settled or simply not liking travelling:

"The children need to go to school so we don't [travel] anymore"

"We just settled when the kids were young"

"I've not travelled since I was 8 years old. I used to live in a house until I came here"

"I only travel to fairs, there's nowhere to stop nowadays"

"Just don't like it anymore"

Waiting lists and pitch allocation

Examining waiting lists and pitch allocations are both relevant factors in order to help understand demand for, and access to, existing local authority sites. Table 23 shows the approaches towards these on each site.

Table 23: Waiting lists and allocation policies

	Local authority site	
	Broad Lane (Sefton)	Tara Park (Liverpool)
Waiting list?	No list	Informal list
Numbers on list	N/A	Not specified
Trends in numbers	Static	Static
Pitches vacated 2004-2006	Not known	Average of just under 1 pitch per annum
Formal allocation policy?	No	No
Most important factors taken into account (in order of importance)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family/personal compatibility 2. Previous known behaviour/references 3. Need for accommodation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Medical/health needs 2. Family size/composition 3. Need for accommodation

An average of about 5 pitches a year has been vacated over the past 3 years – an overall turnover rate of about 6% per year.

As can be seen, there is a particular emphasis on informality when allocating pitches to households. When allocations are considered, the two sites have different factors that are taken into consideration; clearly compatibility is a major driver for Sefton whereas ‘need’ appears to be the predominant deciding issue in Liverpool.

Financial issues

Technically, the charges paid by site residents are licence fees, but they are commonly referred to as rents, and this term is used below. Table 24 shows rents charged, damage deposits charged, proportion of residents receiving housing benefit (HB) and any Supporting People payments received.

Table 24: Pitch rent and other financial matters

	Broad Lane (Sefton)	Tara Park (Liverpool)
Pitch rent – res. single	£48.65	N/A
Pitch rent – res. double	£56.40	£87.00
Pitch rent – transit	N/A	N/A
Damage deposit?	£50	No
% of residents receiving HB	Over 90%	Over 90%
Supporting People payments?	No	Yes

Rents range between £48.65 for a residential single pitch in Sefton to £87 for a double residential pitch in Liverpool. The rent level varies in Sefton according to the type/size of pitch, while in Liverpool the site only has double pitches – having said this there is over a £30 difference between rents for double pitches between the two sites.

Almost all (over 90%) of residents receive housing benefit towards their rent.

Site improvements

Both sites have been the subject of successful bids for Gypsy and Traveller Sites Grant (formerly Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant). Broad Lane, Sefton had work carried out on the sewage pipes, amenity blocks and site office. The Grant was also used for fencing and disabled access on each pitch. On Tara Park (Liverpool), the Grant funded the modernisation of the amenity blocks, the provision of safety fencing around each pitch, and the provision of a grassed area for 50% of the pitches. The drainage system was also upgraded.

Residents' views:

In terms of the improvements residents' would like to see we received a variety of comments. On the Sefton site we received comments including:

- A communal building due to their distance from town
- A bus route
- Moving the site nearer to shops and schools
- Bigger pitches
- Bigger sheds
- Gardens
- Lane widening
- More greenery
- Separate toilet (from bathroom)

In terms of improvements residents' would like to see on the Liverpool site these included:

- Bigger sheds
- Removal of ramps outside sheds
- Clean under sheds
- Removal of mould from pitches
- Replace concrete with tarmac
- Creation of a children's play area
- Reduction in noise at night
- Upgrade fencing
- Ensure caravans on pitches are level
- Bigger pitches

Plans for existing sites

Respondents from the local authorities were asked whether certain specified changes were planned during the next three year period.

Liverpool indicated that there were no plans to make any changes over the next three years.

Sefton indicated that they had plans to undertake major repairs or improvements. They have recently been successful in their receipt of a Grant and work is intended to take place to:

- build a new electricity substation, to increase the supply to the site;
- resurface the roads;
- resurface 50% of the pitches ; and
- general refurbishing of the amenity blocks.

Sefton also indicated a potential change to the site management arrangements

Other plans for local authority sites

All 4 authorities, including those currently without a site, were asked if they had any current plans to provide additional local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites in their area over the next 5 years.

Liverpool indicated that they intended to apply for a further Gypsy and Traveller Sites Grant and this was largely dependent on the results of the GTAA.

- **Sefton** indicated that they have no such plans, however depending on the outcome of the assessment and subject to sub regional discussions and Member endorsement, this may be subject to review.

Knowsley indicated that they had no such plans.

Wirral also indicated that had no plans to develop a local authority site but the decision would be dependent on the outcome of the GTAA.

7. Planning and Private Gypsy and Traveller sites

This chapter looks at a range of issues around Gypsies and Travellers providing pitches/sites for themselves within the Study Area. In particular, this looks at private authorised provision, planning applications, planning issues and the unauthorised development of Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites. Data from the local authorities and Gypsies and Travellers are explored.

Private authorised site provision

There are no private Gypsy and Traveller sites across the Merseyside Study Area and this has been the case since 2001 – the caravan count indicates that there have been no private sites in the area since 1994.

Planning applications

All of the authorities indicated that there had been no planning applications received, granted, refused and granted on appeal since 2001. Sefton and Knowsley stated that they did not expect this to change over the next five years; Wirral stated that this was dependent on the results of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment; and, Liverpool did not provide information on whether or not they thought it would increase over the next five years.

Unauthorised development of Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites

There is currently no unauthorised development of Gypsy and Traveller sites across the Merseyside Study Area. All four authorities indicated that they had not taken any planning enforcement action in relation to the unauthorised development of sites since 2001 and did not expect this number to increase over the next five years.

Planning issues

Local authority officers were asked if they could volunteer an example of good practice in relation to their planning approach. Only one authority offered an example of good practice, although this it was a more general comment relating to service delivery and community engagement rather than being planning specific:

“This authority has a working group, which consists of a range of officers representing various services and partners (external), which may have cause to reflect work that relates to Gypsies and Travellers. This group has developed an informal process for delivering services to Gypsies and Travellers and is currently in the process of developing a contemporary policy” (Knowsley).

The experience of Gypsies and Travellers in relation to planning

We were keen to explore, with Gypsies and Travellers, their experience of buying land and/or going through the planning process.

We asked all respondents if they had ever purchased their own land; only 4 respondents had, at some time in the past, bought their own land – only 2 of these applied for planning permission – it is unclear from the findings where in the UK this occurred. Three of these respondents were now accommodated in bricks and mortar housing with the other respondent accommodated on one of the local authority sites.

We asked respondents to elaborate on their experiences of the planning system in order to gain some insight into the process from their perspective. On both counts the respondents commented that the application process was not successful, *“It got rejected”* and *“It got turned down”*.

8. Unauthorised Encampments: Findings

The presence and incidence of unauthorised encampments is a significant issue impacting upon local authorities, landowners, Gypsies and Travellers, the settled population and the public purse. Just as unauthorised developments are often cited as a major source tension - unauthorised encampments are often the type of accommodation which has become synonymous with Gypsies and Travellers and is often a further source of tension with the wider community.

Due to the nature of unauthorised encampments (i.e. unpredictability, seasonal fluctuations etc.), it is very difficult to grasp a comprehensive picture of need for residential and/or transit accommodation without considering a range of interconnected issues. This section, however, seeks to look at the 'known' prevalence of unauthorised encampments and views of households on such encampments in order to draw some tentative indication as to level and nature of need for authorised provision.

Policies on managing unauthorised encampments

None of the authorities have formal written policies for managing unauthorised encampments. Wirral indicated that a policy was being written and they currently utilise an informal procedure to manage encampments, similarly, Sefton also has an informal procedure.

Two authorities are party to joint agreements or protocols with other agencies for managing unauthorised encampments as follows:

Knowsley	-	Police, other LAs and other agencies
Liverpool	-	Police and other agencies

Sefton and Wirral indicated that they were not party to any joint agreements or protocols for managing encampments; however, Wirral were exploring the opportunity of signing up to the Merseyside Police Gypsy and Traveller Policy.

In all cases, first contact with Gypsies and Travellers on unauthorised encampments is usually made by a council officer. Wirral and Knowsley indicated that a Police officer can also be the first contact, while Liverpool said that the Traveller Education Service can also be the first contact.

Good practice on managing unauthorised encampments

Only one authority identified good practice on managing unauthorised encampments:

"We carry out a welfare check, then provide skips to have rubbish removed" (Liverpool).

Geographical patterns and incidence of unauthorised encampments

When asked whether or not they keep records of encampments, the following information was provided: Liverpool log all known encampments; Wirral log all known encampments on council land; and Knowsley log some encampments. Sefton did not indicate whether or not they keep a record.

The number of separate encampments experienced during 2006 is shown below.

Wirral	-	12 (normally none in area)
Sefton	-	4 (normally none in area)
Liverpool	-	4 (normally 2 in area at a time)
Knowsley	-	1-5 (normally none in area)

Wirral added that the number of recorded encampments for 2006 was unusually high compared to previous years. They felt that some of these encampments could be attributed to a wedding that occurred in Ellesmere Port, a neighbouring authority (which falls under the Cheshire Partnership area). In relation to previous years Wirral had recorded:

- 6 encampments in 2003
- 1 encampment in 2004
- 3 encampments in 2005

It is clear from this information that the Caravan Count does not provide a reliable indication as to the presence of households on unauthorised encampments in the Study Area.

Details of location, number of caravans, duration and action taken were provided for the majority of encampments, except for Knowsley where no information is given. From the information provided, the average encampment size was just under 5 caravans (range 1 to 12). Average encampment size was larger in Sefton (7 caravans) and Liverpool (6 caravans) than in Wirral (4 caravans).

In terms of the information provided by local authorities for encampments during 2006, the duration was given for 19 encampments. The average was just over 1 week (range 1 – 28 days). Only 1 encampment lasted longer than 3 weeks (in Liverpool).

In terms of action taken:

Liverpool	-	4 resolved by eviction
Sefton	-	4 resolved by 'informal eviction'
Wirral	-	9 legal action started but not issued; 2 no action; and, 1 vacated before action.

There was no data provided for encampments in Knowsley.

Trends in unauthorised encampments

Authorities were asked how the number of unauthorised encampments has changed over the past 5 years. The experience seems to be similar in most areas; for example, in Wirral, Sefton and Knowsley the numbers remained broadly the same. Liverpool, however, has seen a decrease in encampments.

In terms of size of group, again, Wirral, Sefton and Knowsley said that encampments had remained broadly the same size over the past 5 years, while Liverpool said the size had decreased.

In terms of the time of year encampments occurred, Liverpool, Wirral and Sefton indicated that more occurred in summer.

Wirral and Sefton said that most unauthorised encampments were people who were 'in transit', while Liverpool indicated that more are 'local'. Indeed one observable change in Liverpool over the last five years was that households involved in unauthorised encampments were often relatives of the residents of Tara Park, the local authority site.

When asked how they expected the number of encampments to change over the next 5 years, all authorities expected no significant change or did not know.

Living on unauthorised encampments – views from Gypsies and Travellers

Unfortunately just two households, classed as unauthorised encampments participated in the needs assessment. It is therefore impossible to present information about general trends and specific experiences based on such a small sample. Instead, the following aims to present a brief narrative about some of the issues of concern whilst protecting the respondents' anonymity and privacy.

Both respondents had two living units and both felt that this provided them with enough space for their needs.

They were also very satisfied with the location that they were encamped, although they did comment, unsurprisingly, on their ability to access facilities being poor. Neither household had access to basic facilities – both of the respondents had access to electricity which was supplied via a generator. When asked how they overcome their lack of access to water or WC they stated that they used the facilities on the socially rented site in Liverpool. One respondent did not feel this posed a problem for them while the other household did.

One of the households had health and safety concerns. When asked to expand on the nature of these concerns they remarked, "*I just don't feel safe*". When asked how their situation could improve they commented, "*I want a pitch*".

Both respondents had been on the encampment for between one month and three months. Similarly, both respondents wanted to stay for as long as they could and both wanted to remain in the area (Liverpool). Both were on the waiting list for a pitch on the Liverpool site.

They both commented that they were looking for a pitch on a site owned by the council rather than any other accommodation type. Neither household had a base elsewhere.

9. Gypsies and Travellers in Social and Private Bricks and Mortar Accommodation: Findings

The number of Gypsies and Travellers currently accommodated within bricks and mortar accommodation is unknown, but potentially large. Movement to and from housing is a major concern if the strategic approach, policies and working practices of local authorities are to remain effective. One of the main issues of the consultation revolved around the role that housing services do, should and could play in the accommodation of Gypsies and Travellers within the Study Area.

This chapter looks at the information held by the authorities around Gypsies and Travellers and housing and looks at the approaches these authorities take. The chapter then continues with analysing the responses of housed Gypsies and Travellers who took part in the assessment.

Housing policies

Authorities were asked whether specific reference is made to Gypsies and Travellers in various housing strategies:

Current housing strategy	Yes in Liverpool and Wirral; No in Knowsley; No in Sefton but indicated that this will be included in the new draft.
Current homelessness strategy	Yes in Liverpool; No in Knowsley ¹⁸ and Wirral ¹⁹ ; No in Sefton but indicated that this will be included in the new draft.
Current BME housing strategy	Yes in Liverpool, which is the only LA with such a strategy.

Obviously specific inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers is the exception rather than the rule at present, which will require changes when results of the needs assessment are available.

Liverpool, Knowsley and Wirral all indicated that Gypsies and Travellers are identified in ethnic records and monitoring of social housing applications and/or allocations. Sefton noted that their 'Homeseach' application form includes a reference to Gypsies and Travellers in the ethnic monitoring section.

¹⁸ Although conducting 'Gypsy and Traveller research' is mentioned in Knowsley's Homelessness Strategy

¹⁹ It is noted that within Wirral that indirect reference is made to Gypsies and Travellers as their Homeless Strategy operates within the overarching Housing Strategy Statement.

Authorities were asked to provide details of how Gypsies and Travellers who are homeless are supported through the homelessness process. Sefton made no comments. Wirral indicated that they would receive similar support to any other applicants. Liverpool and Knowsley indicated that there may be a multi-agency approach:

“Travellers who find themselves homeless are helped through the system by Irish Community Care, council workers and health workers connected to Travellers” (Liverpool)

“There are no formal defined processes; however, a multi-agency directorate approach to supporting applications could be activated” (Knowsley)

There were two pro-active answers to a question about steps taken to provide Gypsies and Travellers with housing advice and assistance or to help them access social housing:

“Travellers would be directed to One Stop Shops; there they would be advised of their position, then their information given over to Careline who will investigate their needs” (Liverpool)

“Partnership approach with the local major Registered Social Landlord (RSL) and a cross directorate” (Knowsley)

Gypsies and Travellers in social housing

The authorities were asked if they could quantify the number of allocations and registrations for social housing for Gypsies and Travellers:

- Liverpool currently had 7 Gypsies and Travellers registered for social housing and Wirral had 2; however, no one had been housed in either of these authorities in 2006.
- Knowsley and Sefton said that no Gypsy and Traveller applicants are currently registered for social housing, or were housed in 2006.
- Over the last 12 months, Liverpool had 3 homeless presentations and Wirral had 1. In Sefton, the reason for presenting as homeless was domestic violence. In Liverpool, the reasons given for presenting as homeless were also domestic violence, but also health issues and overcrowding.
- Knowsley indicated they had no homeless presentations over the last 12 months, while Sefton did not know.

- No authority was able to comment on trends in the number of Gypsies and Travellers moving into social rented housing over the past 5 years. Wirral stated that they did not know because they had only started specifically recording and monitoring over the last 12 months.
- Only Liverpool could comment on the expected number of Gypsies and Travellers moving into social housing over the next 5 years, and they felt that it would remain broadly the same as current numbers.
- Knowsley and Sefton were unable to comment on the main reasons why Gypsies and Travellers move into housing. From a list of possible reasons, Liverpool indicated the following main reasons:

Health reasons
 Unable to find stopping places when travelling
 For children's schooling
 Unable to get a place on a site
 Harassment or other problems on a site

Wirral indicated the following reasons:

Want to 'settle'
 Harassment or other problems on a site

- Only Wirral was able to give an estimate of the number of Gypsies and Travellers living in social rented housing in their area, which they estimated at less than 10 families. This came from information given to them via Education. They also stated that one of Wirral's largest RSLs had recently carried out a comprehensive neighbourhood survey with 2,445 returns, none of which indicated that they were from the Gypsy and Traveller community. However, it is often found that Gypsies and Travellers rarely self-identify themselves as such for fear of recrimination or discrimination. Knowsley commented that they were aware of several housed families who live in the borough – through Children's Services - but did not quantify this or provide further details.
- Only Wirral could comment on the distribution of Gypsies and Travellers on particular estates and that was to say that they were fairly even. They could not comment on where these were.

Gypsies and Travellers in private housing

Answers to questions about Gypsies and Travellers in other forms of housing were largely uninformative:

- Liverpool, Wirral and Sefton could not provide any information about the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in private housing, while Knowsley indicated that there were none.

- Knowsley, Wirral and Sefton were not aware of any issues arising in relation to Gypsies and Travellers living in private housing in their area. Liverpool did not respond;
- Wirral said Gypsies and Travellers do not live on caravan or mobile home parks not specifically designed for them, while the other authorities said there was no information.

Living in bricks and mortar housing – views from Gypsies and Travellers

Among the 49 respondents whom we consulted who lived in bricks and mortar accommodation, 37 (76%) lived in a house; 10 (21%) lived in a bungalow; and, the remainder (2 respondents) lived in a flat or maisonette.

In total, 16% of bricks and mortar dwellers were owner-occupiers; 57% were council tenants; 14% were RSL tenants; and 12% were private tenants.

In terms of the size of the dwelling; 4% had 1 bedroom; 60% had 2 bedrooms; 32% had 3 bedrooms; and 4% had 4 or more bedrooms. A total of 85% thought that their property gave them enough space. However, for those households who did not have enough space we received the following comments:

“Because I have 6 grown children as well as me and my husband. We are overcrowded really”

“There’s not enough room and my eldest son has to sleep on the sofa”

“I’ve 3 kids and there’s not enough room. I only took it because I had nowhere else to go”

In total quite a large number of households in bricks and mortar housing (63% of households) still owned trailers. Twenty-four households had just 1 trailer, and twelve households had 2 trailers – the average number of trailers was 1.4 trailers.

Residents in bricks and mortar accommodation were asked, on a five-point scale from very good to very poor, what they thought about a number of aspects of their accommodation including: size of house; design of accommodation; neighbours; location; facilities; and, condition/state of repair. The vast majority of respondents on the sites viewed these issues either positively or ambivalently. Respondents were particularly happy about the size and facilities of the accommodation. Their view on neighbours was the factor which generated the most ambivalence from respondents; encouragingly few respondents viewed their neighbours negatively.

Table 25: Views on the accommodation (in %)

Issue	Very good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very Poor
Size of house	49	41	6	2	2
Design of house	37	47	10	6	-
Neighbours	14	27	51	4	4
Location	33	31	27	4	6
Facilities	51	39	8	2	-
Condition/state of repair	20	59	14	4	2

All respondents had access to all basic facilities we enquired about, with the exception of:

- 22% did not have somewhere safe for children to play;
- 16% did not have adequate fire precautions;
- 10% did not have a shower;
- 6% did not have a bath; and,
- 2% did not have laundry facilities.

A significant number of respondents had lived in their accommodation for a long time: 27% for 5 years or more; 50% had been there for between 1 and 5 years. The remainder (23%) had been there for less than a year: six respondents had been in the accommodation for between 6 and 12 months; four respondents had been there for between 3 and 6 months; with just one respondent being there for less than 3 months.

Generally speaking, when asked how long they were likely to remain in their house the vast majority said they did not know (56%); 40% thought they would remain indefinitely; 1 respondent intended to remain for around 5 years; and 1 respondent (2%) was planning to leave within the next 6 months. When asked their reasons for leaving we received just one comment:

“I’d like to be nearer to the kids’ schools they are about 30 minutes away now”

One respondent, who did not plan to leave their house, commented that:

“I’ve no intentions of leaving cause I’m not very well at the moment but if my health got better I would travel again”

We asked all Gypsies and Travellers about their experience of living in bricks and mortar accommodation. A total of 13 households (18% of the overall sample) had experience of bricks and mortar housing.

Table 26: Previous experience of bricks and mortar housing by accommodation type

Current accommodation type	No. previously lived in a house	% sample lived in a house
Unauthorised encampments	-	-
Socially rented sites	8	38
Bricks and mortar	5	10
Total	13	18

Just five respondents elaborated on why they had previously lived in bricks and mortar housing: 3 respondents said it was because they were homeless, 1 respondent commented that there was a lack of sites, and 1 respondent moved into housing for their children's education.

Of particular interest was the reasons given for leaving this accommodation. There were a whole range of different responses, some of which reflected some of the difficulties faced by Gypsies and Travellers in adjusting to a different way of living. For instance, some simply commented that they did not like it, whilst some women talked about how they got married, which meant returning to caravan dwelling:

"Because there wasn't a lot of Travellers in the area and I wanted a change"

"Just didn't like it"

"I met my husband who travels"

"It was far too quiet and cut off"

Other reasons were varied and comments we received included:

"Because my parents went back on the road and I went with them"

"It was only temporary accommodation so we had to leave when the other home became available"

"I moved back onto the site as Dad wanted to live back here, it's safer for us."

Just two respondents from the sample would consider moving to a house with both households currently living on unauthorised encampments. Their reasons given for considering bricks and mortar dwelling included: a need for stability and a desire for a change.

Just one respondent, one of the unauthorised encamped households, was on a waiting list for a house with the local authority - but did not expand upon which authority this was.

10. Housing-Related Support Service and General Services: Findings

The questionnaire to local authority officers also sought to ascertain and collate the recognition of Gypsies and Travellers in relation to housing-related support services – many of which come under the umbrella of the Supporting People programme.

Housing-related support

When asked about the housing-related support services available for Gypsies and Travellers, Wirral indicated that their Supporting People team have BME workers and Liverpool indicated that they have a Floating Support Team who can provide support particularly around issues of homelessness. Knowsley stated that they have a designated working group for addressing the needs of Gypsies and Travellers who come into the borough. This group consists of representatives from a local RSL; Health and Social Services; Children and Young People; Planning; Housing Strategy; Chief Executives; and, Neighbourhood Delivery.

Sefton did not provide any information about housing-related support services for Gypsies and Travellers.

When asked which services Gypsies and Travellers most frequently approach the Council about (with a list of general housing-related support categories provided) all authorities except Liverpool either said that they did not know, or that Gypsies and Travellers do not commonly approach the Council. Liverpool indicated that Gypsies and Travellers most frequently approached the Council for:

- Housing advice
- Housing Benefit or other benefits advice
- Discrimination or harassment

Views from Gypsies and Travellers on housing-related support services

It proved extremely difficult to find a suitable method to gain some idea as to the level of experience/need within the Gypsy and Traveller community for housing-related services. The very concept of an outside agency providing services such as support for settling into new accommodation or childcare was often seen as nonsensical because of the reliance upon strong family networks and the support that the extended family have historically provided within Gypsy and Traveller communities. However, we were keen to attempt to gain some idea about the levels of need for a number of services. We consulted with key stakeholders and reviewed key documents²⁰ from elsewhere to produce a list of the kind of services to gain views on.

²⁰ See Supporting People Eastern Regional Cross Authority Group - Gypsy and Traveller Conference, 27th April 2005 <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/6DA547AB-FCBB-4B4F->

We asked all Gypsy and Traveller respondents to comment on the likelihood of using a number of services on a scale which covered; 'would never use', 'might use', 'would definitely use' and 'don't know' (see Table 27).

Table 27: Likelihood of using housing-related support services (in %)

Support need (ranked in order of interest)	Would never use	Might use	Would definitely use	Don't know
Harassment	15	14	63	7
Accessing a GP	19	10	63	7
Accessing legal services	17	22	44	15
Filling in forms	18	33	32	15
Finding accommodation	25	25	39	10
Claiming benefits	26	21	40	11
Support on planning	26	7	42	24
Settling into new accommodation	39	24	18	18
Pregnancy	47	15	21	15
Finding a job	67	14	8	10
Accessing training (for adults)	63	15	7	14
Meeting people	71	13	6	10
Budgeting	75	6	6	13
Parenting	77	1	3	17

As can be seen, the majority of all respondents were not interested in receiving support with many of the services highlighted above. This may be due to the perception that many of these services are not applicable to Gypsies and Travellers, as a consequence these findings cannot be seen to provide an illustration as to the definitive need for such services from Gypsy and Traveller communities. However, a careful examination of the results does seem to indicate where the current main concerns from respondents are and where the initial focus of services should be. The services for which support would be most welcome, albeit still slight, were (in order of preference): harassment, accessing a GP, accessing legal services, filling in forms, finding accommodation, claiming benefits, and support on planning.

Table 28 breaks the interest in these services down by accommodation type and the services ranked in order of collective interest. This table shows that those respondents in bricks and mortar housing are those who are, generally speaking and in comparison to respondents on socially rented sites, most likely to use a significant number of these services. Generally speaking, respondents on socially rented sites seemed least interested in accessing such services. This may be because the networks may already be in place with health, advice, floating support and LA officers etc., which already fulfil some of these support needs, either formally or informally.

[AE12-A5DD282B4C34/7895/FinalReportofGypsyandtravellerWorkshopApril2006.doc](http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/council/consultations/engage/downloaddoc.jsp?id=941) and The Housing Support Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York, December 2006,
<http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/council/consultations/engage/downloaddoc.jsp?id=941>

Table 28: Likelihood of using housing-related support services by accommodation type (in %)

Support need (in order of interest)	Unauthorised sites (% who said they might or would definitely use)	Socially rented sites (% who said they might or would definitely use)	Bricks and mortar (% who said they might or would definitely use)
Harassment	100	50	88
Accessing a GP	100	45	84
Accessing legal services	100	50	74
Filling in forms	100	55	69
Claiming benefits	100	55	63
Finding accommodation	100	35	80
Support on planning	0	25	61
Settling into new accommodation	100	35	43
Pregnancy	0	15	47
Accessing training (for adults)	50	40	14
Finding a job	50	30	18
Meeting people	0	20	18
Budgeting	0	20	8

Access to local services and amenities

In order to gain some idea as to the interaction that the Gypsies and Travellers have with various local services, we asked people if they felt that they or their family had sufficient access to certain services and how important these services were to them (see Table 29). As can be seen, for the most part the services that are most important to people seem to be the ones to which Gypsies and Travellers had access to. The five most important services were: GP/Health centre, Post office, Dentist, A&E, and local shops. The least important services were: Youth clubs, services for older people, and social workers

Table 29: Access to services and importance of service – ranked by importance

Service	Have access (%)	Very important (%)	Quite important (%)	Not so important (%)	Not important at all (%)	Don't know (%)
GP/health centre	99	89	6	-	1	3
Post office	89	65	26	1	1	4
Dentist	75	64	15	1	1	15
A&E	86	62	18	8	4	6
Local shops	88	61	22	7	3	6
Banks	90	53	14	19	8	4
Public transport	81	35	10	22	24	8
Health visitor	44	32	4	4	8	50
Nursery schools and children's services	50	22	13	4	15	44
Maternity care	40	18	3	4	25	47
Sports & leisure services	36	11	6	11	13	54
Social worker	22	8	-	4	26	58
Services for older people	13	4	1	4	31	57
Youth clubs	13	3	7	1	28	58

When asked to comment further on what prevented them accessing such services the predominant theme was mobility and distance – particularly on the site in Sefton. One respondent commented that,

“Can't get taxis - they won't come unless they know you”

Other respondents from the same site commented,

“Distance is a real problem no one is in walking distance and it's 2 miles to the nearest shops. You need a car to get anywhere.”

“There's no buses or anything come down here, you can't get anywhere”

Similarly on the site in Sefton the remoteness was seen to impact upon health care,

“The lane is a problem being so far out of town. The Thornby Doctor won't come on site. The Health Visitor will though”

We also received comments which talked about a lack of literacy and ability to fill in forms as a significant barrier to accessing the kind of services people would like:

“Sometimes I get embarrassed because I can't read and have to ask people”

We asked an open question which invited respondents to comment on ways in which these and other services could be improved. A number of respondents talked about a need to improve access to public transport. *“If a bus came down here people would use it”*. Other ideas revolved around raising the ‘cultural awareness’ of the community and services around Gypsies and Travellers, and the creation of a community centre so outside agencies had somewhere to come to.

One respondent talked about how agencies can identify their site as a ‘Gypsy site’ by their postcode and how this could be a factor which caused discrimination,

“When your address comes up it says ‘Gypsy Site’. It shouldn’t because people don’t want to know when they know you’re a Gypsy. It should just say ‘Broad Lane’”.

We also directly asked whether people who worked in the local authority, health service, education and other services should be more aware of issues affecting Gypsies and Travellers. Nearly half (40%) felt that more awareness was required, with around a third of people (32%) suggesting that greater awareness was not needed, the remainder (28%) did not know.

When asked to expand on this we received some interesting comments around breaking down stereotypes:

“None of them seem to know nothing about us and if they knew more about us they might understand we’re just normal people like they are and not stereotype us as gypo’s”

“They have to know that Gypsies are just the same as themselves and not monsters”

“Doctors need to know more but also schools do. Our children draw animals and trailers, not houses like gaujos”

Other comments we received talked about the need to be more sensitive:

“The Doctors used to be terrible but they are better now. They assume all Travellers can’t read or write”

“When we get post and letters it often says ‘Gypsy site’ which I think is racist”

“The people I’ve seen need a lesson in manners. They are supposed to be Civil Servants. There’s nothing civil about most of them”

11. Employment, Education and Health: Findings

This section presents findings relating to Gypsies and Travellers in the three main service areas of employment, education and health.

Gypsies and Travellers and work, employment and training

For this section the survey started with a general question about the kind of work undertaken by respondents and their families. Answers were extremely varied with the most popular broad areas being: gardening/tree work, uPVC and guttering, scrap, block paving, hawking, and rubbish removal. One respondent was involved in general market stall work and one reported being employed in a factory. It was clear that many of these trades were practical and manual and it was not uncommon to find families engaged in multiple trades.

We also asked how many people were self-employed and employed in the households, 31 households had 40 self-employed members, and 3 households had 6 employed members. A total of 38 respondents did not have self-employed or employed household members. Clearly self-employment is a major mode of employment for Gypsies and Travellers but there appears to be a large number of households out of work, at home or retired.

Only 3 households who currently travelled felt that travelling and living as a Gypsy/Traveller had an impact on their work. We asked people to expand on the reasons why this was the case, two respondents commented:

"It affects work but also affects the children's education."

"It's really hard to get work as there's no public transport as we're so far out."

The survey also asked whether or not households had any particular 'site needs' in relation to their work (i.e. the storage of equipment, etc.). Only 5 households said they did, 4 wanted a place to park their van, the other household talked about a need to be near to public transport.

In terms of training for work, only 6% of the sample (4 respondents) had been on some form of training, through college, for work. An additional 5 respondents (7%) wanted to take part in training at some point in the future. People commented further by saying:

"I'd like to be able to read and write"

"I'm not sure, when youngest gets older, I'd like to try hairdressing"

"When the babies grow up maybe, not sure what though, I can't read or write so don't know what I'd do."

“Would love to learn how to use a sewing machine properly”

“Computers, it would be good if the computer thing comes back to the site”

We asked each respondent to comment on the level/standard of education that they themselves had obtained. A large number of people chose not to answer the question or simply stated “none”, “didn’t go to school” or “no qualifications”. For those respondents that did comment, generally speaking there were very low levels of educational attainment, with only 5 respondents reporting having sat some form of examination or attendance on a course. The vast majority reported problems reading and writing and around a half of respondents talked about only having primary school education or very short periods in school when younger.

Gypsies and Travellers and education

A total of 52 households had school age children (between 5yrs and 16yrs). A total of 32 households (62%) said their children regularly attend school with an additional 8 households reporting that their children receive home education. Twenty respondents said their children did not attend school regularly. This would indicate that around 12 respondents (23% of households with school age children) have children but who do not regularly attend school or receive home education.

In terms of differences in attendance levels, children had similar levels of attendance regardless of accommodation type with around 60% of households on both socially rented sites and bricks and mortar housing likely to have children who have regular education. Interestingly, both households on the unauthorised encampments reported that their children regularly attended schools.

We asked those respondents with school-age children to rate their children’s schools. A number of people did not comment, just 1 respondent said the school was poor (2%), 6% felt they were neither good nor poor, while 56% thought the schools were good or very good. The one respondent who commented negatively on the school was asked to expand on their views. This surrounded problems around conflict between the denomination of the school and the beliefs of the family,

“It’s a Protestant school and they [the children] are Catholic. Our boy asked to be taken to church and the teachers said they don’t do that.”

However, the vast majority of respondents were extremely complimentary:

“Because my children get on with their teachers and they’re not racist at the schools”

“The school is very good in the way they deal with us and our needs”

“My children couldn't read or write when they started a few months ago and already they have started to read bits and write a lot better. The teachers seem to give them a lot of their time.”

“It's the best for children. They all do Holy Communion cause it's a Catholic church. The teachers' are really good with Traveller children”

“The kids get dead good grades. We want to keep them there that's why we want to move nearer to the school”

“They are very understanding. One son attends the homework club cause the school understands that I can't read”

We also asked people how easy or difficult they thought accessing children's education/schools was in the local area. Although some said they did not know (15%), 38% felt that access was either easy or very easy, 14% felt it was neither easy nor difficult. Only 3 respondents (4%) thought access was difficult or very difficult.

Twenty two respondents (42%) with school age children had contact with the local Traveller Education Service (TES). A total of 17 respondents thought the service was either very good or good (77% of those in contact). Just 3 respondents thought the service was poor or very poor (14%). We asked people to expand on what they thought was good about the service, comments received included:

“Anytime we need them they come and help straight away”

“Help is there if we ever need it”

“It leaves our children with us and keeps them away from high schools where they could get up to anything”.

“They have helped us a lot. My son had a bad experience in Manchester and is now seeing a counsellor which the TES arranged.”

In terms of respondents who view the service as poor we received the following comments:

“Their attitudes are not good as they've said bad things to older girls”

“They don't seem to care about us that much”

“Their attitudes have been bad and so has their language in front of the girls. They weren’t very helpful as they took my daughter out of class rather than helping her”

Gypsies and Travellers and health

Identifying households where members have particular health needs for special or adapted accommodation is an important component of housing needs surveys. A growing number of studies show that Gypsies and Travellers experience higher levels of health problems than members of the non-travelling population.

We asked whether respondents had members of their households who experienced some specific conditions (mobility problems, visual impairment, hearing impairments, mental health problems, learning disabilities or communication problems). As can be seen from Table 30, the vast majority of households do not have members with any of these specific conditions. However, a small but significant number of households do have members with these health problems, with a smaller number of households having multiple members with health issues – mobility problems being the main concern.

Table 30: Percentage of households with family members with specific health problems

Type of condition	No one in household	One person in household	Two people in household	Three people in household
Mobility problems	71	17	4	-
Visual impairment	85	6	1	-
Hearing impairment	88	4	-	-
Mental health problems	86	6	-	-
Learning disability	90	-	-	1
Communication problems	92	-	-	-

A further 25 households (35% of the sample) had someone in their family who experienced some other kind of health problem. Conditions reported included (in most prevalent order) arthritis, asthma, heart problems, diabetes, epilepsy. One person mentioned depression and another reported spinal problems.

12. Accommodation Histories, Intentions and Travelling: Findings

This section looks specifically at some of the ways the Gypsies and Travellers we spoke to during the course of the study have lived in the past and how they would like to live in the future.

Accommodation histories

In order to gain some idea as to the movement between different types of accommodation, this section of the survey looked at a range of different issues including: the sort of accommodation they had immediately prior to their current accommodation; the general location of prior accommodation; reasons for leaving this accommodation; and, the reasons for living in their current accommodation.

The previous accommodation of those on the socially rented sites and bricks and mortar housing, in order of significance, is shown in Table 31. As can be seen, the main form of accommodation that households on socially rented sites had prior to their current site was on the roadside (unauthorised encampments), followed closely by renting a pitch on a socially rented site. Households currently in bricks and mortar housing came from various forms of accommodation, predominantly roadside encampments, socially rented sites and private pitches they were renting, but also other houses, transit sites, and caravan parks.

Table 31: Prior accommodation of households on socially rented sites and bricks and mortar housing

Type of prior accommodation	Socially rented sites (% of respondents)	Bricks and mortar (% of respondents)
Roadside	43	33
Private rented pitch	10	16
Socially rented site	29	29
Private transit site	0	2
Bricks and mortar housing	10	8
Other	5	4
Socially rented transit site	0	4
Own land	5	2
Caravan park	0	2

Both of the households currently on unauthorised encampments in the area had previously been on unauthorised encampments as well.

We asked people to tell us what precipitated their move from their previous accommodation (respondents could name multiple reasons). Such reasons were varied (see Table 32). There were 3 main reasons: eviction (both households on unauthorised encampments); health, and, harassment.

Table 32: Reasons for leaving prior accommodation type by current accommodation type

Reason for leaving	Current accommodation type		
	Socially rented sites (%)	Bricks and mortar (%)	Unauthorised encampment (%)
Health reasons/illness	5	25	0
Eviction	5	20	100
Harassment	0	22	0
Personal safety	0	10	0
Site closure	0	2	0
Wanted independence	0	4	0
Work reasons	0	0	0
Children's schooling	10	4	0
To travel	5	2	0
Site/accommodation conditions	0	10	0
Got married	5	0	0
No particular reason	5	2	0
Other	71	18	0

In terms of 'other' reasons given for leaving accommodation, there were a variety of responses. These included: '*wanting to settle*', '*to be near family*', cost of prior accommodation, '*didn't like where we were*' and '*for a change*'.

Travelling patterns and experiences

In order to shed some light on the travelling patterns and experiences of Gypsies and Travellers throughout the Study Area, respondents were asked about a range of issues associated with travelling.

One of the most important issues to gain some information on was the frequency that households travelled. The vast majority of people reported that they never travelled or just travelled seasonally, which generally means travelling for short periods during the summer months. Table 33 breaks this down by accommodation type. This shows that households in bricks and mortar housing are more mobile than their trailer based counterparts on socially rented sites (see Chapter 6 for the restrictions placed upon travelling from socially rented sites).

Table 33: Frequency of travelling by current accommodation type

How often travelled?	Current accommodation type		
	Socially rented sites (%)	Bricks and mortar (%)	Unauthorised encampment (%)
Every week	0	0	0
Every month	0	2	100
Every couple of months	0	6	0
Seasonally	29	42	0
Once per year	10	15	0
Never	62	35	0

We asked those who said they never travelled to tell us why this was. Again, we received diverse replies. Some common themes were around being less physically mobile or disabled, being too old or general health reasons.

“Because of my age. I'm too old to be going round on the roads again”

Others talked about how they were ‘settled’. About half of the sample thought that their travelling had reduced recently, when compared to previous years, with comments on this issue including:

“At one time you could pull up and stop with other Travellers even if you didn't know them but now you just don't know. They might attack you so we just go where we know and to people we know”

“It's getting harder to find places to stop”

“Because of the law, they're able to move us off quicker”

“There's no where for a caravan anymore so we only travel once per year to a holiday camp and stay in a static”

For those who did travel, however, we asked them where they liked to go. This was an open question designed to allow respondents to mention three of the places they visit most frequently. One of the most common responses was ‘anywhere’: It was impossible to identify particularly popular destinations from this. A number of respondents mentioned Appleby Fair with a similar number travelling to Wales. There were diverse replies which included: London, Ireland, Scotland, Birmingham, Nottingham and Essex. However, in terms of the areas most often noted this could be encapsulated by a coast to coast travelling pattern – along a broadly similar route to the M62 i.e. Lancashire, Manchester, Warrington, Leeds, and Hull.

For those people who still travelled there was a wide variation in how many caravans/trailers they travelled with from 1 to 30, with most people travelling with between 1 and 7 caravans. Although respondents noted that they can travel in larger groups both in terms of number of people and trailers.

In total, approximately a quarter of the sample had travelled to some extent over the past 12 months. These households had travelled for a number of reasons including (in order of popularity): to attend a fair, to visit relatives, to attend family events, for work, and for a holiday.

With regard to what type of accommodation people had used while travelling during the last 12 months, by far the most common was pulling up at the ‘roadside’, which as a general rule would indicate unauthorised encampments. This was followed by the use of family owned private sites (residential and transit) with smaller numbers using mainstream caravan parks, farmer's fields, public sites (residential and transit) and hotels.

Out of the people who had travelled in the last 12 month period, 29% had been forced to leave where they were staying; largely as a result of evictions, but also, in a small number of cases, because of harassment issues.

In order to further understand people’s future travelling patterns, we asked everyone how often they thought they might travel over the next 12 month period (summer 2007 – summer 2008). The majority (47%) thought that they would travel about the same as the previous year, 4% thought less, while 8% thought they would travel more (a potential net increase of 4%).

We also asked everyone where they might travel over this period. Very few people anticipated travelling around areas local to where they were based now (4%) or Merseyside (7%) with the majority intending to travel to other parts of the UK (36%) – 8% were intending travelling abroad.

In terms of preference for accommodation when travelling people were asked about the sort of sites/land they would like to use in future (table 34).

Table 34: Popularity of preferred accommodation

Type preferred accommodation	% of respondents
Roadside	47
With family on private sites	41
Caravan park	28
With family on socially rented sites	14
Farmer’s fields	12
Public/private transit sites	9
Other	7
Hotels	7

As Table 34 shows, when travelling, people would, quite surprisingly, rather stay on the roadside than other accommodation types. This is followed closely by staying with family on private sites, followed by residing on a mainstream caravan park. Staying on socially rented sites and transit sites are amongst the least favoured options. However, anecdotal evidence from fieldwork in other local authority areas indicates that there is a general negative view of transit site provision amongst Gypsies and Travellers. This however, may reflect the perceived current standard, management and availability of such sites, generally seen as quite poor, rather than a comment on the nature of transit accommodation itself.

13. Household Formation and Accommodation Preferences and Aspirations

Household formation

A total of 8 households (11% of the sample), reported concealed households (i.e. that there were separate households currently living with them in need of accommodation), which is a total of 11 separate households (5 households from socially rented accommodation). These were exclusively older children whom lived with them. All but one of these new households was expected to want to settle in the area where they currently lived. One potential household was said to want a house, one said "*it's up to them*"; the remainder were all thought to want trailer based accommodation.

Respondents were also asked whether there were people living with them who were likely to want their own separate accommodation in the next five years (2007-2012). A total of 12 households said that there were people living with them who would require independent accommodation within the next five year period. This amounted to 17 separate households (12 of which were on authorised site based accommodation). All were children of the respondents.²¹

All were thought to want to remain near to the family and nine (all site based) wanted trailer accommodation; two of the bricks and mortar households expected them to desire bricks and mortar housing with the remaining household once again saying "*It's up to them*".

Accommodation preferences and aspirations

The final section of the survey with Gypsies and Travellers looked at some of the ways in which they would like to see accommodation options change and what some of their preferences were around accommodation.

Long stay residential sites

A total of 18 respondents said that they would like to move to either a long-stay residential site or a different residential site. Both households on the unauthorised encampments were interested in this. A total of 12 households from socially rented sites wanted to move to another site (57% of the sample from socially rented sites) this was half of the respondents from the Liverpool site and 64% of the households from the Sefton site. Four households from bricks and mortar housing said they would be interested in moving to a site (8% of bricks and mortar households).

²¹ We are confident there was no double counting between these different time periods.

We asked all respondents who expressed an interest in long-stay sites how long they would expect to stay on such a site. The vast majority (78%) thought they would stay on a site for 5 years and over with the remainder unable to anticipate duration.

There were mixed views on the preferred size a long-stay residential site should be. No one thought a site should be less than 10 pitches with a few respondents indicating that 30-60 pitches were the maximum number. There seemed to be a general consensus, however, that a site containing around 20 pitches would be their preference. This also supports recent guidance on site design released by the CLG (currently in consultation form).

The vast majority also wanted to see a residential site developed in the local area (89%) or, less preferably, somewhere else in Merseyside.

Transit/short-stay sites

A total of 11 respondents said that they would be interested in stopping at a short-stay or transit site (15% of the sample). This comprised of 1 household on a socially rented site, and 10 households from bricks and mortar accommodation. Neither of the households on unauthorised encampments was interested in transit accommodation.

We asked all respondents who expressed an interest in short-stay sites how long they would expect to stay on such a site. A number of people could not indicate a time and simply answered 'don't know' (31%); 15% felt they would stay for a very short time (1 week); 31% thought they would stay on the site for around 2-4 weeks; 8% thought they would stay between 1 month and 3 months.

Similar to long-stay residential sites there were mixed views on the preferred size a site should be. No one thought a site should be less than 3 pitches, with a few indicating that 25 pitches was the maximum number. There seemed to be a general consensus, however, that a site containing between 10 -20 pitches would be their preference.

Incorporated long-stay and short-stay sites

We also asked people what their thoughts were about sites that incorporated both long-stay pitches and short-stay pitches. Most respondents said they did not know (49%), 32% thought it was a good idea with around 19% viewing it as a bad idea. We asked people to comment on their answer. Comments in favour of such a site included:

"It would give people passing through a place to stop and wash"

"I think it's a good idea because it stops people stopping on the roadside"

“People would be able to visit and then people can move on and off when they want to. It’d be good for Easter and Christmas”

“It would make life easier for the homeless amongst Gypsies”

More tentative comments included:

“Don’t know really – suppose it’d be alright as long as there’s no trouble”

“We won’t have to stop on illegal sites but I don’t know whether they would be for me or not”

Views against such a site included:

“No because of who you get on the site. The people who come might want it permanently. They would be no good at all.”

“You wouldn’t know who was pulling on. People would leave mess on the transit bit and it ruins the site”

Overall, it was clear from the people we spoke to that it was not thought a good idea to mix residential and transit users on the same site without adequate provision being made for transit users (refuse disposal) and restrictions (length of stay). However, a number of people commented that it would be good to have the ability to visit and stay with family who lived on sites. Therefore, where short-stay pitches are made available, on residential sites, some control over transit users may be necessary in order to ensure and maintain feelings of safety and cohesion for the more permanent residents.

Accommodation preferences

We asked all respondents to comment on their preferences for different forms of accommodation:

- A private site owned and lived on by them or their family.
- A site owned by another Gypsy or Traveller.
- A site owned by the local council.
- A family owned house.
- A local authority or housing association owned house.
- Travelling around and staying on authorised transit sites.
- A ‘group housing’ type site (mixture of transit/residential/chalet/ trailer accommodation).
- A site owned by a private landlord (not a Gypsy or a Traveller).

The answers were ranked on a scale from 1 to 10; 1 being the worst option for them and 10 being the best option. The mean (average) answer for each scenario across the entire sample are presented in preference order in Table 35 below. This shows that by far the most preferred form of accommodation is a private site owned either by themselves or their family. This is followed by a family owned house and then a site owned by the local authority. Living on rented private sites (owned either by a Gypsy/Traveller or by someone else) was regarded as the least favoured option. From looking at his table it is suggested that the simple provision of Gypsy and Travellers sites is not enough (particularly if they are in the private rented sector) as ownership and organisation of the site seem particularly important to respondents. It seems from this that many of the respondents we spoke to would rather reside in bricks and mortar housing than live on sites they did not like.

Table 35: Views on type of accommodation preferred

Type of site	Mean answer
A private site owned by them or their family	9.3
A family owned house	7.4
A site owned by the local council	6.7
A local authority or housing association owned house	5.2
'Group housing' ²²	4.5
Travelling around on authorised transit sites	4.3
A site owned by another Gypsy or Traveller	2.9
A site owned by a private landlord (not a Gypsy/Traveller)	2.3

This final section looks at some of the qualitative information we obtained about the kind of places people prefer and aspire to living to. We asked all respondents to talk openly about both the best place they had ever lived and the worse place. In terms of the worst place people had lived, we received a variety of responses. Some commented on the harassment they had experienced:

“As a child we stayed with some Irish travellers in London who had already had trouble with the locals and we walked straight into it. They turned on us, wrecked our trailers and they came in crowds at us”

“A house in Liverpool. We suffered harassment really badly and the children were beaten up we were all living in fear”

Others talked about a specific site they had stayed on:

“It was a council site near a tip. There was rats and blue bottles everywhere. It stank.”

²² On the questionnaire this was phrased as ‘A site incorporating long stay/permanent plots/housing with short stay/transit facilities’

"I suppose a farm yard. What a dirty, muddy place that was. The farmer used to tip all sorts of rubbish beside our trailer and ran over our generator with his tractor"

"In Manchester, on a Travellers site. It was very dirty and smelled because it was beside a canal. Not a very nice place to live"

A number of people on the sites also said their current accommodation was the worst place, for instance:

"Got to be here. The sheds are bad, there's nothing to do on a night because we're so far out. A community building where we can do things would be good"

"This house, we feel like we're trapped and you don't see as many people as you would on a site"

Mostly though, people talked about experiences they had on unauthorised encampments:

"In Anglesey. It was winter and we were stopping on a field. It was like a mud bath and the police came and locked me up for a milk churn they said I had stolen which I hadn't"

"It was bad at the side of the road before I got this flat"

"In Everton on a car park. It was overcrowded with trailers, the local garages wouldn't give us any water and the police came with bailiffs to move us off"

"In Leeds. There was an old coal yard. It was filthy but it was the only place we could find."

"It was in a lay-by in Lancashire. We pulled up late at night it was a good stopping place but when we woke up my van had gone and we were stranded in the lay-by until my brother came to move us. We were just married too."

In terms of the best places people had lived respondents were quite specific about particular places;

"Back in Ireland in the old bow top trailer my parents had. All the local people would stop for a chat and bring us milk from the farms. It was a very nice place to live but I suppose its all changed now"

"Birmingham where my son lives. It's got everything a travelling man needs and it's where I lived when my children were young"

"In Boston, Lincolnshire on a small holding. It was a very nice area. We had electric, water and never got any hassle"

"Ireland where I was born. It's a very nice place with very nice people and where most of my people still live"

"It was on a Haven caravan park. It was the only place we could stay at the time but it was like a holiday with all the entertainment in the clubs but it was our home too so it was good"

Similar to those who said their current accommodation was the worst they lived a number of people talked about their current home as the best place:

"The best thing I did was moving into this house"

"Here, there's friendly people, no trouble makers. The people have been on here a long time and its got facilities, bath, shower, hot water, etc."

"Here, we're settled here. Liverpool people are nice and the city's good. The dentist and doctors are good too"

"This site. We're settled, know everyone and its peaceful. I've got access to shops and everything"

Others tended to talk about times and places they had spent with either family or friends as making the place better than others:

"I was brought up on a site with my family. It was a lovely, clean site with nice people on it. I enjoyed it because me and my dad went out everyday doing scrap and I really enjoyed it as we were always together"

"In Scotland, where I was born. It was quiet and very healthy in the countryside. It was good because we were a close knit family"

"On a site in Preston when I was young. It was a very clean site and all my family were on it and we got on well"

"When me and my brothers and sisters were at home and we lived on a site. We were all close and happy, all my mother's relatives were on the site. If one had a party then we all had one"

"I don't know really, it's hard to say. Any place can be a good site – its the people who make a good site"

14. Travelling Showpeople

Travelling Showpeople occupy an unusual position in planning terms and a separate planning Circular, detailing the particular planning needs of Travelling Showpeople, has recently been produced; Circular 04/07. As well as detailing the requirements for pitch identification and allocation for Travelling Showpeople, Circular 04/07 also requires that the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople are included within GTAA's.

According to the local authorities there are no yards for Travelling Showpeople in Sefton, Knowsley and Wirral and they did not expect the number to increase over the next five years. Liverpool did not provide any information.

The Lancashire Section of the Showmen's Guild also reported that there were no known sites for Travelling Showpeople within the sub-region.²³ The fieldwork team was unable to locate any Travelling Showpeople to be involved in the survey within the Study Area.

Only Knowsley's development plans included policies towards yards for Travelling Showpeople. Sefton and Wirral indicated that their development plan did not include Travelling Showpeople, while Liverpool provided no information.

In Sefton, Knowsley and Wirral, no planning applications had been received for Showpeople yards since 2001 and there had been no instances of the unauthorised development of yards by Showpeople since 2001. Liverpool did not provide any information.

²³ The Accommodation Situation of Showmen in the Northwest, The Showmen's Guild, Lancashire Section. April 2007

15. An Assessment of Need for Residential Pitches

Nationally, there are no signs that the growth in the Gypsy and Traveller population will slow significantly. Indeed, population characteristics emerging from research around Gypsy and Traveller accommodation agree that the formation of new households is inevitable.²⁴ Although the supply of authorised accommodation has declined since 1994, the size of the population of Gypsies and Travellers does not appear to have been affected to a great extent. Rather, the way in which Gypsies and Travellers live has changed, including an increase in the use of unauthorised sites; innovative house dwelling arrangements (i.e. living in trailers in the grounds of houses); overcrowding on sites; and, overcrowding within accommodation units (trailers, houses, chalets, etc.).

From an analysis of the data presented throughout this report there is every indication that the Merseyside sub-region will share, to some extent, in this national growth, as a result of its long-standing Gypsy and Traveller community; key transport links; and, attractive localities. In turn, this survey has indicated that in many Gypsy and Traveller families, older children will want to form new households, preferably near their families within the Study Area.

Given the presence of unauthorised encampments, household concealment, and future household formation, the current supply of appropriate accommodation appears to be significantly less than the 'need' identified. It is the conclusion of the project team that there is a need for more site accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers within the Merseyside sub-region. The following sections look in depth at this issue, considering residential and transit pitch need for Gypsies and Travellers, specific pitch needs for Travelling Showpeople and needs relating to bricks and mortar accommodation.

Calculating accommodation supply and need

The methods of assessing and calculating the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are still developing. In 2003 a crude estimation of additional pitch provision was made at a national level based predominantly on information contained within the Caravan Count.²⁵ The Guidance on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments also contains an illustration of how need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation might best be calculated.²⁶ In addition, guidance for Regional Planning Bodies has been produced, which outlines a systematic checklist for helping to ensure that GTAA's are accurate in their estimation of accommodation need based upon a

²⁴ Niner, P. (2003) Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England, London: ODPM.

²⁵ Niner, P. (2003) Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England, London: ODPM.

²⁶ CLG (2007) Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments, Guidance.

range of factors.²⁷ It is from combining these guides that our estimation of supply and need is drawn. In particular, residential accommodation need is considered by carefully exploring the following factors:

Current residential supply

- Socially rented pitches
- Private authorised pitches

Residential need 2007-2012

- Temporary planning permissions, which will end over the assessment period.
- Allowance for family growth over the assessment period.
- Need for authorised pitches from families on unauthorised developments.
- Allowance for net movement over the assessment period between sites and housing.
- Allowance for potential closure of existing sites.
- Potential need for residential pitches in the area from families on unauthorised encampments.

Pitch supply 2007-2012

- Vacant pitches over the assessment period.
- Unused pitches, which are to be brought back into use over the assessment period.
- Known planned site developments.

Each one of these factors is taken in turn, and illustrated at a Merseyside sub-regional area level initially. This is then applied to each district and broken-down by local authority.

Within the guidance for producing GTAAs there is also the consideration of 'new households likely to arrive from elsewhere'. It remains unclear from the findings if movement between the Study Area and elsewhere will affect the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers requiring residential accommodation across the Study Area. It is understood that generally speaking, the Study Area is a popular area for Gypsies and Travellers looking for both residential and short-stay/transit accommodation. Gypsies and Travellers spoke about the 'draw' of major urban areas such as Lancashire, Manchester, Birmingham and London; the possibility of short-term employment opportunities in the area; family links in the area; and, the route through Liverpool is noted for its links to transport networks (roads and seaports).

As this accommodation assessment (in line with other accommodation assessments) only included Gypsies and Travellers within the boundaries of the Study Area, it is impossible to present a reliable estimation on the need for accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers currently living elsewhere. In considering the large number of rented pitches available in the area it is felt

²⁷ http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/209/PreparingRegionalSpatialStrategyreviewsonGypsiesandTravellersbyregionalplannings_id1508209.pdf

that those Gypsies and Travellers who arrive from elsewhere will probably be balanced by those Gypsies and Travellers who move on from the area and leave vacancies. For simplicity, both elements (new households and private site vacancies) are omitted.

Although it is not possible to provide an evidence-based numerical assessment of need arising from outside the Study Area to be met within, or vice versa, drawing upon the findings of the existing regional and sub-regional GTAs it is possible to provide some comment upon how this need might be influenced by populations outside the area. None of these reports provided any firm indication that there was a desire for movement from other sub-regions to the Merseyside Study Area. However, the pattern of existing provision and identified need on areas surrounding the Merseyside Study Area highlights that there may be evidence of displaced demand for pitch accommodation within other neighbouring local authorities. The table below highlights the authorities which border the Study Area authorities with their current provision and their estimated need for additional residential pitch provision.

Table 36: Neighbouring local authorities existing pitch provision and estimated pitch need (2006-2011)

Neighbouring LA	Current provision	Estimated pitch need (2006-2011)
West Lancashire	8	14 (+ 3 pitches for Travelling Showpeople)
St Helens	70	15-19
Halton	36	28-31
Ellesmere Port & Neston	0	5-9

As can be seen the main need is arising in those LAs where existing provision is already made. It is possible that these areas (particularly St Helens and Halton) are home to a certain level of displaced demand from households who would rather live in the Merseyside authorities.²⁸ If this is the case it is possible that the numbers of pitches required in the Merseyside Study Area, as outlined below, would increase. Please see the recommendation section which outlines suggestions for ways in which this could be resolved.

The assessment period referred to above relates to the 2007-2012 period with an alternative approach taken to making estimates beyond this point for 2012-2016. As a result of the impact that the creation of more authorised pitches may have on the Gypsy and Traveller community (in terms of households characteristics, travelling patterns, settlement patterns) it is unwise to consider each of the above factors beyond the initial assessment period. Instead we use a simple estimate of family/household growth to illustrate likely natural increase in the Gypsy and Traveller population. This is applied to both a Merseyside sub-regional area and local authority level.

²⁸ Although it is recognised that St Helens usually forms part of the Merseyside sub-region

Additional residential pitch requirements

Table 37 below summarises the model for residential pitch requirements in the Study Area between 2007-2012 local authority requirements can be found in Chapter 18. Each requirement is expanded upon below.

Table 37: Summary of estimated need for residential pitches at a Merseyside sub-regional area level 2007-2012

Element of supply and need		Pitches
	Current residential supply	
1	Socially rented pitches	30
2	Private authorised pitches	0
3	Total authorised pitches	30
	Residential pitch need 2007-2012	
4	End of temporary planning permissions	0
5	New household formation	25
6	Unauthorised developments	0
7	Movement between sites and housing	-2
8	Closure of sites	0
9	Unauthorised encampments	23
10	Additional residential need	46
	Additional supply 2007-2012	
11	Pitches currently closed but re-entering use	0
12	Pitches with permission but not developed	0
13	New sites planned	0
14	Vacancies on socially rented sites	10
15	Supply 2007-2012	10
16	Requirement for extra pitches	36

Element of supply and need 1 - 16

1. The number of pitches on socially rented sites provided by local authority information.
2. The number of pitches on private authorised sites provided by local authority information
3. Sum of 1 + 2
4. There are no temporary planning permissions of sites due to end during the assessment period.
5. The number of new pitches required from new household formation. This requires estimates of:
 - a. The number of new households likely to form;
 - b. The proportion likely to require a pitch; and,
 - c. The proportion likely to remain within the Study Area.

Household formation findings from sites and houses are presented separately. This element includes households who are currently concealed/over-crowded and households expected to require independent accommodation over the next 5 years (i.e. young people who are currently in their mid-late teens).

New households forming on sites

Finding: The analysis of the survey showed that the number of individuals requiring their own accommodation in the next 5 years from authorised sites was the equivalent of 81% of respondents.

Assumptions: treating all individuals as requiring separate accommodation will probably over-state need as there may be some inter-marrying within the Study Area of individuals, and there may have been some over claiming. From what seems reasonable for the area we have adjusted these figures by 10% (i.e. 1 in 10 people will form a household with another individual in the area) therefore new households will be equivalent to 90% of such individuals. It is assumed that all require their own pitch based accommodation and all are assumed to want to stay in the Study Area.

Calculation: 81% grossed to total current population on sites = 81% of 30 = 24 households/pitches. 90% of 24 families = 22 families.

New households forming in housing

Finding: The analysis of the survey showed that the number of individuals requiring their own accommodation in the next 5 years from bricks and mortar accommodation was the equivalent of 22% of respondents.

Assumptions: treating all individuals as requiring separate accommodation will probably over-state need as there may be some inter-marrying within the Study Area of individuals, and there may have been some over claiming. As above we have adjusted these figures by 10% therefore new households will be equivalent to 90% of such individuals

Calculation: 22% of known housed population (70 households) minus 10% reduction. $22\% \times 70 \text{ minus } 10\% = 14 \text{ households}$. It is likely that these households represent a small proportion of housed Gypsies and Travellers. As a result this figure is likely to under-state requirements. From the information provided via the survey there was a general indication that the majority of these households will wish to remain in bricks and mortar accommodation. However, because of the known movement from housing to sites which occurs as young people begin to form independent households it seems reasonable to plan for some potential site desires from bricks and mortar household growth. Therefore, we assume that 1 in 5 households (20%) forming in bricks and mortar housing will desire trailer based accommodation. Therefore, 20% of 14 households = 3 households.

Total pitch need from household formation on authorised sites and bricks and mortar housing = **25 pitches**

6. Zero - according to our survey there were no unauthorised developments at the time of the assessment.
7. This is the net figure of estimation of the flow from sites to houses and vice versa.

Finding: 14% of respondents on authorised sites expressed an interest in moving to a house in the Study Area (i.e. were registered on a waiting list for housing)

Assumptions:

- Although registered on a waiting list based on the number of allocations for social housing in 2006 indicates that Gypsies and Travellers do not appear to be getting re-housed particularly quickly.
- Not all households who desire bricks and mortar accommodation will achieve it immediately. However, over the 5 year period assume all we be allocated a property.

Calculation: 14% grossed to population = 14% of 30 = 4 families/households

Finding: 2% of families/households in bricks and mortar families expressed an interest in a site place in the Study Area

Assumption:

- 2% of families equates to one household involved in the survey
- 2% probably quite low and expressed in a climate of under-provision in the Study Area
- The Study Team was unable to consult with all 'housed' Gypsies and Travellers
- Assume from what seems likely that 5% of 'known' housed population would move to a site if pitches were created

Calculation: 5% of known bricks and mortar population = 2 families/households

The net movement from housing to sites and sites to housing is **2 families** requiring housed accommodation over the assessment period.

8. Zero – there are no plans to close existing sites which the Study Team are aware of.

9. This factor takes into account households involved in unauthorised encampments that require a residential pitch in the Study Area. Need for transit accommodation is considered in Chapter 16. The calculation of need for residential accommodation requires estimates of the number of households involved in unauthorised encampments, and of how many of these need a residential pitch in the Study Area.

Families involved in unauthorised encampments

Findings: The recent Caravan Count shows low (zero) numbers of unauthorised encampments for the Study Area as a whole. Survey information from the local authorities indicates that in 2006 there were an estimated 22-27 separate encampments. This is broadly reflective of previous years although Wirral noted that a family celebration meant that they experienced more encampments than they would usually expect.

Assumptions:

- Information from officers indicated that the vast majority of encampments were thought to be either new or regular visitors to the area, as opposed to groups moving between areas within the Study Area. Assume this to be 90% of encampments.
- The average encampment size during 2006 was around 5 caravans. The survey showed an average of 2 caravans per household. There was an average of 3 families on each encampment.
- As a result of the unusually high number of encampments within Wirral for 2006 a figure based on an average of the last 4 years has been used (6 encampments).
- As Knowsley provided a range figure of encampments (1-5) we have used the mid range as a base i.e. 3 encampments.

Calculation: 90% of encampments during 2006 multiplied by average encampment size = 90% of 17 times 3 = 46 families.

Need for residential pitches from unauthorised encampments

Finding: According to the survey 100% of households on unauthorised encampments were interested in moving to a residential pitch in the Study Area.

Assumptions:

- 100% is based on the findings of just 2 interviews with unauthorised encamped households and likely to over state need
- Based upon what seems reasonable from other GTAAs and the experience of officers and stakeholders assume that 50% of encampments require authorised residential accommodation.
- This is treated as a single year element rather than a 'flow' of new families each year. Other households on unauthorised encampments should be incorporated into other GTAAs.

Calculation: 50% of households involved in unauthorised encampment =
50% of 46 = 23 households/pitches

10. Sum of elements 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.
11. Zero – there are no pitches which are currently closed due to enter re-use.
12. Zero – there are no pitches for which planning permissions have been granted but which are not yet developed
13. Zero – there were no plans reported to develop new socially rented sites.
14. Vacancies on socially rented sites are estimated on the basis of an average of 1 pitch being re-let in each year on each site - 2 times 5 = 10 pitches
15. Sum of elements 11, 12, 13 & 14
16. Row 10 minus Row 15 = total residential pitches required for the Study Area.

Permanent residential accommodation need over the next period 2012-2016

The current shortage of sites and pitches for Gypsies and Travellers means that it is difficult to predict trends in living arrangements once GTAAs across the country have been implemented in the form of nationally increased site/pitch provision. There is no means of knowing how Gypsies and Travellers will decide to live in the next decade. There may be an increase in smaller households, moves into bricks and mortar housing may be more common or household formation may happen at a later age. However, in order to take a strategic view, it is important to be able to plan for the longer-term. Therefore, in order to balance the complexity of issues with a need to plan for the longer term we have used an assumed rate of household growth of 3% a year compound as applied to the projected number of pitches which should be available by 2012.²⁹ This figure is also quoted in the recent CLG report.³⁰ All households on sites are assumed to require pitches. It is assumed there will be no unauthorised developments over the next period and that any

²⁹ Household growth rates of 2% and 3% a year were suggested as appropriate in Pat Niner, *Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England*, ODPM, 2003. In the Republic of Ireland a report noted that the 4% family growth rate assumed by the Task Force on the Travelling Community had proved very accurate between 1997 and 2004 (*Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998*. Report by the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal, 2004).

³⁰ http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/209/PreparingRegionalSpatialStrategyreviewsonGypsiesandTravellersbyregionalplannings_id1508209.pdf

households on unauthorised encampments will not require permanent residential accommodation in the Study Area.

The total requirement for the Study Area over the period **2012-2016** is an additional **8 residential pitches**.

Total additional residential pitch need 2007-2016 = 44 pitches

A note on Merseyside as contained in the North West regional GTAA

As previously mentioned (see Chapter 3) the North West regional GTAA calculated a requirement for pitches for the Merseyside sub-region (excluding St Helens) of 28 pitches. As the regional study used assumptions and trends identified at a much broader level the findings presented in this GTAA should supersede these requirements and this GTAA should be seen as the most reliable source on pitch requirements for the Study Area.

16. An Assessment of Need for Transit Pitches

Although nomadism and travelling is currently restricted to a certain extent, this remains an important feature of Gypsy and Traveller identity and way of life, even if only to visit fairs or visit family. Some Gypsies and Travellers are still highly mobile without a permanent base, and others travel for significant parts of the year from a winter base. More Gypsies and Travellers might travel if it were possible to find places to stop without the threat of constant eviction. Currently the worst living conditions are commonly experienced by Gypsies and Travellers living on unauthorised encampments, who do not have easy access to water or toilet facilities, as well as difficulties in accessing education and health services.

National policy is clear that there should be provision in order for Gypsies and Travellers who chose to travel to do so without resorting to stopping illegally or inappropriately. During the course of this assessment we have found clear evidence as to the need for authorities to make provision for Gypsies and Travellers in transit. This is shown by:

- The records of local authorities and the information in Caravan Counts, both of which show, historically, a number of encampments within the Study Area;
- The views and experiences of officers and stakeholders who encounter families on unauthorised encampments; and,
- The level of interest in the provision of transit sites/stopping places in the area by households on authorised sites (i.e. for family members to visit).

Assessing the need for transit pitches

The assessment of need for transit provision uses the need for regularisation as evidenced by unauthorised encampments; as a result, the methodology for calculating the need for transit provision is similar to that for calculating the need for residential provision from unauthorised encampments.

Households involved in unauthorised encampments

Findings: The recent Caravan Count's shows low (zero) numbers of unauthorised encampments for the Study Area as a whole. Survey information from the local authorities indicates that in 2006 there were an estimated 22-27 separate encampments. This is broadly reflective of previous years although Wirral noted that a family celebration meant that they experienced more encampments than they would usually expect.

Assumptions:

- Information from officers indicated that the vast majority of encampments were thought to be either new or regular visitors to the area, as opposed to groups moving between areas within the Study Area. Assume this to be 90% of encampments.

- The average encampment size during 2006 was around 5 caravans. The survey showed an average of 2 caravans per household. There was an average of 3 families on each encampment.
- As a result of the unusually high number of encampments within Wirral for 2006 a figure based on an average of the last 4 years has been used (6 encampments).
- As Knowsley provided a range figure of encampments (1-5) we have used the mid range as a base i.e. 3 encampments.

Calculation: 90% of encampments during 2006 multiplied by average encampment size = 90% of 17 times 3 = 46 families.

Need for transit provision

Finding: Neither of the two households on unauthorised encampments whom we interviewed as part of the survey desired transit accommodation in the Study Area.

Assumptions:

- Zero use of transit provision is assumed to under-state need as officers and stakeholders both assert their belief as to the need to accommodate households in transit.
- In line with 50% of encampments requiring residential accommodation we assume that 50% of encampments require transit accommodation.

Calculation: 50% of households involved in unauthorised encampment = 50% of 46 = 23 households/pitches.

This indicates that the authorities can expect to see an estimated 23 households require short-stay accommodation during one calendar year.

By taking into account that the main travelling months are, generally speaking, between April-October it seems reasonable to assume that the vast majority of this travelling will be done within this 6 month period. If a transit pitch has an upper time limit of stay of 4 weeks this means that one 10 pitch transit site during the summer will have the capacity to cater for around 60 of these households. This should allow for an appropriate number of vacancies to allow for turnover, cleaning and maintenance.

Total additional need for transit pitches = 10 pitches

It is clear that travelling and resulting unauthorised encampments are complex phenomena. In order to assist Gypsies and Travellers in maintaining their cultural practices, the development of sites need to accommodate the diversity of travelling. It is important to note that the provision of an inappropriate form of transit accommodation may fail to reduce unauthorised encampment.

Because of this complexity, coupled with the lack of data from unauthorised encamped households, transit need has not been specified on a district level. Two things are clear from the findings from the study; firstly, Liverpool is a major draw for people who require short stay accommodation – from both people visiting resident family members and households looking for employment potential. Secondly, where populations of Gypsies and Travellers live or where there are good transport routes unauthorised encampments will tend to occur – this has implications for all LAs in the Study Area. Transit provision may need to be implemented in all LA areas. This might be in the form of ‘hard’ provision i.e. transit sites, transit pitches on existing sites or ‘softer’ provision i.e. designated stopping places.

Although Liverpool is clearly a major draw for households on unauthorised encampments, at a partnership level, a single transit site makes little sense. Travelling occurs at various scales and some of the encampments which have occurred within the Study Area appeared to be present as a result of their proximity to events occurring in neighbouring authorities. The partner authorities are in an ideal position in order to plan, devise and implement a network of transit accommodation between the local authorities. In addition, the provision of transit accommodation is an area of opportunity where local authorities and sub-regional partnerships can work with adjoining regions and authorities to pool information and to ensure that proposals make sense in the wider context.

It is therefore important that flexibility is built into the provision of transit accommodation. There are two fundamental aspects here:

1. Larger pitches on residential sites provide the potential to meet the needs of short-term visitors.
2. A variety in transit provision is needed to cater for the variety of needs. This might include formal transit sites; less-equipped stopping places used on a regular basis; or, temporary sites with temporary facilities available during an event or for part of the year.

17. Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Need

There was no need identified for Travelling Showpeople within the sub-region.

It should be noted that this identification of Travelling Showpeople pitch need is, similar to the identification of pitch need for other Gypsy and Traveller groups, based on a 'need where it is seen to arise' approach. Therefore, this need is based on where people live at the moment. From our consultation with members of the Showmen's Guild, and from the information on accommodation need produced by the Guild,³¹ it would appear that a significant number of households work in the various sub-regions (particularly parts of Cheshire and Lancashire) but currently live in other sub-regions in the North West (particularly Greater Manchester – many of whose sites suffer from overcrowding problems) due to a reported lack of appropriate accommodation options in other areas.

Consultations with Travelling Showpeople indicated a strong desire for some households to live in and around the areas which offer them the greatest opportunities to work.³² As a result there is a need to address the needs of Travelling Showpeople in each sub-region by an informed understanding of the circuit of Fairs and working patterns.³³

In light of this although there has been no need for accommodation identified this should be monitored as in meeting the needs of Travelling Showpeople, just as with other Gypsy and Traveller groups, sub-regions can not be viewed in isolation from one another.

³¹ The Accommodation Situation of Showmen in the Northwest, The Showmen's Guild, Lancashire Section. April 2007

³² Such areas will be heavily influenced by the location of Fairs within the Study Area.

³³ The Showmen's Guild will provide effective partners in order to assist the Regional Assembly and local authorities with this.

18. District Summary of Pitch Requirements

This chapter looks at the issues in identifying requirements at the local (district) level and presents the need for additional site provision.

A cautionary note on local authority pitch allocation

Because of the historical inequalities in pitch provision, Gypsies and Travellers have constrained choices as to where and how they would choose to live if they had real choice. So while choices for the non-Travelling community are generally much wider, as there is social housing available in every authority in the country, there are no local authority sites in 138 of the 353 local authorities in England, and only in 71 authorities is there more than one site. Some authorities have no authorised private sites – such as those within the Study Area. Over time, this has inevitably meant that Gypsies and Travellers have generally moved to areas they see as offering the best life chances; for example, an authority which provides a site; an authority which is perceived as having more private authorised sites than others; or, an authority that is attractive in some other way (slower enforcement, transport links, friends and family resident, etc.). Therefore, there is a tendency, when the need for additional accommodation is assessed, for the needs assessment to further compound these inequalities in site provision. For example, authorities which already provide Gypsy and Traveller accommodation (publicly or privately) are assessed as having greater need for additional pitch provision than authorities with little or no pitch provision. This is compounded further the longer-term the assessment is made (i.e. to 2016).

As requested in the research brief, we have identified Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs at a sub-regional and a local level. This has been done on a **'need where it is seen to arise'** basis. However, the results of this apportionment should not necessarily be assumed to imply that those needs should actually be met in that specific locality. This distribution reflects the current **uneven distribution of pitch provision** and the Gypsy and Traveller population across the Merseyside sub-regional area.

Decisions about where need should be met should be strategic, taken in partnership with local authorities, sub-regional bodies and the North West Regional Assembly – involving consultation with Gypsies and Travellers and other interested parties – which will take into account wider social and economic planning considerations such as equity, choice and sustainability.

Table 38 provides the distribution of extra pitch provision from 2006-2016. On this premise of 'need where it is seen to arise' authorities present some varied patterns of need.

Table 38: Residential and transit accommodation need arising from existing district level Gypsy and Traveller populations 2006-2016³⁴

Authority	Current provision	Additional residential pitch requirement (2007-2012)	Additional residential pitch requirement (2012-2016)	Total additional residential pitch requirement (2007-2016)	Total additional transit pitch provision (2007-2016)
Knowsley	0	4	1	5	10
Liverpool	14	11	3	14	
Sefton	16	12	4	16	
Wirral	0	9	1	10	
Study Area	30	36	9	45	10

³⁴ Rounding these numbers to the nearest whole pitches means that there is some inevitable discrepancy between the total need identified at the broader Study Area level and the need identified more locally

19. Recommendations

This final chapter provides some recommendations, based on the findings of the study, for the Partner Authorities, as well as stakeholders, for how a number of areas might progress.

Each of the local authorities, in partnership with key agencies, should take a proactive approach to the provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in order to meet the accommodation need identified in this assessment. The over-arching recommendation from the study is that the authorities involved aim to work in a pro-active fashion to meet the accommodation needs which have been identified as a result of this assessment.

Each authority has a significant amount of work to do in order to create greater synergy between the current situation of the Gypsy and Traveller population and situation enjoyed by the vast majority of the non-Traveller communities. The following aims to provide the authorities with conclusions and recommendations as to how the need identified can be best met. There are six broad headings: overall strategy, systems and policy framework; accommodating transient Gypsies and Travellers; communication and engagement; developing accommodation; Travelling Showpeople accommodation; and, health and housing-related support issues.

Although there is a general theme of joined-up working in these recommendations, it must be remembered that each of the authorities will need to develop their own responses to this need in order to provide locally intelligent accommodation options for resident Gypsy and Traveller households. A number of the recommendations, and variations thereof, have been made within other GTAAs that the authors have been involved in within the North West region. We have brought our experience of practice (both good and bad) to this assessment in order to make these recommendations. We believe it is important that local authorities begin to take a common approach to embedding Gypsy and Traveller issues into their plans and good practice sharing - this should happen both within and across areas. It is acknowledged that some of these recommendations are quite generic; therefore, those authorities who are not already implementing these recommendations should begin, and those authorities already engaged in such work should continue to do so.

Strategy, systems and policy framework

The Merseyside Study Area authorities have important, strategic and facilitating roles to play in order to support local authorities and each other in developing pitch provision for Gypsies and Travellers. It is important that partnerships between the authorities are maintained after the assessment of need and this is linked into work of neighbouring authorities, in particular St Helens and Ellesmere Port & Neston.

Recommendation 1: A Merseyside co-ordination group on Gypsy and Traveller issues comprised of local authorities and sub-regional partners should be established to assist the authorities in developing a meaningful and co-ordinated approach to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and related issues. The Steering Group for this GTAA would provide an excellent foundation for this to happen – although membership should be widened to include partners both statutory and non-statutory.

Recommendation 2: All authorities should ensure an internal working group exists within each authority, which cuts across service areas, in order to better co-ordinate the response and approach on Gypsy and Traveller issues and avoid potential duplication of work.

Although, in comparison to other areas, some local authorities had access to much more information around the make-up of the local Gypsy and Traveller communities, there is a need to improve information collection and sharing.

Recommendation 3: Each authority needs to ensure that there is a standardised and centralised method of recording occurrences of unauthorised encampments and the needs of households on these encampments. Steps should be taken to produce a Merseyside wide Caravan Count in order to take a much more strategic and accurate view of accommodation need, travelling patterns and trends. Each authority should be party to joint protocols in order to respond effectively and fairly towards unauthorised encampments.

Recommendation 4: In order to adhere to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and to ensure the high quality of on-going monitoring, authorities should ensure that Gypsies and Travellers are recognised as separate categories i.e. Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller in all their ethnic monitoring forms, most urgently in relation to housing and planning applications.

With an increase in the provision of pitches and sites for Gypsies and Travellers, there will be a need to ensure that access to these sites embrace transparency and equality. It should be noted that Gypsies and Travellers are one of the most diverse groupings in UK society. This diversity can at times lead to potential conflict.

Recommendation 5: Residential and transit site waiting lists should be:

- Accessible to all resident Gypsies and Travellers in Merseyside
- Available to be accessed in advance and outside the area via telephone or ICT systems
- Clear and transparent in terms of allocation policies
- Formalised
- Centralised
- Standardised

Recommendation 6: Authorities should ensure that principles of equality, in relation to Gypsies and Travellers, are embedded in the wide range of services provided. In particular this includes:

- Housing policies
- Homeless policies
- Harassment
- Communication and engagement
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Site management
- Housing-related support
- Choice-Based Lettings
- Allocation policies
- Planning policies
- Absence policies
- Equality Impact Assessments

Recommendation 7: Authorities should be sensitive to the different cultural and support needs of Gypsies and Travellers who may present as homeless and those who may require local authority accommodation.

Recommendation 8: All authorities should ensure they take a common approach to the Welfare Needs Assessment. This should be grounded in good practice and be pro-active in meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

Recommendation 9: Housing officers, site managers and other relevant personnel should liaise to ensure that advice on allocation policies and procedures is always up-to-date and that site managers or other liaison staff can assist people through the system.

Recommendation 10: For residential sites the practice of licensing pitches should be discontinued and replaced by more formal tenancies. A tenancy would assure the resident of greater security and encourage feelings of ownership in their site/accommodation.

The management of sites require careful attention. Inappropriate management can foster and encourage a perception of partisanship and divisiveness, and does little to build social cohesion on the sites and lessen social exclusion for members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Recommendation 11: Authorities should implement the principles contained within the emerging guidance for site management published by the CLG.

Recommendation 12: The management of sites needs to be evaluated at regular intervals.

Accommodating transient Gypsies and Travellers

It is clear that travelling and any resulting unauthorised encampment are complex phenomena. In order to assist Gypsies and Travellers in maintaining their cultural practices, the development of sites need to accommodate the diversity of travelling. Provision of an inappropriate form of transit accommodation may fail to reduce unauthorised encampments (i.e. a mixture of residential and transit provision may not work in all cases because of possible community tension between 'settled' and 'highly mobile' Gypsies and Travellers, or varying reasons for travelling).

In addition, the authorities that make up the Study Area appear to be attractive areas for seasonal, short stay or stop-over travelling. Although calculations have been produced, such travelling is difficult to quantify as need in terms of pitch provision, so the authorities will need to develop a range of appropriate strategies to meet this often unpredictable need.

It is therefore important that flexibility is built into the provision of transit accommodation. There are three fundamental recommendations here:

Recommendation 13: There needs to be variety in transit provision in order to cater for the variety of needs. This might range from formal transit pitches, through less-equipped stopping places used on a regular basis to temporary sites with temporary facilities available during an event or for part of the year.

Recommendation 14: There is a need to work across districts, with private landowners and key Gypsy and Traveller groups in order to provide feasible and appropriate options for mass gatherings, should they occur.

Recommendation 15: The level of accommodation provision across Merseyside should remain under constant review.

Communication and engagement

Communication with local Gypsy and Traveller households will be imperative during the coming years of change and upheaval caused by an increase in accommodation provision (both locally and nationally). Such communication will require co-ordination and sensitivity. The process of developing pitches for Gypsies and Travellers provides an opportunity to begin a clear and transparent dialogue with members of the 'settled community', including local residents and parish and district councillors, local authorities and Gypsies and Travellers. Local agencies such as Irish Community Care Merseyside are well placed to advise local authorities on this, based on their experience and current work.

Recommendation 16: The authorities should engage in efforts to raise cultural awareness issues and dispel some of the persistent myths around Gypsies and Travellers.

Recommendation 17: Authorities should develop their communication and engagement strategies already in place for consultation with non-Travelling communities and tailor these, in an appropriate manner, to Gypsy and Traveller community members. The Local Engagement and Employment Strategy should make direct references to Gypsy and Travellers.

As not all pitches identified here need to be met through socially rented provision, and the overwhelming aspiration of the community is to be owner-occupiers, there is a need to develop a constructive dialogue between Gypsies and Travellers seeking to develop private sites and planning authorities. Initial and appropriate discussions with the planning authority could avoid the economic fallout which occurs when land is developed and planning permission is later refused.

Recommendation 18: Planning departments should offer appropriate advice and support to Gypsies and Travellers on the workings of the planning system and the criteria to be considered in applications.

Our experience of collecting data about the Gypsy and Traveller community across each authority has highlighted that certain sections of some local authorities are more involved in Gypsy and Traveller issues than others and have a clear lead on these issues. Other authorities adopted a more ad hoc approach and the responsibility of Gypsy and Traveller issues occasionally went to an officer who had shown an interest. There are two recommendations here.

Recommendation 19: Each authority should identify a clear lead officer (preferably a corporate officer) who manages each authority's response to Gypsies and Traveller issues.

Developing accommodation

Clearly the process of developing accommodation to meet the need identified here will require significant funding, much of which will be directed at the Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant held by Communities and Local Government. A number of stakeholders noted that until the need for residential accommodation was satisfied it will be challenging to develop transit accommodation/sites/places without them turning into residential sites by default.

Recommendation 20: Those officers and agencies leading the planning, design and development of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation should involve the target Gypsy and Traveller population in all stages. In turn site (both residential and transit) and design should be approached in a creative and innovative manner. Preferences and aspirations of Gypsies and Travellers should be taken into consideration. Important things to consider include:

- Location to local services and transport networks
- Pitch size
- Amenities
- Sheds
- Management
- Mixture of accommodation (chalet, trailer, etc.)
- Utility of outside space (driveways, gardens, etc.)
- Homes for life principles
- Health and related support issues
- Tenure Mix
- Space for short-term visitors

Recommendation 21: Authorities should ensure that existing statutory guidelines and emerging good practice are used in relation to residential and transit site design, management and health and safety issues.

Although we did not monitor fiscal levels during the study, households clearly had varying income levels. Discounted for sale, shared ownership and trailer rental are just three of the methods which may help increase the economic mobility and engender a greater sense of belonging for Gypsy and Traveller households.

Recommendation 22: The principles and methods used by authorities and RSLs of promoting affordable accommodation to members of the non-Traveller communities should be adapted to the accommodation used by members of Gypsy and Traveller communities.

At the same time as new sites being developed the authorities still have an obligation to ensure that the supply of accommodation currently in place for Gypsies and Travellers continues to meet their needs and aspirations. It was clear from the survey of both local authority officers and Gypsies and Travellers that the two existing socially rented sites were not ideal in design and/or location. Half of the respondents from the two sites (Sefton and Liverpool) would hope to move onto a new site if one was created. In order to reduce this potential migration there are two recommendations for the authorities.

Recommendation 23: The site in Sefton should be significantly refurbished. Links should be made with public transport and other services in order to reduce the isolation experienced by site residents. Alternatively, the site should be moved to an area where links and access can be achieved more easily.

Recommendation 24: Although the site in Liverpool has recently been refurbished it appears as this has not been extensive enough to ensure the site is a safe and pleasant place to live on a permanent basis.

There are a number of options for Liverpool City Council here:

- Refurbishment of the site should continue and this should be led by the findings of this report, CLG site design guidance, and a separate specific consultation with residents to ascertain their views.
- The pitches could be moved to a new location along with the need arising out of this assessment to create a larger residential site.
- The site could be replaced and pitches could be moved to another location.
- If the site is vacated and replaced this site could serve as a well equipped site for short-stay Gypsies and Travellers who require transit accommodation.

Health and housing-related support Issues

The indications are that although the sample for this study generally experienced few incidences of ill health and disability, when this was not the case the suggestions are that health needs are a significant factor in influencing accommodation need. This affects decisions to continue to reside on 'sites', which without support were seen as difficult to do so, or houses where adaptations were easier to accommodate. There were a number of issues which emerged during the assessment that would improve the life of a number of Gypsies and Travellers and provide different sections of the communities with independence.

Recommendation 25: It will be an important component, in order to produce sustainable solutions for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation provision, for all relevant statutory departments to engage with Gypsy and Traveller needs. Supporting People teams should be embedded in the strategic planning and delivery of services. Any specific training needs should be met where needed.

Recommendation 26: Authorities should work with Supporting People to create additional floating Gypsy and Traveller housing support workers. Such officers could offer support and assistance to enable those people wishing to remain in bricks and mortar accommodation or live on sites, to do so.

Recommendation 27: Supporting People teams should network with Supporting People teams locally, regionally and nationally in order to share and disseminate good practice on meeting the housing-related support needs of Gypsy and Traveller community members.

Recommendation 28: The profile of Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) should be raised in relation to Gypsies and Travellers who wish to remain in their own homes. It is important that such agencies are able to engage with people living on private sites as well as those living in bricks and mortar accommodation.

Recommendation 29: Housing-related support should be flexible in order to offer support when it is needed (i.e. settlement on a site/in a house), with scope to withdraw it on a phased basis or continue as required.

Recommendation 30: In order to assist with the development of more authorised accommodation, adjustment to sites/houses and the regularisation of Gypsies and Travellers, each Gypsy and Traveller in all the authorities in the area should have access to housing-related support in the form of floating support units. This will require review over time and the number of units needed may reduce.

Recommendation 31: Housing-related support should develop appropriate strategies to respond to the key areas of support required, identified in this study.

A major source of recurring tension within the non-Traveller community is around the abandonment of household and occupational waste on areas which have been encamped upon. Gypsies and Travellers however often only have vans and light haulage vehicles as their means of transport. Such transport often prohibits the use of local recycling centres without a charge being paid.

Recommendation 32: Options should be devised by each authority for Gypsies and Travellers on unauthorised sites who have no means to dispose of their household waste to do so.

Recommendation 33: The authorities need to develop ways in which to deal firmly with households who leave occupational waste in areas where encampments have happened rather than discard this at the appropriate recycling centre.

Travelling Showpeople accommodation

Authorities should consider the above recommendations as applying to all Gypsy and Traveller groups, inclusive of Travelling Showpeople. However, because of the unique position afforded to Travelling Showpeople in the planning guidance, coupled with a changing labour market and living arrangements for Travelling Showpeople households, accommodating Travelling Showpeople poses particular challenges. However, there were no accommodation needs identified for Travelling Showpeople as a result of this study. Irrespective of this in order to plan for the future and a changing demographic of the Gypsy/Traveller population it is important that local authorities are prepared and can support neighbouring sub-regions.

Recommendation 34: Authorities should consult with the local branch of the Showmen's Guild to discuss plans to increase and develop the accommodation provision for Travelling Showpeople.

Recommendation 35: Authorities should be aware of and implement the guidance issued by the CLG around planning and Travelling Showpeople sites.

Recommendation 36: Authorities are encouraged to identify specific pieces of land that could be used by Travelling Showpeople in the future.