

The Housing Support Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York

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Melanie Lovatt



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Terminology

While the title of this report refers to 'Gypsies and Travellers', and while this is the phrase that, in the interests of simplicity and continuity I use throughout (apart from when referring to specific groups or individuals) these are very often emotive terms, and further explanation is needed.

Throughout this report I will refer to Travellers, Irish Travellers, Gypsies, Roma and show people. An important distinction between Irish Travellers and Gypsies and other groups, can be found in their status as ethnic minorities, as is stated in the Race Relations Act 1976, which is amended in the Race Relations Act 2000.

Unlike other reports¹ I do not always prefix the term 'Traveller' with an identifier such as 'new' or 'Irish', and this reflects individuals' preferences as to how they would wish to be addressed. The absence of the prefix 'Irish' does not necessarily mean that a Traveller does not have Irish heritage, and can merely reflect that having lived in England for most of their life, they now consider themselves to be English. However, as the Traveller is of Irish heritage, they still have ethnic minority status, and so the 't' remains upper case.

Similarly, while I also interviewed Travellers who could be considered to be 'new', this is not how they chose to be identified, and so I use their preferred term, 'Traveller'. While 'new travellers' do not have ethnic minority status, and while typically many of them are better educated and more aware of their rights, nevertheless many of them face the same problems as other Gypsies and Travellers, and so they are included in this research.

While not specifically mentioned in the research brief, I also interviewed show people. Though often confused with Gypsies and Travellers, show people consider themselves to have little in common with them, apart from their choosing to live in caravans. Their identity is centred upon their employment and livelihood, and they travel only because of their employment, returning to the same site, in which they also store their equipment. While different from Gypsies and Travellers in many ways, their limited accommodation choices, and related accommodation support needs warrants attention and inclusion in this report.

Roma are ethnically related to 'our' English Gypsies in that they form part of the same race who originally emigrated from India hundreds of years ago. Many of the eastern European migrants who are now arriving in the UK are Roma, who have been persecuted for generations in their home countries. Roma are very family-orientated, and arrive in the UK with their extended

¹ See for example Ryan Powell, 'Identifying Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs in Yorkshire and the Humber,' Sheffield Hallam University, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research: 2006, 5.

families intending to stay, rather than work for a while before returning, as 'economic migrants' tend to do.

Due to time limitations, I was unfortunately unable to include the circus people and bargee communities within this research.

Glossary

Capacity	The available number of pitches on official sites. Many sites operate beyond capacity as some families 'double up' on pitches in the absence of other suitable accommodation.
To 'double up'	To share a single pitch on an official site, often for a substantial period of time.
Pitch	Also called ' plot ' or ' slab ', an area on an official site that is rented under licence to a single resident.
Roadside	To live or stop on land which is not owned by the Gypsies and Travellers, and which is not authorised for residential encampment. While roadside encampments are often literally by the side of the road, they do not have to be. Also, while roadside Gypsies and Travellers are often moved on quickly depending on the landowner and the sensitivity of the land, some encampments are allowed to stay for months or sometimes years.
Site	In this report, 'site' refers to official (i.e. LA or RSL) Gypsy and Traveller sites, but not unauthorised encampments.
Stopping places	Places, often traditional, which are used by Gypsies or Travellers staying for just one or two nights whilst travelling.
Unauthorised Encampment	Any encampment on land that is either not owned by Gypsies and Travellers, or on land for which they do not have planning permission.

Acronyms

CBL	Choice Based Lettings
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
GOYH	Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber
HA	Housing Association
LA	Local Authority
Leeds GATE	Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PCT	Primary Care Trust
SP	Supporting People
WYNY	West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, York

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

Supporting People, a Government initiative, was implemented in April 2003, with the aim of providing housing related support to vulnerable people. The aim of a housing related support service is to allow a person to live in more independent accommodation than they otherwise might, or to prevent the loss of this independent living. Examples of housing related support might include: assisting and enabling the development of life skills such as budgeting, signposting to other agencies, and helping someone maintain a safe and secure dwelling.²

Supporting People in West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York are part of a well-established Cross Authority Group. The Supporting People strategies for these seven Administering Authority areas identified Gypsies and Travellers as a 'client group' requiring further research, as there are currently very few Supporting People funded services specifically for Gypsies and Travellers in these areas.

1.2 Aim and objectives of the research

The aim of the research was to investigate the housing related support needs of Gypsies and Travellers across West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York.

The objectives of the research were as follows:

- To identify the numbers of static and transient Gypsies and Travellers across West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York.
- To identify and map provision of sites currently used by Gypsies and Travellers, including Local Authority, private, roadside and other unauthorised. Compare provision with percentage of population.
- For the purposes of this research, define the terms 'site', 'pitch' and 'capacity', in order to identify extent of need and provision required.
- Assess the permanency / static nature of sites and identify any likely seasonal variations in the patterns of residency on sites.
- To analyse the extent to which Gypsies and Travellers are currently accessing Supporting People services and which types of services they may be likely to engage with. Identify what needs they are presenting with and what model of service may best meet those needs.

² For a more comprehensive list of services and for more information about Supporting People, please visit: <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

- To identify the housing related support needs of Gypsies and Travellers and the level of demand for services. Identify need for provision for people with disabilities. Identify the type and level of support (continual vs. flexible floating support) that will be most effective in meeting needs.
- To analyse the extent to which Gypsies and Travellers engage with other services e.g., health and education and the impact those services have on meeting needs. Identify gaps in provision (including those that could be provided by both Supporting People and non-Supporting People funded services) and unmet need e.g., adult education, anti social behaviour.
- To identify any good practice, types of support / accommodation provision that currently meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.
- To identify, through service user consultation, the travelling culture and examine the assumptions regarding aversion to bricks and mortar provision.
- To identify other relevant agencies that Supporting People services would need to link in with, to provide a holistic and needs led approach.
- To develop an evidence base on which to make recommendations regarding the provision of Supporting People services for Gypsies and Travellers.

1.3 National policy and legislative context

According to figures published in 'Common Ground', a recent CRE-commissioned report, there are an estimated 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers living in Britain, with between 90,000 and 120,000 living in caravans.³

Under measures in the Housing Act 2004, local authorities are required to include Gypsies and Travellers in the Accommodation Needs Assessment process, and to have a strategy in place that sets out how any identified need will be met, as part of their Local Development Framework.

A new planning system is set out in circular 01/06 (ODPM): Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites (replacing circular 01/94: Gypsy Sites and Planning). Key changes from the old system include:

- a change to the definition of Gypsy and Traveller. The new definition recognises that Gypsies may stop travelling, either permanently or temporarily, for health or educational reasons or because of caring responsibilities.

³ CRE, "Common Ground: equality, good race relations and sites for Gypsies and Irish Travellers. Summary," CRE: 2006, 4.

- a requirement that where a need has been identified, local authorities must identify suitable sites for Gypsies and Travellers in their development plan documents.

While the definition of 'Gypsies and Travellers' for the purposes of the Housing Act 2004 is still being debated, the proposed definition is as follows:

'Persons of nomadic way of life whatever their race or origin, including 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 all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadic and/or caravan dwelling'.⁴

1.4 Regional, sub-regional and local context

In January 2006 the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly commissioned the report 'Identifying Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs in Yorkshire and the Humber' (Powell, 2006). The study was carried out by researchers from the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University, with support from members of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

While establishing the size of the Gypsy and Traveller population is extremely difficult for reasons that will be explained in more detail in section 2.1, the regional report provided a minimum count of the total number of caravans in the region. This was compared with the present level of provision, and the report provides an initial estimate of regional pitch requirements. This is laid out in table one:

Table One: An estimate of regional and sub-regional pitch requirements to 2010.

Variable	Yorkshire and The Humber Total	Humber	North Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	West Yorkshire
Current unmet need (pitches)	142	15	28	38	61
+ Future need to 2010 (pitches)	115	19	29	40	25
= TOTAL PITCHES TO 2010	257	34	57	78	86

Sources: Caravan Count, Survey of LAs; Author's estimates.⁵

⁴ ODPM (2006a), 'Definition of the term 'Gypsies and Travellers' for the purposes of the Housing Act 2004,' Consultation Paper, February. London:HMSO.

⁵Powell, 29.

For the purposes of this research, the figures for North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire are most significant, with North Yorkshire requiring an estimated 57 additional pitches by 2010, and West Yorkshire requiring an estimated 86 additional pitches by 2010. Though as Powell goes on to note,

“this does not provide the full picture as there is still the need to account for those households in bricks and mortar housing who would occupy an authorised pitch if one was available, the extent of 'doubling up' on sites, and future need arising from population growth and new household formation.”⁶

While the Regional Report is informative in giving a broad overview of accommodation need throughout the Yorkshire and Humber region, each local authority is also required to complete their own local assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and plan for how they will meet any identified need. At the time of writing, the five West Yorkshire local authorities of Calderdale, Kirklees, Bradford, Wakefield and Leeds are in negotiations with the West Yorkshire Housing Partnership to discuss carrying out a sub-regional assessment. The two-tier authority of North Yorkshire and York are planning to carry out a joint assessment.

The results of these forthcoming assessments of accommodation need will clearly have implications for Supporting People's provision of services to the Gypsy and Traveller population, as the level of housing support needs depends to some extent on the type of accommodation in which a person lives. In addition to this, it is recommended that the persons responsible for conducting the accommodation needs assessment make as much use of this, and other relevant research materials as possible, in order to avoid unnecessary questioning of a community which, as was told more than once to me during the course of this research, are 'tired of being asked questions when nothing ever seems to come of it'.

1.5 Methodology

The research was advised and informed by a Steering Group which comprised of myself, representatives of the seven involved Supporting People teams, the Supporting People Regional Co-ordinator, a member of Leeds City Council Gypsy and Traveller Service, a PCT worker specialising in Gypsy and Traveller health issues, and two members of Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (GATE).

The research began with a literature review, comprising national, regional and local reports commissioned by a variety of statutory and voluntary organisations. This review, together with initial scoping interviews that I conducted with 'key' service providers in each area, helped inform the proposed questions and topics for discussion for service users and providers.

⁶ Powell, 29.

In each of the seven local authorities that comprised the study area, I consulted with both service users and service providers. The consultation with service providers took the form of a questionnaire (see Appendix 1), which was sent to both mainstream and specialist service providers in each area. The questionnaire also included an invitation to attend a focus group. Separate focus groups were held in each local authority area, although due to the small number of providers who worked with Gypsies and Travellers in Calderdale and Kirklees, I combined these two areas and just had one consultancy forum. Each focus group was facilitated by myself, and assistance was provided by Supporting People officers.

When consulting with service users, I made an initial meeting with somebody who was already known to the community, for instance a Traveller Education worker or a health support worker. Having introduced myself and explained the research, I then returned with a Supporting People officer to conduct a more formal interview. If consent was given, I tape recorded the interviews in order to be able to quote service users in their own words.

1.6 Ethical considerations

Before beginning the interviews, the research was explained to the participants, an opportunity was provided for questions to be asked, it was explained that the interview could end/the tape recorder could be switched off at any point, and anonymity and confidentiality was assured. Participants were asked to sign consent forms, a copy of which can be seen in Appendix 2.

1.7 Limitations of the research

The time available to conduct this research was four months, and this placed a number of restrictions on a project that covered seven local authorities. While it would have been preferable to conduct a more comprehensive assessment of the housing support needs of Gypsies and Travellers using a larger research sample, the information collected was still of great value to Supporting People, as they previously had very little knowledge of the needs of this community.

The time limitations also made it impossible to satisfactorily investigate other related research areas that emerged during the study. For instance, it was revealed that massive housing related support needs exist among the Roma community, and many needs of the show people community are also not currently being addressed. While it was not possible to explore these in greater depth, the initial findings which I am able to present in this report will hopefully inform later, more detailed research into these areas.

On advice from steering group members, it was decided that I be introduced to members of the Gypsy and Traveller community through trusted service providers who already worked with them. This was partly to address the

distrust that many Gypsies and Travellers have of 'officials' and 'authority figures'. While I found this approach helpful, and it helped foster closer links with key service providers, it also meant that my research was to some extent dependent on the work commitments of others. It also meant that I could only access those members of the Gypsy and Traveller community who were already known to service providers.

Chapter 2 – Current provision of accommodation in West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York (WYNYY)

2.1 Identifying numbers of Gypsies and Travellers across WYNYY

At present, it is extremely difficult to get an accurate number of Gypsies and Travellers in any area. The only official Government statistics on numbers of Gypsies and Travellers come from the bi-annual Caravan Count that local authorities carry out twice yearly, reporting their figures to the DCLG. The count takes place on a given day in January and July and can only provide a snapshot of the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in each area and its adequacy and accuracy is widely questioned.⁷ The Count only records caravans, rather than households, and does not take into consideration the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation. The figures for the ODPM Caravan Count for the last five counts are shown in Table 2 on the following pages:

⁷ For further information on the Caravan Count see 'Counting Gypsies and Travellers: A Review of the Gypsy Caravan Count System,' by Pat Niner, University of Birmingham, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London, February 2004. Available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1153576>.

Table Two: Last Five Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Counts for North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and York.⁸

Region	Count	Authorised sites (with planning permission)		Unauthorised sites (without planning permission)				Total All Caravans
		No. Of Caravans Socially Rented ²	No. of Caravans Private	No. Of Caravans on Sites on Gypsies own land		No. Of caravans on Sites of land Not owned by Gypsies		
				"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	
Yorkshire and the Humber	Jul 2006	765	486	31	19	60	113	1474
	Jan 2006	761	402	71	0	23	21	1278
	Jul 2005	777	311	68	1	207	197	1561
	Jan 2005	750	374	17	56	18	80	1295
	Jul 2004	741	289	32	35	34	175	1306
North Yorkshire	Jul 2006	128	159	2	0	35	22	346
	Jan 2006	120	73	2	0	5	10	210
	Jul 2005	137	57	2	1	5	22	224
	Jan 2005	145	57	6	0	4	4	216
	Jul 2004	138	54	18	0	16	1	227
Craven	Jul 2006	0	11	2	0	0	0	13
	Jan 2006	0	15	2	0	0	0	17
	Jul 2005	0	14	2	0	0	0	16
	Jan 2005	0	12	2	0	0	0	14
	Jul 2004	0	12	2	0	0	0	14

⁸ Taken from 'Count of Gypsy Caravans 19th July 2006: Last Five Counts', available at http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/586/Table1CountofGypsyandTravellercaravanson19July2006Lastfivecounts_id1153586.xls.

Region	Count	Authorised sites (with planning permission)		Unauthorised sites (without planning permission)				Total All Caravans
		No. Of caravans Socially Rented	No. Of caravans Private	No. Of caravans on Sites of Gypsies own Land		No. Of caravans on Sites of land Not owned by Gypsies		
				"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	
Hambleton	Jul 2006	32	11	0	0	30	0	73
	Jan 2006	32	11	0	0	0	0	43
	Jul 2005	32	28	0	0	1	0	61
	Jan 2005	20	28	4	0	0	1	53
	Jul 2004	14	28	16	0	0	1	59
Harrogate	Jul 2006	74	0	0	0	0	10	84
	Jan 2006	70	0	0	0	0	0	70
	Jul 2005	57	0	0	1	0	0	58
	Jan 2005	69	0	0	0	0	0	69
	Jul 2004	72	0	0	0	0	12	84
Richmondshire	Jul 2006	13	6	0	0	5	0	24
	Jan 2006	4	6	0	0	5	0	15
	Jul 2005	10	0	0	0	4	19	33
	Jan 2005	23	0	0	0	4	0	27
	Jul 2004	19	0	0	0	4	0	23
Ryedale	Jul 2006	9	0	0	0	0	2	11
	Jan 2006	14	0	0	0	0	10	24
	Jul 2005	14	0	0	0	0	3	17
	Jan 2005	9	0	0	0	0	3	12
	Jul 2004	9	0	0	0	0	0	9

Region	Count	Authorised Sites (with planning permission)		Unauthorised Sites (without planning permission)				Total All Caravans
		No. Of caravans Socially Rented	No. Of caravans Private	No. Of caravans on Sites of Gypsies own Land		No. Of caravans on Sites of Land Not owned by Gypsies		
				"Tolerated"	"Not Tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not Tolerated"	
Scarborough	Jul 2006	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Jan 2006	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Jul 2005	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Jan 2005	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Jul 2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Selby	Jul 2006	0	131	0	0	0	9	140
	Jan 2006	0	41	0	0	0	0	41
	Jul 2005	24	15	0	0	0	0	39
	Jan 2005	24	17	0	0	0	0	41
	Jul 2004	24	14	0	0	0	0	38
West Yorkshire	Jul 2006	204	9	0	14	12	45	284
	Jan 2006	206	9	0	0	7	0	222
	Jul 2005	214	6	0	0	18	87	325
	Jan 2005	193	14	6	0	12	65	290
	Jul 2004	174	9	9	0	18	100	310
Bradford	Jul 2006	60	9	0	0	6	0	75
	Jan 2006	73	9	0	0	7	0	89
	Jul 2005	62	6	0	0	14	0	82
	Jan 2005	61	12	0	0	8	0	81

Region	Count	Authorised Sites (with planning permission)		Unauthorised Sites (without planning permission)				Total All Caravans
		No. Of caravans Socially Rented	No. Of caravans Private	No. Of caravans on Sites of Gypsies own Land		No. Of caravans on Sites of Land Not owned by Gypsies		
				"Tolerated"	"Not Tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not Tolerated"	
	Jul 2004	46	7	0	0	0	0	53
Calderdale	Jul 2006	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Jan 2006	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Jul 2005	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Jan 2005	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Jul 2004	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Kirklees	Jul 2006	0	0	0	14	0	0	14
	Jan 2006	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Jul 2005	0	0	0	0	0	15	15
	Jan 2005	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
	Jul 2004	0	2	0	0	6	0	8
Leeds	Jul 2006	73	0	0	0	3	10	86
	Jan 2006	72	0	0	0	0	0	72
	Jul 2005	73	0	0	0	4	64	141
	Jan 2005	62	0	3	0	3	46	114
	Jul 2004	63	0	6	0	12	39	120
Wakefield	Jul 2006	71	0	0	0	3	35	109
	Jan 2006	61	0	0	0	0	0	61

Region	Count	Authorised Sites (with planning permission)		Unauthorised Sites (without planning permission)				Total All Caravans
		No. Of caravans Socially Rented	No. Of caravans Private	No. Of caravans on Sites of Gypsies own Land		No. Of caravans on Sites of Land Not owned by Gypsies		
				"Tolerated"	"Not Tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not Tolerated"	
	Jul 2005	79	0	0	0	0	8	87
	Jan 2005	70	0	3	0	1	19	93
	Jul 2004	65	0	3	0	0	56	124
York UA	Jul 2006	78	0	0	0	0	5	83
	Jan 2006	89	0	0	0	3	0	92
	Jul 2005	87	0	0	0	0	39	126
	Jan 2005	86	0	0	0	0	1	87
	Jul 2004	89	0	0	0	0	27	116

With the exception of Leeds City Council, no planning departments in WYNYY monitor the number of planning applications made by Gypsies and Travellers, making it difficult to record the number of private sites owned by Gypsies and Travellers. It would be useful for planning departments to monitor the numbers of applications made by Gypsies and Travellers, not least as a means of addressing statistics which suggest that, nationally, 80% of planning applications made by Gypsies and Travellers are rejected, compared with a 20% rejection rate for the 'settled community'.⁹

It is impossible to know the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers who live in bricks and mortar housing, as there is no Gypsy or Traveller category on the census. Though some of the Gypsies and Travellers who I spoke to felt that some may not wish to identify themselves on housing application forms out of fear of discrimination or harassment, they thought that it would be a good idea for housing application forms to contain the option for Gypsies and Travellers to self-identify. Housing departments and associations who do not currently offer this option should consider it.

To gain as accurate a picture as possible of the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers across WYNYY I have used information drawn from the Government Caravan Count, local authority environmental health officers and Traveller Education Services. While this cannot possibly provide an accurate figure, it can at least provide a minimum estimate.

What follows is a breakdown of estimated numbers of Gypsies and Travellers for each local authority.

2.2 Calderdale

- Calderdale MBC provides no official sites for Gypsies and Travellers.
- There is one private site owned by show people in Brighouse.
- Planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites are currently assessed against criteria based policy within the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). This UDP was written prior to the publication of ODPM Circular 1/2006 which changes Government Policy in relation to planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites. Given the advanced stage already reached in preparation for the UDP at the time the Circular was published, its requirements could not be accommodated in Calderdale's Plan. The new Circular and its guidance that LAs should allocate land for Gypsy and Traveller sites will be incorporated into the new Local Development Framework and the Land Allocation Development Plan Document.
- There are no official figures for the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in housing in Calderdale, as they are not ethnically monitored, but anecdotal evidence from the Traveller Education coordinator suggests that there are families in the area who move into housing only to leave soon after due to an inability to maintain a tenancy.

⁹ Local Government Information Unit, 'LGIU briefing 227/04,' November 2004.

- According to the Traveller Education Coordinator, in an average year between 10 and 20 Gypsy and Traveller children attend schools in Calderdale.
- When the new choice-based lettings system comes into place in the summer of 2007, the application form will include the option to self-identify as Gypsy or Traveller.

Figures for unauthorised encampments in Calderdale over the past five years are shown below:

Table Three: Figures for unauthorised encampments in Calderdale over the past five years

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
11	13	18	18	3

2.3 Kirklees

- Kirklees provides no official sites for Gypsies and Travellers.
- There is one private site owned by show people in Dewsbury.
- There are no official figures for the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in housing in Kirklees, as they are not ethnically monitored, but anecdotal evidence suggests that there are families in the area who move into housing only to leave soon after due to an inability to maintain a tenancy.

Figures for unauthorised encampments in Kirklees over the past five years are shown below:

Table Four: Figures for unauthorised encampments in Kirklees over the past five years

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
2	10	12	9	10

2.4 Bradford

- Bradford provides two official sites for Gypsies and Travellers. Mary Street provides 28 pitches, and Esholt provides 19 pitches.
- Bradford does not monitor planning applications from Gypsies and Travellers.
- It is not known how many Gypsies and Travellers live in houses in the area.

Figures for unauthorised encampments in Bradford over the past five years are shown below:

Table Five: Figures for unauthorised encampments in Bradford over the past five years

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
68	87	60	59	30

2.5 Wakefield

- Wakefield provides one official site for Gypsies and Travellers – Heath Common provides 38 pitches. There is a waiting list.
- Wakefield do not monitor planning applications from Gypsies and Travellers.
- It is not possible to know the number of housed Gypsies and Travellers, though education and health workers reported that they do not know of many.

Figures for unauthorised encampments in Wakefield over the past five years are shown below:

Table Six: Figures for unauthorised encampments in Wakefield over the past five years

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
23	28	35	39	21

2.6 Leeds

- Leeds City Council own one official site and Cottingley Springs provides 41 pitches. There is a waiting list.
- Leeds Planning Department does monitor applications from Gypsies and Travellers, but since it started this 2 ½ years ago it has not received any.

Figures for unauthorised encampments in Leeds over the past five years are shown below:

Table Seven: Figures for unauthorised encampments in Leeds over the past five years

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
52	66	77	64	40

2.7 North Yorkshire

- North Yorkshire County Council own eight official Gypsy/Traveller sites which are leased out to independent managers who runs the sites on behalf of the council.

Location and capacity of the sites are seen below:

Table Eight: Gypsy and Traveller sites provided by LAs in North Yorkshire¹⁰

District	Name/location of site	Total no. of pitches	Residential	Transit	Caravan Capacity
Craven	N/A	0	0	0	0
Hambleton	Thirsk Gypsy Site	16	16	0	16
Harrogate	Spring Lane Caravan Park, Bickerton	20	20	0	32
Harrogate	Thistle Hill Caravan Park, Knaresborough	20	20	0	40
Richmondshire	Limekiln Woods Caravan Site, Catterick	14	5	9	14
Ryedale	Tara Park, Malton	11	11	0	12
Hambleton	Seamer Gypsy Site	16	16	0	16
Selby	Lynwith Lane, Carlton	12	12	0	12
Selby	Burn Airfield, Burn	14	14	0	14

¹⁰ Taken from, 'Gypsy and Traveller sites provided by local authorities and RSLs in England – 19 July 2006,' available at:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/587/Table2GypsyTravellersitesprovidedbylocalauthoritiesandRSLsinEngland19July2006_id1153587.xls.

Table Nine: The last five caravan counts in North Yorkshire¹¹

UA/ LA/ Sub-region	Date	Total	Unauthorised sites	Socially rented authorised sites	Private authorised sites
Craven	Jul-06	13	2	0	11
	Jan-06	17	2	0	15
	Jul-05	16	2	0	14
	Jan-05	14	2	0	12
	Jul-04	14	2	0	12
Hambleton	Jul-06	73	30	32	11
	Jan-06	43	0	32	11
	Jul-05	61	1	32	28
	Jan-05	53	5	20	28
	Jul-04	59	17	14	28
Harrogate	Jul-06	84	10	74	0
	Jan-06	70	0	70	0
	Jul-05	58	1	57	0
	Jan-05	69	0	69	0
	Jul-04	84	12	72	0
Richmondshire	Jul-06	24	5	13	6
	Jan-06	15	5	4	6
	Jul-05	33	23	10	0
	Jan-05	27	4	23	0
	Jul-04	23	4	19	0
Ryedale	Jul-06	11	2	9	0
	Jan-06	24	10	14	0
	Jul-05	17	3	14	0
	Jan-05	12	3	9	0
	Jul-04	9	0	9	0
Scarborough	Jul-06	1	1	0	0
	Jan-06	0	0	0	0
	Jul-05	0	0	0	0
	Jan-05	0	0	0	0
	Jul-04	0	0	0	0
Selby	Jul-06	140	9	0	131
	Jan-06	41	0	0	41
	Jul-05	39	0	24	15
	Jan-05	41	0	24	17
	Jul-04	38	0	24	14

¹¹ Taken from 'Count of Gypsy Caravans 19th July 2006: Last Five Counts', available at http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/586/Table1CountofGypsyandTravellercaravanson19July2006Lastfivecounts_id1153586.xls.

- There is no information on the number of housed Gypsies and Travellers who live in North Yorkshire.

2.8 York

- York county Council own three official sites. Official DCLG figures for these can be seen below:

Table Ten: Gypsy and Traveller sites provided by LAs in York¹²

Name of Site	Total no. of pitches	Residential pitches	Transit pitches	Total capacity
James St City Traveller Site	20	20	0	40
Osbaldwick Caravan Site	11	11	0	24
Water Lane Caravan Site	23	23	0	46

- As in other areas, there is no ethnic monitoring of Gypsies and Travellers in housing in York, so it is impossible to give an accurate figure. However, The Traveller Education Service estimate there to be a substantial number of Travellers in houses in the area, and according to anecdotal information many of them live in Nunnery Lane and in Clifton.
- According to the Traveller Education Coordinator, there is also anecdotal evidence of adult Travellers moving into housing in order to clear space for their adult children on site, so that their grandchildren can be born into the culture of site-based life.
- The Traveller Education Coordinator and Education Social Worker for Travellers know of four families who have moved from the York sites into housing over the past year, and know of one other family who are waiting for a house.
- It is very hard to know the exact figures of Gypsy/Traveller children in schools. According to data monitoring in schools, there are currently 25 Gypsy and Traveller pupils in York schools, however York Traveller Education Services work with about 100 pupils. It is possible that many Gypsy and Traveller families are registered as 'White British'.

¹² Taken from, 'Gypsy and Traveller sites provided by local authorities and RSLs in England – 19 July 2006,' available at: http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/587/Table2GypsyTravellersitesprovidedbylocalauthoritiesandRSLsinEngland19July2006_id1153587.xls.

Figures for the number of unauthorised encampments in York over the last 5 years are shown in the table below:

Table Eleven: Figures for unauthorised encampments in York over the past five years

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
90	105	129	210	119

2.9 Provision of sites used by Gypsies and Travellers compared with the percentage of the population

The timescale for this research project did not make it possible to gain accurate figures for the provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers compared with the percentage of the population. The regional report commissioned by GOYH estimated that by 2010 West Yorkshire needs another 86 pitches, and North Yorkshire requires an additional 57 pitches.

A more accurate figure should be provided by the assessment of accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers which are due to take place in West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire by January 2008.

2.10 The permanency/static nature of sites and likely seasonal variation in the patterns of residency on sites

“A lot of people are not moving around as much as what they used to do; there’s nowhere really to go” (female Traveller)

It was noted in the 2006 Government Office commissioned regional report ‘Identifying Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs in Yorkshire and the Humber’ that

“it was clear from our analysis that the vast majority of Gypsies and Travellers prefer to have a settled base for the stability and security that this brings. Indeed, there was wide acknowledgement of the difficulties in sustaining a nomadic, or semi-nomadic lifestyle which had encouraged the tendency to settle. Consequently, for many respondents travelling was confined to the summer months involving shorter periods on the road before returning to their permanent residential pitch.”¹³

I also found this to be the case. Interviews with site wardens and residents of the local authority sites revealed that there was not a high turnover in pitches on the sites. All of the residents I spoke to said that they stayed on the site through autumn and winter, while some families told me that they travelled through the summer months. In some cases, their travelling patterns were

¹³ Powell, 45.

dictated by site rules. For instance, on Heath Common site in Wakefield, a number of residents informed me that they could travel for six weeks a year, and many felt that this was not enough. However, while some families still travel during the summer months, several Gypsies and Travellers told me that, while they used to travel during the summer, it is becoming increasingly difficult to do so as the number of traditional stopping-places are being blocked off.

Chapter 3 – Support Needs of Gypsies and Travellers

3.1 Overview of support needs

This chapter identifies the principal support needs which were outlined by Gypsies and Travellers themselves, as well as service providers. While this research is primarily focused on housing related support needs, interviews and focus groups were by no means restricted to this topic. For a client group such as Gypsies and Travellers, where there is clearly inadequate accommodation provision, the majority of problems stem from this, and so there is a real need for service providers to coordinate their services and provide holistic support to an often vulnerable community. In this chapter I will therefore highlight the needs, making clear which ones are best met by Supporting People, and which are best met by other service providers.

I will also highlight key issues which arise in the needs of communities such as Roma and show people. While I could not spend as much time investigating these issues as I would have liked, I can at least draw attention to these needs and recommend that further research is carried out in these areas in subsequent reports.

It should be stressed that the two factors which underpin all of the support needs of Gypsies and Travellers are the interrelated factors of inadequate accommodation, and widespread discrimination. The situation can be summarised as follows:

“Current under-supply of adequate accommodation for Gypsy and Travellers is having a detrimental effect on all aspects of their everyday lives and the situation is even more acute for those wishing to lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life. The lack of provision, and particularly a suitable network of transit sites, within the region contributes to a vicious circle of unmet need and increasing incidences of unauthorised encampments. These are often tackled through enforcement measures which only result in the presence of another unauthorised encampment elsewhere and a great deal of distress for those being constantly moved on. This, in turn, perpetuates a sense of injustice, discrimination and mistrust amongst the Gypsy and Traveller community as dealings with authority are, more often than not, extremely negative experiences.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Powell, 36.

3.2 Support with finding accommodation

Given the lack of appropriate accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, many struggle to find suitable homes. Poor levels of literacy and an unwillingness to access mainstream services or other 'authority' figures can exacerbate the problem. While many Gypsies, Travellers and show people are keen to purchase and develop their own land, in reality they encounter many difficulties in doing so.

3.2.1 Choice Based Lettings System

A Choice Based Lettings Scheme of housing allocation is now being implemented – if it has not already happened – across West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York. My research suggests that where CBL has been established for a number of years, for example in Bradford, Gypsies and Travellers are aware of how to bid, and are doing this online. However, there is concern in other areas, specifically Leeds and Wakefield that Gypsies and Travellers are unaware of the system and may 'fall through the gaps'. The Gypsy and Traveller service team leader highlighted this to me in Leeds. Applying for housing is a long and complicated process, and Gypsies and Travellers often fall through the net. Not used to the system, Gypsies and Travellers are sometimes unable to articulate what their housing needs are. Gypsies and Travellers are often vulnerable and should have priority, but they have problems negotiating the bureaucracy. In the Choice Based Letting scheme there is a process, whereby an individual applying for housing needs to keep expressing an interest in order to maintain priority status. Support with helping Travellers through this process would be a great help. While it would be relatively easy to recognise the vulnerability of a homeless Gypsy or Traveller family through an interview, in reality, the choice over who receives housing priority is made through a computer system based on a number of factors which Gypsies and Travellers may not be aware of.

It is also vital that frontline workers are made aware of, and given training in negotiating CBL. At the service provider forum in Wakefield, many service providers, including those who often provide the only 'outside' support to many Gypsies and Travellers, were unaware of the forthcoming switch over to CBL. It is essential that training is provided to the appropriate front line staff.

Good practice

When the Choice Based Lettings System is introduced into Calderdale in June 2007, there will be the opportunity for Gypsies and Travellers to self-identify on the application form. While they may choose not to out of fears of harassment or discrimination, it nevertheless provides an opportunity for more data-gathering on Gypsies and Travellers and gives Supporting People and other service providers more of an idea of the potential need for support.

3.2.2 Finding a house

While many do so out of a lack of other options, I met several Gypsies and Travellers who either live in, or are waiting to move into a house. The problems that some Gypsies and Travellers have in finding a house are outlined in the 2 case studies below:

Case study 1

A female Traveller on a LA site wants to move into housing in order to have more privacy and be able to have indoor facilities. After having been on a waiting list for 3 years, a local housing association offered her accommodation over the telephone, but on phoning them back a few days later, she was informed that the house had been given to somebody else. She was told that she had no points for local connections, as she had only lived in the area for thirteen, rather than twenty years. She had already registered her children with a new school in the area which she thought she was moving to. She was very frustrated by the whole situation and felt very let down by the housing association: **"In the end I said 'I can't be bothered. It's like beating your head off a pole....When I said I have no hot running water, I have no bath, no toilet inside, they've been on the phone to [Traveller Education] to see if I had a toilet. So I actually videoed it, took photographs of the outside shed and shower and sent them through email, [and I still didn't get enough points] So I was devastated."**

Case study 2

A male Traveller, who has been living by the roadside with no running water, no washing facilities, no toilet and only a small gas heater for ten months with his three children. His wife lives on a LA site, but does not want to move into a house. He applied for housing nine months ago and has enough points, but there is currently no suitable accommodation available. He found the local housing department unhelpful.

There is a need for cultural awareness training for housing advice providers and housing associations. There is a real frustration on the part of Gypsies and Travellers that housing associations are unaware of their inadequate living conditions:

I don't understand why they [housing association] can't understand the way of life of Travellers. I think they should get out and visit them more. Visit the needs of the people instead of just looking at a piece of paper.

(Female Traveller)

If housing associations were more aware of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers, then there would not be a need for a dedicated support worker to

help Gypsies and Travellers through the process of applying for housing. As it is, trusted frontline workers, whether they be education, health or any other specialised officers, often spend a great deal of time helping Gypsies and Travellers look for housing.

3.2.3 Applying for planning permission

The DCLG Gypsy and Traveller Unit encourages local authorities to grant planning permission to Gypsies and Travellers to develop their own sites, and I met many Gypsies, Travellers and show people who are keen to do this. Indeed, rather than large, local authority owned sites, the overwhelming preference of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers seems to be small, family owned sites. However, many Gypsies and Travellers find it very difficult to get planning permission, and research suggests that the number of rejected planning applications is far higher for Gypsies and Travellers than it is for the rest of the population, with 80% of Gypsy and Traveller planning applications being initially rejected, compared with 20% overall.¹⁵ The CRE report, 'Common Ground' reports that according to research commissioned by the ODPM,

“Planning officers did not generally consider equality and diversity as being relevant to their work (ODPM and Sheffield Hallam University, 2004). Rather, planning was seen as race neutral, because its subject was land, and not people. The risk of this approach is that it could fail to recognise the barriers to accessing services that people from some racial groups face or appreciate the particular, possibly adverse, effects of planning policies and decisions on certain racial groups, such as Gypsies and Irish Travellers. This is because, although Gypsies and Irish Travellers often require a different type of accommodation to other groups, that is, sites, there may be other ways in which they are subtly disadvantaged, not linked to the type of accommodation they require. If the focus is only on land use, differences will be explained solely in these terms, while other aspects of policy that may systematically disadvantage these groups remain unaddressed.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Local Government Information Unit, 'LGIU briefing 227/04,' November 2004.

¹⁶ CRE, "Common Ground," 119-120.

Case study 1

A female Traveller who lives with her husband and 6 children on a LA site. She is unhappy in her current living situation, as she was forced to move to this site after being evicted off the LA-owned site where she lived previously by her landlord. She had lived on the previous site for 12 years and felt part of the community. She and her family would now like to buy their own land and live on their own private site, but she is worried about the high rejection rate for Gypsies and Travellers who apply for planning permission. She would like an advocate to argue on her family's behalf and liaise with the planning department.

Case Study 2

One 36 year old female Traveller living by the roadside described how in an ideal world her family would buy their own land. However, in order to do this they would need to take out a loan, and it is impossible for them to get a loan without a fixed address. She is also disheartened by reports of other Gypsies and Travellers being rejected for planning permission.

There is also an immediate need for show people to be allowed to purchase their own land. In an interview with 2 members of the Showman's Guild, I learned that one show person's site in West Yorkshire has existed on the same land for over 100 years. Despite repeated attempts, the council has refused to sell the land, which the show people see as discriminatory given councils' policies of 'right to buy' houses. The resident show people are reluctant to pay for improvements to the site while they don't own the land, and they are aware that they are in a very vulnerable situation as the council could choose to sell the land to another developer. There are now many retired, elderly show people on the site who would have nowhere to go should the council decide to sell the land. The two show people who I spoke to felt that the planning department did not understand their needs, and would welcome the opportunity to talk openly with planning officers about their situation, as they felt that nobody was listening to them. There is also the need for training for planning departments on the cultural needs of Gypsies, Travellers and show people, particularly to ensure that new planning circulars such as 22/91¹⁷ are being implemented.

Good practice

Leeds planning department monitor the number of planning applications that they receive from Gypsies and Travellers.

¹⁷ ODPM, 'Circular 22/91: Travelling show people,' December 9, 1991. Available at: <<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144421>>.

Good practice

The CRE-commissioned report 'Common Ground' reported that, "***as part of its work on reaching ethnic minority communities, one local authority had provided funding to Planning Aid and a local Traveller support group, to encourage local Gypsies and Irish Travellers to get involved in consultations on planning matters.***"¹⁸

3.3 Support for moving into accommodation

Given the well-documented shortfall in suitable accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, many Gypsies and Travellers resort to moving into accommodation from lack of choice, rather than a real desire to live there. This can be particularly problematic for Gypsies and Travellers who have never lived in housing before, or who find themselves suddenly cut off from their main support system which can lead to feelings of isolation and mental health problems. Support may also be needed for Gypsies and Travellers who move from roadside encampments onto sites, or are forced from one site to another. Support for Roma families when they first arrive in the UK and move into accommodation has also been highlighted as a major need.

The specific accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers will be assessed in the forthcoming accommodation needs assessments. It is important to note that the accommodation needs assessment will have implications for Supporting People, as the type of accommodation in which a person lives is likely to affect their accommodation support needs. It is also apparent that many Gypsies and Travellers need support and/or advice on seeking to move, and moving into different accommodation, whether that be from a roadside encampment into a LA site, or from a LA site into a house. Therefore with the increase in site provision that is likely to follow the accommodation needs assessments of Gypsies and Travellers, Supporting People and other service providers need to be prepared to provide additional support aimed at helping families settle into new accommodation.

3.3.1 Support when moving into a house

Those Gypsies and Travellers who I spoke to who had applied to move into housing were doing so for various reasons, which included enabling their children to have a better education, accessing basic conditions such as water, toilets and washing facilities, and to live in more comfortable surroundings and have greater privacy. Many Gypsies and Travellers rely on their extended family and community for support, and the move from a site into a house can

¹⁸ 'Common Ground', 121

be very isolating. One female Traveller had to balance her desire to live in greater comfort, with her anxiety at being isolated from other Travellers:

“I don’t want to be living like this. I want some privacy because your life’s never private when you’re on a site like this....Even though I’m saying about having privacy, it’s the loneliness, that people find, not having the whole congregation with them. I mean [on present site] I can walk out and leave [my daughter] playing, or I can walk into [neighbour’s caravan], see if [my neighbour’s] got a cigarette or summat – in a house it is different. It’s safety really in numbers. A lot of them [Travellers] haven’t been in houses, so it’s fear of the unknown really. It’s a different way of life altogether.”
Female Traveller.

Some Gypsies and Travellers suffer harassment from neighbours, while some Gypsies and Travellers who haven’t lived in houses before need help with registering to pay council tax and with gas and electric companies.

In York, Supporting People fund a housing support worker for Gypsies and Travellers on the three LA sites. However, when families move into housing, they often continue to ask the support worker for advice with benefits, taxes and bills. The tendency is for families to continue to ask a known and trusted figure for advice, rather than access mainstream services themselves.

In more than one of the service provider focus groups, participants mentioned that while Gypsies and Travellers receive a good level of support in temporary accommodation, as soon as they move into permanent accommodation the support ends, and their tenancies often fail. The lack of support for Gypsies and Travellers in houses was cited as one of the main gaps in service provision, and service providers advocated a floating support service to support the transition from site living into a house. The support would need to cover the practicalities of living in a house, for instance dealing with repairs and paying tax and rent on time, as well as linking the family into the local community to avoid feelings of isolation.

Case Study

“My only crime was being Irish and being a Traveller”

One female Irish Traveller is living with her family in a house owned by a housing association. While she was born in a house, when she married she lived in caravans permanently. She moved back into housing partly because of her child's chest problems, as she felt it was more difficult accessing emergency services from a site. For a while her family was placed in temporary accommodation, which she felt was very rough. She has also in the past experienced difficulties with housing officers who she feels have harassed her family, and who have tried to enter her home without her consent. On involving a solicitor, the harassment ended. In her current accommodation she and her family are subjected to racial harassment from some neighbours and some harassment from the police. There have been occasions where the police have accused her sons of robbery with no evidence, and other occasions where the police have turned up in great numbers for minor offence allegations. The Traveller feels that the police need training in Gypsy and Traveller awareness issues, and that mediation services between neighbours could be helpful, particularly for the sake of the children.

3.3.2 Support for roadside families moving onto sites

While I only encountered one Traveller who had applied to move onto a local authority site, there are very high waiting lists for sites. It is also likely that in the event of more sites being built following the accommodation needs assessments, more families will apply for pitches on local authority sites. One housed Irish Traveller also told me that if there was more site provision, she would move back into a caravan. Likely support needed for families moving onto sites would include registering with a doctor and dentist, and getting children into a school.

It is significant to note that, while many Gypsies and Travellers are relatively happy living on local authority sites, in some cases this is only because it seems like the only feasible option. One Traveller told me,

“They’ve done away with our way of life....They’ve done a good job making these sites, because we were driven like dogs. We’re still treated like dogs at times, but now we’ve got a permanent site, electric and water where [before] we had sweet FA. Nothing. It is a good thing and a bad thing, because we like to be here today and gone tomorrow. We only come here for a fortnight, now we’ve been here 30 odd years!”

3.3.3 Support for Roma families moving into housing

The service provider focus groups in Calderdale and Kirklees and Leeds in particular, highlighted the substantial unmet needs of the Roma community. The Roma community who have arrived and are continuing to arrive from Eastern Europe are related to 'our' Romany Gypsies, having all migrated from India approximately one thousand years ago and then moved into various countries. A Traveller Education Coordinator for Calderdale and Kirklees writes that,

“In those countries their experiences have been different but all Gypsy/Roma groups share a history of persecution and discrimination and a lack of access to many services including education, the latter being a key empowerment factor. Traditional Gypsies and Travellers share many cultural beliefs and customs with the incoming Roma; extended families are central to the lifestyle, an oral culture, a sense of being ‘different’, early partnerships/marriages made mostly within the community with lots of children seen as a blessing, some wariness around Non-Travellers. Many of the adults have limited literacy because of fragmented or inappropriate education.”

In contrast to other Eastern European migrant workers who work for a while in the UK to save some money before returning to their home country, Roma bring their extended families with them intending to stay in the UK.

In Calderdale the Roma community have mainly arrived from the Czech republic, while in Kirklees the population is mainly from Hungary, with some Polish families. While not all families choose to identify themselves as Roma, the Traveller Education Coordinator estimates there to be approximately seventy Roma children of school age in Kirklees, and at least that number in Calderdale. The Traveller Education Coordinator and a careers adviser for Roma families in Calderdale and Kirklees estimate there to be at least five hundred Roma individuals currently living in Calderdale. As is the case with Gypsies and Travellers, any trusted individual who works with Roma families often ends up trying to provide assistance with all manner of problems. The experiences of the Traveller Education Coordinator are worth quoting in full:

“As new entrants to the European Union in 2004 these citizens have the right to seek work in the UK on the understanding that they have limited recourse to public funds. Some of these people are professional workers or workers with trades and skills that are needed and with a little assistance, especially if they are single without families to support, they can find their feet and integrate quite easily. For others – and the main proportion of these are Roma families, they are taking factory work, often temporary and can only be helped out of poverty by keeping this employment and being given assistance to claim Working Tax Credits, Child Tax credit, Child Allowance when they are entitled to do so.

Information and guidance from central government has been quite confusing (for those of us who have been trying to help such families) and often the advice is either accessed on the Internet or through very long telephone interactions including automatic answer codes which, given these incomers' lack of English, is a very significant barrier.

In this context, where families are struggling to find temporary let alone permanent employment and to pay bills that they didn't even know they were liable for (Council tax tends to cause the most worry and hardship since Hungarians don't have this kind of tax in the apartments or accommodation they had in Hungary), it is easy to see how the educational needs of children can slip down the agenda for families. Many Hungarian families end up with Court Summons for non-payment of Council Tax and it is at this point when they realize from the letter style that it's important that they will contact someone like myself that they know through education support to explain it to them.

I have come across many Roma families who do not have formal tenancy agreements; they are taking rent each week to a landlord at a local shop. They have limited knowledge of their rights and responsibilities and in some cases have had industrial accidents at work for which they have not been given the advice they need and have accepted their 'dismissal' from the job. Some move through the housing stock regularly and this has prevented them from accessing healthcare and education. It is not unusual to come across adults who have very limited or in some cases, no literacy which undermines their ability to access services and help."

Many Roma families are currently living in very overcrowded conditions, much of which contravenes housing regulations.¹⁹ Again, the standard of accommodation and the home situation can impact on all areas of life, and holistic support is needed to address the unmet needs within this community:

"All the work I have done with Gypsy and Traveller families and the newer Roma families from Eastern and Central Europe leads me to the view that if they are given appropriate support when they need it things look up for them quite quickly but if things go wrong and they are unable to access help one problem after another can befall them in different parts of their lives and the health, welfare and education of the children is adversely affected.. For Gypsy and Traveller families who speak English managing a house rental can be daunting at first, especially if there are other issues to deal with. For Roma families with additional problems of communication things are very difficult

¹⁹ Jane Lomas, "Best practice in advising clients from the EU".

indeed.” (Traveller Education Coordinator for Calderdale and Kirklees).

3.4 Support needs of Gypsies and Travellers according to the accommodation in which they live

The needs, including housing support needs, of Gypsies and Travellers vary according to the type of accommodation in which they live, with the most vulnerable Gypsies and Travellers being those who live by the roadside.

3.4.1 Support needs of roadside Gypsies and Travellers

“You get bad people in houses and bad people on the roadside, but on the roadside a lot more people can see them.” Female Traveller, 37

The above quotation illustrates the vicious circle that many Gypsies and Travellers find themselves in. Through lack of suitable accommodation, Gypsies and Travellers are forced to live by the roadside, where there are no facilities, and where some people leave rubbish. As roadside Gypsies and Travellers are the most visible, the negative perception of Gypsies and Travellers is constantly created and reinforced; making it less likely that new sites will be provided.

There is a massive unmet need for Gypsies and Travellers who live by the roadside. They have limited water, electricity, heat and often no washing facilities. Some roadside encampments are moved on every few days, while others are ‘allowed’ to stay for several months. The lack of an address creates difficulties in applying for and receiving benefits, accessing healthcare and applying for driving licences. The health and education needs of roadside Gypsies and Travellers will be explored in more detail in sections **3.5** and **3.9**. Very often, frontline workers such as Traveller education co-ordinators provide the only support which roadside Gypsies and Travellers receive or PCT workers, who try and help in whatever way they can.

While some roadside Gypsies and Travellers who I met were on waiting lists for houses or pitches on LA sites, others wanted to continue living by the roadside. Of those who wanted to stay living by the roadside, all of them without exception said that they would be willing to pay for basic services such as laundry facilities, toilets, showers and electricity generators if the council would provide them. To provide some examples of the condition of life on the roadside, and the needs that are not being met, I have included the case studies below:

Case Study 1

Female Traveller who lives by the roadside with her family

The council allow them to stay where they are because they know her family won't cause any mess or trouble, but it is impossible to control who else pulls up on the site. To some extent they feel part of the community – local farmers will keep an eye on the trailers when they are not there – but they also suffer harassment from some people. They feel very vulnerable, and as the Traveller told me, ***“You're a sitting duck if any trouble comes your way”***.

She would like a washhouse facility, where she could do her laundry and have a shower. She would be willing to pay for a mobile unit – a trailer or portacabin which could come round once or twice a week –and believes that the council could actually make money this way. Laundrettes are very expensive and a mobile washing facility would be very useful.

Case Study 2

Female Traveller living by the roadside

She told me that one of the main problems with roadside encampments is that it is impossible to control who else pulls up on the site. If other Gypsies and Travellers see some space next to her caravan, they'll pull up and then there will be arguments, often forcing her to move on. Also, not everyone will keep the sites tidy and will leave rubbish lying around. ***“People make the assumption that we all behave the same way, but we don't”***.

She is being moved on all the time – at the time of the interview she said that the council were being 'lenient' as she had been allowed to stay for 3 weeks. Not having a toilet is a real problem. She wouldn't mind paying for facilities like toilets and skips.²⁰

While she has a doctor in York, she has to re-register every three months and claim to be settled in York. She says that people on the roadside miss out on a lot of the networks that you can access on sites, and it is harder to go to church.

²⁰ The Traveller mentioned that in Leicestershire it was possible to hire a toilet and skip from the council at a charge. I contacted the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer for Leicestershire County Council who informed me that she only arranged for these facilities to be provided in a very few cases where she knew the family involved and knew that there would be no trouble. If other caravans pulled on to the site then the services would be removed for fear of vandalism. While toilets are relatively cheap to hire, replacement costs are expensive. Leicester City Council have a similar arrangement, where toilets and skips are provided in a very few cases to known and trusted families.

Case Study 3

Family of Travellers living by the roadside

The grandmother in the family had always travelled and always wanted to travel, though she said that it used to be easier to find stopping places. Now she found people a lot more hostile towards Travellers. Family members paid £2.00 for a shower at the local leisure centre. To fetch water involved an 11 mile trip to the garage. The nearest laundrette is 6 miles away and it is very expensive. The family would pay for laundry, rubbish collections, water and cleaning facilities if the council provided them.

While they have good access to GPs, it's a problem not having an address as appointment cards cannot be sent out, and appointments are therefore often missed. The lack of an address also meant that one male Traveller in the family was trying to register his driving licence at the local medical centre.

While some members of the family had lived on sites before, they had to move off in the middle of the night when fights broke out and people were attacked. Some family members said they would go on a site if there were no fighting, or if they could have a small site that the whole family could live on. The family have tried to buy their own land, but have been told by the council that no land is available.

While the family believe the local community to be friendly, a local pub has a 'No Travellers' sign.

The family complained that Gypsies and Travellers were tarred with the same brush, which causes problems when other Travellers pull up on the same site. The family expressed concern that they would get the blame for rubbish and a stolen car that had been left on the site.

The family included an adult male with disabilities and mental health problems. He has bad tantrums, mood swings, and can become violent. He takes medication but receives no other support. His family do what they can for him, but are reluctant to provide him with the attention and support that he needs because of his violence. When he wanders off from time to time, the police have been very helpful in looking for him.

3.4.2 Support needs of Gypsies and Travellers on private sites

As I only managed to speak to one family living on a private site, I cannot generalise about the typical support needs of Gypsies and Travellers living on private sites. However, given that many support needs are caused by unsuitable or undesirable accommodation, and given that private sites are the preferred accommodation choice for most Gypsies and Travellers²¹, it is possible that Gypsies and Travellers living on private sites are less likely to have support needs. This was the case with the one family who I interviewed,

²¹ Ryan Powell, 62-63.

who did not raise any needs or highlight any other problems. However, further research in this area would be advisable.

3.4.3 Support needs of Gypsies and Travellers on Local Authority sites

The support needs of Gypsies and Travellers on Local Authority sites varied. There were differences between the needs of residents of LA managed sites, and the residents of those LA owned sites which were managed by independent landlords. I spoke to two families who lived on sites that are owned by the county council, but are run by independent landlords. Both of them were unhappy with conditions on the site, and their situations and needs are presented below:

Case Study 1

Female Traveller

While the family currently feel secure, they have no rent book or contract or agreement with the landlord; they were moved off their previous site by the landlord, who gave them no reason for the eviction. They wanted more rights on site.

The utility shed was rundown, though this was due to be renovated using the Site Refurbishment Grant. Electricity is provided from a storeroom, and wires hang loose in the sheds, which is clearly an issue for health and safety. Only a limited amount of electricity is provided, which means that only two appliances can be on at any one time.

The Traveller expressed a desire for play facilities on site, as there currently are none.

Case Study 2

Female Traveller

She is unhappy with the lack of privacy on site, and also with the lack of facilities, and as a consequence of this is waiting to move into housing. To treat a skin condition she needs to bathe in oils, but the sheds only have showers. ***“I mean, when these sites were built, I don’t think they took into – the needs of peoples’ – I mean, a lot of children don’t like showers. I mean, all my kids have got dry skin, and it really does itch you off all the time. And soaking in bath oil is the only comfort you can get before you go to bed, and I’ve got to stand in a shower and rub it all over me. I mean, that is an essential thing to me, having a bath. It really is.”*** She also feels uncomfortable at having to go outside to use facilities: ***“I dunno, it’s just, I’m 36....it’s just too cold and everything. I don’t know why they [other Travellers] want to live like this.”***

Like the previous case study, the landlord with no reason moved her on from another site. While she tried to get legal help, this was unsuccessful: ***“There was no winning. There was no winning. We had a solicitor and everything and actually the barrister came out and his exact words was, ‘It’s because you’re Gypsies, you’ve got no rights.’ I’m not joking, them was his exact words to me, and I think it’s because we haven’t got a tenancy agreement.”***

She sometimes needs help with filling in forms, and asks her mother-in-law to help. She also has trouble understanding some forms: ***“I’m good at reading and writing, and spelling’s ok, but it’s just some of the things, it’s understanding them. It’s just some things, ‘well what does it actually mean?’... It’s just knowing what they mean, and how can you put it? What am I supposed to put?”*** While she currently goes either to her mother-in-law or to an education support worker for assistance, she suggested that it would be useful to have an advocate for Travellers’ issues. ***“somebody that’s non-Traveller, but knows a lot about the system and the law... somebody there who would be able to be on your side for a change and fight for you. In the end we had to stand for ourselves in court ‘cause we had no representation.”***

She also noted the lack of play facilities on site for children, but speculated as to whether the provision of more facilities on site would contribute to the ‘ghettoisation’ of the site: ***“I think they should consider making the sheds a bit bigger and putting baths in. And I also think they should have parks on sites, because council estates have parks on. That would be a good thing. I don’t know, I could say a community centre on, but there again, you’re not learning your children to integrate with other children.”***

Gypsies and Travellers on Local Authority managed sites are not susceptible to arbitrary evictions, though the fact that they have licences and not tenancies is a discrepancy that should be addressed.

Levels of satisfaction and need varied throughout the LA sites in Bradford, Leeds, York and Wakefield.

Leeds – Cottingley Springs site

In a focus group consisting of four Irish Traveller women and one English Gypsy aged between 22 and 57, health needs were highlighted as not being met. While a health bus provided by Leeds Primary Care Trust does visit the site, its visits are not regular, and there is no GP, which means that prescriptions cannot be issued. Focus group participants mentioned that if they could get satisfactory health care from nearby health clinics, they would not need their own health bus. However, residents have complained that local clinics refuse to register them. The site is isolated with the nearest shop 5 miles away. The absence of a park or communal area where children could play was also noted by the focus group.

While adaptations for residents with disabilities have recently been carried out, due to the necessary involvement of other council departments and processes, adaptations may not be carried out as swiftly as either the residents or the Gypsy and Traveller services would like. An elderly couple were also concerned at the expense of electricity bills – their son who lives in a house pays much less for gas and electricity. They also feel that it would be nice to have some activities for older people, such as a bus to take people on trips and activities.

The elderly couple also seem to not have much knowledge surrounding services:

“We don’t understand where to go and where not to go”.

Wakefield – Heath Common site

While residents did express some dissatisfaction and expressed needs at Heath Common, on the whole, the residents seemed reasonably happy with the site. The utility sheds are currently being refurbished, and the new sheds are preferred by the residents to the old ones.

Some common views expressed in separate interviews with Travellers included the need for a common play area for children, and more room for gardens. The site has a communal area where in the past classes such as nail decorating and flower arranging have been run. Many residents told me that they would welcome similar classes in the future. While it would clearly be desirable for residents to be able to access activities such as these, it again raises the issue of ghettoisation, and it should be asked whether or not the

residents are ultimately better served by having specific services targeted at the site, or whether efforts should be aimed at increasing the inclusion and involvement of the residents within the wider community.

Many residents also expressed a wish that the amount of time during which they were allowed to travel throughout the year whilst having their pitch held for them be increased from the current six weeks.

While some residents do have health and disability needs, these are generally met, and they have a dedicated PCT worker who is valued immensely by the residents.

There are needs surrounding benefits and literacy. Many residents need assistance with completing benefit forms, using the new Post Office card system, and filling out driving licence and passport application forms.

Bradford – Esholt and Mary St sites

On my initial visit to the Esholt and Mary St sites in Bradford none of the residents to whom I was introduced expressed an interest in a further, more detailed interview, and apart from problems accessing a dentist, no other needs were mentioned. At the service provider forum in Bradford the Gypsy Liaison Manager stated that if any residents required adaptations to be made to their caravan, he would arrange for these to be made.

In a conversation with the site manager at the Esholt site, I learned that all residents are registered with a doctor, and learn about appropriate services by word of mouth. We agreed that it would be a good idea to provide site managers with up-to-date details of local services in order to better inform residents.

York – Osbaldwick, Clifton, and James St sites

Due to time limitations, I was only able to visit the site at Clifton. It is significant that I was advised not to visit the Osbaldwick site as at the time there was considerable tension surrounding a family who had recently occupied a vacant pitch, despite not being next in line on the waiting list. I would advise that future research be carried out on the Osbaldwick site, as I heard from more than one source that it is the worst of the three York sites in terms of site condition and residents' satisfaction.

I visited three different families on the Clifton site, and all of them reported similar needs. Residents reported a problem with contractors not coming on site, and repairs often take longer than they should do. However, York City Council reports that significant work has been put into improving the repairs service, and support workers accompany contractors who have concerns about visiting the sites. While some residents mentioned that the electricity often cuts out, this is believed to be as a result of one resident testing

industrial equipment. Within the past year all three sites have had their electricity supplies replaced, and the supply is equivalent to standard household supply. There is also poor street lighting and drainage. One family also complained that there were no play facilities for children on site.

Individuals said that when they did need help, they asked the Gypsy and Traveller support worker, who seemed to be greatly valued.

In August 2005 a consultation exercise was carried out by York City Council with responses from over 90% of residents with a licence. The results of this consultation have resulted in a successful grant application to address some of the key identified issues. In addition to this the Supporting People Team are carrying out a service review due to be completed by January 2007.

3.4.4 Support needs of Gypsies and Travellers in housing

While discussed earlier, it is worth reiterating that many, though not all, Gypsies and Travellers in housing are vulnerable and have needs which are not being met. While some people told me that they knew of friends or relatives in housing who had no need of support, these were often people who had either lived in houses before, or who had moved into the house some years ago and had learned to adjust.

For other Gypsies and Travellers – particularly those with poor literacy levels, poor links with the local community and mental health problems, the move into housing could have disastrous consequences. In particular, the mental health needs of housed Gypsies and Travellers will be examined in more detail in the next section.

3.5 The health needs of Gypsies and Travellers – an overview

In 2004 the Department of Health funded a team of researchers from the University of Sheffield School of Health and Related Research to research the health status of Gypsies and Travellers in England. 260 Gypsies and Travellers were matched for age and sex with a comparator living in the same location. The comparators included British people in White, Pakistani and Black Caribbean groups, urban and rural environments and those people who were socio-economically deprived. The team found that,

“Gypsy Travellers have significantly more self-reported symptoms of ill-health than other UK-resident, English speaking ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged white UK residents. Using standardised measures as indicators of health, Gypsy Travellers have poorer health than that of their age sex comparators. Self reported chest pain, respiratory problems, and arthritis were also more prevalent in the Traveller group. For Gypsy Travellers, living in a house is associated with long term

illness, poorer health state and anxiety. Those who rarely travel have the poorest health.²²

Accommodation was the overriding factor, mentioned by every respondent, in the context of health effects....Other issues include security of tenure, access to services and ability to register with a GP, support and security of being close to extended family, a non-hazardous environment and the notion of freedom for the children.²³

Further reports find that,

“Gypsy and Traveller families have a reduced life expectancy, a range of chronic health conditions and high rates of disability. There are high levels of stress on carers and poor psychological health. Depression stems from a complex mixture of ill health, bereavements and every day fears and experience of, prejudice, racism and institutional racism.”²⁴

As with other problems, the health needs of Gypsies and Travellers are inextricably linked with poor accommodation and inadequate support. I found examples of health needs on roadside encampments, on local authority sites, and in housing.

3.5.1 The health needs of housed Gypsies and Travellers

A 2001 report on the health needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds found that, ***“The change from living in a caravan all their lives to adapting to a house dwelling has become a major factor in the breakdown of mental health and child-coping mechanisms.”***²⁵ During the service provider forums, it was repeatedly mentioned that the health needs of Gypsies and Travellers in housing are not being met, with feelings of isolation and mental health seen as being major issues. The health needs of one housed family of Irish Travellers is outlined in the case study below:

²² Glenys Parry et al, “‘Executive Summary: The Health Status of Gypsies & Travellers in England’, Report of Health Inequalities in Health Research Initiative Project 121/7500,” School of Health and Related Research, The University of Sheffield, 2004: 0-1.

²³ Parry et al, 54-55.

²⁴ Marion M Horton Associates, “Executive Summary of the Report on the Health and Site Needs of the Transient Gypsies and Travellers of Leeds. May 2004 to September 2004,”

²⁵ Marianne Tavares with Travellers Health Partnership, “‘Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds – Making a Difference’. An Exploratory study on the Health Needs of Gypsies and Travellers,” 2001, 24-25.

Female Irish Traveller living with her family in a house

The participant suffers from depression, her daughter suffers from depression, and her husband suffers from manic depression. The participant provided numerous examples of support not being provided for her husband. Examples included being refused treatment by a psychologist, a GP refusing to treat him, a crisis team refusing to visit him at home. Eventually he was sectioned and treated by a hospital. Her husband's behaviour is cyclical, eg. he will have a crisis situation, the police or hospital will become involved and he will be sectioned. Once discharged from hospital, however, there is no follow up or aftercare, and then the cycle begins again. The participant notes that sometimes she is trying to seek help for her husband when he is unwell for three or four weeks before he is taken seriously by the health service or hospital. On occasion she has had to leave her children with relatives and go from one hospital to another to get help for her husband. Once she resorted to seeking assistance from a school headmaster who helped her in getting the hospital to respond.

On the occasions when her husband is out of hospital and is not staying at the family house, the participant has no idea where her husband lives or sleeps. When her husband is at home she sometimes worries for her children because of his depression. She takes the burden for her husband's illness on herself. She is herself depressed.

The participant also noted that at times the family struggled to remember and/or keep appointments.

The participant was unaware of mental health support services in her area, and the interviewers therefore provided information on local mental health support services.

She feels that either accommodation based or floating support services would help her and her husband.

3.5.2 The health needs of roadside Gypsies and Travellers

The living conditions of Gypsies and Travellers living by the roadside are often appalling, and there is a much greater risk of illness and infection. Many of the Gypsies and Travellers who I spoke to allowed health problems to reach crisis situations before they sought medical help, while others made inappropriate use of A&E facilities because they found it difficult to access GPs, or were refused service. There is no antenatal care for Gypsies and Travellers on the roadside. The needs of disabled Gypsies and Travellers on the roadside are not being met. Service providers at the York focus group were aware of one roadside family with health needs who would benefit from having one full time support worker. The lack of an address also means that appointment reminder cards cannot be sent out, leading to missed appointments. One

roadside Traveller said that she had made up an address in order to register with a doctor. One roadside Traveller said that she was registered with a doctor in another area and had to re-register every 3 months and claim that she lived in that area. One male Traveller living by the roadside was not registered with a GP, but used a walk-in centre.

However, it should be said that despite some missed appointments, there are families who will regularly travel hundreds of miles to ensure that their children make their medical appointments.

Poor levels of literacy lead to some Gypsies and Travellers not being able to understand prescriptions.

Case study

An adult male Traveller lives with his family by the roadside. Despite having visited the family several times, the PCT worker who accompanied me was unaware of his existence until we conducted an interview with his family. The Traveller has mental health problems, has bad tantrums, mood swings and is violent on occasion. He takes medication, which his sisters get for him. The family find it difficult giving him the attention and support which he needs because of his violence. He has a tendency to wander off by himself, and the police have been called out a couple of times to help look for him; the police have been very helpful with this.

His sister mentioned that they would welcome additional support for him, as they are unable to support him fully themselves. She agreed that a floating support worker who could visit for a few hours each week would be welcome, and also suggested that it would be good if he could be taken off the site for one afternoon or so each week, and taken on trips or to activities.

3.5.3 The health needs of Gypsies and Travellers living on LA sites

The health needs of Gypsies and Travellers living on LA sites varied. The only specific health needs that residents of the York and Bradford sites mentioned, were difficulties in accessing dentists, and one Traveller (female, in her 60s) was once refused treatment by a dentist who gave no reason. I would however advise caution before coming to the conclusion that residents on these sites have no health needs. I found a tendency for many Gypsies and Travellers to not recognise health problems until they became critical. For instance, I met one roadside Traveller who claimed that she had no health problems, and it was only well into the conversation that she mentioned that she had recently been to Accident and Emergency to have an infected tooth treated, and that she was currently on antibiotics.

The PCT worker who provides support to Gypsies and Travellers in Wakefield spends a lot of her time reminding people about their appointments, and this was apparent when I visited the Heath Common site with her. The needs of disabled Gypsies and Travellers on the Heath Common site are being met.

Focus group and interview participants on the Leeds Cottingley Springs site reported health needs that included angina, blackouts, physical disabilities and depression. In a recent review of health issues on Cottingley Springs, Leeds GATE interviewed 22 people about their and their family's health needs. Out of twenty-two people consulted, twenty-one stated that,

“they or their immediate family members needed to see a GP regularly because of a long term medical condition, some of which require primary and secondary medical intervention and regular monitoring. The most common medical conditions disclosed during interview were, asthma, clinical depression, arthritis, hypertension and angina, with some of these conditions coexisting.”²⁶

While a health bus visits Cottingley Springs B site, it is currently unable to visit 'A' Site because of a lack of access. There is also no GP on the bus. Some residents expressed concern that some health clinics close to the site would not treat them.

3.6 Support needs of elderly Gypsies and Travellers

Service providers attending the focus groups revealed that they knew of only 1 or 2 elderly Gypsies and Travellers who lived in housing. While it seems to be unusual for elderly Gypsies and Travellers to live in residential homes, service providers in Leeds knew of one elderly woman who loved living in her residential home.

While elderly Gypsies and Travellers are well looked after by their extended families, they still require support, even on sites, and care should be taken to ensure that any required adaptations to the caravans are made, and that every effort is taken to ensure that elderly Gypsies and Travellers feel secure and comfortable.

Opinions varied as to the pros and cons of moving into housing. One Irish Traveller in her 50s said that while she may want to move into a house eventually, she would miss the support of the community, and ideally would want to live in a grouped housing scheme. Several Gypsies and Travellers of all ages mentioned the idea of a grouped housing scheme, consisting of bungalows with room for one or two trailers so family could visit, and I would recommend that this idea be seriously considered.

²⁶ Leeds GATE, “Review of Health Bus and GP Access 31st August – 12th September 2006. Draft,” Leeds GATE: November 2006

One elderly Traveller living by the roadside stated that she had always lived in a caravan, and never wanted to live anywhere else. She thought that if she moved into a house, the neighbours would be unfriendly. However, she did say that she would consider moving onto a site if there was 'no trouble'. Service providers in Wakefield reported that older people do want to settle for longer periods of time on sites. As with members of the settled community, it is vital that elderly Gypsies and Travellers have access to safe, secure, comfortable and appropriate accommodation. Given the aversion that many Gypsies and Travellers have to housing ("***I can't describe how it is. It feels like in prison. You look at the walls and you think, 'prison'***"), it is vital that alternative accommodation options, whether they be suitable sites, or grouped housing schemes be considered.

Good Practice

Leeds GATE has formed 'Purri Folkie' – a support group for older members from the Gypsy and Traveller communities who live in, or travel to Leeds. Purri Folkie aims to, "***support older people from these communities by promoting participation, improving self-esteem and participation in community activities, thus reducing social isolation. It also intends to improve mental and physical well-being through organised outdoor activities and regular meetings with contributions from professionals, including health visitors and dieticians to raise awareness of health issues and benefits available to the communities.***"

3.7 Domestic Violence

From talking to service providers at focus groups, and from talking to a few female Gypsies and Traveller with whom I felt comfortable broaching the topic, domestic violence seems to be an issue within the Gypsy and Traveller community, as it is within any community. There are currently few, if any, culturally appropriate support services.

Victims of domestic violence from the Gypsy and Traveller communities are less likely to access refuges and other support services. Hostels are considered to be dirty, and cultural preferences mean that they do not want to move into a house. The few women who have tried to leave and access mainstream services usually only stay there for a short period of time before returning to the family unit. Women are also reluctant to be seen to be 'running away' from their community, and they fear the consequences of their actions, and recriminations, such as arrests being made, or having their children taken away.

Service providers attending the focus groups thought that 'outside' and mainstream support services were unlikely to work, and thought that a better approach would be to encourage a member of the Gypsy and Traveller

community to work with women on the sites to try to raise awareness of the issue. However, it would still be challenging to address this issue on sites, where it is very difficult to maintain anonymity, and in a community where people are reluctant to discuss their problems.

When I discussed the issue with one Irish Traveller, she said that she thought some Gypsy and Traveller communities would need help around domestic violence, but she was unsure that they would know where to go for help.

Good practice

A Traveller support worker with York Travellers Trust is looking into the possibility of carrying out some research on the York LA sites on the extent of domestic abuse, and how it might best be addressed.

3.8 Alcohol and drug abuse

Within such a private community, it is difficult to have precise information about the extent of alcohol and drug abuse within the Gypsy and Traveller community, but from discussions with service providers and service users, it seems that these are problems just as they are within any community, but the problem is accentuated by the reluctance of some Gypsies and Travellers to access help, even if they know where to find it. Service providers knew of some Gypsies and Travellers with substance abuse problems. The Gypsy Liaison Manager in Bradford was not aware of any drug problems on site. The manager of the Heath Common Site in Wakefield reported that, while drugs did not seem to be an issue at the moment, there were problems a couple of years ago and the site was visited by police. Drug related incidents have now reduced, and residents know that drug abuse is not tolerated on site. However, it is now possible that, rather than solving the problem, drug abuse now simply takes place off site.

As with sex education, many Gypsy and Traveller parents prefer not to expose their children to any information, even prevention information, surrounding drugs for fear that this will encourage their children to take drugs. Many Gypsy and Traveller parents cite drugs and sex awareness classes as a reason for taking their children out of secondary school. It is however inevitable that children do become aware of drugs, and it is worrying that this is not likely to happen through school, parents, or other drugs awareness and prevention schemes. As with domestic violence, service providers suggested that the most practical solution would be for a trained community member to provide drugs advice. However, it is likely that even then there would be opposition from parents. A Connexions bus used to visit Heath Common site in Wakefield, and while it proved to be effective in that children would talk to staff about drugs, it was felt that parents would have been upset if they had known that drugs were being discussed.

3.9 Education support needs of Gypsy and Traveller children

Most of the Gypsies and Travellers who I spoke to were very satisfied with the provision of education for their children, and Traveller Education Services in all local authorities are clearly highly valued. However, it can still be very difficult for children living by the roadside, especially highly mobile ones, to access education services.

One female Gypsy on a LA site mentioned that while her daughter was enjoying school, she was not getting the additional support that she needed, and she worried that her daughter was making little progress.

While Traveller Education Services undoubtedly provide an excellent and widely appreciated service, it seems that much of their time is taken up with other support needs such as housing, health and other issues, and while regarded as necessary, this support inevitably detracts from the education support which they are able to offer. This issue of resources will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, where I consider service provision.

Most of the Gypsy and Traveller parents who I spoke to recognised the need for their children to have a primary education, though fewer parents saw the necessity of a secondary education. Many boys of secondary school age are expected to learn a trade – most often their father's, while teenage girls are often expected to learn housework duties. Gypsies and Travellers typically marry at a young age.

Case Study

Interview with a female Traveller living in a house

In a telephone interview, this Traveller told me that she did not feel there was enough suitable education for Gypsies and Travellers, and there was nothing available for older children after they left primary school. She did not think that a secondary school education was relevant to her children, and would like to see more vocational training for teenagers, e.g. tree lopping for boys, or hair dressing for girls. Her oldest son wants to be a blacksmith. She now teaches her eldest son at home.

She told me that it is wrong to assume that Gypsies and Travellers would necessarily want the opportunity to become doctors or lawyers, and that it is more likely that they will want to learn trades that they see their fathers doing, and what they are familiar with. She believes that Gypsy and Traveller children feel isolated in secondary schools because it has no relevance for them and because they feel different from the other children.

She said that some problems within the travelling community are caused by older children having nothing to do.

3.10 Training and adult education

Many of the Gypsies and Travellers who I spoke to – particularly on Local Authority owned sites, expressed a desire for more adult education courses and more training opportunities. Residents on the Heath Common site in Wakefield used to enjoy attending the nail decorating and flower arranging classes that were organised on site, but while similar classes will be held in the future, there is currently no funding. Again, while the provision of adult education classes is welcomed by many, it can also be seen as contributing to the isolation of the site away from the rest of the community. Although it is encouraging that one female Traveller who lives on the Heath Common site is currently attending a sewing class off site.

An advocacy support worker with Leeds GATE informed me that many young mothers would love to go back to education, and a new community development worker for South Leeds Health for All was now signposting people to adult education courses and literacy training. However, she emphasised that there is a need for more support and *developmental* support – people need support not only to get onto courses, but they also need support throughout the course. This is highlighted by an example of poor practice described by a Traveller Education Co-ordinator:

Case study

“I took an 18 yr old Irish Traveller girl ‘L’ to a Learn Direct Centre because she was working in a pizza shop. She could prepare food but could not take telephone orders because she couldn’t spell the words. To cover her embarrassment she told her employer that she had learnt in Gaelic in Ireland but she realised that he understood her dilemma when he suggested she attend some college classes. I took her to the LD centre after making telephone calls and being told a computer course would take her through the basics. When we arrived the supervisor was busy and her first request was that L should sit down and fill in some forms for her. This was a very bad beginning for someone lacking confidence. Although L came with me several times the course didn’t really meet her needs and she felt frustrated that she was having to work through programmes because that was the way it was done rather than having her specific learning addressed. I was therefore unable to ‘hand her over’ nor did I have the time myself to teach her.”

Apart from Heath Common, none of the local authority sites that I visited had a communal area where courses or training could take place. One of the main training needs mentioned to me, was the need for people to be able to access support with taking the driving theory test. Both Leeds GATE and the York Travellers Trust offer training with this, but this has to take place in their offices, as there is no other suitable building.

Residents at Cottingley Springs in Leeds expressed that they would like a community centre on site, where there could be some computers, and adult education classes such as aromatherapy could be taught.

Chapter 4 – Service provision to the Gypsy and Traveller Community

4.1 Overview of service provision to the Gypsy and Traveller community

My research revealed that few Gypsies and Travellers access mainstream services, choosing instead to seek help and advice from a small number of 'official outsiders' with whom they have built up a relationship of trust. The reasons for these tendencies are interrelated and self-perpetuating. Many Gypsies and Travellers, for reasons of poor literacy and a lack of knowledge of 'official processes' are fearful of approaching mainstream services. The majority of mainstream services, never knowingly coming into contact with Gypsies and Travellers, are unaware of culturally appropriate service provision, sometimes to the point of actual discrimination. There are also instances of mainstream services signposting Gypsies and Travellers to specialised Gypsy and Traveller services, when there is actually no reason why they cannot provide support themselves.

There is an acute need for a comprehensive training and awareness raising programme in the delivery of culturally appropriate services to Gypsies and Travellers across all mainstream service providers. In addition, some Gypsies and Travellers stated that they would appreciate an advocacy service – somebody who they could trust but who 'knew the system.' The current picture, where a few trusted frontline workers are forced to attempt to provide holistic support by themselves is considered to be unsatisfactory.

4.2 The extent to which Gypsies and Travellers are currently accessing Supporting People services

Currently, across West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York, the only Supporting People funded service that is aimed specifically at Gypsies and Travellers, is the one provided by York Supporting People. York Supporting People currently fund 1.5 posts (37 hrs and 18.5 hours). These posts are Gypsy and Traveller support workers who visit the three York sites and assist residents with a range of tasks, including benefits advice, intervention forms and budgeting. The full time support worker who introduced me to the residents on the Clifton site is clearly well regarded. Residents informed me that they tend to go to the support worker with problems that relate to the council, while they recognise that he does not have influence over everything. The support worker also provides a mediation role between families.

While the support worker is currently only funded to provide support to the residents of the LA sites, he also finds that Gypsy and Traveller families who move into housing continue to contact him for support. This reflects my findings that there is a lack of support for newly housed Gypsies and

Travellers, and I would recommend that the support worker's role be formally extended to provide support to Gypsies and Travellers in housing.

Of the six service provider forums that I facilitated, the one at York was the only one where the majority of attendees were familiar with Supporting People. The knowledge base that Supporting People across WYNYY have now accrued on the issue of Gypsies and Travellers provides them with the opportunity to take a lead in the provision of services to this client group, and also to broaden their profile.

Service providers returned sixteen questionnaires. Out of these, of the four service providers who are funded by Supporting People only one – Homelessness services at York City Council, are currently known to be used by Gypsies and Travellers.

4.3 Accommodation support services

As mentioned previously, it is currently impossible to have an accurate figure for the number of Gypsies and Travellers living in housing, as census forms, housing departments and associations do not monitor Gypsies and Travellers. While it is unlikely that all Gypsies and Travellers would identify themselves out of a fear of harassment and discrimination, I would recommend that all housing departments, housing associations and homelessness services allow the option for Gypsies and Travellers to self-identify.

Accommodation support for Gypsies and Travellers is a crucial issue, given the fact that a lack of suitable accommodation impinges dramatically on all other areas. Issues that could and often should be dealt with by mainstream service providers often fall to specialist services. For instance, as part of information requested by Shelter, the Advocacy Support worker at Leeds GATE calculated the time she had spent in one month supporting clients with housing related issues. She estimated that she had spent approximately thirteen hours on maintenance/complaints, fourteen hours on roadside/eviction issues, and twenty-eight hours on applications to housing associations/relocation issues. She adds,

“This roughly equates to 55 hours of my time during the last month. There are many more clients for which housing could be seen as indirectly affecting work I am doing. An example of this would be the high amount of mental health problems faced by the Travelling community who are located in inappropriate accommodation both roadside and housed.”

Other issues that came out of the consultation include a lack of accommodation and high waiting lists.

4.4 Housing associations

I spoke to one Irish Traveller and two other Travellers who have had experiences of housing associations. The Irish Traveller is currently satisfied with her housing association house, but mentioned that she has had problems in the past where housing associations have offered her accommodation in 'rough' areas. The other two Travellers, one of whom lives on the roadside with his three children, the other who lives on a LA owned site are waiting to get a house through a housing association, and feel that the housing associations do not understand their situations.

Case Study 1

A male Traveller has been living by the roadside for ten months, and his three children attend local schools. The family live by a busy road, which is dangerous for the children, and there are no toilets, washing facilities or electricity. One of his children arrives at school early each morning so that he can shower there. The family have enough points, but there is currently no accommodation available, yet the family are clearly in a very vulnerable position, especially with the onset of winter.

Case Study 2

A female Traveller living on an LA site was very frustrated with a housing association, as they had verbally offered her a property, only to inform her a few days later that they had offered it to somebody else. ***“They offered me the house and then they informed us that there was a problem with the form. Now the form’s been put in for three years...We was asked to fill in another application form, the council sent us another application form, and we filled that in [on a Friday], but when we rung up on the Monday they told us that they’d offered it to somebody else.”*** She was told by the housing association that she got no points for local connections, as she had only lived in the area for 13 years, not 20, and told me that she would appreciate an advocate who could argue on her behalf: ***“somebody who understands what they’re saying, but translates the understanding part to us, so therefore we could respond how we should do...I mean it’s understanding why they could do this and to explain it...Like you [to me] say, legislation. I mean I wouldn’t know anything – what they say is final, so that’s what, I mean, we’ve only lived in Skipton for 13 years so we’ve got no local area connection, but we’ve got to be 20 years. Do you know what I mean? I mean, we don’t know any different; but somebody like you who knows legislations and that.”***

She feels that housing associations don’t understand the cultural needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and don’t understand the attitudes towards hygiene. For instance, most Gypsies and Travellers wouldn’t use toilets or showers if they had them in the caravan, and have to go outside to the utility sheds to access running water. ***“I don’t understand why they [housing association] can’t understand the way of life of Travellers. I think they should get out and visit them more. Visit the needs of the people instead of just looking at a piece of paper.”***

The process of applying for accommodation can be confusing, and it is important that housing associations keep Gypsies and Travellers – many of whom may be mobile – up to date with the status of their application. An Advocacy Development Worker at Leeds GATE who spends much of her time assisting clients with housing related issues also reported that she has helped a family in housing association accommodation with racial harassment from neighbours, has registered them with an exchange programme, and has attended viewings with them. In another case she has helped a family communicate with a housing authority, and in another case where a family want to move out of the area, she has had a lack of communication from housing authorities outside Leeds.

Good practice

A housing association in Selby has housed a Traveller family close to the site where they used to live, enabling them to maintain support and emotional ties.

4.5 Housing advice and homelessness services

As with other mainstream services, Gypsies and Travellers are reluctant to access housing and homelessness services directly because of a fear of prejudice. There is also a fundamental problem with Gypsies and Travellers accessing homelessness services; according to the Housing Act 1996, “**a person is homeless if his or her dwelling is a movable structure but there is nowhere they can lawfully put it.**”²⁷ However, practically speaking, homelessness services are unable to provide Gypsies and Travellers presenting as homeless with anywhere other than a hostel, or other housed accommodation. Service providers expressed uncertainty as to whether or not homeless services and Gypsies and Travellers were aware of the status and entitlements of homeless Gypsies and Travellers.

Despite a reluctance to approach services, some Gypsies and Travellers do present as homeless. Housing advice teams in Bradford offer support to Gypsies and Travellers presenting as homeless, and they communicate with the Gypsy Liaison Manager to provide referees to enable the Gypsies and Travellers to access accommodation. One Housing Advice Manager also reported that many of the Gypsies and Travellers who present at Housing Advice services are in a crisis situation. A Temporary Accommodation Manager also reported that, “**some customers who would describe themselves as Gypsies and Travellers apply for housing through the homeless route and by applying to be on the main ... housing register.**” One Housing Services Manager reports that while Gypsies and Travellers do not use their services very often, there is an occasional homeless presentation, an occasional request for housing advice, and several requests for Discretionary Housing Payments each year.

Good practice

The Temporary Accommodation manager at City of York council stresses the need to treat the customer group with respect: **you will only receive respect if you are prepared to give it.** She also advises the importance of delivering equality of service, engaging in consultation, and getting round the poor literacy of some clients by providing information on tape, and offering extra support for any written material which is produced.

²⁷ Housing Act 1996 Act, s.175

Poor practice

“A young Traveller Mum with little confidence was in a homeless hostel and told me she was confused about rent arrears she owed for a previous council rental. She needed to pay off the balance before she could be considered for a council house. I took her to a Housing office. The assistant, despite my introduction and cues insisted on directing all her answers to me as if the Mum was invisible – it was a very uncomfortable experience.”

Traveller Education Coordinator

4.6 Planning Departments

Of the seven planning authorities contacted during this research, only one – Leeds planning department – reported that they monitor the number of planning applications which are made by Gypsies and Travellers. I would recommend that all planning departments do this, to assist with data gathering on a community for which local authorities have very little information. Many Gypsies, Travellers and show people who I spoke to expressed a great deal of frustration at a perceived lack of communication between themselves and planning departments. Given the government recommendation that Gypsies and Travellers be encouraged to buy and develop their own land, yet given the high rejection rate of planning applications made by Gypsies and Travellers, a dialogue should be encouraged, whereby ‘both sides’ can discuss the issues. There is a need to train planning departments in the planning needs of Gypsies and Travellers, as well as a need to educate Gypsies and Travellers about their rights.

The needs of show people should also be drawn to the attention of planning officers. The inability of show people to buy their own sites, regardless of how many years they have been living on them, is a major concern, and is perceived as discriminatory when compared to other council ‘right-to-buy’ schemes. Training should be provided to planning departments on the cultural needs of show people, as many of them are currently living in very insecure living conditions, with nowhere to go should the land on which their site is situated be sold.

Good practice

Craven District Council has recently granted planning permission for a number of private sites.

4.7 Council services for Gypsies and Travellers and coordination of service provision

This research revealed significant discrepancies in the provision of services to Gypsies and Travellers both within, and between local authorities. There is a lack of communication between services who work with Gypsies and Travellers in all of the local authorities which I surveyed. None of the 7 LAs which were involved with this research appeared to have a holistic policy towards Gypsies and Travellers, and while some Local Authorities have a protocol or procedure, these are predominantly concerned with unauthorised encampments. It is also significant to note that procedures/protocols are not necessarily circulated to all relevant services. Good practice has developed from the formation of positive yet informal working relationships, and with the lack of official policies, a changeover in staff can significantly alter service delivery.

4.7.1 Council services and policies

While some local authorities across WYNYY have policies on Gypsies and Travellers, these are mainly concerned with unauthorised encampments and are more protocols/procedures than policies.

The lack of a policy undermines the ability of different service providers within and outside of the council to work together.

Councils vary in the provision of services that they offer to Gypsies and Travellers, and their attitude to unauthorised encampments can vary according to council, and to individual officers.

Good practice

Doncaster MBC have a strategy on Gypsy and Traveller issues, the purpose of which is to, "***promote equality and ensure a consistent multi-agency, partnership-based and Borough-wide approach to Gypsy and Traveller issues, whilst allowing effective planning to deliver services appropriate to, and meeting the needs of, all Gypsies and Travellers within the Borough.***" The strategy is not just concerned with enforcement, and the summary of the strategy has also been published on audio CD for those members of the community who are unable to read.

4.7.2 Coordination of service provision

Typically, there is a lack of coordination across services that work with Gypsies and Travellers, and this is symptomatic of an absence of a holistic policy. Examples of services working well together rely on the establishment of good, informal relationships built up between individuals, rather than being the result of formal procedure and practice. It seems that while many frontline staff will try and support each other with information, this is hard to do in individual LAs where there is no overall strategy or policy in place. For instance, although in York there is a Gypsy and Traveller liaison group, they have only met twice in the last two years, and communication between groups was badly affected by a heavy-handed police raid over 2 years ago. One Traveller Education Coordinator also pointed out that while within her department there was a low staff turnover rate and therefore a large body of knowledge which had been built up by staff, this is not necessarily the case in other departments, where if somebody leaves, in the absence of a written policy, the incoming member of staff does not always maintain contact with the Traveller Education services.²⁸

It is also important for local authorities to be aware of, recognise and make use of individuals and service providers who have gained a great deal of knowledge of, and respect among the Gypsy and Traveller community. The CRE 'Common Ground' report found that,

“some of the authorities that said they had difficulty communicating with local groups had not considered how they could build on and learn from TES [Traveller Education Service], while TES, in turn, expressed frustration that they were unable to share their experience, and that departments were ‘reinventing the wheel’, unnecessarily.”²⁹

Service providers in York particularly should be aware of a research project that has recently been commissioned by the Travellers Trust. Funded by the Joseph Rowntree Trust and carried out by the Social Policy Research Unit, it will aim to investigate service provision for Travellers in York and assess unmet need.

Many attendants at the service provider forum in North Yorkshire were unaware that the Traveller Education Service provided training, and training programmes such as these need greater publicity. Service providers in North Yorkshire also highlighted the need for more liaison between statutory providers, especially considering it is a two-tier organisation. Similarly, some attendants at the service provider forum in Wakefield were unaware of the forthcoming change to a Choice Based Lettings system.

²⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the importance of Traveller Education Services, see 'Common Ground', p42-43.

²⁹ CRE, "Common Ground," 43.

Good practice

In Bradford, the 'Working with Gypsies and Traveller Communities in the Bradford District' group has been meeting for the past 2 years. It includes representatives from Bradford planning, housing and equalities departments, as well as Traveller Education workers and Leeds GATE.

In Leeds there is an accommodation forum that includes representatives from statutory and voluntary organisations, as well as members of the Gypsy and Traveller community. The forum has regular meetings that allow key agencies to meet regularly and coordinate service provision.

Good practice

Education Bradford, with input from the Equalities department is planning a series of training sessions for policy makers and front line workers. It aims to emphasise the inclusion of Gypsy and Traveller issues within the bigger picture of Race Relations and demonstrate that they are not a separate issue. It is seeking input from the Gypsy and Traveller community and from Gypsy and Traveller liaison services. The programme will take a holistic approach to encourage a strategic approach to raising awareness.

Good practice

On 10th November 2006 Leeds GATE held an 'Interagency Day' that was well attended by statutory and non-statutory services, as well as members of the Gypsy and Traveller community. Attendants included a local councillor and police officers, and the event highlighted the need for agencies and individuals to work together. It was agreed that the event will now be held regularly, with the next one to be hosted by the Leeds Traveller Education Service.

Good practice

Responsible council officers from Calderdale, Kirklees, Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield meet regularly as the West Yorkshire Gypsy Liaison Group. Given the mobile nature of many Gypsies and Travellers, it is important to discuss issues at a sub-regional level and discuss instances of good practice.

Good practice

Various stakeholders within Leeds work together on a range of groups which work for and with the Gypsy and Traveller community. For instance, the 'Children's Sub Group', 'Health Group' and 'Accommodation Forum' all include representation from the education service, PCTs, social services, the voluntary sector, other LA services, as well as community members themselves.

4.7.3 Enforcer/Provider paradox

The person or department within a Local Authority who has responsibility for Gypsy and Traveller issues varies from council to council. The position or department which has overall responsibility for Gypsies and Travellers can very often have quite negative connotations. For instance, the fact that the 'Pollution Control Manager' has responsibility for unauthorised encampments on private land in Kirklees does not suggest a very positive attitude on behalf of the council.

It should also be noted that in councils where there is no Gypsy and Traveller liaison officer or service, the officer responsible has most likely not chosen that aspect of the job, and is therefore not necessarily in the best position to carry out the role. In Calderdale MBC, both the Senior Environmental Health officer and the Housing Strategy and Partnerships Officer have responsibility for Gypsy and Traveller issues, but neither has responsibility for a holistic approach.

In his regional report on the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers across Yorkshire and the Humber, Ryan Powell writes that,

“Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officers are often in the best position to act as intermediaries between the Gypsy and Traveller community and local authorities. Yet it would seem that this opportunity to build bridges is often not taken, as the role often involves enforcement and eviction duties which are particularly negative experiences for Gypsies and Travellers.”³⁰

Some council officers in WYNYY perform both enforcer and provider roles, which I would argue is confusing. One Traveller Education Co-ordinator informed me that the police and environmental health services do not necessarily inform her of the arrival of new unauthorised encampments. While the police and environmental health officer claim to ask Travellers if they would like to contact the Traveller Education Service, the Coordinator suggests that because of the negativity with which Travellers perceive police

³⁰ Powell, 38.

and environmental health officers, Travellers may not want anything to do with them, and will refuse any offers of assistance.

In areas where there are no LA Gypsy and Traveller sites and relatively few unauthorised encampments such as Calderdale, it may not be necessary to employ a Gypsy and Traveller Liaison officer. However, I would recommend that councils consider within which department the officer responsible for Gypsy and Traveller issues is best placed. I would also recommend that councils with officers who provide a paradoxical enforcer/provider role review this situation, and discuss with all relevant service providers how best to provide services for the Gypsy and Traveller community.

4.8 Barriers to providing effective support

Some services and/or individuals find that their ability to provide an effective service to Gypsies and Travellers is hindered by the attitude of many mainstream services. Attitudes may include outright prejudice, to a tendency to too readily refer Gypsies and Travellers to specialised services, rather than adapt existing services to cater to their needs. Not only do these attitudes contribute to the general culture of discrimination and prejudice towards Gypsies and Travellers, they also leave specialised services with a real capacity problem.

4.8.1 Prejudice from mainstream services

Service providers present at the focus groups reported a severe prejudice from frontline staff, and recommended that frontline staff, as well as managers and directors who determine the approach of an organisation, receive cultural awareness training in Gypsy and Traveller issues. For instance, a PCT worker in Wakefield reported that when trying to help a Traveller girl get a tetanus injection, she was turned away by five different surgeries before having to resort to A&E. Many receptionists will tell Gypsies and Travellers either that they can't have an appointment, or that they aren't taking any new patients on.

“Workers who wish to help need to create relationships with the families based on respect and trust so that Gypsies and Travellers feel able to ask for the help they need. Front line workers need to be trained to respond sensitively to the adults who may not be able to read and write and who will be embarrassed about this – in education some school secretaries make themselves available as sources of help and are friendly and accessible, others far less so.”

Traveller Education Coordinator, Calderdale and Kirklees.

Good practice

Staff who work on the Heath Common site in Wakefield acquired funding to make a DVD about the young Gypsies and Travellers who live on the site:

It is intended that the DVD will be widely disseminated through PCT and local authority cultural awareness and training events across Wakefield District. It will be available to schools, libraries etc, and it is hoped with increasing knowledge and understanding there will be growing tolerance from agencies and the wider settled community.¹

It is also important for services to follow through on commitments. Some Gypsies and Travellers told me that, while they are frequently consulted about what improvements they would like to see, they rarely see any action taken. A poor example of engagement by a service was reported at one service provider focus group. Apparently a Sure Start worker visited one of the LA sites and her suggestion of on-site activities was well received. Despite this, she did not return to the site and the promised activities never materialised.

4.8.2 Capacity issues

Many specialised services or individuals who have built up a good and trusting relationship with Gypsies and Travellers find that, as a result of assisting with all manner of enquiries outside their specified area of service provision, they are faced with a real capacity problem. While providing holistic support to a family is often not part of the job description of a front line worker, very often workers will do their best to help as otherwise it would undermine the relationship they had built up with the individual or family, and also because they know that if they don't help, possibly nobody else will.³¹ A Traveller Education Coordinator writes:

“My priority is to work in partnership with families and that means I try to avoid saying ‘that’s not my job/remit’ because that doesn’t move our relationship on and it is a frustration to them when they may have found it hard to help. Where I can, I use my contacts in other services to help but I recognise that introducing lots of other professionals into the household may be unsettling and unwelcome. Establishing a good relationship and then retaining it is vital.

³¹ The provision of housing support by non-housing providers is not limited to those working with Gypsies and Travellers. See for example Sarah Griffiths et al, “The housing and support needs of people living with HIV and/or hepatitis C in Leeds,” Leeds City Council: August 2005, 116.

With a few Gypsy Traveller and Irish Traveller families I have spent a significant amount of time liaising with Housing, Health and Social Services in the belief that if we can get some of their broader difficulties sorted out, there will be more time and energy available to the parents to concentrate upon the child's education."

While most frontline workers agree that it is always best to 'enable' Gypsies and Travellers to access services and ultimately help themselves, they are also realistic to admit that often they simply do not have the time to do this, and sometimes end up simply doing tasks for individuals.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

As with previous Supporting People research projects, a key finding is the need for closer and more effective working between different services and agencies.³² This is especially relevant for this client group, whose needs are varied and extend beyond housing related support. As a result of this, many of these recommendations are for non-Supporting People services.

Nevertheless, with the information collected during this research, it is imperative that Supporting People take a lead in the coordination of all services who work with Gypsies and Travellers, show people and Roma, as their housing related support needs are impacted by, and impact on, such a wide range of other needs. Building on the knowledge gained from this research, Supporting People need to involve themselves in the forthcoming accommodation needs assessment of Gypsies and Travellers, and take a key role in any wider strategies which may result.

I also cannot emphasise enough the need to make use of this, and other previous reports, when conducting future research and assessments of the Gypsy and Traveller community. Many of the Gypsies and Travellers who I spoke to had already been interviewed by people involved in numerous research projects, and while the research may be commissioned with the best intentions, there is a real chance of 'consultation fatigue'. This is particularly important in view of the common perception among Gypsies and Travellers that, while they are often asked for their opinions, people rarely get back to them about the outcomes of the research, and more often than not, no action is seen to be taken.

While sometimes understandably cynical about the research, the Gypsies and Travellers who I spoke to were welcoming, open and extremely helpful, and I feel that goodwill has been generated from this project. It is imperative that this goodwill is not lost or wasted, and Supporting People should ensure that the recommendations from this report are carried forward, and the links which have been established between Supporting People and the Gypsy and Traveller community be maintained.

³² Sarah Griffiths et al, 137.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are those specific to Supporting People:

- 5.2.1 Develop floating support provision for Gypsies and Travellers.**
- 5.2.2 Examine the possibility of delivering Supporting People functions through existing resources to enable more holistic service provision.**
- 5.2.3 Raising awareness of Gypsy and Traveller needs across sectors, particularly with regard to equality and diversity, promotion of positive publicity and cultural sensitivity.**
- 5.2.4 Supporting People and other corporate strategies need to be involved in the forthcoming accommodation needs assessments and aware of the resulting implications.**
- 5.2.5 Supporting People services for Gypsies and Travellers need to link with other agencies providing services to Gypsies and Travellers, including education and health.**
- 5.2.6 Further consultation is needed with the Roma Community.**

The recommendations below are broader than the remit of Supporting People:

- 5.2.7 LA equality monitoring of housing, homelessness and planning applications to include Gypsy and Traveller categories.**
- 5.2.8 Aligning strategic policy on enforcement and enabling roles to ensure a complementary approach to achieving desired objectives.**
- 5.2.9 To promote and support capacity building, particularly with the Third sector to develop community advocacy opportunities.**
- 5.2.10 A consistent approach is needed to Local Authority practice and service delivery across WYNYY, particularly with regard to roadside encampments.**
- 5.2.11 Appropriate agencies need to work collaboratively to engage with Gypsy and Traveller children and build on existing good practice.**
- 5.2.12 Adult Education provision needs to be further promoted to the Gypsy and Traveller community.**

5.2.13 Local Authority / private sites need to consider issuing tenancy agreements rather than licenses.

5.2.14 Local Authority departments, planning authorities and other services need to be proactive in consultation and take responsibility for conducting equalities impact assessments when considering future service provision.

5.3 Next steps

The research has been across seven different Local Authorities and each LA is responsible for driving forward the recommendations within a local context.

The Supporting People WYNY Cross Authority Group has a responsibility to oversee progress on a sub-regional basis and the research priorities are included within the groups work programme.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire sent to service providers

Housing related support needs of Gypsies and Travellers
questionnaire

Your name..... Your title.....

Name of
organisation/agency/service.....

Address.....
.....
.....
.....

Phone no.....

Fax no.....

1a) What services do you provide?

1b) Who do you define as Gypsies and Travellers?

1c) Do Gypsies and Travellers use any of your services? Which services are used most regularly by Gypsies and Travellers?

1d) Gypsies and Travellers from which types of accommodation use your services? (Please circle):

Local authority sites

Private Sites

Roadside encampments

'Bricks and Mortar' Housing

Other (please give details.....)

Don't know

1e) Do you actively promote your services to Gypsies and Travellers who live in 'bricks and mortar' accommodation? In what ways?

2a) Do Supporting People fund any of the services which you provide?

2b) How are you funded?

2c) Are there any services which you feel you are unable to provide effectively due to a lack of resources? Please give details.

3) Where do you get your referrals from?

4a) Have you had any training in the provision of services for Gypsies and Travellers?

4b) Do you offer training to others in the provision of services to Gypsies and Travellers?

5) Can you suggest any examples of good practice with regard to the provision of support/accommodation provision for Gypsies and Travellers that either you, or another service provides?

Many thanks for your time in completing this questionnaire.

Appendix 2

Consent form for service users

West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York Supporting People

'The Housing Related Support Needs of Gypsies and Travellers

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

The background and purpose of the research has been explained to me

I understand that my name will not be used, and that any information I provide is confidential, and will be used only by the research team for this project, and for other relevant projects

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions

I feel I have enough information about the research

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason

I give my consent for the interview to be recorded

Signed.....

Date.....

Print name.....

Appendix 3

Service user questionnaire³³

Introduction and current accommodation

How do you define yourself ? (eg. English Gypsy, Traveller of Irish Heritage, Roma etc)

1. What type of accommodation do you currently live in?
2. Do you feel secure in your accommodation? Why/why not?

We would like to know how services could best meet the needs of a travelling population. If services have more of an idea of travelling patterns, then hopefully service provision could be improved.

3. Roughly how many months of the year do you spend travelling?
4. Do you tend to travel mainly within the county?
5. How long do you tend to stay within each place?
6. Are there particular times of year when you travel?
7. What types of sites do you usually stay on when you travel? (Eg roadside, private, housed).

Services

8. I'm going to read out a list of services. Please raise your hand if you use, have used, or are planning to use any of them: GPs, nurses, schools, Traveller Education Services, benefits office, CAB, SureStart, Connexions, council services (give details), Gypsy and Traveller liaison workers, Gypsy and Traveller voluntary organisations, other voluntary organisations, any other service (please state).
9. How often do you use these services?
10. What is your opinion of local services?
11. Are there any other agencies or services which you feel could be used more in providing for your needs?
12. Are there any barriers to using services? (eg physical access, services refusing to serve you, infrequent visits by services etc)
13. Does the type of accommodation which you live in affect your ability to access services?
14. Does the extent to which you are able to access services affect your lifestyle? For instance, when you come into contact with a good service, are you less likely to travel?
15. Thinking about all of the previous places you have lived, is there anything that would have made it easier for you to stay there? Eg.

³³ This questionnaire is included as an example of the areas consulted on. In practice, the interviews were less structured.

regular support, friends/family nearby, advice, employment, education, healthcare etc.

16. Can you think of any examples of support that provides or has provided a good service for you? What was it about them that you liked?
17. Do you think there should be more training for services about providing support for Gypsies and Travellers? What kind of training is needed?
18. Are there any other ways in which you think services could be improved?

Needs

19. I'm going to read out a list of things which people sometimes want help, support or advice with. After each one, please raise your hand if you or your family have wanted help with that in the past, if you want help with it now, or if you think you might want help with it in the future (see appendix A).
20. Have you ever been in a position in the past where you have really wanted some help/support/assistance with something but there was no one there to help you? Please give examples.
21. How does the type of accommodation in which you live affect your needs?
22. In particular, are there any needs which you or your family have which affects your ability to live in your preferred accommodation?
23. Do you or your family require any care because of ill health, disabilities, old age or any other specific reason?
24. If you or a family member currently receives care for this, who provides it? Does the service meet the need? Would you like additional support? In what form?
25. Are there any needs which you have which are not being met?
26. How do you think these needs could be best met? Eg, would you require continual support, temporary support, floating support?

Housed Gypsies and Travellers

27. Do you know of many Gypsies and Travellers in this region who live in houses?
28. What reasons do Gypsies and Travellers have for living in housing?
29. What are the advantages and disadvantages to living in a house?
30. Can you think of any specific needs of Gypsies and Travellers who live in houses? How best could these needs be addressed? (mention group housing scheme in Ireland)
31. Do you think it would be useful if local authorities monitored the proportion of Gypsies and Travellers who live in houses? Would you be willing to disclose your ethnicity if you felt that this would help services provide you with better support?
32. In your opinion, what type of accommodation and accommodation support provision would best enable you to live your life according to your culture?

Demographic information

Note gender of participants, ask their ages, ask if they have any disabilities.

Appendix A

Finding a home
Settling in to a new home
Budgeting
Accessing other services
Staying in education
Finding a school
Coping with isolation
Health issues
Accessing a GP
Accessing legal advice
Complementary therapy
Harassment
Making friends
Counselling
Abortion
Contraception
Alcohol use
Anger management
Sexual abuse

Furnishing your home
Claiming benefits
Independent living skills
Finding a job
Returning to education
Accessing leisure activities
Confidence building
Accessing a dentist
Accessing other healthcare
Dietary issues
Pregnancy
Mediation
Relationship difficulties
Parenting
Sexual health
Mental health
Drug use
Domestic violence

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