

**CAMBRIDGE SUB-REGION GYPSY/TRAVELLER NEEDS ASSESSMENT  
2005**

**(Report by the Heads of Housing Services and Planning Services)**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the key findings of the Cambridge Sub-Region Gypsy/Traveller Needs Assessment.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Housing Act 2004 places a duty on each local housing authorities to carry out a "Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment" (GTAA), in line with the duty to carry out a general Housing Market Assessment every three years.

- 2.2 Nine housing authorities and Cambridgeshire County Council agreed to carry out a joint study across the following administrative areas:

- The Cambridge Sub-region (Cambridgeshire districts plus Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury)
- Police and Health boundaries (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough)
- Rural Pathfinder work areas (Fenland and King's Lynn and West Norfolk)

- 2.3 This approach allowed a larger survey to be carried out than would otherwise be possible and to explore education and health issues. It is the largest survey to date with Gypsies/Travellers in the UK and is recognised by the ODPM as an example of best practice.

- 2.4 A summary of the needs assessment is appended to this report.

- 2.5 A full copy of the needs assessment is available on the council's website and in the members' room.

**3. THE STUDY**

- 3.1 The study was carried out by Anglia Ruskin University and Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College using the following approach, again seen as best practice:

- Working with a Reference Group of nationally known Gypsies/Travellers to ensure that the survey gathered the most accurate data possible
- Training nine Gypsies/Travellers as interviewers. The academics also interviewed to increase the number of interviews and for quality testing.
- Completing 313 interviews with one or more members of each family – similar to the Census approach. Interviews were carried out with Gypsies/Travellers on all kinds of sites as well as those in housing and some on the roadside.

- Analysing existing data - the ODPM 6-month caravan counts from 1980 to 2004 and school role data (also used to identify Gypsies/Travellers living in houses).
- Providing each housing authority in the study area with a GTAA in line with the Housing Act 2004 and ODPM guidelines.

#### 4. KEY FINDINGS

- 4.1 There are an estimated 6,500 to 7,000 Gypsies/Travellers in the study area, including those living in houses. Three districts have over 1,000 (Fenland, South Cambs, East Cambs); three have between 200 and 600 (King's Lynn & West Norfolk, Peterborough, Forest Heath); three have under 200 (Huntingdonshire, Cambridge, St Edmundsbury).
- 4.2 Gypsies/Travellers together constitute one of the largest minority ethnic groups in the study area. Two main groups are: English Gypsies - around 72% of respondents to the survey - tend to be 'born and bred' in the region; Irish Travellers - around 23% of respondents to the survey - some of these are recent in-migrants.
- 4.3 Family size may be decreasing, although *this tentative conclusion is not based on robust demographic methods*. Three generations can be identified in the survey responses and the number of siblings appears to decrease in each generation. However, the Gypsy/Traveller population is young and is increasing, partly by increasing life expectancy.
- 4.4 The total number of caravans in the study area almost doubled between 1980 and 2004 from around 900 to around 1,600<sup>1</sup>. This reflects natural population growth as well as in-migration. The distribution of caravans is not even across the districts. Since 1980 the total numbers have risen in five districts and fallen in four. There was a particularly large in-migration to unauthorised encampments in South Cambridgeshire between 2002 and 2004.
- 4.5 The proportion of the Gypsy/Traveller population living in housing varies considerably between districts - between 12% and 52% of the district Gypsy/Traveller population.
- 4.6 Following the ODPM methodology for the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, the estimated additional pitches required by district to 2010 are:

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<sup>1</sup> Source ODPM Caravan Counts

<b>District</b>	<b>Pitches</b>
Fenland	160-205
South Cambs	110-130
East Cambs	25-45
Kings Lynn & W. Norfolk	45-60
Forest Heath	15-20
Huntingdonshire	15-25
Peterborough	10-15
St Edmundsbury	10-20
Cambridge (City)	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>405-535</b>

- 4.7 Many Gypsies/Travellers prefer to provide their own sites, but may be deterred by cost. Transit sites are unpopular because of not knowing who else will stop there. Asked where sites were needed, Travellers were flexible, e.g.: "*More sites anywhere around here*".
- 4.8 The area is attractive to Gypsies/Travellers for work and travel. Family networks are important for economic activity and many families have lived in the area for a considerable time. They find it increasingly difficult to find work in traditional occupations, e.g. farm labour. The A14, M1, and routes to London are key routes. Some use these routinely for business.
- 4.9 Like the settled population, accommodation is a major factor in health. Those on authorised private sites reported the best health compared to those on council sites or unauthorised sites. Life expectancy for English Gypsies is unusually high in the study area, with 17% being over 65. The major health conditions experienced by at least one member of a family were: asthma or other chest problems (50% of families); back problems; 'nerves'; cardio-vascular problems. Health visitors were considered the most helpful of all services.
- 4.10 The survey confirms educational issues which Traveller Education Services are already addressing. Some parents lack motivation to send children to secondary school, preferring to concentrate on equipping their children for the modern Gypsy/Traveller world. There is low educational achievement - rapidly increasing in some cases. Gypsy/Traveller children feel alienated at school and are often bullied. There is considerable interest in vocational training for young people and adults.
- 4.11 Working in partnership on a planned approach to providing the extra pitches is a key element in easing tension between the Gypsy/Traveller and the settled populations.
- 4.12 Accommodation is a key element in improving health and educational opportunities.

## **5. Planning Perspective - Regional**

- 5.1 Government guidance requires that all Needs Assessments be considered by Regional Housing Boards.
- 5.2 In the Eastern region a single-issue review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) has just commenced concerning the provision of gypsy and traveller caravan sites. The Regional Planning Board has set up a Gypsy and Travellers Steering Group, which met for the first time in May. A part of its remit is to advise the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) on the development of the RSS revision and to make recommendations for an adequate level and spatial distribution of pitch provisions in meeting the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities in the East of England. The RSS will, therefore, ultimately specify pitch numbers for each planning authority but not their locations.

## **6. Planning Perspective - HDC**

- 6.1 The Council will be drafting a Gypsy and Travellers Sites Development Plan Document (DPD), which is a statutory plan. The purpose of a DPD is to contain site specific proposals for gypsy and travellers sites to meet the identified needs up to 2021, including, if necessary, allocating new sites, as required by government policies. The Needs Assessment will be an important part of the evidence base for this plan and, as this sub region is more advanced than the rest of the region, the needs assessment will allow the DPD to proceed without having to wait for the adoption of the RSS policy review.
- 6.2 The Council has set out the programme for the preparation of its plans, including the Gypsy and Travellers DPD, in its Local Development Scheme and will be consulting on the issues and options raised by the DPD and Needs Assessment later this year.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

That members note the key findings of the Needs Assessment.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

'Planning for Gypsy and Travellers Sites – Circular 01/2006, ODPM, February 2006 –available from [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

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## **Cambridge Sub-Region Gypsy/Traveller Needs Assessment 2005 Summary**

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May 2006

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This summary brings together some key points from the Cambridgeshire sub-Region Gypsy/Traveller Needs Assessment. It is intended to be for a general audience and to present the main findings and messages that can be distilled from those findings. The Assessment centred on running 313 interviews - the largest survey of Gypsies/Travellers undertaken in the UK to date - and worked with Gypsies/Travellers to make that survey a success.
- 1.2 The assessment was carried out by academics from Anglia Ruskin University and Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College for a consortium of local authorities - Cambridgeshire County Council and nine councils with housing responsibilities: Cambridge City Council; East Cambridgeshire District Council; Fenland DC; Forest Heath DC; Huntingdonshire DC; King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council; Peterborough City Council; South Cambridgeshire DC; St Edmundsbury BC. Huntingdonshire Primary Care Trust also contributed.
- 1.3 The full report has over 90 pages of detailed information. That detail is necessary to do justice to the study. Facts about Gypsies/Travellers often need to be understood in the context of a detailed picture of facts about the modern travelling lifestyle and the interaction with the settled communities.
- 1.4 The term 'Gypsy/Traveller' is used in this report to distinguish between the main two different ethnic groups in the study area.

### **2 Background**

- 2.1 A considerable amount of work has been carried out in the Cambridgeshire area relating to Travellers. Examples In Cambridgeshire include:
  - The Cambridgeshire Travellers Review, 1998
  - Crime Audits – 2004 fear and experience of crime
  - Work by the Cambridgeshire Race Equality and Diversity Service Traveller Team (Traveller Education)
  - Work by the Ormiston Children and Families Trust Travellers Initiative
- 2.2 Most research or consultation with Gypsies/Travellers is essentially qualitative. This survey attempted to be more quantitative. Gathering information to put planning for Gypsies/Travellers more on a par with planning for the settled communities should allow planning for Gypsies/Travellers to be improved. And that should be to the benefit of everyone in the study area – the settled community as well as Gypsies/Travellers.

### **3 Aims**

3.1 The aims of the study were:

- To assess the current and potential future need within the Travelling communities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for learning, health services and other services provided by local authorities and their partner organizations.
- To understand the demographic profile of the Travelling Community, household formation within it, accommodation and housing needs and routes into accommodation and housing.
- To increase understanding of how services might best be provided to meet Gypsies/Travellers' needs, such as how to make services and accommodation accessible to Gypsies/Travellers.
- To meet the requirements of the Housing Act 2004 - assessing housing needs

3.2 The second of these is the most important in this study.

### **4 The Approach**

4.1 The following approach was taken to the Assessment:

- A Reference Group of nationally known Gypsies/Travellers was recruited.
- The statutory bodies devised a list of questions (councils, Health and Police). This was passed to the Reference Group to ensure that the form of the questions was relevant to Gypsies/Travellers so as to gather the most accurate responses possible.
- Nine Gypsies/Travellers were trained as interviewers. Not all were literate and tapes and transcriptions were used successfully. The academics also interviewed, both to increase the number of interviews and as part of the quality testing.
- 313 interviews were completed. Each interview was with one or more members of each family. This has much in common with the Census approach. Interviews were run with Gypsies/Travellers on all kinds of sites as well as those in housing and some on the roadside.
- Existing data was analysed, particularly the ODPM 6-month caravan counts from 1980 to 2004. School role data was also analysed and used to identify Gypsies/Travellers living in houses.
- Some focus groups were run to explore more detailed issues.
- Each housing authority in the study area had a "Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment" in line with the Housing Act 2004 and ODPM guidelines. Importantly, the Act requires an assessment of the accommodation needs of "Gypsies and Travellers residing in *or resorting to* their district".

### **5 Key Findings**

The Gypsy Traveller Population

5.1 There are significant numbers of Gypsies/Travellers in the study area.

- There are an estimated 6,500 to 7,000 Gypsies/Travellers in the study area, including those living in houses.
  - Around 5,000 to 5,500 of these are in Cambridgeshire.
  - Of those in Cambridgeshire, around 2,800 are in Fenland, 1,300 in South Cambs and 1,000 in East Cambs.
- 5.2 When counted as a single group, Gypsies/Travellers constitute one of the largest minority ethnic groups in the study area. However, it is important to realise that there are different ethnicities within the travelling communities. The two major groups identified here are:
- English Gypsies formed around 72% of respondents to the survey. These tend to be 'born and bred' in the region
  - Irish Travellers formed around 23% of respondents to the survey. Some of these are recent in-migrants.
- 5.3 The Irish Traveller population appears to be younger than the English Gypsy population.
- 5.4 The size of families may be decreasing, although *this tentative conclusion is not based on robust demographic methods*. Three generations can be broadly identified in the survey responses and the number of siblings appears to decrease in each generation:
- Older respondents (aged over 50) averaged 6.2 siblings.
  - Younger respondents (aged around 20 - 50) averaged 5.2 siblings.
  - The average number of children born to respondents averaged 3.6, or each child having around 3 siblings. This is probably lower than the final figure for siblings in this generation as some of these families will grow.
- 5.5 Despite the evidence of smaller families, the Gypsy/Traveller population is young and increasing. This conclusion from the survey is in line with other research and presumably the growth is partly due to increasing life expectancy along with the in-migration.

#### Accommodation and the Changing Numbers of Caravans

- 5.6 The total number of caravans in the study area almost doubled between 1980 and 2004 from around 900 to around 1,600. In the eight years 1996 to 2004 there was an increase of 600 caravans<sup>2</sup>. This reflects natural population growth as well as in-migration.
- 5.7 The distribution of caravans is not even across the districts:
- Since 1980 the total numbers have risen in five districts and fallen in four.
  - South Cambridgeshire and Fenland each have over 400 caravans.
  - East Cambridgeshire, King's Lynn and Peterborough each have 100 to 200 caravans.
  - Cambridge City, Forest Heath, Huntingdonshire and St Edmundsbury each have under 100 caravans

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<sup>2</sup> Source: ODPM caravan counts

- 5.8 There was a particularly large in-migration to South Cambridgeshire between 2002 and 2004, increasing the number of caravans on unauthorised encampments in that district.
- 5.9 Other work has estimated that as many as 50% of Gypsies/Travellers live in houses<sup>3</sup>. The survey and local education data suggest a smaller percentage in this area, with figures varying considerably between districts from around 12% to 52% of the district Gypsy/Traveller population.

#### Existing and Future Sites

- 5.10 Gypsies/Travellers in the survey expressed a preference for providing their own site. Forty-nine percent of those who do not currently own their site said they wanted to own their own site, although the other 41% of this group said they did not want to own their site. Transit sites were not popular for reasons such as not knowing who else will be on the site. Instead, Gypsies/Travellers would prefer visiting pitches on permanent sites.
- 5.11 When asked where they needed sites, Travellers tended to be flexible, such as: *"More sites anywhere around here"*.
- 5.12 A number of Gypsies/Travellers reported that they lacked services – including on some existing council sites. The most important of these are: 20% lacked toilets; 53% lacked fire prevention; 78% lacked play space; 28% lacked a reliable postal service; 87% lacked mains gas. On the positive side, only 7% lacked mains electricity and 4% lacked running water (probably explainable by unauthorised encampments).

#### Work and Travel

- 5.13 Work and travel are major reasons why Cambridgeshire is attractive to Gypsies/Travellers. Family networks are important for economic activity and many families have lived in the area for a considerable time. However, it is increasingly difficult for Gypsies/Travellers to find work in traditional occupations. A good example is agricultural work, where the increased use of migrant workers from Eastern Europe has cut the number of jobs available to Gypsies/Travellers.
- 5.14 The A14, M1, and routes to London such as the M11 are key routes. Some Gypsies/Travellers use them routinely for business, one notable example being a family using the A14 to access trade on the continent.

#### Health

- 5.15 Life expectancy for English Gypsies appears to be comparatively high in the study area. The situation regarding Irish Travellers is less clear. The survey estimates that over 17% of English Gypsies in the study area are over 65. The proportion of Irish Travellers over 65 was considerably lower (under 4%). The difference between the two populations is partly explained by English Gypsies being based in the area for many years while the Irish Travellers include a number of in-migrants who tend to be younger. Other studies have

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<sup>3</sup> Niner, P. (2003). *Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England*, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham. This was a major national study for the ODPM



shown a much lower proportion of Gypsies being over 65 – typically between two and three percent. This higher life expectancy in the Cambridgeshire area probably reflects better access to health services and living with other family members, particularly those living on council sites. However, a considerable number of Gypsies/Travellers in the 55 and over age group reported having poor health.

5.17 Obviously, like the settled population, accommodation is a major factor in health:

- Authorised sites – 55% report good health, 28% poor health
- Council sites - 39% reported good health, 48% poor health (possibly because they moved there because of poor health)
- Unauthorised sites – 37% reported good health, 49% poor health

5.18 The major health conditions experiences by at least one member of a family were:

- Asthma or other chest problems – 50% of families
- Back problems – 38% of families
- 'Nerves' – 30% of families
- Cardio-vascular problems – 18% of families

These are just some of the common conditions found by other surveys<sup>4</sup>.

5.19 Health visitors were considered the most helpful service of any mentioned (54% said they found them helpful) with GP surgeries the second most helpful (14% found them helpful).

Education

5.20 There is considerable information available on education from the Traveller Education services. This survey confirms generally known problems which the Traveller Education services are already addressing such as:

- Lack of motivation in some parents to send children to secondary school, preferring to concentrate on preparing to equip their children for the modern Gypsy/Traveller world.
- Low (but rapidly increasing in some cases) educational achievement.
- Gypsy/Traveller children feeling alienated at school and sometimes being bullied.
- There is considerable interest in vocational training for young people and adults.

## 6 Key Messages

- There are around 6,500 to 7,000 Gypsies/Travellers in the study area.
- Family sizes appear to be decreasing.
- Incoming Irish Travellers are a younger population than the English Gypsies.

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<sup>4</sup> e.g. Parry, G., Van Cleemput, P., Peters, J., Moore, J., Walters, S., Thomas, K., and Cooper, C. (2004) *The Health Status of Gypsies and Travellers in England*, University of Sheffield

- Cambridgeshire is attractive to Gypsies/Travellers for family, work and travel.
- There is a need for more pitches in the study area – the figures are being assessed.
- Working in partnership on a planned approach to providing these pitches is a key element in easing tension between the Gypsy/Traveller and the settled populations.
- Accommodation is a key element in improving health and educational opportunities.
- Gypsies/Travellers prefer smaller, private, family sites.
- There is a much higher proportion of older English Gypsies in the Cambridgeshire area than is usual, probably due to access to health care and living with families
- Poor health remains a problem for the 55-plus age group.
- There are some prevalent health problems such as asthma.
- Gypsy/Traveller children may still feel isolated at school.

## **Appendix: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments**

The Housing Act 2004 places a duty on each local housing authorities to carry out a "Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment" (GTAA), in line with their duty to carry out a general Housing Market Assessment every three years. The survey provided each district with a GTAA in line with the Housing Act and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) guidelines. The number of extra pitches assessed as required in each district is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Assessments**

<b>District</b>	<b>Pitches</b>
Fenland	160-205
South Cambs	110-130
East Cambs	25-45
Kings Lynn & W. Norfolk	45-60
Forest Heath	15-20
Huntingdonshire	15-25
Peterborough	10-15
St Edmundsbury	10-20
Cambridge (City)	15
Total	405-535