

Gypsy and Traveller  
Accommodation  
Assessment  
S.225 Housing Act 2004

Analysis of Existing Data Sources

May 2007

# 1 INTRODUCTION

For the first time the Housing Act 2004 S.225 makes it a statutory requirement that all Local Authorities in England and Wales carry out a formal assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in their area. Under S.225 The Welsh Assembly Government (W.A.G.) further requires Welsh Local Authorities to mainstream their coverage of Gypsy & Traveller accommodation needs within their local Housing Strategy. The precise definition of “Gypsies & Travellers” for the purposes of this assessment is; ‘Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependants educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, and all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism and/or caravan dwelling’. This therefore includes New Travellers, circus people and travelling showmen as well as Romany Gypsies, and Irish Travellers

The Welsh Assembly Government Equal Opportunities Committee Policy Review of Services for Gypsies & Travellers (2002-3) made 52 recommendations focusing on equality, accommodation, education and health issues. The Review highlighted the difficulties of addressing the needs of a group of people that is not homogenous and identified the need for further detailed investigations. In particular it identified the provision of suitable accommodation as critical to improving service provision in all areas.

Further research undertaken in 2006 by the Welsh Assembly Government suggested a total population of around 2000, but acknowledges the “general invisibility” of Gypsies & Travellers in Wales. This estimate did not include people not identifying themselves as Gypsies and Travellers for a variety of reasons. This group of people are likely to be living in houses, mobile home parks and private caravan site accommodation.

Current W.A.G guidance (Local Housing Market Assessment Guide 2006) suggests that neither the current nor the future projected accommodation needs of Gypsies & Travellers are well understood. This is a historic consequence of their exclusion from local housing needs assessments to date.

The S225 Housing Act 2004 Accommodation Assessment will provide data capable of identifying Gypsy & Traveller accommodation needs with reference to both private and socially rented Site accommodation, transit provision, and both owner occupied and affordable housing.

The W.A.G. Guidance identifies a two stage assessment process: an analysis of existing data sources, and a specialist survey.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council commissioned their analysis of existing data sources in November 2006 and this report sets out the results.

The report identifies the existing data sources and presents findings from these sources and a short questionnaire. It sets the findings within a context for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

## 2 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**GYPSY & TRAVELLER:** used to describe all the different groups of Gypsies and Travellers. Separate groups of Gypsies and Travellers include Welsh and English Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Scottish Travellers and New Travellers. Gypsies were recognised as a traditional ethnic group in 1989 and Irish Travellers in 2000; each group has a separate and distinct cultural identity.

**SETTLED COMMUNITY:** a term used to describe non-Gypsies and Travellers.

**SHOWMEN FAMILIES AND CIRCUS FAMILIES:** included in this report as suggested by the WAG Local Housing Market Assessment Guide.

**SITE:** an area of land with planning permission usually for the exclusive use of Gypsies or Travellers. It has planning permission for a specific number of caravans or pitches or households. There are 2 types of site:

\_ **PUBLIC SITES** are provided by the Local Authority and a pitch on the site is rented from the Local Authority.

\_ **PRIVATE SITES** are bought and developed by Gypsies or Travellers for permanent residence for their immediate family or extended family members. They are usually small developments of 1 – 4 family units.

**PITCH:** an area of land within a Site, usually occupied by one licensee family living in 1 or 2 caravans depending on family size and composition, and also available space.

**FAMILY:** a household unit similar to a bricks & mortar household usually made up of parents and children. A family may also include single adult relatives or grandparents, living together as one unit in 1 or 2 caravans. If the family includes older children, single adults, or grandparents then this unit will

probably be living in 2, or sometimes 3 caravans. However roadside families often have fewer caravans.

**HOUSED FAMILIES:** Gypsy & Traveller families who live in ordinary housing and who may have done so for several generations.

**MOBILE HOME PARKS OR SITES:** commercially operated businesses. The owner or operator provides static mobile homes for rent, usually to the settled community, but this may include Gypsy and Traveller families.

**UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENT:** land where Gypsy & Traveller families live in caravans without the owner's permission, and in law is trespass. Types of land include roadside verges and lay-bys, car parks, industrial estates and undeveloped commercial land.

**ROADSIDE FAMILIES:** used to describe Gypsy & Traveller families living on unauthorised encampments.

**TEMPORARY STOPPING :** used to describe families living in caravans on land with both the owner's permission and legal permission.

# 3

## METHODOLOGY: THE INFORMATION GATHERING PROCESS

A mixed approach was taken to gathering data and information. There were 3 stages to the process.

A **data search** of published sources was undertaken.

A short **questionnaire** was compiled to gain as much up to date information as possible. Rhondda Cynon Taf Council sent out the questionnaire, background information and a covering letter to 19 Council officers. The Council also sent the same mailing out to a recommended list of 32 organisations who might have had contact with Gypsies and Travellers in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area over the past 3 years. A total of 19 responses were received from Council officers, and 25 from other organisations. In an effort to maximise the number of responses some unreturned questionnaires were followed up by telephone and/or email as time allowed. Some questionnaires were then completed over the phone.

A series of **follow up interviews** were then arranged. 13 telephone or face to face interviews were held with a number of key officers from within the Local Authority and from other relevant agencies. This included 4 visits to mobile-home parks. The interviews focused on supplementing and cross referencing the data already supplied through the survey form, and took place between 9<sup>th</sup> January and 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007. From the supplementary information supplied through interview it has been possible to eliminate double-counting of both families and locations from the findings.

Throughout the process it was emphasised that individuals would not be identified in the report and that privacy and professional knowledge would be respected.

# 4 DATA SEARCH RESULTS

Most statistical information on the Gypsy & Traveller population at both national and local levels is extremely limited. The information is often incomplete, or restricted to particular categories such as children or caravans.

The following sources were searched and the results summarised as follows:

## 1. NATIONAL CENSUS

Although the National Census 2001 collects information on BME groups there is no separate classification for Gypsies and Travellers. However, a Gypsy and Traveller category is likely to be included for the 2011 Census.

## 2. ETHNIC MONITORING SCHEMES

The majority of national and local ethnic monitoring schemes follow the National Census classification and therefore have no information on Gypsies & Travellers. In “Common Ground”, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) inquiry report on Gypsies & Travellers 2006, 2 separate categories for Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recommended in all ethnic monitoring arrangements.

## 3. GYPSY & TRAVELLER CARAVAN COUNTS 1979-2006

In Wales the biannual caravan count was stopped in 1997 and only resumed in July 2006. The Counts took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January and 20<sup>th</sup> July annually. They rely on each local authority’s resources and commitment, and count Gypsy & Traveller caravans, not families, and of course do not include Gypsies & Travellers living in housing.

## **All Wales**

- In 1994, 57% of caravans were on public sites, 5% on private sites and 38% on unauthorised sites.
- In 2006, 56% of caravans were on public sites, 25% on private sites, and 20% on unauthorised sites

## **Former Taff Ely, Rhondda & Cynon Valley District Councils: July 1979 - July 1993**

- No private or public sites recorded in this period<sup>1</sup>.

## **Taff Ely District**

- 1 unauthorised site was recorded at every count from July 1979 - January 1988, and an additional unauthorised site recorded in July 1982, January 1983, July 1983 & July 1985.
- January 1993 count recorded an unauthorised site at Groesfaen with caravans.
- July 1993 count recorded an unauthorised site at Nantgarw with 21 caravans.

## **Rhondda District**

- No caravans recorded on any type of Site.

## **Cynon Valley District**

- 1 unauthorised site in January 1983 and again in July 1987.

## **Rhondda Cynon Taf July 2006 & January 2007**

- 5 caravans on 5 pitches at the Beddau caravan site (a public/socially rented site) recorded at both counts,
- July 2006 count recorded 5 caravans on 2 unauthorised sites
- January 2007 count recorded 10 caravans on 3 unauthorised sites.
- The unauthorised sites are located in the Taff Ely and Cynon Valley districts and are all owned by Gypsies and Travellers.

#### 4. TRAVELLER CHILDREN & EDUCATIONAL NEED IN WALES, 1998

This Save the Children report identified 17 children, 0-16yrs, in Rhondda Cynon Taf in May 1998. These were 16 fairground/circus children and 1 New Traveller child. No Gypsy or Irish Traveller children were identified through the research.

#### 5. ACCOMMODATION NEEDS OF GYPSY-TRAVELLERS IN WALES (NINER REPORT WALES), W.A.G. 2006

##### **All Wales Findings**

Niner's "best estimate" is that currently there are:

- at least 30 sites providing 440 pitches
- 379 pitches on local authority sites
- 55 pitches on privately owned sites

The report concludes that there is a need for an additional 275-305 permanent pitches; 150-200 on local authority sites and 55 on private sites.

##### **Rhondda Cynon Taf Findings**

Beddau caravan site is included, but Niner notes that it is not a designated Gypsy Traveller site. It is identified as having 4 permanent pitches, and a vacant transit pitch is included in one of the reports.

Beddau site came top of a table of 7 sites in Wales needing more than £2000 per pitch per annum over the next 5 years.

1 unauthorised encampment was reported in the local authority survey March-October 2005.

# 5 FINDINGS & COMMENTARY

## 5.1 RECORD KEEPING & ETHNIC MONITORING

The questionnaire asked respondents what their sources were in providing their information. It offered choices of referral/case monitoring, waiting lists, anecdotal sources, and asked them to specify if other sources were used.

### **R.C.T. Council Service Sections**

- 12 responses from 19 questionnaire replies:
  - 4 used referral/case monitoring,
  - 4 used anecdotal sources,
  - 4 used a combination of 2 sources.
- A total of 7 sections used referral/case monitoring to provide their information.

### **Other Agencies**

- 18 responses from 25 questionnaire replies:
  - 6 used referral/case monitoring
  - 3 used anecdotal sources,
  - 1 used waiting lists
  - 3 used personal knowledge
  - 5 used a combination of 2 or more sources
- A total of 10 agencies used referral/case monitoring
- 2 agencies used both ethnic monitoring and direct contacts with Gypsies & Travellers to provide their information.

- One agency using direct contact with just one family, were able to supply comprehensive information on the number of families living on sites and in housing in one locality. This information was not available to any other agency, and indicates the extent of information held by Gypsy & Traveller families themselves.

## 5.2 NUMBERS, LOCATIONS & RANGE OF ACCOMMODATION TYPES

### 5.2.1 Private Sites

- 7-9 families in 3 locations
- Location areas:
  - Aberdare - 5 caravans (probably 3, 4, 5 or families)
  - Llantrisant - 4 families
- None of the 3 sites have current planning permission
- In the last 3 years 1 family has been unable to find alternative accommodation to their existing site.
- The majority of Gypsy & Traveller families living in caravans in Rhondda Cynon Taf are currently living on private sites. Although in each case the land is owned by a Gypsy & Traveller family, none of the sites have planning permission.

### 5.2.2 Local authority

- 5 families living on 1 site
- Location area:
  - Llantrisant
- 3 families are long-term residents/ licensees.
- 2 families have been resident since 2005 but have no residential licence agreement.

- The Niner Wales Report 2006 found that the site requires £130,000 to be spent in the next 5 years to bring 4 pitches up to an acceptable standard.

### 5.2.3 Housed Families

“more than half of the Gypsy & Traveller community is thought to be residing in bricks and mortar” – WAG Local Housing Market Assessment Guide, 2006.

- 15 families living in houses in 6 location areas
- Location area:
  - 7 families in Aberdare
  - 1 family in Mountain Ash
  - 1 family in Pontypridd
  - 1 family in Tonypandy
  - 5 families in Llantrisant
- Gypsy & Traveller families have the same secure tenancy arrangements as other house dwellers.
- 13 of the 15 families were identified by specialist agencies through direct contact with Gypsy & Traveller families.
- Some Gypsy & Traveller families have always lived in houses. Some families resort temporarily to housing for education, health or social reasons. Others resort to housing because they have no alternative accommodation option.
- It is probable that there are double the numbers of families living in housing than has been found through this exercise; this current total of 15 families is therefore a particularly conservative figure.

### 5.2.4 Commercially Operated Mobile Home Parks

“...an unknown number of Gypsy-Travellers live on caravan sites not specifically designated or designed for Gypsy-Travellers” – Niner Wales report 2006.

- 3 families living on mobile home parks at 2 locations
- Location area:  
Pontypridd
- Approximately 20 years ago, 2 mobile home parks in Rhondda Cynon Taf were set up by Gypsy & Traveller families for Gypsy & Traveller use. The original residents and their families moved off the two sites and some are now living on Local Authority Sites in neighbouring areas but retain strong connections to Rhondda Cynon Taf. Both sites, located in Aberdare and Pontypridd, are now substantial mobile home parks. 1 park site currently has no Gypsy & Traveller families living on it, and the other has 1 Gypsy & Traveller family.
- An additional mobile home park in Pontypridd is owned and managed by a Gypsy family who live on-site.

### 5.2.5 Unauthorised Stopping/Encampments UNAUTHORISED STOPPING/ENCAMPMENTS

(i.e. without permission, but NOT including families living on private sites, or on the LA site without permission)

- 11 separate encampment sites were identified
- Location areas:  
Aberdare - 5  
Mountain Ash – 2  
Pontypridd – 3  
Llantrisant - 1

- Number of different encampments at each site ranged from 1 to 4 in each year.
- Number of caravans per encampment ranged from 2 to 10.
- 8 unauthorised encampments were on commercial premises.  
2 were on land owned by Rhondda Cynon Taf C.B.C.  
1 was on the highway.
- 2 of the locations in Aberdare are visited annually between March and November by Gypsy & Traveller families and the number of encampments and caravans fluctuate.

### 5.2.6 Temporary Stopping

(i.e. with permission of the landowner and on a temporary basis)

- 3 family groups
- Location areas:  
Aberdare  
Llantrisant
- One family group stay on a touring caravan site every year between March and September when the site is open. There are usually 2 caravans on 2 pitches. It is reportedly the only touring caravan site in the area which accepts Gypsies & Travellers. The group moves off this site every 3 weeks up to a maximum 4 times, because of site rules to do with length of stay. Over the last 3 years there has been a total occupancy rate of 128 days.
- Two separate family groups stay temporarily with relatives on private Sites. One family is known to have no other accommodation, otherwise there is no information about family composition or accommodation need.

### 5.2.7 Homelessness

- 3 families were identified as homeless
- Location area:
  - Aberdare – 2
  - Pontypridd – 1
- 2 families were in temporary supported housing and relocated outside Rhondda Cynon Taf, and 1 family is currently street homeless.
- The Code of Guidance For Local Authorities On Allocations Of Accommodation And Homelessness (2003) reminds authorities that people are homeless if they have no legal place to live in their caravan. The above 3 families were not living in caravans, but depending on individual circumstance all Gypsy & Traveller families without secure accommodation are potentially homeless. Within R.C.T. this could include: all families on the local Authority Site, up to 9 families living on private sites, and all families living without a legal base on the 11 unauthorised encampments (see below).

### 5.2.8 Living outside R.C.T. & seeking permanent site accommodation within R.C.T.

- 3 agencies reported families seeking Site accommodation in R.C.T.
- 2 agencies knew of 8 specific families. 2 of these families had stopped on unauthorised encampments in R.C.T. during 2006.
- The 3rd agency reported an additional and unspecified number of families seeking.
- Type of accommodation required :
  - Local authority permanent residential Site.....6 families.
  - Small, family based private site..... ..2 families.
- 4 families had made enquiries about pitch availability and waiting lists for the site in the Llantrisant area.

- 1 family had investigated a plot of land without planning permission in the Aberdare area with a view to site development.
- 1 family seeking private site accommodation was also considering the site in the Llantrisant area.

#### 5.2.9 Showmen Families

- 6 Families
- Location area:  
Llantrisant
- 25 families living outside R.C.T. seeking a permanent accommodation base within R.C.T.
- Showmen Families object to being identified as Gypsies and Travellers.

# 6 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. There is limited statistical information available through published sources on the Welsh Gypsy & Traveller population.
2. Information on Gypsies and Travellers is currently held in a variety of forms as determined by each individual service area.
3. A total of 31-33 Gypsy & Traveller families (households) have been identified living permanently in R.C.T. 1 family is street homeless. 18 families are living in secure accommodation in housing and on mobile-home parks, whilst 12-14 families are living in insecure accommodation on the local authority caravan site, and on small private caravan sites.
4. Over 40% of the Gypsy & Traveller population in R.C.T. are living in insecure accommodation and potentially homeless.
5. There are an additional but unknown number of families who reside temporarily, on the private sites, on a touring caravan site, and on unauthorised encampments. Unauthorised encampments have been recorded for 28 years now, and in the last 3 years there have been at least 11 separate encampment sites.
6. It is probable that there are double the numbers of families living in housing than has been found through this exercise; this current total of 15 families is therefore a particularly conservative figure.
7. A minimum of 8 families living outside the borough are currently looking for accommodation within Rhondda Cynon Taf. 6 families are seeking a pitch on the local authority caravan Site, and 2 families are seeking accommodation on a private site.

8. 6 Showmen families have bases in the Llantrisant area. There are 25 families living outside Rhondda Cynon Taf who need a permanent base within the area.
  
9. Geographically, the majority of Gypsy & Traveller families live in the Aberdare, Pontypridd, and Llantrisant areas, both in housing and on caravan sites. These are also the areas where most of the unauthorised encampments occur.

# 7 CONCLUSIONS

As anticipated in the W.A.G. Guidance for Gypsies and Traveller Accommodation Assessments, the existing data sources do not provide enough quantitative or qualitative information for a detailed and comprehensive assessment to be made and the Council will need to proceed to Stage Two and undertake a specialist survey and/or qualitative research.

A credible and high quality process for arriving at the assessment of Gypsy & Traveller accommodation needs will be essential in meeting the legislative requirements particularly of S.225 Housing Act 2004 and must be robust enough to stand up to judicial review and planning appeals.

This first stage of information gathering has provided the essential information base for further survey work with the Gypsy & Traveller population in Rhondda Cynon Taf. It has involved and engaged a wide range of departments, organizations and individuals throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf and an extensive network of informed and interested contacts now exists.