

# **Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)**

## **Work Brief**

### **Background**

The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 places a legal duty on Local Authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers (Section 101) and subsequently meet those needs (Section 103). There is a legal requirement (Housing (Wales) Act 2014) for GTAAs to be undertaken as a minimum every 5 years and the Council is now required to undertake a new Assessment. The deadline for the GTAA to be submitted to Welsh Government is 24th February 2022. An up to date GTAA is also a requirement for the replacement LDP and must stand up to scrutiny from the Independent Planning Inspector.

Welsh Government have published statutory guidance '*Undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments*' and will assess the completed GTAA against this methodology. The guidance sets out clear stages and tasks to be followed when undertaking a GTAA. This forms the basis for this work brief. Input from discussions and recommendations from the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group have been incorporated into the work brief. A detailed timeline is attached.

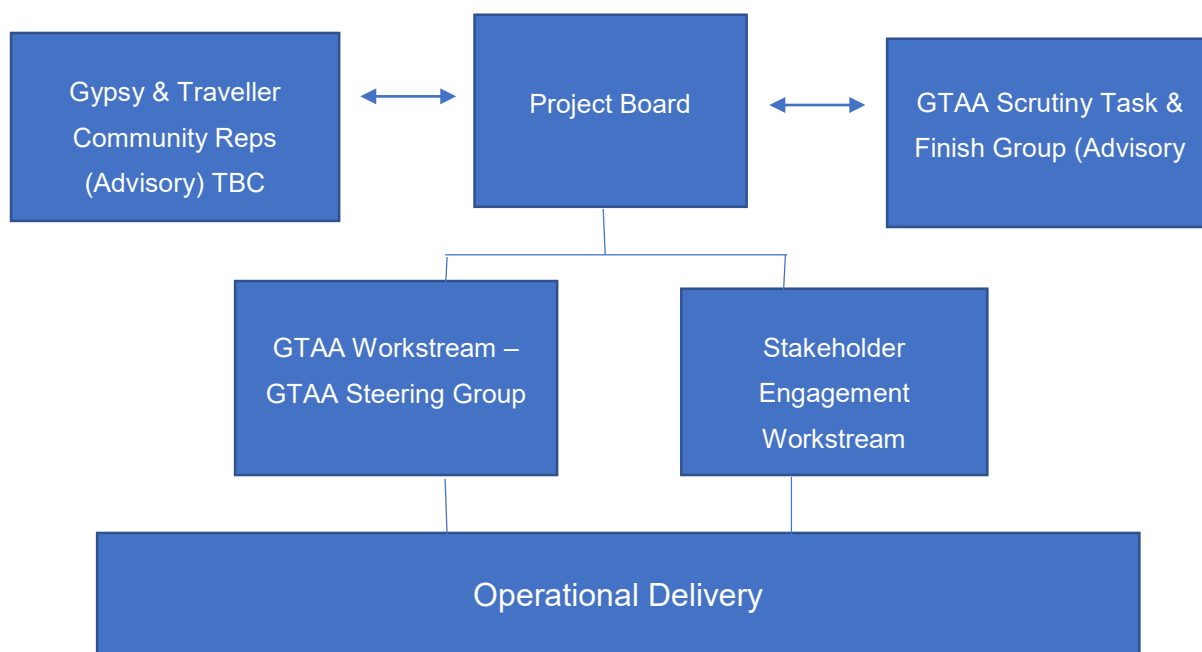
### **Project structure and management**

The WG GTAA methodology requires that a project Steering Group is established. There has been a more comprehensive and robust project structure developed for managing the Denbighshire GTAA, including establishment of a member-led Project Board and a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. This is above the requirements set out within the methodology and includes a role for elected members within the project structure through a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

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Project Structure diagram for the delivery of the GTAA



**Project Board** – This is a project management requirement and is not a requirement of the WG GTAA methodology. A project Management Board has been established with the purpose of ensuring that this piece of work is Member-led through inclusion of the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member.

The role of the Project Board is to manage the delivery of the project, secure resources for the project, and ensure communication about the project.

Membership comprises:

- Cllr Hugh Evans - Leader of the Council
- Cllr Mark Young - Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities
- Graham Boase - Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm
- Emlyn Jones - Head of Planning, Public Protection & Countryside Services
- Gary Williams - Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services

Support is provided by the Corporate Project Manager and Strategic Planning & Housing Manager.

**Scrutiny Task and Finish Group** – This is not a requirement of the WG GTAA methodology. The role of the Task and Finish Group as defined in the agreed Terms of Reference is to monitor adherence to the methodology, advise on the development of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and report to Communities Scrutiny Committee.

**GTAA Steering Group** – There is a requirement as set out within the WG GTAA methodology that a Steering Group should be established. The methodology sets out the role and membership of the Steering Group. The focus of this Group is to provide operational support to those undertaking the study.

The role of the Steering Group as set out in the WG methodology is to confirm details of the commission with the researcher, publicise the study, provide local knowledge and cultural guidance, provide feedback to consultation participants and stakeholders, ensure results are taken seriously and acted on.

Membership as set out in the methodology comprises:

- Local authority housing and planning professionals
- Consultant if employed
- Representatives of the local Gypsy and Traveller community
- Organisations working to support Gypsy and Traveller Communities (Travelling Ahead)
- Lead Councillor (Equality or Planning portfolio holder)

It is not the role of the Steering Group to undertake the assessment or scrutinise the data or study conclusions.

The GTAA Steering Group should endeavour to include Gypsy and Traveller representatives on the Group to represent the views and interests of the Gypsy and Traveller community. Recruitment to this may be challenging and it may be more likely to be achieved through a similar Task & Finish Group structure as with the elected members group. Travelling Ahead are currently liaising with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community to seek support and input.

### **Consultants**

The WG methodology allows for external consultants to be engaged to undertake the Accommodation Needs Assessment. Opinion Research Services (ORS) have been

commissioned to undertake the assessment on behalf of Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County Borough. Separate reports will be developed for each authority.

### **Analysis of existing data sources**

The GTAA methodology sets out the requirement for the GTAA to review secondary data and includes a list of data sources. This secondary data can help to give approximations of need, a basic knowledge base and an indication of how to identify community members.

The WG methodology includes the following list of secondary data sources to be reviewed as a minimum, to be used to inform the assessment:

- Census 2011 (2021 Census data will be more up to date but not available for this assessment)
- Housing records, including waiting list data, tenants, RSL data relating to residents or waiting list information. Supporting People staff may also have information which could help to identify community members
- Planning records including planning applications and information on unauthorised encampments or developments
- WG caravan count and sites database
- Traveller Education records
- Liaison officer/Gypsy and Traveller support organisations (such as Travelling Ahead)

In addition to the quantitative data listed in the WG methodology the following will help to identify additional 'qualitative' information to inform the narrative/understanding of the travelling behaviours:

- Any additional information arising from DCC welfare visits to unauthorised encampments that can inform the narrative / understanding around the need of Transit visitors
- Online survey of all elected members
- Online survey of Town, City and Community Councils

The consultants will review the information and data collected to help to identify Gypsy and Traveller families to be interviewed and understand travelling patterns.

### Promoting the study and awareness raising

The next step is to identify known Gypsies and Travellers in the area and seek to survey each household's accommodation needs.

The Welsh Government GTAA methodology sets out that Local Authorities must be able to demonstrate that they have consulted with as many Gypsies and Travellers as possible 'resorting to' or 'residing' in the area.

The WG GTAA methodology contains an engagement checklist which should be followed as a minimum. The aim is to raise awareness of the Assessment so that members of the Gypsy and Traveller community have the opportunity to engage. The checklist includes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visit every Gypsy and Traveller household identified through the data analysis process up to 3 times, if necessary</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publish details of the GTAA process, including contact details to allow community members to request an interview, on the Local Authority website, Travellers' Times website and World's Fair publication.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consult relevant community support organisations</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a Local Authority waiting list for both pitches and housing, which is accessible and communicated to community members</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Endeavour to include Gypsies and Travellers on the GTAA project steering group.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure contact details provided to the Council by community members through the survey process are followed up and needs assessed.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider holding on-site (or nearby) GTAA information events to explain why community members should participate and encourage site residents to bring others who may not be known to the Council.</li></ul>

The World's Fair publication referred to no longer exists and the Travellers' Times does not take GTAA adverts. We will publish on the Council's website, community support organisation websites, social media channels and any other community publications with contact details to allow community members to get in touch and have the opportunity to participate.

In addition to the minimum requirements set out in the Welsh Government GTAA methodology the following should be used to promote the Assessment and identify members of the Gypsy and Traveller community:

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- If elected members have local information they may pass this onto the consultant
- Elected members could promote the survey within their wards –members could ensure that leaflets are displayed in key local facilities i.e. shops, community centres in their wards
- City, Town & Community Councils could help to publicise via community notice boards
- BCUHB may be able to assist. Health visitors are most likely to have direct contact with households from this target group
- Education, housing and social care teams may be able to promote the Assessment through their front line workers
- Churches and faith groups could help to promote the Assessment
- Given Covid -19 / social restrictions a face to face drop in option would not be appropriate or suitable at this current time
- Seek advice from Gypsy and Traveller representative groups / individuals (such as Travelling Ahead) on other ways to promote the survey.

Further detailed information is set out in the Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Plan.

**Target group** – a definition for the target group for the GTAA is set out in the Welsh Government GTAA methodology. The definition of ‘Gypsies and Travellers’ for the purposes of this accommodation assessment process is contained within section 108 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

*Gypsies and Travellers means:*

- *“(a) Persons of a nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, including:*
- *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*
- *members of an organized group of travelling show people or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such); and*
- *all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a mobile home.”*

*The intention of the above definition is to ensure ethnic Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers are included, as well as those from any ethnic group who follow a nomadic habit of life*

*The definition also includes Travelling Showpeople. New Travellers could also be captured by the definition if they can demonstrate a cultural tradition of nomadism and of living in mobile homes.*

*Members of these communities do not necessarily need to demonstrate a continued nomadic habit of life to be considered to be Gypsies or Travellers for the purposes of this assessment.”*

The definition of Gypsies and Travellers would not include everyone living in a mobile home but as set out in the definition provided, relates to cultural traditions of nomadism.

### **Undertaking the Assessment – conducting a specialist survey**

The consultation will use a census type approach and the Welsh Government methodology includes a universal questionnaire developed by Welsh Government for the purpose of the GTAA which must be used.

The consultants' researchers will complete the questionnaire during a conversation with a member of each Gypsy & Traveller household in the area. This should avoid the potential for literacy issues and ensure a higher rate of participation than a mailshot, as well as providing the opportunity for clarification if questions have been misunderstood. The researchers will also record any additional qualitative information which comes from the discussion with individuals to provide as much data as possible to inform the Assessment. The researchers will seek to conduct interviews with all households on known sites and encampments.

The consultants will also work closely with the Council and Steering Group members to identify any unauthorised encampments that occur during the study and seek to interview these households.

In line with the WG methodology and the engagement checklist, the consultants will make 3 attempts to make contact with each Gypsy and Traveller household for the purpose of the Assessment. A record of contact attempts will be maintained by the consultants.

### **Analysing the Data – assessing accommodation needs**

Data collected through the review of secondary data sources together with information from questionnaires completed during interviews with Gypsy and Traveller households will be analysed and will form the basis of the GTAA.

The consultants will also liaise with neighbouring authorities to establish where any need is arising from, get a better understanding of travelling patterns, and avoid double counting.

The Consultants will analyse and interpret the data. This will inform the content of the GTAA report.

The GTAA report will follow a similar format to the previous report in line with Welsh Government methodology. The report will draw on all the evidence collected during the study period including the data review; stakeholder interviews and full analysis of the outcomes of interviews with the Gypsy and Traveller community. In order to meet the requirements of Welsh Government methodology the report will:

- Provide details of how the assessment was carried out
- Contain a summary of the consultation that was carried out in connection with the assessment and the responses received to the consultation
- Provide details of any accommodation needs identified by the assessment

Data will be made available to the Task and Finish Group in order to understand the findings of the GTAA. Data sharing will comply with all appropriate legislation. Data within the final GTAA report will be anonymised and must also comply with GDPR requirements.

The Task and Finish Group will review progress of the assessment in September 2021, followed by a meeting to review the draft GTAA report when completed. The Task and Finish Group will then report back to Communities Scrutiny Committee. Recommendations from Communities Scrutiny Committee will be reported to Cabinet and submission of the final draft GTAA report to Welsh Government will be subject to Cabinet approval.





