

North Wales Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2013 (Bangor University)

Executive Summary

1.1 This summarizes the main findings and recommendations of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment [GTANA] conducted for a consortium of five authorities in north Wales, and the Snowdonia National Park Authority. The objective of the GTANA is to assess the accommodation needs of members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities, giving them a direct voice in the process. The GTANA was managed by a Steering Group including local authority representatives, and members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. Fieldwork also employed community members as interviewers. This Report has been written by members of the University of Bangor, on behalf of the Steering Group. Any conclusions are the responsibility of the authors alone.

1.2 The study draws of three sources of information:

- An analysis was made of existing sources of information, including research literature and other GTANA surveys identifying strengths and weaknesses of the sources available.
- Information was obtained from key stakeholders within the local authorities
- The views of the community were obtained through questionnaires, focus groups and discussions. A total of 93 responses from adult Gypsies and Travellers, and a further 43 from a survey of young Gypsies and Travellers, from a range of tenures and community groups, were received. The community questionnaire invited respondents to identify their aspirations for sites and their preferred location.

Background

1.3 Since 2006, the Welsh Government has encouraged local strategic housing authorities to collaborate in producing Local Housing Market Area assessments of the future level and nature of housing demand. The LHMA process feeds into the production of Local Development Plans. An essential part of the LHMA process is the production of a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs

Assessment. For this GTANA, the counties of Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Ynys Môn joined together to conduct the GTANA, in collaboration with Bangor University. The Study was managed and commissioned by a steering group consisting of representatives of the local authorities [and SNPA], members of the Gypsy and Traveller community and the University of Bangor.

1.4 The broader objectives of the study are:

- To produce, in consultation with local Gypsies and Travellers, detailed information about in relation to their demographic profile, household formation, current accommodation needs, accommodation related service and support needs and barriers to accessing services.
- To generate reliable estimates of future accommodation need.
- To assess the current and potential future needs within the Gypsy and Traveller communities in the North West Wales Housing Market Area & Flintshire, i.e. the Study Area, for learning, health services and other services provided by local authorities and their partner organisations.
- To assess the relevance of the policies and strategies in relation to Gypsies and Travellers used by the Partner authorities.

Main Findings

Local Gypsies and Travellers

1.5 Very little information is available on the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK as a whole, in Wales, or in the study area. Estimates for the UK as a whole vary from 82,000 to 300,000, including those living in Bricks and Mortar housing. It is agreed that in Wales most Gypsies and Travellers are concentrated along the key transport routes in the North and South of Wales. In the study area, there are currently 78 authorized pitches, and a further four caravans on unauthorized developments. Ten vehicles occupied by New Travellers are situated on an unauthorized but tolerated encampment on Ynys Môn. It is estimated that between half and two-thirds of the Gypsy and Traveller population of the UK now live in 'bricks and mortar' housing, either through choice, but may also be through necessity, due to the shortage of pitches on authorized sites. There is no reliable estimate of the total numbers of Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar in the study area, but from the survey it is clear the number is significant, and distributed between the local authorities. They occupied both private and socially rented accommodation, and owner occupiers.

Characteristics of local Gypsies and Travellers

- 1.6 24 per cent identified as Romany Gypsy, 58 per cent as Travellers, of whom 34 per cent were Irish Travellers, 17 per cent as New Travellers, and 1 per cent as Travelling Showman.
- 1.7 Mean household size was 4.37 persons, median size was four persons. Younger families predominated. The survey did not contact any persons aged 65 or over.
- 1.8 Most respondents described themselves as local to the area.

Gypsies and Travellers and local services

- 1.9 The survey questioned Gypsies and Travellers about their use of local services and their views on the services provided. The Traveller Education Service Some accounts of perceived discriminatory behaviour by local services, health and welfare agencies, and police and local authorities were reported, but other respondents were considered they were treated 'as other people' The Traveller Education Service was generally praised, and the availability of dedicated liaison staff such as the GTLO welcomed.

Accommodation preferences and aspirations

- 1.10 Respondents were asked for their views on the location and nature of further permanent site provision. It should be noted Gypsies and Travellers who want to develop sites privately are face significant obstacles in obtaining planning permission, though more permissions are obtained through the planning and legal appeal processes.

Accommodation need and supply

- 1.11 Using standard calculations, a shortfall of 62 pitches was identified by the year 2016. It should be noted that while the calculations to 2016 are presented on a local authority basis, this is not to imply that future provision should automatically be confined within the boundaries currently existing. Both the WAG guidance (WAG, 2006) and current policy proposals (WG, 2011) support the view that collaborative approaches to these issues are to be preferred.

Table 1: Residential accommodation needs arising from existing district level Gypsy and Traveller populations

Authority	Current provision	Total additional residential pitch requirement (2011-2016)	Total additional transit pitch provision (2011-2016)
Ynys Môn	0	11	28*
Conwy	0	3	
Denbighshire	0	2	
Flintshire	66	36	
Gwynedd	12	10	
Study Area	78	62	28*

*Shared

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

1.12 After 2016, assuming all current need has been addressed; the base calculation is that the number of pitches required will continue to increase at 3 per cent per annum compound. This would produce an overall requirement of 167 pitches (rounded up to nearest whole number) by 2021, an increase of 25 on the 2016 figure, and 194 pitches, a further increase of 27 (both estimates by 2026). Other factors might increase this requirement.

Unauthorized encampments and transit requirements

- 1.13 Currently, there is no transit site located within the study area. Part of the Gypsy and Traveller site at Llandegai in Gwynedd was previously used as a transit site, but this was discontinued in 2005, following significant management issues relating directly to this part of the site. The discussion of transit site need derives its evidence from local authority data, on unauthorized encampments in the GTANA area during the years 2009 and 2010, together with an input of stakeholder experience.
- 1.14 Addressing unauthorized encampments can lead to considerable outlay, by both public authorities and the private sector, and may have a significant impact on relationships between the settled community and the Gypsy and Traveller community
- 1.15 This calculation of the transit site requirement is based on assumptions set out below. These are:
- Annually, about 55 encampments occur in the study area
 - 10% of temporary encampments, about six during the year, will be from those looking for permanent site accommodation, and are discussed under the permanent site requirement
 - Thus 90% of encampments, about 49 in total, would require transit accommodation
 - The maximum stay would be for one month, though some encampments would be for a shorter period
 - Accommodation for 7 caravans would deal with most encampments.
- 1.16 Using 7 as a working figure, transit requirements would be for (49 multiplied by 7) caravans per annum, or 343 over the year. On a monthly basis, this amounts to 28.5 caravans. However, for reasons discussed, this can involve some element of double counting. Proportionately, about 47% of encampments are recorded in the Gwynedd and Ynys Môn area, 15% in the central area of /Conwy and Denbighshire, and 37% in Flintshire.
- 1.17 It is therefore suggested that the authorities work together to consider three or four transit sites accommodating up to seven caravans. More than one site is to be preferred, for a number of reasons
- They are more likely to be used if close to traditional stopping places
 - The size of each site would be reduced
 - Difficulties about ethnic or inter-family tensions would be reduced.
 - A single transit site for the area would not resolve the issues. It is important that there is somewhere for occupants to move on, and a network is required. The local authorities should work jointly to identify appropriate sites for temporary accommodation on a regional basis.
- 1.18 It is recommended that the local authorities work jointly to identify appropriate sites for temporary accommodation. These may be transit sites, with a

relatively full range of facilities where stays of up to three months may be permitted, or temporary stopping places with more restricted provision, where stays may be limited to 28 days. The nature, as well as the location, of provision, should be informed by data on the patterns of unauthorized encampment in recent years

1.19 There are a number of recommendations for action:

- 1.20 *Recommendation 1:* Following the guidance from the Welsh Government on adopting a collaborative approach, a North West Wales Gypsy and Traveller Co-ordination Group comprising of representatives from local authorities and sub-regional partners should be formed to continue the development of a meaningful and co-ordinated approach to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and related issues, as well as ensuring that the findings from the GTANA are disseminated to departments within the partner Authorities and other stakeholder. The existing Gypsy Traveller Working Group would provide an excellent foundation for such a group, along with representation from the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- 1.21 *Recommendation 2:* A North West Wales Gypsy and Traveller Representative Group, with as wide a geographical representation as possible, should be established representing the views of the local Gypsy and Traveller population, and contribute to the consultative process. A Chair and administrative support for the group should be provided from the North West Wales Gypsy and Traveller Co-ordination Group.
- 1.22 *Recommendation 3:* All partner authorities should ensure that an internal working group exists within each authority. This group should cut across service areas, in order to better co-ordinate the response and approach on Gypsy and Traveller issues and avoid potential duplication of work.
- 1.23 *Recommendation 4:* Each authority should identify a lead officer who manages each authority's response to Gypsies and Traveller issues.
- 1.24 *Recommendation 5:* In order to adhere to Equalities legislation, and to ensure the high quality of on-going monitoring, local authorities should ensure that Gypsies and Travellers are recognised in ethnic monitoring forms, most urgently in relation to housing and planning
- 1.25 *Recommendation 6:* Local authorities should ensure that principles of equality, in relation to Gypsies and Travellers, are embedded in the wide range of services provided. In particular this includes: housing, planning and homelessness policies.

- 1.26 *Recommendation 7:* Local authorities should be sensitive to the different cultural and support needs of Gypsies and Travellers who may present as homeless and those who may require local authority accommodation.
- 1.27 *Recommendation 8:* Residential site waiting lists should be: accessible to all Gypsies and Travellers in the area, and clear and transparent in terms of allocation policies
- 1.28 *Recommendation 9:* The management of permanent sites needs to be evaluated at regular intervals in accordance with the guidance issued by the to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG, 2008)
- 1.29 *Recommendation 10:* Social Housing Agencies to establish if any such pattern results from positive choices, or negative decisions due to perceived threats or other causes.
- 1.30 *Recommendation 11:* The methods and approaches used by local authorities in promoting affordable accommodation to members of the non-Traveller communities should be adapted to the accommodation used by members of Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- 1.31 *Recommendation 12:* A progressive campaign which would promote the lifestyle and culture of Gypsies and Travellers in a positive light may help alleviate some of the racial discrimination experienced by young and older Gypsy and Travellers across the study area.
- 1.32 *Recommendation 13:* Ensure that staff working in primary and secondary schools have sufficient training about Gypsy and Traveller culture in order to tackle bullying more effectively.
- 1.33 *Recommendation 14:* Local Authorities should consider collectively providing the resources to recruit and train outreach workers (possibly from Gypsy and Traveller communities) to engage with young people.
- 1.34 *Recommendation 15:* Further research is needed with Travelling Show people, in conjunction with the Showmen's Guild, before recommendations can be made
- 1.35 *Recommendation 16:* An aspiration of many members of the Gypsy and Traveller community is to be owner-occupiers, as such there is a need to develop a constructive dialogue between Gypsies and Travellers seeking to develop private sites and planning authorities.
- 1.36 *Recommendation 17:* Planning departments should offer appropriate advice and support to Gypsies and Travellers on the workings of the planning system

and the criteria to be considered in applications. This advice may require some tailoring for this particular client group.

- 1.37 *Recommendation 18:* All issues relating to access to services issues need to be disseminated as widely as possible by the North West Wales Gypsy and Traveller Co-ordination Group in consultation with the North West Wales Gypsy and Traveller Representative Group resulting in a strategy on how to improve the experiences of the local Gypsy and Traveller community as well as a facility to report other examples.
- 1.38 *Recommendation 19:* Local authorities should seek to identify possible sites where permission for a residential site might be granted.
- 1.39 *Recommendation 20:* that all counties complete the biannual caravan count.
- 1.40 *Recommendation 21:* that a common protocol for reporting the presence of unauthorised encampments and addressing the issues is agreed by the local authorities.
- 1.41 *Recommendation 22:* All authorities within the study area, or whatever group continues the GTANA process, should decide on a common format for the recording of encampments. Ideally this should contain at least the following items:
- Date encampment was reported
 - Date encampment ended
 - Location, nature of site [public/private; industrial or business park, retail car park, other]
 - Number of caravans,
 - Estimated number of adults and children.
- 1.42 *Recommendation 23:* It is also recommended that data from North Wales Police be included, to aid consistency and completeness.
- 1.43 *Recommendation 24:* It is recommended that the local authorities work jointly to identify appropriate sites for temporary accommodation. These may be transit sites, with a relatively full range of facilities where stays of up to three months may be permitted, or temporary stopping places with more restricted provision, where stays may be limited to 28 days. The nature, as well as the location, of provision, should be informed by data on the patterns of unauthorised encampment in recent years. That stated, analysis of the existing data indicates different patterns between the local authorities in the consortium.