

# Consultation response proforma

If you are responding by email or in writing, please reply using this questionnaire proforma, which should be read alongside the consultation document. You are able to expand the comments box should you need more space

Your Details (Required fields are indicated with an asterix(\*))

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Are the views expressed on this consultation your own personal views or an official response from an organisation you represent?\* (please tick as appropriate)

Personal View

Organisational Response

Name of Organisation (if applicable)

National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC)

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please tick the box which best describes your organisation.

Local Authority (including National Parks, Broads Authority, the Greater London Authority and London Boroughs)

Neighbourhood Planning Body/Parish or Town Council

Private Sector organisation (including housebuilders, housing associations, businesses, consultants)

Trade Association / Interest Group/Voluntary or Charitable organisation

Other (Please specify)

National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC)

## Unauthorised development and encampments

### Question 1:

What evidence is there of unauthorised development and encampments in your community, and what issues does this raise for the local community?

*Please enter your comments here*

Firstly, on behalf of the NPCC and APCC, we welcome this consultation and are pleased to offer our views from a national perspective. All questions in this consultation will no doubt be answered specifically by different individuals and organisations in respect of the various different areas of the country.

**We would ask that the MHCLG consider the collation and dissemination of all good practice highlighted in responses to the consultation questions.**

In response to this particular question, on a national level we would say that the key issue to address in respect of GRT communities is the lack of accommodation for them. The shortage of suitable sites for families to live on and access as they move around the country leads to groups setting up unauthorised encampments and developments, thus creating the biggest single source of conflict between the Travelling and settled communities.

The Traveller caravan count (previously known as the Gypsy and Traveller caravan count) is a statistical count of the number of caravans on both authorised and unauthorised sites across England. The count takes place every January and July and has done since 1979.

The count is conducted by local authorities and whilst it is only a "snapshot" of two days in the year and assumes all relevant caravans are counted by the authorities (a fact often disputed), it is at least one statistical measure that has been in place for many years and is currently administered by the MHCLG.

The latest figures available are from July 2017 and were published in January 2018. The number of caravans counted in unauthorised locations in July last year was 3,721. **This is 16% of the total caravans counted, thus 84% of caravans are in perfectly authorised locations.**

Comparing recent figures, the **July 2007** caravan count assessed that there were **23%** of caravans in unauthorised locations – **thus that figure has fallen by 7% in the last 10 years.**

Another interesting fact is that the 3,721 total from July 2017 is very similar to the total number of GRT families assessed to live in the country in 1966 – 3,500 – at which time some 85% - 90% would have been considered to be on 'unauthorised' sites, not the 16% of the latest figures.

The obvious answer to unauthorised development and encampments is the provision of pitches, both public and private, including not only permanent pitches but also transit pitches and emergency stopping places. Additionally there is the concept of 'negotiated stopping' which has been reported on by several agencies, primarily Leeds GATE. The Police still need to be involved in that process with local authorities for it to be conducted successfully.

## **Powers for dealing with unauthorised encampments**

### **Question 2:**

We would like to invite evidence of unauthorised encampments which have occurred in the last 2 years, as follows:

- a. the number of instances where trespassers have occupied land without authorisation, including the location and scale of the encampment.
- b. whether the land in a) required cleaning or repair once the encampment had left, and if so, what was the cost?
- c. how was each unauthorised encampment encouraged to leave, how long did it take, and was the local authority able to move them on; or did the police become involved?

*Please enter your comments here*

**Again, this question will no doubt be answered specifically in relation to the various different areas of the country.**

MHCLG caravan count figures as quoted in the answer to Question 1 do suggest that these numbers are falling overall, albeit there will be regional differences potentially.

## Streamlining the powers under which local authorities can direct unauthorised campers to leave land

### Question 3:

Do you think that the existing powers made available to local authorities to remove unauthorised campers from land are effective?

*Please enter your comments here*

Paragraph 7 of the Consultation document states:-

*Local authorities and the police have a wide range of existing powers to deal with unauthorised encampments. ...Where occupation of land occurs on public land and local authorities use their powers proactively, enforcement action can be taken relatively quickly. The process for private landowners is through civil possession procedures.*

This opening paragraph suggests that current powers are sufficient and broadly speaking we would say that no further powers are required. We will expand on this in our answers to other questions.

Once again, the **lack of accommodation provision** is the real issue here and our reasoning for that is explained below:-

Local Authorities were previously under a formal legal duty to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers. This was established by the Caravan Sites Act 1968 which was a private members bill. Provision was very slow and only began to grow at all with the allocation of 100% grants from central government in 1980 following the recommendation of the Cripps Commission.

The duty upon local authorities to provide sites was repealed by the then Government as a result of measures contained within the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994. By that time less than half of all local authorities had in fact complied with the previous duty. Virtually no action was taken against any authority in respect of that failing.

Over the subsequent years since 1994 - coupled with continued migration and household formation - this has meant that the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers requiring authorised places to live or stop on generally far outweigh the number of authorised pitches available.

In addition to the lack of available authorised pitches, Gypsies and Travellers have also historically found gaining planning permission a major obstacle to providing a site for themselves and their families. Those Gypsies and Travellers who can afford to buy land are frequently in breach of planning laws when they attempt to develop that land for residential use. Subsequently, they find themselves subject to enforcement action and

often evicted, frequently resorting to the use of further unauthorised land or accommodation.

Under section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 local authorities are required to consider the various accommodation needs of the local population and to carry out periodic reviews in order to provide relevant and appropriate provision to meet these needs.

The then government introduced the Housing Act 2004 & the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, together with Circular 01/2006 from what was then the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Sections of the legislation and Circular 01/2006 were designed to help resolve some of the accommodation issues for Gypsies and Travellers by ensuring those communities had equal access to decent and appropriate accommodation options akin to every other member of society.

This equal access to a full range of appropriate accommodation options is vital. Not just new council sites are required. A variety of transit and permanent developments are needed, run either by councils or privately, or indeed housing for those who wish to be housed. Sufficient accommodation which is properly authorised and managed in sustainable locations where it is needed should be the aim of any government's policy in this area.

Under Section 225 of the Housing Act 2004, local authorities were required to develop and implement strategies to respond to the accommodation needs of GRT communities living in their areas. This legislation and Circular 01/2006 placed an obligation on local authorities to carry out a Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA) which would identify the need for sites and feed into regional targets.

On 31 August 2015 the then Department for Communities and Local Government published some long-anticipated changes to planning policy following on from a consultation conducted during 2014. Included in the publication was a new version of the government policy 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' (PPTS) which was originally published in March 2012.

A very significant change was made to the definition of "Gypsies and Travellers" used for planning purposes. In this new policy, Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople who have stopped travelling **permanently** (a crucial word that was in the previous policy) due to education, health or by reason of old age will no longer be within the definitions. Only those who have stopped travelling **temporarily** will be so included.

Given that Gypsies and Travellers are fully recognised ethnic groups for all Equality Act 2010 purposes, it is a point of contention that if a Gypsy or Traveller stops travelling permanently for education or health reasons, or reasons of old age, they will no longer be within the definition of Gypsy and Traveller for planning purposes. It appears to me that this and other changes outlined in the PPTS document could make it more difficult for Gypsies and Travellers to obtain planning permission for sites.

I would also think that the protection afforded to GRT communities under the “Race” protected characteristic of the Equality Act 2010 must surely take precedence over a Planning Policy document.

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 became law on 12 July 2016. The Draft Bill had proposed to remove the formal requirement on local authorities to carry out GTANAs and **Section 124** of the final Act did indeed remove the requirement to conduct stand-alone assessments of Gypsy and Traveller housing needs, although the section does contain directions as to how such housing needs must be assessed from now on, namely:

*In the case of a local housing authority in England, the duty...includes a duty to consider the needs of people residing in or resorting to their district with respect to the provision of sites on which caravans can be stationed, or places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored.*

*“Caravan” has the meaning given by section 29 of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960;*

*“Houseboat” means a boat or similar structure designed or adapted for use as a place to live.*

The rationale behind introducing bespoke GTANAs was that in the past, the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers (especially those living in caravans or mobile homes) did not routinely form part of the process by which local authorities assessed housing needs.

The effect of removing the requirement to produce an explicit housing needs assessment for GRT communities will only be known in the coming years, but we are concerned that now local authorities in England no longer have to assess their housing needs in a separate category to other residents within their jurisdiction, the assessments will not be as robust or wide-ranging as they have been since 2004.

**The above revisions to planning policy, which effectively mean that no-one will be assessed for a pitch unless they travel – has made some people travel just to meet the planning definition, and the result is that encampments have increased in some areas in the last two years.**

The Police are not in the business of providing accommodation but this is such a crucial issue for the Gypsy & Traveller community that encouraging its provision has become part of the NPCC focus. Without accommodation of whatever description, access to health, education and all 'social' services that most people take for granted becomes difficult or impossible.

The lack of sufficient and appropriate accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers remains the main cause of incidents of unauthorised encampment and unauthorised development by these groups.

**Question 4:**

Do you think local authorities could improve their use of existing powers?

*Please enter your comments here*

This is a question for local authorities in essence, but our view is that partnership working between local authorities, the Police and other relevant parties to address both short-term and long-term accommodation issues is the way forward here.

Sustainable solutions to Traveller site and community cohesion issues are needed to ensure adequate provision of authorised Traveller sites in line with a robust assessment of need. **If that were combined with the effective management of unauthorised encampments and a greater development of community cohesion and social inclusion initiatives in local areas experiencing tensions between Traveller and other groups, real progress could be made.**

**Question 5:** What other powers may help local authorities deal with unauthorised encampments?

*Please enter your comments here*

See answer to Question 4.

In addition, local authorities are often in a difficult position regarding recovery of costs etc. which arise from unauthorised encampments. Powers which will assist local authorities to streamline that process could be considered.

**Aggravated trespass**

**Question 6:**

Do you consider that the current powers for police to direct trespassers to leave land are effective?

*Please enter your comments here*

See answer to Question 8

**Question 7:**

Would any new or revised powers that enable police to direct trespassers to leave land make it easier to deal with unauthorised encampments?

*Please enter your comments here*

See answer to Question 8

**Question 8:**

Do you consider that the Government should consider criminalising unauthorised encampments, in addition to the offence of aggravated trespass? If so, how should a new offence differ, and what actions and circumstances should it apply to?

*Please enter your comments here*

Trespass is a civil offence and our view is that it should remain so. The possibility of creating a new criminal offence of 'intentional trespass' or similar has been raised at various times over the years but **the NPCC position has been – and remains – that no new criminal trespass offence is required.**

The co-ordinated use of the powers already available under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 allows for a proportionate response to encampments based on the behaviour of the trespassers. Unauthorised encampments occupied by known individual families where there are small numbers in acceptable locations, not causing anti-social behaviour or crime, can be allowed to remain in that location longer than would otherwise be the case if the law were different. This approach leads to the Gypsies and Travellers having a real incentive to act in a responsible manner.

Current legislation affords the police and local authorities a range of powers, the use of which is discretionary subject to a range of factors. If trespass were a criminal offence the police would be obliged to investigate the commission of a potential crime and move on people resident at encampments. It is also likely that landowners would seek eviction at the earliest opportunity. In every case the trespassers would have no incentive to leave peacefully and may resort to forming large groups to prevent evictions by a show or - worse still - a use of force.

There are many occasions when police and local authority powers are used to move groups of Gypsies and Travellers from land when the circumstances have justify it. Ultimately all this does is simply relocate rather than permanently solve accommodation problems, indeed it often moves the encampment to an even more unsuitable location than the one occupied previously.

NPCC guidance on the use of police powers currently is clear and explains the framework within which police officers should act, recognising the requirement to balance the needs of a range of interested parties. The decision to use police powers remains at the discretion of the senior officer present. His / her decision, however, should be made in accordance with the guidance, and the grounds for any action or inaction fully recorded.

It is essential that the police response takes account of the issues of behaviour, whether criminal, anti-social or nuisance, in combination with the impact on the landowner and settled community rather than simply because encampments are present at a specific location. Police powers to evict people from unauthorised encampments do exist, as provided for by Sections 61 and 62 A-E of the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994. These powers will be used where behaviour or conduct is considered to be inappropriate, or where the impact of an encampment on others is deemed unacceptable. This position is consistent with all other areas of enforcement within the community.

Forces should consider becoming involved in bringing about the prompt and lawful removal of unauthorised encampments, including the use of police powers under Section 61 or 62 A-E of the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994 where local amenities are deprived to communities or there is significant impact on the environment; there is local disruption to the economy; there is other significant disruption to the local community or environment; there is a danger to life or there is a need to take preventative action.

Underlining all the above legislation is the Equality Act 2010 and associated Public Sector Equality Duty. All specified public authorities, including local authorities and the police, must promote race equality. They must, when carrying out their functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups.

The potential impact of the proposed new legislation on the police in cost terms could be enormous and is simply not necessary. There is no need to introduce an "Irish-style" offence in England and Wales, indeed comparisons with Ireland are not helpful in this area.

The only possible area of comparison is in the relative size of the Gypsy and Traveller population. The total population of Ireland is around 4.58 million people (2011 census figure – Ireland also conducts a census every 5 years instead of every 10 years in the UK). Irish Travellers are included in the census and have been for some years. Official census figures suggest around 25,000 Irish Travellers are in the country, meaning they comprise around 0.5% of the population.

The highest estimate of the Gypsy and Traveller population in the UK is 300,000 people, against an estimated UK population of around 64.5 Million and rising. This indicates the Gypsy and Traveller population of the UK as being roughly 0.46% of the population at most.

In Ireland, the 2002 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act did change the status of trespass from a civil to a criminal offence, however there is other legislation in respect of provision for the Travelling communities that is far stronger than in the UK and has been in place for a much longer period of time. The Housing Act 1988 and The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 put into place legislation to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers. Each local authority is under a duty to prepare a Traveller Accommodation programme and in essence, they all do so and in effect suffer very few unauthorised encampments or developments as a result.

NPCC staff have visited Ireland and are familiar with arrangements there employed by both the Garda Síochána and local authorities. Anyone presenting as in need of accommodation will have accommodation provided. This has been enshrined in legislation and is taken seriously by all local authorities. The extent of site provision in Ireland far outstrips that of the UK and thus unauthorised encampments are the exception rather than the rule in Ireland.

A firm stance is taken by the local authorities in respect of unauthorised encampments – and by the Garda Síochána if called to assist – and they believe this can be justified as there is no need for people to find themselves in that position thanks to the extensive accommodation provision and assistance that is readily available. This is not the position in the UK.

The few unauthorised encampments that do occur tend to be dealt with quickly by local authorities using civil legislation and without Garda Síochána involvement.

In summary, we believe that criminalising unauthorised encampments is not acceptable. Complete criminalisation of trespass would likely lead to legal action in terms of incompatibility with regard to the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, most likely on the grounds of how could such an increase in powers be proportionate and reasonable when there are insufficient pitches and stopping places?

In terms of powers already available under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, Section 61 of the Act states:

*(1) If a senior police officer present at the scene reasonably believes that two or more persons are trespassing on land and are present there with the common purpose of residing there for any period, that reasonable steps have been taken by or on behalf of the occupier to ask them to leave and*

*(a) that any of those persons has caused damage to the land or to property on the land or used threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards the occupier, a member of his family or an employee or agent of his or*

*(b) that those persons have between them six or more vehicles on the land,*

*he may direct those persons, or any of them, to leave the land and to remove any vehicles or other property they have with them on the land.*

Failure to comply with such directions may result in arrest without a warrant and impoundment of vehicles.

Section 62A of the same Act states:

*(1) If a senior police officer present at a scene reasonably believes that the conditions in sub-section (2) are satisfied in relation to a person and land, he may direct the person –*

*(a) to leave the land;*

*(b) to remove any vehicle and any other property he has with him on the land.*

*(2) The conditions are –*

*(a) that the person and one or more others ('the trespassers') are trespassing on land;*

*(b) that the trespassers have between them at least one vehicle on the land;*

*(c) that the trespassers are present on the land with the common purpose of residing there for any period;*

*(d) if it appears to the officer that the person has one or more caravans in his possession or under his control on the land, that there is a suitable pitch on a residential caravan site for that caravan or each of those caravans;*

*(e) that the occupier of the land or a person acting on his behalf has asked the police to remove the trespassers from the land.*

It should be noted that Section 61 and 62A cover virtually all open land except that Section 61 does not cover highway land. Some potential for examining whether to include highway land under Section 61 therefore exists.

Section 62A is the part of the Act that allows the police to direct people to a suitable alternative location where one is available. Section 62 currently states that police must consult every local authority within whose area the land being camped on is situated to see if a suitable pitch on a relevant caravan site is available. All manner of issues can potentially arise if an encampment is near local authority boundaries etc. and there is scope for change here, not least to include collaboration by local authorities within a reasonable distance of the encampment's location.

It should also be noted that whilst new legislation may be considered to have a 'deterrent effect' in most cases, in respect of unauthorised encampments the effect is likely to be much reduced due to the reasons that unauthorised encampments exist in the first place, i.e. there is an inherent shortage of accommodation, which is the crucial issue to address.

Aggravated trespass was created especially to deal with hunt saboteurs. In other words it was created to deal with people who were deliberately intending to intimidate or

challenge the landowner or others lawfully on the land. Gypsies and Travellers are trespassing on land because there are insufficient pitches and stopping places and because they have no other alternative. Aggravated trespass powers are inappropriate for unauthorised encampments.

## Use of injunctions to protect land

### Question 9:

What barriers are there to the greater use of injunctions by local authorities, where appropriate, and how might they be overcome?

*Please enter your comments here*

The power to use injunctions already exists and is used in some areas, thus there does not appear to be any barriers to their use.

## Joint-working between local authorities, communities and the police

### Question 10:

Do you have any suggestions or examples of how local authorities, the police, the courts and communities can work together more successfully to improve community relations and address issues raised by unauthorised encampments?

*Please enter your comments here*

Cheshire has a unit called the **Cheshire & Warrington Traveller Team (CWTT)** which involves the local authorities and the police working together in a joint team. Two Police Constables are full-time members of this team and the team ultimately manages all unauthorised encampments.

Cheshire has a county-wide and indeed sub-regional approach to Gypsy and Traveller issues. The Partnership has built capacity and expertise whilst making progress in developing a consistent approach to these issues to ensure an excellent level of service delivery. The Partnership has also attained a credible reputation as providers of good practice and innovative approaches to meeting Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs. The Cheshire and Warrington Traveller Team is headed by a local authority manager.

There has been an increase in accommodation provision within the Partnership in the last ten years as follows:-

**Halton Borough Council** – 10-14 pitch transit site (February 2010) and 12 pitch permanent site (Summer 2015).

**Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council** – secured full permission for 2 permanent sites (18 pitches and 12 pitches). Construction was completed in November 2014 and the first residents moved on in December 2014.

**Cheshire East Borough Council** has extended their site by a further 2 pitches and is planning a 10 pitch transit site.

**Warrington Borough Council** – are looking for land for a transit site.

In the mid-2000s, there were regularly over 300 unauthorised encampments per year in Cheshire. For many years subsequently, the number of encampments was reduced to double figures per year and even with recent increases seen across the country in the last two years, the number of encampments has never returned to previous record levels.

Just as importantly, the vast majority of unauthorised encampments are dealt with smoothly by staff who understand the issues involved and the encampments cause little disruption to local communities.

Joint-working with Gypsies and Travellers themselves should also be a crucial part of partnership working.

As a second example, **Warwickshire** has spent a considerable amount of time creating a protocol to effectively manage unauthorised encampments ensuring that a consistent approach is adopted across the County.

Key individuals within all local Authorities and a Police Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer act as Single Points of Contact with early strategic discussions taking place.

A firm but fair approach is adopted taking into consideration the needs of the community as a whole. Communication with the general public and the trespassers is key to the success, productive engagement has proven to eliminate certain stereotypical misconceptions and in turn reduces community tensions.

Each encampment is very different in its dynamics and is dealt with according to the accurate information available. Keeping detailed records of encampments quickly identifies movement and alerts the process to potential antisocial trespassers resulting in the formulation of a robust strategy around identified problem causers. It also supplies valuable data such as in 2017 that 50% of trespasses in the County were linked to one extended family. Information on several of these families has been shared with other Counties resulting in them being housed on permanent sites.

Warwickshire have also invested time in education and consultation with key community representatives and elected members.

The Warwickshire approach ensures that professionals with a good understanding of dealing with Gypsy and Traveller communities are involved in the process of managing unauthorised encampments.

Although between 2016 and 2017 there was an increase in unauthorised encampments a contributing factor to this was the swift action taken by Warwickshire in moving groups where the impact was significant. This again goes to show that just moving on is not the most successful answer without the provision of appropriate temporary accommodation.

## **Court Processes**

### **Question 11:**

Are there ways in which court processes might be modified in a proportionate way to ensure unauthorised encampments can be addressed more quickly?

*Please enter your comments here*

Paragraph 22 of the Consultation document states:-

*There have been a number of improvements made to the court system, to streamline and improve the efficiency of the appeal and judicial review (JR) process.*

In real terms, we believe that many courts have been closed in recent years which has caused disruption to this process. Judicial review regulations have also been changed meaning that there is a risk for legal aid providers when taking a judicial review case under legal aid that they will not be paid, thus many providers will no longer run such cases.

## **Interim possession orders**

### **Question 12:**

In your view, what would the advantages and disadvantages be of extending the IPO process to open land?

*Please enter your comments here*

Interim possession orders were created to deal with people squatting in residential properties i.e. in circumstances where the person entitled to **reside** in the property was now denied access. These are not the same circumstances with regard to Gypsies and Travellers and these powers would be inappropriate to use in respect of unauthorised developments and encampments.

## **Powers for dealing with unauthorised development**

### **Question 13:**

Are you aware of any specific barriers which prevent the effective use of current planning enforcement powers?

*Please enter your comments here*

Paragraph 32 of the Consultation document states:-

*Used properly, the powers can tackle unauthorised development which has already happened and help to prevent it occurring in the first place. These powers are intended to deal with the full range of breaches of planning control, including unauthorised changes of use and unauthorised new buildings – not just unauthorised encampments.*

This paragraph suggests that current powers are sufficient.

Additionally, paragraph 34 states that “the current planning enforcement powers are extensive.”

This is very much a planning issue for local authorities to fully comment upon.

### **Question 14:**

If you are aware of any specific barriers to effective enforcement, are there any resourcing or administrative arrangements that can help overcome them?

*Please enter your comments here*

See answer to Question 13.

**Question 15:** Are you aware of any specific barriers which prevent the effective use of temporary stop notices? If so, do you have a view on how these barriers can be overcome?

*Please enter your comments here*

See answer to Question 13.

### **Improving the efficiency of enforcement notice appeals**

**Question 16:**

How do you think the existing enforcement notice appeals process can be improved or streamlined?

*Please enter your comments here*

See answer to Question 13.

### **Government Guidance**

**Question 17:**

How can Government make existing guidance more effective in informing and changing behaviour?

*Please enter your comments here*

The only guidance that is mentioned in the document is the March 2015 Guidance which is largely just a list of existing powers.

NPCC Guidance on managing unauthorised encampments is well established and should be used by police forces as they work with their local authorities.

**Question 18:**

If future guidance was issued as statutory guidance, would this help in taking action against unauthorised development and encampments?

*Please enter your comments here*

This is a potentially complicated area and further detail is needed about future plans before we can reasonably comment.

## Planning and traveller site provision

### Question 19:

Are there any specific barriers to the provision of more authorised permanent and transit sites? If so, is there any action that the Government could take to help overcome those barriers?

*Please enter your comments here*

See also our answers to Questions 1 and 3.

Site provision so often falls at the hurdle of having insufficient political will to make it happen. Local authorities - supported by their local Police - need to provide strong leadership regarding Gypsy & Traveller sites, and allocate responsibility for this at a senior officer level. Local authorities, and indeed all partner agencies, need to develop a long-term approach to site provision and enforcement as part of overall plan for housing, linked to health, education and an overarching communications strategy.

## Impacts on the travelling community

### Question 20:

What impact would extending local authority, police or land owner powers have on children and families and other groups with protected characteristics that public authorities must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to under their Public Sector Equality Duty?

*Please enter your comments here*

Surely an equality impact assessment / relevant equality analysis needs to be carried out in respect of any such legislative changes?

### Question 21:

Do you expect that extending the powers referred to above would have a positive or negative impact on the health or educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities? If so, do you have any evidence to support this view, and/or suggestions for what could be done to mitigate or prevent any negative impacts?

*Please enter your comments here*

The document contains an accurate list of the negative data with regard to health, life expectancy, education etc. experienced by GRT communities.

**This data surely points to the need for site provision in all forms as outlined in our responses.**

Without accommodation of whatever description, access to health, education and indeed all services that most people take for granted becomes difficult or impossible.

## Other comments

### Question 22:

Do you have any other comments to make on the issue of unauthorised development and encampments not specifically addressed by any of the questions above?

*Please enter your comments here*

To underline comments made previously, on a national level we would say that the key issue to address in respect of GRT communities is the lack of accommodation for them. The shortage of suitable sites for families to live on and access as they move around the country leads to groups setting up unauthorised encampments and developments. **This is the issue that must be addressed.**

**Your opinion is valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read the consultation and respond.**