

A Road Less Travelled, A Draft Gypsy Traveller Strategy



CONSULTATION

Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales

Report to the Inclusion Unit of the Welsh
Assembly Government

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5. 1. Introduction

The One Wales document that aims to improve the lives of the people in Wales seeks to create a fair and just Wales. Within this context, an All Wales Gypsy Traveller Strategy has been formulated. The Strategy seeks to recognize the needs and address the inequalities experienced by the Gypsy-Traveller community in Wales. This strategy for Gypsy-Travellers is the first of its kind to be developed in the United Kingdom.

The Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales (BVSNW), as one of the driving organizations working with equality issues across Wales, was commissioned by the Inclusion Unit of the Welsh Assembly Government to consult with the Gypsy-Traveller community.

Consulted sites

BVSNW carried out consultation events in twelve of the nineteen Gypsy-Traveller sites across Wales owned by local authorities. The consultations aimed to elicit the opinion of members of the Gypsy-Traveller community living in Wales about the strategy.

Table 1: Consulted sites

Local authority	Site name
Blaenau Gwent	Cwmcrachen
Carmarthenshire	Penybryn
Flintshire	Riverside
Merthyr Tydfil	Glynmil
Pembrokeshire	Castle Quarry
Pembrokeshire	Kingsmoor Common
Pembrokeshire	Withybush
Pembrokeshire	Under the Hill
Rhondda Cynon Taf	Beddau
Swansea	Tygwyn
Torfaen	Shepherd's Hill
Wrexham	Ruthin Road

Characteristics of interviewees

In the twelve consulted sites the post holder interviewed a total of 69 people. The interviews were carried out at different times of the day; some of them took place in the late hours of the afternoon to ensure that Gypsy-Traveller males were at home at the time of the interview. This proved to be successful in terms of finding the men at home and as a result almost twenty percent of the interviewees were male. However most men still prefer their wives to speak on their behalf.

A total of 51 interviewees were female and 18 were males. The individual age of each interviewee was recorded into age groups for monitoring purposes (see Table 3).

Table 2: Gender of interviewees by site

Site name	Females	Males	Total
Cwmcrachen	6	2	8
Penybryn	1	-	1
Riverside	7	-	7
Glynmil	5	1	6
Castle Quarry	5	2	7
Kingsmoor Common	4	2	6
Withybush	3	3	6
Under the Hill	1	-	1
Beddau	6	-	6
Tygwyn	2	-	2
Shepherd's Hill	5	6	11
Ruthin Road	6	2	8
Total by Gender	51	18	69

Table 3: Age of interviewees by site (M=Males F=Females)

Site name	Age 15-20	Age 20-30	Age 30-40	Age 40-50	Age 50-60	Age 60-70	Age 70 plus
Cwmcrachen	2 F	3F 1M	1M	1F			
Penybryn					1F		
Riverside	4F	2F				1F	
Glynmil		1M	1F	1F	2F		1F
Castle Quarry		3F 1M	1F 1M			1F	
Kingsmoor Common	2F 2M	1F				1F	
Withybush				2F 2M	1F		1M
Under the Hill				1F			
Beddau		3F	2F		1F		
Tygwyn	1F		1F				
Shepherd's Hill	1M	3F	1F 1M	1F 2M	2M		
Ruthin Road	3F	1F	1M	1F		1F 1M	
Total	15	19	10	11	7	5	2

The Consultation Process

The consultation was carried out between November and December 2009. Key people were contacted in order to inform the community about the impending consultation prior its commencement. Some of the key people contacted included: Site managers, Education Welfare Officers, Housing Department Officials, Traveller Education Services and an Inclusion Officer from the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Copies of the Easy Read version of the

strategy were sent out to the key contacts with the idea that residents from every site would have a chance to hear about the strategy before the consultation. Only a few number of residents had the chance of looking at the Easy Read version of the strategy before the consultation, due mainly to the scarcity of the number of copies available and to the sometimes random nature of the contact between key people and the Gypsy-Traveller community.

The consultation was done through the use of a semi-structured questionnaire that was prepared by the post holder in collaboration with the Cardiff Gypsy Traveller Project. The questionnaire was piloted a couple of times at the beginning of the consultation and this provided new themes and areas of interest. The main themes of the questionnaire were chosen according to the principal areas covered by the “A Road Less Travelled, A Draft Gypsy Traveller Strategy” document.

The questionnaire consisted of a series of questions organized under four headings: Accommodation, Health, Education and Participation. Interviews were held in the residents’ homes unless otherwise stated. The number of questions asked to each interviewee varied accordingly to their own characteristics. For example older members of the community were not asked questions related to education.

Interviews were carried out with individuals and with family groups. Some site managers were also interviewed (see individual reports in Appendix One). The number of individuals present at each interview is stated in every interview record.

The post holder took note of the responses given by residents. The interviews were not tape-recorded. For a detailed account of each interview please refer to Appendix One.

2. Accommodation

“The links between accommodation and other inequalities experienced by the community is well established (EHRC, 2009). Removing barriers to other services cannot be done in isolation without addressing the accommodation issues.” (A Road Less Travelled, a Draft Gypsy Traveller Strategy)

This section looks into the different areas that Gypsy-Travellers regarded as important for their accommodation. Due to the fact that accommodation issues underpinned many other aspects of life for the Gypsy-Traveller communities, this area produced the largest amount of data of the four areas under scrutiny.

This first section comprises three sub sections: The first one is a revision of the most salient themes explored by the residents during the interviews; the second one mentions suggestions made by the residents about how to make improvements within this area and also some examples of good practice regarding accommodation; and finally the third section is a case study that elucidates the extent to which accommodation issues can permeate other areas of everyday life.

Most salient themes regarding accommodation

This section looks into residents' answers to the first area of the questionnaire, 'Accommodation'. Their answers have been summarized under headings that reflect the main questions asked in this area. It is worth bearing in mind that in a real life interview the process is not as straightforward as this, and some themes overlap and/or are interwoven with more than one question.

For the first section of the questionnaire, residents were asked the following set of questions:

- What is it like living here?
- What is the best thing about living here?
- What is the worst thing about living here? (How does this affect you?)

- Have you ever lived in brick and mortar (House)? Are there any advantages or disadvantages of living in a house?
- Do you travel a lot? If you do, do you experience any problems in the places you go to? Do you have any problems leaving the plot behind?
- Are there any other issues that are important for you that we haven't discussed yet?
- Is there anything you can think of that would improve your life and the life of your family while living on site? (Please think about you, your children, and old people)

What is it like living here? The responses received from residents were most of the time framed in a negative context. Among some of their responses are statements such as: “aggravating”; “derelict and very messy”; “it is like a prison”; “it is rough”; “the site is in a dreadful state”; “I have never felt healthy living here, there are two power stations and the site floods”; “it is torture”; “boring for adults and for children”; and “if this was a private site the council would have closed it for Health and Safety reasons”.

Residents from the Ruthin Rd site in Wrexham and the Riverside site in Flintshire referred to the site as a prison. The interviewed residents in the Ruthin Road argued that the CCTV cameras that point towards the site, the fast road outside, the wardens at the entrance, the tall fence and the “disproportionally big” speed bumps, all contribute to the overall feeling among residents of living in a prison. One resident summed it up like this:

“This is a prison with cameras pointing at us and wardens at the entrance. There is a 70mph road outside, if you run out of jail you get shot, if you get out of this site by foot a car could kill you. Outside the council estate (*nearby*) the road is 30 miles an hour, outside the gypsy site the road is a 70 mile one”. (Ruthin Rd site)

However some residents also regarded the living on their site as “nice place” “nice to live close to your family” and in the sites where the local authorities have refurbished the utility blocks in recent years the residents seemed to have a more positive attitude towards the site.

What is the best thing about living here?

Almost all residents mentioned having their families living nearby as one of the best aspects of living in the site. Some others also considered the geographical location of the site commenting on the green areas around it.

What is the worst thing about living here? (How does this affect you?)

This question brought out a wide range of issues. A series of complaints that residents raised about issues related to accommodation that were articulated in negative terms have also been included in this section.

Most people interviewed referred to the general state of the site in derogative terms. The most frequent complaints included:

Run down state of the utility blocks

The utility blocks that have not been recently refurbished were deemed unsuitable for cooking:

“The sheds are full of wood worm and maggots, and when you ask the site manager to fix the sheds he says that we have to cook inside the caravans which is dangerous anyway, that is why I think that we have no rights here, we are nobody.”
(Riverside site)

“Nothing in there works, the toilet, the bath, the sink, everything is falling apart, and there is no heating”. “I can’t cook there anymore, I cook here (inside the mobile home) which again is a hazard for small children.”
(Glynmil site)

Residents also considered the bathrooms within the utility blocks as unsuitable for use as most of the times do not have appropriate heating systems in place which they argued is detrimental for the health of children and old people or have slippery surfaces:

“There is no heating, nothing in there, there is a child here with asthma and the dampness in the toilets doesn’t help.”
(Glynmil site)

“The sheds are very cold and it is impossible to heat them up, I have to wash my thirteen year old sister in a baby’s bath, inside the caravan so she doesn’t catch pneumonia.”
(Ruthin Rd site)

“The sheds are in an awful state, there are no heaters in the shed, and so, at this time of the year I have to endure the cold weather. I am partly disabled and I need to wash and do other things in the shed but it is freezing cold here, it’s not fair”.
(Riverside site)

The residents of the Beddau site in Rhondda Cynon Taff as well as the residents from the Withybush site in Pembrokeshire said that they have to share the use of the toilet between some family groups. In the Beddau site six families share the use of two toilets.

The overall poor condition of the Tygwyn Rd site in Swansea was considered as detrimental for a vulnerable member of the community:

“We have a child who has only one kidney and is therefore open to infections; the general state of the site does not help with keeping a child like this safe and healthy.”
(Tygwyn Rd site)

Lack of pitches to accommodate expanding families

Most families stated that the sites they are currently living in are either already overcrowded or do not have the capacity to provide accommodation for new families of young residents who are getting married.

“When my daughter grows up there won’t be places for her to live in, and god knows if we will still be here.”
(Kingsmoor Common site)

The lack of provision for newly married couples also means that pitches that are intended for one mobile home hold two or sometimes more homes. This subsequently means a breach of health and safety practice.

Vermin

In several sites residents mentioned vermin as one of their major problems. In the Glynmil site in Merthyr a resident commented that she tries not to use the utility block because there is vermin there. Other residents blamed different reasons such as the proximity to sewage and the fact that some residents keep animals as contributing to the existence of vermin on site

“The rats get into the motors of cars, they chew on the wires, there are too many of them.”
(Cwmcrachen site)

“There is a problem with rats as well and pest controllers have been brought on site and have recommended to clear up the empty pitches as a measure to keep the rat population down.”
(Penybryn site)

Constant sewage smell

Most of the residents interviewed in the Riverside site in Flintshire and the Penybryn site in Carmarthenshire argued that the constant smell of sewage is one of the worst things about life on the site. The smell seemed to worsen in the summer months. A resident commented:

“You can’t get away from it.”
(Riverside site)

Another resident frustrated with the constant smell argued that:

“When they build sites they build them on top of sewage away from towns so people don’t have to see gypsies.”
(Riverside site)

Geographical isolation of the site/ access to public transport

The geographical position of most sites seem to add an extra layer of isolation to a community that due to their cultural make-up has traditionally been marginal to Welsh public life. Most sites visited are located in remote areas away from the local amenities. Only two sites can be reached by or within walking distance from public transport (Cwmcrachen and Beddau sites).

The isolated areas where sites are located mean that residents cannot use health, education, leisure centres, commercial areas etc. with the ease that the majority of the settled population can. Members of the Gypsy-Traveller community that do not have their own transport or do not drive (e.g. older residents or young people) have to rely on other members of the community for transport. Some of the older residents interviewed argued that they have to

either wait for a family member to take them out of the site to run their errands or to call a taxi.

The lack of public transport complicates even further some residents' access to health services, which is the case of an older resident who is partly disabled and lives on a site where the entrance is flooded most days:

“I find it really difficult to go to the doctor's, you can always call a taxi or an ambulance but the taxi will wait outside and I still have to cross to the other side to be picked up.”
(Riverside site)

For the older residents who live in the Glynmil site in Merthyr Tydfil, the option is to walk by the edge of the dual carriageway outside the site, to wait for a resident to give them a lift, or to take a taxi to go to the nearest shopping area. One of them explained that now that one of her sisters is in hospital she needs to take taxis several times a day, which is a very expensive option.

“For someone living on a pension (£4.50) it is a great amount of money spent just in taxis.”
(Glynmil site)

Most of the residents across the twelve sites stated that they need to drive in order to go to their local doctor's and dental surgery. Most people said that the local school where their children go is a short drive away and this did not seem to be an issue.

In the Ruthin Rd site in Wrexham there is a bus service that drives the children to school and residents were very happy with the fact that the drivers have been working with children from the site for generations. In the Tygwyn Rd site in Swansea a resident stated that there used to be a bus service paid by the TES but that the service stopped due to the lack of funding. In the other sites children are either driven by their parents to school or are collected by a local Taxi company (Glynmil site in Merthyr).

Fly tipping

Fly tipping was identified as a serious problem in two sites: Penybryn (Carmarthenshire) and in the Glynmil site (Merthyr Tydfil). In Penybryn the site manager argues that the Local Council has repeatedly cleaned the site and have installed CCTV cameras to stop this happening. The cameras have been vandalised and the problem with fly tipping is an ongoing one. The residents in Merthyr argued that the local settled community uses their site for fly tipping because of the lack of a fence at the entrance.

Lack of infrastructure on the site

Many residents commented on the lack of basic infrastructure on the site. Some mentioned the lack of fences both around the individual pitches and around the site. Residents in the Castle Quarry (Pembrokeshire) argued that they had to spend their own money putting fences around their pitches so their children could play safely away from the traffic.

The fences on the site seemed problematic for many residents. For some the lack of a site fence leaves the site and its residents feeling vulnerable. In the Tygwyn Rd site in Swansea residents argued that there should be a fence between the site and the river since there is a twelve foot drop to the river.

The tall fence of the Ruthin Rd site in Wrexham combined with the constant surveillance of a CCTV camera that points to the site makes most of its residents feel like “cattle” or gives them the impression of being “in a jail”.

Lack of streetlights within the site was an issue mentioned by residents of the Shepherd’s Hill site in Torfaen, making the site very dangerous during the nights. Some residents of this site and of the Witybush site in Pembrokeshire also complained about the lack of a proper drainage system which means that the sites flood easily.

The residents from the Tygwyn Rd site in Swansea have experienced floods in their site. They argued that the site is in a flood zone and that the nearby river has burst its banks a few times.

Residents of the Riverside site in Flintshire have also experienced problems with flooding due to the proximity of the site to the local river. Hence the site's name:

“When the river is high the people with no transport can't leave the site” When the tide is high children have to jump the barrier at the entrance in order to get out of the site. Sometimes you have to wait for someone driving a car to take you to the other side”.

(Riverside site)

Residents at the Riverside site in Flintshire and at Castle Quarry site in Pembrokeshire complained about the pools of stagnant water at the entrance of their site. This, obviously, is not only a problem for vehicles entering and leaving the site but also for residents who have to walk across it.

Postal service

The irregularity or lack of postal service was deemed a problem for residents living in the Tygwyn Rd site in Swansea, in the Ruthin Rd site in Wrexham and in the Beddau site in Rhondda Cynon Taff. Residents argued that their mail does not get delivered to the site for different reasons and a couple of residents argued that in order to make sure that they receive their mail they have to provide the address of a relative living in housing.

For residents of the Ruthin Rd site and the residents of the Tygwyn Rd site in Swansea the fact that the post gets delivered to the Warden's Office and to one of the site residents respectively brings concerns over issues of confidentiality.

No parking for residents

Residents from the Castle Quarry site in Pembrokeshire, Cwmcrachen site in Blaenau Gwent and the Kingsmoor Common site in Pembrokeshire mentioned the lack of parking spaces. This affects not only visitors coming to the site but also represents a problem for the residents who find themselves

blocking the roads for pedestrians and other vehicles due to the lack of parking spaces.

Cost of water and electricity

Residents from the Ruthin Rd site in Wrexham commented on the high prices that they have to pay for not having electric meters in place. They said that they have to purchase electricity cards: “It costs us about £20 a week per family.” The water rates are also very expensive because they receive the water from high pressure pipes that are meant to be used by the fire brigade only. They said that they have to pay a fixed price of £19 per week, even when they are travelling, which means that some of them have to think twice before travelling because it is too expensive.

Residents of the Shepherd’s Hill site in Torfaen stated that they would like to be able to pay their bills directly to the council rather than paying it to the site manager.

Have you ever lived in brick and mortar (house)? Are there any advantages/disadvantages of living in houses?

Most of the residents interviewed argued that they have lived in mobile homes most of their lives, however the few residents that maintained that they lived in houses at one point commented that their experience was negative and that they preferred to live on site.

A resident said that living on site is the only option available and argued that he would not live in a house because of the prejudice of the settled community against Gypsy-Travellers:

“Why would you live in a house when you know that people around you hate you?”
(Shepherd’s Hill site)

A small number of residents commented that they would like to live in brick and mortar and some of them said that they have joined the waiting list to get a house.

I am looking for a house at the moment, this is not a nice place to be, I would love to live close to my friends and family but the sheds in this place are falling apart.”
(Riverside site)

The resident argued that she would like to live in a house, she said that she prefers indoor life to life on a site.

“It’s just easier, for washing the kids in a nice toilet, sheds are freezing.”
(Shepherd’s Hill site)

A resident who is expecting her first baby stated that she would like to leave the site before the birth of her child:

“A house is better, cheaper, warmer, everything is there, you don’t have to go outside to wash.”
(Castle Quarry site)

Do you travel a lot? If you do, do you experience any problems in the places you go to? Do you have any problems leaving the plot behind?

Most residents interviewed said that they travel for a few weeks, especially during the summer months. Some other residents argued that they don’t travel at all, some of them explained that they do not travel due to health reasons.

Residents with children stated that they only travel during the summer months and the average of travelling time amounts to six week during the school holiday period.

A few residents stated that they do not travel at all and one resident said that she has never travelled outside Haverford West.

A resident from the Kingsmoor Common site in Pembrokeshire argued that the last time they went to a Gypsy Fair in Stow “all the shops in town were closed because locals did not want Gypsies in their shops”.

A resident of the Riverside site in Flintshire said that when they travelled around they faced discrimination. The large mobile homes are recognized as gypsies' caravans and are not allowed into holiday camps.

Are there any other issues that are important for you that we haven't discussed yet?

Health and Safety issues in the Shepherd's Hill site and in the Ruthin Rd site were major concerns for the residents.

One of the residents from Shepherd's Hill commented that the fire brigade Chief had recently visited the site and told them that the site was not safe in terms of fire safety.

"The chief from the fire brigade came the other day with a map of the site to check for fire safety, you know what he did to the map? He crossed it with a big X saying that it was not safe".

The resident continued:

"If anything happens in this site is due to negligence, because everybody knows how much a hazard it is in every respect, but no one does anything about it".

Another resident of the site commented that the mobile homes in the site are too close to one another. Their mobile home is too close to their neighbours and that this constitutes a fire hazard.

Residents from the Ruthin Rd site in Wrexham also argued that the site is not equipped to deal with an emergency situation as there is only one narrow entrance to the site and that works as an exit too. The residents pointed out that in the event of a fire or in an emergency situation residents will not be able to exit the site safely and the access to the site by the emergency services could be also jeopardised.

Is there anything you can think of that would improve your life and the life of your family while living on site? (Please think about you, your children, and old people)

Residents on many of the consulted sites thought that a park for children or a green area within the site could improve life on the site. Proper facilities for older members of the community as well as for disable people were also mentioned.

Many parents expressed their concerns about the different hazards for their children on their sites (e.g. constant traffic, stagnant water and lack of fences on individual pitches) and said that children are not allowed to play or have to play indoors.

“My children prefer to live with the grandparents, it breaks my heart but I know that they are better there, there is nothing here for them, this place is full of hazards, if they are here with me I won’t let them out, they have to stay inside the trailer with me and they hate it, they are children and want to be out playing. There are lots of green areas here, but nothing has been done to turn one into a play ground for the kids”
(Glynmil site)

“There is no room here for them to play, the traffic on the site is constant and the streets are too narrow, they have to play indoors” (Shepherd’s Hill site)

A resident in the Ruthin Rd site in Wrexham commented that the lack of a park on the site means that they have to take the children outside the site to play in the park, but by doing this, they put their lives and the lives of their children at risk as they have to cross a 60 mile per hour road that has no traffic light or pedestrian crossings:

“There is no crossing, nothing, but we have to cross with our children, we cross the road to take them to the park, but we have to deal with the traffic”. (Ruthin Rd site)

During the visits to the sites the post holder only saw two sites with a playground for children. There was only one that was available for use in the Tygwyn Rd site in Swansea. The other site with a playground is the Cwmcraehen site in Blaenau Gwent. The playground arrived only a few days before the interviews took place but children could not play in the playground

area as there was not a fence around it and it represented a risk to the children due to the constant flow of traffic.

Some residents stated that appropriate facilities for vulnerable members of the community such as old and disabled people will improve the quality of life for them and their families. Old residents enjoy their independence and prefer to carry out their own chores without much help, however, facilities such as accessible toilets and heaters for their utility blocks were among the requests of some residents.

Special trailers for old people could be a good idea, one where they have all they need without having to go out in the cold. (Riverside site)

Better toilet facilities were also suggested for older and disabled people. Facilities that take into account, for instance, that they can not climb into a bath, therefore ample showers with access to wheel chairs were mentioned as ideal devices for this purpose.

Resident's suggestions to improve in the area of Accommodation

Some residents made the following suggestions:

- The size of the utility block should be proportional to the size of the family group “If you have four or more children you should have a big kitchen” The resident made reference to the fact that her utility block was recently refurbished but that she still has to cook inside the mobile home and that her children are at risk of getting burnt. (Tygwyn Rd site)
- A resident who mentioned that “One of our kids just got married and they don't have a place to live”, suggested that in order to address the lack of provision of pitches for residents the council should use some of land available around the site. This land, the resident argued is currently used by the council who are “leasing it to other people to park Lorries and horse boxes”. The resident stated that problem is not the lack of space in the site “because there is plenty of it around”, but that rather the use of that space.(Castle Quarry site)
- The residents stated that the idea of refurbishing the site causes anxiety among their families. They fear that the local authority will offer them alternative accommodation while the site gets refurbished and that after the work has been done their families will be unable to come back to live on site. The reason for this anxiety is that only one of the

six tenants holds a license agreement with the local authority. The residents suggested that they would like to be involved in the planning process for the new site and are willing to contribute with ideas for the new site. They also commented that an official statement from the local authority stating their plans for the site clearly would be beneficial for all the members of the community as it would put an end to the anxiety that they experience at the moment. (Beddau site)

Good practice

Residents living on the Tygwyn Rd, Castle Quarry, Ruthin Rd, and Kingsmoor Common sites stated that their quality of life has been improved by the construction of new utility blocks.

The older member of the family in the Kingsmoor Common site said that she has been living on this site for 34 years and said that during this time, life in the site has improved. She said that recent improvements done to the utility blocks were one of the best changes in recent years.

Case Study

Hanna¹ has lived on site for 24 years. She lives with their two year old daughter and with her husband who is recovering from a heart attack. She is currently living in an old mobile home. A mobile home that in her own words “won’t see us through the winter months”. She argues that the caravan is too damp for her two year old daughter to live in and said some of her other children are currently living with other family members on the site. One of them is currently receiving home tuition at the site manager’s office.

The resident seemed distressed throughout the interview and requested the help of the post holder who unfortunately had to explain to her is not in a position of helping her.

The resident said that Ebbw Vale council have offered to provide the family with a mobile home if the family has the support of an organization or individual to pay for the rent.

The resident commented that a social worker has been informed of their situation and that with her help the family have applied for money from a charity organization.

The resident stressed that she wanted the post holder to know that her whole

¹ Name has been changed

family is suffering as a result of the lack of an adequate home. She said that the health and wellbeing of her whole family is being directly affected as she is clinically depressed due to the pressure of not being able to look after her family properly and at the same time having to look after her ill husband and her two year old daughter.

The interview with this resident was carried out inside her mobile home and the post holder had the chance to witness the seriously run down state of her caravan. This particular example of a family living under seriously deprived conditions demonstrates the degree to which accommodation can impact upon other areas of life. The resident argued that her current living conditions are affecting almost every other aspect of hers and her family's life and therefore everything else appears to be a struggle too.

3. Education

“The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring an inclusive approach to education and learning that is responsive to individual educational needs, including those of Gypsy and Traveller pupils, and which supports all children and young people to reach their full potential”. (A Road less Travelled, a Draft Gypsy Traveller Strategy)

This section looks into the different areas that Gypsy-Travellers regarded as important for the education of their children and young people.

Most salient themes regarding education

This section looks into resident’s answers to the second area of the questionnaire: Education. Resident’s answers have been summarized under headings that reflect the main questions asked in this area although due to the nature of the semi structure questionnaires some of the resident’s answers merged several questions together.

For the second section of the questionnaire, residents were asked the following set of questions:

- What are your main interests/worries about education for children and young people?
- The Welsh Assembly Government thinks that young Gypsy-Traveller children don’t do as well as other children do at school. What do you think are the reasons for this?
- Do your children go to school? Primary/Secondary (comprehensive, big school) If not what are the reasons?
- What is good about school?
- What is bad about school?
- What would your ideal school be like?
- Have you or your children experienced bullying at school?
- What would be the best way of dealing with bullying?

- Some people would argue that if G&T children and young people don't go to school, they would find it very hard to get a job when they grow up? Would you agree?
- What kind of training would you like for your children? How can this type of training be delivered?
- Is there anything about education that we have not mentioned and you would like to talk about?

What are your main interests/worries about education for children and young people?

In terms of interests about children's and young people's education most residents seemed to agree that the numeracy and literacy skills gained at primary school are an important foundation for the education of a child.

Many parents argued that they want their children to be able to write and write so they will not have to go through the difficulties they have been.

The majority of the parents interviewed regardless of their age (parent's interviewed included a wide range of ages from 19- 40) stated that they worry about the issues that young people are faced with when accessing secondary education.

Some of these issues were:

Change from single to multiple teachers: Most children in primary school receive tuition for different subjects from just one teacher. By the time they reach secondary education this situation changes, and pupils have to deal with a greater number of tutors which can be destabilising at times. Some argued that the fact that the teachers spend only a limited period of time with the pupils means that the relationship between them is almost non-existent and as a result pupils find it more difficult to cope.

Cultural challenges of Secondary Education: For the majority of the parents interviewed the access of their children to secondary education seemed to be a difficult stage due to a number of reasons. Most argued that

sexual education taught at school is one of the reasons why they would chose not to send their children to school.

Some parents suggested that sexual education should be an issue for families to discuss with their children rather than being a curriculum subject. Another parent framed the issue of sexual education as a religious matter and established a comparison with another community:

“Muslims girls have the right to go to school wearing their scarves and schools have to respect that because it is their religion, why can’t they respect Gypsies? We are Catholics, we believe in respect and two people should not be together until they are married, we want our children to grow up with those values.” (Castle Quarry site)

Other residents argued that issues such as drug use and contraception are discussed in secondary school or are part of the lives of the young people from the settled community. Parents would prefer their children not to learn about it at school:

There are children at school using drugs and I know of a girl age 13 who goes to the family planning clinic. I don’t want my daughter to be around people like that thinking that that’s the way it is” (Cwmcrachen site)

Children learn more things at school than they should. Children should be left as children”. (Riverside site)

At one interview the post holder asked some residents if they could think of a way of preserving those values without compromising the education of young people and the female argued that “a way round it” would be if the schools could exempt their children from taking part in sexual education classes.

Do your children go to school? Primary/Secondary (comprehensive, big school) If not what are the reasons?

The majority of parents interviewed sated that their children go to primary school and seemed to be happy with the level of education their children receive.

Bullying was regularly mentioned as one of the reasons for taking children out of school. At times residents argued that the issue of bullying depends on the actions that local schools take in order to prevent it, some schools were considered bully-free (Ruthin Rd site, Monkton Primary) while in others nothing seems to be done from above (headmasters level) in order to stop the bullying of Gypsy-Traveller children (Riverside site, Cwmcraehen site, Tygwyn Rd site)

A resident argued that the bullying of her grandchildren was a result of their ethnic identity:

“They are being bullied because they are Irish” (Tygwyn Rd)

Secondary school is perceived as problematic and many of the parents and young people interview said that the schools need to change in order to address the needs of Gypsy-Travellers.

Schools should have classes about the Gypsy culture so other students can learn about Gypsies and respect them.
(Riverside site)

Some of the children who are taken out of school receive home tuition. There seem to be flexible approach to home tuition as to the days that students receive classes. Some parents argued that their children receive home tuition between one to three days a week while others stated that they receive home tuition five days a week. It is not clear whether this varies at the discretion of the local school or at the discretion of students and their parents.

Resident’s suggestions to improve in the area of Education

A resident suggested that if the Traveller Education Service were to provide a secondary level of education for school for children she would send her children there:

I would send them happily. I know that they understand and respect our way of living.” (Tygwyn Rd site)

Good practice

Residents of the Ruthin Rd site in Wrexham argued that their children have never experienced any bullying from the local children and stated that their relationship with the local settled community is very good. "Everybody is friendly, we know them for years and they know us".

This satisfaction with the quality of care and lack of bullying translates into effective results since parents are willing for their children to continue in education. Residents said that they would like their children to be able to study and to acquire qualifications for future employment. (Ruthin Rd)

A young female resident stated that she finished both her secondary education, went to college for three years and currently works as a volunteer for BAWSO. The resident stated that she is willing to continue with further training and stated that she would like to do a course on issues such as domestic violence.

Some people would argue that if G&T children and young people don't go to school, they would find it very hard to get a job when they grow up? Would you agree?

Most residents interviewed disagreed with this statements. Although some recognized the importance of having recognized qualifications such as NVQ's and GCSE's, some argued that many people from the settled community who have qualifications find themselves unable to find jobs.

A resident pointed out that neither she nor her husband needed school education. She argued that her husband works as a builder and he did not finish secondary school and that she did not need a job in order to have the things she wanted in life.

The young people present at the time of the interview in the Kingsmoor Common site seemed to be divided over the importance given to secondary

school. Some argued that it is important to study and to be able gain access to college. One of them said that she would go to college to study a course to enable her to work with children with disabilities. Some of the young males argued that secondary education is not essential to get a good job. One of them argued that he did not finish school and currently works as a life guard in Tenby. A different young male argued that there are no courses that interest him, he said he has worked as a manual worker on building sites but that if he wanted to do a course to gain qualifications he would have to travel to study and that puts young people off studying.

A resident argued that young people do not need qualifications in order to attain a job in later life:

“they will be scrap dealers, work doing pavements, selling carpets, our children don’t want to be doctors or nurses, they want to work as travellers, sometimes you can’t work anyway because you have children and old members of your family to look after”. (Ruthin Rd site)

What kind of training would you like for your children? How can this type of training be delivered?

At this respect opinions varied as to whether there should be special training courses especially available for Gypsy-Traveller young people or whether they should be able to access the courses that are available for the whole of the population.

Those who agree with offering specific courses for young people suggested arranging courses in colleges near the site or courses run by organizations such as TES. Among the courses suggested were training courses in building, plumbing, hairdressing cooking, beauty therapies and carpentry. Most members of the community take pride in traditional skills passing though generations.

Those who did not agree with offering specific courses to Gypsy-Traveller young people argued that there should not be a difference between the two communities and commented that they should have the same training as anybody else.

4. Health

“Vision: That the Department of Health and Social Services and the NHS in Wales continue to build on the recommendations made in the 2003 Welsh Assembly Government’s Equal Opportunities Committee (EOC) publication “Review of Service Provision for Gypsies and Travellers” and the work undertaken to responses recognises the cultural differences of the Gypsy Traveller community, works to eliminate discriminatory practices and negative perceptions of Gypsy Travellers, raises awareness of the health needs of the community and improves access to health services, through information, involvement and inclusion in national and local strategic developments which seek to improve the health outcomes of the Gypsy Travellers community in Wales.”

(A Road Less Travelled, a Draft Gypsy Traveller Strategy)

This section looks into the different areas that Gypsy-Travellers regarded as important for their health.

Most salient themes regarding health

This section looks into resident’s answers to the third area of the questionnaire: Health. Some issues mentioned here have already been discussed earlier on in the two previous sections and therefore will not be re visited.

Resident’s answers have been summarized under headings that reflect the main questions asked in this area.

For the third section of the questionnaire, residents were asked the following set of questions:

- How would you describe the health of your family?
- What can you tell me about your experience with the National Health Service? (Doctor’s surgery)
- How far is the surgery from the site? How do you get there?
- Have you experienced any problems accessing the NHS when travelling?
- Some people argue that Gypsy-Travellers should carry their health records (notes that your doctor has of your health history) with them so they can show them to different doctors while they are away travelling? What do you think?

- The Welsh Assembly Government thinks that the health of G&T is poorer compared to other people's health? Do you agree? What would be the reasons for this?
- Do you think that GT women use the ante-natal and post-natal (before and after the baby is born) care as much as other women? What would make them use it more efficiently?
- What about vaccinations for small children?
- Can you think of anything that is a barrier to accessing the NHS services? (Staff attitude, lack of transport, etc)
- What can be done to ensure that G&T receive appropriate health service? (Bring services to site –dental care, healthy eating programmes)
- What can you tell me about the long-term care for old people in the community? How this could be done accordingly to GT way of life (to avoid residential care homes)
- Is there anything about health that we have not discussed so far?

How would you describe the health of your family?

The majority of residents interviewed regarded their own and their family's health as good. Only a few residents regarded their health as bad or poor.

The ailments most frequently mentioned were: Diabetes, high cholesterol, depression, heart conditions, asthma, lung problems linked to smoking habits, dental health problems for children and arthritis for women. Only one person was mentioned to the post holder as severely disabled and an old person described herself as partially disabled.

When residents were asked whether conditions such as asthma or arthritis were a result of their life style some commented that were not sure whether it was directly related but pointed out that living in damp sites or mobile homes only aggravates these conditions.

What can you tell me about your experience with the National Health Service?

The majority of residents interviewed regarded the service they receive from the local doctor's surgery as good.

With the exemption of the Cwmcrachen site all the sites stated that they need to drive to go to their doctor's surgery.

For residents of the Glynmil site who do not have a car, the visit to the doctor's surgery constitutes a problem since they are faced with walking on the site of a dual carriage way or taking a taxi as has been described into more detail in section one.

The lack of access to public transport seemed to be an issue that complicates access to doctor's surgery. This was the case for residents of the Kingsmoor Common site, Riverside site and Glynmil site.

For most residents the doctor's surgery is located within a maximum of 15 minute driving distance from the site.

Have you experienced any problems accessing the NHS when travelling? Some people argue that Gypsy-Travellers should carry their health records (notes that your doctor has of your health history) with them so they can show them to different doctors while they are away travelling? What do you think?

The majority of residents interviewed argued that they do not experience any problems accessing medical services while away travelling. They said that they try to use their local doctor's surgery while they are on site. If they need to access emergency medical service while away most argued that this is a simple matter of walking into a medical centre and explain that they are travelling and they usually get the service they are looking for.

"My son is epileptic and my mum has a medical condition, if we are travelling and need drugs for them we walk in, explain the situation and if I need medicines for them we show them the medicine pack we need and they get seen and they get prescribed their medicines again. It hasn't been a problem at all. I always tell them that I am a Gypsy and that I am travelling and they are ok." (Cwmcrachen site)

The same resident commented that she has a Tax Credit Exemption Certificate and with this she does not have to pay for medicines anywhere she goes.

Most residents asked, stated that they do not think that hand held records would be a good idea. Many argued that there is no need for that since they are permanently based on their sites and as such access medical service close to their sites.

A resident argued that this would be a problem for her:

I would not like to carry my own papers (medical records), imagine that, I would have to keep my own, my husband's, my children's. No, I don't think it is a good idea, they might get lost somewhere." (Castle Quarry site)

Do you think that GT women use the ante-natal and post-natal (before and after the baby is born) care as much as other women? What would make them use it more efficiently?

All the female residents interviewed argued that they used the antenatal care; they refer to keeping all the appointments for scans and keeping regular contact with their designated midwife.

Most residents said that they did not go to antenatal classes and although one of them thought it could be useful the other interviewees said they did not think that "breathing classes" would equip them better to deal with birth.

A resident suggested that perhaps midwives could run antenatal sessions with pregnant residents so that they do not have to go to public classes where most argued feel self conscious.

What about vaccinations for small children?

The majority of residents said that their children have been vaccinated. Only one resident said that neither her nor her children were vaccinated and

declined to explain the reasons. Another resident argued that the children received all the immunizations apart from the MMR vaccine because there are instances of autism in the family and they have heard about the links between MMR and autism.

A resident from the Riverside site explained that it is a misconception that Gypsy people do not vaccinate their children.

You wouldn't leave your child in pain would you? Neither do we.
(Riverside site)

Residents of the Castle Quarry site said that their children were all immunized and disagreed with the argument that Gypsy-Travellers suffer poorer health than members of the settled community:

“Do they think that we would deliberately do something like that? We are not that thick.” (Castle Quarry site)

The residents commented that some members of the community might have not immunized their children in the past due to lack of information but said that

“These days is all over the news, the nurses tell you about it, you know that is good for the kids, so we do it.” (Castle Quarry site)

What can be done to ensure that G&T receive appropriate health service? (Bring services to site –dental care, healthy eating programmes)

At the beginning of the consultation some resident mentioned that in the Wrexham site residents were benefiting from the visit of a mobile medical service, as a result idea this was included in the questionnaire. Residents were divided over whether it was or not a good idea.

Many of them considered it a positive measure and welcomed the idea of receiving health care in the site. For other residents this was not a good idea and they thought that by doing that the community will be even more isolated.

Many argued that the medical service they receive in the local surgery is efficient therefore there would be no need for that.

Is there anything about health that we have not discussed so far?

A resident explained the relationship between being poor and unhealthy by saying that they are faced with the choice of paying a lot of money in electricity or staying cold and getting ill.

“In winter we spend a huge amount of money heating the toilet, most of our money goes towards electricity, you wouldn’t have a shower in freezing toilet would you? You would get ill, so we have to spend money buying card after card and in winter it is too expensive” (Tygwyn Rd)

5. Participation

For this last section of the consultation the term Participation has been appropriated from the A Road Less Travelled, A Draft Gypsy Traveller Strategy, however the issues discussed here differ from the ones discussed under that heading in the draft strategy.

The issue of participation here does not refer exclusively to young Gypsy-Travellers but rather is explored in ways that investigate the different areas in which all members of the community participate actively in Welsh public life. It briefly looks into the existing relationships with the settled community and finally considers some issues of relevance that prevents or propels residents to be actively involved in public life.

- What are your experiences/relationships with the settled community like? (Country people, gorgias)
- What would you think is the best way of asking GT about their opinions? Would it be a good idea to train some members of the community to do this kind of work I am doing? Would there be any other way of getting people's opinions?
- What can be done in order to get members of the GT community to speak up for them selves and other members of their community?

What are your experiences/relationships with the settled community like? (Country people, gorgias)

Although many residents referred to instances in which they have experienced discrimination from members of the settled community or have been denied access to restaurants or caravan parks due to their ethnicity, many of them also described their relationship with members of the settled community as good when asked by the post holder. They seemed to place the emphasis on the role that mass media play rather than placing it in individuals from the settled community.

A resident even stated that:

“There are gorgias in the family; the problem is that the papers and the telly are biased against Gypsies”. (Cwmcrachen site)

Two residents from Riverside site stated that:

“I get on well with country people, but there are lots of stereotypes of Gypsies around, what was the name of that film with Brad Pitt? They make Gypsies’ homes look worse than dog’s homes, they think Gypsies still live with lots of animals and speak with stupid accents. (Riverside site)

“That Sheri Word from the X factor, she is a Gypsy acting like country people.” (Riverside site)

Residents from the Beddau site stated that they have very good relationships with local people, which included to their children in school. They said that their children have never experienced any bullying from the local children.

“Everybody is friendly, we know them for years and they know us.” (Beddau)

Residents from the Shepherd’s Hill site said that they have good relations with members of the settled community around the site but pointed out that this is a result of years of interaction between the two communities.

A resident also pointed out that due to the geographical situation of most sites it is very difficult for Gypsy-Travellers to have meaningful long lasting relations with members of the settled community.

What would you think is the best way of asking GT about their opinions?
Would it be a good idea to train some members of the community to do this kind of work I am doing? Would there be any other way of getting people’s opinions?

Residents were divided in their opinion over this issue. Many thought that it was a very good idea to have a Gypsy-Traveller consulting with the members of their own community. They argued that Gypsy-Travellers would be well

equipped to do the post holder's job since they share similar values with the interviewees.

A resident in the Tygwyn Rd site in Swansea stated that Gypsy-Travellers should be used to consult with their own community but under strict terms and conditions of confidentiality. She mentioned that some members of the community not might be willing to talk to another resident in case they get into trouble for expressing particular opinions.

A resident in the Riverside site considered it a bad idea to have consultants from their own community:

Gypsies would never agree with other Gypsies, it won't happen. "If a Gypsy came here to do your job (post holder's job) I wouldn't trust them, I won't talk to them in case they have friends and family here and start making stories about what I have said to you. (Riverside site)

What can be done in order to get members of the GT community to speak up for them selves and other members of their community?

The majority of residents commented that they think that they have traditionally been ignored by local and regional governments and as a result they find it quite difficult to take active part in public life.

Many articulated their lack of political interest by referring to the poor relations they have with council officials. A resident in Merthyr argued that given that the local council does not seem to listen to their requests they do not have much faith in the political system that have ignored them for decades

A few residents living in sites managed by other Gypsy-Travellers argued that they were not satisfied with this situation and that this fact makes it harder for them to participate or make complains since they are afraid of retaliations:

A resident in Riverside said:

"I am afraid of speaking up. He is the boss here, we have no rights, and I will be in trouble if he knows that I am talking to you." (Riverside)

When asked about the possible reasons for the lack of political representation of Gypsy-Travellers in public life, a resident from the Shepherd's Hill site argued the lack of confidence of the community as the main reason.

Some other residents considered that before anyone expects Gypsy-Travellers to get actively involved in public life, they should be granted their basic rights, without that, life will always be a struggle for members of the community.

Some other residents also said that they have so many other things to worry about that becoming active in public life is just not relevant. They said that they feel that as a community they have always been ignored or stigmatized and as a result they prefer not to get involved.

“The government has always ignored us; we have to pay a very high price for being who we are. If we were living in a private caravan site we will probably pay the same amount of money in rent but will have decent facilities, but the council is the landlord and they just don't care.”(Withybush site)

Most residents of Gypsy-Traveller sites made constant comparisons between their living conditions and those of people living in houses some argue that they would like to have the same rights as people from the settled community. Residents in Shepherd's Hill mentioned that they should be entitled to a decent utility block and a decent site because they pay their taxes and bills like everyone else. They also pointed out that:

“If this was a privately owned site, the council would have closed it ages ago for health and safety reasons.” (Shepherd's Hill)

It can be inferred by reading resident's comments on this area that trust and the capacity of individuals need to be built is meaningful contributions from the community are expected.

Good practice example related to participation

A resident in the Tygwyn site in Swansea mentioned the following example to illustrate the way the community mobilised itself in order to reach a common goal with the help of a willing service provided. She mentioned that all the community needs is some encouragement and after that they are capable and willing to do whatever they want.

“We didn’t have driving licenses here, one of the girls from the TES realized that, and started to come here, on her own time during the nights, to teach us to study for the test from the DVD. She was telling people how to turn the computer on, how to start the DVD, step by step. After that everybody went for the test and now all of us here have a license. That one push was all we needed” (Tygwyn site).

Appendix 1 Record of Interviews by site

Visit to Cwmcraehen Site (Blaenau Gwent)

Contact: Kimberly Marshman-Tredegar

Date: Wednesday 11th November 2009

Interview with Robert Paget (Site Manager).

Robert has managed the site for seven years.

The Cwmcraehen site has 20 permanent pitches. There are no transit pitches, although there is great need of a few of them.

The primary school is a 15-minute walk from the site and the medical surgery is also within walking distance.

The amenities blocks have all been recently refurbished and new bathrooms and kitchen appliances have replaced the old ones. Showers and baths have been installed in each block.

A new play area for the children has arrived but there is no fence around it and since there is a lot of traffic in the site, with residents' vehicles coming and going the children will not be able to play there until it is safe to use.

Most of the children on the site go to the local primary school. Parents do not travel during school time; they do that in the summer for about six weeks. Not many children are willing to attend the comprehensive school due to bullying.

Two children on site are home educated by Kimberly Marshman.

Parents trust teachers from primary schools more because they actually know the children. In comprehensive school the children have different teachers for each subject and therefore the level of familiarity with individual pupils decreases compared to that of primary school.

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Interview with three females aged between 20-30 and partial interview with two males

Accommodation:

Overall quite happy with the state of the site and with the recent improvements to the utility blocks. Her only main concern with the site is the lack of parking - not only for visitors but that there is also not enough room for residents' vehicles.

Education:

Mother of four, two of her children go to the local primary school. Her 11 year old child had to leave school due to bullying but currently being home educated by someone from local school twice a week.

Teachers should be educated in the Gypsy way of life because it is their responsibility

"I am against the big school (comprehensive). Children are taught sex education at a very early age when they don't need to know anything about it. There are children at school using drugs and I know of a girl age 13 who goes to the family planning clinic. I don't want my daughter to be around people like that thinking that that's the way it is."

Some of the women who have children argued that the lack of study has not been an issue for them and it will not be an issue for their children. It is important to learn to read and write but they will learn from their parents and will grow up to be self-employed. The lack of qualifications does not seem to worry them, as they know that the girls will get married and hence do not need any qualifications and the boys will learn their fathers' skills.

"If there is no work around, the type we know how to do, like paving and gardening, we will move somewhere else, we will take our belongings and see how we will do in a different place."

Training courses in plumbing and hairdressing are welcomed for young people.

Health:

Doctor's surgery is nearby and all participants agreed that they used the services when required.

The fact that they travel around is not perceived as an obstacle to access health services, as they state that they access emergency services everywhere.

"My son is epileptic and my mum has a medical condition, if we are travelling and need drugs for them we walk in, explain the situation and if I need medicines for them we show them the medicine pack we need and they get seen and they get prescribed their medicines again. It hasn't been a problem at all. I always tell them that I am a Gypsy and that I am travelling and they are ok."

"I have a Tax Credit Exemption Certificate and with this I don't have to pay for medicines anywhere."

"My children they have all the vaccines, you would look after your own children wouldn't you? Well, it is the same, we make sure they are not going to get sick."

I go to every check up I need to go to.

Smoking is an issue, however they also said that there is enough information about how to stop and that in fact they know of members of the community who have stopped altogether.

Men just won't go to the doctors, they act strong.

Participation:

There are gorgias in the family; the problem is that the papers and the telly are biased against Gypsies.

"If a Gypsy does anything wrong everybody knows about it, not because of the offence but because it was a Gypsy who committed it."

.....
Interview with two females aged 15-20

Both girls are or have been home educated. But they regard the present tutor as "not very good."

"How many Gypsies that study get proper jobs?"

Most girls stay at home if they don't take cleaners jobs.

I grew up here without park/green area. Now the park has just arrived.

If you watch TV there is always something against Gypsies.

Health: No problems, you go to hospital and you tell them that you are on holidays.

The rats get into the motors of cars, they chew on the wires, there are too many of them.

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Interview with female aged 40-50 years old

The interviewee had earlier visited the mobile home of another resident to ask for a chat with the post holder.

Accommodation:

This lady stated that she has lived on site for 24 years. At present her mobile home is in such a decrepit state that she thinks is not fit for her family to live in safely during the winter months. She has a two year old daughter and lives with her husband who is recovering from a recent heart attack. She argues that the caravan is too damp for her daughter to live in and during the process of the interview the post holder had the chance to see the general state of disrepair of the mobile home.

There is a social worker involved in helping her, but at present nothing has been achieved.

Abervale council said that they could not pay for the rent and for the caravan at the same time. They also argue that if the family has the support of an organization or individual to pay the rent they could provide them with a mobile home.

The resident has completed an application form with the help of the social worker to request financial help from an organization that helps Gypsies in Carmarthenshire (resident does not remember name of organization. Name and contact number of the social worker was given to the post holder and can be provided upon request).

The resident stressed that she wanted me to know that her whole family is suffering as a result of the lack of an adequate home, she said that the health and wellbeing of her family is being directly affected as she is clinically depressed due to the pressure of not being able to look after her family properly and at the same time having to look after her ill husband and her two year old daughter. Some of her other children are currently living with other family members.

Education:

Most of her children have been taken out of school due to bullying. One of them is receiving home tuition. The resident stated that the school headmaster did not deal adequately with the bullying and this is why she took her daughter out of school.

Health:

It takes too long to see doctors.

Resident said that getting seen by a doctor when travelling is not an issue as they can walk into a surgery and explain their situation and get an appointment.

This particular example of a family living under seriously deprived conditions demonstrates the degree to which accommodation can impact upon other areas of life. The resident argued that her current living conditions are affecting almost every other aspect of hers and her family's life and therefore everything else appears to be a struggle too.

It is also worth noticing that the person who comes to the site to help with the home education of children can only come a couple of times a week and the place where she works with the children is inside the site manager's trailer in a room of less than two square metres.

Visit to Penybryn Site (Carmanthenshire)

Contact: Kim Williams (Site manager)

Date: Thursday 12th November 2009

Context

The site was traditionally a site for Welsh Gypsies until recently when the Local Authority decided to relocate a large family of Irish travellers to the site. This measure was not welcomed by the site's Welsh residents. It was alleged that the Irish family would have preferred a different site and had to be escorted by the police to move in.

Currently most of the site's Welsh residents have left and six pitches are occupied by the Irish family, there is one Welsh family on site and twenty two pitches are empty and in a serious state of disrepair.

Interview with Kim Williams (site manager)

Site manager Kim Williams stated that neither her nor her colleague who works on site along with her were invited to any of the WAG consultation events with service providers. She argued that given the past/recent history of the Penybryn site they should have been invited to contribute to the consultation.

The site is built on a flood plain, however it does not get flooded. The railway line is near by and in terms of accessibility to services (doctors, schools, etc) it is quite isolated.

There has been hostility from nearby neighbours.

The site does not have a park for children. In terms of education all children go to the Bynea Primary School. There is a boy aged 13 who receives home tuition from the Local Authority on an everyday basis.

In terms of health there are several children and young people on site with asthma.

Site managers have contacted a "fruit and vegetables" scheme. All site residents take part in the scheme. Three of the Welsh residents have gained a Food Hygiene Certificate and a few women on site have been involved in hair and beauty courses. One woman has set up her own catering service and is receiving advice on how to run her own business. The site managers are currently applying for money to run a Christmas Party for the children on site. There is a problem with fly tipping on site, the local authority has cleaned up several times and had installed CCTV cameras a few times but they have always been destroyed.

There is a Gypsy Romani who used to live on site and plays traditional music on the accordion but is now living in housing. She would be a good example for promoting Gypsy culture.

The site manager stated that more work needs to be done with all those who provide services to Gypsy Travellers so they can offer services tailored to the needs of the community. There is a great lack of training and awareness raising in general with practitioners.

Finally, she referred to AZADEH, a charity organization that works for Gypsies and Travellers in Carmarthenshire.

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Interview with the matriarch of the Irish family, age 50-60

Her opinions will represent the views of all her family members.

Accommodation:

The resident stated that the site is in a very bad state and that it needs to be improved. Given the amount of empty and vandalized pitches the site has become a place for fly tipping and this is a health hazard for all the residents. There is a problem with rats as well and pest controllers have been brought on site and have recommended clearing up the empty sites as a measure to keep the rat population down.

The resident also argues that the state of the toilets in the utility blocks is very poor: "the toilets are just concrete, and there are children here with pneumonia." There is no heating in any of the toilets. The members of her family are tired of cleaning the site, the street cleaners used to come and clean but not anymore, so it is the residents who have to clean now to prevent diseases.

The resident expressed her family's desire to have a smaller site. She thinks that the council should improve the site for the people who live in it at the moment, instead of spending money on three members of staff for the manager's office and in CCTV cameras. She also stated that the site is quite isolated and does not have any access to public transport. They have to rely on their own cars and on those who drive to get out and about.

Education:

Due to bullying most children refuse to go back to comprehensive school, "they are being bullied because they are Irish."

There is a school bus to pick children up and take them to school.

The family does not travel; they are living in Wales permanently.

Six of her children are over 15 years of age and are married. She has got 17 grandchildren living on a site that does not have a safe/clean place to play.

In terms of training she would like to see her grandchildren learning useful skills such as plumbing, cooking, carpentry, beauty therapies etc. The boys will learn their skills from their fathers.

Health:

They receive very good treatment in their local surgery, located about half a mile from the site. There are several children with asthma and one child who has only one kidney and is therefore vulnerable to infections. The general state of the site does not help with keeping a child like this safe and healthy.

The resident alleges that she suffers from severe back pain that is a result of constantly cleaning the site.

The site is located near sewage and therefore the bad smell is constant. In the summer months they also get lots of flies and wasps that come from the sewage.

Men don't go to the doctors they try to be tough.

Participation:

People need to learn more about Gypsies, when we move here our caravans were burnt. There were local people with placards saying 'We don't want Gypsies', our daughters got insulted, our boys beaten up. Until we are treated with respect we can not be equals.

Visit to Riverside Site (Flintshire)
Contact: Mel (Housing Department)
Date: Monday 16th November 2009

Interview with 20-30 year old female (wife of site manager)

Accommodation:

She has been living on site for four years. She likes living on this site; she couldn't live in a house, too closed in for her. When she moved into the site it was in bad condition but her husband has improved it. The site is fine but needs a green area/park for the children to play safely. Participant talks about the fact that when they travel around they face a lot of discrimination and for the fact that they have large mobile homes they are recognized as Gypsies and are not allowed into holiday camps.

Education:

She has got four children, two of which go to the local primary school. Children get bullied in the big school and that is why parents take them out. Participant also refers to the fact that children "learn more things at school than they should. Children should be left as children." Schools should teach more bible stories and leave out all the sex education. Children in big schools know about gangs and smoking, that is why Gypsies won't send the older kids to school. Participant makes reference to a school for Gypsy Traveller children in Belfast as an example of good practice where family values are respected.

Schools should have classes about Gypsy culture so other students can learn about Gypsies and respect them. Participant thinks that home education works well and she is not worried about the future employment of her children as she thinks that they will be self employed like her husband. Further courses such as paving, working with PVC for young males would be welcomed.

A play bus for children coming on site would be a very good idea.

Health:

A bus from the local surgery has been on site giving small children their vaccinations. She does not agree with the idea that Gypsy travellers have poorer health, in fact she thinks that Gypsies look after their kids very well, they get all the immunisations and if they get ill they are taken to see the doctor immediately. You wouldn't leave your child in pain would you? Neither do we! It is the same for all the care during and after pregnancy, I went to every single appointment.

Adults are different, we only go to the doctor if we are really ill. Men are worse than women though, they are lazy, and they just don't bother to go to the doctors at all, even if they are really ill.

The dentist is a different thing, it is very difficult to get an appointment with the local dentist, it just takes too long to register.

Old people are looked after by family but they want to be independent.

Special trailers for old people could be a good idea, one where they have all they need without having to go out in the cold.

Participation:

Gypsies would never agree with other Gypsies, it won't happen. "If a Gypsy came here to do your job (post holder's job) I won't trust them, I won't talk to them in case they have friends and family here and start making stories about what I have said to you.

"I get on well with country people, but there are lots of stereotypes of Gypsies around, what was the name of that film with Brad Pitt? They make Gypsies' homes look worse than dog's homes, they think Gypsies still live with lots of animals and speak with stupid accents.

"That Sheri Word from the X factor, she is a Gypsy acting like country people. "We have been refused access to restaurants and other places that still don't like Gypsies.

"When they build sites they build them on top of sewage away from towns so people don't have to see Gypsies.

"The police come into the site thinking that everyone here is the same, and we get police helicopters flying around late in the night when the kids are sleeping and wake them up. The police still need to learn not to discriminate against us."

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Interview with two young females, 16 and 17 years old

Both girls are home educated as they experienced bullying at school. "I was bullied and children were calling me Gypsy but the teachers didn't do anything. Now I get classes here, we are home educated, three days a week and we are preparing for GCSE's."

These two young residents didn't seem to be interested in further education since they said that they want to be housewives and think that they don't need training for that.

They dislike the constant sewage smell of the site and stated that during the summer months the smell is unbearable.

They would like a green area for young people to hook up in, away from their parent's eyes, a nice space with benches and trees.

.....

Interview with 19 year old resident, non-Gypsy

This young woman has been living on site for the last year, on and off. She is non-Gypsy, from the settled community nearby. She lives on site because she shares a caravan with the father of her unborn child who is a young Gypsy man.

She asserts that life on site is ok but she wouldn't like to live here after her child is born. The smell of the nearby sewage is the worst aspect about living on site. "You can get away from it." The best thing about living on site is the people, they are very friendly.

The post holder did not ask the resident any more questions.

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Interview with a 19 year old female

This resident has been living for four months on the site.

When the post holder asked her what it is like to live on this site she replied: "Aggravating." The sheds are in a terrible state, they are not fit for cooking, they are damp, the roofs leak, there is a big problem with black worm in the kitchen floor, nobody wants to go there, it is disgusting. It is the same in every plot, the sheds are bad. The worst aspect about the site is the sheds. "We have a child in my family who has only one kidney, there is no way he can go into the shed to be washed, and his family has to wash him inside so he doesn't catch infections in the shed. The best thing is the friends and neighbours, neighbours help each other.

"I am looking for a house at the moment, this is not a nice place to be, I would love to live close to my friends and family but the sheds in this place are falling apart."

The resident states that she does not travel.

Education:

The resident said that she couldn't finish school because she has dyslexia and she needed extra help. She did enjoy school and didn't remember being bullied. She does not read and regards herself as not good for concentration. However she states that her family believes in sending children to school, both primary and secondary school.

"I loved school but I was so behind, they did give me extra attention and my teacher was great, I just couldn't cope with always being behind so I left."

"The school where my sister and brothers go is great (Sandycroft). They deal with bullying very well and the kids respect each other."

Health:

The resident argued that she does not go to the doctor not because she doesn't like it but just because she doesn't need it.

She regards the general health of her family as good. Her main concern in terms of health is the sewage works on the bank beside the site. She also said that nobody drinks the tap water, "the water tastes funny even after boiling it."

Participation:

The resident said that she preferred not to answer the question about participation. Gypsies are better left alone.

.....
Interview with a female aged between 60-70

When approached by the post holder outside her caravan this resident seems concerned about speaking outside where people can hear the conversation, she said she is worried about the site manager knowing about what she has to say. The post holder reassured her about the confidentiality of the consultation but she remains anxious throughout the interview and constantly looks out of the window to check for other people overhearing.

Accommodation:

"We have no rights here, the sheds are in an awful state, there are no heaters in the shed, and so, at this time of the year I have to endure the cold weather. I am partly disabled and I need to wash and do other things in the shed but it is freezing cold here, it's not fair."

The resident has been living on the site for about 7 years and when asked about what it is like to live on the site she said it is like a prison, the site is located beside a busy motorway and the only way of going to the nearest shop is by walking through a tunnel for pedestrians. The resident stated that she feels threatened by the local alcoholics and drug users that gather around the tunnel area, she also thinks this is a bad example for the Gypsy-Traveller children that walk through the tunnel to get to the other side. The young girls can't go there on their own because we fear for their safety.

"When the river is high the people with no transport can't leave the site."

When the tide is high children have to jump the barrier located at the entrance in order to get out of the site. That area gets flooded regularly: "sometimes you have to wait for someone driving a car to take you to the other side."

"The sheds are full of wood worm and maggots, and when you ask the site manager to fix the sheds he says that we have to cook inside the caravans which is dangerous anyway, that is why I think that we have no rights here, we are nobody."

Health:

The resident is partly disabled; she suffers arthritis in her arms and legs and has recently being diagnosed with a heart condition.

The resident argues that the lack of infrastructure on the site makes it difficult for her to go to the doctor; the entrance of the site floods and only vehicles can cross to the other site: "I find it really difficult to go to the doctors, you can always call a taxi or an ambulance but the taxi will wait outside and I still have to cross to the other side to be picked up."

Participation:

"I am afraid of speaking up." The resident stated that she is concerned about different issues on the site but is unable to express her opinions. She thinks that the site manager is in a position of power that allows him to do whatever he wants. "He is the boss here, we have no rights, and I will be in trouble if he knows that I am talking to you."

The resident stressed that no Gypsy-Traveller should be allowed to manage a site because they will take advantage of their power.

Visit to Glynmil Site (Merthyr Tydfil)

Contact: Louise Flynn (Education Welfare Officer)

Date: Tuesday 17th November 2009

Interview with a female aged between 40-50 years

Accommodation:

The resident stated that she has been living on this site for 40 years. And that during all this time nothing has been done in order to refurbish the site. The resident argues that the whole site needs to be refurbished. She stressed the particularly poor state of the utility blocks, which have never been improved: "It's impossible to cook in the sheds, they have leaks. It is impossible to do anything in them. There is no heating, nothing in there, there is a child here with asthma and the dampness in the toilets doesn't help. We need a proper toilet."

When asked about the existing facilities on site she said there are no facilities, she argues that the local council have forgotten about them:

"There is no presence from the council here. There is also a big problem with fly tipping. You just have to look around to see the state of disrepair."

The resident argues that her family does not travel, they have been settled in this site for forty years, and they have never lived anywhere else.

The access to the site seems to be a problem for this family: "There is no way of getting in and out of the site but using cars, outside there is a dual carriageway and there are some old ladies here who have to walk up and down the carriageway if they want to go to the shops, or they have to take taxis which is very expensive for them."

She stated that residents have to cope with all sorts of problems in the site since the local council argues that they can not improve the site due to lack of funds:

"they (the council) say there is no money to make repairs to the site and people are struggling here. The shed of a woman who has two babies doesn't even have a sink and she has to use her neighbour's. We don't have water supply inside the caravans, we have never had running water supply in the caravans, never, for thirty years."

Education:

The resident disagrees with the idea that Gypsy-Travellers are reluctant to educate their children, furthermore she explains that her teenage daughter is starting college and is currently helping other Gypsy-Traveller children at two local nurseries:

"My daughter is starting a college placement; she is doing child care, one day a week. She is only fourteen but now works in two different local nurseries as support for Gypsy children. She works there four days a week.

"My daughter is trying to support other Gypsy Traveller children to stay at school, she was bullied at school and had to be home educated."

Health:

The resident regarded the general health of her family as good, however she mentioned that there are members of the family who suffer from diabetes and

high cholesterol; She stated that it would be good to receive information about healthy eating habits. She also emphasized that the general disrepair of the utility blocks represent a hazard to family members, and she argued that during the winter months children and young people have to endure freezing conditions while in the bathroom area due to the lack of heating. This is particularly an issue for children and adults with respiratory problems. The doctor's surgery where her family is registered is located two miles away from the site and it is only accessible by car (due to its location on a dual carriageway). She regarded the service in the local surgery as good. Neither her children nor her grandchildren have been vaccinated and when asked about the reasons she simply said that she doesn't know why. Health visitors come regularly to the site and residents have an excellent relationship with them.

The resident made reference to three older ladies who live on the site. She argues that old Gypsy-Travellers will not need extra help since members of their family and neighbours are always willing to help she also stressed that older residents like their independence and will do most of their chores themselves.

Participation:

The resident pointed out that due to the geographical situation of most sites it is very difficult for Gypsy-Travellers to have meaningful long lasting relations with members of the settled community.

She also said that given that the local council does not seem to listen to their requests they don't have much faith in the political system that have ignored them for decades.

The resident said that she would like the site to have a site manager, but one designated by the council rather than a Gypsy-Traveller.

.....
Interview with a 70+ year old female

Accommodation:

This elderly resident has been living in this site for more than twenty years. She thinks the site is ok; she regards young people as irresponsible for making fires on site and for throwing litter everywhere.

She would not consider moving to brick and mortar accommodation since she would have to live close to strangers. "Here is like a big family."

She complained about the utility blocks, she argues that they have never been repaired and that her toilet leaks and does not have any heating which is a big problem for her during the winter months. She has not been able to use the utility block for cooking either, due to its general state of disrepair.

The resident made reference to the lack of public transport to access the site, she said that if she needs to leave the site she would have to call her son who lives in town or call a taxi. This is very inconvenient. There used to be a bus route coming to the site years ago but not any more.

Health:

The resident regarded her health as good but also stressed that if she needs to go to the doctor she needs first to arrange for someone to pick her up and to bring her back to the site. The lack of access to public transport makes a simple task like going to the doctor a burden for someone like her who does not drive and has to rely on the transport provided by others.

When the post holder enquired about whether she was interested in joining activities for older people she said that she would not be interested and she also stressed that she does not like to be helped with her chores, she would rather do things her way, she enjoys being independent. She made reference to three elderly sisters living on site and said this was also the case with them. All they need, she argued, is proper services on site.

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Interview with a 30-40 year old female

This resident has six children

Accommodation:

When the resident was asked about life on the site she described it as “Terrible”, making reference to the lack of infrastructure on site and to the hazards it poses to young children.

“My children prefer to live with the grandparents, it breaks my heart but I know that they are better there, there is nothing here for them, this place is full of hazards, if they are here with me I won’t let them out, they have to stay inside the trailer with me and they hate it, they are children and want to be out playing. There are lots of green areas here, but nothing has been done to turn one into a playground for the kids.”

The resident also mentioned that vermin are also a health hazard of this site. “You are too frightened to go to the shed because of the rats.”

She said that the utility block is unsuitable for use, both the bathroom and kitchen are not fit for purpose: “Nothing in there works, the toilet, the bath, the sink, everything is falling apart, and there is no heating. I can’t cook there anymore, I cook here (inside the mobile home) which again is a hazard for small children.” The resident pointed out that since hers is a small mobile home, the kitchen appliances are adjacent to the sitting area which means that if a small child stands on the sofa, she could touch the cooker. “That’s why they spend most of the time in their grandparents.”

The resident argued that living in houses is easier than living on a site like this one. “If you live in a house you have better facilities there, the problem is that then you get bullied for being a Gypsy.”

The resident mentioned the lack of a barrier between the site entrance and the dual carriageway as another factor that makes life for children harder.

“You have to keep them inside, if they go out you are thinking that they are going to go to the dual carriageway.” The lack of barrier also means, the resident argued, that people living nearby can use the site for fly tipping.

Education:

Three of her children are in primary school and two are in the local secondary school. Neither of them has experienced bullying. She argues that she would do her best to keep her children in school. “The boys love school.”

When questioned about the types of training that should be available for Gypsy-Traveller young people, the resident answered that she thinks that they should have the same training as anybody else, she also said that if a child wants to learn the traditional skills of Gypsy-Travellers they could do that with members of their family.

Despite the site being distant from the local schools, transport does not seem to be an issue. The resident argues, “There is a local taxi that picks them up everyday.”

She finally pointed out that she is in favour of education and that she does not want her children to go through what she has for not being able to read and write.

Health:

The resident described the general health of her family as good. She pointed out that for people who do not drive it is difficult to go to the doctor: "Before I learnt to drive I would walk the dual carriageway with my children to go to the doctors, to go to the shops, which is what some residents still do."

She stated that all her children received all the vaccinations and that she received ante and post natal care for all of them. "The health visitor is marvellous; she would do anything for us."

The state of the site was blamed by some residents for the recent illness of a young girl. She was allegedly playing in one of the stagnant water pools on the site, and got ill as a result of that.

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Interview with an approximately 50+ year old female

This resident was reluctant to talk at first. Then she agreed to be interviewed but did not invite the post holder into her mobile home. The interview was brief as a result.

Accommodation:

The resident has been living on this site for five years. She said she would prefer to live in a house but had tried it before and was thrown out.

Regarding the site the resident only had negative remarks to make about it. She described the site as rough "the worst site I have seen." She also said that she could not think anything good about the site.

The interview was limited to a series of requests that the resident made, which were amongst others: Refurbish the utility blocks, to build a "decent kitchen and a decent toilet" to tarmac all the roads on the site and the road leading to the site, to clean up the site of litter, to erect a fence around the site.

The resident said that she has got six children but none of them are of school age.

Health:

The resident said that her husband suffers from liver problems. She also said that when she has to go to the doctors she has to walk along the dual carriage way. She suggested that there should be a bus stop for the site; it would improve the life of residents. She described the service in the local surgery as friendly and said it is easy to get an appointment there.

The resident described the problem with vermin as a health hazard for adults and young people.

The resident declined to talk about participation.

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Interview with a 60-70 year old female

This resident is one of three elderly sisters who live on the site. They care for each other. At the time of the post holder's visit, the oldest of the three was in hospital and as a result the interview was brief.

Accommodation:

The resident mentioned the inconvenience of using the utility block for her and her sisters, she argued that the toilets are in a “terrible condition” and that they find it very difficult to use. They have to cook inside the mobile homes. She said that the site is “ok” but needs a lot of work to “bring it to a decent standard.” She argued that the main problem in the site is the state of the utility blocks but also the holes in the tarmac makes it very difficult for residents who have mobility issues. The resident also stressed that every time it rains the site floods and that there is no proper drainage system in place and that the lack of a fence behind her pitch makes her feel vulnerable.

Health:

The resident explained to the post holder about the current poor health of her sister. She said that since neither of them drive and that there is no public transport to the site, they have to either walk by the site of the dual carriage way or to take a taxi. To take a taxi, she said, seems to be the best option now that her sister is in hospital, but it costs them £4.50 each way which “for someone living on a pension is a great amount of money spent just in taxis.”

Visit to Shepherds' Hill (Torfaen)
Contact: Lyndon Puddy (Housing Department?)
Date: Wednesday 18th November 2009

Interview with Simon Doherty (Site Manager)

Accommodation:

Mr Doherty states that the site is a nice place to live in, "most people here are either family or good friends." He points out that there are 26 pitches all of which are occupied and one transit pitch which at the time of the visit is also occupied with two mobile homes. He said that there are no major problems with the site. Mr Doherty said that he gets paid by the council for managing the site while residents pay their fees to the council.

Education:

Mr Doherty believes that all children in school age living on site either go to school or receive classes at home. The closest school is located at about a mile from the site and there is a bus that picks them up from the site everyday. He said that a few mothers from the site work on the local schools. He has not heard of instances of bullying of Gypsy-Traveller children on this site, he thinks that Gypsy children stand up for themselves and do not allow others to bully them: "I have a son who is a professional fighter, a boxer, he stands up for himself."

Health:

The nearest doctor's surgery is located at about 5 minute drive from the site and Mr Doherty thinks that the service provided there is very good. He regards the health of his family as good although some of them are diabetics. He does not think that Gypsy-Travellers have poorer health than members of the settled community.

Participation:

The only comment that Mr Doherty wants to make in this respect is that Gypsy-Travellers will always "get on with their own way of life." He also seemed sceptical about the benefits of a Gypsy-Traveller strategy for the members of his community.

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Interview with two 20-30 year old females

This interview combines the responses of both residents. One of the residents is the mother of a child under one year old.

Accommodation:

Both residents agreed that life on this site is fine. They regard it as friendly and quiet compared to other sites. The mother of the child considers living on houses as a more comfortable option, "they always have better facilities, toilets, kitchens, etc." Both of them stated that they do not travel.

Education:

One of the residents interviewed said that she finished secondary school, while the other one stated that she "was kicked out of comprehensive." She recalled being bullied at school and standing up for herself. They pointed out that most of the children from the site of school age do go to school. They said this is thanks to the work of a teacher from the West Monmouth School in

Pontypool who is helping young Gypsy-Travellers to stay in school. They argued that “that lady (Beth Harris) goes to college to find work placements for Gypsies.”

The two residents recognised the importance of education and consider that both NVQ and GCSE qualifications are important for finding a job.

One of the residents stressed the need for non-Gypsies to learn about the Gypsy way of life as a measure to stop the bullying that Gypsy-Traveller children face. “People don’t know anything about us, we know all about them, what they like, what they do. They should know that we don’t drink, that we don’t believe in sex before marriage, that we are very respectful of people’s private lives.” She also remembers doing exams at school and how even an exam setting was discriminatory: “They (*teachers*) use to give other pupils one paper and once everybody had their paper they would give me mine, a special one, as if I was thick or something.”

Health:

Both residents considered their health as good. One of them ask “Why do they think that we are not normal, we are the same, as everybody else, some of us get sick some others don’t, my nan is 92 and she is fine.”

They agreed that the service received at the local surgery is fine and stated that as they do not travel don’t have any issues with records not being in just one file. One of the residents seemed concerned about the facilities for older members of the community: “They do ok, their families look after them, all they need is good facilities, heat to heat their sheds, hot water, access to a nice decent toilet, that’s all.”

The mother of the child said that she went for all the scans before the baby was born and also said that the baby is up to date with the immunizations. The post holder mentioned the idea of bringing mobile clinics into sites and both residents rejected the idea as this would be seen as a measure to segregate the community even further.

Participation:

The residents said that they have good relations with members of the settled community around the site but pointed out that this is a result of years of interaction between the two communities.

They suggested that members of the Gypsy-Traveller community should be trained to do consultations; they argued that Gypsy-Travellers would be well equipped to do the post holder’s job since they share similar values with the interviewees.

The residents acknowledged the lack of representation of Gypsy-Traveller issues in mainstream media. They think that in an age of political correctness is still acceptable to be racist against Gypsies:

“That woman Penny from GMTV is very racist against Gypsies but that’s ok. You can’t say anything against black people these days but to slag Gypsies off is still fine.”

When enquired about the possible reasons for the lack of political representation of Gypsy-Travellers in public life, residents argued the lack of confidence of the community as the main reason. They also add that if there were Gypsy-Traveller politicians they would vote for them.



Interview with a 20-30 year old female

Accommodation:

This resident has been living on the site for eight years. She thinks that life in the site is hard. The small size of the pitches is detrimental to family life.

“There is not enough room in this slabs for more than one trailer, so we can’t really have visitors, they need to make them bigger.”

The resident argued that she would like to live in a house, she said that she prefers indoor life to life on a site. “It’s just easier, for washing the kids in a nice toilet, sheds are freezing.”

The resident also mentioned the limitations of living on this site in terms of space for her children to play. “There is no room here for they to play, the traffic on the site is constant and the streets are too narrow, they have to play indoors.”

Education:

The resident has two small children one of whom is at the local primary school. The resident seems to be happy with the school and said that her child has not experienced any bullying so far. She said that she is happy with primary school at the moment and that she will have to decide whether to send the children to secondary school.

The resident does not agree with sexual education being included in the school curriculum and believes that she needs to take this into consideration when sending children to school, she argues “or they could be home educated, some Gypsy children study at home with a tutor, so that is one option.”

Health:

The resident seems to be satisfied with the service she receives in the local doctor’s surgery and stated that it is easy to reach by a 5 minute drive and that the members of staff are very helpful. The post holder asked her about accessing medical care when travelling to which she replied that this is not a problem since they only travel for a few weeks at a time and if in need of urgent medical care they can always go for an emergency appointment, but she pointed out that so far she has not had to do that.

The resident said that she went for all the scans during pregnancy but that she did not go to any of the “breathing classes” (antenatal classes) because she does not regard them as helpful. She also stated that both her children have had all the vaccinations. She rejected the idea of a mobile medical team coming on site on the basis that the medical service in Pontypool is efficient therefore there would be no need for that.

Participation:

The resident argued that before anyone expects Gypsy-Travellers to get actively involved in public life, they should be granted their basic rights, without that, life will always be a struggle for members of the community. “Look at the council; they don’t do anything for us, anything at all. We know that we don’t count, why bother then?”



Interview with a 50-60 male and a female aged 40-50

The male interviewed is the resident of the site; the female is his partner but at the time of the interview was only visiting him. This interview is focused

around his answers but the context of the interview was a conversation between the post holder and both of them.

Accommodation:

He said that he has been living on site for 34 years and was very welcoming as he considered this an opportunity to talk about some issues on the site that worry him. When asked about what it is like living on this site, he answered that the site is in a very bad state due to the management “you shouldn’t have a Gypsy person running the site, the council should do that.” He also commented on the general feeling among residents that the council has forgotten about them. He said that the whole site needs to be rebuilt:

“The sheds are bad, the showers are bad, the buildings are in bad condition, the wiring should be better, there are no street lights and in the night it is very dark and dangerous.”

The worst thing about the site, he said, is that the basic infrastructure is faulty, he argued that the drainage system does not work therefore the site gets easily flooded and that the electricity system needs to be updated. He stressed that the site is in a very good location and that this is the way he likes to live, he said that he would not live in a house since he like to be in the fresh air.

The resident stated that he does not travel due to health reasons.

Health:

The resident’s health is fragile as he has had a triple bypass. He said that the service in the doctor’s surgery in Pontypool is excellent. He does not like the idea of a mobile medical service; he thinks that Gypsies should go to the doctor’s like everybody else.

Participation:

The resident thinks that the local and regional governments should do more for Gypsy-Travellers if they expect the community to be actively involved. He argues that they have been forgotten by the local council and that the fact that there is a person from the Gypsy Council managing the site is detrimental to the residents of this site. He would like to be able to pay the electricity and water bills directly to the council, rather than paying the manager of the site.

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Interview with a family (female aged 30-40, male aged 30-40, and a young person aged 10-15 years old)

The female head of the family has been living on this site for more that 30 years. She likes the site and the surrounding areas, however she thinks that the site needs to be refurbished.

Accommodation:

Her main concerns in terms of accommodation is the fact that they pay bills that are far more expensive that those paid by people living in council homes. She complains about the fact that they have to pay the site manager for the water and electricity bills instead of paying directly to the council. She also comments that the shower in her utility block is faulty and has not been repaired despite her complaints. She also mentions that the sheds have a small heater in place that “eats the electric bill” but fails to heat the shed. She argues that the whole site needs to be refurbished. She invited the post holder to have a look at the utility block to witness the state of it. Once there, she

pointed out to several hazards, there is a electric box in there with wires hanging out that are within reach of young people, she also pointed out that the shower is very small and that the floor is concrete which makes it slippery. There is no room for a freezer in the shed, and she said that the shed is “falling apart.” She also pointed out to several holes in the pitch. She argued that people living in houses would not live in these conditions and she regarded the system as racist against Gypsies stating that no other ethnic group in Britain endures their living conditions.

The male head of the family stated that they have to live like this because there are no more options, “Why would you live in houses when you know that people around you hate you? That is why we are still here. If you live in a house and your shower breaks down you have a number to call and they will come and fix it. Here we don’t have anything.”

The female argued that this is not a suitable place for children. The pitches do not have a fence around them which means that children can not be allowed out without supervision due to the constant flow of traffic on the site. She also pointed out that there is no street lighting and that this makes it very difficult to go from the mobile home to the utility block during the night.

This family travels for six weeks during the summer.

Education:

One of the children in the family is in primary school and it is not very clear whether the child present at the time of the interview is in secondary school.

The female resident argues that she is against sex education for young people – “I think is disgusting what they learn.” When asked by the post holder whether she would stop sending children to school because of this reason she agrees and argues that she would like to send them to the “big school” only if they stop the sex education.

Health:

They said that their general health is ok and argued that the children received all the immunizations apart from the MMR vaccine because there are instances of autism in the family and they have heard about the links between MMR and autism.

The female argued that is very hard to get a dental appointment and that despite that she has tried several places; she has not managed to register her daughter with a dentist.

The male stated that the mobile homes are too close to one and other, even theirs is too close to their neighbours and this is, as he argues, a fire hazard.

Participation:

The family declines to answer this set of questions.

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Interview with two males outside a mobile home, both aged 40-50

These two residents said that they would only like to comment on the state of the site so the post holder only asked questions about accommodation.

Accommodation:

The two residents argued that: “the site is in a dreadful state” and that “this site is finished” for them, there is nothing good about the site.

They argued that the authorities have turned a blind eye to what happens on this site: “If this was a privately owned site, the council would have closed it ages ago for health and safety reasons.”

They draw comparisons between life in a housing estate and life in a Gypsy site stating that “No council would offer a council home in this state of disrepair, this place is falling apart. The sheds are behind the trailers, this is a fire trap. The drainage system doesn’t work; the whole place is pitch-black at night.”

One of the residents commented that the fire brigade Chief has recently visited the site and told them that the site was not safe in terms of fire safety. “The chief from the fire brigade came the other day with a map of the site to check for fire safety, you know what he did to the map? He crossed it with a big X saying that it was not safe.” The resident continued: “If anything happens on this site it is due to negligence, because everybody knows how much a hazard it is in every respect, but no one does anything about it.”

The residents said to the post holder that they would like the Welsh Assembly Government to know that they feel neglected. They stated that they would like to have the same rights as people from the settled community, that they should be entitled to a decent utility block and a decent site because they pay their taxes and bills like everyone else. They also stressed that most residents on this site are “fed up” with the management and would like to see someone official managing the site.

Visit to Tygwyn Rd Site (Swansea)

Contact: Gwenda Jones

Date: Friday 27th November 2009

The visit to this site produced one interview. The female resident interviewed (40-50 years old approximately) was speaking on behalf of her family group.

Accommodation:

The resident has been living on this site for fifteen years. She states that she has never felt healthy living on the site. She thinks this is because of the site's proximity to two power stations. The area where the site is located is a flood zone and the nearby river has burst its banks a few times, she also pointed out that there are no fences around the site and that there is a 12 foot drop to the river.

The resident thinks that the best feature about the site is that is close to local amenities (shops, school, and doctor's). The worst aspect about the site is that is "derelict and very messy" and she argues that the council does not listen to the residents. She commented that the Welsh Assembly Government gave the council money to refurbish the site and that the council said that they were spending seven thousand pounds on each utility block. The resident does not think that the repairs done to her shed cost that amount of money and points out that they only "plastered the walls, painted the shed and installed a PVC door and a window. They did a quick job so it would look ok when the people from the Assembly and the councillors came, but it wasn't done properly."

The resident suggests that the size of the utility block should be proportional to the size of the family group "If you have 4 children you should have a big kitchen." She argues that she has to cook inside the mobile home and that her children are at risk of getting burnt.

The toilet area is small and she invited the post holder to go to the refurbished utility block to see the state of it. She pointed out that there is no shower, just a bath and that the "shed floods easily and there is no drainage" and as a result there is a hole at the entrance of the shed.

The resident commented that they do not receive their post in their homes because they do not have post boxes. In the past this meant that one resident who was receiving the post in his home could open their correspondence. At present they have to travel to the post office to collect their mail.

The resident would like to suggest that WAG produce a work management sheet to ask the council how the money was spent and they should ask residents if they are happy with the results of the refurbishment.

Education:

The resident said that she is happy with the education her children are receiving; however she thinks that they need transport to send the children to school. She recalls that the Traveller Education Service had a grant and that with that money they were paying a bus to collect the children from the site and take them to the school. When that money was finished they had to stop the bus service.

She said that there is no racism in the school (at the Trallwn Primary School) and added that the teachers are very good and sort quickly any problems that may arise. She thinks that the children will not go to secondary education for personal reasons. When asked about the reasons she argues that at

secondary school they learn about sex and drugs and that this is not only learnt through the curriculum but also in interaction with other children. The post holder told her that many would argue that the lack of secondary education might mean that Gypsy-Traveller young people would have less chances of getting good jobs in adult life, to which she replied that "Settled people go to university and don't have jobs either, you don't need big education to be somebody, when have you seen a Gypsy working in a bank?" She recalled her experience as a young girl when she went to college for two days a week and how she felt like an outsider for being a Gypsy; she said that she does not want her children to go through the same experience. The post holder asked her if she could think of an alternative way in which she would be willing to send the children to secondary school. "If there was money available for TES to run classes for secondary school for children I would send them happily. I know that they understand and respect our way of living." The government should look more into the educational needs, the resident commented, "I want my kids to get qualifications but in an environment that is supportive of our way of life. I know that some travellers won't go into housing because they know the government will be after them asking them to send the kids to comprehensive, so people rather keep moving. If you force us to send children to comprehensive we will move and take the other children off primary too."

The resident commented that TES should also run classes for young Gypsy Traveller people. "My daughter loves drawing dresses, and she is into fashion, if TES could do that kind of courses I would trust them to teach them."

Traveller women should also be offered help, the resident argued. "If I went to college the community would say that I am looking for a man." The YWCA (Young Women Christian Association) run classes for women to learn flower making, the resident said that TES also provided the link between members of the community and the YWCA.

Health:

The resident described the health of her family as good; the only major problem is the dental health of the children. She also pointed out that residents need their own transport to go to the doctors. Since there are no bus stops around the site, they have to rely on other family members who drive or to take a taxi. The nearest surgery is not located within walking distance. She commented that the TES service lent their van to a paediatrician who came to the site to give vaccinations to the children and residents were happy with that. "The TES has given us more support than Swansea Council." The post holder commented that some people have suggested bringing mobile clinics to sites but the resident rejected this idea.

Participation:

The resident mentioned that all the community needs is some encouragement and after that they are capable and willing to do whatever they want. She mentioned the following example "We didn't have driving licenses here, one of the girls from the TES realized that, and started to come here, on her own time during the nights, to teach us to study for the test from the DVD. She was telling people how to turn the computer on, how to start the DVD, step by step. After that everybody went for the test and now all of us here have a license. That one push was all we needed."

The resident stated that Gypsy-Travellers should be used to consult with their own community but under strict terms and conditions of confidentiality.

Visit to Withybush Site (Pembrokeshire site 1)
Contact: Martin Peake (Housing Department)
Date: Monday 7th December 2009

The Withybush site is divided into three main areas. Each area is inhabited by a family group.

First Area:

Interview with two females aged 40-50 and 50-60, and a male aged 40-50

Accommodation:

The resident has been living on this site for 36 years. She said that it has never been enough space for their families and that one of her daughters needs a pitch and has been on a list for a while.

She described living on the site as “torture”; she argues that the site lacks basic facilities such as toilets and a washing area; however she considers that the worst aspect of the site is that it floods very easily. She said that the floods have affected her home. The resident also mentioned that there have been serious problems with vermin that at the moment are being dealt with.

The residents argued that three families have to share one toilet. She mentioned that in August 2009 a new toilet was installed but it flooded almost immediately. At the time of the interview there were builders on the site and the residents said that they were building a toilet in the place where the last one built in August was knocked down. “The toilet that we are using now is being used by three families and the door is so swollen that we can’t even close the door, we have no privacy to have a shower, we have no rights, nothing.”

The residents mentioned that they have no contact with the local council. They argued that they have tried to talk to the head of the council several times but that he will not speak to them; they said that it is impossible to get an appointment to see him. “The only way we managed to get a response from the council was to hire a solicitor and put a formal complaint against the council. Then they (*the council*) came, and that’s why they are here now building the new toilet.”

The three residents argue that they never leave the site to travel. One of the women argues that she has never been out of Haverford West.

Education:

One of the female residents said that her four children have left, and comments that all four of them went to both primary and secondary school, she also said that one of her daughters works with Gypsy children in the Monkton School. The other female resident said that she has got a daughter still in school and that she is willing to send her to comprehensive. They said that the Monkton School should be used as an example of good practice for the education of Gypsy-Traveller children.

Health:

One of the residents said that she suffers from arthritis “It doesn’t help when you have arthritis and have to live in a damp place like this one, or when you have to go to a freezing toilet in the middle of the winter.”

They said that the doctor’s surgery is not within walking distance (about 4 miles away from the site) but the staff and the service provided there are very

good. They have not lived away from the site therefore they have always had their medical records in the same place.

They mentioned that there are other people suffering from arthritis on the site and that there is also a person with asthma. When the post holder asked if they considered these illnesses to be a result of living on the site they said that they did not know whether it was directly related but they know that the damp conditions on the site do not help.

A resident explained the relationship between being poor and unhealthy by saying that they are faced with the choice of paying a lot of money in electricity or staying cold and getting ill. "In winter we spend a huge amount of money heating the toilet, most of our money goes towards electricity, you wouldn't have a shower in freezing toilet would you? You would get ill, so we have to spend money buying card after card and in winter it is too expensive." The other resident agreed with the previous statement and added that they have to travel a long distance to buy the electric cards, "14 miles we have to drive to buy the cards, so you think how much petrol we spend on it and then count that towards the price of electricity."

Participation:

The residents stated that they have so many things to worry about that becoming active in public life is just not relevant. They said that they feel that as a community they have always been ignored or stigmatized and as a result they prefer not to get involved. "People have the wrong ideas about Gypsies, they think that we are all thieves, we can't stop in a caravan park because Gypsies are not welcomed. The government has always ignored us; we have to pay a very high price for being who we are. If we were living in a private caravan site we will probably pay the same amount of money in rent but will have decent facilities, but the council is the landlord and they just don't care."

Second area:

Interview with a female and a male both aged 40-50

Accommodation:

The residents said that they have been living on this site for 35 years. They said it is ok to live on the site but there are a few things that need to be fixed. They said that the utility blocks are not fit for purpose and that they need to be updated. They also argued that the toilet facilities are very poor. They commented on the recent problem with vermin but said that is being dealt with. They are concerned about the lack of street lighting in the site and also about the lack of speed control for heavy vehicles outside the site. They would like the council to do something about the floods "every time it rains the site floods, just look around, there are pools everywhere"

The couple also raised the issue about the high price they pay for electricity; they argue that at the time of the interview they spend an average of £25 a week in electricity which is a significant amount of money for them.

Education:

The couple have a thirteen year old son who goes to school and both parents agreed that the education of their children has always been important for them. Their daughter works as a teacher in a local school. They said that neither of their children experienced bullying at school.

They said they were in favour of teaching young people skills that are useful for the community and that are relevant for their way of life and suggested

teaching and hairdressing as relevant for women and gardening, plumbing and building for men.

Health:

Access to the doctor's surgery requires a car; their surgery is located about three miles from the site. The residents said that there is a bus service they can take from the main road but they would have to walk for about half a mile in a road that is not suitable for pedestrians.

The male said that he visits the surgery regularly to check his blood pressure. He disagrees with the statement that Gypsy-Travellers have poorer health than people from the settled community. He argues that his father is 91 years old and has very good health. They said that all their children received all the immunizations and added that since they are settled on this site they have never experienced any problems in terms of keeping accurate health records.

Participation:

The male resident argued that Gypsies are and have always been discriminated against. He thinks that getting involved in political processes will not change anything for the community. He mentions that the police need to receive appropriate training, he perceives the police as a racist organization that "picks on" Gypsy-Travellers. "If there is a fight in town the police are always heavy handed with us but let the other ones go without a caution." He pointed out that he does not want to be called Gypsy anymore because the term carries negative connotations "My name is Mr Moore (*name has been changed*) I was baptised, there is no such a thing as a Gypsy because Gypsy is a bad word."

Third area:

Conversation with a 70-80 year old male

The post holder explained to this resident the purpose of the consultation and the resident stated that he was not interested in taking part in anything related to the government. He recalled that his experience with the authorities has always been negative. He said that he has lived in the site for 37 years and at the time of his arrival this was common land, he cleared it and built sheds to look after animals and tidied the place up, after all his hard work the land was taken from his hands and now he has to pay rent to the council.

The resident referred to "false accusations of rape" raised by the police and other people against him and one of his sons at which point the post holder decided to bring the conversation to an end given the seriousness of the issues raised and the irrelevance of it to the consultation.

Visit to Under the Hills Site (Pembrokeshire site 2)

Contact: Martin Peake (Housing Department)

Date: Monday 7th December 2009

The Under the Hills site was the only site in which the post holder could not interview any of the residents by following the questionnaire. The post holder went into most mobile homes (excluding two of them that had loose dogs within their perimeter, and were, as a result, not approached). Most people who came to the door said that they were not Gypsy-Travellers. The female resident aged approximately 50+ years old, who inhabits the first mobile home on the right hand side of the entrance to the site, said that she is a Gypsy-Traveller but only agreed to talk through the window and very briefly.

The resident declined to answer the questions of the consultation but commented on the poor state of the site and the lack of help from the council. She mentioned that the utility blocks need to be updated because there are leaks in the roofs. She mentioned that there has been a broken pipe on the site for a long time and that although the council has been informed several times they have not solved the problem.

The resident also drew comparisons between people living in council homes and people living on Gypsy sites. "If you lived in a council home and there was something wrong with your front door they would fix it, wouldn't they? They would send you someone to fix it properly. But my front door is attached to the trailer by two pieces of wire. Now you tell me if that is fair?" The resident concluded the interview by stating that her claims have always been ignored and as a result she did not see the reasons why she should talk to the post holder.

**Visit to Castle Quarry formerly known as Cats hole Quarry
(Pembrokeshire site 3)**

Contact: Martin Peake (Housing Department)

Date: Wednesday 9th December 2009

Interview with a 20-30 year old female

Accommodation:

The resident said that she has been living on this site for all her life, she enjoys living on this site, she likes the community looking after each other as a big extended family. She also enjoys having most members of her family living here.

The resident argues that there are a few things that need to be improved on the site such as cleaning the streets, painting the utility blocks outside (they have been recently improved inside). She also comments that there are not enough pitches to provide accommodation for all the people living on the site; she mentions that she is living on her parents' pitch. The lack of parking spaces seems to be a major problem for residents "our cars have to block the road for other people because there aren't enough parking spaces for everyone."

The resident is expecting her first child and is concerned that her child is going to grow up in an area that does not have enough green areas or parks available for children to play. The resident stresses that she is happy with the site and that it only needs a few things to improve the quality of life of its residents. She states that most facilities are in place compared to other sites, they have good utility blocks, their post is delivered to the site, the rubbish gets collected once a week, and that the site is located close to local amenities.

Education:

The resident went to Monkton School until she was fifteen years old and enjoyed her time at school, she was not bullied there. She regards education as very important and said that she would make sure that her children go to comprehensive school. The resident is in favour of providing young people with training after leaving school and stresses that any training should give them qualifications to put in their CV. Finally she suggests that given the location of the sites children should be given a school bus.

Health:

She describes herself as healthy. The doctor's surgery where she goes is easy to reach by car, is located five minutes away. The resident said the service there is "brilliant" and she is receiving help from a local midwife and is following all antenatal care recommended by the midwife. She does not think antenatal classes are helpful therefore does not go. She also argued that the classes are held in big groups and that she would not feel comfortable there.

Participation:

The resident acknowledges that Gypsy-Travellers do not represent themselves and this is the reason why they are still perceived as a minority, however she thinks that "Gypsies should be left alone, to live the way we want to live."

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Interview with a female resident aged 20-30

Accommodation:

The resident has been living on this site all her life and thinks that the site is fine “I don’t know anything different so to me it is alright.” The best thing about living on the site is the people and the worst thing are the rats “There are lots of rats because people have animals, they have chickens.” She said that she does not travel.

The resident said that the utility block was refurbished last year and she is happy with the work that was done. She comments that most people on site buy cards for electricity and considers this to be a very expensive way of paying for the service “people in houses pay less than we do here. Heating the caravan is very expensive too; we buy gas bottles at £47 each, during the winter it is very expensive to keep the caravan warm.”

The resident said that she and her husband want to move into housing before the birth of the baby “a house is better, cheaper, warmer, everything is there, you don’t have to go outside to wash.” They have filled an application form to apply for a house and are currently on a waiting list.

Education:

The resident went to Monkton School and also went to college to do hair dressing for 3 years, following her training she worked as a hair dresser. She would like to send her children to Monkton.

Health:

She described her health as good and said she has been to the two scans during this pregnancy but will not go to antenatal classes as she thinks that “nothing can prepare you for giving birth, you have to deal with it when it comes... I am terrified!”

She regards the service from her doctor’s surgery as very good. The dentist is not as close to the site as the doctor, it is a half hour drive.



Interview with a female aged 20-30 and (partially) with a male aged 20-30

Accommodation:

The couple has lived on the site all their lives. They have two children and they like the site. One of their main concerns about the site is that there are no places for the children to play safely. The residents argued that they have put fences around their pitch with their own money in order to allow the children to play within the pitch, however they think this should be the responsibility of the local council.

The couple thinks that the site is over crowded and that there is not enough space for residents to park their own cars. They also mention the lack of transit pitches as a problem. “When they planned this site they didn’t take into consideration that families expand and they want to have their children living nearby.”

Education:

The female argued that she only went to primary school and that she thinks that she learnt enough in primary school. “My mum didn’t like the big school, so I didn’t go and to be honest with you I learnt to read and write and that is enough. I don’t want my children to learn about sex before they are ready. They will go to primary school as far as I am concerned.” When the post holder explained that some people would argue that the lack of secondary

education will narrow the children's chances of getting a job, the resident said that this is not true and that her husband works as a builder and he did not finish secondary school and that she did not need a job in order to have the things she wanted in life.

Health:

They regarded the general health of their family as good. They said to be happy with the service they receive in the local surgery where they are registered. She said that both the children received all the immunizations.

Participation:

The residents declined to answer the questions in this section.

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Interview with a 60-70 year old female

Accommodation:

The resident stated that she is very happy with the new utility blocks. She said that this has improved her quality of life greatly. "Now we have the kitchen, toilet and shower in different parts and they are what we have been asking for for years."

She mentioned that the only aspect that needs to be improved in the site is to have electricity meters installed so they don't have to pay the high rates that they are currently paying "A £5 card lasts me for 3 days, it is a very expensive way of paying for electricity."

She also commented that the pitches need entrance gates.

She declined to comment on the other areas of the consultation.

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Interview with a female and a male aged 30-40

Accommodation:

The residents stated that they have been living on this site for 21 years. They have three children two of whom are school age. The residents describe the site as "boring for the children and for us. It's too small and the kids can't play outside and there are no views, all you can see here is more trailers." The residents commented that the site has the potential of being a very good site and referred to the recent improvements in the utility block as a positive move towards making it better.

Both residents agreed that the best aspect of the site is to live close to other family members but stressed that there is no enough pitches for everyone.

"One of our kids just got married and they don't have a place to live." They stated that problem is not the lack of space in the site "because there is plenty of it around", but rather is the use of the available land "there is a good piece of yard at the entrance of the site that can take up to ten plots, but instead of giving it to the residents, the council is leasing it to people to park lorries and horse boxes, but when we ask about more plots they say they can't expand."

The residents also mentioned a pond of stagnant water located before the main entrance to the site. "It is here permanently, it doesn't go away, we have been complaining about it for ages, the council is not doing anything about it, the tide is just behind the fence, so they could dig a hole and send the water

to there.” They mentioned that the whole drainage system is faulty and that the site floods easily every time it rains.

The residents stated that they live permanently on the site and that they hardly travel at all these days. They also pointed out that they paid for their own brick wall that was greatly needed but they think that this should have been done by the council.

Health:

Residents described the general health of their family as good. They stated that they go to the Argyle Medical Centre in Pembroke Dock. They pointed out that although the service they receive there is good “it is very difficult to get an appointment when you need it most. By the time you get the appointment is always too late.”

The residents said that their children were all immunized and disagreed with the argument that Gypsy-Travellers suffer poorer health than members of the settled community “Do they think that we would deliberately do something like that, we are not that thick.” The residents commented that some members of the community might have not immunized their children in the past due to lack of information but said that “these days is all over the news, the nurses tell you about it, you know that is good for the kids, so we do it.”

They said that they travel during the summer months for a few weeks but commented that they have not experienced any problems accessing medical help while travelling. “You go to a walk-in clinic and explain that you are travelling and there is no problem. I would not like to carry my own papers (medical records), imagine that, I would have to keep my own, my husband’s, my children’s. No, I don’t think it is a good idea, they might get lost somewhere.”

Education:

The residents said that they are in favour of their children being educated at school but said that they disagree with some subjects such as sexual education at an early age; they also said they were worried about Gypsy-Traveller children mixing with other children that might have experience with drugs. “Muslims girls have the right to go to school wearing their scarves and schools have to respect that because it is their religion, why can’t they respect Gypsies, we are Catholics, we believe in respect and two people should not be together until they are married, we want our children to grow up with those values.” The post holder asked them if they could think of a way of preserving those values without compromising the education of young people and the female argued that “a way round it” would be if the schools could exempt their children from taking part in sexual education classes.

Participation:

Both residents agreed with the post holder’s comment about the lack of representation of Gypsy-Traveller issues in mainstream society and mass media and argued that there are not enough role models from the Gypsy community: “there was girl in the X factor, she was a Gypsy but she was ashamed to say it, we all have a chip on the shoulder and that needs to change.” They said that they feel like outsiders of the system and as a result they do not vote or feel politically motivated. “Gypsies have always been minding their own business, we don’t do much talking, may be this is going to change, maybe the children will grow up and be more confident, may be this is what is going to happen.”

Visit to Kingsmoor Common (Pembrokeshire site 4)

Contact: Martin Peake (Housing Department)

Date: Wednesday 9th December 2009

Interview with female aged 15-20

Accommodation:

The resident stated that she has been living in this site all her life and regarded life on the site as very good. The only downside to the site that she could think of was the size of the pitches. At the time of the interview she said that there were two trailers in a pitch that could only have one and she commented that most pitches are currently exceeding their capacity.

The resident mentioned that the utility blocks have been refurbished recently to a very good standard. "They (*council*) put a bath, a sink, a toilet, they put in new cupboards and a place for washing machines. Everybody is happy with them." She mentioned that there are a lot of young people on the site and that some of them would like to get married soon but know that there will not be pitches available here. "The same is going to happen when my daughter grows up, there won't be places for her to live in, and god knows if we will still be here!"

The resident argued that the local council should provide more pitches for family members of residents, "there are two big fields around the site, they could be building more slabs there."

She said that she does not travel much and neither does her husband and that when they go away they always leave the mobile home behind.

The resident complained about the prices of the electricity "we pay about £60 a week in electricity for two caravans; we need to have those meters installed so we can pay electricity like everybody else"

Health:

The resident regarded the health of her family as "ok"; but mentioned respiratory problems among members of her family with a life history of smoking tobacco. She said that the doctor's surgery is located about 3 miles from the site and that it can only be reached by car, she mentioned that they have no access to public transport due to the location of the site. She explained that those who don't own a car have to rely on other members of the community to take them to appointments or they have to call a taxi which is always an expensive option.

She regarded the service in the local doctor's surgery as good and said that she is registered with a dentist located at about 20 minutes away from the site (*driving distance*).

The resident has a small child and said that the child received all the immunizations. She said that during her pregnancy she had regular contact with the midwife but did not want to go to antenatal classes "I was too afraid of being in the same room with strangers. Midwives could do that when they visit, that would be better"

Education:

The resident said that she went to both primary and secondary school and then wanted to go to college but did not go because she got married. She said that she would do everything she can to make sure that her child goes to school. She does not agree with teaching sex education to young children "I learnt about it when I was 8, when I didn't need to know, it only confuses

children.” She thinks that a solution to the problem of not sending children to school due to sexual education being included in the curriculum would be that schools understand and parents can teach that at home and leave it up to them to do that when their children are ready. It should not be compulsory, she added.

Participation:

The resident said that she can see that Gypsy-Traveller young people are changing and are starting to be more active than their parents. She knows of a young girl living on the site that speaks up on behalf of her community. She pointed out that young people should be encouraged to play an active role, since this is beneficial both for them as individuals and for the Gypsy-Traveller community.

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Interview with a family group: three females aged 60-70, 20-30, 15-20, and two males aged 15-20

Accommodation:

The older member of the family said that she has been living on this site for 34 years and said that during this time life in the site has improved. She mentioned the recent improvements made to the utility blocks as one of the best changes in recent years.

The resident commented that three mobile homes belonging to her family are currently occupying a single pitch. She said that this has been mentioned to member of the Welsh Assembly Government by her granddaughter. Her granddaughter said that she is a member of the Traveller Board in Monkton School. She has spoken in several events on behalf of the Gypsy-Traveller community. She said that she talked to Minister Bryan Gibbons about the lack of pitches on this site and that she will continue raising these issues in the different meetings and events she is invited to.

The residents argued that they only travel during the summer months and mentioned that the last time they went to a Gypsy Fair in Stowe all the shops in town were closed because locals did not want Gypsies in their shops. They argued that they agree there should be more integration with the settled community but first there needs to be more education about the cultural traditions of their community to dispel myths that keep both communities apart.

Health:

They said that the general health of their family is good and that they go to the local surgery only if they really need it. The service received there was regarded as good and the medical staff as very friendly. They did not think that there is any need for hand held records; they said that they do not understand why Gypsies should be different: “If we need to go to the doctor we go here, if we were travelling and we needed to go to the doctor urgently we will go to A&E, like everybody else.”

Education:

Most children on the site go to the Green Hills Primary school. The young people present at the time of the interview seemed to be divided over the importance given to secondary school. Some argued that it is important to study and to be able gain access to college. One of them said that she would go to college to study a course to enable her to work with children with

disabilities. Some of the young males argued that secondary education is not essential to get a good job. One of them argued that he did not finish school and currently works as a life guard in Tenby. A different young male argued that there are no courses that interest him, he said he has worked as a manual worker on building sites but that if he wanted to do a course to gain qualifications he would have to travel to study and that puts young people off studying.

Participation:

The young female who is actively involved in events and meetings commented that she has travelled nationally and internationally speaking on behalf of the community and she said that many other Gypsy-Traveller children and young people are starting to be actively involved in different processes of participation. More capacity building is needed in this area to ensure that young people can have the skills to represent their community.

Visit to Beddau Site (Rhondda Cynon Taff)

Contact: Rob Antonio (Housing Officer)

Date: Thursday 10th December 2009

The Beddau site has 6 pitches. At the time of the visit there was a family gathering in one of the mobile homes and as a result the interview was carried out with 6 females.

Interview with three females aged 20-30, two females aged 30-40, and one female aged 50-60

Accommodation:

The residents invited the post holder to have a look at the site pointing out that the existing sheds have been there "since the war." The sheds do not have a kitchen area and are in a serious state of disrepair. The residents argued that there are only two toilets that are shared by all the residents of the site. They pointed out that the site needs to be repaired as in the current state represent a hazard for its residents.

The residents said that they do not travel and that they have been there for more than 20 years. They said that the site is located in a nice area and they would not like to be relocated to a different site. Officials from the council have visited the site and have suggested on several occasions that the site will be refurbished but nothing has been done in this respect.

The residents stated that the idea of refurbishing the site causes anxiety among their families. They fear that the local authority will offer them alternative accommodation while the site gets refurbished but that after the work has been done their families will be unable to come back to live on site. The reason for this anxiety is that only one tenant holds a license agreement with the local authority. They would like to receive an official statement from the local authority about their plans for the site and if the site is to be refurbished they said that they would like to be involved in the planning of the new site. The post holder mentioned that local authorities should carry out an Accommodation Needs Assessment and should ideally consult with residents before doing any improvements or changes to the site. The post holder left her contact details with the residents in case further information was needed. The residents pointed out that there is no hot water in the toilets and that children need to be washed inside the mobile homes by boiling water in kettles. They said that there are no transit pitches on site.

The residents said that they don't receive their mail on the site but that all their mail gets delivered to the house of a relative. Their domestic waste gets collected on a weekly basis and they pay their electricity directly to the council.

Education:

The local school is within walking distance from the site and the Llwyn Crwn Primary School comprises a nursery. Currently all the children on the site go to primary school. They said that their children have never experienced any bullying from the local children and stated that their relationship with the local settled community is very good. "Everybody is friendly, we know them for years and they know us." They would like their children to be able to study and to acquire qualifications for future employment.

Health:

The residents seemed satisfied with the service provided in the local surgery. It is located within walking distance from the site. They regard the staff from the surgery as friendly. One of the residents present is expecting a child and said that she is receiving antenatal care. All residents said that their children received all the immunizations. Most of the residents said that the members of their family are registered with a dentist.

Participation:

The residents pointed out that the basic living conditions of Gypsy-Travellers need to be improved before they can expect members of the community to be active in public life.

Visit to Ruthin Road (Wrexham)

Contact: Bryn Hall (Inclusion Officer for the Citizens Advice Bureau)

Date: Thursday 10th December 2009

Interview with a family group female and male aged 60-70, female aged 40-50, female 15-20, male aged 30-40 and female 20-30

The interview took place in one of four utility blocks recently built on the site. All the residents took part in the conversation but most of the questions were articulated via the eldest male and the female aged 40-50. The inclusion officer from the CAB has a very good relationship with the members of the community and was present during the interviews.

Accommodation:

The residents commented that they have been living on this site for 15 years and said that they like the site and that being together as a family is one of the best characteristics of the site. They said they were happy with the new utility blocks but they said that they were not consulted before the refurbishment works. As a result the layout of the new pitches is not what they would have wanted. "They built big plots but only two caravans can go on it, there is a lot of space wasted."

They commented that they still have to pay high electricity rates by the purchase of electricity cards: "It costs about £20 a week per family." The water rates are also very expensive because they receive the water from high pressure pipes that are meant to be used by the fire brigade. They said that they have to pay a fixed price of £19 per week even when they are travelling which means that some of them think twice before travelling because it is too expensive.

The residents mentioned a few issues that they dislike about the site: they said that the fence that surrounds the site and the CCTV camera that points towards their homes make them feel like "cattle" – "they said that the camera is to control the traffic but if you have a look it is always watching us, never points out to the traffic."

There are a few issues with the safety of the only road of access to the site "there is just one entrance/exit, two cars can't drive through the entrance at the same time, if you want to get out you have to wait, if you want to get in you always have to wait." This, residents pointed out, is the only access to the site and in the event of a fire people will not be able to exit the site safely. They commented that the post does not always get delivered to their pitches, sometimes the post is delivered to the warden's office and they fear that their private correspondence might be opened. Because of this reason a mother has decided to redirect her mail to an address of a relative who lives in a house so she makes sure that she receives the letters to take her baby to medical appointments.

The residents mentioned that while the refurbishment of the site was taking place they were living on the site and were not offered alternative accommodation, the levels of noise were upsetting for old people and babies alike.

Education:

There are about ten children in primary education living on the site. The local school is 3 miles from the site but there is a bus that collects the children. "The lady who drives the bus is great, her husband used to do that job and when he died she took over, it's great to send your children to school with someone you can trust, they have taken generations of Gypsy children to school on their bus."

Two children are currently receiving home education.

Residents did not seem to agree with the statement that lack of secondary education for Gypsy-Traveller children can be detrimental to their future employment: "they will be scrap dealers, work doing pavements, selling carpets, our children don't want to be doctors or nurses, they want to work as travellers, sometimes you can't work anyway because you have children and old members of your family to look after."

A young resident stated that "There should be an area built for young people for them to meet in a safe environment, within the site, to listen to music, learn new skills, etc."

Health:

The residents stated that the general health of their family is poor. "Some family members have depression, heart troubles, there is a 30 year old man severely disabled." They said that there are four people over 70 years old living in the site and said that their health is fragile and that they, as well as the disabled person, require proper provision of facilities that can guarantee them a good quality of life: "their toilet needs to be adapted so they can use it without running any unnecessary risks. Old people shouldn't have to walk across the site in freezing conditions to use the toilet. The new toilets need to be located in the right place, that's why they (*council*) need to talk to us before doing up the plots."

The closest doctor's surgery is located about one mile from the site but cannot be accessed by foot. The site is located on the side of a busy 60mph road and there are no footpaths. The residents have repeatedly requested a pedestrian crossing outside the site to slow down the traffic and to allow them to cross safely to the other side. The service in the surgery is regarded as very good. Residents stated that is difficult to find a dentist to register with and that it is difficult to get appointments.

Participation:

The oldest male present during the interview is the chairman of Wrexham Gypsy-Traveller Action Group; he, as the most senior member of the community, represents it at different levels.

The residents feel that they are not treated with respect by the council and regard the three wardens who work on the site, the CCTV camera and the fences, as measures to control their lives. They would like their requests to be listened to and would prefer a Gypsy-Traveller warden to the ones who work currently on the site.

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Interview with two females aged 15-20

When the post holder and the CAB inclusion officer arrived at her mobile home the resident looked distressed, but agreed to be interviewed. She stated that she has been unable to eat or sleep during the last week because she has not received a letter to go for an emergency scan. She said that a month

before she had gone to her doctor as she was concerned about some “lumps” she had developed in one breast. The doctor ordered an emergency scan and told her she should receive a letter inviting her to go for the scan. This happened more than a month before the date of this interview and she has phoned the surgery several times but was told that they did not have any of her records there. The inclusion officer telephoned the health visitor that comes to the site and she reassured the resident that she would soon be seen for the scan.

Accommodation:

The resident referred to the site as a prison “this is a prison with cameras pointing at us and wardens at the entrance. There is a 70mph road outside, if you run out of jail you get shot, if you get out of this site by foot a car could kill you.” She referred to a council estate that is located near the site: “Outside the council estate the road is 30 miles an hour, outside the Gypsy site the road is a 70 mile one.”

The resident said that they have to take the children outside the site to play in the park because there is no park inside the site but that this means a risk for them: “there is no crossing, nothing, but we have to cross with our children, we cross the road to take them to the park but we have to deal with the traffic.”

This resident lives in one of the plots that have not been refurbished and said that at the moment the kitchen and toilet are in the same room. “The sheds are very cold and it is impossible to heat them up, I have to wash my thirteen year old sister in a baby bath, inside the caravan, so she doesn’t catch pneumonia.”

The resident said that her family only travel during the summer months but complained about the fact that they have to spend money to travel and when they come back they have to pay £20 for water even if they have not used any “that doesn’t happen to you does it? It is only to Gypsies that they do that”

Education:

The resident stated that she finished secondary school and went to college to study hair dressing. At present she is volunteering with BAWSO in Wrexham and would like to do a course that enables her to work with victims of domestic violence.

Health:

The resident seemed upset about not having received any support during the month that she spent calling the surgery to request the letter for the emergency scan. She is concern about having cancer and has felt stressed as a result.

She said that there is not enough information about breast cancer awareness; she had the lumps on her breast for seven months before she went to the doctor. She decided to go because she saw a programme about breast cancer on television.

She regards the service in the local surgery as good and comments that is easy to get appointments (walk in appointments). It is not easy to get a dental appointment.

The interview was interrupted at this point because she had to go.

Appendix 2 Questionnaire

All Wales Gypsy Traveller Strategy Consultation- BVSNW Questionnaire

The National Gypsy Traveller Strategy is a new plan created by the Welsh Assembly Government. With this plan they want to improve the lives of Gypsy-Travellers (G&T) in Wales and make sure that all Gypsy Travellers are being treated fairly.

To make sure that the Strategy is successful, they have asked us to talk to you and to ask your opinion about the main four areas covered by the Strategy. These areas are: Accommodation (Places to live), Education, Health and Participation (this is about G&T accessing all services and expressing your views)

I will now ask your opinion about some important issues in each of these four areas.

Before we start I have to let you that my work is to collect information on behalf of WAG .I can not promise that any changes will take place a result of our conversation. What I can certainly do is to pass your comments to WAG so they can take your opinions into consideration when writing the final strategy (plan).

If you prefer not to answer a question feel free to do that and feel free to interrupt if you need to. Your answers will remain anonymous which means that nobody will know that these are your opinions.

With your answers and other people's answers I will write a document for each site. The WAG will receive a big document with the opinions of all G&T I talked to in the 12 sites I am visiting.

Do you have any questions so far?

If not:

Can I firstly ask how old are you? This is just to have a rough idea of what age groups we are talking with.

Accommodation

This is related to the place where G&T live. In this case to this site.

How long have you been living on this site?

What is it like living here?

What is the best thing about living here?

What is the worst thing about living here? (How does this affect you?)

Have you ever lived in brick and mortar (house)? Advantages/disadvantages?

Do you travel a lot? If you do, do you experience any problems in the places you go to? Do you have any problems leaving the plot behind?

Are there any other issues that are important for you that we haven't discussed yet?

Is there anything you can think of that would improve your life and the life of your family while living on site? (Please think about you, your children, and old people)

Education

This is mainly to do with Primary and Secondary schools but also to do with training for young people when they leave school

What are your main interests/worries about Education for children and young people?

The Welsh Assembly Government thinks that young GT children don't do as well as other children do at school. What do you think are the reasons for this?

Do your children go to school? Primary/Secondary (comprehensive, big school) If not what are the reasons?

What is good about school?

What is bad about school?

What would your ideal school be like?

Have you or your children experienced bullying at school?

What would be the best way of dealing with bullying?

Some people would argue that if G&T children and young people don't go to school, they would find it very hard to get a job when they grow up? Would you agree?

What kind of training would you like for your children? How can this type of training be delivered?

Is there anything about education that we have not mentioned and you would like to talk about?

Health

How would you describe the health of your family?

What can you tell me about your experience with the National Health Service? (Doctor's surgery)

How far is the surgery from the site? How do you get there?

Have you experienced any problems accessing the NHS when travelling?

Some people argue that Gypsy-Travellers should carry their health records (notes that your doctor has of your health history) with them so they can show them to different doctors while they are away travelling? What do you think?

Do you find the services provided by your doctor's surgery useful?

If not, how could they be improved?

The Welsh Assembly Government thinks that the health of G&T is poorer compared to other people's health? Do you agree? What would be the reasons for this?

Do you think that GT women use the ante-natal and post-natal (before and after the baby is born) care as much as other women? What would make them use it more efficiently?

What about vaccinations for small children?

Can you think of anything that is a barrier to accessing the NHS services?
(Staff attitude, lack of transport, etc)
What can be done to ensure that G&T receive appropriate health service?
(Bring services to site –dental care, healthy eating programmes)
What can you tell me about the long-term care for old people in the
community? How this could be done accordingly to GT way of life (to avoid
residential care homes)
Is there anything about health that we have not discussed so far?

Participation

What are your experiences/relationships with the settled community like?
(Country people, gorgias)
What could be done to improve the relations between GT and country
people?
What would you think is the best way of asking GT about their opinions?
Would it be a good idea to train some members of the community to do this
kind of work I am doing? Would there be any other way of getting people's
opinions?
What can be done in order to get members of the GT community to speak up
for themselves and other members of their community?

I think these are all the questions I wanted to ask you. Do you have any other
comments?

Thank you very much for your help.

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