



COVID-19 Framework for Local Decision Making on Gypsy/Traveller Support - Version 4 Test and Protect – June 2020

What is the purpose of this document?

To provide a framework for supporting Gypsy/Traveller communities living on public and private sites, and in unauthorised encampments in Scottish Local Authorities during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The guidance may also support other mobile communities, however, there are additional considerations for Gypsy/Travellers based on the cultural background.

Who should read it?

- Those involved in local resilience partnerships;
- Local Authority staff including Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officers, Site Managers and those providing temporary accommodation;
- NHS Directors of Public Health and IJB Chief Officers;
- Police Scotland; and
- Anyone who is involved in planning and providing support to Gypsy/Travellers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Key messages

- Gypsy/Travellers face additional risks during the COVID-19 crisis. If resident in trailers this may make it difficult to limit virus spread within camps and comply with guidelines;
- During the virus outbreak Gypsy/Travellers should stay in their settled home or camp in places where they can access sanitation, services and healthcare;
- Local Authorities and their partners should provide appropriate support to help Gypsy/Travellers to follow health advice, test and protect and other public health guidelines, during the lockdown and the recovery period; and
- Gypsy/Travellers are more likely to have pre-existing health conditions and be at increased risk of poverty, fuel poverty, food insecurity etc. so it is important that they are linked to wider local support and services during the lockdown and the recovery period.

Version 4 – Test and Protect – issue date 25 June 2020



**COVID-19 Response:
Supporting Gypsy/Traveller Communities**

Framework Updated for Test and Protect – June 2020

1. Background and Introduction

This framework to support Local Authorities and their partners in local decision making about support for Gypsy/Travellers during the Covid 19 lockdown was first published on 7 April. This updated version provides updated information for the renewal period. We know that there will continue to be risks from the virus and that some of the new ways of living together, working and delivering services are likely to remain in place for months to come. We also know that there will continue to be an impact on people's incomes, access to jobs and their wellbeing and that continued support will be needed.

1.1 Purpose of the document

This document provides a framework to assist Local Authorities and their partners, including the NHS and the third sector, in decision making in their local response to COVID-19 in relation to Gypsy/Travellers. It sets out the policy basis and other considerations for providing support to Gypsy/Traveller communities. The principles that underpin our recommended approach to Gypsy/Travellers flow from the [joint Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan, Improving the Lives of Gypsy/Travellers 2019-21](#), which has the full support of the Scottish Government and all 32 Local Authorities. It is also in line with the existing national guidance on managing unauthorised encampments.

This work is a core part of the Scottish Government's public health response to COVID-19 as it aims to protect the health of individual people in marginalised groups and to support the public health measures designed to prevent the spread of the virus.

The framework has been produced by COSLA and the Scottish Government with support from Public Health Scotland, third sector partners and community representatives. It draws on emerging evidence and resources available to support Local Authorities during the planning and delivery of support to 'at risk' groups.

Local Authorities should draw on the advice of their Chief Social Work Officers, Heads of Housing, Joint Board Chief Officers, equalities officers, internal resilience teams, and NHS Directors of Public Health as well as referring to up to date public health advice on NHS inform. They will also want to ensure that their response to

Gypsy/Travellers takes full advantage of various other means of support being developed and delivered both nationally and locally in response to COVID-19.

It is anticipated that any local issues relating to support for Gypsy/Travellers which require multi-agency input will be discussed by Local Resilience Partnerships in the first instance and escalated as necessary.

We are aware that, as Local Authorities and partners respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, challenges may arise in ensuring services and support reach all individuals in your local areas, and that there will be specific complexities in seeking to meet the needs of vulnerable Gypsy/Traveller communities. This framework is therefore intended to support Local Authorities and their partners in this regard.

1.2 Leadership and Strategic Direction

On Friday 21 March 2020, COSLA Group Leaders unanimously agreed that Gypsy/Travellers living roadside should be supported during this period, including with access to basic sanitation and services – toilets, water, bins and wash facilities. This is in line with existing national guidance on managing unauthorised encampments and puts into practice Leaders' wider commitments to support Gypsy/Travellers.

This position, and the work of Local Government and partners to implement it, is helping to ensure that public health and poverty mitigation measures in place to address the COVID-19 outbreak are accessible to everyone in Scotland. Whilst the provision of support and local resilience planning is a local decision, there is clear political agreement that the response to COVID-19 will not discriminate and will include minority ethnic communities who face additional vulnerabilities.

As we move in to the renewal phase, there is an opportunity to build on the positive work done by Local Authorities to support people living on public sector sites and roadside during the lockdown and to continue to provide for the needs of Gypsy/Travellers, including to support the right to travel, and progress the objectives of the Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan. COSLA's Community Wellbeing Board agreed on 18 May 2020 to "further and ongoing work to mitigate the public health risks of COVID-19 for our Gypsy/Traveller communities and to ensure that we can deliver on our wider commitments under the national Action Plan." The updated framework is designed to help to deliver this.

The Scottish Government's original £350m community support package has been expanded. It is in place to help local partners in the public and third sector to assist communities at highest risk – both in terms of complying with public health guidance, and poverty mitigation and other resilience measures. This funding package includes a £50m Hardship Fund and now £57.6 million Food Fund provided directly to Local Authorities to support local resilience, and intended to support the types of interventions outlined in this guidance. £120,000 of the Community Support Package has been allocated to provide specific support for Gypsy/Travellers during the COVID-19 outbreak to provide tailored financial advice, telephone-based self-directed mental health support, 'health boxes' and sanitation in the form of toilets and

showers. It is recognised that these are temporary funding measures in response to the immediate public health emergency. Work is currently ongoing at national and local level to plan for changing public health needs and demands and to understand the overall and ongoing costs of assistance during the renewal phase. Local plans will want to consider how to sustainably and cost-effectively provide for the needs and rights of Gypsy/Travellers as a high risk and marginalised group and to consider any resources needed to ensure the safe operation of services for staff.

1.3 Feedback and Review

The framework will be reviewed and updated to reflect any significant changes in public health advice. It should apply for the duration of time that UK and Scottish Government public health guidance advises people to practice physical distancing and social isolation.

In order to maintain an up to date picture of provision that is in place for Gypsy/Travellers during this period, and to identify any potential gaps in support or issues with the Framework, Local Authorities are asked to provide regular updates on what is happening in their area to dominique@cosla.gov.uk. These can be fed in via regular Gypsy/Traveller Site manager phone calls hosted by COSLA to share experience. Some examples of practice during the lockdown period are at section 6 below.

If other's have comments on the framework or its operation, please email Robbie.Lambie@gov.scot.

1.4 Policy Context - Why Gypsy/Travellers are at Increased Risk and Need Additional Support

Gypsy/Travellers face some specific additional risks and vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 crisis that are important to consider within local resilience plans and which may make it difficult for them to limit virus spread and comply with public health guidelines. These include:

- Overcrowding in trailers, and between trailers, and – for those on sites – sharing of toilets, washing and kitchen facilities;
- Limited or no access to additional trailer for purpose of self-isolation;
- For those living roadside, reliance on toilet/washing facilities, for example in leisure centres and retail parks, some of which will now be closed;
- Hostile attitudes from settled communities towards encampments, causing people to move from place to place, which is contrary to Scottish Government and NHS Scotland guidelines;
- Difficulties keeping up to date on changing public health messages, due to literacy or digital exclusion issues as well as fear of engagement with authorities and challenges in registering with GPs; and
- A higher number of underlying health conditions, potentially resulting in more serious illness.

The community faces additional risks and vulnerabilities including racism and discrimination, poverty and barriers to accessing mainstream services. They are likely to be more severely affected by the restrictions that we are all subject to. Gypsy/Travellers are:

- more often self-employed workers, often in lower paid trades. They therefore face significant financial insecurity and risks as a result of loss of income if unable to work. They may also have less experience in claiming benefits;
- understood to have higher risks of poor mental health and suicide. They may struggle to maintain their health and wellbeing if they are living in houses and will be unable to travel as part of their cultural and nomadic lifestyle during this period;
- more likely to face exclusions to educational services and support, for example children being missed from educational supports due to being unable to attend school consistently and/or if they do not have digital access on sites or related support to navigate digital resources;
- more likely to be unbanked and therefore be reliant on cash, which some shops are moving away from;
- less likely to have food storage facilities – or the financial resources - to be able to stock up and are therefore affected by issues associated with panic buying and empty shops; and
- much more likely to be fuel poor due to low level insulation in trailers and amenity blocks and be in need of regular card top ups or access to gas or liquid fuel.

The combined impact of all of these factors is a risk of extreme poverty, which will be exacerbated by the need to self-isolate, physically distance and shield (see NHS Inform for more details).

Whilst people living on public sector sites will typically be connected to support via their Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officers, site managers or other Local Authority or health and social care officers, this may not be the case for those living on private sites, or for those living roadside or in houses. We know that many Gypsy/Travellers may not know how to access support, and struggle to access benefits, including Universal Credit, and the Scottish Welfare Fund as well as wider services which identify and assist vulnerable groups.

2. Framework to support Local Authorities and their partners in local decision making

2.1 Accommodation Provision

Supporting Gypsy/Travellers to access suitable accommodation and to have safe and secure places to stay during this period will be an important part of local resilience plans. Different approaches will be necessary to meet these needs, depending on local circumstances. Key principles to guide decision making are set out in the paragraphs below.

A core principle to guide decisions in all circumstances is the need to engage with Gypsy/Travellers directly to understand their particular circumstances and what responses are needed to keep people safe locally.

2.2 Encouraging Stability – Minimising Evictions

During the virus outbreak we are keen to encourage people to settle in places where they can access sanitation, services and healthcare and to minimise unnecessary travel. This will help Local Authorities and other statutory services, including the NHS, to provide help when needed and reduce the spread of the virus.

Gypsy/Traveller families are likely to want to visit family members they are worried about, travel because of the time or year or possibly attend funerals. While travel restrictions are in place, they should be asked to return to their settled home and follow up to date advice on staying at home. In terms of roadside encampments of Gypsy/Travellers who do not have a settled home:

- Local Authorities should only consider eviction or dispersing a camp where the location of an encampment is unsuitable for health or safety reasons or if there is another good reason, for example antisocial behaviour or persistent breach of Covid 19 travel advice. In this case, an alternative, suitable location should be identified where possible; and
- Local Authorities should seek to work with private landowners to avoid eviction or harassment if possible.

2.3 People who fall ill: No-one should be asked to leave a site or camp because someone in the family has fallen ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19. They should be supported to access Test and Protect services. They should also be supported to share the news of their illness with others on the camp, particularly where there has been contact, so that they can also self-isolate.

2.4 People living on public sector sites: The emergency Coronavirus (Scotland) Act was passed on Wednesday 1 April and came in to force on 5 April. The Act includes measures on evictions to protect tenants confined to their homes. The Minimum Standards on Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation set out the rights and responsibilities for occupancy agreements on public sector Gypsy/Traveller sites, including guidelines for ending a tenancy. Social Landlords should extend the same

protection to Gypsy/Travellers sites as to tenants in social housing while the Coronavirus Act remains in force.

2.5 Supporting Gypsy/Travellers living on roadside encampments/ managing unauthorised encampments

Some families or individuals may be living roadside and not have a settled home to return to during this period. Ongoing business closures may mean that they require assistance. Local Authority staff working with Gypsy/Travellers will be familiar with [existing guidance on managing unauthorised encampments](#).

The Guidance sets out some basic principles to be followed:

- Local Authorities should seek to manage unauthorised sites to minimise disruption for all concerned and ensure that any anti-social behaviour is tackled firmly, regardless of who the perpetrators are; and
- the same standards of behaviour should be expected from all members of the community, whether Gypsy/Travellers or the settled community, based on mutual respect and with regard to the rights and responsibilities of all those concerned.

The key stages set out in the guidance are:

- An initial site visit to speak to the residents, assess the situation, establish the length of time that the residents wish to remain on the camp and reach agreement with residents on services that might need to be in place for this to be supported and/or for encampments to shift safely when they move on. Covid 19 should be discussed and an assessment should be made of any additional needs in order to meet health protection needs, particularly where there are people in the camp who are at risk e.g. due to age or health conditions.
- A decision on the most appropriate, proportionate response to keep the people in the camp and the wider community safe, for example, recommending that the people at the camp return to and stay in their settled home, supporting the encampment where it is, or identifying an alternative location/space on a permanent site or within the Local Authority area; and
- An agreement with the camp members on the best way forward and provision of appropriate services.

2.6 Additional requirements for unauthorised encampments during the COVID-19 outbreak

It is vital that you provide effective management of unauthorised encampments in order to help Gypsy/Travellers protect themselves from the virus and to limit any risks associated with travelling: Direct engagement with residents will be necessary to understand any specific risks and vulnerabilities of people staying on the camp and what measures they need or may be required. Staff working on or visiting sites should follow the advice from Health Protection Scotland on working in non-healthcare settings available at: <http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/>

- If possible, encampments should be provided with:
 - sanitation, in the form of additional toilets and washing facilities to allow families to self-isolate within a caravan and limit sharing of facilities and therefore risk spreading the virus; and
 - Bins and regular collections, to allow for safe disposal of waste, which can often be a point of concern for the settled community. Encampments should also be given information on how to dispose of excess waste or items that cannot go in to bins, e.g. gas bottles. Advice should be provided on safe waste disposal in cases where someone is showing Covid 19 symptoms – i.e. double bagging personal waste and waiting 72 hours before putting out for collection. People may need extra bins to make this feasible in a roadside setting.
- Information can be given on the layout of the camp e.g. sufficient space between pitches to allow families to self-isolate and physically distance effectively. The benchmark distance for fire safety is 6m between caravans;
- Health information about the virus should be shared widely, including information for anyone who may fall under the arrangements for shielding those with very high risk pre-existing health conditions (see sections 2.9 and 2.10);
- Arrangements for Test and Protect should be communicated and support provided for anyone who shows symptoms and needs to access the testing service;
- Engagement with site residents should include specific discussion on how provisions for physical distancing and self-isolation can be implemented on the encampment.
- Local Authorities may wish to issue information on any changes to behaviours on the site during the outbreak, e.g. on use of shared facilities. In addition, they should consider supporting conversations with anyone who has the virus, to allow sharing of information, which, may reduce suspicion of others;
- As part of resilience planning, Local Authorities should identify suitable land for encampments and/or to support self-isolation, physical distancing and shielding. If appropriate, this can be done on a regional basis, with Local Authorities working together to identify appropriate locations;
- If Local Authorities cannot identify land that they own but have identified suitable land in public or private ownership, including uninhabited holiday sites, they could consider paying for the use of land. Holiday caravan sites have been asked to close to prevent tourism but emergency regulations, The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020, allow them to remain open if requested to do so by a Local Authority; and
- If a Local Authority thinks that the Scottish Government can support the identification of appropriate land, please contact Dorothy.ogle@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

2.7 Support for Gypsy/Travellers living in public sector sites

Local Authority sites typically have one amenity block (for toilet, washing and cooking) per pitch, but that pitch may be occupied by two or more trailers of the same family. To minimise the spread of the virus within and between family groups the Local Authority should consider:

- offering additional toilets or spread families across pitches, creating two smaller households with separate facilities;
- Making cleaning products accessible for users so that any shared bathrooms are kept clean. Any shared bathrooms should be cleaned using standard household detergent and disinfectant active against viruses and bacteria. If being used by someone who is symptomatic, the bathroom should be cleaned after each use. Particular attention should be paid to frequently touched surfaces such as door handles. An apron and gloves should be considered whilst cleaning depending on the levels of contamination. Ensure good hand hygiene is carried out after cleaning.
- Engagement with site residents should include specific discussion on how provisions for physical distancing and self-isolation can be implemented on the encampment;
- Ensuring that there is access to fuel supplies and consider measures that might help to prevent or mitigate the risk of fuel poverty, including continuing with measures that were in place during lockdown if that is considered to be appropriate and achievable. Support from Home Energy Scotland is detailed at 5.3.

2.8 Support for Gypsy/Travellers living on private sites

Some private Gypsy/Traveller sites operate on a private rental basis, with different families renting a pitch directly from a private landlord, who may or may not live on the site. Other private sites are occupied by a family group who own the land themselves.

While local authorities will have variable knowledge of/contact with private sites in their area, they should be offering support as there are likely to be people at high risk living on private sites, who may be less well connected with the information and services they need to keep themselves safe and well, and to cope if they become ill. Local Authorities may be able to identify private Gypsy/Traveller sites in their area by checking with Planning colleagues on whether they are generally aware of sites or can provide information that's readily available on current planning permissions.

The accommodation and washing facilities on these sites will differ greatly but there may be a need for additional washing facilities to enable people to self-isolate, physically distance and shield, and Local Authorities should consider whether the offer of additional sanitation should be extended to private sites. There should be an awareness that individuals/families may be reluctant to report lack of adequate services due to fear of eviction from the site owner.

2.90 Support for self-isolation, physical distancing and shielding on sites or in camps

If someone on a site or camp becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, the sense of smell or taste, they need to follow public health advice to stay at home and self-isolate. Household members will also need to follow public health advice in case they have contracted the virus. See section 2.10 on health advice. By household we mean members of the family who

live and eat together, sharing an amenity block/bathroom facilities on the same pitch. Due to the confined living conditions on Gypsy/Traveller camps, they will need support to do this.

- Gypsy/Travellers cannot self-isolate while they are travelling so families should be supported to stay in one place, either returning to their settled home or establishing a camp;
- It may be necessary, after informed conversation, to provide individuals and others within their family unit with separate accommodation or housing if someone shows symptoms of COVID-19. Local Authorities should identify local accommodation solutions which are culturally appropriate if feasible, for example an additional trailer on a site if it is large enough or a place on a holiday site. Links can be made to accommodation and support provided by Local Authority homelessness services as part of Rapid Re-housing Transition Plans. The role of homelessness services is highlighted in Health Protection Scotland's guidance for non-healthcare settings.
- Where possible, Local Authorities should allow residents to move onto unoccupied pitches where this allows caravans to be more spaced out;
- Some smaller camps may wish to reduce risk by significantly limiting who and what comes on to the camp. If residents wish to take this approach as a camp, Local Authorities should consider how they can provide any support to access food, medication and other essentials;
- If a separate bathroom is not available, advice should be given on drawing up a rota for washing or bathing, with the person who is unwell using the facilities last, before thoroughly cleaning the bathroom themselves, using standard household detergent and disinfectant active against viruses and bacteria. (if they are able or it is appropriate);
- In light of the confined nature of chalets, campervans and caravans, an outdoor space which people self-isolating can access without coming into contact with others, should be identified wherever possible. Spacing out residents on sites where there are vacant pitches would help with this. Engagement with site residents should include specific discussion on how provisions for physical distancing and self-isolation can be implemented on the encampment.

3 Approach During the Renewal Phase

3.1 Supporting Sites and Encampments:

The period of operation of the revised Framework will see significant change. Gypsy/Traveller culture means that families might typically navigate towards family members and rely on collective support, they may want to travel in line with traditional seasonal shifting and work patterns, for family reasons or potentially in response to tension in residential areas. Once travel for leisure is permitted, anticipated to be at stage 3 of the, [routemap for moving out of lockdown](#). we see ongoing priorities as:

- **A safe place to live** – the need for good quality, affordable site provision - permanent or temporary/transit - will be even more important with people having less income to meet wider living costs;
- **Support for self-isolation** – people on camps will continue to need options to help them follow health advice, self-isolate or shield from others, with appropriate support from services;
- **Sanitation**– making sure people have access to the facilities they need to stay healthy and safe on camps including access to toilets, water and waste facilities remains important going forward; and
- **Communication** – to provide the Community with health advice and information on the test, trace, isolate and support provision, referred to as “Test and Protect” as set out in the Scottish Government’s strategy at www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-trace-isolate-support/. Communication should be accessible and relevant to the Gypsy/Traveller lifestyle. This includes improved digital access to allow Gypsy/Travellers who will need to be supported to access services which are increasingly being provided online.

COSLA's Community Wellbeing Board endorsed these priorities at their meeting on 18 May 2020 and agreed to “further and ongoing work to mitigate the public health risks of COVID-19 for our Gypsy/Traveller communities”. To help to deliver on this commitment over the period, we therefore propose that Local Authority approaches to supporting Gypsy/Travellers should be guided by:

- **Human rights and public health principles.** There is a continued need to support Gypsy/Travellers in line with public health and human rights duties and principles, this includes ensuring access to water and sanitation to meet basic health needs during the pandemic, and the right to travel. The objective is to support people who are ill and to limit any spread of the virus. Where there are people at increased risk on a site or in an encampment, it may be appropriate to continue to provide significant support;
- **Up to date advice on restrictions on movement.** While restrictions on movement remain, Gypsy/Travellers should be supported to remain on existing encampments, with a more flexible approach to travel developing as more movement is permitted;
- **Participation and engagement:** A core principle to guide decisions in all circumstances is the need to engage with Gypsy/Travellers directly to understand

their particular circumstances and what responses are needed to keep people safe locally.

In practical terms, during the renewal phase this will mean:

- Social Landlords should work with residents to review and assess arrangements on public sector sites to ensure that they meet their needs in the next phase including any newly arising needs for services. This includes identifying where broadband/wifi connections are a barrier to accessing services which are predominantly provided online and making plans with residents to overcome this;
- Continued support should be provided to people who are shielding, considering any needs as a result of extended timeframes e.g. around isolation or emotional support;
- Support should be provided for those who need to isolate as a result the arrangements for Test and Protect and support e.g. provision of accommodation, toilets, food, medication etc, drawing on local resilience partnerships and additional services established by MECOPP Article 12, Step and others, in response to Covid 19);
- New camps should be managed using a human rights and public health based approach, in line with the national guidance on managing unauthorised encampments, as set out in Section 2 above;
- Local Authorities may want to consider adopting approaches such as 'negotiated stopping' which advocates positive engagement with sites and the use of written agreements to determine the provision and use of services on encampments, along with agreeing expectations such as noise levels, safe disposal of waste and communication with the Local Authority on any changing circumstances;
- Provision of sanitation or services to roadside encampments that formed prior to lock-down should continue whilst the encampment is in place or until there has been agreement that the camp must move on. The Scottish Government will continue to provide additional sanitation services at the current level until the end of July. If you have any queries please contact Kerri.Ramsay@gov.scot. At this point, plans should be in place for continuity of provision and/or alternative arrangements should be put in place locally to ensure that public health needs are met; and
- In circumstances where an encampment is in place because of a lack of alternative site provision, the Local Authority should ensure this is reflected within local housing needs and demands assessments and that any ongoing needs for temporary or transit provision in the local area are considered and captured during this period.

COSLA will be resuming work with Local Authorities over the summer, as part of the national action plan, to develop and test effective approaches to managing roadside encampments and to 'pilot' negotiated stopping models in Scotland. Please contact dominique@cosla.gov.uk for more information about this work.

4. Health Information

The Scottish Government and COSLA are working with Health professionals and the Third Sector to develop a communications to address the issues identified below. Work is under way to overcome digital exclusion, working with the Scottish Governments Digital Participation Team to improve digital access, and also work with service providers, particularly NHS and Local Authorities, to ensure their messages are accessible to those unable to access information digitally. We aim to:

- Build on the communications work done through the Gypsy/Traveller Facebook page and other channels, provide up to date health messages (physical distancing when back at work, hand washing, face masks etc), communicated in a way that meets the needs of the community;
- Ensure that there is an ongoing high awareness of symptoms in the Gypsy/Traveller community so that they can take action quickly if needed. This could include advice on what to do and who to contact if there is an outbreak on a camp; and
- Communicate arrangements for Test and Protect, i.e. how to access testing and what to expect in terms of contact tracing and isolation as a result of contact with an infected person. This includes 3,000 leaflets specifically for Gypsy/Travellers, distributed to families locally along with information packs on Test and Protect.

4.1 Testing

The Scottish Government is continuing to work with the UK Government and other partners to develop its approach to Community Testing to improve accessibility for those who are less able to access digital services. Advice on this area may change so please check up to date information.

Who can be tested - Anyone over the age of 5 who has Covid-19 symptoms should be tested so that they can avoid passing the virus on to people that they live with and others in the community.

How to book a test –

- **Online** - Tests are currently booked online for drive through testing centres or for a home testing kit. This NHS Inform page offers detailed information: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-testing> Some Gypsy/Travellers will require support to access online booking, either in terms of access to the internet or digital skills to navigate the system. Local Authorities should make links with local services that can provide this support. If a home test is booked, support may also be required to use the instructions; or
- **On the phone** - For those who do not have internet access, tests can be booked by calling the national helpline number on 0300 303 2713. Callers need to select the option for Scotland, and wait to hear options for help required. A test will then be manually booked at appropriate test site by helpline staff. Once the test has been booked a unique code is issued via text message or email, which should be taken to the agreed test site. Some Gypsy/Travellers will need help and support to do this.

If the test is positive – the person who has tested positive and their household should follow guidelines for self-isolation for 14 days. NHS Scotland will contact you.

4.2 Contact Tracing – the person who has tested positive will be **phoned by the Test & Protect service**. Some Gypsy/Travellers may not wish to share detailed information so anyone providing support should explain that contact tracing is a tried and tested way of stopping virus spread and that the reason for asking for information is to protect others in their family and community.

Support for self-isolation – National information about how to get additional support if you need to isolate can be found at www.readyscotland.org/coronavirus. Those who cannot leave their home or get the help they need from family, friends or online can call the National Assistance Helpline on 0800 111 4000. Local helpline teams will provide access to support e.g. food, medication, accommodation and toilets, drawing on local resilience partnerships and additional services established by MECOPP Article 12, Step and others, in response to Covid-9.

4.3 Shielding from COVID-19

Shielding is for people, including children, who are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19. The Scottish Government is advising that people at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should follow shielding measures until at least the end of July. This means staying at home, and keeping at least two metres away from other household members. From 18 June the Scottish Government will be advising that – if infection rates in Scotland remain low enough - shielding people can safely go outside for exercise, as long as they stay at least two metres from other people.

Information on shielding including the steps to take and the list of conditions where shielding is considered to be required is available on the NHS Inform website: .
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding>

[Further information on support and contacts is available on the Scottish Government website: https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/)

Initial contact about shielding is made by GPs. It is therefore important that Gypsy/Travellers register with a local GP practice and ensure their GP has their up to date contact details. For more information if people have difficulties with this, please contact kate.burton@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk.

Housing may need to be offered as a temporary accommodation option in order for a person to be shielded. If appropriate, a culturally appropriate offer should be made, for example in a trailer.

Shielding is for the protection of the individual, it is their choice to decide whether to follow the measures.

4.4 Public Health Information – sources of information that should be provided to Gypsy/Travellers on public and private sites and unauthorised encampments

Local Authority officers will have a crucial role in ensuring that Gypsy/Travellers can receive accessible and up to date public health information when they are supporting site residents and roadside encampments. Up to date information and guidance about COVID-19 from NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government should be shared widely including advice on:

Restrictions on movement – staying at home and away from others	www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others-social-distancing/
Test and Protect	<p>https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-trace-and-isolate/coronavirus-covid-19-testing</p> <p>Scottish Government's Test, Trace Isolate and Protect Strategy</p> <p>https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-trace-isolate-support/</p>
Hand washing and how to protect yourself	www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice
Social distancing	www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-social-distancing
Shielding information	<p>www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding</p> <p>https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/</p>
What to do if someone has Covid-19 – preventing infection	www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-infection
A communications toolkit including alternative formats easy read, posters and other communications can be found on NHS Inform	<p>https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/communications-toolkits-and-leaflets/coronavirus-covid-19-communications-toolkit</p> <p>The Gypsy/Traveller Covid 19 Facebook page also includes some materials developed for</p>

	Gypsy/Travellers and videos recorded by community members
Further detailed advice on specific situations such as advice for parents and advice for people with specific health conditions is also available at NHS Inform	www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19

For further advice on what information to provide, please contact kate.burton@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk.

4.5 Mental Health Support

Work to provide telephone-based guided self-help support to Gypsy/Travellers identifying as being at high risk of mental distress. This is provided by third sector organisation MECOPP, and can be accessed via their website here: <https://www.mecopp.org.uk/gypsytraveller-carers-project>.

4.6 Hospital and Health Appointments

GP practices have remained open throughout the pandemic. Anyone with a health issue, other than COVID-19, is encouraged to contact their GP who will advise them on the best course of action they should take. Those with appointments with healthcare services including hospital out-patients, health visiting and midwifery should have been contacted by their care provider to discuss and arrange support required and future appointments. It is important that GP's and other NHS services are kept updated about any changes to people's contact details so that they can be informed about re-arranged healthcare appointments. Everyone has the right to register with a GP in Scotland, for help and support please see: <http://www.healthliteracyplace.org.uk/tools-and-techniques/access-to-healthcare-gp-registration-cards/>

4.7 Hospital visiting

In order to reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19 and to shield vulnerable groups, NHS Boards are now being asked to restrict hospital visiting to essential visits only. **All arrangements MUST be made through the nurse in charge of the ward, however**

The following visits are considered to be essential:

- A birth partner during childbirth
- For a person receiving end-of-life care
- to support someone with a mental health issue such as dementia, a learning disability or autism where not being present would cause the patient to be distressed
- to accompany a child in hospital.

Visitors should also consider whether a visit is essential even in these circumstances Anyone who is unwell and/or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 - a new, persistent

cough and fever or high temperature or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste - should NOT visit any patients in a hospital.

Non-essential visitors should be encouraged to consider alternative ways of maintaining contact with relatives and loved ones in hospital, such as by phone.

4.8 Dental Treatment

Each person in the family should stick to their own toothbrush and these should be stored apart to prevent infection. Information on what to do in the event of a dental emergency is available at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/dental/dental-emergencies>

4.9 What to do if someone dies

A Gypsy/Traveller death is mourned by the whole community. It is traditional for families is to dress and care for the deceased and this continues in some families today. If someone dies from COVID-19 on a site or in a camp, the Local Authority should tell the family about the steps that they should take to keep themselves safe if they decide to care for their loved one. The Scottish Government has published <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-religious-organisations-faith-and-cultural-groups---preparation-for-burial-or-cremation-of-covid-19-deceased/>. It includes advice that, since there is a small but real risk of transmission from the body of the deceased. The advice is that mourners should not take part in any rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the body of an individual who has died from, or with symptoms of, coronavirus (COVID-19) for the duration of the pandemic. Given the very significant risk for vulnerable and extremely vulnerable people who come into contact with the virus, it is strongly advised that they have no contact with the body. This includes washing, preparing or dressing the body.

Current restrictions on [funeral services](#) continue to be in place which means that only the closest family members can be physically present at funerals (whether or not the death was due to COVID-19), with numbers restricted to the minimum of in-person attendees possible.

In line with wider restrictions on gatherings at this time, it is also the case that any other funeral service or relevant ritual, such as being present with the body in advance of burial or cremation, should also be carried out with the minimum amount of people possible present and seeking to maintain physical distancing requirements i.e. a 2 metre distance from members of other households, wherever possible.

These restrictions will be particularly difficult for Gypsy/Travellers who view immediate family in a wider sense than others and traditionally have large attendance at funerals. Information about the restrictions should be communicated very sensitively, working with the relevant burial or cremation authority to do so (which may be your Local Authority, a different Local Authority or a private business, depending on which burial ground or crematorium is proposed to be used).

5 Food, fuel and wider assistance

All aspects of local resilience plans will need to take account of the needs of Gypsy/Travellers, for example in relation to support for people at risk of poverty and services for children and families as well as the provision of health and social care.

5.1 Finances

Gypsy/Travellers may need additional support or advice to help them to access any benefits they are entitled to or other forms of financial relief provided by either the UK or Scottish Government, as well as local support such as the Scottish Welfare Fund, investment in which has been more than doubled, to provide additional support to those who need crisis support in the short term. MECOPP Gypsy/Traveller Carers' Project can assist community members with advice and information, applications for welfare benefits and other hardship funds as well as making referrals to foodbanks and other sources of community assistance. As this service will be available in different parts of Scotland, in the first instance, please contact suzanne@mecopp.org.uk or 07957 652 413 and you will be directed to the appropriate worker. Please note that this service will only be in operation for 28 hours per week;

5.2 Food

It is important that Local Authorities make sure that local responses to addressing food insecurity includes Gypsy/Travellers, who may not be engaged with local facilities, such as food banks and replacement free school meal provision. The initial £30 million allocation to local authorities through the Food Fund for coordinated responses to support households who may experience barriers in accessing food was increased by a further £27.6 million in June. Guidance for local authorities was published in April 2020 that sets out principles for using the fund. It also highlights that local partners may use resource from their Food Fund allocation to support households that are marginalised, which includes Gypsy/Travellers, noting that community organisations that already provide support to people in this category may be well placed to provide this as part of a coordinated approach.

Of the additional £27.6 million:

- £12.6 million of funding for Local Authorities to support the continued provision of free school meals during the summer holidays;
- £15 million to Local Authorities to continue to support individuals at risk as a result of Coronavirus to access food and other essentials, including those asked to self-isolate under Test and Protect.

The Scottish Government has also provided an additional £15 million to the initial £30 million available for the nationally coordinated grocery box response for those who are in the shielding group.

Further information on food support including priority shopping times, volunteer schemes and location of the retailers by LA area is included in guidance on the Scottish Government website. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid->

[19-guidance-on-support-information-food-and-other-essentials/pages/food-delivery-schemes/](#)

Households may need help to store supplies that they may need for their self-isolate, physical distance or shield, if there is not enough space to store these within their home, for example space for a locked box.

5.3 Fuel

Gypsy/Travellers are at high risk of fuel poverty and may struggle to top up electricity meters during this period. Consideration should be given to the Local Authority meeting their electricity costs for a period of time or providing pre-paid electricity cards. Home Energy Scotland can also provide support to residents who are struggling with their fuel bills and are working in partnership with MECOPP to provide assistance, including facilitating same-day support to top up prepayment meters in the event of imminent disconnection. They offer free and impartial advice, funded by the Scottish Government, and they have the latest information from energy suppliers and the government. If any residents are struggling, please encourage them to call free on 0808 808 2282, visit homeenergyscotland.org for help or discuss this support further with MECOPP Gypsy/Traveller Carers' Project who can access support on their behalf.

5.6 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Unpaid Carers

The Scottish Government has made available PPE for unpaid carers who visit or live with a friend or family member to provide help with personal care such as washing or dressing. For more information see, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-unpaid-carers-providing-personal-care/pages/general-advice/>

5.7 Domestic Abuse

Cultural sensitivities around lifestyle choices and privacy should be recognised at all times when communicating with Gypsy/Traveller women in relation to domestic abuse. The negative impact of misconceptions around domestic abuse within the community should be challenged and care taken not to infer stereotypes of Gypsy/Traveller women as victims or men as being dominant or aggressive.

Officers should consider appropriate methods of developing supportive conversation and giving discrete information around safety planning and specialised helplines. Literacy levels, feelings of failure as a mother and wife, fear of rejection within her community or of others within the community dealing with the abuse internally may present as barriers to engagement or disclosure from women.

COSLA and Scottish Government have developed a joint COVID-19-Supplementary VAW Guidance for Local Authorities. Cross reference should be made to this live guidance. COSLA will be considering the guidance further to ensure that women and children vulnerable to domestic abuse from the Gypsy/Traveller communities are more visible within it:

https://www.cosla.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/17762/COVID-19-Supplementary-VAW-Guidance-FINAL.pdf

Scotland's National Domestic Abuse Helpline is available 24/7/365 - 0800 027 1234 – and web and email services can be accessed at:
<https://sdafmh.org.uk/contact-us/>.

5.8 Education - Scottish Traveller Education Programme (STEP)

[STEP Families website](#) supports Gypsy/Traveller families to continue with young people's education while staying at home. The site contains a range of culturally-relevant learning activities. There are also links to Local Authority staff in all areas and information on gaining digital access to education.

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

5.9 Young Gypsy/Travellers

Article 12 works with Young Gypsy/Travellers and is undertaking additional work to enable young Gypsy/Travellers' and their families engaging with Gypsy/Traveller education services to continue to maintain contact during the C19 restrictions.

<https://www.article12.org/>

5.10 Reporting Hate Crimes

Police Scotland continue to urge victims and witnesses of hate crime to report it during the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities and individuals may feel vulnerable as a result of COVID-19.

A hate crime can include name calling, harassment, graffiti or a physical attack motivated by prejudice or ill-will towards a social group. Social groups covered by hate crime legislation are disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity. What you may view as a minor incident can have a major impact. Anyone who experiences or witnesses such an incident, should be encouraged to report it by calling 101, or 999 in an emergency, or by using the [online hate crime reporting form](#) on the Police Scotland website.

If they do not feel comfortable reporting the matter directly to Police, there is a network of Third Party Reporting (TPR) Centres available to provide support remotely during the current situation. Although, at the moment, people cannot attend a TPR centre in person, many organisations are now offering an option to report an incident over the telephone or via e-mail. Please visit the TPR page of the Police Scotland website for more information on [Third Party Reporting](#) and for a list of active centres.

5.11 Gypsy/Traveller COVID-19 Facebook Page

COSLA and the Scottish Government are working closely with NHS Health Scotland, Article 12, MECOPP and STEP to establish a [moderated COVID-19 Facebook page for Gypsy/Travellers](#).

The Facebook page should be promoted as a source of up to date information as well as a way of gathering feedback about issues and difficulties the community is facing. This may also be a route for communicating with Gypsy/Travellers in a specific area or region. If you would like to use the page please contact dominique@COSLA.gov.uk.

6. Examples of Support in Practice During Lockdown

During the lockdown period, different Local Authorities have used the Framework to develop approaches that meet local needs. Some examples are set out below:

Example one: Dundee

One Local Authority is using the framework to support a roadside encampment in the area. The land the encampment is on is privately owned and normally the landowner would look to take court action to move encampments on. Referring to the framework, the Local Authority negotiated with the landowner and were able to encourage the encampment to stay as per lockdown guidelines. Portaloos, showers, drinking water, weekly food parcels and refuge collections have been provided. To allay concerns about catching the virus, while out locally for essentials, masks and gloves have been provided to the encampment through the “Health Box” funding.

The framework has been used to include the community in the local emergency response and has kept them at the forefront of any decisions the Local Authority is making about additional support required for the local community in general. The regular contact and support provided has enabled a greater level of engagement with a group who return to the area on an annual basis. The Local Authority are hopeful that in future years, the ground work and support that has been offered will continue to encourage positive relationships with the group.

Example 2: Dumfries & Galloway

Another Local Authority has used the framework to inform their operational approach for the permanent Gypsy/Traveller sites they provide and to facilitate additional support in terms of food parcels, financial assistance and welfare support. The framework also informed processes to create an environment to support self-isolation and social distancing and the capacity of the sites has been temporarily reduced to allow families to maintain safe distancing.

The Local Authority was pro-active in implementing procedures to ensure they were able to support Gypsy/Travellers during the pandemic. It was quickly recognised that there would be a negative impact on household income and financial resilience. Actions identified to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the Gypsy/Traveller community included:

- Maintaining a consistent single point of contact through the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer (GTLO). This provides families with a consistent Local Authority presence and ensures any concerns or additional support needs are addressed as they arise
- Suspending electricity charges for a period extending up to 3 months
- Suspending pitch fees for a period extending up to 3 months
- Ensuring effective support is available for the most vulnerable on sites and those who maybe shielding
- Providing access to support organisations and facilitating delivery of essential provision
- Maintained sufficient free space on site to allow families to ‘spread’ out and improve the ability for social distancing.
- Providing up-dated information to residents in relation to COVID-19.

- Identifying a suitable location where we could effectively support families living roadside without access to essential facilities

Example 3: Scottish Borders

One Local Authority worked with a local caravan park that had closed, due to lockdown, to reopen it for the benefit of 4 Gypsy/Traveller families living roadside. This enabled the provision of separate portable toilets for each caravan, shower facilities, electric hook-ups, free electricity, rubbish bins and clean running water.

Example 4: East Ayrshire

A Local Authority, that had already agreed to pilot Negotiated Stopping and therefore having had measures in place to support basic provisions to encampments, identified a local suitable hard-standing area for Gypsy/Travellers who needed to self-isolate. The Scottish Government provided portaloos for use at the site and these are serviced twice weekly. Where families on an encampment were experiencing financial difficulties it was agreed that “health boxes” would be provided alongside the basic provisions of water, portaloos and regular waste collection. It was also agreed that as the Local Authority does not have a permanent site, temporary bricks and mortar accommodation would be offered to families living on roadside encampments if this was preferable.

Example 5: Moray

The Local Authorities Unauthorised Encampments Officer (UEO) has been visiting the encampments on a weekly basis. Each visit consists of ensuring the residents awareness of up to date restrictions regarding Covid-19 and checking clarity and identifying any vulnerable or infected people within the encampment. As per the guidance, information has been supplied on shielding, social distancing, information contained on the NHS inform website, and the Gypsy/Traveller Covid impact Facebook page allowing the encampment to make decisions and adhere to positioning of caravans and removal of waste.

Toilets have been provided to encampments and bins have been issued through LA's waste services team and are uplifted on a regular basis.

Identification of suitable land was carried out by the UEO, reducing conflict with the settled community and allowing better access to the provision of facilities.

Discussion around provision of temporary accommodation/housing options advice, financial help (via Scottish welfare fund) and education materials took place.

7. Useful links:

- **Scottish Government Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on support, information, food and other essentials** - Guidance on the help and support available to protect the wellbeing of people affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) <https://www.mygov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/> and <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-support-information-food-and-other-essentials/pages/overview/>.
- **COSLA's Migration Scotland Website:** <http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/covid-19>
- **Gypsy Traveller Covid 19 Facebook Page** set up by public and third sector partners to support Gypsy/Travellers
:<https://www.facebook.com/GypsyTravellersScotlandCoronavirusinformation-100442048272006/>
- **COVID-19 Advice from Friends, Families and Travellers:** <http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/news/covid-19-guidance-for-supporting-people-living-on-traveller-sites-unauthorised-encampments-and-canal-boats/>

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