

GYPSY/TRAVELLER DELIVERY PLAN – TRACKER

F. Covid19 Response Actions

The table below highlights the additional work that was undertaken in addition to the original 33 actions in the plan, as a result of the Covid19 global pandemic. Work here was often done in partnership between Scottish Government, COSLA, and trusted third sector partners. Regular contact was maintained with the community, and developments were led by feedback from Gypsy/Traveller community members themselves.

This afforded a chance to highlight some long standing issues, such as difficulties surrounding long-distance education or trouble with high quality digital accessibility in the community. The aim is to take this work forward in a post-Covid Scotland.

Action	Activity	Progress
<p>1. Creation of the Covid19 Gypsy/Traveller Impact Group.</p>	<p>It was decided a group should be formed to focus on the specific needs of the Gypsy/Traveller community during the pandemic.</p>	<p>The Impact Group came together at the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020. It consisted of Scottish Government, COSLA, Public Health Scotland and a number of third sector partners.</p> <p>The meetings covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation needs – for example, concerns surrounding over-crowding on campsites and issues with site managers not providing tenants with mail regularly • Education – programmes were organised and funded to enable distance learning and improved digital participation for Gypsy/Traveller children during lockdown • Health outcomes – help lines for mental health and wellbeing were set up, as were individualised Health Boxes for those who were Shielding or in self-isolation (these

		<p>were plain cardboard so as to avoid contents causing embarrassment, and were tailored to each recipient)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality concerns – where there was concern that Gypsy/Traveller communities might face negative impacts the settled community were not, work was done to mitigate it – for example, in the provision of extra sanitation facilities to certain locations to enable improved social distancing. <p>The group met on a weekly basis from March until July 2020, moving to bi-weekly in August and finally monthly by September. Although it was finally disbanded in October 2020, the organisations still come together on a regular basis to develop joint approaches to key areas of work – for example, encouraging uptake of the Covid19 vaccination amongst Gypsy/Travellers.</p>
<p>2. Accommodation Actions undertaken to mitigate the effect of Covid19 in the Gypsy/Traveller community</p>	<p>Develop and publish the Framework to support Local Authorities and Partners in decision making.</p> <p>Provision of sanitation.</p> <p>Liaise with Local Authorities to identify and resolve issues.</p> <p>Keeping an overview, identify and share good practice.</p>	<p>April 2020 - Coronavirus (COVID-19): Revised Framework to Support Gypsy/Traveller communities was published (updated Framework published in June 2020 to reflect post lockdown needs and learning). Approaches will vary locally but the current framework recommends options which focus on providing additional sanitation facilities and minimising evictions. Framework as published</p> <p>December 2020 – During the spring lockdown in 2020, the Scottish Government provided sanitation for Gypsy/Travellers direct. As part of the Winter Plan for Social Protection, funding of up to £100k is available to Local Authorities for costs incurred or committed on sanitation for roadside camps and costs associated with supporting Gypsy/Travellers to follow public health guidelines, for example if an additional caravan was needed on a site for self-isolation because of an outbreak. The money was available for costs up to 31 March 2021, and councils have</p>

		<p>requested nearly £60,000 to cover costs of sanitation and accommodation.</p> <p>The Fuelbank Foundation, which has been funded by the SG to provide emergency top-ups for households with pre-payment meters, has developed a referral partnership with MECOPP, now extended to March 2021.</p> <p>Local Authorities have provided support to roadside encampments throughout the pandemic, including assessments of appropriate stopping places, provision of toilets, bins and waste removal; referrals to health and social care and education services and welfare checks.</p>
<p>3. Provision of additional sanitation facilities to Gypsy/Traveller sites to help with self-isolation and the reduction of virus transmission.</p>	<p>The Equality Unit at Scottish Government were provided with extra funding for the organisation of extra shower/toilet blocks and hand washing stations to distribute to Gypsy/Traveller sites across Scotland.</p>	<p>March 2020</p> <p>One of the first tasks dealt with was mitigating virus transmission and improving facilities to self-isolate on Gypsy/Traveller sites.</p> <p>£100,000 was spent on the provision of extra shower and toilet blocks, as well as hand washing stations, to a number of locations nationwide.</p> <p>April 2020</p> <p>Discussions were had with members of the Gypsy/Traveller community in order to work out where there was need for the extra facilities.</p> <p>A point of contact at Scottish Government was made available for community members wishing to request additional sanitation provisions to help coordinate.</p>

		<p>Facilities arrived on sites at the start of April, with an initial hire of 3 months. When June arrived, these contracts were extended to the end of August – in keeping with the continued guidelines around self-isolation, social distancing and virus transmission.</p> <p>Facilities were rented for both public sites and families living roadside.</p>
<p>4. Funding of third sector partners for projects aimed at mitigating negative impacts of the Covid19 pandemic on the Gypsy/Traveller community.</p>	<p>Money from Scottish Government was used to fund several projects ran by trusted third sector partners Article 12, MECOPP and STEP.</p>	<p>Funding from Scottish Government was used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a financial resilience telephone line, to help families work out what benefits they were entitled to and how to claim them • a mental health support line, for those dealing with anxiety / stress / low mood / depression during lockdown • improved digital access through the distribution of tablet devices, MiFi and electronic data cards to families in need • online teaching programmes, with live learning, to prevent young Gypsy/Travellers from disengaging with education during the pandemic <p>In total – to date - just under £130,000 has been spent specifically to protect the Gypsy/Traveller community from the negative effects of the pandemic.</p>
<p>5. Vaccination up-take support.</p>	<p>Having been made aware by community members themselves of a potential reluctance to vaccination, Scottish Government – in partnership with COSLA and third sector organisations – worked to ensure community members had as</p>	<p>February 2020</p> <p>As a result of the vaccination roll out programme, the Gypsy/Traveller Covid19 Impact Group began meeting on a weekly basis again. This consisted again of SG, COSLA, Public Health Scotland, and third sector organisations.</p>

	<p>much information as they needed to make informed decisions.</p>	<p>Through this, discussions were held on vaccine hesitancy within the community.</p> <p>As a result, a Gypsy/Traveller Q+A was established on Zoom and broadcast live over the Article 12 G/T Facebook Information Page. This allowed community members to ask and discuss anything on their minds with a member of the vaccination policy team in Scottish Government.</p> <p>As it was live streamed, it was possible to both call-in and ask your query over the phone – or type it in the comment box.</p> <p>A vaccination centred comms plan has also been pulled together by colleagues in Public Health Scotland, and will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• videos from community members themselves discussing their experience getting vaccinated• leaflet drops of information fliers to Gypsy/Traveller sites, giving details of the vaccine / how to get vaccinated / where to call for help or more information <p>It is hoped this will encourage more community members to get the vaccine in the long run.</p>
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