

Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund and Site Design Guide

**Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact
Assessment (CRWIA)**

February 2022

CRWIA Title: Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund and Site Design Guide

Summary of Aims and Desired Outcomes

Following commitments to deliver more and better accommodation in both [Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021](#) and [Housing to 2040](#), the Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund opened for applications in June 2021. The Fund is intended for both significant renovation and improvements of standards on existing sites and the building of new sites.

Alongside the Fund, to drive a significant improvement in the quality of sites going forward, we have developed a Site Design Guide for Gypsy/Traveller sites, in conjunction with residents and local authorities. This will set the direction for new accommodation, in keeping with key principles of Housing to 2040 such as accessibility and energy efficiency, which are important for all our homes.

The Fund will initially be focussed on a number of demonstration projects that can establish examples of model sites. These first projects will allow us to take a flexible approach, trialling the Site Design Guide, exploring what good quality Gypsy/Traveller accommodation that reflects Housing to 2040 principles looks like, and seeking cost effective ways of delivering it. This approach will be reviewed in later years of the Fund.

The Fund and the Site Design Guide are intended to help meet the following outcomes for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation that have been developed to take in to account equalities impacts:

- More accommodation - enough sites/pitches to meet the established needs of Gypsy/Traveller communities;
- Accommodation in suitable locations, taking into account place making principles including, for example, access to local services;
- Sites that provide pleasant places to live and include attractive outdoor space, communal facilities and appropriate facilities, including for children and young people;
- A mix of accommodation with layout and facilities that meet the needs of residents and provides for different family sizes and preferences and to allow for movement to different accommodation on the same site if circumstances change;
- Accommodation built to a high standard, in line with other public housing and relevant principles set out in Housing to 2040;
- Accommodation that is durable, sustainable, flexible, safe, secure, digitally connected, warm and economic to run and at a level of rent that represents value for money for residents;
- Accommodation that meets accessibility standards and provides for a range of needs, including families with members who are elderly, disabled or have caring responsibilities;
- Improved satisfaction with accommodation and more meaningful engagement with Gypsy/Traveller communities;
- Additional transit provision, where needed, to facilitate travelling and foster good relations with the settled community.

Executive Summary

Gypsy/Travellers are recognised as having a protected characteristic on the grounds of race under Equalities legislation. A joint screening exercise was carried out for both the Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) and the CRWIA. This considered the impact of the Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund and Site Design Guide on Gypsy/Travellers and how this might intersect with other protected characteristics such as disability and age, including the particular impact on children and young Gypsy/Travellers. While it is expected that the results of the policy will be positive for children and young people who are Gypsy/Travellers, the CRWIA explored if there were any possible negative impacts that could be mitigated or if there were any changes that could be made that would further improve outcomes for children and young people.

The CRWIA drew on evidence from a range of sources. The main published sources were the 2011 Census and an Evidence Review on Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs that was published by the Scottish Government in 2020. In addition, we took into account a report published by Article 12 – ‘I Witness: The UNCRC in the United Kingdom – Young Gypsy/Travellers’ Voices’, where young Gypsy/Travellers spoke about their views on sites. This was supplemented by an online survey where members of Gypsy/Traveller communities were asked to give their views on the content of the draft Site Design Guide for Gypsy/Traveller sites. We held consultation events with members of Gypsy/Traveller communities over summer 2021 on the Site Design Guide. Both of these enabled us to gather the views of parents on what would make sites better for their children. We spoke directly to one young Gypsy/Traveller about what was important to him. Local authorities selected as demonstration projects will engage with children and young people throughout the design process and this will feed into future versions of the Site Design Guide.

Many of the current sites in Scotland do not offer a good standard of living for residents, more sites are needed with bigger pitches and better facilities that can meet the changing needs of residents over time, including children and young people. As well as the overall aim of improving accommodation, there are some specific measures within the Site Design Guide that have been included to improve sites specifically for children such as access to play and recreation facilities. Gypsy/Travellers should be able to access accommodation that enables them to practice their culture and customs. Some Gypsy/Travellers are living in housing who would prefer to be living a more traditional way of life or are living roadside because of a lack of suitable sites. The Fund and Site Design Guide aim to provide more and better accommodation that enables them to do this. While it is likely that the initial demonstration projects to be funded will be to improve accommodation on existing sites, over time it should result in the development of new sites that will provide more accommodation for Gypsy/Traveller families. Not only will better quality sites enable children and young people to realise their rights to an adequate standard of living, they will also help them to access wider rights such as the right to an education.

The CRWIA reemphasised many of the issues that had been highlighted through work with Gypsy/Traveller communities on the Action Plan and the EQIA. The

content of the Site Design Guide and the intended outcomes for this work have been amended to reflect the findings of the CRWIA and EQIA to ensure that sites meet the needs and improve the lives of all residents including children and young people.

Background

Our joint Action Plan, Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers: 2019 - 2021, was published with COSLA in 2019 and commits to providing more and better accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers. Together, we are working with stakeholders and Gypsy/Traveller communities on issues such as investment and improving quality on sites.

As a result of this work, Housing to 2040 - a vision for housing in Scotland to 2040 – announced up to £20 million of funding available over five years from 2021/22 for more and better Gypsy/Traveller accommodation. Building on the £2 million of short term funding in 2020/21, this represents a sustained investment to support local authorities to improve and widen access to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation.

Scope of the CRWIA

This policy affects Gypsy/Traveller children and young people. It does not affect children in the settled community. Gypsy/Traveller communities experience poorer outcomes in terms of living standards, education, health and employment.ⁱ Poor accommodation or the lack of access to accommodation that meets the needs of Gypsy/Traveller families has a negative impact on the lives of children. Better sites that provide a higher standard of living will improve the lives of Gypsy/Traveller children and young people living on sites and potentially those living roadside or in housing whose families would access a public sector pitch if one were available.

Children and Young People's Views and Experiences

We have spoken to a young Gypsy/Traveller about his views on the Site Design Guide through Article 12, an organisation that works with young Gypsy/Travellers. His views were similar to those expressed through the online survey open to members of Gypsy/Traveller communities between January – March 2021 and at consultation events held over summer 2021: more sites with larger pitches are needed; sites need communal facilities with space for tutoring and to play music; green space should be provided on sites; the amenity block should include living space; sites should include security measures such as CCTV and gates; sites should be in accessible locations; there should be access to the internet and; mail should be delivered to the individual pitch not the site office. All of these issues have been covered in the Site Design Guide.

The young Gypsy/Traveller we spoke to was in favour of larger sites, with more children to play with, rather than smaller sites, which are preferred by adult Gypsy/Travellers.

Article 12 also gave us their views on the Site Design Guide. Children and young Gypsy/Travellers will continue to be involved in influencing the Site Design Guide as it develops through the demonstration projects. Local authorities will seek the views of young people through the design process for sites and this will feed into future versions of the Site Design Guide.

Key Findings

The key UNCRC Articles which are relevant to the policy are:

Article 3 - Best interests of the child

Gypsy/Traveller communities experience poorer outcomes in terms of living standards, education, health and employment.ⁱⁱ Poor accommodation or the lack of access to accommodation that meets the needs of Gypsy/Traveller families has a negative impact on the lives of children.

Better sites that provide a higher standard of living will improve the lives of children living on sites. Sites that are funded through the Fund will be expected to meet or exceed the standards provided in social housing. As well as the overall aim of improving the accommodation there are some specific measures within the Site Design Guide that have been included to improve sites specifically for children. The Fund/Site Design Guide include an outcome that requires “sites that provide pleasant places to live and include attractive outdoor space, communal facilities and appropriate facilities, including for children and young people,” proposed projects are assessed against these outcomes.

Article 12 - Respect for the views of the child

As set out above, we have considered the views of young Gypsy/Travellers in the development of the Site Design Guide. A reportⁱⁱⁱ published by Article 12 about the views of Gypsy/Travellers highlighted the need to engage with young people about what is important on a site. Children and young people will have the opportunity to input to the further development of the Site Design Guide and the design of their site through the demonstration projects. Site providers selected as demonstration projects will need to show that they have consulted with site residents and the wider Gypsy/Traveller community including children and young people throughout the process. Children and young people should then feel more involved in the decisions that affect them and be able to live on sites that meet their needs.

Article 16 - Right to privacy

From the Gypsy/Traveller Site Design Guide survey and discussions with members of Gypsy/Traveller communities, it is clear that pitches are too small and this can impact on the family life of Gypsy/Travellers. 78.6% of respondents to the survey thought that pitches should be of a size that enables two caravans and two cars or vans/light commercial vehicles to fit on the pitch (this is larger than the current Minimum Standards.) Due to current pitch sizes, some larger families may have to live over multiple pitches which could be spread across a site instead of a larger plot where the family could live together. The lack of sites in some areas may mean some people are living roadside to stay within a family unit. The Site Design Guide requires that pitches should be of a suitable size for the planned use; allow adequate distances to be maintained between units to ensure fire safety

is not compromised and; ensure a level of privacy and security for each household. The Site Design Guide recognises that while single pitches may still be appropriate in some circumstances, the clear preference is for larger pitches that can meet the needs of a wider range of families and give them flexibility to have visitors and meet changing needs over time.

While not a direct negative impact of this policy, consideration has been given to the spacing requirements between caravans for fire safety purposes in relation to sleeping arrangements for children. Some members of Gypsy/Traveller communities have told us that once children reach a certain age they are usually put in a separate caravan to sleep. Large families may also need to sleep in separate caravans. Effective fire safety comprises measures to prevent fires and to reduce and mitigate risk. We have taken advice on separation distances and possible mitigations. The Scottish Government published fire safety guidance that supports Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and associated Regulations: it includes a benchmark that caravans are to be 5 - 6 metres apart. The 5 or 6 metre benchmark comes from full scale fire testing and analysis which is promoted as acceptable guidance to reduce the risk of fire spread between units, and must be considered within any fire safety risk assessment under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. The inability to control the provision of adequate smoke detection is considered as increasing the risk to life should a fire start in a particular unit and such spacing requirements are a key intervention in negating such risk. The need for caravans to be 5 or 6 metres apart may not align with practical considerations as parents would like the caravans to be closer together. The fire safety benchmark has also meant that some local authorities are having to keep pitches open, reducing the amount of accommodation available. The potential risk to the lives of community members necessitates the prioritisation of proportionate fire safety measures. SFRS is available to advise on issues in practice.

While it is likely that the initial demonstration projects to be funded will be to improve accommodation on existing sites, over time it should result in the development of new sites that will provide more accommodation for Gypsy/Traveller families.

Gypsy/Travellers also told us in the survey that security is a priority for them and the Site Design Guide suggests some measures that may be appropriate to improve this in consultation and agreement with the residents on a site.

Article 23 - Children with a disability

The 2011 census identified that Gypsy/Travellers are more likely than the general population to have a limiting long-term health problem or disability (28 per cent compared to 20 per cent) despite the fact they had a much younger age profile. Within this, they were also more likely to be limited 'a lot' by a long-term health problem or disability (16 per cent compared to 10 per cent).^{iv} The Site Design Guide requires that local authorities provide accommodation that meets the needs of disabled people, including children and young people. This has potential to help families with disabled children who might otherwise need to move in to housing. Communal meeting facilities should also be accessible to disabled people and wheelchair users.

Article 27 - Adequate standard of living

The evidence base suggests that there continues to be a shortage of permanent sites for Gypsy/Traveller communities in Scotland and where sites do exist they can be of poor quality or do not adequately serve those living there.^v The aim of the Fund and Site Design Guide is to improve the standard of living on public Gypsy/Traveller sites for all residents including children and young people. The Site Design Guide sets higher standards for new build sites and refurbished sites. (The Minimum Site Standards continue to set a standard no site should fall below.)

Article 30 - Children from minority or indigenous groups

We have heard that some Gypsy/Travellers are living in housing who would prefer to be living a more traditional way of life or are living roadside because of a lack of suitable sites, although we do not have figures for how many people are in these situations or where they live. Gypsy/Travellers should be able to access accommodation that enables them to practice their culture and customs. The Fund and Site Design Guide aim to provide more and better accommodation that enables them to do this.

Article 31 - Leisure, play and culture

Through our consultation with members of Gypsy/Traveller communities, we have heard that there is a lack of facilities and suitable play/recreation areas for children and young people. The Site Design Guide states that a safe communal recreation/play area for children of all ages is required on sites where suitable provision is not available within reasonable walking distance from the site on a safe route. Play areas should be designed in consultation with children and parents on sites to ensure they meet their needs and that parents safety concerns are listened to and taken into account. Guidance on amenity blocks suggests that there should be living space in the block e.g. a kitchen diner, which will make it easier for parents to supervise play and spend time with children. It also suggests that buildings should be oriented so that play areas are in view.

While access to health care and education are being tackled by other areas of the Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan we recognise that good quality accommodation is central to achieving good outcomes in these areas. Therefore the following Articles are also relevant:

Article 24 - Health and health services

The Minimum Standards should already have ensured that clean water is provided on all public sites. Those living road side may not be able to access sanitation - measures have been put in place during the pandemic to address this and along with local government we will look at lessons that can be learned moving forward. More Gypsy/Traveller accommodation will mean that some people living roadside because of a lack of suitable sites should be able to access accommodation that meets their needs.

Article 28 - Right to education

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the difficulties faced by Gypsy/Traveller children accessing learning online. The Site Design Guide states that fibre broadband should be considered as being the equivalent of a utility service and site providers should be able to show that they have taken account of current and

future digital services or installation needs. This is particularly important as more services and education are delivered digitally. Installations and delivery options should take account of how residents will use the service. As a minimum, the potential for a private connection should be provided to each pitch/amenity block so that residents can take up their own contract; and free Wi-Fi should be provided in community meeting facilities.

School attendance rates in the Gypsy/Traveller community are low and many Gypsy/Traveller children do not make the transition from primary to secondary school. Sites with good quality, digitally connected community facilities will help young Gypsy/Travellers to access education services by providing space where they can meet education providers who visit the site.

Monitoring and Review

An interim version of the Site Design Guide has been published with a view to testing it in practice through the demonstration projects under the Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund. Information will be gathered during the projects, including discussions with residents, to inform an updated Site Design Guide and criteria for later Fund awards.

CRWIA Declaration

Authorisation

Policy lead Dorothy Ogle, Team Lead, Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation, Better Homes	Date 30/11/21
Deputy Director or equivalent Catriona MacKean, Deputy Director, Better Homes	Date 06/12/21

ⁱ [Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

ⁱⁱ [Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

ⁱⁱⁱ [I Witness: The UNCRC in the United Kingdom - Young Gypsy/Travellers' Voices](#)

^{iv} [Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland - A Comprehensive Analysis of the 2011 Census \(webarchive.org.uk\)](#)

^v [evidence-review-accommodation-needs-gypsy-travellers-scotland \(5\).pdf](#)



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