

# **Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund and Site Design Guide**

**Fairer Scotland Duty: Summary**

**February 2022**



**Scottish Government**  
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## Fairer Scotland Duty: Summary

### Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund and Site Design Guide

#### Summary of Aims and Expected Outcomes

Following commitments to deliver more and better accommodation in both [Improving the lives of 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 the 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.

## **Summary of Evidence**

Through our work to develop the Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan - Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers<sup>i</sup>, we saw and heard evidence that Gypsy/Travellers have often missed out on improvements that the majority of people and communities across Scotland have enjoyed. Gypsy/Traveller communities experience poorer outcomes in terms of living standards, education, health and employment.

“Research evidence published in How Fair is Scotland and confirmed by the Scottish Government's analysis of the 2011 Census shows that on every indicator of what is required to live a happy, productive and fulfilled life, Gypsy/Travellers are worse off than any other community in Scotland. The high levels of poverty experienced by Gypsy/Travellers is linked to poor health and the lack of employment and integral to all these issues is the provision of sites across the country.”<sup>ii</sup>

The delivery of the Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan is closely linked to our wider shared priorities in the National Performance Framework and our ambitions to create a fairer Scotland. This means tackling poverty and inequality. It also means ensuring that everyone has a safe and secure place to live. The Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund and Site Design Guide deliver on the actions in the plan to review investment in and improve quality on Gypsy/Traveller sites. In addition to tackling the inequalities in the standard and amount of accommodation provided for Gypsy/Traveller communities in comparison to the settled community, it is recognised that provision of good quality sites is integral to tackling wider inequalities of outcome.

Some Gypsy/Travellers have told us that members of the community can feel forced into moving into settled accommodation because of a lack of Gypsy/Traveller sites which isolates them from their community and the evidence suggests that this can lead to increased costs, reinforcing further vulnerability to poverty. Others may be living roadside as they cannot access appropriate accommodation on a site making them extremely vulnerable to poverty and lacking in the most basic facilities. While the Fund is most likely to deliver improvements to existing sites in the early demonstration projects, a key intended outcome of the Fund is to deliver more Gypsy/Traveller accommodation, this should result in more Gypsy/Travellers being able to access appropriate accommodation that meets their needs, is of a good standard and allows them to access services.

Fuel poverty can be an issue for Gypsy/Traveller communities which can be caused and exacerbated by a number of factors – low incomes, poorly insulated accommodation and the way some members of the community pay for their energy. Feedback suggests that some existing accommodation is cold, difficult to heat and prone to condensation. The Site Design Guide contains a number of measures to ensure that new or refurbished Gypsy/Traveller accommodation is of a high standard and helps to alleviate fuel poverty – for amenity blocks the specification of material used must deliver low levels of heat loss, consistent with or better than that required in social housing; for residential mobile homes provided by the local authority they

must as a minimum meet the relevant British Standard and provide accommodation that is energy efficient and meets the needs of residents; and where action is being taken to decarbonise the heat supply, the approach taken should ensure that running costs are not unaffordable for households in or at risk of fuel poverty.

As amenity blocks and residential mobile homes are non-standard accommodation there are issues around measurement and standards for energy efficiency which will be considered further through the demonstration projects and future versions of the Site Design Guide will be informed by learning from these initial projects.

Some evidence suggests that Gypsy/Travellers can face high fuel bills because of pre-payment meters and because they cannot choose their supplier on local authority sites. Some existing site residents have expressed a preference for their own utilities account and the Site Design Guide requires that site design and utilities provision accommodates this unless residents request a different arrangement. However, it appears that the ability to choose your own provider does not always result in cheaper bills for residents. Some Gypsy/Travellers have told us that paying through the local authority is cheaper and that residents have opted to stay with this arrangement. The Site Design Guide allows for this if it is the preference of residents.

In addition to the measures in the Site Design Guide to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty for Gypsy/Travellers, the wider Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan includes a commitment on fuel poverty and lived experience research with community members. Due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, this work was delayed and the aim is to carry this research out in 2022.

The 2011 Census tells us that Gypsy/Travellers are less likely to be economically active and more likely to be on a low income than the rest of the population.<sup>iii</sup> Gypsy/Travellers face some particular issues in accessing employment. They are more likely to be in seasonal work, saving money in the summer to last them through the winter. They may also find it more difficult to access lending or benefits, depending on their lifestyle. These issues were highlighted during the lockdowns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A further key issue highlighted during the pandemic is digital exclusion. The Site Design Guide, in keeping with the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) requires that fibre broadband is 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. As a minimum: 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 the community meeting facilities. This should ensure that there is a place on every site where residents can access the internet for free, helping to alleviate digital exclusion in Gypsy/Traveller communities. This will help Gypsy/Travellers not only access employment opportunities online but will improve access to education, healthcare and the benefits system.

Other issues identified through the development of the Fund and Site Design Guide as having an impact on outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers are the name of the site, access to work space on sites and problems with delivery of mail. All of these have been addressed in the Site Design Guide with provision made to alleviate the issues.

## **Summary of Assessment Findings**

The policy has been designed with the specific intention of addressing inequalities for Gypsy/Travellers. The key aim of the policy is to address the inequalities that exist in the standard and amount of accommodation provided for Gypsy/Travellers. The policy also helps to address wider inequalities including digital exclusion, fuel poverty and access to services.

We have not identified any options that could significantly strengthen the Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund or Site Design Guide in terms of its impacts on inequalities of outcomes, within the resources available. The Fund and the Site Design Guide are part of a wider set of actions in the Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan to address inequalities experienced by Gypsy/Traveller communities.

We have consulted with members of Gypsy/Traveller communities and third sector organisations including MECOPP and Article 12 who work directly with Gypsy/Travellers to ensure the Fund and Site Design Guide are addressing the many inequalities experienced by Gypsy/Travellers.

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) were also carried out and identified some areas where additional information was added to the Site Design Guide. This Fairer Scotland Assessment has not identified any further additions or changes that need to be made however we will keep this under review during the delivery of the demonstration projects.

## **Sign Off**

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**Date: 6 December 2021**

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<sup>i</sup> Improving the Lives of Gypsy/Travellers, 2019 -2021

<sup>ii</sup> Report from the Scottish Government's Independent Race Equality Adviser: Addressing Race Equality in Scotland: The Way Forward (2017)

<sup>iii</sup> Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland – A comprehensive analysis of the 2011 Census



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