

## Improving Outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers

### **Policy Development**

The Scottish Government's recently published Race Equality Action Plan has set an ambition to take "*radical action*" to tackle inequalities experienced by Gypsy/Travellers. There is a key role for COSLA officers and member authorities in the development of policy solutions and work flowing from a newly established ministerial working group.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

Gypsy/Travellers continue to experience significant inequalities in Scotland. This has become a priority issue for the Scottish Government, which has established a Ministerial Working Group to take forward policy development. The Scottish Government has invited COSLA to work closely at an officer level on this. The Race Equality Action plan further includes a commitment from Scottish Government to work with COSLA to deliver a summit on local authority best practice. By June 2018, it is additionally required that all Gypsy/Traveller sites meet the minimum site standards set out in national guidance. It is likely that there will be considerable interest in and scrutiny of local authority actions on this issue.

The Community Wellbeing Board is invited to:

- i. Endorse officer engagement with Scottish Government to support a programme of work to promote equality for Gypsy/Traveller communities in Scotland;
- ii. Approve work by COSLA officers to scope potential policy development options for discussion at a future meeting of the Board;
- iii. Feed-back on progress in implementing national guidance on minimum site standards and share any examples of good practice in supporting Gypsy/Traveller communities locally; and
- iv. Indicate whether any local authorities would particularly wish to contribute to and/or inform policy development and best practice evaluation (at a political or officer level) as part of this work.

### **References**

Previous reports covering this topic:

- March 2017 CWEG *Elected Members' Briefing Note on Gypsy/Travellers*
- January 2017 *Leaders Guidance on Managing Unauthorised Camping by Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland*
- December 2016 CWEG *Guidance on Managing Unauthorised Camping by Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland*
- May 2015 CWEG *Improving Gypsy/Traveller Sites: Guidance on Minimum Site Standards, and Site Tenants' Core Rights and Responsibilities*
- February 2015 CWEG *Planning Aid Scotland - Gypsy/Traveller Project*
- May 2015 CWEG *COSLA & Scottish Government Joint Gypsy Traveller Strategy*
- May 2015 *Leaders Strategy and Action Plan for Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland*

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## Improving Outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers

### **Policy Development**

1. The Scottish Government's recently published Race Equality Action Plan has set an ambition to take "*radical*" action to tackle inequalities experienced by Gypsy/Travellers. There is a key role for COSLA officers and member authorities in the development of policy solutions and work flowing from a newly established ministerial working group.

### **Current COSLA Position**

2. Meeting the needs of the Gypsy/Travellers and settled communities is a complex area. COSLA has undertaken a significant body of work over recent years to help to improve national policy designed to support Gypsy/Traveller communities and tackle inequalities. This followed a number of high profile inquiries undertaken by the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee (now the Equality and Human Rights Committee). These highlighted specific issues faced by Gypsy/Travellers, with respect to housing, health and education in particular.
3. COSLA has contributed to the development of minimum site standards and the production of a model tenancy agreement for Gypsy/Travellers, updated guidance on managing unauthorised encampments and draft guidance on "*Improving Educational Outcomes for Children and Young People from Travelling Cultures*". In 2017, we created an elected member briefing note on Gypsy/Travellers to improve understanding of the issues faced by this community and to raise awareness of new policy guidance. This can be accessed here:  
<http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/uploads/em-briefing-gypsy-travellers.pdf> (PDF).

### **What is changing?**

4. A renewed focus on supporting Gypsy/Travellers has been pushed up the national political agenda in recent months by the Scottish Government's Independent Race Equality Framework Advisor, Kaliani Lyle. Her 2017 report called for greater leadership on these issues. Subsequently, the Scottish Government's Race Equality Action Plan, published in December 2017, included a specific set of actions designed to support Gypsy/Travellers. The plan committed Scottish Government to "*higher level engagement...and a radical new approach which will bring about change on a much shorter timescale*". This included the establishment of a Ministerial Working Group, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, and attended by the Ministers for Local Government & Housing, Childcare & Early Years, Employability & Training and Public Health & Sport.
5. The Working Group will determine priorities for action and drive forward the changes required to start making improvements across a range of policy areas. The first meeting of the group was held in February and discussed housing and site provision. Scottish Government has invited COSLA to work closely at an officer level on these issues. COSLA officers from the Migration, Population and Diversity and Communities teams will be visiting local authority sites in Edinburgh and Fife in March 2018 as part of initial meetings. These visits will focus on discussing key housing and accommodation issues (including sufficiency and quality of

Gypsy/Traveller sites) and priorities for future policy development as well as meeting directly with Gypsy/Traveller residents.

6. The Race Equality Action plan further includes a commitment from Scottish Government to work with COSLA to deliver a summit on local authority best practice. The specific aims are yet to be agreed but it is intended that this will support identification and dissemination of promising approaches to meeting the needs of Gypsy/Traveller communities, removing barriers to services and strengthening engagement. We have committed to work with Scottish Government to deliver this in 2018/19.
7. By June 2018, it is required that all Gypsy/Traveller sites meet the minimum site standards set out in national guidance. The Scottish Housing Regulator will, for the first time, report on progress made. It is anticipated that this will generate public interest and additional scrutiny of local authority action. It may also be a focus of discussion by the Ministerial Working Group. Informal discussions between COSLA officers and ALACHO indicate that some authorities may be facing challenges in securing the improvements required to meet the necessary threshold.

### **Proposed COSLA position & Next steps**

8. It is recognised that local authorities and other partners play an important role in addressing issues faced by Gypsy/Traveller communities. Members are invited to endorse proposed work by COSLA officers to work with the Scottish Government to improve outcomes for Gypsy/Traveller communities. This will include regular discussion at officer level with Scottish Government officials and key stakeholders across housing, education, health and social care. We will additionally seek to ensure political representation from COSLA Leadership at relevant ministerial meetings.
9. Officials also propose working closely with the Community Wellbeing Board, and other COSLA Boards as appropriate, to develop and discuss issues and solutions flowing from the Ministerial Working Group. We seek approval to begin to scope potential policy development options for discussion at a future meeting of the Board. These actions are intended to ensure that Local Government is an equal partner in race equality work, with a key role to play in developing policy to improve outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers. We invite initial views from members on what these processes should seek to deliver from the perspective of their Local Authority/Local Government.
10. Members are additionally invited to share examples from their local authority of good practice in relation to supporting Gypsy/Travellers as well as the implementation of guidance on minimum site standards and managing unauthorised encampments. We also ask members to advise of any local authorities that would particularly wish to contribute to and/or inform policy development and best practice evaluation (at political or officer level) as part of this work.
11. Members whose local authorities currently manage Gypsy/Traveller sites are additionally asked to share emerging views from housing officers on the likelihood of their local authority meeting the required quality standards by the specified deadline and to share any barriers they may be facing to meeting the deadline. COSLA officers will be contacting all of the relevant council officers to highlight the requirements and gather information on any significant challenges that need to be

addressed. This information will help to identify whether there are any further steps COSLA can take to support local authorities on this issue.

### **Summary and recommendations**

12. Gypsy/Travellers continue to experience significant inequalities in Scotland. This has become a priority issue for the Scottish Government, which has committed to 'radical' action and established a Ministerial Working Group to take forward policy development. The Scottish Government has invited COSLA to work closely at an officer level on these issues. The Race Equality Action plan further includes a commitment from Scottish Government to work with COSLA to deliver a summit on local authority best practice. By June 2018, it is additionally required that all Gypsy/Traveller sites meet the minimum site standards set out in national guidance. It is likely that there will be considerable interest in and scrutiny of local authority actions on this issue.
13. The Community Wellbeing Board is invited to:
  - i. Endorse officer engagement with Scottish Government to support a programme of work to promote equality for Gypsy/Traveller communities in Scotland.
  - ii. Approve work by COSLA officers to scope potential policy development options for discussion at a future meeting of the Board.
  - iii. Feed-back on progress in implementing national guidance on minimum site standards and share any examples of good practice in supporting Gypsy/Traveller communities locally.
  - iv. Indicate whether any local authorities would particularly wish to contribute to and/or inform policy development and best practice evaluation (at political or officer level) as part of this work.

**March 2018**