

**Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers:
Housing/Accommodation Priorities**

Summary and Recommendations

This paper sets out proposed priorities and suggested activities to increase provision of good quality accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers across Scotland. This work also seeks to address key issues raised in previous Board meetings. It focuses on four key areas:

- a) *Improving the quality of accommodation*
- b) *Increasing the number of permanent sites*
- c) *Supporting changes to the planning system*
- d) *Enabling temporary stopping*

This paper invites members to:

- I. Agree the four priorities and proposed activities;
- II. Agree that the COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson writes to the Minister for Equalities and Older People, informing her of the agreed priorities;
- III. Indicate interest in their local authority participating in the national pilots for Negotiated Stopping.

References

- 18-06-18 CWB Item 10: Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers
- 18-03-09 CWB Item 1: Improving Outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers

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Purpose

1. This paper sets out proposed priorities and suggested activities to ensure that there is adequate provision of good quality accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers. The purpose is to support us to engage with and influence outputs from the Scottish Government's Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers and to take forward work in 2018/19.

Current COSLA Position

2. The Community Wellbeing Board has previously approved COSLA work to improve outcomes for Gypsy/Traveller communities. Members have directed COSLA staff to work constructively at officer level with the Scottish Government's Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers and to co-ordinate policy developments that can help to improve education, health, housing/accommodation and employment outcomes for the community.
3. At the last meeting of the Board, members committed to the development of a cross-party network of local elected members who can be 'champions' for our work to improve the lives of Gypsy/Travellers as well as the development of a cross-sector equality campaign. The Board also requested that a paper be brought forward to develop housing and accommodation priorities.

What is changing?

4. The Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers has informed COSLA that it is currently developing a draft set of national actions for publication in early 2019. A final set of actions will be delivered in the current Parliamentary term, in June 2019. The Minister has written to the COSLA Spokesperson to inform her that its work will now include a wider range of activities to improve incomes for Gypsy/Travellers, in and out of work, and to include a concrete set of actions to reduce poverty in the Gypsy/Traveller community. This is likely to have further implications for Local Government.
5. There is an opportunity for us to secure partnership actions that support local authorities to address significant challenges in improving outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers. As part of our policy and engagement with this group, we are producing a range of papers to inform our influencing priorities. These will support ongoing discussion with Scottish Government and facilitate COSLA policy development. There are risks in not setting out clear priorities at this stage, as Ministers may choose to pursue alternative solutions that do not enable us to drive faster progress. There is additional urgency due to ongoing criticism of local authority provision. This criticism focuses on the lack of permanent sites and the fact that a number of current sites fall below minimum standards.

Proposed COSLA Position

6. COSLA proposes taking forward a range of work to ensure that there is adequate provision of good quality accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers across Scotland and to address key issues raised in previous Board meetings. In particular, the paper proposes taking forward four cross-cutting areas of work. These will seek to ensure: that

accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers meets or exceeds minimum quality standards; that new permanent sites are developed with support from Scottish Government; that the planning system reflects the best interests of Gypsy/Travellers; and that local authorities can better facilitate Gypsy/Traveller's rights to a nomadic lifestyle.

a) Improving the quality of accommodation

7. It is clear that progress needs to be made to ensure that minimum standards are met for all current and future Gypsy/Traveller sites, and that there is high quality local authority provision in every area where this is required. Work is required, in partnership with Scottish Government, the Scottish Housing Regulator and site residents, to ensure that the quality of provision can improve over time and that it leads to better outcomes and increased access to services for Gypsy/Travellers. As such, COSLA officers will look to:

- Work with local authorities to understand progress and challenges in meeting quality standards and secure any additional support necessary to fulfil and, where possible, exceed minimum requirements;
- Review key issues relating to quality of provision including adaptations for those with social care needs, conditions on sites, access to amenities and essential services; and
- Facilitate opportunities for Gypsy/Travellers to share their views with national forums on key housing and accommodation issues, including through the Preventing Homelessness Strategy Group and Community Planning Partnerships.

b) Increasing the number of permanent sites

8. Delivering a sufficient supply of permanent sites must be at the heart of work to improve outcomes for Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers. We will consider ways to ensure that new sites are developed to meet the needs of Gypsy/Travellers who presently lack appropriate accommodation. To deliver this commitment, we will seek a partnership with Scottish Government, including agreement on capital funding required to increase the number of permanent sites in Scotland over an agreed time-frame. Through our work we will particularly focus on the needs of low income households. This is key to delivering a diverse socially rented housing sector in Scotland and to our work to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

9. Our particular actions will be to:

- Work with local authorities and Gypsy/Travellers to strengthen the way in which Gypsy/Travellers' accommodation needs are gathered and used to inform local housing strategies;
- Identify capital costs required to meet current and future needs for permanent provision and seek an agreement with Scottish Government on a joint investment plan, including consideration of appropriate funding models; and
- Consider policy options to support ongoing investment in the development of local authority provision.

c) Supporting changes to the planning system

10. Scottish Planning Policy requires councils to plan for the current and future needs of Gypsy/Traveller families, and to involve the community in planning and decision-making which affects them. Building on our partnership work, we will seek collaboration on actions proposed by the Scottish Government to assist Gypsy/Traveller communities to

engage in local planning processes and to ensure that the planning process supports local government to meet public sector equalities duties. Specifically, we will look to:

- Work with Scottish Government to ensure that the planning actions being proposed by the Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers meet the needs of the community and are sustainable from a local government perspective;
- Work with Scottish Government to understand the resource, training and wider implications of forthcoming policy and legislative change and ensure that local authorities have the funding and support that they need to implement improved planning processes and practices; and
- Work with Planning Aid Scotland and other key partners to facilitate opportunities to improve knowledge and understanding of the planning process and how it can support equality outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers.

d) *Enabling temporary stopping*

11. Gypsy/Travellers have the right to a nomadic lifestyle and to access essential services whilst on the move. Further to discussions at the previous Board meeting and a subsequent visit to Leeds City Council earlier this month, it is proposed that local authorities explore a placed-based approach to temporary stopping through piloting the Leeds GATE 'Negotiated Stopping Model'. Negotiated Stopping Places are an alternative to the traditional enforcement-based approach to Unauthorised Encampments. More information about the approach can be found at: <https://www.negotiatedstopping.co.uk>
12. COSLA will seek to work with the Scottish Government and key partners to develop a framework for evaluating the pilot's impact on policy and on the experiences of Gypsy/Travellers and settled communities. Work will include a specific focus on implications for local authority finances and delivery of key public services.
13. The key elements of this priority will be to:
 - Support a number of local authorities to pilot the 'negotiated stopping' approach during 2018/19;
 - Work with Gypsy/Traveller communities and member authorities to identify opportunities for providing access to traditional stopping places where this is possible; and
 - Publish information on outcomes from this work and hold a public event in 2019 to share learning from the pilots.

Next Steps

14. We recommend that the COSLA Spokesperson writes to the Minister for Equalities and Older People to set out key priorities agreed by the Board and seek a future meeting with the Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers.
15. COSLA will also contact Housing Officers and Conveners with further information about national pilots of the Negotiated Stopping model and ask that any authorities indicate interest in participating.