

**Gypsy and Traveller  
Accommodation Assessment  
North Yorkshire Sub-region – 2007/8  
Executive Summary**

***The North Yorkshire sub region covers North Yorkshire County Council, City of York Council, Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Scarborough and Selby District/Borough Councils***

arc<sup>4</sup>  
Studio 2C  
Beehive Mills  
Jersey Street  
Ancoats  
Manchester  
M4 6JG  
T: 0161 228 1689  
F: 0161 228 6514  
Email: [contact@arc4.co.uk](mailto:contact@arc4.co.uk)  
Website: [www.arc4.co.uk](http://www.arc4.co.uk)

# **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment North Yorkshire Sub-region – 2007/8**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction**

1. This research has been commissioned by local authorities in the North Yorkshire Sub-region to inform the development of a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Strategy at a sub-regional level which in turn will inform Local Housing and Homelessness Strategies, Supporting People Strategies and Local Development Frameworks. The research has been carried out by arc4 in partnership with the Northern Network of Travelling People.

### **Methodology**

2. The research methodology has comprised:
  - A comprehensive survey of Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople across the sub-region;
  - Desktop analysis of existing documents and data;
  - A Key Stakeholder Forum with key professionals who have direct contact with local Gypsy and Traveller communities;
  - Consultation with Gypsies and Travellers, the Northern Network of Travelling People and the Showmen's Guild through focus groups and correspondence

### **Documentary Review**

3. Some of the key themes to emerge from the review of relevant literature include:
  - Recognising the long-standing role Gypsies and Travellers have played in society and how prejudice, discrimination and legislative change have increasingly marginalised this distinctive ethnic group;
  - A recognised shortage of pitches on Gypsy and Traveller sites;
  - The importance of understanding Gypsy and Traveller issues in the context of housing and planning policy development at national, regional, sub-regional and local levels;
  - Recognition that Gypsies and Travellers are the most socially excluded group in society and are particularly susceptible to a range of inequalities relating to health, education, law enforcement and quality of accommodation;
  - Recognition of the considerable prejudice and discrimination faced by Gypsy and Traveller communities - "The last acceptable form of racism" as Trevor Phillips put it as Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality.

- A need for better communication and improved understanding between and within Travelling communities themselves, and between Travelling communities and elected members, service providers and permanently settled communities.

## Estimated Population

4. In total it has been estimated that there are 888 Gypsy and Traveller households in the sub region. This mainly comprises English Gypsy (Romany) households but there is a small Irish Traveller Community and a smaller population of Showpeople. This figure has been disaggregated by local authority on the basis of Traveller Education records. Estimates derived in this way suggest concentrations in the York, Hambleton and Selby local authority areas.

## Existing Accommodation

5. There are 11 local authority owned and 4 private authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites in the sub-region providing a total of 196 pitches. The three local authority sites in York are managed by the authority while elsewhere the management had been contracted out.
6. Most of the remaining Gypsy and Traveller households live in conventional housing although there are some unauthorised developments and periodically there are unauthorised encampments in the sub-region. This often occurs on the way to and back from fairs but there was a high level of homelessness reported by those encamped unofficially.

## Site Amenities and Conditions

7. Local authority and authorised private sites show some significant differences in the facilities provided on pitches or elsewhere on the site. While the pitches on local authority owned sites normally included dedicated facilities the tendency on private sites was for shared amenities. Site satisfaction appears to have been better for local authority sites, especially in York.
8. Draft Guidance from CLG suggests among other things that there must be an amenity building on each pitch and that this must include, as a minimum: hot and cold water supply; electricity supply; a separate toilet; a bath/shower room; a kitchen and dining area.
9. The most often cited improvement issue on authorised sites was the need for more space on pitches. Beyond this issue LA site residents highlighted the need for improvements to their amenity blocks (sheds).
10. North Yorkshire County Council are undertaking a survey of their sites which were put out to independent management about six years ago. The seven sites require upgrading from their original design and do not meet the present design brief from CLG.

11. Compared with private tenants, LA site respondents were more than four times as likely to report their home as overcrowded. However, overcrowding was not seen as a problem by a very high overall percentage of respondents.
12. Overall there is a low level of shared facilities. However, the incidence of shared use for toilets and bathrooms is relatively high on private sites where there are fewer amenity blocks (sheds) attached to the individual pitches.
13. The condition on one of the County's sites along with the high charges for electricity, it has been suggested, has led to most residents moving off the site.

### Cost of accommodation

14. The cost of accommodation on sites varies widely. The cheapest accommodation is on private sites and the most expensive on local authority sites. Most households are paying in excess of £55 per week excluding the cost of utilities.

### Unauthorised Developments

15. A number of unauthorised developments were reported across the sub-region. In some cases planning applications were in process and in others action was being taken to prevent occupation of the sites.

### Conventional Housing

16. Nearly one third of those interviewed in houses expressed a preference for living in trailers or wagons. There is a strong probability that many Gypsies and Travellers are living in houses because they have either limited or no alternatives available to them.

### Pitch Requirements

#### Current shortfall

17. Using the CLG-approved model for calculating pitch requirements, the research has demonstrated that across the North Yorkshire Sub-region, there is a current shortfall of 113 pitches. Table ES1 shows how this figure is broken down by individual district

**Table ES1** Current shortfall across the North Yorkshire Sub-region

	Existing Pitch Supply	Current Need	Vacant	Current Shortfall
Craven	10	17	0	7
Hambleton	34	61	13	14
Harrogate	40	54	0	14
Richmondshire	20	23	0	3
Ryedale	13	22	0	9
Scarborough	0	3	0	3
Selby	24	50	0	26
York	54	90	0	36
Total	195	321	13	113

18. In addition to this, there is some suggestion from the survey of Showpeople that a small amount of new provision is required in the Selby and York local authority areas.

### Projected need

19. The likely growth in households on sites is unlikely to outstrip the turnover of sites if the current trend of households moving off sites continues. However, it should be carefully noted that much of this movement may be attributed to the existing condition on sites – especially those not directly managed by local authorities – and no account has been taken of the strong preference of Gypsy and Traveller households in conventional housing to move onto sites.

### New Provision

20. Well over half (56.8) of respondents wanting to live in a trailer or chalet on a site for their permanent/winter base indicated that they would prefer to own this land. For those who wished to rent a pitch, the preferred option was to rent from the Council rather than privately.

### Travelling practices

21. Around half of Gypsy and Traveller respondents and 91% of Showpeople reported travelling for some time every year.
22. A distinction should be made between unofficial encampments that are established as part of the cultural practice of travelling and unofficial encampments which are a consequence of being homeless through not having a permanent base.
23. Of those interviewed on unofficial encampments 90% indicated that they were homeless as they did not have a permanent or winter base and 19% of Gypsy and Traveller participants indicated that they (or a member of their household) had been homeless in the past five years.

24. Respondents were asked to rank where they thought it was most important to locate transit sites in the different authorities. The main priorities for transit sites were the Harrogate, Scarborough, Selby and York local authority areas.

25. The closing of traditional stopping places, the behaviour of enforcement officers and the behaviour of other Travellers were identified as problems by survey respondents.

### **Wider service and supporting people needs**

26. Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople reported few support or wider service needs although there were significant references to their lack of access to doctors and dentists.

27. Few points were made by respondents about education but the views expressed at the Key Stakeholder forum suggest that transport is a key issue for Gypsy and Traveller children living on sites.

28. Of some concern is the high level of Gypsies and Travellers reporting mental health issues. Over one third reported experiencing stress or getting down.

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A full copy of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment  
North Yorkshire Sub-region – 2007/8 can be obtained from:

Sue Walters Thompson  
North Yorkshire Housing Strategy Manager  
Tanners Yard, Huntington Road, YORK YO32 9PX  
[sue.walters-thompson@jrf.org.uk](mailto:sue.walters-thompson@jrf.org.uk)

Kate Grandfield  
Strategy and Enabling Manager  
City of York Council  
PO Box 402, George Hudson Street  
York YO10 6ZE  
[Kate.Grandfield@york.gov.uk](mailto:Kate.Grandfield@york.gov.uk)

Gill Warner  
Strategy & Policy Manager  
North Yorkshire Supporting People  
Masonic (Picks) Lane, Thirsk YO7 1PS  
[Supporting.people@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:Supporting.people@northyorks.gov.uk)