

North West Plan Partial Review

Gypsy and Traveller Dialogue Meeting Notes

Date 27thrd February 2009
 Sub Region Cheshire/Merseyside
 Venue Chester Quaker Meeting House.

Agenda for the day

Welcome and context
 The allocations (How and Why)
 The numbers
 Next steps
 Feedback

The Allocations

	GTAA	Interim Draft		1 st Draft	
		Permanent	Transit	Permanent	Transit
Cheshire East	46-68	80	10	60	10
Cheshire West & Chester	32-45			45	10
Halton	38-42	60	5	45	5
Warrington	6-9	35	5	20	5
St Helens	29-33	45	5	30	5
Knowsley	5	10	5	10	5
Liverpool	14	25	5	15	5
Sefton	16	30	5	15	5
Wirral	10	10	5	10	5

Points notes about the context

- Gypsies and Irish Travellers are protected under Race Relations legislation from discrimination
- An 'ideal site' is 10 to 15 pitches

Points noted about the process

- LAs can influence the figure – this is the purpose of the consultation stage.

Issues Raised

The figures.

- How was additional 70% hidden need figure worked out, what is the evidence?
- Was this 70% figure used in other regions?
- How do the figures compare with other regions?
- How do the figures account for provision in neighbouring regions?
- How do you account for figures in urban areas?
- Have waiting lists been considered?
- How have the different geographical sizes been taken into account?
- Concern about the GTAA, - who was picked up and where; especially as different methodologies were used?
- How has CLG guidance been taken into account to make distribution more equitable; feedback is needed including Gypsy & Traveller's wishes?
- Is it possible to provide background information before the consultation round in the summer?

The GTAA is the best evidence and has been used as the baseline. Sub-regional GTAA's are taken as controls for the numbers. The numbers within sub-regions are dictated by the GTAA and feedback from Gypsy & Travellers. The figures have been based on the evidence, Options Consultation (summer 2008) which showed greatest support for a more equitable distribution, GTAAs, on line forum responses (November 2008), other consultation responses and 4NW officers' professional judgement.

The 70% concealed need figure results from feedback and has been factored in across the board. It comes from discussion with the Gypsy and Traveller community, with further moderation of the original 70% figure as a result of the online responses from both Gypsies and Travellers and local authorities.

Some local authorities included waiting lists, some did not. Acceptance that this may have skewed the figures.

The figures are 'at least'. In multiples of 5 as a pragmatic approach to addressing issues of resources/cost. Within the RSS there is a figure; it is up to the local authorities to take the next step re: distribution.

Detailed technical information about the figure adjustments for each district will come with the Examination in Public.

Pragmatic judgement was made in the light of the evidence available. There is still room for adjustment. Final figures will reflect discussion from today.

Evidence.

- What were the findings from the Gypsy & Travellers survey?
- Are local authorities engaged in direct discussions with Gypsies and Travellers in their communities?
- How have the opinions of Gypsy & Travellers been taken into account?
- Have the policy and the figures addressed the friction between the different groups within the Gypsy & Travelling communities?
- What is the definition of a pitch?
- Is there any evidence of travelling patterns of Gypsy & Travellers?
- More qualitative evidence would be helpful (human experiences).
- Concern that process should be more explicit so that rationale can be explained to members.
- If the Greater Manchester GTAA is recognised as better than the others in the region, what can be learnt from it?
- Based on the evidence already available, i.e. GTAA evidence, why hasn't anything happened yet?
- Are we confident about the way need has been captured?

It is important to identify different Gypsy and Traveller groups in the area in order to inform discussions about site provision through: direct contact; direct questions about where Gypsies and Travellers want to be; regular meetings with Gypsies and Travellers; informal contact when need arises. Important to be proactive in this.

Authorities in other areas who have not done this have been challenged. Figures are usually revised upwards where Gypsy and Traveller consultation has not been thorough.

Despite differences between Gypsy and Traveller groups, they are integrated e.g. through inter-marriage. Most problems on sites arise from overcrowding. Gypsies and Travellers may move around but they are inherent to particular local areas. We must not lose sight of needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

The options consultation (summer 2008) response identified Option 3 as the preferred way forward focusing on a more equitable distribution with input from the Gypsy and Traveller community. Room for moderation of these figures. Pitch definition is included in policy.

Information is all available online and can be used to explain/justify figures to members. Some members may find educational input about Gypsies and Travellers helpful.

Other Issues

- Can 4NW give a steer regarding the process for translating the numbers into practice?
- Is it acceptable to do joint working within different authorities?

- How do you address the existing homelessness within the communities?
- What was the starting point for determining the provision?
- Where is the money for the sites?
- Need to differentiate between permanent and transit provision for existing sites.
- Identifying viable sites is a major factor in provision.
- Include an opportunity to input professional judgement of officers.

The local authorities need to follow up this meeting with a more detailed response. Each sub-regional GTAA did flag up that it was not the whole picture - further work was needed.

Up to local authorities to decide where the sites are allocated; 4NW cannot be too prescriptive. All adjoining authorities are aware of the process. Within the area there are two big districts; other regions have more constraints and the distribution reflects this.

All local authorities have unauthorised encampments, which can be pooled across authorities as long as the total remains the same.

Local authorities need access to evidence to help them decide where to make provision.

There are also costs in regards of families who are unsuitably housed, e.g. mental health; suitable provision also impacts upon other strategies such as crime and disorder.

The starting date for additional pitches is 2007.

The future.

- What are the implications if local authorities can't deliver?
- Are there any ideas for coping with (negative) media interest?

Land required for Gypsy and Traveller sites is very little so an inability to find sites is not acceptable.

The Regional Planning Body can identify that Local Authority core strategies and other development plan documents are not in general conformity with RSS if policy areas are not addressed. Could be directed to do it as it could raise issues of discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers.

Media: be helpful, informative and maintain a positive relationship for more positive coverage. Publicise positive aspects

There are 3 further opportunities to feedback. The more explicit the feedback is, the more robust the policy will be.

Actions from the meeting

For 4NW and the consultation team

- 4NW to include some information on the assumptions used in the process of redistributing the figures (See **Technical Note on how the Interim Draft Policy Figures for Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople (North West Regional Spatial Strategy Partial Review) were derived**)

**(February 2009) – available at
<http://www.northwestplanpartialreview.org.uk/>).**

- **Actions from the meeting**

For 4NW and the consultation team

- 4NW to develop technical note to outline what evidence has been used to support the changes in the numbers
- 4NW to include some information on the assumptions used in the process of redistributing the figures
- Revised figures will be produced at the end of the consultation process, based on what people say in this process
- Note of this meeting will be produced by CAG Consultants

For local authorities

- 4NW need formal responses on the figures on what the districts are 'comfortable with' by 27th March 2009