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# East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership



## 2016/17 BRIEFING ONE ENGAGING TRAVELLER COMMUNITIES

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## OVERVIEW

Engagement with the travelling community in East Cambridgeshire has been challenging and as a result is currently lacking. The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide a profile of engagement with the traveller community in East Cambridgeshire with a view to identifying opportunities for further engagement, especially with those that have been, or are currently, offending.

As shown in Table 1, over a third of travellers in East Cambridgeshire live on socially rented sites (Earith and Wentworth), which are visited weekly by East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) who collect rent. This is a higher proportion than shown in other districts compounding the importance of developing strong relationships between authorities and the traveller communities. By establishing strong relationships it may also help to ensure that the number of caravans on unauthorised land remain low.

**Table 1: Proportion of Traveller caravans on different site types in Cambridgeshire districts, and England, January 2016**

January 2016	Socially rented site	Private site	Unauthorised (own land)	Unauthorised (not own land)	Total caravans (count)
<b>England</b>	33.1% (7,046)	53.8% (11,454)	10% (2,130)	3.2% (676)	<b>21306</b>
<b>Cambridge City</b>	0% (0)	100% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	<b>2</b>
<b>East Cambridgeshire</b>	34.4% (56)	54.6% (89)	5.5% (9)	5.5% (9)	<b>163</b>
<b>Fenland</b>	31.4% (166)	45.3% (239)	22.3% (118)	0.9% (5)	<b>528</b>
<b>Huntingdonshire</b>	27.5% (33)	55.8% (67)	12.5% (118)	4.2% (5)	<b>120</b>
<b>South Cambridgeshire</b>	9.0% (39)	91.0% (394)	0% (0)	0% (0)	<b>433</b>

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, 2016

It is widely acknowledged that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children have lower educational attainment than other ethnicities: a lower percentage of Gypsy/ Roma children (13.8%) and Traveller children (17.5%) achieved at least five A\*-C GCSEs in 2012/13 compared with 'White'<sup>1</sup> children (60.3%)<sup>2</sup>. This is reflected in the community as a whole, with a lack of numeracy and literacy skills acknowledged in adults also. That said children are slightly more immersed into educational services than their parents were, which may be vital for engagement in the future as their trust of authorities may improve as they have more exposure. This will help key messages filter through from child to parent.

Finally, it is noted that there is no traveller marker used within police crime recording and therefore the scale of criminal activity involving travellers is not easily ascertained. Offender data does record ethnicity which includes people from traveller descent; however, reluctance to disclose this means data is unreliable and does not provide an accurate picture of offending behaviour.

<sup>1</sup> Ethnicity classification.

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/healing\\_a\\_divided\\_britain\\_-\\_the\\_need\\_for\\_a\\_comprehensive\\_race\\_equality\\_strategy\\_final.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/healing_a_divided_britain_-_the_need_for_a_comprehensive_race_equality_strategy_final.pdf).

## CURRENT AND EMERGING ISSUES

### *Murder on Burwell site*

As a result of the murder of a man by another traveller in Burwell in January 2015, the Council run site has been closed. The murder resulted in increased tensions amongst the travelling community, but also had implications on the re-locating of families as a consequence of the site closure. It should be recognised that this is likely to have caused unrest amongst families who may feel under – supported, and may have impacted on the lack of trust of authorities that is currently displayed within the community at large.

### *Change to planning definition*

In September 2014 the Government published a consultation<sup>3</sup> on planning and travellers, which proposes a change to the planning definition of “traveller” to exclude those who have permanently ceased travelling. This change came into effect from August 2015 following a revised version of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites being issued.<sup>4</sup>

The need of travellers who do not meet the definition, and the remaining need of those falling into the group who are “unknown” by definition, will need to be addressed through other means including the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

Some in the traveller community see the change as “Defining Travellers out of existence”<sup>5</sup>. There is concern that this view should be monitored within the community going forward, as it may cause community tensions.

### *Hate Crime*

In August 2016, the Equality and Human Rights Commission released a new report<sup>6</sup> which reviews race inequality within Great Britain. The report, “Healing a divided Britain: the need for a comprehensive race equality strategy”, includes Gypsies and Travellers and looks at education, employment, housing, pay and living standards, hate crime, health, criminal justice, and participation.

Key findings indicate that there are still challenges to equality of opportunity in Britain, and that: “Negative attitudes towards gypsy, Roma and traveller communities are still widely held. According to a 2014 survey<sup>7</sup>, 50% of people in Britain reported having an unfavourable view of Roma.”

This year, National Hate Crime Awareness Week<sup>8</sup> will take place from Saturday 8th to Saturday 15th October 2016. It is recommended that targeted engagement raising awareness of this with the local travelling community is prioritised. Low-level engagement delivering this key information via an easy

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-and-travellers-proposed-changes-to-planning-policy-and-guidance>

<sup>4</sup><http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07005>.

<sup>5</sup><http://travellerstimes.org.uk/Blogs--Features/Defining-Travellers-out-of-existence.aspx>.

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/healing\\_a\\_divided\\_britain\\_-\\_the\\_need\\_for\\_a\\_comprehensive\\_race\\_equality\\_strategy\\_final.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/healing_a_divided_britain_-_the_need_for_a_comprehensive_race_equality_strategy_final.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research Center (2014), ‘A Fragile Rebound for EU Image on Eve of European Parliament Elections’. Global Attitudes and Trends. May 12, 2014. Available at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/05/12/chapter-4-views-of-roma-muslims-jews/>

<sup>8</sup> Zoe James, University of Plymouth,

<http://www.bteq.co.uk/sites/default/files/Improving%20outcomes%20for%20offenders%20GT%20communities.pdf>

read leaflet, may encourage travellers to speak out about some of the prejudices they experience in daily life and build relationships with those who may be able to help.

## ENGAGEMENT

### WHAT HASN'T WORKED

Most recent attempts at engagement have not been successful, with high visibility from police being rejected, including the suggestion of an “On-Site Community Hub”. The hub could be used by a number of agencies to deliver services and advice, as well as offering the community access to Wi-Fi and other resources. However, this and the invitation to move towards integrating with some non-traveller communities for some health services, has not been welcomed.

This is largely believed to be due to fear from travellers that they will be perceived within the wider community as “friends” of the police, who have historically not worked well with travelling communities. Until trust is built this tension overshadows any future relationships.

### WHAT COULD WORK

A review of successful engagement efforts in other areas has revealed a range of options for approaching engagement with travellers in East Cambridgeshire. We have grouped these together in Table 2 overleaf, by the aspect of engagement efforts that might be considered when tailoring an engagement approach, rather than providing a detailed case study, as each initiative needs to be applicable to the local context: resources, location, individuals and personalities, community needs versus wants, existing trust or tensions.

What does seem apparent is that using the weekly visits from ECDC to the socially rented site may be a promising starting point to engage with the traveller community; delivering safety messages and interventions via low-level leafleting, examples of which can be shown in the ‘Resources’ section of this briefing. However, it is noted that any engagement, however small this may seem, must be careful not to jeopardise ECDC / Traveller Liaison Officer’s (TLO) existing relationship with the traveller community.

This risk could be mitigated by acknowledging that “Gypsy and Traveller communities are being over policed as potential offenders and under policed as victims<sup>9</sup>” and adopting this clear message at the beginning of a new engagement strategy. This may help to improve crime reporting within the traveller community, but also build trust that they are part of the wider community.

It is suggested that any engagement approach follows the SMART Objectives to ensure they are tailored to the local community and remain achievable:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Assignable
- Realistic
- Time-related

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<sup>9</sup> Zoe James, University of Plymouth,  
<http://www.bteg.co.uk/sites/default/files/Improving%20outcomes%20for%20offenders%20GT%20communities.pdf>

**Table 2: Engagement Strategy**

Engagement Element	Approach	Goal	Outcome
<b>Content</b>	Focus on generic, practical issues: “No matter how effective a service or how necessary for the well-being of an individual a particular form of support/treatment may be, travelling takes precedence over all” <sup>10</sup>	Open lines of communication, deliver important messages; new messages delivered on a monthly basis	Build trust and rapport; travellers are acknowledged as an important part of the wider community; increase personal safety
	Travellers as victims as well as offenders	Open lines of communication, deliver important messages	Build trust and rapport
<b>Audience</b>	Socially rented site (initially)	Clear entry for engagement that is received well	Better relationship; fewer families moving to unauthorised sites; set example of good relationship with authorities to travellers in private sties
	Target primary school children: “Lots of young children on Earith site in particular” <sup>11</sup>	Children can teach their parents the key messages; whole community learns. “10 year olds are almost twice as likely to have a positive opinion of their local police compared to 15 year olds.” <sup>12</sup>	Children are more open to discussion with figures of authority; next generation learn personal safety; increase in adult literacy skills
	Low literacy - Easy read leaflets	Important messages are understood	Increase personal safety; travellers recognise they are considered in the wider community
<b>Delivery</b>	Consistency	Successful low-level engagement over a prolonged period	Build trust and rapport; travellers begin to trust that this is no “one-off” engagement approach
	Familiarity	No obstruction to the delivery of important messages	Build trust and rapport; the whole community is more open to discussion with figures of authority
	Small scale, short term, clear initiatives	Engagement is received as it relevant to the travellers	Build trust and rapport; increase personal safety
	Social media	Two-way communication to enhance personal safety and improve services	Better relationship; travellers are acknowledged as an important part of the wider community

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.parliament.scot/S4\\_EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/Inquiries/PKC\\_supplementary\\_submissions\(1\).pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S4_EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/Inquiries/PKC_supplementary_submissions(1).pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Anecdotal: ECDC and TLO 2016.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.crimesurvey.co.uk/10-15yearOldsSurvey.html>.

## Future Engagement

It is suggested that a 6 month engagement strategy is developed using the low-level, consistent approach detailed in the table above. Future engagement, in particular with offenders, should only be considered once this initial engagement plan has been reviewed. Suggestions for stage 2 of engagement include:

1. Off-site traveller community hub
2. Literacy engagement with:
  - a. Local communities – Lessons learnt from the British Heart Foundation project improving literacy and health with traveller communities in Fenland.<sup>13</sup>
  - b. Offenders - The Shannon Trust's Toby programme - is a *peer led* approach to learning literacy and works well with Gypsy and Traveller offenders<sup>14</sup>.

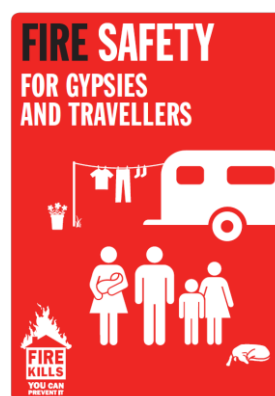
## RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

- **Content** - “Deliver key personal safety messages”
- **Audience** - “Low literacy within community, so easy read publications are essential”
- **Delivery** - “Low-level, consistent engagement via leaflets”

*Successful engagement will require consistent effort and need to benefit the needs of community*

## RESOURCES

### Easy Read Leaflet examples



*Friends, Families and Travellers – a registered charity with many members who are Travellers, or have children and grandchildren who travel*

- <http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/resources/>
- <http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/directory/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/how-we-can-help/hearty-lives/fenland>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.bteg.co.uk/sites/default/files/Improving%20outcomes%20for%20offenders%20GT%20communities.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.stophateuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/words-and-pictures-Final-Version.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-for-gypsies-and-travellers>