
Cambridgeshire Travellers Review

Research Report Number 6

Overall Summary of Research Programme



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PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

· This report is a compilation of the summary / conclusion sections from each of five research reports completed for the Cambridgeshire Travellers Review. A description of each of the reports and instructions about how to obtain them is attached as Appendix 1.

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY ISSUES

A place to live

· Unauthorised camping is seen as an ongoing problem for District and City councils, especially on high profile sites where there is a strong public and political reaction. Legal procedures for moving groups on are ineffective, and groups may simply camp illegally elsewhere. The amount of litter left behind depends to some extent on the occupation of groups (exacerbated by high costs on private tips), with scrap dealing and tree lopping often producing large amounts of waste. Problems for Travellers on unauthorised encampments include lack of access to services, and repeated exposure to potential conflict with officials and surrounding communities.

· Preventing access to some traditional stopping places is thought to have led to more visible and larger encampments, and increased the potential for conflict. The number of unauthorised encampments in the county has been steady over recent years, but community tolerance of them seems to be decreasing. Housed residents may experience intimidation from illegally camped groups, or may feel threatened by the mere presence of Travellers. But encampments in certain locations have been tolerated and caused few problems.

· The costs to local authorities of providing accommodation are thought to be disproportionately high. Official counts show the number of caravans in the county to be decreasing, but Travellers who are currently in housing are not counted in these figures, and there are other indications of a growing local population. Central government no longer provides any resources, and there is often public opposition to the expenditure of local funds on Travellers. There is therefore pressure to operate existing sites at a profit. From a resident's perspective, this may mean that rents seem high and the conditions attached to occupancy appear more restrictive than for council house tenants.

· Some official Travellers' sites have a history of damage, and conflict both within the site and with the surrounding community. There is an official perception that residents at some of these sites lack community spirit and that children are beyond control. This is costly and problematic to local authorities, and may also reduce services to residents, as providers may be reluctant to enter sites. Two new site management options are now being considered, involving the establishment of a joint County/District agency, or the transfer of responsibility to a host agency. Gypsy representatives favour Housing Associations, resident management and right to buy arrangements, but management groups run by Gypsies are thought to invite favouritism.

· Many Travellers do not want to use official sites at all. Those who can afford it would prefer to make a home base on private land. Traveller representatives believe that many official sites are in inconvenient locations or on contaminated land, attract the 'wrong sort of resident', and that occupants have difficulty obtaining contents insurance. District officials believe that some mobile families who refuse pitches on official sites wish to continue using traditional stopping places, with minimal or no restrictions from the authorities.

· Traveller representatives believe that a range of accommodation is needed, including the identification of emergency stopping places and greater willingness to grant planning approval for private sites. Local authorities feel they lack information about the type of accommodation

required, now and in the future, have few resources to provide new public facilities, and face a range of practical and political difficulties in providing more alternative sites for Travellers.

- Planners find that Travellers tend to occupy land they have purchased and apply for retrospective planning approval when challenged. This may be looked on more sympathetically in some areas than others, but forces planners into a reactive mode of operation. Gypsy representatives say that families often have nowhere else to go, and are sceptical about being granted permission. A case is coming up before the European Court of Human Rights that challenges the independence of the Department of Environment Inspectorate that handles planning appeals.
- Districts need to establish better links with the Traveller community to encourage early discussion of planning applications. One Gypsy representative mentioned North Derbyshire as an example of good practice, as planners are included in the Gypsy Liaison Group. Options for incorporating better guidance into Local Plans, either through identifying suitable areas for private sites, developing clearer criteria for judging applications, or providing supplementary guidance, are also being considered. One Gypsy organisation said that authorities were afraid of a 'honey pot' effect if they adopted the first approach, but felt that criteria-based policies could always be used to refuse applications.
- There is a perception amongst some sections of the non-Traveller population that Gypsies receive special treatment within planning law. Access to the provisions for Gypsy sites is via the Caravan Sites Act definition, which hinges on a nomadic way of life. This creates some confusion about eligibility, since Travellers seeking to make a permanent home base may appear to planning authorities to have abandoned a nomadic way of life (although they will probably plan to travel in the summer months).
- The difficulties of maintaining a travelling lifestyle while remaining within the law, are seen by Gypsy representatives to be forcing many Travellers into housing. This is sometimes seen as a threat to Gypsy culture, and may present practical problems for individual Travellers (e.g. neighbour harassment and isolation). Traveller Education is funded to work with pupils for up to 2 years after their families move into housing, but other support networks may be lost, and the needs of this group may remain hidden.
- Travellers who choose to settle in houses may find that existing policies do not fit well with a travelling way of life. For example, applicants may have difficulty establishing 'settled residence' in an area, and may be at risk of losing their place due to sustained absences (particularly those housed under temporary provisions). There is no systematic information at present about the number and experiences of housed Travellers in Cambridgeshire, or the impact on housing providers of any increased demand being experienced from caravan dwellers.
- The County Council has attempted to introduce some consistency in the management of sites and handling of unauthorised encampments, and encourage systematic liaison between agencies. It is felt that there is a need for more central guidance from government (which is low when compared with social housing), and a new spirit of inter-County co-operation on Travellers' issues. Districts feel it will be difficult to achieve total consistency because of variations in local geographical and social circumstances, but agree that national co-ordination and a suitable legislative framework is essential, for example in the provision of emergency stopping sites. Gypsy representatives also thought that national legislation would have to be re-introduced to clarify responsibilities and procedures for the provision of accommodation for Travellers.

Crime, disorder and policing

- Police believe that the criminal element within Traveller communities feature prominently in cross-border crime, such as post office robberies, distraction burglaries and organised vehicle theft. They have established a specialist unit within the Force Investigation Bureau to deal with these cases. There is presently a lack of comprehensive statistical information about the overall involvement of Travellers in crime, and of crime committed against Travellers, which would put these high-profile offences into a wider perspective.
- Some official sites have at times been locations for serious organised crime and disorder, and absorb a disproportionate amount of police resources. Site residents may be intimidated both by the criminal behaviour of this minority, and by the high intensity policing approaches which have sometimes been adopted. Large operations may be remembered for many years, and it is thought that police often misunderstand cultural practices. In turn, police may experience hostility from residents, creating an escalation towards heavier policing styles. The high visibility of some serious offending (such as vehicle arson, and dangerous driving) and the large-scale police response and negative media coverage that may follow, reinforces negative stereotypes of Travellers amongst the wider community.
- There is a desire to re-establish community policing at these problem locations. Attempts to improve relations on some sites have included more careful targeting of police operations, and dialogue between police, site residents and housed residents. Police are introducing cultural awareness training for beat officers, and considering how to attract officers from Traveller backgrounds. Co-operation from site residents might be further enhanced by a greater awareness by police of the social and economic disadvantage experienced by many Travellers, and of their experiences and opinions of the police.
- The Probation Service is concerned that Travellers may be experiencing discrimination in court, particularly in relation to bail. However, site wardens have also reported management problems after defendants have been bailed to sites with which they have no official connection. It appears that adult Travellers sentenced to community penalties are unlikely to have been convicted of offences involving violence, alcohol or drugs. However, without detailed analysis it is not clear whether this reflects differences in sentencing practices (e.g. a greater likelihood of custodial sentences for Travellers charged with violent or drug-related crime) or differences between Travellers and non-Travellers in types of offending.
- Community Service supervisors claim to receive excellent co-operation from Travellers who report for their orders, including a readiness to notify changes of address. Some others do not report at all. Youth Justice staff supervising young Travellers also report generally positive experiences in supervising young people from relatively settled communities, but considerable practical difficulties associated with more mobile young people.
- There is a concern amongst police and others that children living on sites will be drawn into criminal activity by copying older role models, particularly where they are not attending school. Lack of parental control over some children and the reluctance of other parents to intervene is also noted. These problems are not dissimilar from those experienced on many Council estates, and may be one reason why many Travelling families are reluctant to go onto official sites.
- Very low levels of literacy have been noted amongst adult Travellers sentenced to community supervision. The Youth Justice team say they respect the wishes of Traveller parents who do not want education provided for children who are not attending school. This seems to be at odds with the policy of Traveller Education towards this age group. There appears to be potential for greater liaison between Traveller Education, Community Education and those supervising convicted offenders from a Travelling background, both in respect of vocational and school education for convicted offenders, and in the provision of diversionary and preventative programmes for young people at risk of offending.

Access to services and employment opportunities

- Attendance at primary school is increasing, but educational attainment is still well below average for Traveller children at all stages. Retention into secondary education is considered to be a major problem. Attendance may be enforced by court action where positive encouragement has failed. Many Traveller parents wish to see their children complete their secondary education, but factors such as fear of bullying, cultural expectations, lack of transport, disapproval of sex education and fear of contact with drugs may act as disincentives.
- Non-attendance at school has a range of knock-on effects. Police see this as a major contributor to crime amongst young Travellers. The Traveller Education Team is also concerned at the systematic exclusion of many young Travellers from vocational programmes and other opportunities, which depend on being registered on a school roll.
- Traditional ways of making a living are now disappearing, although demand is increasing again in some areas. One Gypsy representative suggested that 90% of Gypsies are now unemployed (compared with 90% once self-employed) and advocated vocational training such as sign writing. Another claimed welfare benefits had made life more secure for poorer Gypsies, who may previously have earned their living as agricultural labourers. Traveller Education pointed out that rules on Traveller sites often preclude traditional occupations, reducing opportunities for young people to be employed in family businesses. The New Start and New Deal programmes have the potential to support some young Travellers in their vocational choices and training.
- Youth work with young Travellers is already well established in Peterborough and Witchford, and is being developed in St Neots and Wisbech. A youth club in Cottenham has experienced some problems and has been forced to close. Young Travellers are being trained as youth workers at Peterborough, and finding the appropriate style of leadership within the youth clubs has been an issue.
- In some parts of the county, social workers have experienced conflict in their contacts with Travellers, and staff are reluctant to go onto some sites. This may be exacerbated by the contentious nature of the work, for example relating to child protection. Social workers say that the poor condition of some sites may raise child protection issues, and believe that referring agencies often adopt different standards for Travellers, and don't refer cases when they should. On the other hand, Traveller parents may think that incorrect judgements in the other direction can be made by health or welfare staff who are unused to working with Travellers.
- Travellers probably lack information about how to access welfare services, and raising awareness of support available for the elderly and disabled was suggested as a possible strategy for increasing positive contacts between Travellers and Social Services. The need to promote a better understanding of these services amongst Travelling communities was also mentioned by Gypsy representatives and health professionals.
- Health professionals believe there is a low uptake of community health services by Travellers, but greater readiness to use hospitals, particularly for childbirth and serious illness. Some GPs are reluctant to register Travellers because of expected difficulties in reaching practice targets, and there are no specialist health visitors, as there are in some other parts of the country. Gypsy representatives suggested that a better understanding of health needs on official sites and improved access for those on unauthorised encampments is needed.
- It was widely thought that better inter-agency co-operation is needed so that experience of working with Travellers can be shared with other agencies which have had less direct contact. Travellers' liaison groups are at present the main vehicle, and agencies such as Social Services

and Probation are becoming increasingly involved. This is thought to have had benefits in terms of information-sharing, but has not yet translated into effective inter-agency co-operation on practical issues such as mandatory needs enquiries on Traveller families prior to evictions. One Gypsy organisation favours the county-wide co-ordination of services to Travellers by a single, specialist agency. This widening of responsibility to include the co-ordination of other services has been raised in the current review of site management options.

- There are no comprehensive mechanisms for consulting Travellers on service planning and delivery, and many agency representatives remarked on the difficulty of involving Travellers within existing structures. Several professionals advocated holistic, community development approaches, which concentrated instead on developing models which were based on existing practices and networks within the community.
- There is a perception that Travellers wish to stay completely separate from the rest of the community. To the extent that this is true, this may be fuelled by hostility from some sections of the majority population. Community representatives claimed that most Gypsies wish to achieve both equality and integration, while feeling secure that their culture and way of life will be respected and preserved. One informant suggested that mobilising the supportive elements within the non-Traveller community may be the key to improving community relations.

Availability of statistical information

- Most agencies have no ethnic monitoring of the use of services by Gypsy/Travellers and there is therefore little management information to use for planning and policy making. Gypsy representatives recognise the need to identify Gypsies as a distinct ethnic group, in order to counter the disadvantages they face. But many sections of the Gypsy community may be suspicious of official information collections, because of past experiences and the possibility of mis-use.
- Those specialist agencies which do collect detailed information about their Traveller clients, such as Traveller Education, are mindful of these concerns and collect only what information is necessary to discharge their responsibilities. Better information about the educational attainment of Traveller children is now being incorporated into information provided to schools in the county, and more systematic monitoring by OFSTED of the quality of support provided for Traveller pupils within individual schools is also thought to be needed.
- Some District/City authorities collect detailed information on the management of official sites and unauthorised encampments, which goes beyond the basic requirement for twice-yearly caravan counts. Others probably collect much less. There is no central management information system held at county level.
- Other service agencies which do not deal exclusively with the Traveller population, may be reluctant to identify specific groups such as Travellers in their records. There seems to be a belief amongst some practitioners directly involved in the delivery of health and welfare services that the recording of ethnic identity is discriminatory per se, regardless of the purpose for which the information is collected. Even where there is no objection in principle, staff may find it difficult in practice to make enquiries about ethnic origin.
- The Probation Service is the only non-specialist agency which is attempting to collect statistics about Traveller clients, based entirely on self-identification. They have experienced considerable difficulties because of the conflation of ethnic and national categories, so that Travellers may choose to identify as English or Irish, for example, rather than as Gypsy/Travellers. The expectation of discriminatory treatment may also prevent convicted persons awaiting sentencing from identifying themselves as Travellers.

· The Police are not required at present to include Travellers in their ethnic monitoring, which is based on 'visible minorities'. Most of their information about serious crime amongst the Travelling community is intelligence-based. More systematic identification of Travellers as both suspects and victims of crime might provide a more balanced picture, but would also present some practical difficulties, for example in terms of categorisation.

Priorities for research

- Policy makers have expressed a need for better information about accommodation requirements. This should include the preferences and experiences of Travellers living in houses, on official sites and on both authorised and unauthorised private sites. The ability to produce quantitative information about future demand will depend on the accuracy of any demographic information obtained, and whether it is thought that movement patterns can be predicted with any confidence.
- Socio-economic information about the Travelling population has also been requested. This information could be used to increase general awareness amongst agency staff and the wider public about the disadvantages faced by many Travellers, could be compared with the risk factors identified by the Audit Commission which are thought to be linked with youth offending, and might be useful for future funding bids.
- Informants from a wide range of service areas asked that the research make some progress towards breaking down prejudice and myths about Travellers, which they perceived to be widespread, and to be more negative than for other minority groups.
- Ideas are also wanted for improving community relations and site management in areas where crime and disorder problems have been experienced. This should include the views of Travellers living on or near official sites about criminal activities attributed to Travellers in their area, their own experiences of victimisation, and their views on local policing.
- Priorities within education and training include establishing the educational, recreational and vocational needs of young Travellers, and identifying suitable programmes and employment opportunities. As well as a general community development orientation, some attention might be given to young people at risk of offending and those who have already been convicted of criminal offences.
- Both health and welfare professionals have identified increasing the awareness of services for the elderly and disabled as a high priority. The research might help to identify needs and establish current levels of knowledge. Access to basic health services is an ongoing concern for Gypsy representatives, and several agencies have also expressed an interest in exploring how health information might best be promulgated amongst Travellers.
- Representatives from agencies which participated in the multi-agency video on services for Travellers in Cambridgeshire, expressed an interest in knowing more about how it was distributed, and how it was received by members of the Travelling community.
- The research cannot cover each service area in detail, but could consider ideas for the improved co-ordination of services to Travellers. This could include identifying innovative approaches adopted by other local authorities in the country, and by actively involving local agencies wherever possible in the remainder of the research programme.
- Similarly, the act of consulting with Travellers during this project, is itself a first step towards developing policies which promote inclusiveness and self determination. In all of the service

areas identified above, an effort will be made to identify models and structures which have the potential to promote the ongoing involvement of Travellers.

TRAVELLERS AND SOCIAL POLICY

“ Romany Gypsies are generally accepted to have descended from groups which migrated to Europe from northern India, although there has been a large amount of mixing with the non-Gypsy population. Irish Travellers usually do not identify as Romany, and are often ascribed different origins within Ireland.

“ Definitions of Gypsies and other Travellers based on ethnicity, culture, nomadism or (in the case of Irish Travellers and some New Travellers) socio-economic factors, have prevailed at different historical periods and still co-exist. Racial definitions based on biological differences between groups are now largely discounted.

“ The various definitions have different practical implications. Definitions emphasising culture and ethnicity are a gateway to 'special treatment' based on cultural rights, whereas nomadism is the key for access to Gypsy caravan sites. Definitions based on culture or ethnicity are currently dominant. Neither concept is seen as rigid or homogeneous, allowing a certain flexibility in the expression of identity.

“ Historical cycles of intolerance and relative tolerance have depended largely on material relations between Travellers and the settled community, and on popular perceptions of the threat of nomadism to the dominant social order. Identifying as a Gypsy has sometimes conferred a benefit, but at other times has brought danger. Distinctions made by the majority community between 'real' and 'counterfeit' Gypsies have been internalised by many Gypsies, who may also seek to exclude others from identifying with the group.

“ Accusations that Travellers fail to 'integrate' ignore this history of persecution, and the power which the dominant community has to accept or exclude marginalised groups. Lacking political power or a geographical base, Travellers have paid a high price for retaining their cultural identity, experiencing widespread rejection from the majority community which often offers acceptance only on its own terms.

“ The stereotype of Travellers as 'innate criminals' is long-established, and was used to justify the Nazi genocide. There is no empirical evidence to substantiate these claims, and it is likely that crime is committed at a similar level to other groups in similar socio-economic circumstances. Although the type of crime committed by Travellers, as with members of any social group, is likely to reflect their way of life, this is not to say that crimes such as theft are a cultural value.

“ Although the introduction in 1968 of a duty to provide permanent sites for Travellers was well-intentioned, and no-doubt welcomed by many Travellers, it had the negative outcome of creating welfare dependency amongst some families. The non-ethnic criteria for entitlement, although appropriate within the political context of the time, had the effect of equating Gypsy and Traveller identity entirely with nomadism, and reducing awareness of ethnic and cultural aspects.

“ The objectives of the legislation were never fully realised, and increases in the ranks of caravan-dwellers by the 1980s, including New Travellers, lead increasingly to unauthorised camping being seen as a public nuisance. The 1968 Act was repealed in 1994, and new powers to remove and criminalise unauthorised campers introduced. The intention to promote private provision was not backed by incentives to approve planning applications, leading to increasing conflict over access to legal camping places.

During this time an ethnic definition of Gypsies was articulated under the Race Relations Act. This established duties for Local Authorities under section 77 to protect Gypsies from unlawful discrimination and promote good relations with the wider population.

Human rights are gradually emerging as an important force in social policy. Recognition that minorities will be an on-going feature of modern societies has led to calls throughout Europe for cultural rights for Gypsies. The growing regime of international agreements on minority and cultural rights places a duty on governments to provide positive support to protect minority groups and preserve minority ways of life.

TRAVELLERS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Demographic information

Gypsies and other Travellers are not enumerated as an ethnic group in the national population census or other official statistics. The Gypsy population in the United Kingdom has been estimated at between 90,000 and 120,000 individuals. About 11,000 Travelling families are thought to live in England and Wales. At least 50% of the Gypsy-Traveller population is thought to live in houses, and many families move in and out of housing.

According to official DETR counts, the number of Gypsy caravans in England and Wales has increased by more than 50% from 1979 to 1997. During the 1990s, the number of Gypsy caravans in Cambridgeshire increased by the same amount as the national average - around 11%. (Note that throughout this report 'Cambridgeshire' is taken to include New Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.)

With around 850 caravans at any one time, Cambridgeshire has one of the largest caravan-dwelling Gypsy populations in England and Wales. Based on July 1997 counts, Cambridge had by far the largest number of caravans on authorised private sites (442) and one of the highest counts on local authority sites (303) compared with other counties, with far fewer on unauthorised encampments (103).

South Cambridgeshire hosts the highest number of caravans in the county (32% in July 1997). The distribution of caravans varies within the county, with South Cambridgeshire accounting for the highest proportion of caravans on authorised private sites on the day of the July 1997 count (48%). Peterborough and Fenland had the highest proportions of caravans on local authority sites (both 30%), and East Cambridgeshire had the largest share of unauthorised encampments (40%).

In recent years, the highest rate of growth in caravans has been recorded in Fenland (50% increase from 1990 to 1997). (Other districts may have experienced periods of growth previously, but earlier figures were not examined.) South Cambridgeshire experienced the greatest shift in types of accommodation occupied during this time (from unauthorised encampments to authorised private sites), but only average growth for the county.

The first county-owned caravan sites were established in Wisbech (Newbridge Lane, 1975) and Peterborough (Oxney Road, 1976). Other sites were developed in Fenland, Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire in the 1980s, but permanent sites were only established in South Cambridgeshire in the 1990s.

The greatest concentration of private sites at present is in Willingham, Cottenham and the northern perimeter of Cambridge. There are also smaller family plots around Wisbech and scattered throughout East Cambridgeshire.

- Multiplying the number of Gypsy caravans included in official counts by the estimated number of occupants per caravan (roughly estimated at 3), gives an estimate of the caravan-dwelling Traveller population on any one day. For example, in July 1997 the estimate would be 2544.
- The number of Travellers living in houses in Cambridgeshire is not known. Nationally, it is estimated that about 50% of the Traveller population are housed at any one time. If this were true in Cambridgeshire, this could mean a population of around 5000 people.
- Using only the estimated population figures for the Travellers population living in caravans, Travellers can be shown to be the biggest single ethnic minority group in Fenland, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire. In Fenland, there would appear to be more Travellers than all other ethnic groups combined.
- Figures supplied by District Traveller Liaison Officers show the proportion of children under 17 living on official sites is about 38%. This compares with about 20% for the county as a whole.
- The majority of Travellers encountered by District officials in Cambridgeshire are traditional Travellers who would identify either as Irish Travellers or British Gypsies. Irish Travellers are encountered on unauthorised encampments more frequently than on official sites. This may reflect differences in travelling patterns and/or different levels of access to official pitches.

Socio-economic information

- Like other sections of the population, Travellers live in a variety of economic circumstances. Many Travellers operate successful businesses - some with European connections. Historically, agricultural workers have been the least well-off group of Travellers.
- In Cambridgeshire, a 1968 survey found that 61% of Travellers in the county were employed primarily as farm workers. According to agricultural census data, the main centres for agricultural work were in Fenland (particularly Elm Parish), Whittlesey and March.
- The seasonal agricultural workforce has declined by about half from the late 1970s to the present time. District officers report that tree lopping, tarmacing, scrap dealing and agricultural work are now the main sources of income for families encountered by them on unauthorised encampments. Social Security is the main source of income for families living on official sites, with the occupations mentioned above also taking place.
- Because Travellers are not identified in the population census, there is generally no direct information about the relative social or economic disadvantage of Traveller groups. One exception is the Newbridge Lane site in Elm Parish, which occupies virtually the whole of the Enumeration District (ED) in which it falls. This ED has the highest recorded rate of male unemployment in the county, and has been identified in a recent national analysis as the ninth most deprived in the country.
- This site, the Cambridge Road site at St Neots and Norwood Lane at Peterborough are all located within census Enumeration Districts (EDs) which were assigned a very high deprivation and disadvantage rating in a county-wide analysis carried out by the Research Group. The Burwell, Earith Bridge, Blackwell, Willingham and Whaddon sites are all located in areas which were not considered disadvantaged, with other sites in areas with moderate disadvantage. (This is not to say that there are not pockets of relative deprivation within these areas.)

Take-up of services

- A 1996 OFSTED report estimated that 61% of school-aged children from Traveller families in England were registered in schools. The 1997-98 Annual Report for the Team for Travellers Education in Cambridgeshire estimated that 65% of school-aged Traveller children encountered during that year were registered on a school roll.
- The proportions in secondary school are likely to be much lower than primary school, but this breakdown is not available. Figures compiled for the New Start programme showed that only about a quarter of 14 to 15 year olds are attending secondary school, with the highest level of attendance in East Cambridgeshire (10 pupils of 19 in the age group).
- Ethnic monitoring of Key Stage 1 pupils in Cambridgeshire was carried out for the first time in 1997. This showed Traveller pupils to be achieving below the level of all other groups in tested areas, particularly in formal reading tests but also including teacher-assessed subjects.
- No official health statistics are available on Travellers in England and Wales. However, Travellers in Ireland have been estimated to have a life expectancy 10 years below the male average, and 12 years below the female average for the population as a whole. A 1986 survey of 260 Traveller mothers in England concluded that child mortality was 1.5 to 2 times greater for Travellers in their first year of life than for other infants.
- A stable home base (although not necessarily a totally sedentary lifestyle) is thought to be a key factor in increasing access to mainstream health services, and reducing the health risks associated with poor living conditions and the stress of being constantly moved on. Cultural beliefs, prejudice and structural factors (such as GP targets) may also be barriers to the uptake of health services.
- A survey of patient records at Upwell Clinic near Wisbech established that Traveller patients living in static caravans in the area made fewer demands than a matched non-Traveller group in terms of acute visits, telephone consultations, ante-natal and follow-up visits. The study concluded that more work was needed to encourage uptake of preventive care and follow-up of chronic disease.
- A small number of Traveller mothers interviewed by the Ormiston Trust around Wisbech reported generally positive relationships with GPs and health visitors, but some negative experiences with medical staff with whom they were less familiar.
- Historical practices throughout Europe have resulted in some suspicion towards social workers, and Social Services departments have often been seen to be slow to develop appropriate services for Traveller families.
- A search of Social Service records in Cambridgeshire revealed that some services had been provided to clients giving an address at an official Traveller site, but the data was not comprehensive enough to withstand further analysis.
- Hypothetical scenarios put to a small sample of Traveller mothers in Wisbech demonstrated a willingness to contact health professionals regarding problems with a crying baby ; a similar readiness to contact Social Security regarding financial crises threatening their children's welfare ; but a strong preference for only involving family members in providing respite care for children.

LOCATION STUDIES

General points

- The main conclusions from the four location studies are considered separately in this report. The next report in this series, entitled Suggestions for Good Practice, takes a strategic and thematic approach in identifying possible areas of county-wide action.
- Overall, the action research did not produce much sustained action. This is not surprising considering the short time frame and absence of resources directly available to the study. However, the methodology was invaluable in assessing the potential for promoting community development and inter-agency work in each of the study areas.
- Detailed reports of the consultations with residents at Oxney Road and Earith Bridge sites have been completed, and can be made available on request.

Oxney Road Location Study

- The Oxney Road site in Peterborough has experienced site management problems, conflict with police and poor relations with neighbouring communities. A generation of young people has grown up on the site, and appears to have a sense of entrapment and lack of opportunity.
- The consultation provided a rich body of information about residents' concerns for young people, views about the quality of life on the site, experiences of discrimination and harassment, attitudes towards police, and understanding of the tensions which had developed with residents on the Heron Park housing estate. The main findings are listed in the body of the full Location Studies report and will not be repeated here.
- Oxney Road was seen as a promising location at which to promote community development, as it is a large site with a settled population, and has access to a community services resource which is lacking in more rural areas. City Council officials, representatives of the Gypsy Council for Education, Culture, Welfare and Civil Rights (Gypsy Council), and other members of the Travellers Liaison Group were all keen to develop programmes following from the research, and the consultation was conducted in a positive and co-operative spirit. For this reason, quite detailed suggestions are made in the full Location Studies report in relation to Oxney Road compared with other individual sites.
- Bearing in mind the danger of raising expectations which could not be fulfilled, the questioning was directed primarily to programmes which were considered feasible within existing resources - such as trial visits of the mobile library, and summer programmes for families and young people to be organised by the City Council and/or Gypsy Council.
- The issues emerging from more open-ended questioning were organised post-hoc into a Quick Action Plan which identified apparently straightforward and low-cost interventions (e.g. regular street sweeping and reduction of the speed limit outside the site entrance) which might be achieved quickly and therefore establish some credibility for the action research process. More difficult issues (e.g. major capital works and community programmes) could then be pursued as part of a strategy to gradually increase participation by site residents.
- Even so, it proved extremely difficult to achieve a quick response to the consultation, due to bureaucratic barriers in some cases (e.g. the speed limit) and failure to secure the necessary resources in others (e.g. the mobile library). Other tensions which had arisen on the site since the consultation, including several police investigations and the resignation of the site warden, did not make implementation easier. By the time the researcher was able to return to the site to discuss some possibilities for action, the consultation process had lost momentum, and had probably reinforced prevailing views that surveys were a waste of time (or, at worst, a threat), and that site residents were a low priority for service provision.

- Despite these difficulties, a possible direction for community development work was beginning to emerge as the Location Study drew to a close. After the mobile library idea was abandoned, an on-site Information Shop had been suggested at the Travellers Liaison Group to facilitate outreach work on the site. This required refurbishment of the site office to provide a venue.
- A drop-in session in the office to discuss the idea was only attended by three women (all of whom were unmarried, and may have had more freedom to take part). There was little interest shown in most of the agencies which had offered to contribute to the Information Shop, and at least one male resident expressed some hostility to the process. There was, however, considerable enthusiasm for reading and writing classes, and indications that other women who had not attended the drop-in would also be interested.
- There was also some curiosity about the Women's Centre, which might be followed up, if and when a women's literacy group is established, by a visit to the Centre or an information session from Centre staff on the site.
- Only one of the three women showed an interest in health, and was surprised that many of the promotional materials on display had been produced by Travellers. However, this topic might be raised again if a group develops, particularly in view of the proposal to hold a Romani Health Fair in 1999, which would require the formation of a planning team.
- It might be highly motivating for residents to take part in presentations from other Traveller groups who had established projects in partnership with non-Travellers, or be shown examples of materials, such as newsletters, cultural information and health promotion materials, which these groups have produced.
- None of the three women expressed interest in the Race Equality Council. However, given the widespread experience of discrimination and hostility reported in the consultation, and the concern expressed in the Travellers Liaison Group about negative reporting by the local newspaper, it would be valuable to maintain the interest the REC has shown in working with site residents, and to explore ways in which this might be initiated at an appropriate time.
- Several of the women who attended the drop-in raised the issue of play facilities, which had also been discussed in the consultation. It would be extremely beneficial to engage residents in developing this idea as soon as possible, particularly since this has the potential to attract married women who did not attend the drop-in session.
- The development of a resident's group, or some less formal mode of resident participation, could be explored further. This should be seen as complementary to the advocacy role played by the liaison officer and Gypsy Council, as it has the potential to engage a broader range of residents in activities (including men) and foster community spirit. Clearly the idea should not be introduced unless there is a mechanism for responding to residents' views through similar procedures provided for housed tenants. One example of the establishment of a Travellers' site residents' group, including a discussion of initial resistance to the idea, is included in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.
- Although young people were not consulted directly, the interviews with parents, and other observations, indicated a clear need for more leisure opportunities, support at secondary school and appropriate vocational training. The site has the valuable resource of two qualified on-site youth leaders. These young women demonstrated a keen insight into the problems faced by teenage Travellers, both at school and when dealing with the world beyond the site boundary.
- A renewed and expanded partnership between the City Council, the Gypsy Council, Traveller Education and Hereward School might support the Traveller youth workers in extending their

current programme of educational and leisure activities, encouraging young people's involvement in establishing community facilities on or near the site, and possibly tackling new and difficult projects to deal with specific concerns such as school exclusion and relations with housed neighbours. These programmes would require support from more experienced youth workers. This would ideally be on mutually-agreed terms which recognise the particular knowledge and skills which each party has to offer.

- The site already has the benefit of a community development worker who is a Traveller, of on-site representatives of the Gypsy Council, and of other service-providers who have undertaken developmental work and established trust with residents. However, as with the youth work, a more clearly articulated partnership would be beneficial in ensuring a sustained approach to community development and building a broader base of involvement by site residents. This might be supported with funds from the Single Regeneration Budget.

- The capacity and scope for development work might be increased by the addition of an experienced female community worker who could facilitate the formation of a women's group based initially around literacy. Other members of the Liaison Group (most obviously the Traveller Education over-16s advisor in the first instance) could advise and provide specific services as the work develops.

- Some male residents might be expected to oppose their partners' involvement in these programmes, and gender issues would have to be addressed sensitively. The existing (male) community development worker might be particularly effective in initiating new work with male residents, including community enterprise initiatives. A range of models which have been adopted elsewhere for development work with Travellers will be presented in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.

- The consultation produced a range of information about policing on the site. The Sector Inspector has been supportive of the research and has indicated that the findings will be considered in the development of future policing strategies. However, further feedback on the police response to the Travellers Liaison Group, would be valuable in promoting openness and inter-agency working on the site. The idea of a 'study day' to discuss policing issues with site residents, which was raised in the Liaison Group, is worthy of further consideration.

- Comments made by interviewees about relations with Heron Park neighbours have been reported almost verbatim in the full consultation report, because of the light they shed on the perspective of site residents. Senior Police and Council officers have undertaken to discuss these accounts with members of the Heron Park Steering Group, and possibly the Neighbourhood Watch group, in an attempt to increase understanding of the problems. This could lead to direct dialogue between the different groups of residents at a later stage, if this is thought to be beneficial.

- Provided that confidentiality can be safeguarded, this verbatim material might also be of value in cultural awareness training, particularly for police officers.

Earith Bridge Location Study

- The Earith Bridge site is located in a quiet rural area, and is considered to present no major management, policing or community relations problems. It was selected for a full consultation primarily to provide a contrast to the situation at Oxney Road. There was no indication from district officials prior to the consultation of any intention on their part to initiate new programmes or ways of operating. For this reason, no specific suggestions are made in the Location Studies report in relation to site management, but some issues which affect all areas (e.g. pitch allocation) are discussed in general terms in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.

- The site was thought to be a suitable place for piloting the inter-agency work on the mobile library within New Cambridgeshire, and it was also intended that any issues which arose spontaneously from the consultation would be responded to, as a matter of good research practice. There was therefore also a measure of 'action research' in the approach adopted at this site, albeit a low-key one.
- Residents at this location generally expressed support for the style of policing on the site, less concern about discrimination and racial harassment than Oxney Road residents, and mainly positive views about the facilities and management of the site. Inevitably, some residents took the opportunity to make suggestions, primarily about health and safety, site design and allocation of empty pitches. These are discussed in the key points which are included in the body of the Location Studies report, and are not repeated here.
- Some young people who were past school-age (including young mothers), and therefore not involved in youth activities organised by Witchford College, complained of a lack of things to do around the site, but the quietness was also seen as an asset by these and other residents.
- As elsewhere, it was not possible to follow through with trial visits of the mobile library. The probability that the service would not be provided was explained to the residents. Alternative proposals to promote library use were later developed. This will initially be centred on Wisbech, so that other starting points would be needed if there is a desire to promote community development at Earith Bridge.
- It was decided that outreach work from relevant agencies might demonstrate some outcome from the consultation (although it could not stimulate resident participation in the way that an ongoing programme might). In response to questions about possible multi-agency visits through the mobile library, several residents had expressed an interest in information about benefits and other legal rights.
- The Ely Citizen's Advice Bureau agreed readily to visit the site, accompanied by the County Travellers' Liaison Officer. One of the workers who was contacted afterwards said she would repeat the exercise in the future if requested, but reported minor practical difficulties, such as the lack of a private place for discussion and access to power points. She had been unsure how openly to ask residents to invite her into their homes.
- An approach to the Village Benefits Advice service run by Social Services was not as successful (despite the service having been included on the Action Plan produced by the Travellers Steering Group). The co-ordinator was unwilling to schedule a visit to the site, on the grounds that Travellers were widely perceived to be in receipt of benefits to which they were not entitled, and due to concerns for staff safety. As this is a service with potential benefits for the whole county, it is discussed again in the Suggestions for Good Practice report, in separate sections covering economic development and non-discrimination in service provision.
- The Cambridge and Huntingdon Health Authority has plans for a Healthy Living Centre in Littleport to be founded on community development principles. Consultations with Travellers may be included as part of the planning process. One site resident has taken an active part in a health promotion video produced by the Anglian Gypsy-Traveller Health Information Project, and there may be potential to involve some residents in future health initiatives.
- Young people on the site generally attend the Witchford Village College. The school is unique in the county in that Traveller pupils have support from both Community Education youth workers and Traveller Education teachers based within the college. A second aspect of this Location Study was to document this work as an example of good practice.

- Parents interviewed on the site who had children enrolled at the school spoke highly of the youth club and other support for young people, and were aware of the community trips organised for Traveller families. Other residents (including those with younger children) had little awareness of these activities. Some ideas are discussed below about how the Witchford programmes might be extended to residents who would not otherwise have contact with the college.
- The Witchford Travellers Project has been running for about 4 years. The Community Education Tutor has funded the activities primarily through external sources. Whilst this gives the project a certain freedom of operation, and a straightforward argument against the charge that LEA resources are being unfairly targeted towards a particular group, it creates constant concern about the sustainability of the programme. Lack of core funding has limited the project's ability to train and employ voluntary staff and develop the potential of Traveller pupils to do developmental work within their own communities.
- Arguably, both the school and the Team for Traveller Education have more limitations placed on the scope of their activities due to their funding sources. Although the school has general responsibilities for student welfare, LEA funding is primarily directed towards the national curriculum. Traveller Education receive funding directly from central government to work within specified criteria, primarily to encourage attendance and provide classroom support for specified groups of Travellers.
- Despite these perceived limitations, good joint working has been established at the college. For example, the school has provided an alternative, non-GCSE curriculum from which Travellers have benefited, and the Traveller Education team has used their longstanding links with Traveller families to promote both the youth club organised by Community Education, and the alternative curriculum and work experience schemes operated by the school.
- These three elements, that is : long term liaison with the Traveller community by the Team for Traveller Education, sustained and high quality youth work from Community Education, and a flexible approach to curriculum and pupil support by the Head Teacher, have been a successful combination. Demonstrated benefits of the approach taken at the school have included good attendance by Traveller pupils when compared with other areas ; improved interaction with non-Traveller pupils ; improved motivation and school achievement by some pupils ; involvement of Traveller pupils in organising social activities ; and successful progression by some school leavers into waged employment.
- It should be noted, however, that the joint working at the school is a largely informal arrangement. The management committee of the Witchford Travellers Project, for example, is not an inter-agency partnership but consists of Community Education workers and Traveller representatives.
- Inevitably, there were some examples where communication and co-operation between agencies has not been optimal. Proposals to extend the school's alternative curriculum programme using New Start funds ran into differences of opinion over the role of youth workers, and two bids (albeit with totally different objectives) were eventually submitted, which potentially competed for funds.
- The Traveller Project has faced the criticism from some quarters that it has encouraged separatism. This has sometimes come from the wider community, and reflected a lack of understanding about minority disadvantage and an unwillingness to see any resources directed towards this group. Other professionals have been concerned at times that Traveller pupils had

become too strident in asserting their identity, and that quicker integration into mainstream services would be desirable.

- At the beginning of their work, Community Education workers claim that Traveller children were virtually invisible at the school, and did not participate in mainstream activities. A period of strengthening of group identity and individual confidence was thought to be essential, if integration was going to be achieved without cultural assimilation. This process may appear threatening to others, as it represents an inversion of the usual power relations associated with minority status. Other professionals, such as Traveller Education, appreciate these arguments, with the main concern being the time frame for progress towards integrated programmes.

- Community Education have incorporated an integration strategy into their programme plan. This has included joint activities with non-Traveller youth groups, and encouraging other pupils to join in the alternative Activities Week which is organised by and for the Traveller pupils. If non-Traveller pupils continue to absent themselves this may be due to continuing negative feelings towards Travellers, lack of 'ownership' of the programme (which mirrors the feelings minority group pupils may have towards mainstream activities), or because other opportunities exist at the school which they perceive to be more attractive.

- A display about a similar programme at a London school was recently encountered by the researcher at a conference. The Traveller ex-pupil who was staffing the display explained that other pupils at the school had readily joined in with their activities after about a year, but it was not possible to follow this up with the organising teachers to identify what factors may have contributed to this seemingly rapid development.

- At Witchford, the school may have inadvertently slowed the integration process to some degree by directing classroom problems to specialist Traveller teachers and youth workers, rather than improving class teachers' abilities to deal with issues sensitively. Supporting individual pupils within classes, and providing literacy support through a special needs department may also have the unintended effect of stigmatising Traveller pupils. Traveller Education teachers were keen to promote other models of support, and the Community Education Tutor believed that out-of-school support with literacy was a better option for Travellers (and possibly other pupils).

- The Witchford project is keen to expand its work with other groups of Travellers. Adult and family literacy in partnership with Cambridge Regional College could provide an opportunity to reach adult Travellers, including those who do not have children at the school. This might also be an avenue for out-of-school help for secondary pupils, if funding difficulties for this age group could be overcome.

- The patch is also seeking funding for a programme with young Travellers (and others) who are not in school, and possibly at risk of offending. This might provide an opportunity to establish links with the Youth Justice team - an apparent gap in inter-agency working which was noted in the Identification of Key Issues report at the beginning of this research programme.

- The model adopted at Witchford also has considerable potential to support Traveller pupils in secondary school elsewhere in the county, although different types of partnership arrangements and different programme content might be appropriate in other locations. Witchford staff are beginning to be approached for advice about establishing youth work with Travellers in other areas. While pleased to be recognised as a pool of expertise, they feel that this should be matched by the provision of resources and other support.

- The implications of this case study might be considered as part of the review of Community Education funding, and in the development of the Education Development Plan.

Blackwell/Willingham Area Study

- The Location Study in South Cambridgeshire did not include a consultation with site residents, but relied on discussions with district council officials, police and other service providers, an interview with a parish councillor, discussions with a Traveller site warden and a submission from a community organisation. The main issues investigated were the suitability of the range of accommodation available for Travellers in the area to the north of Cambridge City and community relations problems in the village of Willingham.
- The Blackwell Traveller's site on the northern perimeter of Cambridge was converted from a transit to a permanent site in 1996. The site was believed by district officials to have operated relatively smoothly as a transit site (although opinions vary about the willingness of different nationalities to co-habit). The relative success of the site was possibly because of its location immediately adjacent to the A14, which is a major route for occupational travellers, and because the limited facilities provided kept running costs to a minimum. There may have been some criminal activity from time to time, but no major disturbances were reported by any of the officials interviewed.
- The upgrading of the site was followed by an extremely unsettled period, characterised by heightened conflict between Irish and English families, a high turn-over of occupants, and increasing criminal and anti-social activity. It is very difficult now to unravel the course of events, but it appears that perceptions about pitch allocation exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions. Introducing the idea of permanence on the site may have created competition to establish 'ownership' of what was a limited resource. There may also have been insufficient thought given to the importance of customary usage, as travelling groups who had previously visited the site were subsequently excluded, with no alternative provision made.
- Questioning of families on unauthorised encampments by the District Traveller Liaison Officer has indicated that there is still a significant group of Travellers moving through the district who need places to stay on a short term basis. Families wishing to make a more permanent base often do not wish to occupy official sites, but would prefer their own family plot.
- There is now a live-in warden on Blackwell, and it is hoped that a stable group of compatible residents will develop, including both English and Irish families. As the warden is Irish, and has been associated with the site during some of the events described above, this may deter some English families from applying for vacant pitches, and pitch allocation continues to be a difficult issue. (This applies at many other sites in the county as well, and is discussed in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.)
- Improving the conditions on the site, including providing screening from the A14, has been proposed as means of attracting potentially permanent residents to the site. Encouraging resident involvement in site management and community development initiatives, have been seen as the key to creating long-term stability. At present, the main barrier to promoting community development on the site is the current low number of residents.
- The County and District Traveller Liaison Officers (TLOs) have worked together to promote resident participation in a scheme to re-open a cycle path adjacent to the site. A free 'hedge-pack' has also been offered through a County environmental project to improve the site boundary. However, since screening for privacy is the main issue for residents (which would probably require a planting with fast growing trees), care should be taken to ensure that shortage of other resources does not encourage solutions which do not meet the most pressing needs. Police have also expressed a wish to be consulted if the planting goes ahead.

- The District TLO has encouraged residents to decorate and make minor repairs to their units (and possibly to develop marketable skills in these areas), and hopes to make improvements to the site using voluntary labour from residents wherever possible (e.g. planting of trees or shrubs). The promotion of the do-it-yourself idea might be strengthened by examples of similar joint efforts involving council tenants in houses. Otherwise there is a risk that site residents may perceive they are receiving a lesser level of service from the council and the objective of encouraging participation may be misunderstood.
- There will also be a need to mobilise residents beyond the warden's immediate family in order to sustain and extend participation. One young resident expressed a desire for play equipment (eg. a climbing frame) to be included in the path development. Although there may not be budget for this at present, engaging other residents in discussions about children's needs, and realistic approaches to meeting them, would be in line with a participatory approach.
- It would also be desirable to reach a point where initiatives are actually resident-led, rather than suggested by site managers (the play equipment is a possible example). This may require specialist work on the site by a community development worker, possibly with a longer-term view to establishing a residents' group, or some less formal mechanism for achieving a broad base of resident involvement.
- The site is in close proximity to the Cambridge Regional College (which is the main provider of basic and vocational education in the area) and to a range of community facilities in the Kings Hedges area operated by the Cambridge City Council. The location presents a potential difficulty for access to these resources as it is just over the City boundary.
- Council staff have confirmed that City-run facilities in Kings Hedges, including group meeting rooms, recreational activities and vocational training schemes, are available to site residents, but that no outreach work can be undertaken by the Kings Hedges community development team. Traveller Education may be aware of some individuals who could benefit immediately from these services, but longer-term development work would be needed to promote a wider take-up of these opportunities. An ESF-funded minority employment project operated by the City Council has funds for training which are also potentially available to Travellers, but these resources can only be accessed by established community-led groups.
- The Cambridge Regional College works beyond the City boundary, and has undertaken outreach work with Travellers in the past. Some Traveller parents participate in family literacy at Shirley Primary, but children from the Blackwell site do not attend this school. Sustainability has been the main problem in outreach work with Travellers. The college would consider conducting courses on the Blackwell site, provided that a reasonably stable attendance could be guaranteed.
- Re-assigning an existing community development worker to spend a small amount of time working with Travellers on a regular basis may offer the best chance of sustaining a long-term approach, rather than seeking to make a specialist appointment. This would also provide good links with existing services and other programmes with which the worker is involved. A particular Community Education staff member has been suggested who may have the capacity to undertake this work provided funds can be found - preferably from within core funding, but possibly through external bids. The work might focus initially on the Blackwell site, but could also expand to include Travellers housed in the north of the city, or even in the villages beyond.
- Some Travellers have moved into council-owned housing in villages north of Cambridge. The Housing Officer for the Cottenham area said Traveller tenants face a range of practical and social problems, including lack of experience in household management, and poor relations with

neighbours ranging from a mutual lack of understanding of cultural differences to outright prejudice by householders. Housing officers generally try to support these families, but are hampered by lack of time. Support schemes using volunteers (preferably, but not necessarily Travellers) may be one solution. As this is a problem which concerns all districts, it is discussed further in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.

- The South Cambridgeshire District Council has also approved a number of private caravan sites in the Willingham and Cottenham area. There was no permanent site provision in the district until the late 1980s when the New Farm site at Whaddon was opened. Planning applications for private sites began to increase during that decade, and were usually submitted retrospectively. A Planning Committee was formed to try to streamline approval of suitable applications, but there is still considerable local opposition. Statistics are not available on approval rates, but it is likely that the majority of the approvals have been won on appeal.

- District planners have expressed a desire to establish better dialogue with Travellers so that planning issues might be discussed before purchasing land. Although they believe they have made efforts in this direction, Travellers will be aware of the low success rate of previous applications and unlikely to feel that contact would be in their interests. There are no easy answers, but some ideas will be presented in the Suggestions for Good Practice report for breaking this vicious cycle.

- District officials believe that granting planning approvals has created a 'honeypot' effect which has attracted more Travellers into the area. An analysis of official caravan counts for the district, which is included in the Travellers in Cambridgeshire report, showed that there had been a significant shift during the 1990s from unauthorised encampments towards private sites (not necessarily, but quite probably, the same individuals). However, the overall growth during that period was only average for the county. There may have been some net increases in caravan numbers prior to this, but earlier data was not examined.

- Another view is that the demand for accommodation has more to do with customary travelling patterns and land use changes than the attraction of Traveller-friendly planning policies. The willingness of farmers to sell former agricultural land to Travellers who previously visited the area for seasonal work, has probably been a greater determinant of where Travellers have tried to settle. Discussions with a Willingham parish councillor suggested that villagers may have very precise views about the location, if any, in which particular families are entitled to live (linked to previous employment on particular farms). Apparently unknown families may therefore be perceived to be coming into an area, when in fact they are not unknown to the district as a whole.

- Travellers themselves may display similar views about the entitlement of other Travellers to occupy particular locations. These distinctions are often delimited by nationality. In particular, English Gypsies may fear being 'over-run' or 'invaded' by Irish Travellers, and use similar terminology to that used by settled populations in relation to Travellers. Although this inter-group conflict has been particularly overt in South Cambridgeshire, it affects the whole county, and will be discussed further in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.

- The proximity of private Travellers' sites to the official caravan site in Willingham has sometimes created difficulties. At the time of writing the official site was closed temporarily, following extensive damage (which was not believed to have been caused by residents). The parish council has welcomed the closure, and the district council has questioned whether this accommodation is needed, now that Blackwell has become a permanent site. On the other hand, central government has indicated a wish that existing accommodation for Travellers be maintained, although they have not offered resources or other support to encourage this.

- In deciding whether to close the site permanently (based, for example, on the findings of the TLO's questioning of people on unauthorised encampments) consideration might be given to whether suitable residents could be found from neighbouring districts. Any decision to re-open the site should bear in mind the community relations issues to be discussed later, and might consider the comments by Travellers (Appendix 3 of the Location Studies report) about the sites' attractions and drawbacks as a place to live.
- A Willingham parish councillor said villagers felt 'swamped' by the sheer numbers of Travellers settling in the area and 'abandoned' by the local authorities and police, who had failed to appreciate or respond to their situation. The main problems were perceived to be crime and anti-social behaviour, and reduced standards at the local primary school.
- The councillor thought the latter problem had been alleviated to some extent by the provision of support by Traveller Education teachers, although he wondered whether separate education might not be better both for the Traveller children and other pupils.
- Crime was thought to be at a higher level than ever before in the village, including theft of vehicles and pilfering of fuel. The councillor acknowledged that car crime and anti-social behaviour was attributable to only a few individuals, but claimed there was widespread resentment in the village against Travellers as a whole, as they were seen to be 'above the law', for example in relation to vehicle registration and other driving regulations.
- Police agree that some serious crime has been committed by Traveller individuals but do not support the view that Travellers are responsible for all, or even the majority of, the crime in the area. Criminal activity by one family had come to a head in 1997, but the situation had improved since. A County councillor quoted in the Cambridge Evening News in November 1996 attributed increases in crime and anti-social behaviour in the village to the rapid general population growth, which had occurred without a commensurate increase in community facilities.
- The councillor interviewed for this study said openly that the parish would like to see planning applications decided on an individual family basis. There is a greater readiness to accept 'old-style Travellers' who are known to the area, while rejecting others who are seen as a threat. The problem is often attributed to degeneration in the behaviour of younger Travellers. However, in the researcher's view, the perception of threat has been exaggerated by a breakdown in the familiar employer/employee relationship which, in more secure and orderly times, governed relations between farmers and 'their' seasonal Traveller workforce. Structural changes have therefore directly affected community relations.
- In the absence of systematic information, it is difficult to know the extent of resentment against Travellers in the village. Independent planning researchers in Scotland, interviewed people who had lodged complaints about proposals for official Gypsy sites, several years after the sites had been opened. Their research demonstrated a differential impact on residents, with adjacent farmers and businesses the most adversely affected. Problems were remarkably similar to those mentioned in Willingham, including pilfering of diesel and difficulties with children fitting into school. However, ordinary householders who had protested about the site generally admitted they had been unaffected, which was attributed to good site management.
- It might be argued that the situation in Willingham is complicated by greater numbers of Travellers living in the area, and the mix of private and publicly-provided accommodation. Nevertheless, the Scottish research suggests that responding selectively to particular problems, is likely to be more productive than assuming a generalised anti-Traveller sentiment. For example, if the official site at Willingham is to be re-opened, discussions with neighbouring farmers might be held to take mutually-agreed steps to minimise practical problems such as incursions onto their land.

- The Scottish study also provides a good model for conducting sensitive research, carried out in a community relations rather than a crime reduction framework and by independent researchers. The addition of consultations with Travellers would be an important element if anything similar were to be attempted in the Willingham area. Travellers interviewed at other locations for the Cambridgeshire research displayed a willingness to discuss community relations issues openly and constructively.
- Local authorities have a responsibility under the Race Relations Act to promote good relations between ethnic groups. While this can be pursued in terms of public education about Traveller cultures and the need for tolerance, practical interventions, such as support in school and the provision of other services, is a more direct way of alleviating or pre-empting conflict. A balance of law enforcement and community development is needed, so that Travellers as a group are not just blamed for things some of them did or did not do, but are given opportunities to build positive relationships with the wider community and re-establish sustainable ways of life.
- The Safer Villages programme presents one such opportunity. A youth bus, basketball facilities and vehicle crime programme targeting 11 to 18 year olds are being developed under the scheme, but there is no indication that specific efforts are being made to consider access by Travellers. The parish councillor believes that joint use, for example of the youth bus, would lead to conflict. If this is so, then extra resources or expertise may be required to ensure that young Travellers have access to facilities and programmes which may help them individually, and may improve relations in the longer term.
- Other avenues for youth work might also be considered. The Cottenham Village College is the main provider in the area. Unfortunately, time constraints did not allow the researcher to visit the college, but it is understood that some conflicts have occurred in the past between Travellers and non-Travellers attending the youth club. The fact that most of the Traveller youths were not otherwise associated with the college was seen as a contributing factor. As this generation is the key to improving future relations with the settled community, it would be extremely valuable if an informed assessment were made of the best way to provide services for young Travellers in the area.
- Options might be, for example, targeting provision at different sub-groups (e.g. defined by gender, age group and/or school attendance) in a range of different locations, or concentrating efforts on familiarising more young people with the school environment. The experience at Witchford suggests that some separate provision may be needed to ease the path to integration, but this may or may not fit with local Community Education patch priorities or current funding levels. (The need for county-wide consideration of services for young Travellers is discussed in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.)
- Finally, a submission was made to the researcher by the British Horse Society about unauthorised encampments blocking access to bridleways in Willingham, Cottenham and other parts of the district. The long-term solution to this must lie in the provision of temporary stopping places for Travellers. This is discussed in the Suggestions for Good Practice report. In the meantime, it can only be a matter of mutual compromise in individual cases.
- The Society also expressed concern about the welfare of Travellers' horses, particularly the dangers of tethered horses straying onto roads. Several local authorities have been identified through the research which provide some grazing facilities. These are also discussed in the Suggestions for Best Practice report. The Willingham or Cottenham area might be considered if such a scheme were to be introduced in Cambridgeshire.

Wisbech Area Study

- A group of health, education and welfare professionals has been meeting in Wisbech for several years to discuss ways of improving the access of Travellers to local services. (The group is referred to in this report as the Wisbech Group.) The Ormiston Children and Families Trust has taken a lead in this work and the emphasis has been on family support and pre-school provision. In order to provide a direction for the group's work, the Ormiston Trust commissioned research in 1997 into Traveller families' needs and take-up of services.
- Sixteen mothers with children under 5 were interviewed for the study. The research concluded that many mothers would make use of pre-school provision if given some support, such as introductory visits to the Wisbech Children and Families Project run by the Ormiston Trust, or accompanied visits to other services. Some of the women expressed a tentative interest in basic skills and first aid education, and in finding out more about organising children's play groups.
- Relations with the wider community were superficially tolerant, but attitudes from non-Travellers often changed when a Traveller site address or a known Traveller surname was given. Some women seemed to avoid interaction and retreat into family life. Others who had more contact tended to report more experiences of discrimination or hostility. There appeared to be a role for voluntary agencies to provide advocacy (for example in gaining access to discretionary benefits) and to mediate between Travellers and statutory bodies such as Social Services.
- A case study demonstrated the practical and emotional problems faced by a female Traveller taking up council housing for the first time, and also revealed inequalities in the benefits provided for house and caravan dwellers which had forced her to take this step. The example also demonstrated the need for advocacy to negotiate the numerous agencies and bureaucratic systems involved.
- As the researcher for the Cambridgeshire Travellers Review had also conducted the consultation for the Ormiston Trust, the Location Study provided an opportunity to generate some action from the existing research findings. The Wisbech Group agreed that a community development/link worker was needed to enable Traveller families to take up relevant services and develop self-sufficiency. A joint application was to be made to the Rural Development Commission who had funded the initial research.
- Initially, introductory visits of the mobile library were planned for the Newbridge Lane site, to be used as a basis for multi-agency outreach work. The development worker was to co-ordinate this programme and encourage resident participation in this, or other initiatives which might emerge. However, the mobile library was not able to manoeuvre on the site (apparently due to site refurbishment), and a new starting point had to be found.
- A valuable partnership was then formed with the Isle College, and the proposal for a community worker was re-directed towards promoting adult and vocational education, and providing advocacy and linking to other services. The College undertook to make its existing courses more accessible to Travellers, with additional funding to be sought as needed to develop more tailored courses. By the time the Location Study was completed, the group had begun to draft a funding proposal for the developmental position.
- The previous research by the Ormiston Trust had found that District Traveller Liaison Officers and site managers could play a valuable role in identifying individuals in need of support from other agencies (as do the Traveller Education home school liaison officers). It would therefore

be desirable to include the Fenland District Council in the Wisbech partnership, particularly in relation to the advocacy and referral aspects of the proposal.

- Although the community development initiative will promote economic development through training, there is no specific proposal at this stage aimed at community enterprise, or targeted at Traveller men. Both the District and County are currently bidding for European Social Fund grants and other resources to promote economic development in Fenland. The needs of Traveller households should be considered in any programmes which follow, particularly in view of the levels of deprivation demonstrated at Newbridge Lane and elsewhere in Elm Parish. (See the Travellers in Cambridgeshire report.)

- Independently of the Wisbech Group initiative, two directions were emerging for work with young Travellers in the area. Traveller Education staff and other teachers established a Travellers Support Group in Queens School. And Community Education provided funds from central budgets for a youth worker from the Oasis Centre to conduct outreach work with young Travellers and their families.

- As a very large secondary school, Queens did not have a good record in addressing non-attendance by Travellers, and many parents were known to have negative opinions of the school. The Travellers Support Group was a voluntary undertaking, with no official support from the school. An imaginative idea to hold a Family Fun Day in the summer break to promote transfer of new pupils from primary school was cancelled at the last minute, due to timing difficulties and lack of opportunity to promote the event. Since resuming the school year, the group has turned its attention to developing a 'survival guide' for new pupils with tips from other young Travellers. In the researchers' view, the Family Fun Day would be worth trying again, with a longer lead time and the possibility of involving Traveller pupils and parents in the organisation of the event.

- By the time the Location Study commenced, the youth worker had made initial visits to Traveller sites and forged links with both the Wisbech Group and Travellers Support group at Queens. Some young Travellers had attended drop-in sessions at the Oasis Centre, but progress with the outreach work was delayed by lack of an assistant to accompany the youth worker (a condition which was imposed by managers, apparently out of concern for her safety). The youth worker also hoped to make contact with Traveller pupils in Queens school, and possibly establish an Information Point. Progress on this work was complicated by lack of official links with the school.

- Both of these projects would benefit greatly from a closer working relationship between Traveller Education staff, other teachers, and youth workers, which is officially sanctioned and supported by the school. It is not clear who would be in a position to broker such an agreement. As Queens is a grant-maintained school this may complicate the process, as even Traveller Education services are 'bought in' at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

- Informal links with the wider community education project described above have been established through the attendance of the youth worker and Traveller Education home-school liaison officer at meetings of the Wisbech Group. These communication channels will be valuable, for example in identifying school-aged Travellers who may benefit from alternative adult or vocational training.

- The needs of Traveller pupils have been specifically recognised in a proposal for a New Start initiative in the Fenland area, aimed at 14 to 16 year olds who are at risk of dropping out of school. The arrangement offers special consideration for Traveller pupils through a quota system for allocation to an alternative programme, without marginalising them by separate provision.

- Following the decision not to trial the mobile library, a proposal has been developed by Libraries and Heritage to work with the County TLO, Traveller Education and the manager of the Wisbech Public Library to promote library use by Travellers. The willingness of the library manager to extend services to Travellers is the reason for piloting the work in this area. Thought might be given in the future as to whether this programme might link to the Wisbech Group community education initiative.
- It has also been suggested that Travellers in the Wisbech area might become involved in organising the Romani Health Fair which the North West Anglia Health Authority has proposed for Peterborough in 1999. It is not clear how this idea might be progressed, as the timing of the community development post is uncertain at the moment, and a planning group of interested Travellers would need to be formed in the near future.
- The Fenland District Council initially identified difficulty in finding residents for the official site at Turf Fen as a problem which they would like the research project to address. Eventually it was decided that the research could do little to shed light on the problem, which is known to be due to relative isolation, and reluctance of English and Irish Travellers to share the same small site. Pitch allocation problems are discussed in general in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

Preliminary comments

- This summary articulates broad principles and possible frameworks to promote positive policies towards Travellers. The body of the Suggestions for Good Practice report gives examples of approaches tried elsewhere and, as far as possible, tries to relate these initiatives to the situation in Cambridgeshire. In most cases it has not been possible to make an independent assessment of the success of these schemes, nor to consider the feasibility of introducing similar approaches within the County.
- An annotated bibliography attached to the Suggestions for Good Practice report provides a list of key references and an outline of each publication. Many of these materials have been deposited with the Local Government Information Service at Shire Hall or left with the County Traveller Liaison Officer (TLO). Selected documents on promoting community development with Travellers have been copied and circulated to individuals who participated in the Location Studies. A range of videos, cassettes and pamphlets dealing mainly with health promotion, school attendance and Romani culture has also been collected over the course of the research, and has been passed on to the County TLO.

Guiding principles

- A first step in creating a more positive relationship with Travelling communities is to recognise their ethnic and/or cultural identities, and their legitimacy as established minority groups. In Ireland, this recognition has occurred at a national level, and has guided the development of accommodation policies and community-led projects, many funded from Europe. In Cambridgeshire, Travellers have been part of the County's heritage - welcomed in the past as seasonal workers and for other services they provided, but now adversely affected by changes in social and material conditions.
- An identity-based approach is central to ensuring culturally-appropriate delivery of some services, and in creating a wider understanding that social identity is not simply a matter of individual choice (so that Traveller identity is not likely to disappear). However, this perspective should not be so absolute as to overlook the range of personal and socio-economic

circumstances in which individual Travellers live (including non-traditional Travellers), to interpret every action of individual Travellers as determined solely by 'Traveller culture', nor to suggest that Travellers' needs are so unique that separate services should necessarily be provided.

- Gypsies have been recognised in law as a group covered by the Race Relations Act. This creates a special duty on local authorities under section 71 to work to eliminate discrimination against them and to promote good relations with the majority community. Technically, Irish Travellers may or may not be covered by this particular ruling, but clearly face discrimination on the basis of their Irish origin in any case, at the hands of both the majority community and indigenous Travellers. Peterborough has a Race Equality Council, but there is no obvious focus for race relations work in rural areas, where most of the known Traveller population of Cambridgeshire is based. Strategies to improve relations between these groups should not concentrate solely on individual attitudes and the lack of understanding which can sustain discrimination, but also on the material conditions which can bring sections of the community into conflict and competition over resources.

- Prejudice or pressure to conform to a majority way of life can create a vicious cycle, where aggressive responses from those experiencing these difficulties may come to justify even harsher treatment of them. Where Travellers are identified as a group by officials or the general public, they are often seen as a problem. The underlying rationale of this research has been that a move away from this view (which emphasises enforcement and control), towards addressing the problems faced by Travellers (by helping Travellers to meet their own needs) is the best way to break this vicious cycle. This approach could have benefits in the longer term not only for Travellers, but for those who work with them, and for the wider community, by reducing the need for costly, reactive responses. Appendix 2 contains a model which represents this argument diagrammatically.

- Some readers may perceive this argument as a 'soft option', or as pandering to people who are already demanding and undeserving. In fact, the more that circumstances support and enable a Traveller way of life, the more justification one has for enforcing the law rigorously where necessary. Secondly, there is not such a dichotomy between the 'control' and 'humanitarian' paradigms as might be assumed, as the latter may promote the development of community self-regulation which reduces the need for external controls to be imposed. Finally, the argument is not for welfarism, which has created a cycle of dependency and paternalism on official sites (as in other areas of economic deprivation) but for a response which promotes self determination and social responsibility without loss of cultural identity. This requires different strategies for Travellers living in different circumstances, as set out below.

Accommodation provision

- For those Travellers who are able to sustain a nomadic way of life, provision of short term stopping places and the encouragement of co-operative use of them is the obvious priority. While recognising that this is an intransigent issue with a regional and national dimension, it would be appropriate for Cambridgeshire, with its large caravan-dwelling Traveller population, to take a leading role. Re-visiting the multi-agency exercise which was begun through the Travellers Review Steering Group to identify potential emergency stopping places, and building on the information which was collated about travelling patterns and customary (unauthorised) camping places in the Travellers in Cambridgeshire report could provide a starting point. Models of provision might also be found in Europe, for example in Germany.

- For Travellers who are willing and able to provide a home base for themselves (as encouraged by government policy) a planning system in which they have confidence could be the basis for improved co-operation in the future. This would be greatly enhanced by general improvements

in community relations, and by the development of formal mechanisms for improved communication between members, planning officials and Travellers (see section below on Consulting Travellers).

- In the absence of grant funding, more 'lateral thinking' will be needed (to quote the words of the Environment Minister) to provide new accommodation for families who cannot afford to provide it themselves. As there are increasing management problems and reducing demand for some existing sites, any new provision should avoid the 'caravan estate' model which has proved to be socially dysfunctional and unsupportive of traditional means of income generation. Meanwhile, management of existing sites might be enhanced by the adoption of some community development principles, and should be brought in line as far as possible with the service provided for housed tenants (both discussed later)

- Housing Associations have led the way in developing innovative approaches to social housing provision by emphasising consultation with prospective occupiers, joint funding of developments and a holistic approach to service provision which places housing at the centre. Housing Associations and development agencies are just beginning to apply these principles to the provision of accommodation for Travellers, often with funding from European sources. Examples from Ireland and Italy are given in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.

- Rightly or wrongly, statutory bodies may perceive themselves to be more constrained by national policies than these independent organisations. However, with political support, local planners might move beyond the criteria-based policies which are being developed at present towards a more proactive approach. This would involve identifying suitable land for development, facilitating planning approval, and considering a range of partnerships for funding and developing accommodation (including prospective Traveller owners and/or occupiers).

- Although this is a radical suggestion in the current climate, it advocates little more than the normalisation of Traveller accommodation policies within broader strategies for social housing. Lack of central funding is, of course, a significant obstacle, as is the prospect of local opposition. If innovative schemes were ever to be introduced which involved public expenditure it would be reasonable to place clear criteria on eligibility, in the way that is done for social housing, in order to allay fears (however well or ill founded) about a 'honeypot effect'.

- Volunteer-based support for Travellers who have moved into housing could greatly improve community relations and, provided it is culturally sensitive, encourage others to take this step where it is the best choice for them. The use of Travellers as volunteers has the advantage of promoting self-reliance within the community and avoiding paternalism. Using well trained non-Traveller volunteers has the advantage of promoting cross-cultural interaction, and may suit some Travellers who prefer to deal with someone from outside their own community (for example for reasons of privacy). Schemes could include both Traveller and non-Traveller volunteers, to provide a choice to clients. The East Cambridgeshire Traveller Liaison Group is beginning to investigate this possibility and consult with some local Travellers about the type of scheme which would be most beneficial. There is a demonstrated need across the County.

- If volunteer schemes are to be established, they would need good links to housing providers (while also retaining an element of independence) and a sound training and support structure for volunteers, possibly through an alliance with an experienced voluntary organisation. Possibilities include Homestart (which provides a range of advice and support to families within their homes) or Lance (a more recently established 'grass-roots' organisation which promotes peer advocacy amongst homeless people). Both agencies are Cambridge-based and have indicated their support in principle.

· As well as assisting people who have moved into housing, structural disadvantages which force many Travellers into this position against their will should also be tackled through greater flexibility in housing-related benefits, the measures outlined above for new types of site provision, and community and economic development initiatives which may enhance the options available to some families in the long term. The decision not to allow housing benefit to cover the rental of a caravan is one factor which can sometimes force families who cannot afford to replace caravans into accepting council housing. This appears to be a local decision, as full pitch and caravan arrangements have been allowed in some other counties, and possibly on occasion within Cambridgeshire.

· The view of some district planners, is that future generations of Travellers settled on private caravan sites will probably be unable to demonstrate 'occupational nomadism' in order to qualify under Gypsy site planning policies, which may also give rise to more house-dwelling Travellers in the future. There is no indication of any intention on the part of the government to introduce a 'cultural rights' justification for approving Gypsy sites, which would automatically extend across generations. However, the blanket denial of the right of subsequent generations to take over a family plot, where there has been no other change in circumstances which is relevant from a planning point of view, would appear to be an unreasonable denial of security for settled Travellers. Such decisions might be liable to challenge following the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights and may arguably be 'appealable' within current planning guidance.

Equality in service delivery

· Clear recognition of Travellers within equal opportunities policies has been the starting point for much of the positive work carried out by statutory agencies, and some authorities locate their 'Traveller function' within an equal opportunities department. However, simply articulating principles in the belief that this will translate into 'mainstreaming' of Traveller issues across substantive policy areas is likely to achieve very little. At least two other steps are essential - the first to improve the way in which services are provided, and the second to improve the capacity of Travelling communities to take up services.

· The first step is the development of an equal opportunities culture which is sophisticated enough to respond to the needs of different groups, and accepts that different processes may be required in order to reach equivalent (although not necessarily identical) outcomes. This move from notions of 'simple' or 'formal' equality towards 'substantive' equality is supported by international legal agreements, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was promulgated as early as 1965. General training of agency staff in equality of service provision may sometimes be necessary in order to maximise the impact of specific awareness-raising information about Travelling cultures and lifestyles. Experience has shown that services which are flexible to the needs of minority groups generally have benefits for other users as well. Specialist provision such as mobile services should not necessarily be ruled out as 'separatist', particularly for mobile groups who may have few other opportunities to access some services, or for more settled Travellers where similar services are provided in any case for the wider community (e.g. the mobile library and village benefits advice).

· Secondly, it is widely accepted that action on the ground is often needed to build awareness and self-confidence with potential service users and provide practical links into mainstream services. This may justify some separate provision in the short term (e.g. on-site or mobile literacy classes or play facilities), provided that the objective is to increase the ability and willingness to access mainstream services wherever possible. Clearly articulated policies for Travellers (and other social groups where barriers to access have been identified),

accompanied by specialist link workers where needed, should not be confused with separate service provision.

Application of equality principles

- Specific prejudices or fears about Travellers or Traveller sites may create a barrier to the provision of services. This was demonstrated on several occasions during the Location Studies, for example when the good intentions of library managers to promote the use of the mobile library for Travellers was hampered by resistance within the organisation, and when the co-ordinator of the village benefits service would not consider organising visits to sites. This situation is in breach of the Council's statutory duty to provide services without discrimination.
- For agencies which provide non-threatening services but have little contact with Travellers, training and partnership working with specialist agencies may be the way to overcome these barriers. The emerging partnership between Traveller Education and Libraries and Heritage to promote library use is a case in point.
- For agencies whose role carries the greatest risk of conflictual contact, such as social services, police, and officials dealing with unauthorised encampments, promoting positive aspects of services (e.g. play provision and support for the elderly, or community policing and information about support services) may be an effective strategy to improve relations in the long term. Many Travellers will not want their privacy interrupted by merely 'PR' visits, but generally appreciate offers of concrete services. Alternatively, agencies (e.g. voluntary or Traveller representative agencies) might be used as a 'go-between'. Where visits to sites are necessary, and conflict may be anticipated, systematic and informed risk assessment should be the basis for deciding on the appropriate approach (as with any other home visit).
- In many cases it is apprehension attached to Travellers' sites (for example due to dogs or feelings of 'territoriality') rather than fear or prejudice about individual Travellers which underlies the reluctance to provide services. Although it is not healthy to leave this perception unchallenged, the need for outreach work or on-site provision might diminish if concerted efforts are made to encourage Travellers to take up mainstream services. (Although Travellers should always be entitled to the same consideration in the provision of mobile services or home visits provided for the rest of the community.)
- Site officials who come to see residents as demanding and undeserving are themselves caught up in the distorted relations created by welfare dependency and the so-called 'poverty trap'. (The researcher has observed the same disillusionment amongst community workers based in economically deprived housing estates.) Promoting understanding of this structural analysis amongst officials, and greater self reliance amongst site residents may have the potential to improve working relations.
- Three options for site management were presented to the Travellers Review Steering Group. The option chosen was to support an 'enhanced' version of the 'status quo'. The formalisation of site management agreements will provide an opportunity to articulate how the 'status quo' is to be enhanced, including principles and structures which are based on equality with housing management wherever possible. Principles to be agreed with districts could include : the promotion of resident participation, access to general housing complaints systems, a possible role for the County TLO as a mediator between residents and site managers (at the request of either), guidelines which set out a proper balance between resident's privacy and site monitoring, formal information sharing agreements in line with data protection principles, and consideration of more secure tenancies (or even the right to buy), possibly after a qualifying period on licence (where this is not prevented by the nature of the underlying planning permission).

· Pitch allocation represents a considerable challenge to equality principles, and deserves separate discussion. At present, site managers are placed in extremely difficult predicaments, often having to negotiate a course between non-discrimination in allocation against a background of pressure applied by existing residents to exclude particular applicants on personal or ethnic grounds. This is a direct product of the 'caravan estate' model which brings households together for long periods in close proximity, which is alien to Traveller traditions and largely unparalleled in conventional housing .

· Pitch allocation policy and site management might be seen as two sides of the same coin. That is, more inclusive allocation policies require more effort in enforcing site rules, whereas excluding potentially incompatible residents allows a more relaxed management approach. Borrowing from international relations parlance, what is involved is a balance of peace and justice, whereby opting to keep the peace may sometimes result in excluding a potential resident on seemingly unjust grounds. Filling sites with only one or two compatible extended families is a 'peace-keeping solution' which would be acceptable on equality grounds so long as provision can be made for all other needy families (for example through the pro-active accommodation policies discussed earlier). The large size of existing official sites, and the lack of public resources (and possibly 'politically acceptable' locations) for developing smaller sites seems to preclude this approach at present.

· While site managers will protest that judgements about pitch allocation are sensitive, and cannot be overly-formalised, equity with housed tenants demands that some consideration be given to making procedures more explicit and open, and in providing an accessible mechanism for rejected applicants to question decisions. In many cases, families may not wish to live on a site where it has become clear that they are not welcome, but the existence of properly established structures would provide some protection for both applicants and district officials (for example against possible accusations of bias). The Council's non-discrimination stance should also be made clear to existing residents, possibly through the pitch licence, as it is to applicants for housing (although it is recognised that such declarations will have little immediate impact on the underlying tensions between individual families and ethnic groups).

· The recent Crime and Disorder legislation, and the resulting crime audit process, creates a situation where Travellers might be at risk of receiving too much, or not the right kind of, attention. In this case, the application of equality principles leads to the conclusion that crime reduction strategies should not focus a priori on any particular social group. Quite properly, the crime audits which are in process will be based initially on geographical areas and offence types at district level. The question of identifying frequently offending groups may properly arise in later analyses at local levels. If soundly-based empirical patterns point to some Traveller perpetrators, this should be dealt with constructively in the interests of the whole community, and the victimisation of Travellers should also be considered.

· Whether or not evidence of Traveller over-representation in some kinds of crime is sought or discovered, there is independent justification in any case for seeking to ensure that Travellers benefit from any preventive programmes for young people provided through the crime reduction strategy, on the basis of 'risk factors' such as non-attendance at school.

Co-ordination of services - district liaison groups

· Multi-agency Traveller Liaison Groups (TLGs) operating at district level have been the main vehicle for co-ordinating services to both authorised and unauthorised sites. With the exception of Peterborough, which has developed a more strategic outlook, these groups function mainly through sharing information about specific case work. Because of confidentiality, the routine attendance of Travellers has not been encouraged, except in a professional capacity. Having

observed many of these meetings, this appears to be a justifiable decision, provided that other opportunities are provided for communication with other Travellers, and that Travellers are invited to discuss issues of a more general nature when they arise. (See the section on Consulting Travellers.)

- Part of the role of the TLG is to co-ordinate a multi-agency response to unauthorised encampments. These needs assessments are required by law before measures can be taken to move families on. Traveller supporters have often complained that TLGs were only established in many areas simply to plan evictions. This has not been the case at any of the meetings attended by the researcher, where the emphasis has been on providing services.

- If TLGs are to work effectively, both the scope of the membership (in terms of agencies attending) and the continuity of individual members is important. There is a range of opinion nationally about whether specialist workers are needed. This depends on the service involved, and on the degree of isolation or disaffection which Travellers in a particular area are experiencing. The main disadvantage of relying on either specialist workers or independent organisations is that it reduces contact between non-specialist professionals and Traveller clients. Having an identified 'lead worker' within each service is a compromise position.

- It has been suggested in Cambridgeshire that a consolidated list which identifies the person or persons from each agency who is responsible for key services in each district (whether or not that person attends TLG meetings) would be of great benefit for practitioners working with Travellers. This could be established and maintained as a central resource by the County.

- TLGs contain a mixture of agencies which work directly and proactively with Travellers and those which respond to referrals. This means that some agencies see participation in the groups as intrinsic to their work (e.g. Traveller Education), while others may attend only sporadically, and find it difficult to reconcile the work with their own organisational priorities (e.g. Social Services). The difficulty of engaging Social Services actively in the needs assessment process has been observed nationally. Health visitors have historically been proactive in their contact with Travellers. However, re-structuring of Cambridge and Huntingdon Health Authority and the loss of the traditional health visitor function has greatly reduced the capacity to visit sites and build up positive relationships.

- Agencies also differ in their statutory responsibilities and organisational philosophies. Some tensions might be expected therefore, between the aims of agencies (or sections within agencies) whose responsibilities fall mainly within law enforcement, and those responsible for service provision. These tensions are not insurmountable, but may affect group dynamics. It is the researcher's observation, for example, that the input of community police at TLG meetings has often been very constructive, but it is not so clear how the presence of representatives of the Force Intelligence Bureau accords with the aims of the groups. Similarly, the expectations on district officials (e.g. to move on unauthorised campers) may be at odds with the objectives of service providers (e.g. to enrol children from nomadic families in school).

- Establishing the appropriate geographical area to be covered by a TLG also raises some difficulties. While the focus on local authority areas makes sense administratively, it does not always correspond to the dispersal of the Traveller population. For example, in Fenland, discussions about Chatteris seem worlds apart from Wisbech, while in South Cambridgeshire, movement across district and county borders has resulted at times in the presence of at TLG meetings of officials from outside the County. The different operational areas used by each of the agencies is another cause for confusion, as there are sometimes several teams (for example of social workers) operating within different parts of a District.

- It has been suggested that new site management arrangements might lead to TLGs taking on a community development role. Although TLGs can clearly generate ideas for development, they do not currently have the skills or resources to conduct this work. There may also be a fundamental conflict of roles between service-providers who have the authority to determine access to services, and community development workers who must establish a non-threatening relationship with clients. Community development workers have occasionally attended TLG meetings, but have tended to absent themselves due to philosophical differences. Since the involvement of Travellers is central to a community development approach, this is another aspect in which the composition of TLGs is currently inappropriate for the task.
- If a more strategic role is envisaged for TLGs, this might be better directed towards encouraging a problem-solving approach and working more clearly towards identified goals. This could include identifying recurring problems in service delivery which require resources or policy decisions (e.g. provision of school transport), problems being experienced by the wider community (e.g. repeated encampments in areas which are unsuitable) or systematic discrimination against Travellers (e.g. by particular pubs or sections of the media). If a project approach is to be taken, consideration might be given to meeting more often - say every 2 months - so that progress can be monitored.
- Throughout the research period TLGs have been considering their terms of reference, with varying degrees of progress. In view of the different organisational and personal perspectives discussed above, it might be helpful to conduct a simple review process, where group members are able to make a short, confidential submission (possibly to the County TLO) setting out their views on the current modus operandi of the group, and making suggestions for the future. The key points raised could then be discussed in the groups, and brought to the attention of the Travellers Review Steering Group (or its successor).

Co-ordination of services - strategic approaches

- While TLGs have been relied on to promote inter-agency working on the ground, the Travellers Review Steering Group has itself proceeded in a manner which generally observes departmental and agency boundaries. For example, the group's Action Plan consists primarily of points identified and pursued within individual agencies. There is a need to connect the inter-agency work at the TLG level to the strategic and policy-making body, and establish ongoing communication in both directions. The County TLO currently reports directly to the Service Advisory Group about strategic issues, especially where resources are required. However, mechanisms for reporting to the Steering Group (or whatever body or bodies follow from it) could help to resolve issues which are within the current resources and remit of officials.
- TLGs at the moment work on an almost voluntary basis, with varying levels of organisational commitment as discussed above. This may be a reality of under-staffing and stretched resources. However, the Travellers Review Steering Group could ask members to articulate for their own agencies how they will work in partnership on Traveller issues, and what priority they will give to TLG (and other) work. Goal-setting and provision of resources to groups may also help to give a higher status to TLG activity. The failure to secure Social Services representation on the Steering Group, or to invite a Community Education representative, are clearly gaps from key service providers.
- Some local authorities have elected to develop 'corporate policies' which articulate each agency or department's role and responsibility, and sometimes outline commitments to inter-agency working. If this approach is not favoured, then some kind of 'watching brief' will have to be established to ensure that Travellers' needs are considered in mainstream policies. This would require ongoing monitoring of policies and advocacy and negotiation with different service providers. This function could be assigned to officers nominated to take the Steering Group into

an implementation phase, or could be the responsibility of a particular person within an equal opportunities or Traveller liaison remit.

- Some authorities have formed sustained multi-agency partnerships to improve services. Examples include the Haringey One Stop Shop which is a joint initiative of housing and social services, who have shared responsibility for the authority's Traveller accommodation. The West Midlands Traveller Education Consortium has taken the initiative in establishing a range of multi-agency partnerships to provide services for Travellers moving through the region and crossing local authority boundaries. Other partnerships are for more specific services such as the mobile library programme implemented by Traveller Education and the libraries service in Sheffield.

- In Cambridgeshire, the key service-provider from amongst statutory agencies is the Team for Traveller Education. However, the Team is largely restricted to classroom work due to limitations on funding. The crucial role of home school liaison officers in informal partnership work is widely recognised but it is not always clear whether this work is officially sanctioned. If Traveller Education were to take a lead in multi-agency partnerships to co-ordinate services, the service would require a broader base of funding and would need to develop a more strategic outlook, including a broad perspective on education which includes family support.

- Inter-agency frameworks which have been established through national initiatives such as the Crime and Disorder legislation, New Start and New Deal programmes, and Health Living initiatives provide other ready-made fora for promoting partnership work at a strategic level. In this case, Travellers would not be the primary focus for the formation of the partnership, but could be considered, where appropriate, as one of a number of priority groups within the respective strategies.

- Voluntary groups which have a close working relationship with Travellers can play an important role as mediators and advocates in partnership working, especially where there are poor relations between Travellers and a particular agency, or where lack of resources restricts levels of positive contact. For example, an Under 8s Advisors might accept an the assessment of need made by a referring professional in considering eligibility for an assisted place in a playgroup, rather than propose a Social Services assessment which the client might be reluctant to accept. Other instances where independent advocacy is valuable is in negotiating the labyrinth of agencies which can be involved in responding to a complex problem such as homelessness, or the needs of a disabled child.

Promotion of economic and community development

- Community development may be of particular benefit to those Travellers adopting a relatively settled lifestyle, in order to open up new employment opportunities and promote better relations with the wider community. It is axiomatic, that these initiatives should be community-led and not imposed (some individuals will feel that they are best served by less contact, not more, with statutory agencies and other professionals). Through the Location Studies, community development has been suggested both to ameliorate the restriction of opportunity arising from long-term residence on a site (i.e. Oxney Road) and to encourage stability on a site where there has been too high a turnover of residents (i.e. Blackwell).

- Apparently successful programmes have tended to begin with groups of Traveller women, focusing on personal development (e.g. literacy) and shared concerns (e.g. cultural preservation or child development and welfare). Some groups have moved at their own pace to a more community-advocacy role, including the promotion of understanding of Traveller life within the wider population, campaigning for policy changes and training individuals to work within their

own communities. A range of these programmes is reviewed in the Suggestions for Good Practice report and listed in the annotated bibliography.

- It is noticeable that most of these programmes involve Irish Travellers. However this need not lead to the conclusion that Gypsy Travellers will not be attracted to group work. The distinction may be partly due to circumstantial factors (such as greater awareness amongst Irish Travellers of the success of the Pavee Point development programmes, or higher concentrations of house-dwelling Irish populations in London) rather than inviolable cultural differences between the groups.
- Gender dynamics may also provide a barrier to establishing community development work, as a degree of 'gatekeeping' might be expected from male Travellers. The experience of many of the programmes mentioned above, suggests that quiet perseverance accompanied by sensitive handling of gender issues may be successful, if there is a genuine indication of interest from women. Some women's groups have gone on to initiate activities to involve Traveller men.
- Examples of successful initiatives with Gypsy Travellers include outreach work conducted by Doncaster Community College which developed into a women's group, and the formation of a resident's association by a Gypsy Traveller worker in Cleveland. Reported attempts by the Redbridge Women's Group near Oxford (formed by Irish Travellers) to invite English Gypsies from a neighbouring site to join their group were not so successful, but this was a more ambitious undertaking.
- Most of the documented programmes are concentrated in London or regional urban centres. This is not to say that community development is not feasible elsewhere. However a rural setting presents particular challenges, such as relative dispersal of the population, lack of community workers 'on the ground', and less clearly established statutory responsibilities for initiating development work.
- Successful programmes vary widely in terms of lead agencies. The West Midlands Consortium, which was discussed earlier in connection with service co-ordination, has also initiated multi-agency community development work. Other schemes, such as the Ealing Travellers Project, are smaller in scale and seem to be based on partnerships between Travellers and semi-independent youth workers (youth work being the other main starting point for wider community development), usually with some local authority funding. The Haringey One Stop shop (which is reportedly beginning to initiate development work) and specialist community development workers employed in Cleveland and South Somerset are all funded by individual local authorities. Voluntary organisations such as Save the Children have also played a role in facilitating community development work with Travellers.
- In Peterborough and New Cambridgeshire, the Location Studies suggested that different arrangements for community development would be called for in different areas.
- At Oxney Road, it was suggested that a more democratic and better-resourced partnership between the City Council and Gypsy Council could establish a sustainable community development programme, beginning with a women's literacy group. Other initiatives to promote greater participation in site management by residents were also discussed at the Travellers Liaison Group.
- In Witchford the well-established programme led by Community Education involves co-operative working but no formal partnerships. Partnerships with Cambridge Regional College would be necessary to expand the project's work to provide literacy courses for adult Travellers. The Community Tutor is seeking external funds for new initiatives, but additional core funding is needed to consolidate staffing levels and train volunteer workers, including young Travellers.

The planned Healthy Living Centre in Littleport is another possible focus for community development work with Travellers.

- In Fenland, a voluntary organisation - the Ormiston Children and Families Trust - is taking the lead in building a new community development partnership involving the Isle College and other local service providers. The independence of a voluntary organisation is an advantage in many ways, for example in attracting funding. However, material and moral support from statutory agencies will also be needed to build the group's confidence in proceeding with what is a new and unfamiliar venture.
- The location of the official site at Blackwell, immediately adjacent to the Cambridge City Council boundary, has meant that establishing links to City-run facilities and services was an obvious first step. However, the City Council will not take the lead in developing work which is directed primarily to non-City residents. (Community development need not be restricted to the site alone, but could be expanded to include Travellers living in houses in Cambridge, and possibly to nearby villages). An approach is being made to Community Education to see if a locally-based development worker could be assigned to begin low-key and sustained work.
- Each area seems independently to have identified literacy and vocational training as a starting point for community development. Ideally, projects would develop to incorporate a wider range of development objectives, such as health promotion, community relations and economic development. Responding to the interest shown in personal development would be of value in itself, in improving uptake of other services and enhancing individual quality of life, even if cohesive groups did not emerge.
- Although a variety of practical arrangements have been suggested, the County's Community and Economic Development Strategy could provide an overall framework for community development work with Travellers in New Cambridgeshire, particularly in identifying funding and developing economic initiatives. For example, Travellers have not always benefited from Single Regeneration Bid money obtained for areas in which they form a significant population group. The County could also promote community enterprise initiatives which are sensitive to the highly structured 'Traveller economy' (as described, mainly in relation to Ireland, in the Suggestions for Good Practice report) and review its own role in employing suitably qualified Travellers in both Traveller-specific and other positions, (within equal opportunity principles).
- Community and economic development for Travellers fits clearly within the government's agenda on reducing social exclusion, although no specific funding or legislative framework seems to have resulted. (The Crime and Disorder legislation apparently includes provisions to reduce social exclusion, presumably as a crime prevention measure, but the potential for this programme to support general community development initiatives has not been investigated by the researcher.) Voluntary organisations, such as Groundswell, which specialise in work with socially excluded groups may be a source of local expertise, if not funding.
- Benefits will inevitably continue to play some role in the economic support of Travelling communities. Like other economically pressured groups, some Traveller families may be caught in a 'poverty trap', which encourages working while on benefit or incomplete disclosure of family circumstances. Knowledge of this can put site officials in a compromising position and sometimes sours relationships. This may become more of an issue if site managers are to be involved in proposed Social Security checks (although these seem to be limited to verifying identity in an effort to detect multiple claims).
- Without going into the pitfalls and benefits of this proposal, it would seem that confidential and voluntary benefits advice by independent advisers could assist many families in setting up a more secure and legitimate benefits regime. Advice should be provided in the same way as for

any other section of the population, for example through improved access to the mobile village benefits service (see the earlier discussion on Application of Equality Principles). There is anecdotal evidence in Cambridgeshire, for example, that some families (including those on unauthorised encampments) may not be accessing entitlements related to disability, and that some working families may have trouble accessing discretionary benefits such as Family Credit, which could help support their efforts to remain financially independent. Systematic barriers to obtaining some benefits, for example housing benefit for caravan rental and certain grants for home improvement, could also be investigated.

Support for young people

- Young Travellers may face particular difficulties, especially if they are the first generation within their families not to have experienced a nomadic way of life. The wish of many Traveller parents in these circumstances, is that their children will have the advantage of the 'best of both worlds'. However, much more practical support is needed if young Travellers are to have access to the dwindling employment opportunities of the 'non-Traveller world', while retaining or developing the secure identity which may once have been offered by the 'Traveller world'.

- For this reason, many development projects, faced with limited resources, have prioritised work with young Travellers. Provision of an appropriate school curriculum to encourage school attendance and achievement, supporting young Travellers through youth work in school, and promoting social integration without loss of cultural identity have been the key elements of these approaches. Some apparently successful approaches are reviewed in the Suggestions for Good Practice report.

- Whereas localised partnerships have been suggested for community development projects, a more central role for the County might be called for in relation to support for young people. This is because Community Education, Traveller Education and schools, all of which are County functions, have primary responsibility for services to this age group. (Traveller Education still provide a service to Peterborough, but the picture is obviously more complicated there.) Voluntary sector providers such as the YMCA and other specialist youth providers might be relevant to particular programmes, for example targeting young people at risk of offending, as would the Youth Justice service - also a County function.

- There may therefore be an argument for a county-wide framework for providing services to young Travellers, learning from (not merely replicating) the co-operative work at Witchford Village College. The most obvious barrier to the development of a county-wide framework is the devolution of decision-making to individual schools and Community Education patches. Whilst programmes cannot be imposed on schools or Community Education teams against their will, the voluntary efforts of Traveller Education, Community Education and teaching staff at Queens School, described in the Location Studies report, demonstrate the difficulties which arise due to lack of official status within the school.

- Suggesting a county-wide framework for Traveller youths is not to suggest that separate provision should necessarily follow, but that specific consideration is necessary to try to find solutions to long-standing problems and disadvantages. Separate activities which take place outside school may have less visibility than those within school, so may attract less criticism about divisiveness or (less justifiably) about favouritism towards Traveller pupils. Non-school venues might also be more appropriate for young people not in school. (Difficulties in re-allocating funds for this group is discussed later under the Funding and Resources heading.)

- Following from the Location Studies, consolidating and supporting the Witchford programme, establishing supportive partnerships to assist the youth workers and Queens school teachers in

their work with young Travellers, and assessing the needs of young Travellers in the Cottenham and Willingham area emerge as the highest priorities in New Cambridgeshire.

- There are several national initiatives which have the potential to impact on this group, and provide a framework for action. New Start, New Deal and the Crime and Disorder crime reduction programme have already been mentioned. In addition, the National Childcare Strategy is a potential source of funding for programmes such as after-school clubs. Travellers have been identified in national guidelines as a possible 'hard to reach' group, and a submission has been made to the New Cambridgeshire steering group for the programme, suggesting Travellers' needs should be assessed in the research phase which is planned as part of the development strategy.

- Drug use has not even been touched upon in this research, but is mentioned here to flag it as an emerging issue being identified by some people working with young Travellers. (Some problems may also exist with mis-use of prescription drugs by Traveller adults.) This is best addressed by a health promotion approach, ideally where relationships of trust already exist between teachers, youth workers and/or health professionals and Traveller families.

Consulting Travellers

- Effective consultation is now widely accepted as a sound basis for policy-making, and is integral to community development approaches. It has already been suggested that Traveller Liaison Groups might be encouraged to invite Travellers (other than local authority employees) to selected meetings in order to obtain feedback on particular ideas. Good practice suggests that meetings should be conducted in a way which is sensitive to possible low levels of literacy and in an informal style and venue if possible. This should not, however, lead to patronising assumptions either about lack of confidence or skills. A more important incentive to encourage local Travellers to attend meetings, would be to establish a good record of open communication and follow-up on agreed points.

- A proliferation of routine 'talking shops' is not likely to interest many Travellers. However, there might be a role for special meetings called for particular purposes (e.g. to look for solutions to local community relations or policing problems). Where the issues to be discussed are likely to be contentious, it is vital that the event is held on neutral ground, is run along well-structured lines by a skilled and independent mediator who is trusted by both 'sides', and is coupled with an effort to draw the discussion towards a mutually agreed resolution. Fora which could reasonably be perceived by Travellers to be dominated by non-Travellers (such as residents' association, parish council or police consultative meetings) clearly do not fit these criteria.

- Planning is one area where regular meetings could be attempted, as the issues are so central to the interests of most Traveller families. Community work might be used to establish a group from within the Travelling community, with a view to meeting with local authority officials as a Planning Forum. This 'bottom-up' approach might promote a sense of ownership, and avoid the 'tokenism' inherent in simply inviting one or more Traveller representatives to existing meetings. This could be attempted in conjunction with exploring the potential for residents' associations (discussed below).

- The inclusion of other service providers in a Travellers' Planning Forum could create a broader social context for discussion (for example, considering the crucial issue of community relations), and encourage a more holistic and innovative approach to the provision of public and private sites. (See the earlier discussion on accommodation provision). A wide membership could also enable competing design principles such as the aesthetic landscaping advocated by planners, the more open designs favoured by police, the need for community facilities on shared-use sites, and Travellers' needs to support their occupational activities, to be discussed in the round.

- The development of residents' associations might be encouraged, particularly on larger, more established sites such as Oxney Road, Norwood Lane, Newbridge Lane and Cambridge Road. One example of a residents' association on an official site has been found, in Cleveland, which was established by a development worker from within the Traveller community. Residents' associations cannot be imposed if they are not wanted, but the Cleveland experience shows that quiet perseverance may be warranted in the face of initial disinterest or opposition. This initiative should not be contemplated unless a structure is developed to respond to Travellers' views, either in parallel to, or actually employing the same procedures in place for tenants in social housing.
- Providing access to routine complaints or appeals procedures - although potentially threatening to local authority staff - is another potential channel of feedback from the Traveller community, and could be of mutual benefit if responded to positively. This is not to say that Travellers would readily take part in such a formal process.
- Providing community development or other field workers and advocates is a less formal way of obtaining ongoing feedback from Travellers. TLOs may fulfil this role to some extent, but their communication with Travellers (no matter how cordial their personal relations) is likely to be affected by their role in pitch allocation and enforcing site rules. South Somerset District Council has employed a community worker for Travellers with a major role in promoting communication. Sustained development work has often resulted in groups becoming more active in articulating well-considered points of view.
- Representatives of Traveller organisations are already invited to various committees, including the Travellers Review Steering Group and some district Traveller Liaison Groups, to broadly represent Travellers' views. This is, of course, a 'tall order'. Good practice in this area includes using a range of organisations for liaison wherever possible, covering expenses for voluntary Traveller representatives to both encourage and acknowledge their contribution, and not creating unrealistic expectations that any individual can represent all points of view (as also applies, for example, to Council Members).
- Some local authorities have actively encouraged the development of groups to represent Travellers' interests. For example the South Glamorgan Council has partly funded the Cardiff Gypsy Sites Group (CGSG), which contributes to liaison meetings and has also conducted independent research on behalf of the Council. The question here of course, is how independence can be achieved where funding is provided, and how well a seemingly 'manufactured' group is accepted by the Traveller population. Indications are that the CGSG has been a positive influence, but the researcher is not in a position to make a firm judgement on the merits of this approach.
- Formal surveys might be warranted at some stages where an information base is needed to guide a particular initiative. However, this should not be embarked upon lightly and should avoid raising expectations if no real action is likely to follow. The failure of the Location Studies to observe this golden rule, despite the researcher's awareness of the issue, demonstrates the dangers of insufficient co-ordination between those obtaining information and the end-users of it.
- This is not to say that existing council staff cannot conduct meaningful consultations with Travellers, particularly over specific, practical issues. For example, the County TLO has recently instigated discussions with individual households on the Cambridge Road site at St Neots to identify preferences for refurbishment of the day rooms. She involved the architect in the consultation process so that he was able to give residents immediate feedback on the feasibility

of their suggestions, after which the TLO returned with diagrams depicting four realistic options. Interestingly, all residents independently chose the same option.

· Several possibilities for increasing the usefulness of routinely collected information are mentioned in the section below on information needs.

Funding and resources

· Although attention is often focused on external sources of funding for identifiable groups such as Travellers, there are several avenues for funding which could be explored within County budgets. Firstly, Community Education is currently reviewing their funding allocation procedures. Any change to targeted provision on the basis of demonstrated need (rather than the present per-capita patch funding) may benefit Travellers, provided there is advocacy within the organisation to raise awareness of these needs. (This may be hampered by the fact that there is currently no Community Education representative on the Travellers Review Steering Group). This report has recommended that a particular priority be placed on core funding for work with young Travellers.

· Gaining access to capitation funding for pupils not attending school is a general problem, but one which particularly affects Travellers. Pupils who are not on school rolls at all present even greater funding challenges. This issue has been identified for some time, and needs to be pursued at a senior management level. The Team for Traveller Education has recently submitted its bid for the next round of central government funding. A more generous settlement, coupled with indications of a more flexible attitude to the use of resources, may better enable the Team to become involved in out-of-class activities and make use of released pupil funding.

· Independent organisations have a role in developing community-led work, especially as their independence from service-providers may help to establish trust with Travellers and open up opportunities for funds which are not available to statutory bodies. However, it would be unreasonable to rely entirely on agencies such as the Ormiston Children and Families Trust to take the lead in new work with Travellers. The Steering Group might consider how it could provide practical support to promote voluntary-led initiatives, without compromising the benefits of their independent status.

· The Economic and Community Development group within the County provides assistance in identifying external sources of funding. A recurring problem, however, is that service agencies (including both statutory and voluntary organisations) often do not have the time or expertise to develop proposals. Networks to access European funding seem to be developing, but there could be more exploration of special funds earmarked for Romani communities, such as the Socrates programme to promote Gypsy education.

· The County might further reduce the 'bidding burden' by looking into the establishment of an earmarked central fund (possibly from European sources) along the lines of the Cambridge City Council's 'Ethnic Minority Employment Project'. This project provides funds to directly community-led groups, but funding might also be directed into professionally-led 'capacity-building' to facilitate the formation of groups which can then access funds such as the one described above.

· Most of the suggestions in this report have been made in the knowledge that no commitment has been made by the Travellers Review Steering Group to fund a separate community development post at County level. However, should such a post be considered, the researcher is now of the view that this should focus, not on work 'on the ground' (which is probably better organised at local level), but on a more strategic development role. Examples would be helping to support and resource local partnership projects, developing a 'corporate policy' for Travellers

(if this is decided upon) or auditing County policies to promote 'mainstreaming' of Traveller issues.

- The post could have a more 'hands-on' role in liaising with Travelling communities over the development of any county-wide (or smaller pilot) programmes which are agreed upon, such as residents associations, local planning fora or youth networks. This would require in-depth knowledge and positive working relationship with Travelling communities, and consideration might be given to seeking a suitably qualified person from a Traveller background. This person might work in close liaison with the County TLO, Community Education staff and the Economic and Community Development group and could report to the Travellers Review Steering Group, or whatever body is put in its place to implement the Review's conclusions.

Information needs

- Planning and policy development, and competition for funds, is increasingly information-driven. What little data is available at present about the Travelling population nationally and locally, has been collated in the Travellers in Cambridgeshire report. However there are many gaps and inadequacies in the information.

- Because of this, many commentators and bodies representing Travellers have called for ethnic monitoring systems within service-providing and criminal justice agencies to include Travellers. This is in line with the principle of responding constructively to the needs of minority groups, as outlined earlier. Any steps in this direction need to be sensitive to the historical mis-use of information about Travellers, and the relatively high levels of monitoring to which some groups are already subjected. There are also considerable technical difficulties in identifying Traveller individuals in client populations, due to reluctance to self-identify as a Traveller in some circumstances, preference for alternative classifications such as 'Irish', or reliance on third party identification of 'visible minorities'.

- This said, it should be possible to establish reasonably accurate records within district councils in New Cambridgeshire of the numbers of Travellers moving from caravans to housing, and of the outcomes of planning applications submitted by Travellers, both of which would greatly assist in a more planned approach to accommodation provision. This information could be then be incorporated into comprehensive discussions of Traveller accommodation within district strategic housing plans, which currently contain little or no information about Travellers' needs.

- Several national bodies, including the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, have called for more meaningful DETR counts which enumerate people as well as caravans, include housed Travellers wherever possible, and ask about accommodation needs. This would provide more useful information for local housing projections and strategic plans. In the meantime, local surveys might be conducted independently of DETR counts, for example as part of regular research for the development of strategic housing plans. The methodology would be complicated by an incomplete and changeable 'sampling frame', particularly in respect of Travellers living in houses and staying on unauthorised encampments, but these would not present insurmountable problems for a well-resourced survey.

- The one-off district data collection exercise which was used to obtain some of the information for the Travellers in Cambridgeshire report, although far too detailed to repeat routinely, could provide a starting point for considering what information (beyond DETR caravan counts) might be worth collating at County level on a regular basis. The upgrading of the existing computerised information system held by the County TLO (which is DOS-based) or the development of a new system capable of producing regular statistical reports clearly has resource implications.

- In view of the increasing emphasis on collecting and sharing information, attention should be given to data protection issues. It has already been suggested that a statement of data sharing principles might be included in site management agreements. This might also apply to the basis on which Traveller Liaison Groups operate. Unless strong arguments can be presented to the contrary, information should generally be shared between agencies only on the same basis as applies to other local authority tenants or members of the public.
- A multi-agency working party on management information might be established through the Travellers Review Steering Group to develop these ideas further. This group could also monitor and contribute to discussions about including 'Travellers' as a category or categories in the next national population census.

APPENDICES

General model for provision of services to travellers

