



**FRIENDS,
FAMILIES &
TRAVELLERS**

November 2024

Freedom of Information research: Local authority transit provision for Gypsies and Travellers across the UK

Friends, Families and Travellers

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Key terms and definitions	4
Research questions	5
Key findings	5
The level of transit provision	6
Research findings: Emerging themes	10
Whose responsibility?.....	10
Accessibility of information - examples	10
Official Caravan Count’s list of sites and data discrepancies (England)	11
Length of stay	12
No return periods.....	13
Use of police powers to direct to transit sites	14
The true costs - what are people getting for their money?	14
Practice examples – Negotiated Stopping	18
Conclusions	19
Recommendations	20
Appendix I	21
Appendix II	23
Appendix III	24

Introduction

Travelling and living in caravans and other mobile structures is an important part of the cultural heritages and identities of Romany Gypsy, Irish Traveller, New Traveller, Boater, and Showman, [*Gypsy and Traveller*] communities. In a 2001 ruling¹, the European Court of Human Rights held that states should be obliged to facilitate this way of living: not only should people enjoy the right to have a certain kind of home, but the right also to maintain their identity as a Romany Gypsy, and lead a life in accordance with that tradition. Around a quarter of Gypsies and Travellers in England and Wales live in a caravan or other mobile structure, and many who are settled and live in bricks and mortar accommodation, continue to maintain this tradition for part of the year.

Transit sites enable people to stop for short periods of time and maintain this way of life.² The need for transit sites and permitted stopping places continues to be a pressing issue, particularly with the backdrop of increasing enforcement powers. Since 2015, local authorities have been obtaining wide injunctions against ‘persons unknown,’ covering huge sections of land where encampments are known to occur. Anyone entering this land is then in immediate breach of the injunction and can be arrested, fined and have their vehicle/home seized. The Court of Appeal ruled in late 2023 that wide injunctions impact negatively on,

“[Gypsies’ and Travellers’] ability to pursue their traditional nomadic way of life and that they should only be sought and granted in exceptional circumstances, with strict limits on their length and geographical scope and after local authorities have complied with guidance laid down in the judgment.”

Additionally, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced tougher police powers, which effectively criminalised trespass, further curtailing Gypsies’ and Travellers’ ability to travel across England and Wales. This follows minimal improvements into the quantity³ and quality of sites⁴, and the continual flow of reduced access to traditional stopping places, despite the clear need for safe,

¹Chapman v. The United Kingdom (Application no. 27238/95), European Court of Human Rights. Para. 96: “the vulnerable position of Gypsies as a minority means that some special consideration should be given to their needs and their different lifestyle both in the relevant regulatory planning framework and in reaching decisions in particular cases [...] there is thus a positive obligation imposed on the Contracting States by virtue of Article 8 to facilitate the Gypsy way of life.”

² See: <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/planning/no-place-to-stop-only-8-of-68-local-authorities-in-south-east-england-have-identified-enough-land-for-travellers-to-live/>

³ See ‘Kicking the can down the road: The planning and provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England 1960-2023.’ Dr Simon Ruston for Friends, Families and Travellers. November 2023.

⁴ Bloch, A., & Quarmby, K. (2024). Environmental racism, segregation and discrimination: Gypsy and Traveller sites in Great Britain. *Critical Social Policy*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183241229053>

culturally appropriate, well-maintained sites with the necessary amenities and services to allow those stopping there to live well.

Gypsy and Traveller populations experience a disproportionately high level of structural inequalities and poor outcomes compared with the rest of the population, including the highest level of disability of all ethnic groups at 16% (over twice the rate of the general population⁵). According to the 2018 National Barometer of Prejudice and Discrimination in Britain,⁶ Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller people as protected groups face some of the highest levels of prejudice and racial discrimination in society.⁷

Existing policy and guidance outline how local authorities and planning authorities should approach the planning and development of Gypsy and Traveller sites in [Planning Policy for Traveller Sites \(PPTS\) 2015](#), but provision remains patchy and inadequate, as does clear information on where and how sites can be accessed.

Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) frequently supports families with accommodation-related issues, including from clients accessing council homelessness and housing services, but also from clients living on roadside camps or on sites, about the difficulties of finding and accessing suitable places to stay. To better understand and map out the current picture of local authority and county council owned and/or managed transit provision, we analysed the responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests sent by FFT to all local authorities and county councils across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on a range of topics.

Key terms and definitions:

Transit site: A site where occupiers have agreements to station a mobile home, typically only for periods under three months. Occupiers on transit sites are covered by the Mobile Homes Act (1983) but have more limited rights, including less security of tenure.⁸

Transit pitch: A pitch on which a person is entitled to station a mobile home under the terms of the site agreement, for a fixed period of up to three months.

⁵ [Ethnic group differences in health, employment, education and housing shown in England and Wales,' Census 2021.](#)

⁶ "Gypsy, Roma and Travellers were the only protected characteristic group for which the most frequent response was openly negative (44%)." *National Barometer of Prejudice and Discrimination in Britain, Equality and Human Rights Commission, (2018).*

⁷ See also: '[Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities,](#)' House of Commons' Women and Equalities Committee, 2019: Seventh Report of Session 2017–19.

⁸ ch.3, Sch1, Mobile Homes Act 1983 as amended by Mobile Homes Act 1983 (Amendment of Schedule 1 and Consequential Amendments) (England) Order 2011 SI 2011/1003; see also *R (on the application of O'Brien) v Bristol CC [2014] EWHC 2423 (Admin).*

Negotiated stopping: A [mutual agreement](#) made between those stopping in an area and the local authority, where a decision is made between both parties about where, and for how long, people can stop on roadside camps without threat of eviction. This includes agreeing on matters such as waste disposal and basic temporary facilities.

Research questions:

To assess the current picture of transit provision across the UK, FFT sent identical Freedom of Information requests to all 382 local government authorities (county, district, borough, city, unitary, metropolitan borough, London borough, and unitary councils⁹) across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland¹⁰, asking a range of questions about various aspects of transit provision (see Appendix I for full list of questions). This included questions about the number of transit pitches and transit sites within the authority's area; lengths of time for which people are permitted to stay, and any minimum 'no return' periods following a stay; costs of securing and renting a pitch and utility charges, and what amenities, facilities and services are available to site residents.

Key findings:

We received responses providing information from 362 (95%) UK local government authorities:

- **Just 9% of authorities told us they had transit provision within their area** – a total of 31 authorities across all four UK regions.
- 332 authorities (92%) responded indicating that they had **no local authority owned or managed transit sites or pitches**.¹¹
- Of these, 54 (15%) responded to say that they held **no data about transit provision** and advised us to contact an alternative local government authority for this information.
- 39% of the 31 authorities with transit provision indicated that **the police have used Section(s) 62A-E of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994**¹² to direct people to the site.
- 74% of authorities with transit provision operated a **maximum amount of time for which people are permitted to stay** on a transit pitch or site. This

⁹ For consistency, the terms 'authority' and 'local government authority' are used throughout this report to encompass all types and tiers of local and county councils. See Local Government Association – ['What is Local Government?'](#)

¹⁰ (*Northern Ireland has 1 relevant public authority for the purposes of this research - there are 11 local authorities in Northern Ireland, however they are not responsible for Irish Travellers' accommodation: this is the responsibility of the NI Housing Executive, as the strategic regional housing authority).

¹¹ This includes 7 authorities which provided information about other arrangements for Gypsies and Travellers, such as negotiated stopping arrangements.

¹² [Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994](#).

ranged from 14 to 180 days, although the majority of these authorities allow stays of up to 90 days on a transit pitch.

- 58% of authorities with transit provision informed us of **minimum ‘no return’ periods** following a stay on a transit site or pitch. Minimum ‘no return’ periods in place ranged in length from 28 days to 365 days.
- The costs of securing and staying on a transit pitch vary greatly between local government authority areas, with **half of transit sites charging deposits as well as pitch fees**. Where charged, deposit amounts ranged from £100 to £500, with some authorities charging this per caravan, and others per caravan, per pitch.
- 50% of authorities with transit provision indicated that people staying on those sites are also **charged extra fees for the use of utilities**.
- Throughout the data, there was a **lack of clarity and consistency between areas** as to their approach and policies on transit provision for Gypsies and Travellers, which raises further questions about the accessibility of information for prospective residents who may be in immediate need of a transit pitch.

The level of transit provision

Existing research into site provision has consistently shown there to be an inadequate level of Gypsy and Traveller sites across the country, despite government policy and guidance requiring site allocation to be included in planning development processes.

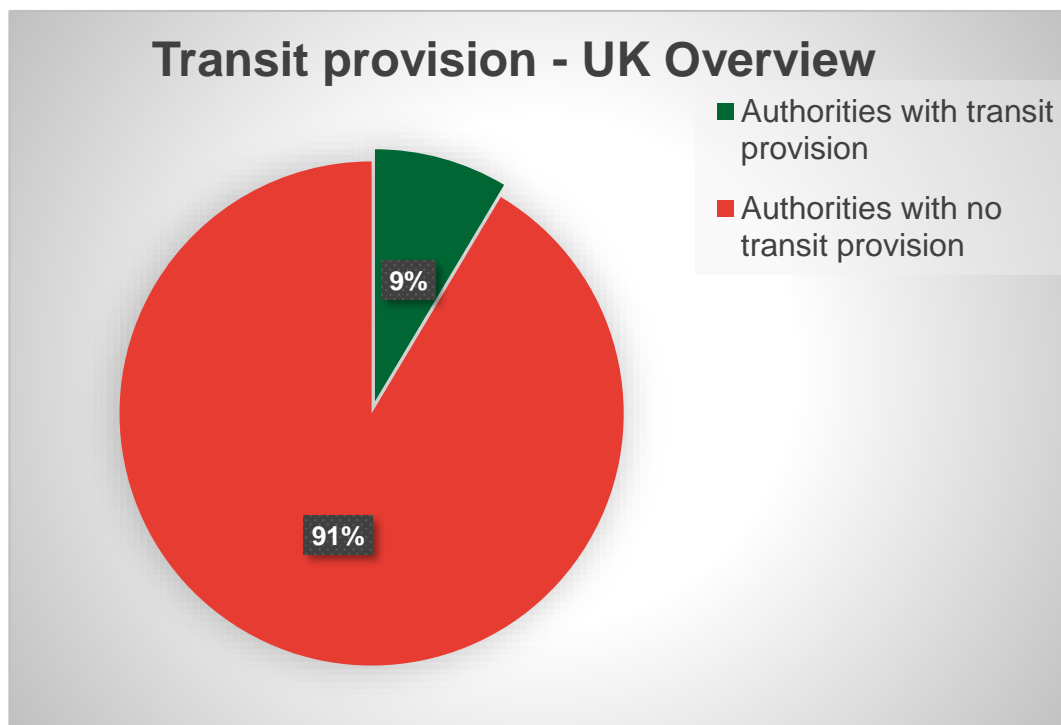
2023 research¹³ into Local Planning Authority site provision in England found that 64% of the 100 Local Planning Authorities analysed had failed to allocate sites. Friends, Families and Travellers’ 2020 research into site provision in South East England¹⁴ found that just 8 out of 68 local authorities had identified land to meet the assessed need for Gypsy and Traveller sites in their area. In this context, it is unsurprising that the vast majority of responses to our Freedom of Information requests indicated no local government authority owned/managed transit provision within their area. We asked: *Does this local authority own and/or manage any transit sites OR transit pitches situated on permanent sites?*

The research found that across the UK as a whole, 9% of local government authorities which responded had some transit provision, either on a specific transit

¹³ See ‘Kicking the can down the road: The planning and provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England 1960-2023.’ Dr Simon Ruston for Friends, Families and Travellers. November 2023.

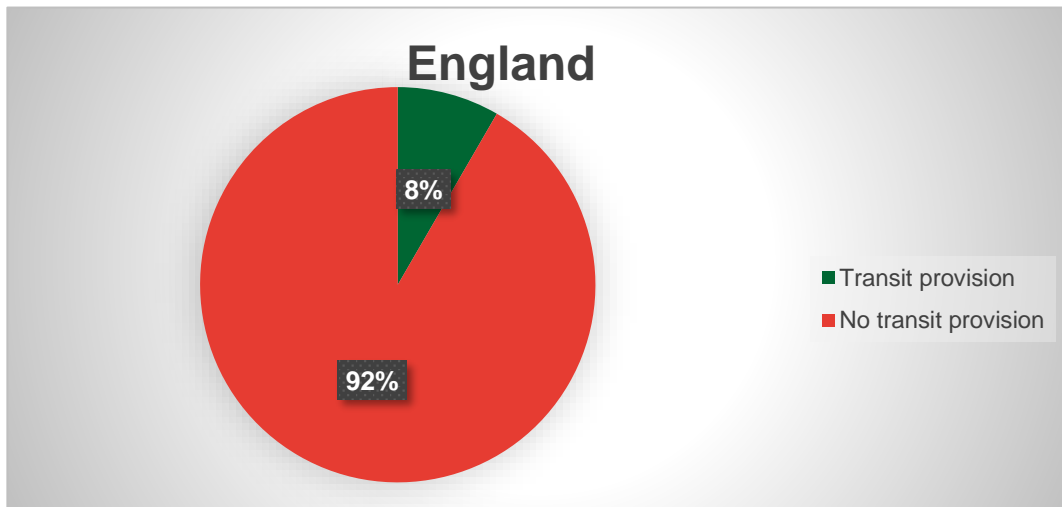
¹⁴ See: <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/planning/no-place-to-stop-only-8-of-68-local-authorities-in-south-east-england-have-identified-enough-land-for-travellers-to-live/>

site or through transit pitches on a local permanent site.¹⁵ 8% of English authorities and 10% of Scottish authorities indicated that they had transit provision within their area, whilst just one Welsh authority (Torfaen County Council), or 5% of authorities in Wales, responded indicating that they provided transit sites and/or pitches. Northern Ireland reported two transit sites, both situated within the same local government authority area.

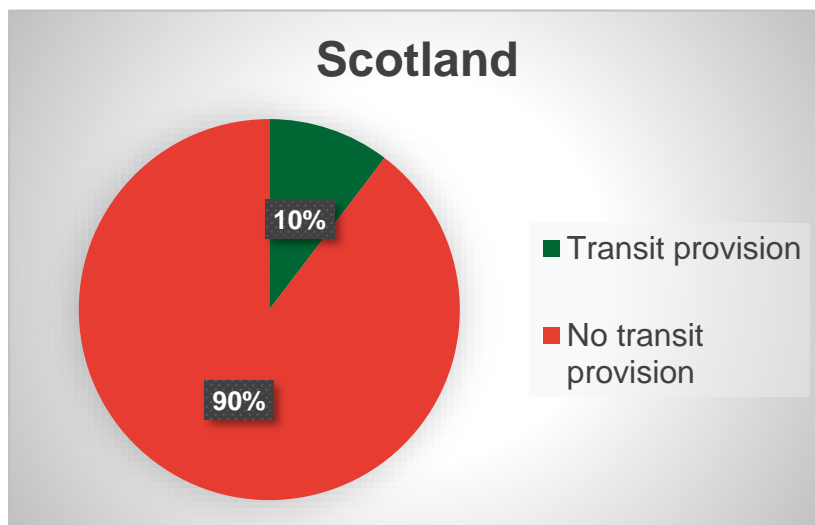


311 out of 317 English local government authorities responded to our request.

¹⁵ Local government authorities with transit provision: Aberdeenshire Council; Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council; Bath & North East Somerset Council; Birmingham City Council; Blaby District Council; Brighton and Hove City Council; Bristol City Council; Cornwall Council; Dartford Borough Council; Dorset Council; Dudley Metropolitan Borough; East Sussex County Council; Fenland District Council; Great Yarmouth Borough Council; Halton Borough Council; Hertfordshire County Council; Liverpool City Council; London Borough of Haringey; North Norfolk District Council; Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council; Scottish Borders Council; South Norfolk; Stirling Council; Stoke-on-Trent City Council; Swindon Borough Council; Telford & Wrekin Council; Torfaen County Borough; Trafford Council; Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council; West Sussex County Council.



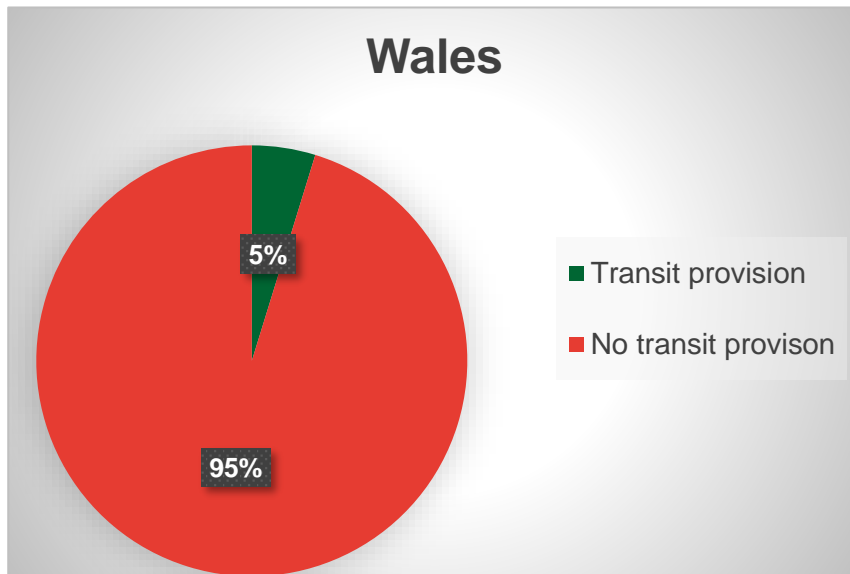
26 responded providing information about transit provision, with the remaining 285 responding to indicate that they did not have transit provision owned and/or managed by their local government authority within their jurisdiction.



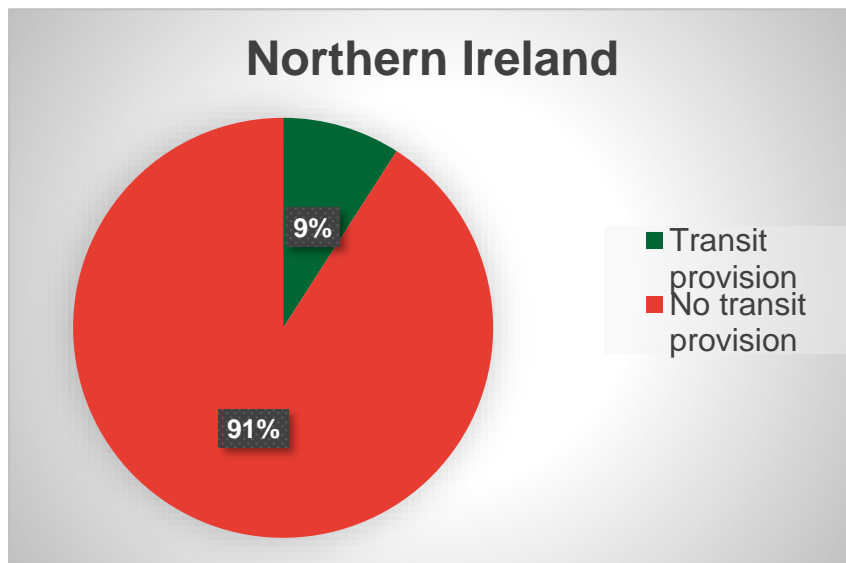
29 of 32¹⁶ Scottish local government authorities responded to our request. 3 Scottish authorities provided information about transit provision within their jurisdiction, while 26 responded indicating that there was no transit provision within their

jurisdiction.

¹⁶ Western Isles Council, East Lothian Council and Midlothian Council were unable to provide responses to our requests, or were seeking a fee for their provision which FFT considered disproportionate relative to the size of the dataset.



21 out of 22 Welsh local government authorities responded to our request, although just one (Torfaen County Borough Council) responded providing information about their transit provision.



The Northern Irish Housing Executive responded to our request as the responsible body in the region; both transit sites situated within Northern Ireland lie within the same local authority area (Derry City and Strabane).

These findings illustrate the low levels of transit provision for Gypsies and Travellers across all four UK nations. Whilst there were some isolated examples of good practice among the 9% of authorities which provided us with information, 9 in 10 local government authorities in the UK appear to be failing to provide the means necessary for Gypsies and Travellers to stop or live in their area for a temporary period.

Research findings: Emerging themes

Whose responsibility?

In total, 54*¹⁷ authorities responded informing us that they did not hold the relevant information and advised us to contact another authority (explicitly or implicitly suggesting that responsibility for transit provision lies with the local district/borough authority rather than that county council, or vice versa). 45 of these authorities were district/borough/city/unitary authorities; nine were county councils.

Nine¹⁸ out of the 29 county councils in England responded indicating that they do not hold legal responsibility for transit provision, and advised us to request the information from district, city, unitary or borough councils, as applicable.

45 of the 317 local authorities in England also responded in this way; including in areas where the County Council had given the same response.

The lack of clarity as to where the legal responsibility for providing decent services for Gypsies and Travellers rests can be unclear, even among those agencies which do hold it. This risks Gypsies' and Travellers' needs and rights too often being ignored and left in the gaps between housing/homelessness and planning legal frameworks. A consistent theme throughout the responses we received was of these services/authorities signposting or diverting responsibility elsewhere, and in some cases, appearing to be unsure of their own authority's provision or responsibility for it – examples are cited in Appendix II.

Accessibility of information — examples

As part of this research, an internet search exercise was conducted, to see how accessible and clear information about transit provision on individual local government authority websites are.

Four authorities were selected¹⁹ from the list of 31 with transit provision, and a Google search completed using the phrase: “[Name of authority] Gypsy Traveller

¹⁷ *Excluding Northern Ireland - all 11 local authorities in Northern Ireland also responded informing us that they did not hold this data, advising us to request the relevant information from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), which holds strategic responsibility for Traveller sites in the North of Ireland. Northern Ireland is therefore not included in this section of analysis, as there was clarity provided as to which public body holds responsibility for transit provision, and the NIHE responded to our request in full, confirming that there are 2 transit sites in Northern Ireland: one with 6 pitches, the other with 11. Both sites are located within one local authority area (Derry City and Strabane).

¹⁸ Cambridgeshire County Council, Derbyshire County Council, Devon County Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Lancashire County Council, Lincolnshire County Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Staffordshire County Council, Suffolk County Council

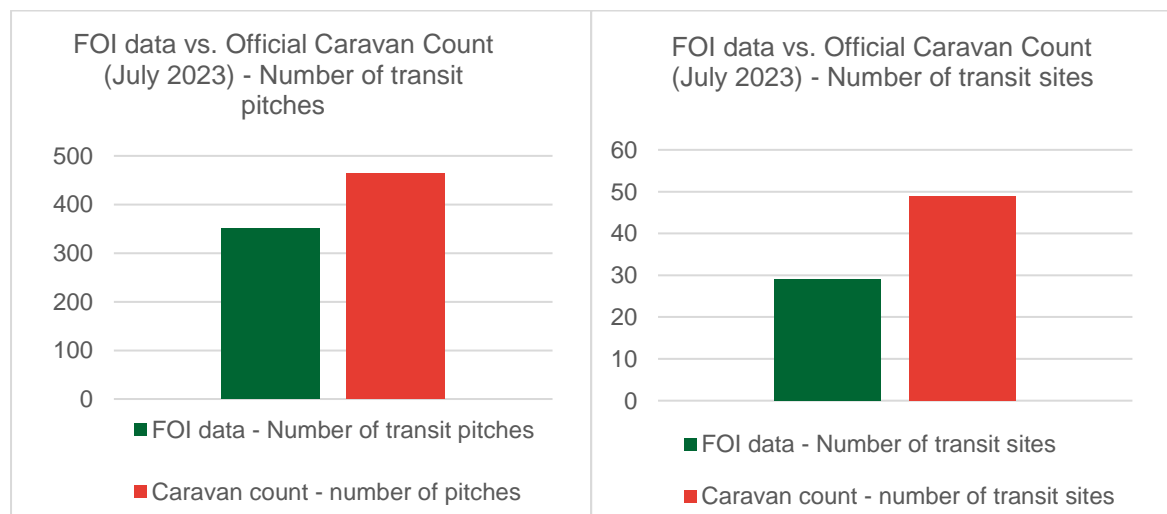
¹⁹ Owing to the small sample of 31, these four were chosen using a simple systematic random sampling method, whereby the first authority in the alphabetical list was selected, followed by every eighth authority.

transit site” for each of these four. The results are summarised below (also see Appendix III), and give an indication of how varied the accessibility and clarity of information is on individual authorities’ websites for anyone trying to find out more about local transit sites or pitches.

Good practice examples we found, such as Aberdeenshire County Council, included clear information written in plain English, on a dedicated webpage or section of an authority’s website, with links to other relevant pages which are easy to navigate (see Appendix III).

There were also examples of inaccessible information found, both in terms of the language used and the navigability of relevant information on the website. Looking for information about transit provision in Dartford Borough Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council via their websites required navigating through several documents or policies (some in PDF format) to find relevant information, e.g. on where sites are, how to access them or apply for a pitch, what facilities are available on site, and on relevant services e.g. Gypsy Traveller liaison officers or departments.

Official Caravan Count’s²⁰ list of sites and data discrepancies (England)



²⁰ The Caravan Count is a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government-published series of official statistics on the count of Gypsy and Traveller caravans in England, intended to “provide local data on the number and seasonal movement of caravans and trends over time.” It is compiled from information about caravans on authorised socially rented sites, authorised privately funded sites, unauthorised developments, and unauthorised encampments. This is submitted by local authorities in England, which carry out the count of caravans on Gypsy and Traveller sites in January and July each year to provide a snapshot of the number of caravans on the day of the count. Information is collected. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traveller-caravan-count>

The results of our research highlighted several discrepancies between the data provided by English local government authorities in response to our FOI requests, and the figures for transit provision published by the Government through the official Caravan Count's list of sites. According to the most recently available Caravan Count (July 2023), there were 464 transit pitches across 49 sites in England. In contrast, the data obtained by FFT reported 351 transit pitches, across 29 sites. These figures are further complicated considering that 132 of the 351 transit pitches, and 10 of the 29 sites mentioned in the dataset, do not appear in the official caravan count figures.

It is therefore difficult to state with certainty what the current picture of transit provision is, especially when this is taken alongside the apparent lack of awareness in some councils as to which body holds legal responsibility for transit provision.

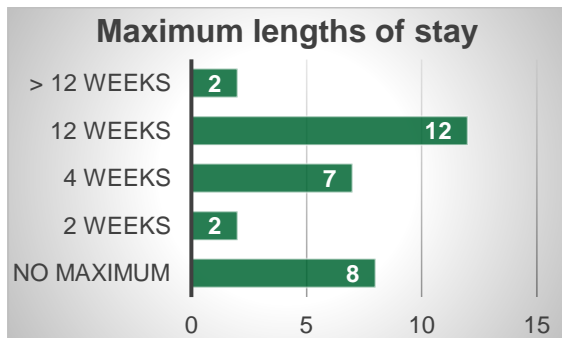
On a practical level, this adds an unnecessary degree of opacity to planning and deciding where to go for Gypsies and Travellers travelling within the UK, and of the prospect of finding a safe and suitable place to stop with the necessary space and amenities. This could further increase existing anxieties among Gypsy and Traveller communities about the risk of being criminalised should they arrive in an area, only to face the risk of being moved on, and potentially having their homes and belongings seized, by the police under powers [introduced in 2022](#).

The relative invisibility of Gypsies and Travellers in official data has long been an issue, and this research further highlights how the lack of data availability further affects Gypsy and Traveller communities negatively – it is more difficult to make evidence-based calls for improvements when the available data is patchy and unreliable.

Length of stay

We asked local government authorities about the maximum length of time for which people are permitted to stay on a transit pitch/site.

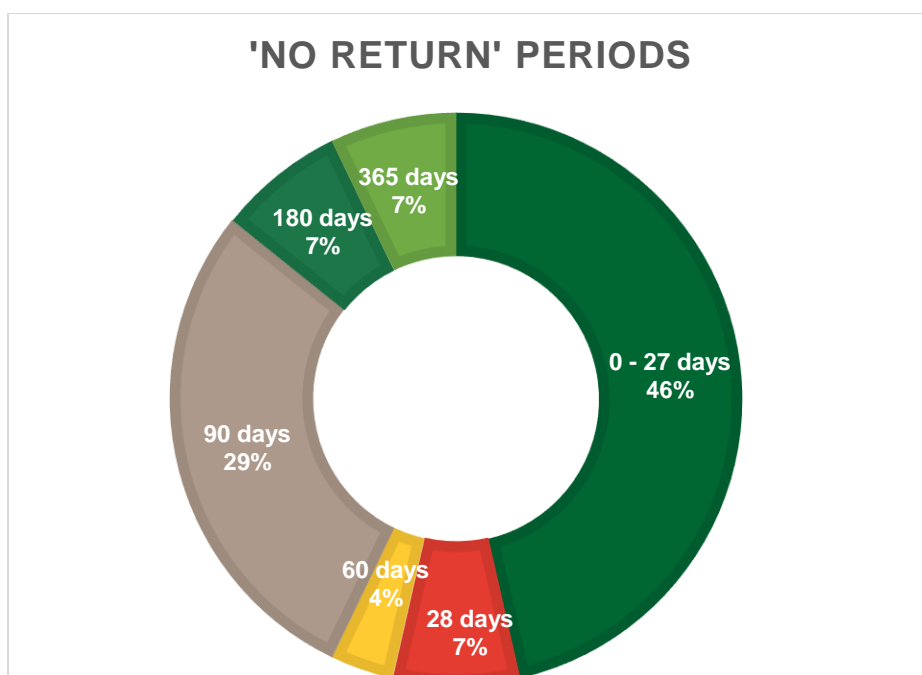
While a maximum length of stay did not apply in some areas, most authorities (74%) stipulated that people can remain on a transit pitch/site for a specific limited period, which ranged between 14 and 180 days. The most common maximum length of stay in authorities with transit provision was 90 days, or 12 weeks.



No return periods

Some sites operate a 'no return' period, where there is a specified amount of time following a stay on a transit pitch/site, before people are allowed to return. We asked local government authorities whether there was there a certain period on each site before which those who have vacated were permitted to return to the transit site or pitch. The results showed that:

- 58% of authorities with transit provision operated a minimum 'no return' period following a stay on a transit site or pitch.
- Of these, the minimum 'no return' period in place ranged from 28 days to 365 days (see graph).
- 2 authorities (Swindon Borough Council and Cornwall Council) reported a 365 day 'no return' period.



Use of police powers to direct to transit sites

Powers introduced via the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, gave police the power to ban Gypsies and Travellers from an area for up to 12 months (alongside powers to fine, arrest, imprison and seize the homes of Gypsies and Travellers on roadside camps), a significant increase on the 3-month period which previously applied.

This created a situation whereby Gypsies and Travellers complying with a notice under s.62A by moving to a pitch deemed suitable, would effectively be banned from a local government authority area for a further nine months upon leaving that pitch – given that most transit pitches are intended for a three-month period of use.

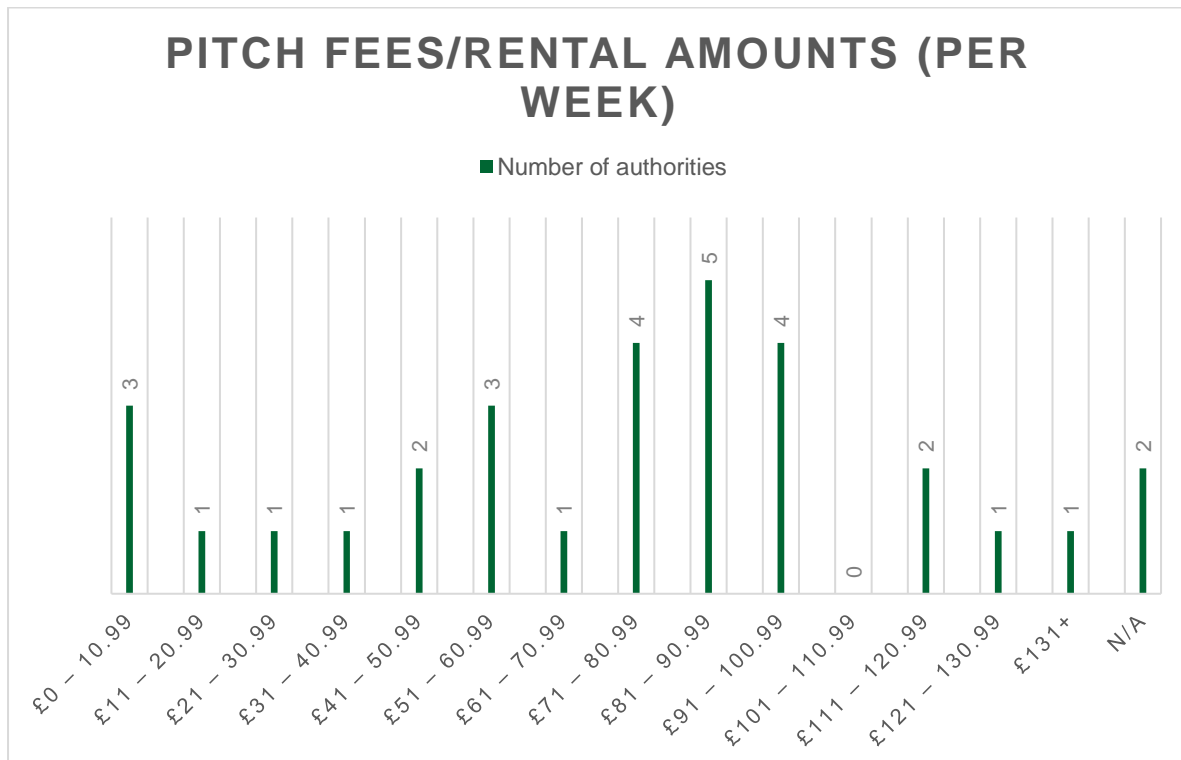
Given this context, as part of this research we asked whether the police had used Section 62A-E (Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994) to direct people to a transit site: 12 of the 31 authorities with transit provision (39%) responded that they had.

This research was conducted between November 2023 and May 2024, shortly before the High Court issued a [Declaration of Incompatibility](#) for the extension of the power to ban changing from 3 to 12 months, finding that it discriminates against Gypsies and Travellers without justification, and breaches Article 14 rights when read with Article 8 of the Convention. At the time of writing, we await the parliamentary review of this legislation which should follow this Declaration, and urge government to prioritise parliamentary time for this.

The true costs - what are people getting for their money?

We asked local government authorities about the rental/pitch fees charged for transit pitches, any deposits charged to secure a pitch or pitches, and extra charges applied for utilities or the use of amenities available onsite. There was variation between whether authorities charged rent on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis – for consistency, the amounts discussed below refer to *weekly* amounts.

The average (mean) weekly pitch fee charged for a transit pitch was £70, although pitch fees ranged from £0 (3 authorities) to £125 a week (see graph below).



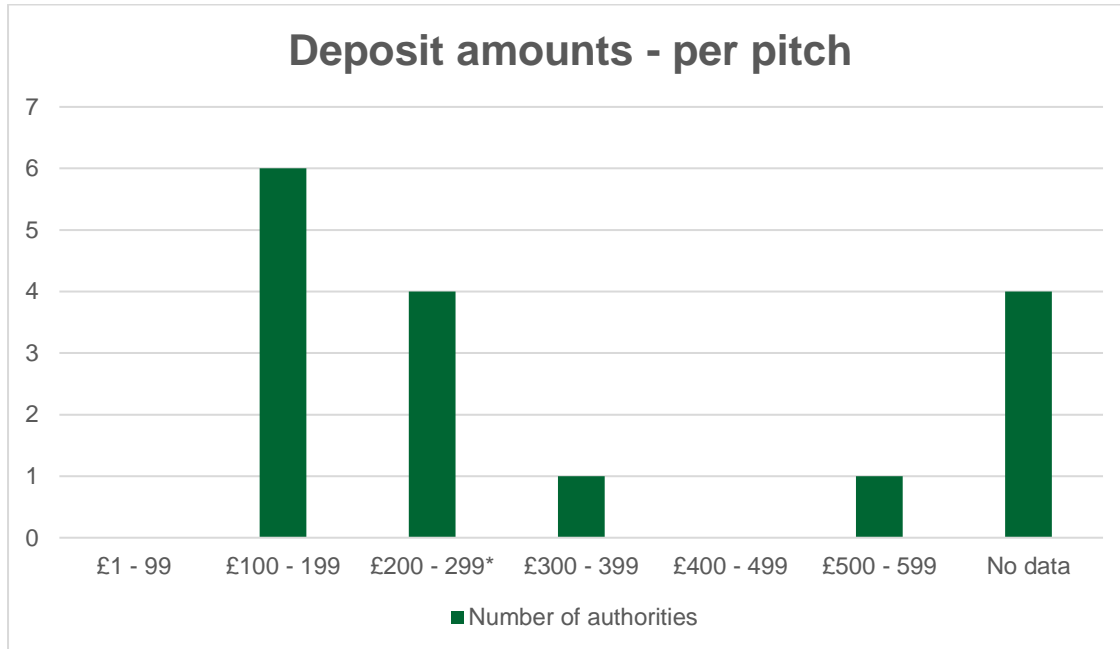
In Walsall, a £125 per week pitch fee is charged, alongside a weekly service charge of £16. This most expensive transit pitch fee is accompanied by a £250 deposit per pitch, which significantly increases the upfront costs people travelling to the site can expect to pay. Additionally, the transit site in Walsall has a maximum 28-day period for any one stay, meaning that the cost to occupy one of the 6 pitches there for just one month exceeds £800.

In contrast (although housing benefit is calculated by rent officers at the Valuation Office Agency for people living in mobile homes and caravans, not by local authorities), the monthly rate of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) available for bricks and mortar social housing accommodation in Walsall²¹ is £625.02 per month for a two-bedroom property, and £749.99 for three bedrooms.

It is interesting to note that in response to our questions on the occupancy levels of transit pitches, Walsall informed us that all of these pitches were vacant. This raises more questions about whether and how existing transit site provision is meeting the needs of those who need to use it; further research into existing sites, their conditions, and assessments of future provision should be co-produced with Gypsies

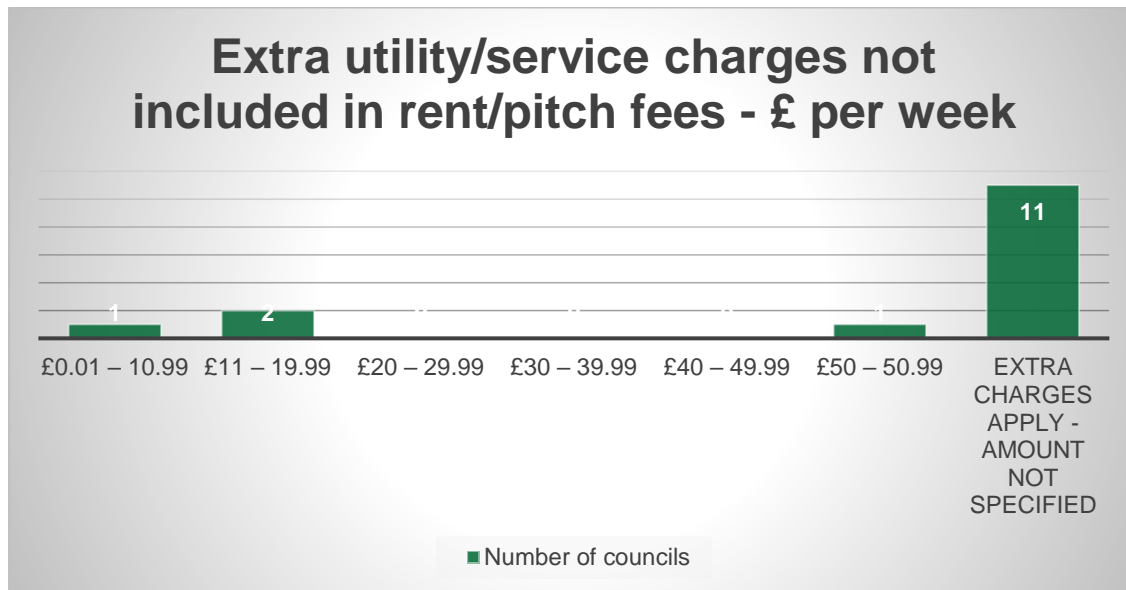
²¹ See: "Your benefits entitlement, charges and LHA rates," Walsall Council website, 2024. Available at: <https://live-ace-walsall.pantheonsite.io/benefits/your-benefits-entitlement-charges-and-lha-rates#size>

and Travellers, to ensure the need for culturally appropriate accommodation can be met.



*Figure represents 2 authorities which charge deposits per caravan per pitch.

The costs of staying on transit sites can vary significantly from one site to another; half of transit sites charge a deposit (up to a maximum of £500) per caravan, and deposits can be charged per caravan, or per caravan per pitch, significantly increasing costs for those travelling in families or other groups. Pitch fees/rents also vary greatly between sites, as do the utilities, amenities, and services available to site residents – some of which are included in pitch rental costs, while others are available at extra charge.



As shown in the above table, there was little specific data provided about extra charges applied at different sites on top of rent/pitch fees.

Where extra charges were indicated, but amounts not specified, this adds to the inaccessibility of information about what can reasonably be expected by those in need of transit provision before they approach an authority or reach a site: given the differing conditions and standards to which different sites are kept, it may be necessary to pay several hundreds of pounds' deposit to secure a small patch of concrete next to a busy A road, before even considering pitch fees and extra charges.

50% of authorities with transit provision indicated that people staying on those sites are also charged extra fees for the use of utilities. Arrangements for this vary across different sites and areas, with some local authority sites charging for electricity hookup only, some for electricity and gas, some for electricity and water, and others charging for utilities excluding electricity.

Fuel poverty is a significant issue for many living in a caravan or mobile home, compounded by recent extreme rises in energy costs. Depending on the arrangement at an individual site, and the utilities available at an extra charge, those using transit provision can face hidden costs – especially if there is no other appropriate place nearby which they can access.

Practice examples – Negotiated Stopping

A small number of authorities responded informing us that although they did not have transit sites or pitches per se, transit provision was either in development, or their areas operate negotiated stopping (or temporary stopping arrangements) in place.

These were:

- Durham County Council
- Isle of Anglesey Council
- Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Highland Council
- Wolverhampton City Council

As the research questions for this report deal with local government authority transit sites, and transit pitches on permanent local authority sites, these examples fell outside the scope of this research project. However, the responses provided by the above authorities which take a negotiated stopping approach suggest some good, collaborative practices whereby it is accepted that Gypsies and Travellers will travel to their local area for different periods of time, and sites are agreed upon mutually by families and/or groups and the local government authority.

The authorities which indicated that they operate a form of negotiated stopping provided varying levels of information; for instance, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council informed us that they “operate negotiated stopping,” with no further details provided.

Although a majority of local government authorities in Wales responded that they do not have transit provision, Isle of Anglesey’s response provided more details of their temporary stopping approach:

“There are currently no permanent transit pitches on Anglesey, however the authority does source locations for temporary stops and carries out welfare checks, arranging the necessary facilities. For instance, there are a few families that visit the island each summer and they let us know in advance when they will be arriving so we can make arrangements for everything that they need. We have been allocating a park and ride site for use recently and have identified another car park should anyone arrive unannounced. The GTAA has identified a need for: A Temporary Stopping site of up to 10 pitches for caravans in the central part of Anglesey, and a stop-over site for a small number, of up to 3, caravans’ proximity to the ferry terminal at Holyhead.”

Durham County Council’s response stated that although they do not have any transit sites in the county area, there are several ‘Temporary Stop Over Areas’ available, although all but one of these “are open to support Gypsies and Travellers getting to

and from Appleby Fair”²² for two weeks before and after Appleby. Gurney Valley Temporary Stop Over Area is open from April to September, and it is not clear what provision can be expected in this area between October and April, should people be travelling during these months for any reason.

Durham County Council’s website provides the contact details for their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service and states that their initial approach to people stopping in the area involves a welfare visit in which length of stay is negotiated with groups – although this is unlikely to exceed a period of 28 days.

While specific practices clearly vary between the areas which operate a negotiated stopping approach, the responses we received from this group of authorities suggest a level of communication and mutual agreement between local authorities and Gypsies and Travellers stopping in these areas.

Conclusions

This research aimed to assess the current provision of transit sites by local government authorities UK-wide, to better understand what existing provision is in place, and to identify differences in whether and how transit sites provided by local government authorities are operated and used.

This initial mapping exercise is intended to inform future, community-led research on what Gypsy and Traveller communities need from local government authority-owned transit sites, and the best means of identifying and providing culturally appropriate sites and stopping places.

A key aspect of the research findings from this project was a lack of clarity and consistency among different local government authorities in terms of the transit provision they have available, what such provision includes, and the availability and accessibility of information about local transit provision.

Despite local government authorities of all tiers having the power, but no longer a statutory duty,²³ to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers, these findings suggest that over 90% of local government authorities are choosing not to use these powers to provide suitable stopping places for Gypsies and Travellers through the provision of transit sites.

²² “Temporary Stop Over Areas ,” Durham County Council website, 2024. Available at: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/18460/Temporary-Stop-Over-Areas>. Accessed 9th August 2024

²³ Following changes made under s.80 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and s.24 Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.

The government's current planning reforms provide a crucial opportunity to ensure that Gypsies and Travellers are properly included in changes to planning policy, in a way which recognises Article 8 and 14 rights to a private and family life and to live free of discrimination, respectively.

Recommendations

- Clarity of remit should be agreed among and between local authorities and county councils where transit provision for Gypsies and Travellers is concerned, accompanied by consistent messaging to communicate this where needed.
- Local and national government should actively increase their engagement with Gypsies and Travellers in relation to their needs, and in the development of best practice guidance for local government authorities.
- Easily accessible information, co-produced with Gypsies and Travellers, detailing local and surrounding site vacancies' availability, cost, facilities/utilities included and excluded, and available services.
- Local government authorities should receive and allocate funding for the maintenance of decent quality sites and accompanying outreach services, especially in areas where health, education and local authority services are remote or difficult to access.
- (Part IV of) The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 should be repealed; as a minimum, Parliament should urgently review the High Court's Declaration of Incompatibility issued in May 2024, which found certain provisions in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 ('CJPO Act') introduced by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 ('Police Act'), to be incompatible with Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Further research, co-produced with and/or produced by Gypsies and Travellers, is needed into the best means of identifying and providing culturally appropriate sites, to help facilitate a better quality of life for people who live nomadically and/or travel for part of the year.

Appendix I

Freedom of Information request sent to all 382 authorities across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on 16th November 2023.

“To whom it may concern,

I am seeking information about the provision of transit sites for Gypsies and Travellers, and transit pitches on permanent sites, situated on land which is owned and/or managed by your public authority. Please find below a series of questions, submitted as a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

1. Does this local authority own and/or manage any transit sites OR transit pitches situated on permanent sites?
If ‘yes,’ please continue to answer the following questions below.
2. How many
 - a) transit sites, and/or
 - b) transit pitches are there in total in your local authority area?
3. Of these transit pitches, on the 16th November 2023, how many were:
 - a) occupied
 - b) vacant?
4. What is the name and full address of each transit site, and/or permanent site containing one or more transit pitch(es), within your jurisdiction?
5. What are the criteria which must be met to be allocated a pitch on a transit site, or a transit pitch on a permanent site (if you have an allocation policy for one or both types of site, please can you share copies via email)?
6. What is the process by which people can apply for a transit pitch, and what are the contact details for applying for a pitch (e.g., list telephone number of site warden, and/or online form, depending on specific site arrangements)? And;
 - a) What are the operational hours on site?
 - b) Are staff always on site?
 - c) Is there weekend cover?
7. What is the maximum length of time for which people are permitted to stay on the transit site(s)/pitch(es)?
8. Please indicate how each transit site the local authority owns/manages is managed day to day, e.g.:
 - Managed in-house by your local authority which owns the site (please provide details)
 - Managed by another local authority within your jurisdiction, e.g., a district or borough council on behalf of a county council (please provide details)
 - Outsourced to a separate housing provider or similar (please provide details)
 - Managed by a security company (please provide details)

- Leased to a named individual, who may themselves live on the site (please provide details)
 - Named person who manages them and contact details (please provide details)
9. Have the police used Section 62a-e (Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994) to direct people to the site?
10. How much are the costs for:
- a) rent for a pitch?
 - b) a deposit to secure a pitch?
11. Are there any additional utility costs not included in the nominal rent amount for which residents are liable? Please provide details (e.g., water, electricity, other utilities).
12. Is there a license agreement or another form of written contract for stays on the site, and if so, please can you share a copy?
13. What facilities and services operate on the site? Please list, for example:
- Traveller education
 - Health visitor
 - Support services
 - Meeting room to hold interviews
 - CCTV
 - Height restrictor/gate
14. Does the local authority accept welfare benefit payments to cover rent for transit pitches, or transit sites?
15. Have there been any difficulties with setting up Universal Credit or Housing Benefit payments to cover rent for a transit pitch? If so, please outline these.
16. Following a stay on a transit site or transit pitch, is there a certain time period on each site before which those who have vacated are permitted to return to the transit site or pitch? If so, please specify.
17. Have there been changes made to individual site policies, with regard to the amount of time before which those who have vacated are permitted to return to the transit site or pitch, since the introduction of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (if applicable in your area)? If so, please provide details.

Appendix II

Examples of responses received from local government authorities which responded to our Freedom of Information request advising us to approach alternative authorities, as discussed under “Whose Responsibility?”

Wales

- 21²⁴ of the 22 [unitary authorities in Wales](#) responded to our FOI request. Of these, 18 responded that they did not hold the relevant information,²⁵ but gave no indication of other authorities which do hold responsibility for transit provision.

Scotland

- 1 Scottish authority indicated that responsibility for all housing stock and Traveller sites has been transferred to a community housing association since 2006, so they were unable to provide the relevant information

England

Authority	Response
Derbyshire County Council	‘Derbyshire County Council are not a local housing authority and therefore does not have any legal responsibilities to provide accommodation or sites for Gypsies and Travellers. However, the County Council does own a number of sites within the County, which are all leased out to private individuals who manage the sites for Gypsies and Travellers and the County Council continue to work with representative traveller organisations to ensure that the sites are run well and to minimise any problems associated with unauthorised camping, the four sites in Derbyshire can be viewed on our website here. The District and Borough Councils may hold the information you are requesting, their contact details can be found on our website at District and borough councils - Derbyshire County Council.’
North East Derbyshire District Council	‘We are a District Authority and do not own, manage or provide the services of transit sites for Gypsies and Travellers, and transit pitches on permanent sites. If you have not already done so, then I recommend you forward your enquiry to Derbyshire County Council who manage the service and will have the information you are enquiring about.’

²⁴ Denbighshire Council did not acknowledge or respond to our FOI requests or follow up attempts.

²⁵ Question: Does this local authority own and/or manage any transit sites OR transit pitches situated on permanent sites? Response: No.

Lincolnshire County Council	'The information you have requested is not held by Lincolnshire County Council and as a result we are unable to provide the information requested. The information you have requested may be held by district councils.'
Lincoln City Council	'City of Lincoln Council does not hold this information. However, Lincolnshire County Council is the appropriate authority for Lincoln and, if you have not already done so, you should contact them directly.'

Appendix III

Accessibility of information exercise

Summary of the information immediately available on local government authorities' websites following internet searches of this term: "[Name of authority] gypsy traveller transit site."

Aberdeenshire Council: 3 brief paragraphs of information about Gypsy Travellers (termed 'Gypsy/Travellers') in Aberdeenshire, with sections on:

- [Accommodation needs assessment](#) (executive summary and full PDF version available)
- [Gypsy/Traveller sites](#) (information about the two existing council sites in Aberdeenshire)
- [Future sites](#) (a separate page providing clear information about local authority duties relating to housing Gypsy Travellers)
- [Unauthorised encampments](#)
- Contact Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer

There are useful details provided about each site, including numbers of pitches at each site, 3 photos of facilities in chalets at Greenbanks, and contact details for the Gypsy Traveller liaison officer for pitch applications and other information.

Dartford Borough Council – Provides a link to the Kent County Council webpage, clarifying that Kent County Council manages 7 sites across the county. 8 other sites within Kent are listed managed by local district councils, one of which is situated in Dartford – the name and address of this site is provided, along with a link to the Dartford Borough Council website main homepage under the heading 'Contact.'

Liverpool City Council – provides information about Tara Park (a permanent site) including a link for applications, a copy of the allocations policy, and a link to a contact form to get in touch with the council's Gypsy and Traveller service.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council – search results link to two documents available to download: GTAA 2020 for Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, and a 2021 update. There is no specific contact information provided, or reference made to a Gypsy Traveller liaison service or similar – information within the allocation policy on how to apply for a pitch advises contacting housing/homelessness services within the council.