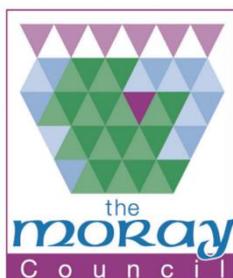


# Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2017





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## Executive summary

In late 2016 it was agreed by the local authority partners of the Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Interagency Group that an updated accommodation needs assessment of Gypsy/Travellers in Grampian was required. Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) and the University of Aberdeen were commissioned to deliver the Needs Assessment. A large-scale Needs Assessment for the Grampian region had previously been published by Craigforth in 2009.

The research work was delivered using the following methods:

1. An analysis of the number of encampments in each local authority area since 2009;
2. A literature review with a focus on the national context and any shifts since 2009;
3. Engagement with Gypsy/Traveller communities residing in the Grampian area during the period May-September 2017;
4. Engagement with key stakeholders.

Progress, in terms of meeting the needs of Gypsy/Traveller communities in the Grampian region since 2009, has been mixed. There have been a range of developments in Aberdeenshire, whereas in terms of site provision there has been little change in Aberdeen City and Moray. All areas have seen an increase in the number of encampments since 2009, with a peak in the period 2010-2013.

38 individuals took part in the research interviews, 50% of whom were located on unauthorised encampments at the time of interview, with the other 50% of participants located on either a local authority or private site, or in housing. Participants had been in their current location for a varied period of time, ranging between 1 day and 29 years.

Participants were asked about what motivated them to move between sites. There were a range of factors which motivated people's most recent move, with "visiting family" and "working in the area" being the most frequent responses.

In terms of services, almost all participants felt that they receive adequate support to access services. However, several participants raised issues around barriers to accessing health services. In terms of which types of services participants felt it most important to be close to, the highest priority was shops, followed by dentist, school, doctor and public transport. Most participants would be willing to travel 1-3 or 3-5 miles to access services.

21 participants felt that their current accommodation was adequate. When asked about ideal future accommodation 16 participants favoured a pitch on a fully-serviced site, 10 wanted a council flat or house, 6 participants wanted their own private site, and 2 wanted a private flat or house. Participants suggested they would need either money, more support from the council or planning approval for more sites in order to achieve their accommodation aspirations.

Based on the findings of the research, in the context of local, regional and national developments, the following recommendations have been made:

1. A review of the approach of including the provision of Gypsy/Traveller sites as part of wider housing/accommodation developments (e.g. within Local Development Plans). Although this may not have been successful in the past, the mechanism seems to offer one of the best opportunities in terms of resourcing and planning. Consideration should also be given as to how new sites, and repairs to existing sites, will be funded.
2. Looking at how Gypsy & Traveller communities can realise aspirations with respect to private site development, including working in partnership with agencies such as Planning Aid Scotland. A relatively small investment in this area could lead to a significant change in outcomes for those who want to develop their own sites, and for the community more generally.
3. Working with Gypsy & Traveller communities to explore options for improving the management of encampments<sup>1</sup> and the potential for developing more informal stopping places, e.g. those historically used by Gypsy & Traveller communities before being closed off.
4. Agree joint protocols for data gathering around encampments and needs assessment on an on-going basis. This will allow for richer data and evidence to be developed, which in turn should support the process of site development in the future.
5. The Scottish Government's Race Equality Action Plan (and associated Framework) should be used as a means to drive forward action at a local level, as well to continue, and enhance, joint working at a regional level. The inclusion of a specific section on Gypsy/Travellers should also allow for joint working, partnership and input at a national level.
6. Initiatives to improve relations between Gypsy & Traveller communities and settled communities. It is clear from the national Scottish Attitudinal Survey and the Aberdeen Viewpoint Survey that negative opinions about Gypsy & Traveller communities remain at a significant level. For long-term positive outcomes this is an issue that will need to be addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> For a recognised example of good practice around encampment management, see the Leeds Gate report, "Assessing the Potential of Negotiated Stopping".

## **Purpose of the research**

It is widely recognised that Gypsy & Traveller communities face some of the highest levels of inequality of any ethnic group in Scotland, and continue to face high levels of discrimination and prejudice.

In late 2016 local authority partners of the Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Interagency Group agreed that updated research on the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers in Grampian was required. This was partly due to the fact that a previous needs assessment, carried out in 2009 by Craigforth (see below), had become out of date. At the same time local authorities were in the process of making decisions on planning applications for private Gypsy/Traveller sites, and updating strategies to meet the needs of Gypsy/Travellers as part of their Local Housing Strategies for 2018-2023.

The purpose of the research was therefore to update the evidence on the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers in North East Scotland. As well as accommodation needs the research also set out to clarify the impact that current accommodation provision (or lack thereof) in Grampian was having on key issues such as access to health and education, as well as on prejudice and discrimination.

For many years it has been largely accepted that, in order to make progress in terms of reducing inequality and discrimination faced by Gypsy/Travellers in the Grampian region, increased site provision is required.

*It is now well established that addressing the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Traveller communities is the shortest and quickest route to ensuring positive outcomes and good relations. Research has shown that a lack of suitable accommodation and poor conditions is related to poor education and poor health as well as being at the root of ill-feeling between communities. In addition, addressing accommodation will in the short- and long-term reduce the costs of maintaining a regressive process that surrounds unauthorised encampments and developments and help achieve additional revenue, in the form of rent and Council Tax, where socially rented and private sites are developed. Permanent solutions will offer the best chance for positive outcomes for all concerned and create a platform where greater engagement and cohesion can be fostered and developed throughout Scotland.*

(Brown/EHRC, 2015)

## **Terminology**

For the purposes of this report the term “Gypsy/Traveller” is used as an over-arching term which includes Scottish Travellers, Irish Travellers, English Travellers and Romany Gypsies. However, it is also recognised that many people within these communities do not like the descriptor “Gypsy/Traveller”, and therefore the term “Gypsy & Traveller communities” has been used where appropriate.

## Methodology

The project to update evidence on the Accommodation Needs of Gypsy/Travellers in Grampian was significantly smaller in scale and capacity compared to the relatively large piece of work that was delivered by Craigforth in 2009. The methodology therefore reflected this and contained four main elements:

1. An analysis of the number of encampments in each local authority area since 2009;
2. A literature review with a focus on the national context and any shifts since 2009;
3. Engagement with Gypsy & Traveller communities residing in the Grampian area during the period May-September 2017;
4. Engagement with key stakeholders.

The first of these elements was delivered through analysing figures collected by local authorities from 2009 onwards.

The literature review looked mainly at documents that had been produced or published by the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee, as well as some key demographic information that came out of the 2011 Census in Scotland.

The third and most important part of the study was engagement with Gypsy & Traveller communities living in the Grampian area. A questionnaire was devised and agreed by the project planning group<sup>2</sup>. Given the size of the project, and additional capacity available to deliver the research, it was agreed that the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officers from each local authority, who had existing relationships with Gypsy & Traveller communities, would deliver the fieldwork and support individuals to complete the questionnaire.

Engagement with key stakeholders took the form of a short questionnaire shared with each local authority, and discussion at the Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Interagency Group meetings.

## 2009 Craigforth Research

The 2009 Accommodation Needs Assessment of Gypsies/Travellers in Grampian by Craigforth Consultancy & Research made a series of recommendations based around four key outcomes:

*Outcome 1: Better planning by local authorities, RSLs and partner organisations to anticipate, and plan to meet, the future needs and aspirations of Gypsies/Travellers in Grampian.*

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<sup>2</sup> Made up of the representatives from Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council, the University of Aberdeen, and Grampian Regional Equality Council

Outcome 2: *Gypsies/Travellers normally resident in Grampian and Gypsies/Travellers visiting the area have accommodation that meets their needs, culture and lifestyle.*

Outcome 3: *Individual support and community development needs are identified and met.*

Outcome 4: *Better and more constructive relationships are developed between Gypsies/Travellers and settled communities (Craigforth, 2009).*

More specifically the report made recommendations on the shortfall in pitches in the three local authority areas, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. For Aberdeen City the recommendation was that no additional pitches were required, but that consideration should be given to updating the mix and location of provision available. In Aberdeenshire an additional 12-15 pitches were recommended, while in Moray an additional 23-25 pitches were recommended. Craigforth recommended a mixture of permanent, temporary and seasonal sites across a range of locations (Craigforth, 2009).

## **Progress and Change since 2009**

There has been a degree of progress with respect to accommodation provision and related issues since the publication of the 2009 Accommodation Needs Assessment. One significant change, that arose soon after the publication of the report, was a significant increase in the number and size of Gypsy/Traveller encampments across the region. Particularly in 2009 and 2010 there were several high-profile unauthorised encampments which were widely covered, generally in a very negative manner, in the local press<sup>3</sup>.

In **Aberdeen City** there has been very little change since 2009 in terms of site provision. A number of initiatives have been established to look at progressing site provision in Aberdeen City, and particularly to address the lack of suitable space for short-stays during key travelling periods. Such attempts have been met with barriers, including political ones. For example, during this period there was a tension with elected officials in Aberdeen City calling for increased powers (through a by-law) to move on groups of Gypsy/Travellers who had stopped in what were deemed to be particular inappropriate locations (e.g. public parks and schools), while the Scottish Government refused to back such a by-law until such time as Aberdeen City had increased site provision.

In Aberdeen City four sites had been ear-marked for Gypsy/Traveller sites within the Local Development Plan. However, these proposed sites are part of much larger housing developments, with requirements to provide sites only after a certain number of housing units have been built. There are also options for developers to

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<sup>3</sup> For a report on Gypsy/Travelers and media coverage in Scotland see Article 12 in Scotland (2016), "Young Gypsy/Traveller Lives: Online Media Audit 2011-14".

pay a contribution rather than provide the site. It is therefore unclear at this point whether any of these sites will be progressed in the future.

In **Aberdeenshire** there have been a number of significant changes since 2009, while the council-run seasonal Gypsy/Traveller site at Greenbanks in Banff (North Aberdeenshire), is still in operation.

One of the most significant elements of change in Aberdeenshire has been the establishment of a private Gypsy/Traveller site at North Esk in St Cyrus (South Aberdeenshire). The site, with 10 permanent plots and 19 transit pitches, was developed without planning permission in 2013. The site was awarded retrospective planning permission in April 2016. However, that decision was then examined by Scottish Ministers and in a report September 2017 the approval for planning permission was over-turned (Scottish Government, 2017). The future of the site and its residents, is under discussion at Aberdeenshire Council.

In March 2017 planning permission was approved for a seasonal Stopover Gypsy/Traveller site, consisting of 12 pitches, at Aikey Brae, New Deer, opening on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. Full planning permission for “Change of Use of Depot and formation of 15 Pitch Caravan Park for Gypsy/Travellers and erection of Amenity Block” at Boyndie, Banff, was approved by Aberdeenshire Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017. Private site developments have also recently been approved for planning permission in Kemnay and Boddam.

Stakeholders felt that some of the reasons for positive progress in Aberdeenshire were a permanent, full-time Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer based in the housing service, who is currently progressing a data-sharing protocol with partners, and a multi-agency approach. Unlike the other two local authorities, Aberdeenshire Council has an officer group and a sub-committee of elected officials with a focus on addressing issues relating to Gypsy & Traveller communities, such as site provision. A strategy for developing site provision in Aberdeenshire was approved in March 2015.

Similarly to Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire Council also included Gypsy/Traveller sites in Local Development Plans, but none of these sites has come to fruition and it is unclear whether any of them will do so in the future.

There has been little change in **Moray** since the publishing of the Accommodation Needs Assessment in 2009, with the focus being on the management of unauthorised encampments, rather than on the development of sites. Proposals for council-run short-stay sites were taken forward in the 2008-09 period but were scrapped after public opposition. Budgetary constraints were highlighted as one of the main barriers to site development in the local authority, which has faced significant budget cuts in recent years. One small private Gypsy/Traveller site was given planning permission (on appeal) in 2016, after being refused planning permission in 2013 (Scottish Housing News, 2016).

In terms of support provided to Gypsy/Travellers, all three local authorities employ a Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer who is responsible for engagement with Gypsy & Traveller communities on encampments, and in some cases council-run and private sites. A range of engagement initiatives, including partners such as NHS Grampian and GREC, have taken place since 2009, focusing on issues such as health and activities for young people. A multi-agency approach is also taken at a strategic level, with partners (local authorities, Police Scotland, NHS Grampian, GREC and Article 12 in Scotland) coming together through the Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Interagency group.

## **National Context**

At a national level there continues to be regular publication of research and reports that highlight inequalities and discrimination faced by Gypsy & Traveller communities in Scotland. The overall picture is of a lack of progress on a number of key issues that have been substantiated in the Scottish context for over 16 years (see the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee's Inquiry into Gypsy Travellers and Public Sector Policies, 2001).

A 2013 report published by the Scottish Parliament's cross-party Equal Opportunities Committee included the following commentary on their experiences of visiting Gypsy/Traveller sites across Scotland:

When we visited sites we saw some horrendous conditions for ourselves. We were deeply disturbed to see that families paying rent to their local council were expected to bathe young children in freezing cold amenity blocks with extortionate heating costs, and that elderly and disabled people might have to go outside to a toilet block in the middle of a cold, winter's night. At one site, as well as a putrid overflowing septic tank and a fire hose that couldn't reach all of the pitches, we heard that, with no bus stop or roadside pavement, the only way for non-driving families to visit local shops or take children to use a playground was to walk two miles to the nearest town along a muddy, unlit woodland path. Another site was barely lit at night, with appalling and tokenistic attempts to make adaptations for a profoundly disabled resident and sightings of prowlers in the woods which provided the only place for children to play. We even felt the fear ourselves of being able to safely access one site up a steep, potholed and gravelled path, only able to imagine the danger it could present in icy weather. Disturbingly this site was lacking in either a fixed phone line or stable mobile phone signal, leaving residents with medical conditions unable to easily seek emergency care.

(Equal Opportunities Committee, 2013)

In 2015 the Equality & Human Rights Commission published a report "Developing Successful Site Provision for Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller Communities", which provides case studies of local authority and private site provision, as well as

managing unauthorised encampments, and a series of observations around suggested ways forward for local authorities (see more below).

In the same year the Scottish Government published a comprehensive set of site standards, called “Improving Gypsy/Traveller Sites”. The document sets out a range of standards that must be met by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords by June 2018. The standards cover both the physical facilities provided, as well as the services provided on site (Scottish Government, 2015).

The regular Scottish Attitudinal Survey (Scottish Government, 2015) shows that Gypsy & Traveller communities continue to face some of the highest levels of prejudice in Scotland when compared with other protected groups. For example 31% of respondents in the Survey stated they would be unhappy if a close relative married a Gypsy/Traveller. This compares with 5-6% of people who felt the same when asked about people of Asian and African backgrounds. 34% of respondents felt a Gypsy/Traveller would be an unsuitable primary school teacher, though this percentage had decreased from 46% of people who held this opinion in the 2010 survey. This compares with 3% of people who felt that someone of African or Asian origin would not make a suitable teacher.

The Scottish Government ran a consultation a paper entitled “Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures” in early 2017. There has not been a follow up publication since the end of the consultation, but the guidance or strategy that is produced is likely to be very relevant to the work of the three local authorities moving forward.

In December 2017 the Scottish Government published a Race Equality Action Plan for 2017-2021, which sits within the Race Equality Framework for 2016-2030. The action plan is broken down into sections such as housing, health and employment, and also has a specific section aimed at improving outcomes for Gypsy & Traveller communities which includes the following actions amongst others:

- A joint Scottish Government and COSLA summit will be held in 2018 with local authorities to share best practice on improving the lives of Gypsy/Traveller communities.
- A review will be held into the progress of local authorities and Registered Social Landlords towards meeting the minimum site standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites ahead of the June 2018 deadline.
- Educational guidance will be published and aimed at schools, including early learning and childcare settings, and local authorities, to help them improve educational outcomes for Traveller children.

(Scottish Government, 2017)

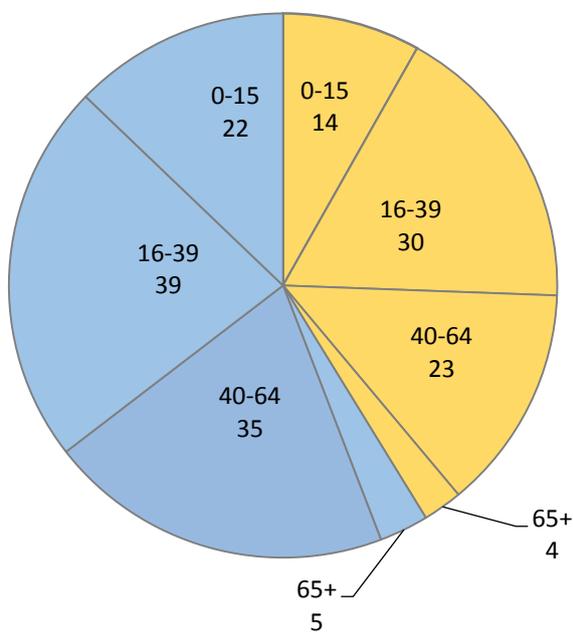
### **Population size, including number of encampments**

2011 was the first time that “Gypsy/Traveller” was included as a tick-box category in the Census in Scotland. Just over 4000 people (around 0.1% of the population) identified as Gypsy/Travellers (Scottish Government, 2015), though there are a

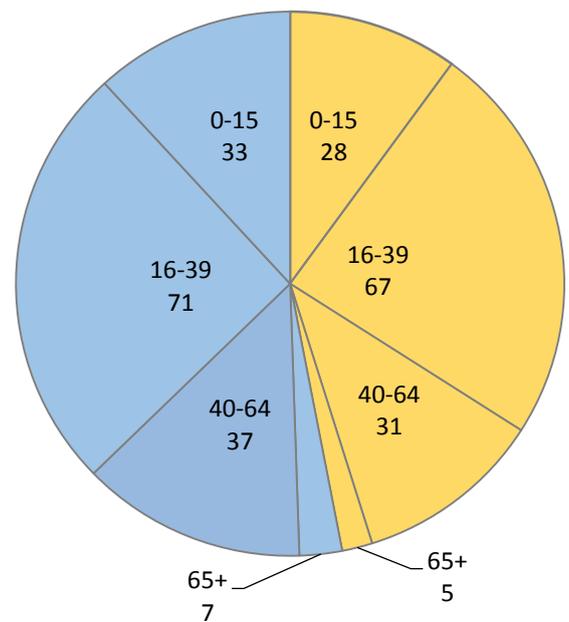
variety of reasons why individuals from these communities may not have identified as such. Estimates of the population size from other reports and organisations tend to range between fifteen and twenty thousand (Equality & Human Rights Commission, 2013).

In the 2011 Census, 279 people described themselves as Gypsy/Travellers in Aberdeen City, 175 in Aberdeenshire, and 79 in Moray (Scottish Government, 2015). The age and gender breakdown is shown here – blue for males, yellow for females.

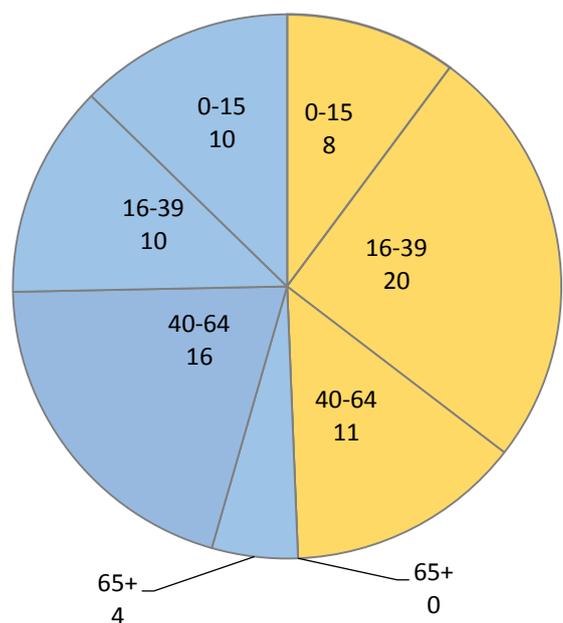
**Aberdeenshire, total 175**



**Aberdeen City, total 279**



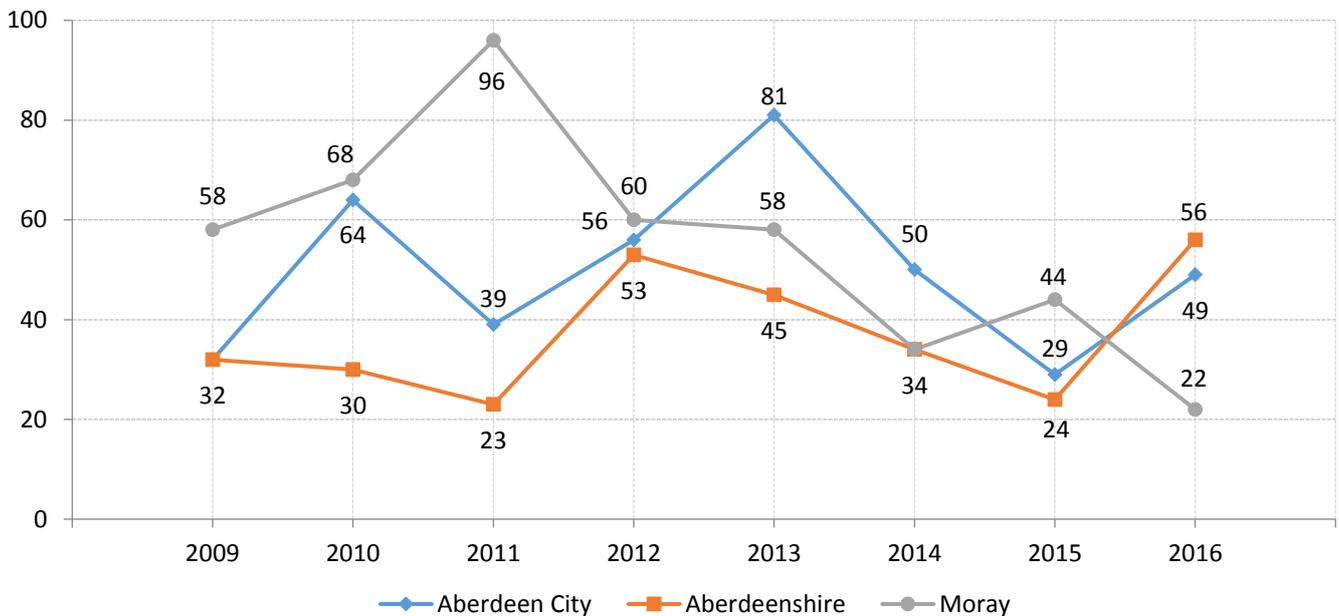
**Moray, total 79**



The chart below shows the total number of unauthorised encampments per year in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. All areas show a peak in numbers in the period 2010-13, with a subsequent rise for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire in

2016. Suggested reasons for the declining number of encampments in Aberdeen City since 2013 included the economic downturn, a more proactive approach taken with groups who were acting illegally, and some of the families who had previously been on encampments moving onto permanent pitches at Clinterty Site.

**Grampian Encampments 2009-2016**



	<b>Encampments</b>		
	Aberdeen City	Aberdeenshire	Moray
2009	32	32	58
2010	64	30	68
2011	39	23	96
2012	56	53	60
2013	81	45	58
2014	50	34	34
2015	29	24	44
2016	49	56	22

## Details of participants in the Research

### Location

Interviews were carried out with Gypsy/Travellers located across the Grampian region and the table below shows that most participants were living in Aberdeenshire at the time, with the fewest located in Moray.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Moray	6	16%
Aberdeen City	13	34%
Aberdeenshire	17	45%
No Response	2	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Number of adults and children within household

In most circumstances only one adult per family group participated in the research. The average number of adults per household was 3.6, whilst the average number of children per household was 3.3. The approximate average age of children on the site was 7.5. Most families had 2 trailers per family; the average number of trailers per family was 2.3.

### Ethnicity of participants

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gypsy/Traveller	8	21%
Gypsy	1	2.6%
Traveller	17	44.7%
Romany	1	2.6%
Scottish Traveller	5	13.2%
No Response	6	15.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Most participants self-defined as either a "Traveller" (44.7%), "Gypsy/Traveller" (21.1%), or a Scottish Traveller (13.2%). Only one participant defined as "Romany", and one further participant as a "Gypsy".

## Current Accommodation

### Accommodation Type

Participants were asked to identify their current location type. The table below shows that half of those who answered this question were located on an unauthorised encampment, with the other half of participants evenly spread across private sites, local authority sites, and housing.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Unauthorised encampment	19	50%
Private site	5	13%
Local authority site	6	16%
Housed	5	13%
No Response	3	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

Of those that answered the question, 5 participants were living in a house at the time of the interview, while 28 participants were living in a trailer or caravan.

#### Length of time at current location

Responses (of which there were 24) varied between one day and 29 years (with one respondent stating that they had stayed at their current site every summer for the last 45 years). 14 respondents have stayed in their current location between 1 day and 1 month.

### **Motivations for Travelling and “Moving on”**

#### Number of places lived in in the last 12 months

The table below shows the number of locations participants had stayed in over the previous 12 months. Although most participants had been in 1-5 locations during that period, some families had been in over 15 different locations.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1 to 5	21	55.3%
6 to 10	6	15.8%
11 to 15	4	10.5%
More than 15	3	7.9%
No Response	4	10.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Reason for most recent move

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Visiting family	4	10.5%
Working in the area	4	10.5%
Change of scenery	3	7.9%
Previous harassment	1	2.6%
Holiday	4	10.5%
Moved on	1	2.6%
Other reasons	10	26.3%
No Response	11	29.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.00</b>

10 respondents gave other reasons for their most recent move. These include 3 people who favour a particular site but need to leave when it closes in the winter (one of these sites is Greenbanks in North Aberdeenshire). People also cite being evicted from a previous house, waiting for a council house to become available, being granted a council house, being granted a permanent pitch at Clinterty, attendance at a funeral and health issues.

### **Impact on health and education**

“In 2011 Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland, compared to the population as a whole, were more likely to report a long-term health problem or disability and were more likely to report bad or very bad general health...Gypsy/Travellers were more likely than the general population to have a limiting long-term health problem or disability (28 per cent compared to 20 per cent) despite the fact they had a much younger age profile. Within this, they were also more likely to be limited ‘a lot’ by a long-term health problem or disability (16 per cent compared to 10 per cent)” (Scottish Government, 2015).

The 2011 Census showed that Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland were less likely than the rest of the population to have good English language skills, with 83 per cent of the Gypsy/Traveller population stating that they could speak, read and write English, which compares with 94 per cent of the whole population (Scottish Government, 2015).

Participants were asked about their health conditions, with 15 respondents sharing information on health conditions. These included mental health (ADHD, depression), pregnancy, heart conditions, diabetes, hearing problems, lung and breathing issues (asthma, COPD), kidney problems, cancer and arthritis. 2 respondents did not wish to disclose what their specific health conditions were.

We asked respondents how accommodation aspects can impact upon healthcare. 16 respondents gave examples. Most responses refer to proximity and access to services which can be difficult when travelling around, e.g.: “[it’s] hard to get to appointments, [we’re] constantly moving so it’s hard to get to appointments”. 2 respondents have actually moved into housing as this issue was affecting them so badly, for example one who tells us that the family moved into housing due to their child’s asthma. Another respondent points out that: “It can get quite cold in the winter”. 2 respondents refer to the facilities on a fixed site, pointing out issues with toilet facilities and running water.

## Access to local services

### Registration with local services

28 respondents are registered with a **doctor** (with 1 respondent currently in the process of registering, 1 waiting for a house, and 1 saying they are probably registered but don’t recall).

20 respondents are registered with a **dentist** (with 1 respondent waiting for a house, another stating it is too expensive, another suggesting the process is too difficult to access, and a final respondent pointing out that there is no point as they are not remaining long enough in one location).

18 respondents have children registered with a **school**. Respondents point out that these schools are not always in the current location, and 1 respondent says it is impossible because they travel too frequently.

34 of our 38 respondents feel that the support provided in order to access and link in with services is adequate, although 1 respondent felt that it would have been better if this evaluation had been done earlier in the year, and another respondent feels that their application for housing is taking too long. Generally respondents point out good levels of support from housing and liaison officers (some of which are based on sites).

### Importance of access to local services

We asked participants to rate the importance of access to various local services. The following table indicates the mean response (on a scale of 1 – 3 with 1 being very important, 2 being important and 3 being not important). These results show that access to all services is considered important, with shops being the most important, followed by the dentist/doctor, school and then access to public transport.

	Shops	Dentist	Doctor	School	Public Transport
Average	1.34	1.37	1.43	1.43	1.69
No. of Responses	35	35	30	35	35

We also asked respondents to suggest other services which are important and currently not available to them. These suggestions comprise 2 suggestions for 24 hour toilets and showers and 2 suggestions for safe play areas for children.

Distance respondents would be willing to travel to services

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1 mile or less	1	2.6%
1 to 3 miles	18	47.4%
3 to 5 miles	13	34.2%
5 miles +	2	5.3%
No Response	4	10.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The responses provided are in line with previous consultation with Gypsy & Traveller communities in the area, with 1-3, or 3-5 miles stated as being the maximum distance from key services.

**Accommodation and Aspirations**

Satisfaction with/challenges with current site

When asked about levels of satisfaction with the current site, 21 respondents felt that their current accommodation is adequate. Many explain that the accommodation is adequate given that it is not permanent – therefore they are not stuck with any one issue indefinitely. Issues are raised however, including toilets not working properly, poor access to water, and sites being generally run down and in need of upgrading. One respondent states that the general public are a concern and take photos of the site and its residents. 2 respondents state they would ideally like to be able to remain on site indefinitely. 2 respondents point out a lack of quality facilities for children including playparks. One respondent is unhappy because the site is littered with *“other people’s rubbish”*.

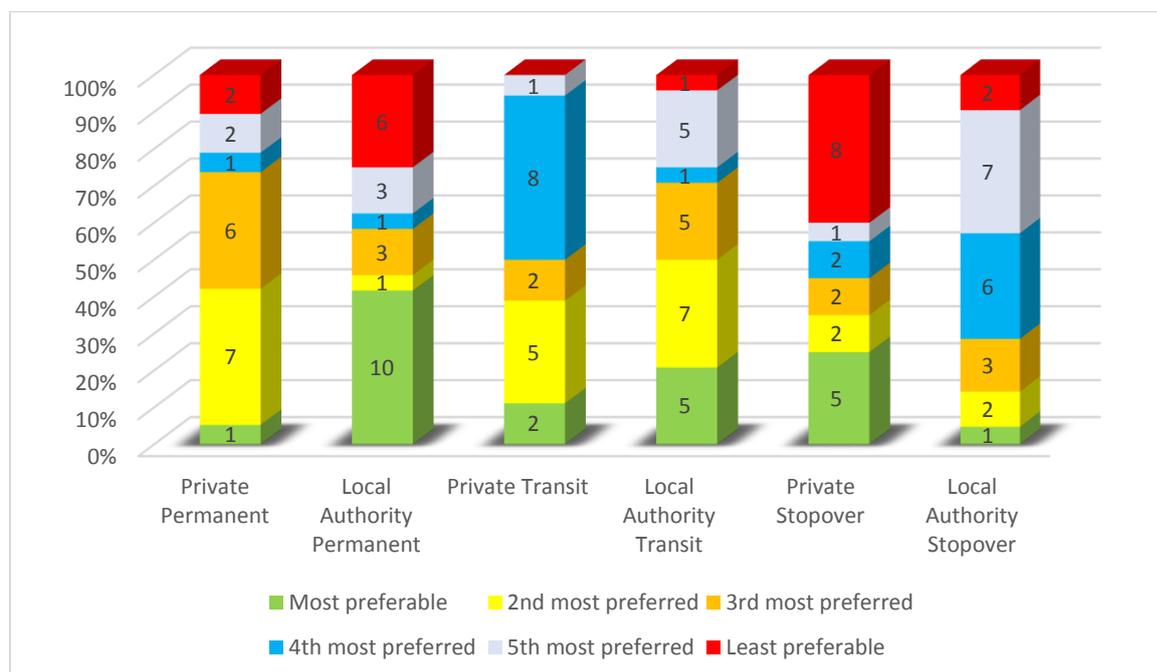
When prompted about any additional challenges, responses include poor toilet facilities, a lack of water or electricity, a fear of eviction, issues with the weather (particularly stormy weather coming in from the coast), constant visits from police and council workers, and unpleasant interactions with members of the general public. As there is not a high number of responses these issues have not been aligned with specific local authority areas, but it is likely that some of these experiences differ depending on the locality.

### Ideal future accommodation

Participants were asked about the type of accommodation provision they would ideally like to have in the future. The table below shows that the most frequent response was a desire for a trailer (caravan) on a fully serviced site, followed by a council provided house or flat.

	Frequency	Percent
Trailer on fully serviced site	16	42.1
Private house or flat	2	5.3
Council provided house or flat	10	26.3
Your own private site	6	15.8
No Response	4	10.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A similar question was asked in 2015, to members of Gypsy & Traveller communities as part of the development of the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Housing Need & Demand Assessment. The types of sites were ranked from most to least preferable. The number refers to participants who selected the ranking for that option.



(GREC, 2015)

Although the most popular type of site that was desired by participants was once again a permanent local authority site, the rankings show a wide range of preferences from different participants.

The same 2015 questionnaire asked participants about the ideal site size for permanent and short stay sites:

*What do you feel would be the optimum number of pitches on a permanent site?*

- 11 participants felt the optimum size was 10-15 pitches.
- 7 participants felt the optimum size was 16-20 pitches.
- 6 participants felt the optimum size was more than 20 pitches.

*What do you feel would be the optimum number of pitches on a Transit or Stopover site?*

- 8 participants felt the optimum size was 11-15 pitches
- 7 participants felt the optimum size was 7-10 pitches.
- 5 participants felt the optimum size was more than 15 pitches.
- 4 participants felt the optimum size was 4-6 pitches.

(GREC, 2015).

For the 2017 fieldwork participants were asked what they felt would be the optimum size of pitch:

- 11 participants felt the optimum size was 5 or less pitches
- 10 participants felt the optimum size was 5-10 pitches
- 6 participants felt the optimum size was 10-15 pitches
- 5 participants felt the optimum size was over 15 pitches

This suggests mixed views in terms of ideal size, though more participants would favour a small site (less than 10 pitches) compared with a larger site (more than 10 pitches).

The responses from the two pieces of research, aligned with the increase in number and size of encampments since the Craigforth research was published, suggest that overall larger site provision is needed compared with what was recommended in 2009, i.e. sites of 6-8 pitches.

### Ideal place to live

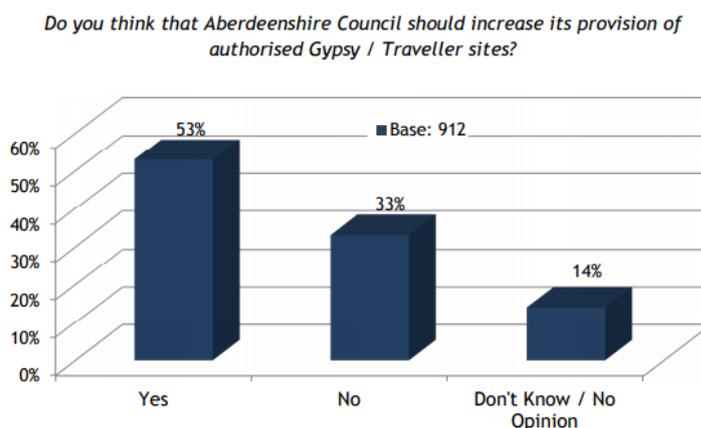
We asked respondents where they felt would be the ideal location to live. 5 respondents said Aberdeen; 3 said Aberdeenshire; 1 said Stonehaven, another Montrose, and another said Peterhead. 1 respondent specified Aikey Brae, another the West Coast of Scotland. Some respondents gave more generic responses such as the North East of Scotland, or either “trailer” or “in housing”. Some explained that their ideal place was their current location, or site.

We asked what help could be provided so that respondents could achieve their ideal location. Most respondents stated that they would need the local Council to either support or build this ideal site or accommodation. Some suggested better planning processes, while 8 participants who responded to this open-ended question stated that they needed either more sites, or money and planning approval for more sites -

“[we need] support from local council: WE WANT AIKEY BRAE!”. One respondent wishes for better support from the local settled community.

### Views of the “settled” community

In 2014, Aberdeenshire Council included questions about Gypsy/Traveller site provision and management of unauthorised encampments in their citizen’s panel survey. The results indicate that a majority of the 912 participants were in favour of the council increasing site provision for Gypsy & Traveller communities.



(Viewpoint, 2014)

The table below shows the responses of participants when asked their views on increased site provision for Gypsy & Traveller communities in the area. Most of the comments are negative or state that the cost of sites should be met by Gypsy & Traveller communities. Although this survey was undertaken in Aberdeenshire only, given responses to site proposals in other areas it is unlikely that feelings in these areas would differ greatly.

Response Theme	% of comments
View that costs should be met by Gypsy / Travellers	38%
Negative comments about mess	28%
Questions as to whether sites would be used	20%
General negative comments about Gypsy / Travellers	12%
View that no sites at all should be allowed	12%
Negative comments about crime	10%
Negative comments about doorstep selling	4%
Positive comments about authorised sites as opposed to unauthorised	3%
Feelings of intimidation by Gypsy / Travellers	2%
Other	5%
<b>Base</b>	

(Viewpoint, 2014)

## Conclusions & Recommendations

The data collected as part of this research project, collated alongside other information from recent years, suggests a picture of mixed progress since the 2009 Craigforth Report in terms of site provision. There continues to be a significant number of unauthorised encampments in the Grampian region every year, particularly in Aberdeenshire in recent years. The number of encampments is still currently higher than in 2009, however in the last 3-4 years the numbers have decreased from a peak in the period 2010-13.

Members of Gypsy & Traveller communities who participated expressed a range of views on the types of sites and provision they would want to see developed in the region. On the whole the most desirable type of site for participants was a local authority provided permanent site, but when taken alongside data on the number of encampments over recent years, and feedback to a 2015 consultation, there is a demand for a range of provision.

Given that the number of participants taking part in the research was lower than anticipated, the data generated does not allow for specific recommendations on the number of sites and pitch sizes. The data is useful in a variety of other ways, e.g. highlighting the services that tend to be more important for Gypsy & Traveller communities to be close to (shops, dentists, doctors, schools), as well as demonstrating that being located 1-3 miles, followed by 3-5 miles, from services was desirable. The research also highlights that a mix of accommodation types is desired by members of Gypsy & Traveller communities.

Given the on-going high number of unauthorised encampments in Aberdeen City each year, there continues to be evidence for the need for a greater mixture of provision, i.e. to look at short stay provision to complement the permanent accommodation at Clinterty Traveller's Site.

Aberdeenshire Council has had the highest number of unauthorised encampments over recent years. It is unclear what impact the opening up of Aikey Brae as a short stay, seasonal site will have, and at the point of writing it is unclear what future there will be for the large private site in St Cyrus, which has both permanent and short-stay pitches. However, given the number of encampments at present, it seems likely that there will continue to be a shortfall of provision even with both of these sites in place.

There is no council provision in Moray, and limited private site provision. The numbers of unauthorised encampments have dropped since a peak in the period 2010-13 but there remains a significant number of encampments each year.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission report, "Developing Successful Site Provision for Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller Communities" (Brown, 2015), highlights the need for developing strategies that address identified need. Arguably the progress made by Aberdeenshire Council in recent years has been supported by the development of a strategy to identify and progress sites, as well as investment in officer time to develop and progress this strategy.

In a time of increasing budgetary constraints for public bodies, it is inevitable that this will impact on the viability and likelihood of certain types of site provision. However, it remains the case that Gypsy & Traveller communities in Scotland face the worst levels of inequality, discrimination and prejudice, and this situation will not be

resolved until suitable site provision is available across the country. As well as developing a strategy for site provision in Aberdeen City and Moray, the following recommendations, most of which would be delivered most effectively in partnership, are made for all three local authorities to consider:

1. A review of the approach of including the provision of Gypsy/Traveller sites as part of wider housing/accommodation developments (e.g. within Local Development Plans). Although this may not have been successful in the past, the mechanism seems to offer one of the best opportunities in terms of resourcing and planning. Consideration should also be given as to how new sites, and repairs to existing sites, will be funded.
2. Looking at how Gypsy & Traveller communities can realise aspirations with respect to private site development, including working in partnership with agencies such as Planning Aid Scotland. A relatively small investment in this area could lead to a significant change in outcomes for those who want to develop their own sites, and for the community more generally.
3. Working with Gypsy & Traveller communities to explore options for improving the management of encampments<sup>4</sup> and the potential for developing more informal stopping places, e.g. those historically used by Gypsy & Traveller communities before being closed off.
4. Agree joint protocols for data gathering around encampments and needs assessment on an on-going basis. This will allow for richer data and evidence to be developed, which in turn should support the process of site development in the future.
5. The Scottish Government's Race Equality Action Plan (and associated Framework) should be used as a means to drive forward action at a local level, as well to continue, and enhance, joint working at a regional level. The inclusion of a specific section on Gypsy/Travellers should also allow for joint working, partnership and input at a national level.
6. Initiatives to improve relations between Gypsy & Traveller communities and settled communities. It is clear from the national Scottish Attitudinal Survey and the Aberdeen Viewpoint Survey that negative opinions about Gypsy & Traveller communities remain at a significant level. For long-term positive outcomes this is an issue that will need to be addressed.

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<sup>4</sup> For a recognised example of good practice around encampment management, see the Leeds Gate report, "Assessing the Potential of Negotiated Stopping".

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