



Managing Gypsy and Traveller Sites

What councils need to do – a guide for Gypsy and Traveller community members

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Introduction

This document explains the guidance on how to manage Gypsy and Traveller sites owned by local councils.

Good management of a site means supporting the people who live there. This includes making sure that:

- Everyone can stay physically healthy.
- Everyone's mental health and wellbeing are supported.
- Everyone has fair access to healthcare and other support services.

Using a human rights approach when planning and managing Gypsy and Traveller sites is very important. This helps make sure that people are treated fairly and feel involved in any decisions that affect them.

What this guide is for

This document is to help Gypsy and Traveller community members understand their rights, and what to expect when living on a local council Gypsy and Traveller site.

Local councils must make sure sites they manage:

- Are sustainable, well managed and properly maintained.
- Meet the same standards as non-Gypsy and Traveller mobile home sites.
- Are managed by working with residents and the wider community.

Developing this guidance

The guidance replaces the 2015 Managing Gypsy and Traveller Sites guidance.

It is for those with day-to-day responsibility for council-owned Gypsy and Traveller sites.

This usually includes:

- A site manager/Liaison Officer
- An operational manager.

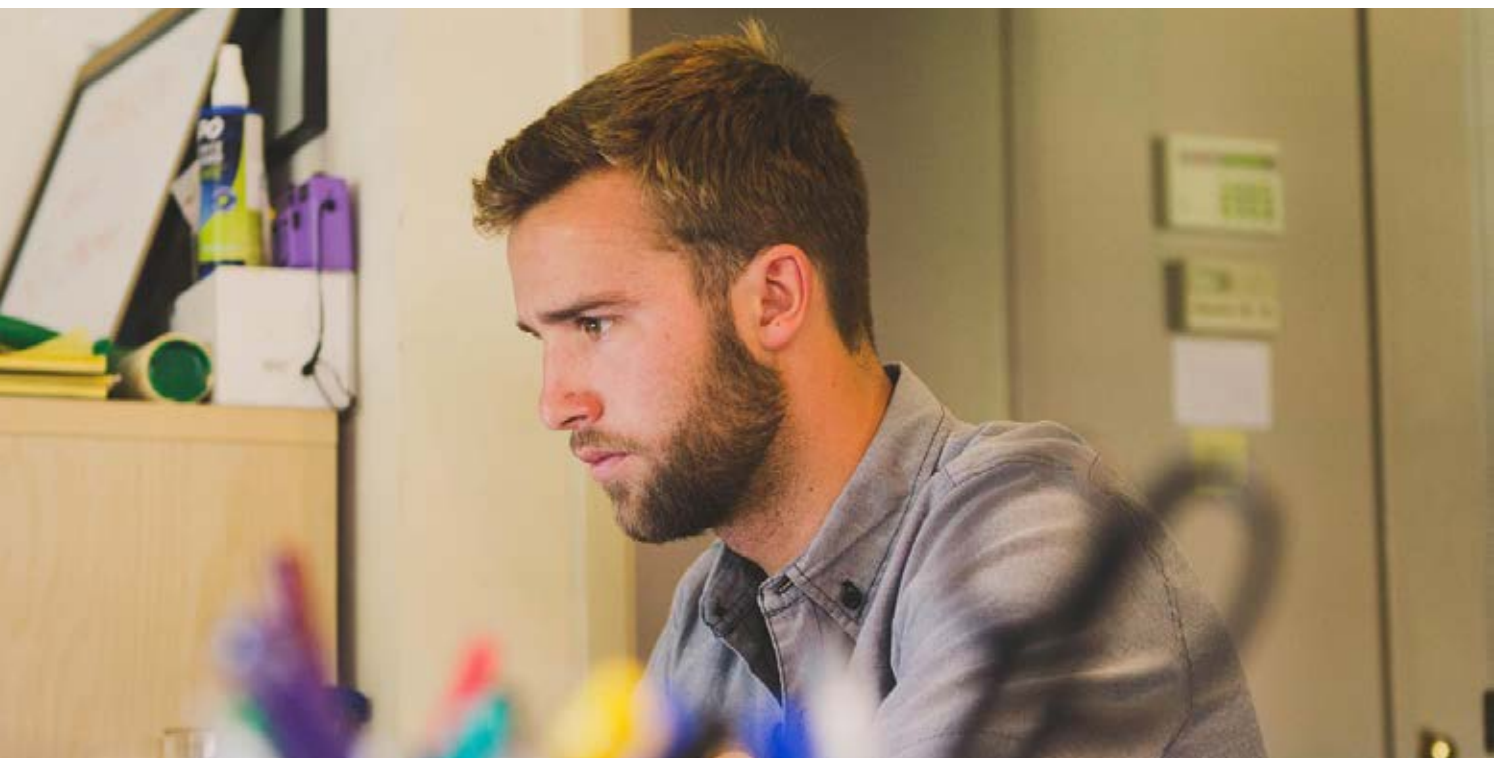
A site manager or Liaison Officer is anyone responsible for daily site operations. They might be called a caretaker or warden.

Some councils have an unofficial site warden. This can be the head of an extended family living on the site who works as a voice between the council and residents.

Some of the responsibilities in this guidance may apply to the unofficial site warden. But overall responsibility usually sits with the council operational manager.

An operational manager means the council official with overall responsibility for these sites.

Some councils with small sites may not have a site manager. The council still holds all responsibilities as site owner or leaseholder whether they have a site manager or not. If the council owns the site, they are responsible.



Responsibility for the site

The council is responsible for the general maintenance of their sites.

Councils should only make decisions about the site after listening to residents. They should talk to residents first about any concerns.

The council must also speak with a residents' association, if there is one, about all matters and possible changes.

In-house management

The local council may manage the site directly and should work closely with residents living on site.

The council may employ a site manager who is from the Gypsy or Traveller community who lives on the site. If the council hires someone else to run the site, the council is still responsible.

Before appointing an onsite manager, councils should speak with site residents. It is important that anything that could affect residents is discussed with them in a way that is clearly understood.

Contracted management

Sometimes councils use outside organisations to manage their sites.

Before doing this, councils should talk to residents to make sure everyone is comfortable with decisions that are being made.

The council always keeps overall responsibility for the management of the site. Even if management of the site is carried out by another organisation.

Fire safety

The law requires councils to keep households on Gypsy and Traveller sites as safe as possible from fire.

On most Gypsy and Traveller sites, these rules apply to:

- All site land.
- Shared or common buildings.

It does not apply to individual caravans, as this is the responsibility of the family living on the pitch.

Fires in caravans can spread quickly and pose serious risks. These risks must be managed by both residents and councils.



Fires can start for lots of reasons, so it's very important to try to stop them from happening. Some ways to do this are:

- Be careful when cooking in a caravan or an amenity block. Food can easily catch fire if you don't pay attention.
- For smokers, put out cigarettes properly in an ashtray and keep lighters and matches where children can't get them.
- Use gas safely. Follow the instructions when using and storing gas bottles.
- Make sure caravans are not too close to each other, or to trees and bushes. This means that if a fire does start, it can't spread to the rest of the site.
- Be careful with bonfires and other outdoor fires. Only light them far away from caravans, vehicles, trees and bushes. Put them out fully with water or sand when they're not needed any more.

Fire safety responsibilities

The law requires councils who own Gypsy and Traveller sites to arrange an assessment of the risks of fire on each site and must keep it up to date.

The council must make sure the site is as safe as possible. They must check for fire risks, make sure fire engines can reach the site, and ensure that alarms are fitted in shared buildings. Residents should be told what to do if there is a fire. The council must help make sure everyone knows how to stay safe.

Residents should be encouraged to fit smoke or heat alarms in their caravans. They should also take safety steps, like using gas bottles carefully.

Amenity blocks and communal buildings should have smoke or heat alarms. Larger buildings may need bigger alarms.

If a fire breaks out on the site it should be possible to contain and extinguish it quickly and safely. This is a task for firefighters, not residents or site staff. Firefighters will bring and use their own equipment for this.

Make sure residents know to call 999, ask for Fire and give the location of the site. If the mobile signal on the site is poor, it may be necessary to provide a landline phone.

Fire engines must be able to access the site easily. If a site is far from public roads, fire hydrants may be needed on the site. These are for use by firefighters only.

Working together

A good relationship between the site manager and residents is important. This relationship should be built on trust and respect.

Roles and responsibilities should be clear. Both sides should understand what they can expect from each other.

Residents should be told who to contact for help and who to speak to if something goes wrong. Residents should also be given emergency contacts or help outside normal office hours.

The council should clearly explain site rules and repairs and involve residents in discussions about how the site is run.

Site management and maintenance

Good site management supports a successful Gypsy and Traveller site. Maintenance is a key part of this.

A site management and maintenance plan should be made by speaking with residents. The plan should be accessible to all residents. This means using clear formats, such as Plain English.

Whether the site management is by the council or another organisation, residents must have a main point of contact.

There should be a named person available during normal office hours to be the first point of contact with the council.

Residents should also be given out of hours emergency contact numbers. The information must be easy to understand.

Council responsibilities

The council must not stop residents from looking after their home or keeping them in a good condition.

The council must give any new residents information about:

- The size of their pitch and where it is.
- Details about the base.
- Details on the amenity block, which includes a bathroom and kitchen.

The council can charge £30 for this information. They must explain the charge and give proof.

If asked the council must give these documents free of charge:

- Details of any new pitch fee.
- Charges for gas, electricity, water, sewerage or other services.
- Details of any other costs involved in living on the site.

The council must also:

- Repair the pitch base that the home sits on.
- Look after gas, electricity, water and sewerage services they provide.
- Repair other things they provide on the pitch.
- Provide maintenance to the amenity block.
- Keep shared areas clean and tidy.

Site managers may also carry out other duties.

Councils must fully explain the mobile home agreement to residents in a clear and accessible way. Councils should explain to residents that seriously breaking the agreement can lead to legal action.

Getting involved

Residents may choose to form a residents' association on their site. This helps make sure that there is a central point where information can be shared and people can talk together about important matters.

The council must speak with residents about making any improvements to the site. It is a good idea to ask for their views on other matters too. Even if there is no residents' association.

Residents should have at least 28 clear days' notice, in writing.

Looking at the needs of residents is also important. For example, living conditions, support needs, satisfaction with the site and areas for improvement.

Also, site managers should ensure that children and young people have equal opportunities to be heard.

Privacy notice

The council must give residents a privacy notice. This explains what information the council collects, why it is collected and if it is shared with others.

Applications and allocations

Individuals have the right to apply for a pitch. The council must make the application form easy to understand and must offer help if needed.

The local council should explain the process and tell individuals how long a decision will take. If their application is refused, the reasons should be explained, and they have the right to ask for their application to be looked at again.

Application forms for council pitches should be available from the local housing office, and from the manager of any council site.

Councils should have a clear and accessible waiting list policy. This means it should be easy to follow and understand by anyone.

Councils have duties to help applicants who are homeless or at risk of homelessness under the **Housing (Wales) Act 2014**.

Written statement and mobile home agreement

Before individuals move onto the site, the council must give them a written statement and a pitch agreement. These documents explain residents' rights and responsibilities. The council must make sure they understand them.

The council must explain any rules, payment details, and the services they will receive. Residents must sign the agreement only after they understand it.

The agreement is a legally binding contract. It must be fully explained to the applicant before anything is signed.



Agreements for permanent pitches

Some agreement terms cannot be changed by the council or residents. For example:

- Ending agreements.
- Dealing with overpayments.
- Re-siting mobile homes.
- The site owner's right of entry to the pitch.
- Setting pitch fees.

The council and resident may agree extra terms. These may include site rules. Residents on permanent sites must:

- Follow the terms in the agreement.
- Pay pitch fees to the site owner or manager.
- Pay the site owner or manager for gas, electricity, water, sewerage or other services.
- Keep their mobile home in good condition.
- Keep the outside of their mobile home clean and tidy.
- Give at least 4 weeks written notice if they want to end their agreement.
- Provide the site owner or manager with entry to the pitch.

If applicants do not agree with terms, they should speak to the council. There are also other steps they can take.

Agreements for transit pitches

Residents on transit pitches do not have the same right to challenge the terms of mobile home agreements as they would on a permanent pitch.

But they can still expect all facilities be kept in good working order, and safety rules to be followed, just like on a permanent pitch.

Transit Site arrivals

Individuals going onto a transit site must pay the fees due for their pitch when arriving on a transit site.

The site manager should discuss payment options with the applicant. This may include Direct Debits, standing orders or Universal Credit.

The pitch agreement must clearly show:

- When fees are due.
- The fee amount.
- What services are included.

All utilities should be available from the day the applicant moves onto the pitch.

On arrival, the site manager must show the pitch, explain hook-up points and explain site services. They must show residents where the water and electricity points are and explain the emergency arrangements.

Residents should also be given clear information about how to pay their fees and how to use the services on the site.

Ending the agreement

Once the mobile home agreement is agreed and signed it will give security to the resident. This does not apply if the pitch has limited planning permission.

Where the pitch agreement is given for a transit pitch, the longest length is 3 months. Different rules to end the agreement will apply depending on if the individual is on a residential pitch or a transit pitch.

If a resident breaks the agreement, the site manager should first try to sort the problem with the resident. They must speak to residents first and explain the problem. The response should always match how serious the rule break is.

Responses to breaking an agreement may include:

- Verbal warnings.
- Written warnings.
- Eviction.

Eviction should be avoided during pregnancy, where possible. If a family with children under the age of five is facing eviction, health services must be told. This is to make sure the family gets the support they need for their young children.

Pitch fees and costs

Pitch fees must reflect the size of the pitch and the services provided on site.

The council must explain what residents are paying for and must tell them in writing before fees change. If residents ask for details of the costs, the council must provide them. Residents have the right to challenge any fee increase if they think it is unfair.

Residential pitch fees can change only by agreement. They may also change following a decision by the Residential Property Tribunal.

If a resident does not agree to the change to the pitch fee, the current fee continues. This is while the local council applies for a decision from the Residential Property Tribunal.

Universal Credit and Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit can be used to pay for pitch fees. Residents are responsible for arranging this payment.

Site repairs and maintenance

Council sites must be maintained to a good standard. This supports the health and well-being of residents and surrounding areas.

The council is responsible for maintaining:

- The pitch base.
- Amenity block.
- Gas, electricity, water, sewerage, or other services supplied by the site owner to the pitch or mobile home.
- Other amenities provided by the owner on the pitch.
- All areas of the site that are not the responsibility of individual pitch agreements.

Residents should report any problems, and the council must act as soon as possible.

The council should also check the site regularly and plan maintenance to keep the site safe and comfortable.

Services and utilities on site

Councils should ask residents about their preferred electrical supply. They should then speak with the electricity provider to try to meet this need.

Where possible, councils should connect sites to direct mains services. This can help reduce costs.

Gas bottles or containers may be used on site. Residents are responsible for the safe storage and use of these.

Councils must provide waste collection services. They should also provide recycling facilities.

Councils must speak to all residents before installing CCTV. They must always respect residents' privacy.

Short term absence

Councils should allow short-term absences in mobile home agreements. This is because the community may travel often for seasonal work, leisure, or personal reasons.

Agreements should include clear rules for temporary absence.

Visitors

Site residents are allowed to have visitors, but visitors must not become permanent residents.

Councils may allow visits of up to four weeks. This depends on space and site capacity.

Shorter visits may be needed if the site is overcrowded.

Animals

Residents should be allowed to keep pets, such as dogs and cats.

With dogs, it must be clear who owns the animal. Animals must always be properly controlled within the pitch.

Grazing land

Residents must arrange their own grazing land or stables.



Safeguarding residents and visitors

Councils should have fair policies that help manage behaviour on site.

Councils should include site rules and policies about expected standards in the pitch agreements.

Departures

If residents of transit pitches wish to leave the site before the end of their agreement, they must give written notice to the site manager.

The council should check the pitch for damage and make sure any overdue payments are sorted before the resident leaves. They may choose whether to give a forwarding address, and the council should provide a reference if they need one.

Complaints

The council must have a clear complaints policy. Details of this should be available to all residents.

Residents can make a complaint verbally or in writing. Complaint forms should be available from the site manager and the council.

Residents should be given details of who to contact if the complaint is about the site manager. The council must tell residents how their complaint will be handled and how long it may take. Residents must also be told what to do if they are not happy with the response.



Help and support

Organisations you can contact for help, support and advice

Gypsies and Travellers Wales

Address: Trowbridge Community Centre
Trowbridge
CF3 1RU

Phone: 029 2021 4411

Email: info@gtwales.org.uk

Travelling Ahead (Tros Gynal Plant Cymru)

Address: TGP Cymru Spark Centre
Cardiff University
Maindy Road
Cardiff
CF24 4HQ

Freephone Advice Line: 0808 802 0025

Website: tgpcymru.org.uk/what-we-do/travelling-ahead-wales-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-advice-and-advocacy-service

There and Back Again

Phone: 07931 376636

Website: thereandbackagain.wales

The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain

Address: South Wales
29 Westend Avenue
Nottage
Porthcawl
CF63 3NE

Phone: 07867 506061

Email: sgwales1@gmail.com

Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

Address: 4th Floor
One Canal Parade
Dumballs Road
Cardiff
CF10 5BF

Phone: 02920 468600

Email: enquiries@wlga.gov.uk

Website: wlga.gov.uk

Travellers' Advice Team

Community Law Partnership

National helpline for Travellers: 0121 685 8677
(Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm)

Out of hours Emergencies only: 07768 316755

Website: communitylawpartnership.co.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales

Address: 1 Caspian Point
Caspian Way
Cardiff
CF10 4DQ

Phone: 029 2044 7710

Email: wales@equalityhumanrights.com

Website: equalityhumanrights.com

The Traveller Movement

Address: 40 Jeffrey's Road
Stockwell
London
SW4 6QX

Phone: 020 7607 2002

Email: info@travellermovement.org.uk

Website: travellermovement.org.uk

Friends, Families and Travellers

Address: Community Base
113 Queens Road
Brighton
BN1 3XG

Phone: 01273 234777

Email: Fft@gypsy-traveller.org

Website: gypsy-traveller.org

Tai Pawb

Address: Trident Court
East Moors Road, Cardiff
CF24 5TD

Phone: 02921 057957

Email: info@taipawb.org

Planning Aid Wales

Address: First Floor
12 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

Phone: 02920 625000

Website: planningaidwales.org.uk

Roma Support Group

Address: PO Box 23610

London

E7 0XB

Phone: 07949 089778

Email: info@romasupportgroup.org.uk

Website: romasupportgroup.org.uk

Travellers Aid Trust

Address: PO Box 16

Llangyndeyrn Kidwelly

SA17 5YT

Phone: 01554 891976

Email: info@travellersaidtrust.org

Website: travellersaidtrust.org

Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers (ACERT)

Address: Little Kiln Pottery Road

Bovey Tracey

Devon

TQ13 9DS

Phone: 020 8374 1286

Email: Info@acert.org.uk

Website: acert.org.uk