

Supporting the nomadic way of life: research on transit provision in Wales

Prepared for Welsh Government

Gypsies and Travellers Wales

In partnership with:

Travelling Ahead

February 2026

Acknowledgements

Gypsies and Travellers Wales and Travelling Ahead would like to thank the Gypsy and Traveller community members, local authority officers and professionals who generously gave their time to participate in interviews, focus groups and discussions as part of this research.

We are particularly grateful to members of the community advisory group for their time and invaluable feedback in helping to shape and validate the findings of this report.

We also thank the peer researchers who supported community engagement and elements of data collection during the study.

We additionally acknowledge the contribution of Dr Rhiannon Craft, who provided research support during the project.

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Glossary

Authorised Site

A site with planning permission for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. It may be owned or managed by a local authority or privately owned.

Caravan Count

A biannual data collection exercise coordinated by Welsh Government that records the number of Gypsy and Traveller caravans and sites across Wales at a specific point in time.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)

A statutory assessment undertaken by local authorities at least every five years to identify accommodation needs for Gypsy and Traveller communities, including permanent and transit provision.

Negotiated Stopping

An approach where a local authority and travelling families agree temporary arrangements for stopping on specific land, usually including agreed timeframes and basic services such as bins or water.

Permanent Residential Site

A site providing long-term pitches for Gypsy and Traveller families as their main residence.

Temporary Designated Stopping Place

A short-term stopping arrangement providing limited facilities for defined periods (typically up to 28 days). These are often less formal than transit sites and may operate on land used for other purposes.

Transit Site

A site intended for short-term stays, up to 3 months, by travelling families, with access to basic facilities such as water, sanitation and waste disposal.

Unauthorised Encampment (UE)

The occupation of land without planning permission or the landowner's consent for the purpose of residing in caravans or other mobile accommodation. Hereafter referred to as 'encampments'

1. Introduction

1.1 Policy context

Gypsy and Traveller communities in Wales have a long tradition of nomadism, travelling for work, cultural and religious events and family reasons. Short-term mobility remains an important feature of many households' lives. However, provision for lawful short-term stopping has historically been limited. This has contributed to recurring encampments and, in many areas, reactive responses by local authorities.

Before the [Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#), local authority responsibilities for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation were guided primarily by the [Housing Act 2004](#) and [Planning Policy Wales](#), alongside [Circular 30/2007: Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Sites](#). While some permanent residential sites were developed, there was no statutory requirement to assess or provide transit provision. Approaches therefore varied across Wales. In many areas, local authorities described responding to encampments through enforcement processes without identifying alternative short-term stopping options. This pattern has continued in some contexts. In England and Wales, the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) also strengthened police powers in relation to encampments, although interview evidence in this study did not indicate routine reliance on these powers within participating Welsh authorities.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced a clearer statutory framework, including a legal definition of 'Gypsies and Travellers' for the purposes of assessing accommodation need. Local authorities are required to undertake Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) at least every five years and to identify needs for both permanent residential pitches and transit or temporary stopping provision. Identified needs must then be addressed through Local Development Plans and delivery mechanisms. The importance of culturally appropriate accommodation has also been reinforced through the [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan 2022](#).

Welsh planning guidance, including [Circular 005/2018: Planning for Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople Sites](#), sets out expectations for site allocation, location and management. More recently, the revised Welsh Government [Guidance for managing Gypsy and Traveller sites](#) (July 2026) and [Guidance for managing unauthorised encampments](#) (July 2026) has signalled

renewed policy focus on short-term stopping arrangements. These documents recognise that the absence of dedicated stopping places can contribute to encampments and increased enforcement pressures.

Despite this statutory and policy framework, in Wales there remains no fully functioning network of authorised transit sites. While some local authorities record transit-labelled pitches within official statistics, this research found no evidence that any were actively managed or openly available for short-term stopping. Successive GTAAs have reached differing conclusions regarding the need for transit provision, with some local authorities identifying need and others concluding that existing arrangements are sufficient.

This variation raises a central policy question: are additional transit sites required in Wales, and if so, where and in what form? Alternatively, are other short-term stopping approaches more appropriate in particular geographic contexts?

1.2 Purpose of the study

In this context, the Welsh Government commissioned this study to examine transit site provision and short-term stopping approaches across Wales.

The research aims to:

- Review patterns of encampment activity across Wales
- Examine how encampment activity is recorded, managed and reflected within GTAAs
- Explore lived experiences of travelling and short-term stopping from the perspective of Gypsy and Traveller community members, hereafter referred to as community members
- Identify barriers to the development and operation of transit sites and negotiated stopping approaches
- Consider whether, where and in what form transit or short-term stopping provision may be required

1.3 Scope of the research

The focus of this research is short-term stopping and travel rather than permanent residential site provision, while recognising the relationship between permanent accommodation and transit demand.

The study reviews current arrangements, patterns of encampment activity, barriers to development and lived experience of mobility. It does not constitute a formal accommodation needs assessment and does not quantify transit pitch requirements. Instead, it examines how existing systems operate in practice and how they may better support nomadic ways of life within Wales.

The methodology underpinning the research is set out in Annex A.

2. Findings

2.1 Community findings

2.1.1 Culture, safety and equality: the lived experience of travelling

2.1.1.1 Cultural erosion and loss of traditional stopping places

The loss of traditional stopping places and routes was a dominant theme across community interviews. Long-established stopping locations were described as having been built over, blocked or made inaccessible.

“...they built a site on one of them...you can’t pull there anymore...Travellers for hundreds of years have been pulling there “

“They’ve just been taken away and blocked with boulders.”

“...local councils stopped our old places where we used to pull ...traditional places where Gypsy people have pulled for hundreds of years.”

The removal of these locations was widely described across interviews as forcing families into more visible and less secure places.

“The only reason us Gypsy people pull where we pull now is because councils stopped our old places.”

Restrictions, enforcement activity and planning barriers were experienced by some participants as undermining traditional ways of life.

“Just seems to be they’re trying to force the culture out of the travelling community.”

“It’s a shame how things have gone... we can’t live the way us Gypsy people are supposed to live.”

“It’s frightening for young mothers...that don’t drive. If they arrest men, where are we meant to go?”

“They tell us to move off...we giving you until this time of night...you’ve got to move.”

Some families described altering their behaviour to avoid discrimination.

“I have my van because I don’t want to be seen as a traveller... but part of me really resents that.”

“There’s places you can pull in with a camper van.... but they don’t know you’re Gypsies. You have to hide your identity...”

There was also concern about cultural continuity for younger generations.

“We want to keep our children with a travelling culture... we don’t want it to die out.”

“We’re not even being recognised as our own selves anymore.”

2.1.1.2 Safety and hostility when stopping

Fear when stopping roadside or on temporary land was a dominant theme across community interviews. Public hostility was consistently reported, and in some cases described as violent.

“We’ve been stoned before... petrol in glass bottles.”

“There’s been arson attacks on trailers at the side of the road.”

Families with children described heightened anxiety.

“When you’re at the side of the road with kids, you’re a nervous wreck.”

Hostility was sometimes described as collective or organised.

“The whole community gets together... they plot to refuse shop entries.”

2.1.1.3 Discrimination, hostility and systemic barriers

Discrimination extending beyond stopping provision was a common and consistent theme across community participants. Denial of services, exclusion from facilities, campsites and unequal treatment were consistently described.

“Once they hear the accent, that’s it.”

“If they see a big trailer...they won’t allow it...anything to do with a traveller they don’t allow.”

“...we go to most campsites and say we’ll book it on... No, they’ll block you with vans you’re not allowed on with vans. You’re not allowed on with every which every loophole they’ll find.”

Media portrayal was described as contributing to public hostility, including escalation through social media.

“The media starts a story and it snowballs.”

“They put us like we’re instantly robbers.”

As a result, some families described withdrawing from visibility.

“It makes you hide who you are... because if they know you’re a traveller, you get treated different.”

2.1.1.4 Barriers to health and education

Participants consistently linked the lack of authorised stopping places to barriers in accessing healthcare and education.

“We had no address... so we had no doctors, no toilets or showers.”

“I was trying to put the children to school... there’s nowhere.”

Families expressed strong aspirations for their children’s education but described practical barriers linked to instability.

“My son really wants to be in school... but it’s hard without a permanent address.”

Mental health impacts were frequently raised across community interviews, linked to constant displacement and uncertainty.

“Most travellers struggle with their mental health.”

“This is like living in hell.”

2.1.2 A layered approach to stopping

Across interviews, participants consistently described stopping as occurring in a number of different forms rather than a single approach. Instead, a range of approaches are used depending on the purpose and duration of travel. These include short informal stopping, negotiated stopping arrangements, temporary designated stopping places and transit sites.

Together these approaches can be understood as forming a layered system of stopping provision, supporting different forms of mobility across Wales. A summary of these

approaches and their key characteristics is provided in Appendix G (in accompanying document).

2.1.2.1 Short-term stopping: safety, rest and cultural practice

Short-term stopping was widely described as an integral part of travelling, supporting safety, rest and cultural practice. Short stays were framed as practical and necessary, rather than as attempts to settle.

“If you pull somewhere safe, you should be able to stay a couple of hours or a night.”

“It’s just to rest... not to stay weeks.”

Participants emphasised that short stopping requires minimal intervention beyond a safe place and a proportionate, person-centred approach. They consistently highlighted the importance of supportive engagement underpinned by rights-based knowledge rather than enforcement, ensuring appropriate processes are followed and proper support needs identified.

“You need someone who knows what they’re on about to help.”

“So if they come to just sweep you under the table to the next man...you defeat him before you start. But if they come to help you...that is a game changer.”

The loss of traditional stopping places was seen as contributing to unsafe roadside occupation.

“If they had choice, people wouldn’t be on parks or roads.”

“Wherever we could stop, we’d stop.”

Participants also acknowledged that roadside stopping carries risks.

“If I ever had children, you wouldn’t want them on the side of the road.”

2.1.2.2 Negotiated stopping

Negotiated stopping was commonly supported across community interviews and described as culturally appropriate. It was valued for flexibility, low infrastructure requirements and preservation of mobility.

“A stopping place could be a farmer’s field... very easy to set up.”

“Just a tap, toilets and bins... just so it feels like we’re actually wanted.”

“A field is freedom... not a site.”

However, a small number of participants expressed concern that negotiated stopping could be favoured as a lower-cost alternative to dedicated transit provision. Potentially reducing pressure on local authorities to develop dedicated transit sites.

"We've got to be careful that that idea doesn't stop the transit sites."

2.1.2.3 Transit sites

Transit sites were particularly emphasised by participants who travel frequently, especially in relation to work-based travel and established travel corridors. Participants described travelling patterns linked to summer travel, family events, seasonal work and religious conventions across Wales and England. In north Wales, peer research participants described the region as a significant travel area but lacking functional transit provision. Transit sites were framed as reducing unsafe roadside stopping and the need to remain “mostly on the road” during travel periods.

“People would travel all over just to go to a place to stop...it’s hard to get stopping places.”

“It gives them...time to find where next to go.”

Peer research participants in north Wales identified established travel routes and areas where short-term stopping regularly occurs. Across suggestions, proximity to shops, schools, bus routes and town centres was consistently emphasised. Community evidence suggests that transit provision is most relevant in areas linked to established work routes and onward travel corridors, rather than applied uniformly across all areas.

“Transit is for the working... they’d be there three months easy.”

“ And that allows people then to work in or out to live, in or out. They can travel to visit friends, relatives, family, the access always close as you can to a motorway is always good.”

“ If it's public transport access then you can get somewhere, can't they?”

Participants consistently noted that transit sites are temporary solutions and do not address homelessness.

“Transit sites are temporary. They’re not the answer for people who are homeless.”

“Yeah, you’d have to have rules though...some travellers might just take their time on there.”

While experiences of travel varied between participants, those who continued to travel more frequently emphasised the importance of transit provision and short-term stopping places that support work, family connections and cultural practices.

“They’ve taken our proper way of living away.”

2.1.2.4 Private land and informal arrangements

Some participants described short-term stopping arrangements taking place on privately owned land, often belonging to other Gypsy or Traveller families. These informal arrangements were typically framed as practical, short-term solutions where families could stop safely for a limited period while travelling.

“So, either we’ll have a pull on someone’s yard, it belongs to travellers or gypsies and we’ll pay them a bit of rent, electric, whatever it is.”

Participants also suggested that greater flexibility in planning could support families to temporarily accommodate relatives or visiting travellers on existing private sites. This was viewed as a potential way to reduce unsafe roadside stopping while maintaining family connections.

“If we could take one of our family members in that would save them being in Asda. So, I think it benefits everyone. It’s only for a week or two.”

However, some participants raised concerns about informal private “transit fields”, where high fees were reportedly charged despite limited or absent facilities. In the absence of regulated alternatives, some families felt they had little choice but to use these arrangements.

“People are paying £150, £200 a week... no toilets... because they’ve got nowhere else to go.”

2.1.3 Design and management

2.1.3.1 Partnership in design and management

Collaborative approaches to design and management were consistently described across interviews as essential.

“You’ve got to talk to people who actually live that life.”

“Well, it’d be handy if it was a Gypsy and Traveller person. Still know more, but the council as well.”

“The way we get on, they know from a bad traveller to a good traveller.”

Two management models were viewed as credible:

- council-only management
- collaborative management combining cultural knowledge with council oversight

Participants expressed a preference against intrusive on-site management. Rather than live-in managers, regular visits were preferred. Access was expected to be straightforward, with the ability to turn up and make phone contact where necessary. Complex booking systems were not favoured.

Participants stressed that access decisions should remain with the local authority to reduce conflict.

“The council has to decide who comes on.”

2.1.3.2 Design of sites

Participants described clear expectations regarding design. Sites were expected to be small scale, typically no more than around 10 pitches or bays. Hardstanding or tarmac surfaces, electric hook-ups, water access, waste provision and bins were considered essential. Toilets and showers were viewed as necessary infrastructure, with a strong preference for individual facilities per pitch where feasible.

“ A bit of hard standing just for obviously the majority of people travelling vehicles”

“ You've got to have a shower toilet. My idea, we have the shower toilet sink and all built in a stained steel type of material.”

Secure access such as a barrier or gated entry was widely supported. CCTV was generally viewed positively when positioned at entrances to improve safety and reduce false allegations, though participants were clear that internal living areas should not be monitored.

“CCTV is good because people blame the travellers for everything.”

“ Once your caravan is on site, there should be a barrier and then there should be a separate car park for the commercial vehicles. So therefore, when the kids are on onsite, they're safe.”

Practical space requirements included parking for cars and work vehicles, with some participants also requesting visitor space. Family-friendly design features, including safe space for children and proximity to play areas, were mentioned.

“ Well, each plot would've to be big enough to take a family. So, a family normally takes two trailers and a couple of cars...”

“ I think a transit... should be done to keep a kid safe...because the key obviously of kids getting hurt and stuff...”

“ You have children that they'll go out onto the road. Just a big field, really field that's got a bit of electric toilets, shower”

Design expectations focused on functionality, safety and dignity rather than high-cost infrastructure. Sites were expected to be practical and proportionate rather than institutional. Accessibility was emphasised, including simple phone-based contact arrangements and fair charging structures. Importantly, design was framed as enabling lawful mobility, not replicating permanent residential provision.

“Some travellers can't read or write... booking won't work.”

“It would be easier if there was a telephone number.”

“The older generation, they wouldn't know.”

Payment was generally accepted in principle, though affordability and fairness were emphasised. Short-term stopping was viewed as needing to remain low cost, with some participants suggesting payment should focus on utilities rather than high pitch fees.

“ I know people might say, well we've got to pay for things and this, that and the other, but they've stopped our traditional places in the first place. We wouldn't have to pay to pull on a traditional place. Do you know what I mean?”

“And for that you get your electric and your water and everything.”

2.1.4 Homelessness, constraint and limited choice

Across interviews, participants commonly described a complex relationship between travelling, homelessness and limited accommodation options. Travelling remains a core cultural practice for many Gypsies and Travellers, shaped by family networks, seasonal work and cultural events.

“ ...we used to stop in more cultural appropriate places than what we do now...we can't live the way us Gypsy people are supposed to live in some of the places where we pulled in.”

“It's a mixture of work and especially when we go back to Ireland...But when we go mainly abroad it is for work, you know what I mean, to Sweden and places like that.”

“ work in or out to live, in or out. They can travel to visit friends, relatives, family...”

Participants also described a parallel reality: that a proportion of roadside encampments are driven by homelessness, overcrowding on existing sites and the loss of traditional stopping places.

“Traditional stopping places have disappeared due to blocked routes...”

“Traditional stopping places have disappeared.”

This distinction matters. Evidence in this study indicates that encampments cannot be understood solely as homelessness or as cultural choice. For some families it is an expression of nomadic life; for others it reflects limited options within a wider accommodation crisis. In practice, sometimes these experiences overlap. Families travelling for cultural or work reasons while simultaneously facing long waits for permanent pitches or the loss of traditional stopping places.

“Most people on the side of the road are there because they're homeless.”

“I know loads of people right now who are on the road because they've got nowhere to

go.”

“There’s nowhere to go back to... that’s why people stay on transit or pull up where they can.”

This context was described as a significant reality for many Gypsy and Traveller families. Participants repeatedly emphasised that transit sites alone cannot resolve what they described as a wider accommodation crisis. Many argued that any approach to temporary stopping must begin with addressing shortages in permanent provision. Without this, there were concerns that transit sites would become overcrowded or used as substitutes for long-term housing need.

“How can they spend money on transit when people are homeless? Sort that first.”

“Sort proper sites first... or transit will be abused because people have nowhere else to go.”

Overcrowding on existing residential sites was frequently described, with multi-generational families sharing single plots and limited capacity for growing families.

“Everybody on this plot has three or four families living on it... it’s overcrowded.”

“Travellers need proper places... there’s too many people and not enough sites.”

“Cardiff needs more permanent sites... this is the main population.”

For many participants, the shortage of permanent provision underpinned all other issues raised in the research. Permanent sites were viewed as essential for family stability, children’s education and breaking cycles of repeated eviction.

“There’s no point building transit when people haven’t even got somewhere to live.”

“If there was somewhere to live, they wouldn’t be on parks or the side of the road.”

Concerns were raised that permanent sites could restrict freedom of movement and weaken cultural traditions.

“Travellers don’t want to leave one site just to go to another... people want the freedom.”

“Settling people down... it’s taking the culture away.”

These views did not represent opposition to permanent provision itself but reflected the desire for a wider system that protects both stability and cultural continuity. This perspective was particularly emphasised by community members who travelled frequently, who placed

greater importance on provision that supports ongoing travelling alongside, rather than secondary to permanent site development.

Overall, community evidence, including detailed peer research from north Wales, suggests that stopping is shaped by a combination of structural pressures rather than travelling alone. Shortages in permanent provision, the loss of traditional stopping places, safety concerns and experiences of discrimination were all described as influencing how, where and why families stop.

Participants expressed support for a range of stopping solutions. However, these were consistently described as part of a wider accommodation system rather than standalone responses. Permanent pitch availability was viewed as central to reducing homelessness and stabilising families, while short-term provision was seen as necessary to support lawful mobility and cultural continuity.

Community perspectives suggest that decisions about transit provision should be geographically informed, culturally appropriate and situated within the wider accommodation system.

2.2 Local authority findings

2.2.1 Scale and nature of encampments

In most areas, encampments were described as small in scale and short in duration, with families typically moving on within several days. The frequency of encampments varied considerably by authority. Some reported regular seasonal activity, while others described only occasional or infrequent occurrences.

This variation appeared to influence how local authorities responded in practice. In areas with more regular encampments, officers often described longstanding well-established relationships and familiarity with recurring families. In those areas encountering activity less frequently, responses were more likely to be described as reactive. However, almost all emphasised responses were case-by-case, informed by local context and person-centred rather than driven by a rigid model.

Encampments were described as occurring across a range of land types, including roadsides, public land and other locations perceived as suitable for short-term stopping. Patterns were characterised as highly variable and context specific.

Differences in reported levels of activity also appeared linked to recording practices and visibility. In some areas describing low levels of encampment, officers referred to families staying on authorised sites, informal arrangements or short-term stays resolving without formal intervention. This suggests that recorded incidence may not fully reflect the complexity of movement patterns, particularly where stopping resolves quickly or occurs through mutually agreed arrangements.

2.2.2 Management of encampments in practice

Local authorities consistently described pragmatic, person-centred approaches. Flexible practice, drawing on professional judgement and officer experience, was commonly favoured over formal or prescriptive procedures.

Initial contact typically involved welfare checks, assessment of land conditions and coordination through a designated council contact point. Early engagement was widely viewed as central to effective management:

“We do the assessment... coordinate and liaise with the Gypsies and Travellers who were just there for a period of time.”

Informal verbal agreements regarding length of stay were frequently described, with officers emphasising trust and proportionality:

“They’ve said they’ll just be here for a few days. We’ve waited that few days and then they’ve left.”

Several local authorities explicitly noted that practice was not rigidly guided by formal frameworks:

“We don’t approach it with the guidance in mind. We just approach it trying to manage a situation.”

Continuity of contact and trust-building were repeatedly identified as enabling effective responses:

“Communication is key. Residents should have a clear point of contact in the council, and families should have someone they trust.”

2.2.3 Enforcement and escalation thresholds

Enforcement was widely described as a last resort. Local authorities did not report fixed thresholds triggering escalation. Instead, decisions were informed by a combination of factors, including:

- location and safety
- impact on land or access
- engagement and cooperation
- adherence to agreed timescales
- wellbeing

Safety-related concerns, particularly proximity to highways, were described as non-negotiable:

“If it’s on a dangerous piece of land or close to the highway, then that’s not something we can negotiate on.”

Complaints alone were generally not considered sufficient to trigger enforcement:

“Complaints in themselves don’t mean we’ll move them on.”

Most local authorities reported that encampments typically ended before legal enforcement became necessary. Where formal action had occurred, it was described as relatively infrequent and generally associated with safety concerns or a breakdown in engagement.

Police involvement was described as limited to specific safety or criminal matters rather than routine management.

2.2.4 Negotiated stopping in practice

Many local authorities described approaches that share characteristics with negotiated stopping principles, although few framed this as a formal policy model. Instead, informal negotiation was embedded within everyday operational practice.

Common elements included:

- early engagement
- verbal agreements
- flexibility around short stays

As one authority noted:

“It’s not really a formal negotiation, it’s just managing the situation.”

Some local authorities referred to negotiated stopping at known locations or flexibility around family events as functionally similar approaches. These arrangements were described as conditional and reviewable:

“It’s not unconditional. If things change, then we reassess.”

Negotiated practice was valued for proportionality and flexibility but remained largely informal and discretionary.

2.2.5 Views on transit provision

Local authority perspectives on transit provision were generally cautious and context specific. Most questioned its necessity within their area, particularly where encampments were short-term or infrequent:

“We don’t really see a need for transit provision here.”

Where transit was considered potentially relevant, this was often linked to major transport routes or specific geographic factors rather than viewed as a uniform national requirement.

Concerns raised included:

- land availability
- management responsibilities
- ongoing revenue costs
- risk of sites becoming de facto permanent provision

“What tends to happen is they just become permanent sites.”

Several local authorities suggested that existing informal approaches offered greater flexibility than fixed-site models.

Written questionnaire responses broadly reinforced these themes. Concerns about land, cost and permanence were echoed. Some local authorities also questioned whether current GTAA's fully capture short-term mobility patterns.

2.2.6 Permanent provision and planning constraints

Permanent site provision was widely identified as a structural factor influencing encampment patterns. Several local authorities acknowledged that roadside stopping may reflect unmet residential need rather than purely nomadic mobility:

“Some of the families we see shouldn't really be on the road at all.”

Planning barriers, land constraints and political sensitivities were consistently cited as obstacles:

“You can identify the need on paper, but delivering a site is another matter.”

A disconnect between assessed need and deliverable provision was frequently referenced. In this context, encampments were sometimes understood as symptoms of broader accommodation pressures.

2.2.7 Data, recording and evidencing need

Local authorities highlighted limitations in available data. Recording of short-duration encampments was described as inconsistent:

“If they're only there for a day or two, it doesn't always get captured properly.”

Variation between teams further reduced comparability:

“Different teams might log things differently.”

The Caravan Count was recognised as an important national dataset but described as a snapshot that does not capture dynamic movement or seasonal travel. GTAA's were similarly described as time-limited and not always reflective of current patterns:

“The GTAA doesn't always reflect what's happening on the ground.”

As a result, officer knowledge and experience were frequently relied upon to interpret patterns. Several local authorities linked these data limitations to uncertainty around evidencing transit need.

2.2.8 Encampment activity and caravan count overview

Across the 12 participating local authorities, encampments were generally described as short-term and seasonal. Reported annual activity ranged from very low (0–2) to moderate (3–10), with one authority reporting higher levels (>10). Most encampments lasted days rather than weeks.

January 2025 Caravan Count returns broadly align with these descriptions. Four of the twelve local authorities recorded zero encampments at the point of count. Most recorded between one and five sites. One authority recorded 16 sites, illustrating uneven geographic distribution.

However, as a point-in-time measure, the Caravan Count does not capture encampments occurring between count dates.

2.2.9 Translation of encampment evidence into planning decisions

Review of recent GTAA's indicates that similar patterns of encampment activity can lead to different conclusions regarding transit provision.

In some local authorities, recurring short-term encampments are interpreted as evidence of sustained mobility warranting structured transit provision. In others, comparable activity is regarded as manageable within existing arrangements and not indicative of infrastructure need.

This variation does not reflect inconsistency in recorded activity. Rather, it reflects differences in how encampment evidence is translated into planning decisions.

3.2.10 Operational resource implications

Several local authorities provided cost information relating to encampment management. Where enforcement was required, costs were described as substantial. Negotiated, person-centred approaches which prioritised dialogue and proportionality were associated with lower direct expenditure but still required officer time and coordination.

Cost data was not recorded consistently across local authorities and methodologies varied. While figures are not directly comparable, the evidence suggests that enforcement-led (reactive) responses can involve higher direct costs, whereas negotiated approaches may reduce immediate expenditure, although both require staff time and coordination.

2.2.11 Comparison of local authority approaches

While there was broad alignment in engagement first discretionary practice, distinct approaches emerged.

Some local authorities described relationship-led management built on regular engagement. Others, particularly those with lower levels of activity, described reactive or light-touch approaches. A smaller number described more procedural responses balancing welfare assessment and compliance.

Variation was consistently framed as reflecting local context rather than differences in commitment to proportionate practice.

Across participating local authorities, encampment activity reflects ongoing mobility shaped by geography, seasonal patterns and accommodation pressures. Current systems are effective at recording static presence but less suited to evidencing movement. Planning conclusions regarding transit provision vary according to how encampment evidence is interpreted. Taken together, the findings suggest that while encampment activity is broadly recognised, there is scope to strengthen how current frameworks respond to patterns of nomadic mobility.

2.3 Professional findings

2.3.1 Housing, planning, policy and safeguarding professionals

2.3.1.1 Framing encampments as system failure

Professionals generally described encampments as arising from gaps in housing and planning systems, rather than isolated local issues. Encampments were described as a predictable consequence of insufficient permanent provision, planning barriers and the absence of lawful and safe stopping places.

Interviewees emphasised the longer-term effects of instability, particularly for families and children.

Professional accounts were typically shaped by policy, safeguarding and system-level responsibilities rather than direct involvement in day-to-day encampment management. This appeared to contribute to a stronger emphasis on consistency, formal safeguards and procedural clarity. Several professionals expressed concern that reliance on informal or discretionary approaches, while often well-intentioned, may leave families without clear rights or meaningful routes to challenge decisions.

2.3.1.2 Proportionality, rights and harm reduction

Proportionality, rights and harm reduction emerged as key themes across interviews. Professionals raised concerns about potential harm arising from current responses to encampments, particularly where welfare checks, enforcement processes and multi-agency involvement become closely associated.

A recurring concern was that local authority engagement can be perceived as the first step toward eviction, undermining trust and discouraging open engagement with services. This was particularly emphasised by those working within safeguarding, social work and equality roles.

Repeated displacement was described as contributing to stress and instability, especially for children. Interviewees emphasised the importance of clear separation between engagement first, person-centred approaches and enforcement activity to reduce harm and support sustained engagement.

2.3.1.3 Advocacy for greater formalisation and clarity

Several professionals advocated for more formalised frameworks governing stopping arrangements. This included calls for clearer national parameters, formal negotiated stopping models and, in some cases, a defined duty to facilitate nomadic ways of life.

These perspectives were grounded in concerns about inconsistency between local authorities and the risks associated with reliance on discretion. Without clearer frameworks, professionals argued, families may lack clarity about processes or safeguards.

Support for statutory negotiated stopping was not universal. It was articulated most strongly by a small number of interviewees and was rooted primarily in rights-based and safeguarding perspectives. Other participants expressed more cautious views, focusing instead on broader system reform and clearer guidance rather than new statutory duties.

2.3.1.4 Tension between policy ideals and practical delivery

While professionals emphasised rights-based and person-centred principles, they also acknowledged practical barriers to implementation. This included land availability, planning constraints, political opposition and ongoing management costs.

Interviewees did not generally describe these barriers as reasons to avoid change. Instead, they were often framed as highlighting the need for clearer national leadership and more consistent frameworks.

Professionals emphasised that local authorities operate within constrained systems, shaped by structural, political and legal factors.

2.3.1.5 Permanent provision as a structural foundation

Permanent site provision emerged as a dominant structural concern. Housing and planning professionals highlighted difficulties securing planning permission, local resistance and the gap between assessed need and deliverable provision.

Transit provision and negotiated stopping were typically discussed in relation to what occurs when permanent accommodation is unavailable, rather than as standalone solutions. Transit was frequently referenced in policy terms, with limited direct operational experience among interviewees.

2.3.1.6 Data, evidence and visibility

Professionals echoed concerns regarding inconsistent and incomplete data systems. Under-recording of short-term stopping, reliance on biannual datasets and limited national oversight were described as constraining effective planning.

Several interviewees noted that weak data may result in policy responses shaped more by visible pressure than underlying structural need.

2.3.1.7 Power and institutional framing

Professional accounts highlighted a tension between institutional framing and community experience. Discretionary, case-by-case approaches were often described as flexible and proportionate. However, professionals acknowledged that such approaches may be experienced by communities as unpredictable or unequal.

Reliance on discretion, even when intended to reduce harm, may risk creating power imbalances. Without clear processes, families may lack clarity about expectations or routes to challenge decisions. Several participants suggested that clearer safeguards could strengthen trust while retaining necessary flexibility.

2.3.2 Health and education professionals

2.3.2.1 Hidden mobility and changing patterns of travelling

Health and education professionals described travelling patterns as increasingly less visible. Movement was reported across private sites, caravan parks and extended family land rather than through roadside encampments.

As a result, demand may appear lower than it is within systems that rely on visibility and fixed addresses. Families were described as moving frequently without coming to the attention of services, complicating monitoring and continuity.

Seasonal travel was noted, particularly during spring and summer months and in connection with work, religious events and onward routes. These patterns were described as established but poorly captured within existing recording systems.

2.3.2.2 Barriers to accessing education

Professionals identified barriers to accessing education including digital exclusion, low literacy and reliance on centralised online admissions systems. Delays in processing applications were described as meaning families may move on before placements are secured.

Some families were reported to avoid enrolling children during short travel periods to prevent repeated disruption. Elective home education was referenced by several participants, alongside concerns regarding monitoring and risks of children becoming missing from

education during periods of movement. An alternative solution was creating ‘guest pupil’ status for short-term enrolments.

2.3.2.3 Health needs and access barriers

Health professionals described a wide range of needs, including vaccinations, chronic disease management, mental health support, women’s health services and dental care. These were linked to broader determinants such as poverty, stress, stigma and digital exclusion.

Access barriers included GP registration requirements such as the need for identification, extended periods on hold when contacting services, limited availability of routine appointments and limited sharing of records between health boards. The need to book appointments weeks in advance was described as incompatible with nomadic ways of life. Families were reported to rely on emergency services for short-term care during travel.

The absence of record sharing between health boards was identified by several participants as a barrier to continuity of healthcare. A “health passport” model was proposed to improve information transfer and reduce repeated assessments across health board boundaries.

2.3.2.4 Impact of the absence of safe stopping places

Both health and education professionals welcomed the idea of safe and secure stopping places, as not having them was viewed as contributing to negative emotional, physical and social pressures. Instability was associated with stress, anxiety and increased risk, particularly for pregnant women, young children and those with existing health conditions.

Education professionals described impacts including experiences of racism, institutional distrust and disengagement linked to repeated displacement and experiences of hostility.

2.3.2.5 Negotiated stopping and informal arrangements

Examples of informal or negotiated arrangements were described, including temporary provision of basic facilities. While generally viewed positively, these were described as inconsistent and dependent on local relationships rather than embedded systems.

2.3.2.6 Multi-agency working

Multi-agency collaboration was described as variable. Effective engagement was more likely where established relationships existed between local authorities, health services, education teams and third-sector organisations.

However, health involvement in encampment responses was not routinely described and awareness of wider planning and encampment guidance was described as limited in some cases.

2.3.2.7 Demand for transit provision and appropriate models

Health and education professionals challenged assumptions of low demand for transit provision, suggesting that limited uptake may reflect availability, stigma or fear rather than lack of need.

Participants emphasised a need for a range of different stopping provision, flexibility in location and design informed by community needs. At the same time, professionals highlighted the importance of respecting autonomy and avoiding overly intrusive systems.

2.3.2.8 Data, records and continuity of care

Concerns were raised regarding ineffective data and record-sharing systems. Poor ethnicity coding, duplication of assessments and loss of information when families move between areas were described as undermining continuity of care.

2.4 Community validation of findings

To ensure that the findings accurately reflected lived experience, a community validation focus group was held with 11 Gypsy and Traveller women aged between 16 and 55 from Cardiff, Gwent and Caerphilly. Participation was open to all, but only women responded. Participants were presented with a summary of the emerging findings and invited to comment on whether these reflected their experiences and whether anything important was missing.

There was broad agreement amongst community members with the overall findings. Participants confirmed that roadside stopping is often linked to limited permanent pitch

availability, overcrowding on existing sites and the absence of safe and lawful alternatives. At the same time, participants emphasised that travelling remains an important cultural practice for many Gypsy and Traveller families and should not be understood solely through the lens of homelessness.

Participants also stressed the continued importance of short-term stopping provision, including transit sites, particularly for families travelling for work, family connections or cultural events.

It was recognised that there is no single form of provision that meets all needs and that a combination of approaches is required. This includes permanent residential sites to address homelessness and overcrowding, alongside transit sites and negotiated stopping arrangements.

Participants reinforced concerns regarding safety when stopping roadside, including experiences of hostility, harassment and fear, particularly when children were present. Experiences of inconsistent treatment by local authorities were also confirmed, with participants describing variations in approach between different areas and highlighting the stress associated with repeated move-on directions.

Barriers to health and education were also reflected in the group discussion. Participants described difficulty registering with GPs without a fixed address and challenges enrolling children in school for short periods, reinforcing the finding that limited stopping provision has wider social and wellbeing impacts.

Two further community members who were unable to attend the focus group provided feedback through follow-up interviews. Their views were consistent with those expressed in the group discussion and did not raise any substantive contradictions to the emerging findings.

An additional community validation focus group was held in north Wales, with 4 Irish Traveller females aged between 25-70 years. They emphasised the importance of recognising travelling as a cultural practice and right alongside evidence of homelessness and limited choice. Participants involved in this discussion included individuals who continue to travel more frequently, and discussion placed particular emphasis on the importance of transit provision and short-term stopping that support travelling.

Overall, the validation process indicated that the findings broadly reflect community experience across different regions of Wales while highlighting the importance of ensuring that transit provision and cultural nomadism remain visible within the wider accommodation discussion.

3. Cross-cutting analysis

This section synthesises findings across community, local authority and professional perspectives to examine areas of alignment, divergence and structural tension. While all groups are dealing with similar practical challenges, they often interpret those challenges differently and prioritise different responses, resulting in differing views on local authority engagement, enforcement and the role of cultural rights.

Understanding these positional differences is essential when considering how stopping provision is interpreted, delivered and embedded within wider accommodation systems.

3.1 Alignment, tension and positional starting points

Across perspectives, encampments were framed differently depending on how each group engages with them in practice.

Community participants described stopping in terms of cultural rights, safety, homelessness, access to services and the need to protect children. For many, encampments reflected limited lawful alternatives opposed to actual preference.

Local authorities described encampments as situations they respond to proportionately as they arise whilst trying to balance best interest considerations, land impact and local context.

Professionals were more likely to view encampments within wider accommodation and planning pressures alongside the absence of lawful stopping options.

These perspectives reflect different experiences of how the same system operates in practice. They do not represent competing explanations, but different interpretations shaped by each group's engagement with travelling and accommodation pressures.

3.2 Engagement, proportionality and lived experience

Local authorities consistently described engagement first, case-by-case approaches as central to their practice. Early engagement and proportionate decision-making were framed as intended to reduce escalation.

However, professional participants highlighted that where engagement processes and enforcement activity are closely linked, families may experience uncertainty or mistrust, particularly in the absence of clearly structured alternatives. Community accounts reinforced this distinction between intent and lived experience, with some participants describing anxiety associated with repeated move-on directions.

Overall, the findings suggest that while principles of proportionality and early engagement are embedded in practice, consistency and clarity of process influence how those approaches are experienced on the ground.

3.3 Flexibility and certainty

Flexibility and discretion were widely described by local authorities as necessary to respond to varied and short-term encampments. Informal agreements were often presented as pragmatic and effective in resolving situations without escalation.

Professionals, while recognising the value of flexibility, raised concerns about the absence of consistent frameworks or safeguards in some contexts. From this perspective, informal arrangements may provide limited certainty for families where expectations are not clearly defined.

Community evidence reflected this tension. While some participants valued informal short-term agreements, others described ongoing uncertainty about duration, rights and next steps.

This highlights a central policy tension: flexibility supports proportionate management, while structured clarity supports confidence and trust.

3.4 Structural drivers of encampment activity

Across community, local authority and professional evidence, encampment activity is not attributable to a single cause. While nomadic mobility remains an important cultural and economic practice for many Gypsy and Traveller families, interview evidence consistently indicates that roadside stopping is also shaped by inadequate provision within the accommodation system.

Permanent site capacity emerged as a recurring underlying factor. Community participants described overcrowding, limited pitch availability and long waiting times. Local authorities similarly acknowledged that existing provision in several areas is operating at or near capacity. Where households are unable to access residential pitches, roadside stopping may reflect necessity as much as choice.

Planning barriers also form part of this context. Evidence suggests that families seeking to develop their own land frequently encounter delays or refusals, limiting lawful alternatives. As a result, mobility patterns are for some influenced by tradition or seasonal work and for others by restricted access to permanent, authorised accommodation.

Some community participants emphasised the need for greater accountability and consistency, expressing concern that without clearer national expectations, local authorities may avoid creating lawful short-term stopping options. Professionals also called for clearer national guidance while retaining flexibility in how provision is designed and delivered locally.

The evidence suggests that encampment activity is closely linked to wider housing and planning conditions. Where culturally appropriate permanent accommodation is limited or does not meet identified need, roadside stopping may, in some cases, reflect constraint rather than preference.

At the same time, travelling remains an enduring feature of the nomadic way of life and a core element of many community members' cultural identity, shaped by the availability of suitable places to stop.

Homelessness arising from limited suitable provision and travelling as an expression of cultural identity may operate in parallel, but they are not interchangeable explanations.

3.5 Geographic variation and uneven distribution

Encampment activity across participating local authorities is uneven in both scale and distribution. While several local authorities reported very low levels of activity, others recorded moderate or higher levels, often linked to seasonal travel or established routes. January 2025 Caravan Count figures similarly illustrate geographic variation.

This uneven distribution has implications for how transit and stopping provision is conceptualised. Activity is not uniform across Wales, and pressures are experienced differently across local contexts. In some areas, stopping may be occasional and short in duration; in others, recurring routes suggest more regular travel patterns.

This suggests that transit provision decisions should take account of both geographic variation and seasonal mobility. Community involvement in this process will be important in identifying where provision is most appropriate.

3.6 Interpretation of encampment evidence within GTAAs

Review of recent GTAAs, alongside interview evidence, indicates that similar patterns of encampment activity can lead to different planning conclusions regarding transit provision.

In some local authorities, recurring short-term encampments are interpreted as evidence of ongoing mobility that may require structured transit provision. In others, comparable activity is regarded as manageable within existing arrangements and therefore not indicative of needing additional infrastructure.

This variation does not necessarily reflect inconsistency in recording. Rather, it highlights differences in how encampment evidence is translated into planning decisions. The distinction often rests on whether short-term stopping is viewed as occasional and resolving on its own, or as part of an ongoing travel pattern that may require more structured accommodation responses.

Clearer guidelines for translating encampment activity into planning conclusions may support greater consistency, while still allowing local authorities to consider local context.

3.7 The role and limits of transit provision

Evidence across community participants, local authorities and professionals indicates broad recognition that structured short-term stopping forms part of a balanced accommodation framework. Transit sites are understood as supporting lawful mobility for families travelling for work, family connection or cultural reasons.

However, transit provision is not designed to address homelessness or compensate for insufficient permanent residential capacity. In areas where there is a shortage of permanent provision, transit infrastructure may experience pressure to absorb longer-term housing need.

Operational use of designated transit pitches was reported as variable. In at least one authority, transit-labelled pitches were used infrequently and primarily for visiting family members of existing residents. This distinction between formal designation and practical deployment highlights the importance of clarity of purpose.

Affordability and access emerged as additional considerations. Community participants referenced deposit levels and fee structures as influencing decisions about whether to use transit sites. Evidence suggests that proportional charging and accessible management arrangements are central to effective utilisation.

Transit sites can therefore form part of a layered accommodation system. Their effectiveness depends on clarity of function, appropriate scale, operational consistency and alignment with wider accommodation capacity.

3.8 Negotiated stopping and short-term arrangements

Many participating local authorities described approaches that closely align with negotiated stopping principles, even where not formally labelled as such. Early engagement and short-term agreements were commonly used where sites were considered safe and manageable.

These arrangements were frequently described as proportionate and, in some cases, resource-efficient compared with formal enforcement. Community participants similarly supported structured short-term arrangements that provide defined timeframes and access to basic services.

However, negotiated or discretionary approaches rely on clarity of criteria, consistency of application and appropriate resourcing. Without a defined framework, practice may vary between areas.

Short-term managed stopping arrangements can therefore form part of a coordinated response to travel, particularly when supported by clear guidance and operational consistency.

3.9 Institutional consistency and professional practice

Community evidence highlighted variation in experiences of engagement with local authorities. While some participants described supportive and constructive approaches, others reported inconsistency and uncertainty.

Local authorities similarly described differing operational pressures and local contexts influencing practice. Responses ranged from informal negotiation to more structured enforcement processes, shaped by risk assessment, land impact and available resources.

Responding to encampments currently relies significantly on local discretion. While flexibility enables proportionate responses, variation may contribute to differing experiences across Wales. Greater clarity of operational guidance and consistent culturally informed practice may support increased uniformity while retaining necessary professional judgement.

The evidence does not indicate a single preferred model. Rather, it suggests that transparency, clarity of process and consistent communication are central to building trust.

3.10 Recording systems and evidence translation

Current recording systems capture aspects of encampment activity but are not designed to fully capture patterns of mobility.

The biannual Caravan Count provides a consistent national snapshot, supporting comparison and monitoring of authorised provision. However, as a point-in-time measure, it does not reflect the frequency, duration or recurrence of short-term stopping between count dates.

Interview evidence indicates that many encampments are brief and resolved through early engagement. As a result, some short-duration activity may be under-represented.

Cost data associated with encampment management was collected using different methods and was therefore not directly comparable. While responses are not resource neutral, current systems do not allow for systematic cost comparison across Wales.

Overall, existing recording systems are effective at documenting presence at a fixed point in time but are less suited to capturing patterns of movement. This has implications for how

travel is interpreted within planning and policy processes, particularly where encampment evidence is used to inform accommodation assessments and provision decisions.

3.11 Toward a structured and layered framework

Across perspectives, there is recognition that no single model provides a complete solution. Evidence from the case studies highlights a number of features that support more effective stopping arrangements in practice. These include access to basic facilities such as water, sanitation and waste provision, clear and proportionate management arrangements and culturally competent staff or officers. While some case study examples were more site-based or permanent in nature, these features were also reflected more broadly in approaches emphasising flexibility, dialogue and early engagement.

Permanent residential sites provide stability and reduce pressure on short-term arrangements. Structured short-term stopping, including transit sites and more informal practices, support lawful mobility and cultural rights while reducing reliance on reactive enforcement.

Encampment activity varies geographically and seasonally. Stopping provision is therefore unlikely to be uniform across all local authorities. Development of clearer national guidance may support greater consistency in how encampment evidence is interpreted and subsequently translated into planning responses.

These findings, therefore, do not point to a single solution but instead highlight the importance of permanent provision, short-term stopping and local authority responses within a clear framework that recognises travelling as an enduring and pivotal feature of Gypsy and Traveller life.

Evidence across the research indicates that, despite the different models of stopping, fundamentally they all require the same components to operate in practice. This includes the availability of suitable land, clear local authority processes and protocols, appropriately trained and culturally informed staff or officers and access to basic facilities such as waste collection and water where appropriate.

While more formal provision, such as transit sites, may require additional infrastructure, planning approval and ongoing site management, this demonstrates that effectiveness is shaped not by the type of provision alone, but by how it is implemented in practice and supported at a local level.

4. Conclusion

This study examined how transit provision and short-term stopping approaches operate across Wales and considered where and in what form structured provision may be required.

Findings from community members, local authorities and professionals indicate that encampments cannot be understood through a single lens. Travelling remains a cultural practice for many Gypsies and Travellers and supporting this requires a range of options. Shortages in permanent residential provision, planning constraints and the loss of traditional stopping places shape patterns of roadside stopping. This is not one or the other, but a combination of cultural continuity and wider accommodation pressures operating alongside each other.

Across perspectives, there is broad recognition that no single model of stopping offers a complete solution for travelling families and a range of approaches is required. Limited permanent residential capacity, short-term stopping arrangements and local authority responses to encampments all play a role within the wider accommodation system.

The recommendations set out in this report are grounded in evidence gathered through interviews, focus groups, review of GTAA's and community feedback. They aim to promote a clearer and fairer approach to travelling, while recognising that geographic location and local authority variation will shape practical solutions. Continued engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities, local authorities and partner agencies is necessary to ensure that future approaches are culturally informed, practical and aligned with statutory responsibilities. Effective provision cannot be designed in isolation and must be informed by direct engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities to ensure that approaches reflect how people live, travel and access services in practice.

This report represents a first stage in ongoing policy development rather than a final endpoint. It provides an evidence base to inform future decision-making on transit provision and short-term stopping in Wales. Continued engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities, local authorities and partner agencies is vital to ensure that future approaches are culturally informed, practically workable and aligned with statutory responsibilities.

The evidence suggests that permanent provision and short-term stopping arrangements form part of the same wider system and cannot be addressed in isolation. Progress will depend on the development of appropriate accommodation, safe and viable stopping options and ensuring responses to encampments are consistent and fair in practice.

4.1 Limitations

Not all local authorities responded to interview or questionnaire requests. Efforts were made to ensure geographic spread and diversity of perspectives; however, findings reflect the views of those who chose to engage. While local authorities from all regions of Wales were represented, engagement was higher in southeast and north Wales.

Participation reflects typical patterns of engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities within the timeframe of the study. Community participants were more frequently female and older, which is consistent with patterns of availability and engagement, particularly where men are more likely to be working and less available to participate during data collection periods.

While efforts were made to achieve a broad geographic spread, representation was influenced by existing relationships and access to communities. As a result, findings are shaped by those who were able to engage within the scope and timeframe of the study.

It was not possible within the scope of this study to produce a detailed spatial analysis of transit provision across Wales, including mapping of existing or potential site locations, or to develop a fully specified operational model covering all aspects of site delivery and management.

Evidence from both community participants and professionals indicates that experiences, needs and preferences vary across different groups and geographic areas, meaning that a single uniform approach would not reflect the complexity identified through the research.

These limitations reflect the scope of the study and indicate areas where further work would support a more detailed understanding of need, distribution and delivery.

4.2 Future Research

Further work would support the development and implementation of the recommendations set out in this report, contributing to a better understanding of transit provision across Wales. Continued engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities is essential to better understand the range of experiences and needs that exist, recognising that these are not uniform and may vary across groups and locations. Future work should be co-produced to ensure that the complexity of community needs is reflected in any proposed approaches.

This includes, but is not limited to, mapping of closed stopping places and potential transit site locations, alongside developing a clearer understanding of where need is greatest across local authorities.

Additional work is required to develop a more detailed operational model of transit provision, including considerations such as site design, management arrangements, access processes and communication with communities. While this research provides an initial understanding of different models, further work is needed to explore which approaches are most appropriate in different local contexts.

Further research may also be needed to explore how experiences and needs vary across different Gypsy and Traveller groups and across different geographic areas, to ensure that future provision is responsive to diverse and sometimes competing circumstances.

5. Recommendations

This research highlights several areas where policy and practice relating to stopping in Wales could be improved. The recommendations below focus on improving understanding of stopping and how it is approached, making better use of available data to inform planning, and creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration between local authorities, the Welsh Government and Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Taken together, these recommendations aim to support a clear and consistent approach to stopping provision across Wales, while ensuring that identified need leads to practical and achievable solutions.

5.1 Developing a layered stopping framework

The research shows that no single model can meet the range of travel patterns described by participants. Instead, a number of approaches currently operate within the wider accommodation system including private travel arrangements, negotiated stopping, temporary designated stopping places and transit sites.

The Welsh Government should develop clearer national guidance that sets out the different models of stopping, how they work in practice including planning requirements and the circumstances where each may be most appropriate. A clearer framework would improve consistency across local authorities while still allowing a flexible local response to travel pattern and need.

Transit sites should continue to play an important role in supporting travelling families in areas where travel patterns indicate a need. However, other approaches, such as negotiated stopping or temporary designated stopping places may provide more flexible and lower-cost responses and could be implemented more quickly alongside longer-term planning and development of transit provision.

Not all areas will require transit provision. Understanding where transit is most appropriate will depend on improved data collection and ongoing collaboration with Gypsy and Traveller communities.

5.2 Strengthening strategies and guidance

Local Authority responses to encampments and temporary stopping are inconsistent. While some described approaches emphasising early engagement and proportionate management, others reported responding in a more reactive or ad hoc way.

[Current guidance](#) suggests that local authorities ‘may’ wish to develop their own local strategies for responding to encampments. This research suggests there is value in strengthening this to ensure each local authority should develop and maintain clear guidelines on how they will respond to the range of stopping approaches. These strategies should be developed with input from Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Since many local authorities already use negotiated stopping in practice, establishing it as a standardised element within local strategies would be a relatively straightforward step.

Formalising this approach would benefit both local authorities and community members by providing clearer expectations, improving communication and offering greater protection for families who are stopping roadside.

The Welsh Government should consider how guidance, support and oversight mechanisms could encourage implementation across local authorities.

5.3 Dissemination and collaborative learning

The Welsh Government should support the dissemination of this report through a series of facilitated workshops bringing together local authorities, Gypsy and Traveller community members and relevant support organisations.

These workshops would provide an opportunity to share the research findings, reflect on the experiences of both local authorities and community members and develop a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with different stopping approaches.

Workshops should create space for discussion and reflection. This might include reviewing current provision across local authorities, identifying barriers and exploring practical steps.

Where possible, workshops should be facilitated by organisations with experience of working alongside Gypsy and Traveller communities and co-facilitated with community members.

5.4 Strengthening the evidence base

Participants highlighted gaps in the data available about where and why encampments occur. While national datasets such as the Caravan Count provide a snapshot of authorised and encampments, the research suggests that short-duration, seasonal and cyclical stopping patterns are not fully captured.

Local authorities record information about encampments, but this information is collected in different formats and is not currently brought together in a way that supports a national understanding.

The Welsh Government should review how encampment information is collected and used across Wales. This should include exploring whether a national database for recording encampment activity across local authorities could improve understanding of travel patterns alongside existing data sources such as the Caravan Count and GTAAAs.

Engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities will also be important in developing this understanding. Community knowledge can help identify historic stopping places, locations that have been lost over time, and areas where families currently stop.

Better understanding of stopping locations and travel patterns would help identify where transit provision or other short-term stopping arrangements are most appropriate.

Any approach should remain proportionate and focused on improving the evidence base used for planning and accommodation decisions.

5.5 Professional practice, language and partnership working

Experiences of engagement varied across areas and between services. Some participants described supportive and fair approaches from local authorities, while others described inconsistency and uncertainty. In some cases where enforcement was involved engagement was described as heavy-handed or intimidating.

Participants also reported fear and hostility from members of the public when stopping roadside, particularly where they were travelling with children.

The Welsh Government should consider how culturally informed and trauma-aware practice can be strengthened across agencies that engage with Gypsy and Traveller communities.

This should include:

- Reviewing the language used in local authority policies in collaboration with Gypsy and Traveller communities;
- Ensuring that staff training and local procedures reflect an understanding of Gypsy and Traveller communities and how roadside stopping is experienced;
- Strengthening safeguarding responses where families experience hostility while roadside, and ensuring travelling families receive clear information about their rights and who to contact for support;
- Encouraging services to work together to support travelling families in maintaining access to health care and education while travelling.

Improving cultural understanding and consistency across agencies would support safer and more inclusive engagement and clearer communication during roadside stopping.

5.6 Interpreting and acting on GTAA evidence

The research identified variation in how encampment activity is translated into accommodation need across Wales. Participants described examples where similar levels of encampment activity were interpreted differently by local authorities. Some saw this as evidence of need for transit or alternative stopping provision, while others treated it primarily as a short-term management issue.

The Welsh Government should consider whether clearer national expectations could support greater consistency in how encampment evidence and travel patterns are interpreted within GTAAs.

This should include ensuring that interpretation of encampment activity and identified need is discussed and sense-checked with Gypsy and Traveller communities as part of the

assessment process. Community members often hold detailed knowledge of travel patterns, stopping behaviour and historic stopping places, which can help provide important context when interpreting local evidence.

5.7 Delivery of permanent provision

While many families travel for cultural, economic or family reasons, limited access to permanent pitches and overcrowding on existing sites were also identified as contributing to some roadside stopping.

The Welsh Government should consider how progress in delivering permanent residential pitches is monitored and supported once need has been identified through the GTAA process. The research suggests that, in some cases, identified need does not progress to the development of permanent provision within expected timescales.

Strengthening oversight and accountability mechanisms would help support more consistent progress in delivering permanent pitch provision across Wales. Ensuring that identified need leads to development of permanent provision would reduce pressure on short-term stopping arrangements and support more stable accommodation pathways.

Annex A: Methodology

1.1 Overview

This research used a mixed-methods approach, combining primary qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, focus groups and written questionnaire responses with the analysis of secondary data sources. These included Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs), local authority encampment records, policy and guidance documents and [Welsh Government Caravan Count data \(January 2025\)](#).

The study was designed to examine how transit provision and stopping approaches are structured and interpreted across Wales. It was not intended as a statistical prevalence study or formal accommodation needs assessment. Instead, the focus was on understanding how nomadic life is experienced and managed in practice and how existing systems may better support nomadic ways of life.

Where available, relevant cost information was also gathered through follow-up correspondence with local authorities. This approach enabled triangulation across sources and perspectives. The study design was proportionate to the time and resources available, while seeking to ensure national coverage and meaningful community participation.

While themes were not systematically quantified, analysis considered the frequency of statements across interviews to identify dominant, common and less frequently raised themes.

1.2 Gaining access and sampling

1.2.1 Community participants

Gypsies and Travellers are recognised as communities that can be difficult for researchers to access, partly due to longstanding mistrust of public authorities and external organisations. To support meaningful participation, the research team drew on trusted relationships

established by Gypsies and Travellers Wales and Travelling Ahead, both of whom have extensive experience working directly with communities across Wales.

A convenience sampling approach was initially used, drawing on existing contacts. This was followed by snowball sampling, whereby participants referred the research team to additional potential interviewees. To widen participation, a recruitment video was created using Canva and shared on Facebook and Instagram by Gypsies and Travellers Wales and Travelling Ahead. Travellers' Times were also contacted and shared the video through their Facebook page.

The target sample was 35–50 community representatives. A total of 36 community members participated, aged between 18–75, with the most common age group being 60+. Both males and females contributed, although participation was more frequently from females.

Participants were from all regions of Wales, with the highest representation from southeast and north Wales. Participants included individuals identifying as Gypsy, Traveller, Irish Traveller, Romany/Romani/Romanichal and Scottish Traveller, alongside a small number recorded as New Age Travellers.

A total of 6 community peer researchers were involved in supporting engagement and shaping interview discussions. Their input helped ensure that questioning remained culturally appropriate and grounded in lived experience.

Following initial analysis, advisory group sessions were held with 9 community representatives from north Wales and 11 from southeast Wales, alongside additional follow-up interviews with 2 participants who were unable to attend group discussions. Participants were aged between 16–75, with the majority being female. Recruitment was undertaken through direct contact with individuals with long-standing nomadic experience and an interest in improving transit and stopping provision.

These sessions presented emerging findings back to participants to test accuracy, identify omissions and ensure that interpretations reflected lived experience. Feedback from this process informed the final analysis and shaped both the cross-cutting synthesis and recommendations.

All community members were compensated for their time with £20 vouchers which was paid at an hourly rate.

1.2.2 Local authorities and other professionals

In this report, 'professionals' refers to individuals working in roles relevant to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and stopping, including local authority officers (e.g. housing, accommodation and enforcement roles), alongside practitioners from the police, health, education and third sector organisations.

A total of 75 individuals were invited to participate. Seventeen interviews were completed, comprising officers from 12 of the 22 local authorities contacted. Local authorities from all regions of Wales were represented, with the majority of participating authorities located in southeast and north Wales.

Additionally, 5 interviews were completed with housing sector representatives and other relevant professionals.

To maximise coverage, a short questionnaire was circulated to local authorities that did not participate in interviews. Two additional written responses were received and analysed alongside interview data. In total, evidence from 12 interview-participating local authorities and 2 written responses informed the local authority analysis. Non-response should not be interpreted as indicating absence of encampment activity or policy position.

In addition, 2 focus groups were held with health and education professionals that engage with Gypsy and Traveller families, with 4 professionals attending the health group and 6 attending the education group. An additional interview was completed with an education professional who was unable to attend the focus group. These discussions explored service access, continuity of care and the impact of short-term mobility on health and educational outcomes. Participation was voluntary.

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) was invited to participate in a focus group to explore strategic perspectives; however, this did not take place during the study period. Police representatives were also contacted to contribute to a more detailed understanding of operational responses, but no response was received during the study period.

1.3 Case studies

The research included a small number of illustrative examples of stopping provision observed during site visits (see Appendices H & I in accompanying document). These examples were proposed by advisory group members as worth including to provide contextual insight into how different stopping models operate in practice, including location, design, management arrangements and day-to-day functioning.

The purpose of including these examples is to support practical understanding rather than to undertake formal comparison or evaluation. They are not intended to represent a comprehensive review of stopping provision across the UK, nor to serve as direct comparators for Wales. Instead, they offer brief illustrations of operational approaches that may inform future discussion.

1.4 Data collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and a questionnaire. Interview schedules were developed by the project team to ensure relevance and cultural appropriateness and were reviewed by the Welsh Government.

Interviews were conducted primarily in person, with online or telephone options available depending on participant preference and practical considerations. Community participants were offered flexible scheduling and familiar locations to support accessibility. Local authority and stakeholder interviews were typically conducted online.

All interviews were documented through detailed notes. Where consent was provided, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using automated speech to text software. Transcripts were checked to ensure accuracy. Written questionnaire responses and relevant follow-up email correspondence were incorporated into the analysis.

1.5 Data analysis

Data was analysed using an inductive thematic approach. Interview notes, transcripts and written responses were reviewed collectively to identify recurring themes, areas of variation and points of policy tension.

Themes were considered in terms of consistency, divergence and policy relevance, rather than frequency alone. Emerging findings were discussed within the research team and the advisory group to ensure contextual and cultural accuracy.

Official Caravan Count data (January 2025) and recent GTAs were reviewed to contextualise qualitative findings within national and local authority recording systems.

1.6 Ethics, accessibility and participation

The study adhered to Welsh Government ethical standards. Participants were provided with clear information about the purpose of the research, confidentiality and how their data would be used via a privacy notice. Informed consent was obtained in all cases.

Accessibility was supported through flexible scheduling, multiple modes of participation and the involvement of trusted intermediaries. Participatory principles underpinned the research design: Gypsies and Travellers Wales and Travelling Ahead played a central role in recruitment, shaping interview questions, interpreting findings and informing recommendations. Participant anonymity has been preserved throughout the report, and quotations have been anonymised to protect identity.