

**GYPSY, ROMA, TRAVELLER UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENT
POLICY STATEMENT**

January 2021



This Policy was published on 06 December 2017 by the then Conservative administration and previously reviewed by the Labour administration in 24 January 2019.

According to a 2019 House of Commons Committee Report Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are among the most disadvantaged people in the country and have poor outcomes in key areas such as health and education.

This policy statement accompanies the amended Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Unauthorised Encampment policy whereby the delivery of Temporary Stopping Places in the city has been removed. This statement outlines the rationale for the change and the focus on the alternative measures already outlined in the policy for Negotiated Stopping Places and Target Hardening, including preventative measures on sites deemed unsuitable.

Temporary Stopping Places are a relatively new development of short term accommodation solutions for Gypsy, Roma, Travellers. There is limited practice in other Local Authorities available to provide a comparator and it is difficult to make definitive conclusions to prove whether the full cost of provision will be lower than the overall cost of managing Unauthorised Encampments. Running costs are difficult to establish although assumptions can be made on the resource required in managing these sites.

The amended policy removes reference to Temporary Stopping Places, which were carefully considered by Officers and Members but are not a sustainable option at this time. Operationally this will have minimal impact on how Community Connections are currently managing Unauthorised Encampments as we have not previously had a Temporary Stopping Place in Plymouth.

This policy amendment has been made following ongoing communication with the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community on the permanent site at Bayview, those accommodated on the Prince Rock Covid19 Emergency Response Site along with other Unauthorised Encampments and continued discussions with key stakeholders such as the Police and neighbouring Local Authorities.

NEGOTIATED STOPPING PLACES

To meet the needs of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community and ensure this amendment does not have a detrimental impact on their rights and wellbeing Community Connections will consider whether the Unauthorised Encampment site would be appropriate to allow for Negotiated Stopping. The policy has always provided for Negotiated Stopping and involves Plymouth City Council Officers making an agreement with the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community on the Unauthorised Encampment. The agreement allows people to stay on the land they are camped on. The length of the agreement can vary but will be for a maximum of 28 days, as anything beyond this would require planning permission. The agreement will include a code of conduct to leave sites clean and not make too much noise as well as provision of facilities such as waste disposal, toilets and water. Whether a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community is permitted to stay on a site will be decided dependent on a number of factors within a community impact assessment. Following expiration of the agreed period the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community will be required to leave and if this does not happen the same process for eviction will be followed as with an Unauthorised Encampment on a non-negotiated site.

Procedural documents to assist Officers in making a decision regarding the use of Negotiated Stopping will continue to be updated to reflect best practice and will be maintained on the website alongside the Unauthorised Encampment policy.

Where Negotiated Stopping has not been agreed or where the site has been deemed unsuitable Community Connections Officers will continue to adhere to policy to remove the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community from the site using Local Authority designated powers as quickly as possible.

TARGET HARDENING

Target Hardening includes, proactive preventative measures to deter a community from entering a particular space or taking steps following the leave of an Unauthorised Encampment to prevent the group or additional groups from returning. This will aim to inhibit access through environmental changes to the land such as planting trees, development of green banks or through the use of gates and fences. Community Connections will work closely with Natural Infrastructure in identifying and implementing this. Sites deemed as appropriate for this approach will depend on a thorough assessment of the impact of Unauthorised Encampments to the local community, environmental damage, safety of the site for the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community to settle there and frequency of the number of Unauthorised Encampments arriving on the site.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

We have committed to working closely with our near neighbouring Local Authorities in South Hams and West Devon prior to the Joint Local Plan review in 2023 to ensure that the needs of this community are fully updated in accordance with MHCLG recommendations and best practice. This will be done using local knowledge and Community Connections Localities Officers who are best placed to build relationships with the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community and support members of the community in expressing needs. Lessons learnt from the recent opening of the Liskeard Transit Site and the Emergency Temporary Stopping Place implemented at Prince Rock in response to Covid19 during 2020 will be taken into consideration during this review.