Gypsy and Traveller Site Management
Good Practice Guide
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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 There are currently around 300 socially rented Gypsy and Traveller sites in England, which will either be managed by the local authority or registered social landlord that owns them, or by another organisation on their behalf.

1.2 The Government has established a framework to increase site provision to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, reducing the number of unauthorised sites and promoting good relations with the settled community. However, the provision of sites, though extremely welcome, is only one dimension of the solution, as new sites can only be properly sustainable when backed by good quality site management.

1.3 The Government believes that it is important to encourage good practice and a consistent approach to managing accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers. This guidance aims to achieve this for both existing and future sites while taking into account the differing needs or circumstances of individual families.

1.4 Where sites are properly managed they can be successful, self-financing and sustainable, helping to ensure that the Gypsy and Traveller communities can co-exist peacefully with the settled population nearby. Gypsies and Travellers are a highly socially excluded group, with health and education outcomes significantly worse than that of the settled population. Clearly families able to settle on well managed and maintained authorised sites are better able to access health and education services, and access a better quality of life, than those unable to find an authorised pitch and forced to live on the margins of society.

1.5 Conversely, where caravan sites for Gypsies and Travellers are not properly managed the likely result is deterioration in the physical fabric, and an increased vulnerability to anti-social behaviour, as experienced with some poorly maintained housing for the settled community. In such circumstances site residents, as well as suffering from health and safety risks, could potentially experience intimidation from others on the site which they are unable to resist.

1.6 Experience has shown that the absence of a proper management structure can lead to families leaving authorised sites for their own safety, only to be challenged by the authorities concerned for having resorted to residing in unauthorised locations. Meanwhile, there is an increased risk that service agencies, utilities and other contractors become more reluctant to enter and work on the site contributing to its decline.
1.7 The use of proper management and maintenance arrangements will help to ensure that the financial investment in site delivery is effectively protected. When a local authority or registered social landlord undertakes to develop a site, it must also accept responsibility for managing it, in the same way that it would do with other forms of housing. This does not mean that it has to manage the site itself – this can be contracted out, although in doing so the site owner must remain accountable for the quality of management and put in place appropriate monitoring to ensure that standards are maintained (see also para 1.15).

1.8 The Government has made capital funding available to local authorities and registered social landlords, to help them meet accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers in their areas. The quality of management arrangements is one of the factors considered in evaluating schemes that are put forward for Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant, in order to maximise the benefit from this investment.

1.9 This guidance will help those with this responsibility to ensure that their management arrangements are appropriate and consistent with good practice, taking into account the experience of those managing sites, and the Gypsies and Travellers that live on them. The aim should be to offer the same high standards of management and support as are available to those in other forms of social housing, while recognising and respecting the cultural and lifestyle differences of these particular groups.

1.10 This guidance is intended in particular for use by:

- local authorities or registered social landlords developing a site for the first time; and
- those already managing socially rented sites; although many elements of it could also apply to the management of private sites on which pitches are rented out.

1.11 The aim is to encourage a positive, realistic and practical approach to the issues that can arise in the management of sites, especially where they are old and have suffered from under-investment or neglect over the years, or where the behaviour of some residents is impacting on others, and may not have been addressed firmly and fairly. It is intended to provide an index of good practice which, if followed, can prevent problems arising or continuing.
The Race Equality Duty

1.12 Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised ethnic minority groups under Race Relations legislation. This legislation applies to all organisations. However, it puts additional duties on public authorities to ensure that all ethnic groups receive parity of treatment regarding the service being provided.

1.13 The Race Relations Act 1976 gives listed public authorities, including local authorities, a three part statutory duty (known as the ‘general duty’) to “pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination; and to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations between persons of different racial groups”. The Act was amended in 2001 to introduce ‘specific duties’ for certain listed public authorities, including local authorities, to make sure they had the systems and processes that would allow them to meet the general duty.

1.14 Local authorities must meet the general duty and specific duties in respect of all legally recognised ethnic groups. As legally recognised ethnic groups, Gypsies and Irish Travellers are included in the scope of the duty to promote race equality and good race relations. This means it is unlawful for any individual or organisation accommodating individuals to treat these groups less favourably than other racial groups, or to discriminate against them. The Race Relations Act 1976 covers all locally and nationally provided services, including housing and management of housing – and this includes Gypsy and Traveller sites (section 20 of the Race Relations Act refers).

1.15 Where the management of Gypsy and Traveller sites is contracted out, it is important that the local authority explicitly builds relevant race equality considerations into the contract to ensure the site management function meets the requirements of the Race Relations Act 1976 regardless of who is carrying it out.

1.16 The CRE (now the Equality and Human Rights Commission) “Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing” explains the provisions of the Race Relations Act 1976 relevant to housing provision and all forms of housing tenure, including caravan sites. It is recommended that site managers are provided with a copy of this document as standard practice.

1.17 Although registered social landlords are not listed public authorities, the Tenant Services Authority which regulates them is, and in its capacity as regulator places specific obligations on them in relation to race equality.
Security of tenure – legislative changes

1.18 Section 318 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 will amend the definition of a protected site in the Mobile Homes Act 1983 to remove the exclusion for local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites. This means that the Mobile Homes Act will apply to these sites. It will improve the security of tenure and rights and responsibilities of Gypsies and Travellers on local authority sites. We have consulted on whether some of the provisions of the Mobile Home Act need to be amended for these sites; as well as transitional provisions for existing residents. For further details please see the consultation paper Implementing the Mobile Homes Act 1983 on local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites: a consultation paper on our website at: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/implementingmobilehomesact

1.19 Section 318 of the Mobile Homes Act will be brought into force by order. Any amendments considered necessary to the Act for local authorities’ sites, and the transitional provisions will also be made at this time. The Mobile Homes Act is relevant to parts of this guidance (particularly Chapter 9), and where this is the case, this is highlighted in the text.

1.20 The term “agreement” has been used throughout this guidance to refer to both the licence through which pitches are currently occupied under the Caravan Sites Act 1968, and the agreement under the Mobile Homes Act through which they will be occupied in future.
Chapter 2
What makes a successful site?

2.1 In the course of research undertaken on behalf of Government on local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites in England\(^1\), some residents were invited to say what factors they thought constituted a successful local authority site. These factors included:

- In good repair
- Clean and tidy
- Quiet and peaceful
- Residents like it there
- Freedom to carry on lifestyle
- People at ease and not frightened
- Children in school
- Health and other services available
- Social cohesion
- Well maintained for the use of residents
- Not causing the local authority major expense or trouble.

*This list is not exhaustive and it can be supplemented with information gathered from the local Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment for the area.*

2.2 Although these factors were quoted in the context of socially rented Gypsy and Traveller sites, they are the kind of requirements which most people would naturally aspire to in their own neighbourhood, irrespective of whether they own or rent a house, a flat, or a mobile home; and live in a city street, a housing estate, a country village – or on a caravan site.

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\(^1\) The Provision and Condition of Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England October 2002.
2.3 All these factors interrelate and can be achieved where the right structure, systems, people and skills are all in place.

2.4 Effective site management is vital to achieving these outcomes. It is a key element in establishing a new site – and the most important in sustaining it as a successful one. It is in the interest of the local authority, in both its landlord and community leadership roles, the Gypsy and Traveller and the settled communities to ensure that new and existing sites are well run, good places to live and operating with a good community spirit.

2.5 This is best achieved by a close and effectively organised multi-agency partnership, including for example educational, welfare, social services, environmental health, the police and voluntary groups.
Chapter 3
Initial approach to site management

3.1 When taking on management of a site, an essential first step is for the site management to quickly become acquainted with the site. This will include:

- Knowing the layout and dimensions of the site surroundings in some detail, with plans of the total land managed and/or owned, and plans of the original site layout – and whether it is the same now
- Obtaining a recent aerial photograph of the site if available, for instance in identifying fire spacings, and pitch limits
- Finding out where all water and electric supplies are turned on and off, and where these and the drains and telephone cables run
- Making sure that a range of people have keys which give access to crucial parts of the site, such as any building where the main electric switch is located, or access to the switch for the drainage equipment
- Being aware of safety precautions on the site ie water supply, fire alarm systems and equipment, and ensure residents are aware of these
- Finding out about the history of the site, its reputation and relationship with the surrounding community, site turnover and demand
- Getting to know the people who live on the site or sites now and how they regard the site – how long have they lived there? Are they related? Are any of them especially vulnerable (for example wheelchair users, people with hearing or speech problems or dependent on machines powered by electricity for their health?)

3.2 The second step is to identify all stakeholders who have a legitimate interest in the success of the site. This may include:

- The local authority or registered social landlord, its staff and any governing body
- The residents on the site
- People who form part of the direct neighbourhood, either residing or having business premises nearby
- Public and private service providers who provide services to the site, for example, education, health, ambulance, fire and police, waste collection, postal services, and utility companies.
3.3 The third step is to seek to agree, with those stakeholders:

- The outcomes being sought (eg a well-managed site, with residents living in harmony with their neighbours; full access to services; and a means of resolving any conflicts, and ensuring good communication and understanding between all parties)

- The objectives to be pursued to achieve those outcomes.

3.4 The fourth step is to recruit or appoint the staff needed for the site management required. A description of the site manager role and details of the appropriate personal skills needed follow in Chapter 6.

3.5 Where new management is taking over an existing site that has been neglected special measures may be needed to restore effective management and ensure it is run properly without delay. Case studies that demonstrate how this has been achieved are included in Chapter 18.

**Check list**

- Get to know the site and residents (3.1)
- Identify and meet all other stakeholders (3.2)
- Agree site management outcomes and objectives with stakeholders as far as possible (3.3)
- Recruit the right staff to manage the site (3.4).
**Chapter 4**

**Corporate organisation**

4.1 There are considerable variations in the way that local authorities are organised for dealing with Gypsy and Traveller accommodation matters. Some socially rented sites are owned and managed by the same authority, some owned by the county council but managed by the district council – or vice versa – and others are contracted out to a non-local authority body, or to Gypsies and Travellers themselves. Other sites are owned by registered social landlords or run by them on a local authority’s behalf.

4.2 These are often the product of history or reflect local administrative arrangements – but there are key ways to manage the site portfolio irrespective of these and this guidance can be adopted in any of these circumstances.

**Where does strategic responsibility lie?**

4.3 The management of a local authority or registered social landlord’s portfolio of Gypsy and Traveller sites, in its broadest sense, remains the responsibility of that organisation even when the day to day management is contracted out. It must have adequate monitoring arrangements in place to ensure effective management practices are adequately maintained.

4.4 Any appointed management company must ensure that it does not compromise any of the duties and responsibilities which the local authority has for the site residents. Clauses should be included in the management contract to that effect.

4.5 These monitoring arrangements should include regular site visits and inspections to ensure the site is clean, safe and in good working order, and operating in line with the terms of the contract. Regular pre-arranged meetings with the contractor’s site manager are recommended, together with opportunities for the residents to make their views known to the landlord. A residents’ association or group could help here (see para 14.8), together with a complaints procedure for residents where relationships with the contractor have broken down.
4.6 Historically most sites have been developed by county councils under previous legislation. The Housing Act 2004 requires local housing authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, and develop strategies for meeting them. This means that, over time, we might expect to see local housing authorities increasingly taking responsibility for site provision and management either directly, or in partnership with county councils. Where operational responsibility for a site remains with a county council there should be clear lines of communication with the appropriate local housing authority to enable them to work together, for example to ensure that a homeless family in the area can be considered for a vacant pitch on the county council site.

4.7 Many local housing authorities have transferred their housing stock to registered social landlords (RSLs), which are also the main providers of new social housing. It is therefore appropriate to seek to encourage more registered social landlords to become involved in developing and managing Gypsy and Traveller sites. RSLs will need to ensure that their staff have been trained to have a clear understanding of the specific needs and culture of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

4.8 RSLs should work closely with local housing authorities, for example to ensure that homeless families on unauthorised sites are made aware of allocation procedures for available local authority and registered social landlord sites in the area.

4.9 In many local authorities Gypsy and Traveller liaison officers are responsible both for site management and enforcement against unauthorised camping although very different skills are required for each role. They are often based in legal services, environmental health or even consumer protection services. An individual who takes eviction action against a family could lose the trust of other site residents in the process, particularly where relations of the evicted family continue to live there.

4.10 To reap the benefits of managing sites alongside other forms of social housing it may be appropriate to split these two roles. It is in any case important that issues around both accommodation and planning enforcement are addressed for Gypsies and Travellers in the same way as they are for any other part of the community.

**Check list**

- Effective arrangements in place to monitor site management performance (4.3)
- Consider aligning site management and housing responsibilities (4.10).
Chapter 5
The landlord/resident relationship

5.1 Effective site management is key to the success of any Gypsy or Traveller site. Without it, the viability of a site and the financial investment in it could be at risk. Its reputation as a decent place to live would be placed under threat, and residents could ultimately choose to move off the site, creating more unauthorised camping.

5.2 Good quality site management also plays a vital role in helping to promote social harmony and address the lack of trust and understanding that can sometimes exist between residents of some Gypsy and Traveller sites and some members of the settled community. A successful site is one that can allow communities to co-exist together without friction and serve to overcome misunderstandings and misconceptions about Gypsies and Travellers and their way of life.

5.3 To achieve this, it is essential that there is a strong emphasis on building and maintaining a relationship between the site’s management and its residents based on mutual trust and respect, with simple, sensible and fair rules and clearly stated roles and responsibilities that everyone understands and which are applied consistently. Residents should all be treated in the same way, with rules enforced equally.

5.4 Without this clarity, there is a risk of uncertainty, misinterpretation and disagreement which could threaten a site’s sustainability.

5.5 The site manager must ensure that site residents are consulted when planning for the management and maintenance of the site. This can only be properly sustained by a regime which has consultation and dialogue embedded within it as a matter of course.

Management arrangements

5.6 Site management arrangements for socially rented Gypsy and Traveller sites vary between one organisation and another. Some have an in-house management arrangement and others contract this function out. Some differentiate between a site manager, as an office-based post in a local authority office; or someone appointed for everyday management of one or more sites, sometimes residing on a site or with a permanent office based on it, or based off-site but with regular patterns of attendance.
5.7 Whatever the arrangement, there should be a named individual who lives on or regularly visits the site, acts as the landlord’s direct, or at least initial, point of contact with the residents, and has a general responsibility for the day to day operation of the site. In the context of this guidance that first and local point of contact is referred to as the “site manager”.

5.8 The location and particular characteristics of a site, together with the higher degree of social exclusion experienced by some members of the Gypsy and Traveller community, may mean that site management is sometimes a more intensive activity, and involve a greater degree of contact between residents and managers, than for some other forms of social housing. Where possible daily visits are recommended in the case of new sites, or where newly arrived families may need help to settle in. Otherwise an assessment should be conducted to consider the appropriate regularity of visits and residents informed of the site manager’s availability on-site once the assessment is completed and decisions taken.

5.9 The site manager will also need strong corporate support from the organisation that owns or manages the site to avoid being left isolated and subject to decision making under pressure or on issues which may be the responsibility of others. Ideally, the immediate senior manager should be easily contactable, particularly as a contingency arrangement where the site manager is not available or engaged elsewhere, and have practical experience of site management and a broad corporate and strategic understanding of all Gypsy and Traveller related issues.

5.10 However it is equally important to ensure that the chain of site management is as short as possible and that each link is:

- clear about its roles and responsibilities
- provided with appropriate powers and delegation to undertake them
- able to access a named officer in the management chain of appropriate seniority where decisions are needed above delegated levels of responsibility
- committed to managing sites effectively and safeguarding the funding invested
- able to understand the distinct culture, traditions and needs of the residents of the site
- committed to ensuring that residents are fully aware of the respective responsibilities of the organisation owning and running the site, and those living on it.
5.11 If a new site manager is to be appointed on an existing site, it is strongly advised that a planned succession process be arranged. This will ensure continuity and enable the current manager to work alongside the new manager for a short period to ensure familiarisation with the site and its management arrangements.

5.12 Site managers should also consider developing closer links with those managing sites elsewhere in the neighbouring areas to share knowledge and good practice, and to gain more insight into demand for pitches and vacancy levels on neighbouring sites.

Check list

- Establish and maintain simple, sensible and fair site rules (5.3)
- Ensure short and effective chain of site management with senior management buy-in and support (5.9).
Chapter 6
The site manager

Role of the site manager

6.1 In overall terms the role of a site manager is to ensure the site is providing a decent and safe environment in which to live, with management arrangements which are efficient and responsive both to the requirements of the local authority or registered social landlord and to the needs of its residents. The site manager therefore has an important part to play in ensuring the continued viability of the site.

6.2 The role of the site manager and the services they are expected to provide should be made clear through a detailed job description. The core site management role consists of those duties outlined in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 – Core management duties**

**Site Inspection**

- Examine site personally, ideally at least twice a week, record and address any issues identified
- Ensure residents are complying with the terms of their agreement to occupy the pitch
- Produce regular monitoring report(s) identifying general maintenance and other actions necessary to ensure proper operation of the site
- Talk with residents about the site, be available; encourage participation in on-site residents’ association
- Act on resident feedback and report progress to them.
**Health and Safety**

- Arrange for immediate repair/rectification of problems where possible
- Advise residents where immediate rectification is not possible and introduce effective warning and protective measures to ensure site safety
- Produce health and safety report on a regular basis and maintain a record of all actions taken
- Review safety procedures, including those for fire safety, regularly and ensure site residents are advised of the appropriate procedures, including for evacuation on at least an annual basis
- Ongoing liaison with health, education, the police, fire service and other statutory bodies
- Conduct annual risk assessment, record outcome and remedial actions taken
- Conduct annual health and safety testing of equipment and facilities and record outcome.

**Site Maintenance and Repair**

- Produce maintenance and repair report following works undertaken and keep detailed records of repairs required
- Undertake minor repairs etc where qualified to do so, or make arrangements for them to be rectified by a qualified contractor, (see Figure 7)
- Agree with senior management where use of contractors will be necessary
- Monitor contractors and ensure they carry out work to an appropriate standard
- Inform residents of impending works, timescales and subsequent progress and keep detailed records of consultation meetings etc.

**Finance**

- Collect rent, water and other charges where this is current practice
- Liaise with housing benefit office on a regular basis
- Maintain accurate records of all financial transactions, and issue receipts in accordance with good financial practices
- Make arrangements for safe handling of cash eg deposits.
Arrivals
- Ensure new arrivals, departures and evictions are reported to those responsible for maintaining site waiting lists
- Welcome new residents, provide information pack, accompany them to the pitch, ensure they understand the parking and fire arrangements and how to operate all equipment and fittings to the amenity block
- Issue the agreement to occupy the pitch and explain its terms
- Receive deposit payment, where this is still current practice and ensure safe handling
- Keep proper records for audit purposes
- Support and develop effective signposting for sources of assistance ie benefits advice, Citizens Advice etc.

Departures
- Ensure rent and any other outstanding charges have been paid
- Ensure pitch and associated facilities are left clean and in good order.

Record keeping

6.3 A fundamental aspect of all these activities is the need for the site manager to complete and maintain records, for ease of auditing and health and safety checks, and to ensure the local authority's legal position can be properly defended in case of any dispute.
Some additional management roles which may arise

6.4 In certain cases, and to enable the smooth running of the site, it may be that some residents require additional help to enable them to engage effectively with social, welfare and benefit systems. This will ensure for example, prompt payment of housing benefit or associated allowances, preventing some residents from falling into financial arrears or being unable to sustain their occupation of the pitch. This kind of assistance is sometimes provided by the site manager and some additional roles which may arise are listed in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2 – Some additional management roles which may arise**

- Advising tenant of benefit entitlement and avoiding over or under payments
- Financial management and debt counselling
- Helping residents to complete forms
- Liaising with outside agencies.

6.5 Alternatively these needs may be addressed by other welfare officers or through a specific programme, for example that provided through Supporting People.

Supporting People programme

6.6 The Supporting People programme is a wide and varied programme that reaches out to different vulnerable members of society and allowing them to live independently. There are good examples of local authorities designing tailored programmes offering accommodation related support to those members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities who may be in need of assistance. The following case study offers a good example.
Case Study 1 – Shropshire County Council Gypsy Liaison Service

Shropshire County Council Gypsy Liaison Service works closely with Shropshire Supporting People Team to develop and enhance the work already carried out by the Gypsy Liaison Officers. Households accepting a pitch on a site owned or managed by Shropshire County Council (SCC) take part in an assessment process at the outset and support plans are prepared and agreed where a need for support is identified.

SCC has found it very important to work closely with other agencies and encourage them to visit the sites and get to know the families. Gypsy Liaison Officers and site managers act as key co-ordinators until trust has been built up as the residents are often unsure at first about ‘strangers’ being involved with their families.

The success of these arrangements has encouraged agencies to visit privately owned Gypsy and Traveller sites with more confidence as well, although occasionally the Gypsy Liaison Service will do some introductions with private site owners to allow various agencies to work on these sites.

There is little difficulty encouraging Gypsies and Travellers to engage with the support services now, as many have heard by word of mouth about how successful these have been. Residents are encouraged to try engaging with new agencies themselves, for example Citizen’s Advice. Contacting statutory organisations for the first time can occasionally be daunting as the language used by organisations can sometimes be a major barrier.

The degree of Supporting People support varies as some clients require significant support on a weekly basis where they have low literacy and social skills and need reminding about appointments, support with budgeting and housing benefit claims. Alternatively some may have health problems and just need someone to listen to them, or more intensive help in a crisis or when complex forms and letters need attention.

Examples of support provided:

- Support has been provided to many residents whilst they try to complete their theory driving test, and families have been going through various aspects with the aid of a lap top computer. This has been very successful and has given some of the teenagers an enthusiasm for IT to the extent that various agencies are looking at ways of developing this interest further.

- An elderly resident with no relatives suffered a debilitating stroke and after months in hospital returned to their caravan on an SCC serviced pitch. At the time of discharge there was considerable concern about the resident’s ability to cope. Slowly, and at the resident’s pace, services have been introduced through the Supporting People programme and despite having no literacy skills the resident was helped to claim Attendance Allowance. This resident would have had no alternative other than to enter residential care if it was not for the support provided through the Supporting People programme.
On or off-site manager?

6.7 An on-site manager offers opportunities for a close rapport to be developed with residents, as an easily accessible and familiar individual, and ensure that any problems or issues can be quickly identified. This would be particularly effective in the case of newly created or extended sites, where recent turnover has resulted in a number of new families taking up residence, or on transit sites. It would also help where there may be tensions within a site, or with the neighbouring community, and where residents have requested on-site management to help overcome difficulties and ensure they are provided with the safe and peaceful environment in which they are entitled to live.

6.8 Although residents might prefer an on-site manager, in some circumstances there is also a risk that in the longer term the continual presence of an “authority figure” on-site could sour relationships where this is considered unnecessary. In some cases long-term on-site managers have become open to accusations of favouritism, and their impartiality and ultimately their position can be undermined and the sustainability of the site adversely affected. Therefore the site manager, whether on or off-site, should always ensure they demonstrate an impartial approach to site management issues.

6.9 There are obvious resource implications for on-site management arrangements and a balance needs to be struck between this and an easy to reach management presence on a regular basis. It is unlikely that an on-site manager would be justifiable in the case of a small site. However a large and busy site could well justify this on financial and management grounds.

6.10 In many cases, residents are known to prefer off-site managers, but to be fully effective such managers should be in attendance on-site at regular times of the day or week. Whether or not the site manager resides on-site is a very important operational decision for the organisation concerned. Whatever arrangements are in place these should be kept under review in the light of the relative stability of the site, its operational performance and the degree of cohesion both within the site and with the neighbouring community. It is important to take the views of residents fully into account when existing arrangements are reviewed to ensure that all aspects of site sustainability are given equal weight. A residents’ association or group can help here (see para 14.8).

6.11 Residents should be made aware of the times when off-site managers will be present on the site. It would be sensible to publicise the contact numbers for daytime routine enquiries, routine enquiries out of hours and emergency repairs out of hours. The telephone contact number should preferably be a landline as reception in an area may make mobile telephones difficult to contact. A well publicised and reliable telephone number should be provided on which they or colleagues can be contacted at any time in case of emergency.
What personal skills should a site manager have?

6.12 While previous experience of working with Gypsy or Traveller communities is not essential, experience of working with the general public in a supervisory/managerial capacity would be a distinct advantage, particularly if this has been in the housing field. It is also very important that the site manager understands the way that the Gypsy and Traveller lifestyle affects requirements for the site and its management. This will also be important in helping to gain the confidence of the residents.

6.13 The success of a well run site depends to a great extent on the competence of the site manager and their relationship with and support provided by senior line managers. As the direct representative of the landlord the site manager must:

- Have sound and balanced judgement, particularly under pressure
- Be literate and numerate
- Have well developed inter-personal skills, both to maintain the trust of the employer that their interests and responsibilities are properly safeguarded – but also to gain the trust and confidence of the Gypsy and Traveller community that the site will be managed fairly
- Be transparent, proactive and committed to the role
- Have an active understanding and commitment to community development issues and practices.
Case Study 2 – Developing Mutual Respect

Norfolk County Council appointed a new manager to take over a Gypsy and Traveller site which had a troubled history and developed a bad reputation over many years.

The new site manager recognised the need for developing a proper understanding between management and residents. They immediately set about making themselves known to the residents and getting to know them, to understand their hopes, fears and expectations.

With a mixture of patience, fairness, good humour and plain speaking, they made it clear that the slate was to be wiped clean and everyone offered a fresh start, on the basis of a clear understanding of site rules and respective responsibilities of the site management and its residents.

The new site manager sought to develop a mutual respect between the management and the residents, and instilled a pride in the site and harmony between residents, service providers and the neighbouring community. Quickly dealing with everyday issues of management and maintenance, together with queries over service provision and licence conditions, no matter how small, and with actions explained carefully and clearly and with no room for doubt, residents knew exactly what service they could expect and long-term disputes and grievances were prevented.
By these means the site management gained the trust of the local authority and residents alike.

However the site manager was aware that more had to be done to promote the good things about the site and to integrate it successfully within the wider community. By working closely with the local education authority for example the site manager helped encourage families on the site to ensure their children attend the local school and integrate with other children. Children of the local village are made welcome on the site, breaking down the barriers between the communities and addressing the myths and perceptions which can otherwise arise amongst children. Cross-community activities are also encouraged to increase awareness and understanding and make the site the success it is today.

Site manager qualifications

6.14 Employers should ensure that site managers receive effective and up to date training in the necessary skills to effectively undertake the role in accordance with the job description. Possession of the Business and Technical Education Council advanced award on-site management would be advantageous.

6.15 General housing management qualifications are also useful, given that these contain the essential elements of good management techniques and practices applicable to housing management generally. Some training providers are known to be considering development of additional modules specific to Gypsy and Traveller site management, some of which would be attainable as free standing qualifications, suited to those without mainstream housing management experience and/or with literacy problems. However these are currently considered to be in the development phase.

6.16 In the meantime relevant training on Gypsy and Traveller needs, travelling cultures and lifestyle should be provided for housing providers who do not have this experience, ideally with input from members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities, in order to avoid any misunderstandings and help ensure the smooth management of the site.

Advertising site manager positions

6.17 As for all public sector appointments vacancies for site manager appointments should be widely advertised, with a transparent selection process. Applicants should be vetted in accordance with the local authority's procedures for other appointments. It should be open to all communities to apply, including members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. Applicants should be considered on merit and suitability for the position.
Monitoring management performance and contracting out

6.18 Whether site management is conducted in-house or contracted out, the organisation should have robust arrangements in place to monitor the standard of the site management services provided in the same way as for other forms of social housing.

6.19 Management of a site should not be contracted out unless the authority can ensure that the necessary level of service will be provided. A mechanism and appropriate resources need to be in place to ensure that site management problems can be quickly rectified where the contractor is not fulfilling the contract specification.

6.20 In line with the general duty on public authorities, site management should be in accordance with the race equality duty. If the management of a site is to be contracted out the authority should ensure the contract takes account of the race equality duty it has effectively adopted in acting on the local authority’s behalf. The local authority should have arrangements in place to measure the effective performance of the contractor in relation to its duties, including with regard to race relations legislation. Local authorities planning to contract out management services may wish to explore these issues with any other local authorities already using that contractor’s services.

6.21 Where the contractor has responsibility for setting rent levels it should operate in line with Chapter 10 of this guidance.

6.22 Management arrangements should include an effective complaints procedure. Where residents wish to complain about the service provided by a contractor they should first approach the contractor directly and seek rectification of the matter. Where the resident is not satisfied with the outcome, complaints should be directed to the landlord in accordance with effective complaints procedures outlined in paragraphs 14.14-14.18 of this guidance.

Check list
- Site manager provided with detailed statement of duties (6.2)
- Decide whether site manager should live on or off-site (6.7-6.11)
- Consider setting up a formal liaison group (6.10 & 14.8)
- Make residents fully aware of site manager’s availability and emergency contact details (6.11)
- Ensure site management performance is properly monitored (6.18-6.22).
Chapter 7
Applications procedure and allocation of pitches

Applications procedure

7.1 The form by which applicants apply for a vacant pitch, or are placed on a waiting list, should be simple to understand and in plain language, taking into account those who have limited literacy skills. Consideration could be given to producing audio or CD format versions for this purpose.

7.2 The site manager should hold a supply of the application forms on-site in case an approach is made there, and should be prepared to help the applicant complete the form where necessary and ensure it reaches those administering the waiting list centrally. Other authorities (for example, district councils in a district where the county council manage sites) could also help people fill out application forms for site waiting-lists.

7.3 Copies of the form should also be available from other staff in the local authority, including the housing department where there is one, and could also be available on the website of a local authority or registered social landlord as an additional but not exclusive source. Applicants should ideally have alternative options of sending the application form by post or electronically, where they may otherwise be travelling or find it difficult to deliver in person.

7.4 It is recommended that the application is submitted by the head of the household, with members of the household who will be living on the pitch named on the form. Where the applicant is placed on a waiting list the applicant must ensure the information provided is up to date and report any change in circumstances which would affect their eligibility. The submission of false information could result in the application being cancelled.

7.5 Applicants should be required to provide proof of identity in the form of a birth certificate, National Insurance number, passport or photo driving licence or other material suitable for this purpose.
7.6 References from any previous landlord should also be provided to satisfy the new landlord that the applicant and their household had left any previous accommodation in good order and settled all rent and other charges which were outstanding. Where this is not available, for example where a young applicant is applying for a pitch for the first time, the authority should ask the applicant to nominate a contact from whom a reference may be obtained. Even if a vacant pitch is available the authority should not permit occupation of a pitch until a satisfactory reference has been obtained.

7.7 The landlord should reserve the right to withdraw any offer which may have been granted on the basis of incorrect information.

**Waiting lists**

7.8 Each application should be acknowledged and assessed as soon as possible after receipt and applicants should be placed on a waiting list if no suitable pitches are currently available. The landlord may wish to set qualification criteria and may ask for evidence in relation to this. Any applicant who does not meet the criteria should be notified with the reason why they do not qualify. This could include a past record of rent arrears for example or issue of anti-social behaviour orders.

7.9 Waiting lists should be regularly reviewed. The waiting list itself should not be publicly available, to protect the confidentiality of family details contained in it, but it should be possible to give applicants an indication of the length of the waiting list and where they are placed in the order of priority.

7.10 Agreeing common waiting lists across whole county council or other authority areas (including unitary councils within the same geographical area) could make the whole system much more user-friendly, and enable Gypsies and Travellers to be considered for vacant pitches over a much wider area than they can now. In addition, waiting list managers might consider a system parallel to choice-based lettings which have been very successful within other forms of social housing, and have encouraged more applications for waiting lists, and increased customer satisfaction.

**Pitch allocations**

7.11 It is essential that local authorities and their management contractors, and registered social landlords, have a published scheme which sets out the policies and procedures for allocating pitches. The policy for allocating pitches should be clear, fair and transparent and common across all Gypsy and Traveller sites owned by the landlord.
7.12 Waiting lists should include a system of prioritisation (which might be a points, date, or banding scheme) and pitches should be allocated in accordance with that system of prioritisation. It should relate as closely as possible to the scheme for the allocation of other forms of social housing to ensure parity across all sectors of the community.

7.13 As such, priority should be given to those households which are in greater need of accommodation, including those specified in Figure 3 below. However any system of prioritisation should permit the landlord to retain:

- a degree of limited discretion in allocating pitches and should not be automatically bound to the household with the highest priority; and
- discretion to offer other pitches than those applied for (eg where these may also meet the needs of the applicant, or where the household would otherwise have no choice but to reside on an unauthorised encampment).

**Figure 3 – Examples of accommodation need**

- Applicants who have medical or welfare needs
- People who have a particular need for an established base, including older people and families with children
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded conditions or who have nowhere to live and are seeking permanent authorised accommodation
- People who have a genuine need for caravan site accommodation based on an aversion to bricks and mortar housing.

7.14 Where there is an on-site manager, responsibility for decisions on whether or not to place applicants on the waiting list or allocate a pitch to them should not rest there alone, but be made in liaison with the waiting list manager in the main office and in accordance with the allocation policy the authority has in place.

7.15 Sites are often occupied by extended family groups and this can help to ensure good community relations on the site. In some exceptional circumstances the waiting list manager may, in consultation with the site manager, want to take account of factors which a pitch allocation may have in adversely affecting the suitability of a site as a social unit.

7.16 But family connections and personal preferences should not override other allocation criteria for a vacant pitch or be used to disguise weak management. The accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers should be addressed in the same way as for allocating other forms of social housing for the wider community, and control of the allocations policy is essential to that process.
7.17 If, as a result of an assessment of their application, the landlord has good reason to be concerned about the risk of conflict with existing residents, they should take up this issue with the applicant, and carry out a risk assessment. It is important that this is carried out objectively. Refusal to allocate a pitch must be based on the merits of the application, without undue influence from those already on a site. Special attention should be paid to applications from people who are not part of a family which is well-represented on a site. All applications need to be considered fully and fairly, and not rejected as a result of assumptions and stereotyping by those making the decision.

7.18 Decisions not to place an applicant on the waiting list or allocate them a pitch should only be taken as a last resort and after a joint decision with senior management of the landlord. Applicants should be told of the procedure for appealing against such a decision, or a decision to allocate a pitch to another applicant instead.

7.19 In all circumstances, and in particular where an applicant household has no other authorised accommodation, every effort should be made to meet the immediate accommodation need of the applicant. The local authority could consider this with a neighbouring local authority to see whether a short-term vacant pitch is available or a transit site pitch for short-term use.

7.20 As with other forms of social housing, Gypsies and Travellers seeking site accommodation should, if possible, be allowed a choice over the type of pitch offered. They may elect to remain on the waiting list until a suitable pitch becomes available. In circumstances involving an unauthorised encampment, the household concerned should be found authorised site accommodation as soon as possible for the short-term by the local housing authority, with more permanent accommodation as soon as possible thereafter.

7.21 The landlord should liaise with relevant agencies as appropriate to ascertain whether any special aids or adaptations are necessary on the pitch following allocation to a particular applicant.

7.22 Site records should include an assessment of predicted turnover. Existing residents should be invited to advise the site manager of plans for any short-term absence from the site and be made aware where this is required under the terms of the agreement to occupy the pitch. Residents should be required to give notification of plans to terminate their agreement. Under the Mobile Homes Act, residents on residential sites will be required to give not less than 28 days notice in writing.
Check list

- Provide a clear and simple site application form for pitches (7.1)
- Obtain proof of identity of applicants, and references (7.5-7.7)
- Compile and maintain site waiting lists (7.8-7.10)
- Publish clear, fair and transparent criteria for pitch allocation (7.11).
Chapter 8
Dealing with new arrivals

8.1 The site manager should arrange to meet the new residents at a mutually convenient time on the site and ensure they are properly welcomed and provided with a copy of the agreement to occupy the pitch, and a leaflet explaining the terms of the agreement in plain and simple language. A plan of the pitch the agreement relates to should also be provided, including the pitch boundaries, locations where the caravan or mobile home may be sited on the pitch to ensure compliance with the fire regulations and also include a plan of nearby pitches or the whole site.

8.2 Sufficient time should be set aside to explain the details of the agreement and ensure all other rules, facilities, rights and responsibilities on-site are clarified and fully understood. Questions should be dealt with patiently.

8.3 The new residents should not be permitted to occupy the pitch until the agreement has been signed by both parties. Where it is current practice to require payment of a deposit, the amount charged should not normally be in excess of four weeks’ rent.

8.4 New residents should be absolutely clear about what they can expect, and what is expected of them, and have the terms of the agreement to occupy the pitch explained verbally before they set up their accommodation.

8.5 After signing the agreement to occupy the pitch, and payment of any deposit and other formalities have been completed, the new residents should be shown:

- The pitch and its boundaries
- Where they may place their caravans, and other possessions on the pitch (ensuring a minimum six metre gap between occupied caravans of one household, and those of neighbouring households)
- The amenity buildings on the pitch and any communal areas on the site
- Essential service provision eg hooking up to electricity/water supply, and where any emergency telephone is located. It will be helpful for residents to be introduced to, and meet other families on the site if they don’t know them already.

8.6 New arrivals should also be provided with a detailed information pack, in writing, and ideally also on CD, DVD or audio cassette. Such a pack should also be made available to existing residents. An example of this can be found in Case Study 3 – Information pack for new arrivals. These should be produced in clear and simple language.
8.7 Ideally, this could include the issues listed in Figure 4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welcome to the site</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landlord’s and manager’s commitment to good service in site provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality and diversity statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day to day management arrangements, including the times an off-site manager will be available on-site, and contact telephone numbers for routine daytime and out of hours enquiries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving onto the site – what to do eg signing up for health and education services, provision of local services including shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who to contact in an emergency and how to do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to arrange a home safety visit from the Fire Service.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The agreement to occupy the pitch</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The written statement, including a plan of the pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A leaflet explaining the terms of the agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changing the agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if I break the agreement?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples of breaking the agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other important terms of the agreement, for example, no sub lettings or lodgers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rent – how to pay and what it covers – in more detail</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How rent is set and services it covers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What rent does not cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice if you have difficulties in paying the rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard arrears procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to appeal against rent levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who to contact about housing benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other charges eg council tax.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Repairs and maintenance

- Landlord repair responsibilities, including response times, inspection levels, and satisfaction surveys
- Resident repair responsibilities, including how to report repairs
- Emergency repairs, including out of hours numbers and charges for using this facility unnecessarily
- Non-emergency repairs procedures
- How to report a hazard, and what action to take to help people be safe
- Health and safety issues.

Other services provided

- Maintenance and cleaning of communal areas
- Services provided by others eg electricity, water, gas
- Electricity etc payment arrangements (including direct payment as a customer, or purchasing cards or keys – and where to do it)
- Dealing with disruption of essential service provision to site as a whole (dealing with regulatory bodies, NHS, Post Office etc).

Responsibilities of the resident

- Keeping to the terms of the agreement to occupy the pitch and the general law which affects all neighbours
- Getting on with your neighbours
- Avoid making excessive noise, nuisance or anti-social behaviour and reporting instances of this to site management
- Keeping mobile home in sound state of repair
- Keep pitch clean and tidy
- Duty to arrange and pay for repairs needed because of damage or neglect caused by resident, household members or visitors
- Reporting repairs that the landlord is responsible for
- Paying rent, utility charges and council tax
- Taking care and ensuring control of pets, restrictions on various types of animals, any arrangements for such animals near the site.
Resident involvement
- Consultation arrangements
- Getting involved
- Residents’ Associations and Committees.

Complaints
- How complaints are dealt with
- Complaints standards.

Changes to your household
- What happens if the person who signed the agreement to occupy the pitch dies?
- Support for families where relatives have died
- Need for alterations or adaptations in case of disability etc – and how to make contact with Occupational Therapy and other services.

Moving Out
- The period of notice required
- Departure checklist, paying the rent, damage checks
- Provision of references.
**Case Study 3 – Information pack for new arrivals**

Every individual Gypsy and Traveller that comes to live on one of Fenland District Council’s five local authority sites benefits from the service that the council provides. This includes a Travellers’ site welcome pack together with an individual Supporting People Plan.

Fenland council and its partners are committed to supporting every individual who comes to live on one of its Traveller sites. Each new arrival receives a Traveller welcome pack which is available in pictorial and audio format and sets out all the support services available in the district and how these can be accessed. This includes council services but also help lines, travel information, locations of places of worship and other useful telephone numbers. This is supplemented by each new person receiving an individual Supporting People plan which looks at all of their needs that the council need to support in order for individuals to lead an independent lifestyle. Every child also receives a support plan which covers health and educational support issues.

Within these documents the council and the individual enter into an agreement of mutual support and understanding. This support plan is reviewed every six months in order to ascertain if individual needs are being met. This relationship is one based on respect between all partners and the Gypsy and Traveller community.

**Check list**

- New residents welcomed and provided with full site information (8.1-8.7)
- Arrange for the agreement to occupy the pitch to be signed before admission (8.3).
Chapter 9
The agreement to occupy the pitch

9.1 Gypsies and Travellers currently occupy pitches on local authority sites under licences under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. The 1968 Act provides that either party should give 28 days notice to terminate the licence. The other terms of the licence are up to the local authority.

9.2 If the resident does not leave once the 28 days has expired the authority can seek a possession order from the court. Because the local authority does not have to prove grounds to terminate the licence, the court does not have the opportunity to consider the grounds for the eviction and, if proved, consider whether it is reasonable to grant the order.

9.3 In 2004, in the case of Connors v United Kingdom, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the lack of procedural safeguards to eviction on local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites breached article 8 of the European Convention for Human Rights, which provides a right to respect for private, family and home life.

9.4 Amendments made to the Caravan Sites Act 1968 by the Housing Act 2004 now enable the courts to suspend a possession order given on a local authority site.

9.5 Section 318 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 will amend the definition of a protected site in the Mobile Homes Act 1983 to remove the exclusion for local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites. This means that the Mobile Homes Act will apply to both long-term ‘residential’ and short-term ‘transit’ pitches on these sites.

9.6 Under the Mobile Homes Act, residents occupy pitches under agreements that consist of:

- a number of implied terms, which are the rights and responsibilities set out in Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Act; and
- express terms, which are the details of the agreement between the site owner and resident, which are not set out in the Act.

9.7 We have consulted on whether some of the provisions of the Mobile Homes Act need to be amended for local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites. Details of how it is intended the Mobile Homes Act will apply to residential and transit pitches on local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites will be set out in the summary of responses to the consultation and ultimately in the implied terms that come into force by order alongside section 318 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.
Ensuring understanding of the agreement

9.8 Terms in agreements should be expressed in a clear and concise manner with a minimum of necessary legal language and leave as little chance as possible of doubt or dispute. The Mobile Homes Act requires that a written statement of the agreement is given to prospective residents and a form for this written statement is set out in regulations. The resident could also be provided with a leaflet explaining the terms of the agreement, and have the terms explained to them verbally before the agreement is made. Given the relatively low literacy levels within the Gypsy and Traveller community, it would be good practice to provide an audio or video version of the agreement.

Providing a copy of the terms of the agreement in advance

9.9 The prospective resident should be provided with a copy of the terms of the agreement in advance of it being made. The Mobile Homes Act requires that a written statement setting out the terms of the agreement is provided 28 days in advance of the agreement being made, unless the resident agrees to this happening less than 28 days in advance.

9.10 It is likely that it will be impractical to provide a copy of the written statement in advance to prospective residents on transit pitches. The arrangements for transit pitches will be set out in the implied terms of the Mobile Homes Act that will come into force alongside section 318 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.

9.11 Ideally, a copy of the written statement could be made available to households when they are placed on the waiting list. This would ensure that they are already aware of the terms of the agreement when a pitch becomes available.

Changes to the terms of the agreement

9.12 The agreement should set out the circumstances in which its terms can be varied or amended. It will not be possible for the local authority or site resident to seek to amend the implied terms of an agreement under the Mobile Homes Act 1983. However, either could seek to amend one of the express terms. If agreement cannot be reached between the local authority and resident on any proposed changes, the implied terms of the Mobile Homes Act set out how the express terms can be changed. The agreement could also set out the procedure for varying the express terms in other circumstances where agreement cannot be reached, for example if one party wishes to add a term to the agreement, or after the six month deadline in the Mobile Homes Act.
Breaking the agreement

9.13 The most common circumstances in which a breach of the agreement may occur could be set out in the written explanation of the terms provided with the agreement. Some possible examples are included in figure 5. Depending on the severity of the breach the objective should normally be to remedy the breach. Appropriate steps could include:

- collecting evidence of the breach
- verbal negotiation to remedy the breach
- written communication requiring the breach to be remedied within a reasonable timescale and the consequences of failure to remedy the breach, including termination of the agreement
- possible second written communication.

**Figure 5 – Breaking the agreement**

**Resident and household**

- Abusive, threatening or violent behaviour by the resident, or members of their household or visitors towards employees of the site owner or their contractors
- Falling into rent arrears
- Refusing access to employees of the local authority to undertake their duties
- Not using the pitch as their main or only home (during the period of the licence)
- Leaving the pitch vacant beyond the period permitted in the licence agreement
- Sub-letting the pitch to another resident
- Fly tipping
- Noise nuisance
- Undertaking activities on-site which are not permitted by the agreement eg employment
- Causing damage to the pitch, amenity block, other facilities and communal areas
- Conducting or permitting anti-social or criminal behaviour.
Terminating the agreement

9.14 The implied terms of the Mobile Homes Act set out how the local authority can terminate an agreement. If necessary, where a term of the agreement is broken the local authority can apply to the court to terminate the agreement. However, before making such an application to the court, the local authority would have to serve a notice requiring the resident to remedy the breach within a reasonable timescale. The court will need to be satisfied that the relevant term has been broken and that it is reasonable to terminate the agreement.

9.15 Prior to the Mobile Homes Act 1983 being implemented on local authority sites, we have recommended that local authorities may wish to include terms in licences providing additional protection from eviction, or use internal appeals procedures where any decision to terminate the licence could be challenged by the resident. The appeal could be considered by a panel which could decide factual disputes between the site manager and licensee and consider whether it was reasonable for the licence to be terminated.

Succession

9.16 The Caravan Sites Act 1968 does not make any provisions for succession where the resident named in a licence dies. However, we are aware that many authorities will already pass on the licence under which the pitch was occupied to a spouse or member of their family that was living with them at the time they died.

9.17 Under the Mobile Homes Act if a resident dies then their spouse (this includes a civil partner) will inherit the agreement to live in the caravan on that pitch, if they are living with them when they die. If there is no spouse living with a resident when they die then the agreement can be inherited by another member of their family living with them when they die. The Mobile Homes Act defines a member of a resident’s family and includes spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece or those living together as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners.
9.18 In order to avoid potential disputes about whether a family member was living with a resident at the time they died, the local authority will need to ensure that it is aware of who is living on the pitches on its sites, and their relationship to the person named in the agreement.

**Short-term absence from site**

9.19 The current shortfall in authorised site provision and often long waiting lists mean that residents who are long-term residents on sites are reluctant to pursue their travelling culture, as a guaranteed pitch may not be available on return.

9.20 Periods of short-term absence from a pitch eg for seasonal work or holidays, should be permitted within the agreement. Residents should advise the site manager of periods of short-term absence from their pitches to avoid confusion over whether they may have left the pitch without giving the required notice, which could result in action being taken to terminate the agreement. During periods of absence, rent should continue to be paid by residents for pitches. Where residents breach any term of the agreement relating to short-term absence from the site, this could result in its termination, with pitches being reallocated in accordance with the site waiting list.

9.21 The maximum period is at the landlord's discretion but a period of less than eight weeks is likely to be unduly restrictive.

**Check list**

- New residents provided with clear explanation of terms of agreement (9.8)
- Residents reminded to give notification of short-term absences (9.19-9.21).
Chapter 10
Rent and other charges – how to pay and what is covered

10.1 Residents should be given a clear written statement of the rent (or pitch fee as used in the Mobile Homes Act) and other charges which need to be paid at the commencement of the agreement together with a list of the services which are to be provided in return. Time should be taken to explain this verbally where there are literacy problems to ensure the applicant is fully aware of the details. Ideally an audio version could also be provided to help overcome any potential misunderstandings later.

10.2 In addition to the use of a pitch and associated amenity buildings, payment of rent should in return provide the services listed in Figure 6 below.

**Figure 6 – Services provided in return for rent**

- Effective standard of maintenance of site infrastructure, repairs regime, proper protection of residents and visitors from health and safety risks and swift remedy where such risks are identified
- Access to domestic services ie water, electricity, street lighting, waste disposal, and electrical connection
- Proper and effective safety arrangements, including spacing of caravans and provision of equipment to sound a fire alarm and assist in fire prevention, together with a clear commitment to residents’ health and safety under the current legislation
- Regular maintenance and cleaning of communal areas, including site roads and car parks
- Regular site inspections and a clear commitment to undertake repairs and rectifications in accordance with the local authority’s repairs procedure, together with a commitment to stop anti social behaviour on the site.

10.3 The cost of rent paid for social site provision can sometimes represent poor value for money in comparison with other forms of social housing and can be prohibitively expensive particularly, for example, where the resident also has to meet the cost of renting a trailer. This does not help encourage full use of a site and can threaten the relationship with residents, particularly where they have no alternative site to live on. Therefore site rents should be appropriately set to reflect a fair and cost effective level appropriate for the infrastructure and management of the site provided.
Although unsuitable locations and poor management and maintenance of some exiting sites can lead to higher running costs this does not mean that residents on socially rented Gypsy and Traveller sites should receive less value for money for their rent than that enjoyed by residents in other forms of social housing. Rents charged should balance a realistic return for the local authority or registered social landlord with a reasonable charge to the residents for the services provided. They should compare fairly with rents charged for other Gypsy and Traveller sites in neighbouring areas.

In fixing rent levels, account should be taken of fairness for what is offered, particularly in the light of the average rent applied by the landlord for other social housing it provides, affordability and the cost of managing and maintaining the site. The landlord should set out to the residents how the rent levels are compiled.

Under the Mobile Homes Act 1983 rent should be reviewed annually on the review date, and proposed changes will need to be notified to residents 28 days before this review date. The pitch fee can only be changed with the agreement of the occupier or if the court (or in future the residential property tribunal) orders it reasonable. Landlords need to consider certain factors in proposing changes to rents, and there is a general presumption that rents should not change by more than any percentage increase or decrease in the retail price index since the last review date.

Rents and housing benefit

The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Amendment)(no2) Regulations 2008 came into force on 6 April 2009. The regulations only require county council rents to be referred to the Rent Officer for determination if the local housing authority considers them excessive. This is the same as the position for registered social landlords.

This will resolve the anomaly between the ways in which housing benefit is paid for local housing authority and county council sites, which county councils have advised can result in them being unable to cover the operating costs of their sites.

Landlords are encouraged to be open and transparent with residents about site income and expenditure. Lessons from other types of housing provision suggest that when residents can see the costs of tackling such problems as vandalism and fly-tipping, and it is made clear that the cost of dealing with this may be at the expense of routine and planned maintenance, then residents are more likely to take a personal interest in the management of the site.

As an incentive to residents to save on maintenance costs, consideration should be given to applying any surplus funding to the site for additional infrastructure. Site managers are encouraged to discuss with residents how savings may be achieved and applied directly to the site.
10.11 The communal facilities available within a site should be available to each household.

10.12 Where management of a site has been contracted to an outside agency and the agency has responsibility for setting rent levels the site landlord should ensure that the contract specifies that the rent charged by the contractor reflects local market conditions and is not above those applied by the landlord to other sites which it owns.

Payment of rent

10.13 It is the responsibility of the resident to deliver payment of the rent, not for the landlord to collect it. Having said that, residents may be offered a range of methods for payment, depending on the facilities and systems of the site provider, including:

- Collection on-site
- Payment cards – used to make payments at a post office
- Post Office giro slips
- Cheque
- Housing benefit, where applicable
- Standing order
- Debit payments via the banking system, or credit cards
- Internet using a debit card.

Payment on-site

10.14 Where rent is collected on-site, the site manager should ensure that residents are aware of when and where it is to be collected. Residents should always be provided with a receipt or other proof of payment. Some residents prefer to have a rent book, and this can help them to manage payments and, especially, arrears. The site manager should ensure that accurate accounts are maintained in accordance with audit specifications.

10.15 Payment arrangements must be clearly understood to avoid any confusion or excuse for non payment or arrears and specified in the agreement to occupy the pitch. If residents are absent at the time of collection a follow up visit should be arranged within a short time and payments not allowed to accumulate.

10.16 Residents should be aware of what steps to take if they are or will be encountering difficulties in paying rent, and advised to tell the site manager as soon as possible. Advice should be provided sympathetically, under the same considerations as is applied in the case of other forms of social housing.
10.17 A rent arrears procedure should be available and clearly explained to new residents in the information pack provided on arrival and to long-term residents when a problem first comes to the site manager’s attention. Ideally the landlord should have trained and knowledgeable employees available to discuss the arrears, on-site and out of office hours if necessary, and with assurances that any information given will be kept in confidence by those handling the case. Every effort should be taken to try and make an agreement by which outstanding arrears can be paid, before any form of court action is considered. Some residents may prefer to seek debt counselling and other advice from alternative independent intermediaries eg Citizens’ Advice, or a Supporting People team where available and it is recommended that contact details for these and other appropriate agencies in the area are publicised on-site for this purpose.

Benefits

10.18 Responsibility for applying for housing benefit, income support and other benefits rests with the residents concerned. However the site manager should ensure that residents are aware of whom to contact in the locality to deal with these issues and offer assistance where required. It is vitally important that residents understand that, if they use housing benefit for purposes other than the rent, that the rent is still due, and they must pay it, or face the procedures applied for arrears.

10.19 Where housing benefit is involved, the site manager will need to establish with the resident whether this is to be paid directly to the individual and then collected as rent under normal collection arrangements, or paid directly to the landlord. Ideally, for the landlord, it should be paid direct. Residents should be reminded to tell their housing benefit office if planning to travel away from home, as failure to do so could lead to loss of benefit or double payment if claimed elsewhere resulting in overpayments for which repayment demands will follow.

10.20 Responsibility for notifying housing benefit officials of changes in a resident’s circumstances, or where a new household is to be admitted, rests with the claimants concerned. However the site manager may assist, if asked, to help the individual with a benefit claim.

Check list

- Residents provided with clear statement of rent charged and services provided (10.1-10.2)
- Fair rent levels set (10.3-10.5)
- Residents notified of ways to pay rent (10.14-10.17)
- Housing benefit arrangements clarified with resident (10.18-10.20).
Chapter 11
Roles and responsibilities

The site manager

11.1 The site manager should ensure that the respective roles and responsibilities of the local authority or registered social landlord, manager and residents are clearly defined in a written statement.

11.2 The site manager is expected to undertake their role in such a way as to provide site residents with a safe and secure environment, provide well maintained facilities and a responsive and helpful climate to meet the needs of the residents quickly and effectively with full value for money for the rent paid, and support good relations with the settled community.

11.3 The management arrangements should achieve a sensible balance, between allowing the residents to assume maximum responsibility for their own pitch, while offering a clearly recognised and understood service to underpin the management and sustainability of the site as a whole. For instance, a dispute between an individual household and an external service provider would not be the responsibility of the site management, whereas disruption of a regular service provided to the site as a whole would be something for the site manager to address. But it is a key part of site management to work closely with other providers and organisations so that issues are successfully resolved.

11.4 For example, where provision of electricity supply, telephone service, or postal deliveries to the site is not functioning properly or within published standards, it would be for the site manager to help residents to take up the issue with the provider, or to take it up on behalf of a number of residents, taking the issue to the appropriate regulatory body if necessary. The following are examples of some of the things that can arise:

- There is an electricity fault “beyond the site meter”, which the supplier has to investigate and address
- There is a power cut affecting either just the site, or the surrounding area
- Mail deliveries have been interrupted by a real or perceived health and safety risk, for example dogs not kept under proper control
- A service provider has had a dispute with a member of the Gypsy or Traveller community elsewhere, or an incident affecting them personally at their home, which has led them to stop providing a service to unrelated site residents.
11.5 In all circumstances the site manager should do their best to gather the facts, tell residents of the action which has been taken on their behalf and keep them informed of progress.

11.6 Communications are absolutely vital to successful management. It can be typical of a site where the management is in difficulties that the physical means of communication, as well as the actual communication, has broken down. So post may no longer be delivered, telephones may not be available, and people may feel unwelcome as visitors to the site. In such circumstances, any methods of restoring communication successfully should be considered.

11.7 The landlord must make clear its responsibilities, for maintaining communal areas on the site and delivering services such as clearance of litter, communal lighting, site roadways and paths, boundary fences etc. These issues need to be addressed to the same standards as for the settled community. Site residents should be informed about cleaning, maintenance and repair service standards for these facilities (see para 13.2).

**Site residents**

11.8 The information pack for new residents (see figure 4) should make clear the respective responsibilities of the site management and the residents, and make clear that residents are responsible for:

- Abiding by the terms of the agreement to occupy the pitch and site rules
- Paying the rent on time and reporting immediately if they are having problems paying it
- Paying utility charges and council tax
- Keeping the pitch, including the amenity block and any other facilities provided clean and tidy
- Under the Mobile Homes Act, keeping the mobile home in a sound state of repair
- Reporting any repairs that the landlord is responsible for so they can be remedied before deteriorating further
- Living in harmony with neighbours
- Avoiding excessive noise, nuisance and anti social behaviour, and reporting instances of it on-site to the management and other relevant agencies, so that appropriate action can be taken
- Good conduct of household members and their visitors, whether in relation to the pitch, amenity block, or other facilities on-site
- Taking care of and ensuring control of pets.
### Check list

- Written statement provided to residents stating landlord responsibilities and what is provided for the rent paid (11.1)
- Written statement provided to residents stating their own responsibilities (11.8).
Chapter 12
Site repairs and maintenance

12.1 As with other forms of social housing it is important that Gypsy and Traveller sites are maintained in good repair, clean and tidy, and safe and pleasant to live in. The Gypsy and Traveller communities on socially rented sites are entitled to expect these basic standards as a matter of course. It should also help to ensure the continued viability of the site and quality of life for those on the site. It should be made clear to residents, through the terms of their agreement to occupy the pitch, that anyone causing damage on the site or undertaking unauthorised repairs will be charged for the cost of rectifying it.

12.2 Sufficient investment of time and resources devoted to meeting these aims and proper two way consultation with the residents are key elements not only in protecting and enhancing the viability and performance of the site, but in helping to encourage a sense of pride and belonging. This will encourage residents to play their part in keeping their own pitches in a clean and tidy condition, and reporting any defects which need to be rectified.

A sense of pride and belonging – residents apply the personal touch to create a real home
12.3 The Mobile Homes Act will formalise some obligations on both the local authority and the resident in relation to repairs and maintenance. The resident will be responsible for keeping the caravan or mobile home in a sound state of repair and maintaining the outside of the mobile home and the pitch (including the fences and amenity block belonging to it) in a clean and tidy condition. The site owner will be responsible for repairing the base on which the caravan or mobile home is stationed, maintaining any utilities supplied by the owner to the pitch and maintaining the amenity blocks and shared amenities that are not the responsibility of any occupier.

Budgets

12.4 Local and senior managers should ensure a budget containing an appropriate allocation of resources for site repairs and maintenance is available not only for a planned programme but also for reactive maintenance, and for priority improvements, eg where a resident needs changes for access purposes or other facilities to help address a change of personal circumstances such as special health needs, or physical or mental disability. Those responsible for Gypsy and Traveller site management should liaise closely with budget holders at an early stage to ensure that estimated running costs are taken fully into account before the budget is set. When assessing priority repairs, proper account should be taken of responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

12.5 It is important to make sure that sufficient funding is set aside both for repair costs, and for ensuring that these are carried out with appropriate swiftness. Residents making their own repairs on-sites can quite often lead not only to extra costs in putting them right, but also allegations of vandalism and counter-allegations of delay in carrying out repairs. Early attention, especially to urgent repairs (see Figure 7) can therefore mean a double saving. Funding for site management and staffing should not prevent money being available for running repairs. All costs should be closely monitored, both for value for money, and closely against all site income. Systems should enable this to be done easily by site managers.

Contractors

12.6 Difficulties can sometimes be encountered in obtaining the service of contractors to work on site repairs and maintenance. Local authorities and registered social landlords could consider requiring approved contractors used in the maintenance of their housing stock (or other buildings where it is not a housing provider) to undertake a similar role for its Gypsy and Traveller sites as part of the overall contract and at the same rates.
12.7 Much of this reluctance is based on rumour or hearsay. Evidence has shown the benefits of building up a relationship between contractors and the residents as part of prior consultation on forthcoming maintenance work (see para 14.8). This has the advantage of setting out the purpose for the work, the advantages to the residents of having the work done and the poorer quality of life and threats to the sustainability of the site if the contractors suffer loss or damage to equipment and refuse to continue.

12.8 Day to day responsibility for site maintenance lies initially with the site manager, together with responsibility for reporting more significant maintenance needs to the designated budget manager. The budget manager should ensure the availability of appropriate funding for emergency and programmed works and a modest budget for minor repairs and routine maintenance. Residents should be told how to report repairs and the timetable for completion.

Site health and safety

12.9 Site health and safety procedures and inspections are the most important aspects of site management. Residents are entitled to live on a safe site and expect the site management/landlord to ensure their health and safety are of the highest priority.

12.10 The site management is responsible, together with the landlord, for a safe site environment and for site residents to reside in a site which does not have health and safety risks. The site manager must undertake health and safety inspections on the site on a regular basis and ensure any breach is immediately reported to the managing authority/landlord, and that temporary repair or stop-gap protective action is undertaken to ensure the safety of the residents is protected.

12.11 It is recommended that regular and recorded health and safety inspections are undertaken by the site manager and other qualified health and safety officers (appropriate to the size and location of the site) on a frequent basis; and immediately any concerns are expressed by the site residents or other agencies.

12.12 All incidents and inspections should be recorded in the appropriate health and safety documentation available from the local authority together with details of temporary repair or stop-gap protective action and timescales to completion. The reports should be forwarded up the management chain and to the authority’s health and safety manager on a regular basis.
12.13 The health and safety record should be available to residents and site management for regular inspection. Suggested areas which should be covered in the health and safety inspection are:

- All communal and amenity block services within the site (not residents’ caravans), including electrical, water, sewage, lighting and waste and gas bottle disposal arrangements
- All roadways, pathways, fencing and drainage
- All fencing, access roads including signage and safe access and exit
- All fire equipment, procedures and alarms installed on the site
- Additional areas appropriate to the health and safety of site residents.

12.14 A clear long-term maintenance and improvement plan should be available for each site, drawn up in consultation with residents, and which should pay particular attention to the needs of disabled and older people, and children and young people on-site.

**Emergency repairs**

12.15 Residents should be clear about:

- What constitutes emergency repairs and what constitutes routine repairs (see Figure 7 below)
- How to report need for emergency repairs out of normal office hours
- Charges which may be incurred if out of hour’s service are called unnecessarily.

12.16 Standards for repairs and maintenance should mirror those for the landlord’s other forms of social housing. These can be set out in a general statement of service standards made available to existing residents and forming part of the information pack provided to new residents on arrival (see para 8.6). This should include repair response times, levels of pre-and post-repair inspection and satisfaction surveys.

12.17 Figure 7 below provides an example of this which should be in line with those provided for social housing tenants in the area. The response times quoted in Figure 7 give indicative examples quoted by some major registered social landlords for their social housing tenants.
Emergency repairs (if this represents a danger to life and safety) advice should be given immediately via the telephone or other appropriate means and addressed as soon as possible taking account of the nature of the emergency. Other emergency repairs should be addressed within 24 hours. Examples of emergency repairs may include

**Drainage**
- Blocked or leaking foul drain or soil stack
- Blocked toilet (amenity block)
- Missing or dangerous manhole covers
- Flooding making roads on-site impassable.

**Water**
- Total loss of water supply
- Leaking water or heating pipes, tank or cistern which cannot be controlled
- Toilet not flushing (amenity block).

**Power**
- Total loss of electric power
- Unsafe or overheating sockets or electrical fittings.

**Heating**
- Total or partial loss of room or water heating (November – April).

**Structures**
- Amenity block major roof leak (if weather conditions permit safe working).

**Non-emergency repairs and response times**

**Drainage**
- Blocked sink, bath or basin – three days.

**Water**
- Partial loss of water supply – three days.

**Power**
- Partial loss of electrical power – three days.

**Heating**
- Total or partial loss of room or water heating (May – October) – three days.

**Structures**
- Amenity block minor roof leak (if weather conditions permit safe working) – seven days.
Site condition and maintenance

12.18 The site manager is normally responsible for implementation of a clear planned programme of maintenance and repair work, and a pre- and post-maintenance and repair work inspection regime which should be discussed with residents at regular site meetings to help them contribute to it (see Chapter 14). Under the Mobile Homes Act when the pitch fee is reviewed, improvements to the site (that have been consulted upon and to which a majority of residents did not disagree in writing) can be taken into account. The definition of “pitch fee” says that it is payment for the right to station the mobile home on the pitch and for use of the common areas of the protected site and their maintenance, but does not include amounts due in respect of gas, electricity, water and sewerage or other services, unless the agreement expressly provides that the pitch fee includes such amounts.

12.19 The site manager should also be responsible for ensuring that maintenance of all supplied equipment on-site is carried out correctly eg external water supplies, site barriers, equipment for the disposal of sewage or surface water. Particular care must be taken when dealing with all items of emergency equipment.

12.20 A regular inspection of site condition and maintenance should be conducted, at least weekly, concentrating in particular on the condition of gullies, gutters, drainage, lighting, gates and health and safety issues. A report of the inspection should be sent to the manager responsible for the maintenance and works budget with recommendations.

12.21 Inspections should take account of the concerns of the site residents. These should be obtained by prior notification of an impending inspection and a request that residents report any shortcomings which they have identified but not reported since the last inspection took place. Care should also be taken to ensure that other areas of the site are in good repair, including the general infrastructure of the site and pitches and associated facilities relating to pitches which are unoccupied, to ensure they are fit for re-letting as soon as demand arises.

12.22 Residents’ concerns regarding health and safety hazards or nuisance arising from external sources should be investigated as part of the routine site inspection and logged in the report eg emissions or noise from neighbouring land, and hazards in respect of close proximity to contaminated land.

12.23 Every effort should be taken to ensure the residents are not at risk, and the issue is addressed, including liaison with environmental health officers, health practitioners and those responsible for the source of concern. Residents should be clearly informed of the steps taken, the outcome of investigations and the ramifications of the inspection for those deemed responsible for the problem.
12.24 Residents should be informed of the timing of forthcoming remedial and routine maintenance work. This will ensure that residents may continue to enjoy their normal everyday life and routines, with unavoidable disruption kept to a minimum.

**Check list**

- Budget available for ad hoc repairs as well as planned maintenance (12.4)
- Residents made aware of procedures for reporting need for repairs (12.15)
- Provide details of standards for repairs and maintenance including response times (12.16)
- Clear planned programme of maintenance and repair work available for each site, after consultation with residents (12.18)
- Regular inspection of site condition and maintenance conducted and report compiled, in consultation with site residents (12.20-12.21).
Chapter 13
Other site management issues

Grounds maintenance

13.1 Where sites have extensively landscaped grass areas these can, if properly maintained and managed, provide tidy and pleasant surroundings by which to foster good relationships and a sense of identity and belonging amongst the residents. In order to reduce fire risks, the grass should be kept trimmed.

13.2 However such areas are not always well managed and, if not properly maintained, may become areas for waste and litter to be deposited. It is recommended that, if possible, communal areas should normally be kept to a minimum to reduce need for maintenance and waste clearance and to reduce conflict over illegal parking and areas of waste deposits. The landlord’s responsibility for cleaning and maintaining these areas should be made clear to residents (see para 11.7) together with details of the steps to be taken where these communal areas are abused. Strong action is always recommended against fly-tipping.

Good quality play equipment helps engage children and enhance the success of a family site
13.3 Play areas should be well maintained and regularly inspected to ensure a safe environment, and children encouraged to play their part in reporting hazards and shortcomings both in respect of equipment and surroundings. Play apparatus which has been damaged should be taken out of operation immediately and the hazards clearly identified to prevent further use prior to repair. If undertaken by the site manager, appropriate training and health and safety assessment should be carried out before work begins.

Cleaning on-site

13.4 Roads and pathways on-site should be swept regularly and at the same frequency as other areas covered by the local authority’s statutory responsibilities. It is important to include the site roads within contracts for road-sweeping that apply elsewhere. Residents should keep their pitches in a clean and tidy condition, and free of waste, and be encouraged to help protect communal areas on the site for the benefit of all.

13.5 The site should be frequently inspected for evidence of fly-tipping and waste disposal and the local environmental health service told if this appears to be happening on a regular basis. Any abandoned vehicles should be removed promptly after the appropriate notification is attached to the vehicle.

13.6 It is vital for the site manager to take action to avoid abandoned vehicles obstructing the roadways and other communal areas to ensure access for emergency vehicles is not impeded. In instances involving larger scale tipping, or involving toxic materials, the Environment Agency should be told immediately. Arrangements should be made to remove the waste quickly (in accordance with the appropriate safety requirements) after consultation with the appropriate environmental body, to avoid danger to the residents and their children, and to discourage further actions of this sort.

13.7 There have been instances of fly-tipping reported on or around sites, sometimes the result of actions by individuals residing on or connected to the site, and sometimes by other individuals not connected to the site. This tends to occur in common areas on the site for which no one is apparently directly responsible. The design of the site can help in this regard by avoiding unclaimed spaces wherever possible.

13.8 Irrespective of who is responsible, those residents who are not involved should not be subject to the results of the unlawful actions of others. Residents should be strongly encouraged to play their part in maintaining the quality of the site on which they live by reporting any instances they observe to the site manager to ensure a rapid response and to maintain a safe and healthy environment.
Waste collection

13.9 The site manager should ensure that:

- Local authority refuse collections call as regularly at the site as at other residential premises nearby
- Barriers are opened for this purpose
- Waste is collected from individual pitches, where the design of the site permits this, not simply from one single pick up point. Poor waste collection, or waste management by site residents, can lead to a build-up of refuse close to where people live, may develop into a significant health hazard, lead to a collective downward spiral of confidence of the residents on the site, present a fire risk and ultimately threaten its viability.

Waste/recycling containers

13.10 Effective arrangements must be in place to prevent accumulations of waste which would give rise to health hazards, fire risk or nuisance. In addition to ensuring continuity of normal domestic refuse collection services, the site manager should work with the local authority to encourage availability of appropriate containers for domestic waste recycling.

13.11 It is recommended that consideration be given to including a recycling collection point on the site where it is not in close proximity to one in the neighbouring vicinity. In this situation the site manager should ensure that the appropriate authority takes away the contents with the same regularity as elsewhere.

Liaison with essential service providers including routine practice visits

13.12 It is essential that the site manager maintains regular liaison with the emergency services and encourages the residents to directly report their own concerns, particularly where the site manager is not regularly on-site or easily available. Any emergency occurring on-site will normally be dealt with by the emergency services directly and it is therefore essential that they are familiar with the site and how to gain free access to and from it.

13.13 As the majority of vehicles used by the fire and ambulance services will not fit under an entry barrier, arrangements should be made, by liaising with those services locally, as to the best means of access in an emergency. If keys are requested by the emergency services, they should be supplied, together with any other access arrangements and instructions as necessary, particularly where the site manager is not on-site. Regular inspection by the fire authority regarding hydrant access and any fire precautions taken on-site are to be encouraged.
13.14 The site manager must maintain regular monitoring and testing of fire equipment, alarm-raising equipment, fire reporting and evacuation procedures. All site residents should be told of these procedures on arrival and on a regular basis subsequently.

13.15 Residents have a responsibility for fire prevention within the confines of their own caravans, including the installation of appropriate smoke alarms and other fire prevention equipment. However the site manager can assist this process by liaising with the fire service to visit the site occasionally to offer fire prevention advice and perhaps training to the residents. Some fire services encourage awareness by children and teenagers by inviting them to fire stations.

**Relationships with the police**

13.16 Gypsy and Traveller site residents are entitled to police services in the same way as anyone else in the community. The site manager should work to promote good relations between the residents, and the police and locally based community police officers, to help develop the confidence of both Gypsies and Travellers and the settled community that any issues affecting site residents will be dealt with effectively and fairly.

**Relationships with social care providers**

13.17 The site manager should maintain regular contact with social care providers to support the welfare of residents on-site. The site manager should ensure the appropriate agencies visit the site regularly and tell residents this is being done. Liaison should also be maintained with the local health practices (general practitioner and health visitor) to assist residents with registering and keeping good relationships with permanent medical services within the locality.

13.18 Where there are additional special needs (eg through old age or disability), local health and social care services should be informed. The manager should ideally tell general practitioners of fluctuations in resident numbers and planned departures to ensure health practices are able to plan their resources effectively.

13.19 The need to consider the availability of pitches, parking spaces and amenity buildings suitable for the use of wheelchair users is addressed in Communities and Local Government’s *Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide*. Where a need for disabled facilities arises within a family on an existing pitch, the site manager is obliged to address this under the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Site maintenance and refurbishment budgets should ideally contain a contingency for such an event, and Disabled Facilities Grant may be available to help with this.
13.20 Similarly, liaison with the Travellers Education Service (or equivalent, or local education authority) and other agencies where appropriate should be encouraged and maintained, particularly where arrivals and departures involving families with children are expected to occur.

13.21 Current information about welfare benefits and local services should be available on-site.

Postal delivery

13.22 Residents of authorised permanent residential sites are entitled to receive delivery of mail to their individual address in the same way as anyone else. However, postal workers have the right to refuse to deliver directly to premises where their personal safety is threatened (eg by dogs not kept under proper control).

13.23 Where postal workers refuse to deliver to a pitch for this type of reason, responsibility rests with the resident to put matters right in direct consultation with the provider. However where there is a breakdown or disruption in normal service to a site as a whole, the site manager should take this up with the postal service to ensure the safety of postal staff is protected, and the obligations of the provider are met.

Electricity supply

13.24 The resident is responsible for the cost of electricity consumed by the household on the pitch, and should have the available payment methods made clear when first arriving at the site. Where the site manager collects payments on behalf of residents, arrangements should be made to ensure that regular weekly collections are made and that arrears are not allowed to build up for more than two weeks. In such cases, residents should be reminded of arrears and prompt payment sought. For arrears beyond that period the local authority should follow the guidelines issued by the power companies concerning their disconnection policies.

13.25 Where “pre-payment” cards or key access energy systems are in use, the site manager should ensure that these are readily available. It would be helpful to have at least one alternative nearby outlet (eg post office, shop, or council office) where these can be bought, particularly where a site is a considerable distance away from the local authority offices, wherever possible in a location which does not involve a need to use transport.

13.26 The site manager is responsible for liaison with the electricity provider to ensure a proper supply is available on-site and to make contact with the provider to secure restoration of power where disruption occurs. There is evidence that some suppliers provide electricity to sites at rates above normal domestic cost and site management should negotiate with the supplier in such circumstances to try and secure more favourable rates by using its multiple purchasing power.
13.27 Individual disputes between a resident household and the supplier, where they are direct customers, are not the responsibility of the site manager although residents should be made aware of where and how to take forward a complaint.

Site security

13.28 The site manager is responsible for reporting and, where possible, managing any unauthorised occupation on the site.

13.29 Some local authorities or registered social landlords regard an effective gate or safety barrier as essential to prevent unauthorised entry of caravans, to avoid the disruption this can cause for legitimate site residents. Any such gate or barrier should be of a type which still allows residents normal access to the site in cars and other standard vehicles. The specific arrangements applying to the operation of the gate or barrier depend on local requirements and custom and practice. Residents should be consulted and be clearly aware of what these arrangements are.

13.30 Arrangements should be put in place to ensure that the emergency services can gain entrance to the site at all times. The site manager should also have arrangements in place to ensure that service providers can get access to the site (eg for rubbish collection).

13.31 Further guidance on site access issues can be found in Communities and Local Government’s *Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide*.

13.32 The boundaries of the site and of individual pitches should be clearly indicated by fencing, landscaping etc which should be adequate to prevent unauthorised entry. As set out in para 8.1, pitch and site boundaries should be shown on a plan attached to the agreement to occupy the pitch. Regular inspections of these facilities should be conducted to ensure they remain in good condition.

CCTV

13.33 Closed circuit television facilities with external monitoring can help protect both residents and staff, as well as safeguard the infrastructure from vandalism from whatever source. Although it can prove expensive to install and costly to repair it can in certain cases save expenditure in the longer term where constant repairs are needed and maintenance costs are high.

13.34 As with all other repairs and improvements, residents should be made aware of and consulted on plans to introduce closed circuit television at an early stage and before any final decision is taken to proceed. Residents should be encouraged to participate in consultation as there may otherwise be suspicion of the motives for installing it. It is also important to ensure that views are sought and taken into account in respect of how closed circuit television can best be sited to give proper protection for residents without unduly invading their privacy.
13.35 It should be made clear to residents that where closed circuit television is provided it is for their benefit as well as for the security of the site. It can provide extra security and safety for residents and their families from the activities of outsiders, protect them from unsubstantiated accusations of anti social behaviour and enable expenditure to be devoted towards providing extra facilities on the site rather than maintaining what is already there. Where doubts remain it may be beneficial to trial CCTV installation on certain parts of the site, after which the benefits can be measured.

Visitors

13.36 Site residents are as entitled to receive visitors to their homes as much as anyone else, but where this involves visitors to the site with additional caravans, residents should discuss this with the site manager in advance, providing details of the number of caravans involved and their plans for locating them if there is no room on-site. Any visitors arriving against the advice of the site manager should be dealt with under existing unauthorised encampment procedures as normal.

13.37 Overnight visitors should not be permitted to turn their stay into permanent occupancy. To guard against this any additional caravans belonging to visitors should not be permitted on other vacant residential pitches, and visitors should be allowed to remain for a specified period only subject to written agreement signed by all parties.

13.38 A clear and unequivocal maximum stay period should be stated where extra caravan accommodation is involved on-site. Ideally a request and permission form for this purpose should name the individuals visiting, date of arrival and intended departure, and be signed by the resident. Permission to extend the period of stay should be strictly at the discretion of the site management although it should be noted that planning restrictions may limit the length of time any extra caravans can remain on-site.

Scrap and storage

13.39 The traditional occupations of some members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities can lead to the appearance of scrap on-site. Storage of scrap and other waste items should be discouraged. Information regarding disposal facilities can be obtained from the Environment Agency.

13.40 In the event that scrap does appear on-site, the site manager should attempt to establish ownership and require the resident to arrange for commercial removal from the site at the first opportunity. Attempts to leave scrap or other waste on-site may constitute an offence and may be regarded as a breach of the agreement to occupy the pitch where its terms do not permit this.
Working on-site

13.41 Gypsy and Traveller sites are essentially residential and those living there are entitled to a peaceful and enjoyable environment. As a general rule working from residential pitches should be discouraged, although residents may be permitted to engage in small scale domestic work within the confines of their pitch provided they have first secured express written permission from the site management, the activity complies with any appropriate planning regulations and does not interfere with neighbouring residents both on- and off-site or constitute a safety hazard.

13.42 It is recommended that residents should not normally be allowed to work elsewhere on-site. Rules governing work should equate with those for other forms of social housing where work is not encouraged or allowed within a residential setting. Examples of activities that should not be approved include:

- A car repair business and vehicle breaking
- Scrap metal work or related activities, including storage
- A taxi service from the premises
- A business that involves many people visiting the site.

13.43 However permission for some level of activity may be considered where the local authority is satisfied that there are no planning, environmental, or health and safety considerations, and that work practices do not intrude on other residents’ own living environment.

Animals

13.44 Again, as for other forms of social housing, keeping domestic pets (dogs, cats, small birds etc) should be permitted, subject to number and health and safety considerations. In the case of dogs, ownership must be properly identified and conditional upon the animals being properly controlled within the pitch. Any animals in excess of those agreed (possibly in the agreement to occupy the pitch) should be agreed with the site manager beforehand.

13.45 The ownership of dangerous dogs, within the definition of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, should be refused within the confines of the residential site.

Grazing land

13.46 Where the site has a grazing area for horses and ponies, consideration should be given to arrangements for the management of this facility, including the imposition of a charge, which might pay for any grazing or stables provided, at a reasonable rate.
13.47 Site managers may also enquire whether owners of suitable land (without ragwort or other hazards) on the periphery of the site may be amenable to providing surplus land for this specific purpose at a reasonable rent, and to make details known to the residents of the site. Residents would be responsible for making their own arrangements with the owner of the land and entering into a separate agreement.

**Check list**

- Arrangements in place for maintenance of communal areas and residents made aware of these (13.2)
- Play areas well maintained and inspected regularly for health and safety risks (13.3)
- Residents encouraged to keep pitches and adjacent areas tidy (13.4)
- Site inspected regularly for fly-tipping and waste disposal hazards (13.5-13.8)
- Regular liaison maintained with emergency services (13.12-13.15)
- Fire equipment, evacuation procedures etc regularly monitored and tested and residents informed (13.14)
- Regular contact maintained with social care providers (13.17-13.21)
- Waste collection and postal services maintained on-site, and disruption investigated (13.9-11 and 13.22-23)
- Site gate or safety barrier in good working use, and emergency services and residents aware of access arrangements (13.29-13.31)
- Residents aware of rules relating to visitors to the site (13.36-13.38).
Chapter 14
Consultation and resident involvement

14.1 It is essential that the views of Gypsy and Traveller residents are taken into account about the services provided, and that these arrangements are responsive to their needs. Appropriate consultation with site residents helps develop a sense of partnership and trust between the site manager and the residents, and will help to avoid conflicts which might otherwise arise from a lack of communication.

14.2 Resident consultation should be actively encouraged with well publicised consultation arrangements organised in the same way as for other forms of social housing, which may include a residents' association or committee to represent the views of site residents.

14.3 Consultation should be real and proactive, and undertaken regularly, rather than immediately prior to the date in which proposed changes would take effect. Issues for consultation should be available in a form which can be understood by those with literacy problems.

14.4 Care should be taken to ensure that the views of all site residents are heard. Representations made by individuals who may not necessarily be representative of the majority on the site should be considered within that context, and efforts made to ensure the views of all are encompassed in any participation arrangements.

14.5 Consultation should take place not only with the heads of households but with all site residents wherever possible, and separately where residents prefer. Younger people and children should be encouraged to give their views and to play an active part in the running of the site and the services it provides.

14.6 The Mobile Homes Act specifically requires that residents are consulted about improvements to the site, and that any residents association that meets the criteria set out in the Act are consulted on improvements and on the operation and management of the site. It requires landlords to write setting out proposals for improvements at least 28 days in advance and to take all representations into account before proceeding.

14.7 However, as set out above, we would expect local authorities or their management contractors, and registered social landlords to consult with all residents and any residents associations or other groups (irrespective of whether they meet the criteria in the Mobile Homes Act) in a way that can be understood by those with lower levels of literacy, and in a timely fashion.
Residents’ association or group

14.8 These issues could be considered with residents on-site in the form of a residents association or other group, designed to:

- Discuss the services provided
- Permit joint site inspections to identify problems and the need for improvements
- Draw attention to any perceived problems, including instances of damage caused by anti social behaviour
- Agree ways in which these issues can be addressed; and
- Enable residents to work with the site owner to help shape services and set the standards which will be most effective in a site environment.

14.9 The site manager should propose and agree details of the procedure and frequency of contact with the residents’ association or group and ensure new residents are aware of these.

14.10 Ideally, the landlord could provide service standards on which regular consultation is based, committing to consultation on, for example, those items specified in Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8 – Consultation standards**

We will consult you on:

- Matters of site management
- Changes in terms of the agreement to occupy the pitch; including changes in the site rent
- How to get the best from the site
- Proposed repairs and improvements to the site
- Any matter significantly affecting everyday life on the site
- Ways in which the site can be improved
- Access to services and changes in payment methods
- Carrying out regular surveys to establish views on the service delivered and providing the opportunity to comment.
Site liaison committee

14.11 It is recommended that site managers encourage residents or their representatives to participate in a site liaison committee to consider wider issues of relevance to the site and residents. These could also include, for example, representatives from the county council (where appropriate), local authority or registered social landlord, the local Gypsy and Traveller community, together with health, education, the police, fire service and other agencies working with these communities. This would help everyone gain a deeper mutual understanding, keep policies and procedures under review and develop best practice. This should be managed effectively to ensure it is seen as a meeting of equal partners and not a means of dictating to the residents involved and should include a commitment to monitor and review the outcome of consultation and feed the results back to the residents.

14.12 Residents could be encouraged to participate in a neighbourhood watch scheme both to protect their own safety and that of their families, help protect the security of the site on which they live and enhance the community spirit both within and beyond the immediate vicinity of the site.

14.13 The site manager could also encourage residents to become more involved both within and beyond their community by publicising the work of voluntary, statutory and community organisations within the area. This can range from inviting organisations, youth groups etc to provide details of forthcoming inter-community events, to arranging visits of representatives of these groups to visit the site to explain directly to residents what their organisation’s work entails and the benefits which participation could bring.

Complaints procedures

14.14 The site manager should ensure that a clear and accessible complaints procedure is available on-site, including the recording of complaints made. Where an issue raised by a resident cannot be addressed by the site manager to the satisfaction of all concerned, residents should have access to complaints procedures of that authority and details of who to contact in the same way as for other forms of social housing.

14.15 Details of the complaints procedures should be freely available to all site residents. Complaints forms should be easily available from the site manager or landlord’s offices, with help given to the resident in completing the form where necessary. The forms should be designed for easy use by those with lower levels of literacy.

14.16 Arrangements should be in place to enable residents to complain directly to a nominated and senior officer in confidence where this involves a complaint related directly to the actions of the site manager or a contractor acting in that capacity where the service has been contracted out.
14.17 Feedback on progress of the complaint should be available during the investigation process. All residents are entitled to a written response from a senior representative of the landlord responsible for the complaint.

14.18 Published standards should state that the complaints procedures will provide:

- Acknowledgement of the complaint within a stated time
- The name of the investigating officer
- An assurance that the complaint will be dealt with confidentially
- That the complainant is informed of progress
- A full explanation of the outcome is provided and the steps to be taken where appropriate.

**Check list**

- Consultation procedures in place and participation encouraged (14.1-14.2)
- Encourage and support residents associations or groups and site liaison committees (14.8-14.13)
- Clear and accessible complaints procedure in place and explained to residents (14.14-14.15).
15.1 It is important that members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities residing on local authority and registered social landlord’s sites are given the same protection against anti-social behaviour as the settled community receive. Through well managed sites, it is possible to provide the safety which residents deserve and expect.

15.2 Landlords will have a range of anti-social behaviour policies in place in respect of other forms of social housing and these should apply equally to those residing on the Gypsy and Traveller sites they manage, or which are managed on their behalf.

15.3 The site manager has important responsibilities in this context to:
   • The local authority or registered social landlord
   • Site residents
   • Residents outside the Gypsy and Traveller community living in the vicinity of the site
   • To ensure that the landlord’s policy on prevention of anti-social behaviour on-sites is effectively implemented, both for instances arising from within and outside the site.

15.4 The agreement to occupy the pitch should contain details of the behaviour and activity that are not permitted on-site, and action to be taken where reported. It should be clear that activities of this sort may constitute a breach of the agreement and could ultimately result in its termination.

15.5 Residents should be told on arrival, and regularly reminded, of the conduct expected of residents on site, the way in which departures from this should be reported and the penalties for these departures. This should mirror similar statements in respect of other forms of social housing and offer the same range of investigative procedures and remedial actions.

15.6 The site manager must uphold the rules relating to conduct on-site. In turn the manager should ensure that the residents are protected and reassured on-site, through close liaison with police and emergency services.

15.7 The landlord should be prepared to support, guide and advise residents regarding all issues of anti-social behaviour, working with them to find ways to resolve particular problems which may arise. Residents should be provided with arrangements by which to report instances of anti-social behaviour to the landlord in confidence, whether in respect of activities on-site or within the near parameters of it.
15.8 The site manager should record incidents and liaise with senior management where instances of illegal activity or anti-social behaviour take place on or around the site (whether by residents or the neighbouring community). This includes vandalism, fly-tipping, waste disposal and damage to the site’s facilities and amenities.

15.9 The site manager should record incidents and notify senior management with a view to their reporting any such occurrences to the police, the local Anti-Social Behaviour coordinator, or fire authorities as appropriate. In reporting these to the authorities, the site manager should obtain a relevant crime reference number as this may be required by the site owner’s insurer.

**Check list**

- Agreement to occupy the pitch clearly states what forms of behaviour and activity are not permitted on-site (15.4)
- Residents regularly reminded of conduct expected and ways in which to report anti social behaviour in confidence (15.5)
- Arrangements in place to record incidents of illegal activities and anti social behaviour and liaise with appropriate authority (15.8-15.9).
16.1 Residents should be required to give advance notification of plans to terminate their agreement to occupy the pitch (see para 7.22). Under both the Caravan Sites Act and the Mobile Homes Act residents on residential sites are required to provide 28 days notice.

16.2 Before the family finally leaves the site, the site manager should ensure that all outstanding payments have been settled, and no damage to facilities has occurred or waste has been left behind which would incur a charge on the resident’s deposit, where in place. The site manager should be present when a departure takes place, which should be at a mutually convenient time.

16.3 The site manager should make clear the residents’ responsibilities in case of departure (see Figure 9 below).

**Figure 9 – Residents’ responsibilities when departing site**

On deciding to vacate the site, residents should ensure:

- Notice is given in line with the terms of the agreement to occupy the pitch
- The pitch and all other facilities covered by the rent are in a clean and reasonable condition and clear of rubbish
- Rent and additional service charges are paid through the required period of notice, even if departing earlier
- Outstanding amounts in respect of utility bills (water, electricity etc) are fully paid
- A forwarding address/contact point is provided where possible
- The appropriate local benefits offices know of the change of address.
16.4 The rules and regulations should also include a statement to the effect that in the event of departing the site with rent arrears or other charges to be paid, the landlord will seek to take action to locate the family and take court action or use a debt collector to obtain sums outstanding.

16.5 The site manager should be prepared to provide on request a reference to another landlord.

**Check list**

- Ensure residents are aware of departure arrangements and responsibilities (16.1-16.3)
- All outstanding payments and charges settled before departure (16.2).
Chapter 17
Enforcement/eviction policy

17.1 Although eviction must always be regarded as a last resort, the site manager must ensure that the ability for law abiding residents to live peacefully and be protected from anti-social behaviour on-site is followed through effectively.

17.2 In the event that a court order for possession is made, the site manager should ensure that the eviction is conducted with discretion, to avoid distress as far as possible, particularly for younger members of the household and any children involved.

17.3 Ideally those involved should be given advance notice of the date this is to happen and the manager should ensure that all appropriate agencies are aware in advance and in attendance when eviction takes place (see Office of the Deputy Prime Minister/Home Office Guidance on Managing Unauthorised Encampments).

Check list
- Any eviction is conducted sensitively and in liaison with appropriate agencies (17.2-17.3).
Chapter 18
Beginning again – turning a failing site into a success

18.1 This guidance contains advice to help ensure that a Gypsy and Traveller site operates successfully and is regarded as an essential asset in the social housing portfolio rather than a difficulty to be avoided and a drain on resources.

18.2 Where new management is taking over an existing site that has been neglected, special measures may be needed to restore effective management and ensure that it is run properly. The following case studies demonstrate how this has been achieved.

Case Study 4 – Turning round a failing site (1)

In 2003 a Gypsy and Traveller site near Kettering was run down and neglected, in an unpleasant condition with rubbish everywhere.

A husband and wife arrived as residents in 2003 and saw that conditions on-site were so poor that the residents had become dispirited but had nowhere else to go. Morale, particularly amongst the young residents, had become very low.
As residents themselves, they refused to believe that conditions had to remain like this, but realised that both the community and the owners, Kettering Borough Council, had a part to play if the site was to be rescued from its downward spiral and revitalised. They understood that only a change of attitude on all sides could really deliver a good place to live and that a partnership based on optimism and determination was the key to success.

They decided to try and lead the way by seeking to manage the site themselves and as a start took time to meet every family on the site to see what they thought of the idea and to secure their support. They made it clear that if successful their responsibility to the local authority would mean having to ensure a proper balance between the operational requirements of running the site and the aspirations of the residents themselves.

By their honesty, determination and enthusiasm they gained the residents’ support. Kettering Borough Council was impressed by the case which they put forward and agreed to try the arrangement. Aided by a Communities and Local Government Gypsy and Traveller site improvement grant the new managers, Kettering Borough Council and the site residents have worked together and turned the site into one which residents are proud to live on.

The new site managers worked in close partnership with Kettering Borough Council and existing residents to clear up the site, dispose of rubbish around it and deliver a well maintained and peaceful site which is a pleasure to live on. The residents now have a real pride in the site and work hard to look after it, with a good community spirit, a partnership with site management and a determination that the poor conditions experienced prior to 2003 never return.

The site managers use the success of the site to develop a positive image of the Gypsy and Traveller community, in particular to help develop good relationships with others in the neighbourhood. Children on the site go to school or college and are encouraged to help out with community projects in the town nearby. Contractors are happy to work on the site, there are good relationships with the police and a window cleaner and an ice cream van regularly visits the site!
Case Study 5 – Turning round a failing site (2)

A 12 pitch local authority site in Essex had experienced some conflict between residents and settled communities when first established, due to a mutual lack of understanding and interest in each other’s culture.

Morale on the site was poor, with a spirit of negativity and pessimism amongst the residents, a mistrust of the site management and a generally bad atmosphere emphasised by some of the pitches becoming and remaining vacant.

Essex County Council appointed a new site manager from the Gypsy and Traveller community to turn the site round. The manager realised that rebuilding the relationship between the residents, site management and the neighbouring community would be a gradual process given what had gone on before but that this would be essential if the site was to become a decent and safe place in which to live.

The new manager was given discretion by the Council on how to go about the role, while given the reassurance of strong support and backing available if needed. This meant that the manager was given the confidence and authority needed to be able to make decisions and commitments and ensure these were subsequently delivered.

The first step was to meet each of the resident families individually and to form a better relationship and understanding with them than had been achieved before. New licences were issued with terms and conditions properly and carefully explained and care and time devoted to explaining these regularly where residents were unsure.

By taking the time to build recognition of the respective responsibilities of site management and the residents, the new site manager developed a proper balance of respect and trust on both sides, explaining clearly when facilities and services could be delivered or reasons why if not.

While establishing better relationships and more pride in the site, the new manager recognised that the ultimate key to success was to establish a better understanding between the residents and the neighbouring communities. In the new manager’s words, “there were a lot of bridges to build.” They describe a two way process with their role as mediating between the two groups, establishing trust and educating both about the other’s cultures and traditions.
While work to integrate the site with the settled community is ongoing, the new manager is optimistic that the two can live side by side: after all, “we’re all humans at the end of the day.” Due to the investment of time and energy in building trust and pride within the site, the manager and residents have a platform by which to play their part in developing a positive relationship with the local community. Villagers visit the Gypsies who live there, and children from both communities attend each others’ birthday parties. Some Gypsies have had their children christened at the local church. The local neighbourhood watch, police, and parish council have good relations with the Gypsy community and are welcome to visit the site. Some of the residents have jobs with local employers in the area, and many send their children to the local school.
Chapter 19
Transit sites

19.1 Transit sites are intended to cater for Gypsies and Travellers who wish or need to reside in their own caravan accommodation in an area on a short-term basis. Periods ranging from an overnight stay to an average maximum period of around six weeks are catered for, although this can sometimes extend up to three months where there is sufficient capacity to meet overall short-term demand, particularly where there is no permanent residential accommodation available.

19.2 But it is important to note that a transit site is not intended, designed, nor will it contain facilities suitable for use as permanent accommodation by individual households. Transit sites have sometimes become used for this purpose owing to the shortage of permanent sites in the area but where this change of use is intended it is essential that these are upgraded to provide the facilities necessary to ensure they are fit for permanent residential purposes.

19.3 Details of what should be included in the design and infrastructure of permanent residential sites and for transit sites can be found in Communities and Local Government’s Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide published in 2008.

19.4 Ideally transit sites will be situated within easy reach (but not adjacent to) major trunk roads and are ideally located where local knowledge of traditionally undertaken Gypsy and Traveller journey routes, or the outcomes of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments, identify a clear need for short-term provision for caravan accommodation in that area.

Demand and usage

19.5 Demand for transit site accommodation can fluctuate, often with increasing popularity during the summer months when more families are travelling, or when traditional fairs and events are held, either in the area itself or reached by routes passing through it. But there could well be demand or potential demand all year round, and therefore a transit site could need to be ready to open up for business at any time. They should therefore be kept well maintained for that purpose.

19.6 The simplified facilities and infrastructure recommended in Communities and Local Government good practice guidance in respect of transit site design will make this adaptability easier and more cost effective than it would be where the site contains the full range of facilities and infrastructure appropriate for a site for permanent residential use.
By the very nature of their intended use, transit sites are likely to experience a considerable turnover of residents on a short-term basis who may not share the same long-term commitment to the site as they would to a permanent residential site. As such there will need to be some variations to the good practice site management arrangements covered elsewhere in this document although the essential elements of providing a decent and suitable home for rent paid remain equally valid anywhere.

On-site/off-site management

As for permanent residential sites, decisions on the need for a manager living on-site should take into account the size of the site, likely usage, turnover, planned maximum length of stay for users and estimates of how often the whole site will be vacant.

For larger sites an on-site manager, with accommodation provided, is recommended to provide proper oversight and to act as a focal point for dealing with admissions and departures at the site. Depending on the circumstances site management may prefer to opt for off-site management but it is strongly recommended that this include daily visits to the site, especially where it is known that users may only be staying on the site for a very short period.

Admissions/departures

It is recommended that the site contain height-restricting barriers or other road and access design to prevent unauthorised access of caravans to the site or the departure of users if rent or other charges are outstanding or a check of the condition of the site has not been carried out.

Transit sites should be operated to ensure the security of the site and the users on it, and allow unrestricted access and egress of users and their vehicles, and for fire appliances and emergency services. Fire hydrants and associated facilities should be accessible to the fire service at the front of the site.

The agreement to occupy the pitch

The Mobile Homes Act will apply to transit pitches. A successful applicant for a pitch should therefore be issued with a written statement that will set out the terms of the agreement to station the mobile home on the transit site.
19.13 Rent should be paid in advance although where the expected stay exceeds one week this could be collected at intervals, date and time to be agreed in advance. This will allow site management to make some estimate of when they will be required to attend the site to ensure that a user may depart from the site with a caravan without delay, but unless the site is full it should be remembered that there could be a new potential user at any time.

19.14 It is therefore important to ensure that arrangements are in place so that the site management can be easily contacted irrespective of the time of day. Details of telephone contact arrangements, for both office and out of office hours, should be displayed prominently at the entrance and around the site to ensure that admissions and departures can be catered for, and to allow users to report any emergency or anti social behaviour experienced within or outside the site.

Maintenance

19.15 Transit sites can be subject to heavy periodical demand but at other times underused or even empty, and flexible management and maintenance arrangements will need to reflect this as best as possible. The condition of the site should be regularly inspected during peak usage and particularly when a pitch is vacated – a check should be made to examine condition of a pitch and its surrounding facilities prior to departure and arrangements for any waste disposal or maintenance addressed quickly to ensure that a new user is provided with a pitch in good order.

19.16 Longer term maintenance and updating of facilities are best planned at quieter times when work can be phased to prevent disruption to those on the site.

Security

19.17 A security regime should be in place to protect the infrastructure of the site when empty. Unused and unprotected transit sites can be subject to anti social behaviour and vandalism and steps should be taken to ensure that access cannot be obtained without the owner’s knowledge.

19.18 Facilities should be left non operational in such circumstances with mains water and electricity supplies shut down, and bottled gas etc stored away and protected from tampering and damage. Regular inspections should be made to ensure that the site and its facilities are in order and ready to be opened and operational again at short notice.