South Lanarkshire Council is committed to providing inclusive, high quality services to a range of people with differing needs, this includes the Gypsy Traveller community, which although small in number in terms of overall population has a longstanding history in the South Lanarkshire area. The Council has a strong track record of service delivery working directly with and on behalf of the community to increase access to services and promote good relations.

1. Site Details

In South Lanarkshire we have two Local Authority sites. Swinhill in Larkhall has 21 pitches and opened in 1985 which is managed by an on premises manager and Springbank in East Kilbride has 6 pitches and opened in 1989 is managed by an off site manager who regularly visits the site. The weekly rent charge for the Larkhall site is £56.95 and £74.73 for the site in East Kilbride, these differing charges related to historic boundary changes in the authority area.

Tenants are able to leave their pitch for a period not exceeding twelve weeks in any twelve month period. The tenant is required to provide notice to the Council if they intend to be absent from their property for any lengthy period. If the tenant does not return at the termination of the agreed period or if the rental charge is not paid to cover the period of absence, the council may re-let the pitch.

The authority over recent years has made significant investment to improve facilities at both sites, this has included, the upgrade of all kitchens and bathrooms, new doors and windows, re-surfacing of pitches, traffic calming and boundary fences, ceiling and fan renewal, landscaping and provision of well used community facility. Work has also been carried out at the Swinhill site to upgrade the fabric of the amenity blocks, clean and re-sealing the roofs and installing instantaneous water heaters. In February 2012 we also completed resurfacing of the roads in the Swinhill site which has allowed for better access to both residents and service providers, we also have plans to place a security barrier at the entrance to the Swinhill site in late 2012, this security measure as well as the CCTV installed on the site in 2007 have both been at the request of residents within the site. Investment priorities and planned site improvements at either of our sites are always done in consultation with residents.

2. Proposed sites

South Lanarkshire Council has no plans for any new sites as we have two long and well established sites which are well managed, in demand and for the most part fully occupied. Throughout South Lanarkshire there is also a healthy provision of private sites with 175 pitches spread across 3 areas.
Over recent years we have worked with other local authorities, through the research carried out by Craigforth in 2007 and the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Housing Need and Demand Assessment to further develop our understanding of the accommodation needs of Gypsy Travellers. Our current Housing Strategy also recognises the need for ongoing development of our understanding of the accommodation needs of the diverse Gypsy Traveller population.

3. **How you determine where and what size sites should be**

   As detailed above the authority have no plans for any new sites.

4. **Existing/Planned temporary or halting sites**

   The Local Authority does not have any existing or planned temporary sites.

   This position is supported by a low number of incidences of unauthorised encampments within the area with no identified pattern or location and for very short periods of time often with people visiting for a specific purpose or event and with little interest in staying on an authorised site.

5. **Review Process of need for more pitches/sites**

   South Lanarkshire Council identified in its first Local Housing Strategy (LHS) a need to gain main information about its Gypsy Traveller community and was a leading authority in commissioning Craigforth Consultancy to conduct research into this topic, together with 10 other local authorities in the west central Scotland area. The key focus of the research was to establish the nature of travelling patterns and the inter – relationships between geographical areas. Unfortunately this matter was not one which the research could assess in any depth and consequently the authority remains of the view that specific conclusions regarding identification of potential locations for new sites must be considered with a degree of caution.

   The research however did highlight that the evidence suggested that potential key locations for additional provision on official sites are in the Lanarkshire area and should be considered on a joint basis with North Lanarkshire. The research also identified that “evidence of need for additional provision is only readily apparent in local authority areas with larger successful settled sites as in the case of South Lanarkshire” Thus, the research confirmed that where there is a track record of well – managed provision, there will be a healthy demand and high site occupancy.

   As noted above, while the research was unable to establish the key desired outcome it did provide information to inform strategic planning of our services and development of the first LHS. In 2010 the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) expressly considered the accommodation needs of Gypsy Travellers and the estimated demand
for further pitches. The assessment identified a shortfall of 32 pitches across the Glasgow and Clyde Valley. In addition to the private sites in South Lanarkshire which are detailed in question 2 the authority has since this report in 2010 approved a further 12 pitches at 3 private family sites in Clydesdale.

More recently we have received feedback on our approach to meeting the need of Gypsy Travellers as part of the peer review feedback on our 2nd Local Housing Strategy. The assessment commented positively on the Pitch Allocation Policy and Occupancy Agreement and our approach to consultation.

6. **Identify, record and address any complaints about size, or facilities**

Complaints about any aspect of the Council’s services can be made by any customer via the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure by filling in the Comments and Complaints form, this can be completed

- in person at any council office
- by phoning any council office
- by email
- in writing by using a freepost card or sending a letter to the freepost address: South Lanarkshire Council, Freepost SCO 1876, Hamilton ML3 6BR

Staff across all Council services are able to help customers write down their complaint should this be necessary.

Customers can also make a complaint through their local Councillor or their MP, MEP or MSP.

All complaints received are logged on the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) at the office which they are received and work is then queued (directed) to the relevant Resource for a response within the required timescales.

In order to ensure this process is robust the Council has introduced a monitoring pro forma which focuses on the outcome of complaints and particularly on the impact of complaints on service delivery. The pro forma is used to record complaints for each quarter and is presented to the authorities Corporate Management Team (CMT) as part of the Councils continuous focus on improvement.

The Councils Gypsy Traveller Occupancy Agreement details methods of making a complaint or query to the Council which would then be direct through the Council Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure. The Occupancy Agreement and also provides details of other independent bodies tenants can contact if they which to seek independent advice.
7. **In building and maintaining sites how would you consider the impact of the site location on, for instance, access to health and education services and/or public transport links.**

Any planned site in South Lanarkshire would have to have both planning consent and a licence. Any licence granted by the local authority would be in accordance with the terms of the Caravan Site and Control of Development Act 1960. South Lanarkshire Council via our Waste & Environmental Services have the role of ensuring that the site operates in accordance with the conditions of the site licence i.e. layout, number of pitches, welfare facilities, fire fighting equipment.

The site in East Kilbride is within close proximity of the Town Centre which enables residents to make use of available local facilities. The site in Larkhall has a dedicated NHS Nurse and an Oral Health Practitioner who regularly attend the site to encourage ongoing engagement with Health Services.

8. **How you monitor private sites and how disputes between their owners and tenants are managed**

Monitoring of private sites which have (unless covered by a listed exemption) both planning consent and a licence granted in terms of the Caravan Site and Control of Development Act 1960 is carried out by the Council’s Waste & Environmental Services. The function of this ongoing monitoring is to ensure that the site operates in accordance with the conditions of the site licence. In this respect we regulate the operator and they in turn monitor the activities of those that use the site. To date, the authority has not been involved in disputes between operators and persons residing on the site. Were this to arise we would identify and pursue the most appropriate resolution to resolve the matter.

9. **How unauthorised sites are managed and by what criteria they are also classified**

Issues arising from unauthorised sites, such as short term occupancy of land by Gypsy/Travellers are required to be pursued by the landowner under civil law which in some occasions will be South Lanarkshire Council. Corporate Resources have the lead responsibility for coordinating the Council's response to unauthorised encampments in the area, which will include liaising with the families involved and relevant services from across the Council including; housing, education, environmental and social work service as appropriate. Within the authority Waste & Environmental Services have the main role for enforcement/management of any unauthorised sites in terms of any ‘statutory nuisance’ e.g. the accumulation of waste including human excrement to ensure that the waste, once the site is vacated/removed there has been minimal risk to public health or pollution of the environment.
Within South Lanarkshire these types of sites are classified as
unauthorised encampments.

10. **What policies and staff awareness raising/training on Gypsy/Travellers you have**

South Lanarkshire Council has a Pitch allocation policy for Gypsy and Traveller sites which was introduced in 2009. The policy focuses on ensuring that those assessed as being in most need are prioritised, that the Council is fair and consistent in the allocation of pitches and ensures equality of opportunity.

South Lanarkshire Council recognises that Gypsy Travellers are distinct ethnic group which applies to all of our Equality and Diversity Policies and strategies, including the Single Equality Scheme and the Harassment Policy.

The authority has specific Equality and Diversity training which staff can attend through discussion with their line managers. Frontline Housing and Technical Resources staff attend Staff weekly training sessions on topics of interest which include Equality and Diversity updates and information, as required this will include specific information on Gypsy/Travellers.

Housing and Technical Resources hold annual consultation events with tenants of the Gypsy Traveller sites run by the Council. The past we have invited other Resources along to the events to provide information on other Councils services such as Social Work who have provided information on adaptations.

In addition, Education Resources has set out its equality commitments in its core policy, Inclusion and Equality. The Resource provides training through its head teachers meetings and equality coordinators meetings in ethnic monitoring, assessing policies for adverse impact, following procedures for reporting racial harassment incidents and use of self evaluation toolkits such as Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) self – evaluation tools Promoting Race Equality and Meeting the Needs of Gypsy Travellers. Schools also offer training in identifying and meeting the needs of pupils from gypsy traveller communities.

Developmental collaborative work in Larkhall Universal Connections with Larkhall Academy has provided recognition of young Gypsy Travellers achievements through local and national certification.

Social Work Resources offer a range of needs based services and support to the community. Positive links have been built with the community over the years, initially by providing a site bases service to overcome the initial reluctance of the community to engage with Social Work services, which now have been mainstreamed into the local social work office as a result of the increased confidence that has been achieved. Social Work's Reception Services were awarded a grading of
“Compliance Plus” in recognition of services to the Gypsy Traveller community, by the national Customer Service Excellence Award.

The Council through Corporate Resources continues to promote Equality and Diversity awareness sessions, including Gypsy Travellers for staff across all Council Resources.

11. **Information about your Gypsy/Traveller liaison officers, including whether the post has a shared remit and whether site managers undertake the role**

The authority does not have a dedicated “Gypsy/Traveller liaison post however there is ongoing positive engagement with the community by various council services and partner agencies. In addition to the site assistants, there are a number of staff and services who have a responsibility to consider the needs of the Gypsy/Traveller community. The authority recognises the need to continue to engage with the community and the potential benefits a specific liaison post may bring, we feel that a dedicated liaison officer would only be viable on a multi – authority basis. This issue was raised as part of the research undertaken by Craigforth Consultancy and we will continue to explore opportunities to further develop service arrangements as they relate to the community to identify potential improvements.

Gillian McCusker
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South Lanarkshire Council
20 July 2012