



Case study

Case Study Title	Engaging Gypsies and Travellers in the Local Development Plan process
Partner	WCBC: Lead Elected Member, Community Cohesion team, Housing Strategy team, Planning Policy team, Traveller Education Service
Organisation (s)	Wrexham Citizens Advice Bureau Wrexham Gypsy and Traveller Multi Agency Forum: Job Centre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, Cruise Bereavement Care, Adult Social Care, Youth Justice Service, Tai Clwyd, Public Health Wales, Health, Children and Young People's Services, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Wrexham Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group, WCBC Housing.
Key words	Gypsy, Traveller, LDP, Local Development Plan, Engagement

1. Brief Introduction

The project has been designed to improve engagement with Gypsies and Travellers in Wrexham to:

- understand their longer term accommodation needs; and
- inform the Wrexham Local Development Plan and the Local Housing Strategy.

2. Details of the issue addressed

Wrexham council has to produce a Local Development Plan. A key aspect of the Plan is a strategic assessment of the future housing / accommodation needs of the County Borough. To achieve an up to date picture of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Wrexham the Council must undertake a Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment. [Information from an earlier Accommodation Needs Assessment is considered to be incomplete and out of date].

- The development of Gypsy and Traveller sites is highly controversial. Previous experience has shown that members of the wider public have significant concerns about the location of Traveller sites and Elected Members struggle to reassure communities. However there is a legal duty on the local authority to prepare the Local Development Plan, including provisions for Gypsies and Travellers.

The aims of the project are to:

- Increase meaningful Gypsy and Traveller engagement in the process to develop the Wrexham Local Development Plan;
- Support officers across the council who are responsible for developing and taking forward the Local Development Plan;
- Provide a Local Development Plan that will meet the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Wrexham County Borough; and
- Enable Elected Members to better understand the needs of local Gypsies and Travellers and make informed Planning and Local Development Plan decisions.

3. Actions/approach taken

A project steering group was established between Housing Strategy, Community Cohesion and Planning Policy teams. The group agreed to take a collaborative approach involving all key stakeholders:



Stakeholder	Key activities
Steering group	Commission the Citizens Advice Bureau to undertake the Needs Assessment research which will provide the raw data and a project report – this utilised existing positive community relationships Commission data analysts to interpret the raw data and re-present in a format that is useful for the LDP and Housing Needs Strategy
Wrexham Citizens Advice Bureau	3 months targeted support to design and complete the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment Support Gypsies and Travellers to complete the Accommodation Needs Questionnaire
Wrexham Gypsy and Traveller Multi Agency Forum	Provide feedback on the approach being adopted. Design the accommodation needs assessment questionnaire Map Gypsies and Travellers across the County Borough
Lead Elected Member	Provide guidance on involving Elected Members / Planning Committee Members Feedback on the approach being adopted
Gypsy and Traveller Reading and Writing group	Feedback on the draft accommodation needs assessment questionnaire
Gypsy and Traveller community	Completion of the Accommodation Needs Assessment Questionnaire [supported by the CAB]

4. Benefits such as: improvements to service, improved dialogue about funding and service planning between third sector organisations and local authorities, in-kind support arrangements etc

- Utilises unique local knowledge and local relationships - which will lead to improved outcomes and reliable data.
- High response rate to Accommodation Needs Assessment questionnaire.
- Provides opportunities to 'manage' the research process because it would take place over a longer period of time than that available through private sector consultants.
- Provides an opportunity for Gypsies and Travellers to engage effectively in the LDP planning process and ensures that their voices are heard.
- Provides an opportunity for a collaborative approach to the provision of Traveller sites between the Traveller community and the council. This could have financial benefits where private sites are developed to meet the identified community needs.

5. Sustaining and or building on the benefits realised

- The expertise commissioned from the CAB will include staff awareness raising, Elected Member training, Member out-of-county site visits etc which will provide robust evidence for the LDP Inspector of community engagement and will inform future Planning Committee decisions in relation to Traveller sites.
- Gypsies and Travellers will be more likely to engage in other consultation activities following a positive experience in relation to the LDP e.g. site design.



6. How do you feel the approach met the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales?

The approach recognised the need to engage with Gypsies and Travellers in a way that met their needs and also provide sufficient data on which to base future planning decisions. Using the national principles we were able to ensure that all key stakeholders were actively involved in the process; this helped us to gain senior management support for the approach and by providing feedback through out the process we were able to keep stakeholders involved in the project. Overall the project did meet the National Principles and there were areas of good practice: engaging the Gypsy and Traveller community in the design of the questionnaire. However there were other areas that were less successful: managing community expectations and working to a very prescriptive short term timetable.

7. How would you rate your approach to the project against the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales?

Evaluation

1= very poor: 2 = poor: 3 = average: 4 = good: 5 = excellent

Principle	
Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference	4
Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose	4
Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way	4
Work with relevant partner organisations	4
The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable	4
Make it easier for people to take part	5
Enable people to take part effectively	5
Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective	4
People are told the impact of their contribution	4
Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement	5

Contact details

Name: Gillian Grainger
Title/role: Community Cohesion Manager
Organisation: Wrexham County Borough Council
E-mail: gillian.grainger@wrexham.gov.uk
Telephone: 01978 298736