1. Housing Needs of Gypsies and Travellers

Introduction

1.1 The housing issues pertaining to Gypsies and Travellers warrant particular attention in this study, partly because of the paucity of information which is currently available. For instance, a major omission from the 2001 Census was that it did not record Gypsies and Travellers as being a separate ethnic group, despite Roma Gypsies being recognised as a separate ethnic group by the Race Relation Act (RRA) 1976 and Travellers of Irish Heritage being recognised as a separate ethnic group by the 2000 amendment to the RRA. Furthermore, relatively few qualitative studies have explored their experiences.

1.2 A multi methodological approach was taken to explore the housing issues of Gypsies and Travellers in Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. The best quantitative information available on Gypsy and Traveller communities in England derives from a bi-annual survey of Gypsy and Traveller caravans which is conducted by each local authority. However, the Welsh Assembly only began collecting this information from local authorities in Wales in July 2006. Therefore, the results of only one count have so far been published and this is summarised below for the 4 local authorities in Figure 1.

Type of Site	Blaenau Gwent	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen	Total
Socially Rented	20	-	0	0	20
Privately Rented	0	-	0	49	49
Unauthorised - Land Owned by Gypsies	0	-	0	7	7
Unauthorised - Land Not Owned by Gypsies	0	-	16	0	16
Caravan Total	**20**	**-**	**16**	**56**	**92**

Figure 1: Count of Gypsy and Traveller Caravans: July 2006
Source: Welsh Assembly Government Bi-annual Caravan Count
Note: Monmouthshire did not complete their data return

1.3 The caravan count in Wales will become a very useful tool for analysing trends in the Gypsy and Traveller population who reside on caravan sites. However, it does inevitably exclude any Gypsies and Travellers who are housed in bricks and mortar dwellings. This is an important omission because there are estimated to be twice as many Gypsies and Travellers living in socially rented accommodation as there are in caravans (*United Kingdom National Report 2004 for the European Observatory on Homelessness: Statistical Update*).

1.4 In order to redress this information deficit, a second source of quantitative information was used. The Local Household Survey featured 43 interviews with respondents who identified themselves as being Gypsies or Travellers who were now living in bricks and mortar housing and another 7 with respondents on private sites in Torfaen. 43 interviews represents a small sample comprising 0.7% of all of the interviews conducted, but is drawn from a random sample of households in Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent and therefore is likely to be representative of the Gypsy and Traveller population in bricks and mortar accommodation.

1.5 In order to supplement the two key sources of quantitative information, qualitative group interviews were held with Gypsies and Travellers at three caravan sites. The interviews were conducted with the permission of the site owners or the Local Authority and their duration ranged from 25 minutes to 45 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured, ensuring that a number of key issues were addressed but also allowing a fluid discussion. Qualitative interviews particularly provide information on the situation of Gypsies and Travellers living on caravan sites, whereas the quantitative studies are used to explore the issues of those living in bricks and mortar accommodation.

1.6 This chapter discusses the housing issues of Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar accommodation, on local authority caravan sites, and on private sites. The discussion is then drawn together in a summary section, highlighting the most pertinent issues. Notably, all of the information relates to authorised accommodation. During the study period, one unauthorised encampment was present but for only a brief period of time. Due to the limited time available, the views of these travellers were not explored.

Gypsies and Travellers Living in Bricks & Mortar Housing

1.7 Figure 2 shows that 21 of the Local Household Survey interviews with Gypsies and Travellers took place in Blaenau Gwent, 5 in Monmouthshire, 2 in Newport and 22 in Torfaen including the 7 on caravan sites.

Area	Number of Interviews
Unitary Authority Area	
Blaenau Gwent	21
Monmouthshire	5
Newport	2
Torfaen	22
Sub-region	**50**

Figure 2: Gypsy and Traveller Interviews by Unitary Authority Area
Source: Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent Household Survey 2006

1.8 Figure 3 shows that nearly 60% of the Gypsy and Traveller population of the sub-region were to be found in terraced properties.

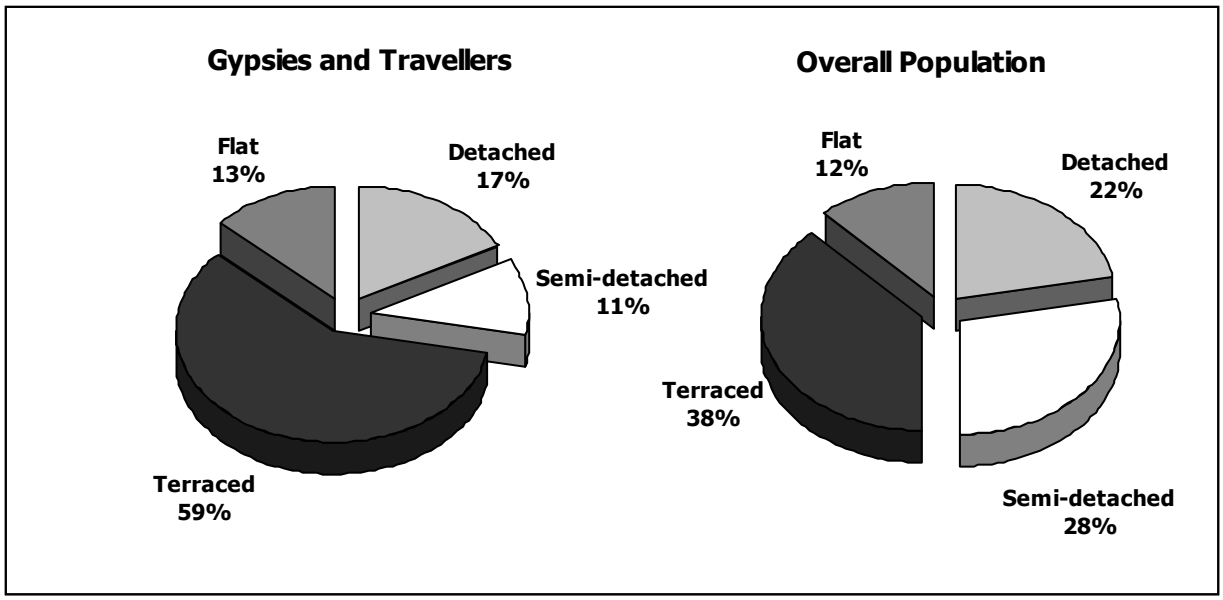

Figure 3: Dwelling Type by Gypsies and Travellers and Overall Population
Source: Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent Household Survey 2006

1.9 Figure 4 shows that the Gypsy and Traveller households were as likely to be owner occupiers as the overall population of the area. Therefore, it appears that many members of the Gypsy and Traveller community have historically been attracted to areas like Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen by the relatively cheap house prices in the area.

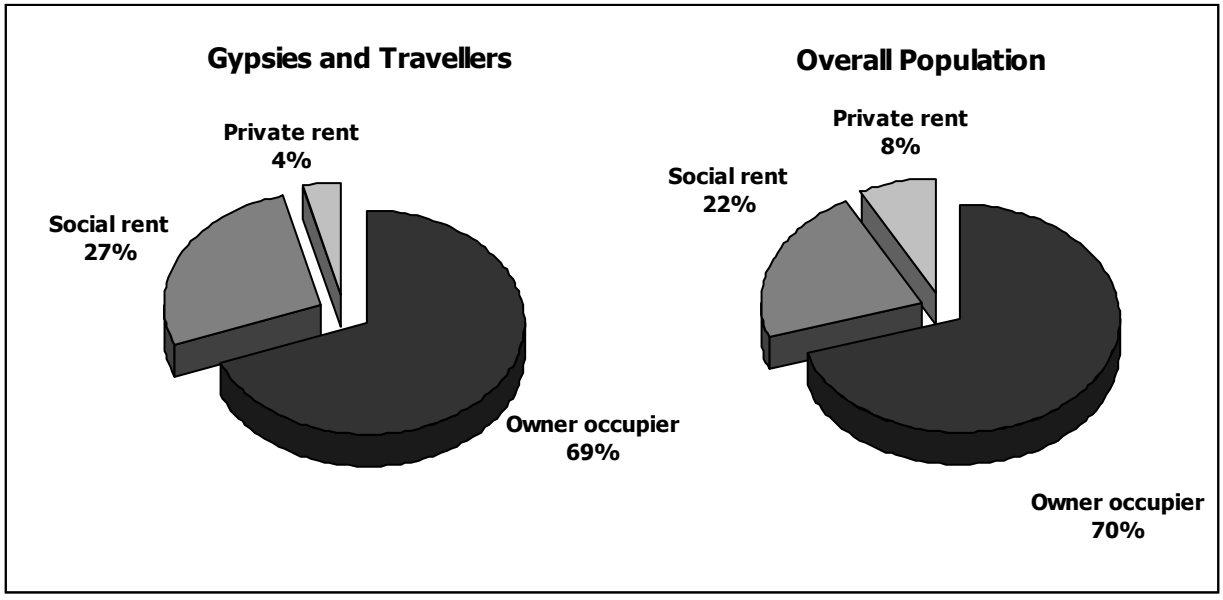

Figure 4: Tenure by Gypsies and Travellers and Overall Population
Source: Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent Household Survey 2006

1.10 Figure 5 shows that Gypsies and Travellers were slightly more likely to be satisfied with their current home than the overall population of Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent.

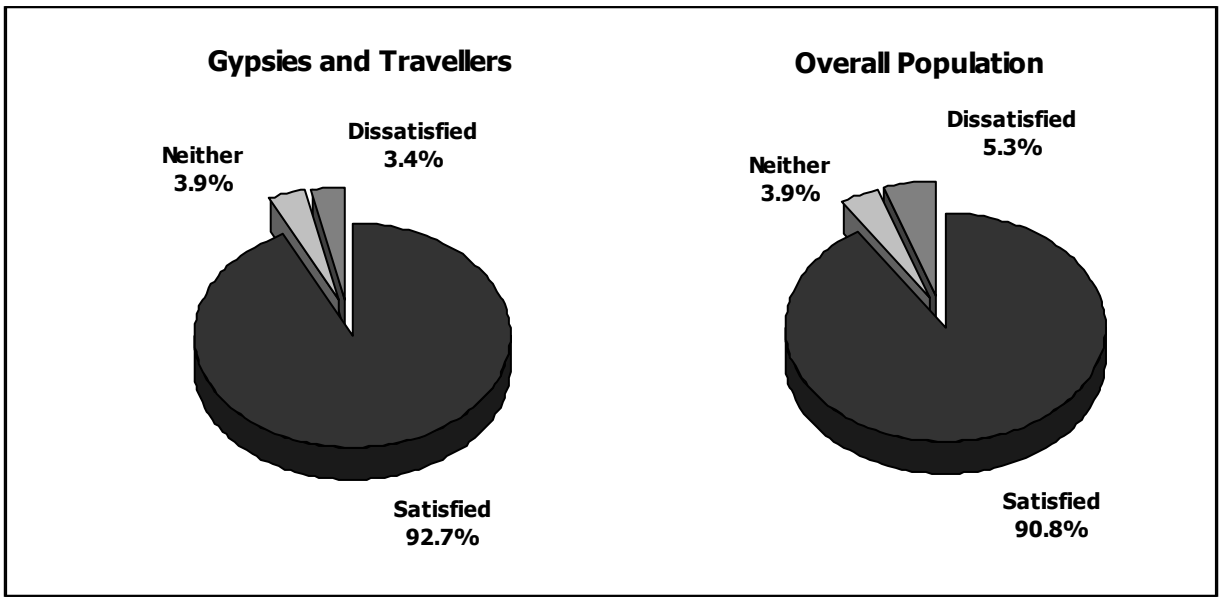

Figure 5: Satisfaction with Current Home by Gypsies and Travellers and Overall Population
Source: Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent Household Survey 2006

1.11 The satisfaction with their current home is reflected in Figure 6 which shows that only 7.6% of the Gypsy and Traveller households want to move. This is less than the 19.6% of other households in Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent who want to move. Among those who do want to move, all would like to move to alternative bricks and mortar housing.

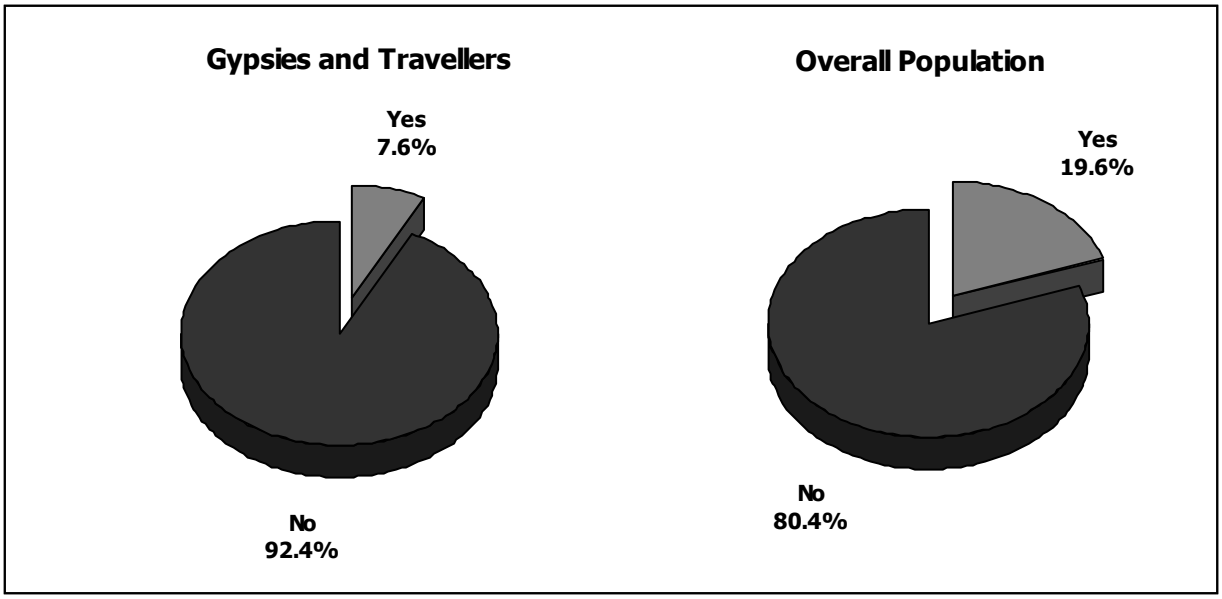

Figure 6: Household Want to Move by Gypsies and Travellers and Overall Population
Source: Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent Household Survey 2006

1.12 This result is of interest from the perspective of Gypsy and Traveller site provision, because it indicates there is not a strong desire among the Gypsy and Traveller population in bricks and mortar to move to a caravan site. Therefore, when considering future site provision for Gypsies and Travellers, there appears to be little necessity to allow a significant amount of extra provision for Gypsies and Travellers moving from bricks and mortar housing.

1.13 Another key result for the Gypsy and Traveller households is that 55.8% contained at least one member with a health problem, which compares with 36.8% of the non Gypsy and Traveller households. Therefore, the health of the Gypsy and Traveller population (who are not living in caravans) does appear to be relatively poor.

1.14 This is particularly noteworthy when considering that the age of the respondents in Gypsy and Traveller households was not dissimilar to that of all households in Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent. Therefore, the health problems in the Gypsy and Traveller population do not appear to be driven simply by the population being older.

1.15 It is possible that many of the Gypsy and Traveller population moved to bricks and mortar accommodation due to health problems in their households, which could more easily be addressed within bricks and mortar accommodation.

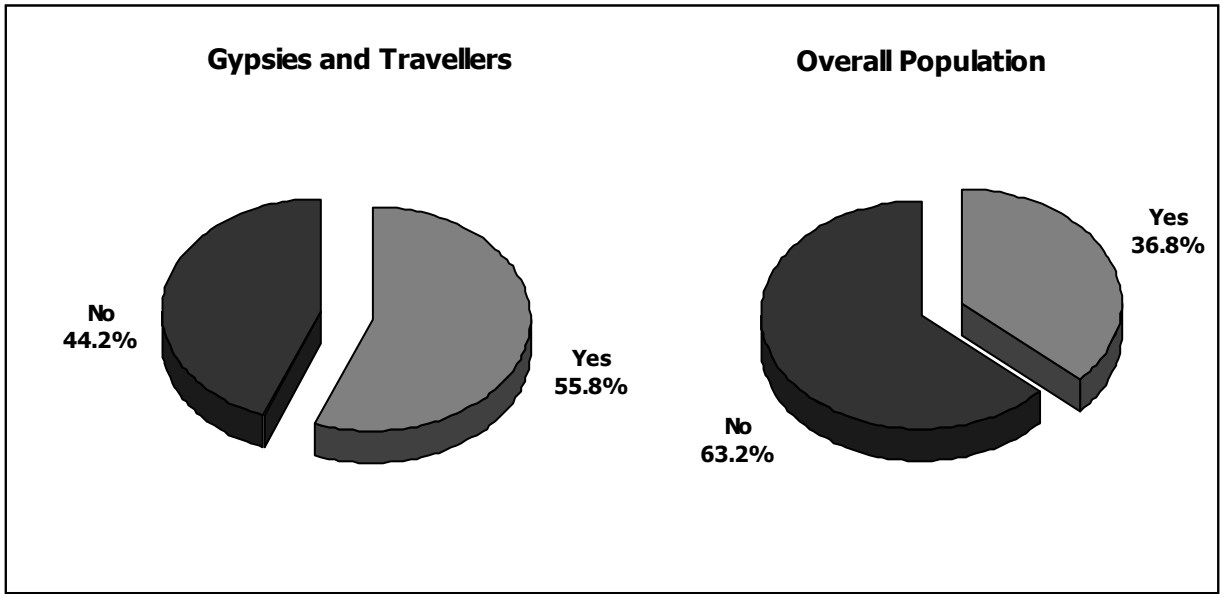

Figure 7: Health Problems in the Household by Gypsies and Travellers and Overall Population

Source: Newport, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent Household Survey 2006

Gypsies and Travellers Living on Local Authority Caravan Sites

1.16 Group interviews were conducted at two Local Authority sites, one in Torfaen and one in Blaenau Gwent. The findings for each site are discussed separately, dealing with the following issues: site conditions, access to services and support, Gypsy/Traveller children, and desire for bricks and mortar accommodation.

Shepherd's Hill, Torfaen

1.17 In total, one small group interview and one individual interview were conducted at this site. The interviews were conducted in people's accommodation, with participants of a range of ages. Generally, people were welcoming of the interviewers. Interviewees explained that the site is dominated by one family: *mostly all of us here are related*. The site was described as *a peaceful site*. However, one person was not part of the extended family and explained that she did not feel that there was a sense of cohesion.

Site conditions

1.18 Taking all comments into consideration, the site was generally perceived to be *clean and well looked after*. Over time the site conditions are thought to have got better. The good conditions are not thought to be due to any site requirement, instead it was due to personal standards of cleanliness. The site is equipped with street lighting and the roads have well maintained tarmac on them (see Plate 1). All chalets and caravans have access to electricity. Residents pay the head of the site for this service. Gas is arranged and paid for on an individual basis.

1.19 In terms of access to washing and toilet facilities, one interviewee lived in a chalet, which included a shower and toilet, therefore reducing the need to use the separate washing block. Each caravan had access to a separate shower block, which was of brick construction (see Plate 2). There were mixed perceptions concerning the shower blocks. One interviewee commented:

> *Everything gets sorted with the toilet blocks if there's a problem. Repairs are done. I had a leak in the shower in the summer and in seconds it was done. I report it to XXX and he gets somebody out. It's better than the side of the road and not having a shower at all.*

1.20 On the contrary, another interviewee claimed:

> *I don't have a shower because it doesn't work – it is in the amenity block. It also has a toilet and sink. You can't wash in the amenity block. You can't go in there and strip off and have a bath and a wash. Other sites have a bathroom and a toilet in the caravan.*

1.21 Evidence of the poor conditions of one amenity block can be seen in Plate 3, which the interviewer was invited to photograph. It is worth noting that the head of the site is responsible for arranging site maintenance and all interviewees agreed that the head of the site was amenable and there were no problems with his role.

Plate 1: Good conditions of tarmac at Shepherd's Hill caravan site
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

Plate 2: Outside of an amenities block at Shepherd's Hill caravan site
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

Plate 3: Inside of an amenities block at Shepherd's Hill caravan site
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

1.22 One of the key concerns with the current site conditions was a lack of pitches available for additional caravans or chalets. One interviewee remarked that *we need more pitches* and explained that the site was *overcrowded*. In particular there is a perceived need to increase the number of caravans available in order to provide for the young people who are currently looking for accommodation. There was a suggestion that *boys have to go over to the Brynmawr site because there aren't slides to go back on to*. Similarly, few transient gypsies use the site because *there is little space for them.*

Access to Services and Support

1.23 Reportedly, there are a number of key individuals who provide necessary support services to Gypsies and Travellers on the Shepherd's Hill site. The head of the site helped one interviewee with her application for a pitch on the site, completing all the required paperwork. A second key individual was the health visitor, who was regarded extremely highly and was praised for offering housing advice when required.

1.24 All interviewees had access to a doctor and dentist, although one interviewee, who had been on the site for three years, was still registered with a doctor in London. Significantly, no Gypsies and Travellers on this site purported to access support from the Local Authority. It was claimed that they *are happy left alone*.

Gypsy and Traveller Children and Young People

1.25 Gypsy and Traveller children were the subject of discussion in all interviews and in one interview, an eighteen year old girl participated. Several key issues about schooling were raised. Firstly, it was pointed out that most (15-20) Gypsy and Traveller children go to the same local school. These children are predominantly cousins. There are some concerns that the children do not integrate with other children, *they only play with each other.* It was claimed that as a consequence the children *are not listening and they don't learn*. The children also sometimes experience *some teasing*. When the children move to secondary school, there is some greater level of integration.

1.26 It seems that most Gypsies and Travellers on the Shepherd's Hill site are well settled and as a result the children regularly attend the same school. This contrasts to the experiences of many Gypsy and Traveller children elsewhere who are rarely in one place long enough to attend school on a frequent basis.

1.27 Interviewees considered the likely futures for Gypsy and Traveller children. It was apparent that the Gypsy and Traveller lifestyle was not imposed on the children, with one guardian intentionally looking for bricks and ortar accommodation in order to offer more choice to her grand daughter. Equally, many of the children and young people were more highly educated than their parents. For example, one eighteen year old girl was training to be a teaching assistant.

1.28 When asked about likely future locations, the lack of available pitches at Shepherd's Hill restricts young people's choices and forces them to move out of the area. One young girl planned to move to Cardiff because her fiancé planned to move there, although she recognised that there were no pitches at Shepherd's hill anyway:

> *If I did want to go here there would be nowhere to go because there're no slabs left.*

Desire for Bricks and Mortar Accommodation

1.29 The final issue discussed with interviewees was whether they had considered moving to bricks and mortar accommodation. Significantly different opinions were revealed. One interviewee expressed a clear desire to move to bricks and mortar accommodation because it would enable her to give her granddaughter *a chance in life*. She claimed that a house *would give everything under one roof*, although it was acknowledged that toilets and showers were available on the current site.

1.30 The desire to move into bricks and mortar accommodation was complicated for the interviewee because she wished to move from Pontypool to Newport. There was a lack of awareness of how to access housing in a neighbouring county. There is certainly *a lack of information* and perhaps a lack of joined-up working to address this issue. The interviewee had clear preference for particular areas and was reluctant to move to anywhere in Pontypool except New Inn. These concerns must be addressed by the Local Authorities.

1.31 Whilst one participant wished to move to bricks and mortar accommodation, another had no desire to at all. Reasons for remaining at Shepherd's Hill include the presence of family and contentment with current circumstances. The chalets purportedly have enough space and provide freedom which is not available in a house:

> *I am happy so I wouldn't want a house. There are no disadvantages of living here. Most people are generally as happy as we are. I think some have their names down for houses but I'm happy to stay here forever.*

Cwmcrachen, Blaenau Gwent

1.32 Cwmcrachen caravan site is owned and managed by the local authority. There are about 24 pitches on the site currently, with about 18 in use (occupied) and arranged in an approximate circle. Most of the occupied pitches each have two or three caravans located alongside their brick washrooms, but a small number have 'chalet bungalows' as the main residence. There are also about three transit pitches, which

are occupied for short periods from time to time – mainly, it seems, by families and friends of existing residents rather than by strangers passing through. The researcher was told that a pitch a Cwmcrachen costs about £80+ per week *inclusive of everything.*

1.33 The researcher was informed on site that the local authority plans to establish six caravans for people with disabilities on an unoccupied part of the site; but there are no special access facilities and no residents were described as having disabilities currently.

1.34 Several small group interviews were conducted at Cwmcrachen, as well as discussions with the helpful site caretaker during two visits to the site. The interviewer was welcomed into people's caravans and was able to have in-depth discussions with residents of a range of ages. Interviewees explained that the site is peaceful and well-ordered, but they were concerned about some of the facilities.

Site Conditions

1.35 The caravan site is positioned on an exposed upland hillside with wide countryside views on two sides; but it is also adjacent to a factory and storage yard on the other sides. Not all the caravan site is occupied, since there appears to be a significant area of rough land without access for caravans at the moment.

1.36 The occupied part of the site has lighting and the roads have well maintained tarmac on them. All chalets and caravans have access to electricity (meter cards are sold by the post office) and the researcher understands that the caretaker is responsible for taking the meter money from the post office to the borough council. Many residents also use bottled gas for heating.

1.37 The CCTV cameras were upgraded in 2006-07 and were said to be helpful in giving the site a greater sense of security. The residents also said that they do not suffer any problems with the local community.

1.38 Many of the residents interviewed were concerned that the site has been seriously encroached upon by the construction of a large semi-circular earth bank effectively enclosing the site on two sides – put there, it seems, to separate (or screen) the caravan site from the nearby industrial area (but for the benefit of the latter rather than the former).

1.39 It is difficult to quote the exact scale of the earth bank without instruments, but the researcher estimates it is about 20 feet high and he found it to be quite steeply sloping when he climbed up.

1.40 The earth bank, then, is substantial and must have seemed at best intrusive and unwelcome or at worst threatening and intimidating during its construction, for which large earth moving equipment would have been needed. Hence, the residents feel 'insulted' and in a sense belittled by the construction of the bank that they say had no official authorisation – but they feel their complaints (made through the site caretaker) were not dealt with effectively by the local authority.

1.41 Time has passed, the earth bank has consolidated (though not lessened in size) and, to a degree at least, people have learnt to live with its intrusiveness – so the matter

is perhaps not the acute grievance it once was. Nonetheless, the interviewer found that a number of people drew it to his attention urgently as matter of real complaint.

1.42 It seems that both the residents and caretaker remain unaware of the legal status of the earthwork and whether or not its construction on the immediate boundary of the site breached planning or not. The local authority may wish to clarify its future role in relation to this and possible similar developments.

Plate 4: View of Cwmcrachen site showing earth bank
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

Plate 5: Earth bank and Caravans below
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

1.43 Apart from the earthwork, another noticeable feature of the site is the very small size and cramped working space of the caretaker's 'office', which is within a small brick hut just inside the entrance to the site. The researcher's judgements – that the space within the hut is inadequate for comfort or amenity, and that the hut's facilities are inadequate for effective working or hygiene – are his own impressions: they are not based upon a knowledge of legal requirements for working space.

1.44 Nonetheless, in good faith it seems fair to say that the caretaker's hut is so small and so cramped and crowded that the researcher could not easily share the space to

interview the caretaker; and the latter lacks any decent space to store documents or made refreshments for himself. At cold and wet times of the year, the caretaker's hut would be a limiting and (for many people) depressing place to work. The researcher heard the hut referred to as a *chicken coope!*

1.45 The mail for the site is delivered to the caretaker's hut but there are no pigeon holes for classifying or storing the mail there. The cramped and crowded hut would appear to make the handling of mail a somewhat haphazard affair at times (but no residents actually complained about this and the caretaker certainly does his best in difficult circumstances).

Plate 6: Exterior of Caretaker's office
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

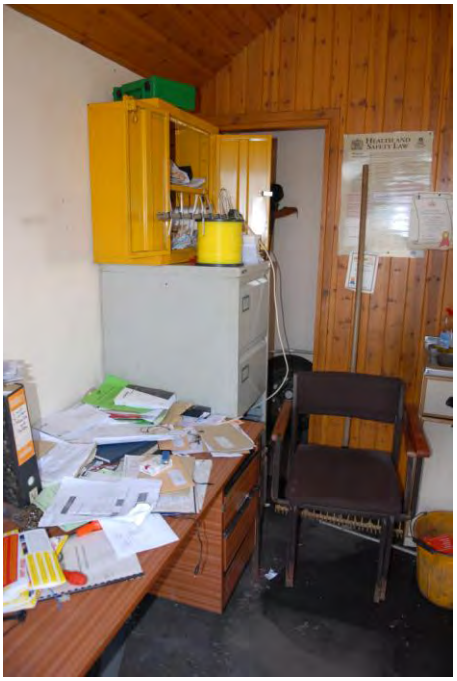

Plate 7: Interior of Caretaker's office
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

1.46 The site itself is untidy in some aspects – with working tools, vans, dogs, animals, cars and rubbish lying in close proximity to residential caravans. The site suffers from

a certain amount of long-term storage (or dumping?) of scrap/waste materials – and like many such sites would benefit from some clearing up. But the commitment to such tidiness can, of course, seem oppressive to many residents who value the freedom their way of life and place of residence gives them.

1.47 Few residents complained about the general appearance of the site (except in relation to the earth bank (see above) and the facilities available on the pitches (see below)); but some said that *buying and selling cars goes on a lot and they can pile up here.* Others, though, said that they would like more room to store tools and equipment.

Plate 8: View of Cwumcrachen site
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

Plate 9: View of Cwumcrachen site
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

1.48 In such situations, the caretaker has to tread an uneasy line between officiousness on the one hand and tolerating anti-social conduct on the other. While the caretaker

never complained of his dilemmas in this regard, it was clear that he feels the tension in the two poles between which he has to navigate.

1.49 The caretaker's situation in trying to maintain the goodwill of the residents while supervising the site effectively prompts the thought that perhaps it would be desirable to have a clearer separation between the more janitorial/pastoral roles of caretaker on the one hand and the more supervisory/enforcement roles on the other. In the opinion of the researcher it is not easy to combine these different functions in one person based on the site. This is not to imply that any of the roles are currently done poorly, but only to recognise the difficulty of doing both effectively while being present on the site for long periods.

1.50 The residents' main concern was with the standard of the washing and toilet facilities on their pitches. One of the interviewees lives in a chalet with a shower and toilet, but most rely on the simple brick-built washing blocks on their pitches. There were some very negative comments about these amenity blocks – for example:

> *They are really cold! There's no effective heating and in winter you don't want to wash in there*
>
> *The blocks aren't useable in winter – only in summer!*
>
> *If you're having a shower, you have to soap up before the shower (to keep warm and finish quickly)*
>
> *No money's been spent here for years – the site just gets left as it is because the local authority is short of money; but they should do something to improve it*

1.51 Above all, the main faults complained of in the amenity blocks were that they are small, have no heating and lack any effective insulation while also being draughty. It was also noticeable that the kitchen-washroom and toilets and showers are in very close proximity in each amenity block. Some residents said that because of the poor amenity blocks they must use bowls for washing themselves or go to the local leisure centre for showers.

1.52 Some residents seemed to think that the prospect of refurbishing the amenity blocks had been *on the cards* for some time – but they complained that they had no firm information about what might be planned and the timetable for any work.

1.53 The poor conditions of the amenity blocks can be seen in Plate 10, which the interviewer was invited to photograph. The showers in particular are in poor condition – with bare cement walls and missing or malfunctioning equipment and no heating or insulation.

Plate 10 Interior of a Cwmcrachen Amenity Block
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

1.54 Some residents have their own 'kitchen day rooms' in portacabins alongside their caravans.

1.55 A number of residents would like to have mobile homes on the site instead of caravans.

1.56 The site is not generally thought to be over-crowded – except in summer when visitors and family members come with their caravans. They said they would like an extra six pitches for such visitors.

1.57 When asked, residents said that the site lacks any dedicated and protected play space for children, but these kinds of facilities were not treated as important priorities in comparison with the improvement of the amenity blocks, for example.

1.58 The residents did not object to the Council managing their site. Indeed, some interviewees said the Gypsy Council is *not necessarily a good manager – and no one votes for them anyway!*

1.59 While complaining about the amenity blocks, the residents also said that the local authority is generally responsive and effective in terms of delivering services and making routine repairs to the site. Services like refuse collection, outside lighting and fencing were said to be satisfactory. The only complaint was that one side of the site was said to have no lights.

1.60 Several residents said they felt fairly treated on Cwmcrachen compared with other sites where extra (unofficial) cash charges are made by site managers for the provision of basic services like electricity cards and water.

Access to Services and Support

1.61 The site caretaker seems to have good working relations with the residents – and to be trusted sufficiently to help with literacy difficulties on occasions. The caretaker is an important link between the residents and the council and other official bodies. He works a split shift of 0900 to 1300 and 1700 to 1900. No council officers seem to

visit the site on a routine basis, but at least one officer is readily available to the caretaker if there is a problem on the site.

1.62 The possible tension in the duality of the caretaker's role (pastoral v enforcement) has been referred to just above. Nonetheless, it should be said that the caretaker is cheerful and positive about his split-shift work at the site; and he is keen to do as good job as he can. In particular, he understands the Gypsy and Traveller way of life.

1.63 Several residents said they had come to the site readily because of its location and are happy living there. They said the rents are cheaper than on some other sites and they are nearer to shops.

1.64 The interviewees were unanimous and emphatic that they do not suffer any harassment from local residents in the surrounding area.

1.65 No interviewees had difficulties gaining access to doctors and similar services – though some added that they found GPs' receptionists can be unpleasant and awkward to deal with. Some also said that they felt their GP had been unresponsive and unhelpful in relation to their worries about a recent TB scare in the area.

Gypsy and Traveller Children

1.66 There were some very specific and pointed complaints about the clergyman at a local Baptist Church who (at the time of the visit) would not allow children from the site to attend his church due to the TB scare.

1.67 The interviewees with children seemed very positive about local schools – particularly the primary school. Some said that there is some bullying at the secondary school, but the teachers are helpful. Most Gypsies and Travellers at Cwmcrachen seem well established and, as a result, their children regularly attend the same school.

1.68 At least one of the Gypsy and Traveller mothers would not be worried if their children were to *marry out* – but only one of them said she had no strong feelings about who her children married.

Desire for Bricks and Mortar Accommodation

1.69 Many residents rejected the prospect of conventional housing vehemently, but the researcher met several people who would like to move from the site into conventional social rented accommodation; but he was also told that some of (the few) who have made the move previously have returned to the caravan life afterwards.

1.70 The outlook of those wanting to leave the site matched that of one long-term resident who said she had been on the waiting list for a council house *for years* but had made no progress with her application. She said the Housing Department had always treated her well but she understood that the waiting list for housing is very long.

1.71 Another resident said she and her three children had been waiting for council housing for four years. She said she did not get much help with her application from

the Council, but that the site caretaker has been helpful in assisting with completing the forms.

1.72 Some of those seeking conventional accommodation said they wanted to leave for the sake of their children and because of drinking and/or rows on the site (though it should be added that there were no general complaints of disorder on the site).

1.73 One resident said she had been recently offered a house to rent by the local authority, but she did not yet know its location – which unnerved her because she feared it might turn out to be in a *very rough area.* She is currently living in portacabin-style accommodation at Cwmcrachen, without the benefit of an amenity block of her own.

Gypsies and Travellers Living on Authorised Private Caravan Sites

1.74 Group interviews were conducted at one authorised private caravan site in Torfaen. The issues discussed were similar to those considered at the local authority site and include: site conditions, access to services and support, Gypsy and Traveller children, desire for bricks and mortar accommodation, and discrimination.

Mountain View, Torfaen

1.75 In total, two small group interviews and one individual interview were conducted at this site. The interviews were conducted in people's accommodation, with participants of a range of ages, both male and female. Generally, people were very welcoming of the interviewers. Interviewees explained that the site is occupied by one family: *they are more or less me (my) own kids and family*. Admittedly, family members *all live separately – everyone lives their own lives.*

Site Conditions

1.76 Generally, the site conditions at Mountain View appear to be far worse than they are at Shepherd's Hill. The site has approximately ten caravans with people living in them and five for storage. In addition to the caravans, there is a section at the back of the site for animals, including horses and dogs (Plate 4). The site appears to be in a state of disrepair. There are several main concerns about the site conditions. The first of these is the access lane which *is terrible and ruins the car*. All interviewees had concerns about the lane, which was described as *bumpy and very dark*. There is street lighting but at the time of visiting the site, these lights were not functioning. One of the consequences of having a poor access road is that the children struggle to get to school, or they do manage to walk down the road and they arrive at school very dirty. There was a definite sense that this issue could not be addressed by the site owner and that help is desperately needed. The site owner rejected any possibility that the Local Authority might take ownership of the site because of the significant efforts he had made to develop it.

1.77 A second issue about the site conditions is the condition of the communal toilet block. It was claimed that it is *a health hazard*. This building is certainly in poor condition (see Plate 5). A grant application was made previously and plans were drawn for a new building but no building was constructed. A new toilet block was

described as *the top priority for everyone*. It was stated that no new plots should be made available in the area until the conditions at the current site are first addressed.

Plate 4: Area allocated to animals at rear of Mountain View caravan site
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

Plate 5: Outside the amenities block at Mountain View caravan site
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

1.78 Interviewees were generally concerned that children have to go outside their caravans to the amenities block to use the toilet:

> *The amenities are poor. It's not fair if the children have to go outside to use the toilet.*

1.79 Most caravans access water from a tap on the outside of the amenities block. Electricity is available in each of the caravans and is paid for by purchasing electricity cards. Similarly individuals purchase their own gas in the form of a cylinder. All cooking is carried out in the caravans. Reportedly, living on the site is much cheaper than living in a house and this is one of the major benefits. There are four chalets on the site, which include integrated showers and toilets but these are far ore expensive. One mother commented: *by the time I could afford a chalet the kids would be grown up*.

1.80 A further concern about the site conditions is overcrowding. One family of four shared a caravan which had only one bedroom and a sofa. The family consisted of a

mother, a young boy and two girls. This caravan appeared to be overcrowded and the family were keen to move to bricks and mortar accommodation. The size of their caravan can be seen in Plate 6. Another interviewee similarly stated: *we don't have much space, the kids are always on top of you.*

Plate 6: Inside one of the caravans at Mountain View caravan site
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

1.81 Whilst some caravans are overcrowded, there is supposedly plenty of space for the site to incorporate more caravans if needed. It was suggested that up to seven more caravans might be accommodated. It was claimed that the *site is getting bigger because the kids are getting older and getting married*.

Access to Services and Support

1.82 As in Shepherd's Hill, interviewees were extremely positive about the commitment of certain individuals with whom they have significant contact. There was satisfaction that these individuals will try to address any problems being faced by Gypsies and Travellers. Reportedly, these people would now be the first point of call. The concern amongst most interviewees was that there is too little commitment above officer level, reducing the likelihood of greater support.

1.83 At Mountain View most people seem to have access to healthcare. They are content with these services, which are within walking distance. One interviewee explained that she had accessed employment support and she was extremely satisfied with the information that was made available.

Gypsy and Traveller Children and Young People

1.84 Interviewees at Mountain View discussed issues concerning Gypsy and Traveller children. In fact, one interviewee was 13 years old. There were mixed attitudes towards children's education. It was explained that in the past, teachers have treated the children differently and other children have teased them. Reportedly, meetings have been held between liaison officers, parents and the schools in order to change attitudes within schools. This process of intervention is thought to have taken place because parents were taking their children to schools outside of the local area.

1.85 One parent remarked that her children attend the local school *and they get on well*. Furthermore, they are treated equally at school. By contrast, another parent still takes her children outside of the local area because a lot of Gypsy and Traveller children attend the local school. Her reason for doing this was that she believed Gypsy and Traveller children are treated differently when they are grouped together.

1.86 In relation to the above point, the children who attend a school outside of the area do integrate with other children, although they will not invite other children to the caravan site. Those children who attend the local school purportedly form a separate group at school and therefore do not interact with other children as frequently.

1.87 The attitudes of parents towards their children's futures vary on the site. The following two quotations illustrate this:

> *When the kids grow up I want them to have a good job and not just want to get married like young travelling girls do. I think that if one does it then the kids look around and they think I can't be bothered either.*
>
> *It's up to my children what they want t do when they get older.*
>
> *If you move into a house they don't know what it's like to be a traveller. I would like them to travel around.*

Desire for Bricks and Mortar Accommodation

1.88 Amongst Gypsies and Travellers on the Mountain View site, there were mixed attitudes towards bricks and mortar accommodation. Two interviewees were particularly keen to find local authority bricks and mortar accommodation in order to improve the prospects of their children. There is a perception that if they live in bricks and mortar accommodation they will be treated differently. Furthermore, this type of accommodation is expected to result in greater space and all necessary amenities in one place.

1.89 Interviewees explained that they would only be willing to move as far as New Inn because they like to be near to their family. Interviewees were not willing to move as far as Cwmbran or Newport. One participant had previously been provided accommodation but she had experienced vandalism which endangered her children and as a consequence she very quickly returned to the site. Therefore, it is important that appropriate accommodation is found in a suitable area.

1.90 The issue of Local authority waiting lists was raised. Interviewees believed that they were not a priority and yet nobody had been to view their current living circumstances. Plate 7 illustrates the bedroom where one adult and two daughters sleep, whilst the other child sleeps on a sofa.

Plate 7: Inside one of the caravans at Mountain View caravan site
Source: Dale Hall, 2007

1.91 A number of interview participants were determined not to move to bricks and mortar accommodation because their current circumstances offer a relatively cheap way of living and it is a traditional way of living.

Discrimination

1.92 Amongst Gypsies and Travellers on the Mountain View site there was some concern regarding discrimination. For instance, the street lighting was not functioning at the time of interviewing and it was believed that this would have been fixed if it had been a local authority housing estate. Similarly, prejudice was reported in accessing employment. One interviewee claimed: *when they know you're a gypsy they put you straight at the bottom of the housing list.* Such discrimination supposedly arises from a lack of understanding of Gypsies and Travellers.

1.93 Whilst there was strong feeling of discrimination, some interviewees remarked that housing provision is not discriminatory, as there is a long waiting list for everybody.

Summary Comparisons

1.94 This section summarises the findings from the quantitative study of Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation. Moreover, it draws together the key discussion points from the remainder of the chapter, highlighting significant similarities and differences between the Local Authority sites and the private authorised site.

Gypsies and Travellers Living in Bricks and Mortar Accommodation

1.95 Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation tend to be owner occupiers of terraced housing and are slightly more satisfied with their current accommodation than the overall population. Consequently, Gypsies and Travellers have less desire to move to alternative accommodation. The health of this part of the Gypsy and Traveller population is relatively poor.

Site Conditions

1.96 Generally, the conditions on Local authority sites are fairly good. At Local Authority sites there is provision of street lighting, roads are well kept, and individuals have access to a water supply and other utilities. Obviously, there are exceptions to this general trend, with many Gypsies and Travellers on Local Authority sites feeling with some justification that their amenity blocks and washing facilities are inadequate. At all sites there is concern that children and elderly living in caravans must go outside in order to use washing facilities. This is a particular issue on the private site, where the amenities block is in a state of particular disrepair.

Room to expand

1.97 There are considered to be too few pitches at some Local Authority sites, with limited space to expand, but this was not raised as an issue at Cwmcrachen. The issue has impact upon young people's choices of location. In contrast, there is reportedly space for expansion on the private site but greater amenities provision would first be required.

Access to Services and Support

1.98 Across all sites in Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent interviewees stated that they had access to health care and support services. Interviewees particularly highlighted the role played by key individuals in providing support services.

Gypsy and Traveller Children and Young People

1.99 Mixed concerns regarding children and young people are present at all sites. Some Gypsies and Travellers are content with current schooling and are not concerned by the fact that their children have a lack of contact with other children. By contrast, other Gypsies and Travellers are concerned that their children are treated differently in school because they are so highly represented in the school's population. As a consequence, these parents often move their children to other schools. Such complaints were less common at Cwmcrachen than elsewhere, but in all cases many parents were happy with their children's education.

Desire for Bricks and Mortar Accommodation

1.100 There exist mixed attitudes towards bricks and mortar accommodation in all sites. Some people definitely wish to move to bricks and mortar accommodation, sometimes to provide new opportunities for their children and also because their current accommodation is thought to be overcrowded. At the authorised private site the issue of overcrowding was a particular concern.

1.101 One interviewee was unable to establish if she would be able to move into Local Authority housing in a neighbouring county – and all those wishing to move seemed pessimistic about their chances of being housed in social rented housing.

1.102 Many Gypsies and Travellers would never move to bricks and mortar accommodation because they prefer to live in caravans or chalets. Equally, they would not move because their current lifestyle is more affordable and they are very close to family.

Discrimination

1.103 Discrimination was raised as a concern by those living on the private authorised site. Discrimination was thought to result from a lack of understanding by many people in Local Authorities and on misconceptions.

Summary of Key Points

- Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation tend to be owner occupiers of terraced housing and are slightly more satisfied with their current accommodation than the overall population. Consequently, Gypsies and Travellers have less desire to move to alternative accommodation. The health of this part of the Gypsy and Traveller population is relatively poor.
- Generally, the conditions on Local authority sites are much better than on private sites. At Local Authority sites there is greater provision of street lighting, roads are well kept, and individuals have access to a water supply. Obviously there are exceptions to this general trend, with some Gypsies and Travellers on Local Authority sites having limited access to wash facilities, and several people on the private site having excellent conditions.
- At all sites there is concern that children and elderly living in caravans must go outside in order to use washing facilities. This is a particular issue on the private site, where the amenities block is in a state of particular disrepair
- There are considered to be too few pitches at the Local Authority sites, with limited space to expand. This has impacted upon young people's choices of location. In contrast, there is reportedly space for expansion on the private site but greater amenities provision would first be required.
- Across all sites in Torfaen interviewees stated that they had access to health care and support services. Interviewees particularly highlighted the role played by key individuals in providing support services.
- Mixed concerns regarding children and young people are present at all sites. Some Gypsies and Travellers are content with current schooling and are not concerned by the fact that their children have a lack of contact with other children. By contrast, other Gypsies and Travellers are concerned that their children are treated differently in school because they are so highly represented in the school's population. As a consequence, these parents often move their children to other schools.
- There exist mixed attitudes towards bricks and mortar accommodation in all sites. Some people wish to move to bricks and mortar accommodation, sometimes to provide new opportunities for their children and also because their current accommodation is thought to be overcrowded. At the authorised private site the issue of overcrowding was a particular concern.
- One interviewee was unable to establish if she would be able to move into Local Authority housing in a neighbouring county – and all those wanting to move into social rented housing were pessimistic about their chances of doing so.
- On the contrary, many Gypsies and Travellers would never move to bricks and mortar accommodation because they prefer to live in caravans or chalets. Equally, they would not move because their current lifestyle is more affordable and they are very close to family.
- Discrimination was raised as a concern by those living on the private authorised site. Discrimination was thought to result from a lack of understanding by many people in Local Authorities and on misconceptions.