

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Service FAQs



Who are Gypsies and Travellers?

Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are defined as minority ethnic groups under the Race Relations Act (1976). There are a number of Gypsy and Traveller communities, each have different histories and traditions:

Gypsies are Romany ethnic groups who have lived in Britain for around 600 years. Their ancestors originate from northern India.

Irish Travellers are a nomadic group with a distinctive way of life who have been part of Irish and British society since ancient times.

New Travellers are people of settled background who adopted a traveling lifestyle in the more recent past, although some are now in their third or fourth generation of travelling.

Do Gypsies and Travellers work?

Similar to the settled community, Gypsies and Travellers work in a range of occupations; for example, as teachers, academics and health workers, while others work in the financial sector and in the sport, leisure and entertainment industries.

Traditionally, Gypsies and Travellers have also worked in a variety of trades such as landscape gardeners, agricultural workers, laying tarmac, motor trade workers, scrap metal dealers, tree fellers and so on.

Do Gypsies and Travellers pay tax?

The families in settled communities and permanent sites do pay council tax and those families living on Council owned sites pay rent to the Council. Income tax as with any other community is liable on money earned.

Does the Council have a duty to move Gypsies/Travellers when they are camped without the landowner's permission?

If Gypsies/Travellers are camped on Council land, the Council can take action to repossess their land. If they are on private land, it is the landowner's responsibility.

The Government has advised that when Gypsies/Travellers are not causing a nuisance, toleration of the site should be considered as part of a process.

If Gypsies/Travellers camp on private land, what can the landowner do?

Please see our [leaflet on guidance for landowners](#).

What if the landowner decides to let them stay on the land temporarily?

The landowner may consider toleration on their own land, however, may have to take consideration of planning legislation to prevent an unauthorised development.

I have seen Gypsies/Travellers camping on the side of the road and sometimes on parks or other Council-owned land, what can the Council do in these cases?

The Council will consider each case on its merits. In all cases the site is visited, and every effort made to make sure that the Gypsies/Travellers keep the site tidy and do not cause public health problems and/or distress to local residents.

Can the Council remove Gypsies/Travellers from their land immediately?

The Council must:

- show that the Gypsies/Travellers are on the land without consent;
- make enquiries regarding their general health, welfare and children's education;
- ensure that the Human Rights Acts 1998 has been fully complied with;
- follow a set procedure in terms of proving ownership of land and details of the unauthorised encampment.
- Consider toleration as well as eviction as part of a protocol with joint agencies

How long will it take for the Gypsies/Travellers to be removed?

This will depend upon the circumstances of each individual case and any court decisions. The Council needs to take account of the issues outlined above, as well as how soon they can obtain a Court hearing date.

Can the Court refuse to grant the Council an order to move Gypsies/Travellers on?

Yes. If there is a reason for the Gypsies/Travellers to stay on the site or if the Court believes that the Council have failed to make adequate enquiries regarding the general health and welfare of the Gypsies/Travellers. The Gypsies/Travellers may also make their case in court if they wish to be tolerated on the land.

Does the council provide sites where the Gypsies/Travellers can stay where facilities are provided for them?

We have fixed sites that provide permanent pitches around Norfolk and one in Suffolk.

What does the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller service do?

Council run permanent sites are managed by our Service. We also provide a sensitive welfare service for private and unauthorised sites. If Travellers occupy council-owned land, in all cases, Travellers are first asked informally to leave. The procedure to consider toleration or eviction as mentioned above, must be followed.

We can act on behalf of any landowner to provide a welfare/education service to the Gypsy/Travellers as well as prevention and enforcement of any unauthorised encampments.

Can the Police move Gypsies/Travellers on?

The Police may activate their powers under Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (CJPO Act) to require Gypsies/Travellers to leave. This can happen if the Police are satisfied that two or more people are trespassing on the land, and the landowner has taken reasonable steps to make them leave (and they have failed to do so). In addition, one of the following also has to apply:

- Damage has been caused to the land or property, or
- Threatening/abusive/insulting behaviour has been used against the occupier, his family or agent, or
- The trespassers have six or more vehicles.

Who is responsible for clearing and securing the site once the Gypsies/Travellers have left?

This will be down to the landowner. Our service can assist with signposting services for clearing and give advice on preventing further encampments to the landowner.