

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE OF 15 MARCH 2004

REPORT ON: RESEARCH INTO THE HOUSING NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS AND BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 126-2004

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To advise Housing Committee of the results of research undertaken into the housing needs and aspirations of Gypsies/Travellers (GT) and Black and Minority (BME) Communities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that Housing Committee notes:
- i. The research findings outlined in the précis attached as (*Appendix 1 and 2*).
 - ii. Agrees that the research findings will be used to inform the appropriate sections of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and future developments of policy.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 ITEMS

- 4.1. The results of the research projects will inform the contents of the LHS and allow the strategy to identify housing proposals which will enable all our citizens to lead full, active lives, in a healthy, safe environment, free from crime and the fear of crime.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The production of a LHS will facilitate the identification of housing need in Dundee across a wide range of special needs. These findings will assist this process with 2 specific customer groups.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. At its meeting of 21 October 2002, Housing Committee agreed a report (693-2002) on "*The Structure and Delivery of Local Housing Strategies*".

- 6.2. It noted that the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 makes it a requirement for all Local Authorities to produce Local Housing Strategies (LHS) and agreed that the Housing Department would lead on production of the LHS through an editorial team chaired by Housing but also including staff from: Planning and Transportation, Social Work and NHS Tayside.
- 6.3. Committee further noted that joint research and assessment of need had been completed for the Housing Market Context Statement and that further work on Minority Ethnic and Gypsy/Traveller Needs was in the pipeline.
- 6.4. In December 2002, after competitive tenders were obtained and interviews held, a contract to undertake the research into the housing needs of Gypsy/Travellers, was awarded to the School of the Built Environment at Heriot Watt University.
- 6.5. The research was funded jointly by Dundee City Council, Angus Council, Perth and Kinross Council and Communities Scotland from grants made available by the Scottish Executive to facilitate the development of LHS. A précis of the research findings is attached as Appendix 1.
- 6.6. In June 2003, again after obtaining tenders and interviewing, a contract was awarded to University of Dundee, Department of Geography, to undertake research into the housing needs and aspirations of BME Communities.
- 6.7. This research was funded jointly by Dundee City Council, Angus Council and Communities Scotland, again through grants made available by the Scottish Executive. A précis of the research findings is attached as Appendix 2.
- 6.8. The full reports of the findings of both research projects will be published shortly.

7. **CONSULTATION**

- 7.1. The Chief Executive and all Directors have been consulted on the content of this report.
- 7.2. Consultation with appropriate organisations and individuals was undertaken as part of both projects.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- a. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- b. Structure and Delivery of Local Housing Strategies.
(Committee Report 693-2002) October 2002.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

APPENDIX 1

Précis: An Assessment of the Housing Needs and Aspirations of Gypsies/Travellers in Tayside

A study of the housing needs and aspirations of Gypsies/Travellers in Tayside was jointly commissioned by Communities Scotland, Angus Council, Dundee City Council and Perth and Kinross Council. The focus of the study was to explore the extent and nature of any social exclusion experienced by Gypsies/Travellers with an aim of informing forward planning, strategy and policy development and assisting the development of Local Housing Strategies.

Key findings from the research were:

- Some local authority Gypsy/Traveller sites that were originally developed as temporary sites have become permanent, thus resulting in a shortfall in “transit” spaces.
- Residents on local authority sites are generally satisfied with the sense of safety and lack of harassment but there is dissatisfaction with facilities (or lack of these) and with having higher costs than those living in council houses.
- There is a perception among some members of the Gypsy/Traveller community that local authorities offer them housing in bad areas. Better conditions and opportunities for their children are a strong motivation for Gypsies/Travellers to move into a house, but they fear their possible exposure to drugs and crime in housing estates. Many returned to sites after disliking living in a house.
- The high incidence of health problems among Gypsies/Travellers has implications for the provision of facilities on sites. Gypsies/Travellers are aware of services and how to access them, with most reporting no difficulty in access and very good standards in some services, though there is some dissatisfaction with access to GP services.
- Gypsy/Traveller parents prefer to look after younger children themselves rather than use nursery services, but generally perceive primary school education to be very good. However, racial harassment and bullying are a major source of concern, particularly in secondary education.
- Private motor vehicles are the main mode of transport amongst the Gypsy/Traveller community, and a number of sites have poor public transport access to local amenities.
- Travelling and living in a caravan is important for young Gypsies/Travellers’ sense of identity during the transition to adulthood. However, having a site address was seen as a problem, with some young Gypsies/Travellers experiencing bullying and discrimination during education and when looking for employment.
- There is confusion over availability of funding mechanisms for adaptations to meet the health requirements of older people. There is a perception among site residents that problems they faced in obtaining adaptations to the facilities arose from an assumption that they should consider living in housing.
- Gypsies/Travellers are facing difficulties in maintaining their culture and values. There is a decline in nomadism for practical reasons, and there is a two-way flow of residents between sites and housing, due to both push and pull factors.

- The level of Gypsy/Traveller representation has improved in recent years, but many Gypsies/Travellers feel that this could be improved further. However, only a minority of

Gypsies/Travellers want to or feel able to become involved in planning for housing and service provision for their community and to do so would need training and support.

Introduction

A central national policy agenda is the promotion of social justice and the mainstreaming of equalities into policy and practice. The Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee identified the need to include Gypsies/Travellers in the regulatory framework of Communities Scotland and for local authorities to assess the needs of this community in Local Housing Strategies. Gypsies/Travellers have been included in Scottish Executive guidance on the development of Local Housing Strategies and the role of Communities Scotland in regulation and inspection, as well as in performance standards for local authorities and registered social landlords.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 aims to make racial equality integral to public functions. Local authorities are required to assess the impact of their policies and functions on race equality and on the promotion of good race relations. The Equal Opportunities Committee recommended that Gypsies/Travellers be recognised as an ethnic group for the purposes and understanding of legislation and policies in Scotland. There is scope for positive action initiatives in the development of affordable and appropriate housing for the Gypsy/Traveller community, to include the broad range of accommodation provision and to include the provision of site accommodation, both permanent and temporary.

This study examines the extent and nature of social exclusion experienced by Gypsies/Travellers in Tayside in accessing accommodation and provides an opportunity to explore issues around access to other services e.g. health, education and employment and, more broadly, their involvement in consultations and participation as tenants and as citizens in community planning.

Key Findings

Housing needs and aspirations of Gypsies/Travellers

Some local authority sites, originally developed as temporary sites, have become permanent, and there is a need to provide more “transit” spaces. Good site management and residents’ character greatly contribute to quality of life on the site. Residents on local authority sites are generally satisfied with the sense of safety and lack of harassment, but dissatisfied with facilities (or lack of these), and they feel they are being discriminated against because they have higher costs than those living in council houses.

There is a perception among Gypsies/Travellers that council housing they get offered is in bad areas. A strong motivation for Gypsies/Travellers to move into a house is providing their children with a safer environment and access to education, as well as convenience. However, they fear the exposure their children might have to a drugs culture and crime in housing estates. Many Gypsies/Travellers returned to sites after disliking living in a house.

Nomadism among Gypsies/Travellers is declining, largely because of a lack of appropriate transit sites or stopping places or due to restrictive policies on permanent local authority sites, but also due to commitment to their children’s educational needs. Attending religious conventions is the main reason for travel for a growing number of Gypsies/Travellers. Gypsies/Travellers in houses are less restricted on time away than local authority site residents, and therefore finding travelling easier.

Access to and use of other services

A high proportion of Gypsies/Travellers suffer from health problems, particularly asthma and arthritis. This has implications for the provision of facilities on sites. Gypsies/Travellers are aware of available services and how to access them, with most reporting no difficulty in

accessing services, except for a minority who were dissatisfied with accessing GP services, particularly if resident on an unofficial site or roadside. Generally they confirmed that the standard of some services was very good.

Gypsy/Traveller parents prefer to look after younger children themselves rather than use nursery services, the quality of which was reported as variable. Primary school education is perceived to be very good. However, racial harassment and bullying are a major source of concern, particularly in secondary education, and anti-bullying or anti-racial harassment policies are perceived to be highly ineffective in high schools.

Private motor vehicles are the main mode of transport amongst Gypsies/Travellers, both for those on a site and in the settled community. Many Gypsies/Travellers on some sites still find that lack of efficient public transport is a problem in accessing local amenities.

Though some Gypsies/Travellers feel that their level of representation has improved in recent years, many more feel this is still ineffective and could be improved. Very few Gypsies/Travellers want to or feel able to get involved in planning for housing and service provision for their community and to do so would need training and support. A number of interviewees preferred qualitative one-to-one interviewing by a neutral researcher as a method of obtaining Gypsy/Traveller views, though this is not representation.

Young people

Travelling and visiting sites is an important social experience for young Gypsies/Travellers, some of whom valued sites where there was opportunity to interact and develop relationships with other Gypsies/Travellers. During the transition to adulthood, it is especially important for young Gypsies/Travellers to fulfil their culture through travelling and living in a caravan.

Experiences of education and looking for employment included bullying and discrimination. Some issues relating to identification of self are different from those faced by people from a "visible" minority ethnic group. Having a site address in particular was seen as a problem for finding work or opening a bank account.

Older people

Two of the LA sites in the study have been home to some residents since they opened over 20 years ago. Health issues are of particular importance to those growing old on these sites, and difficulties were found in obtaining full support to adapt site accommodation to meet their needs. Further in depth examination is required on legislative and other issues relating to this.

There is a perception among site residents that attitudes underpinning the problems they faced in obtaining adaptations to the facilities were discriminatory, with an assumption being made that they should consider moving into housing. Some older people had applied for housing, but others sought to maintain their culture, to live in a caravan, and to be close to the family and social networks that provided them with care and support.

Gypsy/Traveller culture and values

Gypsies/Travellers face difficulties in maintaining their culture and values. Nomadism is declining due to a pragmatic rather than a cultural change, difficulties in safe travelling and accessing sites temporarily, and restrictions on time away from sites. However, count returns show continuing use of these areas for travelling, particularly in the summer.

There is a two-way flow of residents between sites and housing. In addition, there is an indication of hidden demand for site provision on two of the local authority sites, as applications increase when vacancies arise. Push factors from sites appear to be related to conditions of the facilities and costs. Push factors from housing relate to actual or feared harassment and feelings of isolation away from the Gypsy/Traveller community, and pull

factors towards sites are the support of family and friends there and the desire to live in a caravan again.

Main Recommendations

The issues emerging from this study suggest the following key recommendations.

Accommodation on Sites and in Housing:

- The condition of facilities and amenities on sites continue to require improvements, and options for these should be reviewed in consultation with site residents, acknowledging that expectations of accommodation have changed.
- Local authorities should continue to have a proactive role in relation to sites, identifying locations for permanent and temporary sites, working with private site owners to increase provision for Gypsies/Travellers, and monitoring and reviewing rent and services costs to ensure some parity with costs in social housing.
- The provision of funding should be reviewed and the legal status clarified, in terms of housing legislation, in order to address the needs of Gypsies/Travellers.
- Local authorities and RSLs should improve provision for the settled community, consulting on their specific accommodation expectations – e.g. caravan parking.
- Housing allocation should be monitored to ensure that there are equal outcomes for Gypsies/Travellers in the provision of housing, and should also be made sensitive to the issue of racial harassment.

Health, Travel and Services:

- Site rules and regulations should be reviewed to address practices that are perceived by residents as restrictive, for example limits on time spent travelling and rules on access.
- There is a requirement for further investigation of Gypsies/Travellers' health, including consideration of specialist provision or responsibilities for health services for Gypsies/Travellers, along with training needs on awareness of the health needs of this community.
- There is a need for information to be collected, in consultation with Gypsies/Travellers, on their use of education services to identify their needs and consider how to address them, including the delivery of further literacy skills.
- Local authorities should consider access to services and transport when identifying sites and discuss route improvements with site residents and bus companies.
- Local authorities need to continue to develop and improve consultation, including discussion with local Gypsies/Travellers on appropriate support to train representatives.
- Implementation of policies and the impact on racial equality for Gypsies/Travellers should continue to be monitored as required by the RR(A)A, paying particular attention to the duty to promote good relations between the settled community and Gypsies/Travellers.

About the Study

The research was conducted by Delia Lomax, Cathie Fancy, Gina Netto, Harry Smith and Petra Biberbach of Heriot-Watt University. The project methodology had three main components:

- in-depth interviews with Gypsies/Travellers living on all three local authority sites in Tayside, on a private site designated for Gypsies/Travellers, and in housing
- interviews with site managers and area housing managers for the local housing office, and discussions with officers from other departments and from health services
- discussion and analysis of local policies and the returns to the Scottish Executive of the biannual Gypsy/Traveller Counts for January 2003 and July 2002 and collation of data on rents in other local authority areas.

The Way Forward

The findings and recommendations of this research will be used by community planning partners involved in the provision of accommodation and services for Gypsies/Travellers in Tayside to inform strategy and policy development and programme planning. In this respect, it will inform local authority Local Housing Strategies.

APPENDIX 2

Precis: An Assessment of the Housing Needs and Aspirations of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities Living in Dundee and Angus

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households have different housing needs to the population at large in terms of dwelling size, location and tenure. In addition, there are cultural factors that make some support services such as sheltered housing and temporary accommodation less suitable for BME individuals. Local authorities should consider these issues when developing their Local Housing Strategy (LHS). While the results of this research relate specifically to Angus and Dundee, many of the findings are likely to apply across most of Scotland.

Key Findings

- BME groups accounted for only 2% of Scotland's population. 0.8% of the Angus population and 3.7% of Dundee's population in 2001. These figures reflect the concentration of BME groups in Scotland's cities.
- All BME groups experienced strong population and household growth between 1991 and 2001 in Angus, Dundee and Scotland as a whole.
- BME households are on average, considerably larger than white households, although average household size fell for all groups between 1991 and 2001.
- All BME groups have low uptake of social housing, although the proportion of most BME groups renting from a Housing Association is rising.
- The proportion of all BME groups aged over 70 years is rising rapidly.
- The housing aspirations of most BME communities are ultimately broadly similar to those of the white population, i.e. a preference for suburban living and owner occupation. However, these aspirations are only being met to a significant degree by some members of the Bangladeshi and Indian communities in Angus and Dundee. The need for proximity to work and, for the Pakistani community, place of worship, makes suburban living impractical.
- BME homeless people are unlikely to seek assistance from the local authority, due to the stigmatisation this would bring from their own community. In addition, hostel and temporary single unit accommodation are both highly unsuitable for many BME homeless people, particularly Asian women.
- Fear of racial harassment means that certain areas and tenures become 'off-limits', restricting housing availability. However, racial harassment appears to be less severe in Angus than in Dundee.
- Language is a significant deterrent to members of BME communities communicating with 'officialdom', be it voluntary or state sectors.
- There is a degree of stigmatisation within BME communities associated with raising issues with 'officialdom', through fear of provoking racial harassment by appearing to be seeking undue assistance.

Demographic Characteristics

Although accounting for only 0.8% of the Angus and 3.7% of the Dundee population in 2001, the BME population in both areas is growing rapidly (by 71% and 48.8% respectively between 1991 and 2001). Growth in the number of BME households is stronger than that of population, since average household size is falling. In Angus, BME groups are focussed on Monifieth and Forfar, with small clusters of Pakistani residents in Brechin, and Chinese in Keptie. In Dundee, BME groups are focussed on the Hilltown area of the City, although the Indian community tends to live slightly to the south of this main cluster, possibly due to greater income levels and housing choice than other groups.

Most BME groups, but in particular Pakistani and South Asian households, are larger in size than any other ethnic group, with attendant housing space needs. However, there are substantial differences between BME groups in average household size, with Indian households being the same size as white households in Angus, and in Dundee being only slightly larger than white households.

Members of all BME groups are overall considerably younger than their white counterparts. The proportion and number of all BME groups aged over 70 years in Angus, Dundee and Scotland is set to rise in the long term, although from low bases.

Housing Characteristics

All BME groups have a low uptake of social housing, representing an enduring challenge to social housing providers. However, although still under-represented in the Housing Association sector, the proportion of most BME groups in Angus, Dundee and Scotland renting from a Housing Association rose between 1991 and 2001. All BME groups have a high propensity to rent from a private landlord. Despite high levels of home ownership, BME groups are becoming less likely to own their home, in contrast to the white population, in which home ownership is becoming more widespread.

House conditions also present a challenge, with all BME groups except Indian households being less likely than white households to have central heating. A greater proportion of all BME households experience overcrowding in their accommodation than white households, reflecting difficulty finding affordable housing of a suitable size.

Social Characteristics

A lower proportion of each BME group is in employment than of the white population and a lower proportion of each has access to a car, reflecting the weaker socio-economic position of many BME households. Of the BME groups, Indians have the highest proportion in employment and the highest car ownership.

Pakistani and South Asian households are dominated by a traditional family structure, with high proportions of households falling into the 'couples with dependent children' category. This, however, is much less marked for all other BME groups.

The proportion of Indian and Pakistani and South Asian people born in the UK rose slightly between 1991 and 2001, although the absolute number of people in these, and other BME groups born overseas, continues to rise. Thus, there will be a growing number of people in Angus, Dundee and Scotland in years to come, who do not have English as their first language, with attendant challenges for local authorities in terms of communication and engagement.

Needs and Aspirations

Overall, it appears that the housing needs and aspirations of BME communities in both Angus and Dundee are broadly similar to those of the population as a whole, with preferences for suburban living, owner occupation and detached housing with gardens, car parking and front and rear entrances. However, there are four important differences between BME groups and the population as a whole.

Firstly, many areas are considered to be unsafe places to live by BME families because of fear of racial harassment. This is particularly true of the peripheral social housing estates in Dundee, although also of some inner city neighbourhoods and social estates in the main Angus towns. Contrary to widely held popular belief, there is limited evidence of a strong desire to live in close proximity to fellow members of the same ethnic group *per se*. Rather, ethnic clustering is a desire to be close to family and friends that is shared with the white population, and also to avoid, or mitigate, the fear of racial harassment.

Secondly, most BME communities require larger properties, mainly in terms of the number of bedrooms, than the population as a whole. This reflects larger average household size than the white population. Although such properties exist, they are often unaffordable or in locations considered unsafe or isolating by members of BME communities. BME households often access affordable large properties in the private rented sector. However, HMO licensing is apparently causing a worrying withdrawal of such properties from the private rented market.

Thirdly, the need for sheltered housing is much less amongst BME communities. This is due to a combination of the younger age profile of the BME population and cultural traditions of caring for elderly people within the extended family. Although not of immediate concern, this situation may change in the longer term owing to the ageing of the BME population and the increased professional careers and nuclear family living arrangements being pursued by younger members of BME communities.

Finally, BME homeless people are unlikely to seek assistance from the local authority due to the stigmatisation this would bring from their own community. In addition, hostel and temporary single unit accommodation are both highly unsuitable for many BME homeless people. This is particularly true of Asian women.

Barriers and Constraints

Racial harassment and fear of racial harassment constitute barriers to BME communities meeting their housing needs. Fear of racial harassment means that many areas are considered unsafe places to live. This has further consequences for tenure choice because some social housing estates are considered unsafe, in particular the peripheral council housing estates in Dundee. However, this situation is more acute in Dundee than in Angus.

Fear of racial harassment has knock-on effects for housing availability and affordability because the housing market becomes effectively much smaller for members of some households, particularly in Dundee, where many areas are considered unsafe. These factors are the most acute for the Pakistani community which, certainly in Dundee, appears to bear the brunt of racial harassment and are also generally less well-off financially compared to other BME communities. Pakistani households are also on average larger than those in other BME groups, further restricting housing availability owing to the limited availability of larger properties.

BME communities reportedly face a number of institutional barriers and constraints to meeting their housing needs and aspirations. Institutional factors are perhaps those over

which local authorities have more leverage compared to deep-seated structural issues such as poverty and social issues such as racial harassment.

BME groups reportedly have a limited understanding of social housing options. For example, there is a lack of appreciation of the difference between local authority and housing association housing. In addition, BME residents generally feel poorly informed about housing issues. There is also a widely held misperception that children of different sex will need to share bedrooms in social housing, up to or beyond 12 years of age.

Responses to the household survey suggest that Angus Council and Dundee City Council remain important ports of call in their respective areas regarding housing issues and problems. The Property Shop choice-based lettings scheme in Dundee was praised by interviewees in this research, for the flexibility and speed that it offered and it was thought that these aspects are of particular benefit to members of BME communities with particular housing needs.

Communication and Dialogue

In addition to difficulties associated with language barriers, BME communities tend to be characterised as lacking a 'culture of complaint'. Self-help within households or families is the norm and there is stigma attached to asking for assistance from, or complaining to, officials or support agencies. This barrier to civic participation may to a large extent be founded upon cultural norms. However, it is certainly reinforced by the common perceptions that individuals cannot influence the situation for the better and in many cases people fear negative repercussions. Depending on the situation, repercussion that people fear range from worsening of racial harassment or loss of face or isolation within their ethnic community, to the discovery of irregularities surrounding immigration, taxation, benefit or employment procedures, even if any irregularities are unintentional.

THE WAY FORWARD

Racial Harassment and Housing Choice

If people from BME communities were provided with adequate support in some of the communities that are already semi-mixed, a successful strategic approach to integration could be developed. People will not necessarily object to moving into an area where there is already some representation of BME groups – even if different to their own – as they do not feel so visible and therefore, vulnerable to being singled out where there is some BME presence.

Increased availability of larger dwelling units in areas in or close to Hilltown in Dundee would also go some way toward meeting BME housing need. This, of course, need not necessarily be accommodation for social rent but could be provided by private house builders for purchase or private rent. Opportunities to facilitate this could be investigated, for example, through planning agreements. There is less need for this type of action in Angus, where BME populations are less clustered and lower in number.

Social Housing

As noted in the previous section, the increase in the number of BME households in both Angus and Dundee renting from Housing Associations is encouraging. Opening up social housing options to BME communities has the potential to go a long way towards meeting housing need. A key challenge in this respect is to increase awareness of social housing options available, particularly from Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).

The 'Citywide' community paper recently launched through the Maxwelltown Information Centre in Dundee includes articles translated by a growing number of volunteers into English, Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. This paper may be an appropriate medium for disseminating information in the future, to a wide range of people from BME communities, primarily in Dundee. In Angus, given the very low number of BME households, 'one-to-one' and informal approaches to information dissemination may be appropriate, for example, advertising social housing options in BME businesses or through existing contacts.

Consultation

In terms of fostering meaningful consultation with BME communities in the long term, communication and trust are key. In order to achieve these, two elements are vital, first: verbal communication should be used as much as possible and **all** written communication translated, second: consultation should be decentralised and utilise pre-existing community groups and networks.

However, not all community groups meet on a regular basis and in some cases, visits to groups may not be an appropriate or effective means of building upon the links established. A degree of flexibility will be required in terms of the approach taken in relation to different community groups.

About the Study

This study was carried out by Dr Donald Houston and Dr Katrina Allen, both at the Centre for Applied Population Research, University of Dundee. The results are based on four strands of research:

- Analysis of the Census of Population, 1991 and 2001
- Interviews with BME community groups
- A survey of BME households in Angus and Dundee
- A community workshop