A Grant-makers Guide to Supporting Gypsies and Travellers
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SNAP SHOT
A Traveller’s view of Grant makers

• It’s hard to say whether we don’t get funding because of how we’ve filled the form in or because we are a Gypsy and Traveller group.

• We’ve been running without money for a while now. We’ve made applications and funders don’t want to fund us. It all seems to be about outcomes and we don’t understand the language.

• Grant makers need to be more aware of the issues and how they affect our lives. Do they know what it’s like to be stopped several times in one day by the Police just because of being a Gypsy? They need to talk to us – meet some of us and discover that we’re people too.
This guide has been produced to provide some basic facts and information about Gypsies and Travellers as well as to look at some of the issues that grant makers might encounter when considering supporting this community. As a result of our work with the Gypsy and Traveller community over the last eight years, the Travellers Aid Trust is uniquely position to do this and we welcome the opportunity to share what we have learnt with others.

Gypsies and Traveller are not currently included in the National Census as a distinct category and as a result, there is no accurate data on how many there actually are in the UK today. Government estimate places the total numbers at around 200,000 in housing and 100,000 in caravans, similar in size to the Sikh community. Although their number may be comparatively small, the difficulties they face are disproportionately large. Gypsies and Travellers experience the highest infant mortality rates and lowest life expectancy of any community in the country and their children are singled out as the most at risk within the education system.

As a grant maker, supporting this community can at times be challenging. Factors such as illiteracy, cultural attitudes or practices, internal politics and marginalization can present barriers both to the community as applicants and to the grant maker as funder. The strength of prejudice and hatred that the general public and some areas of the media openly express towards this community can also impact on grant making practices, especially in relation to grant makers who rely on broadcast appeals and public donations. This results in the support given to Gypsies and Travellers often being discrete as opposed to overt. Although there are a number of grant makers who have a long track record of supporting Gypsies and Travellers, only a handful openly state that Travellers fall within their funding criteria.

However, many of the issues that affect Travellers, such as poor health, domestic violence, low educational attainment, rural isolation, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, poverty and homelessness are common social themes within our society. There are generalist grant programmes that target these issues and to which Gypsies and Travellers should be able to apply for help. For a number of reasons, Gypsies and Travellers are not effectively accessing many of these grants and this guide is part of a range of work by the Trust to address this. Other work includes bringing grant makers and Gypsy and Traveller groups together to help raise awareness of each others work, working directly with community groups or facilitating training to help strengthen their capacity to access grants, and developing grants programmes that help sustain and strengthen the work already being done by grass roots organisations.

We know from our research that more work needs to be done within the community itself to strengthen capacity. However, capacity building with the Gypsy and Traveller community can be more complex than simply providing training. Supporting Travellers often requires a more pro-
active hands-on approach and can be time intensive. This may cause difficulties, in particular for some of the bigger grant makers who receive large numbers of applications across a broad spectrum of beneficiaries. Whether a large or small grant maker, dedicating resources to a small and select number of beneficiaries may not only be impossible or impractical, but also be seen as unfair to other beneficiary groups. In addition to this, some of the requirements set by grant makers can go against the grain of Gypsy and Traveller culture. The kind of accountability, the level of monitoring or data collection required and the types of organisational structures common in mainstream society, do not often blend well with the way things are done within Gypsy and Traveller communities. This does not mean that accountability, data collection and structures do not exists, but that they are done in a different way and by a different model. Another factor is that Travellers can often tell you what you want to hear rather than what they want or need. This is not meant as a deception but is a mechanism for self preservation that has emerged out of years of persecution. Breaking through this can be very difficult and requires a relationship of trust to build up between grant makers and the Gypsies and Travellers concerned. It is therefore not a case of simply imparting skills, but finding a way to engage Travellers into the grant making process without it compromising those elements of their culture that make them who they are.

Our research also shows that grant makers need and want more information about this community as well as guidance on how to make their grants programmes more accessible to Gypsies and Travellers. Despite the difficulties, this community is inspirational in what it has achieved on its own and with the help of grant makers over the years. We believe that this is a community driven to help itself and we want to help them achieve this. This guide sets out some of the basic facts about Gypsies and Travellers, some common difficulties and approaches in relation to supporting Gypsies and Travellers, a basic definition of the community and the different groups that make it up, important cultural values or norms, a little history of the legislation that has affected Gypsies and Travellers in recent times and some useful contacts for further information. The generic term ‘Traveller’, will be used throughout the rest of the text and is intended to cover all types of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK. A more detailed definition of the different groups within this diverse community is provided further on. The Trust hopes that this guide will go some way to helping grant makers increase their understanding of this community and reach out to Travellers more effectively.
ESSENTIAL FACTS

- Travellers have been an integral part of our society for over 500 years, working as agricultural labourers, horse traders, craftsmen, musicians, in the scrap trade and as soldiers.
- Half a million Gypsies were murdered during the Holocaust by the Nazis.
- Two Victoria Crosses were awarded to Gypsies during the I & II World Wars for bravery.
- Charlie Chaplain, Mother Theresa, Eric Cantona, Bob Hoskins, Michael Cane, David Essex and Elvis Presley all came from Gypsy backgrounds.
- In the last year alone, 3 MBEs have been awarded to Gypsies and Traveller women for services to the community.
- The Traveller Law Reform Coalition was awarded the Liberty Human Rights Award in 2004.
Some general points about Traveller groups......

There are a number of common themes that run across the Traveller community in relation to how community groups are set up and run. These issues are not unique to the Traveller community and are common with many grass roots community groups. There are of course exceptions to this with a number of groups being very professional, successful and effective. However, most will experience at least one or more of these and they can be a real obstacle in securing funding and attaining sustainability.

In the first instance, many of the groups have very similar aims and appear to overlap in their objectives. This can cause concerns for grant makers over the possibility of duplicating work. Secondly, many groups are not technically ‘fit for purpose’, with insufficient capacity in relation to staffing, resources and management. Thirdly, there can be a lack of transparency and ‘democracy’ with many groups being lead by strong individuals and/or family run. In addition to this, the level of skills on management committees is generally weak with membership often being tokenistic. Finally, despite the above points, many groups still manage to achieve very positive outcomes for the benefit of their communities, but these outcomes are often ‘soft’ and indistinct.

Grant makers have taken a range of approaches to deal with these issues and in relation to Traveller groups this has included funding broad capacity development projects, providing basic core costs while groups develop and improve internal structures, providing funding to some of the larger more established groups to enable them to support smaller emerging local groups and funding consultants to work with communities to help them identify needs and ways of addressing these needs. Although a significant amount of work has been done with this community over the last 10 years by grant makers to help them have a voice in policy development, law reform and to develop capacity, the main advances have been with the handful of well-established national and regional groups. The many smaller regional and local groups that have emerged recently are still in their infancy and continue to struggle in this respect. It is in relation to these smaller struggling groups that the context of this guide is set.

One factor regarding much of the work done to date with groups has been an element of joint funding and the use of the Trust as a ‘broker’ and facilitator of grants. The Trust has not only funded work directly, but worked in partnership with other grant makers to administered grant programmes on behalf of other trusts and foundations. This has proved an effective way to address some of the difficulties that grant makers can encounter when wishing to support a community that can require ongoing ‘hands on’ assistance in managing and servicing grants.
Common difficulties for Travellers applying for funding

There are a number of issues that can make applying for funding difficult for Travellers. These are:

1. **Literacy & numeracy**—many adult Travellers have very poor or limited literary skills. This makes understanding grant making criteria and filling in forms, let alone identifying which grant maker to approach, extremely difficult. Although many Travellers run extremely successful businesses, traditional book-keeping is not common and many transactions are done verbally or in cash over a handshake.

2. **IT Skills and internet access**—many Travellers have limited or no IT skills and access to the internet. This causes great difficulty in relation to searching for suitable grant programmes and dealing with on-line application forms.

3. **Access to services**—there are very few service providers, whether statutory or voluntary, which are adequately resourced, informed about and geared up to help Travellers. Because of a widespread lack of training on Traveller culture and the issues that they face, many service providers are not able to support Travellers effectively. Although there are some very good examples of authorities and agencies working successfully in partnership with the Traveller community, these are the exception as opposed to the rule.

4. **Personal circumstances**—most Travellers face difficulties in their own personal circumstances. This is usually centred on a lack of secure accommodation (i.e., threat of eviction) which impacts directly on access to adequate healthcare, education and employment. Those Travellers that are working to help their own communities either face these issues themselves or are trying to help individuals and families in crisis with little or no support. Despite being in need of funding, dealing with application forms and the documentation that is required to accompany it, becomes a secondary priority.
FAST FACTS

- English & Welsh Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Scottish Gypsy Travellers are all recognized as distinct ethnic minority groups in the UK.
- A Mori poll carried out in 2004 revealed that 1 in 3 respondents admitted personal prejudice against Gypsies and Travellers.
- In 2007, the government defined Travellers as ‘the most excluded ethnic minorities in this country’.
- A recent Equalities and Human Rights Commission report estimated that between 61% and 81% of Gypsy or Traveller women “had experienced direct domestic abuse”.
- Life expectancy in Traveller women is estimated to be 15yr less than the average nationwide.
- Infant mortality rates are reported to be 3 times higher amongst Travellers than in the settled community and Traveller mothers are 20 times more likely to experience the death of a child.
- According to OFSTED, Traveller children remain the most ‘at risk’ within the educational system.
- Research by the Children’s Society reported that 63% of young Travellers have been bullied.
- According to government figures, 25% of Travellers in the UK are technically ‘homeless’.
Improving take up of grants programmes

Due to the long history of discrimination experienced by this community, Travellers are very wary about openly asking for help from anyone. This is compounded by low literacy levels and a sense of pride at not being seen as ignorant, uneducated or needing charity. There are four factors that will make all the difference for Travellers wishing to apply for funding from grant makers. These are:

1. **An acknowledgement within grant guidelines that Travellers fall within the beneficiary group.** Only a very small number of grant makers actually state that they will consider applications from Travellers. Although Travellers may well fall into the general beneficiary group of a grant maker, unless this is explicitly stated, Travellers will assume their applications will not be welcomed.

2. **A contact within a grant making organisation whom they can talk directly to.** Only a limited number of Travellers are fully literate or have access to the internet so dealing with complex guidelines and on line forms can be very intimidating. Having someone who will take the time to speak to them helps to break down the mistrust and apprehensions Travellers naturally feel when approaching someone or something that is unfamiliar.

3. **The option to submit an application through a DVD, audio CD or over the phone.** Travellers can find it very difficult to effectively express what they want and need on a piece of paper. Coming from a strong oral tradition, they need to be able to tell their story and a 5 minute conversation or film can often put across a far stronger and clearer message than 5 pages of written information.

4. **A visit by grant makers to projects or community groups to see first hand the work that is being done.** This is particularly relevant for grant makers who feel that there is potential merit in an initial application but insufficient or unclear information to back it up. Traveller applicants can often fail to provide the kind of statistical and organisational information that many grant makers require simply because they do not understand its relevance and have failed to collect it. A visit to a project or community group will often provide grant makers with a wealth of information that the applicants failed to provide or were unable to articulate on paper.
Common difficulties for Grant Makers supporting Travellers

There are a number of issues that can arise when assessing application forms or monitoring grants to Travellers. These come about primarily as a result of a failure to supply sufficient supporting documentation when applying or reporting back to grant makers. We believe that this is due to a general lack of capacity within groups. However, there is another factor which has more to do with Traveller culture as opposed to organisational competence. Grant makers expect Travellers to be accountable to them, whereas Travellers see themselves as primarily accountable to their communities.

1. **Monitoring and evaluation**—very few Gypsy and Traveller community led groups, like much of the community sector, carry out proper monitoring and evaluation. This is due in large part to a failure to understand the relevance and importance of this exercise along with a lack of experience in how to carry it out effectively. For Travellers, the indicator of their success is how their work affects their community and this is their primary concern. Many groups find the various requirements entailed in reporting back to grant makers as a distraction from the hard and important work they are doing. They will often say that if you want to know how your money has been spent, come and see for yourself! There is also the issue of privacy. Travellers can often confuse a request for data on the work they are doing with a request for detailed personal information about the community they are helping. Due to a history of ethnic cleansing, Travellers are inherently wary of any data collected on them and are reluctant to gather it from their own community for the benefit of an ‘outsider’.

2. **Accounts and annual reports**—as with monitoring and evaluation, many Traveller groups do not see the relevance of keeping detailed accounts or producing glossy reports. What matters is the work they do on the ground. Travellers can be fiercely proud and can mistakenly take offence when accounts are requested or questioned. This is not because of any attempt to misappropriate funds, but due to a lack of familiarity with the requirements of servicing a grant. Rather than risk any question of their integrity, some groups will send every single original receipt and invoice in to account for their expenditure.

3. **Internal politics**—as with many minority communities, factions and rivalries also affect the Traveller community. This can be very damaging for the community as grant makers become unsure of who they are supporting and whether the work they have funded or are considering supporting has the support of the community it is intended to benefit.
Improving support for Travellers beneficiaries

It is not always possible to overcome all of the difficulties that have been identified in this guide, but there are a number of approaches that grant makers can take which can help. These are:

1. **Monitoring and Evaluation**—during our research, Travellers stated that grant makers needed to be much clearer from the beginning what exactly was expected back from groups at the end of the grant period and why. Many community groups struggle to understand 'funding jargon' and Travellers are not exception. This may mean a conversation via the phone or at a meeting with the beneficiary group clarifying and agreeing with them what kind of information is expected back and how they might go about collecting this. Requesting a basic interim report or carrying out a phone interview half way through the grant period can also help to make sure the beneficiary is still clear about what is expected and to help identify any problems they may be experiencing early on.

2. **Annual reports and accounts**—again, Travellers requested greater clarity at the beginning of the grant period about what was expected at the end of the grant period and in what format. If grant makers require annual reports and independently examined accounts along with an end of grant report, they need to be sure that the group actually has the capacity to deliver this and if not (which is often the case), consider helping the group by providing training or by identify other agencies that can help them meet these requirements. Travellers will often say that they can meet a requirement but do not in fact have any experience or additional resources to achieve it. If they are a new group or have no record of providing these documents, the assumption should be that they will need support in delivering this.

3. **Internal politics**— There is a well established network of Gypsy and Traveller community groups and national voluntary organisations working with and for Travellers. Although many of the groups within this network have differing views on certain issues, most of them manage to work in a cooperative manner with one another. As many grant makers will know from experience of working with other minority ethnic communities, one of the easiest ways in which to gauge a group’s capacity to work through the political factions that can exist is to request examples of its working relationship with other groups and agencies.
Raising awareness and improving grant making practices…

As is already done by some grant makers with their beneficiary groups, inviting Travellers to comment on application forms and processes and involving representatives from within the beneficiary group in aspects of the applications assessment process can make decision making processes informed and provide valuable insight and clarity in areas that non-Travelers might not necessarily understand. There are also a number of Traveller groups which can provide tailored awareness raising sessions to trusts and foundations. Likewise, the Travellers Aid Trust itself can also help other trusts and foundations to raise their awareness of the Traveller community and can act as consultants on grant programmes to help identify areas that might be altered to improve accessibility.
Who are Gypsies and Travellers?

There is a common misconception that a Traveller is someone who moves about the country in a seeming random and opportunistic manner. Historically, Travellers were born, lived and worked in a specific geographical area. They would travel around that county or region on a seasonal basis primarily to work on farms and sell their goods or services. Once or twice a year, families would travel further a field to attend weddings, funerals, festivals, fairs and other social gatherings and then return to their home county again. Most families had established patterns of movement returning year after year to the same cities, towns, villages, farms, woods, droves and commons meeting up with family and friends as they travelled. A range of factors, including urban expansion, the mechanisation of agriculture and changes in legislation restricting stopping places, all contributed to the disruption of traditional patterns of movement.

Today, Travellers are very restricted in their movement around the UK and many have been forced to moved onto pitches on private or council owned sites. However, there is a chronic shortage of sites for Travellers and for those unable to deal with the hardship of camping by the roadside facing physical and verbal abuse for the public and the threat of forced eviction from the authorities, a move into housing has been their only option. As a result of this, the majority of Travellers are ‘settled’ in the sense that they are no longer as mobile as they were historically. However, most Travellers will still travel for part of the year and many housed Travellers would move back into caravans and onto sites if they were given the choice.

Like many other ethnic minority communities, the Traveller community is very diverse and complex in its make up and cannot easily be defined in simplistic terms. There is disagreement about how the different groups that make up the community should be defined or labelled and even disagreement about who should be included within the community. To complicate matters further, there are two legal definitions of ‘Gypsy’, these being: (1) Gypsies as a recognized ethnic minority group under the Race Relations Act and (2) under planning law which classifies ‘Gypsies and Travellers’ as people with a culture of nomadism or of living in caravans and all other persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin (including those who have had to settle due to health or education and show people or circus people). The definitions given here cover all the groups that can fall within either legal definition and are intended to provide an informal and general understanding of some of the terms used to define this diverse community for the purposes of this guide only and do not necessarily reflect the views of specific Gypsy and Traveller groups.

**Traditional Travellers:**

Traditional Travellers are those members of the Traveller community that have been living on the road for centuries and have distinct languages and customs of their own. All ‘traditional’ Travellers are now recognized as distinct ethnic minorities under law. These communities are English or Welsh ‘Romany’ Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Scottish Gypsy Travellers.
**Gypsies** arrived in the UK over 500 years ago and are believed to have originated from Rajasthan in India. This link was discovered by linguistics who realized that the Romany language had its roots in Rajasthani dialects. Many Gypsies call themselves English, Welsh or Scottish Gypsies and some prefer to use more general terms such as ‘Romany’ or ‘Traveller’ to define themselves.

**European Roma** (European Romany speaking groups) are descended from the same people as British Romany Gypsies and have moved to the UK more recently from Central and Eastern Europe, many as refugees/asylum seekers fleeing persecution. They are recognized as an ethnic minority in the same category as Gypsies and also speak Romany. They are, however, distinct from the UK’s Gypsy community and there is limited interaction between the two.

**Irish Travellers** are first recorded as arriving in Britain in the 1850’s, although it is believed that their origins date back to the 5th century. Unlike Gypsies, they are of Celtic descent and speak Cant/Gammon. Irish Travellers often refer to themselves as ‘Pavee’ or ‘Minceir’. Although there is a large established Irish Traveller community living permanently in the UK, some travel back to Ireland for part of the year.

**Scottish Gypsy Travellers** were only recognized as an ethnic minority community in 2008. They are believed to date back to the 12th century and are made up of a range of different groups. They may refer to themselves as Scottish Travellers, Scottish Gypsies or as Nawkens or Nachins. Like Irish Travellers, many also speak Cant.
**Other Travellers:**
There are two other broad category of Traveller, neither of which are recognized as ethnic minorities as their history is shorter and they do not share a long tradition of specific customs and language. Both groups, however, fall within statutory definitions under planning law, as do traditional Travellers. The fact that traditional Travellers fall under two different statutory definitions has historically caused widespread confusion and some resentment within the community.

‘New’ Travellers originated out of the Peace Convoy of the 60s and although again very diverse, this community was primarily driven by those wishing to live an alternative travelling lifestyle for ideological reasons. ‘New, Travellers have been around as a distinct group since the 1970s and so some are now second or third generation Travellers. Members of this community tend to call themselves simply Travellers and may find the term ‘New Age’ or ‘New’ offensive.

**Occupational Travellers** include Showman or fairground and circus people who have a long history of travelling for a living. This group also includes Bargees or boat dwellers living primarily on narrow boats.
Each group of Traveller has distinct customs and traditions which sets them apart from others. Traditional Travellers in particular have very specific hygiene rules and strong cultural customs around courtship, marriage, birth and death. These distinct cultural ‘norms’ can vary to some degree from group to group within a specific community, let along between the main groups themselves.

Some traditional Travellers, Gypsies in particular, feel very strongly that they should not be grouped together with other ‘types’ of Traveller, including other ‘traditional’ Travellers. This can be very offensive to them and on the surface this appears as a very strong divide.

However, despite the differences and tensions that clearly exist between the groups, historically and to this day, there has been inter-marriage between them as well as different groups living and working along side each other without conflict. There have also been and still are forums where the different Traveller groups have been able to work together to achieve common aims. It is nevertheless very important to acknowledge and respect the differences between the various groups of Travellers in the UK today.
Despite their differences, all the groups mentioned here share some striking common characteristics, or ‘norms’. The first is that they all share ‘nomadism’ whether in their past or at present. Secondly, and critical to their survivals, is their versatility, resilience and self-reliance, including in employment. Thirdly, is a shared historical and cultural legacy, including languages and strong oral histories. Fourthly, and in particular amongst traditional Travellers, is religion and strict rituals around birth, death and cleanliness. Fifthly, social gatherings are a vital element of Traveller life, enabling families to meet, courtships to develop, business to be carried out, news to be shared, and skills displayed.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all the norms, is a very strong sense of ‘family’ and community. Travellers across the board tend to have large ‘extended’ but close knit families upon which they rely for help and support. They also have a very strong sense of identity, from their own family groups to their community as a whole.
Traveller ‘Norms’

- Nomadism, whether past or present
- Self-reliance, self-employment and independence
- Shared culture and strong oral traditions
- Strict rituals around birth, death and cleanliness
- The importance of children, family and the extended family
- Annual and seasonal social gatherings, fairs or festivals
Historically, Travellers used green lanes, verges and common land to stop on while travelling. They provided essential services to rural communities, as metal workers, mending pots and pans, as knife sharpeners and horse traders and as seasonal workers on farms, picking hops, potatoes, fruits and flowers. In more urban environments and more recent times, they have played an integral part in the scrap and metal industries, providing a vital re-cycling service, in and around the West Midlands in particular.

Although rarely acknowledged, many of Britain’s war heroes were Travellers, playing an important role in both World Wars handling horses and carrying out reconnaissance missions as well as contributing to the war effort at home, working in munitions factories and providing other vital services. There is also their vibrant contribution to our cultural heritage through their art-work and skilled craftsmanship, their poetry, storytelling and music.

But despite the fact that they have lived amongst us for centuries and are an undisputed part of our society, the general public seems only prepared to accept the Traveller community if it fits an outdated stereotyped romantic image of the beautiful dancing Gypsy girl with flowing skirts and colourful painted wagons. It seems that, in our society, Gypsies must be immaculate and impeccable, a sterile part of the rural idle, if they are to be allowed to live among us.

Since the beginning of the last century, the traditional stopping places used for generations by Traveller families have systematically been eradicated, either through intentional blocking and bunding or by being absorbed through the spread of urban development. Practically every city and town has a Gypsy Hill or Tinkers Lane, testament to their imprint on the countryside. Nomadism, or the pursuit of an itinerant lifestyle, is formally recognised, both in the UK and in the rest of Europe, as a valid way of life. The reality, however, is that the UK government has more often restricted than facilitated it, forcing Travellers into an endless cycle of conflict with both members of the public and the authorities through the closure of traditional stopping places and by providing no alternative. The simple truth is that all Travellers are free to travel, but only a privileged few are allowed to stop.
Recognition of this dilemma came about after a number of Travellers were killed during police evictions in the 50’s. A report was commissioned and, as a consequence, the first genuine attempt to address the accommodation needs of Travellers came about under the 1968 Caravan Sites Act. This Act placed a statutory duty upon local authorities to provide sites and gave 100% exchequer grants from central government to finance this duty. However, there were many loopholes in the Act and it is widely recognised that insufficient sites were built. In addition to this, a substantial number of the authorised sites built under the 68 Act have since been closed and many more are facing closure. In 1994, the duty to provide sites was withdraw by the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act and this, combined with the lack of political will driven by public ‘nimbyistic’ opposition to Gypsy sites, has meant that severely inadequate numbers of new sites have been built to meet this decline.

Figures published by the Government since 1996, show a total net loss of 596 pitches over a seven-year period, averaging a loss of 76 pitches per year. By comparison, the numbers of caravans and numbers of unauthorised encampments, as reported, consistently rose over the same period. In an attempt to stop the continued closure of local authority sites, Nick Rainsford (the then Minister for Housing, Planning and Construction) announced, in July 2002, that £17 million would be made available to local authorities over a three-year period to improve and refurbish a limited number of sites. However, the lack of authorised stopping places for Travellers nationally reached such a critical point that the government then announced that it would divert some of the millions allocated for site refurbishment for the provision of new transit sites.

Today the situation is little changed with the majority of new sites being privately owned and coming through the planning system after lengthy proceedings and appeals, with a number of landmark cases ending up in the European Courts of Human Rights. With the introduction of the 1994 Criminal Justice Act and the repeal of the duty on local authorities to provide sites, Travellers were encouraged to use the planning system to address their needs. Although there is the public perception that Travellers are somehow privileged within the planning system, nearly 90% of all Traveller planning applications are refused at the initial application stage. It is only at appeal when balanced against the national and local lack of accommodation provision that applications are successful.
In order to encourage more site provision by local authorities, the Government has now introduced a statutory duty to carry out local and regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments. These must link into local and regional plans and are meant to act as the impetus for current site provision. Much of the current work being done by organisations and Traveller groups has been on ensuring that the needs assessments are carried out properly and verifying or contesting the data collected through regional enquiries.
The Travellers Aid Trust...

The Trust was established in January 1988 and is the only independent grant making body dedicated specifically to supporting Gypsies and Travellers in the UK. Its objectives are the relief of poverty, hardship, sickness and distress among the Traveller community and to advance the education among the children of Travellers by attendance at school or otherwise. The Trustees fulfil the objectives of the Trust in three ways. Firstly, by developing and delivering a range of small or targeted grants programmes aimed at benefiting individuals Travellers and the Traveller community; secondly, by working with other grant makers to improve grant making practices to Travellers; and thirdly, and only in exceptional circumstances, by securing funding and administering projects that are seen to be of benefit to the Traveller community as a whole.

Between 2003 and 2008, the Trust expended just over £679,000 through a range of grant programmes and projects using either its own asset or funding from other grant-makers. This included an Alternative Energy Initiative which provided 100 free solar panel and battery kits to Travellers living without access to mains electricity, the DIY Fund which provided core funding to grass roots Gypsy and Traveller groups, support for the Traveller Law Reform Coalition (Project) and the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, the Special Bursary Fund which helped meet travel expenses to enable Travellers to attend meetings, seminars and conferences and an ongoing programme of small grants to individuals experiencing exceptional hardship called the Violet Clegg Fund. The Trust also co-funded an event with the Wates Foundation in 2008 to bring grant makers and Travellers together as part of its ongoing work to improve grant making practices.
...Useful contacts
The details on the following groups and organisations may have changed slightly since publication.