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**TO: ALL CHIEF OFFICERS**

Dear Colleague,

**ADDITIONAL OPERATIONAL ADVICE REGARDING UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS IN LIGHT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

While the majority of Gypsies and Travellers now reside in conventional housing, a significant number live in caravans in accordance with their traditional way of life and the Spring and Summer months usually see the largest numbers of people travelling and setting up encampments.

In the UK, there is a long-standing and serious shortage of sites for Gypsies and Travellers and this lack of accommodation inevitably forces many Gypsies and Travellers onto unauthorised encampments. In June 2018, the latest **NPCC Operational Advice on Unauthorised Encampments** was published and is intended to help police officers respond to unauthorised encampments in a consistent way. The full Advice can be downloaded at the below link...

[https://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/Unauthorised%20Encampments/NPCC%20Op%20Advice%20on%20Unauthorised%20Encampments\\_June%2018.pdf](https://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/Unauthorised%20Encampments/NPCC%20Op%20Advice%20on%20Unauthorised%20Encampments_June%2018.pdf)

Health outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are historically very poor compared to almost all other ethnic groups. The reality of roadside living without reliable access to water and sanitation makes the universal current medical advice of frequent handwashing more challenging. Contact tracing can also be very problematic in communities that are being moved frequently whilst social distancing and self-isolation are much more difficult to implement if you are part of a group which is moved on a regular basis.

Current legislation affords the police and local authorities a range of powers to deal with unauthorised encampments, the use of which is discretionary subject to a range of factors, as outlined in the advice. This would allow families much better access to health care, whilst remaining in locations for longer will help reduce the unmanaged spread of the Covid-19 virus.

**Friends, Families and Travellers** is a national charity that works on behalf of all Gypsies and Travellers and their website contains a very useful section which will assist community members and statutory bodies in managing encampments currently. This has been made available to Local Authorities. The relevant section, which will be updated as necessary, can be found at the below link...

[COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR SUPPORTING PEOPLE LIVING ON TRAVELLER SITES, UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS AND CANAL BOATS](#)

Additionally there is the concept of **'negotiated stopping'** which has been deployed in many areas of the country. Negotiated stopping is an innovative way of addressing problems raised by the lack of suitable provision for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. It involves local authorities and other landowners making an agreement with Gypsies and Travellers on matters such as facilities and waste disposal, whilst allowing unauthorised encampments on land that is not contentious. The link below provided by **Leeds Gypsy & Traveller Exchange** further explains this concept

<https://www.negotiatedstopping.co.uk/>

1st Floor, 10 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0NN T 020 3276 3800 W [www.npcc.police.uk](http://www.npcc.police.uk)



I hope this letter and the existing Operational Advice will provide further assistance in managing unauthorised encampments during this time.

Yours faithfully,

Janette McCormick QPM  
Deputy Chief Constable, College of Policing  
NPCC Lead for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Portfolio