

## **COVID-19 Response for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities in Somerset**

The challenges of COVID-19 have a greater impact on people from Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, particularly around the ability to follow government guidance around travel, access to clean water, social distancing and self-isolation.

In Somerset a multi-agency group has been formed to ensure a county-wide response to these concerns. This group is represented by Avon and Somerset Police, Community Council for Somerset, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue, Mendip District Council, NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton District Council, and South Somerset District Council.

The group has considered national guidance and recommendations set out by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)[1] to ensure that all parts of our society are kept safe during this time. In Somerset, we will endeavour to ensure that anyone already in Somerset or those arriving in Somerset will be provided with a safe place to stay. This could mean accommodating people where they have stopped by providing basic sanitation and support around adhering to national guidance, or relocation to one of the temporary sites in direct response to the pandemic that are being set up around Somerset.

It is important to stress that this is a public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the health of everyone currently in Somerset is paramount, be those travelling communities or those living in settled communities, and to avoid preventable deaths.

As national restrictions are relaxed, we are committed to working with people within the Gypsy, Traveller or Roma communities to ensure that they are able to move on safely within the sphere of the national guidance. In the meantime, all agencies involved will be providing support to anyone currently travelling through Somerset and the communities around them.