

then local authorities should work to ensure that the livelihoods, education, training and employment of Gypsies and Travellers are considered when accommodation needs are assessed.

4.5 Pat Niner in 2003 and 2004 noted that the **main barriers to providing sufficient accommodation** (aside from the lack of a statutory duty) are the **'planning system and, more fundamentally, resistance from the sedentary population to the idea of new sites for Gypsies and Travellers.'** Whilst, as stated, we very much welcome the new provisions for Gypsies and Travellers in the Housing (Wales) Bill, indeed we can see that awareness of the new duty has already prompted action amongst local authorities in anticipation of its introduction; however the negative perceptions still held by many of the public and perpetuated by the media present local authorities with significant challenges in successfully gaining agreements, planning permissions and public support for the development of new sites.

4.6 Whilst the new legislation will provide local authorities with a clear legal mandate and duty the recent experiences of public consultations on new sites around Wales and elsewhere has seen the mushrooming of well organised and resourceful resident's opposition groups, often publically supported by councillors (and other elected members) and with the ear of the local newspapers. Lengthy public consultations have seen thousands of responses from the public relating to the housing needs of a tiny minority ending in elected members failing to support council officer's recommendations for fear of losing their vote. These processes played out in public meetings, the press and social media have a very negative impact on the children and young people we work with and their families, increasing their experience of discrimination and social exclusion; and have the potential to result in local authorities going 'back to square one' in the search for suitable sites.

4.7 **We very much encourage the Welsh Government to consider the need for targeted, mandatory training** on these issues for local authority members and relevant officials and look at how the **duties to promote good relations between different groups under the Equality Act** and the dual agendas of community cohesion and tackling hate crime can ensure that the **Housing Bill delivers positively for Gypsies and Travellers in Wales.**

4.8 Pat Niner's second barrier to providing sufficient accommodation was identified as the 'planning system'. Members of the committee will be aware that not all Gypsies and Travellers wish to live on a local authority run site - the Draft Planning Reform (Wales) Bill currently out for consultation will have implications for Gypsies and Travellers both in terms of local authority provision but also for those wishing to apply for planning permission to live on their own land. We recommend that the Welsh Government ensure that an **adequate equality impact assessment with reference to Gypsies and Travellers** is carried out to ensure that there is consistency of approach across the government to progressing equality of access to housing and accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers.

If you require any further information or clarification we will be happy to assist

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