

ESSEX COUNTYWIDE TRAVELLER UNIT - Maldon Briefing



Background

ECTU commenced formal operation in October 2012 with seven District /Borough /Unitary partners, Essex Police, Essex Fire and Rescue, Public Health and Essex County Council forming a Joint Committee. The Unit was formed in response to recognised inequalities suffered by the Gypsy/Traveller communities with regards to health, education and general access to key services. In addition, this is a highly vulnerable, but difficult to access group with regards to fire safety, and there were inconsistencies/duplication of resource in the management of unauthorised encampments across Essex.

In addressing *health, education, fire safety, site management* issues and *general liaison*, there are direct savings benefits to partner areas. This is in addition to an over-arching benefit to all partners in helping to ensure that a vulnerable part of their community has the appropriate access to services. This will also help ensure that Gypsy and Travellers do not become further dependent and costly to the partner authorities at a later date, with an overarching outcome of helping to improve their quality of life.

For *unauthorised encampments (UE's)*, the Unit provides a robust and consist and eliminates duplication in managing encampments throughout all partner areas. It will remain the objective of the Unit to reduce the impact of UE's by education and management, as it is not illegal to travel, hence we aim to make those that do, act responsibly. This aspect of the service should be seen as an insurance policy/shared risk, as not all partners will be affected every year by the same level of encampments. However, it has been proved that when Travellers target an area, as has been the case in Thurrock, Tendring, Uttlesford etc, the number of encampments can quickly escalate. The expertise and resource of the Unit represents excellent value for money. On the basis that an average encampment could cost in the region of £2000 per encampment, it would not take many to cover the fixed annual contribution.

Although partners may have specific interests, the ongoing existence/operations of the unit is based on equitable contribution from districts and boroughs as per the shared risk/insurance aspect.

Performance/issues over the past 3 years



Unauthorised encampments

Essex County as a whole has continue to experience high levels of unauthorised encampments over the past 3 years

2016/17 – 374

2017/18 – 365

2018/19 to date – 244

Maldon's numbers have been low, with 2 encampments in 2016/17, 2 encampments in 2017/18, and none recorded in the current year. As stated above, this is an insurance/shared risk area, as Maldon could easily be targeted in the coming year/s.

Other activities in Maldon

The residents of Maldon, hence Maldon District Council also benefit from the range of outreach work undertaken as directed by other partners of the unit. There is a considerable amount of 1 to 1 work which goes on, with highly vulnerable families. The figures/charts represent the number of sites/families and individuals benefiting in your district over the past 3 years. Also ECTU, through its site management arm, currently also manages the 2 x local authority Traveller sites in Maldon.

Fire Safety

Home fire safety visits/inspections carrying out a full inspection of individual caravans/homes, issuing smoke alarms and guidance to address issues identified/future safety.

Site fire safety visits/inspections carrying out full inspections of the site, hazards, fire points, caravan distances, fire hydrants etc and issuing guidance to address current/potential future issues.

Health

Families in the district are supporting/signposted in accessing key health services including primary immunisations, flu jabs, identifying/supporting long term conditions, support with mental health issues, confirmation of/assistance with GP registrations and dentist registrations, support key lifestyle well-being including stop smoking, alcohol, healthy eating, reduction in sugar intake, child safety etc.

There are annual health and safety events on Maldon sites, which enable a higher number of the community to be seen, on all the above issues around health, plus

additional activities including on site blood pressure checks and basic first aid training and fire safety support/advice.

Education

Supporting children into education from pre school through to further education including support with transport/attendance, funding etc.

Site Management

- Currently management of 12 permanent Local Authority Gypsy/Travellers Sites with the 2 sites – Wood Corner and Brickhouse Lane in the Maldon district.

