**Hertfordshire County Council**

**HCS - Gypsy Section**

**HOW TO GET ON THE WAITING LIST AND**

**WHAT WE LOOK FOR WHEN SELECTING A TENANT**

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| 1. **How to apply for a pitch** |
| Those wishing to apply for a pitch on a County Council site, fill in an application form giving information about those who would live on the pitch, the number of caravans involved, any special factors such as health, welfare, or education problems and sites that they would be prepared to consider.  Applicants are then given a registration card and have to re-register every year otherwise their application for a pitch is considered to have lapsed.  The vacancies that are actually offered are usually available after people already on sites have had the opportunity to transfer from one pitch to another or from one site to another. It is not unusual for people to move onto one site initially on the basis that they will be offered a pitch on their preferred site when one becomes available. Moves of people between sites provide the Gypsy Section with opportunities to ensure that tenants of a site are able to live together as good neighbours. |

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| 1. **Our main objective – The most important factor when selecting a tenant** |
| Following the repeal of Part II of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 the County Council does not have a duty to provide accommodation to Gypsies. Those applicants who are or whose families contain persons who have serious health/disability problems, are pregnant or have children under 16 years old are therefore encouraged to apply for housing with the local district or borough council for the area where they live, as it will probably have a duty at law to provide accommodation.  It is recognised by the County Council and the Government (see Chapter 2 of The Good Practice Guide published by the DETR/Home Office in Autumn 1998) that different Gypsy and Traveller groups have different characteristics and patterns of behaviour and that these groups rarely mix without friction. Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised ethnic minority groups for the purposes of the Race Relation Act 1976, identified as having a shared culture, language and beliefs.  It is recognised by the County Council and the Government (see Chapter 3 of The Good Practice Guide published by the DETR/Home Office in Autumn 1998) that some Gypsies do not adjust easily to living in conventional housing. Therefore those gypsies on the waiting list who are in conventional housing will be considered in accordance with this system in the same way as anyone else on the waiting list who has a different form of accommodation.  **Our main objective is that, through our selection of tenants, we provide a good quality of life and environment on and around the site. The allocating officer must have reasonable grounds for their decision.** |

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| 1. **What we look at when selecting a tenant** |
| 1. Position on the waiting list 2. History of residence in the County 3. Whether applicant prepared to accept the vacancy 4. Risk of friction with existing tenants 5. Risk that the applicant will discourage against our main objective 6. Health of family members 7. Educational needs of family members 8. Social needs of family members |

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| 1. **How these factors are used to place applicants for a vacancy in priority order** |
| The position of each applicant is first assessed on each individual factor. This section indicates the approach to assessing an applicant’s priority on individual factors:   * 1. **Position on the waiting list:** This means the longer the length of time the applicant has continuously held a waiting list registration card, the higher the priority.   2. **History of residence in the County**: The longer Hertfordshire has been a usual travelling area, the higher the priority. This is not just whether the applicant is currently in Hertfordshire, but whether there is a continuing history of resorting to the County.   3. **Whether applicant prepared to accept the vacancy**: Those wishing to live permanently on the site have a higher priority than those who would be prepared to occupy any site awaiting a transfer on their preferred site.   4. **Risk of friction with existing tenants**: The greater the connection between the family and the group or groups on the site, the higher the priority. This means, whether the applicant is likely to mix with or live near existing tenants of a site without friction.   5. **Risk that the applicant will discourage against our main objective**: Those who **do not have** a history of violence, disruptive behaviour or causing nuisance on sites will have a higher priority than those who do. So that the site and area will be maintained as a desirable place to live in.   6. **Health of family members**: The more people in the family with health problems and the more severe the problems, the higher the priority. E.g. chronic illness, disability, mental health problems, short term illness or pregnancy.   7. **Educational needs of family members**: The more children, the higher the priority, with children on statements counting double. This means the number of children statemented as having special educational needs, primary, secondary and pre-school age.   8. **Social needs of family members**: The more social needs, the higher the priority. This includes: moving to the area to look after elderly relatives or elderly relatives moving to be near the children. Single parent families. Local family connections. |

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| **The relative importance of factors is as follows, running from highest to lowest:**   1. Promotion of our main objective 2. Tenant compatibility 3. Health needs 4. Educational needs 5. Social needs 6. Herts as usual travelling area 7. Length of time on waiting list 8. Vacancy acceptable as a permanent basis |

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| **Conclusion** |

This publication is intended to ensure that pitches are allocated in a reasonable way and that applicants can see and understand how this is done.

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| *Agreed at the meeting of the “Community Services Policy Panel on Gypsies” held on 20 November 1995. Reassessed, updated and agreed at the “Gypsy Panel Meeting” on 9 December 1999. Revised November 2010.* |