

Making a living

Social security, social exclusion and New Travellers

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Social exclusion, social security and New Travellers

Tackling social exclusion is at the heart of Labour government policy. This goal is being addressed by a wide range of policies and provisions, both national and local, and involving several government departments. The approach is threefold – reduce worklessness by supporting people into work and making work pay; tackle child poverty by increases in financial support and provisions in kind; and target support on disadvantaged areas. In addition, the work of the Social Exclusion Unit has focused upon the needs and circumstances of particular groups – teenage mothers, people with disabilities and homeless people.

This study focuses upon one particular group of people – New Travellers – who have not so far received much attention in this new policy agenda, but whose circumstances raise some interesting issues in the context of the current policy agenda. New Travellers live on the margins of society, mainly in rural areas, usually in vehicles, often on illegal sites. Issues of social exclusion are therefore very much to the fore when considering their situations and circumstances. The main aim of this research project was to explore how New Travellers are able to sustain their lifestyles – whether and how they can get paid employment, receipt of benefits, and the role of community self-help.

New Travellers can be defined in various ways but the diversity of this group presents many difficulties for a society which wishes to neatly attach a label to minority populations (Davis et al, 1994; Earle et al, 1994; Webster, 1996; Hawes, 1997). Indeed over the years New Travellers have been ascribed various labels, including ‘crusties’, ‘hedge monkeys’, ‘new age’, ‘soap dodgers’, ‘brew crew’ and ‘eco warriors’ (Lowe and Shaw, 1993). Their accommodation may comprise of trucks,

trailers, caravans, benders, teepees, yurts, rolltops or a combination of any of these. It is perhaps both the accommodation of New Travellers and their appearance – clothes, body piercing and dreadlocks – which makes them stand out from other groups.

One important aspect of new travelling is that anyone can become a New Traveller simply by taking to the road, whereas you have to be born a Romany or Irish Traveller (Davis, 1997). And, while gypsies and traditional Travellers have existed in Britain for over 500 years, New Travellers emerged out of the protest movements – against war, apartheid and materialism – of the 1960s (see Hetherington, 2000, for a more detailed account). The late 1970s and the 1980s witnessed a substantial increase in their numbers. This was the era of convoys and free festivals and the travelling lifestyle provided a means to move in large groups between one festival and the next. It also appealed to many people because travelling offers an opportunity for freedom from the constraints of settled living and the chance to adopt a low-impact way of living – water is used sparingly, natural fuels are typically used to avoid pollution and natural forms of sewage disposal are preferred to chemical means. Others come into the travelling lifestyle for less positive reasons – homelessness, debt and family breakdown (Davis et al, 1994; Webster, 1996, 1999).

Whatever the reasons for travelling, life as a New Traveller is far from idyllic. Daily routines are tough, time consuming and dictated by the elements. Sites in winter are particularly dismal. The rural and often remote location of sites means the occupants have to make long journeys to shop, fetch water and to access essential services. In addition, Travellers and their children have had

to learn to live with discrimination and public hatred. Many of the children have only ever experienced this type of lifestyle, for we are now seeing second and even third generation Travellers who have never been members of the settled community.

New Travellers may also face hostility and discrimination. Local residents may object to having Travellers living nearby and establishing permanent sites is almost impossible. Many of the traditional stopping places have been blocked to exclude them. Getting access to schools, health services, and other facilities can be very difficult (Webster, 1999). Traditional Travellers often perceive New Travellers as a threat, both to their economic existence and to their ability to access stopping places. Even the Home Secretary has recently singled out New Travellers for negative comment:

“Many of these so-called Travellers seem to think that it’s perfectly okay for them to cause mayhem in an area, to go burgling, thieving, breaking into vehicles, causing all kinds of other trouble including defecating in the doorways of firms and so on, and getting away with it ... I’m afraid there has been rather too much tolerance of Travellers and we want to see the police and local authorities cracking down on them.” (Jack Straw interview, Radio West Midlands, 22 July 1999, cited in Oathen, 1999)

This comment illustrates many of the assumptions commonly made about New Travellers. In popular perception, New Travellers are often portrayed as layabouts and dole scroungers, who are likely to be thieves and drug peddlers, and who represent a set of values at variance with those of wider society. As we shall see, these are myths rather than realities and the ways in which New Travellers make a living and sustain their way of life are far more complex, and far less deviant, than this.

New Travellers and public policy

The travelling lifestyle has always presented a challenge to the laws and customs of settled society and in general the authorities have sought to curtail Travellers and encourage settlement. Statutes implemented against ‘rootless’ people

since at least the time of the Black Death reflect the goals of controlling vagrancy, prohibiting begging and making work compulsory (Stone, 1985; Liegeois, 1986; Okely, 1983; Dean, 1999). The new travelling community is no exception to this. They face a number of constraints on their mobility, mainly due to the introduction of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994). Effectively, this legislation seeks to criminalise the travelling lifestyle by removing the duty of local authorities to provide statutory site provision, thus ensuring that the majority of Travellers illegally reside on unauthorised sites and so are subject to eviction. As a consequence, Travellers have very little control over how long they are able to stay in one location; instead this is dependent upon the policies of local authorities and the police. The right to travel and the right to stop are interlinked, and both are precarious. Travellers may be forced to move on a monthly, weekly or even daily basis.

In recent years it is beggars and ‘rough sleepers’ rather than New Travellers who have been singled out for policy attention. Here policy is aiming at discouraging begging and reducing the number of rough sleepers (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; DETR, 1999, 2000). New Travellers are not in the same situation as beggars and rough sleepers, apart from the lack of a settled home. But all these groups highlight an area of potential tension in the current policy agenda. On the one hand, a central goal of policy is the promotion of social inclusion. But on the other hand, promoting social inclusion may mean reducing autonomy and individual choice. The recent political emphasis on communitarianism also stresses mutual aid and a new kind of collective responsibility. It focuses on a social order that is held together by a set of shared values, to which members are taught they are obligated (Etzioni, 1997). This kind of integration draws on normative means in order to standardise people’s behaviour and implies some degree of shared values and common beliefs. All this raises the question of whether people can be included but also be able to live their lives in the ways they choose to do so.

The implementation of the 1998 Human Rights Act brings these issues even more clearly to the fore. Under this legislation, which incorporates the European Convention of Human Rights, individuals have the right to make choices about the ways in which they live. Specifically, Articles 3, 8, 14 and Article 1 of the 1st Protocol of the

European Convention of Human Rights prohibit inhuman or degrading treatment, confer a right to respect for private and family life, prevent discrimination against any minority and confer a right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions. This also has significant implications for the social exclusion/inclusion agenda. Lister (2000) has argued that promoting social inclusion can be at odds with promoting social justice and that current policy gives too much attention to the former over the latter.

As with other lifestyle 'choices', becoming and living as a New Traveller is a mixture of choice and constraint. As noted above, people become New Travellers for various reasons and in various different ways, but there is some element of choice in how they live, if not in why they live as they do. To some extent, New Travellers are choosing to live a nomadic or semi-nomadic life. The new travelling lifestyle thus both challenges the notion of shared values and community and raises the crucial question of whether people can be included and still be able to make their own choices about how they live.

The aim of this research project, which started in the winter of 1999, was to examine the ways in which New Travellers make their living, as a way of exploring these issues. We examine issues of employment and unemployment, the role of social security benefits, and other ways in which travelling people might access resources. We also explore the nature of the new travelling community and the role that community plays in supporting and sustaining what is often a difficult, labour intensive, and high maintenance, lifestyle. New Travellers may be found across the country but the south west is one of the main areas because it includes historically relevant places such as Glastonbury and Stonehenge, has a festival scene and incorporates a sizeable rural labour market of seasonal work. As such, it seemed logical to base our study there. This means we have a rural sample in that the sites we visited were located in remote, rural areas in Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and Cornwall (further details of both the participants and sites are provided below).

One of the key areas that we explore is the role of paid employment in the new travelling lifestyle. Encouraging, even compelling, paid employment is very central to the current social exclusion policy agenda and so we wanted to examine the particular bridges and barriers to employment

experienced by Travellers. The location of our sample, as outlined above, meant that this is also a study of rural, including agricultural, labour markets.

These labour markets have seen some radical changes over the past few decades. There have been long-standing economic and labour market disparities between cities and other areas in Britain, which have continued to widen since the 1970s. Britain has undergone further deindustrialisation and there has been even more of a shift from rural to urban with the decline of the manufacturing industry responsible for the bulk of job losses in most cities. There has been a large-scale loss of full-time male manual jobs and an increase in female part-time employment, particularly in towns and rural areas. This has been linked to the decrease in manufacturing and the growth in the services industry (Turok and Edge, 1999).

In relation to agricultural employment, the South West Region has a total agricultural workforce of 83,434, representing around 3.3% of the region's total working population. In this region the agricultural workforce declined by just under 10% between 1987 and 1997. At the same time there has been a significant trend towards an increasingly part-time workforce. In the last ten years there has been a fall of 10,000 full-time workers and an increase of 3,000 part-time workers. In addition the number of seasonal workers or casual workers has also dropped by approximately 1,400 (MAFF, 2000).

The research

This project builds on several years' experience of conducting research with New Travellers, and a lot of the research was carried out in close cooperation with the Children's Society. One of the Children's Society's projects, based in Somerset, has been working with New Traveller families for the last six years. Indeed it was through this group that we began our work with New Travellers in 1994. Since then we have carried out several projects and have built up contacts, knowledge and perhaps most importantly, trust. This enabled us to gain access and to discuss with participants some difficult and sensitive issues, for we wanted to explore the illegal as well as the legal ways that participants supplemented their incomes.

We carried out 39 in-depth interviews and seven follow-up interviews with New Travellers across the south west of England. In most of the two-parent families, both partners were present at the interview and both joined in the discussion. We therefore talked to 54 people. The interviews were carried out in two batches (February/March and July/August 2000) in order to take account of any seasonal fluctuations. Additionally, in-depth interviews were also conducted with the Children's Society's Traveller Support Workers to discover what, from their perspective, were the main barriers to Travellers' income security. The main characteristics of the Traveller participants are summarised in Box 1. As this shows, most of these were families (29 out of 39 had children living with them), about two thirds (25) were women, and most had been travelling for several years.

Box 1: The Traveller participants

- Interviews were conducted with 39 Travellers, 25 with female Travellers and 14 with male Travellers. The Travellers who had partners were married/cohabiting heterosexual couples.
- Of the 39 Travellers, 21 lived with their partners and children, eight were lone parents, five had partners but no children and five were single and childless.
- The 21 Traveller families had between them a total of 65 children, 34 of whom were of school age and 31 of pre-school age.
- The average age of participants was 32 with half of the participants aged 30 or over. The average time that a participant had been travelling was eight years.
- Educational qualifications varied. Two Travellers held a degree (eight participants had commenced but not completed a degree), 14 participants had obtained A levels and 15 participants O levels or equivalent. A total of eight participants had left school without any qualifications, but of these three had job qualifications.

In addition to the 39 interviews we were able to trace and conduct seven follow-up interviews with participants who, at the time the original interview took place, had employment or benefit issues they needed to resolve. This enabled us to gain a more holistic picture of their experiences over time. Both the main and follow-up interviews were conducted on 19 sites across the counties of Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and Cornwall. The sites could loosely be categorised into four different types. Box 2 shows the categories and the number of interviews, and follow-up interviews, conducted on each type.

As is usual for the south west of England, the range of sites detailed above are all to be found in rural locations. The majority are tucked away from view and are several miles from the nearest town. Unlike traditional Travellers who occupy both urban and rural sites, New Travellers are more frequently located in rural settings, partly in order to be less noticeable (Webster, 1999). Urban sites tend to be highly visible and far more susceptible to a speedy eviction. Living on an urban site may make a difference to how New Travellers make a living because frequent speedy evictions would prohibit access to all types of work, and to claiming benefits. However, since most Travellers would spend infrequent and short periods only on urban sites, we are confident that the spread of participants interviewed across four counties, on a range of sites, are representative of the wider travelling community.

The type of site occupied significantly affects Travellers' mobility patterns. Low mobility is associated with legal authorised sites, whereas high mobility is associated with work sites because Travellers are frequently moving to follow the crop season. However, unlike the high mobility associated with sites which are unauthorised and not tolerated, Travellers occupying work sites have a much higher degree of control over their movement. Although there may be some degree of control associated with unauthorised but tolerated sites it is usually temporary in nature. All occupants of unauthorised sites can be evicted, sometimes at very short notice. Choice over when and where you go is not possible when mobility is enforced.

Box 2: Types of site

- Authorised (legal sites with planning permission). Three interviews.
- Work sites (temporary sites tolerated for a short set period of time during the crop season, often private land). Eight interviews.
- Unauthorised but tolerated sites (traditional stopping places that are tolerated for set periods of time which can range from two to several months). Twenty-one interviews.
- Unauthorised sites that are not tolerated unless occupants have special needs (special needs may include children who attend the local school, pregnant Travellers, newly born babies or sick children or adults). Fourteen interviews.

Since the focus of our study was on how New Travellers were making a living, we explored during the interviews the types and levels of participant's income. Some examples are shown in Box 3. The average weekly income does not include, where relevant, Child Benefit. What is immediately noticeable is that the level of income rises substantially when earnings come solely from work. However, it is important to note that participants' earnings vary substantially over the year when their work is casual or temporary in nature. Families claiming in-work benefits and the participants who claim DSS benefits are all living on low incomes.

Box 3: Weekly incomes: representative examples of income*Work*

- Couple with two children, the male partner working for an agency and earning an average of £350 a week.
- Couple with two children, the male partner is self-employed and his weekly earnings vary from £300 a week to a much lower amount.
- Couple without children who are both crop picking and earning approximately £120 a day.
- Single male who has permanent employment and earns an average of £350 a week.

Work and in-work benefits

- Couple with two children, male self-employed and claiming the Working Families Tax Credit. The family's average weekly income is £200 a week.
- Female lone parent working and claiming the Working Families Tax Credit has a weekly income of £150 a week.
- Couple with three children, the male has a permanent job and they are claiming the Working Families Tax Credit. The family's weekly income is £209 a week.

Benefits

- Couple with two children claiming both Jobseeker's Allowance and supplements have a weekly income of £99 a week.
- Single female claiming Jobseeker's Allowance has an income of £51 a week.
- Female lone parent claiming Income Support has a weekly income of £90 a week.
- Single male claiming Incapacity Benefit has a weekly income of £73 a week.
- Couple living on female partner's Disability Benefit has a weekly income of £74 a week.

Main issues and outline of the report

If the impetus underpinning recent welfare reforms is to integrate people into the labour market, and thus combat social exclusion, how accessible is employment for members of the mobile population? What types of work, if any, are Travellers able to secure, and are they sustainable? Are there certain times in the year when it is easier to get a job, or is it simply a matter of luck, of being in the right location at the right time?

The following chapter addresses these questions. Drawing on the in-depth interview material we explore how Travellers access work, and their experiences of the various forms that employment takes. We begin to see the different types and patterns of work emerging. We see how some participants are more able than others to both find work and be paid a reasonable rate, while others face too many barriers to earn an adequate living. Several of these barriers are very specific to the mobile lifestyle.

Among New Travellers we found that there are some who can sustain employment, some who can access it periodically, and some who for a multiplicity of reasons must put any ideas of work on hold for the time being. In the last two circumstances Travellers' income has to be supplemented or derive solely from social security benefits. Although we touch upon benefits in our discussion of work, these are explored in greater detail in Chapter 3, where we explore the types of benefits participants are trying to access, along with their experiences of claiming and any problems they may encounter. We also look at both the continuity and legality of claiming.

Many economically vulnerable people experience very hard times financially and the New Traveller community is no exception, but how do Travellers manage when cash or food is in short supply or non-existent? What other resources are open to them from which they can draw? The purpose of Chapter 4 is to complete the picture of what Travellers are doing to make a living. As such, we explore how participants supplement their living standards through accessing alternative resources.

In drawing Chapters 2-4 together, we discuss in Chapter 5 the different patterns of making a living and how despite numerous constraints New Travellers are able to sustain their lifestyle. We look at how and why some Travellers do better than others, as well as the specific barriers that Travellers encounter when trying to secure employment. Finally, we discuss the implications of our analysis for policy in the wider context of social exclusion issues.

New Travellers and paid work

There is little doubt that earning a decent income from employment is important to many people. Having a job can affect how others perceive us, as well as how we perceive ourselves. Work has an impact on both our self-identity and our financial stability. As the Beatles once sang, 'Money don't buy you love'. Indeed, but it does help us to buy security and enable us to have a little more control over our lives. Yet work involves a trade-off. We work, we earn money and we gain a degree of financial control but it means giving up control of a significant proportion of our daily lives. Some people are willing and able to cope with this trade-off while others are either unwilling (not a feasible option) or unable (have other commitments, including unpaid work). Nevertheless there is the expectation that we hold conventional attitudes towards work and have conventional aspirations in relation to our future. We are expected to obtain conventional employment, adhere to a tight routine and timetable and in return we are financially rewarded during our working lives, and to a lesser extent, during our retirement. However, not all jobs or employment patterns are conventional.

Work is the focus of this chapter, and our aim is to provide our readers with some sense of the types of work Travellers are willing and able to access, as well as the regularity of work. We also touch briefly on their need to access benefits when they are in between jobs, although benefits are covered in much greater detail in the following chapter.

Types of work

Box 4 below provides an overall picture of participants' work occupations at the time of interview. We can see that a total of 20 participants and/or their partners were working. Eight females were working in their own right and four were either working with their partner, or supporting them in the business.

Box 4: Current work status of participants and their partners

- One male participant and one male partner had permanent jobs. One worked in a factory and the other on a farm.
- Seven participants had temporary jobs. Three were male, two were female and two were couples where both partners worked. The three men worked for agencies and the two couples combined agency with horticultural work. Of the two female earners, one worked in a factory and the other for a local authority.
- Seven participants had casual work. One was female, three were male and three were couples with both partners working. All of these participants were picking crops, apart from one single male who carved statues.
- Four male participants were self-employed and all their partners were heavily involved with each business, either directly or with administration. One couple toured with fairground rides, one participant carved ornaments, one was making furniture and the final participant was a mechanic.

However, participants' work status can change quickly, in that one moment they are employed and then the next they are busy searching for work or need to claim benefit. The types of work that participants obtained over the past year are explored below.

Full-time, permanent work

Access to the formal labour market was problematic for the majority of participants. Only two Travellers had full-time permanent jobs. One was a single male Traveller who had worked in the same factory for the last four years, and the other was again male but with a family who had worked on a farm producing organic vegetables for the last two to three years. Box 5 below provides an example of the circumstances under which one of the participants obtained employment. We also gain an insight into what can assist and hinder Travellers' access to this type of work.

In discussing the concept of work with participants, many female Travellers with children have of course informed us that bringing up a family and carrying out routine daily chores is a

full-time job. Routine daily chores are not simple domestic matters. Without hoovers, washing machines, instant power or water, domestic tasks are arduous and time-consuming. Tasks can often be mechanical as well as domestic in nature. It is not unusual to see Traveller women carrying out mechanical repairs. In discussing the types of work accessed it is important to recognise that, in many cases, it is the willingness of Traveller mothers to take on domestic work and this gendered division of labour then enables their partners to access employment, as shown in the example in Box 5. (This gendered division of labour meant that women typically took responsibility for a range of tasks associated with the maintenance of Travellers' homes, and not just responsibility for childcare and domestic chores.)

The only other participant to have full-time permanent employment had obtained a job working in a factory. He earned more than the minimum wage and had satisfactory work conditions:

"I get £5.70 per hour, Sundays are double time, bank holidays they do a few shows, and if you work a bank holiday you get a

Box 5: Permanent work

Female, age 29, travelling five years

When the participant had first met her partner five years ago, he had been working on a casual basis. Since then the couple had had two children and the mother was expecting a third shortly. The arrival of children had resulted in the father trying to find more secure employment, and nearly three years ago he had obtained a full-time position on an organic farm.

The couple had been allowed to park their home on land attached to the farm but this had caused the mother a lot of anguish:

"He was at work and I was on my own with the kids all the time. The kids never saw other kids and I was lonely and completely isolated. We were parked down a track miles from anywhere. I ended up getting very ill 'cos the isolation got to me and I couldn't cope anymore."

When the mother discovered she was pregnant again, the family moved to an unauthorised site so that she would have the support of other Travellers. Unfortunately the site was so far away from where the father worked that it was impossible for him to commute daily. As a result, the father lives on the farmland and visits his partner and children as often as possible.

This situation would not have been possible had the mother not had the support of the other Travellers on the site, "The others have been helping out when [partner] isn't here. Like I need help to lift the gas in, and someone takes the rubbish away for me. I also get lifts to town to do the odd bit of shopping". Reciprocity underpinned the arrangements as the father invariably brought home a box of organic produce to share among the Travellers.

day off in lieu. I get 21 days' holiday."
(Male, age 32, travelling 12 years)

On the other hand the farm worker only earned the minimum wage and the work conditions were poor – few breaks and inconsistency of hours. As his partner commented:

"The income that's coming in now is just keeping our heads above water, it's still a struggle and we do owe a lot of money."
(Female, age 29, travelling five years)

However, the struggle would have been substantially worse had the family not been in receipt of the Working Families Tax Credit. This helped them considerably when the father's hours were reduced, usually in winter. (The Working Families Tax Credit is available to families working, as employees or self-employed, 16 hours or more and who are on a low income.)

Temporary work

Obtaining part-time and full-time temporary work was a little more manageable. Five Travellers had secured temporary but full-time work through employment agencies. This type of work was usually unskilled (manual labour) and obtained within manufacturing industry. The increase in private employment agencies over recent years has strengthened Travellers' chances of finding an agency that does not discriminate against their lifestyle and is willing to allocate them work. Travellers may work a few days or a few weeks for the agency. It is a fairly simple process. Agency workers must have their time sheets signed by the company they are allocated to, and then send these into the agency by a given date in order to receive their wages. This type of work has been possible because some agencies only require workers to have a telephone number (mobile phone) and a bank account. Mobile phones were a lot more common among participants than were bank accounts. The increase in 'pay as you talk' mobile phones may account for this factor. Overall, five men and two of their partners had worked for agencies. One of these participants was also in receipt of the Working Families Tax Credit. Nevertheless, access to this type of work is not always straightforward, as one participant explained:

"We were packing clothes in a factory for an agency up in Northampton because it

is all done with agencies in Northampton, millions of them. We spent four days going round all the agencies and it was the last one we walked into where we got the job. We were really really rude and we went 'Right we've come here and we want a fucking job right now,' and they said, 'Fine take a seat'." (Female, age 19, travelling three years)

The period that Travellers worked for the agencies depended more on the time that they were able to stay in the same location, rather than the amount of work available. Box 6 provides an example.

Box 6: Temporary agency work

Female, age 27, travelling six years

This participant and her partner had been mainly employed since they had been travelling. Both had opted out of university after the first year. They had arrived at their present site four months ago after experiencing a series of evictions elsewhere in the country and as the female Traveller commented, "We've been here a while and it makes such a big difference where work is concerned".

The female Traveller had recently had a baby and so it was her partner who was working at the moment. He had secured agency work almost immediately they had arrived at the site. The couple had both a mobile phone and a bank account to the relief of the mother:

"... frankly I don't know what we'd have done without a phone and a bank account because without them it would stop the potential to work as we haven't got an address here."

The agency had supplied the father with three different jobs, all of them manual. His present job consisted of working 12-hour shifts at a port rolling up cable.

As we can see from the example above, agencies tended to allocate Travellers unskilled jobs, such as working in warehouses loading delivery lorries, despite the fact that many Travellers have very good qualifications and skills. This may well be the result of agencies' awareness about the Traveller lifestyle and how they may have to leave the area at short notice. On the whole agency work was well paid and the working conditions were satisfactory. One young Traveller and her

partner had obtained two months' work with an agency:

"We worked in a couple of big warehouses, packing CDs and packing clothes. We needed the money, we weren't going to sign on." (Female, age 19, travelling three years)

Apart from agency work, only two Travellers had managed to secure a temporary post. One lived on an authorised site and the other on a site that had been 'tolerated' for several months. The former participant had acquired a research post with a local authority. The long process of how she managed to acquire this type of work is described in Box 7.

Both the security of a stable authorised site and the support of the travelling community had enabled this participant to obtain work. The collective nature of childcare had released this mother's time and enabled her to obtain a qualification and pursue a career.

The second participant lived on a 'tolerated' site. She was a lone mother who had secured a position in a chocolate factory and was combining part-time earnings with the Working Families Tax Credit. Her employer was aware of her lifestyle and rather unusually had given her a trial and then taken her on. As the Traveller explains:

"I do like to be busy, so I'm always looking through the papers. I saw a seasonal job in a chocolate factory. I thought that would be a laugh so I went along. He was nice, he didn't ask for any references or where I lived or anything. When you have been living on the road, you don't really like to say, 'I live in a caravan' because people think funny things don't they? So that was good in the first place and then he said come for a trial." (Female, age 34, travelling 10 years)

It was unusual because she worked in a very hygienic and sterile environment and these conditions were normally a barrier for Travellers because of the lack of washing facilities on sites.

Box 7: Temporary regular work

Female, age 37, travelling 14 years

This female participant with a partner and children had successfully completed a degree while living on a private authorised site. This had been essential for her chosen field of work. Completing the degree had been challenging, not least because of her lifestyle:

"I started going to college and did an access course and then on to do a degree, so I was in full-time education for four years. I finished the degree in 1998 and I had my daughter [second child] a month after I took my finals. I really enjoyed it but it was very, very hard work, especially when you've got kids. The travelling time to uni and back [a round trip of 102 miles a day] and also living somewhere like this didn't give you five minutes' peace. All my studying had to be done away from home basically."

The participant admits that she would not have been able to complete the degree had it not been for the support of her community:

"Basically I wouldn't have got through my college courses and I wouldn't be able to keep so much of my wages now if I was paying loads of childcare costs all the time. When I was at college, I never had any problem with childcare at all, and so in that way it's a major advantage living on site."

However, the Traveller's present work contract was due to finish shortly and she said she needed to look for another job but that she was not prepared to take just any job simply to earn money. Nevertheless, this participant wanted to work, as she commented:

"I prefer to work, it is not really a stigma thing it is to do with my politics. I think if you take something out of this world, you should put something back in. I mean that more in a socialist way than a Tory way."

This lone mother was more than adequately qualified for the skilled job she was employed to do. Her earnings, though part-time, reflected these skills. She was really enjoying the work and took pride in the products she was helping to create. The Traveller felt that this was the result

“... of him [boss] being such a nice guy and [me] getting on with the other workers so well.”

Casual work

Mobility and permanent work are not compatible. Choosing to move or being forced to move, sometimes at an hour's notice, discourages many Travellers from even trying to access permanent work. Yet, paradoxically, Travellers' access to the informal labour market of unregulated, cash-in-hand type work is increased by mobility. Casual employment was by far the most common means of work and provided the greatest variety. Broadly speaking, the casual work undertaken by participants can be divided into five categories – agriculture, festival work, horticulture, building work and art work – although some of these participants had also sold *The Big Issue* or were involved with busking at times. The first two categories mentioned – agricultural and festival work – were the most common among the participants.

The agricultural work that participants were able to access can be split into two kinds: cultivation of crops and cultivation of land. The former includes picking daffodils, apples and hops, lifting bulbs and grading potatoes. The latter mainly consists of farm labouring. Nearly all the participants had at some stage of their travelling life earned money through crop picking and six of these (one was female, two were males and three were couples with both partners working) were currently involved with following the crop seasons. These participants and the travelling population in general were a valuable source of labour to local rural communities. One of the participants explained the reasons why he, and many other Travellers, carry out this type of work:

“If I went for a job interview and they said, ‘Where do you live?’ and I say, ‘I live on a bus, I’m a Traveller,’ they would say, ‘No thank you.’ It is only because we have been coming back here for five years that the farm knows we are good workers and

they want us back. That is the way it has been. People have found that we are actually hard workers. Also, If I took a full-time job I would be stuck because if I got evicted I would be in trouble then, so that is the reason why most people I know, working Travellers, do flowers, veg and fruit.” (Male, age 28, travelling nine years)

Access to this type of work was also improved when crop producers provided sites for the Traveller workers, especially if work was delayed. Trying to stay near to where work was located was a problem if you did not have a work site to reside on and the police were active (in relation to evictions) in the area. Box 8 below provides us with another example of how this type of work is obtained.

Box 8: Casual work: crop picking

Female, age 19, travelling three years

A young female participant and her partner had been working for an agency in another part of the country, and had arrived at their present site in time for the daffodil season to start. They were parked on a private piece of land supplied by the crop grower. The couple, and the other occupants, had not had any problems with the police, although they had visited the site, because the site would usually empty in between the daffodil season and the bulb season.

As a result both partners were able to work without fear of eviction. The work had been easy to access, as the participant explains:

“He [partner] has been doing it for eight years since he was a teenager. He’s got it well in hand. He has been to a lot of farms round [county] because he comes from here, so he knows the places.”

Knowledge of the area and the work reputation of the partner had assisted the couple in the example above to regularly obtain seasonal work.

This type of work demands long, physically exhausting hours. Work is distributed on a daily basis and one's reputation as a worker. It is piece work and a good reputation means that people will earn more money because workers are graded. The higher the grade the more money workers receive per crop. The quote below

provides us with a sense of what the working day entails:

“You are bent double picking flowers all day. Some rows don’t have many flowers so you whizz up and whizz down so it’s not too bad for your back. Today it’s seven pence a bunch, but it changes from day to day depending on how many daffs there are and how naff the weather is.”
(Female, age 23, travelling three years)

Crop picking is a profitable occupation with the majority of participants earning an average of £65 per day. That is of course doubled when both partners work. For all the participants involved in this work, the substantial lump sum acquired provides them with the means of keeping their vehicles legal and in good repair. As one participant commented:

“The bus is always MOT’d after the daffodils and the van had to be done after the bulbs.” (Male, age 28, travelling nine years)

However, seasons are short, weather conditions need to be just right and you have to be able to travel a long way in order to follow the crop seasons across the country. It is an exacting occupation that heavily depends on good time management.

Like crop picking, farm labouring only tends to offer Travellers seasonal work. Thus, work periods are short and again work is normally distributed on a daily basis. The main difference is that it is not piece work, instead workers are paid a daily rate, which is substantially lower than crop pickers. Farm labouring jobs are few and far between, and the two male participants who did manage to secure short periods of work did so by chance – they were single opportunities whereas the crop pickers return to the same growers year after year.

Although festivals have decreased in number, compared with a few years ago, those that remain have provided a small number of participants with the opportunity of work. On the whole, work for the organisers will be carried out before the festival begins and after it has finished. The fencing crew is an example of the former, and the litter crew an example of the latter. Earning money during the festival tends to be the result of

individual enterprises. Details of one participant’s different enterprises are outlined in Box 9 below. Some participants only worked so that they could actually attend and have spending money at the festivals, others needed to work as much as possible in order to live off their earnings afterwards.

Box 9: Casual work: festivals

Male, age 33, travelling eight years

When this participant and his partner first started travelling (eight years ago), they earned most of their money through selling commodities at festivals. They started off selling wine and then progressed to larger enterprises, as the Traveller explains:

“We used to set up bars. We had a little PA system, generated lights and karaoke tapes and things and we used to run an illegal bar. Once we went around and sold coffee and cake, we made a killing then. We had these big coffee jugs and giant kettles on strings on a yolk on our shoulders. The other one would have a tray with all the cakes we had made. We would go around at 10am in the morning when people were just stumbling out of their tents. They would say, ‘you’ve saved my life!’ It was good but it was hard work.”

“One year we turned up at [festival] completely penniless. We had something like five cans of beer, no money and no food. I sold the beer and bought a sixteenth of hash, a couple of mars bars and a packet of digestive biscuits. I made hash truffles and quadrupled my money, did it again and again until in the end I had a sort of production line going. We left with over £500.”

The example above is one of many that could have been provided to highlight the enterprising nature of participants. However, the demise of free festivals in recent years has had repercussions for Travellers’ participation in the informal economy. The opportunity for individual enterprise and earning lump sum amounts of cash, often essential at certain times during the year, has significantly decreased.

Horticultural, building and artwork is accessible providing you are able to stay in one place long enough. The participants who managed to access

these types of work had either gained a reasonably long stay (two to three months) on their particular sites, or had been able to circuit their area of work. The two female participants who had worked part-time at garden centres had managed to achieve the latter, whereas the long hours expected from the building trade required participants to be located on more stable sites. Artwork, in this particular instance henna tattooing, required the female participant to have knowledge about local outlets, such as markets and fairs.

Self-employment

Although many participants expressed a wish to be self-employed, only four had actually and officially managed to do so. Three had accomplished it because they were able to claim the Working Families Tax Credit and for them this in-work benefit had offered them a lifeline. One of the participants was residing on an authorised site, which also assisted his access to clientele. Although their trades were mobile it took time to build up a local clientele, in so doing the Working Families Tax Credit supported the participants living on unauthorised sites through these leaner times. The one participant who was self-employed but not claiming the Working Families Tax Credit had also resided on an authorised site for the last three to four years, thus work was far more consistent and mainly full-time. The Traveller recalls that:

“It was really positive coming here. I got here and I started doing my carvings and we found a couple of good outlets locally.” (Male, age 33, travelling eight years)

The trades of these participants fell into one of two categories, crafts and mechanics, both encompassing highly portable skills. Box 10 provides an example.

Box 10: Self-employment

Male, age 40, travelling 19 years

Not unusually, this male participant had started travelling after ending his service with the Army. Like a number of ex-service Travellers that we have interviewed over the years, the participant had been unable to settle within the housed community. For the first five of the 18 years that he had been travelling, the participant had earned his living through seasonal work but when his children had been born he found that the work was not offering them a decent enough living:

“It got harder and harder. It was really really difficult to make a good living at it, so I diversified. My main income now is from mechanics, although I do bits of building work as well.”

This participant had utilised the apprenticeship he had accomplished in the Army. As a result he was now a self-employed mechanic and the family had been able to claim the Working Families Tax Credit, which had helped them substantially.

This example highlights the value of learning a trade which is portable, and using it to obtain the type of employment, in this case self-employment, that fits comfortably with your lifestyle.

Nevertheless, the income levels of self-employed participants were not high. Generally levels were not a great deal more than what families would have received on Income Support, and at times some were considerably lower. As such, the Traveller participants were reflective of the findings of other studies of low-income self-employed people (see for example, Eardley and Corden, 1996). Indeed, from the experiences of our participants it is easy to agree with Boden et al (1997) that the hourly earnings of self-employed people can be lower than that of employees. As one of the Travellers commented:

“In the summer you are working from 9am until 6pm, and [partner] worked out that last year we made £400 profit in the year.” (Female, age 40, travelling three years)

The regularity of employment

The experiences of participants have shown that Travellers' access to conventional *permanent* employment is limited, and the work patterns expected of members of the settled population are often not compatible with a mobile lifestyle. Nevertheless, the majority of participants were able to secure some work over the year, although the type and work periods varied. Mobility presented both a problem and an asset to Travellers, depending on what type of work they were trying to find. Box 11 provides examples of the different work patterns.

Box 11: Work patterns

- Five male participants and one female participant's partner had been working full-time over the past year, two in regular employment (one single male and one female participant's partner), and four in self-employment (all were male but with partners involved in the business).
- Two female participants, three male partners and two couples had experienced a mix of regular temporary work and claiming benefits over the past year. However, work periods tended to be longer than claiming periods.
- One male participant and three male partners had obtained casual work but only for short periods, as such claiming periods tended to be longer than work periods over the year.
- Three couples, one male partner and one single male, had obtained nine or more months of casual work over the past year and had claimed benefit for three months or less.

High but reasonably controlled mobility is essential for those participants following the crop seasons. This type of casual work is both popular and well-paid and when combined, as it usually is, with other short periods of casual employment tends to keep people ticking over for nine to 10 months of the year. The lean time tends to be from mid-November after the apple season finishes until the daffodil season begins in February. It is these two and a half months in between the seasons when Travellers may need to make a benefit claim.

Participants trying to access other forms of casual employment need to be less mobile, apart from the exception of casual festival work. Without the benefit of either work sites or very short but well-paid work periods, Travellers need periods of stability in order to earn more than a pittance. Enforced mobility due to eviction makes earning a living far more problematic, and although many participants successfully found work, the periods in between jobs tended to be higher than those of the crop followers. As a result the participants' recourse to state benefits was higher.

Both self-employment and temporary but regular employment is closely linked to low mobility. Combining self-employment and the Working Families Tax Credit allows participants some leeway should they be forcibly moved on, as the benefit provides them with a safety net until they have re-established their business.

Summary

It is clear that employment was common among the participants of this study, and many had positive experiences of both their job and work conditions. We have seen that many participants were not 'lay-abouts' but were economically active for at least part of the year. Nevertheless, the mobile nature of the lifestyle limited Travellers' access to conventional employment, apart from short periods when some participants were able to secure temporary agency work. This type of work was only available to Travellers who possessed both a mobile phone and bank account which, in relation to financial exclusion, were important factors. More doors were open to participants with these facilities than those who did not have them.

Securing a regular and permanent job required a more settled existence that could only be obtained by residing on an authorised and legal site, or residing at the place of work. Legal sites are few and far between, and as a result the majority of participants must look to the informal labour market for work. Paradoxically, high mobility assists some Travellers to access certain forms of casual work, particularly crop picking. On the other hand, a more stable existence is needed for longer periods of casual employment. This was also the case for the participants who were self-employed, although more leeway was possible for those combining this type of

employment with the Working Families Tax Credit. Again, a more stable existence was required by the one Traveller who had managed to secure a part-time temporary position and combine it with Working Families Tax Credit.

Overall, participants placed a high value on income that was work generated, reflecting yet again their similarities with the wider community. In addition, the relationship between the collective nature of the travelling lifestyle and employment was important to the participants. Few families would have been able to enjoy an income from work had it not been for the sharing of childcare and mundane, time-consuming tasks, mainly carried out by women.

Although many of the participants faced multiple barriers to conventional employment, it was lone parents (mainly mothers) who fared the worst. Despite the collective nature of the lifestyle, the participants' time was taken up with childcare and trying to survive on a daily basis, leaving them few opportunities and little time to search for work.

On the whole, participants' recourse to state benefits depended on the degree of control that they had over their mobility. The greater their control, the less gaps there were in between jobs. If we are to combat social exclusion by integrating people into the labour market, we can see that many of the participants still have a long way to go. The degree of exclusion may be further compounded when participants' access to the social security system is problematic. It is to state benefits that we turn in the following chapter, when our focus is again on participants' access to benefits and their experiences of claiming.

New Travellers and benefits

Like the population in general, there are times when it is not possible, feasible or desirable to secure paid work, and in such times Travellers turn to the social security system and try to access the benefits to which they are entitled. In addition, there are also times when earnings are so low that people need help in the shape of in-work benefits. In this chapter, therefore, we explore the types of benefit participants were receiving and their experiences of claiming. In order to gain a wider picture and provide some context in this area, we have included material from the in-depth interviews conducted with the Children's Society's Traveller Support Workers because benefit-claiming problems account for a sizeable proportion of their work.

Who claims what?

The main benefit that participants received the most was Income Support. As Box 12 shows, this was closely followed by Jobseeker's Allowance and the Working Families Tax Credit. Incapacity Benefit and Disability Living Allowance were the least frequent, as would be expected.

We can see that overall, 21 Travellers were claiming social security benefits, seven Travellers were claiming in-work benefits, and the income of 11 Travellers came solely from paid work. Two of these Travellers had never claimed benefit at all. One Traveller was 19 years old and had worked since she left home at the age of 12; the other had worked since he was 15 and was now 32 years old.

At the time of the interviews only one Traveller had any experience of the New Deals. The participant had been transferred to every option

Box 12: Benefits

- Nine Travellers were claiming Income Support as lone parents. Eight were female and one was male.
- Eight Travellers were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance. Two were female and six were male.
- Seven Travellers were receiving the Working Families Tax Credit. One was a female lone parent.
- Three Travellers were claiming Incapacity Benefit. One was male and the other two were female lone parents.
- One female Traveller was receiving Disability Living Allowance, supplemented by Income Support.

on the New Deal for Young People until he had forfeited his benefit in order to leave the programme. At this stage he had adopted the travelling lifestyle and secured the first job he had ever had working with one of the festival crews.

Participants' access to Income Support was generally more straightforward for lone parents than for two-parent families, although payment methods differed depending on whether the participant owned a bank account or not. The amount of benefit participants received naturally depended on the number of dependants. All the claimants remarked that the benefit was just about enough to survive on. Box 13 provides an example of a lone mother claiming Income Support and her feelings about the level of the benefit.

Box 13: Lone parent claiming Income Support

Female, age 30, travelling nine years

This participant had been claiming Income Support as a lone parent for over two years. Two of her children lived with her (a child of school age and a baby), and one lived with her ex-partner. As a lone parent access to Income Support had been straightforward and the benefit was paid into her bank account. The participant was just about managing on the amount of Income Support she was receiving:

“If I lived in a house it would be shit, but it’s all right living like this because there are no [domestic] bills to pay. I get £90 a week plus Child Benefit.”

The low overheads of the travelling lifestyle and the anti-materialistic nature of participants enabled the lone mother featured above to survive on a very low income.

One couple with children had only recently applied for Jobseeker’s Allowance because the male partner had previously worked. They were still waiting for their first benefit payment which was due to be picked up from the issuing office in just over a week’s time. The family was in a desperate situation as can be seen from the mother’s remarks:

“He [partner] has just gone to see if we can get a Crisis Loan. I have enough food in the cupboard to feed us but it is not really eating well. Everything we’ve got has now been put into food and the cupboard is a bit low on things at the moment. I am breast feeding as well. My diet over the last week has deteriorated so much that I have ended up with a big cold.” (Female, age 29, travelling 10 years)

We do not know whether her partner obtained a Crisis Loan (intended to help people with immediate short-term needs), but the mother assured us that even if he did not the family would not starve because

“If we need to borrow money there are loads of people on site that will make sure that you don’t go hungry.”

The childless couples and single participants claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance had all been successful in accessing the benefit, although once again methods of payment differed. Few of the participants were managing on the amount of benefit they received:

“I get £102.50 a fortnight. It’s absolutely not enough because there’s food, the dogs and running the car and things, it’s totally subsistence level living. We are doing one big shop at Lidl’s and then that’s stretched for the fortnight. We aren’t going to be able to carry on like this and have any decent lifestyle. There is definitely no way we could afford to go out anywhere, even an unnecessary journey in the car is out of the question.” (Female, age 33, travelling 14 years)

This participant had worked selling *The Big Issue* for a couple of months prior to claiming. She had not been able to continue to work because an eviction had forced her to move away from the area.

The four Travellers claiming Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance had accessed the benefit after medical assessments. In addition, participants claiming Incapacity Benefit were reassessed at specific periods during their claim. All the Incapacity Benefit claimants were paid by book but the participant receiving Disability Living Allowance had the benefit paid into her bank account. An example of the process involved in accessing Incapacity Benefit is provided in Box 14.

For this participant, the substantial drop in income had been cushioned by adopting a lifestyle with fewer overheads and by community support.

Box 14: Lone parent claiming Incapacity Benefit

Female, age 36, travelling four years

Prior to travelling, this participant had held a professional job with an excellent salary until she suffered a mental breakdown. Originally she had received Statutory Sick Pay and then she had been transferred to Incapacity Benefit. The participant had started travelling in order to try and combat her illness. Her son had been born during this time. The Traveller's Incapacity Benefit was paid by book, as she had been able to supply a 'care of' address. The benefit will continue for as long as the medical assessment officer thinks it is necessary.

The difference between earning a large salary and then receiving Incapacity Benefit was substantial, but the participant said that it had not been a hardship:

"When you are earning and you have a house, one third of your income gets taken away in tax before you even see it. The rest gets swallowed up in your living expenses. When you live in a bus and you have reduced the cost of living then you don't need so much to live on. You also learn that food gets thrown away in skips and that it is perfectly edible and that there are nice people around you who will share their food with you."

So far, we have explored participants' access to the main social security benefits, and looked at how claimants were managing on the amount of benefit paid. We have also touched on the length of claims in some of our examples above, but we need a much wider picture of the continuity of claims, as well as a more specific example about the patterns of claiming before turning to explore participants' experiences of claiming benefit.

Continuity and patterns

Continuity of claims differed by the status of Travellers and the type of benefit received. The longest claims were generally those of lone parents and the Travellers on Incapacity Benefit and Disability Living Allowance. The majority of Travellers claiming Jobseeker's Allowance tended to work in between claims, although there were exceptions and these are discussed below when we explore fraudulent claims. The recipients of

these two benefits were mainly the families, couples and single Travellers who followed the crop season. As such, their cumulative periods of claiming varied between one and three months in any one year, although these claims were not always continuous. Many of these Travellers also accessed short spells of agency work. As far as in-work benefits were concerned, the majority of the Working Families Tax Credit recipients had previously claimed Family Credit (Working Families Tax Credit replaced Family Credit in October 1999).

Although we have identified lone parents with long claiming periods, as we noted in the previous chapter, two lone mothers had successfully obtained temporary jobs. Both had been claiming Income Support prior to working. One of the Travellers had attempted to live in a house for a short time prior to working, and the other Traveller was waiting to be housed. However, the quote below, which highlights the experiences of the first of them, suggests that the participant waiting to be housed will have difficulty managing on work-generated income:

"I actually tried living in a house recently. It was a nightmare and I actually left when I got my job because I did a few calculations and realised that by the time I had paid my rent, Council Tax and bills, I would have been worse off than I would on Income Support. It was just before the Working Families Tax Credit came in as well. The rent was high and I was only getting so much of it paid by the council, so I was actually putting £20 a week of my Income Support towards the rent. It was a lot." (Female, age 37, travelling 14 years)

In order to be able to afford to work, this Traveller moved back to the authorised site she had resided on prior to being housed. The experiences of this participant reveal two important factors. First, it illustrates how needs fluctuate as do the arrangements required to meet them, which tells us why some people move on and off benefits with more frequency than others. Second, this participant resides on an authorised site and therefore access to future work may well be easier for her than for those lone parents wishing to work who reside on unstable sites. As such, the long claiming periods associated with lone parents may not be as a result of choice, but of this combination of different factors creating barriers to work.

Fraudulent claims?

We asked our participants if they had ever committed benefit fraud. Most said that they had not but 13 out of the 39 respondents said that they had done so at some time, eight infrequently and five on a more regular basis. This included nine partnered mothers who claimed as lone parents and two childless couples and two single Travellers who had claimed while working. However, as with all fraud estimates, we should treat these figures with some caution. On the one hand, some fraud may not have been disclosed to us, although in general we found people to be willing to discuss these issues. On the other hand, the respondents were not particularly well-informed about the social security system, the different types of benefit and benefit rules, and some of the claims they thought were fraudulent need not necessarily have resulted in any overpayment of benefit and may not strictly speaking have been fraudulent at all.

As has been found with other claimants (Kempson et al, 1994; Dean and Melrose, 1997; Rowlingson et al, 1997), fraud among Travellers was generally opportunistic rather than planned, the monetary gains were quite small, and almost all said that they had committed fraud to meet basic needs and/or to avoid the problems that can be caused by declaring small amounts of irregular earnings. The requirement to declare even very small amounts of occasional earnings was seen as problematic because (as we have seen) Travellers could often only access temporary work. There was one case of a male Traveller who was claiming while working full-time. He had multiple debts that he was attempting to clear and then intended to sign off. In general, however, fraud was seen as something to be avoided and most Travellers preferred other ways to try and make ends meet (as discussed in the next chapter).

Claiming experiences: problems

The majority of participants who were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit and Disability Living Allowance were reasonably knowledgeable about the criteria that they had to fulfil in relation to the benefit. However, the differences in rules and how the various Benefit Agency offices classified Travellers led to several problems. What is surprising is that some Travellers had also encountered problems

with Child Benefit. In addition, Travellers trying to claim other additional benefits also encountered problems. Overall, 21 of the 39 Travellers interviewed had experienced problems with various benefits.

Daily signing on and benefit in arrears

It was not uncommon for participants to report that certain benefit offices had requested them to sign on daily and at different times each day. As participants acknowledged, it is very difficult to keep your daily appointments with the Employment Service and actively be seeking work. The time involved in travelling daily to sign on leaves very little left to look for a job. Indeed it was this particular criteria that led four participants to forfeit their giro and borrow money instead so that they could look for work. As one participant recalls:

“The last time I went to sign on was just before I started the job I have now. I didn't have an address and they said I would have to come in every day to sign on, which was six miles there and six miles back. I said, 'Forget it', even though I didn't know where my next job was coming from.” (Male, age 32, travelling 12 years)

As a result, this participant had borrowed some money, moved to look for work and obtained a full-time permanent position.

Another deterrent to potential Traveller claimants was the benefit in arrears criteria whereby claimants receive benefit a week in arrears. It is not unusual for some Travellers to only make a benefit claim when they are absolutely desperate. However, faced with a 14-day wait until they could collect benefit because of the payment in arrears criteria, three participants were forced to borrow money instead and look for work. One participant did not bother to try and claim a Crisis Loan, two did but were refused. A two week wait for money can be a stressful experience but this can be made even more difficult if the claimant is evicted during the process. Two weeks may then stretch to a month while a different office is sorting out the claim. Participants have told many stories whereby the original benefit office lost the paperwork and as a result payment at the new office had been delayed. The quote from the

participant below provides us with yet another example of why payments could be delayed:

“There was a scrap in the dole office when I went to get my giro and they stopped making payments, so I didn’t get mine and I had to go back on the 23rd December. I told the bloke at the counter that I was owed two weeks’ Income Support and me Maternity Grant. He goes ‘Why are you owed two weeks’ Income Support?’ and I tell him that they stopped paying out when I was here the other week ‘cos there was a scrap. He said, ‘Quite frankly if you are not prepared to tell me the real reason, then I don’t see why this office should pay you’. I said, ‘Oh come on geezer I am going to have a baby in two days,’ and he said, ‘I couldn’t care less’. In the end he went and got the supervisor and eventually I got paid that day’.” (Female, age 36, travelling 15 years)

This had been a stressful experience for the participant. The original delay was neither the fault of the benefit office nor the fault of the participant, but the episode might have been dealt with a little more sensitively.

No fixed abode/without accommodation

The classification of having no fixed abode (or as now used ‘without accommodation’) creates many problems for the travelling community mainly because of the ambiguous nature of this legislation which does not recognise alternative accommodation. First, the classification often means that Travellers will only receive the basic benefit and not the supplements (for example, family premiums). Second, it simply is not true that Travellers are without accommodation as they own a home but the majority are without a legal place to park their accommodation. Third, several Travellers spoke of a special form that was issued to them by certain benefit offices. The Travellers had to fill in the form before making a claim and it asked them for information on where they cooked, washed and did their laundry as well as details about the other occupants on the site. When one Traveller refused to complete the form, on the grounds that the form was inappropriate and intrusive, she was faced with the fraud officer who suggested she was trying to claim illegally. Another participant also objected to having to fill in the form and was told,

“If you don’t then you won’t get your money.” (Female, age 23, travelling three years)

The Traveller was left with very little choice.

Finally, being classified as ‘without accommodation’ usually means that the payment method is that of personal issue particularly if the claimant is assessed as being likely to move on. As we highlighted at the beginning of this report, Traveller sites in the south west tend to be rural and a long way from the nearest town which makes it an expensive and time-consuming business to both sign on and collect benefit payments. The expense is increased even further when combined with daily signing on rules, which, as discussed above, can prevent Travellers from picking up their payments.

Bank accounts

For participants who had their benefits paid into a bank account (approximately half), life was a little easier, particularly for those on Income Support or Disability Living Allowance. Their income was regular and consistent even when moving around. Nevertheless, several participants reported that at certain times their money had been stopped, and in the words of one participant, it was “in order to get my attention” (Male, age 28, travelling 10 years). For one reason or another they had not received the letters, sent to a ‘care of’ address, from the Benefits Agency asking them to attend an appointment. The sudden and immediate cut-off from benefit, along with the time it took to resume payments, caused severe hardship.

Child Benefit

As a universal benefit, Child Benefit should be simple and easy to access, and straightforward to pay. Yet this was not the experience of some of the participants. Five out of the 29 Travellers with children reported problems. Two had experienced problems actually acquiring the benefit, one mother’s Child Benefit had been cut off and two had problems trying to obtain their money. One of the mothers had only just received the benefit after six months of trying. The difficulty some mothers had in obtaining benefit was a result of the rules relating to a change of post office. Recipients are only allowed to cash two orders at post offices, other than their designated one, for the duration of each book. These temporary

changes are available to everyone, but Travellers wishing to change more than twice may not be able to do so if the front of their book is stamped 'No change of post office'.

It had taken the Traveller mother whose Child Benefit had been stopped six weeks to sort the problem out before payments were once again resumed. The mother explains the circumstances:

"My benefits, including Child Benefit, were being paid into my bank account but I wasn't getting any milk tokens. I phoned the benefit office up and asked them to send them to my dad's address as it was the only safe address I had. They didn't believe I was living where I was, so everything was cut off, even my Child Benefit. The Children's Society wrote a letter but they wouldn't communicate with them. They paid up in the end, eventually, but it took a lot of hard work. I was without anything for a good six weeks." (Female, age 29, travelling eight years)

Before one of the mothers had opened a bank account, her Child Benefit had been paid by book. The Traveller was horse-drawn at the time, which prevented her from travelling anywhere very quickly. This had repercussions for cashing her Child Benefit, as she explains:

"We had a book and it was God-awful. Travelling with the horses and having no vehicles was awkward because you could be 100 miles away from your designated post office." (Female, age 30, travelling nine years)

Indeed it is this benefit along with two additional benefits, which takes up a substantial amount of time in the Children's Society Traveller Support Workers' weekly workload. One of the Children's Society workers summarises the mother's difficulties with Child Benefit in Box 15.

The Child Benefit Unit has recently experienced some technical problems that have had an impact on processing claims. Nevertheless, from the comments in Box 14, it would appear that there are two main reasons why some participants experienced difficulties with Child Benefit. First, they lack both the time and consistent telephone facilities that would enable them to speak to the

Box 15: Child Benefit

"I think all the Child Benefit things that we have helped Travellers with have been very difficult to resolve because of the difficulty with contacting the Child Benefit Unit. They do not answer their phones and if you write to them, well my experience is that they write back with some little query that you could have dealt with over the phone, or they don't even write back. I have found them extraordinarily difficult to deal with and I have the time and a telephone to hand. I can think of one Traveller who gave up fighting for her back payment. She was saying one thing, we were supporting her and Newcastle was saying something different. In the end she decided to take what she was offered." (Children's Society worker)

Child Benefit Unit, and so getting payments made directly was difficult. Second, the rules relating to a change of post office were difficult for some participants, especially those who did not have bank accounts.

Additional benefits

Although Travellers have problems with their main benefits, obtaining additional or peripheral benefits can also be problematic, with the two most notable being Social Fund loans and Community Care Grants.

Two participants had had difficulty obtaining a Social Fund loan, one had difficulty justifying the reason for the loan and the other had been refused a loan. The former of the two Travellers had needed a loan in order to move into a house. At the time she had been pregnant with her second child and needed to have a period of stability:

"I told them I needed to get off the road into a house and that I was pregnant. They told me it was not a priority need and refused to give me a loan. I wrote and appealed and did get it. I had to fight for it. I had to repay it at £13.50 a week, which is a lot of money and in the letter they said I had no right to query that amount." (Female, age 29, travelling 10 years)

The difficulty of meeting high repayments had been a concern for other recipients. Some of the Travellers had managed to have their repayments reduced slightly while others had not realised that they were able to apply for a reduction. However, none of the Travellers whose repayments had been reduced had asked for outside help in trying to reduce them even further. As a result it was still a struggle to repay them. One family was still repaying a loan that one partner had received almost eight years ago. He had been unemployed at the time he applied for the loan but had then moved and found a job. A few years later he applied for Family Credit and the loan repayments commenced straight away.

Access to Community Care Grants was not at all straightforward and not one of the three participants who had applied had been successful. According to these participants the criteria governing these grants were complicated, as was the application form itself. Like Crisis Loans and Budget Loans, Community Care Grants are also discretionary and paid out of cash-limited local budgets. Additionally, as the Children's Society workers note, both the form and the focus on different criteria of benefit offices results in the grant being almost impossible to obtain without going through a review process. The Children's Society workers comment on these difficulties in Box 16.

As one of the Children's Society workers commented, it would be difficult enough for her to try and fill out an application form even when armed with benefit information and a knowledge

of key phrases to use, and more so for Travellers trying to complete the form by themselves.

Working Families Tax Credit

It is important to note that the seven families receiving the Working Families Tax Credit viewed this in-work benefit as positive, and as a valuable safety net. For those who were self-employed, the Working Families Tax Credit was often their chief means of income when business was poor. Many participants had previously claimed Family Credit and had been pleased with the change to the Working Families Tax Credit, particularly as it brought with it a financial increase.

This benefit is income-tested and is administered and assessed by the Inland Revenue. The couple can choose whether it is claimed by the man or the woman. The main earner must be working 16 hours a week or more, although there is extra credit for those working 30 hours a week. It is paid over a six-month period either through the wage packet or direct by the Inland Revenue.

However, participants claiming the Working Families Tax Credit were not without their problems. Inland Revenue fraud officers had investigated two families, both self-employed, shortly after the change over from Family Credit to the Working Families tax Credit. Both families were accused of not declaring all their earnings from their trades. The Inland Revenue representatives had little awareness, if any, about the travelling lifestyle and could not understand how the families could survive on so little money.

Box 16: Community Care Grants

"The forms for a Community Care Grant are a nightmare, they are horrid. The problem is that the form asks a lot of questions about assets, what benefits you are on and why you need the grant, which is the sticking point really. There are different criteria and you have to fall into a certain category, for example, you have just left care, or you are on a planned resettlement programme, or you are a family under exceptional pressure. In the most recent grant I helped a Traveller with, the office she was applying to concentrated on the resettlement bit, having an unsettled way of life. They called the Traveller in for a review because they were not convinced that just because she was a Traveller she had an unsettled way of life. We certainly managed to convince them that she had." (Children's Society worker)

"I have had quite a lot of experience of working with people whose Community Care Grant applications have been refused and then we have gone to review, and in some cases we've been successful. There doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason why some people are actually given money while others must go to review. I have worked with Travellers who have been in extreme situations who have been refused a grant and there seems to be no logic to it." (Children's Society worker)

Travellers are adept at managing on a low income because their overheads are much lower than those of the settled population, they are not materialistic and also because of the ethos of their own community. As a result they can survive, if they have to, on very little. However, the Inland Revenue officers were only interested in hard evidence in the shape of up-to-date accounts. One family had kept all their accounts up-to-date while the other family had not. The outcome for the first family was that there was no change while the second family's Working Families Tax Credit was cut by £11 a week. Unfortunately this happened at a time when earnings from the business were at their lowest ebb and the family of two adults and six children (four living with them full-time and two part-time) had to survive on a total income of £130 a week. The Inland Revenue officers suggested that the family would be better off claiming social security benefits instead.

Summary

A total of 21 Travellers out of the 39 interviewed were claiming social security benefits with the most frequently accessed benefit being Income Support. This was because most of the Travellers receiving Income Support (nine) were claiming as lone parents. Seven families were working and claiming the Working Families Tax Credit, and the income of 11 participants came solely from paid work. The evidence suggests that the majority of the participants were not 'dole scroungers', for nearly half the participants were working and many more were able to obtain some form of employment over the year.

The continuity of social security claims varied. Long-standing lone parents tended to have the longest claims, while claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance tended to have the shortest claim periods, rarely longer than three months of the year.

Thirteen Travellers reported that they had made fraudulent benefit claims at some point, eight infrequently and five on a more regular basis. Fraud was generally opportunistic rather than planned, the monetary gains were quite small, and almost all said that they had committed fraud to meet basic needs and/or to avoid the problems that can be caused by declaring small amounts of

irregular earnings. In general fraud was seen as something to be avoided and most Travellers preferred other ways to try and make ends meet.

Participants experienced a number of problems both with social security benefits and in-work benefits. In relation to social security benefits this appears, primarily, to be the result of how the system tends to classify Travellers as being 'without accommodation'. This has an impact on the frequency of signing-on days, the amount of benefit paid and payment methods. In relation to the problems experienced with in-work benefits, specifically the Working Families Tax Credit, it would appear to be the result of the Inland Revenue's lack of understanding about the travelling lifestyle. Nevertheless, despite problems, all the Travellers receiving this benefit perceived it as beneficial and positive.

However, participants' access to state benefits proved problematic on a number of occasions, and when this factor is combined with the difficulties of obtaining regular work, the degree of social exclusion experienced increases for a substantial number of participants.

New Travellers and 'alternative resources'

Few of us would manage to get through our daily lives without recourse to a range of different resources in both cash and kind. We may turn to relatives or friends to mind our children, we may ask a colleague for a lift to work, and can probably imagine why people who are completely 'broke' and desperate might sometimes steal a tin of beans from a local shop. There are many different ways to supplement regular income from work or benefits. It is the alternative resources of the travelling community, which is the focus of this chapter. We wanted to know how, in spite of all the difficulties they face, Travellers are able to sustain their lifestyle. Merely focusing on income, whether from work or benefits, only tells part of the story. This chapter therefore seeks to complete the picture by exploring the types of resources open to the Traveller community.

Supplementing income and lifestyle

We wanted to get a sense of the ways in which participants supplemented their income and lifestyle, and under what circumstances. With the help of participants we compiled a list of activities that they had undertaken when they were either without money or the money they had was not enough to meet basic needs, or there was a pressing financial issue that needed to be resolved. Box 17 provides a list of the activities from the most to the least common. The figures on the far right represent the number of participants who had undertaken the activity.

Box 17: Activities that supplement income or lifestyle

1. Borrowing from family or friends	36
2. Borrowing from other people on site	33
3. Skip-runs	31
4. Selling commodities at festivals	24
5. Weighing-in scrap metal	23
6. Busking	20
7. Fraud (DSS or bouncing cheques)	15
8. Borrowing from the bank	13
9. Fitting out live-in vehicles	12
=9. Selling drugs	12
10. Selling <i>The Big Issue</i>	10
=10. Begging	10
11. Performing	8
=11. Shop-lifting	8
12. Organising raves	5
13. Pawning possessions	3
=13. Burglary	3
14. Prostitution	1

The activities in Box 17 fall roughly into three categories: 'borrowing', 'selling' and 'doing'. 'Borrowing' certainly includes money obtained from others but it might also include, for example, borrowing commodities and services from other people on site. 'Selling' includes items, entertainment and labour. 'Doing' would include activities such as skip-runs, fraud, begging, shop-lifting, burglary and prostitution. We can see from Box 17 that the activities included in the last category tended to be less common than those in

the other two categories, apart from skip-runs and fraud. However, we need to 'unpack' these activities, explore the circumstances under which activities were undertaken and discuss what were, and what were not, acceptable to participants.

Borrowing

Borrowing from family and friends appears to be a common activity. However, it was difficult to get a precise picture of this. Some participants borrowed from family, some from friends and some from both. In most cases friends meant other people on sites. Borrowing from family seems to be a far less common activity than borrowing from others on site. Indeed this was reinforced when we asked participants to order the activities into those they would do first, second, third and so on, and discussed the acceptability of these activities with them.

Of the 39 participants interviewed, 24 had borrowed from family. Six thought this acceptable but only two of those said that borrowing from family would be their first choice. The remaining 18 of the participants who had borrowed from family said they hated doing it and only did so when totally desperate. When borrowing from family, the amount borrowed tended to be large and required for either a pressing bill/debt or emergency expenses. The following two quotes provide examples:

"We still owe my partner's parents for the last mobile phone bill which was about £300." (Female, age 29, travelling five years)

"The bus overturned and we had to get it towed out of the ditch. I had to borrow £500 from my family to pay for it." (Female, age 29, travelling 10 years)

All the participants borrowing large amounts had or were trying to pay back the money. This was easier for some than others. It was very difficult for participants whose income was derived from DSS benefits who were already trying to manage within a very tight margin. It was a little easier if participants were working, although, as we noted in Chapter 2, many participants were surviving on low incomes. The participants with either high incomes or those able to access casual work and amass a sizeable sum of money would either be

able to pay it back more easily or, as we suggest below, not have to borrow in the first place.

However, borrowing from family did not always involve a one-way transaction. At least one participant mentioned a mutual transaction:

"We've borrowed money from [mother] in the past but again it's a mutual thing. Mum is 82 now, bless her, so every now and again we go over and take her out for the day." (Male, age 49, travelling three years)

Another participant spoke of lending her mother a sizeable amount of cash to pay for legal fees.

The participants who had not borrowed from family had a wide range of reasons for not doing so. One participant remarked that she had

"... always run away from family help. My brother's quite in to it but I am not." (Female, age 19, travelling three years)

Another participant had a more specific reason:

"I am really against the idea of being supported by your parents. My dad is retired and my mum retires this year and they have both been very careful about planning their retirement and their money. There is no way I would want to be a drain on them." (Female, age 33, travelling 14 years)

Travellers' needs and financial requirements can fluctuate substantially, and there are times when a large amount of money is required, particularly when vehicles need major repairs. When looking at Travellers' access to work we noted how Travellers involved in crop picking amass lump sums in order to pay for large repairs, tax and insurance. But for Travellers who are unable to access this type of work, or even work in general, they have little choice but to approach family.

The low number of people who had borrowed from a bank reflects the low number of participants with an overdraft facility. But those who did borrow tended to do so for larger items, as had this participant:

"The van engine blew up and we ended up having to borrow money from the

bank to buy a new van with a diesel engine.” (Female, age 36, travelling 15 years)

The participant and her partner also had a £300 overdraft. Participants would have been more than happy to borrow from a bank had they owned a bank account. Interestingly, not one participant had borrowed money from an unofficial source. There were two reasons for this. First, Travellers are not a target for people offering unofficial loans in that they do not move in the same areas and, second, Travellers’ own communities supply short-term, small loans, as we will see below.

Borrowing money from other people on site occurred regularly but it always involved a reciprocal element. The amount of money borrowed tended to be far less than that borrowed from family. The money took the form of a short-term loan to tide people over until they received their wages or benefits. As several participants pointed out, Travellers on a site get paid at different times, which benefits everyone. The following quotes provide us with a sense of why and how money is loaned:

“If [other Travellers] came and knocked on the door and said, ‘I have got to go to [town] and I haven’t got any money,’ I would cheerfully lend them a fiver or a tenner and know that the moment their giro came in or whatever, we would get it back.” (Male, age 49, travelling three years)

“It’s one big community. I had to borrow some money to get down here actually.” (Male, age 38, travelling nine years)

“If you haven’t got money and you need some, people will help out. The whole bulb season I was taking in five people a day in the van. We just shared the cost of the diesel. If I was totally skint I could go next door and they would lend me a fiver. When we were all moving up to [county] to do the bulbs from here some people didn’t even have the money to get there. I lent loads of money out for diesel.” (Male, age 28, travelling nine years)

“We all help each other out. Even if people haven’t got very much they can squeeze out a bit extra for other people. It’s more like a family than people living

in trucks on a strip of land.” (Female, age 24, travelling four years)

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, money was not the only thing that Travellers had borrowed from others on site; and indeed help was not limited to borrowing. The travelling community had a number of resources that supplemented participants’ lifestyles, as the following quotes demonstrate:

“She [another Traveller] has been feeding me for the past week because I have been quite skint, but I have got a giro today so we have gone halves on a box of veg from the organic place up there.” (Male, age 23, travelling one year)

“It was the communal support that very much helped me through the benefits side of things and being a mother. I was very grateful for the support they gave me. It was a tough time, I don’t think I was quite here, I had post-natal depression. It was thankfully due to the support that I managed to get through. I couldn’t have done it living in a house, I would have been very isolated. I didn’t have contact with my family because they all lived abroad and so I was lucky to have the support of the community. I think there was always somebody there looking after me, or looking after [daughter].” (Female, age 29, travelling 10 years)

“We’re always borrowing things off each other on this site and sharing lifts and launderette runs. It’s a way of managing.” (Female, age 29, travelling 10 years)

“We are all working, not one of us is not working. Most of the time it is women and kids on the site [during the day] so we all stick together and bring our kids up together. We all look after each other’s kids, we’ll pick up water, or pick up whatever when we’re out.” (Female, age 36, travelling 15 years)

“It was only last night that [another Traveller] sat in the bus and said, ‘Do you realise I haven’t actually got any water for myself since you’ve been on site?’ The only reason he was sat in our bus this morning was because he was doing a little tour of the site. He is going to the local

shops to save us going out, so he was seeing if anybody needed anything.”
(Male, age 49, travelling three years)

We can see from these comments how invariably help of all kinds involves reciprocity, even though it is not necessarily instant (as others have noted to be the case for such help, for example, Finch and Mason, 1993) Within the travelling community help can be financial, emotional, physical and in kind. The community can support the weak and the vulnerable in that tasks and information are shared, as indeed are skills, which are frequently learned after participants adopt the lifestyle. It is clear from the above that participants prefer to turn to their own community before turning to their extended family or outsiders. They are more comfortable with help that allows a reciprocal element.

However, the travelling community can be exclusive as well as inclusive. For example travelling families with children will rarely share a site with Travellers who have a serious heroin habit, or who engage in offensive criminal activities. Travellers tend to share sites with like-minded people, so that families will live on sites with other families. The result is that some sites consist of mainly families while others are solely composed of Travellers who regularly commit criminal offences in order to feed their drug habit. In our experience the latter are few and far between. In addition, the reciprocal relations discussed above may be more complex in reality. In our interviews we only discussed the type of help that the community gave to participants and not the degree or extent of the relationships and obligations involved. It may be that not all participants are able to conduct a reciprocal relationship, although this may change over time as people's circumstances alter. Nevertheless, although we were unable to analyse this in any depth, it was clear that these Travellers placed a very high value on the collective and reciprocal nature of the lifestyle.

Selling

Selling commodities, entertainment or labour accounted for nearly half of all the activities undertaken by participants. Selling items at festivals and weighing-in scrap metal were the two most common of these activities but the opportunity to do either of these has decreased with the demise of free festivals and the drop in

the price of scrap metal. Activities such as selling *The Big Issue* or busking/performing tended to depend on participants' location and how far they were from a reasonably sized town. Nevertheless, if the opportunity was there, these types of activity supplied participants with instant cash. It was for this reason that several Travellers had sold drugs in the past. As one participant commented:

“I just had no money. I wouldn't do it again unless I was really desperate, and it is silly because you can get locked up. I think anyway that cannabis shouldn't be illegal, there are a lot worse things that people do.” (Male, age 28, travelling nine years)

Only two participants regularly supplemented their income by selling heroin and one of these participants did so in order to sustain a drug habit. The other 10 only dealt with cannabis. All were users.

Doing

Skip-runs were by far the most popular and the most acceptable of the 'doing' activities featured. Skip-runs are visits to supermarket skips that contain damaged or out of date produce, an activity that is regularly carried out by almost all the Travellers. It is seen as an acceptable activity by them because the produce would otherwise be thrown away. It is rarely undertaken through desperation, but rather it is reflective of the travelling culture and Travellers' hate of waste. Travellers who do not take part in this activity are usually committed to more specialist, or organic, diets. This activity was frequently carried out for communal gain rather than purely for individual gain. One or two Travellers will go on a skip-run but will then share the produce among the occupants of the site. An interesting example is provided by the participant below.

“We just had a fantastic Christmas one year. We were doing the skip-runs every week to this particular supermarket, and the week before Christmas they put loads of bottles of sparkling wine in the skip for us and a great big turkey.” (Female, age 37, travelling 14 years)

While skip-runs were a regular occurrence, begging only tended to occur when Travellers were penniless and stranded on their own when

moving between sites. In such circumstances participants needed instant money. They could not get to their own community for help or wait for benefit claims to be processed. In this situation, two participants had applied for a Crisis Loan but had been refused. It was an activity that embarrassed many of the participants who had engaged in it as we can see from the two quotes below.

“I drifted in to it once and it only happened once in one place, but yes sure if circumstances forced me into that position, rather than steal I would beg, even though it is humiliating at times, you get spat on and get called all sorts.” (Male, age 40, travelling 19 years)

“I did it for about a week, just enough to get some money together to carry on.” (Female, age 23, travelling three years)

Activities such as shop-lifting, burglary and soliciting were, once again, only usually undertaken when people were desperate. These tended to be opportunistic activities, rather than premeditated ones. Only one participant reported that he regularly engaged in burglary, and this was to sustain a drug habit.

Social security fraud and bouncing cheques were claimed to have been undertaken by 15 participants. Two participants had engaged in the latter, and 13 in the former. We explored DSS fraud in some detail in the previous chapter.

Although DSS benefits went some way in providing Travellers with some financial security to meet basic needs, there were times when this money was also used to move quickly prior to an eviction. This was an entirely necessary precaution to take, for Travellers who do not move after an eviction notice has been served risk losing their homes as the police have the power to impound them.

As we noted above, needs fluctuate over the year. The seasons, mobility and children all have an impact on participants' needs. As the quotes in Box 18 demonstrate, at certain times and in certain circumstances more money or help is required.

Box 18: Why needs fluctuate

“Sometimes you need loads more money. Like I said when we were coming down here from [county] the vehicle got impounded and I needed £400 to get it out. I didn't think we had the money but [partner] had saved a bit up, it was all our savings.” (Female, age 36, travelling 15 years)

“You get times like when the car goes wrong and you can't get the parts for it 'cos you haven't got any savings, or something happens and there are emergencies. Like if you've got to move in a hurry and you need diesel and that. We always seem to be in more debt in the winter.” (Female age 29, travelling five years)

“It's things like tax and insurance that crop up, and we're always more skint in the winter, we eat more and there's fuel and stuff. Uniforms cost money, especially when they change schools more frequently and there's the expense of commuting daily.” (Female, age 29, travelling 10 years)

“The MOT had expired and up until a month ago I couldn't get one 'cos the bus needed six new tyres. Something we did for somebody three years ago came to roost and he turned up here with new tyres. There is no way we could have financed that on [partner's] money. Trying to get a lump sum like £650 in dribs and drabs is almost impossible. You earn 20 quid and it tends to end up in your pocket. It's the 2-300 at a time that you can put back.” (Male, age 49, travelling three years)

“I think it's the same for us all really, obviously there's Christmas, and you have to start saving from October really, try and wangle a job. We used to do the apples. You know I knew I could stick £200 aside and that would be the Christmas money.” (Female, age 30, travelling nine years)

Participants' financial requirements increase in winter (particularly Christmas), summer and at times when they have to move quickly as a result of eviction. Vehicle repairs and children's needs also means that more money has to be found, often at short notice. The lack of savings and the accumulation of debts mean that few individuals have the high financial resources often required

on these occasions. And as we mentioned above, these are the times when participants are more likely to borrow from family.

Activities and acceptability

We have explored the circumstances under which participants carry out activities and we have touched on how acceptable these activities are to Travellers. However, this needs exploring in greater detail and Box 19 summarises the activities that were both acceptable and unacceptable to participants.

Box 19: Acceptable and unacceptable activities

Most acceptable	Least acceptable
<i>Borrowing</i> From others on site	From family
<i>Selling</i> Commodities at festivals Busking Weighing-in scrap metal	Drugs
<i>Doing</i> Skip-runs Burglary Prostitution	Begging

In relation to the most acceptable activities, if the reciprocal element associated with the top activity is combined with the activities below, apart from borrowing from family, we can see that overall the most acceptable strategies appear to be self-help ones, as indeed is reflective of the findings of other studies, for example, Kempson, 1996; Dean, 1999. The thoughts of one participant who was justifying her choice are shown below.

“I am not a very illegal person. I will take out of rubbish bins, which are really the skips. I have begged, but more often than not I'll take my whistle, if there is someone to babysit, and busk. I have shop-lifted but I don't like it at all. Busking would come first, then borrowing from others on site and skip-runs are pretty much general.” (Female, age 29, travelling 10 years)

We see from Box 19 that the most unacceptable activities to participants reflect the low number of Travellers that were involved in these. However, we are not suggesting that these two categories remain fixed over time. As we have discussed, participants' needs fluctuated over the year, and also by what was required to meet them. There were times when participants needed large sums of cash and times when they only required a small short-term loan.

Summary

We have seen how the participants in this study were able to draw from a wide range of different resources in order to supplement their income or their lifestyle. As such, a variety of activities was undertaken by participants which sustained them through difficult times, both financially and in terms of their well-being. The activities that participants were involved with could be divided into the three categories of 'borrowing', 'selling' and 'doing'. The latter included such activities as skip-runs, fraud, begging, shop-lifting, burglary and soliciting, and we saw that these activities, apart from skip-runs and fraud, tended to be carried out as a last resort. Skip-runs on the other hand were part of the travelling culture, whereas the reported incidences of fraud took place because of the insecure nature of work.

Borrowing from family or others on site was a common activity. Loans from family tended to be large and long-term, whereas loans from other Travellers were small and short-term. The former covered large bills or emergency expenses, and the latter covered day-to-day living expenses. Money was not the only borrowing that went on among participants. Help took many other forms and all, including money, incorporated a reciprocal element. Daily chores, childcare and vehicle maintenance were invariably shared among the occupants of a site.

The activities that fell under the heading of 'selling', such as selling items, entertainment and labour, were also common. However, the opportunity to carry out these activities was not always open to participants. The demise of free festivals, the drop in scrap metal prices and the rural location of sites all had an impact on these activities.

Overall, participants tended to undertake activities that involved a reciprocal element and sat comfortably with the nature of the travelling community. They turned to their community first before turning to outsiders, and only turned to family when the help needed was beyond that which could be given by other Travellers. Indeed, this was reinforced further when we discussed the acceptability of activities with participants. Self-help strategies were the most acceptable, and activities such as selling drugs, begging and burglary were the least acceptable. This appears to dispense with the assumption that, in general, Travellers are 'thieves and drug peddlers'.

This chapter has explored the range of resources that are open to the travelling community. In the following and final chapter we draw all the empirical findings together in order to understand how New Travellers make a living.

Making a living

In the previous three chapters we examined different aspects of work, benefits and other resources in cash and kind that Travellers draw on in order to make a living. In so doing, we have gone some way to dispell the myths that have shrouded the travelling lifestyle. Contrary to public opinion, many New Travellers do work for a living and do not rely solely on benefits. Furthermore most New Travellers seem to hold similar values in respect of the ways they make a living (work, benefits and other activities) as other low-income groups (Dean and Taylor-Gooby, 1992; Kempson, 1996). In this final chapter we seek to bring the empirical chapters together and explore two key questions:

- What strategies are Travellers using to meet their needs? Are these different from or the same as those of other low-income people?
- What does this study tell us about social exclusion? In what ways are Travellers socially excluded/socially integrated?

Before we address these questions, however, we need to reflect on the patterns that have emerged from the analysis in relation to employment and meeting needs.

Work patterns

In thinking about employment access and opportunities, it is important to hold in mind the difficulties of the travelling lifestyle – out-of-the-way sites, time-consuming chores, mud and dirt, finding water and fuel, and uncertainty about how long you are able to stay in a particular location. Nevertheless, many Travellers in our study were currently or recently involved in paid work and from these we identified five main patterns of

employment. These relate to the sorts of criteria typically used to categorise employment – full-time/part-time, employed/self-employed, permanent/temporary – but these categories by themselves were not always very helpful. Additionally, these are fairly fluid groups in that people can move between them and/or, combine them. It is also the case that they are related in part to life course (whether participants have children or are childless) and to mobility (high or low, ‘chosen’ or ‘forced’).

We first describe the main employment patterns which are summarised in Figure 1 and amended to take account of the above. We then discuss the factors that allow Travellers to access and to sustain these, and finally we consider how these patterns relate to meeting needs.

Conventional employment

This category covers regular employment in full-time or part-time jobs. This type of employment was most likely to be obtained by couples with children, single people and lone parents usually living on authorised or tolerated sites. Where families were involved there was often a gendered division of labour within the household so that the employed male could sustain employment. These participants were not very mobile, did not usually have very high earnings and some were receiving the Working Families Tax Credit alongside wages.

Self-employment

Sustained self-employment was possible for couples with children who were working together. The female was usually responsible for keeping the business accounts, if not directly engaged in

the work. These participants were mobile within a limited geographical area or they were living on an authorised site. The families' incomes were low and they were often receiving the Working Families Tax Credit.

Temporary employment via employment agencies

These are temporary jobs, but can last for quite lengthy periods (3 to 4 months). They were obtained by single people, couples without children or couples with children who operated a gendered division of labour. Participants were fairly mobile but (unlike the first pattern) mobility led to work, rather than vice versa. This includes forced mobility through evictions. The hours of work were often long and the work was generally heavy and manual. Earnings could be quite high and work conditions reasonable. Most of these participants were not receiving benefits.

Seasonal agricultural employment

This type of employment was mainly obtained by younger, childless people. Where couples with children were involved, the children were either very young (and cared for alongside work) or the family operated a gendered division of labour, with the man working while the woman cared for the children. These families were highly mobile and they followed work around the country. Work

therefore led to mobility. Employers often provided the crop pickers with work sites which reduced the risk of eviction. Earnings could be quite high, especially if both partners were working. In addition, this group often accessed agency work during periods when there was no agricultural work.

Irregular 'opportunistic' work

We have defined this as work that comes up on an irregular basis and provides an immediate cash boost. We include here both 'conventional' work, for example, domestic cleaning or gardening, and other ways of making some cash quickly, both legal and illegal – busking, selling scrap metal, drug dealing and so on. This type of work is in addition to other sources of income and is often undertaken in times of crisis or out of desperation. People engaged in any of the above work patterns might also undertake opportunistic work. There are also a few people who regularly access this type of work. But the barriers to this type of work are particularly high for lone parents, whose main source of income is usually Income Support, and who access this work on a very occasional basis, sometimes never. These lone parents are fairly mobile, often enforced through evictions. They have low incomes and the small amounts of cash generated by this sort of work are quickly swallowed up.

Figure 1: Approaches to employment

Conventional work	Self-employment	Temporary agency work	Seasonal work	Opportunistic work
• Taxed	• Taxed	• Taxed	• Cash-in-hand	• Cash-in-hand
• Full-time	• Full-time	• Full-time	• Full-time	• Infrequent
• Low mobility leads to work	• Limited mobility	• Medium mobility leads to work	• Work leads to high mobility	• Medium/high mobility leads to 'possible' work
• In-work benefits/ no benefits	• In-work benefits	• No benefits	• No benefits	• Benefits
• Earnings not high	• Low income	• High income but unstable	• High income but unstable	• Small amounts of money
• Single people, couples with children and lone parents	• Couples with children	• Single people, childless couples or couples with children	• Single people, childless couples or couples with children*	• All groups, benefit recipients and Travellers in between jobs

* Either not attending school or too young to attend

This is paid work as supplementary, so it is a little different from the first four categories in which paid work was the main source of income. There are also two further points to note. Not all Income Support recipients are able to access opportunistic work, particularly lone parents. Therefore this is a lone parent and not just a Traveller issue.

Relative size of the categories

It is difficult to try and count up the numbers engaged in these various work strategies because these are fluid categories, especially the first and fourth. The following figures are only approximate but they do provide us with some sort of overview. Of the 39 participants there were four in conventional employment, four in self-employment, five in agency work, five seasonal workers, four in regular opportunistic work, and the rest (17) in irregular opportunistic work, sometimes very limited.

Roughly speaking about half the sample (21 people) was mainly engaged in paid work. For several of these participants agency work was very important – it provides a way into employment and because it is temporary work, it is often the only sort of work that can be obtained by those whose mobility is sometimes forced upon them by evictions. Seasonal agricultural work is also important and Travellers are a valuable source of this type of labour.

The other half of the sample (18) who make up the largest single group, are those who are receiving benefits. These are mainly lone parents, and their access to any work, including opportunistic work, is often very limited. Not only do lone parents face the same barriers to work as other Travellers, the combination of childcare responsibility and the high maintenance nature of the lifestyle limits their time, space and opportunities to seek either formal or informal work. However, there were also four people who were receiving benefits and regularly making extra undeclared money. These participants are probably closest to the stereotype that many people have of Travellers, but they are clearly a minority.

Accessing and sustaining employment patterns

What makes it possible for Travellers to follow these sorts of employment patterns? What do they need to be able to obtain and sustain jobs? There are some differences across the categories and these are discussed next.

Conventional employment

Conventional employment is difficult and not many participants seem to be able to do this. It is necessary to have very low mobility and a low risk of eviction, which means that participants must either live on an authorised or tolerated site. The site must also be large enough to provide childcare support, or a partner must provide childcare. Sites must also have good facilities, or local facilities that can be accessed easily for washing. Sites must also be located within relatively easy reach of employment but even so transport, other than live-in vehicles, would probably be required. In addition, an employer who does not discriminate against Travellers would also be necessary.

Self-employment

Self-employment requires participants to have marketable skills, which need to be portable so that mobility (chosen and forced) is possible. However, mobility should not be too wide-ranging as it is necessary to maintain local contacts and customers. Having a partner also involved in the work is helpful. There may be long periods when earnings are very low, so access to in-work benefits that cushion lean times is important.

Temporary employment via employment agencies

For this type of work a bank account and a mobile phone are almost essential, so that agencies can make contact and wages can be paid, although these jobs may also be paid cash in hand. Although mobility is less of a problem, it is also necessary to be in the same place long enough to take on particular jobs. Appearance is less of an issue than it is for conventional work. Even though agencies act as mediators with employers, participants were mainly offered unskilled manual work. It is necessary to know

which agencies to use and workers need to be in good health and have some physical strength.

Seasonal full-time agricultural employment

To access this work, it is necessary to be mobile, to be able to work long hours at physically demanding work, and it is best not to have children, or to have a partner caring for the children. Participants carrying out this type of work must own 'legal' vehicles and have good time management skills. It is also necessary to have access to sources of information about who is hiring, where and when. This usually comes from other Travellers. A reputation as a good worker is also important.

Irregular 'opportunistic' work

The nature of this work is such that it is not very useful to think about what facilitates it – this is work undertaken when the opportunity arises. But opportunities are least likely to rise for those living in small, remote and very rural sites, with children to care for, and no transport.

It is important to note that the type of work Travellers try to obtain changes over the lifecycle, particularly when children come on to the scene. Many of our participants had obtained seasonal work in the past, but when their children were born they turned to other kinds of work. Also particular types of work are often associated with certain geographical areas, for example, agency work tends to be more common in the north as seasonal work is in the south.

Meeting needs

On the one hand, many of the needs of Travellers are of the same type as those of the settled population, such as food, heating, children's needs (school uniforms, clothing, Christmas, birthdays and holidays). Like many people, most Travellers smoke and drink, and the use of cannabis is not uncommon. On the other hand, some needs are specific to the travelling lifestyle. Travellers have no housing costs as such, but there are quite significant costs associated with live-in vehicles. These include MOT, insurance, repairs to vehicles, veterinary and other costs for horse-drawn vehicles, fuel (usually diesel) and so on. Families might have two or three live-in

vehicles and may also have cars for transport, and so the costs associated with these may be very high. In addition the rural locations impose their own costs, for example, getting laundry done or getting to the shops. Water may also cost money, as well as time – it will often have to be collected and perhaps paid for. Additionally, evictions can create large sudden costs for fuel and for repairs to damaged vehicles.

Over the year, summer is the peak time for mobility costs because Travellers tend to be more mobile in the summer months, but the summer also provides more earning opportunities. Winter not only brings high heating and lighting costs but also fewer opportunities for work.

Conventional employment

With conventional employment income is stable and so are needs. There are unlikely to be unexpected eviction costs and there are less mobility costs. But the incomes of this group are low and so are living standards. Benefits, including Child Benefit, are important in sustaining this type of employment.

Self-employment

This group's income is very unstable and variable and these are some of the poorest families in our study. For these participants benefits, particularly in-work benefits, play a very important role in sustaining self-employment. Opportunistic work may also be undertaken to supplement these low incomes.

Temporary employment via employment agencies

With agency work, earnings can be high but often irregular. However, benefits are rarely claimed by this group – it seems they fall outside both the in-work and the out-of-work benefits systems. These participants often have high and unpredictable mobility costs, therefore debts are not uncommon and family support may be called upon for lump sum loans. A considerable amount of poverty is experienced by this group.

Seasonal full-time agricultural employment

Seasonal crop picking can provide about nine months' work over the year. During the periods without work these families will often turn to

agency work, they rarely claim benefits and nor do they call upon family support. After a period of a few weeks' work, couples can accumulate quite large lump sums and so are able to meet their high mobility costs. However, winter – Christmas especially – may be very hard, and opportunistic work will be accessed if possible at these times.

Irregular 'opportunistic' work

This is one of the main ways of meeting 'lumpy' needs and of providing a little spending money for leisure (including drinks or drugs). It is also the source of 'desperation' cash or goods – for times when the person literally has no money at all. Much of this work is legal but not necessarily declared for tax or benefits purposes, although not all would be over the disregard limit, so it is necessarily breaking benefit rules. Nevertheless some of this work is illegal but, as we have noted, there are quite specific circumstances when people engage in illegal activities. Shop-lifting is usually carried out when participants have been desperate for food, begging usually occurs when someone is stranded and needs immediate cash, and selling cannabis is a relatively small-scale activity. This study only found one participant who was regularly involved with illegal activities (burglary and selling heroin) and these were undertaken in order to sustain a heroin addiction.

Other ways to make ends meet

There were other ways that Travellers made ends meet. Skip-runs to supermarkets for food were very common and almost all Travellers were involved with this activity. Skip-runs can provide a significant, although unreliable, element of food needs. Making clothes, buying jumble, repairing and not replacing items, not having much – these are all part of the way people make ends meet. Travellers rarely have large stocks of clothing or consumer goods, partly reflecting their poverty and partly their anti-materialistic values. Debts are common, usually to family or friends rather than to formal sources. It is hard for Travellers even to get Social Fund loans, let alone loans from financial institutions.

Further, and as we noted above, the travelling community is an important source of support and helps people to be able to sustain employment in several ways. These include providing childcare; providing information about opportunities;

providing other help in kind such as vehicle repairs; sharing food and fuel and providing transport. Rarely are large sums of money lent by other Travellers as very few have the resources to do this, although lending small amounts on a short-term basis is extremely common. Reciprocity is important – the help given is returned in some way, although not necessarily instantly.

Approaches to meeting needs

The needs of the travelling community are much the same as those of the settled population, but with certain costs imposed by the travelling lifestyle. In addition, the approaches that participants used to meet needs were also similar to those identified by other studies of low-income groups (for example, see Kempson, 1996; Elam et al, 1999). Nevertheless there were two basic differences of degree in how participants met needs. First, Travellers live in homes that have lower domestic overheads, and second, in addition to individual approaches to meeting needs, the collective support of their community is extremely important to Travellers.

We have seen that conventional employment is very difficult to access and requires some very specific conditions, in particular a relatively non-mobile lifestyle. So only a small minority of Travellers were able to obtain conventional work. There would have to be much more provision of authorised sites if the number of Travellers engaged in this type of employment was to be increased.

Self-employment is more compatible with the lifestyle, but often means very low and variable incomes. This is not dissimilar to other low-income self-employment. Indeed various studies have found that the low-income self-employed work very long hours but often exist on levels below that of Income Support (Boden et al, 1997; Eardley and Corden, 1996). Thus ensuring these families get their in-work benefits is important; otherwise it is almost impossible to sustain this type of work.

Obtaining seasonal work in agriculture and agency work is very important, because it is more likely to be possible alongside mobility (chosen or forced). These particular jobs are more accessible for Travellers as the work is full-time but temporary and personal appearance is not an

issue with employers. For this group the need for extra income tends to be for periods (often short) outside the times when work is available.

For many Travellers work is obtained in rural labour markets that are characterised by low-skilled and insecure employment. Other studies have shown that seasonal and part-time workers rarely make the transition from this type of work to permanent employment, and thus they are locked into low-paid jobs (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000; Pavis et al, 2000). Our study reflects these findings. We also found that the social networks of participants are important in learning about jobs and facilitating access. Many of the seasonal agricultural workers learned about vacancies through other Travellers.

Policy issues

The needs of the Travellers are not being met by current policy. As we have seen, within this community there are some very economically vulnerable people, particularly lone parents who are reliant upon Income Support and some occasional small earnings, and Travellers with disabilities. There are also people with special needs, including children, who are living in very poor circumstances.

Paid work is important and valued by Travellers. We have seen how some forms of work can increase the quality of Travellers' lives (albeit temporary), while other types are so poorly paid that families desperately struggle to make ends meet. It does not help that Travellers typically only access unskilled and low-paid jobs within rural labour markets, in spite of the fact that many are well-educated and possess good qualifications.

The challenge for policy is to enable Travellers to gain greater access to the labour market while maintaining their mobile, community-based and low-impact lifestyle. This will involve action on three main fronts.

First, there are currently no specific policies that target and help Travellers to participate in the labour force and nor are Travellers benefiting from the welfare reforms that are in place. Only one of our participants had any experience of the New Deals, and no one had encountered other Employment Service initiatives. This is perhaps

not surprising, given that the difficulties these schemes have in reaching the most disadvantaged groups and those with unusual or additional needs (Hasluck, 2000; Richardson and Thompson, 2000; Hinsliff, 2000). Travellers may also find it particularly difficult to access such programmes because they are rarely in any one location for very long and because many do not fall into the target group. The New Deal for Young People, for example, is targeted upon those unemployed for six months plus but many Travellers have a pattern of short spells of benefit receipt, between short spells of employment. The result is that Travellers who work find their own employment and not much help seems to be on offer from official sources. Whether the introduction next year of the new Working-Age Agency, which will deliver more intensive work-focused services, will be better placed to help the mobile population remains to be seen. But if this service is to benefit Travellers as well as other groups, advisers will need to understand the constraints and requirements that underpin the travelling lifestyle.

Second, the benefit system is not very flexible in supporting people whose main access to work is on a temporary or short-term basis. Working Families Tax Credit was very important to the self-employed workers, who often had very low incomes. But only one employed Traveller was receiving this benefit. Working Families Tax Credit is available to people who work at least 16 hours per week and is usually based on proof of earnings over six weeks or three months. This does not necessarily fit the pattern of work actually obtained, which may be for much more than 16 hours per week, but for only a week or two. Flexibility in these rules might help more Travellers to claim Working Families Tax Credit and so supplement wages and help sustain families between spells of paid work. More flexibility of payment systems would also be helpful, including for Child Benefit, which is not always reliable for travelling parents.

Third, a national change of policy is required in relation to site provision. Travellers need to reside on stable and secure sites – transient and longer-term – if we are to link them successfully to the labour market, employment initiatives and in-work benefits. Security of tenure is also essential for those Travellers who are unable to work, or where work is not a feasible option at the present time. This group is typically made up of lone parents who need the support that the benefit

system offers without having to face the difficulties of trying to access benefits when highly mobile because of eviction. Without secure sites Travellers will remain at a serious disadvantage and this is true not just in respect of employment but also more generally in terms of health care, education and other welfare services (Webster, 1997, 1999).

Social exclusion

The current policy agenda, which is committed to tackling social exclusion, to making work pay, and to 'joined-up' policy across departmental boundaries, could thus provide a real opportunity to identify and meet the needs of travelling people and communities. There are, however, a number of criticisms of the social exclusion policy agenda that may be particularly relevant in respect of groups such as Travellers. First, in trying to combat exclusion the current policy agenda focuses almost solely on people's ability to participate in the labour market – those who have paid work are included, those without work are excluded (Levitas, 1998; Lister, 2000). It is often assumed that Travellers never work and so are excluded in this way. But, as we have seen, most Travellers do have experience of paid employment although their work patterns are not conventional and the work is often irregular. Therefore it is not true to say that Travellers are outside the working community. Paid work is valued by Travellers, as by other people, and it is an important factor in increasing people's quality of living. But paid work does not necessarily guarantee adequacy, dignity or inclusion. For many people, including these Travellers, 'paid work' means low quality, low-paid and insecure jobs.

At the same time, the focus on paid work devalues the contributions to society made by unpaid work and ignores the needs of people who, for one reason or another, cannot work (Land, 1999; Hirsch, 1999). There is much controversy for example, over the issue of whether lone parents should be compelled to participate in schemes such as New Deal for Lone Parents, and be required to seek work (Millar, 2000). Lone parent Travellers were a significant group and their unpaid caring work was important in sustaining the community and in allowing men in particular to access employment. Policies that require all, or even most, adults to be in paid

employment at all times, regardless of caring responsibilities, are based on a very narrow view of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Second, there is a danger of stigma in an approach that involves identifying particular groups as socially excluded (Lister, 2000). When groups – such as teenage mothers, rough sleepers, beggars, and homeless people – are identified as policy targets they can also become identified as the problem. And if the existence of a particular group is the problem, then the solution is to target, control and assimilate in order to reduce numbers. This is justified on the grounds that living in such circumstances is self-evidently a bad thing for the individuals involved and that, for example, helping rough sleepers to move from the streets to specially provided accommodation is for their own benefit. Not all rough sleepers, however, want to make use of such accommodation and this policy has attracted a great deal of controversy as imposing a particular solution which does not necessarily fit all circumstances (Fitzpatrick, 2000; Hinsliff, 2000).

For Travellers who have chosen a particular lifestyle, these issues are even more pertinent. Travellers want policies to help them to sustain this way of living, not policies predicated upon them giving it up. This is why the provision of, and security of, sites should be a policy priority for both local and central government, and why evictions should be very carefully monitored and controlled. Enabling some people to choose a mobile lifestyle in a society in which most people are settled can cause tensions but is essential in respecting the right of people to choose their own way of living (within legal boundaries), as enshrined in the human rights legislation.

It has been argued that the concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion are inevitably antithetical to diversity in society because they are based on assumptions of shared values and ways of living. Thus these concepts cannot easily accommodate differences in identity and alternative ways of living (Dean, 1999; Ratcliffe, 2000; Gray, 2000; Askonas and Stewart, 2000). There is a danger, therefore, that social inclusion takes on the meaning of social integration, and results in greater regulation and control over people's lives and less scope for autonomous choices about ways of living. As Ratcliffe (2000) has argued, marginalised groups need to be

brought into policy on a non-discriminatory basis, with recognition of the legitimacy of their lifestyles and values. This requires a political will to support citizenship in the broadest sense of the word. In practical terms it also means a commitment to meeting basic needs, and to ensuring that all members of society have access to services and a degree of security and control over their own lives. This is perhaps better captured by the notion of social justice, rather than that of social inclusion (Lister, 2000).

This study has explored the ways in which people make a living within the opportunities and constraints offered by the travelling lifestyle. It has shown that these are both similar to, and different from, those of other poor and marginalised communities and the policy priorities we identify seek to take this into account. The research has also highlighted some broader issues of tension between concepts of social exclusion/inclusion and those of autonomy and choice. Constructing welfare policy for a diverse society is a major challenge and one that requires both an understanding and an acceptance of that diversity.

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Appendix: The sampling strategy

The very nature of the travelling lifestyle prevented us from being able to access a sampling frame. New Travellers are not included on the electoral register, the majority do not have addresses and of course Travellers move around. Our contact with agencies in our previous research with Travellers turned out to be very valuable in accessing potential participants, in particular two Children's Society projects that worked with new Travellers. Helped by the Children's Society Traveller Support Workers, we were able to make contact with travelers, interview 39 participants and trace and re-interview seven. However, not all contacts were gained via the Children's Society workers, about one-third came from names given to us by Travellers themselves.

Our initial quota for participants to interview was 40 but in the event we only achieved 39. This was mainly the result of interviews being conducted across a large geographical area and it was not always possible to visit sites on more than two occasions in order to catch people at home. Nevertheless, we felt that we had achieved a good spread of participants after interviewing the Travellers featured in this study.

We encountered very few refusals, and the Travellers who did refuse were usually too busy to give up their time. All participants and many non-participants were interested in the study and expressed the wish to read the final report. We will honour this and lodge copies with the two Children's Society projects that will ensure the report reaches Travellers who are interested in reading it.