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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Minimum standards for Traveller accommodation outlined in new report**

A research report calling for better minimum standards for Traveller accommodation in Northern Ireland was launched today in Belfast by the Equality Commission.

Chief Commissioner Bob Collins spoke at the launch. “Having a place to live, feeling at home, being secure, having the basic modern necessities are not always guaranteed for everyone in our society,” he said. “Many Travellers\* have no access to basic facilities such as water, sanitation, laundry facilities, electricity or rubbish collection. The principle that all Travellers should have access to clean water and access to washing and waste facilities remains fundamental. Accommodation that was intended to be temporary has been used far beyond its original intended use – it’s clear that current provision is to no-one’s benefit.”

“No single department or agency has sole policy and operational responsibility for the provision of accommodation for Travellers and as a result there is no single driver to ensure that all departments and agencies work together. That’s a key area in which we would like to see progress as a result of this work.

“This research does show some positive developments in housing, but there is still much more to do. It makes recommendations about good practice and international standards that will not just help tackle the complex picture of Traveller exclusion, segregation and poverty, but should improve the situation for everyone.”

He explained that the research had been commissioned from the Chartered Institute of Housing and the University of Ulster to inform the Commission’s thinking on public policy on Traveller accommodation.

The report recommends changes in the law on homelessness, clarification of the law on security of tenure and on the identification and purchase of land for site development.

The report was launched to an invited audience representing the Department of Social Development and housing bodies including the Housing Executive and Traveller support organisations amongst others. Researchers Grania Long of the Chartered Institute of Housing and Paddy Gray, University of Ulster took part in a roundtable discussion about their findings.

The research report is now available [online](#)

## **ENDS**

\* = In 2006, research undertaken by Craigavon and Banbridge Community HSS Trust ... found that 68% of Travellers lack appropriate accommodation with no access to basic facilities such as water, sanitation, laundry facilities, electricity or rubbish collection, 'which affects their physical and mental wellbeing'.

### **Notes to editors**

#### **Context**

92% of Travellers leave school with no qualifications

Only 11% of the community is in paid employment

The infant mortality rate is ten times the national average

Life expectancy is considerably lower than for the non-Traveller population

#### **Existing Standards of accommodation at an emergency site**

Vans were not plumbed for running water

No communal washing facilities

Parents reported there were no facilities to wash children

No electricity provided to vans

Refuse skips not replaced and overflowing

No space for children to play or to park cars

### **Quotes from Travellers**

- "That generator costs us a tenner a day on petrol to keep the fire going and us warm. I bet you don't have to pay a tenner a day for your fire? I bet the politicians in the council don't neither."

- "We do go to use the council pool for a shower, but you have to pay £2 for each person. For us, that's £8 a wash. For families with six or eight kids, I don't know how they do it."

- "It's very hard for the children...there's nowhere to play, we have to bring them up to the park. They get bored hanging round here, and in the van. And it's not safe for them here."

- "The day they put me in that flat (in the private rented sector), they may as well put me in prison. I don't want to stay there...I don't belong there. I want a site. It's not too much to ask."