

# Royal Borough of Greenwich

## Protocol for Responding to Unauthorised Campsites on Land in Greenwich Borough

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Document Owner	Head of Parks, Estates and Open Spaces

## **Purpose**

To set out the immediate responsibilities for the local authority and in conjunction with the police when unauthorised campsites (whether travellers or others) are set up on land in Greenwich Borough.

## **Aims**

1. Timely response to unauthorised campsites by the local authority working with the police so that an unauthorised campsite does not become entrenched, drawing unnecessarily on police and local authority resources;
2. Reduce adverse impact on communities of unauthorised campsites;
3. Ensure that the welfare needs of vulnerable members of those on the unauthorised campsites are responded to and that the response is compliant with Human Rights and Race Equalities legislation and with safeguarding responsibilities in relation to children and vulnerable adults.

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### **1. Determining Land Ownership / Council Lead Officers.**

- 1.1. All reports of newly established unlawful encampments should be made by contacting the Council's Contact Centre. This service is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.
- 1.2. On receiving the report Contact Centre staff will obtain details of location of the encampment and carry out a check of the Land Registry to determine who owns the land.
- 1.3. Contact Centre staff will pass the report (including details of land owner) to the designated Parks, Estates and Opens Spaces officer, Duty Lead Officer (DLO). The contact details for the person acting in the DLO role at any point in time can be determined by referring to the Parks and Open Spaces cover rota which is circulated each week to the Contact Centre.
- 1.4. The DLO will be available to receive the report from the Contact centre on a 24/7 basis, but will only undertake site visits during daylight hours.
- 1.5. The action taken by the DLO will depend on whether or not RBG is the land owner.

### **2. If local authority land:**

- 2.1. The DLO will contact the Head of Service and the Council's Communications Team (see appendix A for contact details) to inform them of the unauthorised encampment.

- 2.2. The DLO will contact the police with the details of the unauthorised encampment and request a police officer to accompany him/her on a site visit. The police contact is the Duty Inspector (see appendix A). **There is an expectation that Council staff will not attend encampments for either initial or any follow up visits, without a police presence.**

#### The site visit

- 2.3. During the initial site visit the DLO (in the presence of the police officer) will attempt to make contact with the unauthorised campers on the site. The DLO will carry out the welfare check and complete the form at Appendix C. The welfare check mainly relates to checking the vulnerability of any children and adults. However, the DLO will always discuss and negotiate a short stay agreement with Gypsies/traveller groups who stop on public land whether protected by an injunction or not in line with the Council's negotiated stopping policy.
- 2.4. Where necessary, the DLO should liaise with Children's Services and/or Adult Services to ensure that any identified welfare needs are assessed and dealt with as appropriate.
- 2.5. The DLO will instruct the unauthorised campers to leave the land with their vehicles. This should be backed up by providing them a written notice (see appendix D for an example notice). If this notice cannot be served to one of the unauthorised campers, it should be affixed to their vehicles or a nearby fence or gate.
- 2.6. The DLO and Police Officer will also assess:
- Number of people (and where possible their identity),
  - How access to the site was gained
  - Desired amount of time to stay on encampment
  - The location of their previous encampment (where possible)
  - Number of caravans
  - Total number of vehicles
  - Make, model and vehicle registration (where appropriate the police can be requested to check vehicles and owners on the Police National Compute)
  - The behaviour displayed by the campers and specifically whether any criminal acts or ASB has been, or is being committed<sup>1</sup>
  - Community impact.
- 2.7. The DLO will also assess:
- The impact of the encampment on the location
  - Do the vehicles contain waste?
  - Is the land clear of waste is there evidence of environmental ASB?
  - Type of waste
  - Availability of toilet facilities and water supplies

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<sup>1</sup> This can include criminal damage to gain entry to land, obstruction of footpaths or other highways  
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- 2.8. Where there is evidence of environmental ASB, the DLO should contact the Environmental Crime Team Manager (see contact list at Appendix A). The DLO will offer the illegal campers black refuse bags and will ask them to place their domestic waste in these bags to assist with preventing littering of the land.
- 2.9. The DLO should also inform the unauthorised campers about how to contact Housing Options and assist with form-filling (e.g. Housing Register form) where requested to do so. They are also given information about the official Royal Greenwich authorised site, Thistlebrook, and invited to join the waiting list for this site.
- 2.10. During the site visit the DLO and police officer should determine whether any of the unauthorised campers have met the grounds for the use of police section 61 powers:
- a) caused damage to the land or to property on the land, or
  - b) used threatening, abusive or insulting words towards Council officers, or
  - c) that those persons have between them six or more vehicles on the land
- 2.11. If any of the above sections a) to c) met, the DLO should liaise with the Duty Police Inspector to update them and ask them to use their powers under section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to direct the unauthorised campers to leave the land as soon as is reasonably practicable and remove any property or vehicles they have with them.
- 2.12. If for any reason the police are of the view that it is inappropriate to use their powers under section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, an officer of superintendent rank or above will contact the Assistant Director, Community Safety and Environmental Health as soon as possible for further discussion.
- 2.13. If it is not appropriate to request the police to use these powers, the DLO should contact the Council's Legal service to trigger Court proceedings to evict the unauthorised campers.

#### Further Site Visits

- 2.14. Following the initial visit, it will be beneficial to carry out further periodic visits to the site to monitor developments at the encampment. Some of these visits will take place to issue formal notices that make up the eviction process. Once again **Council staff will not attend encampments without a police presence.**
- 2.15. It is important to continue to review on an on-going basis whether the criteria for section 61 (as set out in paragraph 2.9 above) is subsequently met. If so, the police should be asked to use these powers, and this should run alongside the Council's action to evict.

- 2.16. Where the Council has obtained an eviction order and bailiff attendance secured, the DLO will meet with the police, to plan the eviction process with the police to attend to deal with any potential Breach of Peace.
- 2.17. Once the unauthorised campers have left the land, action must be taken to secure access to the land to avoid other campers accessing the site.

### **3. If not local authority land:**

- 3.1. If the land is not owned by the Council, the DLO will contact the Assistant Director, Community Safety and Environmental Health and the Council's Communications Team (see appendix A for contact details) to inform them of the unauthorised encampment.
- 3.2. The DLO will contact the land owner (or his/her agent) and ask him/her to attend a site visit at the earliest opportunity to instruct the unauthorised campers to leave the land with their vehicles. The DLO will provide the land owner with the contact Duty Police Inspector contact details and suggest that s/he requests a police presence during the visit.
- 3.3. The DLO will also contact the Duty Inspector with details of the unauthorised encampment and request a police officer to accompany him/her on a site visit with the landowner.

#### The site visit

- 3.4. During the site visit the DLO will carry out a welfare check, if access available (see paragraph 2.4 and Appendix C).
- 3.5. During the site visit, the DLO and police officer will determine whether any anti-social behaviour or criminal acts (including environmental crimes) have been committed and whether the police should be asked to use their powers under section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. If so the ECTM will contact the Duty Inspector to make the request (see paragraphs 2.8 and 2.9 above). Otherwise, the DLO should ask the landowner/agent to instigate Court proceedings to evict.
- 3.6. Where the police are unable to use their powers under section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the DLO will ask the land owner to contact his/her lawyer to trigger Court proceedings to evict the unauthorised campers. The DLO should also offer the services of the Council's Legal service in taking action to evict the unauthorised campers. This service will be provided at a fee determined by the Council.
- 3.7. Where there is evidence of environmental ASB, the DLO should contact the Environmental Crime Team Manager (see contact list at Appendix A) .
- 3.8. Following the initial visits, the DLO will remain in contact with the land owner to ensure that the necessary action is being taken.

### Further Site Visits

- 3.9. Following the initial visit, it may be beneficial for the DLO to carry out further periodic visits to the site to monitor developments at the encampment. Once again **Council staff will not attend encampments without a police presence.** It is particularly important to continue to review on an on-going basis whether the criteria for section 61 (as set out in paragraph 2.9 above) is subsequently met. If so, the police should be asked to use these powers to run alongside the landowner's action to evict.
- 3.10. Once the landowner has advised DLO that the unauthorised campers have left the land, the land owner will be advised of what action they need to take to secure access to the land to avoid other campers accessing the site.

### **4. Environmental / Waste Issues:**

- 4.1. In all cases, the Environmental Crime Team Manager will seek permission from the landowner to access the land and provide investigative assistance if required. This can include evaluating possible offences under the Environmental Protection Act and making the necessary checks on vehicles that may be transporting waste. Landowner/s will be provided with details of additional services the Council can offer in respect of waste clearance (Waste services).
- 4.2. Where a vehicle is suspected of being involved in the commission of an offence relating to the illegal deposits of waste or other waste offences, the Environmental Crime Team Manager may instantly consider seizing the vehicle under the 2015 waste regulations. The power can be used where a vehicle is suspected of having been involved in the commission of an offence however there is insufficient information concerning who committed the offence. **Any seizure will be subject to the police being present.**

### **5. Advice from the Tenancy Team Leader in Housing Services**

- 5.1. The Tenancy Team Leader in Housing Services with responsibility for the Thistlebrook Traveller site is available on a 9-5, Monday to Friday basis to provide advice to any staff referred to in this protocol.

### **6. Negotiated Stopping Policy**

- 6.1 The Council has an established site for Travellers at Thistlebrook, Abbeywood, Greenwich, SE2 9SQ. This site is intended for long term occupation with established pitches. Allocation to these pitches is in accordance with the Council's Allocations Policy. Occupants of those pitches tend not to be travelling from place to place.
- 6.2 The Council recognises that there is a need to have some provision for those who arrive in the borough and set up unauthorised encampments. It is not an option

to refer them to Thistlebrook. Whilst their specific needs will be identified from the Welfare Assessment Checklist at Appendix C. The Councils priority is to ensure that unauthorized encampments are dealt with and moved on quickly. The Council will, prior to the commencement of any enforcement action including court proceedings: -attempt to agree a timeline ( "grace period") with the occupants of between 3 to 5 days for the encampment to move on and in that period will provide the following, portaloos, waste disposal and standard welfare facilities, as required. The grace period can be extended by the DLO who will take responsibility for this if there are good reasons.

- 6.3 If, upon the expiry of the grace period the unauthorized occupiers remain on the land, the DLO should contact the Council's Legal service to trigger Court proceedings to evict the unauthorised campers

## **7. External and Internal Communications.**

- 7.1. The Communications Team will receive on-going information from relevant external sources such as tweets and local press about:

- developments at the encampments
- actions being taken to deal with the situation
- community reaction

The Team will notify the relevant senior managers and Elected Members and consider whether to draft any external communications such as press releases.

- 7.2. During an encampment, the DLO, with assistance from PEOS Casework & Performance Officer, will provide a daily written Situation Report to the relevant senior managers. The Situation Report will contain relevant information about any incidents or action taken by RBG staff or partner agencies and be provided in the pro-forma shown at Appendix B.

- 7.3. During an encampment, the DLO will also pass regular (at least daily) updates in the Situation Report format of to managers in the Contact Centre ([out-of-hours@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:out-of-hours@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)). This ensures that the Contact Centre is giving a consistent corporate message to residents, providing up to date information on the status of the encampment and on how the Council is responding. This will in turn reduce the possibility of unnecessary escalation.

## APPENDIX A

### CONTACT DETAILS

Royal Greenwich		
Service	Contact details	Hours available
Parks, Estates and Open Spaces	Consult the Parks, Estates and Open Spaces weekly cover rota which is circulated each week to the Contact Centre to determine who to contact to pass on reports of unlawful encampments. (this will be either Paul Martin or Adam Jenkins)	24/7
Contact centre	020 8921 8888 <a href="mailto:out-of-hours@royalgreenwich.gov.uk">out-of-hours@royalgreenwich.gov.uk</a>	24/7
Communications	020 8921 6262	24/7
	<a href="mailto:Media.Desk@royalgreenwich.gov.uk">Media.Desk@royalgreenwich.gov.uk</a>	9am-5pm, Mon-Fri

Police		
Service	Phone Number	Hours available
Non-emergency calls	101	24/7
Ops Room	0207 161 2127	24/7

Royal Greenwich – general contacts			
Directorate/ Service Area	Directorate Lead officer (DLO)	Contact details	Hours available
Environmental Crime Team	Satti Heir Environmental Crime Team Manager (ECTM)	07957105596 020 8921 4605 <a href="mailto:Satti.Heir@royalgreenwich.gov.uk">Satti.Heir@royalgreenwich.gov.uk</a> Or <a href="mailto:Envirocrime@royalgreenwich.gov.uk">Envirocrime@royalgreenwich.gov.uk</a>	7am – 10pm, 7 days a week
General Advice	Jackie Cassar Tenancy Team Leader Housing Services	07977 933 972 020 8921 3632 <a href="mailto:jackie.cassar@royalgreenwich.gov.uk">jackie.cassar@royalgreenwich.gov.uk</a>	9am-5pm, Mon-Fri
Parks, Estates & Open Spaces	Paul Martin Parks Rangers Manager	07770 226 444 020 8921 4125 <a href="mailto:Paul.Martin@royalgreenwich.gov.uk">Paul.Martin@royalgreenwich.gov.uk</a>	9am-5pm, Mon-Fri
Parks, Estates & Open Spaces	Adam Jenkins, Senior Parks Ranger	07831 214827 020 8921 2566 <a href="mailto:Adam.Jenkins@royalgreenwich.gov.uk">Adam.Jenkins@royalgreenwich.gov.uk</a>	9am-5pm, Tues-Sat
Parks, Estates & Open Spaces	Emma Smith, Casework & Performance Officer	020 8921 6157 <a href="mailto:parks@royalgreenwich.gov.uk">parks@royalgreenwich.gov.uk</a>	9am-5pm Mon-Fri



<p><b>Parks, Estates &amp; Open Spaces</b> <b>Situation Report on Unauthorised Encampments</b></p>
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See attached

**WELFARE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST FOR UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS**

The information given will help unauthorised campers to access services. This form is intended to be used as a guide by officer's visiting unauthorised encampments.

Visit undertaken by.....

Date.....

Time.....

Location of camp.....

Approximate number of residents.....

Ethnicity/ies of encampment.....

Traveller/Gypsy/Romany or other

Family Surname.....

Do welfare facilities e.g. portaloo or waste disposal need to be provided

**Education**

Are there any school age children? Yes/No

If so, how many?.....

Are any of the children attending a local school? YES/NO

If so, which school?.....

How many under 5s are there?.....

Would parents be interested in pre-school for them? Yes/No

**Health**

Is anyone in the family pregnant? Yes/No

If yes, when is the due date?.....

Are they attending a hospital? Yes/No

Are any members of the family registered with a doctor? Yes/No

If Yes, where?

Are any members of the family in need of, or receiving treatment at the moment?  
Yes/No

If someone is in hospital, please state which hospital.....

### **Accommodation**

Do they have other accommodation?

Yes/No

Are they on a waiting list for a pitch on a permanent site? Yes/No

Are they on the council waiting list for a property? Yes/No

Do they want information on the Greenwich letting policy for permanent sites? Yes/No

Do they wish to register as homeless? Yes/No

If Yes, do they need support in making a homeless application? Yes/No

### **Other Matters**

Are there any people with physically learning or sensory disabilities?

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I confirm the above details to be an accurate reflection of the status and needs of

.....living on.....

Signed.....

Council Officer.....

**EXAMPLE OF A WRITTEN NOTICE INSTRUCTING UNAUTHORISED  
CAMPERS TO LEAVE THE COUNCIL'S LAND.**

*The example is shown on the next page. Once the relevant details are inserted,  
this can be printed on Council's headed note paper*

[Insert date]

**Notice**

To whom it may concern,

It has been brought to our attention that you have brought a number of caravans and a number of vehicles on to this site [insert address].

You are here without the Council's permission and you are trespassing.

Please ensure you leave the site within [time and date].

Signed – Representative of the Royal Borough of Greenwich

[Insert name of officer]