



## The Traveller Movement

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## Traveller Movement response to Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17 Consultation

May 2014

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**About TM:** The Traveller Movement (TM) was established in 1999 and is a leading national policy and voice charity, working to raise the capacity and social inclusion of the Traveller communities in Britain. TM act as a bridge builder bringing the Traveller communities, service providers and policy makers together, stimulating debate and promoting forward-looking strategies to promote increased race equality, civic engagement, inclusion, service provision and community cohesion. For further information about TM visit [www.irishtraveller.org.uk](http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk)

## Introduction

Office for National Statistics (ONS) data outputs from the 2011 Census<sup>1</sup> and the 2012 Minister Working Group report on inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers (MWG) provide concrete evidence that Gypsies and Travellers 'experience, and are being held back by, some of the worst outcomes of any group, across a wide range of social indicators.'<sup>2</sup> Poor social outcomes across such a wide range of indicators translate into the increased likelihood of high levels of child poverty amongst these communities. Below are some of the key findings from the 2014 ONS report *What does the 2011 Census tell us about the characteristics of Gypsies or Irish Travellers*:

- Gypsy or Irish Travellers had the highest proportion with no qualifications for any ethnic group (60 per cent) – almost three times higher than for England and Wales as a whole (23 per cent).
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller was the ethnic group with the lowest proportion of respondents who were economically active at 47 per cent, compared to 63 per cent for England and Wales as a whole.
- Just under half of Gypsy or Irish Traveller households had dependent children (45 per cent) – above the average for the whole of England and Wales (29 per cent).
- Gypsy or Irish Travellers were more than twice as likely to live in social housing than the overall population of England and Wales (41 per cent compared to 16 per cent) and less likely to own their accommodation outright (21 per cent compared to 26 per cent).
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller ethnic group was among the highest providers of unpaid care in England and Wales at 11 per cent (10 per cent for England and Wales as a whole) and provided the highest proportion of people providing 50 hours or more of unpaid care at 4 per cent (compared to 2 per cent for England and Wales as a whole).

Analysis of the 2011 census data by the Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (Code) has also found that Gypsy and Traveller men and women have twice the White British rates of limiting long-term illness, and at each age they are the group's most likely to be ill.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ONS, 2014, *What does the 2011 Census tell us about the characteristics of Gypsies or Irish Travellers*

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/what-does-the-2011-census-tell-us-about-the-characteristics-of-gypsy-or-irish-travellers-in-england-and-wales-/rpt-characteristics-of-gypsy-or-irish-travellers.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ministerial working group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, p. 5  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-inequalities-for-gypsies-and-travellers-progress-report>

<sup>3</sup> Code, 2013, *Which ethnic groups have the poorest health? Ethnic health inequalities 1991 to 2011*, p. 1  
<http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/census/CoDE-Health-Inequalities-Briefing.pdf>

Broad sweep policy measures to address child poverty and the factors that contribute to it all too often miss out and/or directly/indirectly exclude many Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. Considering these groups are significantly over-represented in child poverty indicators, it follows that both central and local government should focus on targeted interventions to effectively address these issues. Central and local government should also focus on working closely with thirds sector organizations and community groups to ensure policy is touching these communities on the ground.

## Response

### **1. To what extent do you agree that the draft Strategy achieves a good balance between tackling poverty now and tackling the drivers of intergenerational poverty?**

The strategy will struggle to address both the immediate and intergenerational drivers of child poverty in the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities for the following reasons:

- Fails to utilize/reference the latest data on Gypsies' and Travellers' economic activity, qualifications, dependent children etc from the ONS (2014) which provides clear and robust evidence for the development of effective policy in this area (now/intergenerational)
- Lack of a targeted approach to address the stark inequalities (ONS, 2014) experienced by these groups in the key areas of education, skills training, qualifications and employment (intergenerational).
- Negative impact of welfare reforms (specifically benefits cap) and cuts to local authority budgets (specifically resulting in cuts to Traveller Education Services) on social outcomes for these groups (now).
- Lack of emphasis on the wider social determinates of child poverty in the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, especially in the areas of accommodation insecurity and poor physical and mental health (now/intergenerational).
- Whilst we welcome specific reference to Gypsy Traveller and Roma children as vulnerable groups in Annex D (page 86) this section fails to provide any concrete actions (both in the immediate and intergenerational context):
  - Firstly we are unaware of any specialist support for Gypsy and Traveller parents via the Work Programme;
  - We are aware that Ofsted requires schools to focus on these children however we would be interested to hear how this translates into realities on the ground (e.g. how many references are there to GRT children in Ofsted inspection reports and what changes result from this?);
  - What does the Government mean when it states 'we are giving urgent consideration to how we can most quickly improve the attainment outcomes of GRT pupils'? This statement means very little without specific details as to

what 'urgent attention' is being given (this submission makes concrete proposals in response to this statement in sections 3-5).

## **2. Considering the current fiscal climate, what is your view of the actions set out in the draft Strategy?**

The Traveller Movement strongly disagree that the argument for fiscal consolidation should result in cuts to services that are effectively addressing the root causes of child poverty in the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. As evidenced below, informed policy and provision of targeted initiatives and services is a far more cost effective and sustainable solution to addressing this issue. It is unfortunate that many of the actions set out in the draft strategy will be diminished by existing Government policies that negatively impact on the wider social outcomes of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (eg benefits cap, increased powers of eviction, cuts to Traveller Education Services, poor monitoring of these groups in the NHS etc). Evidence of these impacts has been highlighted in Traveller Movement reports on cuts to Traveller Education Services in London,<sup>4</sup> The Impact of Welfare Reforms on GRT<sup>5</sup>, The Impact of Localism on Planning and Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers<sup>6</sup>, Inclusion and Ethnic Monitoring of Gypsies and Travellers in the NHS.<sup>7</sup>

In the context of the current fiscal climate there is ample evidence to indicate the financial as well as social benefits of targeted interventions in the areas of accommodation, health, education and employment which directly address the key indicators of child poverty:

- The EHRC has identified the cost benefits to local authorities of ensuring adequate provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in their areas rather than continuing with a never ending and costly cycle of evictions.<sup>8</sup> It goes without saying that repeated evictions, insecure and environmentally inappropriate accommodation have a detrimental impact on child poverty and children's life chances.
- Gypsies and Travellers experience some of the poorest health outcomes of any group in our society, resulting in a disproportionate impact on child poverty. The 2014 Leeds GATE report "Gypsy and Traveller Health – Who Pays?" provides practical examples and robust evidence of how health services can make significant savings via pro-active commissioning and new service models.<sup>9</sup>
- Local Traveller Education Services and skills training and employment initiatives by charities have proven that greater support for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in education, skills training and employment result in higher levels of economic activity (see TM Roads to Success report: Economic and

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<sup>4</sup> <http://irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ITMB-report-on-London-Traveller-education-support-service-staffing-levels.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Universal-Credit-and-Gypsies-and-Travellers-report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/ITMB-Planning-for-Gypsies-and-Travellers2.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/ITMB-Health-Report-Inclusion-and-Ethnic-Monitoring-of-Gypsies-and-Travellers-in-the-NHS.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/gypsies\\_and\\_travellers.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/gypsies_and_travellers.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.leedsqate.co.uk/2013/06/25/why-should-commissioners-invest-in-gypsy-and-traveller-health-a-new-report-from-leeds-gate/>

Social Inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers).<sup>10</sup> A practical example of this is the Traveller Movement internship scheme which has a proven track record of supporting community members into paid employment and/or skills training/higher education.

### **3. At a local level, what works well in tackling child poverty now?**

- Ensuring local authorities are effectively engaging with their local Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities and working closely with third sector organisations, residents associations and community groups to understand the issues on the ground and develop GTR Strategies which address child poverty.
- Local authorities addressing the all too often chronic shortage of Gypsy and Traveller sites in their areas which directly impacts on children's everyday welfare, education and life opportunities. Local authorities should also ensure that socially rented Traveller sites are appropriately maintained and address any environmental health hazards.
- Local authorities should introduce mitigating measures to support Gypsy, Traveller, Roma and other families disproportionately impacted by the benefits cap, especially considering that GTR have larger family sizes than the national average (ONS 2014).
- Ensuring all Gypsies and Travellers living on Traveller sites can access the Warm Homes Discount Scheme. It's TM's experience that many residents on local authority sites cannot access the WHDS because their power is being provided via the local authority and/or housing association.
- Local authorities and police forces should look to address cases of discrimination in employment and recruitment and the wider race hate crimes which GTR too often experience.

### **4. At a local level, what works well for preventing poor children becoming poor adults?**

- Ensure Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are included as standard practice in local authority child poverty needs assessments and strategies, in line with the duties laid out in the Child Poverty Act 2010.
- Local authorities, health and wellbeing boards, local enterprise partnerships, jobcentres and other relevant bodies at the local level should work in partnership to address the wider social determinates of GTR child poverty and to inform the local child poverty strategy.
- Local authorities with GTR populations should ensure tailored/targeted educational support/programmes for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children and their parents. Ideally these programmes would be delivered in close partnership with the communities and thirds sector organisations and focus on developing closer

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/images/roads\\_to\\_success.pdf](http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/images/roads_to_success.pdf)

relationships between schools and the communities, ensuring parents understand their rights and responsibilities and that children have their right to an education fulfilled.

- Local authorities should support and work in partnership with third sector organisations engaging these communities in adult literacy courses, skills training, further and higher education, internships and job opportunities.

## **5. What more can central government do to help employers, local agencies and the voluntary and community sector work together to end child poverty?**

- The Government should reinstate targeted provision for focused schemes with a proven financial return on investment. This would enable effective training and internship initiatives to be led by trusted third sector GTR organisations.

- The DWP should promote greater economic inclusion of GTR through focused schemes delivered in partnership with third sector organizations supporting greater accesses to financial services and insurance products.

- The Government should assess the impact of welfare reforms (in particular the benefits cap) on child poverty in the GTR communities and identify measures to provide those families most in need with greater support.

- In line with the strategies statement 'we are giving urgent consideration to how we can most quickly improve the attainment outcomes of GRT pupils' we recommend DfE include Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils as standard in the pupil premium alongside looked after children, considering GTR have the poorest education outcomes of all groups in school.

- The Government should support third sector organisations working with Gypsies and Travellers to help community members set up businesses, understand regulatory requirements, manage accounts etc.

- The Government should support the establishment of a GRT Graduate Support Network to guide and promote the increased numbers of community members pursuing further education and careers in the professions. It should also establish a GRT Business and Trades Support Network to guide and promote greater numbers of community members establishing business and better understanding existing legislation.

- In line with Commitment 27 in the 2012 MWG progress report, the DWP should establish a joint working group with the Department for Education and BIS to address the root causes and bring forward policy solutions to the inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers in employment, education, skills training, access to benefits etc.