



Submission to: APPG on Hate crime

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Who are the Traveller Movement?

The [Traveller Movement](http://travellermovement.org.uk) is a registered UK charity promoting inclusion and community engagement with Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT). The Traveller Movement seeks to empower and support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to advocate for the full implementation of their human rights.

About this Submission

This submission looks at the themes of hate crime and hate speech purely from the point of view of the UK's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) population. Although it is likely that many parallels will be able to be drawn with other minority groups, we will deal only with the GRT perspective

It will outline

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Recommendations

1. A framework should be introduced for holding to account politicians who make inflammatory comments about Gypsies, Roma and Travellers
2. Stricter regulation of social media companies, online media etc. should be introduced and greater penalties imposed where racially inflammatory material is posted and allowed to remain on media and newsfeeds
3. There should be an urgent review of all police forces by HMIC to determine within each force, the level of institutional negative bias towards Gypsies Roma and Travellers and to put action plans in place to address this.
4. In particular there should be an urgent review of the role of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer
5. Where there is a shortfall of appropriate Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, it should be mandatory for local authorities to adopt the Negotiated Stopping Model of dealing with unauthorised encampments.

Extent of Hate Crime and Hate Speech Today

In 2014/15 82% of all hate crime was race related and there is a wealth of evidence to show that hate speech and hate crime against Gypsies Travellers and Roma people in the UK is widespread and goes unchallenged. This is not a recent phenomenon. Against GRT it is a longstanding issue and a climate exists today where it is in the main regarded as acceptable against these ethnicities. Often referred to as the last respectable form of racism, the 2017 Traveller Movement report of a similar name¹, found that 81% of GRT respondents had experienced some form of hate speech.

Social media has enabled anti-Gypsyism and hate speech to spread more quickly and extensively, and to take on even more serious and intimidating forms. Racism in the social media is especially harmful because of its immediate results within all sectors of society. Social media can be a new and powerful forum for hate speech, and according to Hatebase, an online database that 'records' hate speech on Twitter, Gypsies and Travellers are the number one targets of online hatred²

Impact on Individuals

Unless one has been on the receiving end of hate speech or hate crime, it is difficult to understand the impact on the individual. Certainly it is not possible to clearly describe here, on paper the destructive impact such an experience has on the

¹ Traveller Movement 2017 *The last acceptable form of Racism* <http://travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/TMreport1J-FINAL.pdf>

² Traveller Movement 2016 *Briefing: Hate Crime, discrimination and the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities* <http://travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/HateCrime-final.pdf>

individual. It is accepted that exposure to hate crime and hate speech has a detrimental effect on health. Population health research over the past twenty years has shown how prejudice, discrimination, and segregation, linked to hatred and antagonism, have a pervasive effect on health. A study in the *American Journal of Public Health*, for example, linked lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth suicide in with neighbourhood-level LGBT hate crimes involving assaults and found that LGBT high school students who lived in neighbourhoods with higher rates of assault were significantly more likely to report suicidal thoughts or attempts³. Another study, in *Social Science & Medicine*, found that “structural stigma,” defined as antigay prejudice at the community level, was associated with higher all-cause mortality, especially from suicides, violence, and cardiovascular disease, among LGBT residents⁴.

Given the pervasive discrimination and hate that GRT people have to endure on a daily basis, it should come as no surprise then to see that GRT people have some of the poorest health outcomes across all ethnic group. The following statistics, come from the 2012 Ministerial Working Group Progress Report⁵ on Tackling Inequalities Experienced by Gypsies and Travellers:

1. 39% of Gypsies and Travellers have a long-term illness compared with 29% of comparators even after controlling for socio economic status and other marginalised groups
2. Travellers are 3 times more likely to have a chronic cough or bronchitis even after controlling for smoking
3. 22% of Gypsies and Travellers are nearly 3 times more likely to be anxious and over twice as likely to be depressed
4. Irish Travellers are 3 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population
5. There is excess prevalence of miscarriages, stillbirths and neonatal death in the Gypsy and Traveller population
6. A high prevalence of diabetes is reported amongst the Gypsy and Traveller population
7. Gypsy and Traveller women live 12 years less than women in general and men live 10 years less

As Wallengren & Mellgren have pointed out in their 2015 study⁶, hate crimes can cause increased levels of fear and anxiety and have a greater emotional impact on the victims when compared to the victims of non-hate crimes. Hate crime victims are often

³ *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Hate Crimes and Suicidality Among a Population-Based Sample of Sexual-Minority Adolescents in Boston* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3935714/>

⁴ *Structural Stigma and All-Cause Mortality in Sexual Minority Population* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3818511/>

⁵ Progress report by the ministerial working group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers 2012 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6287/2124046.pdf

⁶ Wallengren & Mellgren 2015 *The role of visibility for a minority's exposure to (hate) crime and worry about crime – a study of the Traveller community* <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0269758015592108>
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more fearful of future attacks and expect their victimisation to be continuous. Hate crimes are not only damaging to the victim but also to the whole community

As a coping mechanism, and also because they feel the authorities will not help them if they go for help, GRT tend to hide their ethnicity where possible (Traveller Movement, 2017; Wallengren & Mellgren, 2015; Berlin, 2015). The following quotes from TM's (2017) research demonstrate:

"[I hide my ethnicity] all the time. I won't tell anyone I am a Traveller until I have known them for a month or more. Until I feel that I can judge their reaction."

"I do it constantly. In the gym, supermarket. In all situations I never let people know what I am for fear of exclusion"

"[I hide my ethnicity] in all situations where being identified as a Traveller would lead to lost income or opportunity or trouble, e.g. most situations in life outside the home."

Impact on Community Cohesion

Left unchecked, hate crime and hate speech will have a corrosive effect on community cohesion. The example of mainland Europe demonstrates this. Here politicians and the media throughout Europe continue to use hate speech against GRT. This has created a climate in which racist violence is thought more acceptable, escalating into violent racist attacks against these communities⁷. Research has shown hate crimes against GRT minorities in the UK and in Europe are not challenged or acknowledged in the same way as similar acts towards other minority ethnic communities⁸. This is especially alarming since GRT are the largest minority in Europe and subjected to disproportionately higher levels of hate crime⁹. Amnesty International reported in 2014¹⁰ a marked rise in the frequency of anti-Roma violence throughout Europe, and the shockingly inadequate response to it. Alvaro Gil-Robles, the European Commissioner of Human Rights noted¹¹ in 2006 that GRT were the last ethnic minority in respect of which openly racist views can still be acceptably expressed, and this seems to be still true in 2018.

⁷ Willers, M. 2016 *TACKLING HATE SPEECH AIMED AT GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND ROMA* <http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/HateSpeechBlogMWQC5.3.2015.pdf>

⁸ James, Z. (2014): *Hate Crimes against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe*. In Hall, N., Corb, A., Giannasi, P., Grieve, J.: *The International Handbook of Hate Crime*. London: Routledge.

⁹ Chakraborti, Neil and Garland, Jon (2015): *Hate Crime. Impact, causes & responses*. Los Angeles: Sage.

¹⁰ Amnesty International, 2014 "WE ASK FOR JUSTICE" EUROPE'S FAILURE TO PROTECT ROMA FROM RACIST VIOLENCE https://amnesty.dk/media/1127/roma_in_europe_p4312.pdf

¹¹ Gil-Robles 2006 ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF THE ROMA, SINTI AND TRAVELLERS IN EUROPE <https://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/virtuallibrary/librarydb/web/files/pdfs/92/VL-013.pdf>



Impact on Young People and Children

In education, the toleration of Hate speech and Racist Bullying in schools diminishes GRT children's chances to complete their education. This is well evidence with GRT students having the lowest levels of educational attainment across all ethnic groups.

The House of Commons own briefing paper of last year "Gypsies and Travellers¹²" points out children from Gypsy and Traveller communities attain and progress significantly below the national average throughout compulsory education. In 2017, 22% of pupils from Irish Traveller backgrounds and 11% from Gypsy and Roma backgrounds attained GCSEs in English and Maths at grade 4/C or above, compared to 64% of pupils nationally. Gypsy and Traveller pupils also have a high rate of school exclusions and report high levels of bullying and racial abuse.

What can National and Local Government do to Increase Community Cohesion?

When considering ways of addressing the problems of Hate crime and Hate speech it is tempting to think of them as issues with an external locus. However, we believe the drivers for such behaviour are primarily systemic and only by addressing these systemic issues can the problem be tackled

Central to this approach is the role that politicians have to play. High profile and speaking with authority politicians wield enormous influence over society in general. This is evident in the recent comments made about the burka by former foreign secretary, Boris Johnson which according to the charity Tell Mama resulted in a rise in hate crimes against Muslim women¹³. As an organisation that supports GRT community members, we often hear hate speech from both national and local politicians directed at GRT population. For example, the very recent comments made by Walsall Councillor Mike Bird referring to Irish Travellers as "Parasites" on a radio show about unauthorised encampments¹⁴, or the various public comments by Kettering MP Phillip Hollobone over recent years linking GRT ethnicity to crime¹⁵. Change needs to come from the top down. As long as politicians are heard spreading hate speech towards GRT, then hate speech from the wider population is legitimised and any attempts to reduce it are effectively neutralised

The issue of unauthorised encampments remains a major source of community tension and is a direct result of a lack of suitable accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller families. If Government were to make serious attempt to solve the problem

¹² <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8083#fullreport>

¹³ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/boris-johnson-burqa-muslim-women-veil-attacks-islamophobia-letterboxes-rise-a8488651.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/tory-council-leader-brands-travellers-13062377>

¹⁵ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/tory-mp-claims-most-travellers-5860462>

of lack of accommodation, this would have a significant effect on community cohesion and remove one of the most frequent catalysts for anti GRT hate speech and hate crime.

The Negotiated Stopping Model ¹⁶ of addressing the issue of unauthorised encampments, where adopted has been proven to have dramatically reduced community tensions and therefore improve cohesion. Not to mention significantly reducing associated costs.

The Role of the Police in Increasing Community Cohesion

The Public Sector Equality Duty of the 2010 Equalities Act makes a specific requirement of the Police (as well as other Public Bodies) to improve community cohesion.

Under Section 149 of the Act, public authorities must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

However, as highlighted in the 2018 Traveller Movement Report "*Policing by Consent*"¹⁷ there is significant evidence to show that police forces throughout the country are in breach of their Equality Duty, acting in a way that encourages and legitimises Hate speech and hate crime against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. Frequent press releases put out by Police suggest that GRT Ethnicity equates to Criminality. Ethnicity is often stressed in these reports, even though it has no relevance to the crime that is being reported on. Sometimes Police operations aimed solely at GRT Communities, and for no other reason than they are GRT Communities are publicised, giving the impression to the wider public that these ethnic groups are a criminal threat by dint of their ethnicity alone. For example, Durham Police recent press release of its multi-agency visit to Honeypot Lane Traveller Site and its publicly stated intention that it will be setting up a task force to carry out similar operations on the other Traveller sites in its catchment area. Bear in mind that this isn't driven by criminal intelligence. It is driven by ethnicity and a whole community are being subjected to Police and Local Authority scrutiny because they happen to be Gypsy or Traveller. The message this sends to the wider community as a whole is these ethnic groups are a problem the police need to keep on top of. It can only increase fear and

¹⁶ <http://leedsgate.co.uk/negotiated-stopping/whats-not-evaluation-negotiated-stopping-released>

¹⁷ Traveller Movement 2018 Policing by Consent http://travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/TTM-Policing-by-consent_web-2.pdf



distrust amongst the wider community and therefore inflame community tension and weaken cohesion.

Institutional police structures also criminalise GRT ethnicities, publicly so again the message being sent to the wider population is that these groups should be feared. In response to Freedom of Information Requests, the Traveller Movement established that a majority of the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer posts held by Police Forces in the UK prioritise enforcement against criminality and anti-social behaviour, and place GRT ethnicities alongside such thematic issues as organised crime, anti-social behaviour and gang criminality (Traveller Movement, 2018).

As with politicians, if the police are publicly sending out this message they are legitimising and perhaps even stimulating hate crime and hate speech towards these groups. This is worrying, and somewhat ironic, given the police are the primary agency responsible for tackling hate crime and to whom Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are being urged to report to when they become victims.