

## Traveller Movement submission to the call for evidence into ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK<sup>1</sup>

Submitted 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2020

### About the Traveller Movement

The Traveller Movement (TM)<sup>2</sup> is a leading national charity committed to the fulfilment of Human Rights for ethnic minority Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) people. The Traveller Movement's mission is to develop a platform and voice for Travellers, working in solidarity with Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) people to achieve equality through self-determination and proactive participation in influencing and shaping policy. We have particular expertise in tackling local issues and shaping national policies. This is achieved by a proactive community advocacy strategy, capacity building and acting as a bridge between the GRT sector, service providers and policy makers, thereby stimulating debate and promoting forward-looking strategies to advance equality, civic engagement, inclusion and community cohesion.

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<sup>1</sup> [Ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK: call for evidence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> <https://travellermovement.org.uk/about>

## Introduction

- This submission will address the ethnic disparities and inequalities facing ethnic Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers in the UK.
- Romany Gypsies and Irish Traveller people are protected against discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 in England, Wales and Scotland.
- Roma are also an 'ethnic group' in terms of the law, and therefore protected by equality legislation.

## Background

- A report in 2009 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) found that Gypsy and Traveller communities in Britain experience wide-ranging inequalities<sup>3</sup> across all areas of public life.
- The report also noted "the pervasive and corrosive impact of experiencing racism and discrimination throughout an entire lifespan and in employment, social and public contexts".
- Further research from the Commission in 2016 found many of these inequalities remained unaddressed and had become further entrenched in the intervening years.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2019 an inquiry by the Women and Equalities select committee found that policymakers had comprehensively failed Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities in the UK. It also found there had been a persistent failure to tackle long standing inequalities facing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in any sustained way,<sup>5</sup> as well as noting that most public institutions do not record Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller ethnicity in ethnic monitoring, therefore the extent of these inequalities is not fully known or properly understood<sup>6</sup>.

## Questions

### 1. What do you consider to be the main causes of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK, and why?

- Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers (GRT) have suffered decades of prejudice and discrimination, from public institutions, as well as by the media, by politicians and from mainstream society<sup>7</sup>.
- According to research published by the Traveller Movement<sup>8</sup> in 2017 90% of Gypsies and Travellers have experienced discrimination, while a YouGov poll<sup>9</sup> in 2018 showed that 1 in 4 parents would be uncomfortable if their child had a playdate at the home of a Traveller.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-12-inequalities-experienced-by-gypsy-and-traveller-communities.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/is-england-fairer-2016-most-disadvantaged-groups-gypsies-travellers-roma.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/360.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/correspondence/Minister-Communities-MHCLG-GRT-020719.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/national-barometer-of-prejudice-and-discrimination-in-britain.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://travellermovement.org.uk/reports?download=88:sep-2017-the-last-acceptable-form-of-racism-the-pervasive-discrimination-and-prejudice-experienced-by-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities>

<sup>9</sup> <https://travellermovement.org.uk/phocadownload/userupload/equality-human-rights/171002-summary-of-results-Yougov-poll.pdf>

- The pervasive discriminatory behaviour directed toward Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people is borne out of ignorance and is usually based on ill-informed cultural stereotypes. This lack of understanding or cultural awareness causes significant damage to the trust Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have in British society; and perhaps understandably leads to them withdrawing from the support and services they desperately need.
- An additional source of this prejudice is the long standing misconception that all Travellers live on sites; in fact the 2011 census<sup>10</sup> showed that 75% of Gypsies and Travellers live in bricks and mortar accommodation, yet the discrimination facing GRT people remains the same regardless of where they live.

## **2. What could be done to improve representation, retention and progression opportunities for people of different ethnic backgrounds in public sector workforces (for example, in education, healthcare or policing)?**

- Targeted recruitment drives to promote the benefits of public sector employment.
- Targeted outreach to schools, colleges of further education, and universities to recruit young BME and GRT people.
- Peer-to-peer mentoring for BME and GRT groups throughout public institutions.
- Internship opportunities for BME and GRT groups within public sector organisations.
- Funds and resources should be made available to all minority staff police associations – including the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association to allow them to better support members and carry out targeted work within individual forces in highlighting the issues affecting minorities.

## **3. How could the educational performance of school children across different ethnic and socio-economic status groups be improved?**

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children have the lowest attainment of all ethnic groups throughout their school years: at Early Years only 36% of Gypsy and Roma pupils achieved a good level of development, and 39% for Traveller pupils of Irish Heritage– the lowest for any ethnic groups<sup>11</sup>. At Key Stage 4 the disparity is greater; the Attainment 8 score which is the average points scored for attainment in 8 GCSEs including English and Maths, was only 18.2 points for Gypsy and Roma pupils and 21.9 for Traveller pupils of Irish Heritage compared to the average of 46.5 points<sup>12</sup>.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people are also less likely to stay in education after the age of sixteen than pupils in any other ethnic group, with just 73% of Irish Traveller pupils and 66% of Gypsy and Roma pupils staying on in 2016/17 (The latest figures made available)<sup>13</sup>. In 2014, only 3 to 4% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people aged 18 to 30 accessed Higher Education, compared to 43% of the same age group in the general population<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>10</sup>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/whatdoesthe2011censustellusaboutthecharacteristicsofgypsyoririshtravellersinenglandandwales/2014-01-21>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/11-to-16-years-old/gcse-results-attainment-8-for-children-aged-14-to-16-key-stage-4/latest#by-ethnicity>

<sup>12</sup><https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/11-to-16-years-old/gcse-results-attainment-8-for-children-aged-14-to-16-key-stage-4/latest#by-ethnicity>

<sup>13</sup><https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/after-education/destinations-of-school-pupils-after-key-stage-4-usually-aged-16-years/latest#by-ethnicity>

<sup>14</sup>[https://www.cfey.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/KINGWIDE\\_28494\\_proof3.pdf](https://www.cfey.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/KINGWIDE_28494_proof3.pdf)

We suggest the following be made available:

- Targeted interventions aimed at improving outcomes for BME and GRT children should be implemented.
- Schools to provide parents with more support to be able to support their child's learning.
- Better curricular inclusion and representation of BME and GRT history, culture and heritage.
- Tackling high exclusion rates, looking at other ways of managing student behavioural etc. Such as using restorative justice approaches rather than zero tolerance behavior approaches.
- More vocational courses should be made available to young people still in the education system. 14-16 provision and college courses which also include functional skills could help to reduce the uptake of elective home education.

#### **4. How should the school curriculum adapt in response to the ethnic diversity of the country?**

- At present the curriculum does not reflect the ethnic make-up of the United Kingdom.
- In order to develop a sense of belonging, young people need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and reflected in the history that is being taught and the literature that is being read.
- This is important not only in creating a sense of belonging but in combating stereotypes.
- The curriculum must adapt and with a matter of urgency.
- We would encourage the Department for education to mandate the inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history, heritage and culture within the national school curriculum.

#### **5. How can the ways young people (in particular those aged 16 to 24 years) find out about and access education, training and employment opportunities be improved?**

- More targeted information, advice and guidance, especially for young people who may not have any qualifications at all.
- Young people often don't know where they can go to for advice and schools do not always provide this information or may not know themselves.
- Clearer pathways promoted to young people who do not want to go on to an academic career path. E.g. From traineeship to apprenticeship and upwards.
- Make funding available for 14-16 provision at Colleges of Further Education for young NEET people.

#### **6. Which inequalities in health outcomes of people in different racial and ethnic groups are not (wholly) explained by inequalities in underlying determinants of health (for example, education, occupation or income)?**

- Traditional health beliefs might still exist (e.g. Irish Travellers have healing men, also prayer and penance are still part of health regime).
- Because of hundreds of years of experienced discrimination by the health system, there might be lack of trust, some might prefer to get advice from family members that have gone

through the same health issues.

## **7. How could inequalities in the health outcomes of people in different ethnic groups be addressed by government, public bodies, the private sector, and communities?**

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ethnic categories are not included in the NHS data dictionary; they must be included as a matter of priority. The extent of health inequalities cannot be fully understood without correct ethnic monitoring.
- Public Health England should train peer health advisors to work with GRT people.
- Public Health England and NHS England should provide more accessible information to people with lower levels of literacy, and English as an additional language.
- Public Health England and NHS England should engage with all parts of the GRT society, including the vast majority that live in bricks and mortar accommodation who are more invisible and therefore harder to identify.
- Work with the GRT community to develop a GRT mental health strategy which targets resources and funding at suicide prevention and support; addresses accessibility of services; improves access to information about available services; collects data on access, experience and outcomes from health service users; ensures healthcare professionals understand the different needs of GRT communities; and trials interventions to assess what works in improving the healthcare experience for GRT populations.

## **8. What could be done to enhance community relations and perceptions of the police?**

In 2018 research<sup>15</sup> by the Traveller Movement found widespread evidence of institutional racism, discrimination, and bias by the police against GRT communities. As a result, GRT people are very mistrustful of the police and are often reluctant to report crimes committed against them. The report made several lengthy recommendations on how to improve the relationship. Those recommendations include the following:

- A root and branch review by HMICFRS of each police force to understand the extent of institutional bias against GRT people.
- The EHRC should launch an inquiry into whether the role of the GRT police liaison officer is inherently discriminatory.
- Internal police disciplinary procedures must be equally applied to all racist incidents.
- The Government, the NPCC and police forces should continue to support increased reporting of GRT hate crime.
- Funds and resources should be made available to all minority staff police associations – including the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association.
- PEEL assessments include a standardised measure to systematically assess individual police forces on their relationships with GRT communities.
- A neighbourhood policing approach should be developed to better support a positive relationship between officers and GRT individuals and communities.

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<sup>15</sup> [https://travellermovement.org.uk/phocadownload/userupload/criminal-justice/TTM-Policing-by-consent\\_web.pdf](https://travellermovement.org.uk/phocadownload/userupload/criminal-justice/TTM-Policing-by-consent_web.pdf)  
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## 9. What do you consider to be the main causes of the disparities in crime between people in different racial and ethnic groups, and why?

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System is extremely high<sup>16</sup>. This creates what appears to be a disparity in crime between different racial and ethnic groups.
- The causes of this throughout the system are many. For GRT persons, they are extremely overrepresented in the youth estate<sup>17</sup> and suffer poor outcomes compared to their peers. Re-offense rates are high and educational programmes struggle to account for the individual needs GRT students represent.
- Further, in the adult estate there is a lack of alternatives to custodial sentences. This means that many GRT individuals when being sentenced will not be offered a community sentence, pushing the statistics of GRT individuals in prisons up and accentuating disproportionality.
- Further, a huge driver in the disparities in crime arises from the disparity in services. Travellers are placed in a position where it is significantly harder to register for many services, ranging from GPs to claiming Universal Credit with the DWP. This can lead to insecurity and being placed in positions of extreme need, outside the fringes of the social support that is offered to the rest of society. Experiences of poverty and insecurity often push people into the justice system.
- Further, over policing of certain communities is a high driver in causing disparities. Often the Traveller identity is considered to be a risk factor for police, so interactions with police are immediately perceived as having negative, hostile outcomes meaning that both the outcomes and processes of these interactions are different and more negative for Travellers and other BAME groups, than they would be for the majority of the population.

## 10. Can you suggest other ways in which racial and ethnic disparities in the UK could be addressed? In particular, is there evidence of where specific initiatives or interventions have resulted in positive outcomes? Are there any measures which have been counterproductive and why?

- As suggested by Lord Bourne of *Aberystwyth* in June 2019, the government must fund a cross government strategy to improve outcomes for GRT people across all areas of public life. This was first suggested by the Women and Equalities Committee inquiry in April 2019. This national strategy should have targeted policy interventions across the following areas: education; access to health care, as well as a strategy to reduce GRT health inequalities; introduce ethnic monitoring across all public bodies, using the 2021 census categories; and targeted interventions to improve economic inclusion.

**For more information please visit our website or contact us on the details above.**

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<sup>16</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/881317/tackling-racial-disparity-cjs-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/881317/tackling-racial-disparity-cjs-2020.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> <https://travellermovement.org.uk/criminal-justice?download=52:dec-2016-overlooked-and-overrepresented-gypsy-traveller-and-roma-children-in-the-youth-justice-system>