



the Traveller  
Movement

# **The care system and Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: an investigation.**

November 2017

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# Introduction

In the light of considerable and increasing concern amongst the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities that there has been a 'dramatic increase' in 'children taken into care' or 'forcibly adopted' in recent years, the Traveller Movement has carried out an investigation to find out if this is an accurate assessment, or if a small number of high profile cases are causing undue concern to the community.

In preparing this briefing the Traveller Movement has looked at the publically available statistics from the Department of Education<sup>1</sup> and requested further information using the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to enable further analysis (see information below).

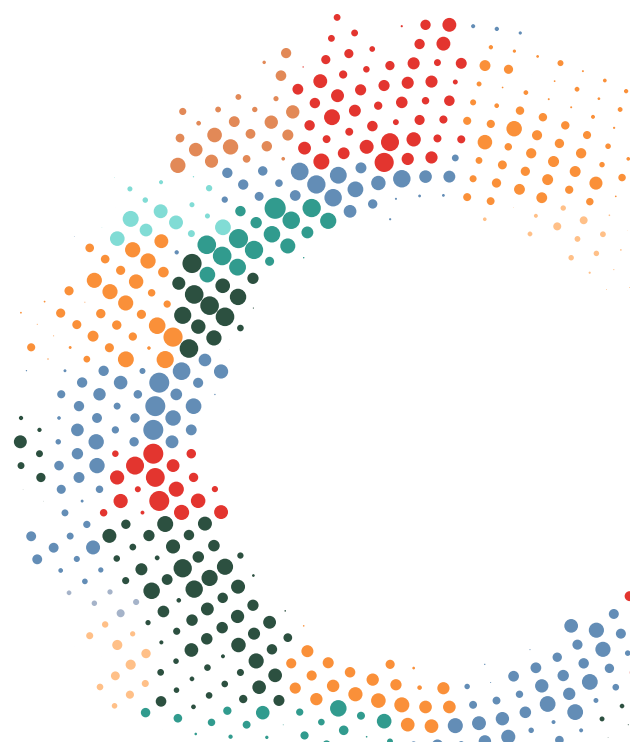
The data held by the Department of Education separates children from the GRT communities into two main categories: "Gypsy/Roma children", and children who are "Travellers of Irish heritage".

Although data on Irish Traveller children is found within a clear single category; it is impossible to separate out which children in the 'Gypsy/Roma' category are of Romani (English Gypsy) background and which are of migrant Roma heritage. It is worth highlighting however, that the increase in children being 'referred' to social services or becoming 'looked after' (in care) and who are listed as being of Gypsy/Roma ethnicity has occurred in the years since EU enlargement, coinciding with greatly increased numbers of Roma families coming to the UK<sup>2</sup>.

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1 The latest available figures (published 28th September 2017) which show the data for looked after children up until the 31st March 2017 can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2016-to-2017>

2 Ofsted (2014) "Overcoming barriers: ensuring that Roma children are fully engaged and achieving in education" [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/430866/Overcoming\\_barriers\\_-\\_ensuring\\_that\\_Roma\\_children\\_are\\_fully\\_engaged\\_and\\_achieving\\_in\\_education.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/430866/Overcoming_barriers_-_ensuring_that_Roma_children_are_fully_engaged_and_achieving_in_education.pdf) reported (p9) that between the years 2009-2014 in Sheffield (one of the areas in which FoI evidence has demonstrated that high numbers of Gypsy/Roma children were subject to referral for social services investigation into concerns over child protection) schools experienced a rise from approximately 100 Roma pupils (2009) to 2,100 (2014) a 1,500% increase in Roma pupils. Brown et. al. (2013) calculate that in the UK in 2013 there were around 200,000 Roma (one of the largest communities of migrant Roma in Europe), with the communities predominantly having settled since the late 2000s. [http://www.salford.ac.uk/sustainable-housing-and-urban-studies-unit-archived/downloads/Migrant\\_Roma\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_final\\_report\\_October\\_2013.pdf](http://www.salford.ac.uk/sustainable-housing-and-urban-studies-unit-archived/downloads/Migrant_Roma_in_the_UK_final_report_October_2013.pdf). The Brown et. al. (2013) study suggested that in England Roma populations are concentrated in the North West and London with significant populations in Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands and West Midlands. FoI requests have indicated (see regional information below for a broad-brush picture) that local authorities which have the largest number of Gypsy/Roma children referred for social work enquiries and becoming 'looked after' are to a large extent those areas with high Roma populations.



# Executive summary

- The increase in the number of children in contact with social services who are listed as being of Gypsy/Roma ethnicity has occurred since EU enlargement and the increased number of migrant Roma families coming to the UK. Coupled with a reported caseload increase by organisations such as Roma Support Group, it is therefore reasonable to assume this increase relates primarily to migrant Roma families and not English Gypsy families.
- **There is no evidence of 'disproportionality' at the national level** – increased rates over and above that which would be expected given the size of the population – in terms of children from GRT backgrounds becoming looked after.
- Whilst every case where a child has to be adopted away from their family is a tragedy for those involved, and there is a clear need for additional foster parents from GRT communities, there is no evidence to suggest sustained patterns of deliberate or disproportionate use of the care system to target GRT children and families.
- The majority of Child Protection Plans are for relatively limited periods of time in the case of Gypsy/Roma (and particularly Irish Traveller) children, indicating that following enquiries and interventions as appropriate, the case is concluded. The relatively high rate at which cases are discontinued, and fairly short time period during which children are on 'Child Protection Plans' indicates the need for social services departments (and other agencies) to have greater cultural competency when working with GRT communities as professionals involved in decision making may be responding 'overly-cautiously' to cases when concerns are raised about GRT children.
- It is also likely a number of young people on longer-term plans may be in secure accommodation/youth detention. This may help explain why some of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are subject to Child Protection Plans for over two years.
- There are very small numbers of adoptions of GRT children and given family demographics for these communities' it is most likely that where small groups of children are placed for adoption that these are members of a single family or household. **Therefore, the evidence certainly does not suggest that forced adoptions are regularly occurring and this information should be circulated widely to reassure families in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.**

## Recommendations

1. The overall slightly higher rates of initial referrals for enquiries for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, which does vary between different local authority areas, indicates a need for increased cultural competency training for social care, educational and other relevant professionals as well as a need for enhanced dialogue with the communities on how social work professionals perceive and interact with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
2. There is a real need for capacity building and advocacy support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities about engaging with, and understanding how, children and family services work.



# Are there more GRT children becoming looked after than would be expected given the size of the community?

Table 1 (below) demonstrates an increase in numbers of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller Children who have become looked after between 2009 and 2017.

**Table 1: Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage children who are ‘looked after’ (in State care in England) 2009-2017 (year ending 31st March)**

Ethnicity of child	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Gypsy/Roma	30 (<1% <sup>3</sup> )	50 (<1%)	90 (<1%)	130 (<1%)	180 (<1%)	220 (<1%)	250 (0.2%)	280 (0.2%)	310 (0.2%)
Travellers of Irish heritage	20 (<1%)	30 (<1%)	50 (<1%)	50 (<1%)	70 (<1%)	70 (<1%)	90 <sup>4</sup> (0.1%)	90 (0.1%)	100 (0.1%)

The table above should be read in the light of an increasing number of children becoming looked after over the last decade<sup>5</sup> across all populations. Between 2011-2015 for example, there was a 6% increase in children becoming looked after<sup>6</sup>, and in the single year between 2016-17 the figure of children becoming looked after, increased by a further 3%<sup>7</sup>.

While there is a clear upward trend in number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children becoming looked after between the years 2009 and 2017 it is most obvious in relation to Gypsy/Roma children.

Despite this, where rates per 10,000 children in the population are given, it can be seen that for Traveller children the figure remains low, with less than .1 Traveller children (equivalent to the number which would be expected based on Census data for size of the population and lower than would be expected if other measures of population size are used). For Gypsy/Roma children under the age of 18 who were ‘in care/looked after on the 31st March 2017, the statistics indicate that .3/10,000 children. **Based purely on census data this would indicate some over-representation/disproportionality, but when other measures of the size of the GRT child population (including school census data) are used, the apparent disproportionality disappears.**

3 All percentages shown are per 10,000 children under the age of 18 years.

4 For figures which have not been subjected to FoI requests it is difficult to obtain precise percentages or number/100,000 children of GRT children who are looked after/subject to a Child Protection Plan. However in the two most recent years (2014-16) when FoI requests were submitted and fuller data obtained, it is clear that the percentage of Traveller children is small at 0.1% per 10,000 and does not appear to be disproportionate to the size of population (see further discussion below). Given the actual number of children who are looked after (for Traveller children at all times 100 or fewer individuals), it can be seen that the number of Traveller children in care has consistently remained at/below 0.1% per 10,000 children in the population) which using all measures of analysis is not disproportionate. The rise in Gypsy/Roma children who are looked after (although a relatively substantial percentage increase between 2011-2017) is also not disproportionate based on school census returns which indicate G/R children accounted for a minimum of .3% of schoolchildren in 2017.

5 See further: NSPCC (2017) ‘Trends in Child Protection England’ [http://www.eif.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/improving-child-protection\\_strand4\\_NSPCC-England\\_June2017.pdf](http://www.eif.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/improving-child-protection_strand4_NSPCC-England_June2017.pdf)

6 According to the October 2015 House of Commons Briefing Paper (Number 04470, 5 October 2015 Children in Care in England: Statistics) at page 6: “the absolute number of children looked after has increased by 6% since 2011....the number of looked after children has increased steadily over the past seven years and it is now higher than at any point since 1985”. White children (excluding Gypsies/Roma and Travellers) accounted for 77% of all children in care, while children of ‘Mixed’ ethnicity and Black/Black British ethnicity made up approximately 9% and 7% of the looked after population respectively. Given that (based on 2011 Census data) 5 per cent of the child population of the UK is Black/Black British or of ‘mixed’ heritage it can be seen that there was a significant over-representation of children from these populations in the looked after children statistics. <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN04470#fullreport>

7 DfE (2017) Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2017 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/647852/SFR50\\_2017-Children\\_looked\\_after\\_in\\_England.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647852/SFR50_2017-Children_looked_after_in_England.pdf)

As shown below however, even with the noticeable increase in numbers of referrals and children becoming subject to Child Protection Plans; in itself, particularly given the degree of poverty experienced by many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children<sup>8</sup>, there is no clear evidence to suggest that there is an large over-representation of children from the GRT communities in terms of the rate at which they are becoming looked after.

To put this in context; it has been calculated that there are perhaps as many as 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers in the UK (Brown et. al 2013<sup>9</sup>); with an estimated average of three or four children per household (Cemlyn et. al. 2009<sup>10</sup>). Having a larger family (three or more children) greatly exacerbates risks of poverty<sup>11</sup>, which for all communities (of all ethnicities, including White British), is a factor very closely associated with children becoming looked after. Extreme poverty is also (for all communities) closely associated with risks of neglect and abuse<sup>12</sup>; the categories which are overwhelmingly given as reasons for Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan or becoming looked after (See Figure 6 below).

If given best available calculations in the UK there are around 250,000 Roma people (Brown et. al., 2013<sup>13</sup>) who may perhaps also be assumed to have around three to four children per family; it might potentially be expected (although further research is required to calculate the size of the school population by ethnic groups against the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan) that a higher number of GRT children would be within the looked after system than are actually found.

In January 2017 the Department for Education<sup>14</sup> recorded 27,953 children in school identifying as Gypsy/Roma and Traveller. Given that families are often reluctant to disclose their ethnicity in educational settings, and that a number of children will be 'out of school'/home educated, this figure will inevitably be a substantial undercount of the actual number of children. Moreover, it does not take into account children below compulsory school age. The DfE figure however does provide a helpful comparator figures against which to assess rates of children who are looked after. **The 2017 DfE figures (see footnote 14) gives a percentage rate of .1% Irish Travellers (primary and secondary) and .4% Gypsy/Roma children at primary and .2% secondary schools in England.** Given that the 2011 Census data is widely used as a baseline figure to illustrate disproportionality experienced by GRT people when we explore administrative (national) data sets, and that the Census suggests .1% of the population are GRT we can see that using education statistics in fact confirms that the number of children within the population is substantially greater than would be expected if we only use Census data.

Even though the school census/DfE data provides some evidence of the numbers and percentages of children who are from the GRT community, given gaps in the evidence we still don't have a clear idea of the size of the child population. Best estimates from education researchers however, suggest that the actual figure for GRT children in school may in fact be nearer 200,000<sup>15</sup> with only a very small minority of these children identifying as Gypsy/Roma or Traveller of Irish Heritage in school records.

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8 Traveller Movement (2014) Child poverty in the Gypsy and Traveller communities <http://www.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Child-Poverty-GRT-January-2014.pdf>

9 Brown, P. et. al. (2013). Migrant Roma in the UK [http://www.salford.ac.uk/sustainable-housing-and-urban-studies-unit-archived/downloads/Migrant\\_Roma\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_final\\_report\\_October\\_2013.pdf](http://www.salford.ac.uk/sustainable-housing-and-urban-studies-unit-archived/downloads/Migrant_Roma_in_the_UK_final_report_October_2013.pdf)

10 Cemlyn, S. et. al. (2009) Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review. Manchester: ECHR [http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11129/1/12inequalities\\_experienced\\_by\\_gypsy\\_and\\_traveller\\_communities\\_a\\_review.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11129/1/12inequalities_experienced_by_gypsy_and_traveller_communities_a_review.pdf)

11 Barnardos (undated) "What Causes Child Poverty" [http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/our\\_work/child\\_poverty/child\\_poverty\\_what\\_is\\_poverty/what\\_causes\\_child\\_poverty.htm](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/child_poverty/child_poverty_what_is_poverty/what_causes_child_poverty.htm) Bradshaw et. al. (2006) Child Poverty in Large Families <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/child-poverty-large-families>

12 Bywaters, P. et. al. (2016) The relationship between poverty, child abuse and neglect: an evidence review. York: JRF. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/relationship-between-poverty-child-abuse-and-neglect-evidence-review> and McNicholl, A. (2017) "Children in poorest areas more likely to enter care" Community Care, 28th February, 2017 <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2017/02/28/children-poorest-areas-likely-enter-care-finds-study/>

13 Brown, P. et. al. (2013). [http://www.salford.ac.uk/sustainable-housing-and-urban-studies-unit-archived/downloads/Migrant\\_Roma\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_final\\_report\\_October\\_2013.pdf](http://www.salford.ac.uk/sustainable-housing-and-urban-studies-unit-archived/downloads/Migrant_Roma_in_the_UK_final_report_October_2013.pdf)

14 Department for Education (2017) Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2017. [National Tables SFR28/2017] Table 4a <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2017>

15 Mulcahy, E. et.al (2017) "The underrepresentation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in higher education A report on barriers from early years to secondary and beyond" (at pp14-15).

Despite this, in some areas with very high concentrations of GRT people (frequently those with higher rates of referral for child protection enquiries) we can gain some understanding of the percentage of children of GRT ethnicity living in a particular locality. Ofsted (2014:9) suggest that in total 3% of children in Sheffield schools are of Roma ethnicity, 400% greater than would be expected given the national statistics.

If the combined Gypsy/Traveller population can (based on the limited available statistics given undercounting in the census<sup>16</sup>) be assumed to be in the region of 300,000 people; with the combined Roma population assessed to be 250,000<sup>17</sup>, based on information from GTAA's and international evidence which suggests a largely young community<sup>18</sup> of GRT people; it can perhaps be presumed (although further analysis would be required using more detailed school census data to fully justify these presumptions) that figures for looked after children from GRT communities would (if disproportionate) be **at least .8** per 10,000 children<sup>19</sup>.

It is clear from the above data however that not only is the number of children in each category (Gypsy/Roma and Traveller) relatively small (although absolute figures are increasing – in common with all groups), but also that the percentage of such children has remained consistently low at between 0.1 and 0.3 children per 10,000 under 18 year olds. In contrast, White British children who are looked after (over a number of years) average around 70 per 10,000 children under the age of 18 (potentially slightly lower than may be expected, given the percentage of 'White' children in the population), whilst African children are over-represented at the rate of 4 per 10,000 as are 'Mixed' heritage children at 3 per 10,000. In comparison too, Chinese children – who belong to a population which may be potentially smaller than that of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller<sup>20</sup> people, were also found to have low numbers of children (less than 1/10,000 averaging 80 children per year) in the looked after system, while they accounted for 29,905 or .4% of children at both primary and secondary school (DfE, 2017<sup>21</sup>) indicating potentially some under-representation of this community in the looked after children statistics.

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16 See Traveller Movement (2013) "Gypsy and Traveller population in England and the 2011 Census" <http://www.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Gypsy-and-Traveller-population-in-England-policy-report.pdf>. At page 2 of the Traveller Movement briefing they note that even with the undercounting recorded in the census the figures for Gypsy and Traveller communities (excluding Roma) are .1% of the English population. Census findings indicate that 45% of all self-identified Gypsy and Traveller households have dependent children. The national average for households with dependent children is 29% of Census respondents .

17 Brown et. al. (2013) op. cit.

18 See for example 2011 Irish Census data which suggest that 60% of the population of Travellers in Ireland are under the age of 25 <http://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2017pressreleases/pressstatementcensus2016resultsprofile8-irishtravellersethnicityandreligion/>

19 For a discussion on calculation of disproportionality in looked after children statistics based on size of the child population see further Owen, C. and Statham, J. (2009) Disproportionality in Child Welfare The Prevalence of Black and Minority Ethnic Children within the 'Looked After' and 'Children in Need' Populations and on Child Protection Registers in England London: IoE (at p22) <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11152/1/DCSF-RR124.pdf>

20 The 2011 Census records 379,502 (0.7%) self-identified Chinese people living in England. Although Census returns for GRT populations were far smaller equating to .1% of the population (Traveller Movement 2013 "Gypsy and Traveller population in England and the 2011 Census") given the difficulty in relying on the 2011 Census to calculate the size of the GRT population, when we claim that the Chinese community is potentially smaller than the GRT population we are using the calculation presented above, which presumes a population of around 500,000 GRT people.

21 Department for Education (2017) Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2017. [National Tables SFR28/2017] Table 4a <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2017>



**In conclusion, in light of the actual numbers of children from Gypsy/Roma and Traveller backgrounds subject to Child Protection Plans or becoming looked after there is no clear evidence to suggest that there is disproportionality at a national level.**

There is however (as considered below) evidence of increasing numbers of GRT children being referred for child protection enquiries and subject to a Child Protection Plan, or becoming looked after. Whilst increased rates of referral for enquiries have been found across all ethnic groups in recent years<sup>22</sup>, **the noticeable upsurge in GRT children being referred, (and ultimately becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan), particularly in certain areas with large GRT populations may indicate a need for increased cultural competency training for social care, educational and other professionals, as well as a need for enhanced dialogue with the communities on how social work professionals perceive of 'good enough parenting', as well as the need for greater awareness of situations which may potentially or automatically trigger referrals**<sup>23</sup>.

## Are Traveller children more likely than Gypsies or Roma to become looked after?

Whilst the evidence is not conclusive in terms of identifying which GRT children are more likely to come into the looked after system – given that there is only a single category for Gypsy/Roma children – one highly persuasive suggestion (considered further in the discussion below) put forward by analysts familiar with English Gypsy and Roma communities, is that the most likely explanation for increased numbers of Gypsy/Roma children becoming looked after in the years 2009-2017 is the relatively large numbers of migrant Roma families experiencing deep and persistent poverty or being identified by social workers as a family 'under stress' who are at risk of; or who are, neglecting their children. This suggestion is highly credible based on concerns articulated by specialist NGOs such as the Roma Support Group who have reported increasing numbers of families coming into contact with social care children & families teams, and emerging evidence from research studies and news reports which indicate increased social work interventions with Roma children, often associated with parenting practices which are regarded as neglect or abuse in the UK (for example children caring for other children or physical chastisement) but which may be perceived of as normalised parenting behaviour in countries of origin (see further Greenfields et al, 2017; Pinter, 2012 and Cox, 2012)<sup>24</sup>. In addition, such clashes of expectations associated with child-rearing appear to be exacerbated by the severe economic hardship impacting Roma families in the wake of welfare changes which has made it significantly harder for them to prove eligibility for housing benefit or other financial support, leading to overcrowding, food poverty and potentially homelessness (see further Dagilyte and Greenfields, 2016 and Martin et. al., 2017)<sup>25</sup>

22 Bilson and Martin (2016) rather shockingly demonstrate that based on DfE statistics not only was there a 79.4% increase in referrals between 2009-2015, but across all populations/ethnic groups, 22.5 per cent of children born in the financial year 2009-10 were referred to children's social care for enquiries before their fifth birthday. [http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw\\_43143-3.pdf](http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_43143-3.pdf)

23 There are statutory duties placed on local authority children's services when a referral is made to them in relation to concerns about a child's welfare. In addition to worries about neglect or abuse, or families struggling to manage, GRT families have (for example) also reported cases where referrals and enquiries have occurred in relation to a child being out of school and working with parents; or staying at home to look after younger children and help with domestic chores. The NSPCC (2014) writing about social workers' role in assessing parenting capacity or 'Good Enough Parenting' refer to assessing whether carers consistently meet children's health and developmental needs; are putting children's needs first; providing routine and consistent care; and acknowledging problems and engaging with support services. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/information-service/factsheet-assessing-parenting-capacity.pdf>

24 Forthcoming winter 2017 – Margaret Greenfields et. al. a pilot study into the experiences of Roma migrant families contact with social workers and youth offending agencies. Pinter, I. "Caring for Roma children" 31/8/2012 <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs/our-blog/caring-roma-children> and Cox, S. (2012) Roma children: Britain's hidden care problem (20/12/2012) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20770420>

25 Dagilyte, E & Greenfields, M (2016) 'United Kingdom welfare benefit reforms in 2013-2014: Roma between the pillory, the precipice and the slippery slope' in *The Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* 37(4); Martin, P, Scullion, L and Brown, P 2017,



Overall Irish Traveller children are far less likely than Gypsy/Roma children to become subject to a Child Protection Plan or looked after and it is likely that most of the children in the Gypsy/Roma category are Roma children. **In particular – given that children who become looked after from the GRT communities may be from larger families with perhaps three to four children in each household, who may all become looked after at the same time – it can be calculated that out of a total population of perhaps 500,000 people – that the 410 children who were subject to a care order (looked after) at 31st March 2017 may perhaps come from around 100-150 Gypsy/Roma and Traveller families who are experiencing particular difficulties so that children have been removed on a temporary or permanent basis.**

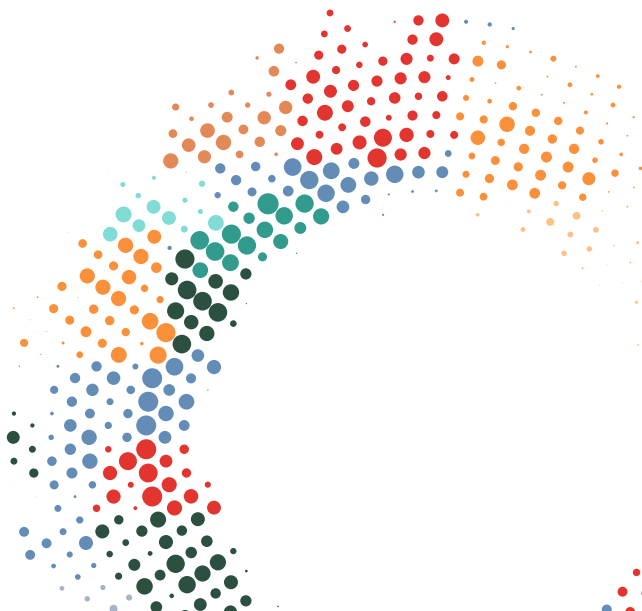
## What happens to Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children – do they all become looked after? Do they go back to their families or are they ‘forcibly adopted’?

Given the increase in figures of children becoming looked after amongst both Gypsy/Roma children and Traveller children; using FOI data requests for 2014/15 and 2015/16 allowed us to carry out more in-depth consideration into numbers of referrals made, whether children receive a Child Protection Plan, how long GRT children remained subject to a Child Protection Plan or ‘in care’ and what are the outcomes for these children (for example when and how the plan ends). The duration, and the way in which a Child Protection Plan is terminated can provide evidence which suggests that a child was in foster care, remained living with relatives under a plan or is returned to family members. In particular it also allows consideration of whether children are in fact being ‘forcibly adopted’ as many community members fear.

Although in the data released to the Traveller Movement, for any local authority areas where there are less than five children subject to a Child Protection Plan/who become looked after, the actual number of children has been suppressed – so as to ensure confidentiality for a child/family in that geographical area – we have shown the **actual figures of children who have become looked after in Table One above at page 5 (100 Travellers and 310 Gypsies/Roma as of 31st March 2017).**

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“We don’t rely on benefits’ : challenging mainstream narratives towards Roma migrants in the UK. Social Policy Review, 29, Bristol: Policy Press pp. 199-21

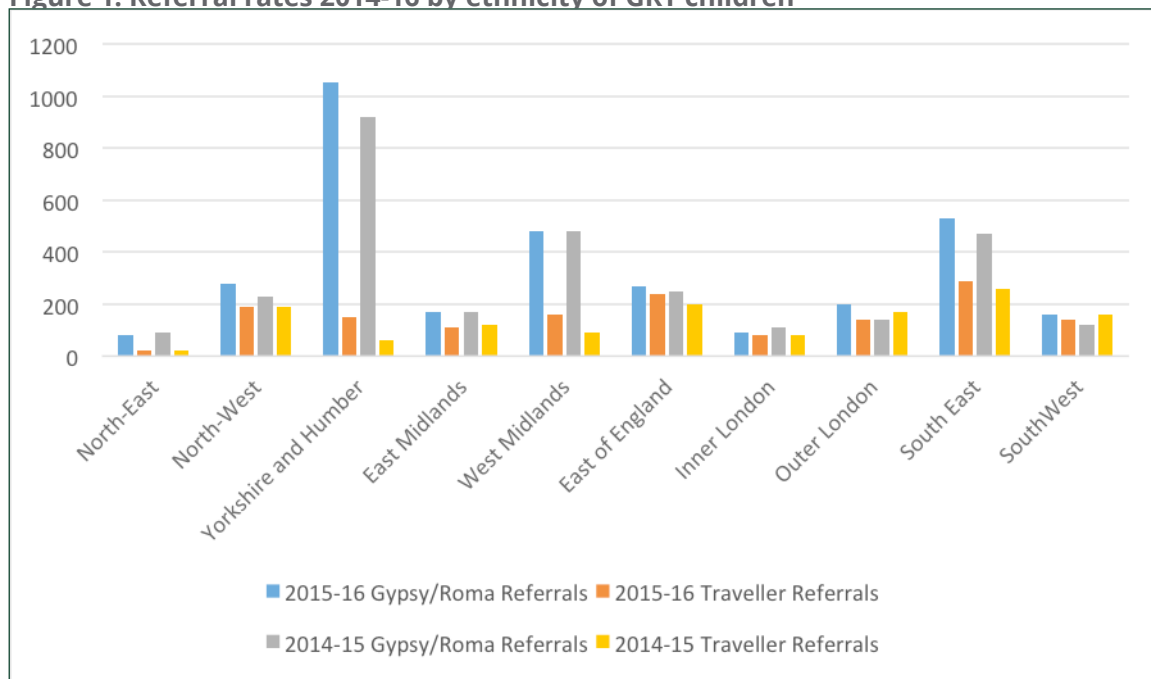


# What areas show highest levels of referrals for child protection enquiries for GRT Children?

Importantly, we know that there are variable levels of referrals to social services teams and accordingly differing rates at which children become subject to a care plan in different parts of the country. As this investigation looks only at national and regional data-sets and trends, further research and analysis would be required on an individual local authority and small output area basis to establish precise patterns of referral and rates at which GRT children become subject to a Child Protection Plan or Looked After in each micro-locality.

**Figure 1 (below) demonstrates this on a regional basis.** As noted above, the highest rates of Gypsy/Roma children subject to referral for child protection enquiries are typically found in areas in high numbers of Roma populations (Yorkshire and Humberside; West Midlands and the South East). There are also differences occurring in rates of Irish Traveller children subject to referral or in receipt of a Child Protection Plan. For example some London Boroughs and counties in the East of England and South East which have large Traveller populations, show higher levels of children being referred (and in some cases ultimately becoming looked after) than in localities with lower Traveller populations.

**Figure 1: Referral rates 2014-16 by ethnicity of GRT children**



What we found was: in 2014-2015, for the whole of England there was (based on our population size assumptions above) when compared to the size of the GRT population, **an over-representation of Gypsy/Roma children who were referred for initial child protection investigations<sup>26</sup> mainly under the categories of neglect or abuse** (2,980 children or 2.6 per 10,000 children under the age of 18) and a lower level of over-representation of Irish Traveller children (1,350 or 1.2 per 10,000 children) referred. There was however something of an under-representation overall in terms of GRT children being subject to a Child Protection Plan for one year or more.

<sup>26</sup> Although given high rates of referrals across all populations (per Bilson and Martin 2016 op. cit. at footnote 22) this is not an especially significant finding but indicative of general trends in child protection referrals/enquiries.

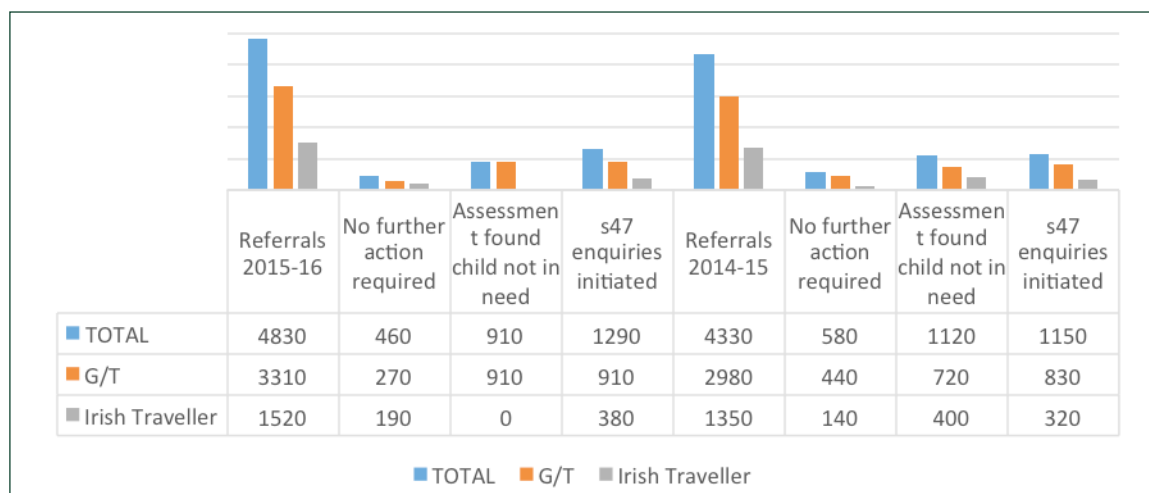
This **initial referral rate increased in 2015-2016** to include 3,310 Gypsy/Roma children (2.8 per 10,000 children), with referrals mainly occurring in local authority areas with large Roma populations. The number of referrals also increased to 1520 or 1.3 per 10,000 Irish Traveller children. Again rates of referral vary by area perhaps indicating differences in practice or that in some localities more reports of concern are made to officials who must investigate any claim of neglect or abuse.

**There is therefore potentially concern to be noted over the number of initial referrals at the local level made to social services teams and a need for further analysis to see if referrals, at a local level, are proportionate to those made for other populations with similar characteristics (e.g. risk of poverty, larger family, membership of an ethnic minority group etc.).**

When we look at what happens next however there is very limited indications that at the national level Gypsies/Travellers are experiencing disproportionality in outcomes.

**FoI evidence indicates that around 14% of Gypsy/Roma children were already known to social services teams** when the referral was made and that a previous referral had been made to social services about the child in the previous 12 months, indicating either that there was an ongoing child protection concern, or that professionals involved in referrals were repeatedly troubled by matters which may on investigation have been associated with limited cultural knowledge of the Gypsy/Roma community. **In contrast, Irish Traveller children were largely unknown to social services prior to the referral detailed as occurring.**

**Figure 2: Outcomes (2014-2016) after an initial referral was made to social services**



In 2014-15 following on from these referrals and initial enquiries (as discussed further below) 1150 children in total were referred for s47<sup>27</sup> enquiries whilst in 2015-16 the figure increased to 1290; demonstrating a sharp upturn in s47 enquiries. This is in line with increased numbers of s47 referrals made across all communities and ethnic groups in recent years<sup>28</sup>. The cases which were not formally discontinued (discontinuation occurs either because there was found to be no further action required, or the child was not seen to be a child in need) but did not continue to s47 enquiries, were presumably treated as 'child in need' cases.

**Whilst there was increased use of s47 enquiries for GRT communities in the years 2014-16: based on the current available evidence this does not appear to be disproportionate when compared to other ethnic groups over the same time frame, given the overall increase in referrals, s47 enquiries and Child Protection Plans issued (Donovan, 2016<sup>29</sup>).**

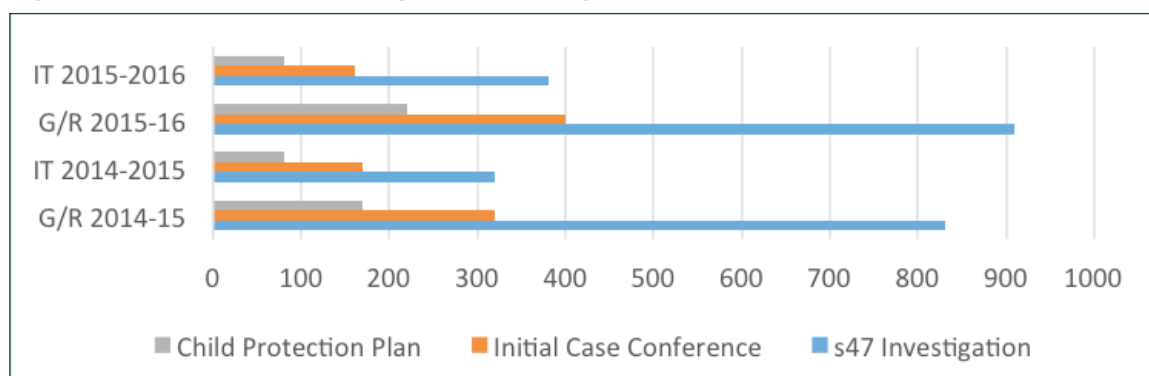
27 When, following initial enquiries there are still concerns that a child is suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority is required by s47 of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries (usually of schools, nurseries, health workers etc.), to enable it to decide whether it should take any action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

28 Community Care (Donovan, 2016) report that there across all populations there was a 12% increase in s47 enquiries in the years 2014-15 and an increased trend for a Child Protection Plans to be issued (10% increase from the preceding year) once s47 enquiries were made <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2016/03/24/government-reports-significant-rise-child-protection-cases-201415/>

29 Donovan, T. (2016) Government reports significant rise in child protection cases during 2014/15 Community Care 24th March 2016

Following on from s47 enquiries a decision is made whether or not to proceed to 'initial case conference' during which, and following multi-agency discussions, a decision will ultimately be made as to whether a child will become subject to a Child Protection Plan or perhaps a Care Order (becoming looked after). Child Protection Plans may last for several months or even years but common practice is to place a child under a Child Protection Plan for perhaps three to six months whilst further investigations take place or support and other interventions are put in place to ensure that the child receives appropriate care, or is in a safe place. As will be discussed further below, it is clear that the majority of Child Protection Plans are for relatively limited periods of time in the case of Gypsy/Roma (and particularly Traveller) children, indicating that following enquiries and interventions as appropriate, the case is concluded. The duration of Child Protection Plans for GRT children does not appear to vary significantly from that of other children, and in fact may actually involve shorter periods of time during which a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan than are found for children from some other minority communities.

**Figure 3: Outcomes of s47 enquiries, leading to initial case conference/Child Protection Plan.**



### Number of s47 enquiries which led to a child becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan

As can be seen from Figure 3 above, in 2014-15 the percentage of Gypsy/Roma children who were subject to s47 enquiries (830) who then receive an initial Child Protection Plan (170) is relatively low at 20.48% indicating that for most children, s47 enquiries do not lead to receipt of a plan or becoming looked after. For Traveller children the percentage is 25% (320 children subject to s47 enquiries and 80 initial Child Protection Plans issued).

In 2015-16 the progression from s47 enquiry to Child Protection Plan increased for Gypsy/Roma children to 24.18% (220 Child Protection Plans resulting from 910 s47 enquiries) and **decreased for Irish Traveller children to 21.05%** of those subject to s47 enquiries (80 Child Protection Plans resulting from 380 s47 enquiries).

### How long do Children stay subject to a Child Protection Plan?

As Child Protection Plans may last for a lengthy period of time (crossing different data collection periods), we examined the duration of plans during the years for which we had undertaken FoI requests. For Traveller children in both 2014-15 and 2015-16, 60 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan lasting more than three months. (The remaining 20 children out of the 80 children on a Child Protection Plan in those years, would therefore appear to be have subject to shorter term plans). In 2014-15; 30 Traveller children were subject to a second or subsequent Child Protection Plan. In 2015-16 this decreased to 20 children having received a second or subsequent plan. In 2014-2015 only 10 children were still subject to a plan which had lasted for two years or more. In 2015-16 no Traveller children were on plans which had lasted for more than two years. This indicates that children were either returned to their families (if placed away from home) were no longer subject to Child Protection Plans, or had been adopted (see further below). The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan for more than three months in both 2014-15 and 2015-16 is 0.1 per 10,000 children in the population under the age of 18. As can be seen this figure is identical to the .1% figure which the 2011 Census data suggests is the percentage of GRT people

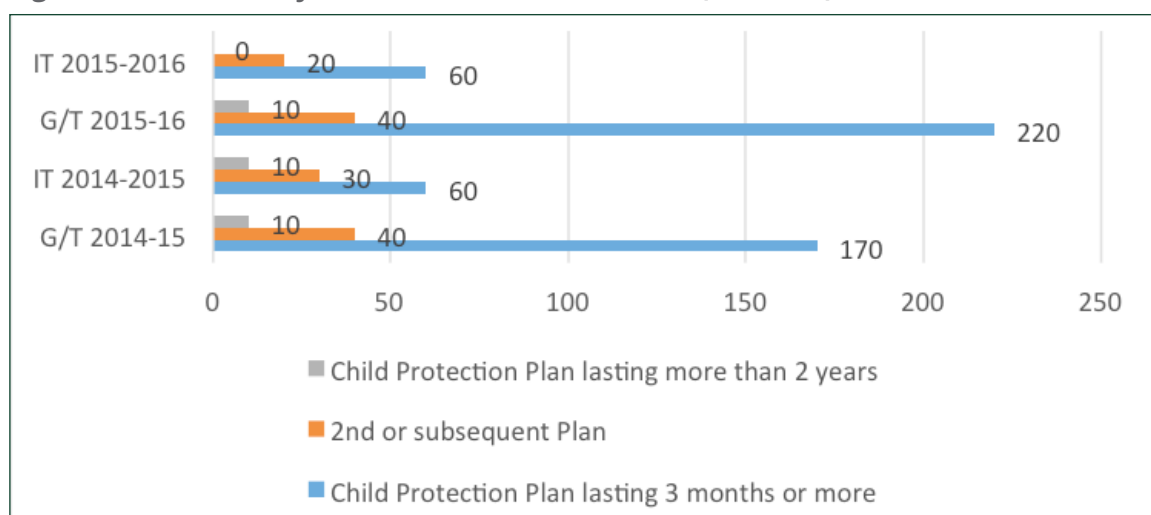
in the whole population. **Even if we used this figure as a baseline comparator we could argue that at the national level, there is no disproportionality evidenced in this statistic as a child subject to a Plan lasting less than three months is proportionate to the overall GRT population.** This is generally how calculations are carried out in relation to disproportionality in – for example – the criminal justice system, even though those GRT people in the criminal justice system are overwhelmingly male and young (i.e. their demographic profile varies from that of the whole population of GRT people).

If however we calculate using the percentages of self-identified GRT children in education (DfE, 2017) we would expect to see .1 % of Traveller and .4% of all Gypsy/Roma children of school age becoming subject to a Plan if there was proportionality in outcomes. Given the total number of Traveller children receiving a Plan also includes children below school age and is still no higher than 0.1% we can see less children receiving a Child Protection Plan than may potentially be expected given the number of Traveller children under 18 in the population. Given that many GRT children may experience relatively high levels of social exclusion or come from larger households – characteristics associated with a higher chance of being subject to a Child Protection Plan or becoming looked after – it can be reasonably argued that fewer children from Traveller backgrounds become subject to a Plan than may be expected.

For Gypsy/Roma children carrying out the same exercise demonstrates that 170 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan for more than three months in 2014-15 (0.2/10,000 children); increasing to 220 in 2015-16 (0.3/10,000). Of this group of children, 40 (in both 2014-15 and 2015-16) were subject to a second or subsequent plan. For G/R children the number subject to a Child Protection Plan for more than two years in both 2014-15 and 2015-16 was 10. Thus **although a higher number of Gypsy/Roma children were on longer-term plans than is found for Traveller children, there is again no major indication of disproportionality given the estimated size of the child population based on the school census** (.4% at primary school and .2% at secondary school) and increased risk factors associated with enhanced likelihood of poverty, larger family size etc.

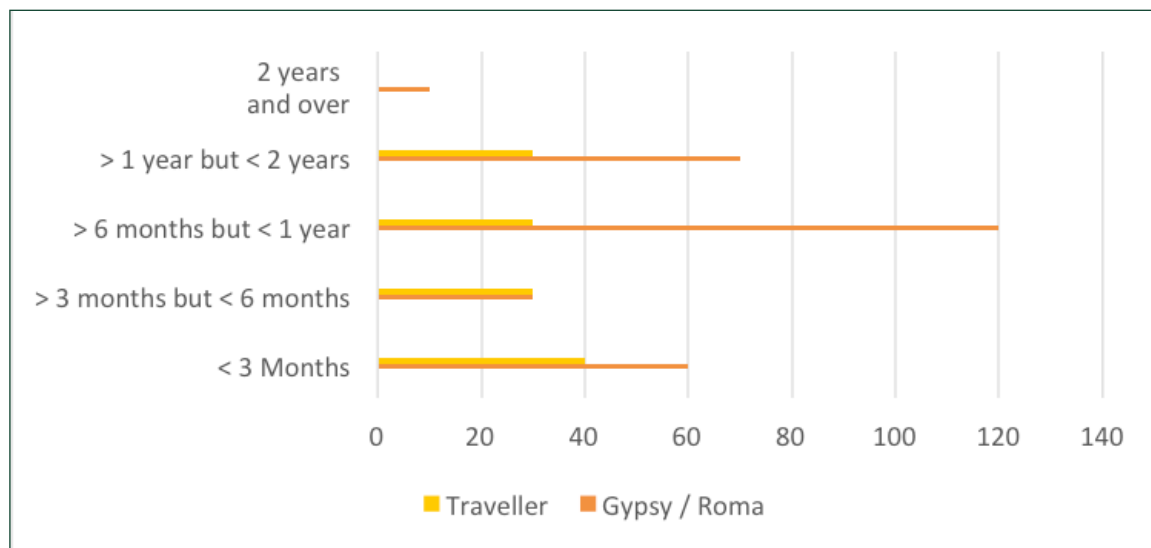
It can thus be seen that between the years 2014-16 for both Gypsy/Roma children and Irish Traveller children subject to a Child Protection Plan, most remain subject to a plan for less than one year. **The small number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan for 2 years or more (in both ethnic groups) may indicate that we are seeing the same very small number of children remaining subject to a Child Protection Plan or living in state care in both years.**

**Figure 4: Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan (duration) 2014-16**



If we look in more detail at the length of time children were subject to a Child Protection Plan (plans which ended in the year 2015-16) we can see (Figure 5) that the great majority of such Plans were of relatively short duration; with Gypsy/Roma children more likely to be subject to a plan (or in state care) for a longer period of time than are Irish Traveller children. In the year 2015-16 there were no Traveller children who had been subject to a Child Protection Plan lasting for two years or more; whilst 10 Gypsy/Roma children were subject to a plan which had existed for at least two years.

**Figure 5: Duration of Child Protection Plans which ceased in 2015-16**

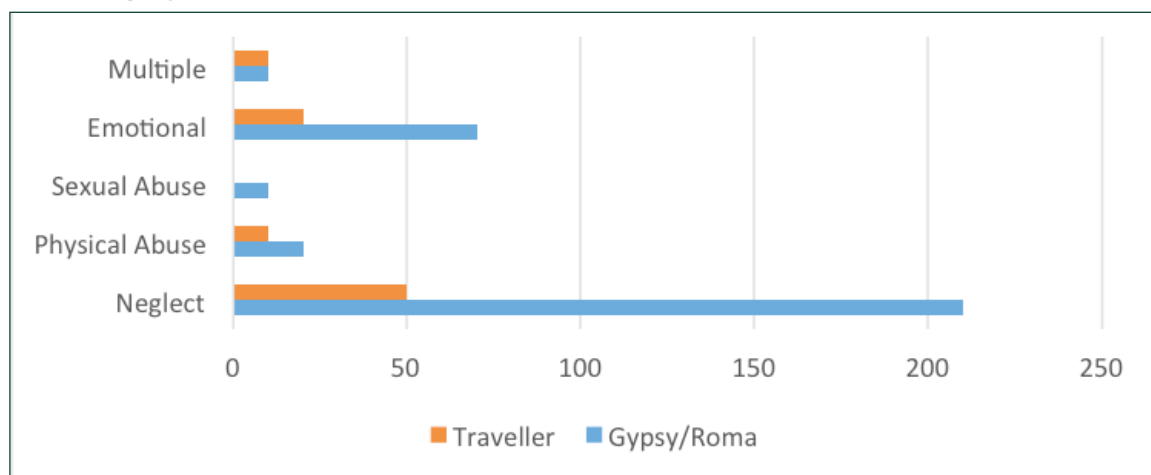


We can see, given the relatively small number of children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan for over six months that particularly in the case of Traveller children, these may well come from a very small number of families given the estimated larger number of children per family. **Overall Figures 4 and 5 illustrate that for the vast majority of children the Plan was terminated at under one year. For Irish Traveller children the plan was most likely to last for less than three months, whilst for Gypsy/Roma children the most likely duration of a Child Protection Plan was between six months and a year.**

### Why do Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children come into the child protection system?

When we look at the reasons why GRT children become subject to a Child Protection Plan we can see (that in common with other children) the main reasons given are abuse/neglect<sup>30</sup>.

**Figure 6: GRT children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan at 31 March 2016, by ethnicity and category of abuse**



<sup>30</sup> Although for reasons of confidentiality no precise information is available in relation to the categories of abuse/neglect, anecdotally neglect amongst GRT families may relate to lack of parental ability to care resulting from poverty, mental health issues and/or substance misuse. For example of those 3 GRT children who were included in 'serious case reviews' (an investigation carried out when a child has died or been subject to an avoidable serious injury) in 2015 - we can see that parental substance misuse, mental health issues and domestic violence were all known to exist in the families concerned. [https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/2015/?\\_t\\_id=1B2M2Y8AsgTpgAmY7PhCfg%3d%3d&\\_t\\_q=gypsy+roma+traveller&\\_t\\_tags=language%3aen%2csiteid%3a7f1b9313-bf5e-4415-abf6-aaf87298c667&\\_t\\_ip=10.99.66.5&\\_t\\_hit.id=Nspcc\\_Web\\_Models\\_Pages\\_TopicPage/\\_beb864a6-df77-4e2a-8ea1-a20ce6e98ee9\\_en-GB&\\_t\\_hit.pos=1](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/2015/?_t_id=1B2M2Y8AsgTpgAmY7PhCfg%3d%3d&_t_q=gypsy+roma+traveller&_t_tags=language%3aen%2csiteid%3a7f1b9313-bf5e-4415-abf6-aaf87298c667&_t_ip=10.99.66.5&_t_hit.id=Nspcc_Web_Models_Pages_TopicPage/_beb864a6-df77-4e2a-8ea1-a20ce6e98ee9_en-GB&_t_hit.pos=1)

In common with all children in the child protection/looked after system, neglect is the primary reason for children being subject to state monitoring or in care<sup>31</sup>. When all GRT children are grouped together, it becomes strikingly obvious that Gypsy/Roma children are most highly clustered within this explanatory category of reasons for being subject to a plan/looked after. Gypsy/Roma children are substantially more likely to be found within this category than are Traveller children. The second most common category for receipt of a plan was emotional abuse, followed by physical abuse and multiple reasons (e.g. a combination of the other categories). Sexual abuse remained the least common reason for a child becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan and in all cases this pertained to (a very small number of) Gypsy/Roma children.

Data returned from FoI requests reports on **'offending behaviours'** of GRT children subject to a Child Protection Plan. Based on available data it is still to some extent unclear where a child was initially subject to a Child Protection Plan and then became a young offender (averaging 80 Roma/Gypsy children per year between 2014-16 and 35 children per year from the Traveller community) or whether children were initially subject to a plan as a result of their offending behaviours/risk. Additional research would be required to unpick these findings further.

However data which refers to changes of placement for looked after children/children subject to a Child Protection Plan does provide information on the number of children who are transferred from another placement (which could be with foster carers for example) to a (collective category) of residential establishments, which includes Secure Units. It is a well-recognised fact for all groups of children (regardless of ethnicity) that children who are looked after (or who have been looked after) have a substantially increased risk of receiving a custodial sentence<sup>32</sup>. A child who is remanded in custody as a result of offending behaviour, even where they were not previously a looked after child becomes a 'Child in Care' as a result of being remanded to a youth detention accommodation (for example a secure training unit). Following sentencing, they may, depending on their age and previous care circumstances thus be included within the category of children who are 'in care'. We know from other evidence that there is a huge disproportionality in terms of GRT young people and children in youth custody (including on remand), self-reported as 12% of young offenders (HMIP, 2016) in the secure estate in 2016<sup>33</sup>.

Indeed, an analysis by the Traveller Movement of the Children in Custody data held by the Youth Justice Board found that an alarming number of Gypsy and Traveller children in youth custody had been in local authority care. The research found that 47% of Gypsies and Travellers in Secure Training Centres had been in local authority care and 33% of Gypsies and Travellers in Young Offenders Institutions had been in local authority care<sup>34</sup>.

Accordingly, although further investigation is required to allow a more rounded view of the full implications of these statistics, it is extremely likely that a substantial proportion of the 410 GRT children who are looked after and/or those have been in receipt of a Child Protection Plan for excess of six months, may be found within youth detention accommodation, offering a persuasive explanation for the care pathway experienced by a number of young people who are included in the statistics above.

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31 NSPCC (2017) Neglect facts and statistics <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/neglect/child-neglect-facts-statistics/>

32 See Further HMIP (2011) The care of looked after children in custody <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/08/Looked-after-children-print.pdf> and The Guardian (23/6/2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/may/23/children-in-care-crime-custody-review-prison-reform-trus>

33 Travellers Times Online (6/1/17) <http://travellerstimes.org.uk/News/Demands-for-inquiry-GRT-youth-custody.aspx>; Traveller Movement (February, 2017) <http://travellermovement.org.uk/research-into-gtr-experiences-of-youth-justice-2/> HMIP (2016) Children in Custody 2015-16 An analysis of 12-18-year-olds' perceptions of their experiences in secure training centres and young offender institutions (see p7): <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/inspections/children-in-custody-2015-16/>

34 The Traveller Movement, Overlooked and Overrepresented: Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in the youth justice system, 2016

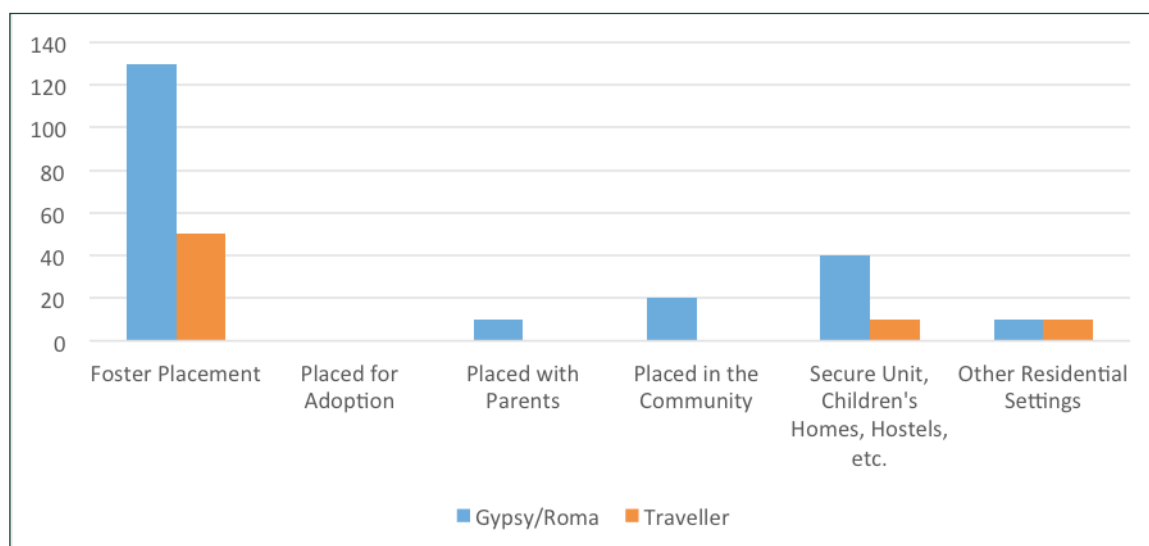
## What happens to GRT children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan?

As we have seen the majority of children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan are in that status for a relatively short period of time. We have also demonstrated that it is likely a number of young people on longer-term plans/looked after may be in secure units/youth detention. Although from available evidence (particularly given that when under five children are included in a particular category the data has been 'suppressed' to avoid the risk of identifying a child or young person) it is not always easy to map precisely how many moves of placement or in and out of care a young person experiences, we are able to identify the following patterns:

- The most common placement for all categories of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller young people is to a foster placement (which may or may not be with approved relatives or family members 'kinship care').
- The second most common form of placement was in a secure unit (which may be a secure children's home or youth offending accommodation).
- Placement in the community or returned to parental care (but still subject to a local authority care plan) were also detailed under 'changes' of Child Protection Plan.

These figures relate only to those children who were still subject to a plan at the date at which the information was recorded (31st March 2016) so refers only to the children still in that status, rather than the children whose plans had ended. It can be assumed – subject to receipt of further evidence – that the pattern of placement change experienced by GRT children and illustrated for the year 2015-16 would be similar to that in other years.

**Figure 7: Changes of placement (2015-16) experienced by GRT children.**



NB: Where less than five children are included in a category the data has been 'suppressed' by the Government statistics department to avoid the risk of identifying a child or small group of children. 'Suppression' has occurred in the following categories 'placement with parents' or 'placement in the community' for Irish Traveller children (indicating that for both of these situations less than five children were within that category).



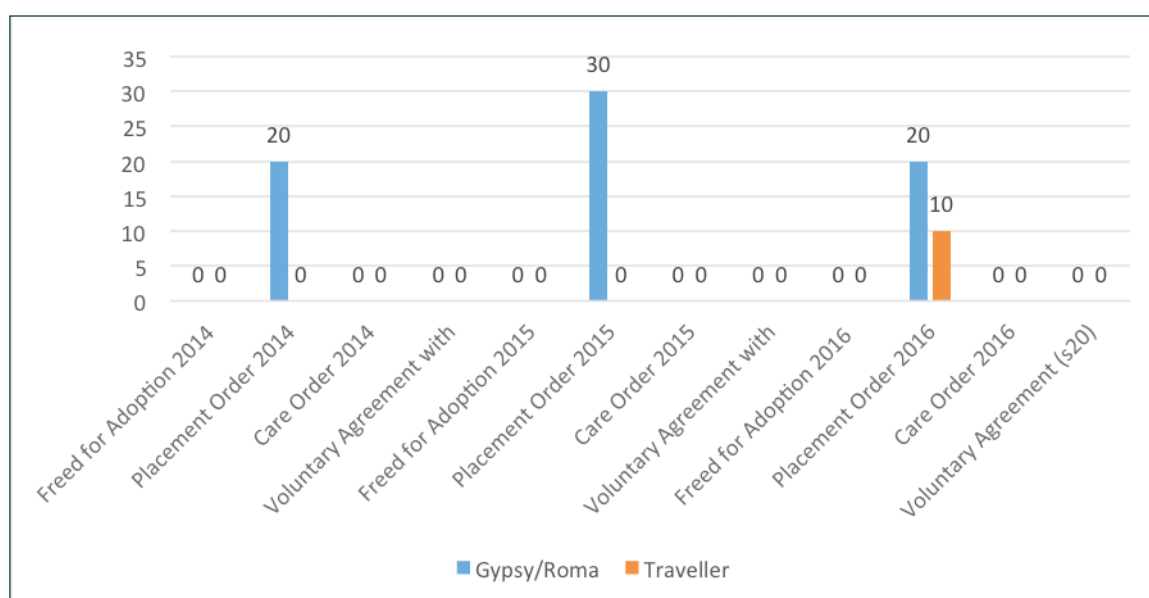


## How many children were adopted from the Traveller and Gypsy/Roma community?

Figure 7 above indicates that no children were adopted during the year 2015-16. Given the levels of anxiety amongst the community and concerns that children are being forcibly adopted at increasing rates we have analysed the data to consider whether and how many adoptions have taken place in each of the years 2014-16; the reasons given for such freeing for adoptions and the time frame during which a child was subject to a Child Protection Plan/care/placement order prior to adoption. Before a child is adopted a legal process of 'placement for adoption' must take place. This is when the courts decide that a child may be adopted, regardless of the wishes of the child's relatives. It does not immediately follow that a child will then become adopted, as they may remain in foster care. Adoption may also potentially take place between family members if a child is placed in foster care with a relative who subsequently applies to adopt them.

As is shown in Figures 8 below, despite considerable concerns that there are increased numbers of such adoptions, the evidence does not demonstrate that this is occurring.

**Figure 8: Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children who were adopted 2014-16 (years ending 31 March)**



NB: where less than five children are included in a category, the data has been suppressed and the precise figure replaced by 'x'. The symbol x occurs in the following cases: for Gypsy/Roma children 'voluntary placement under s20' in years 2014, 2015 and 2016 and for Irish Traveller children under the category of 'placement order' issued in 2014 and 2015.

As can be seen, placement orders were made in total for 20 Gypsy/Roma children in 2014 (< five Irish Traveller children in the same year); 30 Gypsy/Roma children in 2015 and < five Traveller children in 2015. In 2016 10 Traveller children were placed for adoption. Although it is not clear if they are members of the same family or not, it is likely that this would include members of sibling groups, indicating that one or two families would have been impacted. In the same year, 20 Gypsy/Roma children were issued with a placement order. As noted above a very small number of cases (in each case involving less than five children) have had the data 'suppressed' to avoid the risk of identifying individual families.

In total this means an absolute maximum of 10 Traveller children would have been subject to any of the above status categories associated with adoption: in 2014 (< 5 children); in 2015 (< 5 children). No data suppression (other than pertaining to the age range of the child/ren) occurs in relation to Gypsy, Roma or Traveller children in 2016.

Overall therefore, based on the data and FoI requests, the total number of children freed for adoption or subject to a Placement Order in the years 2014-2016 cannot exceed 70 Gypsy/Roma children and 20 Traveller children. **It is likely (based on demographic profiles of the communities) that in at least some cases, children were in sibling groups, indicating that a relatively low number of families were involved in these cases which led ultimately to adoption.**

It is also worth noting that given the average duration of time during which the children had been subject to care (in 2014: 2 years and 4 months for Travellers and 2 years for Gypsy/Roma children; in 2015: 1 year 9 months for Travellers and 2 years, 1 month for Gypsy/Roma and in 2016: 2 years 2 months for Travellers and 2 years and 3 months for Gypsy/Roma children) these children would have featured in sequential data sets and hence been associated with the increased numbers of children subject to care orders which can be seen in Table 1 of this briefing (p5).

Given that there is a marked spike in Traveller children represented in the 'adoption'/placement order statistics in 2016 and that these children can (by analysis of duration of period of care prior to adoption) be demonstrated to have come into the care system in 2013/14, it is possible to identify at least some of the sudden upsurge (but still not disproportionate rate) of Traveller children becoming looked after between 2013-16 as occurring as a result of these 10 children becoming subject to state care.

## Why are children adopted?

The categories under which a child is detailed as becoming freed for adoption were primarily **neglect/abuse** (in total 40 Gypsy/Roma children over the period 2014-16; and between 10 and an absolute maximum of 15 [given data suppression as detailed above] Traveller children).

In addition **'Family under acute stress'** accounted for between 10 and an absolute maximum of 20 children [given data suppression] from Gypsy/Roma households between the years 2014-16. No Traveller families were included in this category.

**'Family Dysfunction'** [figure suppressed as less than 5 children in each ethnic group across all three years but impacting an absolute maximum of 15 Gypsy/Roma ] which may include extreme domestic abuse or witnessing dysfunctional behaviour; for example parental substance misuse or problematic mental health issues. Family dysfunction was cited in each year as affecting both Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children but given the overall numbers of children freed/placed for adoption and cases where the families agreed that a child should be voluntarily accommodated/placed under s20 of the Children Act, this cannot account for more than 10 Traveller children and a maximum of 20 Gypsy/Roma children.

A further small number of children were listed as being in need as a result of experiencing **'absent parenting'** (typically meaning that the child was not resident with a person with parental responsibility, or that the parents could not be found). This impacted an absolute maximum of 10 Gypsy/Roma children across the years 2014-16. The code was recorded (with data suppressed as less than 5 children were included under the category) in both 2015 and 2016. It has been suggested (based upon experienced NGO case worker reports and evidence from social work agencies) that 'absent parenting' may be most likely to occur in relation to Roma children who are resident in the UK but for whom it is difficult to establish the relationship with the adults with whom they live<sup>35</sup>, for example where parents may be resident in the country of origin. On this point, and in relation to the duration of Child Protection Plans which impact Gypsy/Roma children; where a child who is subject to a plan is a non-UK national or potential family carers may exist in the country of origin (specifically in relation to Roma children), enquiries are typically made with the embassy of the child's or their parents' home country to establish whether a placement may potentially be made out of the UK. It may be (although further investigation is required) that some Roma children thus have plans terminated as a result of placement out of their usual place of residence in the UK.

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35 Whilst the NSPCC guidance on working with children from Romania is not unproblematic given the presumptions made about Roma Children being at increased risk of trafficking, the point is made in their briefing that children may not be travelling or living with closely related adults. See further: p3 of NSPCC (undated) guidance booklet "Advice for professionals working with children from Romania in the UK" <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/advice-and-info/advice-professionals-children-romania-uk.pdf>

# Conclusion

Overall there has been a year on year increase in Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children becoming looked after but overall the numbers remain low. This is most noticeable in relation to Gypsy/Roma children (310 children) and it is most probable that the increase relates predominantly to Roma children living in extremely difficult circumstances. The 100 Traveller children who are looked after in 2017 is also a slightly higher figure in the previous year.

Overall however, there is no evidence of 'disproportionality' – at the national level increased rates over and above that which would be expected given the size of the population – in relation to GRT children who are in receipt of a Child Protection Plan or who become looked after. Indeed based on such statistical evidence as exists in relation to the size of the population and average number of children per household (as well as rates of poverty), if GRT children were seen in the child protection datasets at the same rate as other populations in similar circumstances, we might have expected to find a slightly higher number of children recorded as looked after.

Although nationally there is an increase in investigations into concerns over child protection relating to GRT children, only a relatively small proportion (24.18% of Gypsy/Roma children and 21.05% of Traveller children in 2015-16) who are referred for initial enquiries received a Child Protection Plan. Most children who are in receipt of a Plan are in that status for no more than one year with a large percentage no longer in receipt of a Plan after six months. Further research is required to analyse local level variables and practices.

There is evidence to suggest that the over-representation of children and young people in youth detention accommodation may also account for increasing numbers of GRT children subject to a Plan or looked after. The most common reasons for GRT children and young people receiving a Child Protection Plan are neglect (as is common to all communities) and emotional abuse. Based on serious case review evidence it would appear likely that substance misuse and mental health issues are implicated in the most severe cases in which children are placed away from their families for longer periods of time and may be freed for adoption.

There are very small numbers of adoptions of GRT children and it is most likely that where small groups of children are placed for adoption that these are members of a single family. Where children are placed for adoption, on average they have been in the care system for a period of 2 years and 2 months for Traveller children and 2 years and 3 months for Gypsy/Roma children indicating that time has been given for alternative placements with family members to be sought and legal arguments to be heard. Whilst every case where a child has to be adopted away from their family is a tragedy for those involved, and there is a clear need for additional foster parents from GRT communities, there is no evidence to suggest sustained patterns of deliberate or disproportionate use of the care system to target GRT children and families.





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