



The Traveller Movement

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Submission to HMICFRS consultation on proposed policing inspection programme and framework 2019/20

This submission is formally supported by the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association (GRTPA)

30th May 2019

About the Traveller Movement

1. The Traveller Movement (TM) is a leading national charity committed to the fulfilment of Human Rights for ethnic minority Gypsy Roma and Traveller (GRT) people. We work closely with individual police forces, the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association (GRTPA), NPCC, Home Office, EHRC and other bodies to improve policing for the communities across the UK.
2. The information in this submission is based on TMs current policing work, the experiences of officers in the GRTPA and a 2018 national research project led by TM (in partnership with five police forces) into *Understanding and improving relations between Gypsies, Roma, Irish Travellers and the police*.¹ The research involved a national survey of all 45 territorial police forces (conducted by FOI requests), and thirty-one in-depth qualitative interviews with police officers and community members living and working in five police force areas in England. The FOIs specifically looked at how territorial police forces conduct GRT community engagement, while the qualitative study focused on relationships, policing issues building trust.

Summary

3. Across the UK, the relationship between GRT people and the police is too often marked by mutual mistrust, poor communication and conflict limiting the communities' ability to access justice and the police's ability to protect citizens and fight crime. An over emphasis on enforcement and an acute absence of neighbourhood policing lie at the heart of this troubled relationship.

¹ The Traveller Movement, 2018, 'Policing by consent: Understanding and improving relations between Gypsies, Roma, Irish Travellers and the police'

4. Taking into consideration the exceptionally poor outcomes experienced by these communities in the criminal justice system, TM believe HMICFRS should include a specific focus on police force engagement with GRT. This would ideally be included in similar oversight of police force engagement with wider ethnic minority communities and marginalised groups. Below we set out three priority areas/recommendations:

- Include a measure in PEEL assessments to identify how individual police forces are improving relations with GRT communities, specifically looking at shifts from response to prevention led models.
- Carry out a planned thematic inspection of 'Gypsy Roma Traveller policing', focusing on community engagement, enforcement and data collection.
- Require individual police forces (through Force Management Statements and/or PEEL assessments) to summarise GRT ethnic monitoring data, specifically reporting on how data is being collected and measuring performance engaging GRT groups.

Are there any significant new or emerging problems in or for policing which HMICFRS should take into account in its effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy inspections?

5. Many police forces currently emphasis enforcement over engagement, and response over prevention in respect to the GRT communities resulting in ineffective, inefficient and often illegitimate policing. New and more robust evidence to support this has been emerging in recent years, 2 including the Crime Survey for England and Wales which shows that Gypsies and Irish Travellers are nearly half as likely to be confident in their local police. TM believe HMICFRS should take into account the policing of GRT communities in its inspections.

Include a measure in PEEL assessments to identify how individual police forces are improving relations with GRT communities, specifically looking at shifts from response to prevention led models.

6. Our 2018 research into *Understanding and improving relations between GRT and the police* found that forces are poor at prioritising prevention and including GRT in community policing. Only two forces (under 5% of those who responded) described having a targeted strategy for improving relations with the GRT communities, both of which were in Wales. The remainder had either no strategy or a wider strategy that was applicable to, but not targeted at GRT communities. A significant minority (over 16%) of forces associated GRT community engagement strategies with unauthorised encampment policies.

2 Grampian Police and the Home Office, 2003, [Gypsy Travellers a Policing Strategy](#), p. 10

Coxhead, J. (2007) *The last bastion of racism*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, p. 47

Ibid, p.55

EHRC, 2009, [Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Travellers Communities: A review](#), p. 152

Ipsos MORI, 2010, [Confidence in Policing amongst Gypsies and Travellers](#), p. 8

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012, [Minorities as Victims of Crime](#)

Bucks New University, 2015, [Crime and Punishment: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the criminal justice system](#), p.6
Government website, 2017, [Racial Disparities Audit](#)

7. Worryingly TMs research found that where dedicated GRT community engagement roles existed (i.e. Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers) they were more likely to prioritise enforcement over community engagement. Twelve forces with GTLOs (60% of those who responded providing job descriptions and/or role profiles for dedicated GRT roles) made specific reference to dealing with enforcement against unauthorised encampments and other response issues.

8. The research found that the emphasis on reactive rather than preventative policing compounded other outcomes, including GRT people being less likely to report being victims of crime and low levels of trust and confidence between community members and police officers.

Do the proposed thematic inspections of counter-terrorism, older people in the criminal justice system, cyber-crime, child protection and crime data integrity cover areas that are of most concern to you at the moment?

9. We agree with the proposed thematic areas outlined in the consultation document but would also like to see 'Gypsy Roma Traveller policing' included as a priority area for thematic inspection.

10. We believe this is necessary considering nearly three quarters of police officers and the vast majority of community members in our 2018 study identified unconscious bias, racism and discriminatory behaviour towards GRT communities by the police. This included use of racist language, perceptions of the communities as criminogenic, and community members automatically being treated as suspects. The study also found that Gypsy, Roma, Traveller ethnicity was often treated as a risk factor by police, with two thirds of officers and over three quarters of community members identifying cases of over-policing and consistently higher levels of police response.

11. The GRTPA support these findings, stating that policing operations and deployments to matters concerning the GRT community often treat their ethnicity as a risk factor. Practically this results in responses to incidents supposedly associated with GRT ethnicity being more heavily resourced; i.e. they send units when with similar incidents with the exact same information, intelligence and risk they don't send unit. The GRTPA also report that GRT ethnicity is used freely to describe a situation when other ethnicities would not be mentioned; i.e. "Just locked up a Traveller".

Carry out a planned thematic inspection of 'Gypsy Roma Traveller policing', focusing on community engagement, enforcement, bias/discriminatory practice and data collection.

12. Evidence and awareness of police bias and prejudice towards GRT communities has been growing in recent years. A 2007 study by a police officer, John Coxhead, described the police and GRT communities being marred in a negative cycle of mutual distrust.

According to Coxhead, prejudice and a 'them and us' mentality within the police had a significant role to play and he quoted one officer saying, 'prejudice towards Travellers in the police is not only accepted, its expected'.

Coxhead made the case for positive changes but recognised this could only be achieved by 'stopping abnormal practices toward Travellers'.³

13. TM believe HMICFRS has a key role to play in ensuring oversight and accountability in relation to stopping abnormal police practices towards these groups while encouraging and promoting good practice within individual forces.

How else could HMICFRS adapt the way in which it acquires information, to take account of current circumstances and risks to public safety?

14. TM believe HMICFRS should require individual police forces (through Force Management Statements and/or PEEL assessments) to summarise GRT ethnic monitoring data to assess performance engaging these groups.

15. In 2018 the Home Office mandated all police forces to include Gypsies and Irish Travellers as ethnic minority groups in their data collection processes. TM campaigned for this change, arguing that ethnic monitoring of GRT (inline with good practice for other minority groups) would improve accountability, understanding and engagement with GRT people in individual forces.⁴

Require individual police forces (through Force Management Statements and/or PEEL assessments) to summarise GRT ethnic monitoring data, specifically reporting on how data is being collected and measuring performance engaging GRT groups.

16. In 2011 Gypsies and Irish Travellers were first included as ethnic minority groups in the National Census resulting in the ONS conducting a dedicated analysis of data relating to these groups in 2014.⁵ TM believe the HMICFRS should take a similar approach with the introduction of GRT ethnic monitoring in police forces across the country from 2020 onwards.

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

³ Coxhead, J. (2007) The last bastion of racism. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, p. 47

⁴ The Independent, 2016, [Police failure to record dealings with Gypsies 'means discrimination against the groups may be hidden from view'](#)

⁵ ONS, 2014, [2011 Census analysis: What does the 2011 Census tell us about the characteristics of Gypsy or Irish travellers in England and Wales?](#)