



## **The preliminary report:**

'Policing by consent: Understanding and improving relations between Gypsies, Roma, Irish Travellers and the police'

the Traveller  
Movement

June 2018

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# Foreword by Lord Ouseley of Peckham Rye

**Former Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality,  
the current Chair of Kick it Out and Council  
Member of the Institute for Race Relations.**



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities have faced discrimination since the Egyptians Act in 1530 which banned Gypsies from England and allowed the authorities to confiscate their property if they refused to leave. Today, evidence shows that GRT communities remain the most marginalised within society when it comes to their relationship with the authorities, including the police, fraught with difficulty and mistrust on both sides. This research by Traveller Movement provides critical insights into the current relationship between the police and these communities and offers solutions for the way forward.

In 2010 Ipsos Mori found there was a 'culture of fear' amongst Gypsies and Travellers with many feeling that they face police persecution. Then, in 2016, data on public perceptions of the police from the Crime Survey for England and Wales showed that housed Gypsies and Irish Travellers were only half as likely to have confidence in their local police compared to the percentage for all adults.

Based on the lived experiences presented in this report it is not difficult to see why there is a lack of trust. Police officers have reported derogatory and racist language used by colleagues against GRT people being insufficiently dealt with by internal police procedures; an Irish Traveller woman said she was asked by a police officer – *"why are the majority of Gypsies and Travellers criminals?"*

Such a question is typical of the negative, stereotypical assumptions held by many about Britain's GRT communities. Unfortunately, such assumptions have permeated institutional structures and procedures. For example, participants in this research described more police turning up to deal with an incident involving GRT people than would if non-GRT people were involved, demonstrating that ethnicity is sometimes treated as a risk factor. In addition, where there are police roles exclusively dedicated to GRT communities these are more likely to focus on enforcement to the exclusion of engagement, perpetuating the idea that criminality is associated with GRT individuals.

It is not right that some people have a more negative experience of public institutions such as the police simply because they belong to a particular ethnic group – this has to change.

Importantly, Traveller Movement's report also offers hope. The majority of participants in the research talked about better relations between the police and GRT communities in recent years with individuals within the police and the communities now working to improve relations further.

The report offers positive and practical solutions that will enable the relationship between the police and GRT communities to improve and progress. Everyone has the right to justice and a police service they feel they can trust and our police officers deserve to work within an institution that seeks to remove the tensions they may face on the frontline.

# Executive summary



*"I do solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that I will well and truly serve the Queen in the office of constable, with fairness, integrity, diligence and impartiality, upholding fundamental human rights and according equal respect to all people."*

Extract from the policing oath, sworn by every constable upon appointment.



12/17 police and the 13/14 community members identify unconscious bias and/or discriminatory and racist behaviour towards Gypsies Roma and Travellers by the police.

*"That's something you find a lot of, people using words and phrases which are highly offensive to Travellers...You get that from police officers as well, they'll use derogatory comments"*

Male, Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer

*"A good experience is definitely with online hate crime against Gypsies and Travellers, they want Gypsies and Travellers to report it"*

Female, Irish Traveller

*"... All of those [police] procedures, practices, behaviours run along the lines that these are criminal groups. It's our job to deal with criminals, therefore it's our job to deal with these people"*

Male Constable (GRT background)

*"I was talking to a policeman the other day and he said to me, 'why are the majority of Gypsies and Travellers criminals?'"*

Female, Irish Traveller

*"Somebody made a comment very quietly...'dead Gypsy good Gypsy'...I complained to the sergeant and he [said]...'they are not racist, they are just very frustrated'"*

Male, Constable



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POLICE

POLICE

# TM submitted Freedom of Information requests to all 45 territorial police forces across England, Scotland & Wales

## 43 forces replied to the question:

'Does each force have a GRT community engagement strategy?'

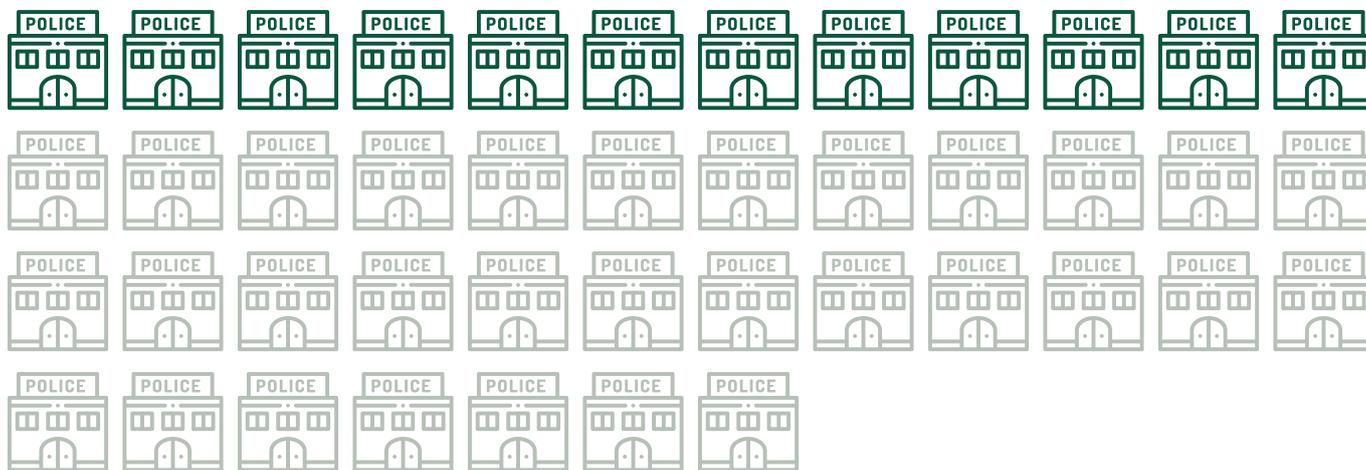
**2/43** have a targeted strategy and/or plan for improving relations with GRT communities

**Gwent Police, Dyfed Powys Police.**



**7/43** associate GRT community engagement strategies with unauthorised encampment policies

**Greater Manchester Police, Hertfordshire Constabulary, Essex Police, Merseyside Police**



**12/43** police forces have wider Community Engagement, Equality and Diversity and/or Hate Crime Strategies

**Surrey Police, West Yorkshire Police, Nottinghamshire Police, Devon and Cornwall Police**



**22/43** provided no strategy

## 45 replied to the question:

'Does each force have a Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer (GTLO) and/or a special point of contact (SPOC) for engaging these communities?'



**23/45** said they have either a GTLO or dedicated SPOC roles



**9/45** have no dedicated GRT engagement role and provided no further data

**13/45** describe wider community liaison work being applicable to, but not targeted at, GRT communities

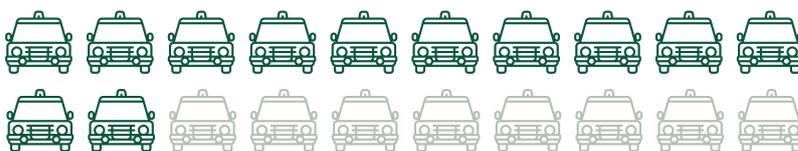
**Cumbria Constabulary, Cleveland Police, Thames Valley Police, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Staffordshire Police**



## The role of GTLOs or SPOCs:



**20** job descriptions and/or role profiles for these roles were received



**12/20** mentioned enforcement against unauthorised encampments and/or place GRT communities alongside thematic issues such as anti-social behaviour, gangs, youth violence etc.



Of these, **9/12** of these are GTLOs, the rest are SPOCs



**8/20** focus instead on building positive relationships with Gypsies and Travellers, **7/8** being SPOCs rather than GTLOs

**Police Scotland, Gwent Police, Dyfed-Powys Police, North Wales Police, South Wales Police, Sussex Police, Merseyside Police, Northumbria Police**

# Summary of recommendations

1. **A root and branch review** of each police force should be conducted by HM's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). This should include an assessment of the extent of institutional bias within individual police forces and take account of the findings from this research that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities experience policing differently from non-GRT communities.
2. Within its remit under the Equality Act 2006, the **Equality and Human Rights Commission should urgently launch an investigation in to whether the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer (GTLO) role is inherently discriminatory** under the Equality Act 2010.
3. There should be collaboration between the police, local licencing authorities and national Pubwatch to ensure that **a non-discriminatory policy is employed in all pubs** to ensure that no groups, including GRT groups, can be refused entry to an establishment based on their ethnicity.
4. **Internal police disciplinary procedures must be equally applied to all racist incidents.** Formal guidance addressing in particular internal racist and discriminatory behaviour towards GRT communities should be re-issued by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC).
5. The Government, the NPCC and **police forces should continue to support increased reporting of GRT hate crime** recognising the wider benefits of this work in terms of building trust and confidence amongst the communities and increasing **awareness amongst officers.**
6. **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.
7. **The negotiated stopping model should be endorsed** by the NPCC and the Local Government Association, and applied nationwide. This would reduce demand on police forces and improve relations between the police and GRT communities. The model involves a local authority authorising an encampment on agreed suitable public land for a limited time period and with certain conditions being set. Negotiated stopping eases local tensions and saves public funds.
8. In 2016, HMICFRS' Police Effectiveness Efficiency Legitimacy (PEEL) assessments noted aspects of good practice in Kent and Thames Valley police forces to improve the relationship between GRT communities and the police through communication and training<sup>1</sup>. **TM recommends that from 2019, PEEL assessments include a standardised measure to systematically assess individual police forces** on their relationships with GRT communities.
9. The police's desire for 'more first-hand interaction with community members as a means of building trust and improving relations' means that a **neighbourhood policing approach** should be developed to better support a positive relationship between officers and GRT individuals and communities.
10. **Police training packages** are important. They should be focused less on 'cultural competency' and more **on change impact assessment**, produced and delivered in liaison with community organisations and members. This would allow police to evaluate the impact of everyday practice on the confidence and trust of GRT communities, as well as providing an opportunity to work together to improve relations and promote institutional change.

<sup>1</sup>HMIC, PEEL <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/peel-2016/thames-valley/legitimacy/> / <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/peel-2016/kent/>

# Introduction

Historically, the relationship between Britain's Romani Gypsy and Traveller populations and the British police has been marred by mistrust and hostility. In recent years however there has been growing recognition of the problems and a growing understanding of the significant negative effects such a relationship has for both the police and Britain's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities. It is widely recognised that police and communities alike would benefit from a more positive relationship, but that there is still some way to go if this is to be achieved.

From January 2017 to January 2018, the Traveller Movement (TM) researched the relationship between the police and GRT. It submitted Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) to all 45 territorial forces in England, Wales and Scotland on the subject of GRT liaison. It also conducted interviews and surveys with 17 police officers and 14 GRT individuals across five police forces areas<sup>2</sup>, all in England, on the relationship between the police and GRT communities.

The findings of this report are not intended to be presented as definitive. The FOI responses received were not exhaustive and provided only a snapshot of available data at the time of request. Furthermore, qualitative findings from interviews do not offer a definitive review of the relationship between the police and GRT communities, or of conduct or practice in any individual force participating in the study.

Instead, the purpose of this report is to provide examples of how different approaches may help or hinder relations between GRT communities and police, based on the opinions of subjective (yet experienced) individuals and a snapshot of what police forces had in place in the way of GRT liaison.

The findings, also supported by TM casework and further anecdotal evidence, indicated the presence of systemic discrimination against GRT communities within police forces. TM found a reported bigger police presence for callouts involving Gypsies or Irish Travellers and pre-emptive number plate collection for Travellers on sites. These approaches seem to be based on stereotypical assumptions; for example, that a callout for a crime allegedly committed by a GRT individual will need more police intervention than one committed by someone not from those communities, or the belief that people from GRT backgrounds, living on sites, are more likely to be involved in criminal activities.

Both police and GRT respondents identified a relationship that has improved but which is still affected by distrust and suspicion – both within the GRT communities and police forces.

Furthermore, the research uncovered a wide range of approaches to how GRT people are policed across the 45 police forces in England, Scotland and Wales. TM believes that this range, coupled with evidence of systemic negative bias, is indicative of a general failure of the police to meet their statutory public sector equality duties; that as an institution they are failing to address on-going prejudice and a lack of understanding within their own ranks.

It is important to stress here that TM also found examples of highly positive policing and relationships across the sample for this study. However overall, the findings of this report suggest a real need for change and an opportunity for the police to critically examine themselves against their statutory public sector equality duty.

This preliminary report will set out the main findings of TM's research using the public sector equality duty as a framework to highlight where change in the police force is needed.

<sup>2</sup>Five police forces formally gave their consent for officers to be involved in the study; these were Thames Valley Police, Cheshire Constabulary, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Sussex Police, and the Met. Two community interviewees were in other adjoining police forces areas but had experience working and living in one of the five forces.

# The public sector equality duty and effective policing

The 'policing oath', required to be sworn by all who wish to hold the office of constable, puts specific emphasis on fairness, impartiality, upholding human rights and according equal respect to all people.

The police's legitimacy as a public body derives from public trust and approval and as such, trust and approval are critical to the public's co-operation and willingness to abide by the law. Trust and approval are shaped by procedural fairness, rational decision-making and respectful treatment from the police. As the primary agents responsible for community cohesion and upholding the law, frontline police have a moral duty to do all they can to secure co-operation before resorting to force. Above this moral duty, the police also have a statutory duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) to ensure that this trust and approval is fostered within all ethnic groups.

Within GRT communities, there is a distinct lack of trust in and approval of the police which undermines police legitimacy; TM believes that adequate steps are not being taken by the police to address this.

Section 149 of the Act imposes a public sector equality duty (PSED) on public authorities. The broad aim of the PSED is to accelerate progress towards equality for all, by placing responsibility on bodies such as the police to consider how it can tackle systemic discrimination and disadvantage which impacts on people with particular protected characteristics.

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

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

Race, which includes ethnic origins, is one of these protected characteristics. Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers are recognised as distinct ethnic groups, and therefore all public authorities, including the police, have a duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to ensure that steps are taken to advance equality for these groups.



# Key findings and the public sector equality duty

This preliminary report 'Policing by consent: Understanding and improving relations between Gypsies, Roma, Travellers and the police' will outline findings from the main report through the lens of each aspect of the PSED, using it as a framework to evaluate police compliance with the law.

## 1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.

### 1a. GRT ethnicity as a risk factor

TM's report found that a majority of police officers and community members who participated in the research described GRT ethnicity being treated as a risk factor by the police, indicating that the police are not only failing to eliminate discrimination but have thereby entrenched a discriminatory approach to policing these communities.

In addition to these findings, TM regularly receives reports from police officers, community members and service providers that the police have at times advised them to deny Gypsies or Travellers access to their establishments (e.g. restaurants, pubs, bars).

Within this research, police respondents reported GRT communities being associated with crime and/or violence and recounted higher police turnouts to calls regarding incidents involving GRT people compared to non-GRT people.



Of those interviewed, 11/17 of police and 12/14 of GRT community members describe GRT ethnicity being treated as a risk factor by the police.

*"The whole emphasis has been one of criminality, of looking at Gypsies and Travellers as some sort of deviant criminal group, and that's been reinforced my whole career"*

Male, Constable

*"If you're living on a Traveller site and you call the emergency services, guaranteed they're going to take longer to get there than what they would to a house because... the police don't want to turn up on their own, they all wait for backup"*

Female, Irish Traveller

*"There was over 100 police, armed police, dogs, there was a helicopter. No one was allowed off site all day long because a young man knocked a window out in the High Street... one night with his girlfriend..."*

Male, Romany Gypsy

*“Right, who’s on that site, go and get some registration plates, find out who’s there. Do some digging to see who it is”*

Male, Inspector on police attitudes on unauthorised encampments

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Police Association (GRTPA) has raised similar concerns that some police operations place specific emphasis on GRT ethnicity as a risk factor. In 2014, the GRTPA made a formal complaint to Operation Liberal, the national police operation set up to tackle distraction burglary, after it released a document entitled ‘Travellers and Traveller events.’<sup>3</sup> Following the complaint, the document was immediately withdrawn by Operation Liberal and an apology issued. However, the fact that it came into existence raises question marks about how well parts of the police understand the issues around GRT ethnic groups.

**Recommendation 1:** A root and branch review of each police force should be conducted by HMICFRS. This should include an assessment of the extent of institutional bias within individual police forces and take account of the findings from this research that GRT communities experience policing differently from non-GRT communities.

**Recommendation 2:** Within its remit under the Equality Act 2006, the EHRC should urgently review whether the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer (GTLO) role is inherently discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010.

**Recommendation 3:** There should be collaboration between the police, local licencing authorities and national Pubwatch to ensure that a non-discriminatory policy is employed in all pubs to ensure that no groups, including GRT groups, can be refused entry to an establishment based on their ethnicity.

## 1b. Overt racism & unconscious bias

TM’s research found evidence of racist language used by some officers against GRT communities, some perceptions within the police of the GRT ethnicity as criminogenic, and discriminatory police practice that automatically treated GRT community members as suspects, *suggesting that discrimination is being perpetuated by aspects of police practice.*

TM believes that through the use of discriminatory language about GRT communities and unconscious bias towards these ethnic groups often going unchallenged, police forces are not only failing to eliminate unlawful discrimination but are actually perpetuating it.



12/17 police and the 13/14 community members identify unconscious bias and/or discriminatory and racist behaviour towards Gypsies Roma and Travellers by the police.



7/14 community respondents recounted experiences of being stopped by police and/or police recording number plates on site.

*“That’s something you find a lot of, people using words and phrases which are highly offensive to Travellers...You get that from police officers as well, they’ll use derogatory comments”*

Male, Constable (Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer)

*"I was talking to a policeman the other day and he said to me, 'why are the majority of Gypsies and Travellers criminals?'"*

Female, Irish Traveller

*"There is a fear ingrained in police culture that Gypsies and Travellers are all inherently violent"*

Male, Sergeant (GRT background)

<sup>3</sup>GRTPA, 2014, Newsletter Breaking Down Barriers, Building Trust, p. 2

*"I've heard some of them go 'oh we need a double-crewed unit, we're going on site' and I said 'No you don't at all, just go and speak to the people on there and you'll be fine'"*

Female, Police Community Support Officer

*"I remember talking to this Mum...and every morning she'd drive over to bring her children to school she was stopped, and asked to produce [her licence] and she said, 'but I just showed it to you yesterday morning', it's because she came from the site"*

Female, Irish Traveller

*"Being pulled over, very bad...my Daddy buys and sells cars, he pays his taxes and everything else, so I often have a different car, but every time I have they put a tag on it...so every time you go past a police car with a camera on it, it comes up a red flag and they pull you over"*

Female, Irish Traveller

### **1c. Institutional discrimination**

Several officers interviewed attributed the association of GRT with crime as an institutional issue rather than an individual one, describing bigotry amongst certain officers as the product of wider police procedures and practices. As examples of such behaviour, respondents cited the policing of wedding and family events, routine collection of number plates from Gypsy Traveller sites, and police recording incidents as "Traveller Related". *Again, this is problematic with respect to the polices' duty to eliminate discrimination under the Act.*

Police respondents described general police procedures as perpetuating discrimination towards GRT communities.

*"... All of those [police] procedures, practices, behaviours run along the lines that these are criminal groups. It's our job to deal with criminals, therefore it's our job to deal with these people"*

Male, Constable

*"Somebody made a comment very quietly... 'Dead Gypsy good Gypsy'... I complained to the sergeant and he [said]... 'they are not racist, they are just very frustrated'"*

Male, Constable

One officer interviewed described a "Catch22" situation where appropriate disciplinary action for anti-GRT racism could not be taken because it was felt that not enough had been done to promote awareness of GRT communities and address racist and discriminatory views within the institution.

To illustrate this, he referred to an incident where an officer who used racially discriminatory language towards Gypsies was disciplined for "misconduct" rather than "gross misconduct" which he would have faced had he used discriminatory language towards any other ethnic group. The lesser charge of misconduct meant that, despite the language used, his job was never at risk. He felt that cases like this perpetuated the idea that racism towards GRT people is treated less severely than racism towards other ethnic groups.

In 2015, TM complained to the Metropolitan Police about online racist posts by serving officers in a Facebook group. Among the posts were: “I fucking hate p\*keys” and “You know when they are lying ... their lips move.” After two unsatisfactory appeals to the Met, TM took its complaint to the Independent Police Complaints Commission which upheld the complaint and “recommended that the Met police hold misconduct meetings...for potentially breaching standards of professional behaviour in relation to authority, respect and courtesy, equality and diversity, and challenging inappropriate behaviour”.<sup>4</sup> TM was disappointed at the lack of decisive and appropriate action at the time of the initial complaint to the Met, which, in its opinion, indicated a general lack of willingness to meaningfully engage with issues around racism towards GRT people.

**Recommendation 4:** Internal police disciplinary procedures must be equally applied to all racist incidents. Formal guidance addressing in particular internal racist and discriminatory behaviour towards GRT communities should be re-issued by the NPCC.

## 2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Under the second strand of the PSED, police are required to have due regard to the need to:

- i. Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by GRT people due to their protected characteristics;
- ii. Take steps to meet the needs of GRT people where these are different from the needs of other people;
- iii. Encourage GRT people to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

### 2a. Investigation of hate crime against Gypsies and Travellers

Officers identify hate crime as the most common issue GRT communities report. Community respondents to TM's research generally expressed growing or high confidence in the police when it comes to their ability and willingness to tackle hate crime towards GRT people. *TM's research suggests that the police are taking steps to meet the needs of GRT people where they disproportionately suffer from discrimination in the form of hate crime (point 2(i) above).*

*“A good experience is definitely with online hate crime against Gypsies and Travellers, they want Gypsies and Travellers to report it...we brought it to their attention that the comments on [the website] weren't very nice and [the policeman] did go and monitor the page and did stop it...we had a conviction on one of the 'spotted' pages [Facebook]...when the encampment comes into town the amount of comments on those pages is just terrible”*

Female, Irish Traveller

This experience is mirrored by a Chief Inspector respondent:

*“The under-representation [of GRT people] as victims of crime is something we are working hard to try and address, particularly hate crime. We know that hate crime is underreported in general and even more so with Gypsy Traveller communities because that confidence in policing isn't there”*

Male, Chief Inspector

<sup>4</sup>Guardian, 2017, Met police chat forum was used to post insults aimed at Gypsies

Another officer described his force, over a twelve-month period, recording over thirty hate crimes where the victims were from the GRT communities; a very high number compared to other police forces. He attributes this to targeted work within the force to engage and involve GRT communities in policing while at the same time promoting greater awareness of the communities amongst officers.

TM's research indicates that a commitment to tackling hate crime amongst police can be hugely positive in increasing levels of trust and understanding within the GRT community. Community-run, government funded projects such as HertsGATE's 'Report Hate' also helps to bridge this gap and build trust within the community.

**Recommendation 5:** The Government, the NPCC and police forces should continue to support increased reporting of GRT hate crime recognising the wider benefits of this work in terms of building trust and confidence amongst the communities and increasing awareness amongst officers.

## 2b. A lack of crime reporting

All police officers described the GRT communities as less likely to report being victims of crime compared to other groups, largely due to lack of trust in the police.

According to point 2(ii) of this aspect of the PSED, the police should be considering methods that will encourage GRT people to report crime, ultimately by building trust and a more positive relationship.



All police officers (17/17) described GRT individuals as less likely to report being victims of crime.



7/14 GRT respondents described themselves as confident reporting crime to the police. A minority of community members are not confident (4/14) reporting crime.

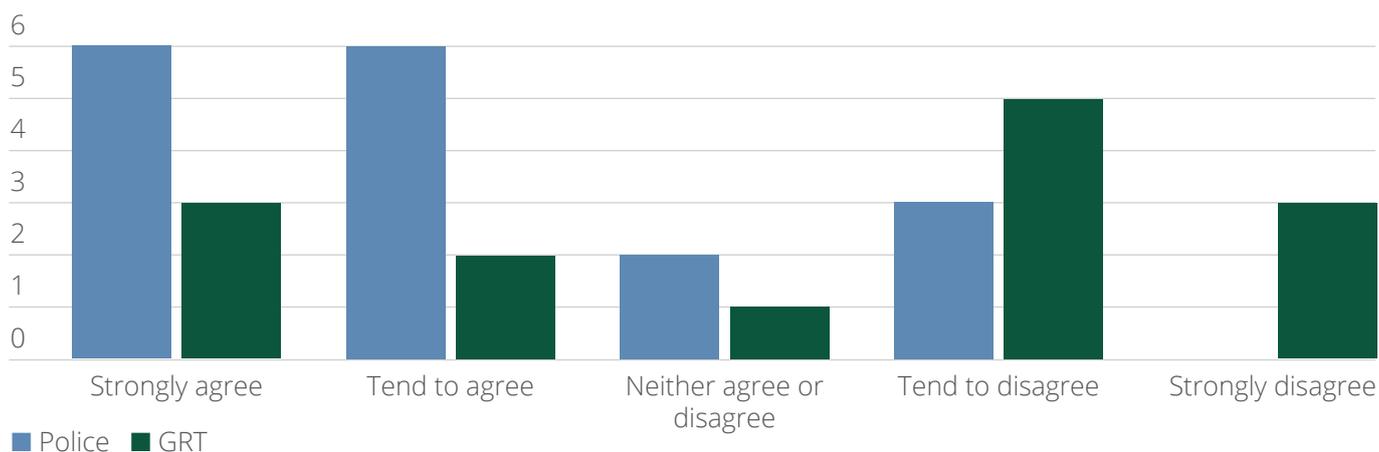
*"When we deal with a group of Travellers it is very unlikely for them to report crime to us, even though by virtue of their lifestyle they're relatively vulnerable to crime... They're a section of the community that we don't see as victims, we don't see them as people who call upon us for assistance unless it's got to a critical point"*

Female, Sergeant

*"A couple of times I've had my car broken into out here...I'd never report it because I don't believe the police will do anything about it..."*

Female, Irish Traveller

## 'The police can be relied on to be there when GRT communities need them'



**Figure 1:** Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police can be relied on to be there when the GRT communities need them'

### 2c. Recruitment

Exact numbers of GRT police officers are not known; not all forces include Gypsy and Irish Travellers in their ethnic monitoring systems yet (and none will include a Roma category). Furthermore, many GRT officers are fearful of revealing their ethnic background within their role. *Where the PSED is concerned, the police either have a duty to create an environment where GRT people feel confident in revealing their ethnicity (point 2(i) above) and/or encourage higher recruitment of GRT people to its forces under point 2(iii), if these groups are under-represented.*

Police and community respondents described recruitment of GRT individuals to the police as key to improving relations.

*"It would help so much if we had an officer from the Travelling community that would be happy to say, 'yes I'm a[n Irish] Traveller'. That would make a huge difference for both the police and the community"*

Male, Constable (GRT background)

Critically though, police forces also need to focus on retention of existing GRT officers, paying attention to the sometimes hostile and/or discriminatory environment in which they may have to work. Respondents also mentioned the important role the GRTPA plays in supporting officers in post and promoting employment prospects for community members in the police.

One constable emphasised his view that there is an anti-GRT bias operating under the surface of the police, in turn creating an overwhelming anti-GRT culture, meaning that the recruitment of GRT people in to the police is not enough:

*"You're either ostracised within it...so you're not part of the group and you're functioning on the outside of the group at a removed level, or you're pushed out altogether, or you actually give up and join the group, and that's the only way you get accepted"*

Male (GRT background), Constable

**Recommendation 6:** Funds and resources should be made available to all minority staff police associations – including the GRTPA – to allow them to better support members and carry out targeted work within individual forces in highlighting the issues affecting minorities.

### 3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The final strand of the PSED imposes a duty on the police to have due regard to the need to take steps to promote good relations between GRT communities and others. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

#### 3a. Relationships between GRT people and the police

TM's research found clear evidence of undoubtedly good, individual working relationships between GRT communities and the police; however on the whole respondents expressed the view that the relationship between the police and communities was 'poor' or 'mixed'.

*"I chair the Independent Advisory Group meetings, so they've been willing to listen and try different methods...We've had loads and loads of occasions to say the police are b\*\*\*\*s, but the fact of it is there are some good people amongst them who want to see change"*

Male, Romany Gypsy

*"The relationship with the police where I am at the moment would be an eight out of ten...because the police know that this here is negotiated stopping...if this wasn't negotiated stopping the police would be in day and night, day and night"*

Male, Romany Gypsy

*"We decided to place ourselves as a police boxing club in the heart of the community...I do think because of the way they [the Irish Traveller boys] respond to me, which is very well, it may affect how they view officers when they deal with them in a professional capacity"*

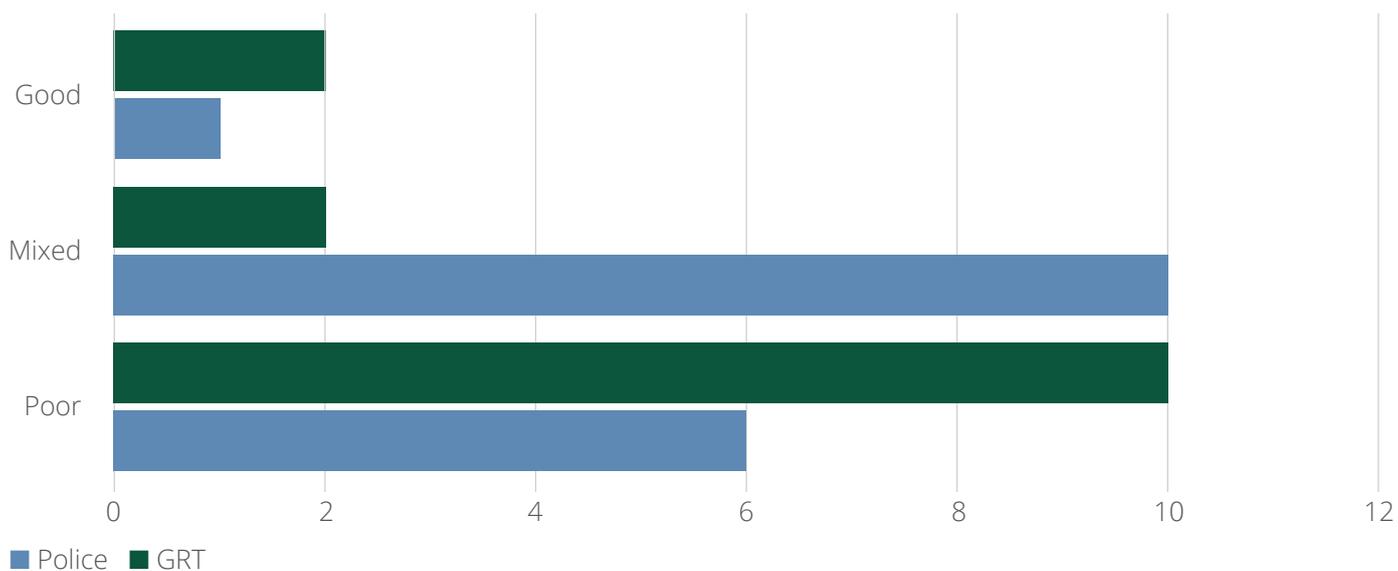
Male, Constable

*"I think the relationships we have developed have helped us understand some issues in greater detail, for example on a couple of occasions we have sought to arrest someone from a Traveller background and actually through contacts, including the GTLOs, we have been able to arrange the arrest without recourse to having to send a van load of officers onto a site"*

Male, Chief Inspector



## Current relations between police and GRT communities

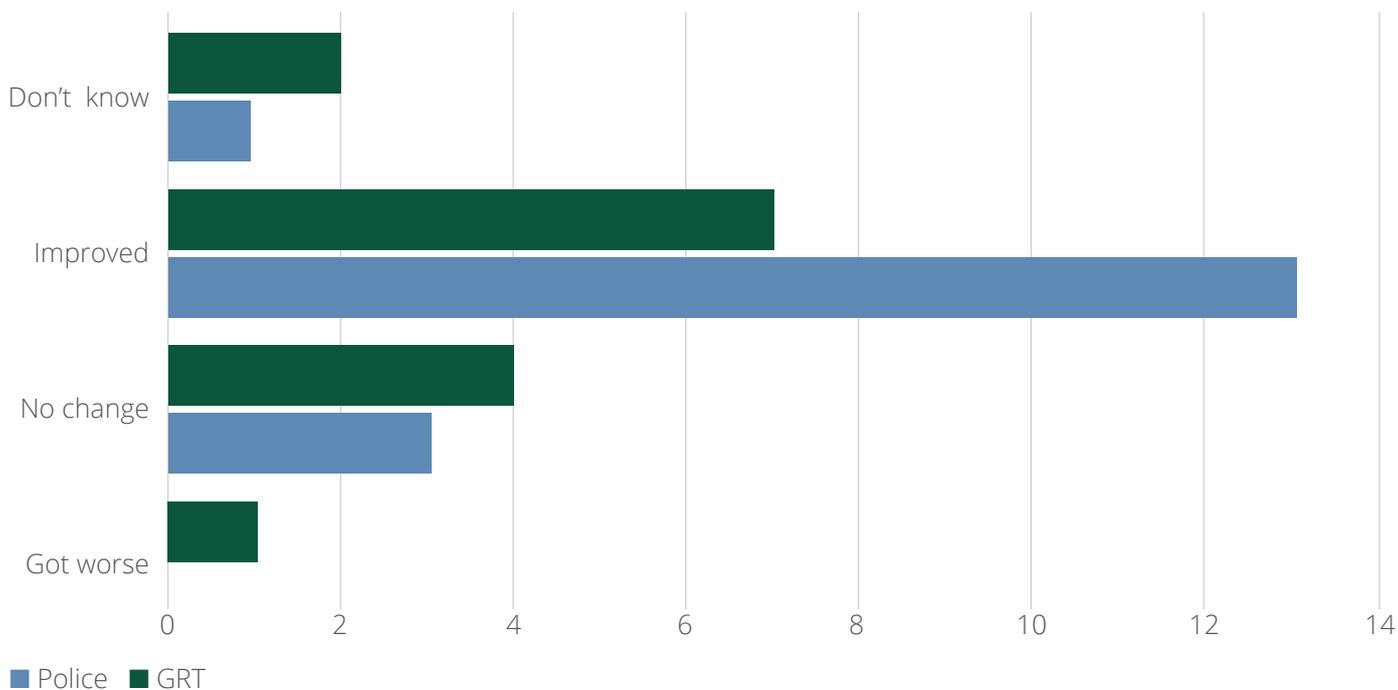


**Figure 2:** Current relations between police and GRT communities

Both community members and officers echoed a strong consensus that relations are improving but it is still early days and they should not be taken for granted.

One sergeant expressed doubt that police forces will continue to prioritise work in this area, while a roadside Romany Gypsy attributed much of the improvements to GRT community empowerment and activism.

## Changes in police and GRT community relations in recent years



**Figure 3:** Changes in police and GRT community relations in recent years

**Recommendation 7:** The negotiated stopping model should be endorsed by the National Police Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association, and applied nationwide. This would reduce demand on police forces and improve relations between the police and GRT communities. The model involves a local authority authorising an encampment on agreed suitable public land for a limited time period and with certain conditions being set. Local authorities should consider this model as a way of easing tensions and saving public funds as it has proved successful in areas where it has been adopted.

**Recommendation 8:** In 2016, HMICFRS' Police Effectiveness Efficiency Legitimacy (PEEL) assessments noted aspects of good practice in Kent and Thames Valley police forces to improve the relationship between GRT communities and the police through communication and training<sup>5</sup>. TM recommends that from 2019, PEEL assessments include a standardised measure to systematically assess individual police forces on their relationships with GRT communities.

### 3b. The possible reinforcement of negative stereotypes through the role of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers (GTLOs)

23/45 territorial police forces which responded to TM's FOI requests said they have either GTLO roles or dedicated Specific Points of Contact (SPOC) which are responsible for communication with GRT communities. These roles are met with mixed reactions. *In regards to the PSED, TM would argue that GTLO roles, which typically focus on enforcement, reinforce negative stereotypes by inextricably linking Gypsies/Irish Travellers with criminality and almost suggesting Gypsies/Irish Travellers need 'extra' policing.*

One liaison officer described the GTLO role as a worthwhile post as it ensures one or a couple of regular police contacts for the GRT communities to liaise with "that they know and feel comfortable speaking to".

However, other respondents expressed concern that GTLO posts and dedicated teams further marginalise and isolate GRT individuals and communities by segregating them from mainstream police practice and labelling them a "difficult group". They also highlighted the fact that other ethnic minority groups don't have dedicated teams and this automatically sets GRT communities apart.

*"Essentially what you've got is an ethnic unit; think about that from a black point of view, think about if the police said 'most of our officers don't like dealing with black people; let's find out who's okay with it and we'll put them in a unit and then they can deal with all the black people and the rest of us won't have to'"*

Male, Constable

Of particular concern to TM was the tendency of GTLO roles to link ethnicity to criminality. For example, of the 20 job descriptions provided for either GTLO or SPOC roles, 12 made specific reference to dealing with unauthorised encampments and/or placed GRT communities alongside thematic issues such as anti-social behaviour, gangs, youth violence etc.



Of the 12 job descriptions that do this, 9 of them were GTLOs (i.e. – Gypsy/Traveller specific).

<sup>5</sup>HMIC, PEEL <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/peel-2016/thames-valley/legitimacy/> / <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/peel-2016/kent/>



Of the 8 job descriptions that did not, 7 of them were SPOCs (i.e. – not Gypsy/Traveller specific).

The following extract from the Kent Police's GTLO job description illustrates this point (despite Kent being identified in their 2016 PEEL assessment as demonstrating good practice in regards to GRT communities):

*"To act as the single point of contact within the Gypsy Liaison Team ensuring effective liaison with Serious Crime Directorate (SCD) for the policing of organised criminal gangs...collating data, keeping packages up to date and building intelligence profiles on individuals until dissemination as required, in order to support the SCD in building central records on gang criminality....."*

Kent police

7 of the 45 police forces which responded to the FOI regarding GRT liaison strategies directed TM to their unauthorised encampment policies in the absence of a liaison strategy, such as this response from Essex police:

*"We do not have an engagement strategy. We do have guidelines in relation to unauthorised encampments and how the police respond to them."*

Essex police

### 3c. Influence of the wider public

Within TM's research, police respondents described efforts to remain impartial in the face of pressure from the wider public on dealing with unauthorised encampments. TM's view is that giving in to pressure from the public on unauthorised encampments is neither promoting good relations between GRT and non-GRT communities, nor promoting understanding.



15/17 police respondents believe the views and attitudes of the wider public influence how GRT communities are policed, particularly when it comes to dealing with unauthorised encampments.



12/14 GRT respondents feel that society's stereotypes and prejudices against their communities influence police practice.

*"As soon as you get an unauthorised encampment, there's pressure from the local community, there's then pressure from the local councils, there's pressure from local government and I think that in some ways drives...how can I put it, if it was another issue we wouldn't necessarily go in hand and fist straightaway, like a bull in a china shop to be honest. So, I think there's a lot of political pressure because people in politics want to get elected and they see Gypsies and Travellers as an easy target"*

Male, Constable, Gypsy, Traveller Liaison Officer

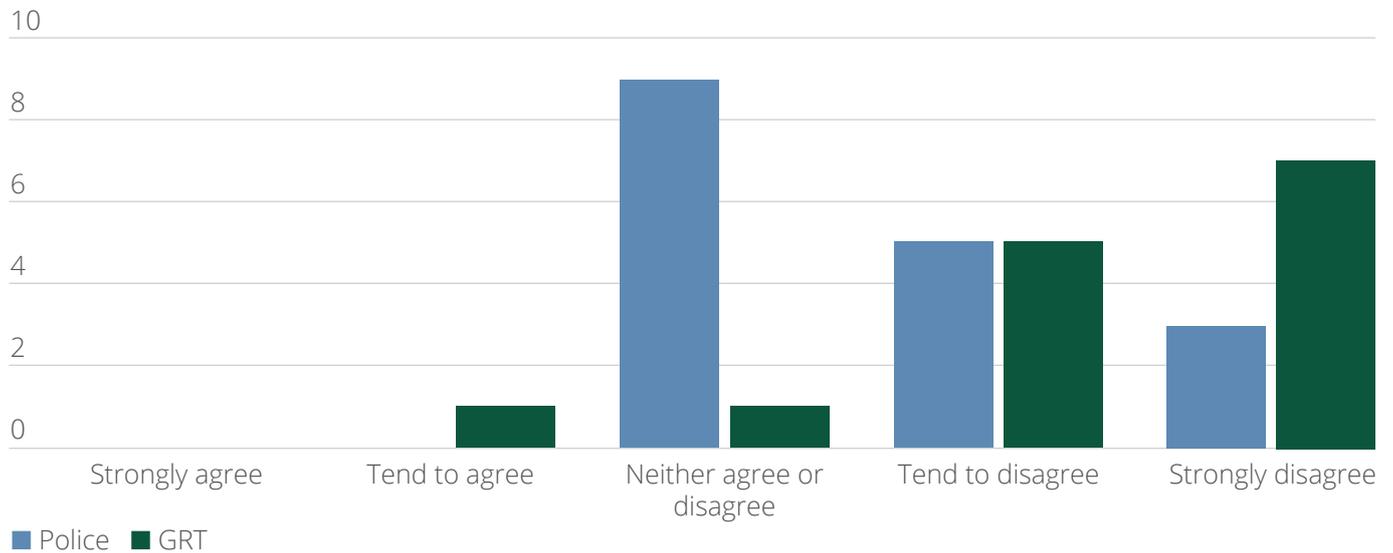
*"We have to be careful not to be bullied, to remain impartial...I've been in situations where they've been trying to move a group of Travellers from a site, encouraging us, putting us under pressure to use section 61 to remove them, and I'm like absolutely not, absolutely not, they are more than reasonable, they're doing nothing wrong, there's no evidence of fly tipping, there's no evidence of anti-social behaviour"*

Female, Sergeant

### 3d. Training

Both community and police respondents overwhelmingly believed that *the police do not understand the issues that affect GRT communities.*

‘The police understand the issues that affect the communities’



**Figure 4:** Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement ‘The police understand the issues that affect the GRT communities’

Police respondents had very mixed opinions on training, particularly culturally-specific training, and whether it addressed the treatment given to GRT communities by the police.

On culturally-specific training, one officer stated:

*“Here’s some training, sit in a room with a trainer, they’re going to tell you Gypsies and Travellers are an ethnic group and you’ve got to treat them fairly and you mustn’t look at them all as criminals, bang back on shift...we want you to go out on to this unauthorised encampment and collect all the registration numbers...that’s just completely rubbished the training”*

Male, Constable



Another officer also expressed scepticism on the value of culturally-specific training:

*“Quite a few times I was asked to deliver training myself to new recruits on GRT, but...I was indirectly forced into delivering what they [the police force] wanted to hear, and that’s very often the case where they tell you to talk about the cultural aspects...and examples like John Coxhead’s book about the traditions and the culture which are no longer the case”*

Male (GRT background), Constable

Despite these misgivings, some officers found aspects of their GRT training useful.

However, most officers favoured interaction with the GRT communities over formal training which did not involve GRT input, revealing an appetite amongst officers to properly engage with GRT individuals on the ground.

This intention marries well with the overwhelming majority of community members who expressed a preference for what they describe as ‘normal, everyday treatment’ over ‘special treatment’ from the police.

This type of interaction could prove more useful than delivering culturally-specific training, which can perpetuate commonly-held general beliefs about GRT communities without focusing on GRT people as individuals.

In addition to this informal interaction, police forces should work with community organisations and members to develop measurable aims relating to treatment of and relationships with GRT communities, with methodical and timely evaluation of progress towards these aims. This is where formal impact and change assessment should be introduced. There needs to be assessment of the impact of police practice on relationships with GRT communities, and change needs to be implemented through SMART objectives; should be introduced; using data from the new ethnic monitoring of Gypsies and Irish Travellers mandated by the home office in 2017<sup>6</sup>, police forces should work to ensure an inclusive service is provided to GRT communities.

**Recommendation 9:** The police’s desire for ‘more first-hand interaction with community members as a means of building trust and improving relations’ means that a neighbourhood policing approach should be developed to better support a positive relationship between officers and GRT individuals and communities.

**Recommendation 10:** Police training packages are important. They should be focused less on ‘cultural competency’ and more on change impact assessment, produced and delivered in liaison with community organisations and members. This would allow police to evaluate the impact of everyday practice on the confidence and trust of GRT communities, as well as providing an opportunity to work together to improve relations and promote institutional change.

<sup>6</sup>The Traveller Movement, 2017, <http://travellermovement.org.uk/ethnic-monitoring-police-successful-campaign-inclusion/>

# Conclusion

TM's 'Policing by consent: Understanding and improving relations between Gypsies, Roma, Irish Travellers and the police' report has outlined:

- The potentially discriminatory nature of GRT-enforcement roles (Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers)
- Anecdotal evidence of heightened police responses for callouts to incidents involving GRT people compared to callouts for incidents involving non-GRT people
- Accounts of the failure of internal police disciplinary procedures to address anti-GRT racism within the service.

On top of these findings, TM has separately been told of police forces advising service providers such as restaurateurs or pub staff to refuse entry to GRT people, which are deeply concerning and which require further investigation.

In spite of these findings, TM's research found many individuals with a clear wish to affect positive change, both within the GRT communities and among police officers. The fact that the police forces featured in the research allowed cooperation suggests in itself a willingness to move forward and address issues that have blighted the relationship between GRT people and the police in the past.

Third sector organisations such as TM have a critical role to play moving forward and are committed to developing the positives from this research through relationship building, advocacy and training.

As one sergeant interviewee noted, her "job could be made easier" by an improvement in the relationship between the police and the GRT communities. Specifically, more positive relations and higher levels of trust with GRT communities would ensure that police officers are better placed to do their job. A more positive relationship with the police would increase access to justice for GRT communities, giving GRT people an effective police service and the support they need which most other parts of society simply take for granted.





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