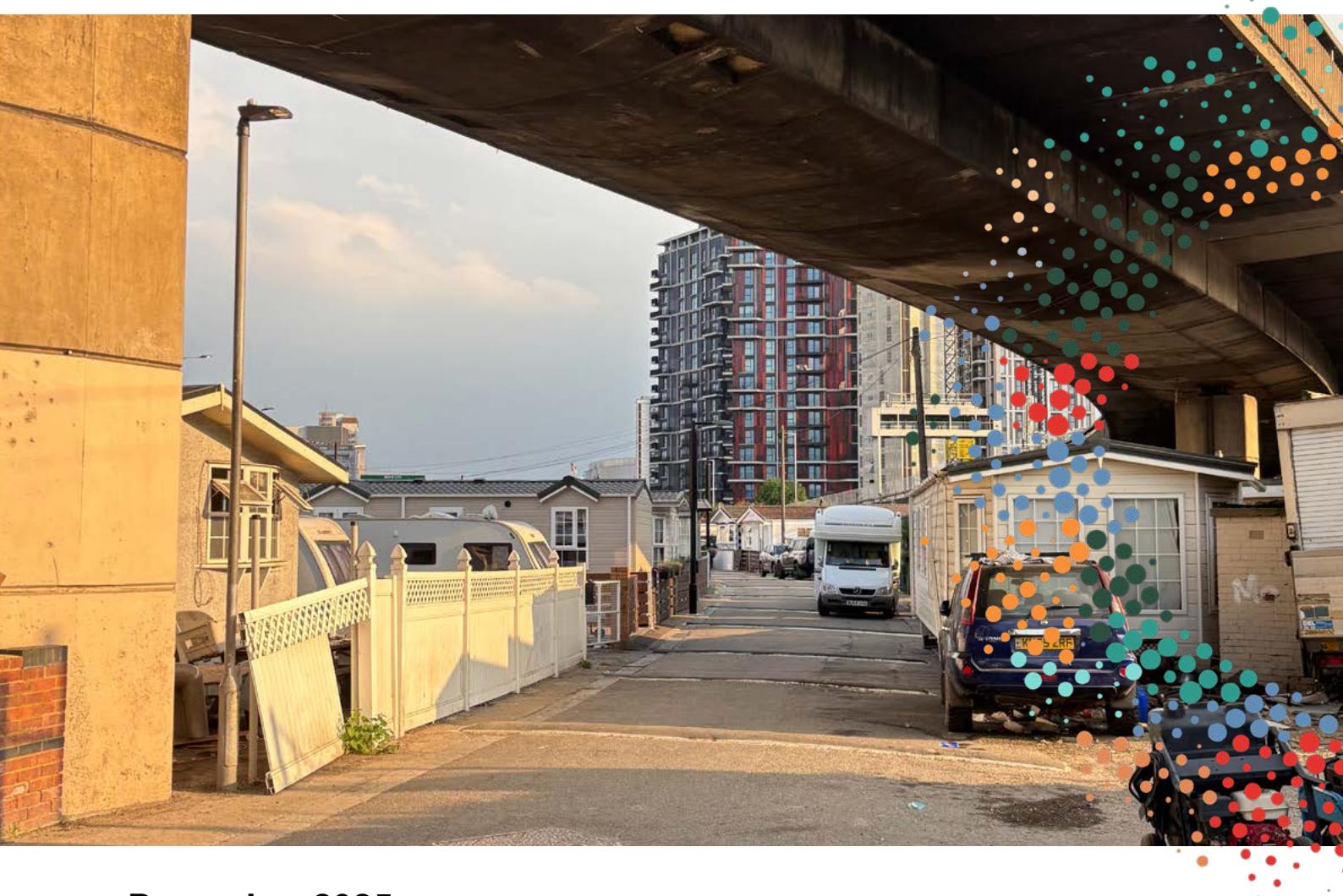




# Towards Inclusion

A Survey Documenting the Lived Experience of Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller Communities in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)



**December 2025**

## About the Traveller Movement

The Traveller Movement is a registered UK charity promoting inclusion and community engagement with to Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers. The Traveller Movement seeks to empower and support Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities to advocate for the full implementation of their human rights.

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# Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the generosity, trust, and courage of the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Our sincere gratitude goes to the families and individuals who shared their experiences, both those living on the Stable Way site and those in bricks-and-mortar accommodation. Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey and for speaking so openly in the workshops.

Your willingness to have your voices heard is the foundation of this work. This report is, first and foremost, a testament to your lived realities and your clear vision for a more equitable future.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Westway Trust for its commitment to this vital work and for providing the funding that made this evaluation possible. We are especially grateful to Joanna Atogdina at the Westway Trust, whose steadfast support was instrumental to the project's success. By providing space for the community workshops and actively encouraging families to participate, she helped ensure that this process was truly accessible and community centred.

It is our hope that this report does justice to the powerful testimonies shared and serves as a springboard for the meaningful change that the community so clearly deserves.



# Foreword



I was first contacted by The Traveller Movement soon after the July 2024 election. The charity was working with a group of my constituents from the Irish Traveller community who had been fighting for the local authority to grant them official recognition as a Qualifying Resident Association (QRA).

Recognition as a QRA was more than just symbolic. It would give the community the legal standing to be consulted on any changes made to their site. It meant that they could request health and safety and fire risk assessments of their homes, and to demand improvements to the condition of their environment.

I was more than happy to support their case, and on a day in November 2024 I joined the Traveller Movement to meet with the Resident Association and discuss how we could work together. The community lives in a corner of my constituency, familiar to locals, but hidden from the rest of London. They have lived here for many decades, on a tight site squeezed between a railway and a flyover. They face undeniable challenges, including poor quality housing, polluted air, and discrimination accessing education and health services. Walking around the site, representatives from the Resident Association also showed me what they wanted to change; setting up new pitches to reduce overcrowding, and cleaning abandoned, polluted land to improve the site's environment and give themselves more room to expand. The community had a clear plan for improving their lives, but up until now, no one in power had listened to them.

This report from the Traveller Movement sets out the community's demands, as well as the challenges they face. They have provided a clear and practical set of recommendations and laid out a vision that includes a dedicated support officer, co-produced health services, and an inclusive education system. It is now our responsibility to respond with the seriousness and urgency this deserves.

My commitment is to ensure these findings are not shelved but become a catalyst for meaningful dialogue and change. The local authority must use these recommendations to critically assess their policies, inform their strategic investments, and build a robust, collaborative plan with the community. There is plenty that central government can learn from this report as well.

My thanks to The Traveller Movement, the Westway Trust, and every resident who shared their story. Your courage in speaking out has provided us with an indispensable blueprint for change. We must now match that courage with our own commitment to listen, learn, and act.

**Joe Powell**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Powell".

**Labour MP for Kensington and Bayswater**

# 1 Introduction to the Report

**This report, *Towards Inclusion*, presents the findings and community-led recommendations from a comprehensive study into the lived experiences of Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller families in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC). The research was commissioned and funded by the Westway Trust, reflecting its commitment to supporting the communities situated in the shadow of the Westway and across the borough.**

The primary aim of this work was to move beyond statistical data and centre the direct voices, experiences, and expertise of the community itself. Through a detailed survey and subsequent feedback workshops held at the Stable Way site, this report captures a powerful and evidence-based account of the challenges, aspirations, and resilience of Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller residents.

The evidence gathered reveals profound and systemic inequalities affecting these communities across all areas of life. Key challenges identified include an acute shortage of culturally appropriate accommodation, with a clear need for at least 31 additional pitches in the coming decade. It highlights entrenched economic disadvantage, exacerbated by near-universal educational exclusion and significant barriers to employment. Furthermore, the report documents severe health inequalities, worsened by experiences of discrimination within services and a lack of cultural competence or humility from providers. Compounding these issues is a critical gap in accessible youth provision and meaningful opportunities for community participation in local decision-making.

However, this is not just a catalogue of challenges; it is also a roadmap for solutions. The community has articulated clear, practical, and achievable recommendations for change. These solutions call for a fundamental shift in how services are designed and delivered, from the urgent expansion of pitch provision and the appointment of a dedicated Traveller Advocacy Officer, to the co-design of health services and the embedding of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history in local schools.

This report serves as a critical tool for RBKC, the Westway Trust, and all local stakeholders. It provides the robust, community-validated evidence needed to inform inclusive policy and strategic investment. By acting on these findings, stakeholders can begin to dismantle the structural barriers faced by these communities and work collaboratively to build a more equitable and inclusive borough for all.

# 2 Findings

## ● ***High Poverty Levels Across Households***

85.7% of respondents reported annual household incomes below £20,000, pointing to systemic economic deprivation. This entrenched poverty severely limits access to housing, healthcare, education, and employment.

## ● ***Near-Universal Educational Disadvantage***

93% of respondents reported having no formal qualifications, highlighting the long-term educational exclusion of Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. This severely impacts employment prospects and engagement with public services.

## ● ***Future Need for 31 Additional Pitches***

79% of families reported needing additional pitch provision within the next 10 years, with a total estimated need of at least 31 pitches. This underscores the urgency of strategic planning and investment in culturally appropriate housing.

## ● ***Bricks-and-Mortar Residents Feel Underserved***

Three out of four bricks-and-mortar residents said their current accommodation does not meet their needs, citing accessibility, overcrowding, and disconnection from community as key issues.

## ● ***Deep Health Inequalities Persist***

71% of respondents rated their physical and mental health as “poor” or “very poor.” This reflects the cumulative impact of poor housing, service barriers, and chronic stress on community wellbeing.

## ● ***Mental Health Challenges are Widespread***

Depression, anxiety, trauma, and caregiving burnout were identified as the most common mental health challenges.

## ● ***Experience of Discrimination in Healthcare***

42.9% of respondents experienced discrimination when accessing healthcare. Incidents ranged from being dismissed or judged to being denied services outright. This was particularly profound among bricks-and-mortar residents.

## ● ***Poor Cultural Competence in Services***

Only 21% said healthcare providers always respected their cultural needs. Many cited condescending attitudes and a lack of awareness about Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller life, leading to disengagement from essential services.

- ***Youth are Marginalised in Local Provision***

Few structured youth programs were identified, and most were located exclusively on Stable Way. This leaves many young people, especially those in bricks-and-mortar, disconnected from safe and enriching activities.

- ***Schools Often Fail to Support Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller Students***

Most respondents said local schools “rarely” or only “sometimes” offered inclusive environments. Experiences of bullying, exclusion, and low expectations have lasting impacts on engagement and achievement.

- ***Barriers to Adult Learning Remain High***

Only one respondent reported access to “mostly sufficient” adult education opportunities. Barriers included low confidence, lack of digital access, limited information, and absence of childcare or local classes.

- ***Workforce Participation is Severely Limited***

86% were not in employment and not seeking work. This suggests deep disengagement from the labour market, often rooted in poor health, lack of qualifications, caregiving duties, and structural exclusion.

- ***Discrimination in Employment is Common***

57% said bias and discrimination impacted job opportunities. Challenges included being stereotyped, under-supported by employment services, or overlooked by employers.

- ***Community Involvement in Decision-Making is Minimal***

Most respondents felt young people and adults are not meaningfully involved in shaping local development. There is a strong appetite for more participatory platforms led by and for the community.

# 3 Recommendations

## ● ***Expand Culturally Appropriate Pitch Provision***

Urgently plan and deliver new pitches to meet the projected need for additional plots. Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller families face overcrowding and future housing insecurity without sufficient provision. Culturally sensitive planning must underpin site development. The Stable Way site should be protected and expanded.

## ● ***Appoint a Dedicated Traveller Support/Welfare Officer***

A community-based support role should be created within RBKC to build trust and improve service access. This officer must have lived or in-depth cultural knowledge of the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller community. They should coordinate across housing, health, education, and employment. Visibility and continuity are essential to meaningful impact.

## ● ***Co-Design Health Services with the Community***

Health and mental health services must be co-produced in collaboration with the communities. A Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller Health Needs Assessment should be delivered in the Borough. Focus on building culturally competent, trauma-informed care models. Services should address stigma, improve accessibility, and involve dedicated outreach. Trust-building through continuity of care is critical.

## ● ***Embed Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History and Inclusion in Education***

Schools should integrate Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller culture, history, and contributions into the curriculum. Training for staff on anti-bullying and cultural awareness must be standardised. Tailored educational outreach and support could improve engagement and reduce drop-out. Cultural celebration can strengthen school-community relations. A simple starting point would be ensuring schools, colleges and universities in the Borough are signed up to the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boaters (GTRSB) Pledge.<sup>1</sup>

## ● ***Deliver Flexible, Community-Based Adult Education***

Adult learning should be brought into the community through trusted venues and formats. Courses should include basic literacy, digital skills, and trade qualifications. Offerings must consider childcare, flexible hours, and confidence-building support. Outreach is vital to re-engage those furthest from education.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK GTRSB Pledge is a commitment from educational institutions to support Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman, and Boater students in accessing and succeeding in higher education. The pledge aims to create equitable spaces, tackle stigmas, and remove barriers to education for these communities. It is developed through consultation with community members, civil society organizations, university representatives, and education policy specialists. The pledge includes a range of measures such as improving data collection, empowering students to self-identify, and ensuring an inclusive workplace environment.

- ***Develop Inclusive Youth Provision Borough-Wide***

Establish targeted youth provision in the Borough including youth clubs, mentoring, and recreational programs that reach beyond Stable Way. Programs must be co-designed with young people and reflect Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller values and lived experience. Focus on safety, creativity, and pathways to education or work. Investment should prioritise bricks-and-mortar inclusion.

- ***Provide Accessible Employment Pathways and Mentorship***

Tailored employment support, including mentoring, job fairs, and apprenticeships, should be prioritised. Build partnerships with inclusive employers and remove practical barriers such as transport and digital exclusion. Celebrate Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller entrepreneurship and trade skills. Guidance must be culturally relevant and sustained.

- ***Train Frontline Staff in Cultural Competency***

Mandatory anti-discrimination and cultural awareness (also known as cultural humility) training should be provided across housing, education, health, and social services. Training must be developed with Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller input and lived experience. Consistent, respectful engagement improves service uptake and outcomes. Accountability mechanisms should follow.

- ***Establish a Community-Led Borough Forum***

In addition to supporting and funding the existing 'Stable Way Residents Association,' create a borough-wide forum for Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. This forum should include representatives from both sites and bricks-and-mortar housing. It can advise on housing policy, health priorities, and youth inclusion, enabling direct, democratic engagement.

- ***Fund and Promote Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish and Scottish Traveller Community Events and Education***

Support annual events for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month (GRTHM) and promote positive visibility through arts, culture, and education. Local campaigns and partnerships can challenge stigma and foster pride. These events are powerful tools for inclusion and change.

# 4 Setting the Context

## Purpose and Scope

This report presents findings and analysis from a community survey conducted in March- April 2025, exploring the lived experiences of Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller residents in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC). Whilst the majority of participants were Irish Traveller people living on Stable Way, it also included Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller families living in bricks and mortar accommodation. The survey focused on key domains, namely accommodation, education, health, workforce development, and youth and community development. The aim was to gather robust evidence to inform inclusive policy and programme design, particularly as an example of good practice should RBKC develop a Gypsy and Traveller strategy.

Following the survey, feedback workshops were held at Stable Way in June 2025, to test whether the report's findings resonated with local experience. Community members strongly endorsed the findings, validating the research and its conclusions; and ensuring a co-produced piece was produced.

## National Context

These findings should be understood within the broader context of entrenched structural inequalities experienced by Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller communities across the UK.

At the national level, the Equality and Human Rights Commission's report,<sup>2</sup> identified these communities as facing the worst outcomes of any ethnic groups in areas such as health, education, justice and employment. This was echoed by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee,<sup>3</sup> which found persistent institutional failure to address these disparities, noting that *“...while many inequalities have existed for a long time, there has been a persistent failure by both national and local policymakers to tackle them in any sustained way. This failure has led to services that are ill-equipped to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people to use services that they need and are entitled to.”*

In addition to policy neglect, Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish and Scottish Traveller communities continue to face widespread discrimination, often reinforced by media misrepresentation. A poll commissioned by the Traveller Movement,<sup>4</sup> revealed that two-thirds of the British public did not recognise Romani (Gypsy), Roma or Irish Traveller people as distinct ethnic groups, highlighting pervasive cultural ignorance and prejudice.

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<sup>2</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission [EHRC], [Healing a Divided Britain: the need for a comprehensive race equality strategy](#), (2020).

<sup>3</sup> Womens and Equalities Committee, [Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities - Report Summary](#), (2019).

<sup>4</sup> YouGov, [Traveller Movement Results](#), (2017).

## Regional Inequalities in London

At a London regional level, several reports and policy reviews have highlighted critical failings in the recognition and support of Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish and Scottish Traveller communities. The communities face multi-dimensional and intersecting inequalities. These challenges undermine individual and collective development, as outlined below:

**Accommodation:** Both the Greater London Authority<sup>5</sup> and London Gypsies and Travellers<sup>6</sup> have highlighted serious shortcomings in how London boroughs are responding to Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller accommodation needs. Despite clear obligations under Policy H14 of the current London Plan 2021, which require boroughs to assess and plan for these communities, many have failed to take meaningful action. Whilst a revised London Plan is currently under consultation (as of the time of writing), offering a potential opportunity for progress, the consistent neglect of policies relating to Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller accommodation reflects a broader and consistent pattern of systemic dismissal within London boroughs' planning and housing policy frameworks.

London Gypsies and Travellers and other sector specific organisations have repeatedly raised concerns since 2022 about the forthcoming London Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Need Assessments' (GTANA)<sup>7</sup> flawed methodology, particularly undercounting the number of pitches needed and failing to capture cultural preferences and overcrowding realities in Roma communities. Despite these concerns, several boroughs such as Brent and Southwark adopted Local plans with no provision for new pitches, despite clear evidence of need.<sup>8</sup>

**Health:** Greater London Authority evidence<sup>9</sup> shows that these communities experience among the worst health outcomes in the city, with disproportionately low access to services. Initiatives such as the 'Right to Thrive' grant have attempted to address this by funding mental health outreach in boroughs like Hounslow.

**Education:** "Gypsy/Roma" and Irish Traveller pupils in London experience high levels of school exclusion, bullying, and academic underperformance, often due to racism and a lack of culturally inclusive teaching.<sup>10</sup> Research reveals the stark reality of exclusion faced by "Gypsy/Roma" and Irish Traveller pupils in London. The data shows extreme disparities at a local level: in Sutton, an Irish Traveller pupil was 42 times more likely to be excluded than their peers. Similarly, in Merton, "Gypsy/Roma" pupils were 24 times more likely to be excluded from secondary school and 39 times more likely to be excluded from primary school.<sup>11</sup>

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5 Greater London Authority [GLA], *MD2908 London Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment*, (Dec, 2021)

6 London Gypsies and Travellers [LGT], *New London Plan finally adopted*, (Mar, 2021)

7 A GTANA is a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment. This is a statutory requirement for local authorities in England, with the duty to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers established under Section 225 of the Housing Act 2004. The findings of the GTANA should then be incorporated into the local planning framework. The London Mayor has commissioned new London wide GTANA that was planned to be released early in 2025, however at the time of writing, has not currently been released.

8 London Gypsies and Travellers [LGT], *Errors on pitch numbers in new GLA report*, (June, 2025).

9 Greater London Authority [GLA], *Health and Wellbeing of Gypsy and Irish Travellers*, (Nov, 2023).

10 Traveller Movement [TM], *Gypsy, Roma and Traveller experiences in Secondary Education: Issues, barriers and recommendations*, (Dec, 2020),

11 Traveller Movement [TM], *Never Giving Up On Them School exclusions of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils in England*. (2016).

**Workforce Development:** With youth unemployment rates of around 40%, Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller young people face the highest joblessness of any ethnic group in the region. Discrimination, low educational outcomes, and limited access to employment pathways are all contributing factors.<sup>12</sup>

**Youth and Community Development:** The capital has seen a dramatic reduction in youth provision over the last decade, with over 130 youth centres and hundreds of youth workers lost between 2011–2021. This erosion of infrastructure disproportionately impacts underserved groups, leaving Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish and Scottish Traveller young people with few spaces for civic participation, leadership, and identity development.<sup>13</sup> An ongoing Nuffield-funded study highlights the absence of London-specific data on digital exclusion among Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller youth, limiting evidence-based service planning.<sup>14</sup>

## Local Policy Landscape in RBKC

The RBKC Local Plan (2024)<sup>15</sup> marks a notable step forward with its explicit emphasis on equality, inclusion, and participatory, community-led planning. Crucially, it references the Stable Way Traveller site, affirming the borough's intention to assess and address the accommodation needs of its Irish Traveller residents. However, this focus is critically narrow. The Plan omits any mention of Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish, and Scottish Traveller communities living in bricks-and-mortar accommodation, a serious oversight that renders a significant part of the community's population invisible. This failure to recognise the needs and experiences of the housed community represents a major gap in the Council's strategic approach to inclusion and accommodation planning.

Despite overarching ambitions to tackle inequality, promote inclusion, and improve community cohesion, the Fairer Action Plan<sup>16</sup> does not explicitly include Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish or Scottish Traveller communities. An omission that stands at odds with the documented local needs and undermines the strategy's comprehensiveness.

In the Fairer Action Plan, Equality Aim 5, pledges to foster a diverse and engaged workforce, which presents a prime opportunity for targeted interventions. Measures such as guaranteed apprenticeships for Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish and Scottish Traveller youth, culturally tailored recruitment outreach, and local trainee schemes, for example, would not only support the Stable Way community but also genuinely embed workforce diversification. Yet, no such provisions are included.

Equality Aim 4, with its focus on community relations, anti-discrimination, and celebrating diversity, presents a clear and timely opportunity for inclusion. RBKC's existing support for initiatives like the Faith Partnership and the Notting Hill Carnival demonstrates a commitment to cultural programming. By expanding this framework to actively showcase Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish and Scottish Traveller heritage, the Council can significantly deepen cultural

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12 Guardian, [Structural racism leading to stark health inequalities in London](#), (Oct, 2024).

13 Greater London Authority, [MQT Londoners access to youth services](#). (Oct, 2024).

14 Nuffield Foundation, [Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Youth: mitigating exclusions using the digital?](#). (2024).

15 Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea [RBKC], [New Local Plan July 2024](#). (2024).

16 Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea [RBKC], [Fairer Action Plan 2025 to 2029](#). (2025).

**Despite overarching ambitions to tackle inequality, promote inclusion, and improve community cohesion, the Fairer Action Plan does not explicitly include Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish or Scottish Traveller communities. An omission that stands at odds with the documented local needs and undermines the strategy's comprehensiveness.**

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inclusion and build trust with these communities. A straightforward inclusion would be to build in recognition and celebration of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month.

Moreover, under its deliverables, the Fairer Action Plan includes commitments to commission community-led research, support residents' surgeries, and launch a Community Steering Board. Such structures could be leveraged to create formal channels for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller representation, ensuring that their voices are embedded in decision-making and that lived experience meaningfully shapes policy.

Taken together, the national, regional, and local evidence makes clear that Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish and Scottish Traveller communities nationally, regionally and locally in RBKC continue to face structural barriers across accommodation, health, education, and employment, compounded by cultural exclusion and discrimination. While the RBKC Local Plan shows promise in acknowledging the Stable Way site, the absence of any Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Irish and Scottish Traveller specific actions in the Fairer Action Plan highlights a significant policy gap. Addressing this omission, and embedding these voices within local governance structures, will be critical if RBKC is to translate its commitments to equality and inclusion into meaningful outcomes for these communities.

## 5 Demographic Overview

This chapter offers a detailed demographic profile of survey respondents from the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities residing in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC). Derived from responses by 14 individuals (13 of whom fully completed the survey) this section captures data on ethnic identity, living conditions, gender, age, religion, and employment. These insights, combined with national-level research and recent policy insights, underscore the interplay between local lived experiences and broader structural frameworks guiding inclusion, employment, accommodation, health, and education.



## Survey Responses

A strong engagement level is reflected in the survey: 92.9% (13 respondents) who fully completed the survey, with one partial response. This high full completion rate signals considerable willingness to participate and share lived experiences in detail.

## Ethnic Identity and Cultural Affiliation

Most respondents identified as Irish Traveller (85.7%), with a small number identifying as Romani (Gypsy) (7.1%) and White British (7.1%). This distribution underscores the predominance of an Irish Traveller identity within the participant group.

Official statistics indicate that Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities represent small proportions of both the national and local population. The 2021 Census recorded 71,440 “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” individuals (0.12%) in England and Wales,<sup>17</sup> while in RBKC, the combined figure for “Gypsy and Irish Traveller” (84) and Roma (1,049) residents is also below 1%.<sup>18</sup> It is important to note, however, that these figures are widely considered a substantial undercount. Researchers and activists estimate the actual UK population to be between 300,000 and 500,000, citing systematic under-identification linked to distrust of authorities, literacy barriers, and a reluctance to disclose ethnicity due to fear of discrimination.<sup>19</sup>

It is noteworthy that one survey respondent identified as White British. This individual is married to an Irish Traveller and has been fully integrated into the local Irish Traveller community. This inclusion reflects the evolving and interconnected nature of community relationships in the borough. Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities have been an integral part of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for generations. As social bonds continue to develop across cultural lines, this example illustrates how longstanding relationships contribute to greater cohesion and mutual recognition within the wider RBKC community.

## Accommodation

The survey revealed that 71.4% of respondents live in caravans or trailers located on Stable Way, a permanent Local Authority site. A further 21.4% reported living in purpose-built flats or tenements, while only 7.1% reside in terraced houses or bungalows. These patterns indicate that most respondents are living in traditional forms of accommodation on the Stable Way Traveller Site.

While the cultural connection to mobile living remains significant, the 2021 Census for England and Wales indicates that the vast majority (78.4%) of Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller households now live in bricks-and-mortar accommodation. Semi-detached homes were the most common type (28.3%). Despite this shift to conventional housing, the proportion of these households living in a mobile or temporary structure (21.6%) is still 72 times greater than that of the wider population (0.3%), underscoring a distinct and enduring cultural practice.<sup>20</sup>

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17 Office of National Statistics [ONS], *Gypsy or Irish Traveller populations, England and Wales: Census 2021*, (2021).

18 UK Government – Ethnicity Facts and Figures, *Regional ethnic diversity*, (2022).

19 Travellers Times, ‘*Younger and more likely to be looking after relatives*’ - *Government Census reveals*, (2023).

20 Office of National Statistics [ONS], *Gypsy or Irish Traveller populations, England and Wales: Census 2021*, (2021).

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## **Gender and Age Profile**

The survey was predominantly completed by women, with females comprising 78.6% of respondents. Male participation stood at 21.4%. The age distribution was relatively balanced across adult age groups, with the highest representation found among those aged 25–34 (28.6%), 35–44 (28.6%), and 55–64 (28.6%). Only one respondent fell within the 18–24 age bracket, and another within the 45–54 group, suggesting that many participants were adults of working age or older.

Nationally, the Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller population has a younger age profile with over one-third being under 18, compared to 21% among all ethnicities. Only 18% are aged 50 and above, in contrast to 35% nationally.<sup>21</sup>

## **Religion and Marital Status**

The religious profile of respondents was overwhelmingly Christian, with the vast majority (92.9%) identifying as Catholic and a single respondent (7.1%) as Church of England. This strong Christian affiliation reflects the national trend, where 63.2% of the “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” population in England and Wales identified as Christian, a significantly higher proportion than the 46.2% observed in the general population.<sup>22</sup>

The survey found that 57.1% of respondents were married, which reflects the marital status pattern for the “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” population in the Census for England and Wales.<sup>23</sup> The remainder of the cohort was composed of those who were divorced or separated (28.6%) and those who were single (14.3%).

## **Employment Status**

The survey points to a profound economic exclusion, with 86% of respondents unemployed and not seeking work. While 14% were self-employed, reflecting a traditional strength of these communities, this figure is minimal in context. Nationally, the overall employment rate for these groups (~41%) remains severely depressed compared to the average (~71%).<sup>24</sup> This indicates that systemic challenges are preventing the community from leveraging its entrepreneurial spirit. These findings highlight a clear need for targeted initiatives that dismantle structural barriers and create accessible pathways into employment.

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21 UK Government – Ethnicity Facts and Figures, *Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller ethnicity summary*, (2022a).

22 Office of National Statistics [ONS], *Gypsy or Irish Traveller populations, England and Wales: Census 2021*, (2021).

23 *ibid.*

24 House of Commons Library, *Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: Statistics*, (2024).



## Summary

This demographic overview shows a community grappling with economic hardship, cultural distinctiveness, and underrepresentation. In RBKC, Irish Traveller women of working age emerge as a prominent demographic group facing intersectional barriers in housing, education, health, and employment. National data confirms similar patterns across England and Wales, highlighting systemic disadvantages, younger age profiles, and low participation in the labour market.

However, recent policy advance, including revised planning frameworks and targeted funding, provide promising avenues for addressing structural inequities. The expanded Traveller definition, stronger planning rights, and site investment reinforce the potential for more inclusive local interventions, offering pathways toward improved housing conditions, socio-economic opportunities, and community cohesion.

This combined demographic and policy context lays a robust foundation for the evaluation findings and the forthcoming recommendations, ensuring they are grounded in both lived realities and enabling frameworks for meaningful change.

# 6 Accommodation Needs, Challenges and Solutions

Accommodation is at the heart of community wellbeing, and for Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller families in RBKC the question of where and how they live remains both deeply cultural and highly contested. The survey shows that while many Irish Traveller families are settled on Stable Way, others are in bricks-and-mortar housing where they often feel out of place. This picture reflects not just local experiences but also national trends: shortages of pitches, cultural insensitivity in housing allocation, and a long history of institutional neglect.



***“100 local planning authorities where information was available, 64% had failed to allocate sites as part of the development plan process despite 29 years of government policy and guidance that required this.”***

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## Future Pitch Provision

The strongest theme to emerge from the survey, is the demand for more pitches. Almost four out of five respondents (78.6%) said their families would need additional provision over the next decade, with 31 extra pitches required to meet their anticipated growth. This is not just about families on Stable, as was exemplified by one family currently in bricks-and-mortar, who clearly expressed a wish to return to site-based living, highlighting the strong cultural preference for this way of life.

These findings are not unique to RBKC. Across England, the supply of socially rented Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller pitches has fallen by 13.4% between 2011 and 2021, despite population growth and clear evidence of unmet need.<sup>25</sup> A Friends, Families and Travellers report<sup>26</sup> provides stark evidence of systemic failure, revealing that of the surveyed “*100 local planning authorities where information was available, 64% had failed to allocate sites as part of the development plan process despite 29 years of government policy and guidance that required this.*”

## Suitability of Current Accommodation

While a surface-level finding suggests a majority satisfaction among the respondents (64.3%) with their accommodation, the community’s testimony reveals a major divide. On the Stable Way site, where satisfaction was higher, residents still highlighted significant challenges with maintenance and safety, with one respondent explaining, “*The ground to the pitch is uneven and has caused me to fall quite a few times and there is no appropriate parking available outside my home.*”

In contrast, the experience of bricks-and-mortar housing was one of profound unsuitability for 75% of residents. Their concerns were not abstract but critically specific to their families’ wellbeing. One parent detailed the acute unsafety of high-rise living for a child with additional needs, stating, “*We need an outdoor space for my son... We are on the second floor and he thinks he can fly!*” Another described how their physical health was compromised by the accommodation itself: “*I have a condition that affects my mobility and the stairs in my flat are really difficult for me to manage.*”

These powerful accounts demonstrate that conventional social housing is failing to provide for both the cultural and practical necessities of life. The respondents’ voices confirm what national research echoes: that for many Romani (Gypsies) and Irish Travellers, bricks-and-mortar accommodation can mean isolation, unsafety, and an inability to live in ways consistent with their traditions.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Friends, Families and Travellers [FFT], [Briefing: Accommodation issues facing Gypsies and Travellers in England](#), (2022).

26 Friends, Families and Travellers [FFT], [Kicking the can down the road: The planning and provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England 1960-2023](#), (2023).

27 House of Commons Library, [Gypsies and Travellers: Accommodation in England](#), (2024a).

***“It is common knowledge that Romany (Gypsy) people have inherently been treat differently from any other minority. This is no different in Kensington and Chelsea.”***

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## **Security and Sense of Safety**

The type of accommodation a family lives in has a direct and significant impact on their perceived safety. Less than half of all respondents (43%) felt “very secure” in their homes, a figure that drops for those in bricks-and-mortar housing. Among this group, 50% reported feeling ‘somewhat’ or ‘very’ insecure, with several describing experiences of discrimination from neighbours or housing officers that compounded the stress of their unsuitable housing.

This localised insecurity reflects a well-documented national crisis. Research by Friends, Families and Travellers<sup>28</sup> into accommodation issues highlights how the chronic shortage of safe, legal sites creates a cycle of housing instability, leaving families in a state of vulnerability and stress. This institutional insecurity, layered atop the high levels of societal hostility and hate crime documented nationally<sup>29</sup> creates a compounded sense of unsafety for residents, whether on an unprotected site or in an isolating bricks-and-mortar dwelling.

## **Barriers to Accessing Suitable Accommodation**

Accessing appropriate accommodation was a significant challenge for nearly two-thirds (64.3%) of the survey participants, though the nature of the barriers differed starkly based on accommodation type. For those on the Stable Way site, the struggle was defined by a real lack of supply and safety concerns. As one resident stated, “*There is no available pitches for anyone to access,*” a sentiment compounded by another who explained, “*There’s no suitable site accommodation. A house wouldn’t be a suitable accommodation for us [as] we’ve lived in caravans our whole lives.*” The desire for a safe, culturally appropriate alternative was clear, with one respondent expressing, “*We have been trying for years to have a site in an appropriate place. Something like the bungalows in Hackney would be better for me and my family.*” For those living on the site, the danger was direct and ever present, with one respondent reporting, “*Living under a motorway, [leads to] sometimes cars throwing things on to the mobiles.*”

Those in bricks-and-mortar housing faced bureaucratic and systemic obstacles. One respondent described being arbitrarily blocked from the housing register, noting that “*For 2-years my case worker wouldn’t lift my ban on bidding. As soon as she left, I bid on 2 properties and got them both.*” Others were placed in deeply unsuitable emergency accommodation, with one parent recounting the trauma of fleeing domestic abuse only to face further instability: “*I had to flee my home due to domestic abuse and had to live in hotels for months and then temporary accommodation which was very unsuitable for my son.*”

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28 Friends, Families and Travellers [FFT], Briefing: Accommodation issues facing Gypsies and Travellers in England, (2022).

29 GATE Herts, Hate: “As regular as rain”, (2020).

Discrimination in housing was a deep-seated issue, reported by over a third of respondents (35.7%), a figure that undoubtedly captures only a fraction of its true extent, as many are often reluctant to formally report such encounters. This bias was experienced through hostile interactions with officials. One respondent described being met with prejudice and victim-blaming at Kensington Town Hall, recalling, “*The lady and also a guy who first saw me, were very rude to me and I feel like it was because I’m a Traveller. They asked me why I couldn’t return home as abuse occurs in my community frequently and that I had to prove it.*” Others experienced a persistent, antagonistic attitude from housing officers, with one person stating, “*My housing officer was antagonistic towards me whenever we spoke on the phone and rude.*” These personal accounts affirm a broader, systemic pattern of differential treatment, summarised by a respondent who asserted, “*It is common knowledge that Romany (Gypsy) people have inherently been treat differently from any other minority. This is no different in Kensington and Chelsea.*”

This local bias, experienced through hostile interactions with officials who exhibited prejudice and victim-blaming, is not a new phenomenon. It reflects a national pattern documented over a decade ago in a Shelter report,<sup>30</sup> which found “*discrimination within housing and homelessness services*” and a “*general acceptance of this overt racism,*” noting that fear of such abuse often makes households reluctant to identify themselves. This long history of systemic bias confirms that the discrimination reported by residents, from being treated with rudeness and antagonism by housing officers to being forced to prove their legitimacy, is a persistent and entrenched failure within the housing system.

## Culturally Appropriate Accommodation

Perhaps one of the most striking findings is the unanimity of every single respondent (100%), who agreed there are not enough culturally appropriate accommodation options.

This local opinion reflects a wider national reality. The government’s updated Planning Policy for Traveller Sites<sup>31</sup> introduces a welcome change by expanding the definition of “Traveller,”<sup>32</sup> acknowledging families who have ceased to travel because of health, education or older age. However, this broader definition includes “[p]ersons of nomadic habit of life regardless of race or origin,” thereby risking obscuring the specific cultural needs and historic disadvantages of ethnic Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. Furthermore, while the policy creates a presumption in favour of development where councils have failed their targets, it crucially lacks enforcement. There remains no statutory duty on councils to provide sites, a key reason why so few new local authority sites have been built since the 1990s. This continued policy failure leaves families in RBKC and across England with a stark and inadequate choice: unsuitable bricks-and-mortar housing or overcrowded sites that cannot meet growing household needs.

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30 Shelter, Good practice: briefing. Gypsies and Travellers. An overview of the issues faced by Gypsy and Traveller communities in accessing housing and services, (2007).

31 Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government [MHCLG], Planning policy for traveller sites, (2024).

32 The revised definition of Gypsies and Travellers from the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (Dec, 2024) is ‘Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependants’ educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, and all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such’

## Community Perspectives on Priorities

Most respondents (86%) reported feeling generally safe and welcome in their area, though those in bricks-and-mortar were less likely to agree. Their concerns were often about belonging: a sense of being watched, targeted, or unable to live in culturally appropriate ways. One parent spoke of the strain of raising a child with sensory needs in high-rise housing. Such experiences underline how “safety” is more than physical security, it also involves cultural identity and psychological wellbeing.

## *Key Challenges Faced by the Communities*

Across both accommodation types, overcrowding (86%), lack of support from local authorities (79%), and planning permission difficulties (71%) emerged as the most pressing issues. Notably, 100% of Bricks and Mortar residents cited discrimination from landlords or housing services. Meanwhile, 80% of Stable Way respondents pointed to a lack of culturally appropriate options and support from the local authority. These findings show that despite the differences in housing type, the community faces similar systemic obstacles rooted in institutional neglect and cultural erasure. They are asking for more than new homes, they are asking for equity, dignity, and inclusion.

## *Recommendations from the Communities*

Community members articulated a clear and consistent set of changes they would like to see:

- Increased pitch provision using underutilised land at the entrance to Stable Way
- Greater cultural awareness and sensitivity among housing staff
- Representation in decision-making, particularly through a nominated Romani (Gypsy) or Irish Traveller spokesperson
- Dedicated council meetings on Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller accommodation issues
- Improvements to existing sites, such as better road surfaces, fencing, pitch resurfacing and play areas

Such recommendations reflect the community’s desire not only for better accommodation but also for meaningful participation in decisions that affect them.

National initiatives, such as the Traveller Site Fund 2022/23, allocated almost £10 million for site improvements across the UK.<sup>33</sup> However, accessing this funding relies on local authorities being proactive in applying. While RBKC did secure a small grant from the fund, the improvements delivered were limited in scope. This represents a missed opportunity to meaningfully improve living conditions for families in the borough or to expand pitch provision.

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<sup>33</sup> UK Government, [Traveller Site Fund 2022/23](#), (June, 2023).

Similarly, proposed reforms within the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (2025) have again failed to address long-standing gaps. Despite advocacy from organisations such as Friends, Families and Travellers<sup>34</sup>, the Bill, which at the time of writing, is currently progressing through the House of Lords, does not reinstate a statutory duty on local authorities to provide Romani (Gypsy) or Irish Traveller sites or strengthen existing guidance. The absence of such a measure risks perpetuating chronic under-provision.

At the local level, the Westway Trust is currently supporting Stable Way residents to work with RBKC officers on proposals for additional pitch provision at the site entrance. While this is a welcome development, community members have been through similar discussions for decades without seeing tangible outcomes. It is vital that this opportunity is not allowed to stall, and that RBKC delivers on its responsibility to ensure adequate, culturally appropriate accommodation.

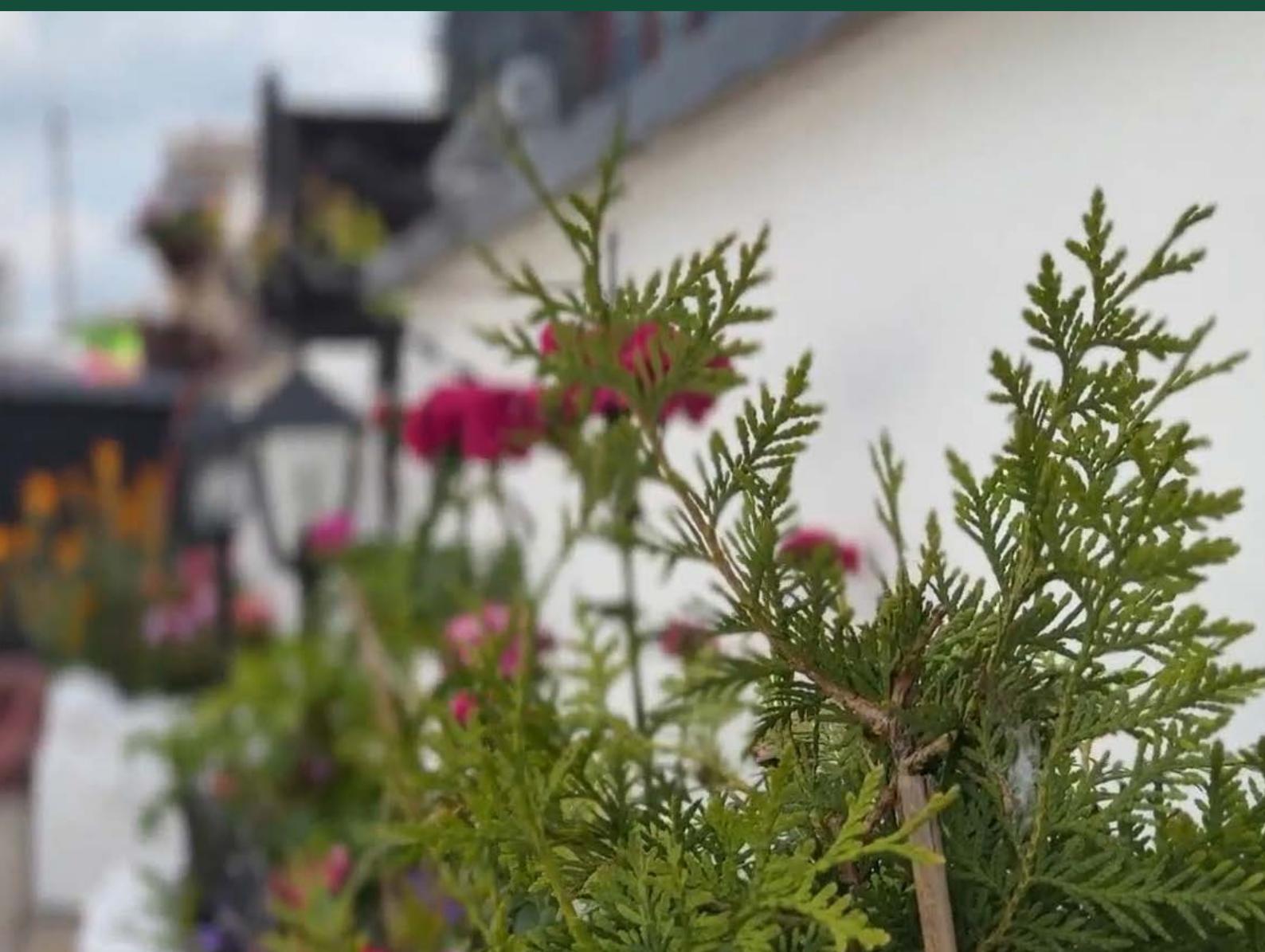
### Summary

This data provides compelling evidence that RBKC is failing to meet its obligations under the Equality Act and the Human Rights Act in relation to its Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller residents. The high projected need for additional pitches, dissatisfaction with current accommodation (particularly in Bricks and Mortar), reports of discrimination, and the total lack of culturally appropriate options point to a systemic neglect that urgently needs redress. The voices of the community are clear: they are asking for dignity, security, and inclusion; not charity but equity. RBKC must now act decisively to ensure that its housing strategy is inclusive, forward-looking, and responsive to the specific needs of these longstanding and too often overlooked communities.

<sup>34</sup> Friends, Families and Travellers [FFT], Planning and Infrastructure Bill: Written evidence - The need for increased and improved Gypsy and Traveller site provision, (May, 2025),

## 7 Health and Wellbeing

**The survey reveals a profound health crisis among local Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller families, characterised by high rates of ill health, chronic stress, and experiences of unequal treatment. This local emergency mirrors the stark national and London-wide context, where these communities consistently record the poorest health outcomes of any ethnic group. Despite policy efforts, these deep-rooted inequalities remain largely unaddressed.**



## **Self-Rated Health and Mental Wellbeing**

Survey respondents reported critically poor levels of health, with profound implications for both physical and mental wellbeing. Only one participant rated their physical health as “Good,” while the overwhelming majority (71%) reported it as “Poor” or “Very Poor.” This distress was even more acute on the Stable Way site, where 70% of residents reported poor physical health compared to 25% in bricks-and-mortar housing.

Mental wellbeing was similarly dire across all accommodation types. Nearly four out of five respondents (79%) rated their mental health as “Poor” or “Very Poor,” indicating a community-wide crisis of mental distress. The testimonies reveal a system that is often difficult to navigate and dismissive. As one respondent explained, *“I have been on with the mental health services for years but have been passed around and haven’t really got no further,”* highlighting a lack of consistent support. Others described encountering stigmatising attitudes that eroded their trust in primary care, with one person stating, *“I have changed doctor over last couple of years as their attitude was condescending. They looked down on me. The new doctor is loads better and I feel safe with them.”*

These local findings are consistent with national evidence, which identifies how “*Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities face some of the starker inequalities in access to healthcare in England and experience dire mental health outcomes.*”<sup>35</sup>

## **Access to General and Local Healthcare Services**

Access to primary care was reported at high levels, with 93% of participants registered with a GP. However, 21% described difficulties accessing local healthcare services, with challenges more common among bricks-and-mortar residents (50%) than Stable Way residents (10%).

Participant testimonies reveal a common theme of dismissiveness and cultural misunderstanding by healthcare providers. Reports of being “*looked down on*”, facing lengthy referrals, and encountering dismissals of legitimate health concerns reflect deep-rooted trust issues in provider-patient relationships, especially when compounded by stigma against Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller identities.

These findings align with the London Health Inequalities Strategy Implementation Plan 2025–28, which highlights that “*Structural racism is a driver of health inequalities; a factor long overlooked. It influences access to the building blocks that support good health, including decent housing, work, education and healthcare. Racism leads to worse health outcomes for many ethnic minority communities, who face higher rates of long-term conditions and poorer access to care.*”<sup>36</sup> Service availability does not necessarily equate to effective or equitable access, particularly for marginalised groups.

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35 NHS Race & Health Observatory [RHO], PROGRESS REPORT, (2023).

36 Mayor of London, Health Inequalities Strategy Implementation Plan 2025–2028, (2025).

## Cultural Sensitivity and Discrimination in Healthcare

A profound lack of cultural sensitivity and respect was reported by many respondents, with only 21% feeling their cultural needs were always understood. For others, their needs were inconsistently met (“often” 29%, “sometimes” 21%, “rarely” 7%), and a stark 14% stated their cultural needs were never respected. This perceived cultural insensitivity frequently manifested as dismissive and disrespectful treatment. One respondent recounted being “*dismissed when trying to get help for health and made to feel stupid*,” while another described a five-year struggle to secure support for their son, during which “*they told me if I didn’t stop harassing them that they would section me. They said he didn’t need help. However, I persisted and now he is receiving the appropriate help*.”

This failure of cultural competence is directly linked to experiences of discrimination, which were reported by 43% of all respondents. The problem was most acute for those in bricks-and-mortar housing, where 75% reported discrimination, suggesting that living outside a traditional community setting may increase exposure to overt prejudice. These experiences ranged from overt refusal of service to palpable shifts in attitude. One respondent reported that “*mental health nurses from Pall Mall refused to come into the site due to fear of being attacked by the Travellers and discharged us from the services without further notice which left us very vulnerable*.” Another observed that “*I’ve also noticed a lot of healthcare professionals attitude changing once they realise I’m an Irish Traveller*.”

These local testimonies underscore an urgent need for the cultural competence initiatives being emphasised at a national policy level, such as the NHS Race & Health Observatory’s work with NICE to address ethnic bias in clinical guidance<sup>37</sup> and the NHS England Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework, that identifies culturally safe care as a key area for improvement with mental health.<sup>38</sup>

## Barriers to Healthcare

The most significant barriers to healthcare were a fear of judgment (50%), experiences of discrimination (36%), and a lack of culturally sensitive care (36%). This points to a fundamental crisis of trust in healthcare providers, underscoring the critical need to rebuild relationships between the community and services.

These local barriers are mirrored in national evidence. Research<sup>39</sup> highlights key challenges as “*Trust: People from diverse ethnic backgrounds lack trust in the system and can feel unwelcome in clinical settings*” and “*Cultural competency: Health professionals are not ‘culturally competent’ (i.e., lack understanding of different ethnic cultures)*.” The Race & Health Observatory similarly found “*Ethnic inequalities in access to, experiences of, and outcomes of healthcare are longstanding problems in the NHS, and are rooted in experiences of structural,*

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37 The PHARMACEUTICAL JOURNAL, NICE to work with NHS Race and Health Observatory to de-bias clinical guidance, (2023).

38 NHS England, Patient and carer race equality framework: Making anti-racism work in all mental health providers, (2023).

39 Unity insights, Health Inequalities, (2024).

*institutional and interpersonal racism.*<sup>40</sup> NHS England's Core20PLUS5 materials further identify PLUS groups to include "Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities" and stress that community-centred approaches are needed to address gaps in awareness, engagement and culturally appropriate access to screening and services.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework defines cultural safety as care "*where patients and carers feel safe to be open about their experiences without fear of being treated badly by staff or an organisation,*" and calls for NHS Trusts to develop culturally informed practices to rebuild trust and reduce stigma.<sup>42</sup>

### **Mental Health Care, Service Access and Prevention.**

The survey reveals a serious mental health challenge within the community, with near-universal reports of depression (93%) and anxiety (86%). High rates of trauma or PTSD (64%), burnout (64%), and isolation (57%) were also prevalent, with bricks-and-mortar residents reporting a bleak 100% prevalence of depression, PTSD, and burnout.

While 57% of participants described mental health services as "Very Accessible," this perceived access did not translate into consistent, quality care. Many reported being "*passed around*" or experiencing early discharge, leading to a significant trust deficit. This is reflected in the finding that while 64.3% of respondents felt comfortable discussing mental health with professionals, this figure dropped to just half of those, with respondents in bricks-and-mortar housing. One respondent explained this reluctance, stating, "*I prefer to just keep my problems to myself.*" Others highlighted the conditional nature of their trust, with one noting they need "*to get to know them initially and then [we are] comfortable afterwards,*" while another called for "*a more understanding environment for us to be able to speak freely about our problems.*"

Compounding this is a critical gap in preventative health. Two-thirds (64.3%) of respondents were unaware of any preventative health programs. One resident stated plainly, "*No one comes in to make us aware of things you can do to prevent sickness,*" while another advocated for "*particular support for men in the community particularly around depression. Support for young fellas with drink and drugs.*" The community's proposed solution is the appointment of a trusted insider, with a respondent insisting, "*We need an appointment [of a] Gypsy liaison officer, and this person needs to be representing the community by being a part of it... at this time we need at least one person from our community to best understand our situation.*"

These findings underscore the urgency of action at all levels, aligning with the London Health Inequalities Strategy 2025–28<sup>43</sup> and the national 10-Year Health Plan for England, which emphasises prevention and community-based care.<sup>44</sup>

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40 Race & Health Observatory [RHO], *Ethnic Inequalities in Healthcare: A Rapid Evidence Review*, (2022).

41 NHS England, *Core20PLUS5 – an approach to reducing healthcare inequalities*. NHS England. Retrieved October 19, 2025, (n.d.). Retrieved on 21 October 2025.

42 NHS England, *Easy Read: Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework*, (2023a)

43 Mayor of London, *Health Inequalities Strategy Implementation Plan 2025–2028*, (2025).

44 Department for Health and Social Care, *Policy paper: Fit for the future: 10 Year Health Plan for England (accessible version)*, (July, 2025).



**One resident stated plainly, “*No one comes in to make us aware of things you can do to prevent sickness,*” while another advocated for “*particular support for men in the community particularly around depression. Support for young fellas with drink and drugs.*”**

## Summary

The data paints a clear picture of entrenched health inequalities, worsened by cultural exclusion, systemic bias, and mistrust in health services. Despite relatively high reported access to GPs and mental health services, participants’ overall health is reported as poor, with widespread dissatisfaction in service quality, cultural understanding, and continuity of care.

These findings are consistent with recent national and regional research, which shows that Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities experience some of the poorest health outcomes in the UK. Policy frameworks, including the NHS Race & Health Observatory’s work, NHS England’s Core20PLUS5 approach, and the London Health Inequalities Strategy, provide a clear direction for addressing these issues. However, the RBKC data suggests that progress is limited at local level, and further targeted work is required to improve both outcomes and experiences for these communities.

This chapter highlights the urgent need for systemic change in how healthcare services are designed and delivered to Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. The experiences documented reflect not just individual hardship, but structural failures in equality, accessibility, and cultural respect. Targeted investment in culturally competent care, improved service outreach, and community engagement is essential to reversing these health disparities and restoring trust. Without such measures, health inequality will persist – and so too will the sense of exclusion and injustice that pervades this data.

# Educational Experiences, Aspirations and Barriers

This chapter explores the educational experiences and aspirations of community members living on Stable Way and in bricks-and-mortar housing. It examines formal qualifications, perceptions of school inclusivity, access to special educational needs (SEN) support, barriers to schooling and further education, and adult learning opportunities. The findings point to persistent inequalities, particularly those rooted in cultural exclusion, financial constraints, and systemic discrimination. The data also reflects the differing challenges faced by families in each housing context, helping to identify priority areas for intervention.



## Educational Attainment

Overall 93% of respondents reported having no formal qualifications, that rises to 100% for those in bricks-and-mortar housing. This highlights long-standing structural barriers to educational access and engagement, likely compounded by historic discrimination and limited culturally responsive support throughout school years. The absence of qualifications severely limits opportunities for further and higher education or skilled employment, perpetuating cycles of marginalisation.

National data reflect similar education gaps. For instance, Census 2021 data identified that ~57% of “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” individuals have no qualifications, compared to ~18% of the broader population.<sup>45</sup> This means that people who identified as “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” were three times more likely to have no qualifications. The ONS report goes further highlighting significant inequalities in educational outcomes. It found that “Gypsy and Irish Traveller” pupils were more likely to have low levels of educational attainment compared with all other ethnic groups. A notably higher proportion had no formal qualifications, while a much smaller proportion achieved Level 4 (degree level) or above. The report also noted that “Gypsy and Irish Traveller” children were less likely to meet expected standards in early years development and core subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics, compared with national averages.<sup>46</sup> These national statistics help contextualise our findings: they are not anomalies but part of a persistent pattern of disparity.

## School Inclusivity and Environment

Schools are largely perceived as unsupportive and culturally alienating environments for Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller children. Only 28% of respondents felt local schools were consistently inclusive, while over a third (35%) described them as “rarely” or “never” inclusive. This dissatisfaction was particularly pronounced among families in bricks-and-mortar housing, who may experience greater social isolation within mainstream settings.

A significant 43% of parents rated schools as “poor” or “very poor” at respecting their cultural and religious practices. The absence of any “very good” ratings underscores a profound disconnect. Respondents directly linked this to a curriculum that excludes their heritage, calling for *“more learning about our culture and celebrate things like St. Patrick’s Day, Easter etc.”* and for *“More about Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month in the annual calendar. More about Traveller culture in the curriculum.”*

These local experiences are reflected in broader research. National data<sup>47</sup> confirm that children from these communities often feel their culture is not understood in school. A London-wide report<sup>48</sup> highlights that the lack of a diverse curriculum remains a key barrier to inclusion for marginalised pupils, including Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller students.

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45 Office of National Statistics [ONS], *Gypsy or Irish Traveller populations, England and Wales: Census 2021*, (2021).

46 Office for National Statistics [ONS], *Gypsies’ and Travellers’ lived experiences, education and employment, England and Wales: 2022*, (2022).

47 *ibid*

48 Centre for Young Lives, *Everyone Included: Transforming our education system to be ambitious about inclusion*, (2025).

## Support for Children with Additional Needs

The survey data demonstrates a real failure in supporting children with additional learning needs, directly impacting the lived experiences of families. Half of all respondents stated that resources for these children were insufficient, a sentiment unanimous among those living in bricks-and-mortar housing, where no respondents' felt provision was adequate.

This local perception of under-resourced and inaccessible support is particularly alarming in the context of national data. A report by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI)<sup>49</sup> identifies that “Gypsy/Roma and Traveller”<sup>50</sup> pupils have the highest rates of identified Special Educational Needs (SEN) of any ethnic group in England. Specifically, 37.4% of “Gypsy/Roma and Traveller” pupils are recorded as having SEN, a figure that is 70% higher than the rate for White British pupils.

The HEPI report further clarifies that these are not just minor needs; “Gypsy/Roma and Traveller” pupils have notably high rates of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and specific learning difficulties, indicating complex requirements that demand robust, specialist support. The convergence of the highest identified need and the poorest perceived support, as evidenced by our survey, means that the children most likely to require assistance are precisely those who are least likely to receive it effectively. This systemic failure compounds educational exclusion, pushing vulnerable pupils further to the margins of the school system and denying them the opportunity to thrive.

## Barriers to Quality Schooling

The most significant barriers to a quality education are not logistical but cultural and systemic. Over half of all respondents (57%) identified a lack of respect for their cultural or religious practices as a major obstacle, while 50% reported that discrimination and bullying were pervasive issues. These problems were especially acute for families in bricks-and-mortar housing, with 75% highlighting cultural disrespect and ethnic discrimination.

The testimonies from respondents give a disturbing voice to these statistics. One individual recounted, *“I was bullied all throughout school and made fun of for my accent often isolated from other students, it made me not want to be at school.”* Another highlighted how bullying was tied directly to their identity and way of life, stating, *“I was bullied at secondary school for living in a caravan.”*

Beyond overt hostility, a more insidious form of discrimination was revealed: institutional neglect and low expectations. One parent described a shocking lack of oversight, explaining, *“The boys if they didn’t show up for school there was no follow up. My lads left school at about 12, and no one came to me to ask where they were. It was the same with the girls. The minute you tell them you’re a Traveller they just accept that the children won’t be attending school.”* This account points to a systemic failure where cultural stereotypes can lead to educational abandonment.

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49 Higher Education Policy Institute [HEPI], *Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: The ethnic minorities most excluded from UK education*, (2022).

50 Government education data wrongly amalgamates Romani (Gypsy) and Roma communities as a homogenous group, obscuring distinct needs and hindering targeted local action.

While these social and cultural barriers were paramount, families also faced practical challenges, including economic pressures for school supplies, gaps in special needs support, and transport limitations. It is notable that no participants selected “language barriers,” which may have been more of a concern had we surveyed Roma families, underscoring that the core issues relate to a fundamental lack of safety, respect, and inclusion within the school environment.

## **Post-16 Education Aspirations and Barriers**

Survey data reveals a significant deficit in encouragement and support for further and higher education within the community. Half of all respondents believe young people are “rarely” encouraged to pursue post-16 education, with only one individual stating they are “always” encouraged. This local aspiration gap is powerfully explained by intersecting barriers: cultural or community attitudes (71%), family responsibilities (57%), and discrimination (57%).

The testimonies from respondents illustrate how these barriers manifest. One individual was driven out of further education by prejudice, stating, *“From my experience I had a lot of racial discrimination from my college peers which led to me leaving.”* Others highlighted a complete lack of institutional support, with a parent explaining, *“My older boys didn’t get any help when they were trying to do college courses.”* This culminates in a profound disconnect from higher education, with no respondent feeling that universities “completely” support their community, reinforcing the perception that university is *“not for us.”*

These local experiences are reflected in stark national data<sup>51</sup> that reports only 6.9% of “Gypsy/Roma” and 10.7% of Irish Traveller young people enter higher education by age 19, the lowest rates of any ethnic groups. While London has high overall participation rates, the gap in access between the poorest and richest students is widening.<sup>52</sup> This indicates that even in a high-participation region, deeply marginalised groups like Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities continue to be systematically left behind, confirming that the barriers identified in our survey are part of a persistent national crisis.

## **Adult Education and Skills Development**

Opportunities for adult learning are remote and failing the community, with over 70% of respondents describing them as “insufficient” or “rarely sufficient.” The main barriers identified are a profound lack of awareness of what is available (57%), cultural obstacles (50%), low confidence (43%), and time pressures (36%). Those in bricks-and-mortar housing reported additional challenges with technological access and time constraints, likely due to greater isolation from community networks and the demands of managing a household without extended family support nearby.

These insights reflect deep-rooted, generational exclusion from formal education. As one respondent pointedly suggested, a direct and accessible solution would be *“Adult literacy and numeracy private lessons or sessions... on the site,”* highlighting the demand for trusted, community-based learning.

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51 Higher Education Policy Institute [HEPI], *Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: The ethnic minorities most excluded from UK education*, (2022).

52 Times Higher Education, *London participation rates tipped to become ‘increasingly uneven’*, (2025).

This local picture is a microcosm of a national crisis. The ONS<sup>53</sup> reports that “Gypsy and Traveller” adults have the lowest qualification levels of any ethnic group and are significantly less likely to be participating in formal education or training than the general population. This is often a direct consequence of negative prior experiences in school and economic pressures. Furthermore, national data from the House of Commons Library<sup>54</sup> confirms that low qualification rates severely limit employment prospects, creating a cycle where a lack of skills leads to economic inactivity, which in turn prevents engagement in skills development.

These findings underscore the urgent need for a transformative approach to adult education. This must involve flexible, community-led pathways that are proactively marketed to rebuild confidence and provide the literacy, numeracy, and digital skills essential for improving life chances and economic engagement.

## Summary

This data paints a stark picture of educational exclusion affecting both children and adults across the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities in RBKC. From early schooling through to adult learning and higher education, systemic and cultural barriers persist. Key themes include a lack of formal qualifications, deeply felt exclusion from school culture, minimal support for SEN, and widespread financial and structural barriers to continuing education. The additional challenges faced by bricks-and-mortar residents, possibly due to greater disconnection from community support networks, require further investigation.

Efforts to address these issues must be community-led, culturally competent, and multi-sectoral, with urgent investment in school inclusion training, targeted outreach, adult education, and transition support. Without such interventions, the cycle of educational disadvantage and intergenerational poverty will remain unbroken. This data should act as a catalyst for change, with educational institutions, local authorities, and policymakers all playing a role in building a more inclusive and empowering learning environment.

<sup>53</sup> Office for National Statistics [ONS], *Gypsies' and Travellers' lived experiences, education and employment, England and Wales: 2022*, (2022).

<sup>54</sup> House of Commons Library, *Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: Statistics*, (2024).

# 9 Workforce Development

This chapter presents an analysis of workforce development data gathered from the survey of community members residing both on Stable Way and in bricks-and-mortar housing in RBKC. The aim is to understand current perceptions, barriers, and opportunities regarding employment, training, and career development within the community, particularly focusing on access, inclusivity, and structural support. The findings highlight ongoing challenges and areas where targeted interventions could significantly enhance community outcomes.



## Opportunities for Training and Skills Development

Community members overwhelmingly perceive workforce training opportunities as inadequate. Only one respondent (7%) found opportunities “completely sufficient,” while none found them “mostly sufficient.” Nearly half (43%) described them as “rarely sufficient” or “not at all,” and a further 28% were unsure, pointing to a critical gap in both the provision and visibility of relevant training. This sentiment was echoed directly by respondents, who called for providers to “*get training opportunities into the site*” and to “*reach out to us more, to let us know what’s available. Do not give up too easily.*”

This local deficit in accessible and visible training pathways reflects a national skills mismatch, where the technical, practical, and digital skills sought by employers, are often absent in underrepresented groups.<sup>55</sup> Promisingly, the community’s expressed need for practical, tailored training is being met by local initiatives like London Gypsies & Travellers’ Step Forward program, which provides basic IT and literacy training using peer-to-peer methods.<sup>56</sup> This demonstrates that models which mirror community priorities and are delivered in trusted settings can effectively begin to bridge this gap.

## Access to Employment Support Services & Sector Barriers

A significant gap exists in both the accessibility and awareness of employment support for the community. Survey data reveals that 43% of participants find these services “rarely accessible” or “not at all accessible,” with a clear disparity between housing types: 75% of bricks-and-mortar residents report inaccessibility compared to 30% on Stable Way. Furthermore, 30% of respondents were uncertain about what services even exist, indicating a critical failure in outreach and communication.

This lack of support is compounded by widespread structural exclusion across key employment sectors. Respondents reported significant challenges accessing retail, office-based roles, and skilled trades, with nearly half of those in bricks-and-mortar housing finding all listed sectors difficult to enter. This points to systemic barriers that prevent participation in both traditional and emerging job markets.

These experiences have fostered a severe trust deficit. 21% of respondents believe employers “rarely” or “never” value diversity, while the majority (57%) were unsure. This pervasive scepticism actively deters job-seeking behaviour and reinforces marginalisation. The community has articulated a clear solution to this disconnect, with one respondent calling for “*Employment fairs specifically aligned to Romany Gypsy people’s needs,*” and emphasising the need for “*local community representatives that can make cultural engagement with larger organisations that want to include diversity within the ranks of Romany Gypsy people.*”

National policy and research validate these local findings and offer a roadmap for change. The Inclusive Britain action plan<sup>57</sup> highlights the under-representation of marginalised communities and recommends concrete measures such as stronger positive action,

55 Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, [Independent report: R&D skills supply and demand: long-term trends and workforce projections](#), (2025).

56 London Gypsies and Travellers [LGT], [Work & Skills](#), (n.d.). Retrieved 01 October 2025

57 UK Government – Race Disparity Unit, [Guidance Inclusive Britain action plan: updates](#), (2022).

enhanced employer guidance, and improved transparency in hiring, all of which would address the reported barriers. Furthermore, the CIPD's work on race inclusion<sup>58</sup> underscores that to improve access and retention, employers must go beyond recruitment to implement inclusive people-management practices and address issues like ethnicity pay gaps.

## Most Beneficial Training

The community has articulated a clear and pragmatic set of training priorities essential for workforce development. An overwhelming 86% of respondents identified job-specific technical skills as the most beneficial form of training, a priority selected by all bricks-and-mortar residents. This was closely followed by demand for apprenticeships (64%) and digital or computer literacy (50%). A critical insight emerged between housing types: while digital skills were a priority for Stable Way residents, they were not highlighted by those in bricks-and-mortar housing, suggesting a nuanced digital divide.

These local priorities align with a significant national challenge. As reported by the Learning and Work Institute<sup>59</sup> a growing 'skills chasm' across UK regions is driven by shortages in the very technical, digital, and sector-specific skills the community is seeking. The report confirms that marginalised groups often fall behind in acquiring these crucial competencies, directly reflecting the local data.

Furthermore, the underrepresentation identified in the survey is a microcosm of a national pattern. A UK Research and Innovation report<sup>60</sup> shows that ethnic minority representation remains modest in many skilled sectors. Critically, the report notes that a lack of disaggregated data and clear pathways often masks the true scale of these inequalities. This underscores the value of the local survey in providing the specific, granular evidence needed to design effective interventions. Together, this evidence confirms that the community's call for technical skills and apprenticeships is not just a local need, but a strategic imperative to address both regional economic gaps and systemic underrepresentation.

## Perceived Discrimination in Employment

Discrimination is perceived as a barrier to employment, with more than half of respondents (57%) believing it plays at least a partial role in limiting their opportunities; 29% stated it "always" impacts outcomes. This perception was most acute among bricks-and-mortar residents, 50% of whom reported perceived high levels of discrimination. These results highlight the persistence of systemic exclusion in local labour markets. As one respondent powerfully articulated, "*Romany Gypsy people, are very rarely selected [for work] and in most cases discriminated upon which needs genuine attention...*" This testimony underscores the critical need for targeted anti-discrimination campaigns and cultural competence training for local employers.

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58 CIPD, [Equality, diversity and inclusion: Discover how to promote equal opportunities and manage equality, diversity and inclusion in your organisation](#), (n.d.). Retrieved 30 September 2025

59 The Guardian, [Warning of 'skills chasm' amid huge UK regional divide in qualifications](#), (2025).

60 UK Research and Innovation [UKRI], [Corporate report: Workforce equality monitoring report 2023 to 2024](#), (2024).

## Youth and Adult Pathways, Aspirations, and Support Needs

Pathways to employment for young people are severely constrained, with nearly 50% of respondents reporting that entry-level jobs and internships are “rarely” or “not at all” adequate. A critical barrier, as one respondent highlighted, is a fundamental lack of information and outreach: *“About motivating young people to more want work. It’s also about knowing what is available so could do with more information.”* This is compounded by low encouragement, cultural expectations, family responsibilities, and systemic discrimination.

For adults, the situation is similarly challenging, with over 70% describing skills development opportunities as “insufficient” or “rarely sufficient,” citing barriers like low confidence, time constraints and poor digital access.

In response to these challenges, the community has proposed clear and practical solutions. The most requested supports from the survey are:

- Affordable training and certification programs (50%)
- Health and wellness support (36%)
- Flexible work arrangements (36%)
- Access to mentorship, job search help, and career counselling (all around 28%)

Furthermore, community suggestions provide critical context for how these services should be delivered:

- **Culturally Competent Engagement:** Implement sustained outreach led by trusted, culturally competent staff.
- **Targeted Opportunities:** Create employment fairs specifically for Romany Gypsy people.
- **Inclusive Workplace Pathways:** Develop supportive pathways that address the specific health and flexibility needs of women.
- **Improved Communication:** Proactively communicate job and training opportunities directly to youth and families.

These responses present a clear demand for services that are not only practical but also culturally sensitive, relying on trusted intermediaries to bridge the gap between the community and service providers.



## Summary

The evidence presents a clear and sobering picture: community members face a complex web of barriers that systematically exclude them from the workforce. These are not isolated issues but interconnected failures, including a critical shortage of accessible and relevant training, pervasive discrimination and sectoral exclusion, and a profound breakdown in trust and awareness of support services. The local survey data, which reveals that 86% of respondents are unemployed and not seeking work, aligns starkly with national evidence of skills gaps and underrepresentation.

Addressing this crisis requires a fundamental shift from generic offers to targeted, multi-layered interventions co-designed with the community. This includes:

- **Delivering hyper-local, practical training** in technical skills, digital literacy, and apprenticeships, as directly requested by respondents, to bridge the identified skills chasm.
- **Encouraging employer inclusion** through anti-discrimination campaigns, cultural competency training, and the adoption of practices like name-blind recruitment and mentorship, as outlined in national strategies.
- **Transforming outreach** through trusted, community-based intermediaries and dedicated liaison advocates to rebuild trust and ensure information reaches those who need it most.

Ultimately, this combination of local testimony and broader evidence underscores that meaningful workforce development is not merely about creating opportunities, it is about actively dismantling barriers to ensure equity of access, guaranteeing visibility for a marginalised community, and committing to the structural change necessary for genuine economic inclusion.

# 10 Youth and Community Development

This chapter evaluates the state of youth and community development provision in the local area. It considers the types of provision, their accessibility, effectiveness, and inclusivity, and compares local experiences with national and London-wide research. The findings highlight limited provision, low visibility, and barriers that mirror wider systemic issues in youth services across the UK.



## Availability of, and access to Youth Programs

The data reveals a severe shortage of access to youth provision in RBKC, creating a divide between young people on the Stable Way site and those in bricks-and-mortar housing. The perceived offer is limited to a handful of activities, with only three sports programmes reported, all used exclusively by Stable Way youth (30%). No participants from bricks-and-mortar housing reported access to any programmes. Arts, career training, mental health support, and pre-school activities were each identified by only one respondent (7%), while essential services like educational support, youth leadership, and volunteering opportunities were entirely absent.

This under-provision is compounded by a critical communication gap. In total, 21% of respondents stated there were no youth programmes available, and another 21% were unsure. This perception was most acute among bricks-and-mortar residents, with 75% reporting either “none” or being “unsure,” indicating they are effectively disconnected from existing services. The community’s demand for change is clear and direct. One respondent called for “*More access and programs for young people at the Harrow Club*,” while another emphasised the need for inclusive spaces, stating, “*More youth centres locally where our young people can made to feel welcome, not embarrassed.*”

These local failures reflect a systemic national and regional crisis. The National Youth Agency<sup>61</sup> census confirms that youth service provision across England is “patchy and uneven,” leaving many young people without structured support. This decline is not accidental; regional research by Berry<sup>62</sup> documents how deep cuts to London’s youth services since 2011 have disproportionately devastated provision for disadvantaged groups, severely reducing the visibility and reach of vital services. The situation in RBKC is therefore a direct consequence of long-term political choices that have created a void in which Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller youth, especially those not on the site, are left without safe spaces, positive role models, or pathways to development.

## Accessibility of Youth Programs

The perceived lack of youth provision is exacerbated by accessibility barriers that prevent engagement. No respondents found existing programmes “completely” or “mostly accessible.” Only 21%, all from Stable Way, described them as “somewhat accessible,” while most responses were clustered around “rarely accessible,” “not accessible at all,” or “unsure.” Notably, half of all respondents were unsure about accessibility, pointing to a profound communication gap and a deep disconnect between service design and community needs.

These barriers are not merely about location; they are practical, perceptual, and systemic. The community has identified specific gaps in provision, with one respondent calling for “*More out of hours activities for kids with Special Educational Needs*,” highlighting how current programmes fail to accommodate vulnerable groups.

This local testimony is reflected in national research, which confirms that participation is shaped by a complex web of obstacles beyond mere availability. The Centre for Youth Impact<sup>63</sup> identifies

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61 National Youth Agency [NYA], National Youth Sector Census: Snapshot, Spring 2023, (2023).

62 Berry, S., London Youth Service Cuts: 2011-2021: A BLIGHTED GENERATION, (2021).

63 Centre for Youth Impact, Young People’s Participation in Decision Making: UK 2022 Survey Report, (2022).

barriers including resource limitations, low confidence, digital exclusion, and the simple means to engage. Furthermore, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs<sup>64</sup> identified that a fundamental lack of awareness and communication is a primary barrier, leaving many young people entirely unaware of services in their area. This national context confirms that the high levels of uncertainty and perceived inaccessibility in RBKC are symptoms of a failure in outreach and programme design that fails to overcome these well-documented hurdles.

### **Multi-faceted Barriers to Participation**

The barriers preventing young people from accessing youth provision are multifaceted, deeply entrenched, and reflect a complex interplay of social and economic factors. The survey identified a lack of awareness of existing programmes as the most significant obstacle (50%), followed closely by family responsibilities (36%), safety concerns (36%), and transportation issues (29%). These burdens are not distributed equally; safety concerns and caregiving responsibilities were notably higher among Bricks and Mortar residents (50% for each), suggesting that gendered roles and a lack of local, trusted spaces disproportionately affect their access. Further barriers compound these issues, with digital exclusion and financial constraints impacting both groups. The interplay of challenges demands targeted, intersectional solutions that address the cultural, economic, and structural dimensions of exclusion.

These local findings are powerfully validated by the most recent national evidence. A report by the Children's Commissioner for England,<sup>65</sup> provides stark data showing that childcare, affordability, and safety are among the biggest barriers preventing young people from accessing out-of-school activities. The report specifically highlights that these barriers are most acute for girls and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, directly mirroring the heightened concerns around safety and family responsibilities reported by RBKC's Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. This alignment confirms that the localised barriers are not isolated but are part of a broader national pattern where failures in support and infrastructure, most severely impact already marginalised groups.

### **Perceived Effectiveness of Youth Programs**

The perceived effectiveness of existing youth provision is critically low, indicating a profound failure to meet the communities' needs. Only two respondents (14%) considered youth programmes to be effective, while 43% deemed them "not effective at all." This negative perception was significantly stronger among Bricks and Mortar residents, 75% of whom found programmes ineffective, reinforcing concerns that services are neither equitably distributed nor responsive to the specific challenges faced by those living outside the Stable Way site. A further 36% of all respondents were unsure of the programmes' effectiveness, underscoring a deep disconnection and lack of clear communication about the purpose and impact of these services.

This local crisis in confidence directly mirrors national research. The UK Youth Annual Report<sup>66</sup> confirms that a decade of cuts and chronic underfunding has left the youth sector

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64 All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth [APPG for Youth], Review of Youth Work in England: Interim report, (2021).

65 Children's Commissioner, The Children's Plan: The Children's Commissioner's School Census, (2025).

66 UK Youth, Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022/23. (2023).

in a precarious state, with many organisations unable to deliver the sustained, high-quality outcomes that young people deserve. Crucially, the report identifies that effectiveness in youth work is fundamentally built on trust and consistent relationships, precisely the elements that are most damaged by the short-term, fragmented funding and project-based provision that now characterises the sector. The high levels of uncertainty and perceived ineffectiveness reported in RBKC are therefore a direct consequence of a system that is structurally incapable of fostering the long-term, trusted connections necessary for genuine impact, particularly in marginalised communities.

## Desired Programs and Services

The community has articulated a clear and compelling vision for the youth provision they need to thrive. Demand for specific services is overwhelming, with sports and recreation (57%), safe youth spaces (50%), youth entrepreneurship and life skills (43%), and mental health services (36%) identified as top priorities. The need for safety and active recreation is particularly acute for those in bricks-and-mortar housing, who unanimously prioritised sports (100%) and safe spaces (75%). This call for safety was powerfully expressed by one respondent, who advocated for *“Making more green areas for our children and grandchildren to feel safe within the community.”*

Beyond immediate recreation, there is a strong, practical demand for programmes that support the transition to adulthood, including job readiness, digital literacy, and apprenticeship opportunities. This desire for a holistic approach that blends personal development with practical skills is strongly supported by national evidence. Youth Futures Foundation<sup>67</sup> emphasises that the most effective interventions for marginalised young people are those that combine personal support with skills development, replicating the community's call for a mix of safe spaces, life skills, and employment pathways. This model, which integrates wellbeing with tangible skill-building, is essential for supporting successful transitions into employment and adult life, confirming that the community's own priorities are aligned with what evidence shows works.

## Youth Participation in Decision-Making

Youth involvement in the decisions that affect their lives is severely limited. Only 14% of respondents felt young people were “often” involved, while over a third (36%) reported they were “not involved at all.” This disengagement is significantly more pronounced among Bricks and Mortar youth, 75% of whom reported little to no involvement, indicating their near-total exclusion from participatory processes.

When asked how to improve engagement, respondents suggested practical strategies such as youth forums (29%), leadership development programmes (21%), and direct involvement in local planning and events (29%). However, the high level of uncertainty (43%) regarding solutions is itself a telling finding. It suggests that young people have had so few meaningful opportunities to participate that they lack awareness of what is possible or are sceptical that their input would be valued. This underscores the necessity for a long-term, dedicated investment in building a participatory culture and the supportive infrastructure needed to sustain it.

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<sup>67</sup> Youth Futures Foundation [YFF], ANNUAL REVIEW 2023. (2023).

## Community Development Program Provision

Opportunities for adult community development are sparse, very much reflecting the lack of provision for young people. Only 21% of respondents were aware of community centres or gathering spaces, and fewer than 15% could identify any other form of development support. A profound information and provision gap exists, with 30% of Stable Way residents and 75% of bricks-and-mortar residents unaware of any local programmes or believing none exist.

This gap underscores the vital importance of strengthening existing, trusted community structures. The solution, as identified by the community itself, is to leverage and build upon the foundation they already have. As one respondent stated, the priority should be to “*develop our Residents’ Association and get more people involved.*” This direct feedback positions the Stable Way Residents’ Association not as a passive entity, but as the central, community-led vehicle for fostering wider adult involvement, improving communication, and ensuring that development efforts are both relevant and sustainable.

## Barriers to Accessing Community Development Initiatives

Adult community development programmes are largely inaccessible, with only 7% of respondents finding them completely accessible and 14% finding them “not accessible at all.” A significant 43% were unsure about accessibility, a clear indicator of failed communication and outreach that renders these programmes invisible to the very community they are meant to serve. The practical barriers are multifaceted, including transportation, cost, language, and a fundamental cultural inappropriateness that makes services feel unwelcoming. Deeper, systemic barriers are equally prevalent, with stigma, a lack of tailored services, and inaccessible childcare each cited by 50% of respondents. Those in bricks-and-mortar housing face an additional hurdle, with half (50%) reporting significant difficulties with registration processes.

This local experience is a direct response of the structural barriers documented at a national level. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation<sup>68</sup> identifies that poverty, which disproportionately affects ethnic minorities like Romani (Gypsy), and Irish Traveller communities, is not just a lack of income but a “lack of access to services and opportunities.” The report confirms that the very barriers identified here, childcare costs, the stigma associated with accessing services, and a lack of affordable transport, are key mechanisms that lock people in poverty and prevent participation in community life. This national context confirms that the community’s marginalisation is systemic. This is powerfully summarised by one respondent’s plea for advocacy: “*Have someone with authority speak on our behalf as no one seems to listen to a Traveller person.*” This testimony underscores that overcoming these deeply entrenched barriers requires not only more accessible programmes but also the empowered, community-led representation to ensure their voices are heard and acted on, by service providers.

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<sup>68</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation [JRF], UK Poverty 2022: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK, (2022).



## Summary

The evidence in this chapter paints a picture of a system in crisis, failing Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller youth and adults alike. Provision is not merely sparse; it is fragmented, invisible, and culturally disconnected. The result is a profound exclusion, where a lack of safe spaces, trusted relationships, and relevant pathways stifles potential and reinforces marginalisation. This is not an accident but the consequence of long-term disinvestment and a failure to co-design services with the community.

The way forward must be transformative, not incremental. Investment must be channelled into community-led infrastructure, starting with the bolstering of the Stable Way Residents Association as a central hub for adult engagement. Youth provision must be completely reimagined around the community's clear priorities: safe spaces, sports, and programmes that blend wellbeing with practical skills for employment. Critically, this requires a fundamental shift in power: embedding youth voice in decision-making and ensuring community representatives have a mandated seat at the table. The current model is broken; the future must be built on partnership, trust, and a commitment to enact the community's own vision for their development.

# 11 Conclusion

**This survey and its analysis provides a powerful and evidence-based account of the lived experiences of Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The findings, validated directly by the community, reveal a clear pattern of interconnected inequalities that demand a coordinated and decisive response. The following summary outlines the critical challenges and community-backed solutions identified in each key area, presenting a clear roadmap for action.**

Beginning with the demographic overview, the data reveals a community characterised by profound economic exclusion, with 86% of respondents unemployed and not seeking work. This is compounded by a near-universal lack of formal qualifications (93%), creating a foundational barrier to socio-economic mobility. However, the survey also reveals a resilient community with a strong cultural identity, presenting a vital asset for any collaborative intervention. The most urgent crisis lies in accommodation. The projected need for at least 31 additional pitches within the next decade, coupled with the profound unsuitability of bricks-and-mortar housing for 75% of those residents, highlights a critical failure in planning. Families are trapped between overcrowding on the Stable Way site and isolation in conventional housing, a situation worsened by reports of discrimination. The community's call is clear: urgently expand culturally appropriate pitch provision and improve the existing Stable Way site, while embedding cultural awareness within housing services.

This accommodation crisis has a direct and devastating impact on health and wellbeing. Critically poor self-rated physical (71%) and mental (79%) health are the norm, exacerbated by a deep-seated mistrust in services, with 43% of respondents experiencing discrimination when seeking care. The solution must be to co-design health services with the community, focusing on building cultural competence, ensuring trauma-informed care, and appointing a trusted, community-based liaison to rebuild broken bridges of trust.

The cycle of disadvantage is perpetuated within the educational landscape. Schools are largely perceived as unsupportive and culturally alienating environments, failing to support children with additional needs and rife with bullying. This results in the near-total absence of qualifications, severely limiting life chances. To break this cycle, we must embed Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller history and culture into the local curriculum, provide robust teacher training on inclusion, and deliver flexible, community-based adult education to address skills gaps.

These educational barriers directly feed into challenges in workforce development. The perception of inadequate training opportunities and widespread discrimination in employment (reported by 57%) creates a deep disengagement from the labour market. To foster economic inclusion, RBKC must champion accessible employment pathways, including tailored apprenticeships, job fairs with inclusive employers, and mentorship programs, all delivered through culturally competent outreach.

Finally, a severe deficit in youth and community development leaves the next generation without support. The near-invisibility of accessible youth programmes, particularly for bricks-and-mortar residents, and the lack of meaningful participation in decision-making, fosters marginalisation. The community's vision is for safe youth spaces, sports and recreation, and programmes that develop life skills. Investing in borough-wide, co-designed youth provision and strengthening the Stable Way Residents' Association as a community-led forum are essential steps to empower residents and nurture future leaders.

The challenges are significant, but they are not insurmountable. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has demonstrated a commitment to inclusion through its Local Plan and its ambitions in the Fairer Action Plan. This report provides the robust, community-validated evidence needed to translate those commitments into tangible actions for Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller residents.

The path forward requires a fundamental shift from consultation to co-design. By acting on the clear recommendations laid out in this report, from expanding pitch provision and embedding a dedicated Advocacy Support Officer, to co-producing health and education services, RBKC can begin to dismantle the structural barriers faced by these communities.

This is a pivotal opportunity for RBKC to lead by example. The community has entrusted the Council with their experiences and their solutions. We now urge the Council to embrace this blueprint for change and work collaboratively to build a truly inclusive borough where every resident can thrive. The time for planning is over; the time for partnership and delivery is now.





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