



## **FRIENDS, FAMILIES AND TRAVELLERS**

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***Annual Report***  
***August 2002 to July 2003***

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***About Friends, Families and Travellers***

Friends, Families & Travellers (FFT) was established during the passage through Parliament of the 1994 Criminal Justice & Public Order Bill and is one of a number of leading organisations which have emerged seeking to address the problems facing the Traveller community. Over a small number of years, FFT grew from an informal support group and network helping to deal with crises faced primarily by new Travellers as and when they arose, to a formal advice, information and training organisation providing a wide range of services to all Travellers nationwide – whether traditional or new, housed or on the road.

Consequently, FFT does not restrict its services to one particular group nor represent one group against another, but responds to the needs of the community as a whole. The overall objective of the organisation is to work towards a more equitable society where everyone has the right to travel and to stop without constant fear of persecution because of their lifestyle. There are separate organisations promoting the interests of specific groups such as Romany Gypsies, Scottish and Irish Travellers and new Travellers, as well as organisations providing specialist legal advice. FFT links with other relevant organisations wherever possible to maximise the effectiveness of services to the client groups.

As recognition of FFT's work in this field, the organisation was one of five shortlisted for the Human Rights Award 1999, part of the United Nations International Day of Human Rights.

FFT is a democratically controlled membership organisation run by a Management Committee, which is currently made up of eight Directors, five of whom are Travellers and two who are lawyers specialising in Traveller issues.



#### Rob Torkington

Rob has been a member of FFT for seven years, a member of the Management Committee for the same period of time and holds the office of Secretary. Rob is a new Traveller and has been living on the road for over ten years. He currently works as a maintenance engineer and lives on an unauthorised green lane site in Lincolnshire.



#### Franqui Wolf

Franqui has been a member of FFT for nine years and a member of the Management Committee for seven years. Franqui is from a mixed race background and a housed Traveller. She is active on the local Traveller forum, is a school governor and a member of Rainbow Circle.



### Tony Thomson

Tony has been a member of FFT for nine years and a member of the Management Committee for five years. Tony also worked extensively as a volunteer for the organisation before becoming a director and was instrumental in the development and delivery of the Woodland Skills Training for Travellers project (1998/99). He is a new Traveller who has been living on the road for over twenty years and currently lives on a green lane in Somerset. He had architectural training before taking to a life on the road. Tony is a single parent and active in rights of way and sustainable development issues.



### Liz Watkins

Liz, who was previously a client of FFT, has been a member of the organisation for four years, a member of the management committee for two years and holds the office of Personnel Officer. She is a new Traveller who lived on the road for over seven years before moving to an authorised private site nine years ago. FFT was active in securing planning permission for the site on which she lives. She currently works for a district council in Somerset and for Citizens Advice.



### Sorcha Rogers

Sorcha has worked for FFT for over six years as a volunteer and was contracted in from time to time to carry out financial work for the organisation. She has been a member of the management committee for two years and holds the office of Treasurer. She is a new Traveller and lived on the road for eight years before moving into housing. She is a qualified accounts technician and a performing artist.



### Chris Johnson

Chris is a senior partner at the Community Law Partnership in Birmingham and the lead solicitor on the firm's Traveller Advice Team. He has been working with Travellers for over nine years and has been involved in a number of groundbreaking legal challenges in Traveller law. The members of the Traveller Advice Team have been members of FFT for over six years.



### Marc Willers

Marc Willers is a barrister practising in Chambers at 1 Pump Court. He has a human rights practice and specialises in the representation of Gypsies and Travellers. As such he has an in depth knowledge of the laws that affect the Travelling Community and he is deeply committed to protecting and reinforcing the right of Travellers to maintain their lifestyle

and their cultural identity. He was co-opted as a management committee member during the year.



#### Neil Ansell

Neil is a journalist specialising in community affairs. He has over 20 years experience of working with Travellers, and has had links with FFT for over 5 years. Neil was also co-opted on to the management committee during the year.

The Directors are elected by the members at the AGM and are answerable directly to them. Management Committee meetings are held every six weeks and are open to all members. FFT, previously a Support Group, became a company (non-profit voluntary organisation) limited by guarantee on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1999, No. 3597515. This is the organisation's seventh annual report. The organisation's financial year runs from August to July.

A quarterly newsletter is produced for the membership and distributed free to Travellers throughout the UK. It includes latest legal and policy developments, project updates, news about Gypsies and Travellers in the UK and from around the world, articles by Travellers and a notice board. Back issues are available by request.

### **The Client Group & Services Delivery**

Travellers, due to their nomadic lifestyle and differing accommodation needs, can present a unique set of situations and difficulties which are often not appreciated by those in authority and professionals dealing with them. The difficulties faced by the Traveller community in accessing services and equality of treatment arise, in large part, as a consequence of ignorance, prejudice and negative stereotyping. We aim to provide a 'bridge' between the settled and Traveller communities.

Service delivery can be broken down into the following areas:

- Provision of advice and information to Travellers directly, either by phone, personal visit to our office, outreach work to sites or indirectly by advice to third party organisations.
- Legal advice and advocacy for individual Travellers, groups and families.
- Provision of professional statements on the need for sites and cultural aversion to 'bricks and mortar' accommodation at planning inquiries and injunction hearings to assist Travellers secure their own sites or influence decisions to evict from unauthorised sites.
- Provision of information to a range of inquirers, be they students, local authorities, other non-government organisations or the press.
- Liaison work with lawyers, legal organisations, local authorities, NGOs

- and police in relation to case work or policy development.
- Publication of educational and research material to either inform the Traveller community or to provide information about the Traveller community and their environment to others.
- Development and delivery of projects to benefit the Traveller community.
- Research into issues that affect Travellers and their families.

### **The FFT Advice & Information Unit**

The FFT Advice & Information Unit, from which the bulk of the organisation's work is carried out, is situated at Community Base in Brighton. Community Base is a charity run office building catering for the voluntary sector. FFT moved its office there from Glastonbury, Somerset in the beginning of 1999. The Unit has a national remit and operates the only national 24hr. telephone help-line for Traveller. The objective of the Unit is to develop expertise in Traveller related issues in order to deliver an informed and constructive service with the aim of achieving sustainable solutions to conflict. We also provide our services to a wide range of voluntary organisations and professionals working with Travellers.

Travellers, like any other group, have diverse needs and this is reflected in the caseload the Unit is presented with. Although many of the cases centre around accommodation issues in all their forms, the Unit is continually approached about discrimination, education, planning, training, welfare and health issues, as well as a variety of other legal matters.

The Unit carries out research, monitoring and mediation and remains very active in policy development through work with local authorities and government. In this capacity, FFT maintains an active presence on a number of local authority policy development working groups at district, county and regional levels. We work with individual councils nation wide for the development of specific policies regarding Travellers and are often requested to make submissions to policies at the draft stage. In addition to this, we are often invited to address conferences and seminars held by district or county councils on Traveller issues.

FFT continues to be an official consultee to the Gypsy Sites Branch, currently situated at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). In this role, the organisation continues to be involved in ongoing government funded research and maintains a regular exchange of correspondence with The Gypsy Sites Branch of the ODPM.

We maintain an ongoing working relationship with the Children's Society, The New Futures Association, Groundswell, The Traveller Law Research

Unit, The Traveller's School Charity, The Big Issue, Save the Children and The Community Law Partnership. We also maintain regular contact and often work in partnership with other Gypsy and Traveller organisations such as the National Association of Gypsy Women, The Gypsy Council for Education, Culture, Welfare and Civil Rights, The Advisory Council for the Education of Romanies and other Travellers, The London Gypsy and Traveller Unit, The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain and the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group. FFT is also a member of the Traveller Law Reform Coalition.

National and local government, health professionals, the Church, landowners, the media and voluntary and statutory organisations also regularly approach us about Travellers and nomadic lifestyles. This can be in relation to general information, research material, development of proactive policies, access to land, representation and referral to Travellers themselves or other Traveller organisations.



## THE YEAR 2002 TO 2003

**Staffing:** Following long term grants from the Tudor Trust and Comic Relief, the FFT Advice & Information Unit is now run by two full time members of staff in the posts of Unit Manager and Administrator (pictured here during a training session along with one of the FFT Directors and an expert on Family Law). The Unit also employs three part-time workers including a National Coordinator for the organisation, a National Policy Development Officer and a Website Development Worker. In July of 2003, the post of National Coordinator and National Policy Development Worker were combined into one full-time post and a new worker recruited. Two new part-time posts were also created in April 2003 with the launch of a three year Traveller Women's Health Project, funded by the Department of Health.

**Service Delivery:** Although the Unit offers its services to all Travellers, traditional Travellers continue to be the main beneficiaries of the Unit's service provision. This year's telephone monitoring figures show that approximately 72% of the client group are traditional Travellers (the main group being English Gypsies, followed by Irish Travellers) and 28% are other Travellers (the majority of whom are new Travellers, but also including Showmen and boat-dwellers or Bargees).

During the period of August 2002 to July 2003, the Unit received a total of 3,592 calls. These figures show a continuation in the increase in the number of calls coming into the Unit, with this year showing a noted increase of 31.8% from last year. This is an average of ten calls a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Of these, 24.6% were calls made directly to the Unit by Travellers themselves. This again is an increase of over 4.5% from last year. This breaks down into 33% from English or Welsh Gypsies, 26% from Irish Travellers and 41% from other Travellers (including new Travellers, Scottish Gypsy Travellers and Bargees). These figures show a decline in the numbers of Gypsies contacting the Unit, but an increase in contact by Irish and other Travellers.

The Unit's extensive telephone work frequently incorporates liaison work between Travellers and third parties including other Traveller groups, health and education professionals, solicitors, CABs, NGOs, the police and local authorities. 37.8% of calls received were from such agencies.

Just over 3% of calls were received on the 24 hour mobile, which repre-



sents a considerable decline since last year. This may well be due to the fact that a new 0845 Telephone Advice Line for Travellers, funded by the Legal Services Commission, was launched in April 2002.

The calls received, with the exclusion of calls relating to FFT business and administration / arrangements, break down as follows:

- 21.4% related to planning, (local and regional government submissions as well as individual clients' cases).
- 14.1% related to evictions
- 13.1% were general enquiries.
- 10.3% were enquiries about site provision and related issues.
- 7.6% were enquiries about education
- 5.2% were enquiries about health
- 4.7% were related to housing issues including getting into housing, and problems experienced by settled Travellers.
- 4.2% were about discrimination
- 4.2% were about fundraising, including grants for Travellers
- 4.2% were from or about the media
- 1.6% were about the police
- 1.9% were about benefits

FFT received and made a total of 823 calls regarding administration and arrangements this year, 27% of calls in and out of the Unit. This high percentage of calls partly reflects the work that was carried out as part of the Traveller Arts contribution to the Brighton Festival which FFT managed.

In total, 4,160 calls were made by the Unit this year in response to communications received. Of these calls, 24.6% were made directly to clients, an increase of 3.6% on last years figures. Again, the largest number of calls, at 31%, were made to Local Authorities and statutory agencies. 19.2% of calls were to legal advisors and solicitors and 16.9% to NGOs, other voluntary organisations or charities.

For more information and breakdown of telephone monitoring figures, please refer to the graphs at the end of this document.

**Visits to the Office:** The Unit received 161 visits to the office, which represents an increase of over 50% from last year. Of these, new Travellers remained the highest category of visitor representing 82.6% of visits made. Irish Travellers represented 8% of the visits made (which represents an increase of 100%) and Gypsies represented just over 4%, which is a slight decrease from last year. Other callers include media, representatives from



Local Authorities and statutory agencies, NGO's and other voluntary organisations.

Evictions remain the main reason for office visits at nearly 21%. Over 15.5% concerned legal advice, just over 16% concerned site provision, over 4.5% dealt with housing issues and benefits respectively, just over 7% related to general enquiries and just under 10.5% were to do with administration/arrangements (including use of the office phone).

**Casework:** This year the Unit has dealt with approximately 135 new Level 2 cases, an increase of 35% on last year's figures. Level 2 Casework is in depth and/or ongoing casework which does not include signposting.

Of the Level 2 cases, 39.2% involved Gypsies, 32.8% involved new Travellers, 24.8% involved Irish Travellers, 2.4% involved Bargees (boat-dwellers) and 0.8% involved Scottish Gypsy Travellers. Of these, evictions and site provision both made up 26.4%, legal matters made up 16%, and 11.2% were concerned with housing.

Planning: The Planning system remains the only avenue by which Travellers can secure appropriate accommodation for themselves. However, their treatment within the system is worrying with a success rate at the initial application stage of somewhere in the region of only 10-20% (as opposed to success rates of 90% for people in housing). The Unit continues to provide free advice and representation for Travellers on planning matters. Due to recent changes concerning funding by Community Legal Services, planning work has also become an avenue for the organisation to attract professional fees without incurring any cost to the client.

This year the Unit was involved in 13 planning cases, which represents an increase of two cases from last year. Of these, five were successful, securing planning permission for Gypsies and Travellers, while the remaining are still pending.

Race and discrimination: This year the Unit has been involved in approximately 14 cases relating to discrimination (police harassment and discriminatory policing, refusal of service in public houses and shops, harassment of Travellers in housing including racially motivated attacks, and discrimination by Local Authorities including the setting up of a hotline to report the presence of Travellers).

Other Work: In the course of casework, Unit staff have made 21 visits to families and/or sites, accompanied clients at one police visit and one housing interview, and made one research trip.

Unit staff have given 12 broadcast press interviews in addition to providing regular press releases.

Unit staff have represented FFT at 20 meetings with other NGOs, including ongoing work to promote the Traveller Law Reform Bill, which is currently being carried forward in partnership via the Traveller Law Reform Coalition.

Unit staff have also attended 20 meetings with statutory agencies including local and central government. Much of this work has been concerned with consultation on policy development.

Unit staff provided training on 8 occasions to local authority officers and county court judges.

Unit staff also attended 5 meetings concerning project work related to Travellers including the Traveller Arts Project.

The majority of staff also attend 6 weekly Management Committee meetings outside of office hours.

**Working Groups:** FFT continues to be very active in policy development at a local, regional and national level with government, the police and local authorities. FFT remains a member of the Metropolitan Police Travellers Working Group, the Sussex Traveller Forum, the Brighton & Hove Racial Harassment Forum, and the Horsdean Management Committee. FFT continues to be an official consultee of the Gypsy Sites Branch (ODPM) and now has a representative on the management committee of the newly formed Traveller Law Reform Coalition. The Coalition is now the forum for most major meetings with the ODPM which are generally hosted by the Commission for Racial Equality, which has become an active agency in facilitating the work of the Traveller Law Reform movement. This included the setting up of an All Party Parliamentary Group on Traveller Law Reform which met with Yvette Cooper MP. FFT is also a member of the Traveller Law Research Unit Advisory Group, Irish Traveller Movement's Culture and Heritage Day Steering Group and the Brighton Festival Traveller Art Exhibition Steering Group.

**Policy Development & Submissions:** This year, the Unit made over fifteen policy submissions, including the ODPM Managing Unauthorised Camping Operational Guidance, ODPM research on Counting Gypsies, Human Rights Commission on Rights of the Child, as well as three equality strategies, a Best Value Review, and a number of other policy documents.

**Conferences, Forums & Events:** This year FFT participated in the International Roma Nation Day, was asked to speak at the Local Government Association conference on Traveller issues, was asked to participate in a session of the House of Lords / House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights, attended the Allen Lane Lecture in London, was invited to the launch of 'Profiles of Prejudice' at Portcullice House, and ran information stalls at the National Probation Services Conference, Glastonbury Festival and the Big Green Gathering.



**The FFT Website & Cyber Pilots Project:** Following three year funding from Comic Relief, FFT has launched a new website designed to provide a broad base of up to date and relevant information for the Traveller community, which is now in its second year. A central part of the website is an interactive site for Traveller children with low literacy and numeracy skills. The children's site is run by a steering group and the children participating in the development of the site (called Cyber Pilots) come from a wide range of backgrounds and levels of skill. This is the second year of the project and a full report on the development of the Cyber Pilot site is available from the Advice & Information Unit. Alternatively, please visit our website at [www.gypsy-traveller.org](http://www.gypsy-traveller.org).

**Traveller Gypsy Art Project at the Brighton Fringe Festival:** This year saw the first ever inclusion of Traveller art and performance at the Brighton Festival, held in May. Through funding from the Scarman Trust, the Unit was able to facilitate the inclusion of Traveller art at all levels of the fringe festival, including contributions by Scottish Gypsy Travellers, English Gypsy children and new Travellers in the form of photography, paintings & drawings, poetry readings, performance art, tattooing, costume design and film. Two photographic exhibitions by non-Travellers featuring Traveller life also featured at the festival. All the above work can be viewed at the FFT website given above.

**Educational Advice for Travellers (EAT):** EAT was set up in late 2000 to meet a gap in service provision left by the decline in activity of the Travellers School Charity (TSC). Fiona Earle, who had worked with TSC for over a decade, left the charity to work independently in order to continue the provision of free educational resources and materials for Traveller children. Lacking the structures of a formalised organisation, Fiona approached FFT requesting support for her work through the provision of supervisory and administrative services. As it was felt that there was a great need to ensure a continuation of the invaluable service TSC had provided, the management committee agreed to adopt EAT as an umbrella project and consequently acts in a supervisory and administrative capacity providing the or-

organisational structures and safeguards necessary for EAT to function effectively.

Following the development and production of a series of ten storybooks for Traveller children based on a character called 'Tess the Traveller' (funded by Lloyds TSB), the books were launched in early 2003 and distributed free to Traveller children throughout the UK. In addition to this, Fiona continues to distribute free materials, advise on educational options, liaise with Travellers and educational professionals and attend conferences and events. A separate detailed report on EAT's activities can be obtained through the FFT Advice & Information Unit.

***The Travellers Aid Trust:*** The Travellers Aid Trust (TAT) was set up in 1988 as a registered charity (no. 299463) to aid in the relief of poverty, hardship, sickness and distress (along with a range of related activities necessary to achieving this objective) among such persons as adopt, whether temporarily or permanently and regardless of race, culture, nationality or ethnic origins, a nomadic style or habit of life. After being active for a number of years, the Trust fell dormant for nearly a decade. In the late 90's, the Trustees approached FFT suggesting a takeover of the charity as the objectives of the two organisations are practically identical. After careful consideration and consultation, FFT offered instead to revive and administer the Trust, helping to maintain it as a separate sister organisation. In June 2000, a new board of Trustees was elected made up of a mixture of one of the original trustees, FFT directors and independent parties. In April 2003, the Trust came into a modest bequest and became fully active in July 2003.

### ***Objectives and Outcomes***

As part of our Comic Relief funding, we were required to identify three objectives we hoped to achieve during the year. These were to:

1. Review and revise current job-descriptions and staff responsibilities and improve office resources and equipment.
2. Improve and develop service delivery monitoring systems. In particular to develop an effective method of collecting feedback from clients.
3. Apply for Community Legal Services accreditation.
4. Continue to improve the computer and internet skills, literacy and numeracy levels of Traveller children through the running of an interactive website.

As with last year, the organisation has experienced mixed success with regards to meeting the objectives set out. The organisation has successfully carried out major reviews of job-descriptions, staffing responsibilities and has updated and improved office resources and equipment. The Directors

have also been reviewing the salary scales and are carrying out benchmarking exercises to bring the organisation pay scales up to date as part of the overall staffing review.

Whilst FFT has a complaints procedure and new service delivery monitoring systems have been introduced, the organisation still intends to develop effective methods of collecting feedback from clients. This has proved to be a challenge as feedback is hard to gain in the sorts of "crisis" situations that FFT often has to work with. This is further complicated by the fact that the client group is largely mobile and the majority have very low literacy skills. Current service delivery monitoring and feedback models will need to be further adapted and developed to accommodate this.

The organisation has continued to have great success with the Cyber Pilots project to improve computer and internet skills, literacy and numeracy levels amongst Traveller children through the interactive website.

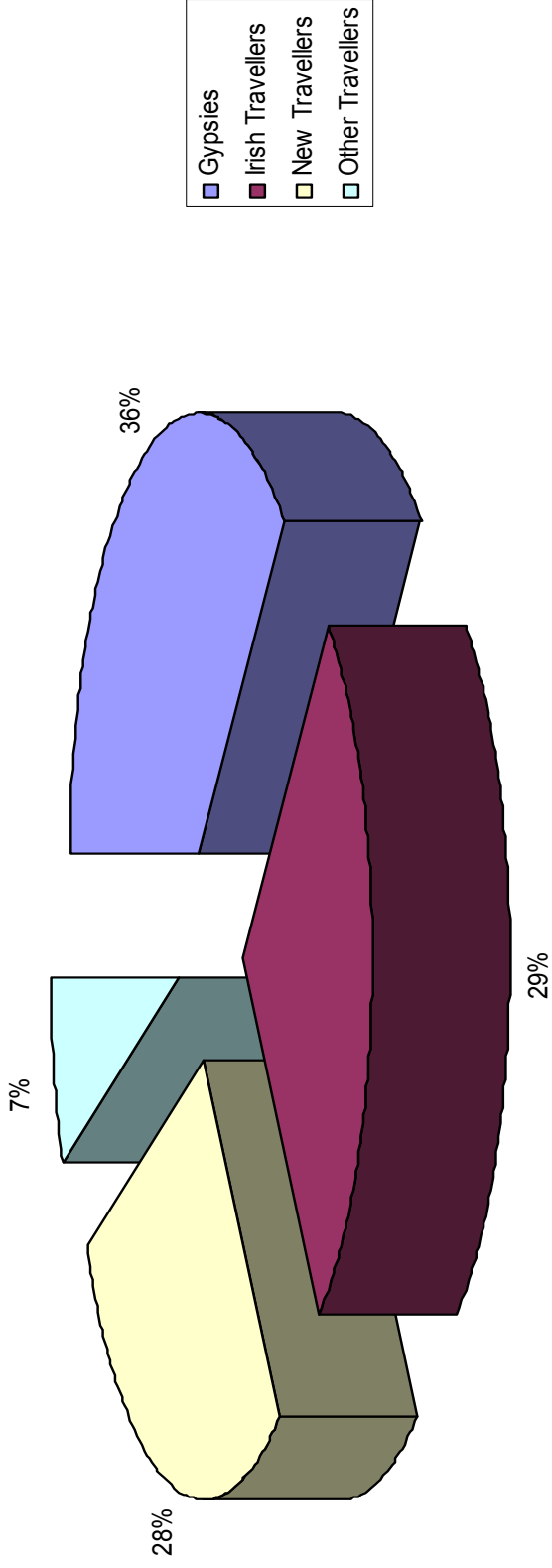
Although still an objective, the organisation did not apply for Community Legal Services accreditation. Nevertheless, staff met with advisors for CLS throughout the year and implemented all the necessary procedures and practices to meet accreditation standards. The reason the application itself was not made during this year was due to a change of management staff and it was felt that securing the accreditation could be deferred until later to enable the new management staff member to settle into the post and to focus on other more urgent tasks.

### ***Funding Sources***

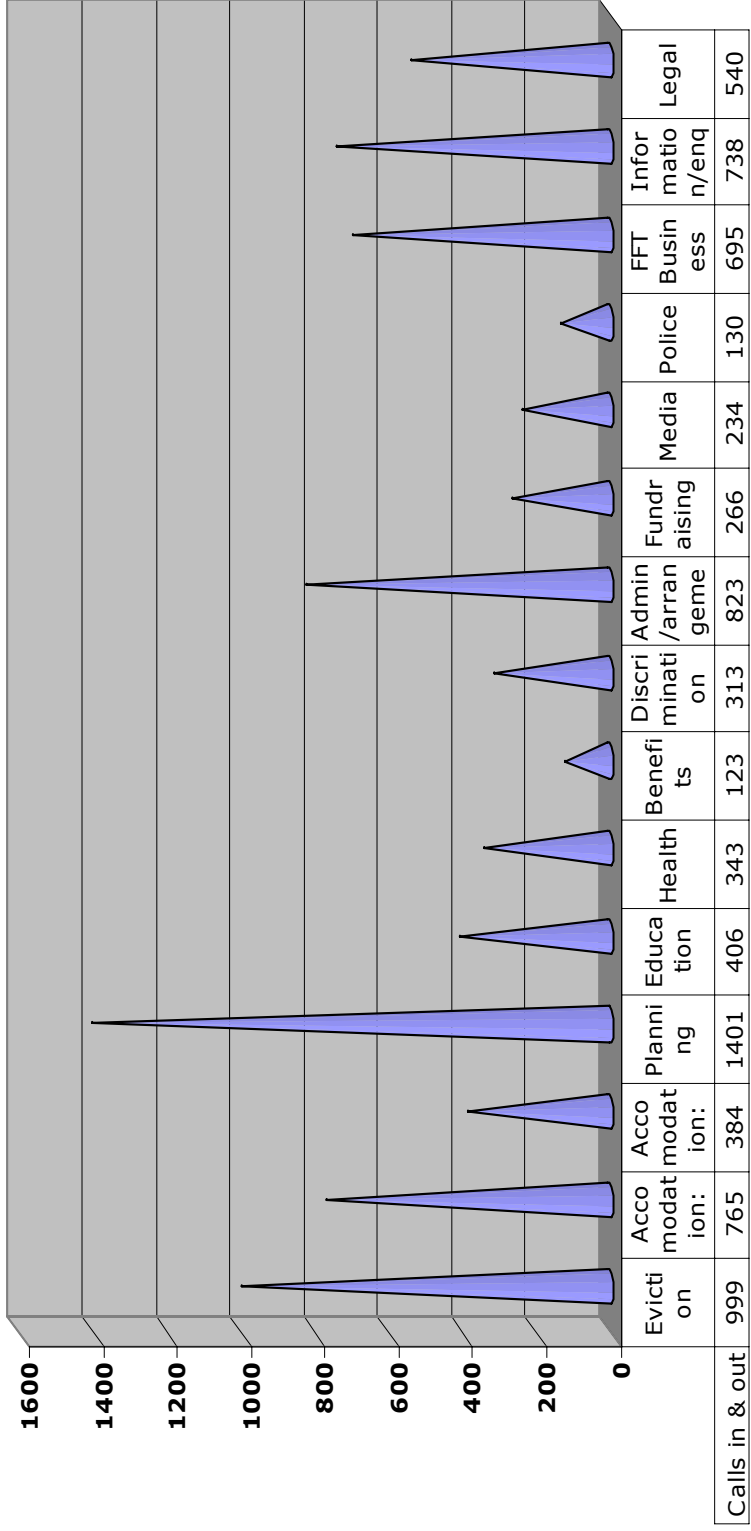
Over the last year, funding for the Unit and has come from The Tudor Trust, Comic Relief, The Stone Ashdown Foundation, The Alan Lane Foundation, The Charities Advisory Trust, The Churches Commission for Racial Justice, the Lyndhurst Settlement, The Travellers Aid Trust, One Pump Court and Two Garden Court. The Unit has also secured project funding from the Department of Health and the Scarman Trust. FFT has also received a number of small donations from members and individuals supportive of our work.

A financial report for the Unit is attached.

# Client Group

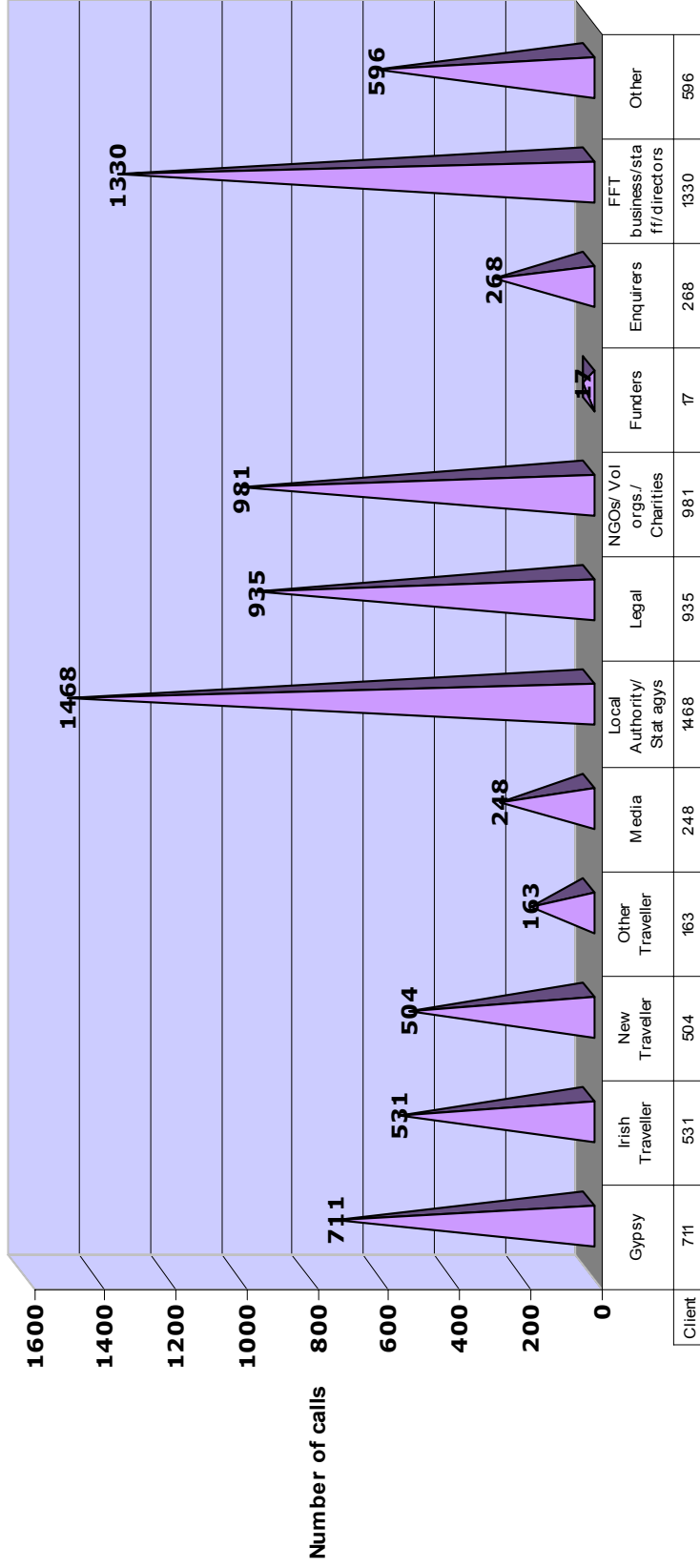


## Calls in & out





## Calls in/out per client



## CALLS IN AND OUT BY YEARLY QUARTERS

