



FRIENDS, FAMILIES AND TRAVELLERS 2003 - 2004

Introduction

Friends, Families & Travellers (FFT) was established during the passage through Parliament of the 1994 Criminal Justice & Public Order Bill and has emerged a lead organisation seeking to address the problems facing the Gypsy and Traveller community. Starting as an informal support group working primarily with new Travellers, FFT soon began working with Gypsies and Irish Travellers and within a few years had grown into a formal organisation providing advice and information along with a wide range of other services to Gypsies and Travellers nationwide.

Very early on in its history, FFT developed a working relationship with the Public Law Project and provided crucial ground work for two land mark legal challenges which resulted in local authorities being required to make basic welfare enquiries before being able to carry out evictions. FFT's ongoing work in this field gained recognition when the organisation was shortlisted for the Human Rights Award in 1999. Taking this work forward, FFT is now one of the three lead agencies in the Traveller Law Reform Coalition.

FFT is a 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. FFT, is a non-profit company limited by guarantee (No. 3597515).

FFT's mission statement is to work towards a more equitable society where everyone has the right to travel and to stop without fear of persecution because of their lifestyle.

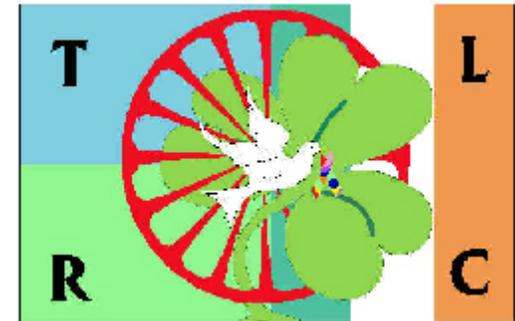


Service Delivery

- 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 Traveller Law Reform Coalition



As one of the original members of Cardiff Law School's Traveller Law Research Unit's Advisory Committee, FFT remains a key organisation with in the Traveller law reform movement. In 1997, the Traveller Law Research Unit (TLRU) held the first of four conference on law reform for Travellers. At this conference, a proposal was made to create a common platform to take forward the reform debate.

Just before the final TLRU conference in November of 2002, the Traveller Law Reform Coalition (TLRC) came into being. TLRC is an alliance of Traveller groups, which have come together out of this 'common platform', to campaign and promote the Traveller Law Reform Bill. The Traveller Law Reform Bill is the product of over four years of discussion and collaboration by Gypsies and Travellers and their representative organisations and service providers in the UK.



Not only was FFT one of the central organizations involved in the development of the Traveller Law Reform Bill, but we are now one of the three lead agencies supporting the work of the TLRC and members of the management committee. Since its inception, the Coalition has actively lobbied ministers in both houses and central government directly to bring about law reform for Travellers and have successfully set up an All Party Parliamentary Group on Traveller Law Reform, which requires cross party support and representation.



THE ADVICE & INFORMATION UNIT

A high quality front line services for Gypsies and Travellers throughout the UK

During the year, the Unit staff dealt with over 190 cases. Of these, 37% were on behalf of Gypsies, 33% were on behalf of new Travellers and 28% were on behalf of Irish Travellers. Every effort is taken to ensure that cases are managed and monitored to Legal Services Commission standards.

Not only does FFT deal with the largest number of cases of any other Gypsy and Traveller NGO in the country, but FFT is also the only organisation carrying out casework on behalf of new Travellers and Irish Travellers at a national level.



Staff

Emma Nuttall initially started working for FFT as a volunteer. She is now the Unit Manager and has been working for FFT for nearly 5 years. She is a senior case worker and represents the organisation at a local and national level.



Anna Hinton (Administrator) joined FFT two and a half years ago and carries out all the administrative duties of the organisation. Anna also helps out with case work and assists with the management of the Unit and project finances.



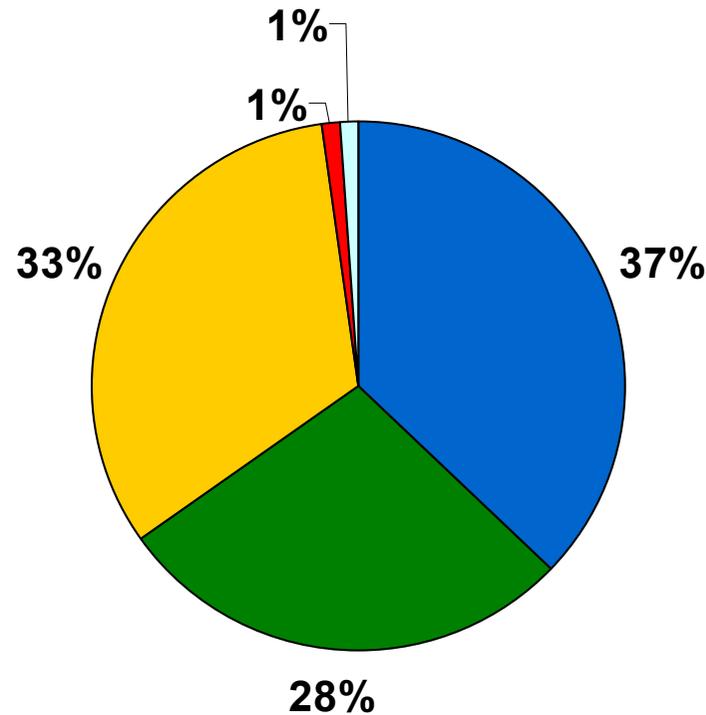
The Client Group

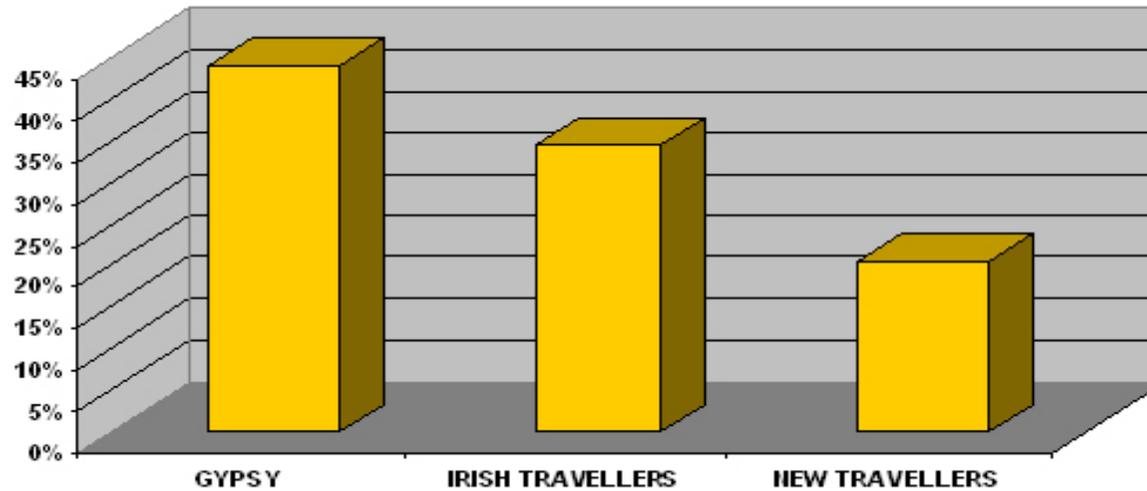
There are no accurate figures for Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, but the Council of Europe estimates that they number around 300,000, with 200,000 believed to be living in housing and 100,000 living in caravans.

The only other official estimate available is the bi-annual Gypsy caravan count carried out by local authorities in England and published twice a year by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The figures published for January 2004 show the national total number of caravans counted as 14,362. Of these 3,571 (25%) represented unauthorised encampments.

Geographically, both the highest numbers of caravans and levels of unauthorised encampments are shown to be in the East, with the South East and South West showing the second and third highest numbers respectively.

CLIENT GROUP





Telephone Monitoring

This year the Unit received over 3000 calls. Of these 35% were made by Gypsies and Travellers contacting the Unit directly. Of these, 44% were made by Gypsies, 34.5% were made by Irish Travellers and 20.5% were made by new Travellers. These figures show an increase in calls to the Unit by Gypsies and Irish Travellers of nearly 20%. Just over 39% of call to the Unit were made by solicitors, local authorities, the police, NGO's and other agencies with the remainder of calls relating to general administration.

During the year, 4,400 calls were made by the Unit, which represents an increase of approximately 8%. Of these, 36% were made directly to clients and 51% were made to other agencies on behalf of clients.

The geographic spread of calls both in and out of the Unit was as follows:

The North East & Yorkshire	2.9%	West Midlands	1.18%	The South East	58.2%
The North West	2.7%	East Midlands	2.8%	The South West	5%
Eastern	5.7%	London	4.5%	National	15.2%



A

This case study relates to a Gypsy family in the South East with whom the Unit has worked with for a year and a half. The couple and their teenage son live on their own land and are attempting to obtain planning permission for a site. The wife suffers from depression, and the son has special educational needs. A referral was made to social services (with the family's permission) under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, child in need, as the council had an injunction on the site which blocked the family's access to water, electricity and a toilet, and thus heat and lighting. Their mobile home was very damp, with water running down the inner walls in the day, and which frosted over at night leaving their bedding permanently damp. Social services visited and agreed their home was unfit for habitation and wrote to the council recommending connection of services. A Traveller Health Visitor was also identified in the area, and was put in touch with the family, who say she has been very supportive. A representative from the Unit appeared as an expert witness at the family's planning inquiry and gave evidence on the need for sites. The family have also been assisted in making a complaint to the police under the Race Relations Act (Incitement to Racial Hatred charge) with regards to The Sun newspaper's racist coverage of Gypsies.

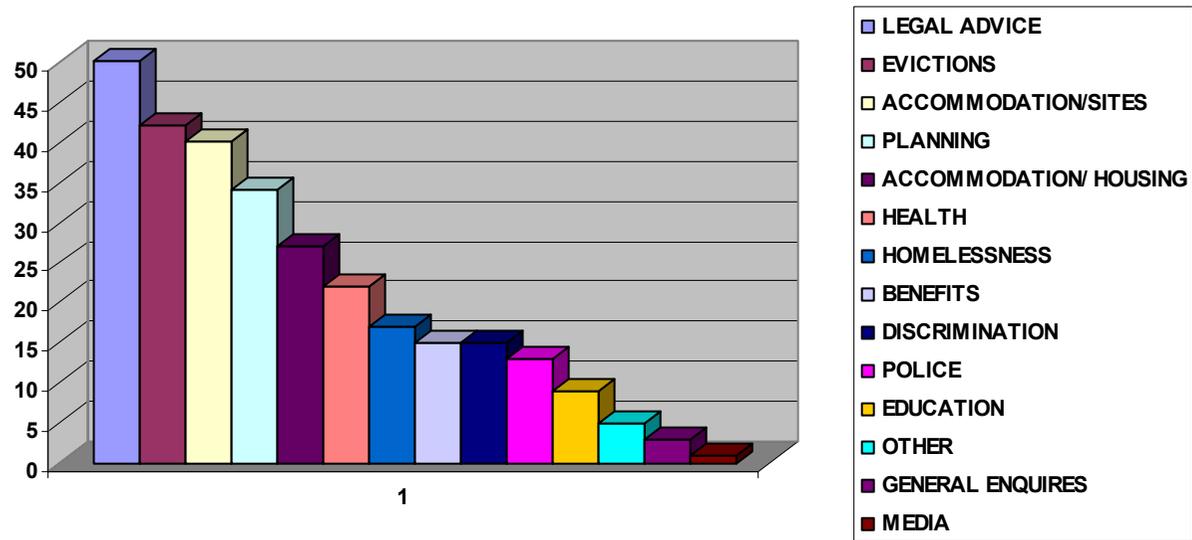
B

This case study relates to an extended Irish Traveller family who have spent the last year stopping in the North West. The family travel in a group which varies in size from 2-9 caravans and sometimes splits and travels in smaller groups. The families do not have an authorized site, and there are no vacant plots in the area. The families ring us on average every fortnight for assistance in negotiating stopping time. We have negotiated extensively with council and police officers in the area, and the courts.

This work has centred primarily on ensuring councils carry out welfare inquiries when evicting from their own land, including gaining additional stopping time for women who have babies so midwives can visit for the required daily post birth period, for pregnant women to have scans, and to be near one of the children who was in hospital. In addition to this, the Unit negotiated with the council in relation to the need for sites in the area (which included joint visits by council officers and Travellers to potential sites) as well as successfully resolving a situation in which private landowners had barricaded the families onto a piece of land.



CASEWORK PROFILE

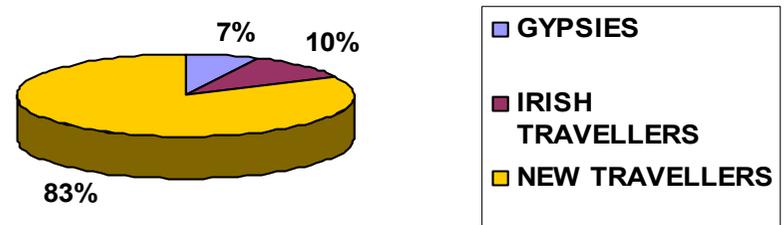


Office Visits

Throughout the year, the Unit received a total of 235 office visits. 96% of these were made by clients - 83% by new Travellers, 10% by Irish Travellers and 7% by Gypsies. The services provided during these visits can be broken down as follows:

Homelessness	7.5%	Eviictions	10.2%
Accommodation	13.3%	Planning	2.7%
Education	2.4%	Health	5.5%
Benefits	8.2%	Discrimination	1.4%
Police Complaints	2.7%	Misc.	22.2%
General Advice & Information	3.4%	General Legal Advice	20.5%

OFFICE VISITS BY CLIENTS

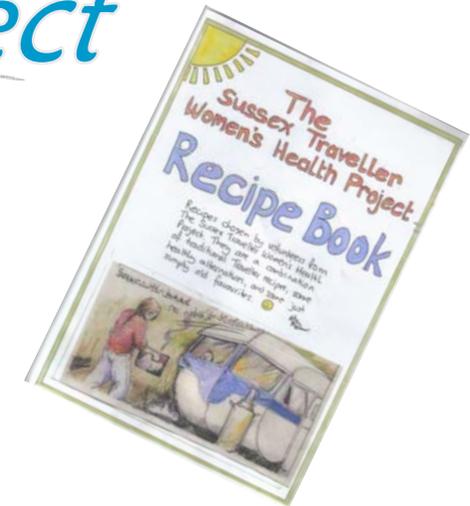


Sussex Traveller Womens Health Project

Objectives

The objectives of the project, which is funded by the Department of Health and in its second year, are:

- To establish a model of Traveller participation in the promotion of health.
- To develop the skills of Traveller Women in providing community based health services.
- To assist with dialogue between Travellers and Health Service providers.
- To reduce inequalities in existing services and highlight gaps.



The Project decided to create an illustrated cook book of Traveller Recipes which would be accessible to those with low literacy skills

The Outreach worker is available to assist with cooking for special diets



Arts and Crafts

The project has utilised Arts and Health funding to facilitate a series of workshops making a banner for the project. Art and crafts workshops present a good forum for informal communication and the exchange of ideas.





Training Programme

The project aims to work with Travellers to identify health needs and interests and set up learning opportunities and exchanges with support from the Outreach worker.



Zoe Matthews RMN, BA (hons) MA is the Health Project Manager, a trained Psychiatric Nurse with a degree in Anthropology and Sociology and has an MA in Health Promotion, where she specialised in the Health of Gypsies and Travellers. Initially joining as a volunteer, Zoe has now been working with FFT for six years.

Case Work

The Health Project has worked extensively with the volunteers of the project, often carrying out essential casework as the need arises, or signposting volunteers to appropriate services. The following issues have been identified during the duration of our work:

Teenage Pregnancy	Evictions
Sexual Assaults	Domestic Violence
Terminal Illness	Support for Carers
Severe and Debilitating Illness requiring regular hospitalisation	

It has taken time and commitment to build a relationship with this group of women. They have all used the project at various stages, and two of the women described have never missed a session. We cannot wave a wand, but we provide an opportunity for something different. Two of these women are now receiving personal skills training so that they can support a Young Adult Traveller project at the local comprehensive. They will be working with the school over a month in order to raise cultural awareness and support many of the Traveller kids at the school. Two of the young mothers are planning to re-enter the education system after we have worked with them, helping them with the support and confidence to do this. All of these women have represented the project at some time in its duration. It is testimony to their spirit that they have been able to do this despite the demands of their lives.



Avril Fuller (project Outreach Worker), pictured on the right with two women from the project on an exchange trip to Pavee Point in Ireland. Avril is from a Traveller background and originally joined FFT as a volunteer.



cyber pilots!

Now in its third year, the objective of this project was to create an interactive website for Traveller children with low literacy and numeracy skill.

The project, funded by Comic Relief, aimed to deliver this by creating and publicising a tailor made website for Traveller children and undertaking limited outreach work. 2003-2004 was a very successful year seeing a 50% rise in participation in the website and outreach projects. For more projects and work, including poems, stories and artwork, visit www.gypsy-traveller.org/cyberpilots



Tammy Furey is the Cyber Pilots Web Development Worker and joined FFT three years ago.

Tammy also produces the FFT newsletter and designed and maintains the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition website.

www.comelookatus.org

In conjunction with CHASE and Save the Children Scotland, the CyberPilot project provided workshops in web and graphic design and also assisted in building the site. The project resulted in the ComeLookatUs.org website that was launched in Inverness in the summer of 2003. The website launch was covered in the local paper and on the local BBC radio station (for an audio clip, go to: www.comelookatus.org; "About us"; "Media").



Denham Road

Denham Road is a housing estate in Burgess Hill. The CyberPilot project has been working with the Young People here for 2 years. Work continues with the internet, video cameras, digital cameras and web design. See www.gypsy-traveller.org/cyberpilots/projects/denham.htm.

Below -Young People at the Summer Club in Denham Road: Self-documented.



Curly

Curly is her name
Curly is her belly
Tight grey locks of hair
Hang like metal springs from her tummy

Grey brown bearded mouth
And grey brown moustachy nose
She looks like an untidy bush
That's my dog Curly Wurly

Curly is her name
Crazy is her nature
Like a wild tiger with her prey
She rips things apart
Shaking her head from side to side

When food is served
She is friendly and licking
But surprise makes Curly vicious and nervous



An example of work by a Young Person at East Sussex Traveller Education



Working in Partnership with:

The Traveller Law Research Unit,
Save the Children,
The Community Law Partnership,
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
The Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group,
The National Romany Rights Association
The Canterbury Gypsy Support Group
The Children's Society,
The New Futures Association,
Groundswell,
The Traveller's School Charity,
The Big Issue.

as well as...

National, regional and local government, the police, health professionals, the Church, landowners, the media and other voluntary and statutory organizations.

With many thanks to our funders

The Travellers Aid Trust

The Tudor Trust

The Stone Ashdown Trust

**The Churches Commission for
Racial Justice**

Comic Relief

The Charities Aid Trust

The Department of Health

The Scarman Trust

2 Garden Court Chambers

and

1 Pump Court Chambers



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