



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

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Dear Kate and Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 29 January about the Government's consultation on powers for dealing with unauthorised development and encampments.

I am sure you are now aware that the Government has published its response to the consultation on 6 February. This announcement includes a comprehensive range of further measures which will help to achieve the Government's overarching aim of fair and equal treatment for travellers, while respecting the interests of the settled community.

I recognise that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are amongst the most disadvantaged in British society and that further action is needed, particularly in the areas of health and education. In response to the Race Disparity Audit, my Department has provided £200,000 of funding between six pilot projects which aim to improve outcomes for GRT communities in the areas of educational attainment, health and social integration. We have also funded 22 projects which support Roma communities across England through the Controlling Migration Fund. These projects are based in specific regions and provide a range of interventions such as improving access to services, improving health outcomes, increasing the provision of English language lessons, wider community outreach work and support for children and young people. My Department also funds two further projects which are working to tackle discrimination and hate crime experienced by GRT communities: Herts GATE, who support victims of hate crime within GRT communities and encourage the reporting of hate crime incidents, and #OperationReportHate, who raise awareness within GRT communities about hate crime, and the need to report it.

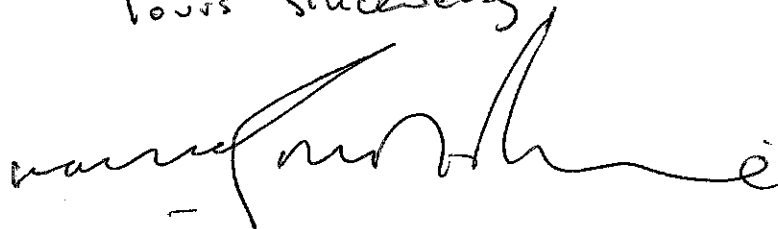
As demonstrated by the publication of the Race Disparity Audit on the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website, the Government remains committed to 'explain or change' disparities. Currently, the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website has over 50 measures that present on GRT groups. However, we recognise that there are still gaps. From 2021, we will introduce a census category of 'Roma' alongside the existing 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller' category. The Race Disparity Unit is working with the Office for National Statistics and other Departments to enhance the consistency of ethnicity data collection. I am also aware of the recommendations made by the international bodies you refer to. We continue to work with these organisations and ensure that our work is cognisant of their recommendations. I take our responsibilities and obligations in this area very seriously.

In terms of your point about the need for traveller sites, we have reminded local authorities in a Written Ministerial Statement of their responsibilities under national planning policy to make transit sites available, and for joint-working between authorities on the setting of pitch and plot targets. We have also announced our work to make information on permanent and transit sites freely available in open data format, so that local authorities have a single clear source of data on the availability of such sites. I note your concerns about the definition of travellers in planning policy, but I should confirm that the revised National Planning Policy Framework published in July 2018 clarified that travellers who are outside the definition in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites should have their needs assessed under the Framework. The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites also reminds local authorities that plan-making and decision-taking should aim to reduce the number of unauthorised developments and encampments and make enforcement more effective.

Our announcement has promoted the grant funding that is available for the provision of new pitches as part of our Affordable Homes Programme. Between 2011 and March 2015, Homes England spent over £43 million delivering more than 500 new pitches and refurbishing and nearly 400 more refurbished pitches, through the Traveller Pitch Funding programme. In addition, under the 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programme, allocations were agreed for 68 new pitches with £4.9m funding, 55 of these have been completed. Two traveller pitch allocations have been made in the 2016-21 Affordable Homes Programme, delivering a total of 30 pitches.

I regret that due to existing diary commitments, I am unable to meet you at present, however I have asked that Lord Bourne, Minister for Faith, meets with you to discuss these important issues, his office will be in touch shortly to arrange a convenient time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Brokenshire', written in a cursive style.

RT HON JAMES BROKESHIRE MP