

Discrimination facing Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the UK today

Marc Willers QC and Tim Baldwin, Garden Court Chambers, set out an overview of the discrimination and socio-economic disadvantages experienced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the UK which, despite equality legislation and legal protection for their traditional way of life, has changed little over recent years. The failure of policy-makers to address the inequalities they experience was highlighted by the Women and Equalities Committee report: *Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities*. The authors review recent Strasbourg and domestic discrimination case law relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. They conclude by identifying some goals to make better use of human rights and equalities legislation both as part of bringing cases and campaigning to improve protection for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Overview

On January 27, 1945 Soviet troops liberated the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Quite rightly we reflect on the terrible fact that the Nazis murdered six million Jews in the Holocaust. Yet there is often little mention of the hundreds of thousands of Roma and Sinti people that were also murdered by the Nazis during World War II, in what has become known as the Porrajmos (the 'Devouring').

The question always remains as to how the Nazis were able to commit these terrible crimes with impunity? The Nazi propaganda machine played a very significant role by reinforcing age old prejudices. Roma and Sinti were made scapegoats, blamed for the ills of society, dehumanised and characterised or stereotyped as anti-social thieves and vagabonds. The propaganda campaign worked; the settled population was conditioned to believe what they were being told (by what would now clearly be understood as '*hate speech*') and there was little opposition when Roma and Sinti were rounded up before being transported to camps from which they would never return.

Over 70 years later the horror of the Nazi concentration camps is hard to imagine but the widespread prejudice that Roma face in Europe (known as '*Anti-Gypsyism*' or '*Romaphobia*') has not abated; it is an unwelcome fact of their daily lives and with the growth of populist politics throughout Europe such prejudice appears to be on the rise. Politicians throughout Europe continue to use hate speech against Roma which in turn creates a climate in which racist violence is thought acceptable by offenders and, tragically, in recent years, Roma have been the victims of violent racist attacks and murder. For example, in 2012 a Slovakian policeman shot dead three Roma and severely injured two more in a killing spree which he said was motivated by a desire to '*solve the Roma problem*'; whilst in 2013 four men

with links to nationalist organisations were jailed in Hungary for nine separate attacks on Roma and the murder of six people. Meanwhile, Roma continue to be forcibly evicted from their homes without the provision of suitable alternative accommodation, their children continue to suffer segregation in schools and they tend to live on the margins of society.

We are not immune from this hateful and discriminatory behaviour here in the UK. Romani Gypsies, Travellers and Roma migrants are amongst the most discriminated ethnic groups in our country, routinely targeted by those using hate speech both online and in other media platforms.

Gypsies and Travellers have been living in the UK for hundreds of years and in some rural areas of the country represent the main established ethnic minority group, yet they remain amongst the most disadvantaged racial groups in our society, with low levels of life expectancy, high vulnerability to serious illness, poor mental health, high child mortality rates and low levels of educational attainment and literacy.

A key contributor to the poor socio-economic status of Gypsies and Travellers is that thousands of families still have no lawful place to station their caravans and live their traditional way of life. Meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers should be a relatively simple task, but in the face of widespread prejudice amongst the settled population, successive governments have done little to address the shortage of sites.

Meanwhile, those Gypsies and Travellers without lawful sites continue to face eviction and a forced nomadic life in which children cannot attend school and healthcare needs are not properly addressed.

Romani Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Scottish and Welsh Gypsy Travellers are all entitled to protection from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 (EA).

Nevertheless, Gypsies and Travellers still experience discrimination of the most overt kind. By way of example, 'no blacks, no Irish, no dogs' signs disappeared long ago, but 'no Travellers' signs, used intentionally to exclude Gypsies and Travellers, are still widespread.

In 2004 Trevor Phillips, then Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), compared the prejudice experienced by Gypsies and Travellers living in the UK to that of black people living in the American deep south in the 1950s, and in 2005, Sarah Spencer, a CRE Commissioner, drew further attention to their plight in an article entitled 'Gypsies and Travellers: Britain's forgotten minority':¹

The European Convention on Human Rights ... was a key pillar of Europe's response to the Nazi holocaust in which half a million Gypsies were among those who lost their lives. The Convention is now helping to protect the rights of this community in the United Kingdom ...

The majority of the 15,000 caravans that are home to Gypsy and Traveller families in England are on sites provided by local authorities, or which are privately owned with planning permission for this use. But the location and condition of these sites would not be tolerated for any other section of society. 26 per cent are situated next to, or under, motorways, 13 per cent next to runways. 12 per cent are next to rubbish tips, and 4 per cent adjacent to sewage farms. Tucked away out of sight, far from shops and schools, they can frequently lack public transport to reach jobs and essential services. In 1997, 90 per cent of planning applications from Gypsies and Travellers were rejected, compared to a success rate of 80 per cent for all other applications ... 18 per cent of Gypsies and Travellers were homeless in 2003 compared to 0.6 per cent of the population ... Lacking sites on which to live, some pitch on land belonging to others; or on their own land but lacking permission for caravan use. There follows a cycle of confrontation and eviction, reluctant travel to a new area, new encampment, confrontation and eviction. Children cannot settle in school. Employment and health care are disrupted. Overt discrimination remains a common experience ... There is a constant struggle to secure the bare necessities, exacerbated by the inability of many adults to read and write, by the reluctance of local officials to visit sites, and by the isolation of these communities from the support of local residents ... But we know that these are communities experiencing severe disadvantage. Infant mortality is twice the national average and life expectancy at least 10 years less than that of others in their generation.

Sadly, as the Women and Equalities Committee recently concluded, little has changed in the last fifteen years.

The Women and Equalities Committee report

On April 5, 2019 the Women and Equalities Committee published its report entitled *Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities*.² In essence, the report concluded that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have been 'comprehensively failed' by policy makers.

The report found that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers have the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a huge range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime and made 49 recommendations for change.

The chair of the committee, Maria Miller MP, said:

Our inquiry has tried to shine a light on the issues that are rarely talked about by policy makers: Gypsies and Travellers are likely to die over a decade earlier than non-Travellers, only a handful of Gypsy and Traveller people go to university every year and many Roma are being exploited by rogue landlords and paid far below the minimum wage.

The focus of the report was on improving policy and service provision in a range of areas including: education, health, discrimination and hate crime, and domestic violence.

These are some of the worst inequalities that the inquiry heard about:

Education:

- pupils from Gypsy or Roma backgrounds and those from a Traveller or Irish heritage background had the lowest attainment of all ethnic groups throughout their school years (government Race Disparity Audit).

Health:

- 14% of Gypsies and Travellers describe their health as 'bad' or 'very bad' – more than twice as high as white British people (2011 Census)
- the health status of Gypsies and Travellers is much poorer than that of the general population, even when allowing for other factors such as variable socio-economic status and/or ethnicity
- life expectancy is 10-12 years less than that of the non-Traveller population
- 42% of English Gypsies are affected by a long-term condition, compared with 18% of the general population
- one in five Gypsy Traveller mothers will experience the loss of a child, compared with one in a hundred in the non-Traveller community (evidence submission from University of Bedfordshire).

1. [2005] EHRLR 335

2. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html>

Discrimination and hate crime:

- a 2017 survey carried out by Traveller Movement found that 90% of respondents had experienced discrimination and 77% had experienced hate speech or a hate crime.³

The committee's key recommendations were:

1. Data collection

The Race Disparity Audit should review all the government and public datasets that currently do not use the 2011 census ethnicity classifications and require their use before the end of 2019. Also that Romani Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Roma categories should be added to the NHS data dictionary as a matter of urgency.

Maria Miller MP commented: *'There is no data collected on Roma people. This leaves them with problems accessing the services they need. They are invisible to policy makers. If you're not counted, you don't count.'*

2. Government policy

Leadership from the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government on tackling inequalities in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities has been lacking. The situation is made worse by the government's ongoing resistance to cross-departmental strategies on race equality issues including for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The government must have a clear and effective plan to support these communities which is equal to the level of the challenges they face.

3. Discrimination

As discrimination was found to exist in public services it was recommended that senior leaders in all public service bodies be trained in the public sector equality duty and that each body have a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller 'champion', similar to the role that exists in the National Police Chiefs Council.

4. Domestic violence

The committee heard of effective work that community organisations are doing working with Gypsy and Traveller men and women to challenge outdated attitudes towards women and it was recommended that the Home Office should work with these organisations with a view to funding similar programmes across the country.

3. <https://travellermovement.org.uk/phocadownload/userupload/equality-human-rights/last-acceptable-form-of-racism-traveller-movement-report.pdf>

5. Education

The committee stated that it was intolerable that any child should not be receiving a suitable education. Many parents, schools and local authorities are letting down Gypsy and Traveller children. The committee said that the first priority for the government, local authorities and Ofsted must be to ensure that the legal right to an education is not denied to any child, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Home education should be a positive, informed choice, not a reaction to either a poor school environment or family expectations. In addition the committee stated that schools should, as part of their responsibilities under the public sector equality duty, be challenging race and gender stereotypes wherever they encounter them and that Ofsted should ensure that inspectors are actively inspecting schools for gender and racial stereotyping.

6. Health

It was found that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers have some of the worst health outcomes of any group; and the committee heard about problems with accessing healthcare services due to discrimination or language and literacy barriers and that service-providers were not considering Gypsies, Roma and Travellers properly when they design their services. Thus, it was recommended that the Equality and Human Rights Commission should conduct a formal inquiry under s16 of the Equality Act 2006 into how Joint Strategic Needs Assessments are including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller health needs.

It is important to note that the committee did not address accommodation issues in any meaningful way. In its summary the report stated:

The Committee did not set out to tackle issues relating to Traveller sites or encampments but to tackle a wide range of other policy issues often eclipsed by issues of accommodation. Given that three in four Gypsies and Travellers live in non-caravan accommodation, we are deeply concerned that Government policy-making is overwhelmingly focused on planning and accommodation issues.

Commenting on this decision, Abbie Kirkby, Advice and Policy Manager at Friends Families and Travellers said:⁴

The omission of site provision is a glaring gap in an otherwise useful report. The chronic shortage of places where Gypsies and Travellers can live is intrinsically

4. <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/report/women-and-equalities-committee-call-on-uk-government-to-address-stark-inequalities-faced-by-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities/>

linked to the stark health and educational inequalities and social exclusion faced by these communities. This absolutely must be addressed.

In a commentary on the report, the Community Law Partnership⁵ also expressed its major disappointment with the committee's failure to address the dire accommodation needs for those living in caravans. It was noted that large numbers of Gypsies and Travellers still have to resort to unauthorised encampments and developments due to the failure of central and local government to ensure that there is adequate site provision; and that all Gypsy and Traveller support and campaigning groups recognise that if the accommodation problems were addressed then that would inevitably lead to improvements in education, health and employment outcomes.

Recent developments in case law

Whilst national and local government in Europe and the UK seem unable or unwilling to tackle the discrimination and inequalities faced by Gypsies Roma and Travellers, individuals and NGOs will continue to fight for their rights in the courts.

The recent case law highlighted below demonstrates that litigation can produce very positive results but it cannot be seen as a substitute for meaningful and sustainable action by governments and public bodies to address what many believe to be the last acceptable form of racism.

Strasbourg case law

Lingurar v Romania (Application no. 48474/14) April 16, 2019⁶

The four applicants were members of a Romani family living in Romania. The applicants were badly beaten by police officers and gendarmes who forced their way into their home. The applicants filed criminal charges against the officers. The prosecutor initially decided not to bring charges, but was ordered by a court to reconsider the case. After a second set of investigations, the prosecutor again decided not to prosecute those responsible, on the basis that there was insufficient evidence that the incident occurred as the applicants described. This second decision was upheld by the domestic courts in Romania. The applicants then made a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

In April 2019, the ECtHR delivered a judgment which

held that Romania had violated the 'substantive limb' of Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), meaning that the officers had subjected the applicants to ill-treatment. The ECtHR also found a violation of Article 14 read with Article 3, that is, that the officers' conduct had been discriminatory. Lastly, the ECtHR found a violation of Article 14 read with the 'procedural limb' of Article 3, on the grounds that the state had violated its human rights obligations by failing to investigate what had happened.

In particular, and for the first time ever in its case law, the ECtHR used the term '*institutionalised racism*', saying: '*Roma communities are often confronted with institutionalised racism and are prone to excessive use of force by the law-enforcement authorities.*' The ECtHR also used the term '*ethnic profiling*' for the first time in its case law, noting that '*the domestic courts did not censure what seems to be a discriminatory use of ethnic profiling by the authorities.*'

Although, the ECtHR did not go so far as to describe what was happening in Romania as '*institutional anti-Gypsyism*', or use the term '*anti-Gypsyism*' when condemning Romania, this judgment provides a damning account of how the law enforcement authorities in Romania treat Romani people. The ECtHR stated that '*the decisions to organise the police raid and to use force against the applicants were made on considerations based on the applicants' ethnic origin. The authorities automatically connected ethnicity to criminal behaviour, thus their ethnic profiling of the applicants was discriminatory*'; the court awarded each applicant €11,700 as just satisfaction for the violation of their rights.

Commenting on the importance of the judgment, Dorde Jovanović, the president of the European Roma Rights Centre, said:

We have been urging the European Court for years to use the term 'institutional racism'. Now, for the first time, they have embraced the term in their reasoning. This is a big deal for Roma and other ethnic minorities targeted by police in Europe.

Burlya and others v Ukraine (Application no. 3289/10) November 6, 2018

On September 7, 2002, the murder of a 17-year-old ethnic Ukrainian took place in the village of Petrivka. This crime was allegedly committed by a member of the Roma community after an argument between Roma and local youngsters. The next day, a group of village residents gathered and asked for the village council to expel all persons of Roma ethnicity from

5. <http://www.communitylawpartnership.co.uk/news/tackling-inequalities-faced-by-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities>

6. [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{"itemid":\["001-192466"\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{)

Petrivka. The council members decided to support the residents' request. On September 9, 2002 the council met again to discuss how to bring this decision in conformity with legal norms. This time, the head of the district administration was present and '*invited the village council members to carefully consider the wisdom of their decision, drawing a clear line between crime-related problems and inter-ethnic relations*'. Then the council changed the wording of its decision and asked the law-enforcement officers to expel '*socially dangerous individuals, regardless of ethnic origin*'.

That evening, the mayor gathered all Roma residents to warn them that a 'pogrom' would start and to advise them to leave their homes. Indeed, several hundred people initiated a mob attack that night. They ransacked the applicants' homes, burned down homes and destroyed their belongings. Although local police officers had been present during the attack, it was argued by the applicants that the police had done nothing to prevent or stop the event, but had concentrated solely on preventing human casualties. Immediately after these events, the district prosecutor's office initiated criminal proceedings '*against persons unknown on suspicion of disorderly conduct committed in a group*'. However, the district prosecutor refused to open criminal proceedings against the village council's officials '*for lack of constituent elements of a crime in their actions*'. The investigations were conducted by a team involving local police officers, led by a regional police investigator. The investigations were suspended and reopened several times before being definitively closed in 2009. During this time, in 2003, the village council's decision to expel socially dangerous individuals was quashed by the domestic courts because '*it was contrary to the constitution and had been taken under the pressure exerted by a crowd of angry villagers in order to calm them down and prevent the lynching of the Roma*'.

It was not until 2018 that the ECtHR addressed the complaints of nineteen Ukrainian Roma about the pogrom. First, the ECtHR held that the attack had undoubtedly been motivated by anti-Roma sentiment. Secondly, it stated that the applicants who had been forced to flee their homes due to the attack had suffered degrading treatment. One important factor which led to this finding was the local authorities' attitude during the events, namely the appearance of their official endorsement for the attack, as well as the ineffective investigation into the crime. Therefore, the court found a violation of both the substantive and procedural aspect of Article 3, taken in conjunction with Article 14 ECHR.

The ECtHR also recognised that the applicants' homes had been targeted in the attack and, therefore, they suffered displacement. Though the facts did not show that the applicants '*were actively prevented from returning to the village*' the ECtHR considered that it would '*have been unreasonable to expect the applicants to permanently live in damaged houses in a locality where the authorities had clearly communicated to them that they would have no protection against mob violence – particularly in circumstances where no investigation has been conducted and no person has been held responsible for the attack*'. Therefore, the damage to the applicants' homes had interfered with their Article 8 rights in a grave and unjustified way and the ECtHR held that a violation of Article 8 taken together with Article 14 ECHR had occurred.

Domestic caselaw

R (on the application of Gullu) v Hillingdon LBC; R (on the application of Ward) v Hillingdon LBC [2019] EWCA Civ 692, April 16, 2019

In this case the CA considered whether the local authority's housing allocation policy, which prioritised people who had been resident in the local area for ten years, indirectly discriminated against certain protected groups.

S166A of the Housing Act 1996 required local authorities to have a scheme for determining priorities in allocating housing. The Localism Act 2011 enabled them to decide, subject to exceptions, what classes of person were qualifying persons. Guidance issued by the Secretary of State encouraged local authorities to prioritise applicants with a local connection. The government guidance also stated that consideration had to be given to the implications of excluding members of groups of non-qualifying persons and to the EA. Further, s11(2) of the Children Act 2004 (CA 2004) imposed a duty to ensure that regard was had to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Hillingdon's allocation scheme stated in paragraph 2.2.4, that, subject to exceptions, a person who did not fall within a group entitled to reasonable preference and had not been resident in the borough for at least ten years would not qualify. Two claims for judicial review had been brought against the lawfulness of the policy on the grounds of unjustified indirect race discrimination. One, brought by an Irish Traveller (Ward) who has three children, succeeded; the other, brought by a Kurdish refugee (Gullu), failed. The local authority appealed against the first decision; Gullu appealed against the second decision.

The CA allowed the appeals and reached the following conclusions.

On the issue of indirect discrimination the court considered whether para 2.2.4 was a provision, criterion or practice amounting to indirect discrimination. The local authority had been prepared to concede the point in both appeals, but the judge in *Gullu* did not accept the concession and wrongly held that the policy was not discriminatory. The protected characteristic identified was that of race.

Although the public sector equality duty had only been raised as a specific ground in Gullu's appeal, the court considered that performance of the duty had a bearing on the approach to justification of indirect discrimination, and to an alleged breach, in Ward's case, of s11(2) CA 2004 in the formulation of the policy. Compliance with the duty required the decision-maker to be informed about which protected groups should be considered. That involved a duty of inquiry.

The local authority relied on features of the scheme as providing 'safety valves', including the possibility of a higher banding being given because of hardship. However, the key principle was that the goal was equality of outcome. If policy resulted in a relative disadvantage to one protected group, any measure relied on as a safety valve had to overcome that disadvantage. There was no evidence that the purported safety valves had operated to eliminate the disadvantage to the two protected groups. Consequently, the court held that the judge in Ward's case had correctly rejected the local authority's reliance on them, and the judge in Gullu's was wrong not to do so.

The court also held that as a whole, the allocation policy indirectly discriminated against the two protected groups by imposing the ten-year residence requirement. Thus Gullu's appeal was allowed and in Ward's case, the court held that the appropriate declaration should be framed in the following terms: the impugned allocation provisions of the scheme constituted indirect discrimination against Irish Travellers and non-UK nationals which was unlawful unless justified, and that the local authority had not yet shown justification for that discrimination.

London Borough of Bromley v Persons Unknown (London Gypsy Travellers intervening) QBD May 17, 2019 (unreported)

Over the past two years, more than 30 local councils, including 14 in London, have been granted wide injunctions against persons unknown which prohibit

Gypsies and Travellers from camping on open land within their boundaries.

The London Borough of Bromley made a similar application which covered 171 separate parcels of land which it owned or managed. However, a charity known as London Gypsies and Travellers⁷ intervened in the proceedings and argued that:

- the injunction created a blanket ban which circumvented the need to comply with government guidance on the humane management of unauthorised camping
- the council had failed to comply with its public sector equality duty before deciding to seek the injunction
- the injunction would disproportionately affect ethnic Gypsies and Travellers and constituted unjustified indirect discrimination in breach of s19 EA and a violation of their rights protected by Articles 8 and 14 ECHR.

Put more shortly, it was argued that the injunction sought amounted to a disproportionate and discriminatory response to the accommodation crisis faced by Gypsies and Travellers, effectively criminalising their traditional way of life.

The case was heard in the High Court by Mulcahy QC. Having heard submissions the judge refused to grant an order which prohibited unauthorised encampments on any of the council's land. The judge made clear her concerns about the impact of wide injunctions on the ability of Gypsies and Travellers to pursue their traditional way of life, particularly given the shortage of lawful sites and the council's failure to undertake an equality impact assessment before seeking the injunction.

Debby Kennett, Chief Executive of London Gypsies and Travellers, commented:

The judge recognised that Gypsies and Travellers have been present in this country for hundreds of years and that their traditional way of life is protected under human rights and equalities law. She referred to the shortage of sites and stopping places and also the cumulative impact of these injunctions on the Gypsy and Traveller community across the country. ... The judge also recognised that simply pushing families out of one area into another was not a solution and criticised Bromley for not considering alternatives.

The judgment clearly has implications for other local authorities which have obtained, or are seeking, similar injunctions and the council has been granted permission to appeal to the CA ... so watch this space.

7. <http://www.londongypsiesandtravellers.org.uk/what-we-do/>

Conclusion

The recent ECtHR case law reminds us that *anti-Gypsyism* is prevalent in mainland Europe and we welcome the court's acknowledgement, at last, that conduct such as that of the Romanian police constituted institutionalised racism.

But we should not consider our society in the UK to be immune from such pervasive prejudice against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. Hate speech which dehumanises these communities needs to be tackled and rooted out by us all. The ethnic profiling of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers by our police forces and other public authorities needs to stop. The severe shortage of caravan sites to accommodate those Gypsies and Travellers who wish to live in caravans in accordance with their traditional way of life needs to be properly addressed. Barriers which prevent Gypsies, Roma and Travellers from gaining access to healthcare and education need to be torn down and other policies and practices which have a discriminatory effect on them must be adapted or abandoned.

Litigation can help achieve these aims and we suggest that advisers, advocates and support groups should build on the successes in the ECtHR and domestic courts and develop arguments based upon human rights and anti-discrimination legislation which help bring an end to institutionalised racism and tackle the gross inequalities which affect Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the UK.

However, we do not believe that piecemeal success in the courts will eradicate institutionalised racism on its own. It is imperative that the government grapples with the issue too if real progress is to be made.

On June 17, 2019 the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Tendayi Achiume, issued her final report on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and recommended that the UK government should adopt *'concrete strategies for the elimination of racial discrimination against ... members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities'*.⁸

The government's recent announcement that it plans to launch a new cross departmental strategy to tackle inequalities experienced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers is to be welcomed.⁹ If such a strategy is to be effective then it will need to be devised in partnership with Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and their support groups. However, if the government fails to recognise the need for community involvement then we fear that its strategy will join a long list of failed policy measures and that we will be no closer to improving the lives of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and eradicating the institutionalised racism they face in the UK.

8. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23073&LangID=E>

9. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-national-strategy-to-tackle-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-inequalities>

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has announced [a national strategy to tackle entrenched inequality and improve the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities](#). Launched on June 6, 2019 the MHCLG is to lead the strategy, working with several government departments and the Cabinet Office Race Disparity Unit to improve outcomes in areas including health, education and employment.

The strategy was announced following publication of the Women and Equalities Committee's report ['Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities'](#). The committee recommended, among other things, that *'the Cabinet Office create a specific workstream within the Race Disparity Unit for eliminating Gypsy and Traveller inequalities. The Unit should work closely across Government departments to ensure that the "explain or change" process is completed promptly and that every Government department has a strategy to tackle Gypsy and Traveller inequalities that are uncovered. Each department should have a strategy in place before the end of 2019'*.

Traveller Movement has welcomed the announcement. While no further information is available at present, it hopes that the MHCLG will work closely with grass roots organisations to ensure effective and meaningful implementation of the committee's recommendations.