



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Cllr James Jamieson
Chair, Local Government Association

By email

17 April 2020

Re: COVID-19 – Gypsy and Traveller communities

Dear James

We write as President and Co-chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.

We write to draw attention to the letter the Minister for Communities sent to local authority Chief Executives (11 April) which recognised the particular vulnerabilities of Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans (attached). The minister's letter highlighted some of the particular challenges Gypsies and Travellers face at this time, such as living in more confined spaces and not having access to basic amenities such as water and sanitation and refuse collection.

During this pandemic Gypsies and Travellers must be supported to follow the public health guidelines, and this will require local authority intervention. Following the principles of [negotiated stopping](#), where unauthorised encampments are allowed a period to stay, with the provision of the necessary amenities, is absolutely imperative.

Whilst we are aware of some local authorities acting very responsibly on these matters, we are also aware that many others are not – leaving families without access to sanitation, refuse collection, or water for drinking, cooking, showering and washing clothes. These basic facilities are needed so that Gypsies and Travellers on camps can socially-distance, self-isolate and follow the guidelines on increased hand-washing and hygiene.

We are hearing cases of local authorities refusing to take action, and sending vulnerable Travellers some distance away to use uncleaned public toilets with no handwashing facilities. Some local authorities are even attempting to evict camps. We would however like to draw attention to the very positive action of local authorities such as Leeds City Council and Bristol City Council who are taking positive steps to support their Traveller communities.

We would be grateful to hear from you as to what action the Local Government Association intends to take in response to the Minister's letter. We are copying this letter to Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chair of the Community Wellbeing Board.

Yours sincerely

Lord Bourne, Honorary President, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies Travellers and Roma



Baroness Janet Whitaker and Kate Green MP
Co-Chairs, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies Travellers and Roma