



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lord Greenhalgh
Minister of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

By email: 17 April 2020

Re: Gypsy and Traveller communities

Dear Stephen

We write as Co-chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. Firstly, may we welcome to your role as Minister for Communities. We look forward to working with you as we did with your predecessors, including Lord Bourne, now President of the APPG.

We were very encouraged to see your letter to local authorities on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 for Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans. We look forward to seeing this published on the GOV.UK website so that it can be more widely distributed.

Once we are through this crisis, we would very much like to meet you to discuss the Government's commitment to develop a cross-departmental strategy to tackle the stark inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, which were evidenced by the Women and Equalities Select Committee Inquiry and in the government's Race Disparity Audit.

On another note, you may have seen the Channel 4 programme (aired on 16 April), 'The Truth About Traveller Crime'. This without doubt is one of the most harmful portrayals of Gypsies and Travellers we have seen, and will have a devastating impact on Gypsy and Traveller communities. The programme focussed on a handful of problematic sites and rogue individuals and used it to present a picture of an inherent link between ethnicity and crime.

Following the programme, we have already heard of a surge of race hate against Gypsies and Travellers through social media channels, with comments such as '*Just round them up and lock them in a field somewhere...thieving twats the lot of them*',

and 'sterilisation plan should be introduced at an early age. Soon sort the problem out.'

We need not point out it's not a community that commits a crime, it's an individual, and the programme has perpetuated harmful stereotypes that will have a long and deeply damaging effect. It would be very helpful if you, as Minister for Communities, were able to make some statement to that effect.

Yours sincerely



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