



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP  
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

By email

12 May 2020

Dear Secretary of State

**Re: Channel 4 Dispatches “The Truth about Traveller Crime” shown at 9pm on 16 April 2020**

We write as co-chairs and president respectively of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in relation to the above programme.

In the weeks since Channel 4 aired the Dispatches show “The Truth about Traveller Crime”, very many Gypsies and Travellers have come forward to express their shock, anger and fear as a direct result of this documentary. Many feel as though they have been sentenced as criminals simply because of their ethnicity.

Whilst the title “The Truth about Traveller Crime” caused hurt and harm to community members before the show even aired, we have seen a wave of hate speech on social media following the broadcast of the show. We have heard stories of people who are afraid to go into work out of fear of what others might think, of businesses who have lost customers and of many parents who are afraid to send their children back to school when the time comes because of fears of bullying.

We have written to Ian Katz, Director of Programmes at Channel 4 detailing the points about which we are most concerned. We found his short response disappointing and have therefore submitted a formal complaint to Ofcom, for which we await a response.

According to research conducted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, 44% of British adults openly express ‘negative’ attitudes toward Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, the most of any protected characteristic group in England. According to research by the Traveller Movement and GATE Herts, police officers consider hate crime to be the most common issue Gypsies, Roma and Travellers report to them, but fewer than 15% of hate incidents are reported to police.

Within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, we regularly hear that people feel misrepresented by the media and that people are reluctant to engage with the media because of fears of being demonised or the subject of hate speech. We are concerned that the recent broadcast of “Dispatches: The Truth about Traveller Crime” goes even further than previous harmful programming, in that it presents its

flawed and demonising research findings as truth and fact to members of the British public.

We would be very keen to hear what you will do to ensure Gypsy, Roma and Traveller citizens are protected from misleading and harmful representations which may lead to greater instances of prejudice, hate speech and hate crime.

Many members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have lost all trust in the media and we are concerned that the media is failing in its duty to keep society safe, fair and informed in its representation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

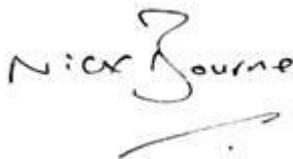
We would be keen to hear how you will work to ensure the media keeps members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller members of our society safe from harm and prejudice. Finally, we would be keen to hear how you will work to ensure that the media provides fair and informed representation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely



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



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