



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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

By email

12 May 2020

Dear Minister

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. Below are examples of just some of the statements we have seen from members of the public in response to the documentary:

- *“I feel no shame in saying if we were rid of them our country would be a better place.”*
- *“I would do time to get rid of them.”*
- *“Gypsies are scumbags”*
- *“The truth about travellers crime... basically the pikeys are a crime wave”*
- *“Traveller sites are full of thieves #Dispatches”*
- *“#Dispatches shut all the traveller sites & send em back to Ireland. these people are just nomadic thieves & murders that deserve to be in just 1 place... prison”*
- *“I absolutely despise travellers. May be a sweeping statement but most are animal abusing scumbags. I fucking hate the thick twats. #Dispatches”*
- *“Why can’t some of these low life travellers get covid?”*

We have heard stories of people from Gypsy and Traveller communities 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 racist 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.

As you will know, 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 are concerned that the show will exacerbate existing levels of prejudice, hate speech and hate crime against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

We welcome the commitment the Government has already made in supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to report hate crime through the 'Report Racism GRT' website and the explicit inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the Government's Hate Crime Action Plan. However, we feel it is essential that more is done to prevent hate crime against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

We are aware of the government's commitment in the 'Action Against Hate' 2018 update of the Hate Crime Action plan to "challenge harmful narratives before they develop into hatred" and in particular, challenge "prejudice in wider society, including the media". We would be very keen to hear how you will work to challenge harmful narratives about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the Dispatches show, as well as in the media more generally. We would also be keen to hear how you plan to work to challenge prejudice against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the media, in order to keep members of these communities protected from hate speech and hate crime.

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

Nick Bourne

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