



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Kemi Badenoch MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Equalities)

By email: 16 June 2020

Re: Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities inquiry into race inequality

Dear Kemi

We write as Co-chairs and President of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. We understand that you will be overseeing the work of the newly established Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. We are very pleased to learn of the Commissions inquiry into race inequality.

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers face some of the most severe inequalities of any other ethnic group in the UK. Although the Government have taken positive steps to address these inequalities with the Race Disparity Audit, there remains a long way to go to meaningfully reduce these inequalities.

Race hate crimes/incidents

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's ['Barometer of Prejudice' 2018](#) research found that Gypsies and Travellers were the group who participants disproportionately expressed openly negative attitudes towards compared with any other protected characteristic group in the study.

There is no centrally held data on the extent of hate crime and incidents committed against Gypsies and Travellers. Because of this lack of data, third sector organisations working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have begun to collect information on the prevalence of race hate incidents/crimes and obstacles to reporting it.

In 2017, the Traveller Movement carried out a survey of 199 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in the UK and found that 77% had experienced hate speech or hate crime (Traveller Movement, 2017).

Furthermore, in their 'Policing by Consent' report released in 2018, the Traveller Movement found that police officers they spoke to from 45 territorial police forces in England, Scotland and Wales considered hate crime to be the most common issue members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities report to the police (Traveller Movement, 2018).

GATE Herts have been commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to develop an online hate crime/incident reporting service called 'Report Racism GRT' which is specifically for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in order to encourage hate crime reporting and address the lack of national data. Between 2016 and 2018 the 'Report Racism GRT' tool has received over 691 reports. GATE Herts found that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities report less than 15% per cent of hate incidents to the police (GATE Herts, 2018).

Criminal Justice System

Gypsies and Travellers are significantly overrepresented in the criminal justice system in the UK. The [2017 Lammy Review](#) found that some prisons recorded up to 12% of their prisoner population under the ethnic category of Gypsy or Irish Traveller, despite the fact that only 0.1% of the UK population identified themselves as Gypsy or Irish Traveller at the date of the last census.

Accommodation

The chronic national shortage of Gypsy and Traveller sites is widely recognised ([Cromarty et al, 2019](#)). Gypsies and Travellers are more likely to experience housing deprivation than any other ethnic group ([De Noronha, 2015](#)). The [January 2020 Traveller Caravan Count](#) tells us that currently there are 2,743 caravans with families without a place to stop.

Despite Government guidance which instructs local authorities to identify land for Gypsy and Traveller sites, local authorities have overwhelmingly failed to do so. Research carried out by [Friends Families and Travellers in 2020](#) found that only 8 local authorities, out of 68 local authorities in the South East of England, had identified a 5 year supply of specific deliverable sites for Gypsies and Travellers. [FFT, 2020](#).

In 2015, the Government revised the definition of 'Gypsies and Travellers' for planning purposes in their 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' (PPTS). The revised PPTS definition of 2015 has meant that not all Gypsies and Travellers are assessed as requiring a Traveller pitch, so not all Gypsies and Travellers who need a place to live in their caravan are being captured and provided for in Local Plans.

The revised definition means that those who have permanently ceased travelling are excluded from the planning definition of a Traveller, even if they are an ethnically defined Romany Gypsy or Irish Traveller. This exclusion disproportionately affects Gypsies and Travellers who are disabled or elderly, and women who may have ceased to travel in order to care for dependents. Research conducted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission on the impact of the definition change found that instead of 100% of accommodation need falling within the PPTS definition, just 15% of need now falls within the definition (EHRC, 2019).

As a result of the lack of authorised places to stop, families are forced to stop in unauthorised locations and experience a constant cycle of evictions. The police and local authorities have a huge number of powers available to them to evict families from unauthorised encampments as listed in 'Dealing with illegal and unauthorised

encampments; A summary of available powers'. The police have use of Sections 61, 62 and 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which permit police to evict and seize property and vehicles of those who have the intention to reside.

Rather than addressing local authority failure to identify land for sites, the Home Office have proposed to criminalise unauthorised encampments, which the police themselves acknowledge would lead to potential breaches of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

Health

Gypsy and Traveller communities face some of the most severe health inequalities amongst the UK population, even when compared with other socially deprived or excluded groups, and with other ethnic minorities (Parry *et al.*, 2007).

Researchers have found that Gypsies and Travellers are estimated to live between 10 and 25 years shorter than the general population (EHRC, 2009). Before life expectancy is taken into account, Gypsies and Travellers experience six less Quality Adjusted Life Years than average, that is six less years spent in good health compared with the general population (Parry *et al.*, 2007).

Research conducted by Friends, Families and Travellers in 2019 found that out of 50 GP practices across England, 24 refused to register our Traveller mystery shopper because they had no proof of identification or because they had no address (FFT, 2019). This issue disproportionately impacts transient Gypsies and Travellers and those without a place to stop at all.

Roma Support Group found that 60% of their Roma beneficiaries had poor physical health including cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, hepatitis B, cardiovascular and respiratory alignments and multiple sclerosis. Further to this, 43% of Roma beneficiaries of the above, were suffering from mental health problems including depression, personality disorders, learning disabilities, suicidal tendencies, self-abuse or dependency/misuse of drugs ([Civil Society Monitoring Report 2018](#))

Education

The disparity between Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children's educational outcomes compared with the combined national average is evidenced in data gathered by the Race Disparity Audit:

Only 40% of Gypsies and Irish Travellers over the age of 16 hold any qualifications, compared to 78% for England and Wales (ONS 2014).

Only 31% of Irish Travellers and 29% of Gypsy/Roma met the expected standard for reading aged 6-7 compared with the combined average of pupils at 76% (Race Disparity Audit, 2018a).

Only 5.3 % of Gypsy/Roma pupils and 9.9 % of Irish Traveller pupils achieved English and Maths GCSE at C grade or above compared with the combined average of 42.6%. (Race Disparity Audit, 2018b).

Pupils from the Irish Traveller and Gypsy/Roma ethnic groups have the highest rates of both temporary ('fixed period') and permanent exclusions (Race Disparity Audit, 2018c; 2018d).

Employment

The 2011 Census revealed that Gypsies or Travellers are the ethnic groups with the lowest proportion of respondents who were economically active at 47% compared with roughly 63% for White British and 70% for Indian, for example (ONS, 2011).

2017-2019 Inquiry into "Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities."

The Women and Equalities Select Committee conducted an inquiry "Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities." finalised in March 2019. [The report](#) highlighted stark inequalities relating to health, education and employment. Women and Equalities Committee Chair Maria Miller said:

"Gypsy Roma and Traveller people have been comprehensively failed by policy makers and public services for far too long. Access to education, health, employment, criminal justice, tackling hate crime and domestic violence - all these require services which differentiate between different groups who have different needs, and yet so many services are ill-equipped to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. The Government must stop filing this under 'too difficult' and set out how it intends to improve health, education and other outcomes for these very marginalised communities who are all too often "out of sight and out of mind. While the number of Gypsy Roma and Traveller people in the UK may be small compared to other groups, the Government's commitment to race equality must reach even the most disenfranchised".

Following this damning report, the UK Government announced on the 6th of June 2019 the launch of a "national strategy to tackle Gypsy, Roma and Traveller inequalities". However we have yet to see any progress on the development of this strategy.

The inequalities experienced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the UK are widely acknowledged and evidenced. We urge you to include these communities in the Commissions inquiry into race inequality to build on the work to reduce these inequalities.

We appreciate your attention on this matter.

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