



**FRIENDS,
FAMILIES &
TRAVELLERS**

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Shadow Report to the Universal Periodic Review Working Group and UN Member States: Focus Report on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities

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Shadow Report to the Universal Periodic Review Working Group and UN Member States

**Focus Report on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities
March 2022, joint submission**

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Our collaboration

The organisations submitting this joint shadow report work have come together for the purposes of this report, although we have been working together to protect Gypsy, Roma and Traveller rights for a number of years.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Despite an outward commitment to human rights reflected in ratified treaties, conventions and agreements in addition to international obligations, the United Kingdom remains a State in which Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people experience stark inequalities.

1.2. This document reports on the progress or deterioration of the enjoyment of human rights of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people, structured by areas of life in which discrimination and barriers are routinely encountered. Under each theme, recommendations from the Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) 2017ⁱ are referenced and the current situation in the UK is outlined, before our recommendations are given for necessary changes the Government should address.

1.3. The following UPR 2017 recommendation applies to all of the themes in this shadow report:

134.90 Ensure that the Government of the United Kingdom takes all necessary steps to prevent all kinds of discrimination directed at minorities in the community namely the Roma community (Indonesia).

Additional UPR recommendationsⁱⁱ ⁱⁱⁱ are listed under the relevant themes.

2. The United Kingdom's international obligations

2.1. The UK has international obligations to protect the rights of minorities including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities on the basis of other UN and regional treaties to which it is a party. These include the right to housing, freedom of movement and choice of residence, right to health, education and freedom from discrimination among others, and are contained in articles 7, 12, 25 and 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948^{iv}, articles 12, 17 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966^v, articles 11, 12 and 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966^{vi}, and articles 2, 5 and 7 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) of 1965^{vii}.

2.2. Furthermore, as a member of the United Nations, the UK is obligated by the Charter of the United Nations^{viii} to promote 'universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion'. The principle of non-discrimination – particularly on the grounds of race – is a peremptory norm of customary international law and must be applied in relation to protecting the right of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

3. National Strategy to address the inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities

134.89 Elaborate a general strategy, in consultation with members of the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, to ensure a systematic and coherent approach to address the problems that such communities continue to face, including discrimination and stigmatization (Guatemala) [noted, not accepted].

134.91 That the State and devolved governments collaborate in the approval of an integration strategy for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma people in all the United Kingdom (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) [noted, not accepted].

Overview of the situation and Government position

3.1. In response to the Women and Equalities Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry into inequalities experienced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers^{ix}, the Government announced its commitment to implement a cross-departmental strategy to address inequalities in June 2019^x. However, to date no visible progress has been made on the Strategy, with no published Plan or Strategy outlining any aims, actions, lines of accountability or timelines.

Our recommendations

- a) The UK Government should take steps to urgently fulfil their commitment to implement a cross-departmental strategy to tackle entrenched inequality and improve the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
- b) The national strategy must include all key social indicators/policy areas and must have specific, measurable outcomes with coherent data collection, and adequate resources for the development and implementation.
- c) The development and implementation of a robust national strategy will help to address the inequalities outlined in the further sections of this report.

4. Accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller Communities

Overview of the situation and Government position

- 4.1. Despite the existence of 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' (PPTS), the policy designed to specifically address the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, the national shortage of culturally appropriate accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers persists^{xi xii xiii}. Research demonstrates that the majority of local authorities are failing to comply with requirements on land allocation for Gypsy and Traveller site provision under PPTS^{xiv}.
- 4.2. The situation has deteriorated, with a dramatic reduction of assessed need for more pitches based on the revised 2015 planning policy definition of a Gypsy or Traveller. This planning policy definition is much more restrictive than previously, and excludes those from protected characteristic groups who are less able to travel, including the elderly, those with a disability and those caring for them (predominantly women). The impact of the definition change has resulted in a significant proportion of Gypsies and Travellers being excluded from the definition, regardless of ethnic status, who are therefore facing insurmountable barriers in accessing culturally pertinent accommodation.
- 4.3. Research conducted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2019 showed that, across the 20 local planning authorities they inspected, the pre-2015 definition total requirement was for 1,584 further pitches, but after the revised definition was introduced, the assessed need fell to just 345^{xv}.
- 4.4. Analysis of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities figures shows there has been an overall 13.36% decrease of pitches on local authority Traveller sites from July 2011 to July 2021, as highlighted in the table below.
- 4.5. Local authority/Registered Social Landlord Gypsy and Traveller pitches:

	July 2011	July 2021	% difference
Transit pitches	291	399	+37.11%
Permanent pitches	4700	3920	-16.59%
Total pitches	4991	4319	-13.36%

- 4.6. Whilst there has been a 37.11% increase in transit pitches alone, this only amounts to an increase of 108 pitches nationally, the equivalent to roughly 11

pitches per year over 10 years, with an overall decrease of 16.59% of permanent pitches on local authority/Registered Social Landlord sites. This shows that the situation regarding accessing culturally appropriate accommodation under the planning system, in the form of socially-rented pitches, has considerably worsened in the last decade.

- 4.7. This decrease in socially rented pitches has occurred during a period of availability of Government funding for the building of local authority sites. In 2021 Homes England (who administer grants under the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme) responded to FFT's query asking about applications to the scheme for grants for Traveller sites. They confirmed that only two schemes had been allocated funding under the programme 2016-2021. Both of these were for transit sites (30 pitches in total) and included no new permanent pitches at all.
- 4.8. On 20th March 2022, the Government announced a £10 million Traveller Site Fund^{xvi}, available for use in the 2022/23 financial year, for local authorities to enter bids up until the 13th June 2022 for building new transit and permanent sites/pitches and temporary stopping places, and for the refurbishment of existing sites. Whilst we welcome the announcement of ring-fenced funding, three months is a limited timeframe and £10 million is a drop in the ocean when addressing national need. Looking at applications to previous funding schemes^{xvii xviii}, we estimate £10 million is likely to provide less than 150 individual pitches UK-wide.
- 4.9. The Government have not only failed to address the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities, they have put forward hostile legislation which seeks to criminalise Gypsies and Travellers living on encampments^{xix xx}. Part 4 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill^{xxi} introduces a new criminal offence where trespassers reside or have the intent to reside. Failure to comply can lead to the police exercising powers to seize a vehicle (someone's home and possessions) as well as imprisonment and a fine. Part 4 also strengthens current police powers of eviction in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994^{xxii}.
- 4.10. The seizure of Gypsy and Traveller homes and possessions, and potentially pushing anyone over 18 into the criminal justice system, would be catastrophic for an individual or family. This would also affect the long-term prospects and welfare of an individual or family and severely impact children who would lose

their home and face Children's Services intervention, possibly breaking up the family. The proposed measures pose a direct threat to the rights of Gypsies and Travellers to lead a nomadic way of life.

4.11. Since the Third Cycle of the UPR, the UK Government have failed to prioritise the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites and stopping places. This and the proposals to criminalise trespass and introduce tougher police powers conflict with recommendation 134.90 made at the Third Cycle of the UPR, as well as receiving wider criticism from the international human rights community^{xxiii}.

Our recommendations

- a) The UK Government should withdraw Part 4 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which relates to the criminalisation of trespass and strengthening of police powers.
- b) The national strategy to tackle Gypsy, Roma and Traveller inequalities must include a strand on supporting the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. This should include:
 - i. the reintroduction of pitch targets and a statutory duty on local authorities to meet the assessed need for Gypsy and Traveller sites;
 - ii. widespread support for a programme of 'negotiated stopping'^{xxiv} arrangements so Gypsies and Travellers have more safe stopping places with access to basic amenities such as water and sanitation;
 - iii. ring-fenced funding for the provision and refurbishment of Traveller sites that reflects the level of assessed need nationally;
 - iv. amendment of the 2015 Planning Policy for Traveller sites definition of a Traveller to include all Gypsies and Travellers who need a pitch to live on.

5. Health inequalities and access to healthcare

134.166 Strengthen measures to foster access of vulnerable populations to public services and social and health services (Côte d'Ivoire).

Overview of the situation and Government position

- a) Gypsy and Traveller people are estimated to have life expectancies of between ten and 25 years shorter than the general population^{xxv xxvi}.
- b) Almost a third of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers responding to an online survey in 2016-17 reported that they had experienced discrimination within the health care system^{xxvii}.
- c) In 2021 the University of Manchester found that a Romany or Traveller man in his 60s has health more comparable to a White British man in his 80s^{xxviii}.
- d) Gypsy and Traveller mothers are 20 times more likely to experience the death of a child than those from the general population^{xxix}.
- e) 42% of Gypsies and Travellers are affected by a long-term condition, as opposed to 18% of the general population^{xxv}.
- f) Gypsies and Travellers suffer higher levels of stress, are three times as likely to suffer from anxiety and twice as likely to suffer from depression compared the general population^{xxvxxv xxx xxxi}.
- g) The suicide rate in the Irish Traveller community in Ireland is six to seven times higher than in the general population^{xxx} and anecdotally we believe the same to be true for Gypsy and Traveller people in Britain^{xxvi}.

5.1. In recent years, the Government has taken a number of steps to address inequalities in access to and availability of quality healthcare services to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. This includes the allocation of funding to Friends, Families and Travellers to support policymakers with more inclusive policy making, the creation of a tool to support Primary Care Networks with more inclusive service to those experiencing the greatest inequalities, the launch of cards to support patients in communicating their rights to be registered in general practice and more. Despite this, severe inequalities remain.

5.2. Whilst, in principle, everyone who is ordinarily resident in the UK has a right to access primary healthcare, our support work and research shows this not to be

the case. When we mystery-shopped 100 GPs across England in 2021, by a 'patient' calling to register with no proof of address or identification, asking for alternatives to online registration and help completing registration forms^{xxxii}, only 6 out of the 100 surgeries would have allowed them to register. This shows a significant worsening of inequalities in registration for people living nomadically since previous research published in 2019^{xxxiii}, suggesting that the adoption of many healthcare services of digital-by-default approaches to healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic has meant greater barriers to healthcare for many. When services refuse to register Gypsy and Traveller people, or offer digital-only options to people who cannot utilise these, there is a huge impact on the individual but very little accountability for the service.

- 5.3. Whilst the NHS collects data broadly on ethnicity and how people from various ethnic groups experience healthcare services, no such data is collected for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. The categories of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, based on the old 2001 census, are in place in the NHS Data Dictionary, but this recording capability is not used. This makes the categories defunct as they are not being used or updated. As a result, frontline healthcare services are often unaware of the severe inequalities that exist and are not able to measure whether or not they have been successful in addressing them.
- 5.4. This issue has been particularly acute during COVID-19. Chronic exclusion across the wider determinants of health coupled with pre-existing health inequalities in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities mean that there is a disproportionately high representation of people at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus. However, the absence of NHS data collection on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people means we do not know how many people have had COVID-19, how many have died as a result or what specific interventions might be most effective in protecting people at risk from harm.
- 5.5. Despite the data on high suicide rates in the Traveller community, Gypsy and Traveller groups are not recognised as high-risk or mentioned in the Government's 2019 National Suicide Prevention Plan^{xxxiv}. Only 5 out of the 79 local authority suicide prevention plans we assessed in 2020 mentioned Gypsy and Traveller communities and only 2 listed any action to address the high suicide rate in their local Gypsy and Traveller communities^{xxxv}. The Government has included Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in its most recent

progress report^{xxxvi}, but the ‘ongoing’ work mentioned is minimal and puts the responsibility onto local and voluntary services.

5.6. Whilst the Government has taken steps in some areas, Gypsies, Roma and Travellers continue to experience barriers in accessing healthcare including mental health support, in conflict with recommendation 134.166 and 134.90, made at the Third Cycle of the UPR.

Our recommendations

- a) The UK Government should strengthen accountability where healthcare services directly or indirectly discriminate against someone and this affects the individual’s ability to access healthcare.
- b) The Government should introduce and ensure routine data collection within healthcare settings for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people, and include these disaggregated minority groups in reporting on the impact of COVID-19.
- c) The Government should make a clear commitment to ensure that patients who choose registration through non-digital means should be able to access all NHS healthcare settings.
- d) The Government should ensure the development of clear guidance and standards for providing accessible communications and appropriate support to people with low or no literacy in healthcare settings.
- e) Training should be mandatory for practice managers and GP receptionists to ensure marginalised communities, including Gypsies and Travellers, are not excluded from primary healthcare services.
- f) Gypsy and Traveller communities should be listed as a high risk group in the Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Plan, with actions identified to address this inequality.
- g) Part of the Government’s additional £25 million investment for suicide prevention projects should be targeted at reducing suicide in Gypsy and Traveller communities.

6. Protection against hate: hate crime and hate speech

134.92 Strengthen and activate existing laws and legislation in the field of combating discrimination and all forms of racism and make further efforts to combat discrimination against Gypsies, nomads and Roma (Lebanon).

Further recommendations under the Theme: B31, Equality and non-discrimination, referring to hate, hate crime and hate speech, including but not limited to:

134.105 Continue to strengthen data collection to better understand the scale and severity of hate crimes, in order to assess the impact of the Hate Crime Action Plan (Netherlands).

Overview of the situation and Government position

- 6.1. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers face widespread prejudice and race hate^{xxxvii}. Research^{xxxviii} in 2020 found that 78% of 88 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller survey respondents said incidents of hate speech/crime happen very often. This included discrimination from and within education and health services, racial bullying and victimisation within school, online racial hatred and incitement of racial hatred within the media^{xxxix}.
- 6.2. A 2017 report found that 91% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people surveyed had experienced discrimination^{xl}, while a YouGov poll found that one in four British parents found it unacceptable for their child to have a playdate with a Gypsy or Traveller child, and one in four would be unhappy if a close relative had a relationship with a Gypsy or a Traveller^{xli}. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's Barometer of Prejudice also found that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers were the protected characteristic group towards whom the highest number of people expressed openly negative feelings (44% of those surveyed)^{xlii}.
- 6.3. Research by GATE Herts, who established and run the independent Gypsy, Roma and Traveller race hate reporting site 'Report Racism GRT', found that the majority of Gypsies and Travellers who reported through the site were reluctant to report these crimes to the police^{xliii}. The most common reason given was lack of confidence that the police would act. There is a longstanding mistrust of the appropriateness of responses from police based on decades of experiences of mistreatment and discriminatory practices.

- 6.4. Data on hate crimes are not disaggregated sufficiently and many Police Forces do not record the ethnicity of victims in line with the Census 2021 categories, making the extent of anti-Gypsyism practically invisible.
- 6.5. Currently, we rely on small-scale research and third sector data collection on hate crime and incidents committed against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. 'Report Racism GRT', was established to address some of the gaps in data and to promote reporting of anti-Gypsyism^{xliv xlv}.
- 6.6. More needs to be done to improve monitoring and strategies to tackle anti-Gypsyism in line with recommendations 134.90, 134.92, 134.105 and other B31 Theme recommendations made at the Third Cycle of the UPR.

Our recommendations

- a) The UK Government and Police Forces should disaggregate their data on hate crimes/incidents in line with the 2021 Census ethnic categories.
- b) The UK Government should include robust measures to tackle anti-Gypsyism into in the next Hate Crime Action Plan.

7. Protection against hate: the role of the media in fuelling hate speech and crime against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

134.84 Dedicate more resources to fight against negative stereotypes in the media, against the most affected minority groups (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, Gypsies, Muslims, refugees and persons granted asylum) (Spain).

134.109 Take measures to curb incitements of hatred in the British mass media, in line with international standards (Russian Federation) [noted, not accepted].

Overview of the situation and Government position

- 7.1. In 2018, the UK Government signed up to the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which contains a commitment from all signatories to stop, 'allocation of public funding or material support to media outlets that systematically promote intolerance, xenophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination towards migrants, in full respect for the freedom of the media.' However, since signing the Global Compact on Migration, the UK Government

has continued to invest in newspapers which promote racism and other forms of discrimination towards migrants, including Roma communities^{xlvi}.

7.2. Existing mechanisms for challenging discrimination in print media through the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) are ineffective and inefficient. The discrimination clause in IPSO's Editors' Code of Practice is ineffective in tackling most forms of discrimination and even where a breach of the code does take place, the process for addressing this is so lengthy that millions of people are able to read an article before it is amended or taken down.

7.3. The issue is reflected in TV and broadcast media also. For example, in April 2020, Channel 4 aired a show, 'Dispatches: The Truth About Traveller Crime', which was misleading, encouraged hate towards Gypsy and Traveller people and reinforced false stereotypes. Over 7,000 people complained and Ofcom, the UK's communications regulator, launched an investigation in May 2020 which took 503 days to investigate but found no breaches^{xlvii}. Information from the show is now quoted by other media outlets as fact, although the content is misleading.

7.4. Another example of media outlets fuelling intolerance and ethnically hostile behaviour is an article in the national newspaper, the Times, in which columnist Matthew Parris' article titled 'It's time we stopped pandering to Travellers' called for the removal of special protections afforded under the Equality Act 2010 for the Romany Gypsy community and the Irish Traveller community. This went as far as to describe the cultural pertinence of nomadism as a 'doomed mindset'. The columnist wrote:

'...we should stop forcing local authorities to create Traveller sites, phase out the "ethnic minority" rights of people who are not a race but a doomed mindset, prioritise with the utmost generosity the offer of social housing to Traveller families; and, to those who refuse it, begin a gradual but relentless squeeze on anyone who tries without permission to park their home on public property or the property of others.'

7.5. More recently, Netflix aired Jimmy Carr's 'His Dark Material' in December 2021, in which the comedian made a joke describing the deaths of 'thousands of Gypsies' during the Holocaust as a 'positive'. Netflix's approval and funding of this material legitimises and perpetuates discrimination and racism. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities continue to face systematic discrimination. This incident also highlights the lack of regulation for streaming services.

7.6. The UK Government have failed to implement or respond to recommendations 134.84, 134.90 and 134.109 (noted) made at the Third Cycle of the UPR.

Our recommendations

- a) The UK Government should stop allocating public funds to media outlets which promote racism, in line with commitments made in the UN Global Compact for Migration.
- b) The UK Government should review and strengthen the IPSO Editor's Code of Practice and the Ofcom broadcasting code to ensure racist media coverage is addressed in all its forms, including online content, in a timely manner.
- c) The national strategy to tackle the inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities should include a strand on addressing anti-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller racism in the media.

8. Education inequalities and access

Overview of the situation and Government position

8.1. The most recently published Race Disparity Audit^{xlviii} and the more recent figures available on the Government Ethnicity Facts and Figures website^{xlix} highlight the critical inequality between the educational outcomes of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and the general population: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children have the lowest attainment of all ethnic groups throughout their school years. For example, the average score at GCSE attainment 8 levelⁱ is just 23.3 out of a possible score of 90 for Gypsies/Roma and 31.8 for Irish Travellers. This compares to combined average of 50.2 out of 90 for 2019/20^{li}. In 2014, only 3 to 4% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people aged 18 to 30 accessed Higher Education^{lii}.

8.2. During the COVID-19 pandemic, existing issues have become exacerbated and we have seen the emergence of new needs. Whilst the Government are providing some funding^{liii} to support the educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, this is insufficient and only reached a limited number of schools and pupils. Wider work needs to be done to address prejudice and to improve outcomes nationally. Failure to address outcomes could see Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils being set even further behind than many already are.

- 8.3. Digital exclusion has become an ongoing issue for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families following the pandemic. Larger family groupings, extended families and small living-spaces have led to huge challenges (e.g. accessing online schooling). Schools have moved almost exclusively to online systems – for consent, lunch/trip payments etc. For families with limited literacy, this has been troublesome, and at times has led to disengagement from schooling altogether.
- 8.4. Race Disparity Audit figures tell us that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers continue to experience the highest rates of temporary and permanent exclusion compared to other ethnic groups in the UK^{liv}. Furthermore, research published in 2020 on the effects of hate crime and discrimination on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities revealed: *‘School bullying was highlighted by 78% of [88] survey respondents as one of the most common forms of hate speech/crime experiences’*.^{lvi}
- 8.5. Bullying remains a serious issue and contributes to early school leaving and exclusion numbers, due to retaliation after schools fail to act. Bullying from peers and teachers, along with a lack of representation in the curriculum, results in pupils feeling a lesser sense of belonging^{lvii}.
- 8.6. In February 2022, over 40 civil society organisations and three All Party Parliamentary Groups wrote to the Secretary of State for Education, urging the Department to address the pressing need for a more inclusive teaching and learning environment for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children^{lviii}. The letter highlighted that, while the Holocaust is on the curriculum, inclusion of Roma and Sinti people as victims of that genocide is not compulsory.
- 8.7. There is also a desperate need for positive narratives about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to be taught, and an important and achievable step would be for the Department for Education to support schools to celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month. The Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers adopted the inclusion of Roma and Traveller history as a recommendation in 2020, which the UK Government has yet to address^{lix}. This fails to recognise that a greater understanding of cultural diversity and difference is the strongest approach to reducing prejudice – education is key.
- 8.8. Despite these continuing educational inequalities the Government has cut vital funding to local authority Traveller Education Services, which were set up to improve relationships, address exclusion rates and attainment gaps. Due to the

discontinuation of Government funding, the vast majority of Traveller Education Services no longer exist.

8.9. The UK Government have failed to address recommendation 134.90 made at the Third Cycle of the UPR.

Our recommendations

- a) The Government should support schools to mark Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month.
- b) Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history and culture should be included across the curriculum.
- c) Mandatory teaching on the Holocaust should include the genocide of Roma and Sinti.
- d) The UK Government should reintroduce ring-fenced funding for Traveller Education Services.
- e) A properly funded national catch-up programme should be established and part of this should be ring-fenced for Gypsy and Traveller children.
- f) The UK Government should take steps to address the high exclusion rates experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.
- g) The UK Government should take steps to address ethnicity-based bullying.
- h) The national strategy needs to include recommendations and support in education in order to bridge the attainment gap, drive down exclusions and improve future opportunities.

9. Equal access to the European Union Settlement Scheme and impact on Roma people

134.82 Exert all its efforts, in law and practice, to combat racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against migrants, and to avoid subjecting asylum seekers and stateless persons to prolonged and/or repeat unlawful detention (Islamic Republic of Iran) [noted, not accepted].

Overview of the situation and Government position

- 9.1. Roma face broad structural inequality in the UK in terms of access to services^{lx} and Brexit has presented yet another challenge in terms of the accessibility of the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS), threatening the residency status of many Roma who have a right to live permanently in the UK.
- 9.2. Roma Support Group carried out research in order to explore some of the specific barriers faced by Roma in accessing the EUSS^{lxi}. They found there was a general lack of awareness of the need to apply and the implications of failing to do so. In addition to this, a number of other barriers were identified:
- a) Limited access to reliable, trusted sources of information and support;
 - b) Digital exclusion and language barriers;
 - c) A lack of valid identification or proof of five years' residence due to informal work and/or unstable housing circumstance;
 - d) The tendency to rely on a national identity card, rather than a passport, and a reluctance to send identification to the Home Office;
 - e) 62% of Roma have the temporary Pre Settled Status (41% national average);
 - f) Lack of awareness regarding the need of children to apply to the EUSS, especially those born in the UK.
- 9.3. To ameliorate some of these barriers, the Government provided £9 million in funding to charities in order to support vulnerable communities to apply to the EUSS. While the Government funding provided much-needed resources for third-sector organisations to support Roma to overcome the barriers identified, the COVID-19 pandemic has served to compound barriers in accessing the EUSS and the work of charities who have been funded to support applications for Roma in terms of restrictions on face to face support and delays in obtaining

documentation. Furthermore, Government funding to third-sector organisations came to an end three months before the application deadline of June 2021, cutting off vital support to Roma who had yet to apply.

9.4. In October 2021, the UK Government granted more funding (£3 million) to cover the period up to 31 March 2022^{lxii}. This funding has provided essential support to many vulnerable people, including Roma, but responses to the pandemic put restrictions on the way that the majority of grant-funded organisations operated. This meant that many Roma lost access to the support ahead of the June 2021 deadline. Furthermore, many Roma experienced huge delays in obtaining identity documents from their embassies.

9.5. The Government failed to address the barriers experienced by those digitally excluded. The EUSS is completely digital. Research by New Europeans, supported by Roma Support Group, identified that 73% of respondents do not know when to update their temporary status to the permanent one and 68% do not know how to prove their EUSS immigration status^{lxiii}. This leads to situations in which Roma people will not be able to access their rights in the UK and may lose their immigration status once their temporary one expires.

9.6. We are concerned that a significant proportion of Roma have fallen through the gaps of the EUSS or are not able to exercise their rights due to its inaccessibility and inadequate Government action to address this in a timely manner. As a result, we fear many Roma who have the right to residency in the UK may face deportation. We consider this to be in conflict with recommendation 134.82 (noted) made at the Third Cycle of the UPR.

Our recommendations

9.7. Government should ensure long-term support for EU citizens and their family members. This could take the form of local authority-coordinated EUSS support centres, where:

- a) EUSS holders could get support to access their EUSS status and prove it;
- b) those who will be identified by authorities as not having EUSS yet could get support to make their EUSS applications;
- c) those still awaiting a decision could get support to complete their applications;

- d) those with the temporary Pre-Settled Status could get support with updating to permanent status.

9.8. Government should reconsider its position on the EUSS Digital Immigration Status. EUSS status holders should get a physical proof of status.

10. Summary

10.1. Despite its UPR commitments to improve human rights situations and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights, the United Kingdom remains a State in which Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people experience stark inequalities. We consider the Government to be failing to deliver on 2017 Third Cycle UPR recommendations, instead introducing measures that are insufficient to enact meaningful change, and bringing in hostile legislation which will actively deteriorate the enjoyment of human rights for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

Endnotes

- i <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/GBIndex.aspx>
- ii <https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session27/GB/MatriceRecommendationsUK.docx>
- iii <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/261/95/PDF/G1726195.pdf?OpenElement>
- iv <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- v <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>
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About us

Friends, Families and Travellers is a leading national charity that works to end racism and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and to protect the right to pursue a nomadic way of life.

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