



Irish Traveller Movement in Britain

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Department for Works and Pension: Classification of Gypsies and Travellers



An Irish Traveller Movement in Britain Briefing

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1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) presently categorise Gypsies and Travellers as a 'disadvantaged group' alongside Ex-Service Personnel and Ex-Offenders with responsibility for these groups falling under the DWP Labour Market Inclusion Division. However, Gypsies and Irish Travellers are legally recognised as ethnic groups, and protected from discrimination by the Race Relations Act (1976, amended 2000) and the Human Rights Act (1998).
- 1.2 Considering Gypsies and Travellers have the poorest social outcomes of any group in the UK in terms of health, education and economic exclusion, it is essential that their ethnic status is officially recognised to enable the DWP to effectively engage with and support these communities.
- 1.3 This briefing will focus on the implications of the DWP not recognising Gypsies and Travellers as an ethnic minority group in the areas of persistent employment disadvantage, child poverty, racial discrimination and disability benefit. It will also focus on the need for greater engagement by the DWP with Gypsy and Traveller communities through its Ethnic Minority Advisory Group.

2. Implications of non-recognition

- 2.1 By not categorising Gypsies and Travellers as an ethnic minority group the DWP has not included them in a large body of DWP research focusing on ethnic minority groups. At the same time there has been no specific research conducted by the DWP's Labour Market Inclusion Division (LMID) on Gypsies and Travellers (apart from a small customer insight study). Considering in 2004 the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) noted a dearth of systematic data on Gypsy and Traveller employment, it is crucial that the DWP include Gypsies and Travellers as an ethnic minority in all relevant future research. Without such data it will be impossible for the government to effectively address the suspected economic exclusion which Gypsies and Travellers suffer.

3. Persistent employment disadvantage

- 3.1 In 2004 the Commission for Racial Equality reported anecdotal evidence which indicated 'unemployment is high among Gypsies and Travellers and few of the general programmes set up to tackle unemployment have initiatives or schemes developed specifically for Gypsies and Travellers, who need training in practical skills as well as opportunities to obtain qualifications for skills they already have.'¹
- 3.2 A 2003 report by Pat Niner for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) found that managers on local authority Travellers sites reported that 'on seven

¹ Commission for Racial Equality, 2004, p. 12

out of 10 sites a minority of households work', with over one-third of site managers noting that less than 10 per cent of residents were in employment.²

- 3.3 **In 2007 the DWP published the report *Persistent employment disadvantage*³ which asked the question 'are members of certain social groups more persistently out of employment than other groups?' and made specific reference to ethnic minorities. As a result of the DWP not categorising Gypsies and Travellers as an ethnic minority group they were not included in this highly relevant piece of research.**

4. Child poverty

- 4.1 The 2010 Department for Education (DfE) report *Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils* found a high percentage of Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils eligible for and claiming free school meals indicating a connection between poverty and disrupted educational experience. The report also found that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils had the highest level of Special Educational Needs of all ethnic minority groups.⁴
- 4.2 **In 2009 the DWP published the report *Ethnicity and child poverty*⁵ focused on 'illuminating the extent to which ethnic minority children's poverty can be understood in terms of recognised risk factors that policy is already concerned to address.' Gypsies and Travellers were not included in this piece of research as they were not classified as an ethnic minority.**
- 4.3 In April 2011 the DWP and DfE produced the report *A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives* in response to their duty under the Child Poverty Act 2010. The report stated:

'Some groups of children are at particularly high risk of poor attainment and developmental outcomes, which can then feed through to poorer outcomes during and after transition into adulthood. This may be due to the barriers faced by children or by their parents. While progress has been made in narrowing gaps for some groups this hasn't gone far enough; large differences still exist. For example: Amongst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, Looked After Children

² Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009, *Inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers: A Review*, p. 38
http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/12inequalities_experienced_by_gypsy_and_traveller_communities_a_review.pdf

³ DWP, 2007, Research Report no. 416, *Persistent employment disadvantage*
<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2007-2008/rrep416.pdf>

⁴ DfE 2010, *Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: final report*, Executive Summary, p. ii
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR043.pdf>

⁵ DWP, 2009, Research report no. 576, *Ethnicity and child poverty*
<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2009-2010/rrep576.pdf>

*and those with Special Educational Needs, educational attainment is unacceptably low...*⁶

- 4.4 If the DWP are serious in their intention of tackling the high incidence of Gypsy and Traveller child poverty they must categorise Gypsies and Travellers as an ethnic minority and include them in all future research on child poverty.

5. Racial discrimination in recruitment

- 5.1 Anecdotal evidence and data from Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments across the UK indicates that Gypsies and Travellers who live on a site, or who are known to be members of local Gypsy or Traveller families, encounter discrimination when applying for paid work. Although hard evidence is (unsurprisingly) hard to come by, examples abound of people not being called for interviews or of jobs being mysteriously filled.⁷
- 5.2 The 2010 report by ITMB on economic inclusion, *Roads to Success* found that 78 per cent of respondents had experienced racism in their adult lives. The report found that such racist experiences negatively impacted on interviewee's educational, employment and training opportunities.
- 5.3 **In 2009 the DWP published the report *A test for racial discrimination in recruitment practice in British cities*⁸ focused on estimating 'the extent of racial discrimination in key areas of the British labour market.' Gypsies and Travellers were not included in this piece of research.**

6. Disability benefits

- 6.1 Despite a lack of availability of national data on the health status of Gypsies and Travellers, studies have found that their health outcomes are much poorer than the general population and also poorer than others in socially deprived areas. The 2009 Equality and Human Rights Commission review highlighted that a West of England Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment found evidence of a significantly higher rate of disability than among the wider population.⁹

⁶ DWP and DfE, 2011, *A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives*, p.18

⁷ EHRC, 2009, *Inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers: A Review*, p. 40

⁸ DWP, 2009, Research report no. 607, *A test for racial discrimination in recruitment practice in British cities*
<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2009-2010/rrep607.pdf>

⁹ EHRC, 2009, *Inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers: A Review*, p. 257

6.2 In 2010 the DWP published the report *Ethnic minority customers' experiences of claiming disability benefits*.¹⁰ Gypsies and Travellers were not included in this piece of research

Recommendations

- ITMB welcome the announcement that the Ethnic Minority Advisory Group (EMAG) have invited a Gypsy and Traveller representative to sit on this group.
- We strongly recommend the DWP categorise Gypsies and Travellers as an ethnic minority group
- We urge the Government to conduct detailed research on Gypsies and Travellers experience in the labour market and access to employment.
- Whilst ITMB welcomes the DWP plans to conduct a limited number of customer insight sessions with the communities, it remains crucial that Gypsies and Travellers are included as an ethnic minority in all future research.
- The Governments Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force (EMETF) and EMAG should take the lead in focusing on Gypsy and Traveller employment issues.
- ITMB urge the Government to develop a national strategy in line with the requirements in the EU's national Roma Integration Strategies to address the high rates of economic and social exclusion suffered by Travellers.

¹⁰ DWP, 2010, Research report no. 609, *Ethnic minority customers' experiences of claiming disability benefits*

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2009-2010/rrep609.pdf>