

# **Roundtable on Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) Communities in Higher Education, 10 September 2019**

## **BRIEFING NOTE**

### **Introduction**

This briefing note summarises the present situation in relation to GTR communities' participation in higher education, reflects on the lacuna in participation data, and highlights key themes for consideration within the roundtable event.

It argues that there is a special need to engage in ways of widening access and participation through co-production of appropriate and effective methodologies with community members who have experience of academia (staff and academics), specialist NGOs, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Such approaches, systematically applied, can be effective in removing barriers, and providing on-going support mechanisms within and across Universities. It is argued that through utilising effective policy and best practice, and working closely with specialists supporting both GTR young people and mature students returning to education, it is possible to encourage access to higher education and successful outcomes for students. Effective design, implementation, and sharing of existing good practice methods which enable university education and academic career paths to be more open to BAME people as a whole<sup>1</sup>; may, potentially, if appropriately adapted, have particular pertinence to GTR community members who are students, academic staff or considering entering into Higher Education. Similarly, use of proven approaches to engaging, retaining and

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<sup>1</sup> This briefing note does not seek to engage with the broader literature on, and well-evidenced disparities experienced by BAME students and staff – for example see further: Universities UK/NUS (2019) <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>; Advance HE (2018) <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/research-insight-evaluating-the-achieving-race-equality-in-higher-education-programme/> and Bhopal, K (2018) *White privilege The myth of a post-racial society*, Policy Press: Bristol; but locates the experiences of GTR communities and challenges faced by them in ensuring equality of access and outcomes, as a specific group of students within broader BAME groupings.

supporting BAME staff (for example through access to high profile staff networks, or indicating that recruiting institutions particularly invite applications from GTR academics), may also increase the numbers and visibility of members of the communities, who are at present significantly under-represented within academia.

This briefing note is intended for higher education senior leadership, widening participation and policy specialists, as well as current and future students and staff from Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. This paper is intended to act as an initial point of discussion which will lead to the co-production of debate, tangible commitments and concrete actions to enhance equity in higher education; remedy the shortfall in participation and engagement; and support GTR community members across their academic and professional careers.

Throughout, this briefing recognises and applauds the actions of individual universities which are already actively engaged in identifying best practice to support GTR students and staff, for example through exploring ways of overcoming barriers to participation, and actively engaging with inclusive practice<sup>2</sup>. Similarly it celebrates the achievements of students and graduates from GTR communities<sup>3</sup> who have overcome many the barriers outlined below, to enable their participation and successful achievement in Higher Education.

## **Current Situation**

The recent publication of the Office for Students advice and guidance note on GTR people in higher education (which in addition to Romany Gypsy, Traveller and Roma

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<sup>2</sup> See for example the work emerging from Kings College London through their 'Rom Belong' outreach activities [https://medium.com/@outreach\\_88279/introducing-the-rom-belong-programme-by-kcl-widening-participation-department-81688af1659b](https://medium.com/@outreach_88279/introducing-the-rom-belong-programme-by-kcl-widening-participation-department-81688af1659b) and the University of Sussex CHEER programme <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/education/cheer/researchprojects/rise/knowledgeexchange>

<sup>3</sup> A number of whom are present at this roundtable and will be discussing their personal experiences of academia

communities also includes Showpeople, Live-Aboard Boaters and New Travellers who are not captured in any extant ethnicity based data-sets), further emphasises the critical necessity and social justice imperative of supporting students from the above communities into and within Higher Education.<sup>4</sup>

The poor quality of available data in relation to GTR students (and staff)<sup>5</sup> in higher and further education, and hence the ability to ascertain the size of the populations and attainment gap (presuming this exists), is highly problematic for a number of reasons. Although the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and University and Colleges Application Service (UCAS) have included ethnicity categories for 'Gypsy and Traveller' students since 2012, no code exists for Roma students, rendering them effectively invisible. Data returns on Gypsy and Traveller students are included as a subset of 'White' students in the above data sets, although disaggregated data are available on request to individual HEIs. Because of the small number of such students (and staff), definitive numbers of such individuals are particularly likely to be suppressed under data protection requirements (where figures are less than 5 individuals) when access to data is sought.

Despite the possibility of self-identification by ethnicity<sup>6</sup>, strong evidence exists of the reluctance of many GTR students, either in college or university, to declare their identity, as a result of concerns over discrimination<sup>7</sup>. This pattern also appears to

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities/>

<sup>5</sup> Currently data is only captured by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in relation to self-identified ethnicity of certain categories of GTR students/staff : Irish Traveller (14) or Gypsy or Traveller (15) and hence excludes other communities whom the OfS include in their guidance as coming within the GTR rubric (see note 1 above).

<sup>6</sup> An option which is not available to Occupational groups such as Showpeople or other mobile communities such as Boaters and new Travellers who are included in the OfS briefing under the generic term GTR (see note 2 above),

<sup>7</sup> In relation to experiences of discrimination and racism in educational settings (predominantly in schools) see for example, Foster, P. and Norton, B (2012): *Educational equality for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in the UK* [https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/ERR8\\_Brian\\_Foster\\_and\\_Peter\\_Norton.pdf](https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/ERR8_Brian_Foster_and_Peter_Norton.pdf);

pertain in relation to School Census returns<sup>8</sup>. Evidence of progression and attainment at school may be taken as a proxy measure for likelihood of proceeding to post-compulsory education, particularly when taken in conjunction with possession of other widening participation (WP) characteristics such as low socio-economic status, school exclusion, etc. which are known to act as barriers to entering HE<sup>9</sup>. Abundant evidence exists of disproportionate school exclusion rates experienced by GTR students; early school leaving, multi-domain socio-economic exclusion, experiences of racism and discrimination and frequent enforced movement impacting school careers<sup>10</sup>. Children recorded in School Census data as being Gypsy/Roma or a Traveller of Irish heritage, consistently have the lowest attainment scores of all groups of pupils at Stage 4/GCSEs. In 2018, children recorded as being Gypsy/Roma or Traveller of Irish Heritage accounted for 13% and 19% respectively of young people achieving Grade 4/C GCSEs in English and Maths, as opposed to 64% of the whole population<sup>11</sup>.

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Derrington & Kendall (2008) <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/social-policy-and-society/article/challenges-and-barriers-to-secondary-education-the-experiences-of-young-gypsy-traveller-students-in-english-secondary-schools/58E82A3A4F8995DA6238BF8D26711C50> ; Traveller Movement (2019) *A Good Practice Guide for improving outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children in education*:

<https://travellermovement.org.uk/education?download=122:a-good-practice-guide-for-improving-outcomes-for-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-children-in-education> and Lane P. Spencer, S. and Jones, A (2014) *Experts by Experience: Gypsy, Traveller and Roma: reviewing UK progress on the European Union Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*. The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups and Anglia Ruskin University

<sup>8</sup> See for example: Women and Equalities Committee Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities Seventh Report of Session 2017–19.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html> Chapters 4 ‘Data Gaps’ and 5, ‘Education’ ; Traveller Movement (2019) op. cit; and Wilkin, A; Derrington, C & Foster, B (2009) *Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils Literature Review* DCSF Research Report RR077 London: DCSF <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11361/1/DCSF-RR077.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.parliament.scot/Research%20briefings%20and%20fact%20sheets/SB\\_10-07.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/Research%20briefings%20and%20fact%20sheets/SB_10-07.pdf) and <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poorer-children%E2%80%99s-educational-attainment-how-important-are-attitudes-and-behaviour>.

<sup>10</sup> House of Commons Briefing Paper (May 2019) ‘Gypsies and Travellers’

<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8083#fullreport> and House of Commons (2019) Women and Equalities Committee Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities Seventh Report of Session 2017–19. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html> Chapter 5, ‘Education’.

<sup>11</sup> House of Commons Briefing Paper (May 2019) op. cit.

From such indicative evidence as does exist, it is ascertainable that GTR students (and staff) are, perhaps unsurprisingly, significantly under-represented in FE and HE in the UK. Research undertaken by LKMCO (2017)<sup>12</sup> suggested that in the academic year 2015-16, Gypsy and Traveller students were approximately 11 times less likely to enter HE than would be expected, given their population size. This finding is based on a best estimate of the Gypsy/Traveller population size (as noted, no measure exists for Roma or other groups such as Showmen<sup>13</sup>) calculated from the School Census data and the 2011 Census, which are both widely acknowledged to be flawed data sets<sup>14</sup> which significantly underestimate the size of the communities. Data from HESA returns<sup>15</sup> released in 2016 suggested that only 3 to 4% of GTR young people aged 18-30 accessed HE in 2014/15, whereas 43% of the national 18-30 year old population did so.

As noted above, it is highly likely that a greater number of young GTR people than are enumerated in official data, are in fact overcoming considerable barriers to entering, and attaining within FE and HE institutions. Strategies of ‘passing’ as a member of the majority community and non-disclosure of ethnicity, may in fact be pertinent and effective in relation to academic career progression, sense of belonging within academia/student bodies, and assessed attainment, as has been anecdotally suggested in some forums. However more verifiable evidence is required in relation to the

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<sup>12</sup> Mulcahy et. al. (2017) The underrepresentation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in higher education Research brief A report on barriers from early years to secondary and beyond London: LKMCO [https://www.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/KINGWIDE\\_28494\\_brief\\_proof2.pdf](https://www.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/KINGWIDE_28494_brief_proof2.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Limited evidence exists in relation to the experiences of Showpeople and education across the life-span but the Showman’s Guild notes the importance of Traveller Education Services distance learning activities (and tangentially the impact of educational service cuts) for their members. <https://showmensguild.co.uk/education/>. Good practice examples for schools with Show families on the roll has been produced by Education Scotland, National Improvement Hub: <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/practice-exemplars/travelling-showmen>

<sup>14</sup> <https://pad.basingstoke.gov.uk/documents/4753/01/07/37/01073789.PDF> and <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/resource/a-good-practice-guide-for-improving-outcomes-for-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-children-in-education/>

<sup>15</sup> See Mulcahy et al. (2017) p21. op.cit. HESA returns from 2014 suggest a total of 200 self-identified GTR students, somewhat higher than the above figure identified by TM through their FoI request pertaining to 2016/17.

experiences of students and staff to be able ascertain how common such strategies are and the actual impact of such practice.

Freedom of Information responses provided by universities to the Traveller Movement (TM) in 2018 in relation to a question on numbers of GTR students in HE in 2016/17<sup>16</sup>, indicated that there were only 169 such self-identified students in the whole of the UK. Only three institutions (one in Northern Ireland and one delivering education online) recorded having a GTR student population in double figures, and only two institutions reported including GTR ethnicity within staff surveys. Of these, only one HEI returned a figure of more than 5 GTR staff members. Whilst this will be an undercount of GTR students for the reasons noted above (as well as some HEIs not responding to the TM FoI requests), it is clear that all available evidence indicates that significant under-representation exists in relation to Higher Education participation by members of the GTR communities. As noted above, no mechanism exists for monitoring numbers of Roma, Boater and Showpeople<sup>17</sup> in HE. Further, there is a lacuna in evidence in relation to progression rates of GTR students (both at undergraduate level and taught post-graduate/doctoral studies), and how this translates into sustainable academic careers. The impact of tuition fees (although this does not appear to necessarily negatively impact students from all minority ethnic groups) may act as a particular disincentive to GTR students and is worthy of further exploration<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Unpublished figures from a work in progress – please check further with the Traveller Movement if wish to cite.

<sup>17</sup> Two newspaper articles in 2015, referred to young women from Show families who have achieved outstanding academic results at elite universities, but no other publicly available data exists in relation to general trends in education for this community. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11695522/Funfair-to-Oxbridge-What-its-like-being-a-traveller-at-university.html> and <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/11690332/Traveller-who-studied-at-Oxford-to-return-to-work-on-familys-fairground-after-completing-degree.html>

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion on financial issues potentially impacting BAME students see Universities UK/NUS (2019) *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic student attainment at UK Universities: #closingthegap*. London: UUK/NUS <https://www.soas.ac.uk/bame-attainment-gap/file140448.pdf> (p19) and Universities UK/NEON (2018) *The Financial Concerns of Students* London : UUK <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/the-financial-concerns-students.pdf>

Greenfields (2007)<sup>19</sup>, in an Aim Higher study, found that young Gypsies and Travellers focused extensively on issues of cultural/family expectations impacting on the perceived feasibility of university education and training<sup>20</sup>. A number of young people expressed a sense both that certain career paths were precluded to them, and that universities were not accessible to them as a result of lack of qualifications, cultural isolation, fear of experiencing racism and discrimination (typically based on prior school experiences) and an erroneous belief about the types of courses on offer – with academic programmes often not seen as relevant to GTR people. Concerns about moving away from family support networks, particularly for young women who referred to wide-spread taboos relating to living away from home before marriage, were also prominent. These themes were also identified as major barriers to access to HE within the 2017 LKMCO study on WP and GTR communities undertaken on behalf of KCL<sup>21</sup>, and were again reiterated within a workshop day on co-producing inclusive learning with GTR communities, hosted by UCLAN in May 2018<sup>22</sup>.

Whilst it is recognized (LKMCO 2017; Greenfields, 2007; Danvers, 2015; Bhopal, 2018<sup>23</sup>); that GTR students are particularly likely to have one or more widening participation characteristics which potentially negatively impact access to FE and HE, even less is known about the experiences of more ‘hidden’/unenumerated

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<sup>19</sup> Greenfields, (2007) [https://leedsgate.co.uk/sites/default/files/media/aim\\_higher\\_final.pdf](https://leedsgate.co.uk/sites/default/files/media/aim_higher_final.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> LKMCO (2017) [https://www.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/KINGWIDE\\_28494\\_brief\\_proof2.pdf](https://www.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/KINGWIDE_28494_brief_proof2.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> UCLAN 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2018 1-3pm "Co-producing inclusive learning at UCLan: A request for guidance from GTR organisations" workshop

<sup>23</sup> LKMCO (2017) op. cit.; Danvers (2015) <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=sussexheimreport-uk--final.pdf&site=41> Greenfields, (2007) op. cit. Bhopal (2018) op. cit.



communities included within the OfS definition of GTR populations - including Showpeople<sup>24</sup>, live-aboard Boaters<sup>25</sup> and new Travellers<sup>26</sup>.

Further, intersectional issues impacting the diverse GTR populations within HE are essentially invisible. Thus for example, we are not able to identify evidence (including within grey literature) in relation to the higher education experiences (or barriers to access to FE and HE) of GTR community members who are living with disabilities or who identify as LGBT+. Possession of more than one protected characteristic or intersectional identities, has in the case of students and staff from wider BAME populations, been noted (particularly in relation to gender<sup>27</sup>) as having a potentially detrimental effect on access, retention, outcome and career progression in HE even where supportive, proactive and inclusive educational environments exist.<sup>28</sup> It is to be presumed that experiences of GTR students and staff mirror those of other

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<sup>24</sup> See above note 17. Only one academic in the UK (Professor Vanessa Toulmin, Director of the National Fairground Archive) <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/collections/oconnortoulmin> is publicly known to be a member of the Showpeople's community, but it is likely that significantly more staff and students are within academia.

<sup>25</sup> A newspaper report of September 2019 refers to the experience of a family of live-aboard Boaters in South-West England whose children's secondary education is being disrupted as a result of stringent 'continuous cruising' requirements imposed by the Canals and River Trust <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/houseboat-eviction-canal-river-trust-ctr-steve-holder-wiltshire-a9087246.html>. It can be presumed that considerably more live-aboard boater children experience these challenges to remaining in education. See further a news story from 2016: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-36046323>

<sup>26</sup> There has been no substantive research into HE and FE experiences of new Travellers but Greenfields' collation of anecdotal evidence suggests substantially higher access to HE for these children who grew up on sites, often following their return to house-dwelling. Such access to HE and FE is potentially as a result of prior parental experience in housing/mainstream education impacting decisions and knowledge. The Children Society in the 1990s operated support programmes with this community in South West England, and (unpublished) identified barriers to accessing school education which bore similarities to those experienced by other GTR populations, with eviction and bullying in school settings, commonly cited as reasons for disrupted learning.

<sup>27</sup> Universities UK/NUS (2019) op. cit; and in relation to disproportionately low numbers of female Black Professors in UK Universities see further: Rollock (2019) *Staying Power: The career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors* London: UCU [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10075/Staying-Power/pdf/UCU\\_Rollock\\_February\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10075/Staying-Power/pdf/UCU_Rollock_February_2019.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Equality Challenge Unit (2017) [http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Research\\_and\\_data\\_briefing\\_2\\_Intersectional\\_approaches\\_to\\_equality\\_research\\_and\\_data.pdf](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Research_and_data_briefing_2_Intersectional_approaches_to_equality_research_and_data.pdf) Tate, S. and Bagguley, P. (2017). 'Building the anti-racist university: next steps'. *Race Ethnicity and Education*. 20:3, 289-299; Bhopal, K (2018) op. cit. Gilbert P (undated) Changing Mindsets web-portal <http://mindsets.port.ac.uk/?p=1511>



BAME communities<sup>29</sup>, albeit with particular and specific circumstances (for example wide spread acceptance of casual racism towards their communities<sup>30</sup>, limited community wide experience of higher education, and an almost total lack of positive representations in print or broadcast media<sup>31</sup>) impacting them even further.

## **Identified Barriers to Recruitment, Retention and Attainment for GTR Students**

The issues summarised below<sup>32</sup> are anticipated to be prominent within presentations, thematic discussions and debate within the round-table session, although it is anticipated that further themes will emerge within the event and follow-up activities.

- Perceived lack of relevance of university curricula to GTR cultures and career preferences
- Fear of discrimination and prejudice<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Whilst fully recognising that People of Colour from other BAME communities do not have the option of 'passing' / or failing to be recognised as members of 'non-White' communities through non-declaration of ethnicity. Hence experiences of discrimination may occur as a result of visible recognition of ethnicity, or having a name which may not be present in the White 'mainstream' (see further: Bhopal, K (2018) op. cit; Curtis (2005) <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2005/nov/30/accesstouniversity.highereducation..>

<sup>30</sup> Even within liberal education institutions where clear conceptualisation of equalities exist and robust policies are in place, there is plentiful evidence that casual (and direct) racism can still be enacted within the student body. See for example recent news reports on students' experiences of racism within HEIs:

<https://glasgowguardian.co.uk/2019/03/14/far-right-group-targets-glasgow-university-lecturer/>;

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jul/05/a-demeaning-environment-stories-of-racism-in-uk-universities>.

As detailed within the 2019 Women and Equalities Committee report (particularly Chapter 8 'Discrimination and Hate Crime'); GTR community members are particularly at risk of experiencing hate speech and hate crime, as well as discrimination (direct and indirect) from service providers.

<sup>31</sup> Okely, J (2014) <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/recycled-misrepresentations-gypsies-travellers-roma.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> The bullet-pointed themes have been identified from a range of publications cited in this briefing, emergent evidence on successful initiatives to support and engage GTR students, debates with GTR students and community members/experts in a variety of contexts, and evidence provided to the Women's and Equalities Select Committee Inquiry. House of Commons (2019) Women and Equalities Committee *Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities Seventh Report of Session 2017–19*. In particular, Chapter 5, 'Education'. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html>

<sup>33</sup> See for example evidence provided to the Women's and Equality Committee Inquiry (op. cit.) and Lane P. Spencer, S. and Jones, A (2014) *Experts by Experience: Gypsy, Traveller and Roma: reviewing UK progress on the European Union Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*. The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups and Anglia Ruskin University

- Issues of inclusion, recognition<sup>34</sup>, identity and sense of belonging within HE (potentially linking to issues of exclusion common to broader BAME communities; and self-identified first-generation/working class students<sup>35</sup>)
- Absence of GTR community recognition/inclusion/respect and awareness of cultures within the curricula
- Lack of ‘academic cultural capital’; tailored support services and guidance, for students and their families pertinent to entering HE (e.g familiarity with ‘academic language’, technical issues pertaining to applying for student loans, or accommodation etc.) which impacts the confidence of students in accessing support and entitlements.
- Lack of visible role models from GTR communities or supportive peer communities.<sup>36</sup>
- Lack of culturally competent and co-produced engagement and support initiatives to work with GTR communities, families and students.
- Poor perceptions of universities (and in some cases formal education more generally), particularly in relation to whether academic qualifications offer ‘value for money’ over time.
- Debt resistance and concern over long-term financial implications/inability to continue working within family businesses or trade.
- Caring responsibilities, particularly for mature students.

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<sup>34</sup> For example, (anecdotal evidence) fear of being ‘outed’ by peers/staff as a member of a GTR community and hence exposed to negative comment or discrimination.

<sup>35</sup> Clarke, P & Beech, D eds. (2018) *Reaching the parts of society universities have missed: A manifesto for the new Director of Fair Access and Participation* London: HEPI and Whiteside [https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/HEPI-Brightside\\_WP-Manifesto-for-OfS\\_FINAL-Report-106.pdf](https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/HEPI-Brightside_WP-Manifesto-for-OfS_FINAL-Report-106.pdf); Barrs et. Al. (2016) *The underrepresentation of white working class boys in higher education: The role of widening participation*. LKMCo: London <https://www.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/The-underrepresentation-of-white-working-class-boys-in-higher-education-baars-et-al-2016.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Whilst some HEIs are taking active steps to ensure greater visibility of role models from the communities – e.g. the RomBelong programme at KCL (op.cit note 2) which are part of a package of WP activities impacting recruitment and retention, there is a clear need for expansion of such activities which will support and encourage self-identification of GTR students and staff in HE.

- Widening Participation and engagement initiatives which are currently targeted at GTR students have been largely focused on Russell Group and Oxbridge institutions, which may leave more vocationally inclined students feeling that HE is not appropriate for them. This latter point has relevance also to the experiences/perceptions of students from other BAME and students who identify as working class<sup>37</sup>.

## **The Case for Change**

The arguments for focusing on widening participation, and delivering support and equality of opportunity appropriately to GTR students and staff, are first and foremost a matter of social justice. However, it is also worth emphasising that apart from widening personal and community networks, enhancing social inclusion and individual life-chances, the HEI sector, the economy and society as a whole, benefits from the inclusion of diverse experiences and perspectives. Removal or mitigation of the barriers identified within this briefing paper, could go a considerable way towards increasing the low numbers of self-identified GTR students and staff in HE, with anticipated positive impacts across multiple domains.

GTR communities are overwhelmingly absent from both positive discourse and inclusion within the HEI policy focus but it is hoped that this opportunity to bring together a range of GTR community members (academic staff and students) with expert experience of academia; HEI representatives, and education policy experts, will place us in a strong position to share good practice, and openly discuss challenges and solutions. Accordingly the anticipated aim of the GTR people in HE

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2018/05/10/new-report-calls-universities-take-radical-steps-make-higher-education-accessible/>

roundtable, is to facilitate and commence co-production of a strategic best-practice sector-wide approach to ensuring inclusion and equality of opportunity for GTR students and staff in academia.

### **Margaret Greenfields - August 2019**

With thanks to critical readers of earlier versions of this brief: Professor Colin Clark; Dr. David Smith and Dr. Siobhan Spencer.

We are also grateful to the Traveller Movement for permission to cite from their unpublished FoI data on GTR students in HE.