

# the Traveller Movement



## Traveller Movement Conference Report 2019

*Waiting, waiting, waiting – is the wait finally over?  
As Government announces new national  
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller strategy*

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## Foreword by Lord Simon Woolley of Woodford CBE

In my maiden speech to the House of Lords, I said directly to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people – “your struggle, is our struggle”. When I spoke those words I did so in full recognition that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers continue to experience some of the worst forms of prejudice and discrimination in this country, and sadly right across Europe.

Sadly too, it isn't uncommon to hear politicians speak in discriminatory terms against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, terms they would never dare to utter against other ethnic minority groups. It is for this reason that I believe we all must act together to advance the rights of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

I was particularly honoured to deliver both the key note address at the Traveller Movement's annual conference last November, and the wider Roma movement at the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture in Berlin, Germany in December. For too long the inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have been ignored. The findings from the Women and Equalities Committee 18 month inquiry were truly shocking, revealing Traveller men and women live on average 10-12 years less than non-Travellers, their suicide rate is 6-7 times higher than general population, and the communities are plagued by social and economic exclusion.

Additionally, Gypsies and Travellers are over-represented in the criminal justice system, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are excluded from school at four times the rate as non-Travellers. This is unacceptable in the twenty first century. Something must change.

These problems are exacerbated by significant data gaps in ethnic monitoring across all public institutions. Of the 130 data sets analysed in the Race Disparity Audit, only 27 contained classifications for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. This must be remedied. As Chair of the advisory board to the Race Disparity Unit, I know of the importance of consistent ethnic monitoring and data collection in driving change forward. Data is so important for securing equality and human rights. Without it, we cannot “prove” any disproportionality, or make the persuasive argument for meaningful interventions if policymakers still have to ask “but where's the data?”

For decades, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have been abandoned by successive governments. They need a race equality strategy in the Cabinet Office as a matter of urgency. Moreover, it must be robust with significant planning and investment, targeted outreach, gentle encouragement about the importance of data, and meaningful and respectful engagement from all public institutions. Above all, it must bring the community with it. Without their centre stage involvement in all areas at all levels any strategy will be meaningless.

A comprehensive, cross-government strategy to improve outcomes must be seen as a great opportunity not just for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers but for wider society too. They are entitled to and deserve respect, support, and the opportunity that they and their children can fulfil their great potential, free from the abuse and disadvantage.

I endorse this report by the Traveller Movement, and I urge the government to take its recommendations seriously.



# Background and context

In November 2019, the Traveller Movement held its annual, national conference at the 'Resource for London' premises on Holloway Road, North London. The Traveller Movement's annual conference provides a platform and a friendly space for Romany Gypsies, Roma and Pavee/Mincéir (Irish Travellers) to discuss the issues affecting them. It also provides an opportunity to hear from activists and supporters about how to address these issues, and build support across politics and civil society.

The theme of this year's conference was Waiting, Waiting, Waiting...is the wait finally over? and related specifically to the June 2019 announcement of a new **national strategy** to address inequalities experienced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. A raft of evidence dating back decades highlights the fact that Romany Gypsies, Roma and Pavee/Mincéir (Irish Travellers) experience some of the worst outcomes of any ethnic groups in the UK, across a wide range of social indicators. Despite inclusion within the Census 2011, coding has not been aligned, and key data collection and ethnic monitoring across public bodies and statutory services have remained woefully inadequate.

This year's conference provided a space for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, academics, public institutions and supporters to come together and contribute to a blueprint for the new national strategy to tackle inequalities. Delegates heard from a range of speakers from across civil society, including leading policy makers, campaigners, activists and academics, and many more.

There were two panel discussions – the morning panel focused on the critical need to address data gaps in ethnic monitoring across all public institutions, while the second panel heard from prominent Gypsies, Roma and Pavee/Mincéir about why it will be crucial for Gypsy and Traveller voices to be prioritised in devising any future framework or strategy.

The key note address was delivered by Lord Simon Woolley, founder and director of Operation Black Vote, who spoke of the importance of voter registration for minority ethnic groups, as well as their democratic participation and the need for collaborative collective action.

The conference workshops addressed four thematic areas: **education and economic inclusion; mental health and suicide; data gaps in ethnic monitoring; and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller disproportionality in the criminal justice system.**

Additionally, over 150 delegates were asked what they thought should be included in the new national strategy through user feedback forms, workshop participation and via general Q&A.

This report provides a synopsis of that feedback, as well as a conference summary.



# National policy framework relating to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

There is an indisputable body of evidence outlining the stark inequalities affecting Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers, yet there is an absence of coherent national policy measures, or frameworks to consistently address these inequalities. Romany 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). Yet, despite this recognition they experience the worst outcomes of any minority group across all social indicators.

According to the 2011 Census, Gypsies and Irish Travellers were the ethnic group with the lowest qualification levels, with 60% having no qualifications, compared with 23% of people in the general population. They were the ethnic group with the lowest proportion of respondents who were economically active (47%, compared to 63% for the general population).<sup>2</sup> This relates to the fact that the educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are particularly poor. According to the *Race Disparity Audit*, Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers have the highest rates of school exclusion, and the lowest educational attainment of all ethnic groups. They are also overrepresented within the criminal justice system, and have some of the poorest health outcomes of any ethnic groups in Britain.

In 2012, an inter-ministerial working group published [28 commitments to tackle inequalities faced by Gypsies and Travellers](#) (PDF 208 KB). In April 2019 an [inquiry](#) by the Women and Equalities Committee (WEC) reviewed these commitments and the progress made by the Government in achieving them. It found that there has been a persistent failure by both national and local policy-makers to tackle these inequalities in any sustained way in the intervening years. This long-term failure has led to services that are ill-equipped to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) people to use services that they need and are entitled to. Subsequently in June 2019 the then Communities Minister, Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth issued a statement announcing a [new national strategy](#) to tackle Gypsy and Traveller inequalities.

Given the lack of specificity or detail in the Communities Minister's announcement, the Traveller Movement used this year's conference as a way to push forward on this policy promise, and to ensure that the voices of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers lead the response.

## What should be contained within the strategy?

We believe that a cross government strategy to tackle GRT inequalities should, at a minimum, include recommendations in relation to the following:

- Education and training
- Measures to improve economic inclusion
- Data gaps and ethnic monitoring
- Disproportionality in the criminal justice system
- Health and mental health
- Accommodation

However, a Home Office [announcement](#) of a public consultation to criminalise trespass and increase Police powers in November 2019 runs contrary to the spirit of a national strategy to tackle GRT inequalities. Given the proximity of the announcement to the December election, and the inclusion of the intention to criminalise trespass in the Conservative Party's manifesto, it would appear that the government is at cross purposes with itself, and perhaps unclear about what methods it should use to reduce GRT inequalities. Therefore it is essential that both the Home Office consultation, and the forthcoming national strategy be jointly referred to in any on-going advocacy by GRT groups and their supporters.



# Conference Panels

## Panel 1: *“Are we committed to gathering data on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT), and are we serious about using that data to address the pervasive inequality and discrimination experienced on a daily basis by these communities?”*

This panel addressed **data gaps** in GRT ethnic monitoring and the **lack of consistent data collection** across public institutions in the UK. These institutions included health, education, social care, crime and policing, criminal justice systems, housing, labour market participation, and public sector workforce.

Speakers included:

- **Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson**, CEO of Women's Budget Group
- **Jeremy Crook OBE**, Chief Executive, Black Training and Enterprise Group
- **Marc Willers QC**, Barrister at Garden Court Chambers
- **Sue McAllister CB**, Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

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## Panel 2: *“Nothing about us, without us. Here is the template for the new national strategy”.*

The panel consisted only of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers who discussed what needed to be included in the new national strategy being rolled out across government.

Speakers included:

- **Jim Davies**, Formerly GRTPA and The TM Advisory Board
  - **Denisa Gannon**, Solicitor and TM Advisory Board
  - **Christina Kerrigan**, TM Partnerships & Community Development Officer
  - **Chelsea McDonagh**, TM Education Policy & Campaigns Officer, TM Advisory Board
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# Conference Workshops

## Workshop 1: *Economic Inclusion: From school to work*

Chair: **Brian Foster** (ACERT & TM Trustee); **Josie O'Driscoll** (Gate Hertfordshire); **Helena Kiely** (TM advisory Board); **Dan Rosenberg** (Simpson Millar)

This workshop critically examined the damning statistics in relation to GRT educational attainment and outcomes, and explored the contexts from the perspectives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. The panel came up with recommendations for the cross-government strategy for tackling GRT inequalities.

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## Workshop 2: *We are speaking up, who is listening?* *Mental health in GRT communities*

Chair: **Prof Margaret Greenfields** (Bucks New University); **Tina McInerney** (TM); **Lisa Smith** (Travellers' Times); **Shaynie Larwood** (Cambridgeshire GRT community nurse)

This workshop pulled together a large gathering of actors from across civil society and provided recommendations for the Government National GRT Strategy on how to tackle the mental health crisis affecting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

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## Workshop 3: *Still invisible!* *The impact of data gaps in tackling GRT inequalities*

Chair: **Prof Colin Clark** (University of West Scotland; TM Advisory Board); **Christine Browne** (Student at Kings College London; TM Advisory Board); **Dr Aileen Kitching** (HSE Ireland; TM Trustee)

This workshop explored the weak evidence of data gathering to date, the insights gained from qualitative research, and how the Government could take forward data-driven responses in the new cross-government strategy.

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## Workshop 4: *Still overlooked and overrepresented?* *Disproportionality in the criminal justice system*

Chair: **Jim Davies** (formerly GRTPA and TM Advisory Board); **Mairéad Healy** (Amnesty International & Youth Justice Board); **Aleksandra Stankova** (Hibiscus Initiatives)

This workshop examined the impact of poor ethnic monitoring across the criminal justice system, the experience of GRT in court, in prisons, and the treatment of young GRT across the youth justice estate. The workshop produced compelling recommendations for change to ensure effective support and rehabilitation.



# Key Recommendations for national strategy

## Methodology

The delegate's views were gathered via hand-written questionnaires, during workshop participation, through monitoring and evaluation forms, and during multiple Q&A sessions. A Q&A session followed each panel discussion and sought specific views on the commitments and actions needed, at the highest level, to tackle GRT inequalities.



Below is a breakdown of the conference recommendations in relation to **education and training, economic inclusion, health and mental health, the criminal justice system, data gaps in ethnic monitoring, and accommodation** for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

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## Education and training



- A national funded GRT education strategy, with timelines and reporting objectives across all key stages: pre-school, primary and secondary schools, further education, alternative provision and higher education.
  - Mandatory vocational education provision for 14-16 year olds
  - Pathways back into education for 19-24 year olds.
  - Fact sheets, videos and other accessible resources about basic education rights for parents **in plain English**.
  - Fund a national campaign to encourage ethnicity self-ascription.
  - Revisit, update and re-release the materials developed through the National Strategies Gypsy Roma Traveller Achievement Programme, and fund a nationwide training programme to promote them.
  - GRT cultural competency training to be embedded in national teacher training programmes.
  - Earmark funding and a national coordinator to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month.
  - Forced off-rolling or home education must be inspected by Ofsted.
  - Resources and support from Local Authorities for GRT/all children in Elective Home Education, including information on paths back into mainstream or further education.
  - Amend the Department for Education '*Preventing and tackling bullying*' guidance and make it compatible with the public sector equality duty; prosecute schools for not having effective anti-bullying policies.
  - Reinstate GRT in the Ofsted framework to ensure on inspectors radar
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## Economic inclusion



- Targeted support for secondary school age young people who are in elective home education, and link to work and training opportunities.
  - Lifelong learning and training opportunities.
  - Small business advice and training.
  - Targeted programme to get GRT people into apprenticeships.
  - Targeted provision for NEET GRT.
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## Health and mental health



- Include GRT in NHS data dictionary (or undertake a legal challenge in relation to this not taking place).
- Targeted services - Make sure community nurses build relationships with GRT families to support health and child development.
- Assign mental health nurses/mental health visitors who are trained to work directly with GRT people.
- Train GRTs to become mental health advocates for their own communities.
- Engagement with Clinical Commissioning Groups, Care Quality Commission, and have GRT representative on patient panels.
- Financial incentives for reducing GRT inequalities for NHS trusts.
- Better education for staff working in children's services about GRT communities and culture.
- Mechanisms to ensure easier registration with GPs.
- Identify barriers to GRT engagement with physical and mental health services and develop strategies to reduce these.
- Strategy to address high suicide rates in Traveller communities
- Develop more accessible information about mental health, also specifically targeted at GRT people (videos etc.).
- Fund organisations to work with the Traveller communities to break down stigma around mental health, LGBT+ identities, and gender roles.
- Co-production between NHS and organisations (GRT & non-GRT) around development of resources.

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## Criminal justice – prisons, police and probation



- Instigate an effective ethnic recording and monitoring system across the entire criminal justice system:
  - Use 18+1 census categories (include 'Roma' from 2021)
  - Include efforts to collect data at every intervention
  - To take Intersectional aspects into account. i.e. note the range of social factors which contribute to the prejudices faced by this group of people
- Training for staff at all levels to understand the concerns and culture of GRT communities and what changes need to be made, both within the CJS and wider public sector:
  - Training should be a requirement and not a "one off", and
  - It should include, where possible community members in custody who might contribute to this.
- Help with literacy, education and employability skills across the adult estate.
- Put education at the heart of the youth justice system.
- Positive strategies for working with GRT reflected in policies and procedures.
- Explore how to increase the diversity of GRT across the criminal justice workforce, including magistrates, police and prison officers, probation etc.
- Create GRT-specific support in prisons, including proper outreach to GRT, and re-establish Traveller forums.
- Review charging decisions within the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) with regard to how prejudice affects such outcomes, and further the effectiveness of current practices.
- Mental health support in prisons – including building on the work of the prison chaplaincies.
- Train GRT people in custody to become mental health advocates in prisons.
- Encourage Roma to become court interpreters to eliminate dismissive/ discriminatory behaviour from interpreters.

- Take a trauma-informed, whole system approach to the youth justice estate. Consider using the Youth Justice [Blueprint](#) for Wales which is intended to prevent children entering the Youth Justice System.
- Put an end to the criminalisation of those experiencing sex trafficking and modern slavery. This is a particular issue for Roma people.
- To ensure updates on the effectiveness of sentencing measures and guidelines in relation to GRT communities.

## Data gaps in ethnic monitoring



- Collaborate and share best practice in data collection among GRT organisations.
- Fund trust-building campaigns in GRT communities to encourage box-ticking, explaining what happens with the data, and why it's important to collect it.
- The 18+1 census categories must be rolled out across all public institutions as a matter of priority. Where the inclusion doesn't exist, it must be challenged. Additionally:
  - A 'Roma' tick box in line with 2021 census categories
  - Find supporters across sectors to help with implementation
  - Normalise asking 'where's the data?'
- Challenge opposition to updating ethnic categories, including any relating to a cost implication (prove to us there is a cost implication).
- Regulation and accountability for reducing GRT inequalities.
- Effective use of data, and outcomes of the data.

## Accommodation

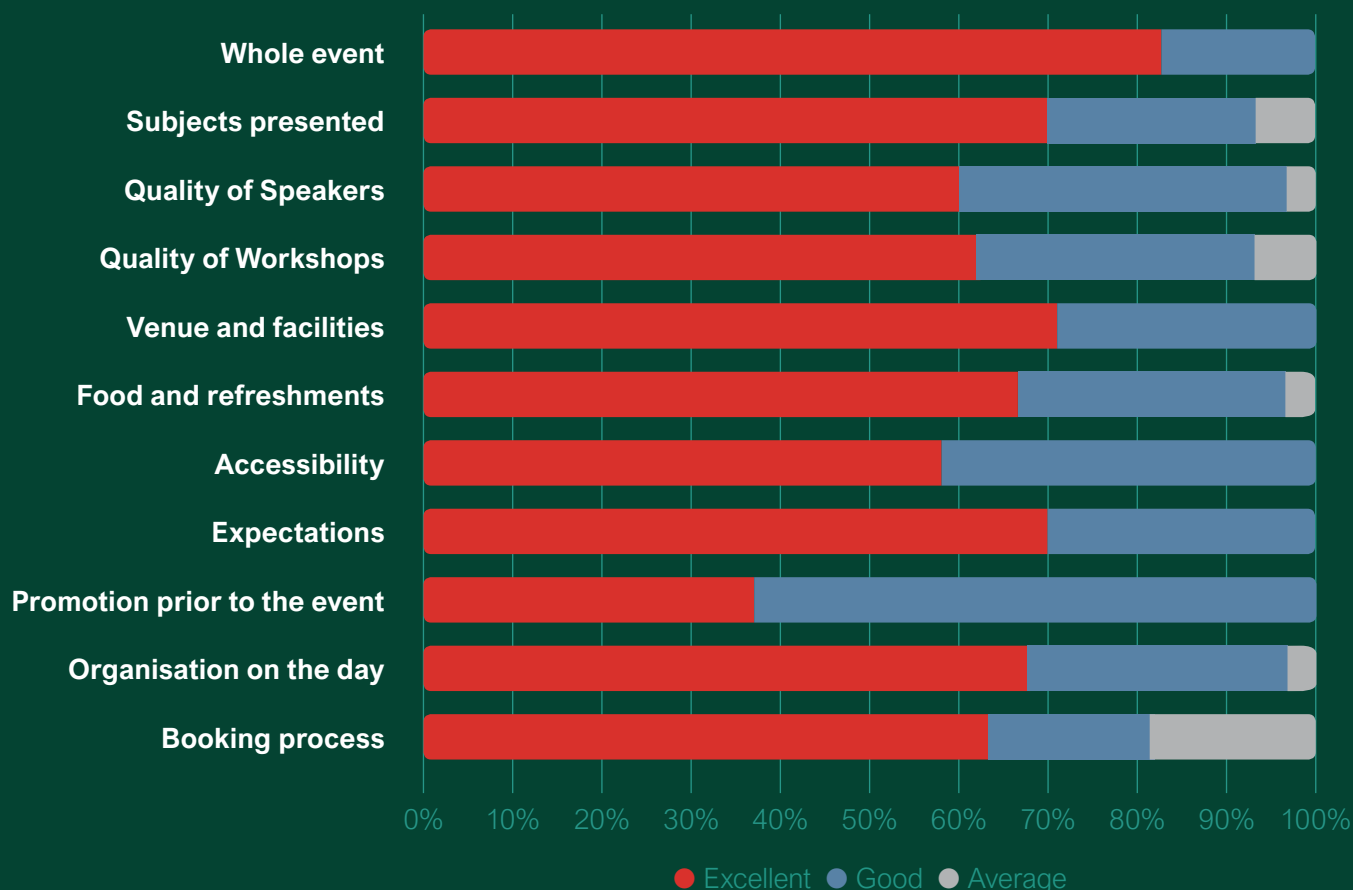


- Return duty to councils to provide permanent and temporary sites, and penalise those that fail to comply
- Strategy to engage with GRT living in poor quality social housing.
- Review current restrictive policies.
- Withdraw the current Home Office consultation to criminalise trespass.
- Provide additional funding for sites, including transit sites, so all Local Authorities have transit sites.
- Funding for site upgrade, improvement and management.



# Evaluation

181 people attended the Annual Conference, which was an all time high. 83% of the delegates felt the whole event was excellent, with the remaining delegates scoring the whole event as good. 70% felt the subjects presented were excellent and 60% also felt the quality of the speakers were excellent.



## Quotes



*“Great to see so many people from the GRT community”*

*“Thank you for another great day”*

*“Excellent event with interesting speakers and engaging workshop on mental health”*

*“Thank you for an excellent and informative day”*

*“As always it was fantastic, it had a good mix of delegates and speakers”*





## Christmas card competition

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## Save the date

Our next Annual Conference will be on  
Thursday 12th November 2020



## Need to get in contact?

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