

the Traveller Movement



Care and custody: a social justice agenda

Conference report 2017

“Engagement is key”

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Introduction

Our 2017 annual conference was our 10th and another huge success. We have noticed a year on year increase of GRT attendance and participation and this was one of our biggest and best.

2017 was a very eventful year for the Traveller Movement. The conference's focus on social justice and key policy areas such as domestic violence, economic inclusion and LGBT rights reflect some of the various strands of research and lobbying that the Traveller Movement has focused on in 2017. It was extremely useful to hear from leading agencies, key stakeholders, community members, NGOs and politicians on how they intend to address these policy areas over the next 12 months, and how we at the Traveller Movement can engage with them.

Thank you again to all who participated in the conference, making it the highly successful and inspirational day that it was.

A special thanks to photographer Mary Humphrey for the photographs contained in this report.

Key recommendations

Domestic violence

- The church and religious groups should play a role in mediation.
- Targeting education on domestic violence at young boys as well as adult perpetrators would be effective in breaking the cycle of domestic violence.
- It is vitally important that the 2018 Domestic Violence Bill suits the needs of GRT communities.

Hate crime

- GRT service providers must create safe spaces for LGBT individuals, for example through visible LGBT signs or symbols in offices and communal spaces.
- GRT & LGBT individuals should work together to raise awareness around LGBT issues.
- LGBT issues need to be discussed and acknowledged as widely as possible.

Policing

- All police forces should have strategies in place for how they engage with the GRT community, employing GRT liaison officers where possible.
- Police should ensure that their press releases discuss GRT communities in an appropriate way and avoid discriminatory language.
- The police force should work to recruit more officers from GRT backgrounds.

Economic inclusion

- Relevant bodies should examine the reasons that GRT young people are under-represented in the National Apprenticeship scheme.
- An 'informed consent' principle should be introduced for GRT parents choosing Elective Home Education.
- There should be a drive to employ more teachers from GRT backgrounds.

Social care

- More meaningful community consultation, engagement and processes need to be established.
- Statutory frontline services should have to undergo compulsory, professional cultural competency training, and should need to prove that they have effective impact assessment methods in place thereafter.
- Direct community advocacy support needs to be resourced and developed.



David Lammy MP *Keynote speaker*

The keynote session of the morning was led by David Lammy MP.

Lammy spoke about his recent review on how Black and Minority Ethnic people are treated by the criminal justice system. David Lammy spoke about the “*outrageous*” discrimination towards GRT communities, highlighting that it was significant that the UK’s Gypsies and Travellers make up less than 1% of the population, yet account for 12% of young people in youth custody.

As well as discussing the wider context of GRT communities and custody, Lammy also spoke about his own experience of coming face to face with Gypsy and Traveller men and women in the prison system. He recalled one such experience: “*I visited one Traveller in prison as part of the criminal justice review and as soon as I got to know him he asked for fifteen other Travellers to be allowed to join the meeting.*” Lammy also mentioned that he had witnessed Travellers being separated in prison, which contributed further to poor mental health and isolation.

David Lammy’s review has done much in bringing the marginalisation of GRT communities in to mainstream discussion, and this was most welcomed by conference delegates.



Domestic violence

Navigating the complex issue of Domestic Violence, the law and finding a solution-focused approach to accessing support services.

Another morning session focused on how to challenge domestic violence. Guest speakers in this session were:

- **Tina McInerney**
(TM GRT Women's Empowerment Network / Women's Worker)
- **Cathy Ashley**
(Family Rights Group)
- **Cris McCurley**
(Ben Hoare Bell Solicitors)

This session was highly emotive, with Tina sharing her personal experiences of domestic violence. She spoke also of the stigma and shame surrounding divorce.

Tina spoke also of frustrations surrounding access to suitable frontline services amidst a huge recent increase of 130% in contacting the helpline at the Family Rights Group, where Cathy Ashley is the Chief Executive.

The general consensus from the panel during this session was that it is absolutely critical for victims of domestic abuse to engage with social services. Further, services need to get better at understanding the culture of GRT communities in order to understand better how to serve these communities appropriately.



Social care

Addressing inequalities across health and social care and the often fractured and difficult relationships with social and health care services.

The conference began with a panel discussion on social care.
Guest speakers were:

- **Fr John Chadwick**
(Margaret Clitherow Trust)
- **Dr Carol Homden**
(Coram)
- **Kealey Sly**
(Leicestershire Gate / GRT Women's Empowerment network / Social Worker)
- **Guy Shennan**
(British Association of Social Workers)



An expert and diverse panel in this session allowed for rich discussion and open debate.

Key ideas from this debate were that it is paramount that social workers have respect around values and cultural diversity, whilst also listening carefully to the individuals that they are working with. In terms of community engagement, key ideas included that GRT communities must acknowledge issues such as sexuality, addiction and mental illness in order to better support each other through struggles.

At the end of the session, community members highlighted historical neglect and abuses by social services in the past, pointing out that this partly explains why relations are so fraught. The panel sought to assure the community members present that social services do not have time, resources or intentions to target GRT communities, and act only on referrals that come in from other agencies such as schools or the police. Furthermore, these agencies usually refer on legal grounds rather than because of a community member's ethnicity.

Overall, it was agreed that the community need to engage with services so that they can be better understood and their needs can be met.

The Traveller Movement's report, *The care system and Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: an investigation*, was launched with this session. It aims to provide clarity on current figures and was welcomed as a useful update on the statistics concerning referrals and children being taken in to care. Whilst providing a snapshot of the current picture on care in the UK, it does not address the historical relationship that social services and GRT communities have had with authorities. This history will need to be remembered when it comes to social services seeking to improve relations with community members and further, more detailed research will be required.

Workshop 1

Domestic violence: *'Never going to beat you'*

Cris McCurley (Ben Hoare Bell Solicitors);

Tina McInerney (TM GRT Women's Empowerment Network / Women's Worker);

Ronke Johnson (Women's Aid Federation)

One workshop focused on the topic of domestic violence and resolved at the beginning to answer two questions by the end of the workshop: 'How can we inform GRT communities about safeguarding procedures and potential care orders?' and 'How can we improve relations between GRT communities and the authorities working on issues relating to domestic abuse?' Much of the discussion sprung from participants' own experiences.



Workshop 2

Hate crime: *'Beginning a dialogue of LGBT inclusion within GRT community'*

Chris Smith (Travellers' Times); **Henry Chapman** (Student and Community Activist);

Cassie-Marie McDonagh (TM Partnerships Officer); **Geraldine Scullion** (TM's Equality and Social Justice Unit)

Another workshop was focused on hate crime within the LGBT community, something that the Traveller Movement has been campaigning on across 2017 through Operation Report Hate. The workshop began with participants being asked to watch a promotional video put out by TM, where people from Gypsy and Traveller communities told their stories of being LGBT. Participants said that they felt proud of the people in the videos yet upset by the hostility those featured had faced. Issues explored were to do with LGBT children, religion and the act of 'shaming' those who come out as LGBT and the impact it would have on their mental health.



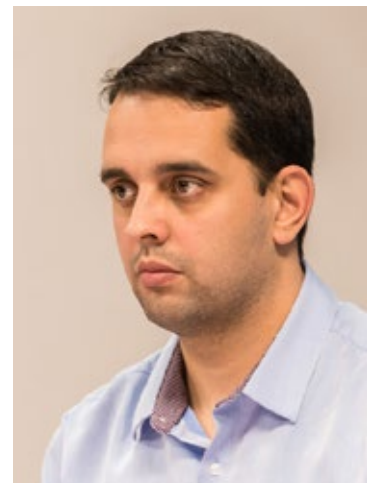
Workshop 3

Policing: *‘Improving relations between the police and GRT communities’*

Matthew Brindley (TM Researcher); **Phien O’Reachtigain** (Community Activist);
Petr Torak MBE (Roma Consultant and Police Officer)

The workshop on policing began with Matthew Brindley sharing key findings of his newest report, which will be published by the Traveller Movement in early 2018. There were then two speeches, one from Phien O’Reachtigain and one from Petr Torak.

The main discussion of the workshop centred on the low levels of trust and confidence that community members have in regards to the police and called for a forum for the community to liaise with police. Petr outlined his work as a Roma consultant and discussed positive work done between the Peterborough police and the Roma community there; a big change being that they employed a GRT officer. Petr did however, express concern that change in attitudes towards GRT communities within the police force was far too slow.



Workshop 4

Economic inclusion: *‘Mapping the progressive roots to economic inclusion for young people from the GRT communities’*

Margaret Greenfields (Bucks New University);
Patricia Stapleton (TM Partnerships Manager);
Lisa Smith (Travellers’ Times); **Christina Kerrigan** (TM Intern);
Tracey Sherlock (Former TM Intern)

The economic inclusion workshop was attended by individuals from a variety of sectors. It was strongly argued that gender equality must be at the forefront of any discussion about economic inclusion.

The under-representation of GRT communities among teaching professionals was recognised as a real issue, particularly if discrimination and stereotyping is to be addressed. It was raised that GRT children need a variety of options open to them; including access to vocational education, apprenticeship schemes, fair and equitable access to mainstream education and, where requested, fully resourced and supported Elective Home Education.



Evaluation

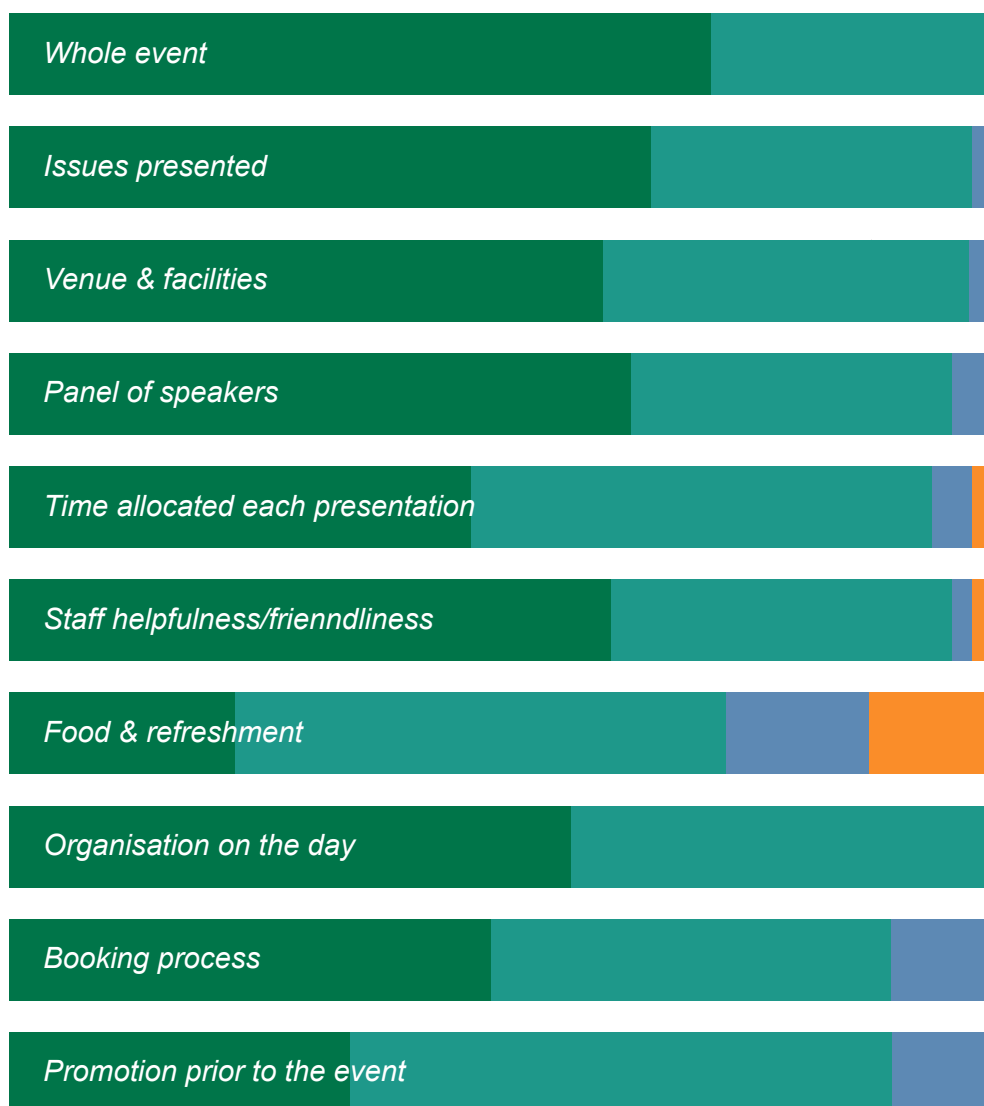
From the 49 evaluations received, over 70% of the delegates felt the whole event was excellent, with the remaining delegates scoring the whole event as good.

Attendees

This year we had a record number of attendees at the Conference reaching over 160 delegates.

Christmas card competition

The Christmas card competition also took place at the conference, where there was the opportunity to vote from 12 entries. After all the votes had been counted up, it was confirmed that Michael, Aged 6 from London won the votes.



■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Average ■ Poor



Comments

"Good range of speakers - David Lammy was excellent."

"I enjoyed attending the conference and feel it made a difference especially the way it tackled LGBT issues in an honest way."

"Excellent conference as always and credit to the TM team. Fantastic and brilliant Chair. Well done to all."

"I think this was a particularly vibrant and exciting conference. I was very pleased to be invited and attend."

"Great day, thank you for tackling the difficult subjects in a sensitive way."

Save the date!

Our next conference will be on
Thursday 22 November 2018.

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