

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: [Tackling Inequalities Faced by the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Communities](#), HC 360

Wednesday 21 February 2018

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Members present: Mrs Maria Miller (Chair); Tonia Antoniazzi; Angela Crawley; Philip Davies; Eddie Hughes; Tulip Siddiq.

Questions 1–37

Witnesses

Councillor Malcolm Buckley, Essex County Council; Councillor Ian Dalgarno, Central Bedfordshire Council; Professor Margaret Greenfields, Professor of Social Policy and Community Engagement, Buckinghamshire New University; Yvonne MacNamara, Chief Executive Officer, The Traveller Movement; and Kealey Sly, Leicestershire Gypsy and Traveller Equalities.

Written evidence from witnesses:

[Professor Margaret Greenfields](#)

[The Traveller Movement](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Councillor Malcolm Buckley, Councillor Ian Dalgarno, Professor Margaret Greenfields, Yvonne MacNamara and Kealey Sly.

Chair: May I thank you all, on behalf of the Committee, for taking the time to be here today? We are immensely grateful to you for that. We know that coming here, and also preparing to come here, takes a slug of time, so huge thanks from all of us for your time in doing that. I also welcome not only our witnesses but the people who are watching in the public gallery or online.

This is the very first oral evidence session of the Committee's inquiry on tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. We have been working on this topic for quite a while. However, having originally launched the inquiry before the general election, we had to have a slight hiatus while the election happened and then before the Committee was reconstituted in the early autumn of last year. The written evidence we have received is available to view on our website. We are very grateful to all those who have given their time and expertise to our inquiry in that way.

We launched the inquiry because of the clear evidence that people in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are some of the most disadvantaged in the UK. In 2012, a ministerial working group published 28 commitments for tackling inequalities faced by these groups across health, education, justice and other areas. We want to understand what progress has been made in improving the outcomes. Today, we will take a very broad overview of the subject, considering whether the Government's approach has been improving things for people and has been effective.

The usual style for these things is that each Committee member will have a set of questions they want to ask. Nobody has to answer every single question; please do not feel compelled to do so. We have quite a lot to go through, so if I cut people short, I apologise in advance. Tulip is going to start us off.

Q1 Tulip Siddiq: Thanks very much for coming. In your opinion, what is the single most important issue that the Government must tackle when it comes to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities?

Councillor Buckley: That is around site provision. Across the country, and particularly in my county division, there are a large number of authorised sites and a large number of unauthorised sites. It is quite clear that the need is not being met across the country. As I was mentioning to my colleague earlier, I actually confronted Michael Howard some years ago over the repeal of designation. Designation required each authority to provide a certain number of pitches. In many authority areas—I think in particular of Southend, which is very close to my area—there are no



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authorised pitches, and the councils will argue therefore that there is no demand, yet, regularly, Travellers set up camp in their car parks.

I think that it is incumbent on Government to force local authorities to make some provision for permanent pitches and also, despite the resistance of local residents, for transient pitches, because we have the settled Travellers and the travelling Travellers. When they camp on the side of the road, that is obviously a problem for the local community, and it is a problem for the Travellers themselves because there is nowhere they can access services. I think particularly of healthcare, because we all know that life expectancy is much less for that community than for the rest of us. So I think site provision is the No. 1 issue.

Yvonne MacNamara: I totally agree with that. In 2009, the Equality and Human Rights Commission produced a report that identified that the lynchpin that underpinned all the other inequalities that Gypsies and Travellers experience is that those are a direct result of insecure accommodation. That is the one area that—despite all the evidence, all the lobbying and all the consultations with the GRT sectors and the voluntary and community sectors, which have been lobbying for years on accommodation and site provision—the ministerial working group totally ignored, and it did not develop any specific commitment on accommodation.

Professor Greenfields: I agree with that, but I think that, also, we need to look at the embedded levels of racism and discrimination, which is why there is so much traction in terms of hostility towards the provision of sites, whether provided privately or by local authorities. So much work needs to be undertaken in terms of engaging with the political will at local authority level on this as well, and there needs to be strong leadership.

Yvonne MacNamara: It's actually the key issue.

Councillor Buckley: May I follow up that point? There is no doubt that if, as a member of a local authority, I say that we wish to provide a site for Gypsies and Travellers in any given location, there will be enormous resistance from local residents. That is pretty much a given. The problem is that the local members for those areas want to get re-elected and that gives them, if you like, a conflict of interest. As Professor Greenfields said, it needs very strong leadership and a very thick skin to actually deliver. That is why I think that Government has a role to play in instructing, in the same way as we are all doing with our local plans at the moment, to ensure that there is the delivery of sites for Gypsies and Travellers.

Kealey Sly: I agree with what everybody has said. To add to that, I think that when we are looking at site provision, it is really important to look at the areas where they are being built, because often there is local opposition, and what happens is that sites are built in unsuitable locations, such as next to train lines or rubbish tips, or are built in such a way that they are unsafe in terms of access routes and so on. We know that, sadly, a number of children have actually died as a result of poor site design. So



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yes, we definitely need more social site pitches and private site pitches, but we also need to pay attention to how those sites are actually built.

Councillor Buckley: That's a very important point. Of the sites that I am aware of that have been given consent and developed, many are by motorway viaducts or railway lines; I have one by a sewage farm. Would you choose to live there? I wouldn't and I don't think that we should impose that on other human beings.

Professor Greenfields: Can I come in on this, unless we are going to engage with it later? There is the issue of the health impacts of poor accommodation. I worked with the Traveller Movement for the Department of Health inclusion health project on this very issue, and one thing we found was very high levels of sites with appalling conditions. Quite often, there were tolerated sites that really were not fit for human habitation.

Chair: Shall we hold on to that for later? At this point, we just want to get an idea of the broad issues.

Councillor Dalgarno: What we find locally is that the level of engagement that we have, as an authority, with settled Travellers is improving, but we have real difficulty with transient Travellers. The Government needs to support us for transient sites. It is very difficult to get those established. Yet they are the most vulnerable part of this community because they cannot access any services. If we touch on, say, education, by the time children get established or find a school place, they have moved again because we do not give them the opportunity to get established.

So I think Government, in terms of transit sites, need to support us, and that is probably one of the biggest issues that I have as a local authority member: "How do I get those in place?"

Q2 **Tulip Siddiq:** I just want to come back to Kealey for one thing, which is when you say that children have died, is that because of disease, or because they have been run over?

Kealey Sly: There has been at least one child that has been killed on a railway. If I take, for example, the sites in Leicestershire, there are three main ones. One is built very well. The other one—quite a lot of the pitches at the moment do not actually have gates across the front of the pitch, so there is no protection for the children preventing them from going out into the road. As I said, in terms of access, as well, there is often only one way on to the site and one way off the site, so in terms of fire safety etc., that is also a concern, yes.

Yvonne MacNamara: And it is also to do with the health impact on these sites. So, for example, I am just thinking of some of the sites here in London that are built just underneath flyovers, next to concrete factories. We know that there are high levels of respiratory and breathing difficulties—lots of bronchitis, lots of huge issues, right across, in terms of a lot of health issues that children are suffering on a lot of these sites, because of poor locations.



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Professor Greenfields: And huge levels of anxiety and depression as well—very widespread.

Yvonne MacNamara: The existing ones that are there are exceptionally overcrowded.

Q3 **Tulip Siddiq:** Six years ago a ministerial working group made 28 commitments in relation to improving outcomes for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. In your opinion have those commitments been fulfilled? I will start with Professor Greenfields.

Professor Greenfields: It is quite difficult to give a precise answer on that because there have been some gains and some losses. And of course there has been some quite recent movement in terms of new grants which are suddenly becoming available, which are not yet on track, in relation to health studies. If I run through a few of these, we know from the race disparity audit, for example, in terms of educational outcomes, they are still exceptionally poor for children: so 90% of Gypsy, Traveller and Romany children are failing to achieve the expected level at key stage 2, for example. So we know that although there has been a commitment, we are not seeing much movement. There has been the rollback in terms of Traveller education services tackling poor education attendance at school. I know that we have colleagues here on the panel who will be able to speak to that more, but there certainly seems to be an increase in home education pressure on families to follow that particular route. There is not adequate support put in, which means more children potentially failing and obviously very high levels of school exclusion.

Bullying—well, again, we know there are exceptionally high levels of bullying. Around 90% of Gypsy and Traveller children experience this at school, and sometimes, I have to say, it is facilitated by teachers and not engaged with adequately. Over the years I have come across some quite appalling cases where there has been a failure to engage at school level until and unless parents have actually approached the police. Again, you will be hearing from a number of other people on this panel and in other hearings, I am sure, about that.

The National Inclusion Health Board—that is somewhere I have been quite focused over the last few years. There has been a series of research studies; what they have done is identify the problems, but there has been absolutely no movement to date. Baroness Whitaker, who some of us here work with quite closely, emailed me yesterday and believes she has managed to secure a debate on 8 March to actually look at what has happened in terms of some of the outcomes from the health inclusion board, but so far we have not really seen anything, to the best of my knowledge, unless anyone else has more to add on that.

Yvonne MacNamara: I would actually say one of the overarching criticisms of the ministerial working group and the commitments is that there was a piecemeal approach. It was not targeted and it was not focused. So, for example, if we look at commitment 23, which is about DWP jobcentres' personalised support, that was already in existence. That



was there. It was just a bolt-on; nothing actually happened. If we look at commitment 2, the Department for Education funded a pilot scheme for virtual headteachers to improve educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller children. That pilot scheme funded four different areas of the country. From what we could see, there was never any intention to scale that project up, develop it or roll it out, which begs the question: why was it called a pilot? Nothing actually happened as a result of that. Two areas did not complete; two areas did. Two of the areas that the pilot project went into were Kent and Cambridge, which had really good pre-existing Traveller education services, so it was just replicating work that had gone on in the past. Traveller education services, although they were imperfect, were a reference point for the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community and the access point for education for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller children. The funding got de-ring-fenced and they have been practically obliterated across the country. It really begs the question: why were these initiatives even developed? There did not seem to be any real focus or targeting, and they just seemed to be very disjointed and ill-conceived.

Q4 Tulip Siddiq: Do you feel that it made any measurable difference to the lives of the communities?

Professor Greenfields: There have certainly been some improvements in terms of monitoring hate speech and hate crime recently, and that is something that we really must commend. That is my main comment, really. That is the major improvement. There is also more alertness in terms of the gathering of data and statistics. The way I see it, stats are always good. We have better statistics and data in the UK than most parts of Europe in relation to Roma communities. But just gathering data is not enough; we really need solid commitments. At the moment, it is piecemeal. I cannot even really call it incremental policy making. We are not engaged adequately with the national Roma integration strategy. It feels largely as though things that have been going on in various places have been drawn together to try to indicate some form of compliance with European expectations.

Yvonne MacNamara: There have been gestures. For example, there have been initiatives from the community themselves around hate crime. Gypsy and Traveller Empowerment Hertfordshire developed a "Report Racism" website themselves. Only in January this year—just this year—they received some funding from Housing, Communities and Local Government to develop it more. There have definitely been gestures. The Traveller Movement has done a lot of work on data collection. Data collection and ethnic monitoring have been at the forefront of all our work. We had some successes last year with the youth justice system, which is now beginning to collate figures on Gypsy, Roma, Traveller people. We have also lobbied the police quite hard, and all 48 police forces will now be rolling out ethnic monitoring and collating that evidence as well. But the successes are few and far between, to be quite honest. I really would struggle to point out something very positive that has come out of the commitments.



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Kealey Sly: We also need to commend commitment 19, which was to record Gypsies and Travellers within the adult prison system under code W3. That has been effective to some degree, but because the requirement is for self-disclosure, there are still a large number of Gypsies and Travellers in the prison system who choose not to disclose as Gypsy or Traveller and instead will be recorded as Irish or white British. That could be improved further if we had more equality officers in the prison system, but again, that is discretionary and dependent on whether individual prisons follow it up.

Yvonne MacNamara: This is something that the Lammy review picked up. Following a meeting yesterday, I know that the Prison Service has developed an initiative specifically around Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. There is a specific working group of people from the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community that has come together and works within prisons and is advising on the implementation of the Lammy review. That is one positive that has started to come together this week.

Q5 Tulip Siddiq: Can I ask the two councillors what effect you think the central Government action related to the communities has had on how councils deliver services to them?

Councillor Buckley: I think it has raised awareness of the particular issues with this section of the community. The point was made by one of my colleagues on the right around the fact that recognition of the individual groups within the designation of Gypsy and Travellers is something people are not always aware of. There are different needs in the different groups.

I am also very much in agreement with the point made about the Gypsy and Traveller community not always wanting to identify themselves as members of that community, for fear that they will receive discriminatory treatment in whatever area it is they are going to. Again, purely on personal experience, I had to fill in a form for a hospital appointment yesterday, and on this form I think there were 16 categories but not the opportunity to disclose that somebody was part of the Gypsy and Traveller, Irish Traveller or Roma community. If we do not know they are part of that community, it makes it much more difficult to try to accommodate their needs.

Yvonne MacNamara: But that is often the issue of disclosing, whether someone is from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community—it is very much based on fear. The Traveller Movement recently carried out a specific piece of research around discrimination and commissioned a YouGov poll. We found that up to 81% of people would be really frightened of identifying their ethnicity simply because of the discrimination they experienced. But equally, we also found in those reports that, I think, 71% of British parents would not allow their child on a play date with a child from the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community. So I totally understand why people would hide their ethnicity, if that is the type of prejudice and discrimination that is actually coming back.



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Councillor Dalgarno: Coming back to your question on what we have done as a local authority, we have taken on board the push that the Government has given us. In 2016 we set up a corporate Gypsy and Traveller board, and we have taken the heads of 11 parts of the service who engage in that board and everybody who interacts with the Gypsy and Traveller community and given it a real high profile within the authority.

Q6 **Chair:** And that is Central Bedfordshire.

Councillor Dalgarno: That is Central Bedfordshire. One of the things we found quite early on was a lack of knowledge among our staff of the racial characteristics and everything to do with the Gypsy and Traveller community. So every member of staff now goes to e-learning sessions so that they get better knowledge of the ethnic diversity and the culture, because hopefully if they engage with those people, they will be able to see what is going on.

We are putting a huge amount of training into colleagues who engage with the Gypsy and Traveller community. We have set up an engagement officer, and her job is specifically so that they have got a set face that they can talk to. We have picked seven themes to work to, but the public generally just see the enforcement side of what we do; they do not see all the hard work that we are doing with the Gypsy and Traveller community on education and on engagement in terms of health and wellbeing and so on.

Last summer we had a large number of unauthorised sites, and the amount of racist abuse on local websites and Facebook pages had to be seen to be believed. There were two caravans parked on a place called the Woodside Link, near to the Luton and Dunstable hospital, and we left them be. We did a health and wellbeing assessment on the people there—there were two pregnant women, who were accessing the hospital to give birth. But the amount of abuse, racism and discrimination they suffered while they were there, and the amount of grief we got as a local authority because we did the right thing and left them alone while they had their babies, was unreal. I don't think people understand what is going on. If we had a transit site we could put them on for that sort of thing, it would make life a lot easier for them to access health facilities, wellbeing and so on.

One thing we find with the transient community is that, before we do anything as a local authority, we try to do health and wellbeing engagement with them, and they will not engage, unless it is to do with pregnancy, because they have a genuine fear that, if they engage with us, we will take their children into care or affect their families. As my colleagues have expressed, there is a real fear of authority, be it the police or any of the social services, within those communities. As a local authority, we are trying to give them set faces, names and ways to engage with different parts of that community. We find that a lot easier to do within the settled part of that.



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Q7 Tulip Siddiq: Are those fears unfounded or have there been instances where children have been taken away? Where does the fear come from?

Councillor Dalgarno: I think it comes from the fact that historically there has always been a huge amount of racist abuse towards these families. The only time they ever see the police or social services is when there is an issue or something has been reported, so they will not report.

In terms of domestic abuse, we have now got officers trained to try to spot that and try to support, but they will not report it because they sort it out among themselves. If a woman in that community wanted to leave a domestic abuse situation, they have got nowhere to go, because the rest of the community will ostracise them. There is the fear of, "If I try to get away from this, where do I go? What do I do?" They don't know what is available.

We touched earlier on education. About 35% of home-schooled children in Central Bedfordshire are Gypsy and Traveller children. We have no real measures of the quality of education they are getting. We put together as much as we possibly can to try to engage with those children, but they are falling through a loophole. In my day job outside of this, I am a retail manager. I have been with Asda for 19 years, running supermarkets. I have a number of Gypsy and Traveller sites around my store. When they come in and talk to me—they know who I am in terms of the local authority—they ask, "What is the price of this?" These are grown women and they cannot read, write or count. They have totally fallen through the education system.

We find that the average age that they leave education is nine years old. It is worse for boys—boys end up working with dad, doing whatever line of business they are doing, and girls become homemakers. They fall through that net. Unless we change the policy—and that is led by Government—then I am afraid that will continue to happen.

Kealey Sly: You raised quite a lot of points there. In terms of women's refuges, we have done a certain amount of work on domestic abuse. One of the main issues is that any child of a certain age, particularly a boy, would not be allowed to enter a women's refuge. If a mother knows that there is a risk that a child would be physically or emotionally abused at home, she is not going to leave her child. That is one of the main factors why women don't seek assistance from refuges. And again, they are often not aware of them because of the lack of outreach services.

In terms of children's services in particular, yes there is a real fear. Sometime negative news and stories travel a lot faster than positive ones, unfortunately. Margaret has a lot more data on that.

Q8 Chair: What we are trying to do is not to scrutinise; we are trying to find out from the councillors how Government policy affects what they do on the ground. It is not so much a critique of what they do. Can we just focus on that at the moment? You will have very ample opportunity to come back. Is that all right?



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Councillor Dalgarno: Government policy does not support us to try to get these children educated and keep them in education for longer. There are some families that are now starting to engage in that process and see the benefits, but when you have a child who is part of a transient family, it will take them 15 days to get into education when they turn up at a site, but we move them on within five. Those poor children are never going to get into that. Government can help by putting together a passport scheme for education so that those children have a measured document, or a register of Gypsy and Traveller children, so that they can move from one school to the next more easily. Then we engage with the parents to make it simpler for them to get their children into schools.

Q9 **Chair:** So there is big room for improvement there?

Councillor Dalgarno: There is massive room for improvement in that area.

Q10 **Tulip Siddiq:** I will come to Yvonne for one question. The commitments mention a number of working groups across Government Departments, such as the National Inclusion Health Board, the DCLG liaison group and the ethnic minority advisory group at the Department for Work and Pensions. To your knowledge, are these groups still active?

Yvonne MacNamara: I have no idea about the stakeholder group that DCLG—sorry, it is not DCLG anymore—

Chair: We know what you mean; we still call it DCLG.

Yvonne MacNamara: I have no idea about that particular group. We are not, or were not, a part of that group. I was a part of the EMAG group at the DWP. Again, I am not quite sure whether it is still active, but when I was part of that group, as an organisation the Traveller Movement identified a very specific and targeted programme of employment preparation for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, with proven outcomes. We identified really good progressive routes. Some of the young people who came through that programme went on to study law, accountancy or whatever.

We presented that to the EMAG group within DWP, who absolutely loved it, and we were looking for endorsement and some kind of a commitment to try to roll it out and develop it. While everybody congratulated us on the programme and really liked it, nothing actually happened as a result of it—there was no action whatsoever. We never got that endorsement. As a result, we have been unable to develop the scheme—a targeted scheme that absolutely worked—beyond, say, two young people a year, because we cannot get the funding. When we went wider for funding, our trust funders would say, "This should be a Government initiative."

While I sat on the EMAG group and it was great to go and drink the tea and whatever, very little actually happened in relation to Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. With the National Inclusion Health Board, again, some good things happened in terms of evidence gathering and reports. Margaret was involved in some of that as well. We wrote some fantastic reports, but the



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difficulty is that a lot of those reports end up sitting on a shelf gathering dust. The difficulty I have with a lot of the working groups is implementation plans. It is all very well to keep collating and gathering research, but we need to see some tangible outputs from these groups. We need to see implementation plans. We need to see something happening on the ground. That is the criticism I would have of a lot of the groups.

- Q11 **Tonia Antoniazzi:** Many of those who have submitted evidence suggest that there has been a lack of leadership or coherent strategy at national Government level. Has that been your experience?

Councillor Buckley: Yes—in a nutshell.

Tonia Antoniazzi: I guessed that was going to be the answer.

Yvonne MacNamara: I think that is a unanimous yes. There is real scope and a real need for a strategy, not piecemeal commitments. We need a joined-up strategy across Government. We need Departments working with one another. The operative word here is partnership, and that partnership has to involve meaningful consultation with the wider GRT sector, rather than going away and developing top-down commitments and strategies. We have to be really engaging with the organisations and the communities affected by these.

Professor Greenfields: And also wider communities, because in terms of community cohesion, we have already talked about the degree of racism and the connotation of racism. In local authorities, an enforcement officer will often be the first point you actually see if you go on to a website talking about Gypsies and Travellers. There is nothing about the range of professionals within the communities, or other issues that exist. It is very much, "This is a problem community as a whole." Stuart Hall talked about connotational racism regarding the black Caribbean community, and I would say it is exactly the same for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma.

There is also a real loss of institutional knowledge across time. You have these piecemeal initiatives, staff leave, and austerity has had a huge impact. There needs to be joined-up thinking, including across boroughs and local authorities.

Councillor Buckley: I completely agree with that point. It is not just local authorities; it is the police, the health service and so on. If one just looks at health—Ian mentioned a situation in his area, and anecdotally we see the same at our local A&E. Gypsies and Travellers turn up there because they cannot get registered with a GP as they are not around for long enough. I think there is perhaps something to be said for a health passport, to enable people to access GP services in the way that the majority of our society does.

Professor Greenfields: That has been tried historically. There was fast-track guidance that came out about 2009, I believe, but I don't know how effective it was.



- Q12 **Chair:** Can we stick to leadership at the moment? We were just commenting earlier, before you came in, that we hadn't received evidence from the LGA. I know that you two councillors are not here representing the LGA, but are you a bit surprised that we haven't received any evidence from them?

Councillor Buckley: I would be. Most of the authorities that I talk to have issues of one sort or another with Gypsy and Traveller communities, whether that is the provision of services, of sites, or whatever. I certainly would have thought that the LGA would have a clear view on that, and that they ought to send a witness, if not to this meeting, then to one of your future meetings.

- Q13 **Tonia Antoniazzi:** I think it is very interesting. We talk about top-down initiatives from the Government, and whether that will work, but who ultimately needs to be driving the agenda forward to improve outcomes for the GRT communities?

Yvonne MacNamara: If we are looking at the best way to achieve a cost-effective national strategy, there are some very quick wins. We need to look at smaller issues, which would have a ripple effect. For example, if we had a really good commitment around data monitoring and inclusion in public services, that would enable targeted interventions and vital data capture to make proper national comparisons. For example, we have massive issues around health inequality for the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities. Infant mortality rates are three times above the national average, and life expectancy is 10 to 12 years lower than for their counterparts. There is a very quick win here. The NHS data dictionary does not include Gypsies and Travellers. We have been lobbying for almost 10 or 12 years for that inclusion. Although we have had successes in other areas, such as the police and prison service, the NHS keeps saying "Yes, this is a great idea" and it keeps commissioning a few reports every few years, but it is not doing anything about data monitoring and its inclusion in the NHS data dictionary. If it were to capture the monitoring within the NHS data dictionary, you would get a fairer slice of the cake at local commissioning level, and the needs of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities would be picked up at local level. That is not happening but it is one thing we need to see leadership on.

In education, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history month is a fantastic initiative for learning about the history and culture of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities. If we look across at other communities, black history month has been a really positive initiative. We had Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history month prior to 2006-07. That initiative was funded for two years and was beginning to grow within the community. Local libraries and schools were beginning to do it. It was started by the Department for Education, but it got scrapped.

The third thing that we should be looking at is the whole area of economic inclusion and targeted provision, whether that is apprenticeship schemes, or taking on board initiatives that the communities are coming up with



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themselves. There is no leadership in any of these areas, or any real commitment.

- Q14 **Tonia Antoniazzi:** So your top priorities are health, education and economic inclusion? Would that be generally agreed across the board?

Yvonne MacNamara: And accommodation.

Professor Greenfields: Those are of course all in the national Roma integration strategy, so they are things the Government have a duty to respond to.

- Q15 **Tonia Antoniazzi:** Do you feel that is reflected in Government and local government action?

Councillor Dalgarno: I think, if you read out a corporate Gypsy and Traveller plan, you would think so, yes. It is something we have developed in the last year and a half, and we have tried to pick up all those different themes, so I would hope that it would. One of the biggest issues, which we have touched on, is the data. The Government could do an awful lot more to gather data for us to use at a local authority level. I know, looking at the next census, that even if Roma was on there as a demographic, most Roma, if you gave them the questionnaire, would probably tick the box for "White British" rather than for the Roma community, so we don't know the size of the issue in some areas.

We need some help, in terms of data mining and gaining that information and so on, so we can see where we need to put those services. It is very easy to go along. Last week, we did our local count—our census—but all we do is count the number of Traveller units. We don't count the size of the families, the demographics of those families, the health status of those families or so on. At a local level, unless we can try to engage with individual families, we do not know what is going on and what support they really need.

Councillor Buckley: I would agree with that. We do the counts within our area, but you can only count what is on the ground on the day of the count. By the very nature of those communities, the numbers fluctuate. As an authority, we have set up slightly different arrangements. We have a Gypsy and Traveller unit, which takes part in all our equality impact assessments and is directly responsible to a cabinet member. We have perhaps dealt with it in a slightly different way from Bedfordshire. It is something around which the awareness has been increased, which is a critical issue.

- Q16 **Chair:** Just before we move on to the next set of questions, you have all talked a lot about the need for data. We actually have quite good data on education issues, but that hasn't actually helped to close the gap in attainment. Are you right to put quite so much emphasis on data alone? Will it really solve everything?

Councillor Buckley: I think there is an issue of trust. If I can borrow from my own experience, there is an issue of the Gypsy and Traveller community seeing the establishment as set against them. By definition,



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we are all the establishment. It is getting them to trust the establishment and to actually engage properly. Our social services have great difficulty in engaging, particularly in the case of domestic violence. We are aware that it happens, and we are aware of the impact on the children at school, as you referred to education. However, we need those parents to actually engage, so that we can actually intervene and give them the help that they need.

Councillor Dalgarno: You said about us having all the data. In the village where I live, I found out last year that there is a Roma family living in a house in my community. I didn't even know that they were there. I live in a small village, but none of us knew they were Roma, because nobody picked up that information. If there was some way to get that information, we could find out a bit more and then work with them on the cultural differences. There is a huge cultural difference between Roma families, Irish Travellers, English Travellers and so on that we do not engage enough with to understand. They live a separate lifestyle with bigger families and bigger needs, and we are not picking that up.

Professor Greenfields: If I could follow up on that, I am obviously a bit of a data geek—it is what I like; it is my bread and butter—so I would argue that we need more statistics. However, it is very much about the implementation gap, and part of that, as we have all alluded to, is the lack of trust that exists.

That is the problem: there has been cutbacks and the slashing-back of services throughout the country—the impact of austerity—so you lose staff who have built up long-term relationships, which I think is really the way in. In areas where we see good practice, there tends to be a long history of engagement.

Interestingly, just picking up on the issue of Roma, we have heard about Kent and Essex, and certainly East Anglia and Kent have both recently accessed CLG funding—I want to call it CLG, because I cannot remember who it is now—under the hideously named controlling migration fund. They are actually doing some quite big pieces of work with the Roma community in terms of building trust. I have had conversations with the teams working in both of those areas, who have approached me, and what is going on is looking multi-factorially, working perhaps with social services, police and a number of other services to see how you can engage communities.

I think the loss of the Traveller education service has been fundamental—and the specialist health visitors working with Travellers, who were people they would go to and would often be the gateway to other services.

Kealey Sly: I would absolutely agree. To come back on that point, in a lot of the commitments it states that the Government is clear that these decisions for commissioning and buying in services should be done at a local level. In my experience, particularly in my local authority, many schools, because of the constraints on their budgets already, are just choosing not to buy that service. We have had a Traveller education



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service cut from 32 to two part-time staff. They are no longer called the Traveller education service; they are access mentors and it is their role to assist families to go on to a school register.

If those families, for whatever reason, choose not to do that—the likelihood is that is because their child was being bullied, though we know of other reasons as well—that service can no longer work with that family. As Malcolm quite rightly said, along with the Traveller health service, these were the services that were preventing families from needing children's services and adult social care. We were actually stopping quite a lot of cases from getting to that point, where it becomes more expensive.

A lot of feedback I have had from working in schools is that, because of the increased pressure from Ofsted on schools to improve their figures and their outcomes, some headteachers have commented to me that it would be far easier not to have these children on a school register. We are seeing more and more children whose parents are being advised to look at elective home education as an option, and increasingly we are seeing more and more children not on anybody's system.

Q17 Chair: So data doesn't solve everything; there is an implementation gap as well?

Kealey Sly: We need the services in place. It is clear from the local authorities that I have worked with—planning officers in Leicestershire, and particularly the education service—that they need very clear guidance from the Government. It must be mandatory, not discretionary.

Q18 Eddie Hughes: I've got a triple-pronged question. Where Travellers are living alongside settled communities, how common is it for there to be tensions? What is most likely to be the cause of those tensions, and how are they best dealt with?

Councillor Dalgarno: If I take my own community, I live in a place near Luton called Arlesey, on the edge of two smaller towns, Biggleswade and Letchworth. We have got two Gypsy and Traveller sites on the edge of our community. One of them I would describe as very well maintained. An awful lot of money has been invested in it, and if you drove past you would think it was a really good, high-quality mobile home park with fantastic facilities. They tend to keep themselves to themselves. They are well managed, and I do not get an awful lot of conflict within the community about them, unless they do something to do with planning—generally they will do it and then put in a retrospective application, and then the rest of the community will be all over Facebook, and the racial comments and aggressiveness on there is quite obscene—because the settled community feel they are getting away with something.

The other site is not as tidy. It is a bit larger. There are other families, so it is a mixed family site. We do tend to get a few issues there now and again, with the odd police car having to go in. If anything happens in the local community—if there is any criminal damage, any vandalism or any burglaries—that site gets the blame. It doesn't matter who it is; that site will get the blame. It is really quite sad.



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The racial conflict and the aggressiveness that comes across needs to be dealt with more. I think it is a little bit about educating the public as well as to what is actually happening with those families. My wife worked in the local village school in the nursery for quite some time, and she met those families. Those kids came in, and they looked immaculate. They were extremely tidy, they were very polite. Those families wanted to engage—but they were settled. But then we would see other children coming in who had just parked up on the verge in the village, and it would be a totally different story. It's a bit of a two-pronged thing, I'm afraid. How a site is received in the community depends on how well managed it is.

Yvonne MacNamara: Could I add to that? I think the question was about tensions between the settled community and the Traveller community. I would say that, on the whole, there is very little tension between the settled community and the Traveller community. I agree that the problem is planning issues. This is the case across the country. I don't know any Travellers who are sitting on parish committees and making decisions on local planning, and that is often—well, always—the point of conflict between the local community and the Traveller community. All the cases that we have been involved with have involved planning. Local parish councils and local planning officers are making decisions not to grant planning permission. A family could have lived in an area for 20-odd years on their own plot of land and are applying for planning permission, whether it's retrospective or whatever, and 10 to one they will be turned down, because the local community will object to a Traveller site. Whatever that is about—whether it is because people feel that their properties will be devalued if there is a Traveller site in the area, which is often what you hear, or whatever—that is where the tension comes from. Very rarely are there any other kinds of tension. It is primarily to do with—90% of cases are to do with—

Kealey Sly: There is no evidence to suggest that property prices decrease because the properties are in the proximity of a Traveller site.

Councillor Dalgarno: There is also a fair amount of ignorance. I recently dealt with a planning application, which we approved, for a travelling showpeople site in Biggleswade. This is a travelling family who have been in Biggleswade for over 200 years. They are actively involved in the local community. They do lots of work there. They are established. They are expanding; their family is growing. And we looked to put in workshops; we looked to put in buildings for them to refurbish their equipment during the winter and so on. This is an established family—a part of the community—but we still got negative connotations from some members of the community. Admittedly, there was huge support from other parts. All the local ward members were basically saying, "Get on and build it. They deserve it."

Q19 **Chair:** So how do you deal with these tensions?

Councillor Dalgarno: I ignore the stuff on Facebook, because that's all that deserves, frankly, and I try as much as I can, when I'm at town council meetings and representing Central Bedfordshire Council, to put



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across the reasoning as to why we do things and to put across the fact that we treat Travellers the same as everybody else and treat them fairly, and they deserve to be treated fairly, the same as everybody else.

Councillor Buckley: A number of issues come from that. In my own patch, we have what we call a plotlands community, which is one of small, rural, established homes, among which are pepper-potted a number of Traveller pitches as well. Those two communities are actually working together now, because we are going through a local plan and they both see an opportunity to redevelop that area. I'm sure they will make some money out of it as well, but there is a motivation for the Travellers to work together with the settled community there. That seems to be working well.

I will explain where we do get some challenges. The Travellers inevitably get blamed for fly-tipping, and although it may be the case that they have done that in some instances, it is certainly not the case in every instance of fly-tipping. What we have seen a lot of is, where we have had unauthorised roadside pitches, the mess left behind and a large sum of money being required from the local authority to clear it. Or, indeed, last week a group of Travellers camped on a football pitch belonging to a community centre and tore up the football pitch with their vehicles. That resulted in it cancelling a football tournament, losing money and so on. That is where some of the resentment comes from, but one thing that I think we can put an end to the lie is on council tax. We are always being told, "They never pay council tax." I can tell you as a councillor who was responsible for that for a long while that they do pay council tax. Maybe some do so through benefits, but where those pitches are established, even if they are not authorised, they pay their council tax. That is something the wider public do not even recognise.

Q20 **Chair:** We have just heard about some of the tensions in relation to racial conflict, planning and unauthorised pitches, and a little about how Ian and Malcolm try to deal with them. Margaret, Kealey and Yvonne, how would you characterise such tensions and how they are dealt with?

Yvonne MacNamara: First, I would say there is a perception that all Travellers are on sites. The majority of Travellers actually live in bricks and mortar and get along perfectly with their neighbours.

Of course, within every community you will have a rogue element. We accept that, within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, you will have a very small element that will fly tip or whatever. But it is a very small element and it should not be used as an excuse by local authorities up and down the country not to deliver on their commitments.

Where there are tensions? They are to do with local planning. We would try to go out there and work with and talk to local parish councils. If you want to know a community, go out and engage and talk to those people. Find out why they want to settle in an area. They have a right and an entitlement to settle within those areas. It is about getting to know your local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.



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Councillor Buckley: Sorry to cut you off. Could I add to the planning issue? I think that is relevant. When I was leader of Basildon council, during the Dale Farm period, we recognised there was a need for additional pitches. We did not necessarily think that they could all be accommodated within the borough, because geographically it is quite a small borough.

I approached a number of leaders of other authorities in Essex. The response I got back from them was, "We would not mind having a site of, say, a dozen or so pitches but we are afraid that what would happen to us is what happened to you." We originally granted 14 for Dale Farm and then, for a variety of reasons not appropriate to go through here, the site expanded at its peak to more than 100 pitches. That is certainly the reason why my colleagues at other boroughs within Essex would not entertain giving consent to a small site.

Yvonne MacNamara: But that is the issue. What gives any local authority the right to put a quota on the number of Gypsy and Traveller people living within their constituencies?

Councillor Buckley: We do put a quota on the number of built environment. Although I could argue that the balance is different—

Yvonne MacNamara: But not the number of people from any community moving into an area. No other community will be told, "There are too many of you living within our local authority area." I defy anybody to identify another community where we would say: "We have too many French, Dutch or whatever." It just does not happen for any other communities.

Q21 **Eddie Hughes:** To support Councillor Buckley. If for the sake of argument we say, as has already been established, that most Travellers live in bricks and mortar, then we do limit the number of one-bed flats, the number of five-bed properties, the number of properties built over five storeys. There are all sorts of other restrictions.

Yvonne MacNamara: I agree with that and that is a slightly different thing. I am talking about quotas on ethnicity—the ethnicity of the people coming in.

Q22 **Eddie Hughes:** But there would not be a quota if that was in bricks and mortar accommodation. But we do restrict—

Councillor Buckley: We offered bricks and mortar accommodation at the time of the Dale Farm evictions. That was turned down.

Professor Greenfields: In a sense, this is the elision between ethnicity and accommodation. We see that throughout the whole planning system, in terms of someone being a planning Gypsy or an ethnic Gypsy or Traveller. That is really problematic in unpicking the cultural demand, the need and necessity for people to live within particular sorts of accommodation.



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Q23 **Chair:** May I just ask for a point of clarification from Yvonne? Are you implying that councils will stop—

Yvonne MacNamara: On numerous occasions, yes.

Q24 **Chair:** If I could finish my question: Are you implying that councils will stop Gypsy, Roma and Travellers from moving into bricks and mortar on occasion?

Yvonne MacNamara: No, not into—

Q25 **Chair:** Because you said the vast majority of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers live in bricks and mortar.

Yvonne MacNamara: On numerous occasions, we have heard local authorities say, "We have had enough of Gypsies and Travellers." We have heard that on numerous occasions.

Q26 **Chair:** Have you good evidence that they would stop them moving into bricks and mortar accommodation?

Yvonne MacNamara: I would have to start going through years of paperwork. We were very involved with the Dale Farm issue. I do know that Essex County Council did try to engage with other local authorities to see if they could provide Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and I think the response was no.

Councillor Buckley: Absolutely no, even within the county. I mentioned Southend earlier.

Q27 **Chair:** Sorry, that is absolutely no on pitches—not on bricks and mortar accommodation.

Councillor Buckley: No, we offered them bricks and mortar accommodation.

Yvonne MacNamara: There is no evidence around bricks and mortar; but when you engage with the local authority and you ask about the accommodation issues or whatever, they almost always come up with this kind of quota thing, and say, "Well, we've had enough."

Chair: I think we need to avoid using traveller pitches as a proxy for all accommodation, because it is clearly not the case. Sorry to interrupt, Eddie.

Q28 **Eddie Hughes:** The previous conversation that we were having before I started my line of questioning was about trust. Research suggests that, in pilots, outcomes are improved if there are interventions from trusted community partners such as charities, so would trust be the silver bullet? Would that help us move things on?

Councillor Dalgarno: We find it does. Some of the different schemes that we run—obviously, I spoke a little bit about the Gypsy and Traveller engagement officer, and what we are trying to do is use the same people within the authority, so they see the same faces—those members of staff go through a huge amount of training now, so they understand the needs



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and are able to give over as much information as possible to gain that trust. We are trying some other schemes, in terms of our children's centres, etc. We are providing travel tokens so we can get mums to those centres with their children and make them feel more welcome. Then hopefully they see the same faces there and they get that trust.

In terms of other partners, we are doing an awful lot of work with the fire brigade, doing site visits to families, and then talking to them about their safety, installing smoke detectors, talking about the health and safety risks around the accommodation that they live in. They might say, "Hang on," when we turn up, but we are actually giving them some support. We are not just there to check up on them or to do anything else. What we are finding now is that we are starting to get some trust and some traction in other areas, but for us it has been an awful lot to do with training and engaging with our staff and getting them so they know what they are doing.

Professor Greenfields: In terms of training for professions, it is not simply at local authority level. Certainly over the years when I have taught students from a wide variety of backgrounds, sometimes I have heard some quite shocking things said. Let us say we used Gypsies, Travellers or Roma as a case study. You hear these appallingly racist comments, but once you actually work through with people it can shift attitudes. I think you need to have professionals, representatives, members of the organisations who are coming in delivering training, which we have always attempted to do. You need to have more visibility of professionals from the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma populations, and you need to make sure that it is embedded within curriculums, so that health workers, police officers, education staff are aware that this is another ethnic minority community and there are certain cultural competencies which are appropriate in terms of engaging with the population—they are as much of a community as people from black, Jewish, Asian or whatever the other backgrounds we work with.

Councillor Dalgarno: One of the other things that we have set up is a Gypsy and Traveller frontline practitioners group, so that everybody who actually deals with them can network across the group and learn skills and experience. That has helped us an awful lot as well, in terms of engagement. We can spot problems and then our frontline practitioners can then find a solution that we can actually go and help them with. Then that gains a bit more trust.

Councillor Buckley: The point being made about having the same faces go regularly to meet with the different communities is one of the key issues. We have certainly tended to find in our area, by having the same groups of officers attend, albeit sometimes with other partners, that that has enabled them to open up a little bit more. One of the key partners in the past has been the local CCG. They have sent outreach workers to the settled sites, if that is the right description. I think that that has been important in dealing with preventative healthcare in particular. I think that is one of the areas where these communities do miss out. They miss out



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on the regular vaccinations for the children and that type of thing. In the long term, that has an impact on their health when they get to middle or older age.

Yvonne MacNamara: It is very much about continuity of service and developing those relationships. One of the models that worked very well a number of years ago was the inter-agency model—a lot of local authorities held inter-agency forums and representatives from the different communities attended those meetings—but that model seems no longer to exist. There is huge disengagement right across the country with a lot of Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Professor Greenfields: Although there is potentially a lot of scope in terms of joint commissioning, the problem is that Gypsies and Travellers, and Roma in particular, are often excluded from joint strategic needs assessments, so there is very limited evidence of that. An awful lot more could be done in terms of emphasis.

Kealey Sly: Particularly at sites in our area that happen to be on the border between two counties, we see that one county has really good examples of good practice but the neighbouring county does not. That leads to the good county increasing and further stretching its service, because it does not want to let those community members down as it can see there is very much a need there. The neighbouring county that is not so good just does not, because there is no statutory requirement for it to do so.

We talk about outreach workers or liaison officers—they have many different names. Often, where local authorities still have them—they are really important—they have a joint role. They have a responsibility for doing needs assessments and supporting families, but they also have an enforcement role. That is not particularly effective.

Councillor Dalgarno: That comes across when someone comes on to a Traveller site and, unless they are a regular face, the community says, “Who’s that? What are they here for?” If I turned up on a site they would think, “Oh, he’s here to do enforcement,” not, “Actually, he’s a local councillor and he’s come to see what he can do to help.” That is part of the issue. There is a real fear of anybody who comes on to their sites.

Councillor Buckley: Following on from that—you are quite right—if you go to a site unannounced, there is suspicion. We have a protocol in our area whereby if we want to send our officers down there for a particular purpose, we phone the leaders of the different groups on the site and say, “We’re coming down. This is what we’re coming for.” That seems to allow them to open up a little bit.

I would like to mention one other thing, which has not been mentioned: the media. I cannot speak for other areas, but we have daily local media, plus of course social media, and you tend to find that the local media will sensationalise everything, which sets a ball rolling on social media. That makes any issues disproportionate to the reality.



- Q29 **Chair:** Kealey, can I press you on what you think builds trust? You are on the ground day in, day out. You work with local communities. What do you think would build trust?

Kealey Sly: Sustainability of services. We have found over the years that the local authority or community projects like ourselves receive a certain amount of funding for a specific time. It can often take 12 months or more to build initial trust with families, and if that funding is then taken away, they no longer see that service provider. If they are lucky, a new service provider comes in—a new face, who needs to get to know the community all over again. Longevity is certainly one of the main factors.

As was quite rightly said, unless there is a reason why you could not, you would ring and explain the reason for your visit. I do not think we should label Gypsy and Traveller communities who live on a site as particularly sceptical. You would be wary of anybody who came to your home, whether it was a house or otherwise. If they turned up unannounced, you would want to know why.

Chair: Okay, so increased consistency.

- Q30 **Tonia Antoniazzi:** How effective has the Equality Act been at protecting the rights of GRT individuals in any or all of the areas covered by the ministerial working group commitments? *[Laughter.]*

Councillor Dalgarno: The first thing is that if they do not identify themselves as GRT, it is not going to help them. One part of it is that they are falling through the gaps. They are not getting that support, because they are not identifying. The reason they do not identify is that they feel they are going to be persecuted.

Professor Greenfields: I think the Equality and Human Rights Commission has brought some cases forward, and work is obviously going on with individual NGOs and agencies. There is also the legal unit within the Traveller Movement, but broadly speaking, I would say it is not hugely the case. You have intersectional issues—look, for example, at Gypsy Traveller and Roma women. LGBT people are another community that we haven't identified yet, and they perhaps face multiple discrimination. It is very difficult for people to come forward and enact their rights by using legislation. There is also quite often a lack of awareness about legal rights. People just feel, "I'll keep my head down. I'm a member of this community and I just need to get through and engage with what is happening on a day-to-day basis."

Councillor Dalgarno: They won't complain. I was briefed on an incident that one of my colleagues told me about. She was in a nail bar getting her nails done. There was a bit of a queue and a lady came in and asked how long the wait was, and she was told "Oh, 20 minutes". She went out, and then a couple of ladies who were obviously from the Gypsy and Traveller community came in and asked how long the wait was, and they were told, "At least an hour and a half". Basically, that was direct discrimination; they didn't want them in there, yet nothing happened with that. The lady who spoke to me about it said that she went and spoke to the manager,



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and said, "That's obscene; I'm leaving. I'm not prepared to put up with that", but businesses and people think that they can get away with it. It is pretty endemic.

Kealey Sly: If we look at examples of where Gypsies and Travellers have been discriminated against, and received less favourable treatment based on the fact that they have identified as Gypsies or Travellers, you can perhaps understand their reluctance to identify in the first place. One of those areas in particular is education—we know that many, many families have received unfair treatment because of the assumptions that we have within society that children won't stay in school past year 6, or that they do not want to take their GCSEs because that is not within their culture. That has led to many schools recommending elective home education, or simply stating—as they have stated to me—that there is really no point in putting additional effort into those children because they will leave anyway. When you see treatment like that, there is a justification.

- Q31 **Chair:** But we are trying to work out at the moment why you laughed when we mentioned the Equality Act. It is because people don't self-identify, yes?

Yvonne MacNamara: The Equality Act has certainly been a useful vehicle in some instances. For example, the Traveller Movement has established an equality and social justice unit within the organisation. One of the first cases we took was against Wetherspoons plc, and we won that case under the Equality Act. Yes, it is beneficial to have that Act, but our difficulty with it is that a lot of Gypsies and Travellers do not have that access to justice. They are unaware of their rights and entitlements. We have set up the equality and social justice unit, and within that we have progressed a number of cases, be that with the Advertising Standards Authority, the police, or whoever, challenging direct discrimination against these communities. We have also developed lots of different information guides and resources for the community so that people start to become aware that they have rights and entitlements. It is not just the community. When you go out and talk to local authorities and statutory services, a lot of them are not aware that Gypsies and Travellers are protected under race equality laws. They are not aware of their public sector equality duties, and certainly not aware that these groups are ethnic minorities. There is a complete lack of information out there about who the communities are and what the law actually states.

Councillor Dalgarno: This comes back to my earlier comment. We have put together e-learning modules on equality and so on, and every member of staff goes through those modules to raise that awareness. To be honest, if that wasn't legislated for, we probably wouldn't do it.

Chair: Very good point.

- Q32 **Eddie Hughes:** To what extent should there be a differentiation between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities?



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Professor Greenfields: Absolutely 100%. They are three very different communities, with different experiences, and we are so lacking in information, particularly in Roma—

- Q33 **Eddie Hughes:** Sorry. If I jump to the second bit of the question, it might help to inform the answer. Can you give us some examples of how that approach should be differentiated?

Kealey Sly: One of the main areas is education. We have Roma and English, Scottish and Welsh Gypsies in the same classification, and that is not helpful at all because it does not allow us to distinguish between those two—and Irish Travellers. As we have quite rightly said, they are three very different groups. Sometimes they share the fact that they travel from one place in the country to another, but in terms of religion, origins and language they are all completely different.

Professor Greenfields: Disaggregation of statistics is fundamentally important in enabling us to track through and look at the outcomes and experiences. The big piece of work was done in Salford on Roma communities, and there has been other population-level work on a smaller scale, but it is very difficult. The DFE has data on Roma/Romany, so when looking at that I have had to say that we know that there is a large Roma population in this area, and therefore to some extent we can probably track through what is going on in particular communities. But we need it disaggregated. Within Roma populations there are so many different experiences. There is broadly race discrimination, different languages, different levels of integration in the country of origin and the duration of the period in the UK. There is a huge amount of more work to be done.

Yvonne MacNamara: This is often where policy makers go wrong, treating the communities as one big homogenous group when they are clearly not.

- Q34 **Eddie Hughes:** Has Government policy making ever been effective in the way that it differentiates between them?

Councillor Dalgarno: No, I don't think so.

Kealey Sly: It is now starting to differentiate between Travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma. But as we have said, when discussing what is now known as the nomadic group of Gypsies that have lived in the UK for many years, versus European Roma who are coming over to this country, they have completely different needs. It is really difficult when looking at the datasets to establish what need is out there and how we meet it.

Councillor Dalgarno: There is a group in the fenlands called Parallel Lives. I think the LGA is funding that casework through to September 2019, specifically looking at Roma communities and how they engage with the settled community. A fair amount of work is going on in Peterborough with that, and that group are getting some traction. They have found that quite a large Roma community has moved into that area in recent years as places like Slovenia moved into the EU. There is a growing need, which is finally starting to be identified and some work is being done on it.



Q35 Angela Crawley: Professor Greenfields, you mentioned the need for data, and Yvonne, you said the same. Not only the collection but the use of that data is important. Kealey, you mentioned the sustainability and continuity of funding. Do you think that the current data collection mechanisms are adequate for measuring outcomes, and if there are gaps, where would you seek to improve the gaps in data?

Professor Greenfields: Health, first and foremost. It is not part of the NHS data dictionary, and we have all been calling for that for a very long time. Much of the evidence that we have is very localised and small-scale. There are problems around methodology, for example when we try to map life expectancy, in not only self-identification but how and where we access members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. Often we tend to use sites as a proxy. Some work is beginning to come through on the Roma population. Health, fundamentally. We are starting to deal with criminal justice—

Yvonne MacNamara: In terms of the criminal justice system, the police are now beginning to collate that data. We know that the prison service has had P-NOMS for a number of years, but in the last few years there has been no data. They had what was called the smart monitoring system, and yesterday I was talking to some colleagues in the Ministry of Justice who were saying that no data has been coming in centrally for a number of years. As I say, with the recommendations of the Lammy review, they are beginning to look at that. The Youth Justice Board, which I mentioned earlier, is beginning to roll out data collection.

Professor Greenfields: I would argue we need to track it right through in terms of probation decisions as well. It needs to be very far-reaching, so that we can look at whether there are differential and disproportionate outcomes at all stages.

Kealey Sly: It is having some comeback, as well, when we get those figures. Again, if we use education as an example, we have had the GRT category for quite a number of years now in education and we have seen that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities continue to be the lowest-performing group across every key stage. That gap is widening and widening. What we also see is a service that we know worked and was effective, which I myself am a product of: the Traveller education service. I had been taken out of school, and an outreach worker came out and spent hours and hours trying to build up trust with my family. Eventually, he built that trust and managed to support me back into education at a much later stage.

We know that that service works, but many local authorities are choosing not to implement that service or continuing to cut that service, even though we can clearly see that there is a need there and there has been a need for some time. We are not asking questions of that as well as we should be.



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Yvonne MacNamara: We know that in areas around education in particular, where there is good data collection and they really invest in the local GRT communities, attainment levels are quite good.

Q36 **Angela Crawley:** So the main areas you have outlined are health, criminal justice and education. Can you give me—?

Professor Greenfields: Can I also say housing? I have done various projects on Gypsy and Traveller communities in housing, and anecdotally there are a lot of things coming through, and also from one or two projects on Roma about Roma populations living in really quite appalling housing conditions, overcrowded and exploited by slum landlords, if I can use that term. We need to be able to follow that through as well in terms of ethnicity at every level of local authority and reach.

Q37 **Angela Crawley:** Are there any examples or models of good practice where visibility, for example, has made a difference or you have seen the benefit of it—perhaps one of the programmes you have worked on, Kealey?

Yvonne MacNamara: In terms of models of good practice, I spoke earlier about education. We know there is a school called Ash Manor School, based in Surrey, with excellent attendance rates. They have really embraced the local community. They celebrate Gypsy Roma and Traveller history month; all the children in the school learn about Gypsy Roma and Travellers. They also employ a local Traveller woman who is a community liaison officer. There is excellent attendance, and those children really are going on and achieving. That is one model where good data collection is in place and there is a good relationship with the local community, and they are celebrated as part of the local community.

Kealey Sly: There is also a general consensus, when we look at issues of planning and suitable accommodation, that above all more smaller sites work better than bigger sites with more pitches concentrated into one particular area. But it is quite difficult to give you positive examples.

Professor Greenfields: I did a piece of work—I think in about 2013—in the Bath area, BANES, where they commissioned a study through the health authority, working with the local authority on health access. It was good practice, engaging both with health practitioners and members of the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma and Boater communities to find out about their experiences and begin developing mapping. Again, unfortunately, I don't know what happened at the end of that, but there was some good positive work, there was data-gathering and engagement, bringing together members of mainstream settled and the GRT communities to talk about issues. I think that was very positive.

Kealey Sly: We had a project a couple of years ago in Leicester and Leicestershire, particularly with the health service, where we had a number of Gypsy and Traveller women who received training to go out and talk to local authorities and health professionals, telling them about the barriers they faced. What happened in turn was that those professionals could then inform the Gypsy and Traveller community, who then went out



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back to their sites and houses and wherever else, and were able to support other community members.

What we saw from that was an increase in Gypsy and Traveller community members actually accessing healthcare at a much earlier stage, because they had had that knowledge and expertise from within their own community. It was not a particularly expensive project to run, but unfortunately, again, it has been cut because whenever we speak about Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, we know that they are a small community. That is probably not ever going to change. We know that probably for every one that does ascribe, two or three maybe won't, so we know that it is actually much bigger than we say, but, again: a very small project that made a really big difference and actually gave some power and understanding back to the community.

Professor Greenfields: Can I talk about the cost savings on that as well, just very briefly? At my university a few years ago we accessed funding; we trained up women as health champions. This was before more European money filtered through. We had reports back from Gypsy and Traveller women we worked with about closer engagement subsequently with the local community, the local authority and NGOs, and also reports of people saying, for example, "I recognise now the signs of a stroke, and was able to get my father-in-law into hospital rapidly". So it is not only wellbeing; it is also fiscal cost savings in terms of improving health literacy and engaging more closely with communities.

Chair: That is all our questions. I cannot thank you enough for the time you have taken with us this morning. It has been an excellent first evidence session and will give us the foundations for the remainder of the inquiry that we are undertaking. Thank you all very much for coming in to see us today.

Yvonne MacNamara: Thank you for giving us the opportunity.