

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: [Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities](#), HC 360

Wednesday 9 January 2019

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Mrs Maria Miller (Chair); Sarah Champion; Angela Crawley; Philip Davies; Vicky Ford; Jess Phillips; Mr Gavin Shuker.

Questions 666–718

Witnesses

I: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; Jackie Doyle-Price MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care; Nadhim Zahawi MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)
- [HM Government](#)

Examination of witnesses

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Jackie Doyle-Price MP and Nadhim Zahawi MP.

Q666 **Chair:** Can I say welcome to our witnesses? Sorry for starting a few minutes late. Also, welcome to those watching online and people joining us in the public gallery. This is the final session of our inquiry into tackling the inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. It has been a long-running and important piece of work and we are grateful to everybody who has contributed to us over the months.

Today, we are joined by Lord Bourne from the Housing, Communities and Local Government Department, Jackie Doyle-Price, who is from the Department of Health and Social Care, and Nadhim Zahawi, who is from the Department for Education. We are really grateful to you, Ministers, for coming in. We know that we are a cross-cutting Committee and you have commitments to other Select Committees as well. We are conscious of the fact that we are yet another burden on your diary, but you can imagine that for the inquiry that we have been doing your input is incredibly helpful.

We are going to follow the usual form. Because I have introduced you, I will not ask you to introduce yourselves. We have a number of questions from Committee members. Angela is going to start us off.

Angela Crawley: Hello. Thank you, first of all, for coming forward to the Committee. Can you perhaps outline where you feel there has been the most progress in the last five years on tackling inequality for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities?

Lord Bourne: Sorry, I missed the first point.

Angela Crawley: Could you provide any indication of what progress you feel there has been in the last five years?

Lord Bourne: First of all, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here to explain what the Government are doing and what progress is being made. It is a daunting problem. "Challenge" perhaps would be a better way of describing it, and has been over a period of years—this is not something that suddenly happened. The most material thing that has happened over the last five years has been the Race Disparity Audit. It might not be too obvious as yet, but that has demonstrated—unless one wants to challenge the data, and the data are not challengeable—that these particular communities, because they are distinct, face massive discrimination and have done over a period of time.

If you look at the outcomes, their life chances are not nearly as good other parts of the community, even other minorities. There is that challenge, but at least we do now have the Government's commitment to the Race Disparity Audit and to doing something about it. We have a steer from the Race Disparity Unit within the Cabinet Office that they do



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regard this as a priority, particularly education. There are challenges all over the place with education. The outcomes are even more daunting and challenging.

As a Department, we co-ordinate things, though clearly my colleagues will want to say things about education, health and some of the broader issues as well. Another particular issue that we do face with these communities is that, unlike other minorities, they are often very slow to identify as Gypsy, as some of your evidence has demonstrated over your previous sessions. These people, because of fear of discrimination, particularly if they are more recently from Europe, will not come forward and identify as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities or individuals. That is an additional challenge.

Sorry, to come back to the point, the most significant thing over the last five years has been the Race Disparity Audit that was commissioned.

Chair: The question was what is the improvement in people's lives? The audit itself is not an improvement in people's lives.

Lord Bourne: It signals an improvement because it does offer the hope of something happening: we do have the evidence there and we are determined to act upon it. The challenges that have existed over a period of time are still there, but what we do need to do is have education and publicity from the Government.

Q667 **Chair:** If I can interrupt, the Government have had seven years to do something to improve the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. What improvement have the Government made, even if it is just one area? What one improvement do you think is the best improvement that the Government have offered?

Lord Bourne: Let me deal with that. The most obvious thing is that we have set up various projects. We have 22 projects under the Controlling Migration Fund—something of a misnomer—which is spending money on these communities. Some are expressly on the Roma community; others are more broad. I can certainly get details to you of those 22 projects up and down the country. For example, in Gravesham we are spending money on English language classes for the Roma community and so on, and explaining rights and responsibilities to people in those communities. This is very important.

We also have six pilots being run and financed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: two on education, two on health and two more broadly on community issues. We will evaluate those and, dependent on success—the evidence so far is good—we would want to roll those out and act on them on a broader front.

Nadhim Zahawi: I just want to come in on your question, if I may, just to set the scene for you from the Department for Education. We need to be honest with ourselves that, in terms of attainment and progress,



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things have remained relatively flat. There is a lot of work we need to do. We are not sitting here saying to you that we are high-fiving each other, saying that the work is done. If you look at Key Stage 4 for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, attainment last year was 11%, and for Travellers of Irish heritage attainment was 22%, compared to a 64% national average. We have a long way to go, but if you look at this ratio over the last three years it has remained broadly the same. At Key Stage 4, progress has at least remained stable and attainment has increased very slightly. The increase is not quite statistically significant, so I do not want to mislead the Committee in any way.

On the educational side of this, we still have a long way to go, but there are some very good examples of work, which we can talk about in our session, in the opportunity areas—places like Derby and elsewhere—and there are some very good examples of schools doing really well. If you look at the system overall, where we have a devolved system of education and local government, there are some very good schools. You are familiar with some of the case studies with the Ash Manor School in Surrey, where they have got 12% of pupils from a GRT background. They challenge both GRT and non-GRT pupils' use of derogatory language and train staff to understand the cultural background. Then in Stoke-on-Trent, St Joseph's academy—

Chair: We are actually going to go into education as a detailed section, but I appreciate your candour.

Nadhim Zahawi: I would rather be candid with you than claim that the work is done yet.

Q668 **Angela Crawley:** Thank you for that. Can I just take us back slightly? Just for clarity, can you outline who specifically is leading on the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller strategy? How are they working with colleagues across the Government?

Lord Bourne: The strategy would rest ultimately with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The three of us do meet to discuss progress on the pilots that I referred to that cross the three different areas. Obviously, it does involve other Government Departments as well—for example, the Home Office—so we are in touch on that.

Q669 **Angela Crawley:** You have mentioned that you have the Race Disparity Audit, which is an example of a way to measure the success of this strategy. What improvements should happen for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people to see their lives improve in the next five years, as a result of this Government policy? What other mechanism, if any, will you then use to measure the success of that strategy?

Lord Bourne: There are various areas. One is hate crime, fairly obviously. There has been some progress on this across the board, as some of your evidence sessions have demonstrated, though once again I



do not want to overstate that. There are still significant challenges there on getting people to report hate crime. That is true across the board. It is particularly true of GRT communities, as I have indicated. We would want to see an improvement on reporting. It will help that in the next census in 2021 Roma is going to be a separately identified group. Gypsies and Travellers already are. That will help us in terms of identifying that as an ethnicity. That is one area.

The other two areas, and I am sure Jackie and Nadhim will want to say something, are on health and education. These are two significant areas where the life chances of people in these communities are significantly lower and significantly less favourable than for the general population, or indeed other minorities. We would hope to see improvements in these areas by identifying actions that we can do, through the Race Disparity Audit.

Q670 Angela Crawley: What actions would you like to see or should happen in the next five years? Would either of you like to comment?

Nadhim Zahawi: From our perspective, if you think a step back, there are three areas in education. There is attainment, attendance and self-identification. We have the GRT stakeholder group, which is chaired by Baroness Whitaker. It actually includes representatives from the GRT community and third sector organisations. Essentially, that stakeholder group feeds into those three policy areas: attainment, attendance and self-identification. We can talk more about each of those in this session today.

The other area, which is equally important to the Race Disparity Audit for us in the Department for Education, is exclusion. Edward Timpson's exclusions review has direct input. Pauline Anderson, the acting Service Director for Learning and Skills at Derby City Council, was appointed to the Timpson exclusions review reference group. Pauline is a former teacher with significant knowledge of dealing with the GRT issues in education.

Jackie Doyle-Price: In respect of health, obviously we rely very heavily on a locally commissioned model, but the Secretary of State obviously has a duty to tackle inequalities. We are very much looking at local commissioning to tackle this, bearing in mind that we are talking about a population that is 0.6% across the nation, but within local communities it can obviously be much higher. We are looking very much at the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to identify where particular initiatives need to be made.

Having said all of that, this week we have published the forward plan for the next 10 years. A key part of that is what we are doing with regard to maternity. We recognise that childbirth is an opportunity for new engagement with communities. In that regard, I am very interested in some of the work that has been done within local communities in terms of engagement with health visitors, who are a really effective way of



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engaging with the communities. It is less formal, less threatening and is a much closer relationship, with which we can start giving messages to these communities and families within these communities, because they tend to be clans. We can say, "Start going to the dentist," and give really good public health messages to these people.

We recognise that these health inequalities are themselves a function of that lifestyle. We are only going to tackle that by giving good messages and empowering people to look after themselves.

Q671 Angela Crawley: I am pleased to hear you say that, because my next question was going to be on how you are going to tackle the equalities issue, rather than it being all about unauthorised encampments. Specifically, how do you see tackling the inequalities issue itself as the priority?

Jackie Doyle-Price: As I say, the health visitor relationship is an important one. There are local communities that are doing the right thing, particularly in Brighton and Leeds, where you actually see these health visitors who are specifically engaging with Traveller communities. We have good practice locally and one of the things that I want to do is make sure that we develop that expertise and that ability to communicate with them. Ultimately, we need to recognise that with the cultural behaviours of this group, the way the public sector usually communicates is not going to work. It has to be something much more formal if we are going to really tackle these inequalities.

One of the issues we need to consider is literacy. The NHS's traditional way of producing leaflets is not going to wash. We are going to have to be a lot more imaginative about how we engage.

Nadhim Zahawi: On the issue of reducing inequalities, the Chairman mentioned the seven-year timeline. In terms of the Department for Education, we have delivered on all six of our commitments, as set out in the progress report by the ministerial working group. We committed to highlight GRT people as a vulnerable group; in the revised Ofsted framework we have done that. We have committed to piloting a virtual school head teacher for GRT pupils in a smaller number of local authorities. We have committed to look again at the impact of legislation that under certain circumstances protects mobile GRT families from prosecution for their children's non-attendance at school. This will be done in parallel with the review of the statutory guidance as well.

Angela Crawley: Can I maybe just ask you a final question? I am conscious that we are going to ask specific questions on healthcare and specific questions on education.

Nadhim Zahawi: There are the other three commitments of the six, but I just wanted to address your question.

Q672 Angela Crawley: It is just because I know we will come back to



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education and healthcare. I appreciate you are looking at it specifically through your Department's lens at this moment, but we are going to have specific questions directed to your Department.

My final question is: I appreciate the points that you have made, but witnesses have told us that Ministers suffer from short-term thinking on improving the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people, and these pilot projects are run and then abandoned. Good practice documents are written and then left to gather dust. That is the opinion of the witnesses who have come forward. What can you say to reassure the communities that the Government are taking these inequalities seriously and that they will improve the outcomes? Can you maybe give me an example of projects that have been rolled out successfully and measurably by your Department?

Lord Bourne: It is fair to say that we are in this for the long haul. This is not going to be something that is cured overnight or indeed over a Parliament. These have been very deep-seated issues for a long time. There are six pilots, which we have referred to. In addition, there are 22 projects that will benefit Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Many of those are concentrating on rights and responsibilities, explaining these and getting these across to the communities. That is important. It is about rights and responsibilities because there are some issues that are difficult, such as child sexual exploitation, modern slavery and so on. There are children leaving school in some cases at age eight and nine. There are really deep-seated problems here, but we are in this for the long haul.

The pilots will be evaluated. That is built into the budget. If successful, or if there are any successful parts of them, they will be taken forward. We would want to do that. We are not investing in pilots with a view to saying, "They have been successful. We want to ditch them". This really is about doing things that are going to make a material difference to the lives of people who have been disadvantaged for far too long.

Jackie Doyle-Price: That is a really fair challenge. Let's be honest: we are all Members of Parliament and we all know there are no votes in championing this group of people. If you are relying, as we do in health, on a local commissioning model, you are relying on people who are going to be bothered enough to carry on at making the effort. To an extent, the Race Disparity Audit is a method of embedding challenge across Government to make sure that we are tackling these issues. It is a fair point to make that unless somebody is really showing leadership in this area, the extent to which we can really embed outcomes consistently is going to be an issue.

Nadhim Zahawi: I have just mentioned that the Department for Education has pretty much delivered on all of the six commitments that were in that progress report from 2012. Of course, as I opened by saying, there is a long way to go before we feel that we are beginning to deliver for this vulnerable group. If you look at our priorities in terms of



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closing the gap—the vocabulary gap and the education gap—there are three vulnerable groups that we are focused on. The Secretary of State has made it very clear that our laser-like focus is on SEND children, looked-after children and GRT. The focus on those three groups is very much now embedded in the Department for Education.

Q673 Chair: Can we just come back to this? The question was actually can you give examples of the pilots that have been rolled out successfully? There have been pilots running since 2012 and we are under the impression that none of them have been rolled out. To hear that there are going to be more pilots sounds strange, given that we have had pilots running and none of them have been rolled out. Why have none of them been rolled out? Why is this set of pilots going to be so much better than the last set that you set up?

Lord Bourne: The pilots that you refer to are already running. These six pilots that we are talking about have been in place for the last year.

Chair: I am talking the ones that you set up in 2012.

Lord Bourne: Well, I did not, but I can get information to you on that if you want.

Q674 Chair: You are the Minister responsible for the Government's work in this area and there have been pilots running since 2012. Why have none of those been rolled out? They came out of the ministerial working group in 2012. Why are you now saying that another set of pilots are going to be so much more successful if the first lot were not?

Lord Bourne: I can speak to the set of pilots that have been set up in the last year. The assessments that we have made of those to date have been that they are very effective. Obviously, we would make a full assessment of those.

Q675 Chair: Have you not been briefed on what was done in 2012?

Lord Bourne: I was aware that in 2010 work began on the 27 areas where it was felt that the Government should be making inroads, certainly.

Nadhim Zahawi: Can I just come in on the 2012 pilots from the Department for Education perspective? Between 2012 and 2014, we funded two local authorities to trial the virtual school head teacher for GRT pupils, with all of the responsibilities for supporting schools to promote better pupil outcomes. We identified effective practice and we disseminated that to every local authority. It is not that we have just piloted and it has then been shelved. It actually went out to every local authority.

Q676 Chair: How many local authorities have taken up that idea?

Nadhim Zahawi: I can come back with that, but in 2017 we followed up with a conference for local authority GRT leads to identify and



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disseminate further best practice in this area. The work is ongoing, but you are right to challenge us on it and say, "Show me how you have scaled that up". I can come back to you with the numbers on that.

Lord Bourne: I can pick up the point because I have been advised. The pilots you are referring to from 2012 have now evolved into the Controlling Migration Fund projects of 2022. They are being carried forward in relation to the rights and responsibilities. This is what has happened. They are due to run until 2020, which will take us into the next spending review period.

Q677 **Chair:** With regards to the Controlling Migration Fund, one project mentions Roma and none mention Gypsy, Roma and Traveller specifically. What commitment can the Government make that the fund will benefit those communities? At the moment, it is not very specific.

Lord Bourne: You are right. It is actually three that mention Roma specifically, but you are right that many of them are just general in terms of immigrants from Eastern Europe or more generally. What I can certainly do is provide you with details of how those are working now. Indeed, if you would like to visit any of those projects, that is something that we could facilitate. It may be helpful to the Committee to do that.

Chair: Brilliant, that is great.

Sarah Champion: I want to focus specifically on data and data capture. You will be aware that Gypsies and Travellers have been included in the census since 2011, but very few public bodies are capturing that information. You know that without that data it becomes very difficult to create informed policies. I would like you each to say specifically what your Department is doing to address that. If I could, I will start with Lord Bourne because you started your opening answer talking about the Race Disparity Audit, which has no data on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers beyond education and a very little bit of health. Do you know specifically on the Race Disparity Audit, as well as within your Department, what they are doing going forwards to make that data better?

Lord Bourne: Yes, this is a common concern on the Race Disparity Audit generally. As you will know, there is an intergovernmental committee that meets. Jackie is on this as well and Nick Gibb is on it for education. We are looking at specific issues with regard to data. It is not comprehensive. For example, we do not have it at all on universities. This is something that the Race Disparity Unit is concerned about. You are right: it is a particular issue with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. It will probably be made somewhat easier in regard to Roma, because of their being included in the 2021 census, but it still remains very much a challenge. I do not want to pretend that we are going to be able to solve that overnight. We are aware of the issue. It will be addressed by the committee.

Q678 **Sarah Champion:** Could I ask each of you what your Departments are



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doing to get better at capturing the data?

Nadhim Zahawi: What we are doing in the Department for Education is improving the dissemination of outcomes by ethnicity, including for GRT young people, by working with the Cabinet Office. They have the ethnicity facts and figures website. It will make the data available in one place, and allow us to draw links between different indicators and data sets.

We have our own statistics improvement and coherence plan. We will review the breakdowns we publish and I am hoping that will modernise the way the DfE statistics are accessed. We collect pupil ethnicities, including GRT and Traveller of Irish heritage, through the school census. This is obviously available for all statistics that link to the National Pupil Database. I would caveat all of that by saying that we recognise that there is more to be done to provide comparable data for all age groups and sexes, so that we can better understand different groups' pathways through education. At the moment, I am exploring how to do that best.

Q679 **Sarah Champion:** One of the particular issues that we have in Rotherham is that we have a large Roma population, less so Traveller, and the schools say that children will come in maybe for a couple of weeks or a term, but will then disappear for six months and come back again. Are you trying to capture that specific phenomenon?

Nadhim Zahawi: That is one phenomenon that is challenging. Really good schools in this area are working with the community and actually co-producing. They are engaging them by saying, "If the whole community travels at different times, we are going to struggle. If we work together, then the school can manage better". In some instances, you get dual registrations in different schools. It is an area that I am looking at in terms of following the pathways for these children.

Sarah Champion: That has a particular safeguarding issue around being able to report when children move to different schools around the country.

Nadhim Zahawi: Absolutely right.

Sarah Champion: Thank you.

Jackie Doyle-Price: Data is always a challenge in the NHS, particularly collecting and analysing data in a way that properly allows you to challenge whether you are delivering the outcomes that you wish to do. That is something that we are looking at now, particularly from a view across tackling the inequalities agenda generally. We know there is an issue about how we record and capture information regarding this community, but there are other areas of inequality too. The data on autism, for example, would be another area that we really need to improve.



There is a broader challenge about how we really generate the data that allows us to properly analyse whether we are delivering on our tackling inequalities agenda. That is something that we have a review of taking place now, but again I come back to the fact that if we are looking at a population set that is 0.6%, giving some national interrogation for that is going to be very limited in what it tells us we need to do. I still focus on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment as a way of really identifying whether we are making sure that we are delivering what we should do for our population, in those areas where they are. They do cluster. There are clusters where it is a particular challenge. I fully expect CCGs to be properly engaging with local authorities to make sure that that need is delivered.

Q680 Sarah Champion: One of the things that our stakeholders have been saying is that it would make a really big difference if Gypsy, Roma and Traveller were actually categorised to a category in the NHS data dictionary. Is that something that you could push for?

Jackie Doyle-Price: We are talking about the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population as a group now, but I would say that in some respects that in itself brings with it discrimination too. There is a world of difference from showpeople, who are quite well integrated, right through the spectrum until you get to Roma, where there is probably the least integration. Yes, there is good reason to try and capture that ethnicity, but equally we really do need to challenge whether that is going to give us a proper picture of what we need to be tackling.

Lord Bourne: I appreciate some of the issues that you have mentioned in Rotherham. I did a visit to Gill Furniss's constituency in Brightside, in Sheffield, and there is a real issue about rogue landlords. To some extent, the laws are there and they are not enforced, partly because Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are, again, fearful of enforcing their rights sometimes. Jackie is right: there are really three different communities here. They are not homogenous. That is something I learnt early on. The self-identification issue, which Nadhim referred to, is a real problem, until we get people more willing to come forward and say, "We are part of this community." We do not really have this issue, say, with the Indian subcontinent or the Caribbean, but we do have this problem here. It is going to be a real problem, but we are encouraging local authorities and so on to seek that information, because there is a real issue. I have found that again in Luton. I visited Luton and spoke to some of the Roma community there, where rogue landlords are similarly a problem. We have the laws there.

We can help by these projects that have been rolled out under the Controlling Migration Fund, in terms of getting the rights and responsibilities known, but the reliable data does to some extent depend on them. I do not want to create victimhood and make it sound like it is the victim's fault. It is not, but we do face that challenge of getting people to identify as GRT if we are going to have that successful data.



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That would be true even of the census, if people do not tick the relevant boxes.

Q681 Sarah Champion: This is a pet project, so bear with me. In Rotherham, our Sure Start Children's Centres are seen as a safe space. A lot of children go there to get registered, to have their health visits. We have one that is based in a school, so it familiarises the family with the school. They will meet the housing association people and the local authority people there. As a cross-departmental team, do you see the value of having these safe spaces? Rather than expecting people to come to you, you are providing a safe area that they can go to. What are you doing to keep them going?

Lord Bourne: It is a very fair point and I have seen that in other areas. With homelessness, for example, if you provide the doctor's service—in Sheffield there is a doctor's and dentist service at the cathedral that people can use—they are more willing to go to that than they perhaps would be to register at a permanent site, as it were. The same may be true here. Jackie will have views as to whether we can, in some ways, take the mountain to Muhammed. That is something I saw happening when I did a visit in Bradford. One of the pilots that we have in the Thornbury Centre there is where the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, who are used to going there, are provided education on sexual exploitation, protection of daughters particularly, and so on. It is having some success. There is merit in that.

Jackie Doyle-Price: Yes, it comes back to trying to establish good relationships with these communities in whatever way works for them. It is not about the established formal ways that we are used to delivering services. It is less about location and instead just the fact that somebody is doing that. I mentioned Brighton and the fact that they are having lots of engagement via health visitors with the Traveller community there. That does rely on spaces with weekly drop-ins, where the community then gets used to having that engagement. As I say, it is less about physical location, as long as we have those kinds of networks emerging that are comfortable for everyone to engage with.

Nadhim Zahawi: You see it not just where local authorities have used their children's centres, but in Essex, where they have co-located health and child social care. You see much better engagement and outcomes. It is worth looking at some of those models and saying which ones we want to think about scaling up.

Sarah Champion: Thank you.

Q682 Chair: Can I pick up one point before we move on? Jackie, you put great emphasis on the importance of strategic needs assessments developed by CCGs. How do you make sure that CCGs are actually doing what you, who are in charge and responsible for the strategy, expect of them? The evidence that we have is that joint strategic needs assessments almost never have GRT included. How do you make sure, as the strategically



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responsible Minister, that either that is challenged or hopefully it is changed?

Jackie Doyle-Price: Again, that is entirely fair. It comes back to the point I made earlier, because obviously the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is scrutinised by the local authority health overview and scrutiny committee. That does rely on local leadership being bothered. It is a very fair challenge that we centrally need to be a lot better about interrogating the quality of those. Part of that is we need to improve our intelligence about where there are particular issues with these communities. That is something where the work is in play now to properly interrogate that data so that we can properly make real the Secretary of State's duty to tackle inequality.

Q683 **Chair:** Local authorities and CCGs have, subject to the public sector equality duty, to have due regard to equality issues. Do you think the EHRC should be investigating some local authorities that are not paying due regard?

Jackie Doyle-Price: We all operate in democracy, so we always have that ability to challenge and we have that accountability. Where there is clear evidence of discrimination, yes.

Chair: And of not paying due regard.

Jackie Doyle-Price: Exactly.

Q684 **Jess Phillips:** My questions are specifically about health. The Inclusion Health project has been replaced by the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, which launched last year. What has the Health and Wellbeing Alliance achieved so far? How has that work been disseminated across the NHS?

Jackie Doyle-Price: As I say, we are relying on local commissioning to deliver services that reflect the needs of the local population. We are relying on local CCGs to step up to that. Where we at the centre can play a more meaningful role is highlighting those areas of good practice. I have mentioned some of those already. I am not going to pretend that we have a great story to tell, to be honest with you. What I would say is that with regards to where we are now, we have set out a full plan for the next 10 years and I have very clear ambitions in that. We have opportunities for intervention, where we can tackle inequality generally. I see maternity as being key to that. The whole continuity of carer then establishes the foundations whereby we can get people to take those early measures to protect their long-term health and build those relationships.

Coming back to this issue of integration of the local community and the NHS, you will see within the forward plan we have recognised that, as I keep saying, health visitors are key in this. The riposte I get back is, "Yes, but local authorities have been cutting them." It is worth saying that we are cutting them from a peak in 2015, but we also recognise in getting the whole system to work better that the silo of local authority



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versus NHS can lead to dysfunction. Part of what we are trying to achieve through the forward plan is to get better integration of that. Lord Bourne and I both recognise that this is an area that we really need to tackle.

Q685 Jess Phillips: Specifically with regard to the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, rather than Inclusion Health, why the change? What do we hope is going to be more effective? Is it more effective?

Jackie Doyle-Price: To be honest, I cannot answer that. I would prefer to come back to the Committee with a response to that question.

Q686 Jess Phillips: Also, you have said you are relying on and expecting CCGs to do this work, quite rightly, because they are concentrated communities; it is not an issue everywhere. When we say that we are expecting them to do it, is there somebody at the centre making sure that is not just the triumph of hope over experience, and that expectation is matched with monitoring, measuring and making sure that the CCGs, such as in Kent or Rotherham, have a detailed plan around what do to about this?

Jackie Doyle-Price: This is where it is a real challenge to remain outcome-focused and have some degree of central organisation, particularly when the challenges in each community are going to be very different. What you will find is that if we are looking at good practice, we will find, for example in Kent, that they have a really good practice in terms of empowering people with discreet ways of being able to reveal the fact that they are struggling with literacy and so on, so they can engage better, but perhaps less so in terms of actually having a specific strategy. But that could still lead to a better outcome. You do not want to destroy that creativity that can be done by the locality.

The challenge then is to make sure that there is some level of consistency, so if you are a Roma citizen in Rotherham, you can expect the same health outcomes as Birmingham, for example. We still have a long way to go there. That is something we need to challenge with NHS England in terms of how we can better improve data and measurement to ensure that quality of outcome.

Q687 Jess Phillips: Thank you very much. Lots of the witnesses that we have talked to have said that a very large part of the reason health outcomes are so poor with this particular community is because Traveller sites lack basic amenities.

Jackie Doyle-Price: That is correct.

Jess Phillips: We have heard horror stories about them not having even basic clean running water and plumbing. What work are MHCLG and the Department of Health doing to resolve this particular part of the problem?

Jackie Doyle-Price: I can give an anecdotal example. One of the reasons we end up with that is because it suits everybody, frankly, for Travellers to sit outside the rest of society. It suits them because one of



the ways of tackling discrimination is to just put the barriers up. It suits the local communities because they just do not want to pay attention. The result is that nobody is actually making those visits to assess basic amenities like that. I know from my own local community, when the local authority did decide to go and visit they were horrified by the standards that they found, because there just is not that regular level of inspection. Again, we are relying on local authorities to make sure that they are delivering for their communities. I do not want to be dictatorial—you know, “I expect this kind of inspection”—but we ought to be able to expect our local authorities to step up to the plate and do that.

Jess Phillips: To inspect the known sites.

Jackie Doyle-Price: Yes, to make sure that common facilities are of decent standard. I remember when my local chief executive went down to the local Traveller site the showers were a disgrace. If we are talking about health outcomes, there are some basic standards that can limit your life expectancy. We know that the housing conditions are going to, by themselves, bring a risk, but there are things that can be done in terms of shared amenities that can mitigate those.

Q688 **Jess Phillips:** Is MHCLG doing that?

Lord Bourne: Yes, let me pick that up, if I may. The first thing I would like to say is that we have, in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller liaison group, which was set up as a result of the 2010 analysis and the 2012 report, a group that does highlight good practice so that we are able to say, “Here are some very good examples of Traveller sites.” Some Traveller sites are local authority council sites, although more are in private hands. There are planning rules that have to be adhered to with regard to basic planning, basic hygiene and so on, which are set out in the planning policy for Traveller sites. Local authorities should be monitoring that.

Jess Phillips: They should be. We are all local Members of Parliament, so we are all quite aware of how great planning enforcement can be.

Lord Bourne: I did use the word advisedly, and you are right: they should be.

Q689 **Jess Phillips:** It is one thing if your neighbour does not like your colonnades that you have put out at the front of your house, but it is quite a different issue if we have children growing up without running water. I do not mean to keep saying “the triumph of hope over experience”—you are the Government—but if we should be, how can we make sure that we are?

Lord Bourne: You are absolutely right and it is the challenge that we do have. It is variable.

Chair: There is nothing in the legislation that says that local authorities should check sites.



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Lord Bourne: There certainly is in relation to their own sites. In relation to the private sites, there will be other agencies that may be responsible for particular issues. For example, at a private site it may involve social services if it is something that has affected children. It may be the Environment Agency. It is not quite as straightforward as saying that it is all on the local councils, though some of it is.

Q690 **Chair:** If you rent a flat, it will be subject to building regulations. It would have to comply with building regulations and fire regulations to enable somebody to be able to rent it for instance. What are the regulations that are associated with allowing the site to operate?

Lord Bourne: They would be set out in the planning policy Traveller site regulations. There are basic requirements. The issue, Chair, as so often, is there are rights here and responsibilities here but they are not always enforced, just as we know in relation to rogue landlords.

Part of the challenge we have is not that we need new laws or tightening up of the laws. There may be some loopholes, but I do not think that is the particular issue. The particular issue is one of enforcement. Jess is absolutely right. It is a question of how we get this carried forward. I do not want to pretend this is going to be easy. There are real challenges all over the place. That said, there are perfectly good sites in the country, and we can identify some through the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller liaison group, but they are possibly a minority. It is certainly not the norm—I would agree with that.

Q691 **Jess Phillips:** We have heard, from our evidence, about the support from mainstream health services that understand the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and we have heard people saying that they prefer that. We have also heard people saying that there is a need for really specialist outreach and specific Gypsy, Roma and Traveller health services. Which approach does the Department favour in this particular regard?

Jackie Doyle-Price: We reserve the right to commission specialist services where we need to, but generally that is not our inclination in any health need. We want it to be business as usual and locally commissioned. There is a case—we are aware of this with regard to homelessness as well—that we do need to make sure that GPs understand their responsibilities to not discriminate on the basis of identity, gender or place of abode. We have certainly issued guidance and will continue to issue robust guidance in that regard. Again, much as we would like to say that everybody has the same access and the same quality of service from their primary care services, the reality is that they do not. We can only do our best through inspection and guidance to make sure that is the case. We obviously do continue to keep that under review.

Q692 **Jess Phillips:** I agree with you. It is a realistic assessment for all sorts of different communities, this being one of the most marginalised that we



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are talking about, but you are right. You say, "We can only do our best," but it is illegal to discriminate as a GP. As a public body, it would be illegal for you to discriminate against somebody on the basis of their ethnicity. In this case, an easy way around it is to say, "You don't live near this GP surgery," "You haven't been here long enough," or, "We're full and we can't take people who are going to come and go." What work is the Department doing with primary care services, which we now know sit somewhat outside of the NHS but are funded through your Department, to make sure no discrimination in access exists? How is that being enforced?

Jackie Doyle-Price: We have issued very clear guidance to GPs. Obviously, we do have inspection now, where part of the leadership and governance is that you are honouring your commitments that we expect.

Jess Phillips: There is an inspection regime.

Jackie Doyle-Price: Yes. We look at the holistic aspects of the service when the CQC inspects, but again this is one of the weaknesses we have. We rely on sunlight as the best disinfectant. We rely on complaints to highlight where this is happening. When you are talking about this kind of discrimination and a community that perhaps does not feel it can complain, that is a challenge. Again, we rely on local networks and local voluntary organisations to champion the interests of this group. I come back again to the forward plan. I have specifically highlighted the issue with regard to health visitors and how we can properly integrate there. We have also ring-fenced some funding for people who are homeless. We can use that as well, because it is the same kind of discrimination there, but I cannot say enough, Jess, that we do need to get better at this.

Q693 **Jess Phillips:** I really appreciate your candour; it is an approach I obviously like. You say there are CQC inspections, so there is an inspection regime. If you are in the Vale of Kent or somewhere, we saw in the schools that we visited that 80% of the children were from the GRT community. At that local GP in that nice little village that we went to, if they did not have anyone from the GRT community on their books, would there be somebody who would say, "Hang on a minute. Let's look at the data, the joint needs assessment, and look at the communities. None of them are at this GP. What is going on?"

Jackie Doyle-Price: I would like to say yes. I would like to say yes with confidence, but I would ask the CQC to write to the Committee about this because that would be helpful.

Jess Phillips: Yes, that's fair.

Jackie Doyle-Price: I can only give an anecdotal example from my own constituency, where I have a healthy-sized population. When we brought in GP inspection, we knew that some GPs were not doing what they should do for the entirety of their local community. The CQC was incredibly effective about bringing that to account. I can say with some



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degree of confidence that I would expect that any failure to properly react to the demands of the local population should be identified through CQC inspection.

Lord Bourne: I wonder if I could just mention one visit I did. I am not suggesting this is typical—it probably is not. Gavin might be able to say something about it, because it was Luton. I met with a group of Roma there and was very open. “Please could you tell me what issues you have in terms of accessing public services?” They were very content with access to the health service. The issue they really homed in on was rogue landlords. Indeed, there was a family that had to leave early from the meeting to go to the doctor’s—the mother of the family was very obviously pregnant, so it was probably that—and there did not seem to be an issue. I am not suggesting it is typical, but I do want to nail the fact that there are exceptions. In Luton, it did not seem to be a real issue. It clearly is elsewhere. It is a real problem.

Q694 **Chair:** Can I just ask one question before we move on to education? Jackie, the NHS’s own constitution says that the NHS is available to all, irrespective of race. How do you hold the NHS to account for its own constitution? What else could other organisations do to actually make sure they are delivering on that?

Jackie Doyle-Price: That would be my starting point. It is a very easy thing to say, “We have this universal service, it is free at the point of need and everyone has access to it. That’s everybody’s right to enjoy, therefore over to you to exercise your responsibility to make sure you get what you deserve.” Obviously, the constitution is designed to empower people. It is a rather bulky document to do that, but it is there to empower people to enforce their rights, which is all well and good.

Q695 **Chair:** How do you as a Minister make sure the NHS delivers for the people of this country what its own constitution says?

Jackie Doyle-Price: As I say, it is designed to empower patients to look after themselves and articulate those demands, but your challenge is the right one in the context of this community. If you are dealing with a community that is not used to enforcing its rights in that way, that comes back to me as the Minister to make sure that the Secretary of State is fulfilling the equality duty. That is where we rely on intelligence. We rely on representations from Members of Parliament. Again, it comes back to the issue of if you have a community, which both by virtue of society and by its own behaviour is excluded, we really have to give ourselves some challenge to make sure that we are delivering what we think is everybody’s right in that sense.

It is a case of balancing. As the Secretary of State repeatedly says, everyone has a responsibility for their own health, which of course they do, and we can give tools to enable people to do that. At the same time, we do need to satisfy ourselves that we really are doing our best. Quite often this is all input-driven. Everyone has access to a GP, and so on, but



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we are relying on that behaviour at the coalface. Unless it is highlighted to us, then we cannot do anything about it. Clearly we have inspection as a way of challenging that performance but, I say again, sunlight is the best disinfectant. Noise and visibility is perhaps the best way of ensuring accountability.

Q696 Mr Shuker: Nadhim, Gypsy and Roma pupils, along with pupils of Irish Traveller heritage, are among the lowest-achieving groups at every stage of education. What is going wrong?

Nadhim Zahawi: You are absolutely right in terms of highlighting the attainment gap at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. We have reformed the primary and secondary curriculum and the assessment and accountability arrangements. This will raise the standards and will create a much fairer system. Much of this is from the centre. You have been talking about what levers you have in the other Departments. It is about the leadership and the narrative around that.

Both I and the Secretary of State, as our priority in terms of closing the gap in attainment, have identified GRT as one of our three priority groups, along with SEND and looked-after children. That is one part of it—to message. We have an education system that is devolved and schools can decide how they deliver the curriculum and how they deliver things like the history of this country, which can include the Romani history, but ultimately we have a message. If the message from the leadership at the centre, right from the top—the Secretary of State down—says that this group is our priority, you can begin to see the machine delivering on that.

To go back to what I was trying to say earlier on the 2012 progress report, I spoke about the pilot we have done with virtual school heads in local authorities, and then disseminating that information. In commitment six we have also committed to collecting and publishing case studies from the highest-performing schools for GRT pupils. In June of last year, we published a research report detailing all the common strategies that specific schools have found to be effective, for combatting everything from bullying to looking at attainment and improving attainment. But it is still a huge challenge, no doubt.

Q697 Mr Shuker: You have identified that as one of three key areas where there needs to be greater leadership from Government. I guess am getting to the heart of the question, which is what is your assessment of or hypothesis as to what is going wrong?

Nadhim Zahawi: The GRT community, with some other ethnic groups, is over-represented in all of the negative stats, whether it is in terms of temporary or permanent exclusion or attainment. What we have to do is learn from the best-achieving schools. I gave examples earlier on from a school in Surrey and a school in Stoke-on-Trent—a secondary and a primary school—where they have really engaged with the community. All of the way through, the school leadership has focused on this particular



group. You begin to make a difference. I see very much my role as continuing that work. What more can we do to highlight what good schools do and do well, and what good local authorities and virtual school heads do and do well? We need to see how we can spread that good practice further through the education system.

Q698 Mr Shuker: In terms of identifying it as a priority, it is probably really helpful to have a clear analysis of what the fundamental problem is. Let me put a hypothesis to you and just explore it. What if it is attendance? What if it is access to education? In other words, this group of young people is not accessing the same quality of education that others are. The 1996 Act placed a duty on all parents to ensure that children receive an education, but parents are not required to inform the local authority if they are home educating, are they?

Nadhim Zahawi: You are right on attendance. It is just worth reminding ourselves that local authorities have a duty to make arrangements to establish, as far as they can, the identities of children who are of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving a suitable education otherwise. That duty is important. Of course, the statutory guidance that we publish on children missing from education identifies very clearly that GRT children are at a particular risk of missing education. It emphasises the need for local authorities to consider GRT children when establishing the children missing from education policies. We have very clearly homed in on this particular group.

Mr Shuker: That is in your draft guidance.

Nadhim Zahawi: It is in our draft guidance.

Q699 Mr Shuker: Your draft guidance also says that for GRT communities home education should not necessarily be regarded as any less appropriate than in other communities. Given what we have just talked about—the obvious relationship between low school attendance and low attainment—how can you defend that?

Nadhim Zahawi: You have to strike a balance. There is some very good home education being delivered by parents. It is important to remember that, of course, the parents of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children of compulsory school age have a legal duty, as any other parent does, to ensure their children are registered to attend a school or are home educated. Where parents do have to travel, our expectation is that schools would work with parents to ensure that the child receives continuity of education. Some schools work very well with the GRT community by bringing in the community, engaging with them and working out the time periods of travel and maybe co-registration.

Q700 Mr Shuker: Do you think that duty on parents is working well at present?

Nadhim Zahawi: Do I think it is working well?



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Mr Shuker: You can be candid.

Nadhim Zahawi: I can tell you we are keeping our position on the Private Members' Bill proposing the registration of educated pupils under review.

Q701 **Chair:** What are the Government actually doing on home schooling? It would be helpful for the Committee to know what the Government are actually doing to make sure that it is working in the way it should.

Nadhim Zahawi: You are right to ask the question. We ran a call for evidence on the proposal for elective home education and we will be publishing our response in due course.

Chair: When?

Nadhim Zahawi: In due course, Chair.

Q702 **Mr Shuker:** Let us just talk about schools for a second, because that is the alternative. Section 9 of the 1996 Act says that schools should have regard to the general principle that pupils be educated in accordance with the wishes of the parents. GRT parents are voting with their feet, are they not? They are not sending, in the same numbers, their young people to mainstream schools. Why do you think that is?

Nadhim Zahawi: There are a couple of challenges. One obviously is around the stigma that we have talked about earlier, associated with identifying as GRT. There is the issue of bullying, and we can talk about behaviour and what we are doing on that in more detail. Also, we MPs and leadership in Government need to be much more vocal, as we are with SEND children or looked-after children, where we champion their cause, so that families feel much more comfortable in mainstream education.

Q703 **Mr Shuker:** You mentioned bullying in that response. I have to say, in the evidence we have taken, Nadhim, I have rarely come across a group that so consistently reported bullying and harassment in education settings. Yet we have also seen that Government and Ofsted guidance on bullying rarely mentions GRT communities directly. Do you think that is right?

Nadhim Zahawi: If you are asking me if we need to do more, the answer is yes. In addition to funding activities around tackling bullying and poor behaviour, we have also published the "Respectful School Communities: Self-Review and Signposting Tool", to support schools to develop a whole-school approach. That will obviously then promote respect and discipline and, of course, combat harassment and prejudice.

There is a research report that details common strategies that specific schools have found to be effective at combating bullying around this particular group as well. It includes examples of schools who have undertaken work to increase the understanding and the empathy around



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in order to challenge the stereotype. Hopefully, the outcome will be supporting pupils and giving the confidence to the pupils and parents that the schools are there for them as well.

Q704 Mr Shuker: If we dealt with bullying and harassment, we would still have the area of curriculum. A very specific concern that has emerged from the inquiry is GRT parents also reporting that they are removing children because some areas of school education do not appear to be culturally sensitive for that group, particularly relationship and sex education. That is a difficult one to manage, because we want to provide a broad curriculum for all young people.

Nadhim Zahawi: Yes, we do.

Mr Shuker: What are your reflections on how best to manage that issue?

Nadhim Zahawi: Obviously, we are in the process of introducing relationship education at primary school and then relationship and sex education in all secondary schools. Some time ago, the Department commissioned the Historical Association to produce a curriculum resource for schools. The resource was seeking to enable children to learn Gypsy Romani culture as part of more general work on British society and identity, rather than make a specific focus—self-contained studies—on Gypsy Romani culture.

The National Curriculum for history sets the framework for the teaching of the subject in England's maintained schools, in terms of the broad time periods and themes to be taught, but then obviously it is up to the school how they use that curriculum. Again, one of the things that we did in the progress report of disseminating best practice is to share how you can use that part of the curriculum as a vehicle to increase that empathy and understanding of the culture of the community, but it is not homogenous. That has come through from my colleagues as well. It is dangerous for us to say that GRT is just a homogenous group, because it is not.

Q705 Mr Shuker: You have described a group with worse educational outcomes at every key stage, one where there are significant concerns about access to mainstream education through school provision, where the current system cannot even necessarily identify effectively young people that are not receiving an education at home, or assess the quality of the education they are getting, where the strategy for getting parents to live up to their duty is weak, and yet you have identified it as a key priority for your Department. Given that would seem to suggest that Government would want to make some specific interventions over a long period of time, why today is there less specific education provision for GRT communities than there was a decade ago?

Nadhim Zahawi: Great question. All I would say to you is, if you judge us by our actions today, we have established the stakeholder group specifically looking at Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. That



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group is chaired by Baroness Whitaker. That was in the beginning of last year. During this year, the group has already provided input into a number of policy areas, including Edward Timpson's review of exclusions. Again, they are over-represented, as I said earlier, in the exclusion numbers. Of course, in home education policy as well there is what I referred to earlier, which was the three aspects: attainment, attendance and self-identification.

If you take our strategy as a Department as a whole—our education reforms, school accountability, duties on local authorities, the pupil premium and schools being able to target that money, our work on bullying and exclusions, and the increased transparency through the availability of data, whether it is because of the Race Disparity Audit or just our drive to improve our data—I think that is a coherent strategy. I hope in years to come I will be able to come to this Committee and say, "It is beginning to deliver."

What I am trying to say to you is—I hope it is not lost on this Committee—how seriously we are taking this particular vulnerable group of people in the Department for Education. We have a holistic approach to it, which I think will ultimately begin to deliver on the ground.

Q706 Mr Shuker: Lastly from me, given the nature of that specific provision, obviously the Traveller education services, which there are fewer of today than there were before, are effectively a devolved responsibility.

Nadhim Zahawi: They are.

Mr Shuker: You have identified as a national priority for a Government Department—one of your three key areas—that that should be there. Do you think devolution in this area works effectively?

Nadhim Zahawi: Let me try and address what we are doing on it, and hopefully that will help you answer the question. You are absolutely right to say it is devolved. Schools and local authorities are best placed to meet the needs of pupils they serve, including on the Traveller education service, because needs vary from area to area. I will not rehearse all the arguments for that.

We are providing local authorities with over £465 million next year to fund services they provide to all schools in their local area through the central school service block. Local authorities have a legal duty to ensure that every child fulfils their educational potential. That is what they have to do. It is not through us not focusing on it and not providing the funding. The funding is there.

I guess what you are saying is—which is what we heard earlier from Jess in her questions around health—whether that is translating to the travel education service being consistent in every local authority. Part of my work centrally is to question both my officials and local government officials. Since we have the £465 million in place for next year, how are



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we using it? How effective is it and what does the provision look like on the ground in England?

Lord Bourne: I wonder if I could briefly comment, Chair, with one point that applies in this area and would apply in other areas as well, which is the importance of role models. I know that before your Committee—I think on your first day—you had Kealey Sly, who was a representative of the community in a key role. There are many graduates, for example, from these communities and I have come across some. To get them to speak to their community and for us to recognise the importance of that to encourage others is something we should not lose sight of. I am not saying it is a panacea by any means. I have often said in relation to race relations that Nadiya Hussain and Mo Farah have done more than any Government project or publicity campaign. Having those role models is important.

Chair: We have a couple of supplementaries from Sarah and Philip.

Q707 **Sarah Champion:** Minister Zahawi, can I take you back to school attendance and give you an example? Clifton comp in Rotherham is about a five-minute walk from the main Roma residential area. It sends out minibuses a couple of times a day to go round that area, to get the teenagers, to bring them into school. It provides them with after-school classes and homework facilities. It provides them with food, outreach activities and school holiday activities, to get the children to engage in the school, and it is working. They have to fund all of that themselves—there is no additional funding for them. Alongside the guidance you are giving to schools, will there be a specific pot of money where schools can apply to be able to facilitate the attendance rates in schools and the children's development?

Nadhim Zahawi: You are right, attendance is one of our massive challenges. GRT pupils have the lowest average attendance rate by a considerable distance. In 2016-17, the absence rate at primary school levels was 11.8%, and 14.9% at secondary school level. In the same year, for Travellers of Irish heritage, the absence rate at primary school was 18%, and 17.7% at secondary schools. This compares with the national absence level of 4% and 5.4%, for primary and secondary respectively.

At the moment, we are using the pupil premium as our financial support mechanism for schools. Rather than us dictating from the centre how that money should be used, it is up to schools to deliver that. Schools receive—you will know this—£1,320 for every eligible primary school pupil and £935 for eligible secondary pupils. If you look at the funding we are doing, we are using the pupil premium as our vehicle. This year, £2.4 billion went to schools to support those who need it.

Q708 **Sarah Champion:** I hear that. However, it would be easier for that school just to do nothing and keep the money for the core activities they are doing. As an incentive to try to challenge an area that you know is a



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particular problem, would you consider ring-fencing some specific money to help?

Nadhim Zahawi: I do not want to mislead you. I think the best way for doing it is through the pupil premium vehicle. If you look at GRT pupils—

Sarah Champion: Even though that is massively under-represented in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Nadhim Zahawi: The number of GRT pupils who were eligible for pupil premium in 2016-17 was 39.1%, so 40% of GRT pupils were eligible for free school meals.

Jess Phillips: Eligible or claiming it—

Nadhim Zahawi: At the end of key stage 2 it was 32%, so the numbers are high, in terms of eligibility. I think what Jess is intervening on is to say, “Do we identify and is that money is actually going to the schools?” My view is that the best way to do this continues to be through the pupil premium, rather than the centre ring-fencing and trying to intervene in particular interventions, and rather than looking at a whole-school strategy for improvement for this particular group of young people.

Q709 **Chair:** Would it be possible for you to write to us about the eligibility for pupil premium and the uptake of pupil premium, because I think our figures are slightly different to the ones you have, and if there might be some room to review whether the pupil premium criteria really are picking up on the needs of children in this community? Would that be possible?

Nadhim Zahawi: I will do that.

Chair: Thank you.

Q710 **Philip Davies:** There might be a lot of people outside of the bubble here who think, “Hold on a minute. People from the GRT communities are free to send their kids to school just like anybody else does, no more or less free to do that, and for whatever reason they choose not to.” Largely, from the evidence we have seen, they do not place as great an emphasis on formal education as other groups. Actually, many of them would prefer that they learnt the trade in their parent’s business, whatever that might be, rather than going to school. Many people would say, “You can have as many initiatives as you like and you can have the Secretary of State saying what they like, but that’s not going to change. It is not going to make any difference at all.”

I just wondered, out of the problems of attainment and attendance—obviously if you are not attending school the chances are your attainment is not going to be good, so the two flow on from each other—what responsibility do you think the Government have? Out of 100%, what proportion of that problem of attainment and attendance is the responsibility of the Government? What proportion is the responsibility of



the GRT communities themselves?

Nadhim Zahawi: I opened an answer earlier to Gavin by saying that parents have a legal duty. If you are asking me if there is parental responsibility, there certainly is parental responsibility. Where I would slightly disagree with you, Philip, is to say that it is important in any civilised society to provide the best outcomes for all children. Children do not choose who their parents are. Therefore, I see it as very much my responsibility to deliver many ways into education, and a quality education and quality outcomes—we can talk about apprenticeships and T Levels and widening participation in HE—for all children, no matter what your family background is. I see it very much as that that is where our duty comes in. I have to deliver products, as I would see it in my old world before coming to Parliament, where I can make it as attractive as possible and as simple as possible for these communities.

Let me try and describe it. When I came to this country, I could not speak English. I sat at the back of the class. It is a frightening place to be at school. My sister did not want to go to school for the first few weeks because we could not speak the language and we were bullied. These communities probably feel the same way most of the time, because of the way the rest of society tends to treat them, sadly. It is incumbent on us to make sure those kids get to overcome that stigma and get the best opportunity. Why? Because they are born to such huge disadvantage by being so discriminated against. I would not sit there and say, “Their parents choose that for them and so be it.” The sign of a civilised society is to do the right thing and to deliver the best outcomes possible.

Q711 **Philip Davies:** What is the measure of success for the Government? What will we look to to say that the Government have either failed or succeeded in what they seek to do? How much difference can you make? That is the question. Whatever you do, how much difference are you going to make to these attendances. You can have many warm words, but what I want to know is what difference you can make. If you did everything under the sun that this Committee asked, that everybody asked, what actual difference in the outcome of the number of people going to school and their attainment can you make? What do you see as a measure of success as to what is achievable?

Nadhim Zahawi: We just have to keep driving everything possible and pulling every possible lever that we can to increase the attendance and attainment and take away the stigma. I cannot deliver miracles, but I am going to have a damn good go.

Philip Davies: But there is no measure of success at the end of it.

Nadhim Zahawi: The measure is we have transparency. Data will continue to challenge us, hold our feet to the fire, to say “What more can you do?” Your Committee and this inquiry actually helps certainly this ministerial group to go back to our own officials and think, “Okay, what



else can we do? How well are we co-ordinating? How much more can we do individually?" That is the whole process of being in Government.

Q712 **Philip Davies:** There is also a feeling amongst many people that the authorities, whoever they may be, pussyfoot around the GRT communities in the way they do not anybody else. In terms of prosecuting parents who do not do what they should be doing, do you give an assurance that the GRT community will be prosecuted just as firmly as any other group of parents would be?

Nadhim Zahawi: There is a legal duty on parents and they should not in any way be treated differently.

Q713 **Philip Davies:** Do you think they are at the moment?

Nadhim Zahawi: Sometimes they can challenge it because of their own circumstances and travel, and the courts will look at it and be sympathetic to their circumstances. We have an independent judiciary in this country. It is not up to a politician like me to dictate to the judiciary. I passionately believe that, if we can help take away some of the stigma, you just might get those parents to actually feel a little bit more confident about integrating more in society, and there are amazing people. There is a very senior civil servant working in our Department, supporting the Secretary of State, from the GRT community. When you talk to them, it is because they have been given the opportunity. It is incumbent upon us to continue to challenge ourselves to deliver that opportunity for them.

Q714 **Chair:** We are just going on to a last couple of questions. Throughout our discussions today, we have heard about the issue of discrimination, regardless of the fact that GRT people are protected under the Equality Act. This is probably for Lord Bourne. What specifically are the Government doing to make sure it is absolutely understood that discrimination, in the way that we have heard about it today, whether it is across education, through the health services or whatever, is against the law and is to be eliminated? What are you doing on that particularly?

Lord Bourne: It is a point that is very well made and it rests at the root of a lot of what we are looking at—gaining the trust of these communities, that they are not at the moment always seeking to enforce rights that exist, and that those rights truly come with responsibilities. That is part of the projects that we are doing, looking at how we get information on rights and responsibilities through to the communities.

A slightly related issue, which I do not think you were intending to touch on, Chair, is hate crime. There is an issue of ensuring that the process of registering complaints of hate crimes is made more user-friendly for the GRT communities. We have a couple of projects that are looking specifically—one is GATE Hertfordshire, which, as its name suggests, is mainly prevalent in Hertfordshire, and the other is called Operation Report Hate, which is actually run by people from the GRT communities—at how we can make the process more user friendly. We know there are issues of True Vision perhaps being a little bit more user friendly for these



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communities. We have heard people say it is not something the GRT communities are aware of—their rights and responsibilities—in the way we would want.

The point is well made, and the root of this—it touches upon the point I was making about role models as well—is gaining the trust of those communities. At the moment, I do not think any local government, any public authority, really has the trust, and therefore very often people are not willing to use the rights that do exist. There are exceptions to that, and we need to up our publicity, up our game. Certainly, the three of us are keen to do that.

I should say that my Secretary of State, James Brokenshire, is very keen on moving this agenda forward as well. It is something I will be discussing with him later today just on the basis of what I have heard today. There is a real job of work to be done and it is something I am very keen to be doing.

Q715 Chair: It is clear from what you have set out today, Lord Bourne, that the projects you have are very important to the Government's strategy in tackling this issue, but those projects are very much based on a locality, not on a nationwide basis. How are you going to be capturing and disseminating that good practice to make sure those projects are not simply benefiting one particular small community, but have wider and broader benefit for the whole community?

Lord Bourne: A very good point, if I may say so. One or two of the projects are national. The one I mentioned, Operation Report Hate, for example, is a national project. You are right: the great bulk of them are focused on communities, sometimes large communities. We have some that focus on Sheffield, on Derby, on Birmingham and so on. You are right that the essence of this is going to be to learn what is working. That will come from the evaluation and rolling it out. In respect of the Controlling Migration Fund, we have other projects that are in the pipeline at the moment that are related to this community.

Q716 Chair: What is your mechanism for rolling it out? What is your mechanism for rolling out a project?

Lord Bourne: The evaluation is often integral to the budget. There is a means of evaluating the project and then, if it is successful, of looking at how we roll that out nationally. That is very much the essence of what we are seeking to do with the pilots. If they are successful, based on the evaluation, we will then look at how we do that. What is important, and perhaps the dog that has not barked, is that it needs to come with a budget. It is not just about money, but you try doing some of this without money and you are not going to get very far.

Q717 Chair: Would it be possible for you to write to the Committee with a detailed list of the projects, the budgets and the timeframes over which those projects would proceed?



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Lord Bourne: Yes, certainly. It was very much my intention to do just that. Again, if I could reiterate, if you wanted to visit any of the projects, I am sure we could facilitate that.

Q718 **Chair:** A final question—a final ask from me—is to the Minister from the Department for Education. Could you also send us something in writing about your policy commitment to the GRT community? You said you have three policy commitments; we would be very happy to see a policy document on that. We were not very aware that it is a priority for the Department.

Nadhim Zahawi: It is absolutely a priority throughout our work in the Department. I can set out in a letter for you how we are using the priority on GRT, SEND and looked-after children throughout our work in the Department.

Chair: That would be very helpful. Ministers, thank you so much for your time. I know how busy you are. We are really grateful for you not only spending the time today but also for the follow up that you have undertaken to do. Thank you very much.