



Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Submission by René Cassin, UK

Main contact: Mia Hasenson-Gross, Director, René Cassin

Address: 853 Finchley Road, London NW11 8LX

Tel: +44 20 8455 6616

Mia.Hasenson-Gross@renecassin.org

www.renecassin.org

Introduction

In this submission, René Cassin seeks to assist the Women and Equalities Select Committee into an inquiry on the inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities.

In question one we examine the progress made in achieving the commitments of the Ministerial Working Group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers.

In question two, we examine the tangible improvements the commitments have made for the GRT community.

In question four we examine the mechanisms put in place to achieve the Ministerial Working Group's commitments.

In question five we examine the most extreme data that shows inequalities faced by GRT communities.

In question seven we examine how effective the mechanisms mentioned in question four are.

In question eight we examine the areas of public life inequalities against GRT communities are evident.

In question nine we examine particular challenges faced by groups within GRT communities, specifically women and LGB&T individuals.

About René Cassin

René Cassin is a human rights organisation that promotes and protects universal human rights drawing upon Jewish experience and values. We campaign and educate on issues such as discrimination, asylum, modern day slavery and human trafficking and general human rights protections.

The organisation is named in honour of Monsieur René Cassin, a French Jew and Nobel Laureate who was one of the principal co-drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Within René Cassin's discrimination work, we aim to counter the racism and discrimination faced by the UK's GRT community for almost 17 years. As a result, we were awarded the Together in Service spotlight award in 2015, which was supported by the then Prime Minister, David Cameron. As a Jewish

organisation distinctly aware of the discrimination that the Jewish community has experienced, it is important to speak out on behalf of discrimination against all minorities.

1. What progress has been made in achieving the commitments of the Ministerial Working Group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers?

Education

- a. **Educational attainment** has improved in GRT children since the commitments of the Ministerial Working Group were made in 2012, however the attainment gap between GRT pupils and white pupils has either widened or is unchanged. Thus commitments one, two and three have not fully been achieved¹.
- b. No progress has been made on commitment four, **attempting to reduce exclusion rates**. GRT children are four to five times more likely to be excluded than other white children².
- c. Although a survey³ on **prejudiced-based bullying**, laid out in commitment five, was published, GRT pupils were not mentioned in it, and bullying of minority groups was only mentioned a handful of times⁴.
- d. We were unable to find any **case studies** on the success of high performing GRT pupils, relating to commitment six.

Health

- e. Commitments 7-11 were to do with improving the **health** of the GRT community, and enabling them to have better access to GPs, however no progress has been made on this. The Equality and

¹ Information displayed in a-h: The Equality and Human Rights Commission, March 2016 'England's most disadvantaged groups: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma' accessed 10/01/2017

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/ief_gypsies_travellers_and_roma.pdf

² Ibid

³ Ofsted, June 2012 'No Place for Bullying'

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413234/No_place_for_bullying.pdf accessed 16/01/2017

⁴ The Equality and Human Rights Commission, n 1

Human Rights Commission highlights concern regarding the extent of data the NHS services collect on GRT patients⁵.

- f. Government funding has been provided to comply with commitment 12 and 13, encouraging healthy **living conditions** and improving GRT sites⁶.

Hate crimes

- g. Commitments 14-18 describe improvements that will be made to tackle hate crimes towards the GRT community. However, according to Traveller Movement research, 98% of the GRT community have experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity and 81% had experienced hate crime or hate speech, but only 29% sought legal advice or advocacy. Reports of hate crime in Britain soared by 41% in July 2016, after the referendum on the European Union. However, despite rises in hate crime targeting the GRT community, this went under reported due to a lack of trust between the GRT community and police forces, as well as a lack of knowledge within the GRT community as to what constitutes a hate crime and how to report it⁷.

Prisons

- h. GRT individuals in prisons were more likely to report feeling unsafe in prison, more likely to say they had been victimised by other prisoners and staff and more likely to have been physically restrained. Therefore, the commitments to **improve interaction with the National Offender Management Service** (commitments 19-22) still improvement⁸.

Work

- i. Progress has been made with the GRT community in terms of employment, laid out in commitments 23-27, as over half of those who are economically active were employed or self-employed,

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ The Traveller Movement, 'Discrimination experienced by Gypsies, Travellers and Roma: results from 2016 survey' <http://travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Discrimination-survey-report.pdf> accessed 12/01/2017

⁸ The Equality and Human Rights Commission, n 1

and high proportions were looking for work. However, Gypsy and Irish Travellers have the lowest recorded economic activity in England and Wales, 47% compared to a 63% average for England and Wales, and many of those who are working earn below the living wage⁹.

- j. Although the **Gypsy and Traveller Knowledge Network**, described in commitment 28, was created in 2012, there are only around 200 members, and very little activity, with the last post being almost one year ago¹⁰.

2. Have these commitments delivered a tangible improvement in the position of Gypsy and Traveller communities?

The commitments have delivered a very limited tangible improvement; this can be seen in the statistics below.

- a. 13.8% of Gypsy and Roma children, and 17.5% of Traveller children achieved the GCSE threshold in 2012/13, compared with 60.3% of other white children. This has increased since 2009, from 9.1% of Gypsy and Roma children, and 9.2% of Traveller children¹¹.
- b. In 2011, 14.1% of GRT rated their health as bad or very bad, compared with 5.9% of White British people. This is likely to do with their living environment, low community participation and discrimination. Infrequent contact with health providers also causes Roma patients to have similar health inequalities¹².
- c. The number of GRT individuals in prisons has increased considerably over the last few years – in 2011 it was at 0.1%, but by 2013-14 it had increased to 4%¹³.

⁹ Office for National Statistics, 2014 'What does the 2011 Census tell us about the Characteristics of Gypsy or Irish Travellers in England and Wales?' http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_349352.pdf accessed 11/01/2017

¹⁰ Gypsy and Traveller Knowledge Network <https://khub.net/web/gypsyandtravellerknowledgegenetwork> accessed 12/01/2017

¹¹ Department for Education, June 2015 'Ethnicity, deprivation and educational achievement at age 16 in England: trends over time' https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439867/RR439B-Ethnic_minorities_and_attainment_the_effects_of_poverty_annex.pdf.pdf accessed 16/01/2017

¹² The Equality and Human Rights Commission, n 1

¹³ Ibid

- d. 77% of GRT hide their ethnicity in order to protect themselves against discrimination and hate¹⁴.

GRT communities are worse off than any ethnic minority in this country in nearly all important scales, such as health, education and housing. Despite some improvements detailed in questions one and two, there is still plenty more to do so as to reduce the inequalities the GRT community face.

~~3. How well has this work been led, managed and monitored across Government? Has sufficient funding been provided, and has adequate funding been identified for the future?~~

N/A

4. What mechanisms have been put in place to achieve the Ministerial Working Group's commitments and other policy aims for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities?

The Government provided funding from 2011-15 for new and refurbished Traveller sites, and gave incentives to local authorities through the New Homes Bonus Scheme to provide new housing, however some local authorities have not assisted with this.¹⁵ We were unable to find any other mechanisms that have been put in place to achieve the Ministerial Working Group's commitments.

5. Is adequate data available to underpin policy-making? Where are the most significant gaps in the evidence base, and what are the reasons for those gaps?

One of the most significant gaps in the evidence base is that GRT is not included as an ethnic category on all official forms. Despite GRT ethnicity being added to the Prison National Offender Management Information System monitoring system for the first time in 2011¹⁶, the youth criminal justice system still does not record Gypsies and Travellers. As a result, official data from the youth justice service on GRT young offenders is

¹⁴ The Traveller Movement, n 7

¹⁵ Equality and Human Rights Commission, n 1

¹⁶ Ibid

unable to be obtained¹⁷. This creates barriers to tackling inequalities faced by GRT individuals in the criminal justice system.

It is difficult to find recent data available to underpin policy-making, with many of the statistics dated from 2011, or earlier. This shows that little research and analysis has been conducted over the past five years on the discrimination of the GRT community.

~~6. How effectively has policy taken into account the diverse needs of different Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and a developing context including greater use of social media?~~

N/A

7. How effective are mechanisms for engagement and dialogue between national and local policy-makers and members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities?

Despite government funding for new and refurbished Traveller sites, some local authorities have not granted planning permission and have been found to act unlawfully and in breach of the Equality Act 2010¹⁸. As mentioned above, we were unable to find any other mechanisms that had been put in place, therefore work must be done on translating central Government funding and will into local authority action.

In July 2016, 12 areas of Brighton and Hove were granted special protection from Travellers after a vote by Councillors. The sites are now subject to a 'public spaces protection order' (PSPO), which prohibits, and fines, unauthorised encampments. Local policy-makers have been criticised for not engaging with members of GRT communities, and the PSPO, which the Equality and Human Rights Commission argues that the PSPO orders are contrary to Article Eight of the European Convention on Human Rights.

8. In what areas of public life are inequalities against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities evident? How do these affect access to services, outcomes and life chances for people in those communities? How well are these reflected in policy priorities?

¹⁷ The Traveller Movement 'Ethnicity monitoring in the youth justice system'
<http://travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Ethnicity-monitoring-briefing-Policing-and-Crime-Bill-amendment.pdf> accessed 16/01/2017

¹⁸ *Moore & Coates v SSCLG* [2015] EWHC 44

Education, employment, health care, and living environments are all areas where the GRT community faces inequalities¹⁹. Despite commitments being made by the Ministerial Working Group in all of these areas, little progress has occurred over the last few years. The British Crime Survey visits households living in brick and mortar but not those living on caravan sites, which results in the GRT communities experience of crime going unrecorded, despite such a high percentage of them experiencing hate crime²⁰.

9. Are there particular challenges faced by groups within GRT communities, for example women and LGBT people?

- a. The GRT community face a higher incidence of disability than in other communities and have difficulty in accessing facilities to meet their needs²¹. This includes both physical and mental disabilities, with women twice as likely as men to experience mental health problems within the GRT community²².
- b. There are several personal testimonies of LGBT people within the GRT community, however many choose to remain anonymous, as they may face threats of violence and could be disowned by their family. This can be seen in the book called 'Gypsy Boy' by Mikey Walsh, detailing a true story, but written under a fake name. The Equality and Human Rights Commission²³ reported that issues often arise in this area because of the issue of sexuality and culturally expected behaviours, with many young people missing out on sex education at school thus having limited opportunities to discuss sexual orientation.

¹⁹ The Traveller Movement, n 7

²⁰ The Traveller Movement 'Written evidence by the Traveller Movement to the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into hate crime and its violence Consequences' <http://travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/160831-Inquiry-for-website.pdf> accessed 11/01/2017

²¹ Disability Equality, 'Experience of disability among Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Black and Minority Ethnic communities' <http://www.disability-equality.org.uk/uploads/files/cfa5ecd2a7e54517ab0e32233559eca5.pdf> accessed 12/01/2017

²² Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review' https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research_report_12inequalities_experienced_by_gypsy_and_traveller_communities_a_review.pdf accessed 11/01/2017

²³ Ibid

- c. A high percentage of women do not work outside the home, or will only work until married and are caring for children. Low levels of qualifications do not help with this, and can act as a barrier for women trying to gain jobs or become self-employed²⁴.
- d. There are high numbers of GRT women who are victims of domestic violence, however it is difficult to find reliable statistics for this. The most recent study detailing domestic violence of GRT women was from a 2007 presentation that reported 61% of married English Gypsy women and 81% of married Irish Traveller women had experienced direct domestic abuse. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has found that, despite the high number of GRT women thought to be victims of domestic violence, many are reluctant to leave a marriage or seek help, for fear of being ostracised²⁵.

²⁴ The Traveller Movement, n 20

²⁵ The Equality and Human Rights Commission, n 22