

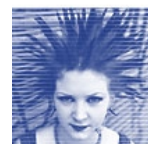


Czech Republic 2005

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**Field social work  
programmes in  
neighbourhoods  
threatened by  
social exclusion**

Comment Paper,  
United Kingdom



on behalf of

 European Commission  
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities





## **Part 1:**

### **Assessment of the possible relevance of the policy/measure to UK (what social inclusion problems in the peer country it could potentially solve, whether it fits with UK policy and legislative system etc.)**

#### *Gypsy and Traveller communities in Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)*

Irish Travellers are the only substantial Traveller population in Northern Ireland, the most recent figure used for numbers of Irish Travellers in Northern Ireland is 1,710 (Census 2001). The Census in NI was fairly comprehensive and sensitive to nomadic practices and Traveller site locations – nevertheless it seems likely to be an underestimate.

Estimates of Gypsy and Traveller numbers in the rest of the UK are many and varied. Census 2001 information does not account for Gypsy and Traveller populations. Reliable NGO based figures appear to range between 150,000 and 300,000 whilst government figures, such as those collected by the Office for the Deputy Minister, are much lower. This is largely because the government does not count those Gypsies and Travellers who live in houses, only those in caravans.

#### *Equality provisions*

In contrast to most other Member States, it could be argued that UK national mechanisms to promote race equality are stronger and have much more effective enforcement mechanisms than the European Race Equality Directive 2000/43/EC. Indeed, race equality strategies and legislation have been key to policy making in Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland (NI) for some time. This continues to be the case despite the increasing devolution of powers to Scotland and Wales in areas such as education and health.

The Race Relations Act 1976, which covers GB makes it unlawful to treat someone less favourably on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) is a publicly funded, non-departmental public body set up by this Act. The CRE specifically tackles racial discrimination and promotes equal opportunities and good race relations in GB, its purpose is to:



*'... promote good relations between and within all communities and prevent racial discrimination in all its forms, using the power of persuasion where possible and the power of the law where necessary... work in partnership with other public agencies as well as the private and voluntary sector, and focus [our] resources to achieve maximum impact.'*

The Race Relations act 1976 also introduced a statutory duty for public authorities to promote race equality by: eliminating unlawful racial discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity between persons of different racial groups and promoting good relations between persons of different racial groups. The Race Relations Act 1976 became the Race Relations (Amendment) Act in 2000. Under this legislation Gypsy and Traveller communities are protected against racial discrimination and efforts to monitor discrimination in service provision have been increased.

The CRE Equivalent in Northern Ireland is the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI). ECNI is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In contrast to the CRE the ECNI also works on other equality grounds relating to gender, disability and religion. There are further differences between Northern Ireland (NI) and Great Britain (GB) in terms of traditional legislation and monitoring practices for race equality measures which affect Gypsy and Traveller communities. These differences largely stem from the workings of the Section 75 statutory equality duty of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This Act obliges public bodies to proactively 'equality proof' all of their policies in relation to Travellers and has generated a longer track record of research and monitoring on the situation of Travellers alongside other ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland.

GB experience of protecting Gypsy and Traveller communities from discrimination is less extensive than NI. Anti-racism measures have mainly focussed on larger and more visible ethnic minorities, particularly on behalf of those groups representing countries with which the UK had colonial and Commonwealth ties. However, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 has helped increase the focus on monitoring discrimination in service provision with respect to Gypsy and Traveller communities across Great Britain.

Notably, in October 2004, the CRE launched a Gypsy and Traveller scrutiny project under which council officers, police officers, education and health providers, Gypsies and Irish Travellers and local support bodies will submit responses outlining their experiences of local authority race equality practices. As part of



this research scrutiny project officers interviewed a number of Traveller education services and visited Gypsy and Traveller sites around the country. In addition 9 particularly relevant local authorities were selected for detailed on-site-analysis and interviews were conducted with health and education workers and the local police force. Interviews are also taking place with local support groups, Gypsies and Travellers and local residents. This evidence from key stakeholders will focus on the provision of adequate sites and accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers.

Despite the work of national equality bodies, government departments and an established body of race equality legislation, the results for Gypsies and Travellers have so far been largely disappointing; they continue to experience disadvantage in employment, education and access to public services across the UK, as well as discriminatory coverage in the media.

*Gypsy and Traveller communities in Northern Ireland:  
Main Social inclusion Issues*

The establishment of the NI Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) Working Group on Travellers is probably considered to be a best practice model. The Task Force of the PSI Working Group was instrumental in developments to mainstream Traveller issues across Government departments. The final report of its Task Force recorded the exclusion and inequality experienced by Travellers in NI in some detail:

**Long-term unemployment:** Only 11% are in paid employment of one form or another

**Poor levels of educational attainment:** The vast majority of Travellers have no formal qualifications (92% have no high school diplomas or their equivalent or higher). There are high levels of non-attendance at secondary school, nonexistent attendance at university level and high levels of illiteracy;

**Poor living conditions:** Travellers are eight times more likely to live in overcrowded conditions in comparison with the general population in Northern Ireland. Many still have extremely limited access to basic amenities such as running water, electricity and sanitation.



**Poor health status:** The mortality rate for Traveller children up to the age of 10 has been found to be 10 times that for the population as a whole. The overall life expectancy of Travellers is around 20% lower than the general population. Only 10% of the Traveller population is over 40 years of age and only 1% is aged over 65.

**Identifying segregation in schools:** Further research needs to be done into whether schools which only have Gypsy and Traveller pupils are an example of de facto segregation or parental choice. Research has been conducted into 'the educational needs and experiences of Traveller parents and children' in NI, but the ECNI report an apparent reluctance to place any of this research and monitoring in the public domain.

*Gypsy and Traveller communities in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales): Social inclusion Issues*

Less research has been done relating to discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers in GB, but that which has been done has focussed on:

**Poor health:** for Gypsies and Travellers levels of parental mortality, still-births and infant mortality are significantly higher than the national average. It is estimated that on average, Gypsy and Traveller women live 12 years less than women in the general population and Gypsy and Traveller men ten years less than men in the general population.

**Poor achievement in school:** Gypsy and Traveller pupils in England are the group most at risk of failure in the education system. In 2003, 23% of Roma Gypsy pupils and 42% of Irish Traveller pupils in England obtained five or more A\*-C GCSEs, compared with an overall average of 51%. 22% of Roma Gypsy pupils and 17% of Irish Traveller pupils obtained no passes, compared with 6% on average. By Key Stage 3, it is estimated that only 15-20% of Traveller pupils are registered or regularly attend school. Gypsy and Traveller children, particularly those of secondary age, have much lower levels of school attendance than pupils from other groups.

**Poor site provision:** The 1968 Caravan Sites Act placed a statutory duty on all local authorities in England and Wales to provide sites and stopping places for Gypsies and Travellers, it did not apply in Scotland. In 1994 the introduction of Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJPOA) caused a major



shift in policy towards site provision for Gypsies and Travellers by introducing new powers to remove and criminalise unauthorised sites.<sup>1</sup> The duty previously placed on local authorities to provide sites was also removed. Consequently, planning requests for private sites were largely rejected and the maintenance of and provision of local authority sites withdrawn. An increase in unauthorised or roadside camps and negative newspaper articles around 'illegal' Gypsy sites in Britain followed. The subsequent suppression of 'illegal' camping has in turn had direct implications for the access of Gypsies and Travellers to education. Eviction and the constant 'moving on' undermine the potential for regular attendance at any one school. Whereas eviction forces movement, education requires a fixed abode.<sup>2</sup> The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) scrutiny project will focus on experiences of adequate site provision for Gypsies and Travellers.

The negative attitudes of the majority population towards Gypsies and Travellers and inflammatory press coverage also increase tensions between communities, a phenomenon which is a problem across the UK. The NI Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) working group found that the 'attitudes and behaviour of the settled community towards Travellers appears to compound' their social exclusion. A survey suggested that 40% of people in Northern Ireland do not actually believe that the nomadic way of life of Travellers is a valid one that should be supported by the Government. Moreover, over half of the population (57%) did not want Travellers as residents in their local area and two thirds of people would not willingly accept a Traveller as a work colleague. During campaigning for the May 2005 UK election, press coverage reporting on proposed centre right Conservative Party policies led to the Head of the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition, Andrew Ryder, to accuse the Conservatives of trying to "surf on the prejudice and hysteria stoked up" by the media and "score some cheap political points".

- 1 It is important to note that 'local authorities retain their discretionary powers to provide sites if they wish to do so.' This has resulted, however, in an inconsistent provision of sites across England and Wales. DETR, *Managing Unauthorised Camping – A Good Practice Guide*, London: DETR, 1998.
- 2 Katerina Tomasevski took note of the contradiction in policies in her report, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education in UK, Report of a field Mission to UK (1999)



## **Part 2: A brief assessment of the potential transferability of the policy/measure**

Several aspects of the Czech project could be considered transferable to the UK in terms of tackling social exclusion among Gypsy and Traveller communities. This can be seen in that several aspects have already been applied in GB and NI, by government, NGOs and authorities; for example:

### *'Field workers' work with Gypsy and Traveller communities on sites*

The Travellers' School Charity, a voluntary organisation which works mainly with New Travellers has taken this approach. It has developed culture-friendly educational resources for those families who wish to teach their children at home and runs the 'Skool Bus Project' which, using a mobile classroom, provides education on-site and at festivals. At one point this did involve an actual bus but TSC now use a large mobile 'dome' for classes. The aim is to leave parents with materials, and children with the enthusiasm to continue their progress after the TSC teachers have moved on to another part of the country.<sup>3</sup>

The National Playbus Association is an organisation which uses similar methods to support mobile projects in improving the quality of life for children and families who have poor access to community facilities and resources. They have worked with Gypsies and Travellers, mainly in England, in educational and recreational work. For example the Playbus has been an advice and information point, a youth centre, an after school club, an adult education centre, an arts centre and a Traveller museum.<sup>4</sup>

### *'Employing' people from the Gypsy and Traveller community and promoting an inclusive approach:*

Employing' people from the Gypsy and Traveller community has also been used as a supportive strategy to improve school attendance. For example, some Traveller Education Services have set up 'buddying' / 'my new school' projects in secondary schools. These involve the pairing up a younger Gypsy/Traveller

3 Festival Eye, (1989) *Skool Bus*, Summer 1989.

4 The National Playbus Association, (undated), *Working with Travellers: A Practical Guide for Play, Youth and Community Groups*, p21.



with an older peer where, ideally the older buddy is a Gypsy/Traveller. Another example is where Gypsy/Travellers are recruited as 'escorts' to accompany younger Gypsy/Traveller children to school on specially provided transport. This has been developed in a number of areas across England, such as the West Midlands.

### *Responding to 'difference'*

The Scottish Department of Education in 1992 introduced the 'Green Card' scheme. It provides a parent held card to facilitate swift transfer of educational records between schools. A system known as the 'Blue Folder' is already in existence for Fairground Travellers and is one of a number of Parent Held Pupil Education Record Books in operation. Both are seen as being 'minimum aids' rather than something which replaces school entirely. Some authorities offer 'Education Otherwise' as an alternative if parents choose not to send their children to secondary school. Other authorities have used 'education otherwise' as a type of bridging option to keep lines of communication open until the children reach the age of 14 when they can opt for a college course.<sup>5</sup>

The principle here is that Education systems should be flexible enough to be able to respond to the different life conditions of children and the needs of different communities. Nomadism is often seen as an 'obstacle' to the education of Gypsy and Traveller children in Britain. The emphasis on providing Gypsy and Traveller children with access to a relevant education therefore must rest on an understanding of, and a respect for, nomadic culture in order to find ways of adapting to it. However, it should also be remembered that nomadism may not be the primary reason why a school education is being rejected by Gypsies and Travellers.

### *Employability*

As with all children, schools and the education system should offer Gypsy and Traveller pupils various opportunities to learn things that will help them develop and acquire relevant skills. There should be equal focus and attention given to academic and vocational skills and teachers should not assume 'low expectations' in order to meet this challenge of 'being relevant'.

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5 Wrexham Traveller Education Service (1998), *Gateway to Success; Secondary School Attendance by Traveller Children*, p. 21.



The issue of low attendance rates among Gypsy and Travellers beyond the age of 14 is a problem in Britain as it is in other EU Member States. Often, this can be partly attributed to the curriculum that is being followed. According to parents, the curriculum is generally not seen as appropriate for Gypsy and Traveller children in terms of developing relevant and necessary skills for being a 'good Traveller'.

However, some Traveller Education teams have been identified as responding well to a differentiated style of learning. For example Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) have carried out a 'Woodland Skills Training for Travellers' Project whereby Gypsies and Travellers are involved in forestry. This is seen as particularly beneficial in that it gives work to Gypsy and Traveller families, keeps woodland in economic production and improves relationships between settled people and Gypsies/Travellers.<sup>6</sup> The scheme was extremely successful:

- 94% completed training
- 34% went directly into employment by another or self-employment
- 10% went on to further training

These figures are particularly significant in the light of the fact that nearly a third of those that completed the questionnaires had no previous vocational qualifications.<sup>7</sup>

'Jobcentre Plus' on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, provides delivery of benefits and job broking services to customers of working age including those from Gypsy and Traveller communities. At present these communities attract no additional funding therefore do not have any specific programmes aimed at moving them closer to the labour market although they do have access to all mainstream programmes. However, Jobcentre Plus recognises that these communities are covered under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and has put in place a number of measures to improve services delivered to them, including:

**Liaising and sharing knowledge and expertise:** with other DWP agencies, ensuring continuity of delivery of services and development of policies

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6 Churches Commission for Racial Justice, (1998), *Gypsies, Travellers and the Church*, June 1998, p23.

7 Susan Alexander and Mike Gardner, (2000), *Woodland Skills Training Project for Travellers*, Final Report 1998-1999, Brighton: FFT, April 2000.



**Producing guidance and training for staff:** to highlight Gypsy and Traveller background, culture and issues enabling them to tailor services and increase customer service

**Encouraging and forging links:** with representative groups for these communities to address and overcome gaps in delivery of local services. Working directly with communities to establish links, deliver services out with Jobcentre Plus offices including joint services with other public authorities, i.e. Police, NHS, Local Authorities, etc

*Active local authorities- the case of Fenland District Council, Cambridgeshire*

As is noticeable in the example of the Czech project under discussion, the active involvement of local authorities in supporting charities and community groups who work directly with Gypsy and Traveller Communities is vital to effectively combating social exclusion faced by Gypsies and Traveller communities. For example, the 'Traveller and Diversity Manager' of Fenland District Council in Cambridgeshire oversees the Management of 5 local authority Traveller sites in Cambridgeshire and runs a liaison office with Travellers on most issues. Some of the schemes run by Fenland District,<sup>8</sup> with the support of Gypsy and Traveller communities and government authorities include:

**The Children Voices Project:** to empower children and young people aged 5 – 13 to speak about issues that effect them - in Partnership with Ormiston Children & Families Trust.

**Cultural Awareness Training:** Traveller led- training courses- in Partnership with the Gypsy Media Company. Traveller led cultural awareness training is also given to Members of the Local Strategic Partnership and Council Members.

**Celebrate Diversity Events:** for example, a Play in the local Fens theatre for imparting knowledge of the Gypsy Traveller community – in partnership with the Romany Theatre Company, attended by all communities.

8 [http://www.cambsmentalhealthinfo.nhs.uk/services/fens/ethnic\\_groups.html](http://www.cambsmentalhealthinfo.nhs.uk/services/fens/ethnic_groups.html)



**Mainstreaming access through the Supporting People Programme:** Every Traveller on a local authority sites has a needs assessment conducted and a programme of support to meet those needs. Facilitating access to mainstream services is part of enabling Gypsies and Travellers to live an independent life.

**Gypsy Site refurbishment:** all sites maintained to the highest standards, they are fully occupied and there is a long waiting list. Fenland District Council has also taken a proactive approach to training on unauthorised encampments through applying recommendations of Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) reports such as the Good Practice Guide to dealing with unauthorised encampments.<sup>9</sup> There were 229 unauthorised encampments in Fenland during 2004 and all issues were resolved without need for court action.

**Membership of the Cambridgeshire Traveller Initiative:** a capacity building programme for Travelling People enabling people to meet their potential, gain literacy and numeracy skills and mainstream employment.

**Proactive Policy of engaging with prospective land purchasers:** working with land purchasers who want to develop a private site; a government recommendation in the Diversity and Equality in Planning Report.<sup>10</sup>

**Making information on rights and services accessible and available to Gypsy and Traveller communities:** CD advice of for Travellers on reporting racist incidents was distributed, in partnership with Cambridgeshire Police and the Gypsy Media Company. It informed Travellers of how they can report 'hate crime' and encouraged their communities to report hate crime to the police. An information CD was also developed for all Travellers on unauthorised encampments, those seeking to buy land, people who want advice on planning issues, and residents on private and local authority sites. A Traveller Welcome Pack is also distributed, this is a graphic pictorial pack enabling people to understand the services available to them in the area. It's used by all but particularly helpful to those who cannot read.

9 [http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_housing/documents/page/odpm\\_house\\_603871.hcsp](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_603871.hcsp)

10 [http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_planning/documents/page/odpm\\_plan\\_035786.pdf](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_035786.pdf)



### **Part 3:**

#### **Important questions about the policy/measure that are being raised and debated in the peer country**

This section looks at important questions about policies relating to Gypsies and Travellers which are under debate in the UK. They are also areas which have been highlighted in the UK NAPS I 2003-5 and any experiences and good practice from other peer countries would be particularly welcome on these issues.

**Accommodation/ legal sites:** the CRE scrutiny project is continuing to seek responses from council officers, police officers, education and health providers, Gypsies and Irish Travellers and local support bodies to tell us about with their experiences of local authority race equality practices in relation to Gypsies and Irish Travellers. The research will focus on planning, site provision and eviction, and will lead to detailed practical guidance for local authorities. The UK NAPS I aims to tackle 'access to decent housing, and tackling poverty' (point 34, p38). Two pilot group housing schemes have been completed and a further two are due for completion in 2005.

**Closing the gap on educational achievement:** the UK NAPS I (point 48, p42) reports that 'the UK government is committed to closing the educational achievement gap that exists between some groups of ethnic minority pupils and their peers.' Part of taking this forward will include 'helping schools and Local Education authorities to manage the effects of unavoidable pupil mobility better' including for Gypsy and Traveller communities.

**Drug problems:** The UK NAPS I reports that drug problems disproportionately affect the most deprived communities and that the associated crime which underpins drug use adds to the decline of communities and social exclusion. Further research will be done on the needs of Travellers in this area.

**Other factors relating to social inclusion issues for Gypsies and Travellers:** improving the relationship of Gypsy and Traveller communities with the police and ensuring local authorities conform to the race relations and race equality legislation.