



BRITISH-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

**TIONÓL PARLAIMINTEACH NA BREATAINE-NA
hÉIREANN**

REPORT

from

Committee D (Environment and Social)

on

**Travellers, Gypsies and Roma: access to public services and
community relations**

October 2014

Background to the inquiry

1. In October 2013, we agreed that it would be valuable to consider the provision of public services to, and community relations with, Travellers, Gypsies and Roma across the jurisdictions represented on the Committee. Our aim was to identify common issues and to share good practice across the jurisdictions.
2. We took evidence in Dublin, Belfast, London and Edinburgh. We met with a wide range of stakeholders including civil society groups, Government representatives, service providers working specifically with these groups, residents associations, law enforcement personnel, and members of the Traveller, Gypsy and Roma communities. We felt that it was important to capture the view of the “man on the street” and so visited sites, of varying types, status and quality, in Dublin, Belfast and London, and met with Travellers from various sites in Edinburgh, to hear the stories and experiences of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. We are most grateful to all those who spoke to us and helped us to reach our conclusions. A list of meetings held and participants is enclosed as an Annex to this Report.

Structure

3. This Report is divided into five sections: access to health services, access to housing services, access to education services, community relations and employment. Many of these are interlinked; we consider each in turn.

Definitions and (mis)understandings

4. Definitions and understandings of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma as separate or overlapping ethnic groups vary across our jurisdictions – consequently, we have chosen to use all three terms throughout our Report. The use of these umbrella terms, and inclusion of Roma within the scope of this inquiry, is not to suggest that we consider these groups to be homogenous, rather it recognises that there is some overlap in the types of difficulties encountered in accessing public services.

5. There are estimated to be between 22, 000 – 36, 000 Travellers and Gypsies in Ireland, between 1, 700 – 4, 000 in Northern Ireland, over 15, 000 in Scotland, and 200, 000 – 300, 000 in England and Wales.¹

6. Travellers, Gypsies and Roma are recognised as ethnic groups in the United Kingdom under the Race Relations Act 1976² and Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. This legislation makes it unlawful for a person to discriminate on racial grounds against another person. In Irish law, Travellers are a “social group” which affords the group considerably less protections in terms of cultural rights. The recommendation of the 1995 Irish Task Force on the Traveller Community that “the distinct culture and identity of the Traveller community be recognised and taken into account” has not yet been fully implemented. The definition of Irish Travellers in the Irish Equal Status Acts 2000-2008 is:

“the community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.”

7. **A recent Report by the Houses of the Oireachtas’ Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality recommended the formal recognition of Traveller ethnicity. We share their view and recommend that the Irish Government take urgent steps to recognise the Traveller ethnicity to ensure the appropriate protection of those people who view themselves as Travellers and to protect their culture.**

8. There are approximately 10–12 million Roma people in Europe. Pavee Point (a voluntary organisation in Ireland seeking to improve the quality of life of Irish Travellers) estimate that around 3, 000 Roma live in the Republic of Ireland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) consider that there are just over 1, 000 in Northern Ireland. There are approximately 5, 000 Roma in Scotland. A 2012 study by the University of

¹ These figures rely on different interpretations of the ethnic groups, which is one reason for the variation, another being the lack of reliable data (for example, due to non-completion of census returns)

² Which was repealed by the Equality Act 2010

Salford estimated that there were approximately 200, 000 Roma migrants living in the UK.³ Many Roma migrants in the UK and Ireland speak Romani and are from Romania and Bulgaria, although some come from Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic as well. These groups of people have been the subject of considerable attention following the lifting of limitations on Romania and Bulgaria's membership of the European Union on 1 January 2014. Many Roma migrants are economically and socially disadvantaged, and are often not well integrated in European countries (including Romania and Bulgaria).

9. Many other Reports and campaigns have sought to dispel myths surrounding these groups but we were shocked at the extent to which negative stereotypes, prejudice and misunderstandings persist. For example, many assume that Travellers spend a large proportion of the year on the road. In reality, approximately 75-80% of those people who identify themselves as Travellers in Ireland either live in static caravans, social housing or private housing. In addition, we heard shocking stories of continued discrimination against Travellers and Gypsies who were actively seeking employment. It astounds us that in the 21st Century people can still encounter barriers to employment because of their accent, address and name, as confirmed vividly by one woman in Dublin and many young people living in East London.
10. Across all the jurisdictions, the nomadic lifestyle of some Travellers and Gypsies makes access to health and education services in particular more challenging. We met some Travellers and Gypsies who had chosen to settle in static housing or caravans, who perhaps chose to travel in the summer (although many did not), as well as those who still chose to travel through the year. We considered the question of how to ensure access to public services for all of these groups.
11. This Report summarises our key findings and makes recommendations to the Governments of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Republic of Ireland and Wales. The membership of the Committee is set out in Annex 2 to the Report.

³ P Brown, L Scullion, P Martin: *Migrant Roma in the United Kingdom*, 2012

Access to health services

12. The 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health study showed that health outcomes among Travellers and Gypsies were worse than for the rest of the population, and that this situation was deteriorating. Rates of suicide were found to be up to seven times higher among Traveller men than the national average, and life expectancy was shorter by around 15 years for men and 12 years for women. Infant mortality was estimated to be three to six times higher among Traveller and Gypsy children. On the other hand, we were pleased to note that concerted efforts in Ireland mean that over 94% of Travellers there have a Medical Card with this figure rising to 99% in the older age group and nearly 97% of Travellers in Ireland are registered with a GP.

13. We were disappointed to find that Traveller, Gypsy and Roma health data is not routinely systematically collected in the jurisdictions, making assessment of their health needs particularly difficult. It was suggested that in many cases work to improve health services for Traveller in England was using evidence that was 10-14 years out of date. There have been a variety of taskforces, strategies and forums on access to healthcare for these groups of people. These must lead to action and outcomes need to be measured so that their effect can be evaluated.

14. **We recommend that the ethnic groups Travellers and Gypsies become part of the “data dictionary” and that statistics are regularly gathered about their accessing health services and health outcomes in Ireland and the UK jurisdictions. Targets should be set centrally by Governments and administrations, in consultation with the relevant communities, about use of those services and goals set for improving health outcomes with robust timescales and monitoring programmes. Although action should be taken at local level, clear leadership needs to be shown nationally.**

15. We heard evidence of isolated good practice but got the overall impression that health provision for these groups was patchy at best across the UK. On our site visits in Ireland we heard that it was much easier for settled Travellers to access health and education

provision than it was for those who were transient. We were shocked to hear repeated stories, across the jurisdictions, of expectant mothers being unable to access maternity services in emergencies. One father in Dublin told us how he had had to drive his daughter to the side of a road to get an ambulance to pick her up in an emergency because the ambulance service wouldn't come onto the same site that we were visiting. It was disappointing to hear that GPs in Scotland and Ireland have still been known to close their books to Travellers and Gypsies, although we were pleased to hear that health authorities had been compelled to step in in many cases. **This seeming inequality of access and patchy provision is unacceptable.**

16. There were some examples of exciting initiatives in this area. We heard about “safety net” projects in Ireland that were specifically designed to capture and meet the needs of socially excluded peoples. Similarly, we were impressed by mobile GP services, health visitors and health clinics in the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland to meet the needs of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma. In Scotland, there were commendable efforts to ensure Traveller, Gypsy and Roma women had access to midwifery and maternity services, as these had been identified as a priority need for those communities. In Belfast, efforts were made to explain rights and responsibilities to Roma people, for example explaining how to make an appointment, what services could be accessed and by whom. There was confusion among Roma people and Gypsies and Travellers about what services they could access and doubt about whether healthcare professionals could be trusted. The overarching message we heard was that **more needs to be done to increase understanding of services, particularly among Roma, to offer translation services where necessary, and for greater trust to be built between healthcare professionals and Travellers, Gypsies and Roma.**
17. Belfast Health Trust had dedicated Traveller Liaison Officers who built relationships with Travellers and helped them access health services. Belfast Health Trust also encouraged discussion of mental health issues among Travellers and Gypsies using a DVD resource. This was one example of an innovative approach to engaging with health needs of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma that we commend. Likewise, using community choirs and other creative arts to build confidence tackle stigma and address mental health issues among Travellers and Gypsies were great examples of innovation. We were particularly

impressed to hear of a bus being placed on a Traveller site in Craigmillar with a children's care facility downstairs with the upstairs being used for health sessions based on needs identified by the local Travellers. **We recommend that Governments and administrations share best practice and lessons-learnt from initiatives to reach Travellers, Gypsies and Roma to ensure those people can and do access health services.**

18. The work of some projects to increase the "cultural competence" of health professionals through training, such as courses delivered by Travellers and Gypsies to doctors and nurses through the Belfast Health Trust and MECOPP (a charity supporting minority ethnic carers), is highly commendable. The range of health awareness materials produced by Pavee Point, for example, were also very useful tools. Although diversity training is part of most professional training in this field, the specific needs and prejudice faced by these particular groups must be explicitly addressed in core training. **We recommend that the English, Northern Irish, Scottish, Irish and Welsh Governments and administrations discuss how to improve understanding and awareness of the needs and challenges faced by Travellers and Gypsies with the authorities responsible for medical, dental, social care and nursing training.**

19. Undoubtedly, many health issues faced by these groups are linked to problems with accommodation. For example, inhabitants of an unauthorised site in Greenwich beside a quarry and cement factory had regular eye and throat infections from dust, and many had lung problems as well. They felt that they had nowhere else to go as they had built local community connections, such as attending nearby schools and getting to know neighbouring people. This leads us to consider accommodation for Travellers, Gypsies and Roma in greater detail.

Access to housing services

20. The many and varied needs of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma mean that they seek to access many types of housing. Some seek static sites, others temporary halts (authorised sites provided by local authorities as temporary accommodation), some social, group or private housing, or a mix of all of the above. There seems to be a shortage of Traveller

accommodation in England and Scotland. For example, it was estimated that a further 3, 000 – 5, 000 pitches were required in England alone. In Wales and Ireland local authorities have a statutory obligation to provide sites for Travellers and Gypsies. There is no longer such a statutory obligation in England or Scotland, which may have contributed to the increasing need for further pitches. **Unspent funding for new sites, closure and non-replacement of sites in England, and a lack of confidence in processes for engaging Travellers lead us to conclude that the UK Governments and administrations should consider whether to reinstate a statutory obligation on local authorities to provide sites in order to set a clear national direction.**

21. **We further recommend that a statutory obligation for local authorities to coordinate traveller site provision be explored in all the jurisdictions. This would go some way to addressing the, perhaps unfounded, fear that areas which build sites first will be overwhelmed by Travellers coming to that region. Travellers have as much right to appropriate accommodation that is both fit-for-purpose and honours their cultural traditions, as any other group in society.**

22. Traveller accommodation needs assessments were carried out periodically in each of the jurisdictions; however, there was very limited confidence in their accuracy. One witness suggested that such surveys in England could even miss a preference for living in a caravan. Furthermore, many such surveys were quite outdated. For example, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray councils rely on information from 2009 when considering accommodation provision in the Grampian area of Scotland. The most frequent complaint we heard from Travellers and Gypsies was about lack of consultation about their needs and preferences. This lack of confidence in the system, which the Scottish Government itself has recognised as a problem, leads us to conclude that more **work needs to be done to ensure that local authorities assess Traveller and Gypsy accommodation needs effectively. The Scottish Government has committed to being more transparent in needs assessments, to consult clearly and to set out evidence gathering in such needs assessments. We encourage the other Governments in our jurisdictions to follow this good**

example and to share good practice when it comes to engaging those communities.

- 23. Although a culture of consultation with Travellers and Gypsies has begun to develop this requires further embedding. Channels must be built to ensure Travellers and Gypsies can and do engage with local decision making. This does not mean that all requests will be met, particularly in the current economic climate where difficult decisions about priorities must be made, but will ensure that these groups are fairly represented and included in those discussions.**
24. We were concerned to hear that even when need had been assessed this did not necessarily lead to action. Although we heard some examples of good practice and excellent provision, these seemed to be exceptions rather than typical. We heard overwhelming agreement that there was insufficient Traveller accommodation across the jurisdictions.
25. Some authorities have taken the responsibilities that come with not providing sufficient accommodation seriously. For example, Edinburgh City Council does not prosecute or move on unauthorised encampments (unless they pose a hazard) but instead provides signposts to local amenities including health and education services, puts in place bins and in the future hope to provide sanitation facilities, because they recognise that they do not provide sufficient authorised facilities. The NI Housing Executive and local councils offer similar facilities when unauthorised sites are built on public land. **This practice seems necessary to us until adequate accommodation provision has been made. We recommend that all the jurisdictions learn from this good practice of engaging with Travellers and Gypsies, providing necessary amenities and signposting them to local services when new (sometimes unauthorised) sites are set-up, where this is appropriate.**
26. We were disappointed to hear about the levels of under occupancy and impacts of feuds upon existing accommodation. It was suggested that up to one third of Traveller sites in the Republic of Ireland were under-occupied because of families falling out and refusing

to live side-by-side. We heard that some site occupants sought to exclude those who were not in their family circle from living on the same site. We visited one site in Belfast that had been destroyed by its previous occupants when they left to ensure that others could not move on. We heard of other sites where one individual held the power to decide who was welcome on those pitches. **Access to publicly-funded accommodation should be needs-based. On the one hand, it is clearly unacceptable to have widespread under occupancy, individuals controlling who lives where and publicly-funded accommodation damaged by feuding. On the other hand, these are not problems that have easy solutions. We recognise the many difficulties and how to handle this requires further careful consideration.**

27. We were also concerned to hear some evidence of extortion rackets where a few Travellers or Gypsies occupied private land for the purpose of extorting money to be moved on from the owners. We heard of this happening on building sites, factories and warehouses, particularly in Northern Ireland. **We do not condone such criminal activity and urge the various police services to investigate and prevent such extortion rackets, and to ensure that culprits are prosecuted.**

28. All forms of anti-social behaviour such as poor standards of hygiene, failing to clean up sites and fighting publicly (both armed and unarmed) was roundly condemned by the Travellers and Gypsies that we met. **We support the work of police services to engage the communities, seeking to prevent crime and dealing with it. This approach of enforcement and engagement has been also been adopted by some local authorities who explain rights and responsibilities to Travellers, Gypsies and Roma, for example when it comes to sanitation. We view this as the most effective way of interacting: ensuring both that expectations are clear and need is met.**

29. We were sorry to hear of the distress that younger Travellers faced, particularly in Dublin, because they could not get accommodation near to their families. We visited one community where the younger generation was frequently living in caravans at the back of their parents' houses because they did not wish to leave the local area. We met

one woman in Dublin who had accepted local authority housing in an area away from her family and had been so distressed by the isolation that she came back to live with her parents again. We recognise that this is a problem in much social housing. Although it is good for local authorities to take such considerations seriously, there is a practical and financial limit to how much housing can be provided in one area. Likewise, there is bound to be a limit on how many temporary caravans can be placed adjacent to houses.

30. Specially-adapted social housing for Travellers, for example with equine facilities and space for caravans, comes at great price. For example, to build more units like the model social housing for Travellers at Monagh Road in Belfast would cost approximately £285, 000 per unit. **We recognise that Travellers have specific needs and that accommodation-providers should seek to meet reasonable requests. In building stronger consultations between such groups a mature dialogue must develop where Gypsies and Traveller needs are listened to carefully and taken seriously, and Travellers and Gypsies engage with the realities of limited resources and seek to compromise with accommodation-providers. Similarly, there must be dialogue between accommodation-providers and Travellers and Gypsies on the location of sites so that both understand need, preferences and limitations.**

31. We recognise that it is difficult for many local authorities to get planning permission for new Traveller sites. We heard of one recent social attitudes survey in which 90% of participants said that they would not wish to live next door to a Traveller. In many ways this is symptomatic of poor community relations, if not prejudice, in the UK and Ireland, which is fuelled at least in part by negative portrayal of Travellers and Gypsies in the media. We heard many witnesses argue that the media focussed on criminal elements and failed to accurately portray the life and culture of Travellers. There are examples of successfully building good relations, for example in Ballymun and Finglas, where the local authority has worked hard to foster good relations between Travellers and Gypsies and others in that area. There is a clear need for more efforts to build community relations between Gypsies, Travellers and others.

32. A University of Sheffield study suggests that there is a very strong link between lack of secure accommodation and lower health outcomes. **We view provision of suitable and sufficient accommodation for Travellers as an urgent priority.**

Access to education services

33. In 2011 just 12% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils achieved five or more GCSEs grade A-C, compared with 58.2% of all pupils in the England. In Ireland, only 31 (self-identifying) travellers progressed to third-level education last year, a modest increase from 24 the previous year. In 2006, it was estimated that 2.1% of Travellers had third level qualifications compared with 26% of the Irish population as a whole. In Northern Ireland, an estimated 92% of Travellers have no GCSEs, compared with 4% of all NI school leavers; in 2006, the NI Audit Office reported that 9 out of 10 Traveller children were not achieving the required literacy levels; and average attendance of Traveller children in 2007-08 was 72% at primary school and 51.8% at secondary-level education. The data about Gypsy, Traveller and Roma attendance, attainment and progression in education suggest that they do not receive the full benefits of the education service.
34. We were particularly impressed by efforts to engage Travellers with education by Pembrokeshire County Council's Gypsy Traveller Education Service. It has developed a "one-stop-shop" model whereby infant education, childcare, healthcare advice and other forms of advice can all be found at the local school hub, which invests significantly in building trusting relationships with the Traveller and Gypsy communities. This model also highlighted the importance of parental learning, as literacy rates among Travellers and Gypsies are thought to be lower than national averages, and learning circles with adults there had had a major impact. Without support to complete homework, completing education can be significantly more challenging for Gypsy Traveller children. 65 of that school's cohort were progressing to college and attainment was rising, suggesting that these interventions were effective. In Northern Ireland, we heard that afterschools projects were also helping improve education for Travellers and Gypsies, as they were receiving necessary support to complete homework. **We recognise the value of "one-stop-shop" models where schools also serve as community hubs for, potentially among other aims, building good relationships with Travellers and Gypsies. We recommend that model to areas with high**

concentrations of Travellers and Gypsies although we realise that current financial restraints are likely to delay implementation

35. **Widening support for adult Travellers and Gypsies to help them develop literacy and numeracy skills so that they can support their children through school ought to be provided through lifelong learning projects.**
36. Historically, Traveller and Gypsy childrens' attendance at school has been significantly lower than the national average in the UK. The Western Education and Library Board in Northern Ireland had increased Traveller school attendance to 92–93% by engaging early and taking a consistent approach to challenging non-attendance, suggesting that it is possible to tackle the problem of non-attendance. Challenging non-attendance is one step to improving Traveller and Gypsy educational outcomes, and so enhancing employment opportunities and life chances.
37. We were concerned by the lack of appropriate systems to support Travellers moving schools, a system which would surely be of benefit to other children moving, for example for economic reasons, as well. Transferring a school record and teacher observations seems vital to us in educating any child, and given the culture of travelling (albeit diminishing in some countries) among Travellers and Gypsies this need should be met. **The Irish and UK Governments should invest in building and maintaining appropriate mechanisms for transferring schools records, particularly to support Traveller and Gypsy children.**
38. Bullying was a major challenge for Travellers and Gypsies across the Republic of Ireland and UK. We heard heartbreaking stories of children facing daily bullying and the psychological impact that had had. A 2005 Save the Children Scotland study found that 92% of young Travellers and Gypsies had been bullied because of their ethnic identity. We believe that more education about difference and equality in classrooms would help address to this problem. Tackling all bullying and prejudice in our schools must be a priority.

39. College and university taster courses also seemed to be making a difference, as they helped raised aspirations and incentivised attendance and completion of secondary-level education. Allowing 14 year olds to experience what college or vocational training might be like was viewed as a real motivator to complete education up to 16, and to consider progressing beyond that.
40. Equality Commission research suggests that there are a greater percentage of children with Special Education Needs among Travellers and Gypsies. Although some additional funding is available for schools in NI and Wales to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller education, for example to provide additional learning support assistant, we were concerned to hear that much of that funding had been significantly cut in the jurisdictions. **Ensuring that Traveller and Gypsy children can access education services with the support that they require to fulfil their potential is a basic human right. Governments should make funding available to adequately support these children.**
41. We are pleased that STEP (the Scottish Traveller Education Programme) is doing ground-breaking research and providing resources to support teachers of Travellers and Gypsies, and we recognise the work of organisations such as the National Association of Teachers of Travellers and other professionals to provide resources to support those teachers. However, we were concerned to hear that resources were very limited in number and guidance was often quite dated. **We recommend that the other Governments in our jurisdictions seek or provide funding for research and development of support resources for teachers.**
42. We heard that there was a need for greater language support for Roma in schools. Working well with these pupils when they move to our countries is important and they deserve to receive the support that they require to engage with the education service. **Adequate language support in schools is vital if Roma children are to be able to access education services in the UK and Ireland. We recommend that the Governments and administrations assess the adequacy of current provisions and keep a watching brief on it.**

43. Finally, we heard that mentoring and community role models would help improve education outcomes amongst these groups. Highlighting the achievements of Travellers who have completed third-level education would help raise aspirations among Traveller children and perhaps help motivate completion of studies. For example, more stories like the press coverage of Zoah Hedges-Stocks attending Cambridge University and achieving a first in history, would help persuade others that this can be achieved. **It would be most desirable to see greater media coverage of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma who do well in education so that they can be role models and inspire the next generation.**
44. The lack of comprehensive, routine collection of data on achievement, retention and progression of Traveller and Gypsy children in education is a significant barrier to measuring the impact of various programmes and projects to support them better. **We recommend that the English, Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh Governments and administrations explore better data-collection mechanisms covering achievement, retention and progression of Traveller, Gypsy and Roma children. Without comprehensive data it is difficult to measure the impact of any interventions.**

Community relations

45. Law enforcement agencies, third sector groups, and Travellers and Gypsies all argued that the media was, in part, responsible for portraying Travellers as criminals and focussing on criminality in their reporting of those communities. They reported no statistical evidence of crime rates increasing when Travellers and Gypsies moved into particular areas. We heard strong condemnation of criminal activity from within the Traveller and Gypsy communities. Furthermore, Father Micheál MacGréil SJ, an Irish Jesuit priest, Sociologist, writer and activist, argued that trust between the various communities must be increased, as if it was not Travellers and Gypsies would not be able to find employment and some might turn to criminal activities. The Scottish social attitudes survey led to the Scottish Government identifying a need for a specific equality outcome referencing Travellers and Gypsies directly. It is: “that Gypsies/Travellers experience less discrimination and more positive attitudes towards their culture and way of life by 2017”. **We commend this national leadership and urge other**

Governments to set similar targets for tackling discrimination and improving community relations.

46. Many Roma are the victims of negative stereotypes caused by gang activity. Organised begging, trade of fake merchandise and shoplifting are all unacceptable. We agree with the Ambassador of Romania to the UK that the police must intervene to tackle these criminal elements. We recognise that there is criminal behaviour in the Traveller, Gypsy and Roma communities. We in no way support this. We appreciate that the minority who engage in criminal activity feed the stereotype that Travellers, Gypsies and Roma are criminals. Co-operation with the police, celebration of the culture of these groups and improving community relations will all be vital to improving this situation.

47. We commend the efforts of the various police forces to build good relations with Travellers, Gypsies and Roma, for example by organising sporting activities, employing Roma police officers, and having dedicated Traveller and Roma liaison officers. Building such relations has enabled police services to work well with these communities, and to tackle anti-social and criminal behaviour. For example, the PSNI now often know when organised fights will take place between Travellers, talk to those concerned, call the fights off and if necessary use police to prevent the fights from taking place. Continued efforts to build effective relationships between police services and these communities will be key to good relations.

Employment

48. Employment opportunities was one of the final issues we considered during our inquiry. We heard considerable concern that new licensing laws in England were severely restricting scrap metal businesses, as each Council required a different license if a businessperson was to operate in their area. This seems to be an unnecessary, costly and unhelpful barrier to work, particularly in London where a businessperson would require a license for each of the 33 borough council areas to operate across the city. **We recommend that the UK Government consider whether the current arrangements for scrap metal dealership in England are unnecessarily cumbersome.**

49. Continued discrimination against Travellers in employment is unacceptable. Barriers to employment must be removed. One way of doing this has been to offer part (or fully) funded site safety courses and safe working courses to facilitate access to the building trade and work in oil refineries. Other positive efforts include Dublin County Council's employment of Travellers as customer service agents so that they are seen and to promote good relations. **Public authorities should show leadership in profiling the employability of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma and consider ways to help these communities access labour markets.**
50. The European Commission gave poor ratings for the UK and Ireland's Roma integration strategies initially. We are pleased to see that the Commission has recognised progress in these areas. However, these strategies must not just be words, they must lead to change on the ground. **We join those who ask whether regional strategies, such as those developed by Wales and Liverpool, might be helpful in other areas with high concentrations of Roma economic migrants, such as Glasgow and Northern Ireland.**

Concluding remarks

51. Treating all minorities the same may not be the most effective way of identifying and meeting their specific needs, as general approaches mean that the specific needs of particular groups can be overlooked. "Officialdom" must ensure equality of access to public services for Travellers, Gypsies and Roma, and all other ethnic groups in the UK and Ireland.
52. **We conclude that better data-collection would be of great help in identifying problems in service provision and in assessing the efficacy of interventions to support Travellers, Gypsies and Roma.**
53. **Given the similarities in problems faced across the jurisdictions represented on our Committee, we recommend greater sharing of best practice on engaging with and meeting the needs of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma across the UK and Ireland. We have come across so many problems and differences**

of approach that we suggest it would be extremely useful if the Governments and administrations held a joint conference to explore many of these issues, with the input and support of representatives of the Traveller, Gypsy and Roma communities. We are aware that some co-operation already happens but we think that the various strands could be better pulled together by such a conference.

54. In conclusion, there is a worrying lack of consistency in provision of services to Travellers, Gypsies and Roma across and within the jurisdictions. We view this partly as a result of a lack of overall co-ordination and central ownership of these issues. It is clear that multi-agency City-wide efforts, such as those we saw in Edinburgh, are powerful vehicles for change. This interagency working and joined-up approach to meeting the needs of these groups should be replicated across the jurisdictions. National political leadership in these areas is essential.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. A recent Report by the Houses of the Oireachtas' Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality recommended the formal recognition of Traveller ethnicity. We share their view and recommend that the Irish Government take urgent steps to recognise the Traveller ethnicity to ensure the appropriate protection of those people who view themselves as Travellers and to protect their culture.

Health

2. We recommend that the ethnic groups Travellers and Gypsies become part of the “data dictionary” and that statistics are regularly gathered about their accessing health services and health outcomes in Ireland and the UK jurisdictions. Targets should be set centrally by Governments and administrations, in consultation with the relevant communities, about use of those services and goals set for improving health outcomes with robust timescales and monitoring programmes. Although action should be taken at local level, clear leadership needs to be shown nationally.
3. The seeming inequality of access to, and patchy provision of, health services is unacceptable.
4. More needs to be done to increase understanding of services, particularly among Roma, to offer translation services where necessary, and for greater trust to be built between healthcare professionals and Travellers, Gypsies and Roma.
5. We recommend that Governments and administrations share best practice and lessons-learnt from initiatives to reach Travellers, Gypsies and Roma to ensure those people can and do access health services.
6. We recommend that the English, Northern Irish, Scottish, Irish and Welsh Governments and administrations discuss how to improve understanding and awareness of the needs and challenges faced by Travellers and Gypsies with the authorities responsible for medical, dental, social care and nursing training.

Housing

7. Unspent funding for new sites, closure and non-replacement of sites in England, and a lack of confidence in processes for engaging Travellers lead us to conclude that the UK Governments and administrations should consider whether to reinstate a statutory obligation on local authorities to provide sites in order to set a clear national direction.
8. We further recommend that a statutory obligation for local authorities to coordinate traveller site provision be explored in all the jurisdictions. This would go some way to addressing the, perhaps unfounded, fear that areas which build sites first will be overwhelmed by Travellers coming to that region. Travellers have as much right to appropriate accommodation that is both fit-for-purpose and honours their cultural traditions, as any other group in society.
9. Work needs to be done to ensure that local authorities assess Traveller and Gypsy accommodation needs effectively. The Scottish Government has committed to being more transparent in needs assessments, to consult clearly and to set out evidence gathering in such needs assessments. We encourage the other Governments in our jurisdictions to follow this good example and to share good practice when it comes to engaging those communities.
10. Although a culture of consultation with Travellers and Gypsies has begun to develop this requires further embedding. Channels must be built to ensure Travellers and Gypsies can and do engage with local decision making. This does not mean that all requests will be met, particularly in the current economic climate where difficult decisions about priorities must be made, but will ensure that these groups are fairly represented and included in those discussions.
11. We recommend that all the jurisdictions learn from this good practice of engaging with Travellers and Gypsies, providing necessary amenities and signposting them to local services when new (sometimes unauthorised) sites are set-up. This practice seems necessary to us until adequate accommodation provision has been made.

12. Access to publicly-funded accommodation should be needs-based. On the one hand, it is clearly unacceptable to have widespread under occupancy, individuals controlling who lives where and publicly-funded accommodation damaged by feuding. On the other hand, these are not problems that have easy solutions. We recognise the many difficulties and how to handle this requires further careful consideration.
13. We do not condone criminal activity and urge the various police services to investigate and prevent such extortion rackets, and to ensure that culprits are prosecuted.
14. We support the work of police services to engage the communities, seeking to prevent crime and dealing with it. This approach of enforcement and engagement has been also been adopted by some local authorities who explain rights and responsibilities to Travellers, Gypsies and Roma, for example when it comes to sanitation. We view this as the most effective way of interacting: ensuring both that expectations are clear and need is met.
15. We recognise that Travellers have specific needs and that accommodation-providers should seek to meet reasonable requests. In building stronger consultations between such groups a mature dialogue must develop where Gypsies and Traveller needs are listened to carefully and taken seriously, and Travellers and Gypsies engage with the realities of limited resources and seek to compromise with accommodation-providers. Similarly, there must be dialogue between accommodation-providers and Travellers and Gypsies on the location of sites so that both understand need, preferences and limitations.
16. We view provision of suitable and sufficient accommodation for Travellers as an urgent priority.

Education

17. We recognise the value of “one-stop-shop” models where schools also serve as community hubs for, potentially among other aims, building good relationships with Travellers and Gypsies. We recommend that model to areas with high concentrations of

Travellers and Gypsies although we realise that current financial restraints are likely to delay implementation

18. Widening support for adult Travellers and Gypsies to help them develop literacy and numeracy skills so that they can support their children through school ought to be provided through lifelong learning projects.
19. The Irish and UK Governments and administrations should invest in building and maintaining appropriate mechanisms for transferring schools records, particularly to support Traveller and Gypsy children.
20. Ensuring that Traveller and Gypsy children can access education services with the support that they require to fulfil their potential is a basic human right. Governments should make funding available to adequately support these children.
21. We recommend that the other Governments in our jurisdictions seek or provide funding for research and development of support resources for teachers.
22. Adequate language support in schools is vital if Roma children are to be able to access education services in the UK and Ireland. We recommend that the Governments and administrations assess the adequacy of current provisions and keep a watching brief on it.
23. It would be most desirable to see greater media coverage of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma who do well in education so that they can be role models and inspire the next generation.
24. We recommend that the English, Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh Governments and administrations explore better data-collection mechanisms covering achievement, retention and progression of Traveller, Gypsy and Roma children. Without comprehensive data it is difficult to measure the impact of any interventions.

Community relations

25. We urge other Governments to set targets for tackling discrimination and improving community relations.

Employment

26. We recommend that the UK Government consider whether the current arrangements for scrap metal dealership in England are unnecessarily cumbersome.
27. Public authorities should show leadership in profiling the employability of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma and consider ways to help these communities access labour markets.
28. We join those who ask whether regional strategies, such as those developed by Wales and Liverpool, might be helpful in other areas with high concentrations of Roma economic migrants, such as Glasgow and Northern Ireland.

Concluding remarks

29. We conclude that better data-collection would be of great help in identifying problems in service provision and in assessing the efficacy of interventions to support Travellers, Gypsies and Roma.
30. Given the similarities in problems faced across the jurisdictions represented on our Committee, we recommend greater sharing of best practice on engaging with and meeting the needs of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma across the UK and Ireland. We have come across so many problems and differences of approach that we suggest it would be extremely useful if the Governments and administrations held a joint conference to explore many of these issues, with the input and support of representatives of the Traveller, Gypsy and Roma communities. We are aware that some co-operation already happens but we think that the various strands could be better pulled together by such a conference.
31. In conclusion, there is a worrying lack of consistency in provision of services to Travellers, Gypsies and Roma across and within the jurisdictions. We view this partly as a result of a lack of overall co-ordination and central ownership of these issues. It is

clear that multi-agency City-wide efforts, such as those we saw in Edinburgh, are powerful vehicles for change. This interagency working and joined-up approach to meeting the needs of these groups should be replicated across the jurisdictions. National political leadership in these areas is essential.

Annex A: Witness lists for evidence sessions

Dublin, 12-13 January 2014

- Paul Hickey, Assistant Secretary, Equality Division, Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration and the Reception and Integration Agency, Department of Justice and Equality
- Catherine Linehan, Assistant Principal, Equality Division/Traveller Policy, Department of Justice and Equality
- Superintendent Karl Heller, National Crime Prevention Unit, An Garda Síochána
- Sergeant Dave McInerney, National Crime Prevention Unit, An Garda Síochána
- Jim Ganley, Principal Officer, Social Housing Investment Programme (Operational), Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
- Deirdre Kearney, Assistant Principal Officer, Social Housing Investment Programme (Operational), Department of Justice and Equality
- Diane Nurse, National Planning Specialist, Social Inclusion Unit, Health Service Executive
Ms Linda O'Rourke, Higher Executive Officer, Health and Wellbeing Programme, Department of Health
- Caitriona O'Brien, Principal Officer, Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Education and Skills
- Father Micheál MacGréil SJ
- Martin Collins, Director, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
- Ronnie Fay, Director, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
- Siobhan Curran, Community Development Worker, Roma Project, Pavee Point
- Gabi Muntean, Roma Community Worker, Pavee Point

Belfast, 2-3 March 2014

- Denise Wright, South Belfast Round Table
- Ann Marie White, Project coordinator Creating Cohesive Community, Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group
- Maura Muldoon, Head of Policing with the Community Branch and various officers, Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Pauline McCarry, Project Health Manager, An Múna Tober
- Sorina Toma, Roma Health Liaison Officer, Bryson Intercultural
- Denis Long, Roma Community Development Coordinator, Mediation NI
- Nicolae Nicola, Chair, Romanian Roma Community Association of Northern Ireland
- Connor Smith, Travellers Project Team and Mary McDonnell, Principal Officer, NI Housing Executive
- Stephen Martin, Deputy Director, and Jason McNulty, Department for Social Development
- Stephen Long, Community Development Officer and Bryan Nelson, Senior Manager Health Improvement, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- Heather Stevens, Director of Service Delivery and Stephen Galway, Head of Primary Care Medical Services, Department of Health
- Joan McGovern and Pamela Kirk, Barnardo's Tuar Ceatha
- Julie Humphries, Department of Education

- Michael Wardlow, Commissioner and Paul Noonan, Senior Policy Officer, Northern Ireland Equality Commission
- Kieran Shields, Southern Education and Library Board

London, 15-16 June 2014

- Chris Whitwell, Friends, Families and Travellers
- Bill Forrester, National Association of Gypsy and Traveller Officers
- Tracie Giles and Ilinca Diaconescu, London Gypsy and Traveller Unit
- Matthew Brindley, The Traveller Movement
- Dr Gill Paramjit, Reader in Primary Care Research and GP, University of Birmingham and Royal College of GPs Clinical Champion for Social Inclusion
- Gill Francis, former Health Inclusion Worker for Travellers & Gypsies, NHS City & Hackney
- Martin Gibbs, Deputy Director for Equity and Social Inclusion, Department of Health
- Brian Foster, Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers
- Bev Stephens, Head, Pembrokeshire Gypsy Traveller Education Service
- His Excellency Dr Ion Jinga, Ambassador of Romania to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Edinburgh, 13-14 July 2014

- William Fleming, Head of Housing Services Policy Unit
- Wendy Henderson, Chair of the City of Edinburgh's Gypsy Traveller and Roma Strategic Development Groups
- Jim Hayton, Policy Manager, Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers
- Ann Morton Hyde, Lead Expert on Roma integration, ROMA-NeT
- Inspector Tom Galbraith, Police Scotland
- Lesley Boyd, Health Inequalities Manager, NHS Lothian and Chair, Lothian Joint Gypsy/Traveller Health Steering group
- Michelle Lloyd, MECOPP
- Lynne Powis, Chair, National Association of Teachers of Travellers +Other Professionals
- Maureen Finn, Director, Scottish Traveller Education Programme (STEP)
- Ms Lynne Tammi, National Co-ordinator, Article 12
- Lesley Irving, Head of the Equality Policy Team in the Scottish Government's Equality Unit
- Gavin Phillip; David Gallanders, Jim Hume, Police Scotland
- Chris Oswald, Head of Policy, Scotland Team, Equality and Human Rights Commission

Annex B: Attendance

Dublin, 12-13 January 2014

Lord Dubs (Chairman)
Senator Maurice Cummins (Vice-Chairman)
Seán Crowe TD
John Lyons TD
Michael McMahon MSP
David Melding AM
Chris Ruane MP
Jim Sheridan MP
Lord Skelmersdale
Jim Wells MLA

Belfast, 2-3 March 2014

Lord Dubs (Chairman)
Seán Crowe TD
Michael McMahon MSP
Mark Pritchard MP
Chris Ruane MP
Jim Wells MLA

London, 15-16 June 2014

Lord Dubs (Chairman)
Senator Maurice Cummins (Vice-Chairman)
Seán Crowe TD
Senator Cáit Keane
John Lyons TD
Mark Pritchard MP
Chris Ruane MP
Lord Skelmersdale
Joyce Watson AM
Jim Wells MLA

Edinburgh, 13-14 July 2014

Lord Dubs (Chairman)
Senator Maurice Cummins (Vice-Chairman)
Joe Benton MP
Seán Crowe TD
John Lyons TD
Michael McMahon MSP
Lord Skelmersdale
Joyce Watson AM