

Gypsy & Traveller Law Reform Coalition Newsletter

February 2005

Welcome to this first G&TLRC Newsletter, hopefully, the first of many. Hopefully too, this first will inspire more people to contribute, particularly on issues to do with women and young people. Contributions from young people will be very welcome.

Len Smith, Compiler

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Probably the most important news was the winning of the prestigious “Liberty Award for Human Rights” in December of 2004. I was privileged to give the acceptance speech when the award was collected by Siobhan Spencer, Noelette Keane, Tom Sweeney and myself. The award was particularly special in that we won against a very high profile short list of organisations. The award is recognition for all the hard work and determination which has been demonstrated from the large number of activists who make up our coalition.

Len Smith

Below is an extract from the Liberty website:

Human Rights Awards Winners 2004

The Human Rights Awards 2004 were presented at a ceremony on Thursday 9 December.

The event featured contributions from Sheena McDonald, the writer and broadcaster and Alan Rusbridger, editor of the Guardian.

The Awards are the joint venture of Liberty, JUSTICE and the Law Society. They aim to honour the commitment and dedication shown by human rights campaigners in the UK.

The citation reads:

Human Rights Award 2004 - Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition - For exceptional achievement in uniting Gypsies, Irish Travellers and New Travellers and providing a powerful voice to lobby for positive change and recognition of their human rights. For effective engagement of cross-party support for some of the most socially excluded groups in the UK.

For more information see:

<http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/events/human-rights-awards/index.shtml>

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The Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition and the Travellers’ Advice Team Conference (Provisional Agenda) - Birmingham 6th of May 2005

- **New Opportunities and New Challenges**

- 9 - 10 am Registration

10 - 11.15 Opening Session

- **Chair - Rodney Bickerstaffe (tbc)**
- **Welcome Violet Tucker (Leeds GATE)**
- **Tom Sweeney (Co Chair Irish Traveller Movement)**
- **Janie Codona - NTAG**
- **Len Smith GTLRC - An Overview of Government Policies**
- **Rob Torkington - Friends Families and Travellers**

- 11.15 - 11.30 tea

- **Workshops 11.30 - 1**

- **Gypsy and Traveller Women**

- A workshop to consider the problems Gypsy and Traveller women endure in particular as a result of homelessness, poor living conditions and eviction and how women activists can effectively mobilise to tackle the exclusion from which they and their families suffer from. Details to follow

What Do We Want and When Do We Want it? accommodation needs assessments for Gypsies and Travellers

Margaret Greenfields - Buckingham Chiltern University

- Cliff Codona - National Travellers' Action Group
- Greg Yates - Clearwater Gypsies
- Justine Compton - TAT

- **The New Planning System**

- Siobhan Spencer - Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group
- Angus Murdoch - TAT
- Marc Willers - Friends Families and Travellers

- **Support Groups for Gypsies and Travellers – Sharing Good Practice (morning only)**

- Frieda Shiecker (London Gypsy and Traveller Unit)
- Helen Jones (Leeds GATE)
- Sherry Peck (Ormiston Trust)
- Lochaber Routes and the Traveller and Gypsy Community Development Project (Glasgow).

Site Issues - Security of Tenure and Management (afternoon only)

Sharon Baxter (TAT)

John Wilson (Novas)

Debbie Kennett (LGTU)

- **Supporting Travellers Living on the Road**

- Chris Johnson TAT, Joe and Bridie Jones (Canterbury Gypsy and Traveller Support Group), Win Lawlor - Irish Community Care Liverpool, John Mercer Hull GATE (tbc)

- **Youth Conference** During the workshop times in the morning/afternoon a youth conference aimed at and led by Gypsy and Traveller teenagers will be held. - Facilitators - The Children's Society, Save the Children, the London Gypsy and Traveller Unit, Traveller and Gypsy Community Development Project (Glasgow). Hull GATE/Northern Network. The conference will involve music, entertainment and debate and the chance for young activists to interview **Richard O'Neil** and **Charles Smith** about their past experiences of being young Travellers and now activists.

1 – 2.10 – buffet lunch

Conference Hall 2.10 - 2.45

Chair Tom McCready (tbc)

Charles Smith the Gypsy Council

Father Joe Browne - Irish Traveller Movement (GTLRC annual report)

2.45 – 4.15 repeat of workshops

Music will be played throughout the day and at the end of the conference by Mic and Rosie Darling. The Travellers Advice Team will host a short party at the end.

Tickets are free for Gypsies and Travellers. Contact Andrew Ryder:

romanistan@yahoo.com

07 985 684 921

Community/Charity/Traveller Education Workers etc pay £50

Senior Management/Civil Servants pay £90

Paid tickets - email orders to Jenny Malone

jenny@communitylawpartnership.co.uk

Venue - The Irish Club 14-20 High Street Deritend Birmingham B12 0LN

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Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition Give Evidence to the Joint Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights

Today a parliamentary committee of MPs and peers took oral evidence from the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition. The committee are considering the UK Government's response to the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination report on race issues in the UK.

A 15 page written submission by the The Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition (**A Report by the GTLRC which assesses the Progress made by the UK Government on Gypsy/Traveller issues**) can be accessed at:

<http://www.travellerslaw.org.uk/press.htm>

Charles Smith and **Janie Codona**, English Gypsies, gave oral evidence on behalf of the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition. Charles Smith is Chair of the Gypsy Council. Janie Codona is facing possible eviction from a Traveller site called Woodside where she lives with her children and grandchildren.

Below is summary of the oral evidence

Charles Smith felt politicians and the media are stoking dangerous levels of hysteria and there are great fears as to where this could lead. Charles felt that many of the government's new accommodation proposals contained

some merit but feared they would not be implemented without a statutory duty to provide and facilitate sites and interventions and sanctions where councils are negligent. He was also concerned about the resources the Gypsy and Traveller community had to effectively input into council's new development plans and was fearful of the Traveller voice not being heard.

Janie Codona stated that many Travellers living on local authority sites felt that they had no ownership of their homes because of their limited security of tenure, she called for Travellers to be given the same tenancy rights as mobile park home occupiers. She also spoke of the anxiety felt by many Travellers facing eviction. She felt great expense and trauma could be avoided if there was a moratorium on evictions and for councils to identify land immediately for Travellers facing eviction to have the opportunity to take up. Charles Smith drew the committee's attention to how Traveller sites had been managed in Oxfordshire, he asked whether the police would have a say in the management of housing for other ethnic groups.

Charles Smith said that a new report by the University of Sheffield 'The Health Status of Gypsies and Travellers In England' demonstrates the health inequalities suffered by many Travellers. Janie said that eviction and homelessness could make a minor health problem a major one and lead to the impairment of children's educational achievement and participation.

Both spoke of the need for a Task Force to ensure that the voice of the Gypsy and Traveller community was heard and shaped and monitored policies.

Concern was expressed at the campaign for extreme enforcement measures primarily being led by the media and politicians such as Conservative MPs and they bemoaned the fact that the supporters of such measures had little to say on provision.

Both Janie and Charles gave a first rate performance. Thanks and well done

The new draft planning circular

The following press statement was issued by the ODPM about the new circular

ODPM Press Notice - TACKLING THE CAUSES OF PROBLEM GYPSY TRAVELLER SITES

Local authorities must do more to identify appropriate sites so that Gypsies and Travellers can be more easily moved off problem sites that cause misery for local residents, Minister for Housing Yvette Cooper said today.

The Government today published its response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Select Committee investigation into Gypsy and Traveller sites.

It coincides with yesterday's conclusion of the public consultation into proposals to give local authorities increased powers to stop unauthorised development through Temporary Stop Notices. It is intended that councils will have access to these increased enforcement powers in March.

Yvette Cooper said:

"There are two major problems in the planning system at the moment concerning Gypsy and Traveller sites.

"Firstly, local authorities are not identifying enough appropriate locations either for private or public sites. And secondly, they do not have enough powers to deal swiftly with development on inappropriate sites. The result is that there are too many developments on inappropriate sites, causing tensions and difficulties for both the neighbouring communities and the Gypsies and Travellers.

"That is why we are consulting on a new obligation on local authorities to identify more appropriate sites, as well as new powers to take immediate action if the development is in the wrong place and cannot be tolerated in even the short term because of risk to local amenity and the environment."

Funding for the refurbishment of existing authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites has been extended to include the creation of new residential sites. Over the last four years £25 million has been dedicated to improving and refurbishing existing sites. The ODPM is currently inviting bids for projects to refurbish and create new authorised sites.

The G&TLRC followed this press release with one of our own:

Andrew Ryder of the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition said

"We welcome talk about an obligation on councils to identify land for Gypsies and Travellers, so long as it is a real obligation as opposed to a recommendation as was previously the case, which could and was easily ignored. New accommodation proposals for Travellers need to be backed up with decent funding and intervention by the Government when councils attempt to dodge their responsibilities towards Travellers as they often do. Let us also not forget unauthorised encampments also create misery for Gypsies and Travellers, living on the side of the road or being worn down by planning appeals, legal action and eviction is no one's idea of fun. Finally, let us also not forget that the ODPM Select Committee called for a statutory duty to be placed on councils to provide and facilitate sites and a Task Force, with Gypsy and Traveller members, to raise the political inclusion of the Gypsy and Traveller community".

A draft response to the new ODPM planning circular can be accessed at:

<http://www.travellerslaw.org.uk/press.htm#190105odpm>

The deadline is 18/3/05

We urge people to respond

Temporary Stop Notices

The Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition met with officials from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to discuss their temporary Stop notices. Our draft written submission can be accessed at:

<http://www.travellerslaw.org.uk/press.htm#190105stop>

Below are some points from the submission

General Observations

1/ The temporary stop notice provisions in Part 4 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 inserted sections 171E to 171H to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Act gives local planning authorities a new discretionary enforcement power to be able to issue a temporary stop notice at the start of unauthorised development, before an enforcement notice is served, speeding up the process of enforcement.

2/ The Gypsy & Traveller Law Reform Coalition (G&TLRC) firmly believes that existing enforcement powers and stop notices are already extremely harsh and have led to the imposition of fines of up to twenty thousand pounds or even imprisonment for those who have infringed them. It should be remembered that members of the Gypsy and Traveller community have been compelled to resort to establishing homes through retrospective planning applications as the repeal of the duty on councils to provide sites in 1994 and replacement with the universally accepted ineffective circular 1/94 have created a shortage of sites. This leaves families with limited

choices, either to live on the side of the road, give up their nomadic way of life and move into housing (assimilation) or develop a site through a retrospective planning application. It is therefore inhumane to pile up even more draconian punishments and restrictions on families who take the latter option.

Some Specific Points on the New Temporary Stop Notices

3/ We welcome the fact (see point 13 of the regulations) that temporary stop notices may not prohibit the continued stationing of a caravan on land where the caravan is the main place of residence. However, the regulations declare that the exception is in extreme cases where development is *"harmful to the local amenity"*. We believe that it would be useful if the regulations provided more clarification here so that the stop notices really are only invoked in extreme cases and thus ensure that planning authorities do not try and extend this definition to cover cases which fall outside of this criteria.

4/ We welcome the fact that (point 14 of the regulations) the local planning authority should ensure minimum standards of health, hygiene and public health are maintained before taking action such as "waste disposal". We presume this enables Travellers to install drainage and flushable lavatories. We believe that Traveller families should also be allowed to erect fencing to ensure the safety of their children.

5/ We note that the person affected by a temporary stop notice cannot appeal to the Secretary of State. We believe that the temporary stop notices should not be issued/upheld in relation to a breach of planning control by Gypsies or other Travellers unless the Secretary of State has certified that sufficient accommodation exists for Gypsies or other Travellers residing in or resorting to the region of which the local planning authority forms a part. Hence, stop notices should be conditional on councils meeting the targets set as a result of the Regional Spatial Strategies, this may act as a slight spur to increasing site provision.

6/ Local authority representatives (point 32) may choose to discuss whether there is any alternative means to overcome objections. If an alternative can be found the regulations suggest an option is to consider granting planning permission. In order to promote such dialogue and compromise we believe that the Secretary of State should actively assess any such dialogue in deciding where to support an appeal against a temporary stop notice. The absence of any such dialogue should weigh against the Secretary of State upholding a temporary stop notice in the appeals process. Clearly therefore we believe that there should be an appeal process and that the Secretary of State should have a role within it.

7/ Given the focus of stop notice measures against Gypsies/Travellers as opposed to their direction against the settled community they are probably discriminatory. We believe that the temporary stop notices are incompatible with article 8 and article 1 of the protocol of the Human Rights Act (the right to peaceful enjoyment of one's property) but also article 6 because there is no right of appeal and judicial review is likely to prove an inadequate remedy when the temporary stop notice can be issued without notice and lasts only 28 days.

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SCOTLAND

Very good news for the New Year! The Rowntree Charitable Trust have awarded a grant to draft a Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Law Reform Bill, which hopefully will be ready to be introduced into the Scottish Parliament by the autumn/winter of 2005.

The project will be coordinated by a steering group in Scotland, the majority of which will be Scottish Gypsies and Travellers.

This is an exciting and important project.

Thanks to Michelle Lloyd, Colin Clark and Roseanna McPhee for their invaluable assistance in helping draft a successful bid.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT STUDY

MESSAGE FROM SEU

As you may know, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) has recently begun work on a new programme of co-ordinated projects aimed at improving service delivery for disadvantaged people/groups. One part of this programme looks specifically at disadvantaged people who move frequently, which will include people from groups such as asylum seekers/refugees, the homeless, Gypsies and Travellers and care leavers.

As part of the project on disadvantaged people who move frequently, the SEU will be launching a written consultation, which will run for a 12 week period in early November. I am writing to ask if you would be able to provide some feedback on our proposed consultation questionnaire. Please accept my apologies for the tight timescale, but due to issues around type-setting and printing, we will require responses before 9.00am on Wednesday 27th October (next weds).

We would be very grateful to have your views on our proposed questions which hopefully shouldn't take long to read. Please note that although the whole draft consultation document is attached for background information, we are only seeking comments on the questionnaire, which is on pages 9-13 of the document. We would like to know whether you think the questions are easy to understand and whether they will enable people to get their key views and issues across (of course any other comments that you have about the questions would also be gratefully received). Please do bear in mind that, as we are seeking views from a number of different groups, the questions have deliberately been framed quite broadly. Unfortunately, we are unable to ask questions that refer specifically to different client groups.

We are aware that a written consultation might not be the best way of gathering views from some people in our target groups. We will also be organising a series of focus groups to help us understand the views of people who would rather not send them in in writing. However, in past SEU projects, written consultations have been invaluable sources of information that help us understand the relevant issues and they are often referred to extensively in SEU reports. We envisage that the consultation will be answered largely by practitioners and others with experience of working with the groups focused on by the project. However, we also expect (and hope) that individuals will respond, and have included a section of questions focusing on individuals'

A SUMMARY OF WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING ON TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister started their policy review 15 months ago. We have not had their final statement yet but enough policies have been unveiled on accommodation to give us some indicator of what they are planning. Below is a summary.

New Draft Circular

This will replace circular 1/94, Councils will need to identify land in their development plans. The new definition of Gypsy/Traveller recognises that for health and other reasons Travellers have to sometimes stop travelling permanently/temporarily. This will hopefully end legal challenges like that of Wrexham V Berry.

The Housing Act 2004 - Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Councils are now under a statutory duty to assess Traveller accommodation need and develop strategies to meet those needs. The new measures in the Housing Act 2004 require councils to take such a strategy into account when exercising their other functions re planning, education, social care and housing/accommodation for Gypsies/Travellers.

Gypsy/Traveller accommodation will form part of the new Regional Spatial Strategies - there are various powers of intervention where councils failing in their responsibilities towards Gypsies/Travellers can be tackled. The GTLRC has said these powers will need to be used robustly where councils attempt to shirk their responsibilities (see annex powers of intervention)

Funding

The Gypsy Sites Refurbishment Grant will provide £8 million for 2005/6 to improve existing sites and create new transit and residential sites. Many of us feel that much greater funding is needed.

The remit of the Housing Corporation will be extended to allow Registered Social Landlords to provide and manage Gypsy sites and to be funded to do so. At the moment we have little indication as to what this will mean in money terms.

Travellers on local authority sites will have access to disabled facilities grants.

Research

The Social Exclusion Unit is conducting a study looking at the exclusion experienced by people who frequently move including Gypsies/Travellers. The SEU is very influential and its study could open more doors.

Security of Tenure

The Government has issued a memorandum regarding Connors V UK.

The Government accepts that certain general measures are necessary in light of the Connors case and in the memorandum draws attention to the fact that:

1/ The Housing Act 2004 allows judges to suspend eviction orders against residents of local authority sites in line with those on private sites and with secure tenancies in bricks and mortar accommodation. This will come into force on the 18th of January 2005.

2/ The Government acknowledges that further action will be needed to address the concerns raised by the Connor's case. The memorandum says the ODPM policy review is considering the best way forward. Ministers

have indicated that the most suitable way forward would be as part of the legislation on tenure reform relating to bricks and mortar housing. The Law Commission are preparing a draft Bill which will be delivered in early 2005. Separate consultation would be required on Gypsies/Travellers so that a specific amendment on their security of tenure can be inserted into the Bill.

Enforcement

The Government will be introducing new temporary stop notices. However, the Government has not given in to pressure by the Conservatives and adopted the harsher enforcement powers and call to amend the Human Rights Act which they are proposing. Their proposed stop notices are aimed at preventing more caravans moving onto a site after the initial occupation and hardstanding and permanent structures being erected, they do not appear to prevent the installation of waste disposal/toilets or basic amenities. The GTLRC believes that fencing should not be affected by such notices as it is important to child safety. We have other concerns also.

What We Want

A Task Force/a body to allow Gypsies/Travellers to advise the Government on accommodation policies and other policy areas and establish dialogue with a range of stakeholders.

A statutory duty to provide/facilitate sites. Many believe this will strengthen and complement the Government's accommodation proposals.

I and many planning experts feel that there is now some light at the end of the tunnel. Of course there are many families facing eviction. The Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition has been considering this problem. There are a number of policy positions that could be adopted which would be of assistance.

Councils in the process of evicting families could identify land immediately, which is suitable for site development, giving families the option to lawfully move onto another piece of land. Land swap may assist in the process where families hand over the land they are vacating in part/full exchange for a new piece of land.

In the coming months we need to ensure that the Gypsy/Traveller community understands the new accommodation policies and is able to have maximum input into their development.

A wider campaign issue is the need for a fairer and more effective Press Complaints Commission. The press have not helped at all in recent months and have helped stoke tensions to dangerous levels.

Annex - Powers of Intervention

The Secretary of State has various powers of intervention in the new planning system. Annex D (9) of the draft circular describes for example how under section 21 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Secretary of State has the power to modify the draft DPD. If councils fail to do so the Secretary of State can under section 21 (4) of the Act direct that the relevant part of the document be submitted to him for approval. Furthermore, where a local planning authority has not prepared a DPD in the first place then under section 26 (2) of the Act the Secretary of State can direct them to prepare the necessary document – if they fail to do so then ultimately the Secretary of State can exercise their default power under section 27 and identify the necessary sites, proceed to an examination, and then approve the document. Councils in the past have proved to be reluctant to fulfil the most minimum of requirements regarding Gypsies and Travellers. It is likely that many councils will attempt to shirk their new responsibilities. The Secretary of State will therefore have to use their powers of intervention at the earliest possible opportunity. Swift intervention will set an example and will encourage councils to meet their responsibilities. However, failure to intervene on a sufficient level will lead to large numbers of councils shirking their responsibilities and many of the ills associated with the present planning system will continue.

I believe it will also count as a material consideration in planning appeals if councils fail in carrying out the tasks expected of them

**Health research report
for
GTLRC newsletter Feb 2005
Patrice van Cleemput**

**NEW AND IMPORTANT EVIDENCE ON HEALTH INEQUALITIES
- IMPLICATIONS HIGHLIGHTED IN RECENT REPORT.**

In 2004 a team from the School of Health and Related Research in the University of Sheffield completed an important study for the Department of Health:

Health Status of Gypsies and Travellers in England

by Parry G, Van Cleemput P, Peters J, Moore J, Walters S, Thomas K, Cooper C

Earlier, in 1999, Glenys Parry and her colleague, Patrice Van Cleemput had carried out a pilot study in Sheffield, when Patrice was then a health visitor for that population of Gypsies and Travellers. The pilot results led to them submitting a bid to the Inequalities Research Programme in the Dept of Health to conduct multi centre research in Sheffield, Leicester, Norfolk, London and Bristol, in order to provide the first national data set on health status.

It was one of few successful bids in the face of competition from many that focused on other areas of inequality, and the study commenced in January 2002.

The study was designed to address health policy objectives by identifying the inequalities in health status between Gypsy Traveller and non-Gypsy Traveller populations and was the first large-scale study of the health of Gypsies and Travellers in England, using valid and reliable measures of health status, combined with qualitative evidence on the impact of environmental stress, cultural attitudes and health beliefs on service use.

Gypsies and Travellers were fully involved in the study from the start. Ann Bagehot, secretary of the Gypsy Council, and Gypsy Travellers, Richard O'Neill, Mally Dow, Mary Lee and the late Tommy Doherty and Josie Lee all gave their considerable support and advice to the study as members of the research study advisory group.

More recently, at the end of 2003, the research study team gave presentations of the early findings at a series of road shows for Gypsies and Travellers in each of the study locations, in order to validate the findings and invite further discussion and comments. The views and comments from Gypsies and Travellers attending these forums were incorporated into the final report.

In addition, Len Smith and Richard O'Neill both reviewed the final version before it was submitted to the Department of Health

The study found that the health inequalities between Gypsy Traveller and non-Gypsy Traveller populations are marked, with reported health problems being between twice and five times more prevalent. Qualitative analysis carried out by Patrice showed the impact of environmental stress and cultural and health beliefs and attitudes on service use.

Accommodation was the overriding factor, mentioned by every respondent, in the context of health effects. These effects are seen to be far-reaching and not exclusively concerned with actual living conditions, although these are clearly seen as crucial

For most respondents the ability to choose their style of accommodation and to decide for themselves whether, or how, they continue to live a traditional travelling lifestyle is of fundamental importance and crucial to their sense of independence and autonomy. The lack of choice or the intolerable conditions, mentioned by the majority of respondents, are an indication to them of the negative way in which they are viewed by the non-Traveller society.

A survey of health care provision and planning in Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities in England showed limited specific service provision or policy statements referring to Gypsies and Travellers.

The study draws out the implications for future health provision, policies and research.

Fuller results are available on an audio -CD for Gypsies and Travellers; in a printed summary report; and the full reports can be downloaded from the university web site (see below for all details)

What now then? Can the study make a difference?

The report of the study will make no difference if it sits on a dusty shelf. The results and the implications require informed action.

In October 2004 the Sheffield team held a conference, not only to launch the report, but also to give delegates an opportunity to consider the implications of the report and discuss some practical ways to improve Gypsy and Traveller health.

Professor Glenys Parry, who led the research study, chaired the conference and welcomed the 200 delegates who attended. They included Gypsies and Travellers from across the UK and Ireland, health professionals, policy makers and voluntary and statutory agencies working with Gypsies and Travellers

In a series of workshops, many of which were facilitated by Gypsies and Travellers, the delegates suggested many practical ideas and recommendations and also shared examples of current good practice. A full report of these workshops and recommendations from them is available (see details below). A copy of this report has also been sent to the Department of Health

In relation to Gypsy Travellers' experiences in accessing health care and the cultural appropriateness of services provided, there are widespread communication difficulties between health workers and Gypsy Travellers, with experience of, and defensive expectation of, racism and prejudice.

As a result of their particular interest shown at the initial results road show in Leicester, Patrice is now working with a group of Gypsy and Traveller women in that area on an **action research study** to further explore these communication difficulties between primary health care staff and Gypsies and Travellers.

A Department of Health Fellowship awarded to Patrice is funding this collaborative study, with which she will complete a PhD. It aims to mutually understand the barriers from all perspectives and to explore ways of overcoming them.

Many Gypsies and Travellers as well as voluntary sector workers and health professionals working with them left the health conference in October inspired to use the findings of the report to campaign for policy and practice improvements aimed at improving the health of Gypsies and Travellers.

Already, several PCT's and statutory and voluntary organisations, in their commitment to service improvement, have invited study team members to present and discuss the findings and implications at local and national multi disciplinary events.

Reports available from:

Audio CD - The health of Gypsies and Travellers in England

(limited supply available to Gypsies and Travellers only)

Contact either:

Sheffield University team - t.coldwell@sheffield.ac.uk or tel. 0114 222 0817

Gypsy council thegypsycouncil@btinternet.com or tel. 01708 868 986

Printed summary reports (The health of Gypsies and Travellers in England)

as above

Downloadable full reports (The health of Gypsies and Travellers in England)

www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/about/publications/travellers.html

Health conference (October 2004) and workshops report

Email Patrice Van Cleemput for copy: pvancleemput@yahoo.co.uk

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“INCLUSION” By Richard O’Neill

‘Gypsies and Travellers not included’

Having seen all the adverts for electronic toys and games before Christmas I like many others forgot to read the small print, which pointed out ‘Batteries Not Included’. Which then meant I had to scramble around looking for batteries. Sound familiar?

On my travels dealing with a whole range of organisations private and public, I just wonder whether they have a similar invisible to me small print, which reads ‘Gypsies and Travellers not included’, because in many case we just aren’t. When some organisations have this pointed out to them there is often a mad scramble to find someone to give a talk or do a little bit of training also sound familiar?

There would be no need for any mad scramble if people planned ahead and included us from the start.

If we aren’t included it’s not like a lack of batteries just an inconvenience, it’s much more serious than that that because then it makes it so much harder for us to get the equal treatment we deserve and for they the organisations to fulfil their legal and moral obligations to our communities.

Many organisations just don’t know what do with us because we don’t fit into their current plans, that’s not our fault or problem it is rather their responsibility to make sure they accommodate us.

A classic one in 2003 was an invitation by the arts council to encourage ethnic minorities to get funding for creative projects through their decibel scheme, which sounded great but on further inspection it turned out that the scheme was just for Black, Asian and Chinese. When it was pointed out to them that they had missed out the most excluded ethnic group they were apologetic but felt they couldn’t do anything about it until the next scheme a couple of years down the line. I believe because we did tackle them on this, they will include us next time. This has also happened with the new head of diversity at the BBC Andrea Callender after a couple of meetings she is very keen to make sure that and Gypsy and Traveller issues are now included at the BBC.

It poses the question why aren’t we included if we’ve been in this country for so long?

One of the reasons I think is the way we are brought up, we just don’t like being forward, we are brought up to wait until being asked, even if it’s a cup of tea.

I remember when I was a young lad being brought up in the north east and inviting one of my school pals a Gorgia lad to come to our home for his tea. While we were all eating he just got up and just helped himself to another drink of pop from a kitchen cupboard without asking, I would never have dreamed of doing that in his home. We were all shocked at his forwardness.

I'm not saying that we should be rude or arrogant or go against the way we are brought up, only that we ask for what is rightfully ours in law and that as recognised ethnic minorities Traveller and Gypsy to be included. We need to keep asking and demanding that we are included not just because it's our right but also because we have to think of our children and grandchildren the ones we are encouraging to go into higher education and into a range of jobs, it's no good them doing that and then finding out that organisations still don't want to include them.

Much of the lack of inclusion I believe is ignorance in it's truest form, in that many people in organisations just aren't aware that Traveller's and Gypsies are ethnic minorities altogether in fact larger than the Bangladeshi community for example. A few of the reasons I've been given for not being included are 'oh I thought you had all settled down and weren't Gypsies anymore'. 'I thought there were only about 10,000 of your group in the whole country and we didn't know how to contact you'. 'We knew that you were mostly illiterate so didn't want to cause any embarrassment by contacting you'.

As every Traveller who's ever knocked at a door knows it's how you ask and how you talk to people that makes a difference whether you get the work or the sale, but this is different we are not selling anything at least we shouldn't have to be. Most organisations are supposed to include all people in this country it's up to them to make sure we are included and us to remind them of the fact. It is always easy to dismiss one or two individuals but when it's groups or hundreds and thousands as we are now they can't dismiss us.

In 2005 we have an fantastic opportunity to build on the superb work of the coalition in getting recognition for all the good things that Gypsies and Travellers do rather than the bad, if we keep working together on becoming included then we'll create a better present and future for ourselves and those who follow us.

Above all we must make sure that we keep pressing these people with our message that **Traveller's and Gypsies must be included.**

Richard O'Neill www.Gypsyexpressions.org.uk