

# The Scottish Parliament

The Information Centre

Research Note

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## GYPSEY TRAVELLERS AND PUBLIC SECTOR POLICIES

The report of the Equal Opportunities Committee's ["Inquiry into Gypsy Travellers and Public Policies"](#) was published on 27 June 2001. This Research Note summarises the recommendations contained in the report and the Scottish Executive's response to those recommendations. It also highlights comments made by other interested parties and briefly looks at the outcomes of the civic participation event held in the Scottish Parliament by the Equal Opportunities Committee on 2 November 2001.

The Equal Opportunities Committee carried out an Inquiry into Gypsy Travellers and Public Sector Policies between October 2000 and June 2001. The terms of reference for the inquiry were:

- to examine how public sector policies relate to the minority group of travelling people, in particular services provided by local authorities and others public bodies
- to hear evidence from the travelling people community and from the agencies who interact with them
- to report and make recommendations as appropriate

The Committee published its [report](#)<sup>1</sup> into the inquiry on 27 June 2001. The report contained 37 recommendations for amendments to public policy, which can be categorised under the following headings:

- Legal Definitions
- Accommodation
- Education
- Health
- Personal Social Services
- Policing and Criminal Justice
- Promoting Good Race Relations

The following sections summarise the Committee's recommendations and the Scottish Executive's response to them. The Committee's recommendations are highlighted with grey shading and are numbered as in the report. If you require the full text of the [Committee's recommendations](#) or the [Scottish Executive's response](#) you are advised to consult the source documents.

### Legal Definitions

1: Capitalisation of the term Gypsy Traveller, or Gypsy and Traveller where used separately, should be adopted in all official minutes and reports by the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Executive, local authorities and other public bodies.
This is already standard practice within the Scottish Executive.
2: All legislation and policies should be framed on the understanding that Gypsy Travellers are an ethnic group, until such time as a court decision is made on recognition as a racial group under the Race Relations Act 1976.
The Scottish Executive will look to build Gypsy Travellers as a group in its work.

### Accommodation

3: Gypsy Travellers should be clearly identified as a specific community of interest in the implementation of the Equality Strategy.
Travellers should be considered as a community in the Community Planning process. The Scottish Executive is undertaking a review of ethnic minority voluntary sector funding.
4: New provision or site improvement programmes should be developed in consultation with Gypsy Travellers and representative organisations.
The former Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People issued guidance on consultation about site development. No commitment to change.

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<sup>1</sup> Equal Opportunities Committee, First Report 2001, Inquiry into Gypsy Travellers and Public Sector Policies, SP Paper 356, Session 1 (2001)

5: Communities Scotland has responsibility for the regulation of local authority services for Gypsy Travellers, it should ensure local authorities carry out local needs assessment for Gypsy Traveller accommodation, provide development funding for new and improved sites and issue guidance on improving site management standards.
Communities Scotland published " <a href="#">Performance Standards</a> " on 1 November 2001, Activity Standard 6 sets out the standard that local authorities should meet in Gypsy Traveller provision. Funding for sites must come from local authorities.
6: The definition of "home" for the purposes of future amendments to housing legislation should be reconsidered to include sites, which are homes to Gypsy Travellers.
No commitment to change.
7: A review should be undertaken by local authorities and the Executive Agency of the key role of site managers in providing support and information services for site residents, including job description, person specification, recruitment and training.
The former Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People has issued guidance on this topic. No commitment to change.
8: Appointment by local authorities of a designated Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer.
At the discretion of individual local authorities.
9: Private sites should be subject to the regulations and standards applicable to local authority sites. The monitoring and enforcement of these standards by local authorities should include consultation with and participation by site users.
No commitment to change.
10: Local planning authorities should be required to identify the need for Gypsy Traveller site provision and land for sites in statutory plans, using Community Planning frameworks, which include Gypsy Travellers.
Under consideration as part of the review of National Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: "Land for Housing".
11: National good practice guidance for local authorities and police forces on the management of unauthorised camping should be developed, based on a clearly articulated national policy taking into account the Scottish legislative context and in consultation with all stakeholders.
The former Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People has issued guidance on this topic. No commitment to change.
12: Gypsy Travellers should be as an identified as an ethnic group in policies on racial harassment and be included in related training and awareness raising for all those involved in the provision of housing.
No commitment to change.
13: The impact of allocation policies on the needs and lifestyle of Gypsy Travellers applying for social housing should be reviewed. Specific issues relating to Gypsies and Travellers should be included in local homelessness strategies.
Guidance on drafting homelessness strategies will highlight the requirement to consider the needs of minorities, including Gypsy Travellers.

14: The aims and objectives of the single regulatory framework for Communities Scotland should include working with local authorities to assess the needs of Gypsy Travellers for accommodation (sites and housing) and social housing providers to develop innovative models of housing provision. This should be undertaken in consultation with Gypsy Travellers.

Draft guidance on the preparation of Local Housing Strategies was issued in July 2001. The Scottish Executive are monitoring the results of an innovative travellers housing project in Northern Ireland.

## Education

15: Existing funding arrangements should be reviewed to support school and pre-school by providing additional resources where Gypsy Travellers access school education.

The Scottish Executive has made commitments relating to pre-school education, however the development of detailed policies is at the discretion of local authorities.

16: Whilst access to the core curriculum and the development of literacy and numeracy skills remains essential at the secondary level, more flexible provision in relation to vocational and work based learning should be considered for older children and young people, in consultation with Gypsy Travellers.

The Scottish Ministers set national priorities for education, it is then up to education authorities how to interpret these. The Scottish Executive will ask the Inclusiveness Projects to consider the needs of young Gypsy Travellers in accessing education, training and employment.

17: Alternative approaches to school education should be explored, where needs are identified in consultation with Gypsy Travellers.

At the discretion of local authorities. The Scottish Executive will shortly issue draft guidance relating to home education.

18: Research and good practice guidance on how schools engage with parents and welcome them into schools, for example through teacher contact, PTAs and Governing Boards.

Proposal will be considered against other research priorities.

19: The role of the education system in promoting good relations between the Gypsy Traveller and settled communities should be acknowledged and supported by education authorities by the Scottish Executive Education Department. Guidelines on initial teacher training and Continuing Professional Development should clearly identify Gypsy Travellers as an ethnic group in relation to training on equality, social justice and anti-discriminatory practice.

From autumn 2001 the "Guidelines for initial teacher education in Scotland" include expanded policies on equal opportunities. In addition the standards for registration as a teacher with the General Teaching Council Scotland will include similar policies on equal opportunities.

<p>20: Monitoring of anti-bullying strategies, use of the anti-bullying network and Childline, should include Gypsy Travellers as a separate ethnic group. Practical guidance on good practice and training to support schools and teachers should include specific reference to issues relating to Gypsy Traveller children.</p>
<p>The Anti-bullying Network will produce a leaflet on the integration of those who join during a school year, although this is not aimed particularly at Gypsy Traveller children.</p>
<p>21: Evaluation of pilot projects and examples of good practice relating to adult learning, access to vocational qualifications through community and further education, should be disseminated and further developed in consultation with Gypsy Travellers.</p>
<p>The Scottish Executive will write to the directors of Careers Scotland, and associated local careers companies, drawing attention to this recommendation. It will also consult with the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council on its implementation.</p>
<p>22: Gypsy Travellers should be included as a separate ethnic group in all systematic ethnic monitoring of education services to measure progress in meeting targets, for the educational inclusion of Gypsy Traveller children and improvements in their educational attainment. Performance indicators for school inspections should include specific reference to Gypsy Travellers.</p>
<p>Revised version of the self-assessment book "How good is our school" will include direct reference to Gypsy Travellers with regards "Meeting pupils needs" and "Pastoral care".</p>
<p>23: Further work is required on developing the information base on Gypsy Traveller children throughout the education system, clearly identified as an ethnic group, so that their needs can be included in strategic planning and policy development.</p>
<p>Personal Learning Plans will be introduced for all pupils by 2003. The continuing development of the National Management Information System should allow for such monitoring at some point in the future.</p>
<p>24: Consideration should be given by local authorities to ring-fencing or top-slicing resources for specific initiatives and interventions for education provision for Gypsy Travellers, for alternatives to school education and to encourage and support school attendance.</p>
<p>Such decisions are at the discretion of local authorities. No commitment to change.</p>
<p>25: Gypsy Travellers should be included in the strategic planning of education services and the impact of their participation monitored to ensure that their views are considered and listened to.</p>
<p>The Scottish Executive is funding the development of guidance by the Scottish Travellers Education Programme for schools and education authorities on education for Gypsy Travellers.</p>

## Health

26: Research should be commissioned by the Scottish Executive to establish the health and health needs of Gypsy Travellers in Scotland, including specific research on health issues arising from environmental factors relating to accommodation.
A Scottish Health Plan commitment.
27: Guidelines on initial training and Continuing Professional Development of NHS staff should clearly identify Gypsy Travellers as an ethnic group in relation to training on equality, social justice and anti-discriminatory practice and promote awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of Gypsy Travellers in relation to health care.
A Scottish Health Plan commitment.
28: New services and improvements to existing services should be developed in consultation and monitored, to establish whether targets are being met and that the services meet Gypsy Traveller needs.
A Scottish Health Plan commitment.
29: Funding systems should be reviewed, clearly explained and transparent, to ensure that there are no disincentives for GP practices in registering Gypsy Travellers.
Research into the availability of medical services to Gypsy Travellers for the Scottish Executive has been submitted to the Primary Care Modernisation Group for their consideration.
30: Resources for the maintenance or mainstreaming of pilot projects that develop good practice in the provision of health care for Gypsy Travellers should be made available to Health Boards, with particular reference to the use of patient hand-held records.
A Scottish Health Plan Commitment.
31: Gypsy Travellers should be targeted for specific health promotion campaigns, such as immunisation, accident prevention, child development, and women's health issues, including screening.
NHS boards are required to target services at vulnerable groups under the Child Health Support Group Template and a commitment to tackle health inequalities in "Our National Health".

## Personal Social Services

32: Where a Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer is appointed their specific responsibilities should include consultation with Gypsy Travellers, promoting appropriate service provision, providing information and support to Gypsy Travellers in accessing public services.
The appointment of a Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer is at the discretion of individual local authorities. Where such an officer has been appointed the Scottish Executive supports that these tasks should form part of their responsibilities.

33: Gypsy Travellers should be included in the strategic planning of personal social services, including community care, and the impact of their participation monitored to ensure that their views are considered.

The Scottish Executive will ensure that future guidance to local authorities on the strategic planning of social services reminds authorities to take account of the needs of Gypsy Travellers.

### **Policing and criminal justice**

34: Racial diversity strategies and training materials for the police and other relevant bodies in the criminal justice system should include reference to Gypsy Travellers as a separate ethnic group.

This is the responsibility of the Scottish Police Service and Scottish Police College.

35: Schemes should be developed to promote the confidence of Gypsy Travellers in the police, whether contact relates to experiences as victims of crime, racial harassment or as suspected offenders.

A working group is due to report on the creation of a Scottish Community Legal Service, which could provide particular legal support for travellers is due to report to the Justice Minister.

36: Policing practices and arrangements should continue to be reviewed and specific monitoring of relations between Police and Gypsy Travellers relations established. Guidance should be provided for use by the Police in working with Gypsy Travellers.

Local police forces will make appropriate arrangements for the care of people coming to their attentions for whatever reason.

### **Promoting good relations**

37: To support the recognition of Gypsy Travellers as a distinct ethnic group and commitment by public services to develop policy and service provision based on such an approach.

The forthcoming Local Government Bill will place a duty of best value on local authorities that will have regard to equal opportunities. The Advertising Agency appointed by the Scottish Executive to develop its anti-racist campaign has been asked to consult Gypsy Travellers.

## REACTION TO THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

Responses to the Equal Opportunities Committee report have been generally favourable, Save the Children Scotland stated:

*“The publication of this weighty tome was arguably a landmark event in the history of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland. For the first time the discrimination faced by many Gypsy/Travellers on a daily basis was clearly acknowledged and condemned. The report represents the first serious attempt in Scotland to detail the issues affecting Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland and sends a clear message to public agencies and others that discriminatory policies and practices towards Gypsy/Travellers will no longer be acceptable.”<sup>2</sup>*

While the vice-chairman of the Scottish Gypsy Travellers Association is quoted as saying:

*“We are delighted that there has at last been recognition of the social exclusion, discrimination and harassment which gypsy travellers face on a daily basis. We strongly hope that the Scottish Executive, local authorities and service providers will take urgent action on these recommendations to improve the lives of gypsy travellers.”<sup>3</sup>*

The call to implement the recommendations in the report is echoed by the Scottish Legal Action Group, which states that:

*“The Committee’s Report should be welcomed and its recommendations should be implemented.”<sup>4</sup>*

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE: GYPSY TRAVELLER CIVIC PARTICIPATION EVENT

On Friday 2 November 2001 the Equal Opportunities Committee held a civic participation event in the chamber of the Scottish Parliament which event brought together:

- Organisations working with and representing the Gypsy Traveller communities
- Gypsy Travellers, including young Gypsy Travellers
- Local authority housing, education and social services staff
- Health service staff
- MSPs
- Scottish Executive officials

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<sup>2</sup> [Report on Gypsy Traveller Civic Participation Event](#), Pre-event written submissions, SP Paper 448, The Scottish Parliament, 2001

<sup>3</sup> [BBC News Online](#), 27 June 2001

<sup>4</sup> [SCOLAG Legal Journal](#), August 2001



Prior to the event, written submissions were invited from all interested parties to help inform the discussions, which were carried out in workshop groups facilitated by Members of the Equal Opportunities Committee. The workshops focused on Health and Social Services, Education and Culture, Policing and Criminal Justice and Accommodation.

The four workshop groups together brought forward 21 recommendations outlining their views of the priorities for future action to deal with the key issues affecting the lives of Gypsy Travellers in Scotland. These recommendations broadly agreed with the recommendations put forward by the Equal Opportunities Committee in its report.

Following the event the Equal Opportunities Committee stated:

*“The Committee wishes to express its disappointment in the tone and extent of the Executive's response to its report. The Gypsy Traveller community and others shared this disappointment. Whilst accepting that not all of the recommendations contained in the report are the direct responsibility of the Scottish Executive, the Committee does feel that the Executive has an important role in spearheading anti-discriminatory practice.”<sup>5</sup>*

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**Research Notes** are compiled for the benefit of Members of Parliament and their personal staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

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<sup>5</sup> [Report on Gypsy Traveller Civic Participation Event](#), SP Paper 448, The Scottish Parliament, 2001  
*providing research and information services to the Scottish Parliament*