GYPSY AND TRAVELLER EMPOWERMENT
GATE
Hertfordshire

RECOGNISE, REPORT, RESOLVE

"I HOPE THE RIVER FLOODS"

EVERYDAY HATRED AGAINST GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER COMMUNITIES

An evaluation of the Report Racism GRT website submissions

July 2016 – February 2018

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For GATE Hertfordshire

Report Racism
GYPSY, ROMA, TRAVELLER

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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Please note this report contains strong and potentially offensive language.

FOREWORD

Foreword by Josie O Driscoll
Chief Officer GATE Herts

Gypsy, Roma and Travellers are among the most disenfranchised and discriminated against in society.

Racist language, prejudicial images and stereotyped portrayals of Gypsy Roma and Travellers endorse the principle of prejudice and may suggest that racist attitudes to others are acceptable. Stereotypes are an invention, a pretence, they divide people into groups, based on certain perceived characteristics, and they are propagating prejudice against my people.

The work that GATE Hertfordshires/ Report Racism GRT are doing to record hate crime and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities is highly important.

We already know that my people face significant barriers in engaging with systems and services. Statistics consistently show extremely low levels of school retention and attainment, and a lack of progression into higher education for young people from GRT communities.

In terms of health outcomes, GRT individuals have a lower life expectancy than the general population, and higher rates of physical and mental health problems throughout their adult lives.

This report on the data gathered by GATEHertfordshire through the Report Racism GRT website sheds light on some of the everyday challenges that people from GRT communities face that inevitably impact on their wider lives including engagement with education, health and other services, and their mental and physical health.

The report finds that GRT individuals face everyday discrimination and hatred. This occurs in their engagement with public and private services, in the streets and even at their homes. A significant amount of hate speech is also directed at them online, with threats of serious violence levelled against them on a daily basis. GRT communities are deliberately targeted for such hate both online and offline, and it is a pervasive reality of their lives.

Through this report, GATE Hertfordshire in conjunction with Goldsmiths, University of London, highlight the extent of the problem and the response needed is clear. Public and private services, the media, politicians, online social networking platforms, and those regulating communication via all these organisations and individuals, must urgently act to speak out against the hatred and discrimination faced by GRT individuals and communities, and refrain from perpetuating it.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

As you will be aware, in his Police and Crime Plan for London (2017-21), the Mayor has committed to tackling hate crime in all its forms and has pledged to take a zero tolerance approach to hate crime anywhere in London, be it on public transport, on our streets or online. We know that hate crime is under-reported, and particularly so amongst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, so I commend the work that you are doing to support communities in seeking and accessing advice and support.

Dr Zoë James
Associate Professor (Senior Lecturer) in Criminology and Criminal Justice

School of Law, Criminology and Government (Faculty of Business)

Supporting Gypsies and Travellers to report hate is important and essential work. The hateful rhetoric, incidents and crimes that Gypsies and Travellers experience every day is harmful in multiple ways: they suffer effects that are physical, psychological and impact on the wider community. Providing a reporting mechanism that works to engage and empower Gypsies and Travellers ensures their needs are recognised and their rights respected.

INTRODUCTION

This evaluation has analysed the cases of hate incidents and discrimination crime towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities in the UK that have been reported to the Report Racism GRT website since its inception in July 2016. The evaluation took place in early February 2018 and considered all cases reported to the site that were from the UK, removing any spam, duplicates and cases outside the UK. In total, 115 cases were analysed. These were subject to both quantitative analysis of the nature of reporting and abuse, as well as qualitative analysis to identify key themes and examples. As many of the reports stated that the incidents affected all three key group categories; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller - or did not state which they related to specifically, the evaluation has not made a specific distinction between these groups in the analysis of cases. A small number of follow-up interviews took place with some reporters who had given permission to be contacted, where more information on particular cases was needed.

Of the 115 cases, 89 (77%) of incidents were reported by people from GRT groups and 26 (23%) by third parties.

20% of the incidents reported to Report Racism GRT were also reported to police.

18% of the incidents reported to the site by people from GRT groups were reported to police compared with 27% of third parties reporting to police.

The most common reason for not reporting to police was a lack of confidence that the police would act. 57% of people who did not report to police gave this reason.

People reporting to the site chose the type of incident they were reporting from several categories (they could choose multiple categories per incident).

The most common type of incident reported to Report Racism GRT was online hate (67%).

Despite the focus of Report Racism GRT on hate incidents crime in particular, the second most common category chosen was discrimination (30%).

The themes identified in the qualitative analysis of the cases were: social media abuse; media incitement; reinforcing negative stereotypes; harassment, intimidation and violence; discrimination and exclusion from services; and bullying at school or work.

This report outlines the quantitative and qualitative findings including both online and offline examples of abuse and discrimination.

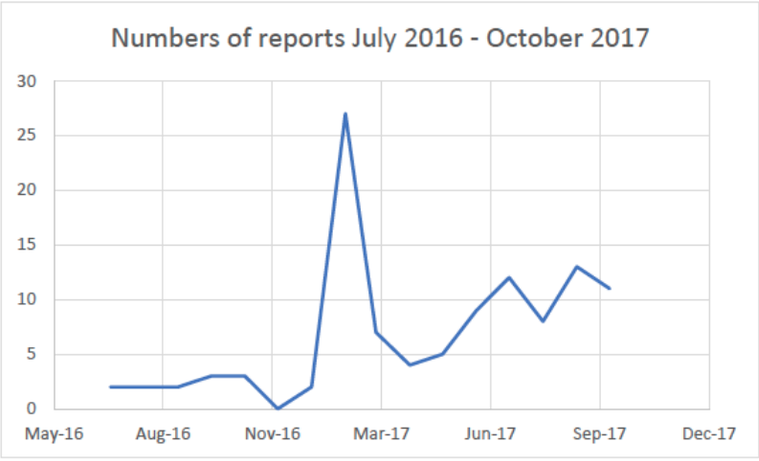
NATURE OF REPORTING

This section outlines the nature of the reporting to the Report Racism GRT website including numbers and locations of reports from its first reports in July 2016 until the data was analysed in early February 2018. It also outlines the low levels of reporting to police by those reporting to the website and what they have said about why they didn't report.

Numbers of reports over time

Between July 2016 and early February 2018, there were 115 independent reports to the site from the UK. Over this period, the overall pattern is of growth in the number of reports. In both 2016 and 2017 the number of reports reduces to almost zero in the November and December period. Numbers of reports to the site also dipped somewhat in July and August 2017 before picking up again in September. These periods of low reports are likely to reflect how easily people have access to the internet in these periods rather than necessarily a lack of incidents.

The graph below shows the overall pattern in numbers of reports from July 2016 until October 2017. This graph stops before the low period of reporting in November and December 2017 in order to demonstrate the overall pattern of growth over time.



The large spike in reports in February 2017 represents a particularly abusive takeover of a 'Travellers buy and sell' Facebook group by trolls which received 24 independent reports in one month.

Location of reports

Not all reported incidents included a geographical location. Of those that did, it is apparent that the Report Racism GRT website is known about and being used across England. It is not yet being used in any significant way by the rest of the UK with one report from Scotland, one from Wales and none from Northern Ireland. The map below shows the locations of UK reports.

It should be noted here that this is an indication not necessarily of where incidents are prevalent but where the Report Racism GRT website is known about and being used. There is a need for some awareness raising in the UK nations beyond England.

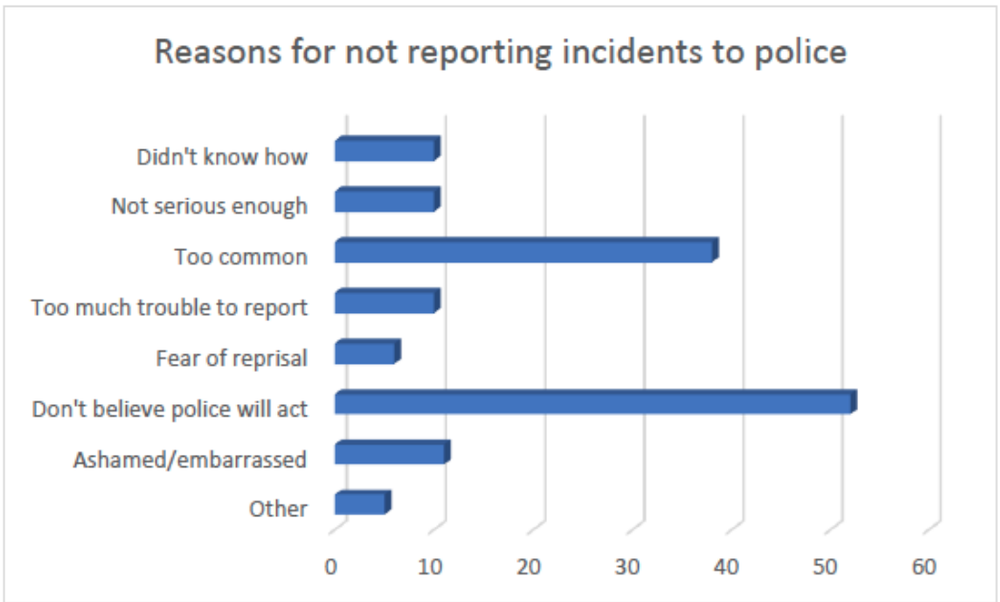
Whilst this evaluation has focused on UK reports to the site, it is worth noting that Report Racism GRT is beginning to be used internationally with reports coming from countries including Ireland, Italy, Russia, Ukraine, Norway, Spain and the USA.

Reporting to police and other agencies

Only 20% (23 of 115) of those reporting incidents to Report Racism GRT had also reported the incident to the police. When the incidents reported by third parties not from GRT communities are removed, this is even lower with 18% of incidents reported by people from GRT groups having also been reported to police. 27% of people from non-GRT groups who reported incidents had also reported to the police.

The low levels of reporting to police demonstrates low levels of trust between GRT communities and the police. Whilst non-GRT third parties were more likely to report incidents to the police, it is clear that these third parties also did not trust an appropriate police response would be made to incidents perpetrated against people from GRT groups.

The graph below illustrates the reasons that people gave for not reporting incidents to police. (People could choose multiple categories).



The most common reason for not reporting is the belief that the police won't act on the incident. 57% of people who did not report the incidents to police stated police inaction as a reason for not reporting.

The second most common reason was that people felt that such incidents were 'too common an occurrence' with 41% of those who did not report incidents to police stating this as a reason. This often coincided with reporters feeling the incident was 'not serious enough' and/or 'too much trouble to report'. The choosing of these categories indicates how discrimination and abuse against GRT communities is normalised and seen as a pervasive reality of their lives. It is recognised as something that is socially acceptable and unlikely to change, even by the communities themselves. Around one quarter of the incidents reported to Report Racism GRT were part of an ongoing issue the victims were facing rather than being one-off incidents.

In a follow-up interview, one person who had reported to the website on a number of occasions shared that:

"If I reported everything I came across I would do nothing else... I have tried to report and respond to the abuse which is often targeted at our animals and children but there is too many and you just can't win"

She said she had reported incidents to police in the past but because nothing was ever done she just 'stopped bothering' to do this. She was encouraged by a GRT organisation to report to the Report Racism GRT site.

Where people reporting to the site indicate that they did report incidents to police or to other agencies, there is little evidence of any action or change. Some of these incidents demonstrate bias against GRT groups by police and other agencies.

Some of the online incidents were reported to the social media platforms (Facebook in particular) or to the admins of the groups in which they occurred. In most cases the reporters indicated that this was not acted upon. However, when following up some of these online posts it did appear that some had been later removed. However, a significant amount of online hate and discrimination remains online on news and social media sites several months later.

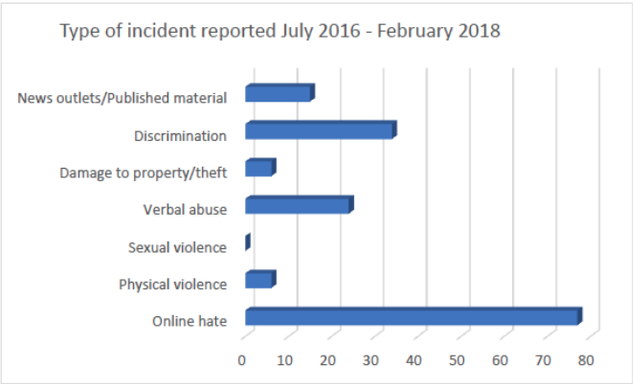
The fact that the people reporting incidents to Report Racism GRT did so despite not reporting to the police or other authorities suggests that the lack of official reporting is not because the incidents are not seen as worthy of reporting by victims and observers. Some further work is needed to explore why people will report incidents to the website when they won't report via official channels and what their expectations are for a response. There are implications for Report Racism GRT to ensure they are following up on reports and are not another forum for inaction.

NATURE OF THE ABUSE

People reporting incidents to the Report Racism GRT site are asked what type of incident they are reporting from a number of different categories. They are able to choose more than one of these categories.

Type of incidents reported

Online hate was the most common type of incident with 67% of reporters choosing this category. There is clearly a high rate of online abuse towards GRT groups. The high levels of reporting of online incidents is likely to also reflect to an extent the fact that Report Racism GRT is an online reporting system. It also demonstrates the reach of online abuse. For example, some abuse taking place online is reported independently by multiple people demonstrating a level of impact not experienced in offline incidents which tend to be reported by one person once and to affect only one individual or a small number of people.



Discrimination was the second most common type of incident reported with 30% of reporters choosing this category. It is also possible that some incidents of discrimination may not be reported because the site is framed as hate incidents.

Verbal abuse was the third most common type of incident at 21%. Some people ticked verbal abuse alongside online hate suggesting that in some cases online hate speech is seen as the equivalent of offline verbal threats.

Thematic analysis of the incident

All of the 115 incidents were subject to qualitative thematic analysis to identify themes that cut across the different categories of incident reported to the Report Racism GRT site. The key themes that emerged from this analysis are:

- Social media abuse
- Media incitement
- Reinforcing negative stereotypes
- Intimidation, harassment and violence
- Exclusion and discrimination from and within services
- Bullying at school and work

These qualitative themes are explored in detail below.

SOCIAL MEDIA ABUSE

Abuse of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups on social media was the most common theme that emerged from the analysis of hate incidents reported on the website. The prevalence of this type of report may reflect, to an extent, that the method of reporting to Report Racism GRT is also online and therefore is an easy and perhaps preferred mode of reporting for those individuals who are active online. These forms of online incident which lack a specific location may also be ones that victims are particularly unsure about the appropriateness of reporting to local police, especially given the low confidence in the police overall. However, given that 67% of the incidents reported were classed as online hate and the majority of these relate to social media, it is clearly a pervasive form of abuse towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Facebook was the most common site of reported abuse.

This may reflect the age demographic of those reporting as well as the ease of the site for such abuse on social media took various forms. One of these was the targeting of an individual or group's own page or account to perpetuate hate. On Facebook, individuals' profiles were targeted as well as groups or pages created by Gypsy and Traveller groups for their own communities. For example, one person reported that someone had observed from a badge on their Facebook profile picture that they were of Gypsy heritage and left the extremely offensive comment, 'pikey cunt' on the photo. In other cases, people reported that perpetrators had shared the personal accounts of Gypsy, Roma or Traveller individuals on other pages or sites with derogatory commentary. For example, one victim's YouTube videos were shared on Facebook in this way. These invasions of people's personal profiles are a particularly intimidating form of online harassment for victims.

Case Study: Takeover of the 'Travellers Buy and Sell' group on Facebook

In February 2017, there were 24 independent reports to the Report Racism GRT website about abuse happening on a 'buy and sell' group on Facebook set up by and for, and used by Travellers. This page was targeted by a number of 'trolls' using fake accounts to level some horrific abuse towards GRT groups and individuals. As well as general insults and hatred towards Traveller communities, the trolls moved on to taking the pictures of children and dead relatives from the personal Facebook accounts of group members and posting them to the group with abuse and threats towards these individuals. People who responded to the original, more general threats were particular targets for this type of abuse. The comments reported, many alongside personal photos from group members' profiles, included.

"Go and commit suicide"

"I wish this was all Travellers" (alongside a picture of a burning caravan)

"Go hang yourselves"

"You need to wash"

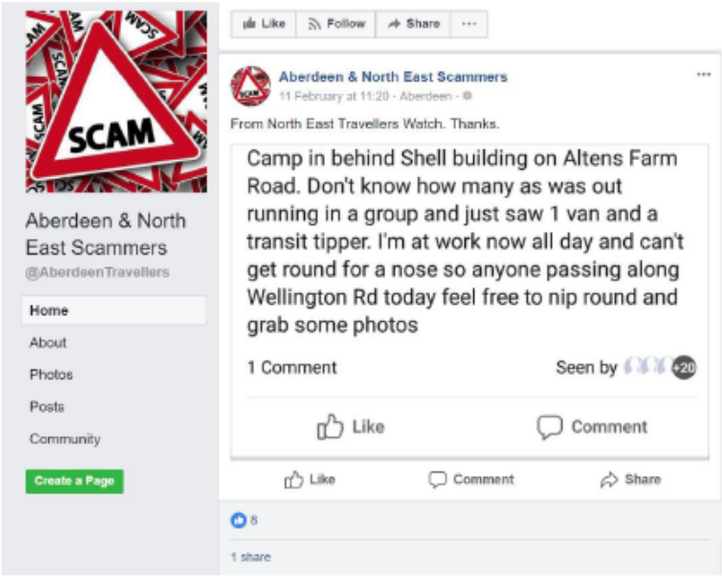
"Learn to read"

"Half dead travelling baby for sale"

"Retards"

This case study is a clear example of the reach and impact of online abuse, leading to so many reports. It also highlights how perpetrators can protect their own anonymity online (through the use of fake accounts) and yet access personal information about those they target to harass and intimidate. The level of personal invasion and intimidation was significant in this case as well as that the perpetrators hijacked the communities' own group to perpetuate this abuse.

Another common form reported of perpetuating hatred on Facebook was through local groups that were set up as community groups specific to local areas such as 'Spotted: Grimsby', 'Stubbington Matters', 'Crossgates Leeds', 'Dunmow Residents', 'Exmouth Community UK' and 'Spotted Hoddesdon', and even on official pages of some publicly funded authorities. These groups were not set up by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups but were more general community forums used by local residents to discuss the area. There were also local pages and groups set up by residents specifically to monitor the arrival or presence of Travellers and Gypsies in the area. The creation and existence of such pages appears to be tolerated by Facebook although there is some evidence of particular posts being removed from these and other groups, even in some cases where reporters to the Report Racism GRT website said they had not been removed after being reported to Facebook. The example below 'Aberdeen and North East Scammers' is similar to one reported that appeared to have been closed and reflects a common theme in the name of these groups, the word 'scammers'. It can be observed that the handle of this particular group is '@Aberdeentravellers' demonstrating the particular targeting of Travellers and the direct association being made between 'Travellers' and the description of them as 'scammers'.



The fact that Facebook tolerates the existence of whole pages explicitly dedicated to monitoring Travellers demonstrates that they are not afforded the same protections online as other minority groups.

A significant aspect of incidents on social media is just how horrific the nature of the abuse could be. Extreme hate speech towards Gypsy and Roma Traveller communities is prevalent and it appears, in many cases, tolerated. Terms such as ‘gas’, ‘cull’, ‘bomb’, ‘drone’, ‘drown’ and other threats of violence were common in the reports made to Report Racism GRT. In the example below, this can be observed in one person’s response to Travellers arriving

in the local area where he states ‘Gas them out’.

Overall, it appears that social media is an easy forum to perpetuate abuse in a variety of forms, even for threats of quite serious violence. There is further evidence of this is the next section on media incitement.

MEDIA INCITEMENT

This theme overlaps with social media abuse as much of the incitement takes place on social media sites but not exclusively so. It is a theme in its own right because of the prevalence of the pattern where a media outlet publish an article or social media post about GRT groups in a way that incites some serious levels of online hate speech and inference of violence. This takes place both in the direct comments on the media article on their own website as well as where the article or post is shared on social media by the media outlet. Whilst the articles themselves do not perpetuate the hatred directly, they are a frequent forum for incitement of hate. Some extreme comments perpetuating hatred and violence remain on their own websites and on their social media pages several months after they are made, demonstrating that these media outlets are not doing enough to moderate the comments their publishing incites. Responsible reporting is a key issue here.

The pattern of incitement typically involves one of three types of incident being reported by the media:

– The arrival of a new encampment

– Negative comments about GRT groups by someone in public life, usually a politician (for example, an MP, local councillor, or Mayor)

– An incident of anti-social behaviour or crime involving Gypsies or Travellers

These reports prompt a torrent of abuse and attacks on GRT communities online by individuals. Even where people reporting these incidents to Report Racism GRT indicate they have also reported to the publisher and/or social media platform, the comments are often not removed.

The regional press in local areas is the most common publisher of such stories. Regional press implicated in these reports include, for example, the Yorkshire Evening Post, the Bucks Free Press and the Express and Star.

There were also some examples from the national press as in the one below, an example of reporting about crime and anti-social behaviour, from the Express which led to comments inciting hate on the website comments.

OAP 'had false teeth KNOCKED OUT as she tried to stop travellers entering nature reserve'

A PENSIONER claims her false teeth were knocked out when she was thrown to the floor by travellers as she battled to stop them entering a popular nature reserve.

By MARK REYNOLDS

PUBLISHED: 14:58, Mon, Jun 12, 2017 | UPDATED: 18:18, Mon, Jun 12, 2017

SHARE TWEET 1 10

Peterboroughboy 256 days ago

There is another name for these so called "travellers" just thieving thugs.....

Reply · Share Report This Comment +2

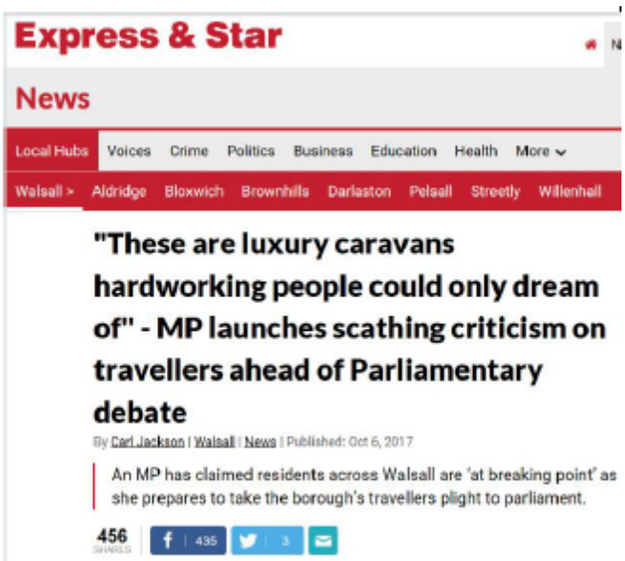
Dave01 256 days ago

If they try any of this nonsense in Ireland they get their teeth knocked out - false or otherwise. And their police don't don't negotiate with them; if they stray off of their fully functional 'reservations' their caravans are just hooked up to tractors and dragged back. And . . . . no one over there gets them to tarmacadam their drives. We're just too soft.

Reply · Share · 1 reply Report This Comment +5

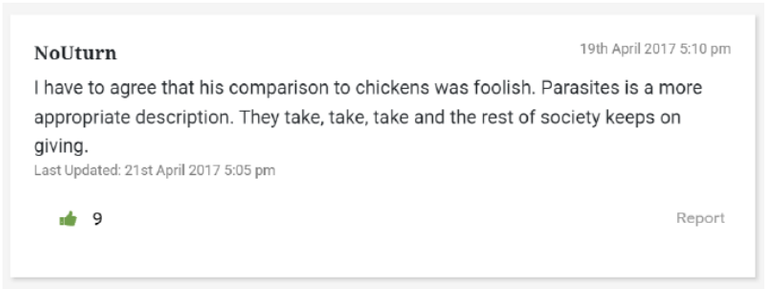
Reports about politicians' comments produce similar hatred and, arguably, add legitimacy to such prejudice. The example below from regional publisher, the Express and Star, which published a story about an MP's comments about Travellers was similar with the example comment below, among many others, still on their website several months later:

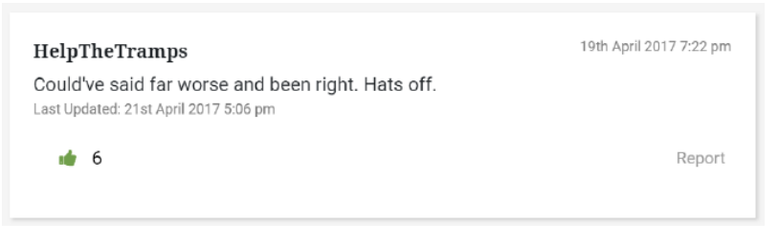
It is significant here that the perpetrator has 'starred out' letters in the words 'crap' and 'shit' but not 'Pikeys'. This indicates that the commenter sees the 'starred out' words as more offensive and/or that they think only the first two words would prevent the comment making it through a filter for swear words on the newspaper's website. Either way, the fact that the publisher finds it acceptable to have the word 'Pikey' on their website even several months later indicates the lack of response given to racism against GRT groups.



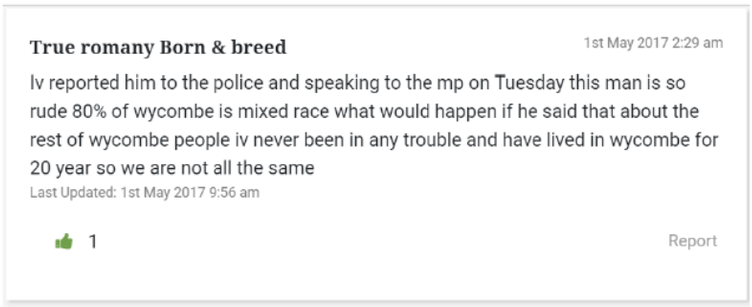
Having successfully called for a Parliamentary debate on the issue of unauthorised traveller encampments, which will take place next week, Aldridge-Brownhills MP Wendy Morton has hit out at travellers who act 'above the law'.

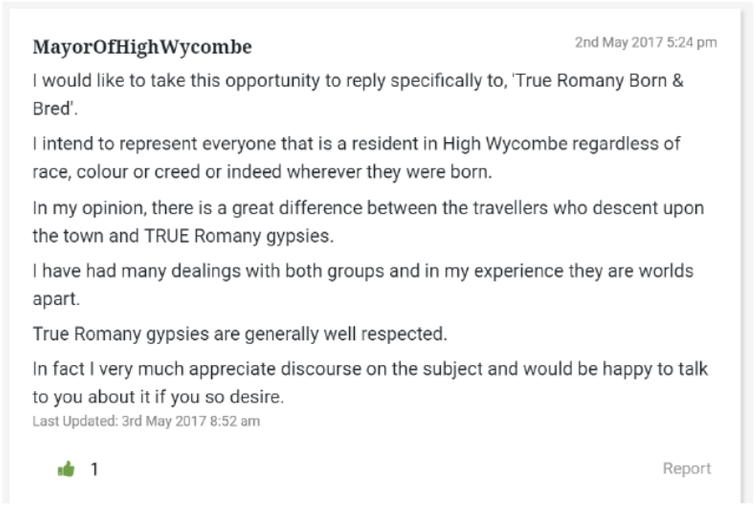
In another example of comments made by a politician, the Bucks Free Press reported on the local Mayor's apology for problematic comments about 'culling' Travellers. Whilst reporting this kind of story could be viewed as more sympathetic to GRT groups, again hateful and abusive comments that support the Mayor and demonise GRT communities are left on their website several months later, indicative of inaction and even collusion.





An inappropriate and divisive response to comments that claims to come from the Mayor himself is also left on the website.

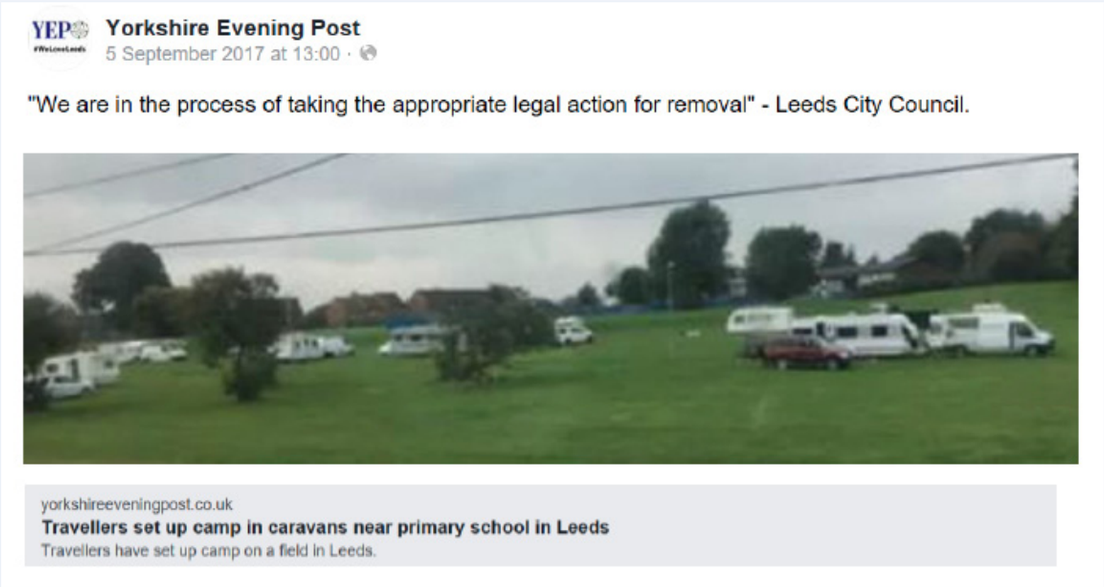




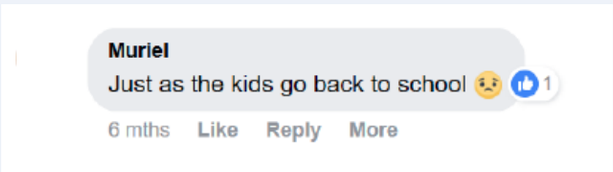
It is worth noting here that it is not possible to determine whether this comment actually came from the Mayor but the Bucks Free Press's collusion in leaving these comments online is the key issue.

Case Study: Incitement by the Yorkshire Evening Post

This case study demonstrates how media incitement overlaps with the themes of social media abuse, the reinforcement of negative stereotypes, intimidation and violence and clear discrimination by the press against GRT groups. The Yorkshire Evening Post was reported twice to Report Racism GRT for inciting hatred through its Facebook page. On both these occasions, it posted an image with a comment about Travellers arriving in the area, one example of which is below.

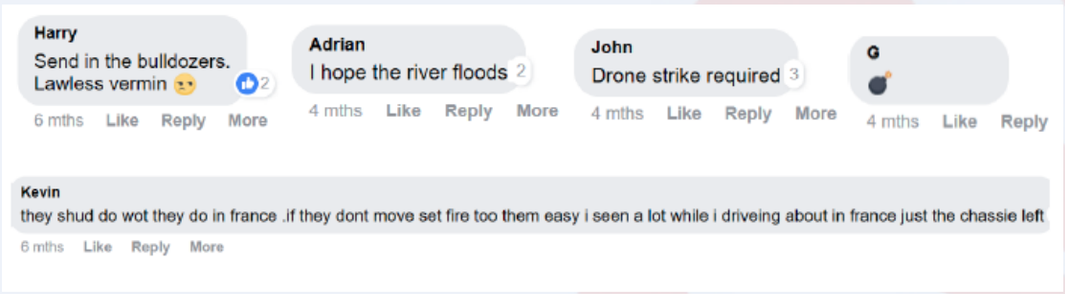


These posts incited vast numbers of negative comments, more than any other examples reported to Report Racism GRT. Many of the comments appear to be posted by people who genuinely believe the message created by this type of reporting that Travellers are a problem to be feared. For example, one such response to the above reacts to the field being near a school.



Other comments reinforced negative stereotypes about GRT communities such as those around not paying taxes, being thieves, and leaving mess behind. Some examples of this are included in the section of this report on reinforcing negative stereotypes.

In response to both posts by the Yorkshire Evening Post of this nature, there were also significant numbers of extremely hateful comments including those inciting violence.



There is evidence that some extreme violent comments have been removed as one commenter states to another: “I notice your picture of the gas used to kill millions in concentration camps was quickly removed. That is evil”. However, given the other posts remain, it can be assumed that this one relating to the Holocaust was removed because it is also offensive to other groups beyond GRT communities.

When people defended GRT communities against the hateful comments, the response they received was either further hatred targeted at GRT people or insults directed at the person defending them, as in the examples below.

As well as the examples of hatred exemplified in this section, the media reports about GRT groups also incited comments that reinforce negative stereotypes (as demonstrated in the next section) and comments suggesting that GRT groups are given freedoms and allowances others are not, due to political correctness and human rights legislation. The very fact that such hatred is allowed to remain on these sites suggests the direct opposite. There is arguably a need for a more serious response to hate speech against GRT communities both by the media outlets themselves as well as by social media platforms.

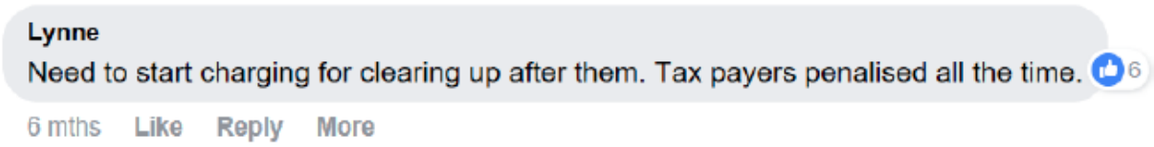
There were also a number of offline examples reported of incitement including through TV, radio, newspapers and local publicity for events.

REINFORCING NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

Much of the abuse reported involved derogatory comments that reinforce problematic negative stereotypes about GRT communities. This theme overlaps with the themes of social media abuse and media incitement and is prevalent across the online examples of hate reported to Report Racism GRT. It is also a feature of the offline incidents of verbal abuse and discrimination including, for example, by health services, media and the general public. Some of these offline incidents are outlined in later sections.

The negative stereotypes that are most commonly referred to are outlined below with examples of some of the online comments made by commentators in incidents reported to Report Racism GRT. These range from stereotypes about GRT communities avoiding taxes and committing crime to accusations of animal cruelty. A stereotype reinforced about GRT communities leaving mess behind as they travel also often evolves into extremely derogatory accusations about their toilet habits. The particularly nasty comments about human faeces reinforce both these stereotypes around mess as well as belittling their status as civilised human beings. Discussions of such online led to GRT groups being referred to as 'scrotes', 'scum', 'dirty', 'filthy' and 'savages'.

Reference to GRT communities not paying taxes



"They should pay taxes and council tax water rates then no one would object like everyone else"

"Firstly you cant be Racist in law about Travelers as they are not a race. So are you saying they in general. They all pay tax. They don't overcharge old ladies and the weak. If you are you are deluded. I wish I could afford a brand new van and a New Merc every year. They need some where to stay so the police can find them when someone has ripped off an old lady. Pay in to society and you get some thing out. don't and don't expect the same as others."

"they could always get a house and contribute to society rather than just taking from it"

"And the fact they expect to live for free, the rest of us pay...."

"I don't have a problem with people who want to spend their lives travelling but they have to pay tax otherwise they have no right to services provided by government."

"They don't pay any tax, no tv license majority make a mess where ever they go, I'm not even sure how the hell they tax and insure their cars with no fixed address. It costs the tax payer for the council to put portable loo's up for them, clean up the mess and give them skips."

"They want to travel not live in houses and want land to set up camp on ??? Yet fail to pay tax like the rest of us and want us to feel sorry for them ??"

"They wont settle on camp sites because they have to pay council tax, we had them on Brooklands ave every car was a 17 plate there was a BMW x5 in white 67 plate fresh out of the wrapper"

"Same old garbage from the council it's time you chased these gypsy for money to pay for the damaged and court cost. I bet you have not reclaimed one single penny from any illegal gypsy set up at all You are supposed to be the tax pay-ers servants not the gypsy servants. Start doing your jobs."

Reference to theft, crime and anti-social behaviour

"If these 'travellers' didn't commit crime or send there urchin children out stealing, or stop doing bogus burglaries purporting to be the gas man etc. Then when they went they tidied up and took their own waste with them, then maybe it would be more acceptable. the only people to create this issue is the travellers themselves. Also to try and pretend to be some race or have some ethnic link is utter rubbish."

"There is an increas in anti-social noise when they turn up when they race around the local area in bikes and quads. I've witnessed them racing each other in cars at life threatening speeds. They have a total disregard for the land they rest on and the local community."

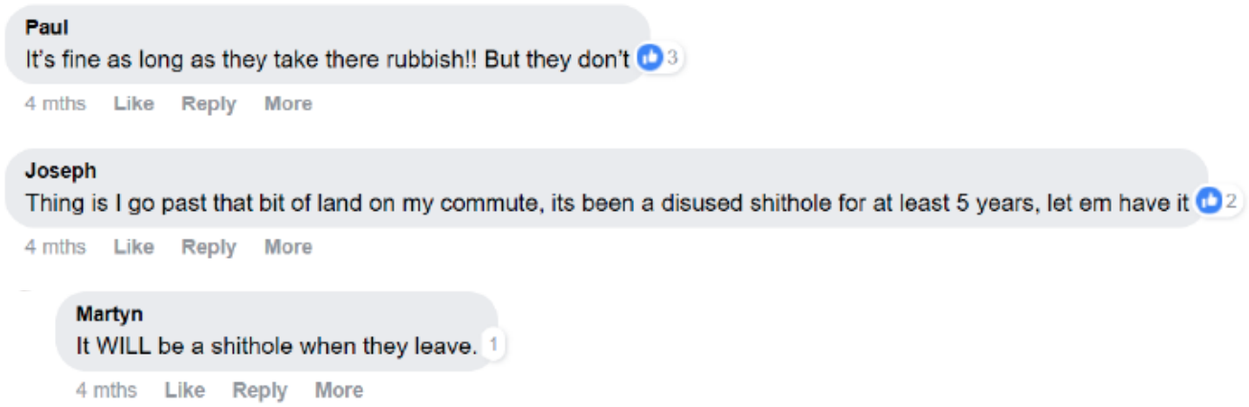
"If i break the law i get arrested immediately or if I'm causing an obstruction I'm moved on immediately...so why the hell does it take the council and plod an absolute age to move these pikeys on ??"

"Threating behaviour, leave rubbish and break the law but yet have to wait for eviction notice and you wonder why members of public take action into there own hands?"

"To be honest of those that I have met, their kids seem way more sexualised. Being winked at and called 'big boy' by 12 year olds it's pretty disconcerting!"
"All they have to do is obey the law like everyone else. But nooooo"

"poor kids cant play there as gypsy kids are pushing the kids off the swings. discusting"

Reference to leaving mess



"it's against the law to fly tip, most people use a bin... Most of them not only leave a mess, they commit crimes like shop lifting, they fight amongst each other, intimidate others and stay up until all hours shouting and carrying on."

"Have you seen the land when they leave it though? Horse and dog muck, rubbish absolutely everywhere and no effort by the travellers to clean up their mess. They never look after the land."

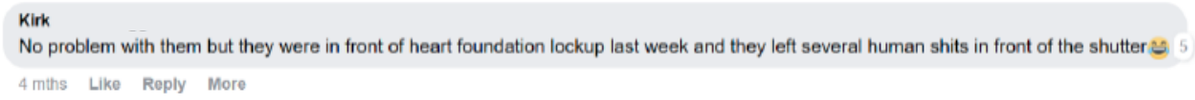
"For everyone saying leave them to it. I take it you're all going to be going here and cleaning up all the mess that will be left... oh wait no it will be left to the council to clean it. If they wanna stay there they should at least clean up after themselves."

"They were down in headingley the other week! I've seen them a good few times! Absolute menace! Leave the place a state when they leave too!"

"Travellers left farnley park in a terrible state a few years ago churned all the grass up dog poo everywhere kids shouting and swearing. It was disgraceful. And us the tax payer pays for the clean up. If they leave it in the same state they found it that would be acceptable."

"Now watch them turn the place into a Dump and Thousands of £'s have to paid to Clear up their trash, sewage waste etc etc etc of Local Tax payers money to get rid of them!!! Why is it they are allowed to come over from Ireland and the Irish do NOTHING to stop them!!! This is a Joke of which the left wing eagerly permit it to continue !!! ;("

Reference to human faeces



"They find it dirty to shit in the caravans. Surely its more dirty to shit outside!"

"one of them climbed a tree an had a dump out of it showing off"

"I don't care who they are! Traveller's or not. It's dam right disgusting behaviour!!!!!! Leaving human shit!!!!!"

"They should set up camp at the police station or council offices and shit all around them useless wankers...i wouldnt mind that so much!!!"

"totally agree allowing kids to s**t any where other than a toilet is totally unacceptable"
"It is disgusting but the saddest part of it is those children won't know any different, it must be normal to them to behave like that."

"travellers don't exactly make themselves welcome when threatening local residents and allowing their kids to s**t on the grass like animals!"

"I clean up after my dog maybe they should do the same if they keep on doing it outdoors."

"They shat on jolleys car park last week"

"As a young boy I witnessed my first 'travelers' a 4 caravan of 'travelers' parked up on beautiful common land. They left it with toilet paper and human waste behind every bush...old washing machines etc etc etc were dumped all around...the place was utterly disgusting afterwards.....there is no smoke without fire."

INTIMIDATION, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

This theme overlaps with the online incidents of intimidation and harassment reported earlier in the social media and incitement sections of this report. The incidents that follow are a sample of those that took place offline. They include individual and collective verbal and physical abuse, attacks and protests, targeted at GRT communities without provocation.

Those people setting up camps or sites or living in camps were particularly targeted for violence, intimidation and harassment. In one incident, a group of Gypsies arrived at a camp and shortly after, the police turned up to let them know they had to move on. During this time, those people living in the houses nearby came out shouting "Gypsy scum, Gypsy bastards", letting their dogs loose to attack the community who had just arrived. These residents then blocked the exit from the camp refusing to let the caravans leave, forcing the families to find another route off the camp. Despite all the abuse and intimidation from the residents towards the Gypsy families and the physical blocking of the exit, the police made no interventions and watched on silently. Another encampment attack involved a group of vigilantes who approached a child and a woman threatening them with knives and slashing their caravan tyres. In Weston Super Mare, it was reported that hundreds of the local community converged around an encampment, demonstrated and shouted at the Travellers. This kind of large group mobilisation to harass and intimidate people on temporary encampments was common.

People from GRT groups who live in houses were also targets for harassment and intimidation at home. One third party report came from a community centre about a family of Irish travellers who had experienced ongoing racism within their neighbourhood. In one particular incident they had graffiti daubed onto their front door saying 'dirty pigs'.

One woman shared her anger and a sense of resignation about trying to live in a council house, lacking support, and with constant harassment from children's services and the police. She had been issued with an anti-social behaviour because of her 6-year old son's behaviour and a community support order but not offered any positive support. In addition, her neighbours were regularly calling the RSPCA to check on her dogs, without reason. She felt isolated and that no-one wanted her to live in a house because she is a Traveller. There were numerous other cases where the RSPCA were called unnecessarily and in one case they were called over twenty times as part of an ongoing campaign of harassment and intimidation.

There were cases of people being attacked without any provocation. One woman in a supermarket car park was hit and knocked to the ground. Another young woman was attacked outside a tube station where she was scratched, her front tooth knocked out and her clothes wrenched and pulled, with alcohol thrown over her. It would have been worse if a passer-by had not stopped the assailant. This incident was reported to the police.

A young man reported his experience of entering a pub and being challenged soon after arriving by the bar tender asking him if he was a Traveller and saying "that she did not want any trouble in here"'. This conversation must have been overheard as he then faced abusive singing from a large group of people for the rest of the evening.

EXCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION FROM AND WITHIN SERVICES

Discrimination was the second most common type of incident reported to Report Racism GRT. Within this, discrimination within and exclusion from services emerged as a prevalent form in which such discrimination takes place offline. This form of discrimination occurs in a range of services, both public and private.

The issue of identifying as Gypsy or Traveller emerged in a few cases. One woman shared that she was encouraged to identify her ethnicity as Gypsy in the application process for admission to schools. Her experience was this had worked against her, with her child facing a series of rejections. She spent considerable time fighting for a place in the local schools and eventually got one. Subsequently, when her son needed Special Educational Needs support in the school, which she also had to fight for, she constantly experienced the feeling that the school wished she would 'move on'. Several parents reported that they have been challenged to hide their child's ethnicity. Another parent shared that her child's school were penalising Gypsy and Traveller children on attendance as they were not accepting that certain cultural events should be classed as an authorised absence.

Other people reported discrimination in various other public services including health centres and hospitals and when seeking welfare support. A woman in a lot of pain was spoken to rudely by a GP receptionist, with a derogatory reference to "your kind of people". A Traveller without a fixed address reported that they were unable to get a Personal Independent Payment form as they were required to show a passport and proof of address as well as other documents. Another person reported being denied an early repeat prescription (by 6 days) before going travelling.

One report outlines the charity work a Gypsy group has embarked on each year in the New Forest. This is arranged each year in advance working with the Police and Forest Commission and is a family day for the community. As part of the day they stop at two or three pubs primarily to give the horses a rest and families take the opportunity to have a picnic and sometimes a drink. In 2017, without discussion, it was reported that the local police force contacted the landlords of the pubs warning them if they allowed access to the Gypsies they would revoke their licences. They requested the pubs to close or refuse entry to anyone involved with the event. The reporter stated that there had been no previous difficulties with this event which raises money for charity.

In another case involving the police, it was reported that the police respond to complaints about GRT people rather than to the abuse the communities themselves face. This example of a Tweet response by the Metropolitan Police to someone referring to 'pikey wagons' features in The Traveller Movement's recent 'Acceptable Racism' report but was also reported to Report Racism GRT site.

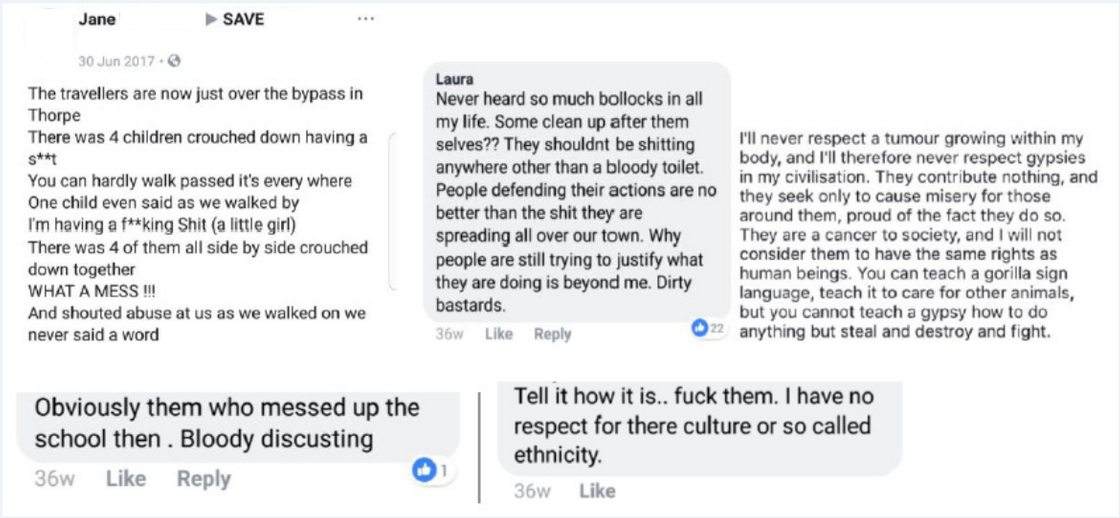
Feeling discriminated against by police emerged across the cases, often even where it wasn't the main focus of the incident being reported.

There were also several cases where people were denied access to or discriminated against by private businesses. One person reported a sign outside a pub/clubhouse stating 'no travellers'. Another third party reporter outlined how a pub they were in was closed after a small group of Travellers came in, despite there being no problems. An Irish Traveller young woman was asked to pay in a nail bar before she got her nails done when normal practice was to collect money after the nails were manicured.

A third party reported that he witnessed discrimination when three young women were denied access to a national cinema chain. A security guard approached the cashiers and told them not to serve the three girls who were behind him in the queue because they were Travellers. He shared that the three girls had not been causing any problems but were barred from buying tickets purely because of how they looked and dressed.

Case Study: Response to an encampment on a Selby playing field

This case study highlights how the themes of discrimination, social media abuse and incitement all inter-connect within certain incidents. It demonstrates the speed in which social media can be used to drive hatred and racism as well as being an example of discrimination by the police. This incident was reported by a non-GRT third party to the police. She reported not just a lack of action but considerable resistance. She reported that an encampment of Travellers arrived on a local playing field. Members of the local community began posting to a Facebook group with 10,000 members to raise their concerns and annoyance about the camp. This quickly descended into accusations about the spreading of human and animal faeces, and litter, calling Gypsies and Travellers 'disgusting'. Anyone who defended them was quickly vilified.



Shortly after the camp arrived, the local school playground suffered some damage. This was adjacent to the encampment. The two primary schools responded by sending children home for their safety. This closure without any clarification of the reason served to stir up a frenzy of online and offline hate. The person reporting the case said she visited the encampment and that it was clean and free of litter, and that she wasn't the only person who observed this. She stated that after the schools closed:

"Then the hate became out right shameful racial hate of 'pikey no likey', 'pikey watch' instead of 'spring watch', travellers are all the same, don't pay taxes, steal, commit crime, filth, tumours like cancer, not worthy of life, worse than immigrants, all the same, Irish the worst, new age the worse."

She reported one extreme perpetrator of the online hate speech to the police and was told by one officer that it was nothing to do with the police. She stated:

"I think they aren't even going to investigate to save paperwork and will say it's the travellers... I put in a complaint against one person whose comments were filled with hate and racism that incited the community. The officer didn't even come to take a statement off me as I made it clear I wanted to complain. Instead he went to the lad and gave him a telling off. He then phoned me and said it was a child, his parents were mortified, I asked what age and he again said he's a child his parents are good people, pro police which is rare".

She continued insisting that she wanted to file a complaint. The officer responded by saying that the CPS are unlikely to take this forward. At this stage, the officer had still not seen the posts or taken a statement from the person reporting this hate incident. The posts were still not removed the next day and the reporter contacted the police again. In this conversation, it emerged that the 'child' referred to was a 17-year-old male. The woman felt "This officer tried to diminish responsibility for this man by inferring several times he was a child. I feel this officer also has prejudices".

BULLYING AT SCHOOL AND WORK

Cases of bullying at school or work were common among the incidents reported. For young people, these took place at school or college. For adults, there were incidents reported at work from colleagues and managers, and for mothers at the school gates.

Whilst there were only a few reports to the site that appeared to come directly from young people, there were a small number that reported incidents of bullying and abuse from school friends on their 'snapchat' or 'instagram' conversations as well as some offline cases of bullying at school or college. One young woman shared how she was having an argument on snapchat and her school-friend responded by calling her a "fuckin gypo". Another young woman, also in an argument with a school-friend, was asked "do you live with the goats?". Another child was told at school that "gypsies sleep with their families and they are horrible people". In one college, 16 students circled one Gypsy student, verbally abusing and calling him "dirty gypo". Another two young Roma students reported how a group of 12 young people surrounded them singing, "You're sleeping with your sister, sleeping with your sister-you inbreds". They shared how they felt scared and intimidated by this collective verbal attack.

Another case reported was by the mother of a boy who experienced bullying in multiple schools due to his Gypsy heritage. He changed schools several times to try to escape the bullying and even changed his name. The schools did not respond to the mother's concerns and she felt dismissed by them. Even after changing his name to disguise his ethnicity, his mother reported that things have not changed and he has experienced "5 years of misery".

Another mother (who did not live on a site) reported that her son attends a school where half of the pupils are Gypsy children. She reported the ongoing hostility towards the mothers living on site from non-gypsy mums, saying "there's often a lot of verbal abuse and arguments between mums". She shared how bad the treatment of those living on site was compared to those who now lived in houses.

Other people reported being bullied by colleagues and managers at work. Three sisters working in a hospital for the housekeeping service reported how, after new managers were brought in, they became regularly bullied and threatened with dismissal. They faced ongoing harassment from both supervisors and colleagues that even spilled outside of the workplace. On one occasion, a relative of one of their work colleagues saw one of the women in a GP surgery and taunted her, shouting and swearing, saying "you and your sisters are going to all get the sack". This was reported to the police. The senior managers then actively sought out people to try and discredit them, saying they were disruptive. At the time of reporting, this had been ongoing for a year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation was commissioned by GATE Herts to explore the implications of reports to the Report Racism GRT website. As such, whilst recognising there are significant wider implications for policy and practice with GRT groups, the recommendations outlined here are focused primarily on the implications for GATE Herts to develop their work as they move forward into the next stage of the Report Racism GRT project.

Responding to those reporting incidents

Given the nature of the hate crime there is an urgent need for someone to respond to the cases and incidents reported to the site; giving advice, supporting interventions or in some cases advocating and directly getting involved. At least, this should involve contacting the person reporting, where they request a response, and referring them to appropriate agencies.

Awareness-raising

- There is a need to further publicise the website, particularly beyond England.
- The website itself needs to make clear it is a national (or international) reporting centre and not simply local to Hertfordshire.
- There is a need to consider how to target young people to report hate crime as most of the reports appear to come from adults – perhaps via an 'app' version of the site. There may also be a similar need to think about engaging older people.

Website development

- A contact form or email address is needed to ensure for people who want to make contact to ask a question or similar are able to do so. There are some examples of people using the report form to do this at present. This would need to be monitored and responded to.
- There is a need for some means of verbal rather than written reporting for people who struggle to articulate cases in written form. A phone number email or way to get in touch to indicate they wish to share a verbal report or message is needed.
- An upload function is needed for pictures, screenshots and videos - and an encouragement to those reporting to upload any evidence they have.
- The 'Describe the incident' section needs to ask for as much detail as possible.
- Reporters need to receive confirmation of submission, to avoid duplicate reports and assure them that their report is received.

- The website front-page could make more explicit mention of the fact the site can be used to report more general discrimination and exclusion rather than just hate crime.

- The report form itself could be amended in a few other minor ways, for example: ask for reporter's geographical location even where reporting online incidents; consider whether the categories of incident need any amendments/additions; reduce categories for reasons for not reporting to police as some are very similar; ask whether incident is a one-off or ongoing; ask if they require a response

Targeting key agencies for developing responsive partnerships

It would be useful for GATE Herts to work with a range of agencies to respond to the evaluation findings and develop proactive action to reduce incitement and tackle discrimination. Good practice examples could be highlighted such as the 'negotiated stopping' developed with Leeds City Council. Agencies or partners that GATE Herts might approach include:

- Media agencies including local media outlets and media regulators such as OFCOM.

- Facebook and other social media sites where online abuse against GRT groups is prevalent.

- Police – local, national, and the IPCC.

- Councillors, other local politicians and local authorities.

Wider policy and practice

There are a number of wider implications for policy and practice. Some of these may be possible through the awareness raising and development of responsive partnerships outlined above. However, it is key that public and private services, and the bodies they are accountable to, begin to take responsibility for ensuring GRT communities are not discriminated against or subject to harassment or intimidation. The implications for wider responsibility beyond GATE Herts include:

- Responsible reporting – media outlets, social media platforms, and regulating bodies such as OFCOM, IPSO and Hacked Off, need to respond to incitement and hate relating to GRT communities. Media platforms need to more effectively monitor and moderate hate speech left as comments on their sites. Within this, local police need to be a legitimate place for people to report hate incidents that occur online as the evaluation suggests that such reports are not taken seriously or acted upon.

- Tackling racism – public services and figures such as police, politicians and health services need to speak out against racism and discrimination towards GRT communities and ensure they are afforded the same rights and respect as other ethnic groups. Within this, local authorities can implement more widely strategies such as transit sites, negotiated stopping, permanent sites with sufficient space to avoid long waiting lists, and policies that work for GRT groups, in order to ease wider tensions around unauthorised encampments.

- Representation – GRT communities need to be represented on key strategy groups in order to inform policy and practice that affects them, at local and national level. This includes representation on national advisory groups around hate crime including that currently hosted by the Ministry of Justice.

Funding

GATE Herts has recently received funding and support from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. However, it is recognised that in order to sustain Report Racism GRT, effectively respond to the number of incidents reported, and to implement the recommendations above that further, long-term funding and support is needed.

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