

"Eroding Trust: The Impact of Legislation and Delayed Inclusion Strategies on Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Communities"

Any trust that the state sought to foster between Gypsies, Roma, Travellers and the wider society has suffered significant damage due to the ever-changing legislation and a delay in developing and implementing a cross-government inclusion strategy. Many Gypsies, Roma, and Traveller individuals expressed feeling that they had been set back several decades, with new legislation eroding their confidence in societal institutions entirely. Despite the announcement by the former Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to include Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers through an inclusion strategy, entrenched and biased structures persist within institutions.

Many discriminatory practices within society are rooted in historical and socially accepted anti-gypsyism, which manifests as a unique form of racism targeting the collective. This prejudice encompasses xenophobic attitudes, negative stereotypes, and discriminatory actions directed specifically towards Gypsies, Roma and Travellers individuals, both on an individual and structural level.

Stigma symbols

Despite efforts to blend in, Gypsies Roma and Traveller individuals still face discrimination due to stigma symbols, which convey social information about their identity beyond physical appearance. Being denied access to camping sites is a common experience, with owners often providing various excuses to justify turning away Gypsies, Roma and Travellers individuals. The persistent issue of stigmatisation and discrimination faced by the Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

The community continues to grapple with stigmatisation and discrimination, evident through stigma symbols such as Gypsy caravans and traditional dress that are used to identify and marginalise them. Even names can serve as markers of their background, subjecting them to prejudice and bias. Simple tasks like purchasing food become psychological ordeals for women and children due to the potential for discrimination and abuse in public spaces. This underscores the pervasive nature of everyday racism, which often goes unaddressed and is not recognised as a criminal offence.

Despite efforts to combat hate crimes, the focus remains predominantly on individual perpetrators rather than addressing the broader systemic issues perpetuating discrimination against the Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. This narrow focus fails to acknowledge the structural barriers that contribute to their marginalisation.

The concept of anti-gypsyism, denoting the specific prejudice and discrimination faced by the Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, remains deeply ingrained in societal attitudes. This prejudice impedes integration and erodes trust in wider society.

Proving hate crime motives within the legal system poses significant challenges, leaving Gypsies, Roma and Travellers individuals vulnerable to stigmatisation in various everyday situations, thereby limiting their quality of life. This reality forces them to constantly consider

whether to reveal their identity or conceal their Gypsies, Roma, and Traveller affiliation to avoid discrimination and appear "normal."

Urgent action is needed to challenge these prejudices, dismantle anti-gypsyism in all its forms, and empower the Gypsies Roma and Travellers community to actively participate in shaping anti-racist policies. Rather than being passive recipients, they must be recognised as agents of change in their own right.

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