

# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 13 March 2001  
*(Morning)*

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# CONTENTS

Tuesday 13 March 2001

	Col.
PETITION .....	1053
TRAVELLING PEOPLE .....	1056

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## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

### † 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2001, Session 1

#### CONVENER

\*Kate MacLean (Dundee West) (Lab)

#### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Kay Ullrich (West of Scotland) (SNP)

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)

\*Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

\*Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

\*Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD)

\*attended

#### WITNESSES

Patrick Chaney (City of Edinburgh Council)

Diana Dodd (City of Edinburgh Council)

Dr Elizabeth Jordan (Scottish Traveller Education Programme)

#### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Lee Bridges

#### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Richard Walsh

#### ASSISTANT CLERK

Roy McMahon

#### LOCATION

The Chamber

† 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2001, Session 1—held in private.



## Scottish Parliament

### Equal Opportunities Committee

*Tuesday 13 March 2001*

*(Morning)*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting in private at 10:03*]

10:16

*Meeting continued in public.*

### Petition

**The Convener (Kate MacLean):** Let us start the public part of the meeting. The item under consideration is petition PE139. I thank the signers for coming along this morning to facilitate the committee. It would be useful if people could speak clearly into their microphones. I call Linda Fabiani.

**Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Is the petition first? I had my agenda the wrong way round.

**The Convener:** Sorry.

**Linda Fabiani:** I come to the petition from two angles. First, I am the disability reporter for the committee. Secondly, I am a member of the Holyrood progress group, so I come with a view towards what will happen when we move to our new Parliament building next parliamentary session.

The issue is hugely important. As far as equal opportunities is concerned, the Parliament should be an institution that is as open as possible. One way in which it could be open is to provide signers—ideally permanently. However, the shortage of signers is a problem that cannot be denied and it is sometimes difficult to book people who can provide that facility.

Having looked at the various options, I consider that option B, which is given in our private paper, is best. Option B is that we note the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's response and ask that, when the draft policy is available, it be referred formally to the committee so that it can look at it again. I would be happy, in the meantime, to discuss the issue with the Holyrood progress group's disability forum and come back to the committee—at the same time as we receive the draft policy, if we can schedule when that is to take place—with a report on how we can proceed in future.

**The Convener:** Thank you. The convener of the cross-party group on deafness, Cathie Craigie, would have liked to be here today, but she must attend a long-standing constituency event. The cross-party group on deafness has been examining the lack of qualified signers.

Although Linda Fabiani recommends option B, we might want to take from option A the suggestion that we write to the cross-party group on deafness, to say that we have considered the matter.

**Kay Ullrich (West of Scotland) (SNP):** What is happening about the proposal to give MSPs and parliamentary staff an introduction to, or familiarisation with, sign language? The idea of such a programme was punted up, but I am not sure what stage that is at.

**Lee Bridges (Clerk):** The equality strategy is being considered by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. Part of that strategy will involve a training programme for MSPs. The matter is with the corporate body and when the strategy is approved, it will be rolled out.

**Kay Ullrich:** So it is still in the frame?

**Lee Bridges:** Indeed.

**The Convener:** I think that an e-mail was sent last week, asking people whether they wanted to sign up for various language courses. The e-mail said that consideration was being given to offering British Sign Language courses. I think that, in the not-too-distant future, BSL will be available to MSPs.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** I agree with Linda Fabiani and also with what the convener said about writing to cross-party groups. In the Holyrood project, it is clearly important to ensure that the new building is accessible to all, including people with children and people with all sorts of disabilities.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** I am sorry that I have arrived late, convener. I hope that I will not repeat anything that has already been said. I think that option B is a good idea. I agree also that we should write to the cross-party group on deafness and speak to Cathie Craigie, its convener. There is also an issue around the availability of signers and interpreters. The problem about interpreters also applies in relation to minority ethnic languages.

Because there has been a funding crisis over the past four or five years, it is difficult to get people to do interpreting work. There has been a move to encourage more people to train to be signers, but that is a fairly long process. Messages need to be delivered about how signing is funded and promoted, to encourage people to take it up. It is not a matter only of ensuring that signers are

available; it can be very difficult to ensure that there are sufficient signers around at all.

**The Convener:** The issue that is being discussed by the cross-party group is that although there is no lack of commitment on the part of the Parliament to ensure that we are as accessible as possible, there is a lack of signers. It is very difficult. For example, for a meeting such as this, two signers are required and we managed to get two signers at the last minute. I can find out what the cross-party group has been doing on the matter, and I can ask whether it can send a note to members, asking what they are doing. We would support any work that is being done on the matter.

Is it agreed that we accept the recommendation under option B, but that we also take from option A the suggestion that we write to the cross-party group on deafness and, furthermore, that I ask the convener of that group whether she could give the committee information about what that group is doing?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Again, I thank the signers for coming along and for helping to facilitate the meeting, and I thank the members of the public who have taken an interest.

## Travelling People

**The Convener:** The next item on the agenda is our inquiry into travelling people and public sector policies, on which we are taking evidence.

I welcome Patrick Chaney and Diana Dodd, from the City of Edinburgh Council. I invite you to give the committee a brief presentation before we ask questions.

**Diana Dodd (City of Edinburgh Council):** I am very glad to be here this morning. I want to introduce Patrick Chaney, who is a development officer in community education. I am a senior community education worker. We started a Travellers project about 10 years ago, although historically the work goes a bit further back than that. I am pleased that the inquiry into policies concerning and public attitudes towards Travellers is taking place—it is long overdue. I would probably not be here today had I not known that the committee has gone out of its way to ensure that Travellers have sufficient input into the inquiry. I know that committee members have visited sites and talked to Travellers, which is important, because the Travellers themselves are the leading experts in all the matters that affect their lives. I am glad that the committee recognises that.

I have submitted a fair amount of paperwork. Do you want me to speak specifically to any of that material? Perhaps I could highlight one or two areas.

**The Convener:** That would be very useful.

**Diana Dodd:** In my covering letter, I suggested 10 points that would involve a lot of work. Although none of the recommendations should be isolated, recommendations 8 and 9 stick out for me. Recommendation 8 is:

“To make provision for innovative and appropriate learning and employment opportunities for Travellers in and beyond the classroom”.

Coming from a community education background, I think that it is extremely important that both the formal and informal learning needs of Travellers are taken into account.

The provision of

“free transport to primary schools”

is important where that would make a difference to whether the kids went to school—we have found that to be increasingly the case in our experience in Edinburgh and West Lothian. In West Lothian, free school transport has made a super difference in normalising Travellers’ kids’ attendance at school.

**The Convener:** What involvement have you had

in policy formulation in the City of Edinburgh Council? I ask that because it might help the questioning.

**Diana Dodd:** We were very involved in drafting a policy that was published in 1992 by Lothian Regional Council. That policy is the backbone of the work that the City of Edinburgh Council and West Lothian Council now do. It was a policy primarily of encouragement rather than enforcement and it took Travellers' culture and way of life into account.

**The Convener:** Do you want me to open out the discussion to questions?

**Diana Dodd:** Yes.

**Elaine Smith:** Your submission says that the evidence suggests that, over a six-month period in the Edinburgh area, as many as 94 Gypsy and Traveller children—58 of whom were of primary age—were not enrolled in any primary school. Furthermore, it is an educated guess that the majority of secondary age Gypsy and Traveller children do not enrol in secondary schools. As you said yourself, education is an issue.

I have a few questions on that point. What approaches or specific education services should be provided for Traveller children by local authorities? The issue of funding for those services has also been raised. Should funding for Traveller education services be centrally co-ordinated and ring-fenced or should that be the responsibility of local authorities? Your submission also mentions alternative supporting initiatives such as home family learning, flexible short-term further education courses, information technology and mobile provision. Could you expand on those? Finally, do mobile classrooms—such as the buses that are used for mobile playgroups—have a role?

**Diana Dodd:** I shall start with the last question. I am sorry, but I cannot remember the first question. I am not sure about mobile provision. Its suitability depends on the local council's housing and accommodation policies. If Travellers are being evicted frequently, as they have been in Edinburgh in the past few years, mobile provision can have a role in following them around. In areas where Travellers have sufficient accommodation, evidence is increasing that it is more useful to have a Portakabin on the site and some static provision rather than provision that follows the Travellers around. The answer would depend on local circumstances.

10:30

**Elaine Smith:** I will go back to my first question. I asked you to outline the approaches that each local authority should take to Traveller children, and to outline the education services that

authorities should provide for them. Should those services be funded centrally and ring-fenced, or should provision be up to each local authority?

**Diana Dodd:** In our experience, a small piece of funding can be extremely useful in one situation, which I will highlight. If local authorities can access the budget, they can put money straight into schools when a child or group of children enrolls outwith the normal start of term. That takes account of the fact that such children are not already included under the capitation money and have experienced interrupted learning. It also recognises the fact that schools need a bit of extra support at that point. During the past three years, this has been some of the most useful money that has gone direct to schools. It makes the schools feel supported and welcoming, and resources them to integrate and settle the children quickly.

However, a major problem remains with support to schools, particularly with the new development of the literacy hour in primary schools. As far as I can make out—although it has been popular in schools and young children in primaries 1 and 2 are coming on well with their literacy—that system makes no provision to support schools with children who have missed chunks of teaching. It is a block-building system. If a pupil misses a chunk, he or she will struggle in the classroom. I am aware of several Traveller children who are finding life hard because schools have nothing in place to support their learning when they have missed a bit of it. I flag that up as a problem.

Elaine Smith's question about whether funding should be local or central has been discussed throughout the past 10 to 20 years. There is a role for central funding that could be similar to—but not, by a long chalk, the same as—the system that has operated for a long time in England and Wales. I am not keen for a model to be adopted that would mean that local authorities entered into competitive bidding for a small stash of money. However, there might be a role for seed funding, pump priming or some way in which local authorities could show what plans they have for Traveller education and for which resources would be made available. That something would be better than the nothing that is in place in many parts of Scotland.

**Cathy Peattie:** I will pick up one or two comments by starting where you finished and working back. You talked about local authorities having something written into their educational plans. Might it be helpful for Her Majesty's inspectors of schools, when they inspect schools or local authorities, to check that such plans are in place? That would encourage local authorities to make such plans.

**Diana Dodd:** That would be a useful small part to play. However, the plans must also branch out

to the informal learning sector.

**Cathy Peattie:** We are going in the right direction—I would like to discuss the informal sector now. Your report says that some work has been done and that continuity is needed. Is there frustration that some work has been done and that bits of funding have been received, then lost?

**Diana Dodd:** In my experience, the frustration is not so much local. It is more that, when Travellers leave Edinburgh for another area, they do not get the same level of service, or no service.

**Cathy Peattie:** You are talking about Edinburgh, but we are interested, as you know, in the wider issues. What kind of things could we be saying? What is important for continuity and community development? There is a feeling that, to work with children, it is necessary to work first with parents. What could be done nationally to ensure that community development happens?

**Diana Dodd:** I hope that the results of the inquiry will answer that, rather than what I can say here and now.

**Cathy Peattie:** I know that that question was hard. Often, when really good work is happening in one area, that can raise expectations. People move elsewhere and find that such work is not being done in that area.

**Diana Dodd:** That helps to empower people to demand that such services are put in place in other areas. That has certainly been my experience. When we see good practice elsewhere, we want to ensure that such practice is adopted in our area.

Some level of provision should be on offer in every part of Scotland. That provision should be diverse; practice should not necessarily be the same everywhere. It is not possible for everyone to do everything everywhere, but it is possible to have a central dissemination point where good practice is recognised. Good practice should be measured by Travellers, not necessarily by educationists.

**Cathy Peattie:** What has been done and what needs to be done to train and educate the educators? What needs to be done to ensure that teachers and those who work in the community are aware of the needs of the travelling community?

**Diana Dodd:** The best work of which I am aware has been done by Travellers. That work has been quite informal. We have been involved over the past few years in joint work with Save the Children. I highlight our organisation as a good example of good practice in, for example, taking groups of parents into schools to talk about Travellers, acknowledging Travellers as experts and paying them and recompensing them for the

time that they give up to do such things.

**Cathy Peattie:** Do you agree that local authorities need some encouragement to ensure that such work happens in their areas?

**Diana Dodd:** They definitely need encouragement. To go back to the then Lothian Regional Council policy, I think that 23 Traveller families were involved as consultants in the preparation of that policy. Travellers and educationists discussed and hacked out the main components of that policy together and agreed on them.

**Linda Fabiani:** Cathy Peattie has covered most of what I was thinking, following on from Elaine Smith's questions. However, I am interested in Travellers who have settled, but who still consider themselves to be Travellers. I am also interested in how schools deal with the children of settled Travellers who go to school permanently. Although the evidence that I have heard is limited, I have heard about really bad bullying. I have also heard about cases of teachers burying their heads in the sand—that happens with other groups as far as bullying is concerned. I have heard about teachers being quite relieved when the children left the school, and even about them suggesting subtly that it would be better all round if those children did leave. It becomes the parents' choice to teach their children at home. Have either of you come across such problems? Is there any national good practice code for dealing with such problems? Would one be useful?

**Diana Dodd:** We do not think that there is a national strategy. On local good practice, I hope that measures such as supported study or out-of-school-hours learning activities would begin to address the problems. If there are Traveller-specific staff, who are aware and who have a good relationship with parents and children, there is a better chance of that happening.

Let me backtrack to talk about our Edinburgh youth social inclusion programme research, which was published last year. In doing that work, we saw the issues that were referred to by Linda Fabiani. The research showed that a number of settled Travellers' children, not just in primary schools, but in secondary schools, left school early because of bullying.

In all schools there is a need to try to nip those things in the bud when they first arise. If there are any signs of conflict, it is possible that early intervention in the relationships that exist between teachers and pupils, and among the pupils, will address that. We have put together some useful case studies from real stories that we have been told, and we are using them in schools and with Travellers. Using real-life examples allows us to ask what should be done in the sort of situation in



which a child might overhear another saying something derogatory about Gypsies and turn on him. Up to that point, the teacher might have had no idea that he has a Gypsy in his classroom, but he might then do nothing about it. That is a real scenario and one that needs to be tackled head on, so that it can be dealt with directly and confidently. That is the right strategy or approach to take; teachers should not merely turn their backs on situations and say that they cannot deal with them.

**Linda Fabiani:** Did you find variation in how different schools deal with the problem?

**Diana Dodd:** Yes. There is a whole issue of Travellers—

**Linda Fabiani:** Is that up to the individual head teacher and does it come from the top down?

**Diana Dodd:** Yes, it is partly the responsibility of the head teacher and partly the general school ethos.

**Kay Ullrich:** Linda Fabiani referred to evidence that we received on school attendance and school experience. Our questions are based on a visit that we made on Friday to a site, where we were told tales of bullying and about schools not understanding the culture of travelling children.

We were also told that primary school tended to be a good experience for travelling children but that, when they went to secondary school, they voted with their feet. Second year seems to be the crucial point and, from my past experience, that tends to be a general rule. Particularly in areas of deprivation, at the crucial second-year secondary school stage, children begin to feel that school has nothing to offer them and that it does not relate to their particular culture or circumstances. Is that a problem that is specific to Travellers, and is it more acute for Travellers than it is for the general population?

Having visited the site, and being most impressed by the people that I met, I must say that the children seem to have had different experiences. Some children had, as Linda Fabiani said, been encouraged towards parental choice, if their parents had been encouraged to consider home education. We also heard about a young woman who clearly found school to be a positive experience; she was about to embark on a business studies course at a college in Glasgow. Do you think that the problems are specific or are they more general?

**Diana Dodd:** They are specific. The question of secondary education is particularly relevant to Gypsies and Travellers. I would prefer not to look at it as a problem because, if we do not look on it as a problem, there is the possibility of finding alternative ways for young people to access

learning opportunities, if they choose not to go to secondary school.

Speaking about this is extremely difficult because the last thing that I want to do is to stereotype Travellers. Obviously, some Travellers go through secondary school and further and higher education successfully. We must acknowledge that. However, I think that the majority of such Travellers do so by hiding their identity rather than by being open about their being Travellers. If the way of life and identity of the Travellers is honoured and accepted, progress will be made in relation to secondary and further education.

10:45

**Kay Ullrich:** To be fair, the girl I mentioned was from a travelling family that had been settled on a site for some years.

I notice that you say that children from the travelling sites in West Lothian have been entitled to free transport to and from school on safety grounds. We raised that issue at the site that we visited. Although children there have a fairly lengthy and potentially dangerous walk, they do not get free transport. I congratulate West Lothian Council, but there are 31 other authorities. How could free transport be provided for all such children?

**Diana Dodd:** Regardless of the road safety issue, free transport should be provided for all children in areas where not just Travellers' children would be affected. I think that only a few Traveller children in settled families would benefit from the provision of free transport. The scheme was introduced by West Lothian Council on the ground of road safety, although, for four years, the road was deemed safe enough for children to walk down with their parents. For some reason—perhaps a change of personnel—the road was no longer judged to be safe. That decision has caused transport to be made available.

**Kay Ullrich:** In that case, there would be no secret recipe that would ensure that other authorities adopted similar schemes. Did you perhaps put your case a little differently?

**Diana Dodd:** No.

**Kay Ullrich:** There was simply a change of personnel?

**Diana Dodd:** I think so.

**Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab):** The Edinburgh youth social inclusion programme identified that the provision of accommodation to allow Travellers to locate themselves in an area for the period during which their children attend school is important. I think

that that is a given—how can children be expected to go to school if they do not have a permanent base while they are settling in?

Given the importance for education of providing stopping places and Travellers' sites, do you think that that should be left exclusively to the local authorities or do you think that there is a need for a national agency to ensure that the provision of Travellers' sites is sufficient to allow Travellers to locate themselves in an area and give their children the best opportunity to attend school?

**Diana Dodd:** The fact that over the past 20 years local authorities have failed to provide sufficient stopping places is reason enough to suggest that an alternative—perhaps a national agency—might be better.

**Mr McMahon:** Your submission indicates that there is a role for community education in changing the settled community's attitudes to the travelling community. Who should co-ordinate that role? What sort of innovative solutions could community education bring? Should that education be left to a local authority or done by a national agency?

**Diana Dodd:** I will ask Patrick Chaney to give us a national perspective on that.

**Patrick Chaney (City of Edinburgh Council):** I will refer to a previous question about community development and Travellers' out-of-school work. We must be wary of considering community development as a form of knowledge that is held somewhere and taken out and delivered to people, which then makes them have the right thoughts in their heads. That is not the case.

We must view community development with Travellers with an open mind, and we must find out what their needs are. They are not a homogeneous group of people. Even on the site that I know, I could not run a community development project that met the needs, desires and aspirations of everyone there. They are a highly diverse group of people, as are we all.

Examples of good practice have been mentioned. They could also help—they are certainly useful. However, they can also be tyrannical. Good practice is often good because it is local and because of the local people who are involved. It is not easily reproducible elsewhere. Although we can learn from good practice, we can also learn from unsuccessful practice that is arrived at honestly. That is a long-winded way of describing learning from our mistakes.

That is where a central authority could help. By changing the inspection procedure, it could give equal weight to projects that were unsuccessful. We can learn from mistakes—we can often learn much more from things that have failed honestly.

That can prevent the same mistake being repeated, which happens simply because people copy successful funding applications rather than successful projects.

That way of learning honestly from each other is the best way of doing things, rather than having some central set of instructions—I am not sure what you would call them, but I would probably say instructions—which would not be very effective. We need an inquiring, assessing dialogue about what is useful and successful that must involve Travellers. We must also accept that the results of such dialogues will be contested, because not everybody wants the same thing.

**Mr McMahon:** Would it be correct to summarise your view by saying that you consider that there is a role for a central structure to identify best practice and co-ordinate the development of projects, but that there can also be a large degree of local flexibility to address differences between rural and urban communities and the needs of the travelling community as it moves between rural and urban areas?

**Patrick Chaney:** Yes. That structure should probably be located within the inspectorate. At the moment, however, the way in which community education is inspected is based on principles of best value. Best value concerns, for the most part, measurable and comparable things. A lot of the work in which we are involved is not comparable. It is local, precise and of its time and place. If we try to fit that into a rigid inspection procedure it leads to an anodyne report that is not much use to anyone. We must look at that again. I underline my reference to failures that have been honestly arrived at. We can learn a lot from them if the inspection procedure encourages discussion and learning, rather than dwelling on things that are bent and hammered into shape.

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Are you aware of similar joint working arrangements in Scotland involving education and other council departments having liaison meetings with Travellers?

**Diana Dodd:** Yes. We are members of two working parties. The first is the Travellers education network, which is primarily a network of teachers, and some community education workers, from central Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife and Clackmannanshire. I am fairly up-to-date with some of the work that has been going on in Glasgow, particularly with the Travellers and Gypsy community development project. Secondly, we meet with a network of voluntary sector projects which is headed up by the Scottish Travellers Consortium, and includes the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association, Save the Children, and projects in Aberdeen and Glasgow.

**Mr McGrigor:** You mentioned Dumfries and Galloway. I believe that there is a successful site with a Portakabin near Dumfries. The furnishings and pictures in the Portakabin are of a gypsy and Traveller background and so make the children feel at home. They feel less afraid when going to school, so they start their early learning in an environment that is suitable to them. That is a good idea.

Yesterday, I visited three sites in the Highlands and Islands, and I talked to a lot of Gypsies and Travellers. One question was whether it would be possible to have a virtual school, whereby children could be connected by computer to teachers on a one-to-one basis.

The other point that came up was that many of the parents had had a bad experience of school, and did not want to send their children to school. We asked if they had been given any help towards educating their children at home. They said that they had great difficulty in getting any help, and that they had more or less been told just to send their children to school. Would you comment on that? There should be some sort of help for the parents if they want to educate their children themselves, as is their right.

**Diana Dodd:** There should be support. Where parents have had a poor experience—or little experience—of school, their sense of their ability to help their kids is diminished. Work that we did last year with excellence fund money brought the issue to our attention. Travellers, even those parents who have a bad memory of school, are doing far more early-learning work with their kids than they realise, but they do not recognise its value. That is part of the sadness of the issue. Maybe it is embedded in the Scottish system that the professionals are the ones who teach the kids, and the parents are the ones who send them to the professionals to be taught. The parents do not realise how much early learning and on-going learning they are involved in already.

We had a project in which we took a computer to young mums and helped them to put some words and rhymes on it that they thought their kids would want to work with. That helped the parents to sharpen up their literacy skills, and sharpened up the kids' skills as well. They ended up with some nice laminated resources at the end of the project.

What you have heard in the Highlands and Islands does not surprise me at all, although I do not have any direct experience.

**Mr McGrigor:** On the Portakabin, it was obvious on the sites that we visited yesterday that there was no community place of any kind: there were just caravans. In fact, it had been raining when we arrived and if we had not been invited into individuals' caravans, we would have had to stand

outside in the rain. There was nowhere for any sort of group meeting. It was also obvious that there was little potential for any sort of communal playground facility—which is part of education—on the site. Something like the famous Portakabin near Dumfries, which seems to have achieved so much, would not cost much to provide.

11:00

**Diana Dodd:** The Portakabin idea is excellent and it is an excellent resource. However, one would want to ensure that a number of conditions were attached to it. The one in Dumfries and Galloway is successful because it is not an alternative to school—it is a stepping stone or a bridge to school. That is important.

Some kids on the site in Edinburgh asked me whether they could give some information to the committee members who visited the site. They had heard about the Portakabin in Dumfries and Galloway and decided that they should have something like it in Duddingston. They made a presentation of a pack and a wish list of the things that they thought ought to be going on at that site. It would be important to involve the young people, especially the teenagers, in the acquisition and the running of such a facility. The key to the issue will be who manages the facility and takes responsibility for it. Once that is sorted out, it should be plain sailing.

**The Convener:** I visited that site and received a lovely presentation from the children and a petition that will be made available to all committee members. It contains some nice drawings and is very well presented.

**Cathy Peattie:** I would like to take the discussion back a couple of stages, then I will pick up on an issue that has not yet been covered.

Let us return to home education. Clearly, there is a sector of the community that has a strong oral tradition with a lot of stories and those people feel that they want to educate their children at home. What kind of support exists to facilitate such education?

**Diana Dodd:** Next to no support is available nationally.

**Cathy Peattie:** Could such support be made available?

**Diana Dodd:** Yes.

**Cathy Peattie:** Would that be a step forward, or do you think that the kids should go off to school?

**Diana Dodd:** No. It could be a very exciting and positive area of work.

**Cathy Peattie:** It would build on what is there already—on the culture and traditions.

**Diana Dodd:** Absolutely.

**Cathy Peattie:** Patrick Chaney talked about HMI. The issue is quality measurement and the kinds of indicators that are used. Do you think that HMI should reconsider its quality indicators?

**Patrick Chaney:** Yes. We must consider the qualitative indicators. The indicators that we have are extremely general—a rough fit for the whole population. There should be specific indicators for a specific group, which would be understandable so that everyone would know what was happening and why. Such things can be bent and battered into shape, but that is unsatisfactory. We need proper indicators.

**Cathy Peattie:** Yes. They are too rigid. We need indicators that reflect the quality of delivery, and so on.

**Patrick Chaney:** The purpose of the indicators is to improve people's work. If the measure is not appropriate, we cannot know whether that work is improving. The measurement is purely anecdotal unless we use the correct instrument. At the moment, most of the instruments are not specific to working with Travellers.

**Cathy Peattie:** Is there a system to involve all the stakeholders, including Gypsies and Travellers, in that monitoring and evaluation?

**Patrick Chaney:** Yes. The indicators could easily be adapted for specific sectors, and they must be tailored to specific circumstances—national indicators cannot include everybody.

**Cathy Peattie:** I agree. You talked earlier about good practice. What is being done—or what could be done—to share good practice with local authorities or the voluntary sector, which is very active and has done a lot of work? You talked about failures and about how we learn by mistakes. It is important that good practice is shared in some way.

**Patrick Chaney:** That is quite a big task. It refers to another point that you made on the teaching of community workers or teachers. We need a culture change in community education so that we look at things and take a sort of experimental view. We should not assume that we know the answers to everything and that everything that we do is successful. As in all other aspects of life, we must realise that much of what we do does not work out. Reality intervenes and prevents our plans from coming to fruition.

However, we must encourage a culture in which people meet and do not boast about how successful they have been and what a wonderful amount of money they have attracted into their projects. They should be able to say, for example, "I have been working at this project for the last two years but it is not working out. Can you help me?

Can I have a peer review of the project?" That would take the worker's personality out of the issue and would mean that there could be an objective look at what is happening. People could say, "Let's try this or something else." It is very difficult to do that within an assessment and inspection culture in which it is assumed that everything works and everything improves all the time. That is patently false.

**Cathy Peattie:** Perhaps we are all eternal optimists.

I want to ask Diana Dodd about special needs education. Parents throughout the country say how frustrated they can become when they are not able to access the support that they want for their children. That situation could be exacerbated for the gypsy and travelling community. What is being done? Is there any good practice? Are we picking up any frustration from people who feel that they are not getting the support that they might need?

**Diana Dodd:** In special needs education?

**Cathy Peattie:** Yes.

**Diana Dodd:** I am extremely grateful that we have an educational fieldworker who can at least identify where particular needs are. I do not have a great deal of experience of that—it has not hit us in the face that often. One of the key roles of a field worker is to access other services where they exist. That is what we do. I imagine that if that were more widespread, there might be less frustration.

**The Convener:** I want to ask a slightly different question. A section in your submission talks about relating to other organisations and inter-agency work. Is training available to people who work in other departments such as housing, education and social work? Is there training for site managers in respect of equal opportunities and attitudes towards Gypsies and Travellers, or are you not involved?

**Diana Dodd:** I believe that there is training for site managers, but we are not involved. On multi-agency networking and working with Travellers, we have done quite a lot locally over a few years in bringing agencies together with Travellers. There have been half-day and all-day seminars.

One of our most recent seminars involved the coming together of all school doctors and nurses. That was done jointly with Save the Children. We want to broaden that policy and focus not necessarily just on Travellers but on other ethnic minorities too, so that ethnic minority groups and organisations can start to consider Travellers' needs rather than have those needs considered in isolation.

**The Convener:** Are you involved in training for site managers?

**Diana Dodd:** No, not at all. I believe that there is training but I do not know anything about it.

**The Convener:** Kay Ullrich and Linda Fabiani want to ask questions. I intend to finish this part of the session in about five minutes.

**Kay Ullrich:** I want to pick up on site managers. Can you give us an idea of what your ideal site manager would be like? To give you the background to my question, a site that I visited on Friday had had a site manager for a number of years who had joined in and helped out with maintenance in a hands-on way. He had retired and the job had been given to a housing assistant whose remit was different, because she came from the housing department and also had other areas to look after. With that in mind, what is your ideal for a good site manager?

**Diana Dodd:** Well, the easy answer is that it is someone that everybody on the site is happy with.

**Kay Ullrich:** Well, that seemed to be the case. How do you feel about the job being given to somebody who comes from the housing department and who is virtually a housing officer?

**Diana Dodd:** It would depend on the individual. There is no pre-training for site managers that I am aware of. An ideal site management policy would be one that involves the Travellers in drawing up person specs on the kind of site manager that they want, so that they have a say before someone is appointed, rather than saying what the ideal person would be like. I do not think that it would be too difficult to draw up a person spec in consultation with Travellers. In my experience, housing departments are not the most forward thinking in consulting their client groups. If that were to shift, there might be happier residents.

**Kay Ullrich:** To be fair, that housing officer was working very hard. I felt that her background would not include the culture of travelling people and, as I said, she had to deal with tenants in other areas. Would you go so far as to suggest that, wherever possible, site managers should be drawn from the travelling community itself?

**Diana Dodd:** Only if that is what the Travellers ask for. I do not know that they have been asked that question. I have not asked it, although it has come up quite a lot in discussion over the years. There are pros and cons. There have been times when Travellers have run sites very successfully, but they are put into a pretty difficult situation when they have to decide who can or cannot come on to a site. There is lots of potential for that to be a difficult job for a Traveller to do.

**Kay Ullrich:** Might it be better for somebody who is removed from the travelling community to do that?

**Diana Dodd:** Sometimes, yes. In communities where there are Travellers who have long settled on a site, as opposed to a site with a high turnover rate, there is no reason why the residents cannot have much more involvement in deciding how and by whom they should be managed.

**Linda Fabiani:** Jamie McGrigor mentioned a site that he visited—I do not know where it was—that did not have an outside play area for children. The site that Kay Ullrich and I visited on Friday had no external play facilities, but it is in a local authority area in which I have worked on housing development. Whenever a housing development with more than 12 houses was being built, we also had to build a children's play area and provide play equipment on it, as a condition of planning permission. Are Traveller sites outwith the general policies of local authorities when it comes to facilities?

**Diana Dodd:** The type of tenancy agreements that are available to Travellers on council sites should be held up to question. They are certainly not equal by a long chalk to those available to other council tenants—and that extends way beyond the provision of children's play areas.

The council sites that I know in Edinburgh, Dalkeith and Bathgate all have designated play areas provided by the councils. They were not built into the sites when they were first created, but have been added. The kids were not consulted about the equipment that they wanted or about what was a safe area for them.

**Linda Fabiani:** I will finish on a much more general point. I am sure that we all feel this, but no one has yet said it: the evidence that both sets of witnesses have submitted is marvellous. I do not know who compiled the Scottish Traveller Education Programme's submission, but please pass on my thanks, because I learned so much from it. It is excellent.

I have heard accounts from people who are involved with Travellers about the number of Travellers in Scotland. The range that I have heard has been immense. In your opinion, are the official figures accurate? What is your view on the number of Travellers? Does that figure include Travellers who are still travelling, show Travellers and Travellers who have settled and still consider themselves Travellers?

11:15

**Diana Dodd:** My submission says that there is clear evidence that the figures are inaccurate, that there are many questions about how counts have been conducted and that perhaps they should be conducted by completely independent researchers, possibly with advice from Gypsies and Travellers. I do not think that the figures are

accurate. I also said in my submission that I thought that that was a fairly important issue, especially for education planning. I am not quite as convinced of that now as I was when I wrote the paper a few months ago, but I still think that the question is relevant.

You asked how many Travellers I think there are. We carry out counts of kids when we can, but they include only kids from families with which we come into contact, so it is impossible to know the figure.

**Linda Fabiani:** So there is a clear case for a proper study to be conducted.

**Diana Dodd:** I do not know whether even such a study would produce a correct answer.

**Linda Fabiani:** Thank you.

**The Convener:** I thank Diana Dodd and Patrick Chaney for coming along. That was useful evidence.

I imagine that our next witness, Dr Betty Jordan, produced the STEP report.

**Linda Fabiani:** Do you want me to talk about it again?

**The Convener:** Yes. If you wait until Dr Jordan takes her seat, you can repeat what you said. I am sure that it will be much appreciated.

I welcome Dr Jordan, the director of STEP. I understand that she will speak briefly to the submission then take questions.

**Dr Elizabeth Jordan (Scottish Traveller Education Programme):** Thank you, convener.

I prepared a fairly lengthy paper, as Linda Fabiani said. It was quite broad, but as the focus today is education, I will narrow down the issues a little bit.

My work has been funded by the Scottish Executive education department for the past 10 years; its purpose is to maintain a national focus on what is happening with Travellers and education. Before that, I worked for the local authority in Fife for five years. As part of my remit as an adviser in learning support, we set up provision for Travellers. Part of my submission is about my experience of fieldwork and part is about my experience as an academic and researcher. The committee can direct its questions at either of those parts; it does not matter.

The small briefing paper that I gave out highlights three levels of responsibility in education. The Scottish Executive should have a responsibility to ensure that Travellers—no matter where they are or the length of time they stay in one place—have a guaranteed place in educational establishments, from those providing

pre-school education to those providing lifelong learning. That is fundamental if they are to enjoy rights as citizens and have equality of opportunity.

There also needs to be a system of supported learning at a distance. That needs to be done by the Scottish Executive, as schools do not have the funding and school boards will not allow schools to use scarce resources to do that and because local authorities do not have the money.

The Scottish Executive has a responsibility to empower Traveller parents. They need to be presented with hand-held records so that those who are mobile can carry them with them and present them at any school. That is important because, by the time one school contacts another to get the records sent on, the Travellers could have moved away. The same applies to any family who moves accommodation.

There must be an initiative at national level that allows the assessment of Traveller children. At present, they miss out unfairly on national testing. When they enter a school, the last thing the school wants to do is to test them as that can also be unfair. The schools are in a double bind; there must be a national mechanism.

As Diana Dodd said, there must be strong anti-racist and positive discrimination training at local authority level. Service providers need to be aware of the diversity of the client group, so that they do not stereotype people, and must provide multidimensional instead of unitary approaches. Community education is under-exploited by Travellers at the moment but could take a lead in developing contacts; mediators could take on an advocacy role.

In each local authority, there should be a key person who ensures that all of that is done. That person, whether in the chief executive's department or another department, is instrumental in the efficacy of the position. Research that I carried out in 1995 showed that to be true. Local authorities should carry out regular monitoring of enrolment and attendance, particularly in schools close to official Traveller sites. Other than the monitoring that I have conducted, there is no such monitoring in Scotland. Local authorities and schools should log all exclusions and drop-outs of Travellers and investigate why the incidences occurred. The irony is that, even when we get Travellers into schools, they have a hard time and end up getting excluded. If that happens to children, it is hard to explain to Traveller parents that sending their children to school is a good idea.

**Mr McMahon:** Will you elaborate on what you said about institutional discrimination and the lack of monitoring? Will you define institutional discrimination against Travellers?

**Dr Jordan:** Have you got all day? The comprehensive system in Scotland is basically exclusionary. In its present form, it is incapable of including Travellers and the diversity of other interrupted learners. Apart from the up-front racism against Travellers, there is a lot of institutional stuff. A child gets lessons when he or she is in school, but whose responsibility is it when the child is not in school? The issues have not been resolved for homeless families, bed-and-breakfast families, children who are chronically sick and a range of other interrupted learners. The field is extensive.

Schools do not intend to be exclusionary, but the system of having no more than 33 children in a class leads to exclusion. If a family of five or six—or perhaps two or three families—comes to the school, there may be space for only one child. The head teacher of one of the schools that welcomes Traveller children, which has 50 or 60 every year, rang me one day and said, “I don’t have any more spaces. I know what’s going to happen: they are going to think I’m excluding them.” That was the last thing she wanted to happen.

The local authority ought to have been able to supply that head teacher with an extra teacher immediately. If the committee knows anything about education at the moment, it will know that there is not a supply teacher to be had anywhere. The whole system militates against good head teachers having enough flexibility.

I am not sure that that answers the question in full. The field really is enormous.

**Mr McMahon:** We will probably have to go into that in a bit more detail. You specifically mentioned overt racism. I talked to some asylum seekers recently. They were quite happy with the anti-racist policies in the school in Glasgow that they were in. Do you believe that such policies cover the Traveller community or do we need to consider specific anti-bullying and anti-racist strategies for Traveller communities?

**Dr Jordan:** The obvious answer is that the strategies should be the same for all. There should be no group that is seen to be so different that we say that it is deviant and therefore outside the main stream in any way.

You referred to Glasgow. Glasgow has very strong anti-racist policies. The teachers are being trained in them and there is a strong commitment to them in the local authority. The policies are being well driven. If such policies were found in every local authority area, Travellers would not have quite such a hard time.

Policy, of course, varies from school to school. People are individuals and react in different ways. All our schools are supposed to have anti-bullying initiatives, but in a lot of them they are at surface

level. They do not log what goes on. They do not involve speaking to children in such a way as to unpick what led to the critical incident. Such incidents are never one-offs. There are always stories behind them: particular families, particular children or an event that just happened there and then.

The situation is immensely complicated, but if a local authority is really doing the business, there is no need for Travellers to be treated separately. It is respect that is needed.

**Kay Ullrich:** I will pick up on what you wrote about funding at the start of your paper. It is quite concerning. You state:

“The annual funds from SEED have not been increased since 1992”.

You acknowledge that more and more people are trying to access the material that you have. That is good; it suggests that there is more awareness of education and Travellers’ needs. However, even though there is a higher volume of requests, you say that you actually provide less than you have done in the past.

You also go on to say:

“The recent changes to the SOCRATES programme ... further diminish the likelihood of any further funds being accessed from that source by STEP.”

I must plead ignorance; could you explain what the Socrates programme is?

**Dr Jordan:** In the European Commission, there are several directorates general. They are funding groups. DG XXII has the funding for an initiative called Socrates, which is funding to promote international education projects. Part of that, action 2 in the original Socrates, was devoted exclusively to Travellers and migrants. There was protected European funding for Gypsies and Travellers, another budget for occupational Travellers and another fund for migrant workers, because they were perceived as missing out on education throughout Europe. They had the highest incidence of having no qualifications and poor literacy levels.

To go back to the first part of the question, I have to confess that, since I wrote the submission, the world has changed. There has been a sort of steadying of civil servants. Only last week, I was told that funding for salaries will be increased and that it will be for three years. That means that we can get down to planning, which is wonderful.

**Kay Ullrich:** That is good. One-year funding is a nightmare. Organisations across the board tell us that.

**Dr Jordan:** Exactly. So I think that the problem has been resolved. Particular tasks that I will carry out will still have to be agreed in the next three

years, but the information side is secure.

**Kay Ullrich:** You draw comparisons with what has been happening in England. Please expand on that. Can we learn lessons from our southern cousins?

11:30

**Dr Jordan:** Yes and no. Since the middle of the 1960s, the UK education department has held some central funding that local education authorities can use. However, they can tap into the funds only by competitive bidding, so not all local authorities can access them. Over the years, high-powered and extensive networks of Traveller education services have developed in particular areas, but that has not happened in others.

The funding was always on a pro-rata basis. Eighty per cent of funding used to come from central Government and 20 per cent from local authorities. The proportion is now down to about 50:50. Around Christmas, a major change to the funding was announced, which will be implemented this spring. Funding will now be allocated on the basis of a needs assessment. All the time, less and less funding is being made available in England for Travellers. I would not recommend that we follow that model speedily.

In the early days, when I started working for STEP and in Fife, I spent many hours talking to the Scottish Office and asking why we could not have central funds. However, I began to realise that, in a sense, central funding condones segregationist approaches. I was quite worried about that. Now that I am older and a bit wiser, I would say that we should avoid that model. There are plenty of slush funds around at the moment. Extra moneys are available. If local authorities were doing their bit, they could tap into those.

**Kay Ullrich:** Political will is required.

**Dr Jordan:** Absolutely. There is plenty money. Local authorities should use the money pro-actively and effectively, but they tend to forget that the needs of Travellers' children are, in some instances, different from the needs of other children.

**Kay Ullrich:** While we are on the issue of funding, I want to pick up on a question that you may have heard me asking earlier, which is about free transport to schools. West Lothian Council provides free transport, but the site that I visited did not—and I would hate my child to have to walk along that road. Free transport would encourage attendance at school. What are your feelings on free transport? Should it be widespread?

**Dr Jordan:** That was another area that I looked at. I almost hate to admit it, but I could not find any correlation between free transport and an increase

in attendance numbers. That was a bit of a shock—although I have had a few shocks like that while doing the research.

A lot of parents need free transport. If the need exists, free transport should definitely be provided. However, bullying on school buses is endemic. Bullying of Travellers on school buses is definitely a key factor in the drop-out of secondary-age pupils. Some parents do not need transport. Like any group, Travellers have mixed needs. Perhaps free transport should be available all the time, but it would be very costly and would cause resentment from other local inhabitants, who would ask why Travellers were getting free transport when they were not. That is the big worry. Positive discrimination can sometimes be a double-edged sword. The question is how we discriminate positively without being seen to overdo it. It is tricky.

**Kay Ullrich:** The submission from our previous witnesses states in relation to free transport:

"In Stoneyburn especially, this had a very positive impact on enrolments and attendance at the primary school."

Would you say that that is localised? Your research has obviously not shown that.

**Dr Jordan:** May I report on that in private?

**Kay Ullrich:** Yes. I would be happy to hear your evidence in private.

**Cathy Peattie:** I want to go back to support for home education. Some people have a strong tradition of home education, yet that is not recognised as valuable. What kind of support could families be given to provide home education? How could that link in to the wider educational establishment?

**Dr Jordan:** That is another difficult question. Local authorities do not provide any support to home educators. We are always hitting against the hard realities of public provision. I think that home education is valid. Members of my family are involved in it and local authorities should be able to offer help and support. They should also monitor whether children are receiving an education. However, education can be wide: it does not have to be the five-to-14 curriculum. If we provide such wide education for Travellers, we should provide it for everyone; if we provide it for everyone, it will be there for Travellers. I am sorry to keep saying these things, but we are hitting against the inadequacies in the system. It is not that the Travellers have inadequacies; we have an inadequate system.

**Cathy Peattie:** On the subject of inadequacies in the system, I want to ask about special needs education. Parents sometimes say that the provision that they would hope for does not exist for their children. We have been talking about



exclusions. Often, when we start to unpick the reasons for an exclusion, we find that there is a learning difficulty. That is not always recognised.

**Dr Jordan:** When I carried out research in all nine mainland regional authorities and the three islands authorities—before local authority reorganisation—I was surprised at how many Travellers received special education provision. I wondered how they accessed it, and found that it was usually because pre-school medical services or attentive nurseries or primary schools had alerted the authorities.

Some Travellers are accessing special needs provision, but not all. Through my work with the Aberdeen young Travellers education and information project, we have picked up on families that have children and young adults with special needs but that do not want special provision. We have to respect their wishes.

We have to find ways of getting information to disparate groups on their rights, on the services available and on how they can access those services. I very much support Diana Dodd and Patrick Chaney: community education has an enormous role to play; so does social work. The key, if it can be used positively and proactively, is interagency working. That will ensure that services are available and that Travellers know about them and know how to access them. We need to offer that kind of support.

**Cathy Peattie:** I agree. In your submission, on the subject of community education, you talk about the need for advocacy and about the under-representation of travelling people. How can we deal with that? There is a role for services working together—we are not talking about schools on their own, or social work or community education on their own. How can we encourage services to join and to deliver one service? They are not always good at that.

**Dr Jordan:** No—and they are not very good at coming to free conferences either. I ran a conference here in Edinburgh in 1998 on interrupted learners. More than 100 people came and Brian Wilson gave the opening speech. At the end of the conference, he said to me that he would like me to run the conference again for heads of services. The Scottish Office made funding available, Glasgow City Council was involved and we held the conference in the Burrell collection. Nice place, free lunch, but not one head of service came. Instead, they sent the person who always works with Travellers. Once again, I was talking to the converted and again I wondered how we could get local authorities to take responsibility at high level and to realise that they had a duty. It is very difficult.

Focusing on interagency work is essential.

Information must be readily available. People should not be reinventing the wheel or working at cross-purposes. I know of instances of Travellers who have got heartily fed up with so many people being involved and who have said, “I don’t want to see a single other worker come to this site.” I can understand that.

We are not especially good at interagency work in Scotland. It is not one of our strong points. At the moment, I am running a course for undergraduates who will be teachers. They have never heard of interagency work before, and they are in their third year.

**Cathy Peattie:** We need to work on that.

Her Majesty’s inspectors of schools now has a remit to inspect education departments, which is a positive step forward. Does HMI have a role in ensuring that local authorities have a realistic plan for delivering appropriate education and support for Travellers?

**Dr Jordan:** Yes. I hope to produce performance indicators over the next three years, working with the quality audit service. There is an inspector with responsibility for Travellers, but he does not have any time in his timetable. Such are the hard realities. We will work together, and other inspectors will be involved in the quality audit unit.

The difficulty is getting local authorities to act following the Advisory Committee’s Ninth Term Report, which says “Look, we have tried for 30 years to establish things on a voluntary level with local authorities and it hasn’t worked particularly well.” There must be something more. There should be some kind of central forum or platform that prods the public conscience. The performance indicators are necessary but, as Patrick Chaney said, they must be of value for improvements. It should not be a case of saying, “Been there, seen it, done it, ticked it. We’re okay, folks.”

**Cathy Peattie:** The indicators have to be qualitative and measure everything. Do you see HMI taking a stakeholder approach to establishing the indicators?

**Dr Jordan:** Yes.

**Cathy Peattie:** In the past, inspectors have spoken to various people, but not to consumers of the services. It is important that they do so. Do you agree?

**Dr Jordan:** Yes. Absolutely. Those people’s views must be included.

**Linda Fabiani:** I thought that Patrick Chaney was from the Scottish Traveller Education Programme. I do not know why I thought that. I apologise. I did not know that you were coming separately. Do you have an opinion on the number of Travellers in Scotland and on what groups are

included in that category? I am also interested in the relationship that STEP has with the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association. What links do you have? Do you work together on certain issues?

A separate issue that intrigued me as I read your report was what you said about new Travellers. It is probably the first time that I have seen new Travellers defined in a report on Travellers. You say that they are the most stereotyped of Travellers. I acknowledge that, and I have probably been guilty of such stereotyping. I would appreciate your view on who comprises the new Travellers, whether they are going to be a permanent group in society and whether new Travellers are temporary Travellers. The common belief is that they travel for a while and then return to their former lives, but that may be completely wrong. I would appreciate some clarification.

**Dr Jordan:** There are three separate issues. Let us begin with the numbers issue. It is incredibly difficult for anybody to count Travellers unless they want to be counted. There is no place for them on the census form other than the "Other" bit. Not all Travellers get included in the census, which is another issue. The two reports that were issued by the Scottish Executive were simply counts of Travellers on the roads—mobile Travellers at that time. It is impossible to say whether those reports are accurate. We know that they are not an accurate reflection of the total number of Travellers.

In a shorter paper that I have prepared, I pick up on that issue. Farnham Rehfish conducted a piece of research in Scotland in the 1970s, estimating that there were more than 20,000 Travellers; however, he included some home-based, sedentary Travellers. Thomas Acton and Donald Kendrick came to Scotland in 1985 and conducted a quick count for a paper that went to the European Parliament. In that paper, they came up with the figure of 40,000 Travellers in Scotland, but they never carried out a survey and the Scottish Office was unaware that they had been here. Additionally, both the SGTA and Save the Children have conducted counts. I do not know how one can decide what figure is accurate.

I was there on the night when the SGTA was set up in Tillicoultry or one of the little villages around there. The Traveller Willie Reid was instrumental in that, as was Kevin Byrne of Save the Children, and I worked closely with them for several years. That work dropped off but, over the past couple of years, it has picked up again. I would like to continue to work with the SGTA, which is a very important organisation. It has a critical role in expressing at least some Travellers' opinions and views, and that role is definitely needed.

New Travellers—oh, dear, this is a poisoned chalice—are grossly stereotyped, as if, once

again, they were only one group. People adopt alternative lifestyles for all sorts of reasons. My cousin and his girlfriend dropped out when they were students because they felt that they wanted to live that way, and they have lived that lifestyle for many years. While I have no reason to believe that others are of a similar ilk, the few new Travellers that I have met tend to be in the same grouping. However, my views probably come from my background as an educated middle-class person—that is how I am stereotyped. They tend to want a freedom that they do not experience in permanent housing or with their families. Many of them maintain their links with their original families and it is a myth that they separate and drop away. New Travellers include every variety of person.

11:45

Whether new Travellers adopt that lifestyle permanently is another issue. There are third-generation new Travellers, if that helps. We have a video of a young Traveller girl who talks ably about the positive side of her life. She said that, when she was growing up, she did not want to continue with that lifestyle, although she enjoyed it. New Travellers seem to be a UK phenomenon. There are some groups in Germany, but they are not recognised or supported, depending on which Länder they are in, nor are they recognised by the European Parliament.

**Elaine Smith:** I would like to explore an issue that leads on from the questions that Linda Fabiani asked you—whether Gypsy/Travellers are an ethnic minority.

Your paper says:

"Gypsy/Traveller groups throughout Europe are increasingly being constructed as ethnic minorities in the hope of redressing years of stigmatisation and marginalisation."

You go on to say:

"English Romanies have achieved ethnic status, and indeed within the UK Irish Travellers have also just received formal recognition"

and that Save the Children and the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association have called on the Scottish Executive to take steps towards initiating a similar process for Scottish Travellers.

However, it is clear that other issues are involved. In your paper, you ask how the views of Travellers would be sought, given that representation is a key factor. You also ask whether ethnic status is necessary to secure justice. Have you answers to your own questions?

I would be grateful if you could also answer my questions. How do Travellers view themselves? Do all Travellers see themselves as having a distinct ethnic origin? What differences would

travelling people expect if they achieved ethnic minority status?

**Dr Jordan:** That is another book for me to write.

Those difficult issues have been voiced strongly only in the past four or five years. I quote a woman from one of the sites who gave me the shock of my life when she said, "Dinna cry me ain o thae foreigners." In response to my questions, "How are you finding this? Are you a Gypsy?" she said, "Ah'm no a Gypsy." She was quite strong and adamant about that. I begged her pardon, saying, "I'm so sorry. What would you like me to call you?" She said, "Ach, they ca us Travellers these days." I asked her if she wanted me to call her a Traveller, and she replied, "Just ca me Maggie." At that level of dialogue, one realises that while some things are important to some people, they are not important to others—just like the rest of us.

At a professional level, I understand why Travellers might want to declare themselves to be an ethnic group. I have held long discussions with some Travellers about that—it is about recognition, gaining respect and having a recognised voice, all of which are important. In today's climate, it is possible that they are even more important. However, at the back of my mind I think, "Yes, in Hitler's Germany they were caught out because they were easily identifiable." That is a worry. The cynic in me says, "Those days can come back just as easily, even with this social justice agenda." What works in one time and place may not work in another, and giving ethnic status to Travellers must be explored and agreed sensitively with Travellers, not with professionals such as me.

I raised that issue because I know that it will be advanced more and more strongly. I also know that, at the international level, some Gypsies, most of whom are powerful academics, are driving that agenda forward. It is very much about a power struggle in their domains as well. The Travellers that I know who live quietly on a wee site know nothing of that world. How do we explain to them that two dominant Greek Gypsies are arguing the case in the European Parliament, and that both of them want to be the winner?

There are so many issues there that I am frightened to say anything. That is why I asked the questions. I do not have the answers. I know only of the problems that are out there, waiting to be addressed. It is an issue for members. You are the representatives of our Parliament.

**Elaine Smith:** So the ball is back in our court.

I accept what you say, but if Travellers had ethnic minority status, there would be legal recourse against discrimination. Whether people would want to access that legal recourse is another question, but surely that would have a

positive effect.

**Dr Jordan:** It seems so, but it leaves behind the others who are not included in that qualification. That worries me. What about Maggie, who does not want to be one of the ethnics? It is difficult. You asked whether all Travellers have that status. I work with the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain quite a bit, and showground Travellers throughout the UK do not wish to have ethnic status; they wish to be known as a business community. However, when we consider their lifestyle and their genealogies, they are Travellers. Do we give all Travellers ethnic status? Do we give it to a particular kind of Traveller, a sub-group? It is a minefield.

**Mr McGrigor:** Is there any evidence that there is a different level of bullying and racism against groups who have attained ethnic status such as the English Romanies and the Irish Travellers?

**Dr Jordan:** Are you referring to bullying and racism in schools or in general?

**Mr McGrigor:** You refer in your submission to overt racism in the education system and bullying in school playgrounds and corridors. Has there been any difference for groups that have achieved ethnic status?

**Dr Jordan:** In Scotland, bullying and racism continue—there has been no change there. In England, I am a member of the National Association of Teachers of Travellers, which is the professional organisation for the Traveller education services. Whenever we discuss matters, bullying and racism still exist; they do not seem to have suddenly and magically gone away. Ethnic status empowers those families who want to take action and who feel that they are ready and able to challenge a school or a local authority.

**Mr McGrigor:** Gypsies and Travellers are proud of their culture and tradition. As you say, they are Scotland's oldest ethnic minority. However, there are few people who know the history of the Gypsies. Should it not be taught in schools, along with other histories? Would that not give Gypsies and Travellers more recognition? People might look up to them.

**Dr Jordan:** History books are only one version of truth, usually a sanitised, politicised version. It would be lovely to think that all our people's histories could be revealed and talked about openly.

There is a dearth of quality information on Travellers in this country and the little bits of writing that I have done do not go into the right places. Edinburgh University's school of Scottish studies has collected material over many years and runs ethnographic workshops and courses in which Travellers are mentioned. In the official

school books, however, it is a different world.

I am not answering your question properly as the situation is fragmented, but yes, I think that your suggestion is correct. Also, just as I do not know all the history of the Scottish and Irish people from whom I am descended, some Travellers do not know their history. I am aware that my answer is not satisfactory, but I do not think that I can offer anything better.

**The Convener:** I think that that covers all our questions. I thank you for coming along, Dr Jordan, and I am sure that we will work closely with you in the future.

Linda Fabiani wants to make a statement before we move into private session.

**Linda Fabiani:** I want to have on the record the fact that I fully intended to go on the visit to a Traveller site on 2 March but, due to a lack of communication within the Parliament, I was unable to do so. It was through no fault of my own.

**The Convener:** Thanks very much for that.

11:56

*Meeting continued in private until 12:39.*

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