

# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 21 June 2005

Session 2

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## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**10<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2005, Session 2**

### **CONVENER**

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

### **DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD)

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green)  
Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con)  
\*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
\*Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
\*Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

### **COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES**

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)  
\*Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

\*attended

### **THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:**

Nadia Foy  
Janet McPhee  
Roseanna McPhee  
Sharon McPhee  
Andrew Ryder (Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition)  
Fiona Townsley  
Kerrera Wilson

### **CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Steve Farrell

### **SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK**

Zoé Tough

### **ASSISTANT CLERK**

Roy McMahon

### **LOCATION**

Committee Room 2



## Scottish Parliament

### Equal Opportunities Committee

*Tuesday 21 June 2005*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:38*]

### Gypsy Travellers

**The Convener (Cathy Peattie):** Good morning. Welcome to the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting this year of the Equal Opportunities Committee. I remind all those present that mobile phones should be turned off.

I have received apologies from Elaine Smith, Frances Curran and Phil Gallie. I welcome to the meeting Carolyn Leckie, who is attending as a substitute for Frances Curran. Phil Gallie is undertaking work with the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill Committee.

The only item on the agenda today is our fourth evidence session in our review of progress on Gypsy Travellers. I am pleased to welcome Nadia Foy; Janet McPhee; Roseanna McPhee; Sharon McPhee; Kerrera Wilson; Andrew Ryder, from the Gypsy and Traveller law reform coalition; and Fiona Townsley.

There are lots of questions to get through and I am keen to ensure that our witnesses are able to give us as much information as possible, so I would like to go straight to questions.

The committee's report on its inquiry into Gypsy Travellers and public sector policies, which was produced in 2001, said that it was important to hear directly from Gypsies and Travellers and to involve them in decisions that affect them. Have you been more involved in the decisions that have affected you in the past four years? If so, do you have good examples of that? If not, we want to hear about that, too.

**Roseanna McPhee:** There has been more involvement in what people call consultation, but consultation needs to be redefined. We get invited to meetings at which people sit us down and ask for our opinions, but when they go ahead and do the follow-up work they ignore whatever we said. I have been involved in many forums during the past four years and that is my impression.

**The Convener:** Do you feel that you are told about things, rather than asked to participate or consulted and listened to?

**Roseanna McPhee:** Yes. Consultation is one thing; listening to what people say is another.

**Janet McPhee:** Sometimes there is consultation, but then people go away and do something totally different.

**Fiona Townsley:** I have had the same experience. The council just wants us to agree with what it has already decided; it does not want to hear our views.

**Kerrera Wilson:** I do not know what happens in the areas where the other witnesses live, but in the Highlands we have not had much involvement. We feel that we have been pretty much left out of decision making. Travellers need to be more involved in what is going on up there.

**The Convener:** Is there no involvement or consultation in the Highlands?

**Kerrera Wilson:** Not really.

**Janet McPhee:** That is the same all over the country.

**Andrew Ryder (Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition):** In the Gypsy and Traveller community, a growing number of activists want to contribute to policy formulation. Their skills and confidence are growing in leaps and bounds, but policy makers do not always make adequate use of those skills. We would like a Gypsy and Traveller task force to be established in Scotland, which would include members of the Traveller community at the heart of the decision making that has an impact on their lives. Policy would be much better for that.

**The Convener:** Do the witnesses agree with that suggestion?

**Sharon McPhee:** Yes.

**Kerrera Wilson:** Yes.

**Nadia Foy:** Yes.

**The Convener:** The committee recommended that Gypsies and Travellers should be regarded as an ethnic minority group until there was a court decision under the Race Relations Act 1976. Do people regard Gypsies and Travellers as an ethnic minority group? If so, does that make a difference in your lives?

**Fiona Townsley:** Perth and Kinross Council has an equal opportunities strategy but we are not seeing it in practice. Although the council recognises us as an ethnic minority group, it still discriminates against us.

**The Convener:** Is the council just paying lip service to the fact that you are regarded as being an ethnic minority?

**Fiona Townsley:** Yes. We are not treated equally and our views are not taken into consideration. We are still treated as if we are substandard citizens.

**Nadia Foy:** Where I stay, I do not know anyone who recognises us as an ethnic minority.

**Sharon McPhee:** We are not regarded as an ethnic minority. It is okay for the newspapers and media to say whatever they want to say about Travellers, but there would be a big outcry if they said those things about another ethnic minority.

**The Convener:** Is there still no protection for you?

**Sharon McPhee:** No.

**Roseanna McPhee:** The national health service officially recognised us as an ethnic minority and a round table was set up that we were told would do wonderful things. However, unfortunately if someone tries to register with a general practitioner, they are told, "We don't do caravan people." The next time they try to register, they are told, "Oh, there's a waiting list." If we take the matter to the local health trust, the trust says, "We've got no jurisdiction over GPs," because GPs can do whatever they want. However far up the health chain we go, whether we go to the board or the trust, we are told, "We can't force a GP to take you," even though in a rural area there might be only one GP for miles around.

**The Convener:** What happens in that situation?

**Roseanna McPhee:** I dealt with the case of a lady who is waiting for a heart operation in my area, who had been turned away because she did not have a postcode. When she gave the postcode of her father's house she was told, "We don't do caravan dwellers." When I inquired about that, I was told that there was a waiting list. We had to register her in the nearest village, but she will not be able to have her heart operation—she needs to have the operation within a year or she will pop her clogs—because she should not be on that doctor's list; she should be in a different catchment area, so the doctor cannot refer her on.

10:45

**Sharon McPhee:** I have never had a bad experience with a doctor, but it is impossible for Travellers to get dental care in the Highlands. All the dentists are booked up and they are not keen on seeing Travellers because they do not know whether we will be in the area long enough. If we prove that we will stay in the area, the dentists still do not want to take us and tell us that there is a two-year waiting list and we will have to wait two years before being seen. They are just fobbing us off, as far as I can see.

**The Convener:** Absolutely.

**Nadia Foy:** If we are regarded as an ethnic minority, why does a member of the Scottish Parliament—I will not mention the name—want to

try to take away our human rights? Never mind dentists and health care; human rights are more important. The MSP claimed that our human rights should be taken away by taking a case to Geneva.

**The Convener:** The committee cannot answer for that individual, with whom we disagree, of course.

**Andrew Ryder:** A clear message would be sent to people in Scotland that Gypsies and Travellers are an ethnic minority if there was legislation that gave them that status. People have waited for a court case that might enable that to happen, but they are frustrated with the wait and think that the time has come for legislation that clearly expresses the rights that Gypsies and Travellers deserve.

**The Convener:** The committee recommended that that should happen. However, such legislation is reserved to Westminster, so the committee cannot take the matter forward. That is frustrating for us.

**Nadia Foy:** Should we take that up at Westminster?

**The Convener:** Yes. We will feed that back, too.

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** The committee received evidence from Aberdeenshire Council that although there is still much prejudice against Gypsy Travellers from the settled community, such prejudice is not regarded as racism. Do the witnesses' experiences back up that observation? Are we making progress on the issue?

**Sharon McPhee:** I do not know about Aberdeenshire, but there is racism everywhere. I am not just talking about the attitudes of the settled community; Travellers can attach a stigma to the settled community. Racism of any kind should not be tolerated, but there is still a lot of racism. The attitudes that you describe would be regarded as racist if they were directed at another ethnic minority.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Yes, indeed.

**Nadia Foy:** We carried out a survey of young people, and 92 per cent said that they had been picked on and called names because of their identity. They do not think that the situation has improved.

**Nora Radcliffe:** When such incidents happen, does anyone step in and challenge the attitudes on the ground that they are racist? For example, if something happens at school, do the teachers step in?

**Nadia Foy:** How can we challenge attitudes on the ground that they are racist if we are not classed as an ethnic minority? We have no laws behind us to enable us to take things forward. To consider the matter from another perspective,

what is the Government doing for the young men and women in the settled, non-Traveller community who have been picked on? Some young people have taken their lives. Therefore, how much can we expect to be overlooked, given that we have no laws behind us? When Asians, Chinese and people who emigrate to live in our country are picked on, the law is behind them, although they are not from our country—I am not racist in any way. However, generations of my family have been brought up in Scotland and England and, although we come from this country, we are not accepted and have no laws behind us, so there is not much hope for us.

**Kerrera Wilson:** The problem seems to be getting worse, particularly for people who live on sites or in Traveller camps. When I lived in a house, the prejudice was not as bad, but when I moved into a site full time the settled community was much more hostile towards me.

**The Convener:** Sometimes the stigma can be worse in the settled community.

**Janet McPhee:** I was born and brought up in Kirkcaldy, where the settled community has accepted Travellers for years. There has not been much prejudice against Travellers there, but there are problems in schools. I have three kids in school and my wee girl has just moved school. Her school does not know that she is a Traveller. I have two sons who went halfway through high school without the school knowing that they were Travellers—their friends found out just a few months ago. My sons get away with it because they are the only Travellers in the school and can hide their identity, but we should not have to hide our culture; we should be proud of it.

**The Convener:** Absolutely.

**Sharon McPhee:** I had a bad experience at school. The teacher put me out of the classroom so that she could tell the rest of the children that I was different. She told them that I had behavioural problems because of where I came from and said that they should act in a certain way towards me. Schools should raise awareness. That is how to let settled children know that Traveller children are just the same as them.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Nora Radcliffe asked about racism. When the Scottish Travellers against racism—STARS—project was formed, we went to the Scottish Executive and made quite a bit of a din about the fact that it had missed us out of the one Scotland, many cultures campaign. We told the Executive that a lot of the terminology that people use is racist. People think that they are not being racist if they call a Gypsy Traveller a tinker, for example.

I am a voluntary tutor for a Gaelic choir. Recently, someone said, “Your grandfather was a

tinker.” The person, who is very nice, was not being cheeky; they thought that the term “tinker” was not pejorative at all. The STARS project wanted to get the message through to the Executive that things such as that are racist, but nothing happened. The Executive told us that it would do this and that, but after that there was silence.

**Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP):** The aim of the STARS project is to educate communities about the Gypsy Traveller way of life.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Yes.

**Ms White:** Will you ask the Executive for funding, perhaps through the committee?

**Roseanna McPhee:** We have asked the Executive for funding. We met Executive officials over 18 months—month after month—but they kept telling us that we had to develop the proposal. I spent about six months developing it after which I was asked to develop the budget, so I had to spend another six months or so doing that. Eventually, we had a meeting last January. When we asked what the problem with the proposals and the budget was, we were told that there was nothing wrong with them and yet we had been going to meetings for 18 months. Mr Ryder was at the meeting, too.

People such as me who are unemployed are paying out of our own pockets to travel to such meetings and have to wait for three months to get the fares back. I did not even get the last one.

**Ms White:** Nora Radcliffe might want to pick up on that question.

Do you have a copy of your application? Perhaps there is scope to include it in our report.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Towards the end of its previous recommendations, the committee called for a national campaign. I think that recommendation 37 was that there should be an anti-racism campaign in addition to a schools-based campaign; we would have slotted neatly into those recommendations.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Exactly. That was a very big missed opportunity.

Andrew Ryder suggested that a task force should be set up to represent Gypsy Traveller interests. How can the views of a community that is so mobile and spread across Scotland be represented effectively? Is there scope for a representative group and, if so, should it be a national group? The committee seeks your views on the best mechanisms for allowing the Gypsy Traveller voice to be heard effectively.

**Sharon McPhee:** Training should be given to Travellers who want to become outreach workers for the Traveller community. People trust their own

kind more. The experiences that Gypsy Travellers have been through can sometimes lead to a bit of distrust of workers from the settled community. It is a good idea to train Traveller people to do such work.

**Janet McPhee:** I work part time with the Heatherywood community association in Kirkcaldy, which works to raise awareness in the community. When we need to take a view on an issue in Kirkcaldy, we put together a questionnaire and take it round the Travellers.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Does that mechanism work well?

**Janet McPhee:** Yes. It is all right for those of us who are sitting round the table to say what Travellers need, but we still need to consult other Travellers. We cannot speak for everybody; our opinions could be different from those of other Travellers.

**Nora Radcliffe:** We are trying to get at the most effective way of getting everyone's voice heard.

**Janet McPhee:** We ask for people's opinions by sending out questionnaires.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Another missed opportunity was the National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health round table, on which we worked. I was one of the five that went to Dublin—Janet McPhee was another. We worked towards the idea of having a national needs assessment that would be co-ordinated by a community researcher. At the end of the day, someone from outwith the community got the job, which was not a researcher job but a health link worker post. All the work that we had done and everything that we had fed into the meetings, which we thought had been agreed, was suddenly changed on the day.

**Andrew Ryder:** In recent times, a number of developments have shown that Gypsies and Travellers across Scotland can work together very well, so a Scottish task force on which Gypsies and Travellers would sit would be a success. One such development is the STARS project, which brought together a range of Gypsies and Travellers. They developed the project themselves and came up with an extremely good proposal. Another recent development is the formation of the Scottish Gypsy and Traveller law reform coalition. A number of successful meetings have been held and a consultation process has been devised. As the committee can see from today's evidence-taking session and probably from its other sessions, there is a body of articulate Gypsy Travellers in this country and we must not lose the opportunity to include them in the political process. If they are included, great things will happen for the community and in policy development.

**Fiona Townsley:** There was a Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association, which seemed to reach all Travellers. From what I hear from other Travellers, it went out to all the caravan sites and spread information about what was happening in other areas. However, it could not get funding. If there is to be an organisation, it must be funded.

**The Convener:** Resources are an issue. We need to ensure that people have the tools and the training, as Sharon McPhee said, but we also need to ensure that they have funding and support, as those are vital if people are to work together as a group.

**Nadia Foy:** The Government should provide funding. We do seminars for local authorities and communities—Travellers go in and educate them. Basically, they ask us questions about how we like to be dealt with, for example, and we answer them. It sounds horrible to talk about how we like to be dealt with, as we should not be "dealt with", but that is the situation we are in at present. If funding could be found for such work, much more educational work on the connections between the Gypsy Traveller and settled communities could be done for local authorities and in local communities.

**Roseanna McPhee:** On funding, in addition to working for STARS, I was a founder member of the SGTA and worked for the association. I am also a member of the Gypsy Traveller community development project steering group and worked for the project for a while. There is reluctance to give funding to something that might be managed by Gypsy Travellers; it is as if we cannot be trusted with the pot of honey.

**The Convener:** But only if an organisation is run and managed by Gypsy Travellers can we hear the voice of Gypsy Travellers. Do you agree?

**Roseanna McPhee:** Yes.

**The Convener:** The committees and members of the Scottish Parliament need to talk to Gypsy Travellers and not to the people who always talk on behalf of Gypsy Travellers.

**Roseanna McPhee:** That is right.

**Janet McPhee:** On the points that Nadia and Roseanna made about funding and training, many young people and teenagers in the Traveller community cannot get work and getting funding and training for them so that they can get work is a job. If someone applies for a job, their address comes up as being a site for Travelling people. The first thing that someone says is, "That application's from a Gypsy. It's no use giving them the job; all they do is steal." Whenever we apply for work, that is the first opinion that we hear.

I was on the radio yesterday and a man phoned in to ask me whether Travellers pay their taxes. Of course we pay our taxes. People think such things



about us, but we have to go out there and fend for ourselves; we cannot apply for jobs.

When the young people on our site go out to look for jobs and give their address, the computer comes up with Heatherywood Travelling people's site—the committee can check that. Five years ago, we began the fight to get that removed. We are proud of who and what we are but we are fighting to get the address removed because of the discrimination that it causes. Five years down the line, the address has still not been removed.

**Roseanna McPhee:** I have academic qualifications and yet I cannot get work. However, the more general point on the discrimination that Gypsy Travellers face when we look for work is that jobcentres seem to be of the opinion that there is no racism against Gypsy Travellers. Recently, I have dealt with the cases of two young girls. One of them is bright enough but she does not have any qualifications—she did not finish school, so she has no official qualifications, and the jobcentre sent her for a skills test. She was asked why she has been unable to get a job and has been unemployed for the four years since she left school. The answer is that every time she gives her caravan as an address, she does not even get an interview. The jobcentres want to send girls such as her for literacy skills training. That is fair enough, but if all that they say to someone is that they have to go and get a literacy test, they are not handling the issue very sensitively.

A number of young people have signed off rather than have to suffer the stress of being told that they are not looking for work, which is terrible, because they are just sitting at home with no money and their parents are having to pay for them.

11:00

**Sharon McPhee:** I agree with what Janet McPhee said about what is happening. One paper said that Travellers were lazy and had dropped out of society. We were described as scum. Most of the Travellers whom I know do their own kind of work and are hard-working people. I do not know many lazy people.

**The Convener:** Travellers have to be hard working.

**Fiona Townsley:** When Travellers try to run projects, local authorities and other public bodies put down and undermine what they are doing. They make a joke out of what Travellers are trying to do. They should take it more seriously.

**Ms White:** Reference has been made to people paying their way. Earlier I spoke to Frances, who is sitting in the public gallery, who told me that

Travellers pay more for electricity and that they pay council tax, but do not get any services.

I have a couple of questions about accommodation, which has been raised with us as an issue of concern. Save the Children Scotland told us that over the past 30 years local authorities have not been enthusiastic about providing Gypsy Traveller sites and that there are not enough sites for the number of people who want to use them now or in the future. Do local authorities and the Scottish Executive understand what Gypsy Travellers need now and in the future? What could be done to increase the number of sites on which Gypsy Travellers would want to stay?

**Sharon McPhee:** At the moment, local authorities are more interested in closing sites. They are closing a lot of sites and are not opening any. When sites are opened, Travellers are not consulted about that. Such sites are always built on bits of wasteland that no one wants and in unhealthy places, such as dumps and under pylons.

**Janet McPhee:** Local authorities go on about renovation, but after sites have been built they are just left to become run down. It takes years for authorities to renovate them. Where is all the rent going? When our site opened in Fife, people's annual rent was supposed to be ploughed back into funding renovations on the site. Now we are in mainstream housing, so we are all right, but I know a few sites up north that have not been touched since they were built years ago.

Fife Council does things for Travellers, but it does not consult them enough. Two years ago, we applied for our site to be renovated. The council was supposed to consult the people on the site, but workmen simply did the work and people did not have a say. The council should have given the Traveller men the money, because they could have done a better job. In my mother's chalet, red stuff was put on the floor for heating. However, the stuff goes only halfway under her sink cupboard and the rest of the floor is concrete. The council did not even send anyone down to the site to inspect the work after it had been done.

**Kerrera Wilson:** Janet made the point that sites have not been renovated or properly maintained. Months ago, we reported damage to the caravan in which we live to the people who are supposed to fix it, but no one has even bothered to look at it. Authorities build sites but do not bother to maintain them properly.

**The Convener:** So there is no maintenance and sites are left to become run down.

**Roseanna McPhee:** I would like to make two points about accommodation. First, the 100 per cent grant was withdrawn when the advisory committee of the Secretary of State for Scotland

on Scotland's Travelling people was wound up. Since then, there has not really been funding for accommodation—the Scottish Executive has simply told councils to find it from their budgets. Councils will never find that kind of money from their budgets, because there would be an outcry from the settled community if they did.

My second point relates to accommodation needs. Councils say that they cannot include us in their local housing strategies because caravans on sites are not houses. My father has lived in a tinker housing experiment since 1947 and only £825 has been spent on his house. I have tried for two years to get him supplied with electricity and hot water. Basically, the house needs to be pulled down—a shed would provide a better standard of accommodation. However, the council says that it cannot do anything or even write that need into its local housing plan for two years.

**Fiona Townsley:** We have the same problem when trying to get repairs done at Double Dykes in Perth. It is a nightmare and can go on for years. We cannot see where the rent money has gone. We have been in the middle of an upgrade for about three years, but there is constant argument about standards. We have contacted the Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland and have tried to get them involved, so that the standards for accommodation that is provided to Gypsy Travellers can be clarified. However, we end up going round in circles. We want a good standard of housing to be provided at Double Dykes—proper insulation and chalets—but there is a funding problem.

**Andrew Ryder:** We are strongly of the opinion that in England and Scotland there needs to be a statutory duty on councils to provide sites. In England, we have a wide body of support for that call. The Commission for Racial Equality, the Local Government Association, the National Farmers Union and the Association of Chief Police Officers all officially endorsed the clause calling for such a duty that we proposed be inserted in the Westminster Parliament's Housing Bill. There is a perception that that legal obligation is needed to ensure that councils deliver what is being asked of them.

We also agree with the recommendation that the Equal Opportunities Committee made four years ago that the definition of "home" should be changed to include Gypsy Traveller sites. As members are aware, that would have huge implications for funding and tenancy rights. All that we are seeking is equality. I hope that the recommendation will be acted on in the near future. Gypsies and Travellers have already had to wait four years for that simple but fair request to be delivered. It has not been, and it needs to be

delivered soon, either through the Housing (Scotland) Bill or through some other mechanism.

We believe that there is a need for a legal obligation on councils to identify land that Travellers can buy. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is to issue a new planning circular setting out that obligation. I hope that the Scots will act similarly.

A huge number of Gypsy Traveller sites occupy marginal space. I have seen a large number of sites in Scotland, and the situation here is not very different from that in England. Sites have been built in places where houses would never be built—under motorway flyovers, next to rubbish dumps and next to busy motorways. It is a disgrace that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are consigning people to live in such marginal space. Let us be clear: decent sites are the key to creating the inclusion that we want for the Gypsy and Traveller community. They are the key to improved educational attainment and attendance, improved health care and increased employment of Gypsies and Travellers in the economy. How can those things happen when people do not have a proper place to live—when they are living at the side of the road or under a motorway flyover?

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** The evidence that you are presenting is very powerful. The stage 1 debate on the Housing (Scotland) Bill is scheduled for Wednesday 29 June. Have you looked at the bill? Would you like specific amendments to be lodged? If the committee could agree on amendments to lodge at stage 2 of the bill, that would be very powerful. We have a real opportunity to do that. It would be great for us to have your help and co-operation in lodging such amendments.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Recommendations 4, 5 and 6 in the committee's original report were very good. Recommendation 5, which called on planning departments in their development control plans to identify land for Gypsy Travellers for development and to progress matters in conjunction with the community, was ahead of its time.

Recommendation 4 was about extending family housing and about rights of ownership and succession. We in Perth have been told categorically that there is no way that people will be able to buy their own place, because they are different from people in the settled community. I see no difference on rights of ownership.

Those recommendations were good in the first instance and could be slotted into the Housing (Scotland) Bill. As Andrew Ryder said, no statutory duty has been created; only recommendations have been made. Even some MSPs—I will name no names—have said that they are only

recommendations, which councils do not have to put in place. Unless what is in the recommendations becomes statutory, things will not progress.

**Ms White:** The feedback is that to increase the number of sites that are acceptable to you, local councils need to speak to Gypsy Travellers to hear your ideas about how you wish to live, and that we need to legislate through the bill.

**Janet McPhee:** What is not realised is that sites are not built to accommodate Travellers' needs. Only two caravans are allowed on a bay. What are people expected to do if they have a couple of grown-up daughters and a couple of grown-up sons but only two caravans? We are not allowed to have three caravans on a bay, so are a girl of 16 or 17 and a boy of 18 or 19 expected to sleep in one caravan? Those issues should be taken into consideration when sites are built. Even though we are Travellers, our children still need their privacy.

**Nadia Foy:** Without being rude, I ask how many times the questions need to be asked. We were asked the exact same questions about how we can be helped with sites, how sites can be provided and what we want to be done four years ago. Four years on, the situation is the same.

**Fiona Townsley:** I will continue with what Janet spoke about. Where we stay, the pitches are so small that some caravans hang over the road. Caravans are becoming bigger and bigger. On a residential site, the pitches cannot hold such caravans, but that does not seem to bother the local council. Health and safety regulations and fire safety regulations apply to sites, but they cannot be complied with. Tenancy agreements, health and safety regulations and fire safety regulations keep being broken, but nobody seems to bother.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Janet said that people—particularly grown-up members of a family—are entitled to their privacy. Since the beginning of time, it has been a tradition for Gypsy Travellers to travel in family groupings. Living in a family grouping is part of the culture. However, "Guidelines for Managing Unauthorised Camping by Gypsies/Travellers" by the Scottish Executive says that people can travel with only three vehicles on an unauthorised spot. Those three vehicles could be a van and two caravans or two vans and one caravan, neither of which combination is particularly useful—how are two caravans pulled by one van? What about a family of nine, such as ours? If we all wanted to have our own space and to have a small caravan, we would have nowhere to go, because people are allowed to live only with three vehicles. That breaches human rights.

**Ms White:** Nadia, you asked how many times the questions must be asked. We know that you must be consulted and that you are fed up because nothing is resulting from that. What about settled sites? Should we do more for people in settled housing or open up transit sites?

**Nadia Foy:** None of that is being done.

**Ms White:** I am just asking for the purposes of our report.

**Nadia Foy:** I know what will go in the report, but my point is that we keep on being asked, "Do you want transit sites? What can we do to help people in the settled community, such as people who might have been settled on council sites for 10 years? What can we do for people in houses who are being picked on?" The questions keep on being asked, but nothing is being done. We are in the same position.

**The Convener:** That is why we are revisiting the report. We want to examine what has been done. If things have not been done, we will make more recommendations. I understand your frustration.

**Nadia Foy:** The recommendations will go nowhere until they are in legislation, as Andrew Ryder says.

**The Convener:** Legislation is vital.

**Sharon McPhee:** Nadia is right: the same questions are being asked as were asked four years ago. We feel that, four years from now, perhaps the same questions will be asked again. We would like something to be done for a change.

11:15

**Janet McPhee:** Many people wonder why all the Travellers have come out of the woodwork. As I told somebody this morning, a good few years ago, Travellers used to do farm work with the berries, the tatties and all that. When they went to farms, they stayed on farmers' ground, but all that has been done away with and is washed out. That is why we are all coming out of the woodwork. We want to continue our culture and to travel, but there is nowhere to go—there are no camps. If transit sites were established all over, people would shift from one transit site to another.

Sandra White talked about settled sites, which need to be made bigger for families. Our site has 18 pitches with families. A few years ago, our site was overcrowded because people do not have a picture of how, even though we are Travellers, we have children who grow up and marry. When our children marry, they have no place to go, because the sites are full, so they must go on the road. We need more permanent sites and transit sites.

**Fiona Townsley:** In Double Dykes, we have doubling up on pitches, where two or three

families stay on one pitch. Travellers have even stayed on the grass because of the lack of places for them to stop.

**Roseanna McPhee:** We have said that the definition of accommodation should include caravans. In Tayside, research was conducted in 1999-2000 by Communities Scotland, Perth and Kinross Council and Angus Council—I think that Dundee City Council also had some input—and it showed huge interest in small family group housing, such as chalets or other houses of some kind, but only in family groupings. I have been to Ireland to see quite a few such houses. Where small family groupings exist, people live in such places for years. Kids begin to go to school and to have education. I would not say that it is integration, but some multiculturalism goes on. There is peaceful co-existence, as there has been where we have stayed in Pitlochry. Quite a lot of people have expressed interest in that, but nothing has been taken up.

**Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):** I feel your frustration, which we all recognise, but it is important that we ask whether progress has been made, because at least we can now say that no progress has been made and that we really need to do something about that. My question is along much the same lines. One recommendation in the report was that each local authority should appoint a Gypsy Traveller liaison officer. We have heard evidence that few liaison officers have been appointed. The belief has been that a site manager would act as a liaison officer, but that was not meant to be the situation. What are your views on liaison officers? Would they provide a useful link? What are your views on site managers? Fiona Townsley's submission says that Double Dykes does not even have a site manager.

**Fiona Townsley:** The last time that the committee asked, we had a site manager, but the post was removed. We had a man for one hour per day, which was then reduced to a visit from somebody twice a week, and now we have seen nobody for weeks. We have gone backwards for a while, but the local council says that we will have a part-time liaison officer and a part-time site manager. They will be two different people.

**Sharon McPhee:** A site manager could not do the liaison job, because Travellers would not trust a site manager to speak about what they need or want. As I have said, members of the Traveller community must be given the opportunity to be trained to be liaison officers.

**The Convener:** That would create more trust and ensure a clearer understanding.

**Sharon McPhee:** Yes.

**Kerrera Wilson:** What I want to say about wardens—

**Janet McPhee:** Managers.

**Kerrera Wilson:** Wardens, or whatever they are called, would not work as liaison officers, because they are sometimes unsympathetic towards Travellers' needs. My experience of many managers is that they sit in their office all day. They will provide electricity cards or whatever people need, but most of the time they are locked in their office drinking coffee.

**Roseanna McPhee:** As Fiona said, we are members of the Perth and Kinross liaison committee and we have pushed for a Gypsy Traveller liaison officer, which we are to be given. The problem is that if the liaison officers are employed by the council and the council does not want something to happen, the employee will not go against their employer. The Gypsy Traveller liaison officer should be more independent.

**Nadia Foy:** I was on a settled site in Dalkeith for seven or eight years. When we first moved on to the site, the warden was not allowed to keep electricity cards, there were 7ft or 8ft gates with barbed wire around the site and there was a phone box that took only cards—it did not take coins in case we stole them. There was no need for the warden to be there because he was not even in contact with us. He went round to check that the rubbish was picked up and he told the kids that they had to be quiet and keep inside without running up and down. As time went on, he got a little nicer because he realised that we were not what he thought we were. However, if wardens are not allowed to keep electricity cards or to have any direct contact with us, why are they running sites? Wardens do not run council estates, so why do they have to run Traveller sites?

**The Convener:** That is a good point.

**Sharon McPhee:** Wardens usually have an idea of what they think Travellers are like before they start working with them. We were talking about this last night. Some wardens lock themselves in their offices—they lock the door behind them and we have to knock on the door to buy an electricity card. Every so often, they go round the site and take down the number plates of the cars and things like that. That does not happen on a housing estate because there would be an outcry—you just do not do that to people; it is not normal.

**Nadia Foy:** The wardens count how many heads are in the caravans. When my sister was having a baby, she did not keep well and we asked for her to be put on the same bay as us so that we could be near at hand, but that was not allowed. If she came to stay overnight with us, the

warden was on at us saying, "Only one family is allowed per bay. She is not allowed here."

**Andrew Ryder:** As regards consultation, the Gypsy and Traveller law reform coalition would especially like more site forums—residents associations—on the sites. That would allow the Travellers to talk about what they want and how to achieve it. Where I have seen such forums, they have given Gypsies and Travellers very important skills in how to contribute to meetings. We are beginning to see Gypsies and Travellers become school governors or community councillors and it is off the back of such forums that they get the skills and confidence to do so.

On Gypsy Traveller liaison officers, their job is difficult when there is a shortage of sites. In England, the Gypsy Traveller liaison officer is often dragged into enforcement proceedings against Travellers who are on unauthorised encampments. If the council puts pressure on that officer to act in a certain way, that can make it difficult to create trust. That is one of my concerns.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Following on from what Andrew said about the shortage of sites and what Janet said about Gypsies and Travellers coming out of the woodwork, if the unauthorised encampment guidelines are applied, a lot of the traditional stopping places will be classified—some have been already—as unauthorised. If those sites suddenly become unauthorised, where are the people going to go? Even more of the type of scenes that happened in England will be replicated up here. Suddenly, a lot of sites that were traditional stopping places, although not for long-term stays, are unauthorised. Why? Some of them are on rights of way and have boulders and chains on them.

**Shiona Baird:** My next question might not seem terribly relevant in light of what the witnesses have said. One of the recommendations was that there should be improved facilities on sites, such as play areas or meeting rooms. Has there been any progress in that area? You say that a lot of the sites do not even have basic facilities.

**Janet McPhee:** We have an education Portakabin, and two teachers who have just won a special teaching award come to the site. We applied to the Scottish Executive two years ago and got three new computers for teaching the kids. However, it seems that the internet access was cut off last year. Before that, we applied to Fife Council for computers. As a matter of fact, when we started working with fairness, race awareness and equality Fife—FRAE Fife—we got a new computer from the organisation, and we put it in the Portakabin. We got on to Fife Council to connect the computer to the internet for the kids, but it lay and lay until we applied to the Scottish Executive and got those three new computers.

However, we could not get access to the Portakabin because it had been residential and was vandalised—I was away for the summer and returned to find it vandalised. As a result, no one was allowed into the Portakabin and internet access was turned off. Those three computers are lying there doing not much good at all because the kids are not interested in them if they are not connected to the internet. I have been on to Fife Council to try to get the internet connection back on for the kids and their education, but so far nothing has happened.

There is no play area on the site. There is nothing for the kids to do; they just wander about. The process of putting up a play park was started, but it was for teenagers and not for the children. The health and safety people condemned it so it was pulled down. That happened two or three years ago and we are still waiting for a swing park. Every time that we go to the Gypsy Traveller working group meetings, we bring the subject up and we are told that we are getting funding for a park, but nothing has happened so far.

The council is too busy trying to pilot a transit site at the end of the road next to the Redhouse roundabout to show that Kirkcaldy is the first place to have a transit site. However, the site is dangerous because it is right next to a busy road. I would not pull on to it with my kids because it is too dangerous, especially at 5 o'clock in the rush-hour traffic. The council would be better asking us what we want and putting up swing parks for the kids instead of trying to be the first to get a transit site up and running.

**Kerrera Wilson:** There have been some small improvements to the sites, but Travellers have had to fight very hard to get them. When Portakabins are put on a site, the warden keeps the keys because we are not considered responsible enough to look after whatever equipment is in the Portakabin. A lot more has to be done to put facilities on the sites for Travellers so that their kids can be taught and the children can have play parks.

**Janet McPhee:** We tried to get youth workers to come up to supervise the kids. We even sat in the Portakabin waiting for them to come up because we were to have meetings with them, but they never turned up.

**Fiona Townsley:** We also find that there is patchwork provision and that the council puts in just the bare necessities. The children had their first class in the Portakabin yesterday—it came on to the site just this year. We have been holding tenants association meetings in the caretaker's office, but we are not allowed the keys to the office. We went through a winter of waiting until somebody came out to open the office; when we went in it was freezing cold because the heating

has to be put on a few hours beforehand so that the heat builds up. We sat in there freezing. We have another Portakabin now and we are still having to wait until somebody comes out to open it because we cannot get in.

**Ms White:** Are the keys taken away so that you can only get into the Portakabin when the key holder comes back? You are not trusted to be responsible enough to hold the keys.

**Fiona Townsley:** Somebody from the council keeps the keys. If we hold a tenants association meeting, which does not include the council, somebody from the tenants federation has to go to the council building, come to the site, open the Portakabin and then take the keys away with them when they leave.

**Shiona Baird:** My final question is about disabled Gypsy Travellers. We have heard recently that it has been difficult to get improvements made to their facilities. What are your experiences of that?

**Fiona Townsley:** That is one of the fights that we are having on our caravan site. I am a carer for my mum and we find it very difficult to get disabled adaptations. One tenant who had a stroke has been waiting for a shower since 2003—she is still waiting.

The council says that because our rent money goes into the general fund and not into the housing revenue account, it cannot get funding from the housing revenue account to put disabled adaptations on the caravan site, and because the site is not classified as housing, we cannot get grants for disabled adaptations. So there is nowhere that Perth and Kinross Council can get funding from for adaptations for the tenants of Double Dykes. We have been fighting for years to get them.

11:30

**Roseanna McPhee:** Coming back to the point about housing, my father is 81 and has had two strokes. He lives in a hut that hot water or electricity cannot be put into, although technically it is classified as housing—it is part of the tinker housing experiment, the idea of which was to eradicate the tinker clan, but that has not quite happened. Because of overcrowding, the council has said over the years, "Your daughter can have a caravan and your son can have a caravan," but it is still refusing to put water or electricity on the site, despite the fact that technically it is classified as housing. It does not matter whether it is housing or a caravan, there is reluctance to improve it.

**Nadia Foy:** One family has been waiting for seven years and has been involved in a court

battle to get proper accommodation for their disabled child.

**Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab):** We have talked a little bit about education, particularly in relation to bullying and racism, and I invite you to go back to that. The Scottish Traveller education programme has reported that fear of racist attacks, including bullying, still stops Gypsy Travellers going to school. Are we doing enough to tackle that problem?

**Sharon McPhee:** Awareness raising should be brought into schools. Teachers do not seem to take incidents seriously. They do not see the bullying of Traveller children as racist acts. They see it as the Traveller child's problem, not the other way round. No form of racism should be tolerated, so why is it tolerated against Travellers? Most Traveller children I know have problems at school unless they hide their identity, but why should they have to?

**Kerrera Wilson:** There were five or six Traveller children and 500 from the settled community at my high school. When the Traveller children were bullied and it was reported to the teacher, it was always portrayed as the Traveller children's fault. When there is such a small minority in a school, they have no voice. The problem is that they are not believed. Teachers should be more sensitive towards them because of that.

**Nadia Foy:** It is fair to say that most Traveller kids have been bullied at school. My nephew and his brother are in school in Dundee. They have been picked on and bullied and have been moved from school to school. They have been fighting back and they have been expelled and so on. The school did not refuse my nephew education, but moved him to a different school on the other side of the city, while his brother is still attending the school that the problems are in. The teachers, headmasters and authorities have moved my nephew to another school, and there is nothing much that his mother can do because they are not refusing her son education. However, instead of fixing the problem and getting together a panel to think about the problem, what it is and why it is recurring, the authorities are just not dealing with the problem but moving my nephew to another school. He is being separated from his brother and will be the only Traveller kid in the other school. He will be in the minority among settled kids, so the problem will reoccur when they find out that he is a Traveller.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Sharon mentioned the need to have awareness raising in schools; however, it should not just happen in schools but should be part of teacher training. Two weeks ago, my sister, who is a Gypsy Traveller and a teacher, had to sit in a staffroom and listen to another teacher going on about tinkers carrying pots and

pans and diseases. I would not have taken that; I would have complained. However, she did not. If the teachers have that attitude in the staffroom, what are they carrying over into the classroom? Even if we get the school environment right, we will need a wider campaign for parents and the wider public to reduce discrimination and tackle the stereotypical prejudices that are perpetuated in the press.

**Andrew Ryder:** I am a former school teacher with experience of teaching Travellers. The bullying that the Gypsy Traveller community suffers from is a huge problem. Well-funded Traveller education services in local authorities have an important role to play. However, we have to ask where that bullying comes from. I say that it comes from a prejudice that is deeply ingrained in society as a whole. We can do things in schools, but we also need to do things in the wider community.

I am deeply concerned about the level of bullying in schools, because it has increased in recent months. As Trevor Phillips, chair of the CRE, declared in April in an interview in *The Times*, a huge increase in cases of harassment against Gypsies and Travellers has been recorded, particularly in schools. I am not going to mince my words. I know who is to blame for that. Sections of the media, such as *The Sun*, have run stories with headlines such as "Stamp on the camps". In Scotland, the *Aberdeen Evening Express* has fallen below an acceptable level of decent reporting in its coverage of Gypsies and Travellers. I say to those newspapers that they are no better than school playground bullies, because the consequence of their reporting is that Gypsies and Travellers are being called names at school and attacked. I call upon the editors of those newspapers to think carefully about the implications of their reporting, because I am deeply fearful about what might happen in the future, not only in schools but outside schools.

**Janet McPhee:** I had some friends up north, and there was a bit on the news about them. Some of the teenagers from the village came down and stoned them. They broke the windows of my friend's car and caravan.

My son has been raising awareness of Gypsy Travellers in schools. For example, he went to a school in Kelty a few months back to talk about Travellers. He has been to a few conferences with Save the Children and given a few talks. For example, in Glasgow, wee cards were given out and feedback came back from Glasgow school kids. One wee boy wrote on his card, "I wish you could come and stay beside my house. I could have you for a friend." If some of the parents thought what the kids thought, the world would be a better place.

**Sharon McPhee:** How can we expect things to change if newspapers are allowed to print the sort of stories that Andrew Ryder mentioned? No form of racism should be tolerated. What I read in those papers reminded me of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. One particular TV presenter basically said that Travellers were scum and that they drop out of society, are lazy and do not pay taxes. The presenter asked why decent people should have to put up with Travellers. Those were small-minded views from a small-minded person. If everybody thought like that, we would have a huge problem, and if the main newspapers are allowed to print such stories, people will think like that.

**Nadia Foy:** I back up what Sharon said. It was Lorraine Kelly who made those comments—I am not frightened to say her name. She said in another newspaper report that we drive fancy cars, that our kids' pram wheels have excrement on them and that we do not pay taxes. My husband runs a small business and his tax is above board. Everything is paid. We are fully legal and fully registered. Not many people do that, because it is hard when you are not settled. I am settled, so it is a wee bit easier, but the people who live next door to us and our clients do not know that we are Travellers. If they did, we would not have a livelihood and a legal and above-board business, and we would not be able to pay our taxes the way that you do, because the income would not be coming in legally—I mean legally in your eyes, not our eyes, and by "you", I do not mean the committee or anyone else here but the community.

**Roseanna McPhee:** I am holding one of the articles that has been referred to. There is a get-out clause in it, which says that no one condemns the illegal Travellers more than the decent, pure Romany Gypsies. There is too much deciding what people's ethnicity is, whether by reporters, the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland or council officials who go out to sites. No one is ethnically or racially pure—even the Scots have Vikings, Picts and Normans in their background. The idea of establishing racial purity smacks of what happened in Nazi Germany in 1936 and 1938.

The problem is that, when we took the matter up, the Press Complaints Commission was not deemed to be a public body, so the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 did not really apply to it. There was no way of getting at it. However, the Government has to report on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Europe, and article 6 of that states that the Government—the state party—must take an active role in reducing discrimination, hostility and violence towards any particular minority. When I write my shadow report, I will

state in it that the Government is not taking an active role.

**Marlyn Glen:** Another member of the committee will return to the issue of the media; I would like to address education. I was interested in what was said about visiting schools and raising awareness. I am keen on taking positive measures. There was an exhibition in Kirkcaldy that encouraged people to find out about and take pride in their culture, and spreading that message is a good way to move forward. Is enough being done to encourage Gypsy Travellers to take part in mainstream education? Is there sufficient alternative provision, such as on-site education? We have talked about the two-teacher site that has just opened.

**Sharon McPhee:** Years ago, when I was a little girl, a school bus used to come round the camps and sites to collect the children who did not go to school. The younger children would go first and, after they had done what they did, the older children would go and get taught. That does not happen any more. I remember that from when I was a wee girl, but I have not heard of it since. That was a great idea.

**Fiona Townsley:** The Portakabin on our site provides back-up support for school. The education people tell us that it is there only to support children who go to school, but we hope that Gypsy Traveller children who do not go to school can be taught there as well. They should not be forced into standard school if they do not want to go, and some Traveller children do not want to go to secondary school. If there is a Portakabin on the site, they should be educated there as an alternative.

**Janet McPhee:** We have a Portakabin on our site, but only the teenagers are taught there, not the younger children. When I first moved to Heatherwood, my kids went right through school, except for the eldest, who went through primary school but not through high school. They were the only kids on the site who went to school, but now all the kids on the site go to school.

I have now moved into a house and do not stay on the site any more. My wee girl goes to school in the village where I live, and no one knows that she is a Traveller. A teacher told me that I should tell her not to let on to the other kids that she is a Traveller, but I said that that is what she will do. My other two children go to high school, although my eldest son did not. I believe that, if the children are getting bullied, it is up to them to decide, so we gave them the choice. My eldest son chose not to go to high school, but my other two wanted to go and so they are at high school.

**Roseanna McPhee:** We are talking about on-site provision, but the emphasis of the Scottish Traveller education project has been mainly on

improving things for children who come into school and are enrolled. In Perth a few years ago, one primary school was refusing to take children from the local site and they had to be bussed to the other side of the town. The emphasis of the school curriculum does not take much account of Gypsy Traveller culture—I know that because I was a teacher—and what is taught in school is not always relevant to the culture and lifestyle.

In Perth and Kinross, a land-based education course runs in one school. Children of 14, 15 and 16 go out and learn skills to enable them to become ghillies, to work in forestry or to work on the land. They learn all sorts of different skills and the course is very popular. Gypsy Traveller children at other schools have heard about it and have asked whether they can attend such a course in the same region. That is one way of teaching children in a way that is relevant to their culture, instead of just getting them into school, where they switch off.

11:45

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** I spoke earlier with Janet McPhee and Fiona Townsley about the change in culture and the loss of traditional employment for the Gypsy Traveller community. Points have been made about primary and secondary education, but what support do Gypsy Travellers who want to go on with lifelong learning, perhaps because of those changes, get? Are they given careers support? It is important to talk to teenagers, in particular, about further and higher education and about jobs. You have talked about how you have had to adapt. What support do you get for the transition from school into further and higher education and from school education into work?

**Janet McPhee:** None whatever. A few weeks ago, we went to a meeting to do with our work and met two people from Scottish Enterprise. We explained to them that we have a lot of young boys aged 17 and 18 who are sitting about doing nothing because they cannot get any work. We explained that they want to get qualifications and start courses but that, if they sign on for employment, they are put on office-based courses. My boy signed on for a while because he was getting no work and he wanted to pass his driving test. He was put on a course for a year, but Traveller boys will not go and sit in an office. They do courses up at Randolph industrial estate, but they sit in a wee Portakabin all day and it is too boring for them. They want to get out there and get experience in monoblocking, laying slabs and things—that is the kind of experience that they want. They want to get their certificate so that they can go out and get a job or maybe start their own business.



At the moment, most of the young Traveller boys have no qualifications because they have not been to high school and sat A-levels. We had the one meeting with Scottish Enterprise officials and we will have another meeting with them in September. Hopefully, we will get some courses going for the kids so that they can get some qualifications. They have no qualifications to go to college because most of them drop out and do not go to high school.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** The point that I am trying to make is that getting skills and training is not all about academic qualifications; as you say, it is about learning skills as well.

**The Convener:** But Janet is telling us what we have heard before—that the boys tend to opt out of secondary education, so the guidance and support tend not to be there.

**Kerrera Wilson:** More support should be given to Travellers who want to go on to further education. When I applied to colleges, one college was more interested in why I lived in a caravan and questioned whether I was suitable for the course that I had applied for, because I was a Traveller.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Even for Gypsy Travellers who have qualifications, there can be problems. I have a degree and two postgraduate qualifications, but since I came back from an experiment to my home area, where I am a well-known Gypsy Traveller, I have not worked—I have never had a day's supply teaching. My sister has been on the supply teacher list for 22 years—she can drive and has been going to Dundee. I cannot drive and my background is in Gaelic, which limits my options. That said, there was a Gaelic-medium unit without a teacher for a year, and a plea went out for anyone who could speak Gaelic to come forward. I had taught at primary level as well as at secondary level, but when I applied there was just silence.

Someone can have all the skills and all the qualifications but, as Janet said, unless they set up their own business, they probably will not get employment. As the girls have said, when you put down your address as a caravan—or even if you put an address care of someone else—if people know who you are in the area, you cannot seem to overcome that. The equal opportunities policies and racial equality schemes are in place—as Fiona said, in Perth and Kinross, Gypsy Travellers are even mentioned—but as I recently found out at a tribunal, the equal opportunities policy is not applied to Gypsy Travellers. There seems to be no comeback. If you go and say, "You discriminated against me because I am a Gypsy Traveller," they can turn round and say, "We did not know that you are a Gypsy Traveller. You are not a visible minority. You do not have a different colour of

skin. How could we know?" There seems to be no way to get further forward.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Some of these questions will probably seem academic and I could perhaps predict the answers, but it is important that we get the evidence. I agree that we need legislation and that enforcement procedures must be in place for all the statutory bodies, because the common theme is that there is structural and endemic racism. The situation gives people the message that racism is okay. The committee did a good job four years ago and got the recommendations out, but it seems that nobody is paying any attention to them. We need to get that on the record and have the evidence to argue for legislation. It is helpful that the witnesses are at the committee and can provide that.

Health services were mentioned earlier. Do the witnesses have any other specific examples of their experience of the health service over the past few years since the committee made its recommendations? Have there been any improvements? I suspect that not very much has happened.

**Kerrera Wilson:** In the area where I currently stay, the doctors have been pretty helpful. They encouraged me to register with them so that they would have my medical records. In the area that I am in, there must have been some improvement.

**Sharon McPhee:** I agree. Although I know that some Travellers have problems, I have never had any problems in relation to health service doctors; in the Highlands it is dentists that need to be seen to.

**Fiona Townsley:** We have found that if someone stays on a caravan site and is settled, they can register with a doctor. The main problem is with Travellers who are on the move.

**Janet McPhee:** We had problems when our site first opened up. A lot of women who were expecting were on it and they could not get registered, but now the situation is fine.

As Fiona says, the problems arise when people are travelling. One time when I was travelling up north my wee girl took a panic attack late at night. She could not get her breath so I had to rush her to the hospital. The doctor sat there for three hours questioning us upside down before they gave her a cup with a wee drop of steroid stuff in it to clear her airways. They ended up keeping her in overnight. The doctor sat there for three hours asking a two-year old child her brothers' names and so on. That is horrendous.

**Roseanna McPhee:** There have been many changes in the health service in the past few years because of devolution and so on, but although we have been static here since 1947, we have found

that the situation is worse. We are told that we must phone in at 8.30 in the morning to get an appointment, so we never get an appointment because we have no electricity so we have no phone. When I have dragged myself up, as I did with chicken pox and pneumonia, and asked to be seen, I have been told, "No. Go away and phone in tomorrow morning."

In addition, getting referrals for specialists seems to be a problem not only for people who are on the move but for people who are registered and known Gypsy Travellers. They might have a problem for three years before they get a referral. For example, I did not get a referral for quite a serious problem. I eventually ended up collapsing when I was doing my shopping at Tesco. I was taken to the hospital and the problem has now been sorted out. That happened when I was down in Perth. Doctors will not refer you. Even if a Gypsy Traveller gets on to the health list, that does not mean to say that they will get good treatment.

**Carolyn Leckie:** What reasons were given for you not getting a referral?

**Roseanna McPhee:** I kept being told that I probably had this or that. The week before I collapsed, I said, "I'm in a terrible state. I can't keep any food down. I can only drink milk." The doctor looked over my head at the wall and said, "It's probably X, Y or Z." He did not examine me at all. He said that he would make a referral, but I had not been referred by the time I went. He kept saying, "It costs a lot of money to refer people, and it's probably just this anyway." The view is that if you are a Gypsy Traveller who lives in poverty, poverty causes everything; but even if poverty is the cause, people still need to have their symptoms treated.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Have you heard of the National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health? Are you aware of any health programmes that are aimed at the needs of Gypsy Travellers in particular?

**Roseanna McPhee:** Yes. I was on a group for a couple of years with one of the women who went to Dublin with Janet McPhee, but I was disappointed with the impact, because the idea was just to get something up and running so that people could say that they were doing this and that. We were all members of a round table—about 10 Gypsy Travellers were involved—that looked into hand-held records. Five months later we were told, "We've done the draft for you." No Gypsy Travellers were aware of the sub-committee that was set up, and none was on it. The process was poor at involving Gypsy Travellers.

"Delivering for Scotland's Gypsies/Travellers" said that a conference would be held in Perth but, because I am from Perthshire, I know for a fact that not a single Gypsy Traveller turned up to it. The impact has been poor, because people have not been listening to us, which is what we have said all along. For instance, a non-Gypsy Traveller researcher was hired, who became a link worker, but they have now left. As far as I know, needs assessments have not been performed in any regions, so I do not know why we did all the voluntary work to make the case for funding.

We said that a male researcher and a female researcher were needed, because issues within the community are gender driven. For instance, I would not talk to a male about his health, and he would not talk to me about it. That would be taboo. If you have a female researcher, you are likely only to address female health, but male health has been badly neglected, because it is difficult to get men to come forward and talk about health issues. Over and above that, as Janet and the other girls here have said, we need to have researchers from within the community, who have the contacts and know how to elicit the proper information from Gypsy Travellers. The proposal to employ a community researcher somehow fell by the wayside.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Are you aware of hand-held records being used in any circumstances? Are you aware of any proactive health promotion work among your community, or is such work dependent on you knowing what you need and seeking it yourself?

**Janet McPhee:** When we were working on hand-held records, the health visitor from Fife said that it was doing them about 20 years ago. She gave me two copies of ones that she did for the meeting that we were holding at the time, but I do not think that hand-held records have been issued—nobody has received any. They are good, because if you are travelling about and your kids have an illness, you can show them to the doctor. They are also helpful for many older travellers who cannot read and write and do not know their medication, because the information is written down for them. They can show the doctor the medication that they need, for example if they lose their repeat prescription and need a new one. When they are away travelling in the summer time, some of them have to come all the way back to their own area to get their medication.

**Sharon McPhee:** I agree. I remember that hand-held records were proposed at a meeting that I was at, but I have not heard anything since. They have disappeared.

**Fiona Townsley:** My sister has a daughter with a lot of health problems. When she travels, she gets a letter from her doctor that has contact

numbers for her daughter's doctors and gives all her daughter's medical problems and all the medication that she is on and the dosage. If she has any problems when she is anywhere, she goes into accident and emergency and hands over the letter, so that others are aware of her medical history.

12:00

**Nadia Foy:** I have two points to make. First, young people's health needs are not getting covered. I will not go into any great detail, but loads of issues need covered, such as sex education and sexual health—young people's bodies are changing; they are growing up and things are happening.

Secondly, a health visitor was assigned to go around the Travelling community in Edinburgh, but that did not work out because of the visitor's attitude and because of a lack of communication.

**Roseanna McPhee:** Hand-held records are a good idea, which I proposed; I was one of the people for them. However, if people come up against a general practitioner who says, "We can't see you," there is still a problem, because nobody seems to be able to make GPs see people. People in the Highlands and remote communities might have a long trawl to get to the nearest hospital. What do they do if they have appendicitis, for example, and really need to be seen? People will still come up against that form of bureaucracy with the hand-held records.

Also, not everyone will use hand-held records. I have heard some Gypsy Travellers say that because they have all your information on them, if they are lost, people will know all about you. I do not think that they realise that it is proposed to have all the records on a national database to which people could hack in anyway.

Given the problem with GPs, even with hand-held records there could be an influx at accident and emergency departments. I ended up there and I have a GP.

We are lucky to have good health visitors in Perth and Kinross. They work through one centre and it seems that many Gypsy Travellers, particularly the women, flock to it, regardless of whether they have a GP. They get seen through the family planning clinic, although technically they are not there for family planning. If we had a centre of excellence or a specified Gypsy Traveller-friendly centre in each region, at least people would know that they could be seen there. Resources could be channelled into somewhere where people would go, as resources are channelled into a family planning centre in a town. That might be an idea to pursue.

**Carolyn Leckie:** I will return to young people's health needs, but first I would like to develop the point about access to GPs. Someone talked about people trying to get registered with a GP. Recent health legislation changed the arrangement between GPs and health boards. There is an obligation on health boards to ensure that people get primary care services. That has obviously not filtered through in some areas. Could we ask the Health Committee to look into the implementation of the primary medical services contract to see whether there is room for amendment to refer specifically to the health needs of the Gypsy Traveller community?

**Roseanna McPhee:** Fiona Townsley was at the Gypsy Traveller liaison meeting when I spoke to a national health service worker—I am not sure of her exact designation—who said that "Fair for all" was nothing to do with her. My understanding from my two-year involvement in the National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health is that "Fair for all" had to be implemented right through the service, from NHS boards and trusts down to GPs and hospitals, but apparently it has not filtered down further than the health boards. The boards know about the document, but workers in the rest of the service say that they do not. How have boards energised their staff, as they set out to do?

**The Convener:** Certainly it is not acceptable if Gypsy Travellers cannot access the health service or a doctor.

**Carolyn Leckie:** It is totally unacceptable. We have heard a litany of shame this morning, which is disgraceful.

I turn to the health needs of young people. Save the Children told us that not enough attention is paid to the health needs of young people.

**Nadia Foy:** Since I was 16 or 17—I am 24 now and I am not a good counter, so you can work out the number of years yourself—there have been seminars, weekends away and days out. They are organised so that the young people have fun and get the information that they want. They come back having had sex education—which, as I said, is not just about sex but about their bodies and growing up—and education about drugs, health needs, smoking and alcohol. The young people come back with a positive attitude and wanting to know more about drugs and what nicotine, alcohol and painkillers do to the body, but there is only so much funding to run such seminars. We need to get the young people away from their parents, so that they can ask questions without thinking, "If I say that, my mum and dad will think I'm taking drugs."

That is about educating young people so that when they are out in the big world they know the consequences of what they do. If someone offers

them drugs, they will understand how to deal with the situation and decide not to take them. The seminars run alongside all the other health education for young people. They go swimming, they have conversations, they have a wee bit of lunch, and the rest of the four or five hours is purely on health. It really works. I have been involved in the education service for some time. I was encouraged to go there, then I found out a bit more and I wanted to help.

**Carolyn Leckie:** A child's right to access confidential advice, support and information on health is a specific human rights issue. As well as the human rights breaches that you face as an ethnic group, we are obviously falling down in relation to children's rights. Does any other group in your community have specific needs that are not being addressed?

**Sharon McPhee:** Everybody's needs are not being addressed. Disabled people's needs are not being addressed. Young people's needs are not being addressed. Everyone's needs should be addressed, but that is not happening.

**Janet McPhee:** As Nadia said, a lot of Travelling people are protective of their kids. Our site is in the middle of a wood and it is a good way to the town. We do not let the teenagers go wandering down the town. If they want to go down the town, one of us will drop them off at the pictures or whatever, and then they come home. They are not allowed to wander through the town—we try to keep them away from that.

As Sharon said, the kids are not getting educated on the issues. Nobody comes up to the site to teach them and they do not get to go down the town so they are not experiencing things. They are sheltered from it all. She also said that they need to be taught; they need sex education and drugs awareness. My situation is not too bad, because my two sons were taught all that at high school, but the kids could be out playing somewhere and find a tablet and eat it without knowing what it is.

**Carolyn Leckie:** That point brings us back to what I said at the beginning. In general, the health of your community is in your hands. It is up to you to identify your health needs and go and look for services. You are not aware of any proactive health promotion service that comes to your community, and you have to go and find it.

**Fiona Townsley:** We have health visitors who come to our caravan site. They are supposed to come on Mondays but the scheme is not properly set up yet, so we will wait and see how it goes.

**Janet McPhee:** We have a health visitor who comes to our site, but she only comes round to women who have new-born babies and so on.

**Roseanna McPhee:** The attitude of receptionists can be daunting and off-putting. Where I stay, people cannot get an appointment on the day. If I ask whether I can be seen, I am told no. If I ask whether there is a duty doctor, I am told that the duty doctor is for emergencies. If I say, "When I throw myself down the road out there I'll become an emergency," I am told to go and sit down. Then the doctor comes through, but talking to the receptionist is like trying to get into Fort Knox without a stick of dynamite. That is daunting for a lot of people. It puts them off, and they do not go to see any doctor after that. I have known people to sit and wait until their appendix has nearly burst because they will not go back after they have been treated like that by a receptionist. Front-line staff on the desk need training in racial diversity, and such training should be compulsory.

**Nadia Foy:** In Edinburgh, we have done work with staff from doctors' surgeries, clinics and so on. We work together in seminars with the receptionists, nurses and doctors. We educate them on the issues that need to be addressed, the attitudes that need to be changed and the things that need to be done. I do not mean to sound sticky on that, because there are things that we need to change as well. We are open to discussion on those issues, and they are discussed.

I return to the issue of funding. We need funding to run the seminars in order to make people, including local authorities and the Government, a wee bit more aware.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Earlier, Janet McPhee talked about her contact with the accident and emergency department when she took her children in. That set alarm bells off in my head. In the situation that you described, Janet, in which you were asked lots and lots of questions, it sounded as if there was an air of suspicion. Do you find that such suspicion leads to situations in which you are more likely to be investigated in relation to child protection issues and so on?

**Janet McPhee:** That was what happened at the time. When I was up there, some guy had tried to abduct a wee girl from one of the streets, so that is what I put that down to. However, it is a bit much to be questioned for three hours.

I wanted to talk about immunisation jags for children. A lot of young Traveller women—and there are women on my site who are like this—cannot read or write and will not get their kids vaccinated because they do not know what they are giving them. That is a big issue. If a kid is not vaccinated, they will catch any bugs or germs that are going about.

**The Convener:** They need more information.

**Janet McPhee:** Yes.

**Carolyn Leckie:** They need to be given information rather than just being handed a leaflet.

**Janet McPhee:** You can give them a leaflet, but they cannot read it, so it is no use.

**Carolyn Leckie:** That is what I mean; people need to spend time explaining things to them.

**Marlyn Glen:** What has been the witnesses' experience of the way in which the police work with the Gypsy Traveller community. Are police forces moving in the right direction in that regard?

**Sharon McPhee:** I was talking about this just last night. Some police say that they are doing everything perfectly but my experience is different. I was pulled over in Tain and, when the police realised that I was going to visit people in the Gypsy encampment, they said, "That's not a legal site. That's what I hate about you people. You're just there to make a mess and leave a smell." That is what they actually said. I was a bit annoyed with them. I do not think that the situation is getting better at all.

**Nadia Foy:** I have been settled in a house for most of the three-and-a-half years of my married life. Before I had my baby, my husband got a trailer and we went away for the summer, as we knew that we would not get away after the birth, because of the health visitor and the baby's health needs and so on. At about 11 o'clock at night, we pulled into an illegal camp in Perth—if you want to call it illegal—which was just a pull-on site. We had asked people in the surrounding area whether anybody owned it and they said that they did not think so. At half past eleven, when we were all in our beds, including kids, the police came in four or five riot vans and told us that we had to move. I know my rights and was aware of everything that I could have done, but, by that stage of my pregnancy, I was quite big and I just couldn't be bothered getting up and arguing with them. If we did not move there and then, they were going to take our kids and put them in homes, impound our caravans and vans and put us in jail. This was only two and a half years ago, but they had dogs, shields and batons. We got up and moved because we did not want to cause hassle or get arrested and we did not want any fights or riots to break out.

The problem has not been addressed and the situation is still much the same. I am settled, so I do not suffer from the stigma as much as others, and when people told me things like the things that I have just told you, I always thought that it could not be as bad as they were saying. However, having experienced such treatment at first hand, I now know that it is.

**The Convener:** How long did it take you to find somewhere else to stop that night?

**Nadia Foy:** We had to go and ask people in various areas around Perth whether they knew who owned various bits of land. We moved to the other side of Perth to what I think was an old football park next to a footway. People were passing and spying through the curtains in the vans and dogs would do the toilet in front of our doors. Things were no easier after we moved, but we got a little more peace by stopping there.

12:15

**Sharon McPhee:** I remember an incident when the police sent people from the community to stone the trailers so that they could get us to move. I know that because we got the people to tell us. The police gave us a date to move, but they wanted us off the site before that date. Therefore, they sent people from the community to stone the trailers; people in the pub agreed that that is what happened.

**Janet McPhee:** We had no trouble with the police before. We were going along to the police station every week to raise awareness about Travellers and other ethnic minority groups.

**Fiona Townsley:** The police need more training. They have a bad attitude towards Gypsy Travellers and they stereotype them. They abuse their position of authority and cannot be reasoned with.

**Roseanna McPhee:** There can be variations in treatment even within a region. For instance, the police are quite good where we are in the Pitlochry area. Only one incident has occurred in years, and that was a couple of years ago. Suddenly, police cars kept arriving at four in the morning and sitting right in front of the house with their engines running. When we asked them why they were doing that, they did not answer, so I raised the question with the community safety policeman on our liaison group and he spoke to the inspector. It turned out that a young, overenthusiastic new recruit was in the car. The new recruits should be specifically targeted and told what is and is not politically correct.

I went over to Crieff where I had to deal with a lady who had lived there for years. One month, every time that she went into the village, she was stopped by the police on the way in and on the way out. That happened every day for 30 days on the trot. If that is not an example of harassment, I do not know what is. The police asked to see her seatbelt, her tyres, her book, her lights and what she had in the back of her car—she was even told that her paintwork was needing done. It was a different thing every time. As I said, there can be variations in treatment in one police area. The attitude is not spread from the top down.

**Andrew Ryder:** I will tell the committee about something that I think is very positive and exciting that is happening in the police—a project called moving forward. The lead police force is Derbyshire police, but police officers throughout the country are working on the project, including some Scottish officers. The police are working with Gypsies and Travellers to develop cultural awareness-raising exercises and guidance for the police on working with the Traveller community. There is talk of creating an association in the police force of Gypsy and Traveller police officers, because Gypsies and Travellers work in the police force and believe in the police force. There is also talk of trying to run recruitment drives so that even more Gypsies and Travellers will join the force.

The enthusiasm of the police officers involved is really quite something. They believe that by addressing the issue, they will make the police force a more inclusive and better institution. Their annual conference—and the fact that they have one—is a reflection of the success of their work. When I first went to the conference, there was quite a lot of mistrust and tension on both sides. However, at the most recent conference, 50 per cent of an audience of 230 were from the Gypsy and Traveller community and the other half were police officers. Huge progress has been made and some positive things are happening.

**Sharon McPhee:** The head police officers who say that everything in their area is perfect and fine and that everything is being done right must be the ones who work behind a desk and give orders. They are not the ones who are patrolling the streets.

**The Convener:** We heard evidence from Inspector Taggart from Grampian police about the good relationship that his force has with local Gypsy Travellers.

**Sharon McPhee:** The situation is different everywhere; not all police are racist against Travellers.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** What should the Executive do to help to improve relations between the Gypsy Traveller and settled communities?

**Kerrera Wilson:** The Executive should be seen to be taking a firmer stand on racism towards Gypsies and Travellers in Scotland. People learn by example: if people in the settled community see that the Executive has decided that the problem has gone far enough and that it is dealing with it, their attitudes might change.

**Fiona Townsley:** The Executive must recognise that where we stay is our home. The homes in which we live are well below the tolerable standard. The Executive needs not only to make recommendations, but to enforce them.

**Roseanna McPhee:** The Executive should have trained Gypsy Traveller mediators who work between the communities in each region. For instance, there was a huge hoo-ha at a big site in Cottenham, which Andrew Ryder knows more about than I do. The people who were making the worst din about getting the Gypsy Travellers out were asked to sit down around the table. Those people are now saying that the problem was caused not by the Gypsy Travellers but by the local authority and central Government. Both communities are now putting pressure on the local authority and the Government to resolve the situation. Mediation would do away with some of the inertia that we have seen from the Scottish Executive, which says, "Oh, that's not our jurisdiction; it's up to the local authority." In other words, the Executive is just passing the buck.

**Andrew Ryder:** I very much agree with that. The Gypsy and Traveller law reform coalition was strongly involved in the mediation at Cottenham. I am a great believer in getting different groups that are in dispute around the table to seek consensus because I believe that consensus can be found. I fully support Roseanna's call for mediators. As I said, a task force should also be set up at national level on which Gypsy Travellers and other community stakeholders would be represented. If consensus can be found at national level, it can be transmitted to the wider community.

If the Scottish Executive were to make a priority of tackling the accommodation shortage for Travellers, I believe that that would reduce tensions between Travellers and the settled community because it would reduce the friction that is caused by the number of unauthorised encampments that are set up. Finally, a fair and effective Press Complaints Commission or media monitoring body would also play an invaluable role in creating harmonious community relations.

**Marilyn Livingstone:** We have discussed the committee's original recommendations. My final set of questions seeks to wind up the debate on the recommendations by asking you to raise any issues that we may have missed so far. Have the recommendations led to any changes in your life? Are the recommendations still important today? What do we need to do to ensure that they are fully implemented? For the future, what recommendations should the committee make to improve service delivery to Gypsy Travellers throughout the country? In short, I am asking where we are, what difference the recommendations have made and how the committee should move forward.

**Janet McPhee:** I do not see any difference, although it is about time we did. Gypsy Travellers have been here since the world began and we are not going anywhere. It is time that society

accepted us and treated us fairly. We are human beings like everybody else—if you cut us, we bleed in the same way. Our culture is the only difference, but people cannot help how they were born. A person who has a disfigured baby will love that baby just the same. We are part of society and society should accept our culture and way of life.

**Fiona Townsley:** Some councils are providing patchwork services, but they are nowhere near what Gypsy Travellers need. The recommendations should no longer be recommendations; the council has told us, “They’re only recommendations. We don’t have to do that.” There must be enforcement, and there must be a timescale for that.

**The Convener:** So we need something stronger than just recommendations: we need legislation.

**Fiona Townsley:** Yes.

**Roseanna McPhee:** The recommendations should be statutory obligations. There ought to be what there was for the inquiry by the National Assembly for Wales—a monitoring mechanism that includes Gypsy Travellers. We do not want merely examples of what someone else thinks is good practice, which is what you will see in the guidelines for managing unauthorised encampments. Such forums are thought to be doing well, but Gypsy Travellers would not tell you that if you talked to them. We need timescales to be applied so that monitors can keep going back to site managers to ask what they have done. If the matter is left for three years, the sites will be in the same predicament in three years. The recommendations therefore need to be made statutory requirements.

The gap should be closed in race legislation. At the moment, if someone discriminates against us and says, “We didn’t know that you’re Gypsy Travellers, so there was no discrimination,” we have no comeback and we are still in the same predicament. There must be more effective monitoring of that. If we are told that we cannot join a doctor’s list, someone should go in and ask why we cannot join the list. I have been on a supply teachers list for 13 years, but have been overlooked every time a supply contract has come up. Someone from the jobcentre or the CRE should examine that.

If the CRE’s draft strategy becomes a proper strategy, it should be able to go in and undertake a monitoring role to find out what is going on. It could at least ask the questions. At the moment, we are left on our own to fight the discrimination in a very ad hoc way, and we cannot get proper legal access. Lawyers do not take us seriously. They know that we are probably never going to win a case, so the chances of Gypsy Travellers getting

ethnic minority status through the courts is virtually nil, even if they have the money to proceed with such cases. There are problems with the Scottish Legal Aid Board and all sorts of things. We need to close the loophole that makes us the ethnic minority that has least protection. Protection should be equal under the law.

**Janet McPhee:** When the councils come back with their reports, they should not wait four years for the Travellers to come back with theirs.

**Andrew Ryder:** The committee’s 2001 report was hugely influential, not just in Scotland, but in terms of the campaign that has emerged in recent years among Gypsies and Travellers. That report was one of the factors that kicked off the campaign and got it moving; it inspired Travellers. It was a great shame that it stalled; however, you now have an opportunity to turn things around through the Housing (Scotland) Bill and the forthcoming planning bill. We hope that the committee will push for the definition of “home” to include Gypsy and Traveller sites, and for a statutory obligation to provide and facilitate sites and some of the other things that we have been calling for.

The Gypsies and Travellers are following the parliamentary process and you have people behind you. Please do not fritter away the enthusiasm for change and the activism that exists within the Gypsy and Traveller community; harness it and nurture it. I am fearful that, if there is inactivity again, cynicism will creep in. I urge you to act because if you do not, the Gypsy Traveller community will act—they are drafting a bill and they will press it. I would rather see Gypsies and Travellers working with MSPs to achieve change, but if they have to, they will do it on their own. They need your help, so I hope that you can provide that.

**Nadia Foy:** I want to agree with something that Roseanna McPhee said. The issue of discrimination came up with me a year or so ago. Everybody knows that before people can be classed as belonging to an ethnic minority, there needs to be a proper action in court. People must give their evidence of racism, and they can then be classed as being part of an ethnic minority. I was willing to do that, but the CRE never had any funding to take me on and it ran out of time because it had plotered about so much. I never took that on by myself because it would have cost too much money, the case would have gone on for too long and it would never have got anywhere. For the people who are willing to take a case like that to the higher level, we need the CRE to do as much as it can—or as much as it is supposed to—to help them to achieve that.

**The Convener:** We have covered many issues today. Are there any areas that we have not asked

questions on or any areas that you feel that we need to pay particular attention to?

**Roseanna McPhee:** I think that the judicial system needs to be looked at in great detail. We are talking about discrimination in education, health, policing and so on, but nobody ever tackles the judicial system. It is as if the judicial system is above any normal rules. Research must be done into the number of Gypsy Traveller offenders, if they are known, and what type of sentences they are getting. A comparative study needs to be done of them and members of the settled community who commit the same crimes.

Why should the judicial system be exempt from racial diversity training? I went to eight different lawyers and the attitude that I met with was virtually, "Get out of here. You're just a waste of space." They did not even listen to the case. Something has to be instigated to root out discrimination within the judicial system. Even if the CRE takes a case—it has been weak in being unable to find a case to progress in 28 years, despite so much evidence being put before this committee in only a couple of years—what are the chances of its being successful if the people who sit on the bench have ingrained stereotypical ideas?

**Sharon McPhee:** I would like to thank the committee for inviting us here and allowing us to put our opinions across. It is a great opportunity. Let us hope that we can move forward from here and get rid of racism on both sides.

**The Convener:** Thank you. Perhaps we can work together to fight that.

*Meeting closed at 12:31.*



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