



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Thursday 17 January 2013

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - [www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk) or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

---

**Thursday 17 January 2013**

**CONTENTS**

<b>WHERE GYPSY TRAVELLERS LIVE .....</b>	<b>Col. 875</b>
--	-----------------

---

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting 2013, Session 4**

**CONVENER**

\*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con)

\*John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)

Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

\*Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Gavin Buist (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents)

Mhairi Craig (Shelter Scotland)

Nigel Firth (NHS Grampian)

Kathryn Hilditch (Planning Aid for Scotland)

Alex Jarrett (Fife Constabulary)

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con) (Committee Substitute)

Michelle Lloyd (Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project)

Neil Mackay (Lothian and Borders Police)

Dr Pauline Padfield (Scottish Traveller Education Programme)

Lynne Tammi (Article 12 in Scotland)

Helen Watson (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Douglas Thornton

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 4



## Scottish Parliament

### Equal Opportunities Committee

*Thursday 17 January 2013*

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 09:34*]

### Where Gypsy Travellers Live

**The Convener (Mary Fee):** Welcome to the Equal Opportunities Committee's second meeting in 2013. I remind everyone to either set electronic devices to flight mode or switch them off completely. We have received apologies this morning from Siobhan McMahon, who is stuck in traffic on the M8—there have been two very bad accidents this morning.

Our only agenda item is an evidence-taking session on where Gypsy Travellers live, with witnesses representing support services, including voluntary organisations, health workers and the police.

We will begin by having everyone introduce themselves. As we are having a round-table session, members are sitting among the witnesses around the table. At the table, we also have our clerking and research teams, along with the official reporters. Around the room, we are supported by broadcasting services and the security office. I also welcome the observers who are sitting in the public gallery at the rear of the room.

I am the committee's convener. I ask all members and witnesses to introduce themselves.

**Gavin Buist (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents):** Good morning. I am the vice-president of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents.

**Helen Watson (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde):** Good morning. I am the head of planning, health improvement and commissioning at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

**Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):** Good morning. I am the MSP for Aberdeenshire West.

**Mhairi Craig (Shelter Scotland):** Good morning. I am a support and development worker for Shelter Scotland.

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** I am a member of the Scottish Parliament for North East Scotland.

**Nigel Firth (NHS Grampian):** Good morning. I am the equality and diversity manager for NHS Grampian and NHS Orkney.

**Kathryn Hilditch (Planning Aid for Scotland):** Good morning. I am the training and mediation manager at Planning Aid for Scotland.

**Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP):** I am the MSP for Edinburgh Central.

**Alex Jarrett (Fife Constabulary):** I am a chief inspector with Fife Constabulary and I chair the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland's Gypsy Traveller reference group.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** I am the MSP for Glasgow Shettleston.

**Michelle Lloyd (Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project):** I am a manager at MECOPP.

**Neil Mackay (Lothian and Borders Police):** I am from the Lothian and Borders Police diversity unit.

**Dr Pauline Padfield (Scottish Traveller Education Programme):** I am from the Scottish Traveller education programme.

**Lynne Tammi (Article 12 in Scotland):** Good morning. I am the national co-ordinator of Article 12 in Scotland.

**John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):** Madainn mhath. I am a Highlands and Islands MSP.

**The Convener:** What we hear this morning will help us to understand better how Gypsy Travellers' living arrangements might affect their access to support services and their interactions with the police. The evidence will feed into our inquiry. Committee members have a number of questions for the witnesses.

**John Mason:** We have had quite a lot of evidence. The permanent sites, on which people live permanently, appear to be more straightforward in some respects, but more issues have arisen with what are often called unauthorised encampments, where people live temporarily. I ask the folk who are here what their experience has been of working with Gypsy Travellers on unauthorised encampments.

**Gavin Buist:** My comments will be general and will represent the results of consulting my colleagues before coming to the meeting. Around the table, we are all familiar with the policing problems that unauthorised encampments present. I am happy to speak about that in more detail but, given the agenda item's title, I suspect that we might not like to focus on that initially.

The difficulty that the police face in dealing with unauthorised encampments is that we are under significant pressure from landowners and often from the local media, which take a particular stance on such encampments. That can create

difficulties in trying to put together a sophisticated response to the people who are encamped.

I am conscious that the itinerant lifestyle creates problems in accessing health services, schools, council services and so on. Given the nature of our encounters with the people on sites, it would be nice to get to the level of conversation that is needed with them, but—unfortunately—the pressures and forces that act on me and my colleagues can often make such conversation difficult. The challenge is much more sophisticated than simply moving people on—that is not a longer-term solution.

**Nigel Firth:** We have one permanent site in the Grampian area, at Clinterty, which has good links with our local general practitioner practices. That enables us to provide community nursing, health visitors and community midwife support and makes screening and immunisation programmes much simpler.

The problem that our staff face with unauthorised encampments—for want of a better term—is that they can go out to an encampment one week and return to do follow-up care the next week, only to find that the occupants have been served with an eviction notice and moved on. That makes providing continuity of healthcare difficult and challenging.

As we know, the Gypsy Traveller community as a whole enjoys far poorer health than the settled community and is a priority area into which we need to put more resources. However, the current arrangements, with the shortage of permanent and temporary halting sites, make the provision of healthcare very difficult.

**Alex Jarrett:** We are starting to see some of the stresses that appear in public agencies as they respond to unauthorised encampments.

The Scottish Police Service has reviewed its response to unauthorised encampments and the guidance that we have had from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. We still have a presumption against prosecution, which has been slightly widened. On the law in that regard, we used to use the Trespass (Scotland) Act 1865; there is also the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and other ancillary legislation that might affect an unauthorised encampment.

We are moving towards not looking at the issue through the prism of prosecution but trying to mainstream the police response to unauthorised encampments. Historically, because of competing pressures from landowners and other services, there was a presumption that we would try to prosecute and move people on. A lot of work is going on in the Scottish Police Service at the moment about mainstreaming service provision to

people in unauthorised encampments—if we want to use that term—and permanent sites.

The argument about how many temporary and permanent sites we should have in Scotland is for other people, who must consider the landscape and the travelling community. We are doing work at the moment, and anecdotal evidence suggests that there have been fewer reports of unauthorised encampments during the past two or three years—it looks like the number is starting to diminish, slightly. We want to validate our figures and think about why that is, and we want to look at the Scottish Police Service response.

The important point is that we are looking to mainstream our service provision. There is enhanced community engagement in some parts of Scotland. In Fife, our enhanced community engagement model attempts to bring people together from the whole, diverse community. Where there are permanent Travellers sites, we have had some success in bringing members of the Gypsy Traveller community to our community engagement meetings. We see that as a big success. It is about bringing communities together, so that they can start to discuss the issues together at ground level, without our continually having to arbitrate between groups. We want groups to come together and develop local solutions in their local environment.

From a police perspective, we want to look at the situation not through the prism of prosecution but from the perspective of wanting to mainstream service provision and consider the Equality Act 2010 and the European convention on human rights in supporting the Gypsy Traveller community.

**John Mason:** At our meeting last week we heard about an encampment in East Lothian, which police tried to visit quickly so that they could build up a relationship. I am not sure whether that was just about the local police. Is that a common approach?

**Alex Jarrett:** Yes, that is what our guidance says. We will get a report of an unauthorised encampment fairly quickly, and we look to make contact with the Gypsy Travellers on the encampment quickly, with a view to asking quite openly who they are and how many vehicles are there, and with a view to working with the public authority. As I said, the presumption is not that we will prosecute but that we will bring in support services and work with our partners.

The message can sometimes get confused. You will understand that there is a great deal of distrust and wariness about working with the police among certain groups—not only in the Gypsy Traveller community; that can be the case for members of the settled community. We go in very quickly, with

a view not to moving people on but to assessing whether there are issues of public health, danger, obstruction and so on. Once we have had a look at that in the round, we report to our local public authority liaison officer, who will then make contact. We hand over to them.

We do not abrogate our responsibility in terms of crimes or offences that might take place, but as far as the encampment is concerned we are just there to ensure that the Travellers are supported and we have all the information that we need to enable us to work with our partners. That should be done within one or two days.

09:45

**Dennis Robertson:** We heard in evidence last week that there are occasions when the police are reluctant to visit. Would you support that claim?

**Neil Mackay:** I could probably tie those two points together.

In response to John Mason's question, there is a designated police Gypsy Traveller liaison officer in East Lothian, as there is in the Borders, West Lothian and the City of Edinburgh. I was on the ground three weeks ago and I can confirm that efforts are made for the police Gypsy Traveller liaison officer and their council counterpart to engage at the first opportunity. I have seen that in practice.

Dennis Robertson mentioned reluctance to take action. Not in my experience—

**Dennis Robertson:** It is not reluctance to take action. The claim that we heard last week was that there was reluctance to engage or even visit.

**Neil Mackay:** Perhaps I do not have the same overview of the Scottish picture as my police colleagues, but I have not heard that before in Lothian and Borders.

**Alex Jarrett:** I have not witnessed any reluctance to go to unauthorised encampments. Our guidance and procedures are clear—they will be publicly available, having just been reviewed—that we will interact with members of the Gypsy Traveller community in an unauthorised encampment, and that we will take details and pass them on. All forces will have liaison officers of some form within their framework, and they will have contact with local authorities and others.

We are working with officers. Our professional development programme, which is currently being looked at, will give staff and officers more skills, in the same way as we would deal with other minority and hard-to-reach groups. Work is going on to give officers more skills in their interaction with the Gypsy Traveller community and to make the interaction more fruitful. If we get a call, it is all

recorded electronically and we have databases and so on. There should be no reason for a tardy response.

**Lynne Tammi:** We have moved on a bit from the question that I was going to ask so I will comment on the issue of reluctance to engage, which was raised by Dennis Robertson. That is certainly not our experience. We have done quite a bit of work with Grampian Police, and Jim Hume in particular. I would say that there have been good attempts to connect with the community.

Alex Jarrett talked about work that he is doing on enhanced community engagement and so on. How do you square that with members of the settled community?

**Alex Jarrett:** It is a response to our community as a whole. Any community, settled or otherwise, has component parts and cultural differences. We have eastern Europeans and people from south-east Asia in our communities and we work with them. The fact that they are so-called settled really does not matter to us. We have three permanent Gypsy Traveller sites in Fife. We work with those groups, which we see as a conduit to access Gypsy Travellers who have a more movement-orientated lifestyle. We do not see any difference.

You asked about stresses between the settled community and the Gypsy Traveller community. We want people to come together in a single forum to discuss issues at a local level. People in the permanent sites have the same issues about accessing services and the same quality-of-life issues as members of the settled community. It is their community in the round, so we want them to come together. We think that by bringing people together and working together, we can iron out all the misconceptions and forge relationships. It is not for us to force that upon people; we act as a conduit to bring people together. Our response to the settled community is no different from our response to the Gypsy Traveller community.

**Mhairi Craig:** I want to echo what Lynne Tammi was saying. In East Lothian, I have had extensive contact with the police liaison officer, Rhona, and I will meet the inspector next week. They have been keen to engage with the settled community and roadside travellers and with agencies such as Shelter and the local authority.

**Helen Watson:** NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is keen to engage with so-called unauthorised camps and I know that the social work and education departments of the six local authority areas that we cover are also keen to do so. We have been trying to develop a model of approach that takes account of the fact that, for very good reasons, the Gypsy Traveller community has strong issues with trust when it comes to the statutory services. We find that the

level of engagement and trust is affected by the stigmatising attitudes of the wider settled community and that the Gypsy Travellers' experience of the settled community has an impact on our ability to engage with them.

**Dr Padfield:** In these discussions, a dichotomy always emerges between the settled community and Gypsy Travellers. It is important to bear in mind that a lot of Gypsy Travellers are part of the settled community. It is not helpful to juxtapose the two groups in that way. It is important to bear that in mind when we talk about dialogue and engagement.

**The Convener:** Throughout the evidence sessions that we have had, we have heard a fair amount about Gypsy Travellers who are part of the settled community and have lived in the settled community for a number of years.

Would Alex Johnstone like to come in at this point, as we have talked a lot about the police?

**Alex Johnstone:** It was my intention to explore some of the issues around the police and how they deal with Gypsy Travellers. We have covered a lot of that ground already, so I would like to clarify a couple of things that have come up.

Alex Jarrett used the term "mainstreaming" quite a lot. I think that I understand what he meant by that, but I thought that he would like a chance to explain exactly what he meant by it.

**Alex Jarrett:** As Dr Padfield said, because of the language that we use and the pressures that we are under, we can often treat Gypsy Travellers as an entity in a silo, with everything that we do in relation to unauthorised encampments, the provision of public services and so on being focused towards that silo, as if Gypsy Travellers were outwith the community. I am saying that they are a part of the community. Whatever terms we use—settled, Gypsy Travellers, roadside travellers—the bottom line is that these people are members of our community.

When I talk about mainstreaming, I am thinking about the fact that we are continually being forced to approach the issues through the prism of enforcement and that we should not do so. Everything that we do should be proportionate, legal and necessary, and we should approach issues relating to Gypsy Travellers in the round, as we would with issues relating to the settled community.

When I talk about community engagement with the Gypsy Traveller community, I mean that we should do that in the same way as we would with any other cultural group with some differences in our community. We should mainstream our response to those communities and bring in the Gypsy Travellers. We must acknowledge the

differences but start to work with them to enable them to engage with—to use one of those terms that I mentioned—the settled community. We have settled and permanent sites that are part of our settled community and we have many Gypsy Travellers who live in our settled community, and we have to start bringing those people into mainstream service provision and empowering them to raise their voice at a local level.

**Gavin Buist:** I echo those comments. Personally, I do not find the mainstream media portrayal of Gypsy Travellers particularly helpful in fostering relationships between that group in the community and the broader community; it tends to shape the views of what I think I will call the settled community, particularly if an unauthorised or street encampment appears. As I have said, that creates its own dynamic with regard to the police's response and the individuals who try to shape the delivery of that response. However, Neil Mackay made a valuable point about the experience of liaison officers. In my experience, if a liaison officer is established and allowed to remain in post, they can develop a very close working relationship, particularly with people who use the fixed sites.

As for mainstreaming, although we have still some way to go in building the clearly important relationship of trust to which Neil Mackay and Alex Jarrett referred, I draw comfort from the history of policing with regard to diversity. Twenty years ago, the police did not have a good relationship with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people—I do not think that anyone will disagree with that—but 20 years on that relationship is light years better than it ever was. I believe that we can do this. As I think that people round the table will acknowledge, this is a particularly challenging community for a number of reasons but I like to think that if we persist in the direction of travel that Alex Jarrett has articulated a couple of times now, we will have a better and more trusting relationship that will provide the basis for interventions and support from other statutory bodies.

**Michelle Lloyd:** I am encouraged by the examples of community engagement that I have heard about this morning and hope that, instead of our having only one example of good practice, we will see such approaches becoming more widespread across the country. That is particularly important because the relationship between Gypsy Travellers and the police needs to be seen in a slightly wider perspective. As far as policing is concerned, too often in the past—and we are in danger of doing it this morning—Gypsy Travellers have been seen solely in terms of what are called unauthorised or roadside encampments. However, we need to build trust, not least because, like any other members of the community, Gypsy



Travellers are very often the victims of crime. As those who work with the community—and, I am sure, some police officers—know, the crimes that are committed individually or collectively against the community, which could range from something such as theft or an attack to something more serious such as attacks on camps across the country, are simply not reported.

I am encouraged by what I have heard but it would be great if these things could be rolled out effectively.

**Kathryn Hilditch:** From a planning perspective, we have found that, although community engagement is becoming a much more important part of the planning process, Gypsy Travellers are perhaps not so engaged. As a result, there is a need for planning to have a real engagement with Gypsy Travellers and to find out their accommodation needs, whether they be temporary or settled sites, through whatever means of engagement is required. We have to find some really interactive ways of engaging with them.

**Alex Johnstone:** I want to extend the question slightly by referring to Alex Jarrett's point about the presumption against prosecution, which is a phrase that I have heard used many times by many police forces. To what extent does such a presumption operate? More important, does it support the principle of mainstreaming, or is it an exception to it?

**Alex Jarrett:** As I have said, the presumption against prosecution came from Scottish Government guidance on the Trespass (Scotland) Act 1865 that was issued to the police service by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service in relation to trespassing on property and land. As far as certain criteria are concerned, local authorities have alternatives covering public safety and so on. If you want, I can give you the detail of that, but the primary point is that, unless certain criteria are met, the presumption is that there will be no prosecution against Gypsy Travellers on an unauthorised encampment.

10:00

The police service considers that to be supportive, because it allows us to formulate guidelines that we can give to landowners. We have standard operating procedures that dictate that response, which are now being rolled out across the greater police service—they were replicated almost word for word throughout Scotland in any case.

When a police officer goes to an unauthorised encampment, they will take certain details and, whether the land is public or private, they will have guidance on how to interact with the landowner.

We have template letters that set out the law, including the presumption against prosecution in certain circumstances, which we give to landowners, and we work with landowners.

We have a framework in place to work with the local authorities when we pass the details on. It is then for the local authority to go and work with the Gypsy Travellers. The local authority will decide whether eviction in the round will take place or whether it will facilitate the Gypsy Travellers moving on.

My personal opinion is that the guidelines that we have from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service are helpful, because they clarify our position and that of partners in our response to unauthorised encampments.

**Lynne Tammi:** Gavin Buist mentioned the mainstream media. We completely agree on that point. We are doing a bit of research over four years on how the mainstream media report on the Gypsy Traveller community. As he rightly said, many people shape their views on groups whose culture they do not understand by what they see in the media.

I read the *Official Report* of the previous meeting. It came up a lot that people do not understand the community or do not know enough about it. People said that they want to learn about the community but that the opportunities to do so do not exist. However, the opportunities exist if people look for them.

I noticed that people in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire mentioned that there are no opportunities to learn about the Gypsy Traveller culture. We have had an exhibition that was put together by young Gypsy Travellers going around those areas for the past four months. That was widely publicised—it was in the mainstream daily and weekly newspapers—so I find it difficult to understand how people can say that there are no opportunities to learn about the culture when they clearly exist. The exhibition will be at the main library in Aberdeen for another two weeks, so if anybody here from the region has not seen it and wants to learn a bit more, they can go and look at it.

**Dr Padfield:** The statistics from the Scottish Traveller education programme website show that most of the hits that we get are from people who want to find out about travelling people. That was quite surprising.

There is an interest, but part of the difficulty in enabling people to understand the different cultures is finding out how to meet travelling people. At STEP, we get calls about that and it is as if people expect us to have a drawer and be able to pull out a travelling person. However,

Gypsy Travellers are as diverse as any group. That is a difficulty.

The exhibition that Lynne Tammi mentioned is important. MECOPP has an extremely moving exhibition that is very good at explaining to people what it is like to be a Gypsy Traveller in Scotland today. Perhaps more such exhibitions are needed throughout Scotland.

**Dennis Robertson:** I sincerely hope that the witnesses are aware that the committee is determined to seek answers to many of the questions that are being posed. I also sincerely hope that, through that determination, we will be able to make a difference.

On some of the policing matters, we know that the Gypsy Travelling communities tend to have a fairly set pattern of travel and fairly set locations. Because many sites are no longer available to Gypsy Travelling communities, it seems to me that they have very little alternative other than to use unauthorised encampments. Given that we know where the Gypsy Travelling communities tend to go, is the solution to try to ensure that every authority sets up permanent sites?

We have heard about the need for engagement in relation to issues such as schools, education and health. Many Gypsy Travelling communities and people, certainly those with children, are keen to ensure that their children go to school, but many sites are away from public transport and from settled communities, which makes that more difficult. What are your thoughts on the issue of integration? It is often during school holidays when Gypsy Travellers travel.

**Helen Watson:** Integration would certainly help, although NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has good relationships with the local authorities.

I want to pull us back to the point about the approach that settled communities take to Gypsy Travellers, because that gets in the way. That approach is largely informed by the local media. If some of the reports that we see, particularly in the local papers, related to another ethnic minority, they would be clearly illegal and unacceptable. Gypsy Travellers are not afforded the same respect as other ethnic minorities.

It would certainly be helpful to have proper campsites in every local authority area, although there are questions about finding appropriate sites. I do not know enough about land availability, but it is worth trying to do that. Having such sites would give us an opportunity to have more consistent health and vaccination records. It does not send out a good signal when we ask Gypsy Travellers whether we can immunise their children, but they have already been immunised. We do not have proper continuity of care, because we do not have the right information infrastructure

for that. The four pillars of health inequalities are health, education, housing and employment, but the culture of Gypsy Travellers can sometimes make dealing with those four pillars challenging for the rest of us. Integration would certainly help to support a stronger approach on that.

**Kathryn Hilditch:** A related point is that many assumptions are made and there are a lot of misconceptions about where Gypsy Travellers want to live. Obviously, Gypsy Travellers are not a homogeneous group and do not all want to live in the same area. However, when we ran a seminar that brought together planners and Gypsy Traveller support workers, afterwards, a lot of planners told me that they simply had not realised that some Gypsy Travellers want to be located near towns and services such as schools. There is an assumption that they want to be further away, whereas a lot of people want to be located close to a town. We need to think about how we find out from people what they want and need.

**Michelle Lloyd:** To take a slightly wider perspective, not many people round the table would disagree that the policies and practices that have been in place for the past 20 or 30 years are certainly outdated, and many would argue that they are paternalistic. They were designed as what was thought of as “a solution” to “a problem”—the Gypsy Travellers were very much seen as “a problem” that had to be “solved”.

Hopefully, those days are now gone, so we need to look forward. However, I do not think that there are any quick fixes. It is not simply a case of having a transit site or one extra permanent site in every local authority area in Scotland; we need a diverse and comprehensive accommodation strategy that takes into account the varying needs of the community. Obviously, the community's needs have changed over the years, in exactly the same way as the needs of the other communities in Scotland have changed. Traditional occupations are no longer available and people have found alternative ways of making a living.

Any comprehensive accommodation strategy must be closely linked to an anti-racism strategy to tackle the attitudes that we are all aware of, not only in the media, but among many public authorities and the general public. Unless those two things go side by side, the accommodation strategy is probably doomed to fail, as previous experience illustrates. I think that we need to take a slightly wider view.

**The Convener:** Did you want to comment, Pauline?

**Dr Padfield:** I wanted to say what Michelle Lloyd has just said. I am encouraged to hear about the engagement that is taking place. As far as racism is concerned, what is said about Travellers

is against the law; it does not matter that they are not Chinese, African or whatever. How come that continues?

The police are often at the front of such conflict. The fact that there is dialogue and a preparedness to talk, and that there are people who get to know and build trust with the Traveller community is extremely important. I cannot reiterate strongly enough what Michelle Lloyd has just said.

**The Convener:** I want to bring in Nigel Firth, then John Finnie and John Mason.

**Nigel Firth:** In Grampian, we have good liaison and good co-operation between the local authorities, the police, the NHS and our local Gypsy Traveller communities. In 2011, we had a very positive dialogue day, which involved a representative cross-section of our local Gypsy Traveller communities. Out of that dialogue day and the follow-up work, proposals have emerged in Aberdeen for an additional permanent halting site and there is an initiative in Aberdeenshire for a new temporary halting site. Those are extremely positive initiatives. Discussion will have to take place between the Gypsy Traveller communities, the statutory bodies and the residents in the areas where the facilities are proposed.

I want to go back to a comment that Helen Watson made. The media play a highly significant role. It is true that people tend to judge Gypsy Traveller communities on the basis of their own experiences, many of which are very positive and some of which are negative but, in the past, we had a particular issue in Grampian, where one particular newspaper had a drip, drip, drip negative campaign. That resulted in the proprietors of that newspaper being brought before this committee and told in very straight terms that the paper had

"fallen below an acceptable level of decent reporting in its coverage of Gypsies and Travellers."—[*Official Report, Equal Opportunities Committee*, 21 June 2005; c 1033.]

Such negative campaigns have an effect not just at the time; they have a legacy. Therefore, perhaps the committee could take a leading role in ensuring that when reporting is unacceptable, those who are responsible are brought to book quickly.

**Dennis Robertson:** I have a quick point on that issue.

**The Convener:** Make it very quick, Dennis, because John Finnie has been waiting patiently.

**Dennis Robertson:** I am aware of what is happening in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. I am conscious that the evidence that we took last week from a community council from that area was negative as far as engagement was concerned. Last weekend, on a phone-in programme that

covers the north-east, all that we heard was nimbyism, so there is a long way to go in Grampian. The positivity of NHS Grampian is fantastic, but on the radio show there was just nimbyism. Callers said that they understood that people needed somewhere to live, but they did not want it to be where they lived.

10:15

**The Convener:** Do you want to come in on that point, Gavin?

**Gavin Buist:** Yes. I have a comment from an operational perspective. It is two or three years since I was a divisional commander, but my last stint was characterised by that. The conversations that I had with the local community councils in the abstract were supportive of Gypsy Travellers, but when a roadside encampment appeared, the rhetoric changed literally overnight from general support for the concept to, "Why are you not taking enforcement action?" That was a stumbling block and, unfortunately, we never got beyond it. In the event, we managed, through the liaison that Neil Mackay and Alex Jarrett spoke about, to negotiate a move-on within two or three weeks, but it was a lively two or three weeks in that community and some of the rhetoric was disturbing.

**John Finnie:** We have heard some interesting contributions already and I am sure that there are more to come. My intention was to pose a question to Mr Buist. I will come to that, but first I briefly comment that a couple of the contributions from Kathryn Hilditch, which were followed up by Michelle Lloyd, were highly pertinent. They were about unauthorised encampments, which are the perennial problem.

I would also like to pose my question to Mr Jarrett, given the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland hat that he is wearing today. The question is about community planning partnerships.

Mr Buist, your members are most likely to be directly involved with local authorities in community planning partnerships. Given that problem solving seems to be a popular term in police circles, if unauthorised encampments are a problem for the police, is the subject being raised in community planning partnerships with a view to what the local authority can do by way of, perhaps, including your comments in the composition of a local development plan? Everyone should be consulted on that. Have your members made such representations and, if not, could they do so?

Michelle Lloyd is right. The answer is not simply to have more sites everywhere. We need to have a considered approach, and beyond local issues there may well be a national planning development issue.

Forgive me if I noted what you said incorrectly, Mr Jarrett, but you used the term “for others”. I think that there is a role, particularly when we move to the single police service, for a more co-ordinated approach. Have your members made representations? If not, can you give us an undertaking that you will engage on that basis?

**Gavin Buist:** If I can answer the second part of your question first, it is absolutely appropriate that representations can be made by our members. You are right that the community planning partnerships are the logical vehicle to initiate that dialogue. From what I picked up from people round the table, I think that there is a view that senior police officers can play a role. In many respects, they have an interest in doing that because, as I mentioned, they can quickly find themselves behind the 8-ball when they are presented with a roadside encampment.

The caveat that I would put on that is that any representation would be much stronger if it was made on a partnership basis, with the interested local individuals and national agencies trying to progress the local agenda and get something into the single outcome agreement that initiates a process that will, hopefully, lead to change in the longer term. *[Interruption.]* My apologies, convener—my phone was supposed to be switched off. It is a new phone. I was going to say, “Saved by the bell.” *[Laughter.]*

Do we do it now? Representations are made across the country but, to be perfectly frank, the position is patchy and representations tend to be reactive. Could it be done better? It probably could be, but my colleague Alex Jarrett might be better qualified to comment on that.

**Alex Jarrett:** On the point about community planning partnerships, local authorities have single outcome agreements within which there are short, medium and longer-term outcomes. In general terms, they will be about reducing inequalities and enhancing health and wellbeing, and within those the partners will work within the profiles of their area. For example, I can speak for our outcomes in the Glenrothes area in Fife, where supporting the community, reducing inequalities, enhancing healthcare and quality of life issues are captured in a single outcome agreement.

Within that, in areas that have either permanent sites or unauthorised encampments—the comment was made earlier that there can be patterns to those in the travelling year—we will respond to that with our community planning partners. I mentioned that we are piloting an enhanced community engagement model in the Glenrothes area, which has a permanent site. That strategy includes our response to communicating with and supporting the Gypsy Traveller

community, and we work with our community planning partners within it.

On our national response for the police service, we have just reviewed our unauthorised encampments guidance, which included a comprehensive equality impact assessment. Liaison officers, local authority members, public partners and the Scottish Gypsy Traveller movement—everyone possible—commented on the standard operating procedure. We researched current ECHR equalities steps and MECOPP work that has been done, and our response to unauthorised encampments was found to be fit for purpose from our perspective. Therefore, we are working.

On the ACPOS Gypsy Traveller reference group, we have acknowledged that we are moving on to a different policing landscape and that our response to how we can make relations better with the Gypsy Traveller community has probably moved on over the past few decades, as Gavin Buist mentioned earlier. We are mapping good practice throughout Scotland, identifying good practice within and outwith the police service, and looking to map within reason whether there is a pattern in unauthorised encampments that we can take to work with our public sector partners and say, “Let’s stop being ad hoc. Let’s take matters to the planning table.” If we just say that we will set up another couple of permanent sites and some transit sites without considering the Gypsy Traveller community’s needs and travelling lifestyle, they are unlikely to be used in the way that is wanted. Work in that vein is currently going on.

**John Finnie:** Thanks for that, but I am not sure how I would translate any of that into meaningful language for some of the Gypsy Travellers with whom I have contact, who have concerns about traditional stopping-off places no longer being available.

The policing landscape and mapping are not recent issues. How will the approach translate into something meaningful? We keep hearing that all the local authorities know the places where the unauthorised encampments are. It seems to me that you asked for 32 responses. At the end of the day, Travellers are not so much interested in policies to do with equality issues: they really just want somewhere to park their van. It can be as simple as that. As Dennis Robertson said, we are keen to ensure that, rather than simply yet another report coming out of the committee, there is something meaningful. Can you give any timeframe for the police service in Scotland looking at engagement and a quick turnaround of meaningful information that could perhaps contribute to our report?

**Alex Jarrett:** We are gathering information now, and we hope to have gathered over the next two months or quarter the information in a higher-level scoping study of where we think unauthorised encampments lie. We are looking at the trends in unauthorised encampments over the past three years.

On the dialogue and how that would affect the Traveller community, we use the Scottish Police College to run development days for police officers, partners and Gypsy Travellers to come together and consider how we form our policies and procedures. Developing them is being looked at to try to capture the wider Gypsy Traveller community and give it a greater voice. That is being scoped now, and I hope that, over the next two months, we will have captured much of the information to take us forward with the new police service. If we can be of any assistance and provide any information, you should not hesitate to contact me or task me.

**Gavin Buist:** Let me just build on what John Finnie and Alex Jarrett have said and try to capture some of the earlier comments.

The focus seems to be on the roadside encampments, and I can entirely understand why. In my limited experience, the permanent sites are exactly as has been described to the committee this morning. The sites are not in ideal places: they tend to be off bus routes and not to be near local health centres, schools or other services. Someone to my right used the term “nimbyism”, and perhaps that is why the sites are where they are. We need to be fairly frank about that. Roadside encampments are different in character, and there are different types of roadside encampments. However, I sometimes wonder whether some roadside encampments become unofficially established because they offer the kind of access that the official sites do not offer. Those that I have had dealings with tend to be in semi-urban areas, near the arterial routes, and give access to town centres, bus routes and so on.

Perhaps a starting point would be to ask travelling people themselves, “What do you actually want from an encampment site?” We could then move on, having gained their perspective. I am quite sure that, if people were given the courtesy of being sat down and asked to design—perhaps in the abstract—what an ideal permanent site would look like, it would not look like the existing sites.

**Lynne Tammi:** You took the words right out of my mouth. I was going to shift the focus back to planning and planning processes, but that has summed it up in a nutshell. You need to ask the people for whom you are allegedly making provision.

Kathryn Hilditch knows much more about planning processes than I do, but for us the key is to go back to first principles and build capacity. Essentially, our work is with young people: we aim to build capacity among young people so that they understand planning processes. That is not just about saying, “Come along to a meeting. We want to ask you what you want. Draw us a picture and show us the ideal site.” It is about people having access to all the knowledge so that they can fully participate, whether in national meetings or at the local level. They could be involved in looking at local development plans and where Traveller sites fit into those.

At the moment, we are working with Planning Aid for Scotland on developing a resource for that, but that takes time. We need time to develop the young people who are involved with Kathryn Hilditch’s organisation, and it takes time and resources to roll out such things across Scotland, in order that we do not end up with an elite group of young people who are seen as the group who are trotted out to speak on the community’s behalf every time. I will hand over to Kathryn Hilditch on planning processes and how those work, as that is her area of expertise.

**Kathryn Hilditch:** The point that we have made about the development plan is that when we have worked with Gypsy Travellers they have perhaps been thinking only about the planning application for their own site, but they have a right—as does everyone—to get involved in the development plan for their area by proposing potential sites, and by influencing what goes on around their sites and where other sites might be. It is important to ensure that people get involved at that stage.

As Lynne Tammi mentioned, we are seeking to provide more training for young Gypsy Travellers to help them to understand how they can get involved in the planning process and when the right time to get involved is. Often, people miss opportunities to get involved in planning, or it is too late by the time they get involved. We would like to make progress with that.

**Dr Padfield:** One of my colleagues in the STEP team is Mary Hendry, who has a lot of experience in this area. She is about to start on a piece of work in East Ayrshire to find out what kind of accommodation Travellers would like there. The work has not started, but we could come back to you on it.

**Dennis Robertson:** Planning is complex for the majority of people. Could we have a dedicated planning person to work with the Gypsy Traveller community not just to explain the process but to take them through it timeously? For most people, planning is a nightmare. It may not be the case for

people who work in planning, but it is for the rest of us.

**The Convener:** I think that one is for you, Kathryn.

10:30

**Kathryn Hilditch:** We have a free planning advice service that anybody—individuals or community groups, for example—can call at any time. We get a lot of inquiries from Gypsy Travellers. We are not a consultancy; we do not do things for people, but instead give them the skills to do them themselves. We work with a lot of Gypsy Travellers through our advice service.

**Dennis Robertson:** Is not the problem, in some respects, that not many people in the Gypsy Traveller community have the skills to enable that process to happen?

**Kathryn Hilditch:** Yes, and that is why we are trying to build up their skills through training. As Lynne Tammi said, we are considering a project with young Gypsy Travellers so that they will be able to do planning applications and make representations about development plans in the hope that in the future such things will not be so much of a problem. We want to train young people and break down the process so that they understand it. In any of our training, we try to break down the planning process and make it as easy as possible to understand, because it is very complicated.

**Lynne Tammi:** We are looking at building a resource that young Gypsy Travellers can use multiple times with their peers and older people in the community—in particular, so that the process can be explained to older people who may have literacy issues. The point is to get information out as widely as possible. As Kathryn Hilditch said, the planning process is complicated—it is a minefield—and people need to understand its underpinnings before they can become involved in it.

**The Convener:** Does John Finnie have more questions on that, before I move on?

**John Finnie:** No, but I have a deep sense of frustration that we are just going round in circles—although I do not question that everyone is acting in good faith. On whether the issue ultimately becomes more national than local, ministerial leadership may prove to be important in the end; it may galvanise people. However, a lot of good work is taking place all over Scotland.

**Michelle Lloyd:** I would echo John Finnie's point about going round in circles—I suspect it rings bells for lots of people—and his point about the need for national leadership. Others who have given evidence to the committee have referred to

that, and the need for it is so obvious in the case of accommodation for Gypsy Travellers.

I want to mention another issue. Pauline Padfield and others referred to the need to speak to Gypsy Travellers. It goes without saying that that should be at the core of any accommodation strategy or recommendation. However, a number of accommodation needs assessments have been done over the past 10 years by a variety of organisations in a range of different ways. To my knowledge, none of the recommendations from those assessments, which are big glossy documents, has been implemented. There is scope to go back to Gypsy Travellers to ask them what they want in terms of accommodation. However, as John Finnie said earlier, a lot of people want something pretty basic. The time is right to do a few pilots throughout the country, because there is enough evidence about the kind of accommodation that people want. There is a desperate need for action, rather than for more research.

**John Mason:** My point follows on from the previous one and is not completely different from it. I completely agree with the point about attitudes; it applies to loads of things in respect of which we want ultimately to change people's attitudes—although that can take a long time. I am interested to know whether panel members have ideas about how we can change attitudes about Gypsy Travellers. Should we do it through the schools, for example, then just work up from that? Clearly, the media just reflect public attitudes, in some ways.

Linked to that is the idea of the national against the local, which John Finnie and others referred to. If we take the example of smoking, we have tried to change attitudes to it through education, but we have also had quite dramatic legislation from the centre. On accommodation for Gypsy Travellers, we could say at national level that every local authority must produce one permanent transit site—if that is the right term—within two years. That would be concrete solid action. However, my feeling is that there might be a reaction against that locally, because the site might not be appropriate. I am interested in how we try to tie national and local action together.

**The Convener:** Who would like to kick off on that one?

**Dr Padfield:** I do not think that it is about "the national against the local",

because that is the key partnership. When people are trying to get things changed at local level, they look for national leadership and when national leadership is trying to find out about things, it looks to people at local level. The two should not be set

against each other; there should be a partnership between them.

**John Mason:** What do you mean by “national leadership”, though? Do you want Alex Salmond to stand up and say, “Gypsy Travellers are a good thing,” or do you want Parliament to enforce creation of sites by councils, which they are not doing?

**Dr Padfield:** Michelle Lloyd made the important point that information is already being gathered and that it needs to be examined to see what is being said. We have done that already—indeed, a lot of Travellers would say, “We’ve done that already and can’t be bothered doing it again.” After all, their day-to-day lives are already a struggle and it takes a lot of energy to keep this sort of thing going.

I am not going to say that Alex Salmond or anyone else should stand up and comment—I am not engaged at that level. The fact is that this committee clearly acts at national level; what we need is dialogue between people at that level and people on the ground in order to ensure that recommendations and what has been suggested are effected.

I return to my point that if someone were to write in a newspaper about another ethnic group what they write about Gypsy Travellers, it would simply not be allowed. Why is it allowed in this case? If we address that issue, we might be able to start changing attitudes. I was very heartened to hear that an action had been brought against a newspaper and that it was suggested that it had fallen below acceptable standards.

I cannot commit to a nice potted answer to John Mason’s question. However, all the stuff that we need is there and the dialogue that the police representatives have referred to is the approach that should be taken. Evidence has been gathered, people with lots of experience are in place, new people are coming in and Planning Aid for Scotland is making an extremely helpful contribution. Everything is there, but it all needs to be pulled together to allow us to find out whether things are happening.

**Lynne Tammi:** I agree with many of Pauline Padfield’s comments, but on leadership I am reminded of the old argument that silence is complicity. We really need leadership. We have discussed the matter at Council of Europe level and people have made statements on it. Those kinds of national statements have to be made to make it clear that the current situation is not acceptable.

As for certain sections of the mainstream media, I have to say that we are tracking the publication that Pauline Padfield alluded to and not much has changed there. If Government sends out the

message that that sort of thing is simply not acceptable, we can begin to measure what is happening, to challenge people and to consider change. After all, discrimination and prejudice are core to this argument, because they stop people coming forward. As Pauline Padfield pointed out, we have looked at the matter over and over again and recommendations have been made here and there. Now, we need some sort of action.

Action needs, however, to be coupled with what is often termed awareness raising or bridge building, which—as has been mentioned—can happen through schools and so on. We have to look at the many different ways of doing it to ensure that we reach out to everyone. For example, we have had young people go into schools not just to speak about their culture, but to engage their peers in the settled community in conflict-resolution activities. We have to get to the heart of the matter by acknowledging and naming the current situation as a conflict and by finding ways to deal with it, which will be difficult and will take time and resources.

We certainly need statements from leaders, but we also need financial commitment. I do not know how much money is going into changing things for the community or dealing with conflict, but I am fairly certain that it is not a lot. I know that times are difficult, but we are talking about a conflict. If we want to address the situation and secure positive outcomes for the whole of society, we must ensure that the appropriate resources are going in and that the appropriate statements are being made by the leadership.

**Michelle Lloyd:** In response to John Mason’s question about how we change attitudes, I agree with others that there is not just one way—there needs to be a multipronged approach through work in schools, awareness-raising training, and work with the Gypsy Traveller communities so that they feel comfortable about getting involved in meetings—local development plans meetings or events such as this meeting. The last thing that people who have been on the receiving end of discrimination for decades or centuries want to do is engage with the process. Why should they? Sometimes it is easier to keep your head down and get on with your life.

Strong leadership is needed through statements and action. There have been statements in the past, but there have not been many champions at senior level and such people are certainly needed. There is also a need to use the existing international and domestic legislation—some of it is not being implemented as effectively as it could be.

**John Mason:** I will press you on that. Are you saying that there should be prosecutions of the media that have not happened?

**Michelle Lloyd:** Yes—but there should be prosecutions not just of the media. Some examples of racist reporting and discriminatory practice are so blatant that they beggar belief. One does not have to look far to find examples. The media play an important part, but in our experience of working with Gypsy Traveller carers, what is also shocking is the level of discriminatory attitudes that we see among service providers. There are regular breaches of confidentiality, assumptions are made about families, and completely unacceptable comments are made—comments such as would not be made about other minority ethnic communities, but which are somehow deemed to be acceptable when said about Gypsy Travellers. Those attitudes can be tackled within our institutions. They are not unique to the social care and health sector but exist within other professions, some of which are represented around the table.

In the past, the Government has tackled a number of sensitive issues through what used to be called public education campaigns, through advertising and through ministers making strong statements. All those are needed in relation to Gypsy Travellers.

**Helen Watson:** I will add to what Lynne Tammi and Michelle Lloyd have said. We must recognise that there is conflict. The people around the table have recognised that we should not make assumptions about what Gypsy Travellers want or need and that we need to ask them. Likewise, we should not make assumptions about what is at the root of the prejudice that we see so explicitly exhibited at times. We should get underneath that, identify the building blocks and take those apart. It is great if we have strong national leadership, but if that is to filter down through the system, it needs a route to follow.

Reference has been made to nimbyism. We are saying that Gypsy Travellers are a good thing and that they add new dimensions and learning to local cultures—they do—but there is often, when we want to set up sites, nimbyism that puts local elected members in the uncomfortable position of having to challenge attitudes and prejudices within their community. I know that that is part of their job, but it is hard and they need a strong support network behind them to do it effectively.

We need to be in schools, but we need also to talk to the wider community to find out about the myths that build up, and about the stigmas and the prejudices so that we can start to dismantle them.

**Mhairi Craig:** I agree with Michelle Lloyd. I am not aware that anything from the report that she was involved in—which led to the setting up of my post three and a half years ago—has been actioned. If someone was to go back yet again to the Gypsy Travellers whom I work with and ask

them what they want and what can be done for them, they would say—this is not apathy—“Why should we bother? We’ve done this before and nothing happened.” They have a hard enough life and have enough to be getting on with without having to deal with all that time and again.

10:45

Awareness raising perhaps needs to be a bit more forceful. Awareness-raising work is done in schools, with teachers—Article 12 in Scotland is involved in one such session that is going on today—but it is non-mandatory continuing professional development, and it is not well attended. If such sessions were mandatory, people might become a bit more aware of the issues.

**Gavin Buist:** Mhairi Craig used the important word “awareness”. I have listened with great interest to the discussion that Mr Mason initiated. There has been talk of individual champions, leadership and the media. I will pick my words carefully, because I am in slightly unfamiliar territory. At the moment, I am picking up on the fact that, in Scotland, there is a public discourse that does not condemn what Lynne Tammi and Pauline Padfield are talking about.

Earlier, I talked about drawing some comfort from previous successes. I joined the police service 32 years ago, and I can see that there are now positive role models for people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, for LGBT people and for disabled people. Such role models simply were not on the radar back then. The Paralympics highlighted some fantastic role models for disabled people. I make that point because we have shown that we can do that in Scotland. However, leadership is absolutely vital in making that happen. I do not see why, in the abstract, we cannot do the same thing with Gypsy Travellers, if there is the necessary leadership and there are role models and champions. We know how to do it, and we have achieved it with certain groups. I do not see why we cannot do it with this part of the community.

**Dr Padfield:** I agree with all the things that people have said. There must be leadership—the idea of me telling Alex Salmond what to do threw me for a minute—but STEP has chosen to focus its resources on supporting teachers of travelling children.

We note that the number of local authorities that have a service for those children, which had grown from nine to about 21, has dropped to 19. We also note that there are not enough people on the ground to do the awareness-raising work that is required in schools. There might be only one person, although in Fife, there are three. They do



a really good job, but they also have the job of supporting the families to get into schools. That double task falls on people who have fewer hours at their disposal to carry out their jobs. That is an important area to consider in relation to the outcomes that were mentioned earlier. I have noted that some research into how those outcomes have been achieved over the past few years would give us further evidence that, regardless of the rhetoric, there must be people on the ground to do the work. If staff are cut and posts are not filled at that level, we will have more problems with racist treatment of Gypsy Travellers—not fewer.

**Lynne Tammi:** Mhairi Craig mentioned awareness raising in schools. It is important to mention examples of good practice. The University of Dundee recently included a module on working with Gypsy Traveller families in its MSc social work course. We have been involved in that—it is just happening, so the module will need to be evaluated and what have you.

I have never been able to understand why the issue has not been a core part of training social workers, community learning and development workers and teachers. It is easy enough to pull together a module that gives people a good starting point when they go into the field. Much of the problem is that people are unsure. They do not understand the issues and are afraid to make contact—so the barriers go up again and then we get the negative stereotyping and what have you. We should be embedding the issue in professional learning and development.

**Alex Jarrett:** I am getting a flavour of the good work that is going on. John Finnie mentioned community planning partnerships. There is an infrastructure in place to deliver what we want to deliver through CPPs, single outcome agreements and so on. There is a move towards empowering communities, in the context of CPPs throughout the country.

Michelle Lloyd and Gavin Buist talked about having a champion. It seems to me that we need a champion at higher, strategic, Government level, who can pull together an action plan that ties in everything—good work, best practice, shortcomings and outcomes; I hope that the committee will produce such a plan—and work with community planning partnerships and other partners to ensure that it is delivered consistently and coherently throughout the country. We do not need to reinvent the wheel; we just need someone at strategic, Government level to say, “I will be the champion. You provide me with the framework and the action plan, and I will drive it forward with all the contributing partners.”

**Mhairi Craig:** I echo what Lynne Tammi said. It is heartening to hear about what the University of

Dundee is doing—that is fabulous. It would be fantastic if the approach was rolled out in other universities and colleges, so that awareness of Gypsy Traveller communities was mainstreamed in the way that awareness of mental health and disability is mainstreamed.

**John Mason:** I share John Finnie’s frustration—he used the word earlier—but we have heard good ideas about how we take things forward, which is what interests me.

**Dennis Robertson:** One or two comments have been made about the media—newspaper reports and so on—but no one has said anything specific about the issue. How much damage is done by programmes such as the one about Gypsy weddings? Forgive me, but I cannot remember the title; I have never watched it. From what I have heard, the programme’s portrayal of Gypsy Traveller life is not particularly real. Do programmes like that create an image for the public that does a lot of damage?

**Dr Padfield:** Showpeople say that it has put back racism against them to what it was 10 years ago. They are not Gypsy Travellers, but the flak that they have experienced as a consequence of those programmes has really distressed and disheartened them.

**Michelle Lloyd:** Research was carried out by Show Racism the Red Card, which delivers awareness-raising training in schools about the issues that affect Roma Gypsy Traveller communities. The organisation was working in Perth and Kinross recently, and before the session started it asked the young people what they thought when they heard “Roma Gypsy Traveller”. The vast majority of comments related to things that had come from the programme—it is best not to mention its name, so that it does not get any more publicity. I will forward the research to the committee.

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

**Lynne Tammi:** I echo what people have said. Members have probably read about the more serious issue to do with the sexualisation of children in advertisements for the car-crash television programmes that we are talking about. That issue has been pursued. It takes us back full circle to this question: would the children of any other community be used and portrayed in such a manner to sell television programmes? I do not think so. It goes right back to what is and is not acceptable. I will not name the programme, either.

**Dennis Robertson:** Thank you. I will remain ignorant.

**The Convener:** That is best, Dennis.

**Marco Biagi:** A lot of the questions that I was going to ask about leadership have been covered, but I will follow on from John Mason's questions about what national leadership might look like. On the basis of what I have heard, I think that you would characterise local leadership as having failed—or perhaps not succeeded; it depends on whether your glass is half empty or half full. Is that the case? If local leadership has not succeeded, why is that? What would be different about national leadership that would mean that it worked when local leadership manifestly has not?

**Mhairi Craig:** The issue is about mainstreaming. If national leadership put the issue in the media and enabled it to be more mainstreamed, it would be more acceptable to communities in general.

**Kathryn Hilditch:** In planning, plans are passed down from the national level to the strategic and local levels. Little national planning guidance relates to planning for Gypsy Travellers. If such national guidance existed, it would filter down to the local level.

**Dr Padfield:** There is a little bit of a contradiction in achieving mainstreaming while having a focus. The arguments were all raised in relation to the Equality Act 2010. In the discussions about that, there were consistent strategic things among lots of groups, so a new law was to cover them all. However, there was a question about how to talk about particular instances.

The difficulty is perhaps in discussing things equally and not forgetting that Gypsy Travellers have planning needs and require access to healthcare and medicine. A particular focus is needed, but they must be part of the general discussion and must not be forgotten and left off the agenda. Perhaps that is it—people's agendas need to be clear. They must ask whether they have considered all the groups that they might work with.

**Kathryn Hilditch:** Under the 2010 act, all plans and policies—including planning documents—need to be equality impact assessed. That requirement, which is now coming in, could make quite a big difference, as it will mean that the effects on different groups that are being worked with will need to be assessed in planning documents.

**Alex Jarrett:** The issue is national. It stretches across the country and a national direction and grip are required to drive it forward. It is as simple as that.

**Nigel Firth:** From memory, I believe that Gypsy Travellers were given formal recognition as a distinct ethnic group through test cases from 2005. That means that, in 2005, the Race Relations

(Amendment) Act 2000 kicked in, so perhaps we should not focus on the 2010 act onwards—perhaps we should look at the situation from 2005 onwards.

A lot of informed and positive comments have been made about leadership. My only suggestion is that positive encouragement for local authorities is better than wielding a big stick.

**Marco Biagi:** What role do community councils have in resolving the issue?

11:00

**Lynne Tammi:** Witnesses from community councils were at the committee last week, and it was interesting to read their comments. We covered that issue earlier, when we said that they did not understand the culture and traditions of Gypsy Travellers. Perhaps it would help if they did.

Kathryn Hilditch will correct me if I am wrong, but I think that community councils have a role in overseeing or commenting on certain planning issues in their area. They obviously need to be brought into the fold and engaged. Judging by the comments in the *Official Report* of the committee's last meeting, we need to go back to first principles with many community councils. The majority of the witnesses were fairly negative. My assessment is that that is based on a lack of understanding of the community.

To return to an issue that was raised earlier, the mainstream media, including Scottish and United Kingdom dailies, feed negativity and stereotyping on a daily basis. People need to be encouraged to see beyond that. We will do that by involving and engaging people and bringing the communities together. A basic thing is to get information out so that people can make informed decisions. When all is said and done, if people are representing a community, they have to put aside their personal assumptions or beliefs. We need to make the point that community councils and elected representatives, whether local or national, have a duty to represent and consider all the citizens in their area and not just a few, or the majority.

**The Convener:** Does anybody else want to come in on that point?

**Michelle Lloyd:** I have a comment, although it is on the previous point.

I am always slightly worried when we hear the word "mainstreaming", because it has been used and abused over the years. Although I am the first to say that having Gypsy Travellers as one of the many communities that come up in history lessons or social work courses might be a goal to aspire to, we need to remember the reality: the shocking statistics on health inequalities and the appalling

conditions on sites in the 21st century in Scotland, which members have seen.

Because of that, it is not enough simply to have an equality impact assessment that has Gypsy Travellers as one of the communities, because it is too easy just to tick that box. As we know, progress on most of the areas that the 2001 inquiry covered has been negligible. I hesitate to use the word “special”, but there needs to be a targeted approach to address the multiplicity of issues. That needs leadership at a national level, which hopefully will be followed up at local level. A local approach might be needed, because what is happening in Aberdeen is different from what is happening in Oban. We need local approaches to building capacity with Gypsy Traveller communities, which vary from area to area.

There is definitely a need for strong national leadership, but we also need resourcing. As others have said, there are examples of good practice and materials, such as those that our colleague from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde mentioned, to do with dispelling myths and raising awareness. However, those examples exist in pockets and are often delivered by the third sector, which in the current climate is on a shoestring. We need a programme of work that is properly resourced.

**Helen Watson:** The health inequalities are huge and we have not been able to quantify them properly. There are some structural problems. Consider, for example, the number of general practitioners who are willing to register Gypsy Travellers. GPs are independent contractors and can refuse to register Gypsy Travellers, but the primary reason that they refuse is clinical governance, follow-through and the duty of care. We have not sorted that out, but it needs to be sorted out nationally. It probably needs to be part of the GP contract because that would facilitate follow-through in the system.

Michelle Lloyd mentioned our reliance on the third sector. That is positive, because it can act as a buffer and help to mitigate some of the mistrust that the Gypsy Travellers feel towards the statutory services. However, how well the statutory services embrace the third sector's role is patchy throughout the country.

She also mentioned that the third sector is on a shoestring; so is the statutory sector now. We are all in the same boat, but perhaps that is an opportunity to pool limited resources and find a way forward.

**Michelle Lloyd:** I have worked all my life in the third sector and would never say that it was not good. There is good work going on in the third sector, but it needs to be resourced. Often, a choice has to be made between supporting and assisting a family that is in a desperate situation

and going along to a community planning meeting. That is not a nice choice to make.

**The Convener:** One point that we have not covered this morning and on which I would be interested in the witnesses' views is the role of the Gypsy Traveller liaison officers. Do the witnesses think that they perform a worthwhile role? What involvement have they had with them? Should their role be enhanced in some way and, if so, in what way?

**Lynne Tammi:** As with other provisions for the community, the picture is patchy because not every local authority has a Gypsy Traveller liaison officer—GTLO. Some authorities that have sites have site managers who cover that role—if you like, they have a dual role. Some have site managers who are specifically engaged with work on the site, and that is it. It is difficult to compare, contrast and measure when the service does not exist across the board.

The GTLOs with whom we have worked—we have not worked with GTLOs in all of Scotland—have engaged helpfully with us in the third sector. I will give Clinterty as an example, because we have done quite a lot of work with the GTLO up there, who also operates as the site manager and covers the area. That is a lot of work, and it would be better if that person did not have that dual role because, when there are a lot of roadside camps and a lot of people passing through, her job can become quite difficult.

I would like there to be GTLOs in every region in the country with a set remit, so that they would have something against which they could measure their work and so that they could come together as a group to examine their work, how things are going and what needs to be changed.

I will move away slightly from the question, but what I will say is relevant because some site managers operate as GTLOs. It would have been good to have had a site manager here, perhaps. I do not know whether the committee will speak to site managers.

Where was I going? I have completely lost track of what I was saying.

It would be good to have solid networks that would enable GTLOs to come together to share information. I know that times are tight and it is difficult to assign finances to such posts, but they are important and they are a good point of contact for the community. Because GTLOs are there permanently, relationships can be built. They are a good third way of making contact with the community when the trust has been built. The posts need to be permanent and there need to be GTLOs throughout the country so that trust can be built.

**Dr Padfield:** I do not want to sound negative, but STEP works with teachers of travelling children and we have found it very hard to gather information from local authorities on what is provided by other services. There is good practice, but it has sometimes been hard to find enough good practice to feel confident that things are going well.

We have never heard anyone mention a Gypsy Traveller liaison officer except in one local authority. I know that person—he has been a Gypsy Traveller liaison officer for many years—and he is crucial in helping the educators there to make contact with travelling people. I have never heard any other local authority mention a Gypsy Traveller liaison officer, but that was a very strong plank in the original 37 recommendations. I was new to the field then, but I am conscious of the sense of excitement that existed among people about those 37 recommendations. That reinforces what Michelle Lloyd has said: from the discussions that I have had, it seems that some of the shapes might have changed a bit but we are not managing to deliver what needs to be delivered.

**Michelle Lloyd:** I was around at the time of the previous inquiry. I remember very clearly the recommendation that the roles of site manager and GTLO should be distinct, but that has happened in only a handful of local authorities. One reason why the recommendation was made was because those roles involve different skill sets and different knowledge. To my mind, managing an accommodation facility and potentially having an enforcement role in relation to roadside camps is quite different from being able to provide a social care, health and education-type liaison role, which requires a different background.

It is difficult to assess the situation when there are differing remits and approaches within local authorities. I think that there is also room for independent liaison—I know that this has come up in previous evidence sessions—whereby the liaison role is provided by someone in the third sector. Third sector organisations have some independence and may be able to tackle issues of poor practice within the local authority that a site manager and/or GTLO might find difficult.

I am not sure about the question of whether the GTLO's role should be enhanced, because I would rather see any additional investment or resource that is made available going into capacity building within the Gypsy Traveller community. In my experience, much of the role of liaison officers, whether they are employed by the third sector or the local authority, is about facilitating access to services for Gypsy Travellers and, in an ideal world, people would be able to access those services without the need for an intermediary. That

is a difficult issue, but I would like to see more investment in the capacity building side.

**Mhairi Craig:** Certainly, my job seems to have developed into doing a lot of liaison work. I work quite closely with the site managers, but over the years that I have been doing the job it has been obvious that there is a need for someone independent from the local authority. I have had a lot of good feedback and reaction to the job that I have done, and I agree that it is definitely something that should be done across the board.

**Helen Watson:** I think that we have to be very precise about what the GTLO's role should be. Given the different sizes of local authority—if you compare Clackmannanshire with Glasgow City, for example—having one GTLO for each authority will, by definition, affect what those officers can achieve.

We probably have to look at geographical spread as well. If a GTLO has to drive up and down Argyll, it will take all day for them to drive from one end of their area to the other. I think that we need to be a wee bit more sophisticated than just saying that each local authority must have a GTLO.

**Dennis Robertson:** With the integration of services, could the provision be done by health board area?

**Helen Watson:** Again, there are huge variations in the size of health board areas.

**Dennis Robertson:** Absolutely, but those variations in size are smaller in the health board context than in the local authority context.

**Helen Watson:** I think that a better way to approach the issue would be to look at the patterns of movement of the Gypsy Traveller population and to build up an infrastructure around that.

11:15

**Dr Padfield:** Today's session is about accommodation, so STEP's role sits on the edge of that. However, it is important to mention that in education the partnership attempts to work well together have flowed from the institution of the getting it right for every child approach. We find evidence—which is patchy and depends on how many people are on the ground—of educators being the central person in the team, because it is often the teacher who is closest to a Gypsy Traveller family. In that sense, a Gypsy Traveller liaison officer may be more relevant when we are talking about accommodation than when we are talking about education.

In practice, however, what tends to happen is that different people have different roles. In

working together, they find that helpful. If they pick up the phone, the connections can be made.

**The Convener:** Have the witnesses who are representing the police had any involvement with GTLOs? What is your view of the role?

**Gavin Buist:** I defer to the gentleman at the bottom of the table.

**Alex Jarrett:** From personal experience and from what colleagues have told me, I have found it to be a very useful role in forming relationships and acting as a conduit. Throughout the country, we have police officers who are liaison officers. Sometimes community police officers with responsibility for a geographical area will assume that role, whereas some divisions or areas will have champions who work with liaison officers. We have found it helpful to have as a constant presence someone who has formed relationships and can assist the police. As the police can have a moving landscape of personnel, having someone whom we can access saves us having to build bridges again and again.

We find the GTLO very useful in accessing people, doing work on unauthorised encampments and forming better relationships, but I totally agree that there must be some discussion about what that role is for different partners, as it develops differently in different areas, depending on the person who carries it out and the focus of the local authority. I think that the role of GTLO should be enhanced and kept.

**The Convener:** Do any of the other witnesses have any brief comments that they want to make on that specific point?

**Neil Mackay:** I echo what Mr Jarrett said. I have been in my current post for only two months, but in that short time I have managed to get round the Borders, East Lothian, West Lothian and so on. They all run the liaison officer model slightly differently. I think that Scottish Borders Council runs it as a sort of consultancy call-out-type service, whereas City of Edinburgh Council has a dedicated GTLO.

Whatever the set-up, my view is that GTLOs have been entirely positive. I think that they work well with our designated police liaison officers, particularly on visits to unauthorised encampments and so on. I am trying to visualise what such a visit would be like without a council liaison officer. I think that a police officer going by themselves would have a detrimental effect.

**The Convener:** As members have no further questions, I thank our witnesses for coming along and giving evidence. It has been an extremely useful and positive session. If I were to take away one message from the meeting, it would be about

the importance of leadership. It has been a very good session.

That concludes our formal meeting. Our next meeting will take place on Thursday 24 January and will include oral evidence on where Gypsy Travellers live from local authorities at a strategic level.

*Meeting closed at 11:19.*



Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

---

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland.

All documents are available on  
the Scottish Parliament website at:

[www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

For details of documents available to  
order in hard copy format, please contact:  
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact  
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000  
Textphone: 0800 092 7100  
Email: [sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk)

e-format first available  
ISBN 978-1-78307-142-5

Revised e-format available  
ISBN 978-1-78307-156-2

---

Printed in Scotland by APS Group Scotland

---