

THE LONDON GYPSY AND TRAVELLER FORUM

MANIFESTO FOR THE 2016 MAYORAL ELECTIONS



The London Gypsy and Traveller Forum is a network of Gypsies and Travellers, GRT organisations, council officers, elected representatives and other stakeholders from across London, established in 2004.

Our aim is to improve the lives of Gypsies and Travellers in London and to promote their rights to equal treatment at a strategic level.

Over the last year we have worked together to produce this manifesto setting out the main priorities for policy and action for the new Mayor and London Assembly Members to take on board.

ACCOMMODATION

Current challenges

The housing crisis in London affects Gypsy and Traveller communities in a disproportionate way. High pressures on the land market, political unwillingness and lack of strategic leadership from the Mayor have resulted in a severe shortage of culturally suitable accommodation and little hope for new sites to be identified in the future.

Only 10 new pitches have been delivered out of the 800 identified in the 2008 GTANA.

The new planning definition of Travellers together with the Housing and Planning Bill proposal to remove the duty on local authorities to assess the specific needs of Gypsies and Travellers will have damaging impacts on future generations.

Insecurity, lack of choice, isolation and discrimination are already taking a great toll on family life, health and well-being and opportunities for education and employment.

Without adequate accommodation options to support the culture and tradition of Gypsy and

Traveller communities, inequalities and exclusion will continue to rise.

Our demands

- 1. Adopt an inclusive definition of Gypsies and Travellers agreed by the community**
- 2. Implement the recommendations from the London Assembly Housing Committee investigation on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs**
- 3. Identify suitable land for Gypsy and Traveller sites and make the Traveller Pitch Fund more accessible**
- 4. Enable the temporary use of land for negotiated stopping places**
- 5. Support alternative and community-led routes to site provision**

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Current challenges

Many Gypsies and Travellers are at great disadvantage in the London labour market, facing exclusion from employment and training due to a variety of factors such as lack of literacy and numeracy skills, discrimination and lack of cultural awareness.

54% of Gypsies and Travellers in London are economically inactive, compared to the London average of 33%. Out of these the largest proportion are looking after home and family (14%) or are long term ill or disabled (16%)

Although Gypsies and Travellers are included as a target group for the European Social Fund, the London Enterprise Panel does not provide any programmes tailored to the needs of this community or third sector organisations working to support Gypsies and Travellers into employment and training.

Apprenticeship schemes in London offer very limited options in the range of practical skills needed by Gypsies and Travellers and traditional trades are in decline. Some types of work are threatened by excessive regulation, such as the Scrap Metal Dealers Act.

Our demands

6. Recognise and address the discrimination Gypsies and Travellers face from many employers and apprenticeship providers

7. Diversify apprenticeship opportunities to better suit the needs and skills of the Gypsy and Traveller communities and provide targeted support to enable access to apprenticeships

8. Develop representation of grassroots organisations on the London Enterprise Panel and establish a working group on equality

Current challenges

Gypsies and Travellers suffer from worse health outcomes than any other ethnic minority group. Common health issues affect members of the community at all stages in life. There are higher incidences of maternal death, stillbirth, miscarriages, long-term illnesses, diabetes and chronic conditions particularly of the respiratory system. Life expectancy is 12 years less for Gypsy and Traveller women and 10 years less for men, compared to the UK average.

Under 70% of Gypsies and Travellers in London have good or very good health, compared to the 85% average, while 15% report having bad or very bad health, compared to the 5% London average.

Gypsies and Travellers are also more likely to suffer from mental health issues such as depression and anxiety than other marginalised groups. Alcohol and drug abuse have become more prevalent in recent years.

Some of the factors which affect the health and well-being of Gypsies and Travellers are

barriers to accessing services, discrimination, recent changes to the health system, employment, education and family circumstances. Research also shows that insecure, poor quality and unsuitable accommodation together with isolation from family and community can have negative impacts on the health of Gypsies and Travellers

Our demands

9. Better data collection on Gypsy and Traveller health at GLA level to inform evidence documents

10. Require boroughs to include Gypsy and Traveller needs in their Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and reflect findings in planning policy

11. Mayor's Health Inequality Strategy and Delivery Plan to address specifically the needs of diverse groups, including Gypsies and Travellers.

Current challenges

Gypsy and Traveller children and young people fare worse in terms of education outcomes than most other marginalised groups. Historical trends shows that the situation has improved over the last few years but this still remains one of the most concerning issues facing the community.

54% of Gypsies and Travellers over 16 do not have qualifications, compared to the 18% London average.

School absences for Gypsy and Traveller children are up to 4 times higher than for all other ethnic groups.

The percentage of Gypsy and Traveller pupils achieving qualifications at GCSE is just under 40%, more than half of the average for all other ethnic groups.

Many parents consider that primary education is very important, but tend to see secondary education as less relevant, as it does not equip young people with practical skills. The loss of Traveller Education Services across most London boroughs has left huge gaps in terms of support and understanding of particular needs and family circumstances. Accommodation

issues also impact sustained access to education, with a large proportion of Gypsies and Travellers affected by precarious and insecure housing especially in the private rented sector.

Our demands

12. Focus on funding schools and education programmes in the most disadvantaged areas of London and address the needs of underachieving groups, rather than on schools with the highest standards.

13. Better collection of data and evidence on Gypsies and Travellers attendance, attainment, specific needs

14. Use the Pupil Premium to fund support programmes for Gypsy and Traveller children such as literacy, numeracy and vocational skill training.

Attendees of 2015 Forum:

Brenda Downes,
Matt Brindley, Traveller
Movement
Lizzy Lenferna De La Motte
– Richmond and Kingston
Dorothea Savva- People of
the road
Sarah Clark – LB Croydon
Pauline Barry – LB Croydon
Grantley Bisphom- LB
Tower Hamlets
Iman Achara-Roma Forum
Marian Mahoney- Old
Willow Close resident
group
Georgina English- EHRC
Mena Mongan- Hackney
Resident
Sherrie Smith- Sherries
Flowers
Rose Palmer – LB
Kensington and Chelsea
Michael Reilly – Hackney
Resident
Daniel Mongan- Hackney
Resident
Harriet Ballance-
Southwark Travellers
Action Group
Abigail Angus –Traveller
Movement

Anthony Howard-
Cambridge Academic
Simon Shaw - GLA
Fiona Twycross -
Rose McCarthy – ALERT
Amy Rogers- LB Havering
Val Smith – LB Havering
Farah Hussain –GLA
Labour Group
Viola Petrella- Healthwatch
Newham
Brian Hanley – Mind
Your Self
Mark Haythorne-
Surry CC
Nathalie Wilson-
Kingston Council
Shelley Eugene –Homerton
Hospital
Cleone Henry- LB Merton
Patrick O’Donnell- Stable
Way Resident
Sue Mutter- LB Redbridge
Traveller Education
Hilda Brasil –Surry CC
Kathleen Ryan- STAG
Noel Baxter- Southward
CCG
Helen Bedford – NHS
Debby Kennet,LGTU
Iilnca Diaconescu,LGTU
Clemmie James,LGTU
Tracie Giles,LGTU
Emma Mile- LGT

Miranda Waterworth- Ealing
Gypsy Roma and Traveller
Achievement Service
Lisa Buttigieg – Old Willow
Close
Mike Doherty- Traveller Times
Guido Borasino-UCL
Sittha Kruarat-UCL
Delilah Zhou- UCL
Brian Foster- Traveller Education
Billy Smith - Student
Billie Jo Sines – Ash Manor School
Jo Luhman – Deputy Ash Manor School
Ruby Brazil -Student
Mary- Lou Searle -Student
David Landau- LB Redbridge



For more information contact London Gypsy and Traveller Unit: lgту.org.uk; info@lgту.org.uk