

Policing by consent: Understanding and improving relations between Gypsies, Roma, Travellers and the police



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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Executive summary and recommendations | 6 |
| 2. Introduction..... | 11 |
| 3. Police community relations in the past and present..... | 12 |
| Lack of trust and confidence in recent years | 12 |
| A long history of persecution | 14 |
| Gypsy, Roma, Traveller ethnicity misunderstood and seen as a risk factor | 15 |
| Current policy and practice | 18 |
| 4. Survey of police force approaches to GRT community engagement..... | 21 |
| Methodology..... | 22 |
| Key Findings | 22 |
| Community engagement strategies..... | 22 |
| Targeted strategies for community engagement..... | 22 |
| Part of wider policing strategies | 23 |
| Associating GRT communities with unauthorised encampments..... | 23 |
| The role of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers..... | 24 |
| Majority of dedicated roles place emphasis on enforcement | 24 |
| A minority of dedicated roles focus on community engagement | 25 |
| Wider community liaison (non-dedicated engagement) | 27 |
| Cross-sector working and involving the GRT communities | 28 |
| 5. Qualitative study: Relationships, policing issues and building trust..... | 29 |
| Methodology..... | 29 |
| Demographics of sample | 30 |
| Key findings..... | 31 |
| Relationships..... | 31 |
| Current state of relations..... | 31 |
| Changes in relationship in recent years..... | 34 |
| Confidence with one another | 35 |
| Discriminatory behaviour, unconscious bias and harassment | 38 |
| Policing issues | 41 |
| Ethnicity as a risk factor | 42 |
| Living roadside and unauthorised encampments..... | 44 |
| Influence of the wider public | 48 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Reporting crime | 50 |
| The role of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers..... | 52 |
| Building trust | 54 |
| Institutional and structural changes | 54 |
| Engagement and interaction..... | 56 |
| Recruitment | 59 |
| Addressing discriminatory behaviour | 61 |
| Training | 63 |
| 6. Attitudinal survey of police officers and community members..... | 65 |
| 7. Conclusion | 69 |
| Appendices..... | 73 |
| Appendix C: Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers' job descriptions..... | 79 |
| References | 81 |

Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Crime Survey for England and Wales, perceptions of local police by personal characteristic, year ending March 2016 (percentage saying they 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree')..... | 14 |
| Figure 2: Change in number of PCSOs (full-time equivalents) from 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2016..... | 20 |
| Figure 3: Current relations between police and GRT communities..... | 31 |
| Figure 4: Changes in police and GRT community relations in recent years..... | 34 |
| Figure 5: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police treat GRT communities fairly'..... | 65 |
| Figure 6: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police treat GRT communities with respect'..... | 66 |
| Figure 7: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'GRT communities treat the police with respect'..... | 66 |
| Figure 8: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police are dealing with the things that matter to the GRT communities'..... | 67 |
| Figure 9: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police understand the issues that affect the GRT communities'..... | 67 |
| Figure 10: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police can be relied on to be there when the GRT communities need them'..... | 68 |
| Figure 11: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police are trusted by the GRT communities'..... | 68 |
| Figure 12: Responses by police and community members to the statement 'The police have the confidence of the GRT communities'..... | 69 |

1. Executive summary and recommendations

The relationship between Gypsies, Roma, Travellers (GRT) and the police is too often marked by mutual mistrust, poor communication and conflict limiting both the communities' ability to access justice, and the police's ability to protect citizens and fight crime. A long history of police harassment, the prioritisation of enforcement over engagement and a generational cycle of mistrust¹ continue to hamper efforts to improve relations, resulting in many GRT communities not being policed by consent.

The first step towards a more cohesive and consensual relationship requires the police to focus on preventative rather than reactive policing and on equal rather than special treatment of the GRT communities. It also requires more GRT individuals and communities to be active partners in the process and, in some cases community advocates, who are prepared to engage and hold the police to account. Before the police and the communities can start on this journey they need to recognise and openly address current and historical prejudice and maltreatment which continues to cast a long shadow over relations.

This report was commissioned by the Traveller Movement (TM) to inform how government, police forces and the GRT communities can work together to improve relations.

Key Findings

The key findings draw on data from a survey conducted by TM between January 2017 and January 2018 of 45² territorial police forces in England, Scotland and Wales. It submitted Freedom of Information requests to all the forces and conducted 31 in-depth qualitative interviews with police officers and community members living and working in five police force areas in England. The survey specifically looks at how territorial police forces conduct **GRT community engagement**, while the qualitative study focuses on **relationships, policing issues** and **building trust**.

The findings in the qualitative study should not be interpreted as conveying national trends; however, they do represent exemplars of common issues facing many community members and police officers across the country.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community engagement

- **Police strategies for enforcement but not engagement**

Only **two forces** describe having a targeted strategy for improving relations with the GRT communities (both of which are in Wales). The remainder have either no strategy or a wider strategy that's applicable to, but not targeted at, GRT communities. A significant minority of seven forces (over 16%) associate GRT community engagement strategies with unauthorised encampment policies.

- **Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer roles more likely to prioritise enforcement**

Twelve forces (60% of those which responded providing job descriptions and/or role profiles for dedicated GRT roles) make specific reference to dealing with unauthorised encampments and/or other enforcement issues. The majority of these are ethnically defined 'Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer' roles. The remaining eight forces (40%) which responded focus solely on GRT community engagement, often as part of a wider job description working with other minority communities or vulnerable groups. Five out of the eight forces which focus solely on engagement are in Scotland and Wales.

Relationships

- **Relations are improving, but still have a long way to go**

Despite most GRT respondents and many police officers describing current relations as mixed or poor, half of community members and three quarters of police officers believe that police-community relations are improving.

- **The wider police and GRT communities are not confident engaging each other, but where there is engagement, confidence grows**

The vast majority of police officers working with GRT individuals and communities say they feel confident doing so; however, nearly two-thirds of them describe their colleagues as not being confident engaging the communities. Half of police officers interviewed also describe low police confidence manifesting itself in GRT communities being over-policed. Most GRT community members also report being confident engaging the police but describe other community members as not being so.

- **Unconscious bias, racism and discrimination persists**

Nearly three quarters of police officers and the vast majority of community members identify unconscious bias, racism and discriminatory behaviour towards GRT communities by the police. This includes use of racist language, perceptions of the communities as criminogenic, and community members automatically being treated as suspects. Community members also describe cases of current and historical police harassment and brutality, with roadside communities most likely to be victims of such behaviour. It is evident from police and community responses that experiences of discrimination and harassment significantly inform current levels of trust and confidence.

Policing issues

- **Gypsy, Roma, Traveller ethnicity treated as a risk factor**

Two-thirds of police officers and over three-quarters of community members describe GRT ethnicity as being treated as a 'risk factor', often resulting in a higher level of police response. Half of community members and a minority of police officers identify traffic stops and the recording of number plates on sites as specific areas where ethnicity influences the police response. Other examples include over-policing weddings and everyday call outs to Traveller sites and so-called 'Traveller related' incidents. Treating GRT ethnicity as a

risk factor is at odds with police forces' duties to eliminate discrimination under s149 Equality Act 2010 (EA).

- **Inconsistent approaches to encampments**

Roadside community members (i.e. people either permanently nomadic or travelling for work without access to an authorised stopping place) describe police forces and individual officers taking very different approaches to encampments, with some being hostile, heavy-handed and at times carrying out evictions late at night, while others were reported to take a more respectful, non-enforcement led approach. Police officers also express frustration at poor communication with roadside Gypsies and Travellers, incidents of anti-social behaviour and having to repeatedly evict the same families, often in the absence of sustainable solutions like improved site provision and/or negotiated stopping places. Officers also describe being under public and political pressure to evict roadside families quickly.

- **GRT communities are less likely to report being victims of crime because they don't trust the police**

All police respondents describe the GRT communities as less likely to report being victims of crime compared to other groups, largely due to lack of trust in the police. According to officer respondents hate crime is the most common issue the communities report, followed by domestic violence and theft. While half of GRT community members say they are confident reporting crime, they pick and choose what they report and describe friends and family as being less likely to report a crime. A minority of community members would never report being a victim of crime, believing the police would not believe them or think it was their fault.³ TM considers that in line with their s149 EA duty to advance equality of opportunity, the police should be considering methods that will encourage GRT people to report crime, ultimately by building trust and a more positive relationship.

- **Role and purpose of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers is often unclear**

Apart from addressing unauthorised encampments, there doesn't appear to be a common purpose to the role of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers (GLTO) across police forces. While some officer respondents and community members praise liaison roles for providing a regular face within the communities, others express concern that their work load is driven by an enforcement role rather than liaison. This further marginalises and isolates the communities from mainstream community engagement practice. TM is concerned that GTLO roles, which typically focus on enforcement, reinforce negative stereotypes by inextricably linking Gypsies and Irish Travellers with criminality, almost suggesting Gypsies/Irish Travellers need 'extra' policing.

Building trust

- **Institutional change and community involvement**

Several community and police respondents describe the necessity for institutional and structural change within the police to improve community-police relations, while other police and community respondents highlight the need for greater GRT community involvement in the process. For the former, building trust depends first and foremost on the police taking a long hard look at themselves and honestly addressing how they, as an institution or service, engage the GRT communities.

- **Equal treatment not special treatment**

Over two thirds of community members state a clear desire for 'normal, everyday treatment' rather than 'special treatment' from the police. For many community respondents this means being treated as individuals rather than as one group which the police often associate with being a risk factor. Over three quarters of police officers echo these thoughts, expressing a desire for more first-hand interaction with community members as a means of building trust and improving relations.

- **Need to recruit, retain and increase the visibility of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the police**

For many police and community respondents recruiting, retaining and increasing the visibility of GRT officers, staff and volunteers in the police is key to building trust and improving relations. Interviewees also mentioned the important role the recently formed Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Police Association (GRTPA) plays in supporting officers in post, as well as promoting employment prospects for community members within the police service. Some officers specifically highlight the need for more Irish Travellers to be recruited and visible to both the public and other officers.

- **More robust, transparent disciplinary procedures and use of video to address racist and discriminatory police behaviour**

Worryingly, some officers describe more lenient police disciplinary procedures being applied in discrimination and racism cases brought against officers which involved GRT communities. They argue that more robust and transparent procedures need to be followed to build trust and confidence in the police. Community respondents also describe the wider use of video and body cams to improve standards of behaviour on all sides. Community members also believe the police can do more to address issues like hate crime, and in so doing increase their own awareness and understanding of discrimination and racism.

- **First-hand interactions with Gypsies, Roma and Travellers is better than formal training about them**

Over half of police officers received some form of training on the GRT communities; however a majority were critical of the training and believe involvement and/or interaction directly with the communities would be of more

value. Only one community respondent describes delivering training to the police.

Recommendations

1. **A root and branch review** of each police force should be conducted by HM's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). This should include an assessment of the extent of institutional bias within individual police forces and take account of the findings from this research that GRT communities experience policing differently from non-GRT communities.
2. Within its remit under the Equality Act 2006, the **Equality and Human Rights Commission should urgently launch an investigation in to** whether the **Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer** role is inherently discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010.
3. There should be collaboration between the police, local licencing authorities and national Pubwatch to ensure that **a non-discriminatory policy is employed in all pubs** to ensure that no groups, including GRT groups, can be refused entry to an establishment based on their ethnicity.
4. **Internal police disciplinary procedures must be equally applied to all racist incidents.** Formal guidance addressing in particular internal racist and discriminatory behaviour towards GRT communities should be re-issued by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC).
5. The Government, the NPCC and **police forces should continue to support increased reporting of GRT hate crime** recognising the wider benefits of this work in terms of building trust and confidence amongst the communities and increasing **awareness amongst officers.**
6. **Funds and resources should be made available to all minority staff police associations** – including the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association – to allow them to better support members and carry out targeted work within individual forces in highlighting the issues affecting minorities.
7. **The negotiated stopping model should be endorsed** by the NPCC and the Local Government Association, and applied nationwide. This would reduce demand on police forces and improve relations between the police and GRT communities. The model involves a local authority authorising an encampment on agreed suitable public land for a limited time period and with certain conditions being set. Negotiated stopping eases local tensions and saves public funds.
8. In 2016, HMICFRS' Police Effectiveness Efficiency Legitimacy (PEEL) assessments noted aspects of good practice in Kent and Thames Valley police forces to improve the relationship between GRT communities and the police through communication and training⁴. **TM recommends that from 2019, PEEL assessments include a standardised measure to systematically assess individual police forces** on their relationships with GRT communities.
9. The police's desire for 'more first-hand interaction with community members as a means of building trust and improving relations' means that a **neighbourhood**

policing approach should be developed to better support a positive relationship between officers and GRT individuals and communities.

10. **Police training packages** are important. They should be focused less on 'cultural competency' and more **on change impact assessment**, produced and delivered in liaison with community organisations and members. This would allow police to evaluate the impact of everyday practice on the confidence and trust of GRT communities, as well as providing an opportunity to work together to improve relations and promote institutional change.

2. Introduction

'To prevent crime and disorder...To recognise always that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence...To recognise always that the extent to which the co-operation of the public can be secured diminishes proportionately the necessity of the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives...To seek and preserve public favour, not by pandering to public opinion; but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy...by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing, by ready exercise of courtesy and friendly good humour; and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.'⁵

Extracts from the 9 Principles of Policing, Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis (Charles Rowan and Richard Mayne), 1829

This report is about improving relationships between GRT communities and the police. It is about making sure GRT individuals and communities are policed by consent and have equal access to justice while empowering the police service to deliver these outcomes for the whole community. For too long many in the GRT communities and the police have been caught in a generational cycle of mistrust and conflict, resulting in over-policing and under-reporting.

This report is the culmination of a one-year study by TM which consulted and worked with GRT individuals and communities and with police officers across the country throughout the duration of this research. TM also worked closely with academic experts, policy makers and third sector organisations to ensure that its findings and recommendations are robust.

Throughout this research TM aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between GRT communities and the police and develop ideas and proposals that build trust and confidence over the long-term. To this end, the report draws heavily on primary data to capture the lived experiences and perceptions of community members and police officers. It also utilises existing literature and publicly available data from police forces across the country.

Chapter three summarises literature and data relating to **police community relations in the past and present**. Chapter four presents the findings of a national **survey of police force approaches to GRT community engagement**. Chapter five presents the findings of 31 qualitative interviews with police officers and community members looking at **relationships, policing issues and building trust**. Finally, chapter six summarises responses to TM's **attitudinal survey of police officers and community members** from the qualitative sample which used statements extrapolated from the ONS crime survey for England and Wales.

3. Police community relations in the past and present

Summarising the available research and data relevant to Gypsy, Roma, Traveller police relations, this chapter looks firstly at literature evidencing the persistent lack of trust and confidence between GRT communities and the police in recent years. It then summarises the long history of persecution GRT people have faced and how this continues to shape both community and police attitudes and relations today. Finally, it reviews current policy and practice, looking at preventative policing models and the varying GRT engagement approaches taken by forces across the UK.

Lack of trust and confidence in recent years

Low levels of trust and confidence between GRT communities and the police have been prevalent in literature and data over the last couple of decades. A 2003 Home Office strategy written by Inspector Ian Taggart of Grampian Police identified an 'apparent lack of confidence with the Gypsy, Traveller community regarding the police service, with a substantial number of Gypsy Travellers of the view they suffer prejudice and harassment from the police'.⁶ Taggart outlined the need for more community liaison and racial diversity awareness within police forces to help increase confidence and address areas of concern for the communities.

In 2007 another police officer, John Coxhead, added greater substance to Taggart's findings, describing the police and GRT communities as being mirrored in a negative cycle of mutual distrust. Prejudice within the police against the communities had a significant role to play in creating this state of affairs, according to Coxhead, who quoted one officer as saying, 'prejudice towards Travellers in the police is not only accepted, it's expected'.⁷ Coxhead made the case for positive changes to break down the 'them and us' mentality, emphasising that this could only be achieved by 'stopping abnormal practices toward Travellers'.⁸

Since Coxhead's study, there is limited evidence of improvement in the relationship between police officers and GRT communities, despite some forces paying more attention to policy and practice in this area (as detailed further on in this chapter). A 2009 review of inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) found considerable evidence from a range of studies of 'problematic relationships with the police'.⁹

In 2010 Ipsos MORI carried out a qualitative study for West Yorkshire Police Authority into confidence in policing amongst Gypsies and Travellers. The research found that a 'culture of fear' existed amongst those interviewed who said they faced police persecution. One Traveller woman explained that the feeling of fear towards the police had existed throughout most Gypsy and Travellers' lifetimes. The study concluded that overcoming these perceptions would be challenging, given that they are so embedded.¹⁰ It also emphasised the important role a community outreach worker can play in improving interactions and relations between the communities and police.

Since then, other studies have found that poor relations and lack of trust contribute to GRT people being less likely to report crime. A 2012 report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights recorded the overrepresentation of Roma as victims of crime and their low levels of reporting crime to the police. Reasons included lack of confidence in the police's ability to do anything and their negative attitude towards the police.¹¹

Buckinghamshire New University's 2015 Council of Europe policy advice on GRT individuals in the criminal justice system echoed previous studies, expressing key concerns around the lack of trust and confidence the GRT communities had in the police.¹² It identified as barriers to better relations poor communication, ethnic profiling and the failure of 'street level' policing to engage GRT individuals and communities. The report went on to recommend that urgent action be taken to ensure trust can begin to be built.

Data on public perceptions of the police from the 2016 Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that Gypsies and Irish Travellers are nearly half as likely to be confident in their local police compared to the average for all adults (Figure 1). While the sample was not deemed statistically relevant to be included in the government's 2017 racial disparities audit¹³ (it is based on just 15 respondents) and is not inclusive of GRT people living on sites, it does provide a snapshot of housed community members' perceptions of the police.¹⁴

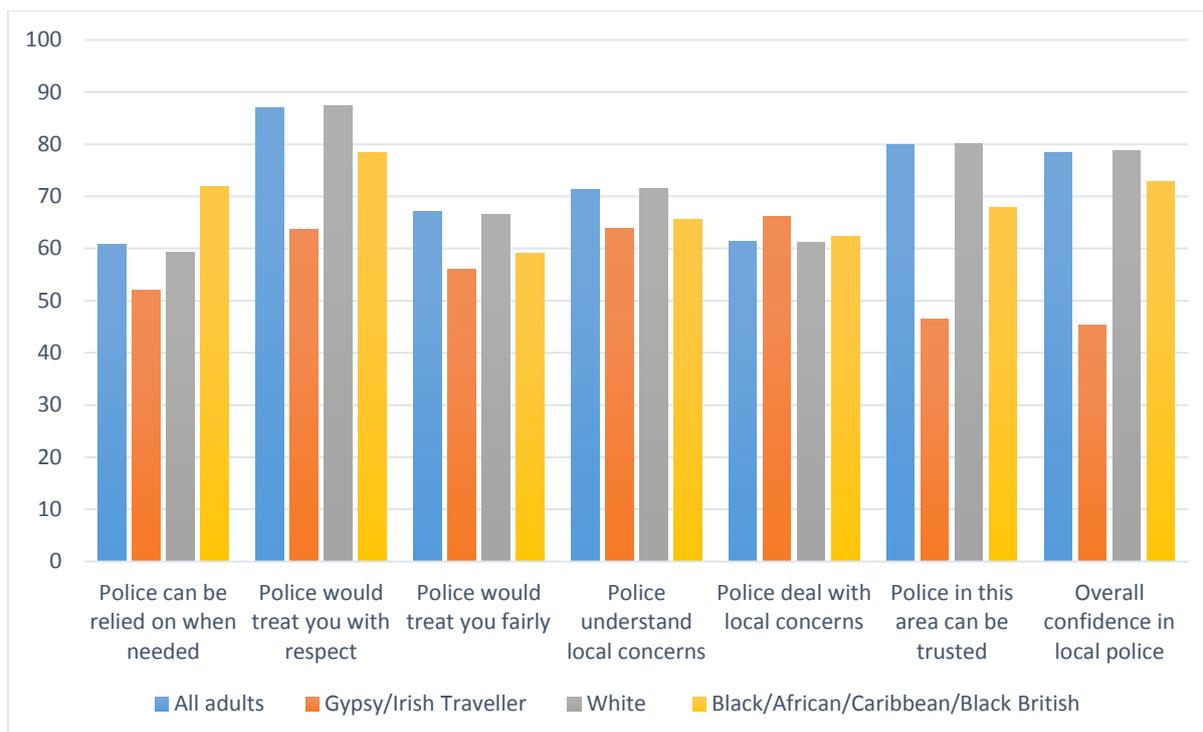


Figure 1: Crime Survey for England and Wales, perceptions of local police by personal characteristic, year ending March 2016 (percentage saying they 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree')

The lack of trust and confidence identified in recent literature should not lead to the assumption that all GRT communities and police experience poor relations. There are numerous examples of localised good practice and good relations, some of which are highlighted in this report. However, what the literature does indicate is that mistrust on both sides is deep rooted and widespread, and based on historical as well as present day practices and experiences. A generational cycle of prejudice and fear exists both in the police and the GRT communities, hampering attempts on both sides to build trust and confidence. Over ten years ago John Coxhead noted that 'it is vital for future generations that the past does not go on repeating itself.' To do this the past needs to be understood and acknowledged, alongside addressing current prejudicial systems and behaviours.

A long history of persecution

In 1829 the founder of modern British Policing, Sir Robert Peel, stated that 'the police are the public and the public are the police'. However, for centuries - dating back long before Peel's words heralded the creation of the Metropolitan Police Service – GRT communities have not been considered part of the public or part of the police. Instead, their ethnicity and culture has been perceived as a risk factor and legislated against.

The Egyptians Act passed in 1530 banned Gypsies from England and allowed the authorities to confiscate their property if they refused to leave. In 1554 Queen Mary amended the act and allowed Gypsies to stay, but only if they gave up travelling.¹⁵ If they refused they faced execution, with the last known hanging of a Gypsy under the act carried out in Suffolk in 1650.¹⁶

While some English anti-Gypsy laws were being repealed by 1780, public hostility towards these groups and their way of life persisted over the following two centuries. In 1960 the Caravan Sites Act forced many Gypsies and Travellers onto the roadside by requiring them to have a licence and planning permission to buy and winter on small plots of land. A few years later, a national survey of Gypsies and Travellers found that 60% of families had travelled in the previous year, mainly because of harassment from police and council officials. By 1994 the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act in England had greatly increased the powers of police and local authorities to evict Gypsies and Travellers living on the side of the road.¹⁷

Meanwhile in Ireland the 1960s saw the Commission on Itinerancy established to consider 'the problem arising from the presence in the country of itinerants in considerable numbers.' The creation of the Commission marked the beginning of a twenty-year government programme assimilating Irish Travellers.¹⁸

During the same period of history, anti-Gypsy legislation was prevalent across Europe, with Germany alone passing 148 draconian laws to deal with Roma between 1416 and 1774. By the turn of the 20th century there were bi-lateral agreements between eleven European states to deal with the 'Gypsy Nuisance'. In Munich, the Central Office for Fighting the Gypsy Nuisance had been created, whilst in France, all Gypsies over the age of six were required to carry identity cards.¹⁹

Centuries of persecution culminated in the Gypsy Holocaust in the 1940's - referred to by Roma as *Porrajmos* or the 'Great Devouring' - which saw the Nazis exterminate over half a million Roma (between a quarter and a third of the population living in Europe at the time).²⁰

These histories and experiences cannot be ignored or downplayed in attempts to improve relations between the communities and the police. This is especially true considering the police and criminal justice system have, over the centuries, been tasked with enforcing anti-Gypsy, Roma, Traveller policy. The act of doing so has shaped how the police as an institution perceive and interact with the GRT communities. Likewise, a long history of persecution has embedded within the communities a deep mistrust and, in some cases, hatred of the police that will take a long time to heal.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller ethnicity misunderstood and seen as a risk factor

While being from the GRT communities is no longer a crime punishable by death, it is still often perceived and treated as a risk factor by many statutory bodies, politicians, sections of the media and the wider public.²¹ In 2015 the EHRC found that GRT communities continue to experience bias and hostility in society, whilst a previous review by the Commission identified 'widespread stereotyping of the communities as being engaged in criminal activity'.²²

Coxhead's 2007 study found that 'a predominant issue in police occupational culture repeatedly showed itself: the powerful perceptions of Gypsies and Travellers as a criminogenic community.'²³ More recent testimonials by serving police officers from

the GRTPA provide real life examples of these perceptions being played out in everyday police practice:

'Whilst out on patrol, control room call up, some people refusing to leave a pub, staff want assistance anti-social behaviour, any unit free to deal? Silence. Control room calls again, staff have asked them to leave as they are local Gypsies, any unit free to deal? All of a sudden two units are available and will attend and eject them!'

Anonymous officer (March 20, 2015)

'The month I left the military I visited my grandparents who had stopped at a site, taking with me my prized medals along with the union flag I had brought in a charity raffle held for a friend who died in service. Leaving my Grandfathers site I was stopped by the police, they searched my car and upon finding the medal asked me "Who have you stolen this from?".'

Anonymous sergeant (March 21, 2015)

These testimonials reveal an automatic assumption by some police officers that GRT people pose a greater risk and/or are involved in crime. It also reflects a lack of awareness that community members may be victims of crime. Research by Zoe James with police in South West England found that they primarily engage Gypsies and Travellers through enforcement rather than community policing initiatives, indicating a focus on GTR communities as perpetrators rather than victims.²⁴

As highlighted above, the perception of GRT people as criminogenic is not just limited to the police, it occurs throughout society and is propagated at a high level by politicians, such as the MP for Kettering, Mr Phillip Hollobone:

'In Kettering, there was a proposal for a Traveller site near the Scott Road garages in the town itself, and it caused uproar among the local community, who knew that if permission were granted for Traveller pitches on that site, local crime levels would go through the roof.'²⁵

Unlike Phillip Hollobone MP, police officers do not have parliamentary privilege and must abide by a code of standards for professional behaviour. However, conduct towards GRT people does not always meet these standards and community members often feel their complaints are not considered as seriously as they should be.

A recent example is a TM complaint to the Met in 2015 regarding racist posts by serving officers on a Facebook group. Among the posts were: 'I fucking hate p*keys' and 'You know when they are lying ... their lips move.' After two unsatisfactory appeals to the Met, TM took its complaint to the Independent Police Complaints Commission which upheld the complaint and 'recommended that the Met police hold misconduct meetings ... for potentially breaching standards of professional behaviour in relation to authority, respect and courtesy, equality and diversity, and challenging inappropriate behaviour.'²⁶ TM was disappointed at the lack of decisive and appropriate action at the time of the initial complaint to the Met, which, in its

opinion, indicated a general lack of willingness to meaningfully engage with issues around racism towards GRT people.²⁷

The Met are not on alone in this regard. In 2014 Thames Valley Police launched a full independent review of policies and procedures relating to GRT communities after being accused of institutional racism by one of its own officers and taken to an employment tribunal.²⁸ On publication of the review²⁹, which was the first such to take place in the UK, the Assistant Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police acknowledged that 'cultural and operational changes' were needed in the force and recognised the 'national need for change' in how the police service engage GRT people.

Lack of awareness and non-recognition of the communities as ethnic minority groups is a key challenge facing the police. A 2016 TM report found that the majority of police forces in GB do not include Gypsies and Travellers in their ethnic monitoring systems, despite both groups being classified as ethnic minorities in the ONS 2011 National Census.³⁰ In response to the TM study, the Cleveland police indicated that it did not consider Gypsies and Travellers to be ethnic minority groups.

'Our ethnicity recording does not have an option for Gypsies and Irish Travellers. We record the standard 7 officer defined. We would not class 'Gypsies and Irish Travellers' as an ethnicity. Cleveland Police would class it more as an occupation than an ethnicity however it is not in our occupation lists either.'

This response raises serious questions as to how Gypsies and Travellers are recorded in some forces and whether their ethnicity and culture is properly recognised.

Moreover the GRTPA has raised concerns that (contrary to the Equality Act 2010 and in particular the PSED) certain police operations place specific emphasis on Traveller ethnicity as a risk factor on its own, regardless of the behaviour of any member of the community.

In 2014 the Association made a formal complaint to Operation Liberal, the national police operation set up to tackle distraction burglary, after it released a document entitled 'Travellers and Traveller events.'³¹ Following the complaint, the document was immediately withdrawn by Operation Liberal and an apology issued. However, the fact that it ever came into existence raises questions about how members of the community are viewed by officers and senior policy-makers within the service, or how well parts of the police understand the issues facing GRT ethnic groups.

Despite these challenges to achieving equality and recognition, indications have been provided at a high level, that inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers will be mandated within police ethnic monitoring systems nationally. However, without higher levels of trust and confidence, many GRT individuals are unlikely to self-identify when in contact with police services, whether as police and civilian personnel, victims of crime or witnesses/suspects.

Current policy and practice

Even with the historical hurdles and persistent inequalities outlined above, changes in policy and practice in recent years have laid the foundations for improved community-police relations. The legal recognition of Gypsies and Irish Travellers as ethnic minorities, introduction of legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 (EA) and Human Rights Act 1999, the expansion of GRT activism, and a greater focus on diversity and anti-racist practice in police forces have all been stepping stones towards more equitable relations.

Section 149 of the EA enacts a public sector equality duty (PSED) applicable to public authorities including the police. In force since April 2011, the PSED requires the police to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity for racial and ethnic groups including GRT individuals and communities, and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The aim of advancing equality of opportunity involves, in particular, the police having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by GRT individuals and communities due to their protected characteristics
- take steps to meet the needs of GRT people where these are different from the needs of other people
- encourage GRT people to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

At a national level the formation of the GRTPA has marked a significant step in the direction of improved relations, providing a support network for police personnel from a GRT background while fostering good relations between the police and GRT communities.³² Likewise, the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC)(formerly ACPO) has worked to increase hate crime reporting amongst the GRT communities and championed their inclusion in national police ethnic monitoring systems.³³

The NPCC's focus on reporting hate crime was partly a response to recommendations made by the ministerial working group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers in 2012.³⁴ While the work of the NPCC should be commended, the ministerial working group itself failed to bring forward recommendations to directly address poor police-community relations. It also failed to address the national shortage of Traveller sites which is often the catalyst for poor relations. Following a Freedom of Information request in 2014, it was revealed that the ministerial working group had not met since 2012 and had no further plans to meet.³⁵

The Welsh Government has taken a very different approach, producing a detailed framework for addressing inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers (including engagement with the police).³⁶ The framework also addresses some of the root causes of poor community-police relations by introducing a duty on Local Authorities to provide Gypsy and Traveller sites where there is an identified need.

The devolved Welsh government also introduced additional regulations under the Equality Act requiring public bodies in Wales (including the police) to develop

Strategic Equality Plans and methods of engagement with groups with protected characteristics (the impact of which is covered in the following section looking at 'police force approaches to GRT community engagement').³⁷ As a result of these changes, police in Wales are taking a more holistic, joined up approach to engaging the GRT communities, including a greater emphasis on positive engagement, as detailed in its framework.

'It takes time and effort to gain the trust of the community. The Police in Wales have been trying to do just that by moving away from a confrontational and enforcement-based role to more of a positive policing approach. There have been some notable approaches employed by the Police in Wales to aid better engagement with the community. For example, the "cuppa with a copper" initiative has been highlighted as a good way of engaging with the community.'³⁸

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 reinforces this approach by requiring public bodies to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems.³⁹ In the context of police-community relations, the potential long-term benefits of the Welsh Government's approach are outlined in a 2015 literature review of neighbourhood policing by The Police Foundation.

'If executed fairly and respectfully it [neighbourhood policing] can build public confidence, encourage compliance with the law and, most importantly, secure police legitimacy...Research shows that the quality of routine, daily encounters with members of the public are more important to improving public confidence than formal mechanisms of engagement, such as public meetings. This is particularly evident in street-based encounters with young people, black and minority ethnic and other marginalised groups.'⁴⁰

The review partly attributes the origins of neighbourhood policing in the UK to recommendations made in the 1981 Scarman report into the Brixton Riots (large scale racial confrontations between black British youths and white British police in April 1981.)

In observations which resonate with GRT community-police relations today, the Scarman report highlighted that the police service had become 'unresponsive and uncommunicative to the community'. It went on to observe that policing had become increasingly 'police-oriented rather than community-oriented' and recommended it shift towards a more 'service' and community focused ethos.⁴¹

The concerns raised in the Scarman report nearly 30 years ago are echoed in a recent HMIC review of police effectiveness which commented that police forces are becoming too reactive and not investing enough in 'preventative policing.'⁴² There is no doubt that the 25% (in real terms) reduction in police force budgets between 2010/11 and 2015/16 has contributed to this situation.⁴³ However, there is also a noticeable difference in cuts to neighbourhood policing between England and Wales, with Welsh forces less likely to have cut expenditure on neighbourhoods and more likely to have increased numbers of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in recent years (see figure 2).

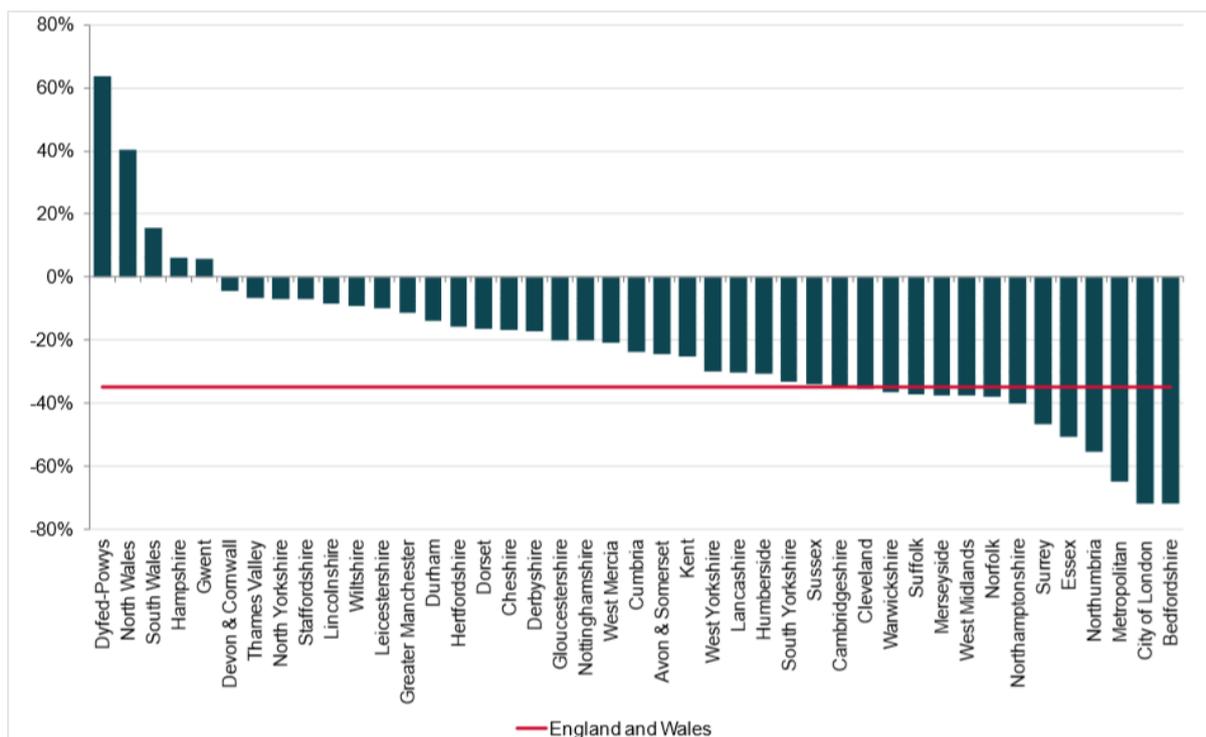


Figure 2: Change in number of PCSOs (full-time equivalents) from 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2016⁴⁴

It has yet to be seen whether the more joined up and preventative approach being taken in Wales results in improved GRT community-police relations. The Police Foundation does raise wider concerns that the lack of such an approach across forces could increase demand for more acute interventions.

‘Major change often results in the long term being sacrificed to the short term, the important giving way to the urgent, the strategic being supplanted by the pragmatic. The key benefits of neighbourhood policing – the construction of trust, confidence and legitimacy – are long term, important and strategic and hence at risk. The chances of igniting a vicious circle, whereby prevention is replaced with reaction and demand spirals, are high.’⁴⁵

In this respect, there is a significant danger that funding cuts and a tendency for police to prioritise enforcement over engagement with GRT communities could exacerbate often already tense community-police relations.

Despite these wider policy challenges there are examples of localised good practice involving GRT communities, police and other bodies working together to improve relations and move towards more preventative models. One example is the Leeds Negotiated Stopping initiative which reduces conflict and the need for costly evictions of unauthorised encampments.

‘Negotiated Stopping is a term used by Leeds GATE and Leeds City Council, though it can be applied more generally. It describes a situation where some agreement has been reached between the Local Authority and Gypsies/Travellers which allows them to stay temporarily on a particular piece of land which is not an official site, as an alternative to repeated evictions. In return, the Gypsies/Travellers agree to certain conditions on behaviour, tidiness of the site and length of stay.’⁴⁶

An evaluation of Negotiated Stopping in Leeds by De Montford University estimated local authority savings of between £102,640 to £128,350 annually and between £88,000 to £110,000 savings for the local police.⁴⁷

As mentioned above, Thames Valley Police conducted a full review of how they police the GRT communities in response to a Romany Gypsy officer taking a discrimination case against them. This resulted in numerous changes within the force, including a new GRT equality objective in the force delivery plan, a targeted recruitment and retention programme, training for all officers in the force, and a requirement for better recording of GRT communities in intelligence systems.⁴⁸ The force also provided crucial support for the developing national GRTPA.

Meanwhile, at the local level there are numerous examples of GRT communities having good relations with the police. In response to a call for community interviewees for this study, a Romany Gypsy woman sent details about her site in West Somerset, which has a long-standing relationship with their local police defined by mutual respect and good communication.

'In West Somerset we have a fantastic relationship with our police and have done for the last 19 years. They are always quick to help us. They stay in touch and regularly visit for coffee and a chat. They have brought other officers here to learn about our diversity and they try very hard indeed to respect our way of life. Whenever a new officer joins the force he is brought here to meet us. We are told we are one of the few sites in England where a police man can come alone to visit on our site as we are no threat to them and they are no threat to us...We are on our local neighbourhood watch list and the police let us know what's going on around the area we live.'

The above example shows that good relations can and do exist; unfortunately, this appears to be the exception rather than the rule. As outlined, the key to building better relations lie in a long-term preventative approach – i.e. one which ensures a better grasp of community policing by police officers and enhances relations between them and the local GRT population - and which acknowledges the troubles of the past while ensuring equitable treatment, mutual respect and good communication in the present.

4. Survey of police force approaches to GRT community engagement

As part of this research TM wanted to better understand how police forces across the UK plan and carry out community engagement with GRT communities. Specifically, TM wanted to know if forces are thinking strategically about building trust and confidence and what balance they strike between preventative and reactive policing in relation to the GRT communities.

This chapter summarises the findings from Freedom of Information (FOI) requests sent to every police force in England, Scotland and Wales. It specifically looks at

police force community engagement strategies and the role of Gypsy, Traveller Liaison Officers.

Methodology

TM made two FOI requests of all 45 territorial forces:

1. Does your force have a GRT community engagement strategy?
2. Does your force have a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Liaison Officer (GTLO) and/or a special point of contact (SPOC) for engaging these communities?

43 responses were received to the first request regarding community engagement strategies and 45 responses to the second request. In addition, TM asked forces to provide copies of relevant documents such as engagement strategies and job descriptions/role profiles.

The below findings are based on a detailed analysis of the data provided. It should be remembered that FOI responses are not exhaustive and represent an un-audited snapshot of available data at the time of the request.

Key Findings

Community engagement strategies

Out of the 43 forces which responded to the first request, only two describe having a targeted strategy and/or plan for improving relations with the GRT communities. The remainder have either no strategy (in some cases emphasising that they engage all sections of society without distinction) or a wider strategy that's applicable to, but not targeted at GRT communities. A significant minority of responses (seven) associate GRT community engagement strategies with unauthorised encampment policies.

Targeted strategies for community engagement

The two forces (Gwent and Dyfed Powys) with a targeted strategy and/or plan were both in Wales where the devolved government introduced regulations in 2011 requiring public bodies (including the police) to develop Strategic Equality Plans and methods of engagement.⁴⁹ Below is an extract from the Dyfed-Powys Police response:

'Through the Dyfed Powys Police Strategic Equality Plan 2013-2016, a priority was raised to nominate a specific point of contact (SPOC) for each Gypsy Traveller site from within our Neighbourhood Policing Teams. It is their responsibility to engage on at least a monthly basis with their dedicated site. The aims were to raise confidence from the Gypsy Traveller communities in reporting incidents, not tolerating Hate crime and to develop working relationships. This priority is being maintained for 2017.'

Similarly, Gwent Police outline detailed objectives as part of a targeted plan to increase trust and confidence amongst Gypsies and Travellers in policing services

and promote positive relationships. South Wales Police said they were in the process of developing an engagement strategy while North Wales said they did not currently have one.

Part of wider policing strategies

Twelve police forces have wider Community Engagement, Equality and Diversity and/or Hate Crime Strategies which they describe as applicable, but not specific to the GTR communities; for example the Surrey Police don't have a specific GRT strategy but have an equality diversity and human rights strategy.

The West Yorkshire Police reported that any strategic engagement with the [GRT] community forms part of its wider community engagement plans which may, or may not, be incorporated into broader partnership initiatives – for example, the Gypsy Traveller Partnership Forum in Leeds of which West Yorkshire Police are a member along with other agencies.

The Nottinghamshire Police reported that it is 'developing an engagement strategy to address hate crime with assistance from the Safer Nottinghamshire Board, working closely with Nottinghamshire County Council's Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Officer.'

Many of the 12 forces describe a variety of strategies of engagement which could potentially build positive relations with GRT communities. However, much of this work appears quite ad-hoc and lacks an overarching strategic objective (compared to the more structured interventions by Dyfed-Powys Police which are underpinned by specific long-term objectives to build confidence and improve relationships).

Associating GRT communities with unauthorised encampments

Seven forces associate GRT community engagement strategies with policies for addressing unauthorised encampment, in some cases providing copies of their own encampment policy or the NPCC guidance⁵⁰. For example Greater Manchester Police and Merseyside Police sent copies of the latter guidance; Essex Police indicated that it does not have an engagement strategy but 'follows guidelines in relation to unauthorised encampments and how the police respond to them'; Herefordshire Constabulary provided a link to its own unauthorised encampment guidance.⁵¹

While the NPCC guidance pays due regard to Romany Gypsies' and Irish Travellers' human rights, it is essentially a practical guide for police officers dealing with unauthorised encampments. It is not a guide or strategy on engaging the diverse GRT communities and building trust and confidence.

To put this in context, just under four percent of caravan dwelling Gypsies and Travellers in England live on unauthorised encampments, with the vast majority of site-based community members living on authorised private or socially rented sites.⁵² The NPCC guidance does not apply to the majority of GRT individuals in England who live in bricks and mortar housing – i.e. between one-half to two-thirds of the total Gypsy and Traveller population in England and almost the whole Roma population.⁵³

The role of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers

‘Does your force have a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Liaison Officer (GTLO) and/or a special point of contact (SPOC) for engaging these communities?’

All 45 territorial police forces responded to the second FOI request. Twenty-three said they have either GTLO or dedicated SPOC roles, while nine have no dedicated GRT engagement role and provided no further data. A further 13 forces describe wider community liaison work being applicable to, but not targeted at GRT communities, in some cases providing specific examples of the communities being engaged through generic services.

Of the 23 forces which have dedicated roles, 20 provided job descriptions and/or role profiles. In most cases these roles are combined with other responsibilities in rural, neighbourhood, diversity and multi-agency working teams. A minority of forces (3) said they have dedicated GRT teams.

Majority of dedicated roles place emphasis on enforcement

Of the 20 job descriptions provided, twelve make specific reference to dealing with unauthorised encampments and/or place GRT communities alongside thematic issues such as anti-social behaviour, gangs, youth violence etc. Six of the forces prioritise enforcement over community engagement in their job descriptions, while six prioritise engagement but still retain a focus on enforcement.

An example of enforcement being prioritised is Northamptonshire Police’s ‘Traveller Liaison and Rural Crime Officer’ who is tasked with addressing unauthorised encampments and rural crime:

‘To act as the police member of the Countywide Traveller Unit multi-agency team, contributing towards action at unauthorised encampments specifically using police powers, where appropriate to evict illegal encampments. To address all types of Traveller related issues within the county and to advise senior officers in relation to Traveller related issues and legislation. To provide forcewide expertise in relation to rural crime.’

At no point in the detailed three-page job description do Northamptonshire mention fostering stronger links or strengthening engagement with GRT communities. The five other forces which prioritise enforcement over engagement follow a similar model, despite the majority being classified as GRT community liaison roles.

The six forces which prioritise community engagement over enforcement, still refer to unauthorised encampments and/or place GRT communities alongside issues such as anti-social behaviour and criminal activity.

In the sample of job descriptions provided (see Appendix C), there were instances of vague distinctions being drawn between criminal issues and engaging with ethnic minority groups. This may well be down to poor phrasing rather than planned policy; however, it is worth considering how this would appear if reference to Gypsies and Travellers was replaced with another ethnic minority group.

Interestingly, out of the twelve forces that place an emphasis on enforcement, nine are ethnically defined roles (GTLOs instead of SPOCs), while just three are non-ethnically defined.

It is very concerning that in the majority of cases, the definition of GTLO roles inextricably link Gypsies and Irish Travellers with criminality and suggests they need 'extra' policing, and so reinforce negative stereotypes. This raises further concerns that the police are failing to comply with their s149 EA PSEDs to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations in relation to these roles.

A minority of dedicated roles focus on community engagement

Eight out of the 20 dedicated roles make no reference to enforcement and instead focus solely on GRT community engagement, often as part of a wider job description working with other minority communities or vulnerable groups. Seven out of the eight are non-ethnically defined roles (SPOCs instead of GTLOs) and come under community and diversity policing teams. Interestingly, five out of the eight forces are in Scotland and Wales.

Police Scotland:

'Each division within Police Scotland has an identified Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for the Gypsy, Roma Traveller community. Engagement with this community is carried out according to local community needs. To suit specific divisional circumstances, the SPOC role may be provided by officers from within specialist departments such as Safer Communities, or a local community officer. Safer Communities national team have an overview of work with this community, and are available to provide specialist advice and guidance as and when required. Partnership working is vital to ensuring an appropriate response to the Gypsy, Roma Traveller community's needs.'

Wales:

Both Gwent and Dyfed-Powys Police have dedicated SPOCs who are guided by targeted strategies to increase trust and confidence with the communities. The actions for these roles include regular contact with the communities, training for police and Gypsies and Travellers, making policing services more accessible, meaningful consultation and seeking independent advice from public and third sector partners. The outcomes both forces aim to achieve because of this work are clearly outlined in the role descriptions:

'The trust and confidence of Gypsy and Traveller communities in our policing services is improved, positive relationships are promoted between the Police, Gypsies and Travellers and settled communities, and the response to incidents involving Gypsy and Traveller communities is improved.'

(Gwent Police)

‘Gypsies and Travellers living in the Force area know who their Specific Point of Contacts are within their Neighbourhood Policing Teams, know how to contact them, and feel confident to engage with them.’

(Dyfed-Powys Police)

Engagement in North and South Wales Police is not as defined as in Gwent and Dyfed-Powys; however both forces still have dedicated roles for engaging the GRT communities in their diversity and local policing teams.

England

In England just three forces have dedicated roles focused solely on community engagement with GRT communities. The most developed is the GTLO post in Sussex Police which emphasises the importance of building trust and confidence with the communities, alongside promoting best practice within the force:

‘Within your role, act as a point of contact for Gypsy and Traveller individuals and communities, building relations to increase trust and confidence, and encourage reporting of individual concerns, community tensions and hate crime/incidents. Act as an internal point of contact giving advice to colleagues and sharing information within Sussex Police.’

The two other forces in England (Merseyside and Northumbria) include GRT communities in the role responsibilities of their Community Engagement Officers; however, unlike Sussex, it is not clear how defined or pro-active this engagement is:

‘Merseyside Police force has an officer designated to cater for the Gypsy Traveller community who sits within the Community Engagement Unit at Police Headquarters and works in liaison with the Local Policing team, third sector and the Local Authority. In addition to this there are officers based in Local Policing areas where such communities reside. The role does not have its own specific Job Description, but instead shares the generic Job Description of a Community Liaison Officer.

Job purpose: To ensure that community engagement processes are in place, particularly with diverse communities and vulnerable groups thereby engendering trust and confidence to support the delivery of excellent policing to the communities of Merseyside.’

(Merseyside Police)

‘All Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) and ‘Community Engagement Officers (CEOs) work with this community as part of their role responsibilities. The purpose of the role of the Community Engagement officer is to re-engage with the community to identify and support vulnerable victims and under-represented groups. Work in conjunction with Neighbourhood Policing Teams to address local issues and provide problem solving services.’

(Northumbria Police)

As outlined above, dedicated GRT roles vary greatly across the country. What is noticeable is that those forces with ethnically defined roles (GTLOs) are far more likely to place an emphasis on enforcement (the exception to this being Sussex Police), while those with non-ethnically defined roles (SPOCs) are far more likely to focus on GRT community engagement.

The data also reveals a marked difference in how police forces in devolved government areas engage GRT communities compared to forces in England. All four police forces in Wales and Police Scotland have dedicated roles specifically focused on GRT community engagement, while just three forces in England have equivalent roles. Conversely, all the dedicated roles with an emphasis on enforcement were in in police forces in England.

Wider community liaison (non-dedicated engagement)

13 police forces described their wider community liaison work as being applicable to, but not targeted at GRT communities, unlike the dedicated roles outlined in the previous section. Over half of these forces said responsibility for GRT community engagement sat with neighbourhood policing teams, while the rest identified diversity, community cohesion and hate crime teams as being responsible.

‘We have a Diversity Unit based at Cumbria Constabulary Headquarters which works with all minority/ethnic groups around the County. Gypsies and travellers are part of that interaction but are not singled out.’

(Cumbria Constabulary)

‘The role would come under the hate crime officer who covers all protected characteristics.’

(Cleveland Police)

‘Each of the 12 Local Police Areas has an engagement plan, managing effective appropriate engagement with their communities. That includes the GRT communities within the LPAs. Neighbourhood teams may have a member who is the SPOC for GRT static sites to build up the community trust and be a point of contact, should there be any communities within the area they cover. This however will be an additional duty and not a dedicated post.’

(Thames Valley Police)

‘Local Policing Teams liaise with this community as and when required and good relationships are in place. The Constabulary also has a new County Hate Crime Strategy, which includes the Gypsy Traveller Community.’

(Gloucestershire Constabulary)

‘If there is a travelling community who happened to reside within the Staffordshire Police area, then a Neighbourhood Beat Officer or PCSO would be the public face of the police for this community as well as others.’

(Staffordshire Police)

A common theme through most of the responses is that community engagement is a universal service open to all sections of society, and where there is a need GRT communities can be included but not 'singled out'. The closest any of these forces come to targeted work with the communities are initiatives aimed at groups with protected characteristics (as defined under the EA). It's hard to tell from the responses how inclusive of GRT these universal, ad-hoc community engagement approaches are, despite a few forces describing interactions with the communities.

Cross-sector working and involving the GRT communities

Of the 45 police forces who responded to the FOI requests on GTLOs and SPOCs, nine said they are involved in cross-sector GRT working groups, the majority of which are led by councils. With one exception, all the working groups are tasked with addressing unauthorised encampments, with many also addressing health, education and accommodation issues.

For example, Dorset County Council's Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Service describe a partnership between local councils, the police, local landowners and the Gypsy and Traveller community. It provides 'advice and support to landowners and the settled community...act[s] as a first point of contact for Travellers for health, welfare, housing and education issues. In partnership with the district councils, we provide permanent and transit pitches on the county's Gypsy site.'

Northamptonshire County Council Countywide Traveller Unit (CTU) 'deals with unauthorised Traveller encampments and other Traveller related issues... [is] the central point of contact for all Traveller matters throughout Northamptonshire and ...bring[s] together a specialist multi-agency team to deal with traveller issues across the county in a co-ordinated and proactive way.'

Likewise, Leicestershire County Council's Multi Agency Traveller Unit, (MATU) 'exists to provide a one stop point of access for the public, business, agencies and Travellers. Among its aims are minimising conflict, enhancing quality of life, and providing access to health and education services, through the consistent application of best practice, legislation and guidance.'

While addressing unauthorised encampments remains part of its remit, the Leicestershire MATU takes a proactive and holistic approach to engaging the Gypsy and Traveller communities. MATU prioritises negotiation over enforcement when it comes to unauthorised encampments and supports community led development projects addressing health, community cohesion and equality.⁵⁴

The only force which doesn't detail unauthorised encampments as part of a cross-sector working group's remit is the Strategic Traveller Group in Cambridgeshire. Instead the group focuses on partnership working between agencies to 'ensure that strategies, policies and plans can improve the life chances of Cambridgeshire's Gypsy/Traveller Community.' The group also aims to develop and improve links and engagement with Gypsies and Travellers, but it is unclear from the response how this translates into tangible changes on the ground.

While not necessarily a cross-sector working group, the Gypsy Traveller Advisory Group (GTAG) coordinated by Sussex Police brings together GRT community members and a variety of representative groups to promote equality and act on community policing issues. GTAG's purpose is to:

'... assist Sussex Police in making sure its policies and procedures take into account the needs of gypsy travellers and that they are treated equally to any other community whilst simultaneously raising awareness of gypsy travellers issues throughout the Force and to remove any outdated myths and prejudices.'

5. Qualitative study: Relationships, policing issues and building trust

The aim of the qualitative study is to give a first-hand account of GRT community members' and police officers' perceptions and experiences of each other, identifying how various approaches can facilitate and, in some cases, impede trust and confidence on the ground. This chapter looks at the relationship between the police and the communities, how specific policing issues shape this relationship and what police officers and community members think will build trust.

Methodology

The study conducted 17 interviews with police officers and 14 interviews with GRT community members across five police forces areas.⁵⁵ The interviews with police officers were arranged through formal agreements with the participating police forces. Because of this most police forces put forward officers who were known to have experience engaging GRT communities. Interviews with community members were coordinated via TM community networks, local voluntary organisations and GRT community activists.

The lead researcher conducted all the interviews, most of which took place over the phone or via skype, except for five with officers in Thames Valley Police which were carried out in person. Interviews were semi-structured and followed detailed police and community questionnaires (see appendix A and B).

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents to the study. Interviews were digitally recorded and subject to partial transcription. All data is held in accordance with the Data Protection Acts. After transcription the data was treated to a simplified form of framework analysis⁵⁶ and entered into a database designed to capture key thematic elements.

The qualitative findings in this report are not intended to offer a definitive review of the relationship between the police and GRT communities or of conduct or practice in any individual force participating in the study. Instead, they provide real life

examples of how certain approaches may help or hinder GRT- police relations based on individual's subjective opinions.

Demographics of sample

Of the 17 interviews with police officers, five were in Thames Valley Police, four in Cheshire Constabulary, three in the Met, three in Cambridgeshire Constabulary, and two in Sussex Police. Twelve (71%) of the officers interviewed were male and five (29%) female reflecting UK national figures for men and women in law enforcement.⁵⁷ Ten officers were aged between 25-39 while seven were 40-59 years of age, also reflecting national police workforce statistics. Twelve of those interviewed had been in service for between 5-15 years, two officers had under five years while three had served over 15 years.

Most police officer were constables (11), four of whom were Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers, while the others had a variety of roles including neighbourhood policing (2), response team (2), detectives/serious crime (2) and traffic (1). Other interviewees included three sergeants, one PCSO, one inspector and one chief inspector. Four officers described being from a GRT background while another officer said they were distantly related.

Of the 14 community interviews, three were in Thames Valley, three in Cambridgeshire, three in the Met, one in Sussex and one in Cheshire, while three were with roadside Gypsies and Travellers (who had experience travelling through most of the five force areas).

Half of the community interviewees defined their ethnicity as Irish Traveller, three said they were Romany Gypsy, two described having a mixed Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller background, while two said they were of Roma ethnicity. Males (as is common to many surveys) were slightly under-represented in the sample making up six of the 14 respondents. Most interviewees were in the 25-39 age bracket (6) or 40-59 age bracket (6), with one respondent aged between 16-24 years and one over 60 years old. Taking into consideration children were not included in the sampling framework, the age range roughly replicates the typical population pyramid found amongst Gypsies and Irish Travellers in the ONS 2011 Census.⁵⁸

Half (7) of GRT respondents were caravan dwelling, of which two lived on private authorised Traveller sites, two on local authority sites, and three were roadside (i.e. they had no permanent site and were often travelling regularly). The remaining interviewees were in bricks and mortar housing, of which five lived in a local authority or housing association house or flat, while one was in a private rented flat and another owned their own house. Two of the three respondents who were roadside had moved in the last month, while the other roadside interviewee had negotiated stopping rights with their local authority and had been based at their current location for three years. Community members living on permanent sites or in local authority and private housing were less likely to have moved in recent years, except for younger respondents (including the two Roma interviewees) who were more likely to have moved in the last five years.

Key findings

Relationships

This chapter looks at respondents' thoughts and experiences on the current state of relations between GRT individuals and communities and the police and if relations have improved, got worse or remained the same in recent years. It also looks at how confident police officers and community members are with one another and how discriminatory behaviour, unconscious bias and harassment influences trust and confidence.

Current state of relations

Figure 3 represents community and police responses when asked to describe relations. A majority of police officers (10/17) describe relations as mixed while a majority of community members (10/14) describe them as poor. A significant minority of police officers (6/17) also report poor relations.

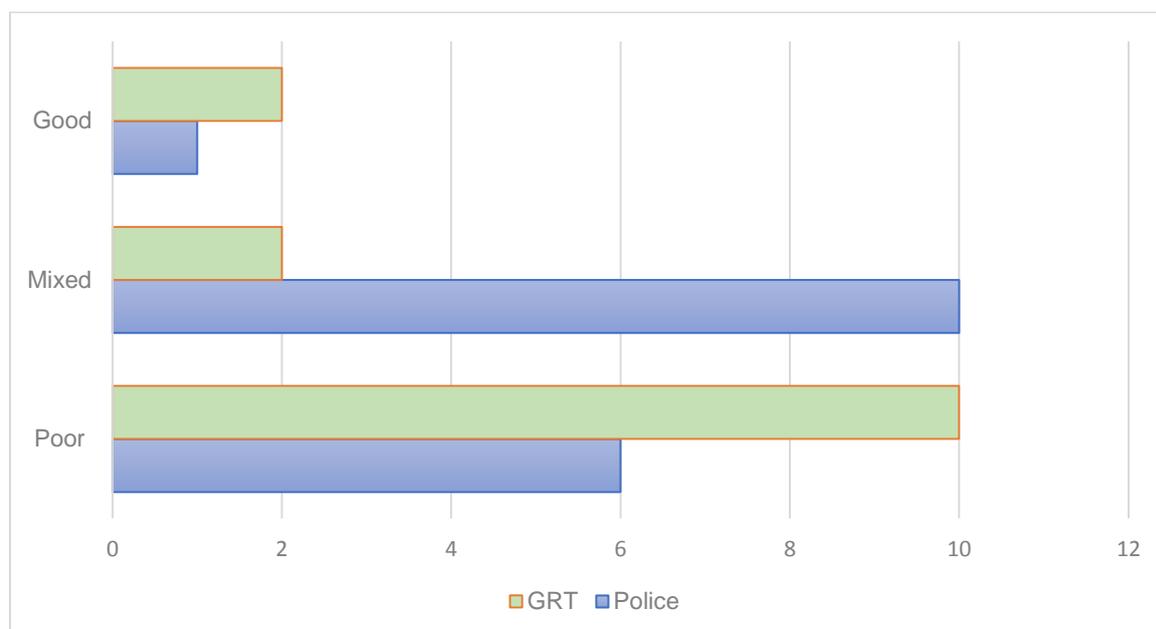


Figure 3: Current relations between police and GRT communities

Officers identifying relations as mixed (10/17) give examples of both positive and negative interactions with community members, often varying between groups, locations and scenarios.

'It's very mixed, our settled communities are probably a bit more responsive to police intervention ...with regard to our roadside encampments, they engage with the police but only because they have to.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

'There is more mistrust and lack of confidence when it comes to Travellers and the police...Roma people are not experiencing such direct discrimination and stereotypes and prejudices when it comes to police.' (Male, Constable)

'... the challenge is for those we don't come into any contact with other than enforcement activity, or in fact those who we don't come into contact with at all.' (Male, Chief Inspector)

'From my experience the Traveller community do want to have an interaction with the police...If I went in on my own I was welcomed generally, if I turned up with other officers that's when the atmosphere changed.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

Issues such as unauthorised encampments and lack of engagement with more marginalised sections of the GRT communities are common barriers for the police. Many officers also describe having good personal one-to-one relationships with GRT individuals; however these often become fraught and need to be repaired when the communities engage with wider police services. A small number of officers describe better relations with settled Roma communities compared to Irish Travellers and Gypsies; however, poorer relations with Gypsies and Travellers should be contextualised as this area is often in the context of addressing issues of unauthorised encampments with the latter groups.

The minority of officers citing poor relations (6/17) describe (often with frustration) interactions being driven by enforcement and characterised by lack of communication and mistrust.

'From a policing point of view, a lot of the lads constantly say to me "nobody ever engages" and I try to say to them the reason for that is because, up until fairly recently, and it still goes on now, you still come onto the site and you still put your blazing two's on at two in the morning, so what do you expect.' (Male, Sergeant)

'I turn up, I'm not trusted because of my uniform...I instantly hit a brick wall and I'm not even going to get to ask them all that stuff about welfare, and even if I do, they're going to doubt me and probably not believe me, so I get nothing back, so we then go down the route of..."they're trespassing, lets evict them."' (Male, Inspector)

Just one officer out of the 17 interviewed describes relations as good, attributing this to the GRT communities on the site being 'interwoven' into their local community.

'The people who live on that [permanent] site, and the family who run it are intertwined in the community. One of the men sits on the parish council, the children attend school. They are interwoven into the community.' (Male, Constable, Neighbourhoods)

Compared to the police, the communities have a less optimistic view of relations, with the majority (10/14) describing them as poor. The observations of one police constable may shed some light on these different perspectives.

'In terms of the relationship, I don't think much has changed. In terms of the police and its approach and their professionalism towards [engagement with GRT communities] I think there's been a massive change, but I'm not sure

that has filtered through to something you see every day on the street.’ (Male, Constable, Response/Firearms)

Based on their responses, GRT respondents have yet to fully experience the potential benefits of internal changes taking place within some police forces. Nervousness and confrontation define most community responses, despite some describing positive relationships with individual officers and certain areas where police-community relations have improved.

‘Eight out of ten I’d say nervous and confrontational...Then we’ve had the good parts of the police where some are perfectly fine...’ (Female, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

‘Not very good to be honest with you...they never give us a bit of fair play.’ (Male, Irish Traveller)

‘Where I live now they’re more lenient with the settled Travellers, the Travellers they know in the area because they figured out who’s who and what’s what, but I feel sorry for the Travellers who come into the area new because I know they get a bit of stick.’ (Female, Irish Traveller)

‘It depends on situation to situation and officer to officer, some are worse than others...We don’t trust the police ..., in the past there were so many times that we’ve been let down and so many times we’ve been judged ...a victim becomes a suspect for something else.’ (Female, Roma)

‘The police are bad within the Travelling community because they saw so much eviction, they saw so much pushing on and having to go in the early hours of the morning. How could you have anything but disrespect for that person?’ (Female, Irish Traveller)

For many community members, poor treatment by the police in the past still shapes their attitude today. Many respondents also describe on-going mistreatment by the police as contributing to poor relations (see following section on unconscious bias, racism and discrimination).

While Irish Travellers and Roma were more likely to report poor relations with the police, Romany Gypsies were more likely to describe relations as either mixed (2/14) or good (2/14). Interviewees provide several reasons for better relations, including proactive engagement with local communities, the police and local authorities.

‘They’re not so bad on the site I’m on now, but that’s because we’ve had many conversations, and as you know I chair the IAG meetings, so they’ve been willing to listen and try different methods ... there are some good people amongst them who want to see change.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy)

‘The relationship with the police where I am at the moment would be an eight out of ten ... because the police know that this here is negotiated stopping ... if this wasn’t negotiated stopping the police would be in day and night ...they’d be waiting around the corner waiting to stop you and harass you.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy)

Changes in relationship in recent years

Despite most GRT respondents and many police respondents identifying current relations as poor, half of GRT respondents (7/14) and a majority of officer respondents (13/17) believe that police-community relations are improving (see figure 4). For many police officers and community members respondents such improvements are small tentative steps, often starting from point of very poor relations. Few respondents take improved relations for granted, describing it as a slow and delicate process liable to setbacks.

‘I think things have improved; however if you put that against the improvements made with the LGBT community or other Black and ethnic minority groups I think it’s right at the bottom ...’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

‘Lots of things have changed over the last few years. Initially when the GRT training came in, people didn’t really understand why they were doing it. But now I think people are truly getting it... Things have absolutely improved in recent years.’ (Female, Sergeant, Neighbourhoods)

‘I do think it’s improved...they don’t treat us like an animal as what they did years ago...the police aren’t that bad with me now, but maybe that’s because I’m living in a house and they know exactly who I am’ (Female, Irish Traveller)

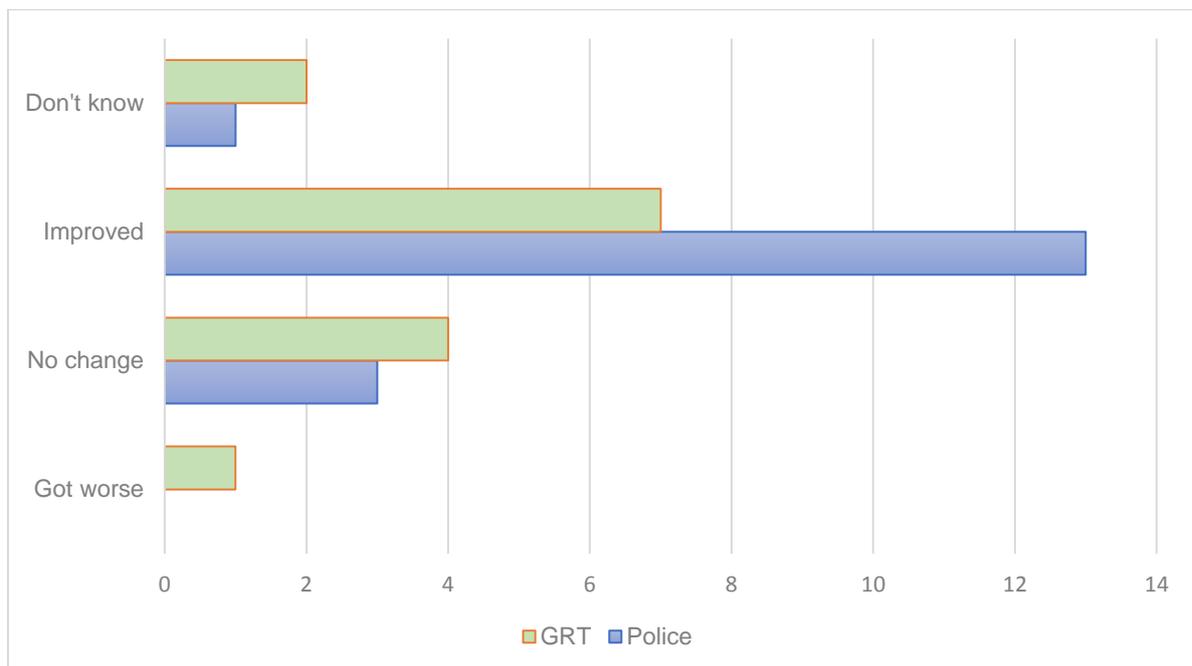


Figure 4: Changes in police and GRT community relations in recent years

Both community members and officers echo a strong consensus that relations are improving but it is still early days and they should not be taken for granted. One Sergeant expresses doubt that police forces will continue to prioritise work in this area, while a roadside Romany Gypsy attributes much of the improvements to GRT community empowerment and activism.

‘It’s changed for the better ... a lot of Gypsies and Travellers have learnt and found out more about racism, back in them times there was no such thing as racism.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy)

These two perspectives are important because community activism and a focus on GRT community engagement within police forces are areas interviewees identify as being key to improving relations.

A minority of community members (4/14) and officers (3/17) describe no change in police-community relations, despite one officer referring to internal improvements within his force (as detailed in previous section) which have yet to touch communities on the ground.

‘Certainly, around the office there has been a change, things that people used to consider banter and jokes are no longer acceptable; we’ve come on leaps and bounds behind closed doors.’ (Male, Constable, Response)

‘Not really, from what I used to hear off my father and my uncle from years ago I think the police is just still the same...they still got a minority of police who paint everybody with the same brush.’ (Female, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

Just one community member describes relations getting worse rather than better following a police operation on their local authority site. Before the operation police-community relations were very good, with senior officers regularly visiting the site and having a cup of tea. An agreed procedure for pre-arranged arrests was also in place reducing the need for a larger police presence which often harmed relations.

Confidence with one another

Most police officers (15/17) are personally confident liaising and working with the GRT communities; however, a majority (10/17) describe many of their colleagues in the police as not being confident. Similarly, most GRT community members (9/14) are confident engaging the police but describe other community members as not being so.

Many officers attribute their confidence – and in many cases good working relationships – to taking a person-centred, not ethnicity-focused, approach to engaging GRT individuals. Such an approach is often borne out of closer working relationships with the communities.

‘Because I’ve spent so much time working with GRT communities, I don’t look at somebody and think you’re GRT community...I’ve met nice people and horrible people from every walk of life.’ (Male, Constable, Neighbourhoods)

‘I’ve never really had a problem...I find that being friendly, firm but fair and abiding by the law is the way ahead. If you go in like a bull in a china shop you expect that back, which is totally the wrong way to do it.’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

A small number of officer respondents are very open about how first-hand interactions and relationships with GRT individuals and communities are changing their perceptions and approaches to the communities. One example is a detective constable whose voluntary experience as a boxing coach with Irish Traveller boys in a local police boxing club is changing his attitude to the communities.

“I do feel confident, but that confidence has been born out of what has happened with the boxing club...My experience with them has been really, really positive, a few years before this I may not have been so quick to challenge somebody when they’re being derogatory towards the Traveller community; however I would now. (Male, Detective Constable)

Similarly, a GTLO describes his personal struggle to address unconscious bias since taking on the liaison role:

‘There’s still that unconscious bias, but that’s something for me and my role to work on, to make people a bit more understanding of it all...my personal opinions and values have changed; however, I still have difficulties in communicating, in particular with those roadside Travellers...so breaking down that bias that I might have sometimes, can be quite difficult, although I’m trying my hardest to do that.’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

Four officers attribute their confidence to being from the communities themselves, with one stating that every officer who is adhering to the National Decision-Making Model should be confident because there shouldn’t be a difference engaging GRT communities. Another GRT officer attributes low confidence amongst colleagues to wider institutional issues within police forces.

‘I’ve been told...that I couldn’t go on the site where my mum lived, that I needed to call into control room and get the authority of the sergeant before I went on the site. There’s an atmosphere of fear which comes out of the way that the institution, the police have subtly educated their staff to think. If you’re going to teach people that these are a nasty, violent, horrible, criminal group, which is exactly what’s happened, then people are going to have reservations, they’re not going to feel confident about going and engaging.’ (Male, Constable)

This constable’s account is supported by many other officers (10/17) who describe low levels of confidence within their forces, often manifesting itself in GRT communities being over-policed.

‘I know they [other officers] don’t feel as confident, because I’ve heard some of them go “oh we need a double-crewed unit we’re going on site” and I said, “no you don’t at all, just go and speak to the people on there and you’ll be fine.”’ (Female, PCSO)

‘The vast majority of officers, if there’s an incident on a site, will ask me to go...because they don’t feel comfortable going on...Definitely the officers are very nervous in my experience, in my opinion.’ (Male, Sergeant)

The high levels of personal confidence amongst police interviewees in this research is not surprising considering most police forces put forward officers for interview who were known to have experience working with the communities. However, the low levels of confidence officers report amongst their colleagues reveals a wider lack of GRT communities' awareness within police forces and that community engagement with these groups is a niche area of work and not mainstream practice. On a more positive note, it also highlights that increased contact and meaningful community engagement between police officers and community members can result in increased trust and confidence.

A majority of GRT interviewees (9/14) feel confident interacting with the police. However over half of these interviewees (5/9) refer to low levels of confidence amongst family members and/or the wider GRT communities. This is not surprising considering GRT community members who agreed to do interviews were more likely to be publicly outgoing and engaging with services. Even with these attributes it took time for some respondents to build up the confidence to work with the police.

'I would, but that took me a long time to be able to do that, I know for a fact that other family members wouldn't.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

'Me personally yeah, I haven't really had bad experience with the police and if I ever had trouble I would be confident enough to talk to them, but then that's just me...Roma people probably don't feel confident enough to tell the police what the problem is, because the police take it from their point of view...'
(Female, Roma)

'For me I suppose because I work...on hate crime and things like that, I might have a better relationship than others. I know a lot of people on sites they don't have any relationship whatsoever with the police, because if they're coming on to sites, if they're looking for one person they'll raid the whole site, they'll got into every plot on it and it's not fair to do that.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

While fear and mistrust of the police based on past and present experience is a key predictor of low confidence amongst the wider GRT communities, a couple of interviewees refer to cultural taboo preventing community members engaging the police.

'I wouldn't have a problem in principle reporting to the police...there are culturally certain occasions when we would feel we wouldn't call the police when other people probably would, so for instance if there was a family argument...That's not the police's fault, it's because it's taboo in Traveller culture to call the police on each other.' (Male, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

Historical and on-going mistreatment by the police may be the driver behind this cultural taboo; nonetheless, it represents a deeply ingrained mistrust which will take a long time to repair. Similar mistrust is evident in the five interviews with community members (5/14) who describe themselves as not being confident engaging the police.

'No still nervous. Some of the one's who're higher up they seem to stick to their word, but the one's on the street, they're still thugs in uniform, very thuggish, disrespectful, you can't change what's deep rooted in certain people.' (Male, Romany Gypsy)

'I was a victim of domestic abuse from my partner and when I contacted the police they wouldn't deal with me, they wouldn't believe me.' (Female, Roma)

'I wouldn't tell the police nothing and I wouldn't ask the police for nothing, if I was getting murdered in the street I wouldn't go to the police for help because I know I would be wasting my time and energy.' (Male, Irish Traveller)

Many respondents express anger and frustration regarding the conduct of the police and describe some, but not all officers as being aggressive and/or treating them with disrespect. Despite these frustrations, half of all GRT respondents (7/14) recognise the value and importance of the work the police do, they simply express a wish for them to do it better when it comes to their communities.

'We wouldn't wish any badness on them...we all appreciate they've got a job to, just do it a little bit better.' (Male, Irish Traveller)

'We're not naive, they are police officers and they've got a job to do; however, common decency doesn't cost anything' (Male, Irish Traveller)

'Every Traveller I speak to they always say, no matter what their experiences have been, "where would we be without the police?"' (Male, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

Discriminatory behaviour, unconscious bias and harassment

Nearly three quarters of police officers (12/17) and the majority of community members (13/14) identify unconscious bias and/or discriminatory and racist behaviour towards GRT people by the police. Officers describe the use of racist language by officers, perceptions of the communities as criminogenic, and discriminatory police practice that automatically treats GRT community members as suspects.

'Gypsies and Travellers have been the two ethnic groups where it's been okay to be openly racist against, almost to the point where it's expected really, nobody bats an eyelid if someone's being overtly racist...I used to hear it every week.' (Male, Constable)

'People would call them derogatory names such as 'p****' and it was kind of the norm to refer to people that way especially when I first joined.' (Female, Sergeant, Neighbourhoods)

'There's also a stigma in the police in relation to Travellers, in relation to crimes and so on...if you hear that a vehicle has just left a scene where there's a potential burglary and it's a pick-up truck, people will more than likely say it was probably the Travellers from the area.' (Male, Constable, Response)

‘That’s kind of what we’re trying to promote and change, the perception that these are criminals, what are they doing, what are they up to, why are they here, let’s get their reg’s, go and hound them every half-an-hour; that’s the cultural thing the police very slowly, I hope, are trying to change.’ (Male, Inspector)

‘There is still that unconscious bias, you talk about Gypsy Travellers, straight away they think of Irish Travellers and roadside encampments and causing problems for the local community, that’s what they see...prior to me starting this job I had that unconscious bias as well ...’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

‘There’s a fear ingrained in police culture that Gypsies and Travellers are all inherently violent.’ (Male, Sergeant)

‘You will hear police officers from time to time use the word p****... highly offensive term. People outside that community don’t seem to have a problem with it, yet if you were to swap that word for another racist term they’d be up in arms about it.’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

Many officers refer to the need for cultural change within the police to address discriminatory practice and racist behaviour towards GRT communities. Some describe on-going initiatives aimed at doing this, such as training programmes or officers (often GTLOs) appointed to promote greater cultural awareness within the ranks. However, most of the initiatives are in their infancy and often sit within targeted GRT interventions focused on enforcement (for example dealing with unauthorised encampments and/or organised crime).

Two officer’s express frustration that racist and discriminatory behaviour towards GRT is not dealt with more robustly in police disciplinary procedures. One officer describes a ‘Catch 22’ scenario, where the police feel they can’t appropriately discipline an officer because they as an institution haven’t done enough to promote awareness of GRT ethnicity and culture and address racist and discriminatory views. The officer in question has serious concerns that inadequate disciplinary procedures are reinforcing future cycles of racist behaviour towards GRT communities.

‘I had a case recently where a complaint was made because someone had used the ‘p’ word and it was dealt with as misconduct ...which means they were never in danger of losing their job and they go and get advice and training. .. if they had used the ‘n’ word for a black person ...it would have been gross misconduct... the institution felt that they had to take corporate responsibility and they didn’t feel they had done enough to inform their staff, so felt it wouldn’t actually be fair to discipline them at the higher level.’ (Male, Constable)

‘I remember one particular training ... somebody made a comment very quietly...“dead Gypsy good Gypsy”...I challenged it, I complained to the sergeant and he was justifying and protecting the officer saying “they are not racist, they are just very frustrated.”’ (Male, Constable)

All except one of the GRT interviewees describe racism, discriminatory practice and unconscious bias by the police. It is evident from their responses that regaining the communities' trust and confidence is dependent on police forces effectively addressing these issues.

'It's still in their heads that you're guilty until proven innocent...I was talking to a policeman the other day and he said to me, "why are the majority of Gypsies and Travellers criminals?"' (Female, Irish Traveller)

'Do I still see the racism there, sometimes without the words, but do I still see it there? Yes, I do and it's in actions not just words, but I am trusting that will change because there's no need for that type of conduct.' (Male, Romany Gypsy)

'I used to get searched quite often because I used to live in an area where my community lived and obviously on a day to day basis when anything happened they used to come up with something random like you meet the description.' (Female, Roma)

One Irish Traveller woman who volunteers with the police in a community liaison role describes the benefits and challenges of being a community member working in what can sometimes be a discriminatory environment.

'I've witnessed racism in the police, there was a time I was called "p**** assistant" by a police officer...that was actually when I was helping them out doing cultural awareness...It's good going in trying to educate the police, try and make them more culturally aware...but it's a hard job...they're looking at you and want to believe you but don't, they have bad views on Travellers...they assume you have something to hide.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

Despite these challenges, the liaison worker believes her role is slowly improving community-police relations; however, she also describes an incident of police brutality involving a family member.

'I think it is still going on [police brutality] but then again I hear less of it because I actually work with the police now and there's someone looking out for Travellers...My brother was only fifteen when he was taken into custody and they beat him...he came out with two black eyes and they said they don't know what happened he must have done it to himself...he's twenty-eight now so that's not that long ago.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

Overall nine community members describe current and/or historical police harassment and/or brutality. Roadside respondents were most likely to be victims of such behaviour, with all three interviewees recounting recent experiences.

"I had a policeman one night...take my wheel brace...and he actually put the two back jacks up himself and one of the front ones and I grabbed the wheel brace off him and he said "if you do that again I'll arrest you for assault", I said "that's my home my friend, you don't touch it, I'll move it when I'm going" and

he said “you’ll f***** move it now” and started pushing the caravan off the pavement.’ (Male, Irish Traveller)

‘There was one point...where we were stopped on roadside and a policeman pushed me, he literally tried to push me to the ground ... I never gave them no reason whatsoever...they were ranting and raving and swearing, they wanted us off the piece of land we had pulled onto...it’s not very often that happens, but it does happen occasionally.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy)

‘One time me and my husband had a policeman who said our caravan was stolen, we showed him all the documentation, paper work and receipts, he still tried to say it was stolen, he said he was taking it, ... so basically you’ve got to go or you get your caravan took...so we had to go.’ (Female, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

For other community members on permanent sites and in housing, harassment and brutality is often associated with past experiences on the side of the road; however many respondents still describe current experiences of such behaviour.

‘The police used to literally beat us all up if we were parked with a trailer on a side road or that, they wouldn’t think twice about beating us up and making us move that night...Since we’ve been settled we know that the police are very heavy handed, but it’s better on the site where I am.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy)

‘That’s what Travellers grow up with, especially the older Travellers that have been out travelling. If the kids were a young age that’s what they remember about the police, they remember them coming at six in the morning and dragging them out to get towed out of a camp, and they’ve often seen escalations and confrontations between Gypsies, Travellers and the police.’ (Female, Irish Traveller)

Based on these responses, it is evident that past experiences of police harassment and discrimination undoubtedly inform current levels of trust and confidence. The shadow cast from such behaviour is long and raises concern that if unaddressed, current cases of discrimination and harassment could prolong poor relations between many in the GRT communities and the police.

The use of racist language by some officers, police perceptions of GRT ethnicity as criminogenic, and discriminatory police practice which automatically treats GRT community members as suspects, suggests that, contrary to the EA, police forces are not only failing to eliminate unlawful discrimination but are actually perpetuating it.

Policing issues

This section summarises the key policing issues raised by both police and community interviewees. It specifically addresses ethnicity being treated as a risk factor, roadside living and dealing with unauthorised encampments, the influence of

the wider public on policing GRT communities, reporting crime, and the role of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers.

Ethnicity as a risk factor

A majority of police respondents (11/17) and community members (12/14) describe GRT ethnicity being treated as a risk factor by police. For police respondents this often involved GRT communities being associated with crime and/or violence and receiving a higher level of police response compared to other communities.

‘Something that I’ve always thought is that it’s treated as a risk factor, when the word Gypsy or Traveller is used everyone’s ears prick up. A fight involving three Travellers will have a higher level of response to a fight involving three people.’ (Male, Constable, Response/Firearms)

‘The whole emphasis has been one of criminality, of looking at Gypsies and Travellers as some sort of deviant criminal group or groups and that’s been reinforced my whole career.’ (Male, Constable)

One Sergeant’s experience policing a supposed Gypsy wedding illustrates the degree to which GRT ethnicity influences police decision making and allocation of resources.

‘A wedding...September-October time, a hundred-people attending, no information to say there’s going to be any crime or disorder. A landlord called up and said, “it’s Gypsies” and the response was to bring out public order...a dog on standby...specialist public order trained officers, and then a member of the public called up the landlord and said, “actually it’s not Gypsies” and everybody was stood down.’ (Male, Sergeant)

Several officers attribute the association of GRT communities with risk and crime as an institutional rather than individual issue within the police, describing bigotry amongst certain officers as the product of wider police procedures, practices and behaviours.

‘The bigotry of individuals isn’t really the problem, that’s a symptom, the problem is that the structure, the systems, the organisational behaviours actually legitimises people doing that [bigotry against GRT], because all of those procedures, practices, behaviours run along the lines that these are criminal groups, it’s our job to deal with criminals, therefore it’s our job to deal with these people.’ (Male, Constable)

‘Culturally within the police ... we do view unauthorised encampments as “right who’s on that site, go and get some registration plates, find out who’s there...do some digging to see who it is”. Why? Well I do understand why, it’s almost that’s our first instinct is “what are they up to?”’ (Male, Inspector)

‘There are practices that have been identified...like comments, databases or resources that are very stereotypical and label Traveller or Travelling community to unauthorised encampments and there’s this direct link - Traveller equals unauthorised encampment.’ (Male, Constable)

While most officers refer to Gypsies and Travellers as being treated as a risk factor, one Sergeant also describes similar perceptions of Roma, despite her experience to the contrary.

‘There’s a wider belief that when we get a spike in burglaries, a spike in theft, pickpockets, that sort of thing, it could be the Roma community sleeping rough...having worked with those communities now for some years, I’ve yet to come across any supporting evidence they’re committing crime.’ (Female, Sergeant)

Community members’ responses reflect the experiences of officers, with all but one interviewee identifying cases of over-policing and assumed criminality. All roadside respondents describe with frustration and anger what they see as unnecessary over-policing of mobile Gypsies and Travellers.

‘Why bring half of [the police force] with you for? Haven’t the officers got something better to do? ... They brought three arrest vans full of police to move us on ... there was about ten caravans ... but there was no problems, no causing any hassle...half of them had babies, there was one lady who wasn’t very well in a wheelchair.’ (Female, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

Community members living on permanent local authority and private sites also describe disproportionate police responses, in some cases resulting in other emergency services being delayed while police wait for backup, and for others creating a feeling that the whole community is at times under siege.

‘If you’re living on a Traveller site and you call the emergency services, guaranteed they’re going to take longer to get there than what they would to a house because...the police don’t want to turn up on their own, they all wait for backup.’ (Female, Irish Traveller)

‘If the police have a phone call regarding something going on, they will come down to this site absolutely tooled up to the nines, they’ll have a lot of police on standby around waiting if they’re needed, and we always get helicopters, actually we got helicopters coming around twice a day for six months, coming down low and literally harassing us.’ (Male, Irish Traveller)

A long-term housed Romany Gypsy respondent describes community members on permanent sites as being more likely to be harassed by the police, compared to those in housing. His experience is supported by others, including an Irish Traveller woman from a local authority site who believes the police target vehicles addressed to Traveller sites.

‘I do find that if your vehicle is registered at a Travellers address...if a policeman comes behind you they will pull you up because you’re a Traveller, especially if it’s the men out working, collecting a bit of scrap or whatever, straight away they believe the scrap is stolen.’ (Female, Irish Traveller)

Half of community respondents recount experiences of being pulled and/or police recording number plates on sites. These experiences aren’t just limited to Gypsy and

Traveller men collecting scrap, but affect the whole community including young mothers and children on both sites and in housing.

'I remember talking to this Mum...and every morning she'd drive over to bring her children to school she was stopped, and asked to produce [her licence] and she said, "but I just showed it to you yesterday morning", it's because she came from the site.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

'Being pulled over, very bad...my Daddy buys and sells cars, he pays his taxes and everything else, so I often have a different car, but every time I have they put a tag on it...so every time you go past a police car with a camera on it, it comes up a red flag and they pull you over.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

A minority of police officers (6/17) talk about traffic stops, with only half of these giving specific examples of GRT communities being targeted. One officer describes being tasked with collecting number plates on Traveller sites, while another (from a GRT background) describes being stopped and searched himself for a 'Traveller-related' issue.

'I've been stopped and searched as a copper, on the motorway with my family in the car ... stopped, checked and searched, didn't do any paper work, didn't offer me anything whatsoever, and when they done the check on the radio they said it's Traveller related, and that was in front of my eight-year-old kid...my child heard who I am is enough to pull me...I said your grounds don't exist to do this and the look I got was: "don't go any further", it was aggressive.' (Male, Sergeant)

It's evident from other officer's responses that traffic stops involve police treating GRT ethnicity as a risk factor. One officer describes specifically targeting vehicles on unauthorised encampments, while others identify unconscious bias.

'Right who's on that site, go and get some registration plates, find out who's there...do some digging to see who it is.' (Male, Inspector describing some police attitudes to unauthorised encampments])

'There is a stereotype, a negative, that that sort of vehicle [a van] may well be driven by a Gypsy or Traveller.' (Male, Constable, Response/Firearms)

Living roadside and unauthorised encampments

As highlighted above, community members living on the roadside encounter the police on a regular basis, largely because of enforcement action and/or surveillance. One roadside Irish Traveller/Romany Gypsy woman describes her families mixed experiences with the police depending on the force area they are travelling in.

'A few weeks ago we were moving [in one police force area] and they was pretty good the police they never bothered you, [but another police force area] it was everyday move, move, move, we were moving off pieces of ground at ten and eleven o'clock, sometimes two o'clock in the morning...About three weeks ago we pulled on a place and they come at half past nine at night with

a section 61 saying we had to move, why didn't they come in the morning?
But you've got to go...' (Female, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

These experiences are shared by other interviewees (both roadside and settled respondents who travel at certain times of the year or travelled in the past) who express frustration and fear at being moved on in the night and over policed when on the road.

'If you're driving along the road pulling a trailer...you definitely get some stick...it could be three o'clock in the morning and they pull you over and they go through the trailer, you could have children as well.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

'With the police they go up in crowds...there was a big massive long road of them and it was dark the evening time when it happened, and I have to say it was unnerving experience ...and for five or six trailers and these were a family not a group of big rowdy men.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

'I've seen when we were stopping, they've walked in with the video cameras, maybe two or three big vans full of them, and they walked in putting videos in your face, so they can go back and recognise and see if anybody was wanted or if anything was stolen, but it's just intimidation.' (Male, Romany Gypsy)

One roadside Irish Traveller expresses particular frustration with police over-extending their powers to evict community members, and in some cases fuelling tension by advising local settled communities not to engage with roadside Travellers.

'You'll get the odd one out of a house say to you that the police have advised us strongly "don't go down around them" [the roadside Gypsies and Travellers]...and the police will try and stop them coming down and making friends with us.' (Male, Irish Traveller)

For another roadside interviewee, relations with the police dramatically improved with the introduction of negotiated stopping, i.e. where the council and roadside Gypsies and Travellers agree a set of conditions enabling them to stop on designated land. For negotiated stopping to work, community members must be able to commit to the council's conditions.

'To do negotiated stopping you've got to have single families, just one main family...because once you start getting others in they think we can do what we want because we're shooting off next week and it causes big problems.' (Male, Romany Gypsy)

Like the GRT communities, police officer respondents (12/17) describe a variety of experiences and attitudes engaging roadside Gypsies and Travellers. In some cases, the relationship is defined by frustration and hostility with officers and community members caught in binary roles.

'You can understand that if we go on to an unauthorised encampment, already the hostility is going to be there, because we are going into someone's house ... and that's where they've settled their children for the last

however many days – we’re going to say you’re not welcome here and you’re going to need to move on, and that’s awful.’ (Female, Sergeant, Neighbourhoods)

‘When I turn up they assume I’m here to remove them off this piece of land, and generally speaking the men will come forward and there will be a load of intimidating stuff that goes on.’ (Male, Constable, Neighbourhoods)

‘I’ve dealt with families who have turned up and there’s no respect at all for the land or the landowner, no respect at all to the locality or the public in the area and I’m trying to have that balanced approach but I’ve got no choice, I have to use action and remove them as quickly as possible.’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

Some officers express an opinion that many roadside community members bring trouble (and police action) upon themselves by not engaging and respecting their local areas, and not changing with the times culturally.

‘They were at a community-based football team and it affected all age groups, in terms of being able to get to the facilities to train, it affected match day, it affected the car park facilities...and when they left there was human excrement, it was a complete mess.’ (Male, Detective Constable)

‘The only difficulties that policing has with regard to dealing with Gypsy Travellers is because they are so reserved, and they do not let outside people in, it’s very difficult for us to then conduct those investigations to try and engage, to pin down people, because they’re so transient...Policing’s changed, but traditions of Gypsy Travellers haven’t, they’ve still got those strong traditions there. I think they need to be looking at themselves and going “okay then society’s changed and we possibly need to change with that as well”. That’s the barrier I see, they are still decades or centuries behind.’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

Other officer’s express frustration at continuously having to move Gypsies and Travellers on often without being able to properly communicate with them and understand their welfare needs. One senior officer describes enforcement action against unauthorised encampments as an avoidable waste of valuable police time and often outside of their responsibilities.

‘Do I really need to be tying up my staff with doing that ...I don’t actually think it’s a police issue more often than not...My responsibilities are to try and find out if there are any welfare needs, any medical needs, how long they’re planning on staying on this plot of land ... but there’s a complete lack of trust, understandably from the Travellers, that my motives are very different, but because of that lack of communication it pushes the police down a route of...enforcement, of evicting them from that land, when actually there could be ...underlying welfare issues as to why they’re there, near to a hospital...a sick member of family ... but as the police, we never truly establish that.’ (Male, Inspector)

Poor communication is a common occurrence for officers engaging roadside Gypsies and Travellers. According to officer respondents, this is often fuelled by community members' mistrust and fear of the police. However, data from community and police interviews also reveals inconsistent and sometimes conflicting police approaches to dealing with unauthorised encampments, which in turn creates confusion and mistrust for roadside Gypsies and Travellers. Some officers also describe lack of information on roadside families entering their area as an added challenge in assessing the risk and scale of the police response required.

Several officers identify inadequate provision of Traveller sites and stopping places as the key to addressing unauthorised encampments, with some expressing frustration with councils for not taking more responsibility.

'I think all the time there is nationally a lack of site provision, I think it's always going to be an issue police are going to be involved with.' (Male, Chief Inspector)

'I welcome this transit site ... but as things have turned out it is just being used for us to use our section 62 powers because nothing else has been built.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

'We've suggested having negotiated stopping sites...it's just speaking to the council, getting the council to take that on as well.' (Female, Constable, GTLO)

Despite these challenges, officers and community members (some of whom are quoted above citing negative experiences) also describe a small number of positive interaction, marked by good communication and respect for one another's interests.

'I've been dealing with a small family over the past few weeks and they've been refusing to leave the area, they've been living in the retail park area; however, they have been so clean, tidy, approachable and all the businesses down there have been saying "we haven't got a problem here" ... I've closed that incident down, these people are not a risk, they are not a problem, we're not dealing with it as a police force.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

Most community and police interviewees recognise that good relations between roadside families and the police are dependent on mutual respect and good practice; however, most respondents see this as the exception rather than the rule.

'Similar to Travellers having a poor view of police because sometimes they're not dealt with particularly well, it goes both ways and the policing they get comes down to the poor experiences [officers] have had with other community members.' (Female, Sergeant)

'There could be a better relationship between the police and Gypsies and Travellers; don't get me wrong there's a lot of Travellers who can carry on as well, but if the police come most of the time in a more civilised manner I think they would find out that the Travellers would work with them.' (Male, Romany Gypsy)

Influence of the wider public

Most police officers (15/17) believe the views and attitudes of the wider public affect how GRT communities are policed, particularly when it comes to dealing with unauthorised encampments. Similarly, most GRT respondents (12/14) feel that wider stereotypes and prejudices against GRT people in society influence police practice, but not all police officers have negative attitudes.

A majority of officers (12/17) cite unauthorised encampments as the key area where the public and politicians influence how they police GRT communities.

‘As soon as you get an unauthorised encampment, there’s pressure from the local community, there’s then pressure from the local councils, there’s pressure from local government ... I think there’s a lot of political pressure because people in politics want to get elected and they see Gypsies and Travellers as an easy target.’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

‘There is undoubtedly sometimes community pressure, there is political pressure and there is a misunderstanding that the police are responsible for unauthorised encampments, and we’re not; local authorities lead on that and it’s for us to support when criteria are met.’ (Male, Chief Inspector)

One liaison officer emphasises the importance of the police acting quickly to address public concerns about unauthorised encampments, liaising with both roadside Gypsy, Traveller and settled communities to calm fears, before things become overheated.

‘I found the sooner we could calm nerves, the better...if we don’t get in there and start calming fears straightaway, it just leads on to loads and loads of calls, “get them off our land, get them away from here” that type of thing, and because those people don’t see us doing anything, they start phoning the local councillors, local MPs and that’s where the pressure comes down from to act, to evict quick.’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

Other officers describe the pressure they are put under to act against unauthorised encampments and the complicated balancing act addressing local settled community concerns with the rights and welfare of roadside families.

‘We have to be careful not to be bullied, to remain impartial...I’ve been in situations where they’ve been trying to move a group of Travellers from a site, encouraging us, putting us under pressure to use section 61 to remove them, and I’m like absolutely not, absolutely not, they are more than reasonable, they’re doing nothing wrong, there’s no evidence of fly tipping, there’s no evidence of anti-social behaviour.’ (Female, Sergeant)

‘There’s an expectation - especially with an unauthorised encampment on a nice local green that the local cricket team play cricket – that we will use our powers to effectively remove them; however, we are not there to do what the public want us to do all the time...We need to manage their expectations

while considering the needs of the GRT communities.’ (Female, Sergeant, Neighbourhoods)

These accounts also highlight a lack of awareness amongst the public and politicians of police force’s limited role in dealing with unauthorised encampments. One liaison officer describes a vicious cycle in which roadside Gypsies and Travellers experience massive bias from the public, resulting in them showing little respect for local communities and public bodies, and vice versa.

Other police officers identify wider public and media narratives of GRT people as dangerous and/or criminogenic shaping how the police perceive and treat the communities while also putting political pressure on forces which do attempt to address issues of bias or unfair treatment.

‘The police have been conditioned by ... the media ... that a Traveller is more dangerous than a normal person or inclined to commit crime. It really is an ingrained thing that needs to be ironed out over time.’ (Male, Constable, Response/Firearms)

‘I think the police come under enormous public pressure to act against Gypsies and Travellers because socially Gypsies and Travellers are thought of as criminal groups ... a great example was the local MP who publicly criticised the force saying they were letting Gypsies and Travellers get away with things they wouldn’t let anyone else get away with.’ (Male, Constable)

For most community respondents police-community relations are symptomatic of the wider bias and discrimination GRT communities face in society, with many believing the police automatically take the side of the settled community.

‘The local people rile the police up so as the police can show their authority; that is the way it works.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy)

One Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller interviewee believes people’s prejudices are deeply ingrained and unlikely to change and that institutions like the police shouldn’t try to change what staff think, but instead insure they act in an appropriate and professional way.

‘I believe people’s opinions about Gypsies and Travellers are formed in childhood ...I can’t see how any amount of police training can immunise you against those kind of prejudices. But that’s not the ultimate goal - the goal is simply to try to ensure there is a reasonable procedure...[which] should minimise the impact of people’s individual prejudices on the way that they police.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

Other respondents recognise the difficult position the police are in when addressing publicly contentious issues like unauthorised encampments, and crucially that not all officers have negative attitudes, citing good experiences of reporting incidents to the police.

‘Sometimes it’s hard for the police, they’re caught in the middle, if there is an encampment they’re getting phone calls from the public ... then they’re trying

to be fair on the other side and not use section 61 all the time.’ (Female, Irish Traveller)

‘Don’t get me wrong, there are officers you come across and they make your day, they deal with an incident in a respectful manner, get the matter sorted and give you the reassurance you need but then you get another one that comes and messes it up completely.’ (Female, Roma)

However, several community members express frustration that the police aren’t doing more to address cases of discrimination against the GTR communities and in some cases, don’t take them as seriously as those reported by other ethnic minority groups.

‘I’m an Irish Traveller and every year my role is to organise the Christmas party for my whole team. ..we went to a local bar... and everyone else got served except for me, they would not serve me because I was a Traveller. As you can imagine embarrassing is not the word...called the police, would they do anything? Absolutely not, they advised us to leave the pub...if I was a Black man or a Muslim for instance that would be in the papers.’ (Male, Irish Traveller)

‘I was looking on the internet about planning laws, and there’s a website on there about some people who charge to sort out evictions for you ... offering “would you like Gypsies parked on your land? We can guarantee that you can have them off”...and the website proudly states they have an absolutely fantastic working relationship with all the local police...It was almost like an exterminating thing, “have you got rats?”’ (Male, Romany Gypsy)

Reporting crime

All police officer respondents (17/17) describe the GRT communities as less likely to report being victims of crime, while half of community respondent (7/14) describe themselves as confident reporting crime to the police, depending on the nature of the crime involved. A minority of community members are not confident (4/14) reporting crime, expressing apathy and a lack of trust that the police will do anything about it.

Most officer respondents attribute the communities’ low levels of reporting to lack of trust in the police, and in some cases to lack of awareness by the police. Officers describe the communities as wanting to deal with issues internally; however, in most cases they attribute this to an historical lack of trust in the police rather than a cultural preference.

‘It’s very few, it needs to be a lot more...Gypsies and Travellers try and sort out their own issues a lot of the time, which is fine, but because they don’t trust us.’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

‘When we deal with a group of Travellers it is very unlikely for them to report crime to us, even though by virtue of their lifestyle they’re relatively vulnerable to crime...They’re a section of the community that we don’t see as victims, we

don't see them as people who call upon us for assistance unless it's got to a critical point.' (Female, Sergeant)

'In terms of victims, we don't get that many because police are not so keen...the other side of the coin is that GRT ... don't trust the police to solve their problems ... they will deal with it themselves or just suffer in silence.'
(Male, Sergeant)

'The under-representation as victims of crime is something we are working hard to try and address, particularly hate crime. We know that hate crime is underreported in general and even more so with Gypsy Traveller communities because that confidence in policing isn't there.' (Male, Chief Inspector)

Officer respondents identify hate crime as the most common issue GRT communities report, followed by domestic violence and theft. While most officers describe significant underreporting, several also give examples of successfully supporting GRT victims, usually as a result of building trust through wider GRT community engagement.

One officer describes his force, over a twelve-month period, recording over thirty hate crimes where the victims were from the GRT communities; a very high number compared to other police forces. He attributes this to targeted work within the force to engage the GRT in policing while at the same time promoting greater awareness of the communities amongst officers. A GTLO from another force describes his experience of returning a Traveller man's stolen van and getting his fines written off as being a 'real occasion' for community-police relations on a Traveller site.

'When I first went onto the site there was a lot of people who were suspicious or sceptical as to why I was there, and there was this one guy...and we built up a rapport...he was quite well connected within the community...His van had been stolen in a car park...and he hadn't reported it to the police so I took the report from him...his van was stopped and someone was arrested for it and he ended up getting his van back. He got justice out of that whereas he wasn't going to bother reporting it, and because he hadn't reported it stolen, he was getting all the speeding tickets and parking fines and everything and he was paying off debts that weren't actually his ... It was a small thing that I did, it was an everyday part of my job, but it was something I took to be a real occasion ... he'd never reported a crime to the police before because he didn't think anyone would take him seriously ... after that he was going around telling everyone.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

Another officer, with good community relations, describes the communities as picking and choosing which crimes they report to him depending on their severity. This officer's experience reflects that of many community respondents (7/14) who describe themselves as confident reporting crime, but pick and choose which crimes they are willing to report. Some community interviewees also describe their friends and family as being less likely to report a crime than themselves, which is not surprising considering GRT community members who agreed to do interviews are more likely to be publicly outgoing and engaging with services.

'If it was a serious crime yes...it would have to be serious, a matter of life or death before I would report it but anyone stealing a bike or anything like that by the time they get there it's gone, so what's the sense in reporting it?' (Male, Romany Gypsy)

'I wouldn't have a problem in principle reporting to the police...there are culturally certain occasions when we would feel we wouldn't call the police when other people probably would, so for instance if there was a family argument.' (Male, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

Like many others, an Irish Traveller woman gives a mixed response to reporting crime, being very reluctant to report theft and damage to property while being very positive about reporting cases of hate crime.

'A couple of times I've had my car broken into out here...I'd never report it because I don't believe the police will do anything about it...A good experience is definitely with online hate crime against Gypsies and Travellers, they want Gypsies and Travellers to report it...we brought it to their attention that the comments on [the website] weren't very nice and [the policeman] did go and monitor the page and did stop it...we had a conviction on one of the 'spotted' pages [Facebook].' (Female, Irish Traveller)

Alongside mistrust in the police, one of the key reasons community respondents give for not reporting is a belief that it won't make any difference in resolving the crime. The Irish Traveller woman's positive response to reporting hate crime is rooted in the police producing an identifiable outcome and achieving justice for her. It follows that the more the police can help GRT communities achieve justice and communicate successful outcomes, the more the communities will trust the police and report crime. Hate crime appears to be an area where some police forces are pioneering this approach.

For a minority of community members (4/14) reporting a crime to the police is not seen as an option due to lack of trust and a belief that the police would not take them seriously or would assume they were at fault.

'No...because they'd think it was my fault or it doesn't matter, obviously the judgements there so I don't think they'd take me very seriously.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

'Probably not no because I know it wouldn't get nowhere.' (Female, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

'We don't tend to speak to the police, we don't tend to report anything to the police, we don't tend to get police involved, if we have a problem we sort it out between ourselves, the families will get an agreement, the older generation will speak.' (Female, Roma)

The role of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers

Officers and community members share varying opinions and interpretations as to the purpose and role of GTLOs. Three of the five police forces involved in the

qualitative study have GTLOs with four interviewees carrying out this role. There doesn't appear to be a common or agreed job description and/or purpose for liaison officers across the forces; however a majority (3/4) of GTLO interviewees and/or their managers describe unauthorised encampments as a key aspect of their work.

'It's every day, predominantly I'm dealing with the roadside encampments, that's predominantly my role, but on the downtime, I'm trying to promote engagement with our settled communities, to try and build those bridges and that confidence and that cohesion.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

'There's a number of GTLO in role, and unless there is an immediate policing need to go on to a site or visit an unauthorised encampment, it should only be those trained officers that enter that site, because that then builds the trust, the Travellers ... are seeing the same person all the time, which builds the trust.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

One GTLO interviewee didn't identify unauthorised encampments as a core function of his role; he described community engagement work on a permanent local authority Traveller site as his key focus. However, this wasn't necessarily clear when he took up the post.

'When I was first appointed in the role no one explained to me what the role was...I was basically told "you are going to be the Traveller Liaison Officer - off you go", I didn't know what to expect, the only time I'd ever been on a Traveller site was to arrest someone.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

In the absence of a clear job description, the liaison officer took his steer from Gypsies and Travellers themselves and informally co-produced the role. From the beginning, the communities were keen to have some form of consistent engagement with the police.

'There was a trust divide,... what I was being told from the community was they would prefer to see a police officer more regularly, which was what I was doing in my role, popping down on a regular occasion, speaking to the members of the community and finding out what their issues were, because a lot of them had been victims of crime as well.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

The liaison officer describes it as 'definitely a worthwhile post, to have one person...or a couple of people that are regular faces within the community...that they know and feel comfortable speaking to'. However, other police interviewees express concern that GTLO posts and dedicated teams further marginalise and isolate the GRT communities by segregating them from mainstream police practice and labelling them a 'difficult group'. They also highlight that other ethnic minority groups don't have dedicated teams which automatically sets GRT communities apart.

'Essentially what you've got is an ethnic unit; think about that from a black point of view, think about if the police said, "most of our officers don't like dealing with black people, let's find out who's okay with it and we'll put them in a unit and then they can deal with all the black people and the rest of us won't have to."' (Male, Constable)

‘With the resources we have, it’s just not possible to say these police officers are going to be Traveller liaison...and also a certain part of me thinks you shouldn’t have to ... they should be able to come to the police and any officer should treat them with respect and dignity.’ (Female, Constable, Neighbourhoods)

A senior officer describes how his forces’ Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Group sits within the structures for engaging other groups with protected characteristics. The force had a network of liaison officers for different strands of diversity e.g. LGBT liaison officers, race liaison officers, and different liaison officers for different religious backgrounds. The standalone Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Group was not part of the race advisory group. He expressed the view that it could be argued that ‘by singling them out there’s an element of prejudice there or unconscious bias there’

Community members also have conflicting opinions on the benefits and drawbacks of police forces taking targeted GRT approaches.

‘The majority of ethnic Gypsies and Travellers don’t live on unauthorised encampments...it’s a weird job description [GTLO] to be pre-occupied with one ethnic group...but maybe it’s better that someone who knows a little bit about Travellers goes in than someone else goes steaming in without a clue?’ (Male, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

An Irish Traveller woman describes the contradictory role many GTLOs have between enforcement and engagement, while identifying how Gypsy and Traveller-centred work with the police may preclude the communities from wider diversity and cohesion initiatives.

‘Some of them (GTLOs) do go down and get to know Travellers, but more of them don’t and they can’t really have a relationship with them because on one side of the coin they’re moving them on, evicting them, enforcement, and on the other side they’re trying to engage with them and have a chat with them and it doesn’t work...I was talking to a policeman the other day, he was on the rural team...and they had a cohesion team within the police and they engaged with every other ethnic minority except for Gypsies and Travellers.’ (Female, Irish Traveller)

Building trust

This section captures what police officers and community members think will build trust and improve police-community relations. It looks at institutional and structural changes, improving engagement and interactions, recruiting officers from the communities, addressing discriminatory behaviour and training.

Institutional and structural changes

Several community and police respondents describe the necessity for institutional and structural changes within the police to improve community-police relations, while a small number of officers also highlight the need for cultural change within the communities. For one officer building trust depends first and foremost on the police

taking a long hard look at themselves and honestly addressing how they, as an institution, engage the GRT communities.

‘There’s been a lack of trust for a long time, you can’t build trust instantly...the thing that will build that trust up is for the police to look inwards, stop looking at Gypsies and Travellers...It’s easier to look at the community and say, “it’s you that are slightly dysfunctional, you’re not talking to us”...it’s much more difficult to look at yourself and say, “what is it about us that’s stopping them from engaging?”’ (Male, Constable)

The officer believes that an independent root and branch review of how the GRT communities are policed is needed, encompassing both current and historical police-community relations. One Irish Traveller respondent shares this view but expanded it to include the whole criminal justice system which, in her view, treats Gypsies and Travellers differently.

However, a small number of officers have very different perspectives, attributing greater responsibility for improving relations to the GRT communities, who they believe bring trouble upon themselves and need to change their traditions and behaviours.

‘I think they need to move away from traditions, I think they need to come up to today’s society, and it is an ever-changing society and keeping those traditions they’ve had for centuries and centuries, it has to change.’ (Male, Constable, GTLO)

‘A change of attitude, in that the whole thing seems to be that when you deal with police you do whatever you can to lie and fob them off. I hate generalising but that’s the experience that I’ve always had.’ (Female, Constable, GTLO)

Some community members also express an opinion that the communities need to do more to engage with the police; however, they do not go so far as to say the communities should change their traditions or shoulder most of the responsibility. A Romany Gypsy man who chairs a local police Independent Advisory Group (IAG) describes his frustration with fellow community members not engaging more, but also outlines how the police need to take the lead and adopt a more preventative approach based on ensuring equitable treatment of the communities.

Both police and community respondents describe the importance of councils ensuring appropriate permanent and temporary sites for Gypsies and Travellers as a means of reducing police forces enforcement against unauthorised encampments. As outlined by the chair of the IAG above, this could also be a preventative approach aimed at improving police-community relations over the long-term.

‘I think if you had permanent sites and negotiated stopping sites you could go in there, make sure the kids are fine, make sure mental health needs are addressed...We’ve suggested having negotiated stopping sites...it’s just speaking to the council, getting the council to take that on as well.’ (Female, Constable, GTLO)

Alongside site provision, several officers identify inclusion of GRT monitoring in police ethnic monitoring systems and better use of the National Decision-Making Model (NDMM) as ways of improving relations.

'I think you can apply the NDMM to any decision and it helps you rationalise it ... that it's clear, concise, to the point and I've made it based on the intelligence and evidence that's been received.' (Female, Sergeant, Neighbourhoods)

'I think now that [the inclusion of Gypsies and Traveller in police ethnic monitoring systems] is coming into practice ... that's going to be really beneficial to us to be able to see, because it's difficult when it's not something visible.... just us being able to see in front of us that a person's a Traveller and I had a really good interaction with them.' (Male, Constable, Response/Firearms)

While most community members describe a desire for equal not special treatment from the police (as detailed in the following section on 'engagement and interaction'), several also recognise the potential practical benefits of targeted GRT approaches aimed at building trust. Likewise, officers give a variety of opinions on the benefits and drawbacks of targeted and non-targeted interventions (as discussed above in 'the role of Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers' section). Critically, many officers, including some of those in favour of targeting, recognise that the obvious segregation of GRT communities in police practice poses the danger of creating further barriers to these communities.

'It's because we can't communicate properly ... and it's because we're segregating people out, by labelling people we're already creating a barrier. My view is that we take away these labels altogether and see it as we're all human here...the system and the government are creating these barriers.' (Male, Constable, Neighbourhoods)

'We've got to almost move away from having a community label on people, if we say the Travelling community, the Jewish community...whatever it happens to be and then we tarnish or label with the same label that community, when actually what you're dealing with every time is individuals. So, if we move away from the community label and move towards an individual label, what you're actually dealing with is a group of individuals who are no more related to the last group of Travellers than they are related to the Jewish family down the road.' (Female, Sergeant)

Engagement and interaction

Most Gypsy, Roma, Traveller respondents (10/14) state a clear desire for 'normal, everyday treatment' rather than 'special treatment' from the police.

‘Treat us like neighbours, that’s all we ask, we’re not asking for special treatment, we’re asking for normal, everyday treatment, like your neighbour.’
(Male, Romany Gypsy)

For many community respondents this means being treated as individuals rather than as one group which the police often associate as being a risk factor.

‘If they treated us on an individual basis they wouldn’t have a problem, but because they treat us as ‘the Travellers’ they have a set of rules against us, must go in heavy handed, Travellers are known to be violent and intimidating...’ (Male, Irish Traveller)

‘I think they could try to understand that not everyone is the same and maybe if they had bad experiences of Roma people or other background, it’s not kind of like put it in the same kind of bag and think this one maybe trouble and the other one would as well.’ (Female, Roma)

Some community members emphasise the importance of the police being more polite and respectful when interacting with them, while others put forward practical suggestions like inviting them to sport and community events to help establish ‘normal, everyday’ relations.

‘I don’t know many young men that don’t like a game of football. Quite a lot of the Traveller sites have their own little football team now...why not approach them on a sports level, why not approach them on boxing level where the young Traveller boys are already going to.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy)

Most community respondents recognise that building trust and improving relations will take time and require a significant input from the communities themselves as well as the police. For some community members experiences of police harassment and discrimination in their childhood make this a difficult process.

‘I think it will take years and years, hundreds maybe to be able to improve it...It will take some time for the communities themselves to be able to accept and for the police themselves to learn to respect.’ (Female, Roma)

‘We’ve been brought up with it our whole lives, we’ve been hardened into it...If you kick a dog when he’s a pup he’ll remember that and bite you when he’s older.’ (Male, Irish Traveller)

Other GRT respondents describe a determination that the past will not repeat itself and that their children will be more confident to seek help from the police. For this to happen, some community members warn that one-off individual initiatives by the police are not enough and that it requires a wider institutional and cultural change within the service.

‘When I was a child I remember getting raided by the police...I used to be afraid to go to a policeman when I was lost or anything, I had a very bad opinion of them, I was scared of police...I wouldn’t want to raise my children like that, I would tell my children now to go to a police officer.’ (Female, Irish Traveller)

'You can't just focus on the younger generation and get them involved in games and think we're actually doing something and everything is fine, but it's actually not fine when officers are not getting trained into how they should behave, and it's not that they need to be aware we have particular needs, it's just treat us with respect, treat us the way they would want to be treated, at the end of the day that's the most important thing regardless of where you come from, your nationality, your colour, your orientation, that's nothing to do with it, it's just a lack of respect some officers have.' (Female, Roma)

The majority of officer respondents (15/17) express a desire for more first-hand interaction with community members as a means of building trust and improving relations. For some this entails a cup of tea and a chat in a caravan while others see senior officers also playing a role attending GRT community festivals and events.

'The best thing you could possibly do is create first hand interaction between members of the GRT and police officers in quite a low-level setting. Social type things where it's just an afternoon tea and biscuits and chat so you can break down those barriers.' (Male, Constable, Neighbourhoods)

'Positive engagement, going to festivals, going to Traveller weddings, instead of having an officer stationed outside every pub and club when there's a Traveller wedding or funeral, it would be efficient and more positive if there was a senior rank officer in the parade maybe or amongst the Travellers engaging the positive side, not "I'm here to make sure you don't cause any trouble."' (Male, Constable)

'For me personally if I was welcome I'd be more than happy to go and sit in someone's home or caravan, neutral space whatever I don't mind and sit and have a discussion with them. I'd love things to be easier, I'd love my job to be easier.' (Female, Constable, Neighbourhoods)

Several officers outline a few key points and observations about the nature and purpose of community engagement, namely that it needs to be natural not forced, be part of mainstream police practice not a niche, and finally that it should focus on individuals not the groups.

'It needs to be natural, it doesn't need to be a conscious thing ... it just needs to be something you routinely do as you would anywhere else... We're maybe in danger of forcing interaction, which could potentially make things worse.' (Male, Constable, Response/Firearms)

'If you've got individual officers who are working with Gypsies and Travellers and actually get on well and have got a good relationship with them, very very rare for them to come back in and start changing the institution.' (Male, Constable)

'You don't treat people the same, one family will come down and they're completely different to another family or another community of Travellers that have come down. It's about speaking to those people from fresh.' (Female, Sergeant)

One sergeant identifies the challenges many officers in his force face in order to be able to free up the time to do the outreach required, while noting the big difference PCSOs make engaging communities in this capacity.

'I noticed a massive difference with PCSOs, because they're not going in in an enforcement capacity...they go because they're having a brew up...whereas the PCs are so close to the grinder as it were...they don't have a chance to go and have a chat.' (Male, Sergeant)

Despite these concerns, many police officers identify and give examples of the added value GRT community engagement brings, such as increased community cohesion and police awareness, fewer police resources required, and more GRT people feeling confident enough to report crimes.

'We decided to place ourselves as a police boxing club in the heart of the community...I do think because of the way they [the Traveller boys he coaches] respond to me, which is very well, it may affect how they view officers when they deal with them in a professional capacity.' (Male, Constable)

'I think the relationships we have developed have helped us understand some issues in greater detail, for example on a couple of occasions we have sought to arrest someone from a Traveller background and actually through contacts, including the GTLOs, we have been able to arrange the arrest without recourse to having to send a van load of officers onto a site.' (Male, Chief Inspector)

Building trust, addressing institutional discrimination, improving engagement and interaction with the GRT communities all require the police authorities to review their compliance with their s149 EA PSEDs to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, in particular by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups.

Recruitment

For many police and community respondents recruiting more GRT into the police is key to improving relations. Exact numbers of GRT police officers are not known; not all forces include Gypsy and Irish Travellers in their ethnic monitoring systems yet (and none will include a Roma category). Furthermore, many GRT officers are fearful of revealing their ethnic background within their role.

Police and community respondents described recruitment of GRT individuals to the police as key to improving relations.

Interviewees also mentioned the important role the recently formed GRTPA plays in supporting officers in post and promoting employment prospects for community members in the police service.

‘Because of the wider coverage in the media regarding the Police Association, people are now feeling more able to be open about their background..[The Chief Constable asked me] “now would you like to disclose your ethnicity?” ... I think they are trying to get on their books that they have staff who are GRT.’ (Male, Constable)

‘The most important thing that is happening is this Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Police Association so the public, and the police, and Travellers can see not just that there are Travellers in different jobs, but Gypsy and Traveller police.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

For a few officers, the visibility of existing community members in the police is as important as recruiting new members, with some respondents specifically highlighting the need for more Irish Traveller to be recruited and visible, and the benefit to the police and communities when they are.

‘It would help so much if we had an officer from the Travelling community that would be happy to say, “yes I’m a Traveller”. That would make a huge difference for both the police and the community.’ (Male, Constable)

‘There a chap in the force who’s got family, I think his mum and dad are Travellers. That’s going a significant way to try and break down some sort of barriers and stereotypes within the police. He’s doing some great bits of work really making people sit up and think about how an individual’s behaviour effects confidence within that community.’ (Male, Inspector)

However, both police and community respondents describe lack of trust and awareness on both sides as particular challenges in the recruitment process, even more so than with other marginalised groups in society.

‘We’re accepting of LGBT, we’re accepting of BME candidates into the police and we strive to get a better cross-section of police officers into the service so we can better represent our community, and then there’s that one community we are not aware of.’ (Female, Sergeant, Neighbourhoods)

Critically, police forces also need to focus on retention of existing GRT officers, paying attention to the sometimes hostile and/or discriminatory environment in which they may have to work. Several officers from GRT backgrounds describe the challenges of working in the police, including being marginalised within the ranks when faced with discriminatory behaviour, being classified as the go-to person for all GRT issues, and facing hostility from their own communities.

‘You’re either ostracised within it...so you’re not part of the group and your functioning on the outside of the group at a removed level, or you’re pushed out altogether, or you actually give up and join the group, and that’s the only way you get accepted.’ (Male, Constable)

‘From a professional point of view this must sound like I’ve got a split personality, you’re constantly between a rock and a hard place.’ (Male, Sergeant)

‘When I started I was very proud to be from the...community...and every time something would happen in the community the police would use me...but I soon became abused in my position and then the...community and those that were committing criminal offences or on the edge of the law, they saw me as a threat...so I started receiving death threats.’ (Male, Constable)

These issues and experiences are not just limited to GRT officers but are also mentioned by a small number of community members in formal Independent Advisory Group (IAG) and police-community liaison roles. A Romany Gypsy man, who chairs a local IAG describes the need for more community members to be formally involved engaging the police and the frustrations and dangers of taking on the role himself.

‘The police really should be trying to find spokespeople, preferably amongst the elders on the site, elders not as in age but as in standing...I wish my own Gypsies, Roma and Travellers would get more involved in outreach... when are the Travellers going to say “let me lend my voice to this”? ... In the last four years they [community members] run me over, I’ve been stabbed, beat up, because of the IAG meetings...when are they going to realise one thing, it’s alright saying “I wish they would treat us like other people”; well, show them you’re like other people.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy)

In accordance with their s149 EA PSEDs to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity, the police should create an environment where GRT people feel confident in revealing their ethnicity, and/or encourage higher recruitment of GRT people if these groups are under-represented. Those working with the GRT communities and police forces need to be aware of (and take steps to mitigate) these extra hurdles facing community members becoming police officers or formally engaging with the police.

Addressing discriminatory behaviour

Community members and police officers highlight the importance of addressing discriminatory behaviour and practice within the police as a critical step towards building trust and better relations. Some officers and community members see wider public awareness and increased GRT-settled community interaction as the key to addressing discrimination. Community respondents also believe the police can do more to address issues like hate crime, and, in so doing, increase their own awareness and understanding of discrimination.

‘Education and wider public awareness. All the time the vast majority of the public are in blissful isolation and ignorance of anything to do with Gypsy Traveller issues we are still going to have to deal with prejudice and discrimination.’ (Male, Chief Inspector)

‘For me personally it’s about getting better representation in public areas.’ (Male, Irish Traveller)

Other respondents focus on more immediate practical steps to address discrimination towards GRT communities in the police service, such as ensuring

robust disciplinary procedures and widespread use of video to improve behaviour and practice.

‘A lot of them have got body cameras now and a lot of Travellers have got mobile phones and when they come in now, even the women when they’re cooking the food, I see them put their hands up for the phone and put them on record, and the police knows that now.’ (Male, Irish Traveller)

‘You can’t prevent people thinking that Gypsies are scum of the earth, but you can prevent them to an extent acting as though they think that.’ (Male, Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)

‘Highlighting of cases where it’s not complaint with the protected characteristics in the Equality Act...if you were to write it was a black-related incident you’d probably get sacked, but if you write Traveller-related it’s fine, it’s in common parlance...if we made a few examples, maybe some people would actually switch on.’ (Male, Sergeant)

Both respondents prioritise changing discriminatory behaviour through the robust use of disciplinary procedures and video evidence over attempting to train officers to think and act differently when engaging GRT communities. Other interviewees emphasise changing individual officers’ attitudes and behaviours in the hope that non-discriminatory practice will follow.

‘One of the main things we’re addressing in our code of ethics training is unconscious bias and there’s points when we show pictures of vehicles, and one I suppose is a vehicle that you expect a GRT to be driving and asking the opinion of the room would you be pulling that vehicle over?’ (Female, Sergeant, Neighbourhoods)

However, two officers express frustration with such an approach because they believe it fails to address systems within the police which influence discriminatory behaviour, while at the same time patronising individual officers.

‘If you have systems in the force that are racist, deal with those systems...but to start wagging fingers at individual police officers who are just trying to do their best with what they’ve got, is just offensive and wrong.’ (Male, Constable, Neighbourhoods)

‘Acknowledge we’ve actually got a problem ... say we have a problem, apologise for what’s happened in the past and make a commitment to actually put that right ... that would be the most productive thing a police force could do.’ (Male, Constable)

One of the systemic flaws the last respondent refers to is disciplinary procedures not being equitably applied in anti-GRT discrimination cases (covered in the section above on ‘Discriminatory behaviour, unconscious bias and harassment’).

The failure to adequately address discriminatory behaviour and practice within the service, suggests that the police are not fulfilling their s149 EA PSEDs to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and

victimisation. To build GRT communities trust and confidence in the police, an independent root and branch review of the whole police service is needed to ensure that discriminatory policies and practice are recognised and addressed, restoring confidence in the institution.

Training

A majority of police officers (10/17) received some form of training relating to the GRT communities; however, in many cases this was in a limited capacity and a long time ago. Police respondents describe GRT community members being involved in just two of these training sessions, despite a majority of officers (12/17) believing involvement and/or interaction with the GRT communities would enhance the value of training. Only one community respondent describes delivering training to the police.

'We did deliver training to the police...five out of six of them were fine...I think we learnt a lot as well, about what they have to deal with on unauthorised encampments, and how they get hounded by the public - they can get up to 35 calls.' (Female, Irish Traveller)

A majority of officers (7/10) are critical of the training they received, describing it as not practical or clear enough, covering the wrong subjects, contrary to police practice, and in one case offensive.

'It didn't seem to have anything practical. It was all a bit general.' (Female, PCSO)

'Training about taking your shoes off, it's not relevant, if I'm going into someone's house and I have to keep my boots on, I will keep them on whether they like it or not, obviously this is if there's a threat to life or property, but if I go there on enquiries that's absolutely a normal thing I would offer the person should I take my shoes off, I don't need training on this.' (Male, Constable)

'Here's some training, sit in a room with a trainer, they're going to tell you Gypsies and Travellers are an ethnic group and you've got to treat them fairly and you mustn't look at them all as criminals, bang back on shift...we want you to go out on to this unauthorised encampment and collect all the registration numbers...that's just completely rubbish the training.' (Male, Constable)

'I've had two training packages in lecture theatres. I found it quite patronising and antagonistic. It was very much geared around "we (the police force) have been told off because we have not been treating the GRT community properly and we are now going to overcompensate, and basically all of you have been getting it wrong"...I didn't like it, and in fact the first training package was so heavily criticised it was sent back.' (Male, Constable, Neighbourhoods)

One Sergeant describes the futility of the GRT training he's delivering within his force, while another officer expresses frustration that police forces often dictate what the training is about in line with their interests.

'Training is labour intensive and I've lost hope doing it...I've done it to a couple hundred of officers now and the ones who are receptive to it...understand it before I've even spoken; the ones who don't, I'm wasting my time. I think it might be a generational thing, generally speaking the younger cops, the probationers get it infinitely...the older, 25 years in, don't seem to get it.' (Male, Sergeant)

'Quite a few times I was asked to deliver training myself to new recruits on GRT, but I have to admit, especially at the beginning, I was indirectly forced into delivering what they [police force] wanted to hear, and that's very often the case where they tell you to talk about the cultural aspects...and examples like John Coxhead's book about the traditions and the culture which are no longer the case.' (Male, Constable)

Despite many officer's frustrations and misgivings, some still thought the training they received was useful, while a majority of those who did not receive training thought they would benefit from it.

'I would say our GRT training is excellent because it really does put you in ethical situations...I've worked for people who've made decisions based purely on the fact that they're that community and tarred them with the same brush, because that's what we've always done and no one's ever challenged that.' (Female, Sergeant, Neighbourhoods)

'I haven't had any training on my role...I think the police should offer a bit more training specific to GRT.' (Female, Constable, GTLO)

'No, I didn't get any training, wish I had, but then I think sometimes going onto the site the way I did was kind of a baptism of fire, but it was good because I had no preconceived ideas, I went in with my eyes completely wide open.' (Male, Constable, GTLO)

As mentioned above, most officers favour interaction with the GRT communities over formal training without them, revealing an appetite amongst officers to properly engage with GRT individuals on the ground. This intention marries well with the overwhelming majority of community members who prefer what they describe as 'normal, everyday treatment' over 'special treatment' from the police.

Given that both community and police respondents overwhelmingly believe that the police do not understand the issues affecting GRT communities, there is clear need for the police authorities to address this through appropriate training which focuses **on change impact assessment** to address this. Without doing so, the police are in danger of failing to comply with their statutory duties under s149 of the EA to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6. Attitudinal survey of police officers and community members

Alongside the 31 qualitative interviews, respondents were also asked to respond to eight attitudinal survey statements (see appendix A and B) extrapolated from the ONS crime survey for England and Wales.⁵⁹ The statements were used with both community members and police officers to measure attitudinal differences towards relationships, policing issues and building trust.

While all the survey statements in the police questionnaire were generic (i.e. 'The police treat GRT fairly'), the statements for figures 5, 6, 9 and 11 in the community questionnaire were presented in the first person (i.e. 'I have confidence in the police in this area'). A consequence of this is that community responses in figures 5, 6, 9 and 11 show a slightly more favourable attitude towards the police compared to other figures, reflecting findings in the qualitative study where a majority of interviewees describe themselves (personally) as confident engaging the police but describe the wider GRT communities (generally) as being less confident.

Relationships

Figure 5 reveals stark differences between police and community perspectives of fair treatment. This reflects data from the qualitative study which found that even individual community members who had good relations with local police often felt that wider police treatment of GRT communities was unfair.

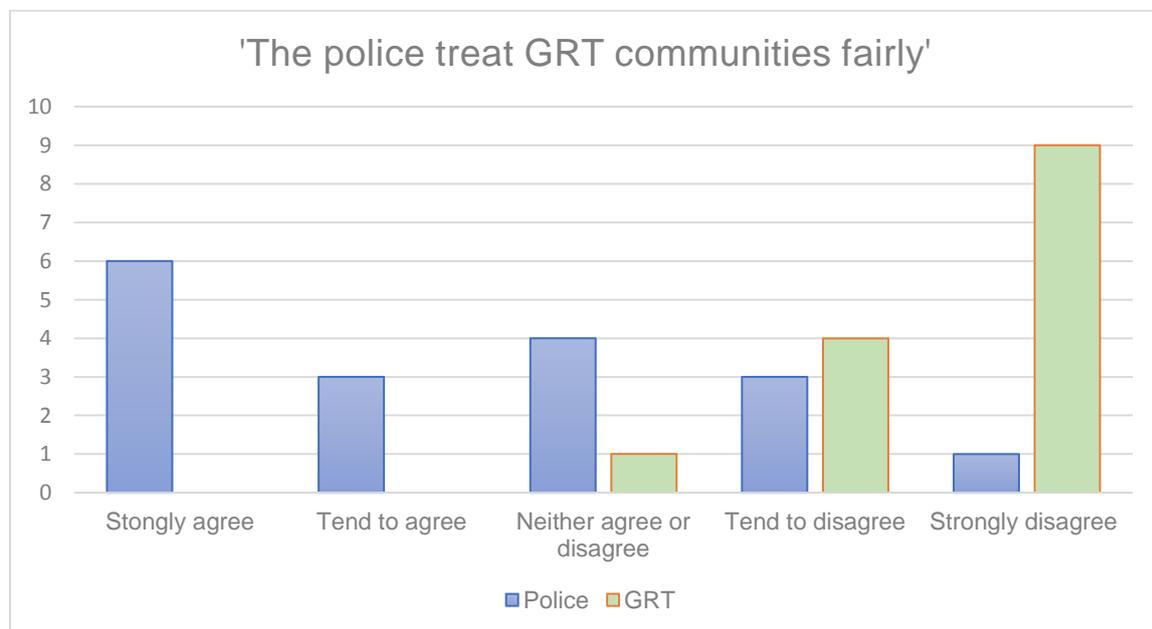


Figure 5: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police treat GRT communities fairly'

Figure 6 shows a majority of police and just under half of community respondents are in agreement that the police treat GRT communities with respect; however, the

same number of community members and just under a quarter of police officers still disagree with this statement in varying degrees.



Figure 6: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police treat GRT communities with respect'

Figure 7 sees something of a consensus amongst police and community respondents who neither agree or disagree with the statement 'GRT communities treat the police with respect'. More community than police respondents believe that GRT communities don't treat the police with respect.

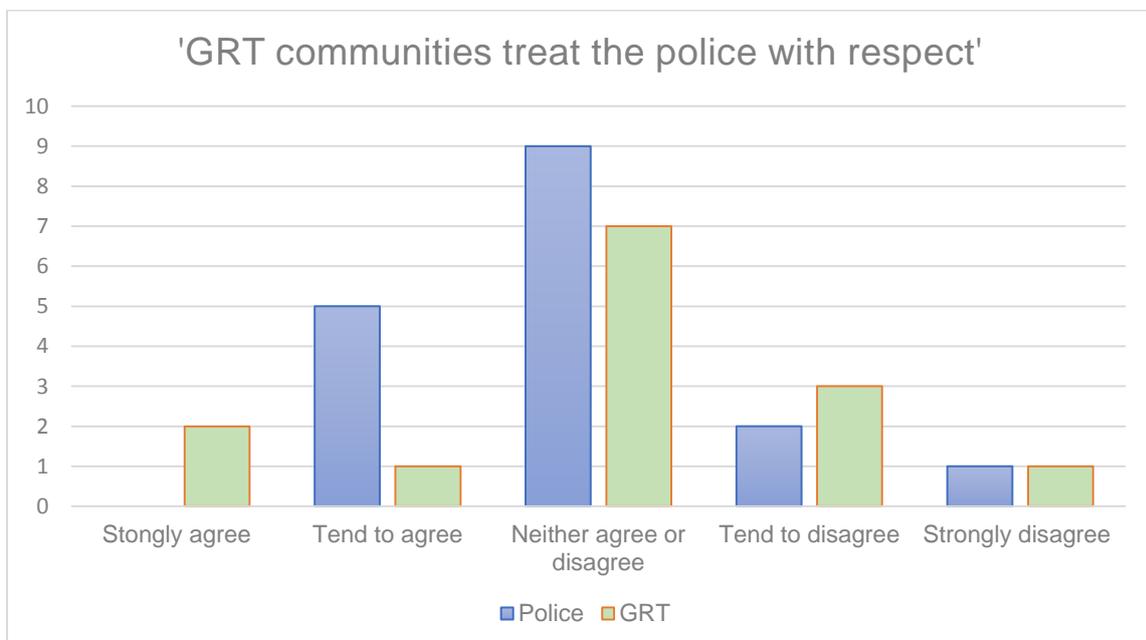


Figure 7: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'GRT communities treat the police with respect'

Policing issues

In figures 8 and 9, GRT respondents clearly don't believe the police understand or are dealing with the things that matter to the communities, nor do the police appear to be confident in these areas. In figure 10 there appears to be a broader agreement on the reliability of the police; however, a small majority of community members still believe they can't be relied upon.

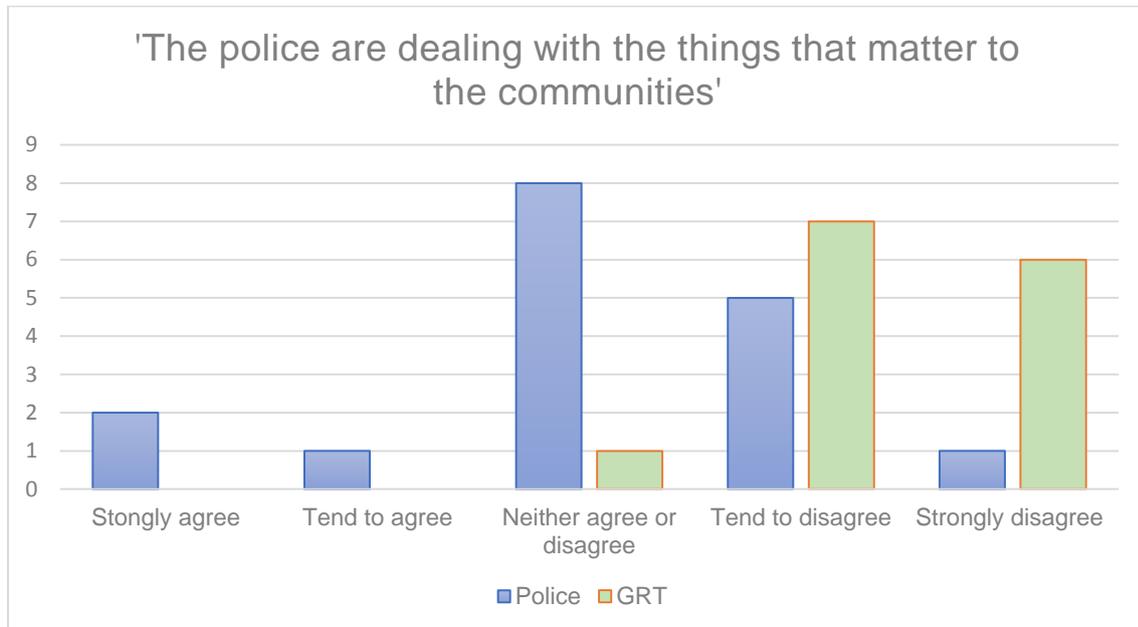


Figure 8: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police are dealing with the things that matter to the GRT communities'

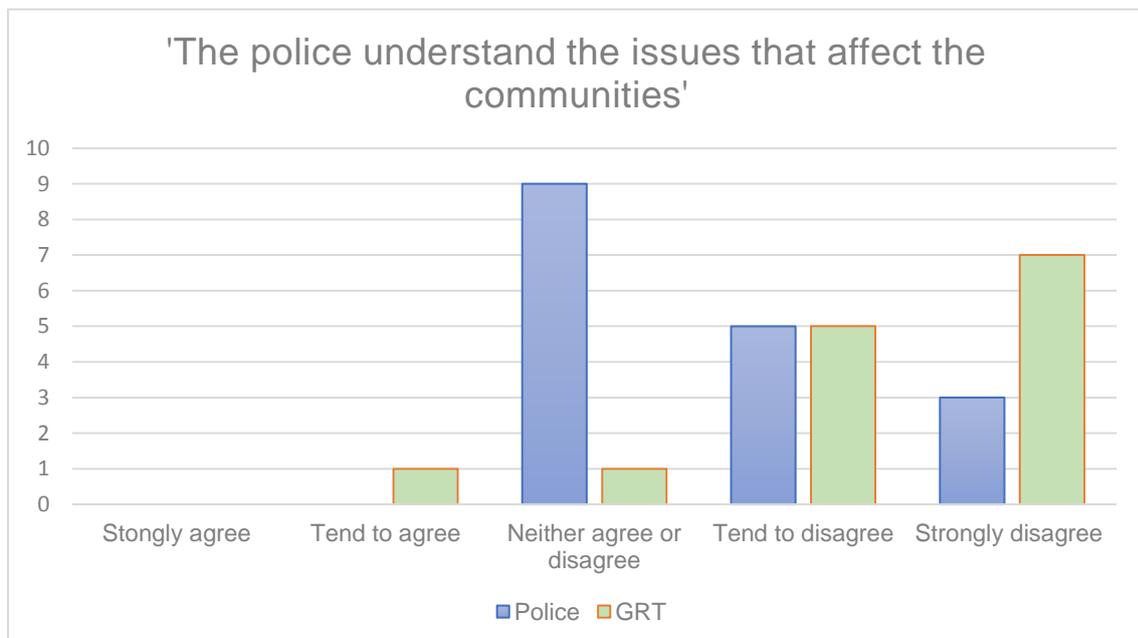


Figure 9: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police understand the issues that affect the GRT communities'

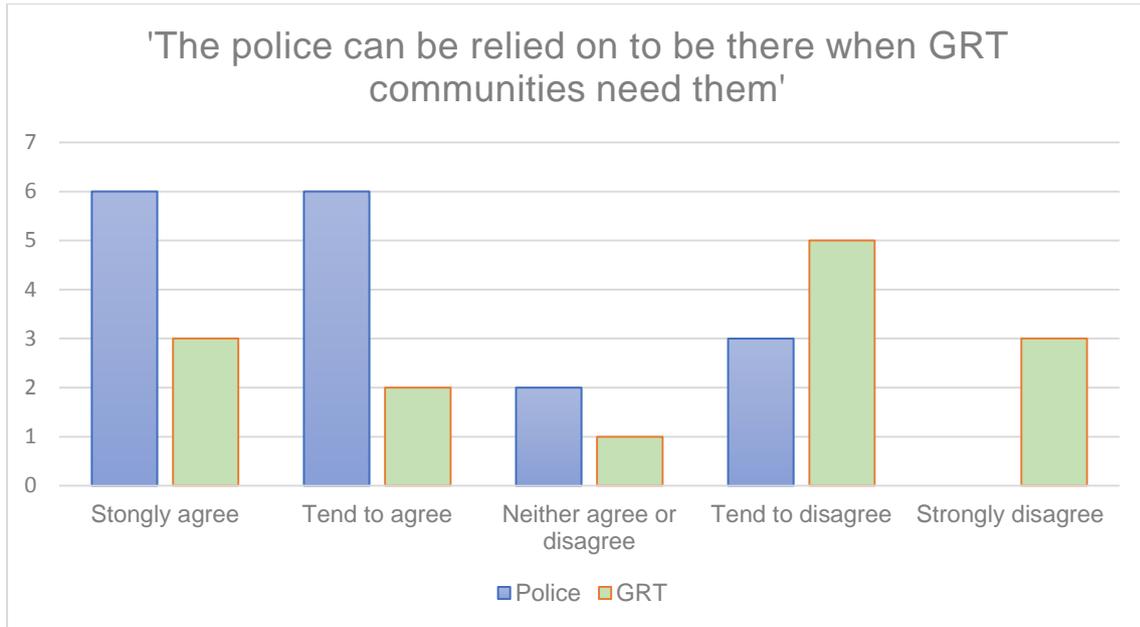


Figure 10: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police can be relied on to be there when the GRT communities need them'

Building Trust

There is a strong consensus from community and police respondents in figure 11 that the police are not trusted by the GRT communities. Likewise, in figure 12 most police and community members do not believe the police have the confidence of the GRT communities. Interestingly in figures 11 and 12, more community than police respondents agree that the police are trusted and have the confidence of GRT communities.

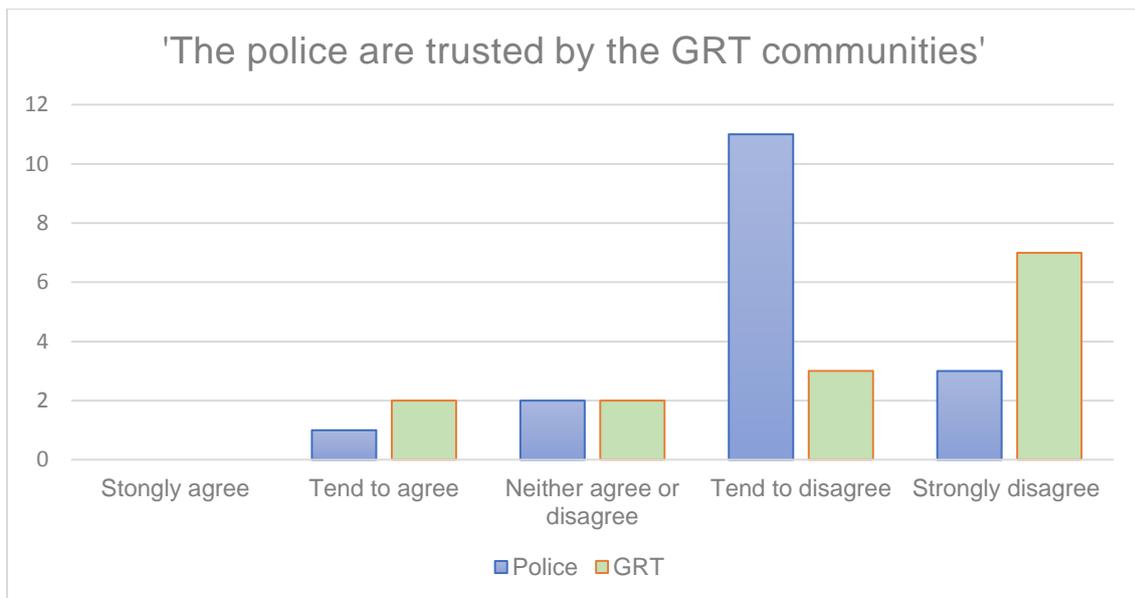


Figure 11: Responses by police and GRT community members to the statement 'The police are trusted by the GRT communities'

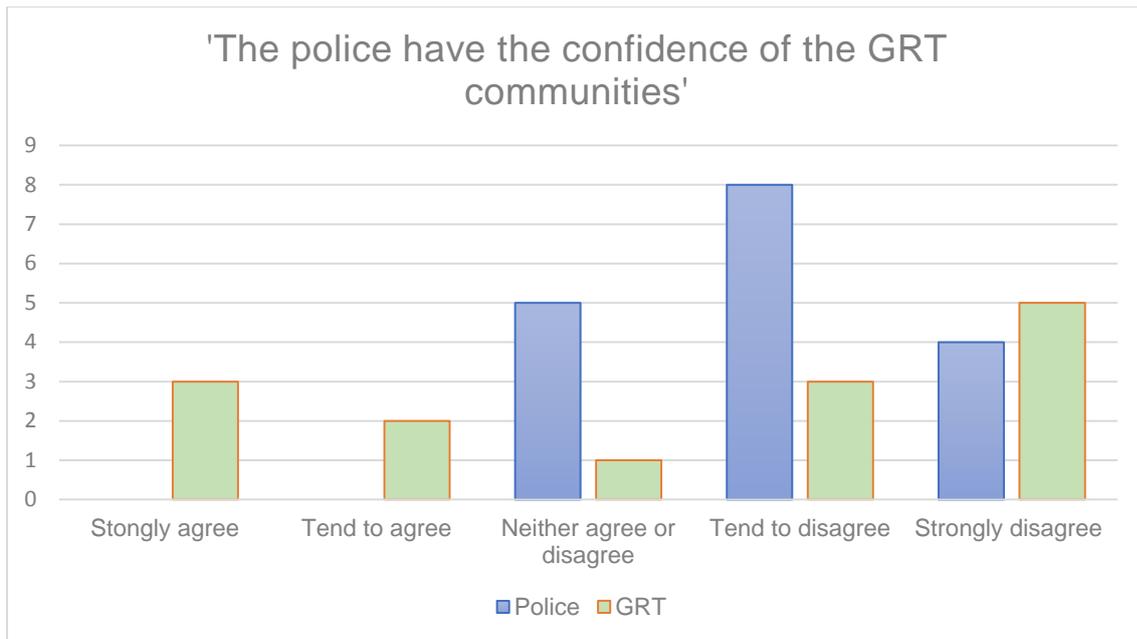


Figure 12: Responses by police and community members to the statement 'The police have the confidence of the GRT communities'

7. Conclusion

This research has indicated that a majority of police and GRT respondents believe relations between them are improving. This is undoubtedly good news; however, when compared to other groups with protected characteristics, GRT communities are still a long way behind. As one police officer put it, GRT communities are still 'right at the bottom, and very far at the bottom - off the list to be honest'.

The research has revealed some worrying and persistent trends, such as a focus on enforcement over engagement, generally low confidence amongst wider GRT communities and police officers, and unconscious bias, racism and discrimination in the police service.

In particular, this report has outlined:

- the potentially discriminatory nature of GRT-enforcement roles as defined in many forces' Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers' job descriptions
- anecdotal evidence of heightened police responses to callouts to incidents involving GRT people compared to those involving non-GRT people
- accounts of a failure of internal police disciplinary procedures to address anti-GRT racism within the service.

The report has also highlighted that both members of a GRT community and the police often find themselves to be in an uncomfortable position, as though being a GRT police officer is inherently incompatible. GRT officer respondents have reported the challenges of working within the service and reluctance to reveal their ethnic identity to colleagues. While both officer and community respondents recognise the importance of recruitment and visibility of GRT officers in building trust, unless marginalisation within the ranks, discriminatory language and anti-GRT racism are taken seriously and investigated by senior staff, this will remain a barrier to GRT recruitment and retention.

It is imperative that any recruitment or retention initiatives are led from the top and create an environment which ensures that GRT officers entering the police service can be open about their ethnicity and do not feel the need to conform to a police culture which contradicts and undermines that identity.

The Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer role needs to be reviewed. The *raison d'être* for the police is to uphold and enforce the law. To have a role which is focused on an ethnicity suggests and reinforces the idea that this ethnicity needs more 'enforcement' because GRT people commit more crime. TM believes that this has dangerous ripple effects and legitimises anti-GRT stereotypes.

GRT communities and individuals will not be surprised by the findings of this report. Many GRT people have a deep distrust of the police and a lack of belief in the fairness of the police as an institution. It is clear that the relationships between members of GRT communities and the police need to be improved. Even community respondents who defined their relationship with local police as 'good', still felt that the wider treatment of GRT individuals and communities by the police was unfair. It is critical that trust exists between the police and community members and that police practice with regard to the treatment of GRT communities is not only fair and measured, but *seen* to be fair and measured.

Yet, in the face of these challenges there appears to be a growing appetite on all sides to make things better, with increasing evidence of police forces proactively engaging the communities and reviewing policing methods, alongside the expansion of GRT-led advocacy and activism

Many police and GRT respondents expressed a clear desire to affect positive change. The fact that the police forces featured cooperated with the research, suggests in itself a willingness to move forward and address issues that have blighted relationships in the past.

TM supports the police in taking positive steps to engage with GRT communities in a meaningful way. The report includes positive examples of neighbourhood policing and police-led community projects (e.g. football or boxing clubs). In order for these models to be developed, they should be piloted and examined to assess impact on local relations.

The police service has a duty to reflect honestly and openly on its current practice and how it affects GRT communities. It needs to take into account the generational cycle of mistrust and how this compounds the challenges it faces in improving its

service to the GRT communities and its relationships with them. Emphasis should be placed on training for officers in non-discriminatory practice and unconscious bias; GRT people have voiced a wish to be policed in the same manner as everyone else. This can only be done if officers – both at the top of the ranks and the bottom – acknowledge the institutional discrimination within the service and commit to eliminating it.

In this regard the police authorities are assisted by their s149 EA duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Taking steps to fully comply with these statutory duties will assist them in building trust, addressing institutional discrimination, and improving engagement and interaction with the GRT communities.

With budgets being cut, police forces will have to do more with less and consequently they will have to learn to do things differently. There is no education like adversity, and over-policing of GRT communities is a common theme running through this report, with many police and community respondents describing it as unnecessary. A Romany Gypsy respondent on a private site aptly remarked ‘you know, if money was still abundant they would still be kicking the doors in.’ Prioritising community engagement over enforcement is an opportunity for forces to build trust with the GRT communities at the same time as reducing demand.

Third sector organisations such as TM have a critical role to play moving forward and developing the positives from this research through relationship building, advocacy and training. The recommendations in this report will be taken forward by TM in order to promote positive change for police forces and community members alike. TM commits to collating, developing and promoting models of good practice in collaboration with the police and other stakeholders.

As one sergeant interviewee noted, her ‘job could be made easier’ by an improvement in the relationship between the police and the GRT communities. Specifically, more positive relations and higher levels of trust with GRT communities would ensure that police officers are better able to do their job. A more positive relationship with the police would increase access to justice for GRT communities, giving them an effective police service and the support they need which most other parts of society simply take for granted. There are significant common gains in ensuring a more positive relationship.

For any of the above ideas and recommendations to be successful, the police and communities need to recognise and address current, and historical, prejudice and maltreatment. Without an open discussion on this central issue, the traumas and prejudices of the past and present will continue to cast a long shadow over future relations.

Appendices

Appendix A: Community interview: Questionnaire and discussion guide

1. Introductions

- Thank you for participating – Introduce yourself and TM (build rapport) – Stress that we are an independent charity (not working for the police, government etc)
- Explain the purpose of the discussion and research – emphasise that all opinions are valid and there are no right or wrong answers (they are the experts and we're here to listen)
- Emphasise confidentiality – all responses are anonymous and that their details will not be passed on to anyone
- Check it is okay to digitally record the discussion so we can write it up afterwards – again emphasise that it is entirely confidential and the recording will be deleted when the project is complete

2. Personal details and accommodation

Gender

| | |
|------|--------|
| Male | Female |
|------|--------|

Age

| | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| Under 15 | 16 to 24 | 25 to 39 | 40 to 59 | Over 60 |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|

Ethnicity

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|------|------------------------|
| English Gypsy | Irish Traveller | Scottish Traveller | Welsh Gypsy | Travelling Showperson | Boat Dweller | Circus Traveller | Roma | Other (please specify) |
| New Traveller | | | | | | | | |

Accommodation type

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| House/flat (private) | House/flat (LA) | Traveller site (private authorised) | Traveller site (LA) | Traveller site (private unauthorised) | Roadside |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|

How long have you lived at this address?

| | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| Under 6 months | 6 months - 1 year | 1 - 5 years | 5 - 10 years | Over 10 years |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|

3. **Core questions:** For each question probe into why they think this? What experience it is based on? Ask their opinion wider GTRs experiences and perspectives?
- I. **When I say 'police' what's the first thing that comes to mind?** This maybe safety and security, danger and apprehension (i.e. the police can be relied on to keep us safe, they are perceived as a threat)
 - II. **How would you describe the relationship between GTR and the police in your area?** Relaxed and trustworthy, nervous and confrontational?
 - *What's the nature of you contact with them? (i.e. incident response, neighbourhood/community policing, criminal investigation, traffic)
 - * How much contact have you had with the police?
 - III. **(Y/N answer) Do you feel comfortable/confident engaging your local police?** (i.e. Day-to-day relationships, reporting crime, making a complaint)
 - *Do you think relations with the police have improved or got worse since you were a child?
 - IV. **(Y/N answer) Do you think there are differences in how local police engage with GTR communities compared to other groups and wider society?** Do you feel you are treated fairly? Do you feel over-policed, under-policed?
 - *Are there differences in how they conduct community engagement (Y/N), investigate crime (Y/N) and respond to incidents (Y/N)?
 - V. **(Y/N answer) Do you think the views and attitudes of the wider public affect how the police treat you?** (i.e. Community groups running campaigns on GT sites, politicians making statements, stories in the media).
 - *Do you think this can influence culture within police forces?
 - VI. **Could you tell me about any good and/or bad experiences you've had with the police?** (your own/family's experiences)
 - * In what kind of situations has there been a positive interaction/result with the police?
 - * Ever been involved or been invited to be involved in a community policing initiative, (i.e. Independent Advisory Group, cultural awareness training)?
 - VII. **What do you think would improve relationships with the police?**
 - *Aware of any models of good practice?
 - *Would greater informal contact help (increased community policing)? Inter-agency approach? Working with GTR children (i.e. bike tagging scheme)?
 - VIII. **Anything else you want to tell me?**

4. Survey questions

- GIVE INTERVIEWEE EMOTICONS SHEET: Using the emoticons/smiley faces below, please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the police in your area
- FOLLOWING THEIR RESPONSE: I would also like to hear about why you think this and any other experiences you've had that have influenced your perceptions of the police on these issues

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree or disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree |
|  |  |  |  |  |

- IX. **The police in this area can be relied on to be there when you need them**
- X. **They would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason**
- XI. **They treat everyone fairly, regardless of who they are**
- XII. **They understand the issues that affect this community**
- XIII. **They are dealing with the things that matter to people in this community**
- XIV. **The police can be trusted**
- XV. **I have confidence in the police in this area**

- XVI. **Gypsies, Travellers and Roma treat the police with respect**

Appendix B: Police interview: Questionnaire and discussion guide

1. Introductions

- Thank you for participating – Introduce yourself and TM (build rapport) – Stress that we are an independent charity who work closely with NPCC, EHRC etc (i.e. Janette McCormick).
- Explain the purpose of the discussion and research – emphasise that all opinions are valid and there are no right or wrong answers (they are the experts and we're here to listen).
- Emphasise confidentiality – all responses are anonymous and that their details (name, force, or info that could disclose either) will not be passed on to anyone. Can leave out parts of personal details if concerned with disclosure.
- Check it is okay to digitally record the discussion so we can write it up afterwards (not for any other purpose) – again emphasise that it is entirely confidential and the recording will be deleted when the project is complete

2. Officer details

Gender

| | |
|------|--------|
| Male | Female |
|------|--------|

Age

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| 18 to 24 | 25 to 39 | 40 to 59 | Over 60 |
|----------|----------|----------|---------|

Rank

| | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Constable | Sergeant | Inspector | Chief inspector | Superintendent | Chief Superintendent |
|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|

How long have you been an officer?

3. **Core questions:** For each question probe into why they think this? What experience it is based on? Ask their opinion on the experiences and perspectives of the wider police?

I. **When I say 'Gypsy/Traveller' what's the first thing that comes to mind?** (i.e. travelling heritage and culture, ethnic minority groups, discrimination)

II. **How would you describe the relationship between GTR and the police in you area?** (Relaxed and trustworthy, nervous and confrontational?)

*What's the nature of your contact with them? (i.e. incident response, neighbourhood/community policing, criminal investigation, traffic).

*How much contact do you have with GTR?

*Do you think relations with GTR have improved or got worse in recent years?

III. **(Y/N answer) Do you feel comfortable/confident engaging GTR?**

*The latest Crime Survey for England and Wales shows GTR have very low confidence in the police: what are your thoughts on this?

*How do you think colleagues in your forces and other forces feel?

IV. **(Y/N answer) Do you think there are differences in policing GTR communities compared to other groups in your area? If so, what are the differences in community engagement, investigating crime and responding to incidents?**

*Are there barriers to the effective policing of GTR?

*How do you feel if you're called out to a GT site? (Are there differences policing GT sites compared to a housing estate?)

V. **(Y/N answer) Do you think the views and attitudes of the wider public affect how you police GTR communities? (i.e. Community groups running campaigns Traveller site issues, politicians making statements, stories in the media)**

*Do you think this can influence culture within police forces?

VI. **Could you tell us about any good and/or bad experiences you've had with GTR?**

*In what kind of situations have you had a positive interaction/result with GTR? (i.e. experiences/scenarios where confidence and trust have been built)

VII. **What do you think would improve relationships? If they don't need improving, please explain why?**

*Aware of any models of good practice? (informal contact, community policing etc.)

VIII. **Research has found that GTR are under-represented as victims of crime and over-represented as offenders; what's your opinion?**

*Do you think GTR are confident reporting crime to you?

*What types of crimes do they report?

*What's your experience dealing with incidents, crime, anti-social behaviour involving GTR?

IX. **Have you ever been involved in cultural awareness and/or other community policing initiatives targeted at GTR?**

*Was it useful? What would improve it?

*Did it influence how you and colleagues police these groups? *Were GTR involved in delivering the training/community initiative?

4. Questions relating to the Crime Survey for England and Wales

- GIVE INTERVIEWEE EMOTICONS SHEET: Using the emoticons/smiley faces, please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the GTR communities in your area.
- FOLLOWING THEIR RESPONSE: I would also like to hear why you think this, and about any other experiences you've had that have influenced your perceptions of the GTR communities on these issues

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Strongly agree  | Tend to agree  | Neither agree or disagree  | Tend to disagree  | Strongly disagree  |
|---|--|--|--|--|

- X. **The police can be relied on to be there when the GTR communities need them**
 - XI. **The police in this area treat GTR with respect**
 - XII. **The police treat GTR fairly**
 - XIII. **The police understand the issues that affect the GTR community**
 - XIV. **The police are dealing with the things that matter to GTR**
 - XV. **The police are trusted by the GTR communities**
 - XVI. **The police have the confidence of GTR communities**
-
- XVII. **Gypsies, Travellers and Roma treat the police with respect**

Appendix C: Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers' job descriptions

Twenty-three forces indicated they have dedicated GTLO or dedicated SPOC roles; 20 provided job descriptions and/or role profiles, 12 of which made specific reference to dealing with unauthorised encampments and/or place GRT communities alongside thematic issues such as anti-social behaviour, gangs, youth violence etc.

Six of the forces prioritise enforcement over community engagement in their job descriptions, while six prioritise engagement but still retain a focus on enforcement.

Example of roles which prioritise enforcement:

Northamptonshire Police's 'Traveller Liaison and Rural Crime Officer':

'To act as the police member of the Countywide Traveller Unit multi-agency team, contributing towards action at unauthorised encampments specifically using police powers, where appropriate to evict illegal encampments. To address all types of Traveller related issues within the county and to advise senior officers in relation to Traveller related issues and legislation. To provide forcewide expertise in relation to rural crime.'

Kent Police's Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer (acts as a single point of contact within the Gypsy Liaison Team (GLT):

'Act as the single point of contact within the GLT ensuring effective liaison with SCD for the policing of organised criminal gangs, receiving, assessing and researching intelligence from within Force, other UK Forces, National Crime Agency, UK Border Authority, HM Revenue and Customs and other relevant policing agencies, categorising relevant offences, undertaking research into offenders using all available systems, collating data, keeping packages up to date and building intelligence profiles on individuals until dissemination as required, in order to support the SCD in building central records on gang criminality and establish the requirements for intelligence packages to support investigators and the progress of investigations and operations...'

Essex Police:

To provide a police liaison point as a member of a multi-agency team. To action and address all types of Gypsy and Traveller related issues within the Essex police area. This includes delivering a consistent, assertive and proactive approach to all criminal enforcement issues related to Traveller encampments countywide and enforcement action against those who breach legislation. In addition, to provide support to other agencies dealing with welfare and human rights issues associated with Gypsy and Traveller communities...'

Warwickshire Police:

'I have been advised that the role is County wide and includes the following:

- Over seeing and managing unauthorised encampments in the County.
- Working in conjunction with the County Council Gypsy Traveller team.
- Working with identified points of contact within District and Borough Councils as land owners and private land owners to ensure that all unauthorised encampments are managed professionally, and any actions are proportionate and justified within the parameters of the law...'

Example of roles which prioritise community engagement over enforcement:

Avon and Somerset Constabulary:

'The role is two-fold around increasing the trust and confidence of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community in the police working with Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI), councils, and other charities and leading on the plans and policies of dealing with unauthorised encampments in partnership with local authorities.'

Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Police:

'To provide advisory support, training and operational support to CSPs in relation to Rural, Wildlife, Environmental & Heritage crime issues as well as Traveller and Gypsy liaison responsibility. To include co-ordinating multi-agency operations within rural areas and working with other partner agencies, public and internal departments to tackle and reduce the fear of Crime and Anti-Social behaviour in rural communities. To contribute to achieving the Force vision, purpose and values...'

Represent the Constabulary at local/regional or national level as required in relation to the core functions of the team (ASB, Traveller Liaison, and Rural/Wildlife/Environmental/Heritage Crime).'

Norfolk Constabulary:

'The role of the GRT officer is to support engagement with the community and to provide strategic advice, both internally and externally, supporting front line staff, statutory/voluntary and support groups. The role is that of advocacy, supporting the community relating to policing issues and promoting confidence in Norfolk Constabulary as a service. The officer in this role also meets with MPs and Crown Estates when there are contentious issues over land.'

Suffolk Constabulary's 'Emerging Communities Co-ordinator' tasks include

Developing strategies to address 'cybercrime, internet fraud, and gypsy and traveller liaison, gangs and youth violence' alongside building and developing community partnerships.

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