

# 'WHAT MATTERS TO US'

*Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people on what they want to see from the next government*

---



**FRIENDS,  
FAMILIES &  
TRAVELLERS**

# INTRODUCTION

---

In the run up to the General Election 2024, we launched an engagement campaign for Gypsies, Travellers, and Roma to share their views about what people want to see from the next Government.

The campaign ran from 11<sup>th</sup> May to 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

We received responses from 56 Romany, Irish Traveller, Roma, New Traveller, Boater and Showman participants.

Some people shared one key thing about what matters to them, while others shared a number of pressing concerns.

We have summarised common themes below, with some specific views shared in each section.



# PREJUDICE, RACISM AND HATE SPEECH

---

Many people called for societal prejudice and discrimination to be addressed through national campaigns and education programmes celebrating the cultures and histories of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller people. Similarly, a considerable number of responses condemned hate speech in the media and within politics, calling for improved regulation.

“

***‘Commitment from politics and the media to end the stigma against us and racial stereotyping.’***

”

“

***‘Foster partnerships with media outlets to promote balanced and fair coverage.’***

“

***‘Education of the wider public in order to foster a better understanding of Traveller cultures, our histories and encourage cultural understanding and less judgement and prejudice.’***

”

”

“

***‘Address negative stereotypes and misconceptions about Gypsy and Traveller communities through education campaigns [and] support initiatives that showcase the cultural contributions of Gypsy and Traveller communities to broader society.’***

”

“

***‘We should be allowed to live our lives the way we have been brought up without prejudice like we are getting from a number people in Parliament.’***

”

“

***‘Government to highlight and celebrate the fact that the UK has a...nomadic population that has lived in accordance with ancient ways of life and traditions again for many centuries, and that this adds a rich nomadic cultural heritage to the fabric of the UK.’***

”

“

***‘[Government] to step up help in the stopping of unwarranted and stereotypical discrimination (a major cause in GRT mental health decline and suicide).’***

”

“

***‘I would also like to see the government challenging racism and prejudice against Travellers at a local authority and small council level.’***

”

“

***‘Prejudicing the local communities and leading to the denial of our heritage and traditions. This forces some groups to give up completely and try to live in bricks and mortar.’***

”

“

***‘I think there is work to be done on educating and raising awareness of the gifts that our communities bring in terms of custom, tradition and nature.’***

”

# INCREASED NUMBER OF SITES AND STOPPING PLACES

The majority of people who shared their views called for more sites and stopping places.

“

*‘We don’t want to be stuck in houses. We want to live how we’ve been brought up in trailers wagons up and down the road and on our own yards.’*

”

“

*‘Site provision for nomadic people, transient and permanent. Easy access to public transport so people are not left isolated on sites.*

*Services...to use along with everyone else, including those who don’t have a permanent address.’*

”

“

*‘More stopping places and less harsh rules/laws surrounding travelling.’*

”

“

*‘I would like to see stronger legislation put in place to encourage councils to create adequate provision for Travellers.’*

”

# IMPROVED QUALITY OF SITES

---

Some participants said the quality of sites needed to be improved. The location of sites needs to be well connected to local areas, sites need to be safe, clean, and free from environmental hazards with adequate facilities on both permanent and transit sites.

“

***‘Funding for better, energy efficient homes, even if home is a static caravan.’***

”

“

***‘Advocate for the environmental rights of Gypsy and Traveller communities, ensuring access to clean and safe natural environments.’***

”

“

***‘...increasing the space for existing growing families, and allowing for some green space for gardening for better quality of living and the environment. Transit sites - more transit sites need to exist, with correct facilities.’***

”

# NOMADIC RIGHTS

---

Many people called for the removal of harsh police powers against roadside camps.

“

*‘Home is (or should be) a place of comfort and safety be it four walls or wheels and the right of seizure is completely disgraceful. This is allowing fear and hopelessness to be rife in travelling communities.’*

”

“

*‘...less harsh rules/laws surrounding travelling.’*

“

*‘More sites and stopping places for Travellers to live quiet and peaceful, nobody to bother them and move them on all the time.’*

”

”

# FAIRER PLANNING SYSTEM

---

“

*‘Planning not refused on spurious grounds such as anti Traveller bias from locals’*

”

“

*‘Ease planning policies on Travellers that buy their own land to dwell.’*

”

“

*‘Permission to stay on my own land.’*

”



# BOATER-SPECIFIC CONCERNS

---

Itinerant boaters who gave their views for this campaign shared many of the concerns already discussed, adding some specific issues of concern to people living on canals and waterways.

“

*I would like the next government to reassess the arrangement with Canal and River Trust who manage many of the UK's waterways. Currently, due to reduced central funding, CRT are failing to maintain the waterways to a standard necessary for continuous use and are penalising Boaters by raising license fees exponentially.*

”

“

*[Government departments should work] together to prevent Bargee Travellers from losing their homes or being financially penalised in enforcement action that is out of all proportion.*

“

*'Clean waterways and access to clean water [and] a freeze on rising electricity on private tariffs and a freeze on [mooring] fees and boat licences.'*

”

”



# IMPROVED EDUCATION FOR GYPSY, ROMA, AND TRAVELLER PEOPLE

---

“

*‘Good access to education for our young people.’*

”

“

*‘I would like better education for the children of a Traveller Gypsy background’*

”

“

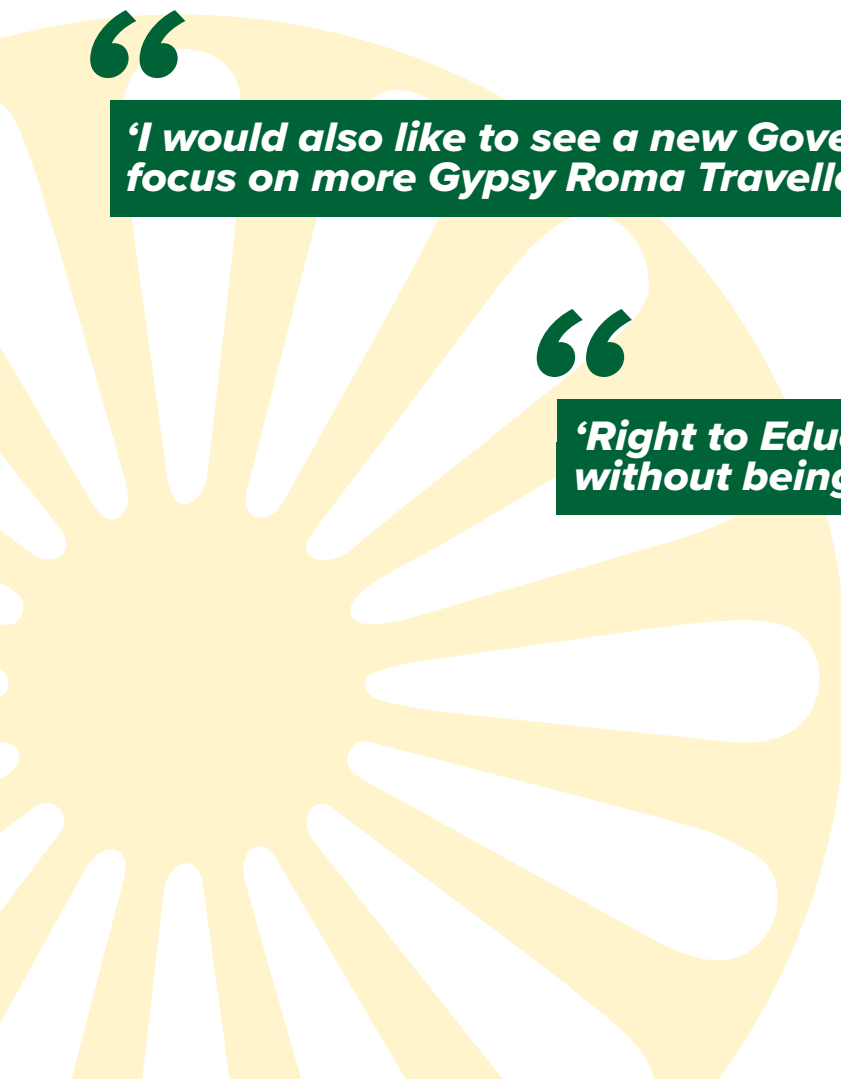
*‘I would also like to see a new Government put focus on more Gypsy Roma Traveller education’*

”

“

*‘Right to Education for Children and Adults without being singled out.’*

”



# INCREASED ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR NOMADIC PUPILS

---

People who responded to the survey called for a flexible education system which is more inclusive of nomadic cultures, allowing pupils to attend schools as they travel through an area.

“

*‘Some kind of system needs to be put in place for children, so when they travel from place to place, they can enter back into mainstream education with ease.’*

”

“

*‘...a more flexible education system that is designed for nomadic pupils.’*

”



# ADDRESSING RACE-BASED BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

---

Those who responded to the survey highlighted issues with racist bullying in schools and called for more to be done to create a safe, and inclusive environment for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people.

“

*‘Improve antibullying campaigns in schools, treat our young people with respect kindness and understand our communities.’*

”

“

*‘There needs to be serious efforts made to combat bullying towards students from [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller] backgrounds.’*

”



# ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE

---

People who shared their views highlighted issues with accessing primary care and the knock-on effect this has on their health.

“

***‘Equity of healthcare, the right of access to primary (GP based) and subsidiary healthcare services (dentist, etc.) as everyone else. This will lead to better health outcomes as treatment will inevitably start earlier.’***

”

“

***‘If not taking a mooring, we usually move out of a GP’s area to another catchment every 2 to 4 weeks this has to happen to comply with [Canal & River Trust] requirements for continuous cruisers. Therefore, we cannot get continuity of care and in my case, 6 years of my medical records got lost and I was dropped from the breast screening recall.’***

”

“

***‘More outreach for mental health and general health care...More Traveller friendly doctors and midwives too!’***

”

“

***‘Tackling high suicide rates within the travelling community’***

”

# POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

---

People called for representation of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller people at all levels of government, and meaningful engagement in policy making processes.

“

***‘Travellers need representation in parliament... without members who make legislation the priorities of the many different Traveller groups will not be a priority for parliament.’***

”

“

***‘Encourage and support the participation of Gypsy and Traveller individuals in political processes at all levels. Lobby for the inclusion of Gypsy and Traveller voices in policy-making that affects their lives and communities. Establish advisory groups that include Gypsy and Traveller representatives to work with government agencies.’***

”



# EQUAL HUMAN RIGHTS

---

Participants shared strong views about human rights inequalities experienced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, particularly regarding the right to a private and family life and the right to live free from discrimination.

“

***‘This next government need to look out for all races and treat us with equality and rights.’***

”

“

***‘I would like to see a new Government put more focus on the rights of [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller] people and the...[communities].’***

”

“

***‘More support for LGBT Travellers’***

”



# INCOME AND BENEFITS INEQUALITY

---

Increasing poverty levels and costs of living was another priority area for those who shared their views. Some mentioned difficulties with the benefits system, and the inadequate incomes people are forced to live on – whether they are currently in work or not.

“

***‘We are being made to constantly reapply for benefits and subjected to inhumane treatment that is cruel under unnecessary.’***

”

“

***‘We need a rise in benefits due to the cost-of-living crisis we are living through.’***

”

“

***‘[There should be a] right to an adequate living standard’***

”



# YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

---

Four young Romany participants (aged 12-18) also shared their views through FFT's Youth Advisory Board. Asked what matters to them, and what they would like to see from the next government, youth representatives' priorities included:

## **COST OF LIVING AND FUNDING OF PUBLIC SERVICES**

- *Focus on sorting the cost-of-living crisis out such as decreasing the price of food.*
- *Reforming the tax system – tax energy companies and rich people to generate money for public services.*
- *Invest money so homeless people are better supported.*
- *More funding for drug support services.*
- *Stop the closure of swimming pools and open up more.*
- *Fund schools properly.*
- *More funding to ensure there is more mental health support.*
- *Invest in more youth clubs due to lots of youth organisations/clubs closing.*
- *Investing more money into road surfaces and therefore improving potholes.*
- *Make public transport free for young people.*
- *Stop corruption in business and government - stop overpricing items and pay workers fairly.*

## EDUCATION

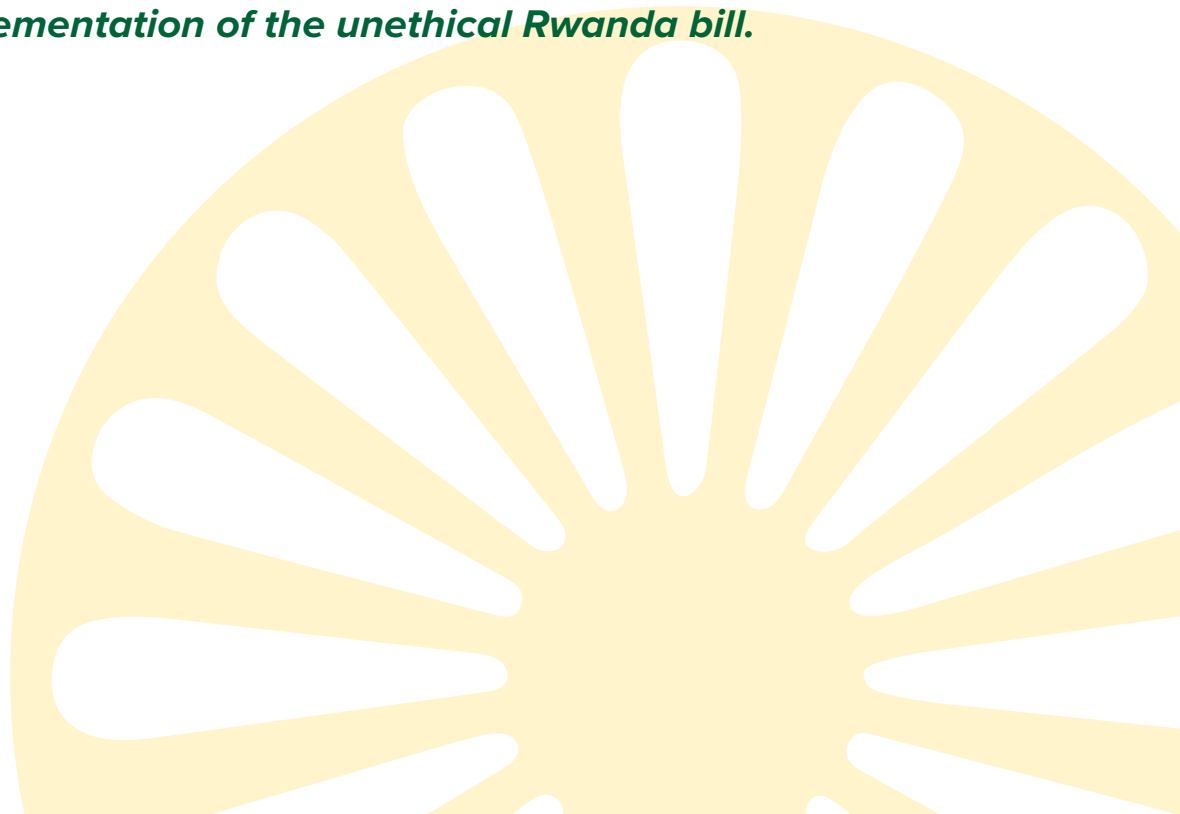
- *Design lessons in school about Traveller culture and awareness training to staff at school so teachers and their peers have a better understanding of Gypsy and Traveller cultures.*
- *Offer vocational subjects in education, such as hair & beauty.*

## ACCOMMODATION

- *Address poor quality and location of Gypsy and Traveller sites - generally sites are built on dangerous roads, next to tips, next to sewage works.*

## CITIZENSHIP, HUMAN RIGHTS AND WIDER SOCIETY

- *Reduce the voting age to 16.*
- *Put more restrictions on social media.*
- *Get rid of the powers in the Policing Act 2022, because it can risk families' homes being taken away, and family members receiving a criminal record.*
- *Stop the implementation of the unethical Rwanda bill.*



# VIEW OUR BRIEFINGS

---

Click on the boxes below to be guided to our briefings, where you will find recommendations to help address the issues raised by participants:

## HEALTH

Friends, Families and Travellers policy briefing on health inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities - [view here](#).

## ACCOMMODATION

Friends, Families and Travellers report '*Kicking the can down the road: The planning and provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England 1960-2023*', authored by Dr Simon Ruston MRTPI. - [view here](#).

## EDUCATION

Friends, Families and Travellers policy briefing on key issues faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in education - [view here](#).

## HATE

Friends, Families and Travellers policy briefing on key issues faced by Gypsy and Traveller communities in race hate and discrimination - [view here](#).





**FRIENDS,  
FAMILIES &  
TRAVELLERS**

# **FRIENDS, FAMILIES & TRAVELLERS**

**Friends, Families and Travellers works to end racism and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and to protect the right to pursue a nomadic way of life.**

## **Contact Details:**

### **Address**

Friends, Families and Travellers  
Community Base  
113 Queens Road  
Brighton  
BN1 3XG

**Telephone** 01273 234 777

**Email** [fft@gypsy-traveller.org](mailto:fft@gypsy-traveller.org)

### **Like us on Facebook**

[/FriendsFamiliesandTravellers](#)

### **Follow us on Instagram**

[@FriendsFamiliesandTravellers](#)

### **Follow us on Twitter**

[@GypsyTravellers](#)

### **View us on Youtube**

[/FriendsFamiliesandTravellers](#)

**[gypsy-traveller.org](http://gypsy-traveller.org)**