



Chief Constable Stephen Watson QPM
By email: Stephen.Watson@gmp.police.uk

25th November 2024

Re: The over-policing and violent restraint of Gypsy and Traveller children by Greater Manchester Police

Dear Chief Constable Stephen Watson QPM,

We are writing to you with deep concern about the actions of Greater Manchester Police over the weekend, involving the racial profiling, over-policing and violent restraint of Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller children. The incidents are utterly deplorable, and the victims and their families are experiencing significant distress, with concern and anger felt across the communities.

We have had numerous reports of Greater Manchester Police targeting and preventing young Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers, who were visiting the City Centre for Christmas shopping, from entering the market and other shopping areas. We are appalled that Greater Manchester Police made operational decisions which led to young people from minority ethnic communities to experience police violence and humiliation.

In addition to the criminalisation of Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller children, police forced the young people onto trains out of the city with no clear plans or provisions in place to ensure these children would reach home safely, after being targets of police action, the very institution that is supposed to ensure their safety.

For far too long, Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities have faced over-policing, discrimination and race hate, and are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. What happened over the weekend is not an isolated event, but a clear example of structural racism against Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities. Incidents of racism have an ongoing and reverberating impact.

As Chief Constable, we look to you for answers and expect changes to be implemented so that Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities can live in and visit Manchester without fear of retribution. There needs to be a full investigation into Greater Manchester Police's decision-making and actions over the weekend, as well as an apology for the distress and anguish caused to these children and their families. The incidents of the weekend need to be addressed, with an action plan developed to prevent further incidents of this nature.

gypsy-traveller.org

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Mann, CEO, Friends, Families and Travellers
Yvonne MacNamara, CEO, The Traveller Movement
Violet Cannon, CEO, York Travellers Trust & Chair Moving For Change
Dr Siobhan Spencer MBE, CEO, Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group
Betty Billington BEM, Chair of Kushti Bok
Debby Kennett, CEO, London Gypsies and Travellers
Billy Welch and Bill Lloyd, organisers of Appleby Horse Fair
Liza Mortimer, Project Manager, Travellers Times
Ellie Rogers, CEO, Leeds GATE
Jackie Duffy, CEO, Leicestershire GATE
Breege McDaid, Director, Irish Community Care
Rev. Canon Dr. Nichola Chater, Chair of Gypsy Roma and Traveller Friendly Churches
Rev'd Canon Jonathan Herbert, Chaplain to Gypsies Travellers and Showmen Diocese of Salisbury
Matt Smith, TravellerSpace
Reverend Roger Redding MBE, Trustee of Kushti Bok, retired Chaplain to Gypsies Travellers and Showmen for Salisbury Diocese
Paul Boucher, CEO, Lincolnshire Traveller Initiative
John Delahunty, Chief Executive, Innisfree Housing Association
Brian Dalton, CEO, Irish in Britain
Fionuala Bonnar, CEO, ICAP
Patrick Morrison, Chief Executive, Irish Community Care Manchester
Anthony Hanlon Chief Executive Leeds Irish Health & Homes
Marie Norbury, CEO, Irish Chaplaincy