

**Challenges in accessing public services  
for Roma, Gypsies and Travellers:  
Reflections over Time**

ESRC Seminar: Sheffield 21-22/3/13



Institute for Diversity Research, Inclusivity,  
Communities and Society

**Margaret Greenfields**  
Research Director IDRICS  
[m.greenfields@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:m.greenfields@bucks.ac.uk)

**society&  
health**

# Reflections on a Personal Journey

- Life-long (personal) contact with Gypsies/Irish Travellers
- Association with Travellers Aid Trust (and previously Festival Welfare Services) initially working with New Travellers (early 1980s onwards)
- Late 1980s – studying as a lawyer – special paper on site provision and evictions as part of my land law course
- 1990s – working at law centres and as a legal advisor – contact with Traveller and Gypsy clients (met Chris Johnson – 1996)
  - Housing/site issues
  - Family law matters
  - Social workers
  - Discrimination
- 1998-> studying for a PhD in Travellers and Social Work/S8 Children Act engagement
- 2000 – first expert witnessing in site provision cases (met Sarah C and Len Smith, 2001)
- 2004-05 – first GTAA (Cambridge) (Richard, Janie, Rob Home, Siobhan, Joe Jones )
- 2007 – health, housing research (met Jo, Judith and David, Patrice) – TAT reconstituted (Susan A)
- 2007-8 – employment research (Helen, Yvonne, Helena,)
- 2009 – EHRC review (Brian, Arthur)
- 2010 – TEIP
- And so it goes on.....>
- 2011 – initial engagement with Roma issues (met Dan + Pauline)
- 2012 – first Boater research

# Accommodation

- Between 1994 - present
- Legislative changes – 1994 CJPOA
- Decline in sites + increase in unauthorised encampments/developments
- 2002 New Labour multi-level policy review – positive changes in approach
- 2004 Housing Act
- GTAAs and slow increase in delivery of sites (predominantly privately provided sites)
- Increase in Central Government grants
- Post Coalition Government (2010) – decline in provision, increase in restrictive legislation, some continued consultation with GRT groups(?);
- European Roma Integration Strategies – emphasis on accommodation

# Gender + Employment

- Shift in employment practices (see presentation tomorrow) across time.
- Women (Gypsies and Irish Travellers) employed in field work, 'on the knock' and trading – 1960s-1980s. NTs – no gender specific employment practices 1980s-1990s
- Decline in 'traditional' employment Gypsies/Travellers 1980s -> New Traveller women (some) shift towards home-base setting e.g. horse-drawn
- Loss of significant levels of traditional employment with rise of regulation + East European migration for field-work/gang masters
- Increase in cultural/community employment (predominantly female) in 2000s
- Gradual increase in female educational attainment/remaining in education
- Roma women and employment practices – variance from EG/IT populations – language barriers, 'grey' employment?

# Health

- Significant and disproportionate variance in life expectancy
- Loss of traditional lifestyles/diets and more sedentarism leading to increased obesity
- Increase in awareness of Gypsy/Traveller health variables
- 2004 – Parry et al study
- DH engagement in health research/health exclusion
- Growth of health trainers + community health literacy
- Still no significant decrease in lost life years (see tomorrow's presentation – Van Cleemput) + rise in childhood obesity
- Health monitoring potentially more intrusive??
- Increase in access to health care for sited populations – huge increase in depression, anxiety and mental health issues (observable during research)
- Limited knowledge of Roma health issues to date

# Social Care + Social Workers

- Social Work involvement (and use of social services) taboo amongst all GRT communities.
- Anecdotally (rarely spoken about) higher rates of hostile SW engagement and fear of 'child snatching' (see paper Dan Allen tomorrow)
- 1980s-1990s – SW increase in interest in NT populations
- Involvement as a lawyer in cases where lack of accommodation (1990s) led to SW interest (+ NTs – taking 'to the road' perceived of as cause for intervention)
- Increase in equality discourse (Cemlyn as pioneer) around SWs and GRT populations
- Increase interest in engaging in a positive manner (teaching on GRT issues in universities ...)
- Increased awareness by EG/IT of + aspects of social care – although caution.. (DGLG work etc.)
- 2009-> Interventions and hostility towards Roma in child protection proceedings
- Full circle???? (with different populations under surveillance)

# Housing + Discrimination

- Less 'choice' in housing options – 1960s-> housing previously deliberate/intermittent choice for EG/ITs
- 1980s – increase in social exclusion – rise of NTs
- 1990s – CJPOA – forced settlement and minimised opportunities for nomadism
- Increase in 'awareness of' and hostility towards GRT populations with loss of inter-community connections (see Smith/Greenfields, tomorrow) + media discourse around 'out of placeness' of Gypsies/Travellers
- Repeated reports of discrimination/attacks on housed families + racism in work and education settings on the rise
- Roma migrants – hostile reporting/discrimination – (full circle??)
- Over-crowding/poor accommodation – Roma (and now with benefit cuts – other populations – targeting of Romanian migrants....?)