

The Traveller Movement briefing: Policing and Crime Bill: House of Lords, Committee Stage

Ethnicity monitoring in the youth justice system

Introduction

According to [HM Inspectorate for Prisons](#) (HMIP) both Secure Training Centres and Youth Offender Institutions (YOI) continue to hold a **hugely disproportionate number of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) children**. However, the youth criminal justice system still does not record Gypsies and Travellers, despite HMIP stating that this is **needed in order to address their needs relating to safety, behaviour, education and resettlement**.

HMIP have repeatedly raised concerns about this issue, asserting that if any other group had such a huge disproportionate there would have been a more formal inquiry and investigation into why this situation has occurred. **We fear that without official data from the youth justice service itself, overrepresentation of Gypsy and Traveller children will never be addressed.**

The Prime Minister's announcement of a racial disparities audit in August 2016 was very welcome. However, as most services – most pertinently the criminal justice system – do not have ethnicity recording for GTR **the “differences in outcomes” they face in criminal justice cannot be tackled.**

Amendment After Clause 145 Baroness Brinton

“Insert the following new Clause –

“Ethnic monitoring in the youth criminal justice system

“All youth criminal justice agencies using the 16+1 ethnicity code must replace the code with the 18+1 ethnicity code based on the 2011 Census”.

“Ethnic monitoring in the custodial institutions for young people

“All custodial institutions for young people must adopt the 18+1 ethnicity code based on the 2011 Census”.

Purpose of amendment

The amendments would update the ethnicity recording systems across the entire youth justice system in line with the 2011 census ethnicity categories known as ‘18+1’ and therefore include ‘Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ and ‘Arab’.

Overrepresentation in Secure Training Centres (STCs)

STCs are purpose-built facilities, originally designed to hold children aged between 12 and 14, although they may now hold boys and girls up to the age of 18.

The only statistics available of GTR children in STCs are from HMIP, the latest estimates indicate that **11% of children** are Gypsy, Traveller or Roma (**this is 100% greater than the 0.1% of the estimated proportion in the population as a whole**).

In Medway (Kent) and Oakhill (Milton Keynes) the number is 18% and 16% respectively. However, as organisations working with GTR people know the figure is likely to be even higher as many will hide their ethnicity through fear of discrimination.

Care needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in STCs

Gypsy and Traveller children reported greater levels of need and worse experiences in custody than other children. HMIP 2014-15 report found that Gypsy and Traveller children were:

- **Less likely to turn to a caseworker** if they had a problem;
- Four times more likely to **have their property taken by other children**;
- **Less likely to report that they had a care plan** setting out targets for them to achieve while in custody.

Previous research from HMIP ([2013-14](#)) also found that Gypsy and Traveller children were: Far **less likely to feel safe on the first night** and significantly **more likely to experience bullying**, particularly physical abuse.

Young Offenders Institutions (YOI)

Juvenile YOIs hold boys between the ages of 15 and 18. **One in twelve YOI detainees are Gypsy, Traveller or Roma.** In Keppel Unit, which is a “specialist centre for very vulnerable boys”, 15% are GTR – the highest proportion across the YOI estate.

As seen in STCs, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children needs in YOIs are far greater compared to the other young people. **GTR young people in YOI were:**

- Significantly **less likely to say they understood written English** compared to other boys;
- Twice as likely to **report having money worries** when they entered;
- More likely to **report substance abuse problems** (alcohol and drugs);
- Less likely to take part in “purposeful activity”.

The lack of ethnic monitoring in the youth criminal justice system means that these issues relating to safety, education and resettlement will never become priorities to be addressed.

Evidence from the adult prison estate

In 2011 the code ‘W3 -Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ was added to the P-Nomis monitoring system for the first time. The **Irish Chaplaincy, a leading charity in engaging with Gypsies and Travellers in prison**, state that ethnic monitoring has [led to many prisons now holding Traveller groups, appointing Traveller reps and holding Traveller history month events in an effort to promote inclusion.](#)

[Research from the Irish Chaplaincy Traveller Equality Project](#) also found that there is a real appetite among adult GRT prisoners to engage with education programmes (11% of [Shannon Trust](#) participants are GRT) and are more likely to see the benefit of education and vocational programmes for resettlement.

Without ethnic monitoring in the youth justice system, where education and support is even more vital, it is almost impossible to envisage improved outcomes for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children.

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