



## Hate speech can still be a crime, whether spoken or written

### WHEN IS WRITTEN HATE SPEECH A CRIME?

It is a criminal offence to publish words or pictures which are threatening, abusive or insulting and which either intend to stir up racial hatred or make it likely that racial hatred will escalate.

Illegal hate speech would include writing an article condemning Gypsies, Roma or Travellers and deliberately encouraging others to turn against them and commit acts of violence.

If the crime has been motivated by hostility or prejudice because you are a Gypsy, Roma or a Traveller, then the court can increase the punishment on conviction.

It is important to report hate speech to the police as it's the only way to tackle it and stop it. You can contact your local police by phoning 101 or by visiting your local police station.

**If you don't want to go directly to the police yourself**, you can use the [True Vision](#) website or you can contact one of the following organisations which can help:

<http://travellermovement.org.uk/index.php/hate-crime/third-party-reporting/>.

You can also complain about offensive comments posted below an online article. It is best to do this in writing.

If you are unsure or have literacy problems, contact Traveller Movement which can assist you to make a complaint and support you. See the contact details below.

*The information in this fact sheet refers to the law in England. It summarises the main points and is intended for guidance only. While every effort is made to ensure it is correct at time of publication it should not be used as a substitute for legal advice or for individual advice about your case. If you have any specific questions about any legal matter you should consult a solicitor.* 1

**A complaint about hate speech or other offensive words should be made to the newspaper or website which published it.** Here is an example of what you could say:

**URGENT – offensive article/racist comments**

Dear sir/madam

I wish to complain about the article [*title of the article*] which was published on [*date*] in your newspaper/online website.

*[For the published article say:]*

The article was inaccurate and misleading; it repeated stereotypes which describe Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals and communities in a negative, offensive light. I am proud to be a Gypsy/Roma/Traveller and your comments are hurtful to me and my community.

The article was inaccurate when it said [*extract from wrong information printed in the article*].

*[For the online comments say:]*

I would like to draw your attention to the online comments beneath your article [*title of the article*] which was published on [*date*] on your newspaper's online website; see copy attached.

You will be aware that Romani Gypsies and Irish Travellers are ethnic groups and are covered by the law relating to hate crime. Many of the comments include racist language and some in my view constitute incitement to racial hatred contrary to the Public Order Act 1986. Please remove the offending comments immediately and let me know once this has been done.

*[Both:]*

In addition, **I ask you to publish an apology and a correction and clarification at the next available opportunity.** I look forward to hearing from your response.

Yours sincerely [*Your name*]

If you are unhappy with the newspaper's response to your complaint, write again and appeal.

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