



# **Room To Roam**

## **England's Irish Travellers**

*A report of research, by Dr. Colm Power*

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## Contents

Title	
Contents	
Acknowledgements	
Key to referencing system	
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Who are Irish Travellers?	
1.2 Traveller demographics	
1.3 Select review of literature	
1.4 Travellers and assimilation in twentieth century Britain	
1.5 The mediation of anti-Irish Traveller racism	
1.6 Particularly vulnerable sections of the Irish Traveller population	
1.7 Aims and Objectives of Research	
1.8 Research Brief	
1.9 Summary and comments	
<b>2. ACCOMMODATION AND ECONOMY</b>	
2.1 Introduction	
2.2 Legal background to Travellers' accommodation situation	
2.3 The current legal situation	
2.4 LA sites: Barry Site in Gander Borough	
2.5 Site management by LA coercion	
2.7 Travellers and the settled Irish community in Britain	
2.8 Homeless Travellers and housing	
2.9 Fleeing domestic violence	
2.10 Plots, planning and sedentarism	
2.11 Illegal Irish Traveller encampments	
2.12 Traveller economies	
2.13 Summary and comments	
<b>3. HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE</b>	
3.1 Introduction	
3.2 PCTs: The new primary healthcare regime	
3.3 Healthcare access for Irish Travellers	
3.4 Irish Traveller family's healthcare	
3.5 Family access to secondary and specialist healthcare in hospitals	
3.6 Environmental health	
3.7 Traveller men's health	
3.8 Mental health	
3.9 Social Services Departments (SSDs) and Irish Travellers	
3.10 Homeless Traveller children and SSDs	
3.11 SSDs that work for Travellers?	
3.12 Summary and comments	
<b>4. TRAVELLERS' EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b>	
4.1 Introduction	
4.2 Education support for Travellers	
4.3 LENC, Painham and Gander Traveller education delivery perspectives	
4.4 Irish Traveller's under-achievement and absence in LA and RC schools	
4.5 Excluding Travellers from schooling	
4.6 Secondary Education and Training	
4.7 Summary and comments	
<b>5. POLICING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE</b>	
5.1 Introduction	
5.2 Policing Irish Travellers in SEEM and LENC	
5.3 Operational policing and Irish Travellers	
5.4 Police diversity training and Irish Travellers	

- 5.5 Community Policing and Irish Travellers
- 5.6 Irish Travellers in the Criminal Justice System
- 5.7 Youth Offender Teams (YOTs) and youth justice
- 5.8 Dealing with complex Irish identities
- 5.9 Good YOT practice with Travellers
- 5.10 Probation pre-sentence reports (PSRs) and sentence outcomes for Travellers
- 5.11 LENC Probation Service responses
- 5.12 Travellers' Prison experiences
- 5.13 Summary and comments

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Ethnic Monitoring Key
- 6.2 Key strategic recommendations
- 6.3 General recommendations
- 6.4 Central and Local Government (and associated agencies)
- 6.5 Voluntary and Statutory sector support
- 6.6 Accommodation and economy
- 6.7 PCTs, GP Surgeries and Hospital Trusts recommendations
- 6.8 Social Services Departments (SSDs)
  - 6.8.1 Other Services
- 6.9 Education and Training
- 6.10 The Criminal Justice System and Travellers

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books, Articles, Reports and Websites

## 8. APPENDICES

- Appendix I: Background to the Research Project
- Appendix II: Historical background to nomadism in Europe
- Appendix III: Primary research respondents' background and competences
- Appendix IV: Main organisations and research locations in report
- Appendix V: List of primary research respondents referred to by name in report
- Appendix VI: Data collection methods and reflections on their practice
- Appendix VII: Using appropriate research methodologies

## 9. KEY TO REFERENCING SYSTEM

All academic references are given in this text using the Harvard system: author, year of publication and page numbers where appropriate in curved brackets, eg. (Power, 1990: 24). Primary research interview material is differentiated in this text from other references by the particular respondents' assumed name or description and the year the interview was conducted in square brackets, eg. [Irish Traveller 2002]. All quotes taken from primary and secondary sources are indicated by the use of '*italicized*' text. Interviews were edited to remove extraneous material in order to make the interviews more readable (digestible) and to accentuate pertinent passages. Interviewers' questions have been removed where they are superfluous or detract from the research respondents' narrative – where interviewers' questions are included in italicized respondents narratives they are rendered in 'normal' print type. Comments in square brackets, eg. '[sic]', contained in either research interview quotes or secondary quotes are the report author's own comments.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Who are Irish Travellers?

This brief historical perspective outlines recent Irish Traveller migration to Britain and explains the social, legal and administrative contexts that impact on Travellers' lives underlining the necessity for this research report. Irish Travellers refer to themselves as 'Pavees' or 'Minceir'. They are an indigenous nomadic minority group in Ireland (south and north) and Britain.<sup>(1)</sup> They have been part of Irish and British society for many centuries according to historical sources (McDonagh and McVeigh, 1996; Fraser, 1992). Irish Travellers' distinctive way of life, values, culture and traditions manifest themselves in Traveller 'nomadism', the centrality of the extended family, their own language or 'secret patois', and the entrepreneurial nature of their economy (Ó Riain, 1997; LIWC, 1995; McCann et al, 1994). Irish Travellers, and indeed other Traveller groups, do not form discrete or homogenous ethnic categories in the sense that suit sedentary institutions and bureaucracies that tend to compartmentalise in order to generalise, but they can be better understood from without as 'a community of communities' (Parekh, 2000: 34). The extended family (or tribe) is the central organising unit while alliances (or disputes) within particular groups or with other extended families form the bonds or demarcations that link and divide these groups in a more general sense. Many Irish Travellers still speak their language known as 'Gammon' or 'Cant' – a combination of 'disguised' Irish and English words that uses English language syntax and sentence structure (Binchy, 1994). Irish Travellers use Cant/Gammon in conjunction with English and are sometimes very reluctant to divulge it to outsiders. Travellers use the language within their own community and in the presence of settled people in certain situations (ibid).

Travellers have also played a significant role in maintaining aspects of Irish culture such as music and storytelling, and have helped to reinvigorate aspects of the struggling folk music tradition in Britain. Rural settled people often welcomed Irish Travellers as a source of news, entertainment, consumer goods and as flexible seasonal agricultural workers before the advent of mass media, consumerism and telecommunications. They filled vital niches in the economy of pre-industrialised Ireland and parts of rural Britain up to the 1950s as they bartered, sold and recycled scarce consumer commodities. Historically, Irish Travellers have been employed in horse trading, seasonal farm-work, rural crafts, selling domestic goods door-to-door (hawking), and as tinsmiths and tradesmen. Many Traveller extended families had established regular migratory patterns that often stretched beyond national boundaries to sustain their lifestyle. One example of an Irish Traveller family (consisting of about thirty members) migratory pattern in the early 1950s was to cross from Ireland to north Wales for Spring lambing, then travel and work through the English Midlands to eventually reap the harvest in rural Lancashire. They would then return to the north of Ireland to spend some time with relatives and finally winter in Wicklow in the southeast before the cycle began again [Irish Traveller female interview 2002].

Since the 1960s urbanisation, mass production of cheap disposable plastics and other domestic items, and the mechanisation of agriculture changed the lives of Irish Travellers profoundly and undermined the basis of their rural economy in Britain and Ireland. Travellers migrated in large numbers to urban areas such as Dublin and the major cities in Britain (replicating the migratory patterns of settled rural Irish migrants) for employment opportunities from the late 1950s onwards (Gmelch and Gmelch, 1985) [Traveller interviews, 2000-2002]. The common feature of individual Irish Traveller economies is nomadism and self-employment. A combination of social separateness, nomadism, cohesive extended families, and a strong resistance to wage-labour underpin the nature and structure of the Traveller economy, differentiating it significantly from most of the settled community (Okely, 1994). Traveller's entrepreneurial skills adapted to new employment opportunities as the 'mainstream' economy changed and developed. Access to motor vehicles gave rise to new opportunities for commercial nomadism (ibid, 1980). This pattern is corroborated by a 1998 study in Ireland which estimates that up to twenty percent of the approximately 15,000 market traders in Ireland are Irish Travellers (McCarthy and McCarthy, 1998: 51).

As a consequence Traveller employment patterns have shifted to casual forms of building work, tarmacing, tree-topping, market stalls, gardening and scrap metal collection.<sup>(2)</sup> A minority have developed very successful businesses dealing in antiques, furniture, carpets and linoleum. Street begging and petty crime amongst Travellers is a minor concern, but Travellers as a whole have been routinely labelled as petty criminals by some settled people and sections of the media (Rutter, 1997; Acton, 1994b). Anti-Traveller racism and discrimination increased dangerously in Ireland after urbanisation and industrialisation in the 1960s and the breakdown of the old rural hierarchical, but also mutually beneficial, relationships between settled and Traveller. Migration to the periphery of major cities in Britain has increased in the last half century as Travellers traditional economies have been modified by modernisation. Their nomadic rights have been severely curtailed by criminal justice legislation, commodification of marginal land, and settled people's resistance to their nomadic way of life. Conflict has arisen between urban settled denizens, municipal authorities, police forces, and Irish Travellers over modes of living and access to scarce resources (Sibley, 1995).

## 1.2 Traveller demographics

According to the Department of the Environment in the Republic of Ireland there is a total Traveller population of approximately 22,000 people in Ireland, or half of one percent of the total national population (O’Riain, 1997: 9). Liegeois and Gheorghe (1995: 7) have estimated Ireland’s Traveller population to be in the region of 28,000. Gmelch and Gmelch (1985) interpreted the migration of Irish Travellers into Britain as an adaptation strategy, driven by the processes of rapid urbanisation, agricultural mechanisation, and industrialisation in Ireland from the 1960s onwards. Travellers had been leaving Ireland, since the Great Famine in the 1840s up to the 1950s, due to diminishing economic opportunities in an increasingly depopulated and contracting rural Irish economy. Disparities in estimates of Traveller populations are usual across European states and often reflect negative attitudes of states and settled populations to ideologically disqualified, politically invisible, and socially marginalised nomadic groups (Clark, 1998). The large disparities in official population estimates can be partly explained by high internal mobility rates, but also by the (largely un-researched) phenomenon of Irish Traveller seasonal migration within and between Britain and Ireland (North and South), continental Europe, and even the United States.

Accurate statistics on Irish Travellers are difficult to obtain as they are not yet specifically defined as a separate ethnic grouping on Census forms in Britain.<sup>(3)</sup> Travellers and Gypsies who are deemed to be living in ‘settled’ accommodation are not enumerated in any way by the state, so that the inability of many Irish Travellers to live a traditional nomadic lifestyle due to anti-nomadic legislation and practices leads directly to their ethnic disqualification. Current Traveller population estimates by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) 4 are based on local counts of trailers on official sites or other ‘known’ unauthorised encampments carried out by Local Authorities (LAs). The ‘total population’ is extrapolated from the ‘estimated’ occupancy per trailer. This reporting procedure is non-mandatory and incomplete – no information is collected on specific Gypsy and Traveller population numbers, age, gender, or ethnicity - as a result no accurate government statistics exist for Irish Travellers in Britain (Hickman and Walter, 1997: 20-21). Recent government figures for England (ODPM, July 2003, [www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/information/index14.htm](http://www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/information/index14.htm)) indicate that 14,736 trailers were counted by LAs overall.<sup>5</sup> Of those, 3,976 were in unauthorised camps, indicating that just over twenty-four percent of all ‘counted’ Travellers and Gypsies have no legal stopping places and are constantly under threat of harassment and eviction with no secure place to reside.

Many Irish Travellers are now seasonally nomadic, preferring to winter in housing while risking the vagaries of travelling for work during the Summer months [Irish Traveller, Voluntary Support Groups (VSGs) and Traveller Education Services (TESS) interviews]. The above ODPM estimates do not include the large numbers of Travellers who are living either temporarily or permanently in settled forms of accommodation. Numerous ‘settled’ Irish Travellers have been forced from their traditional nomadic way of life due to lack of trailer sites and the virtual outlawing of nomadism in England and Wales initially by “Section 39” of the Public Order Act (1986) and later by the extended powers contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJPOA 1994). No official data are collected on ‘settled’ Travellers, but these supposedly assimilated Travellers still ‘travel’ through private, association and LA housing stocks, often moving between or within cities up to five or six times a year. Large disparities in population estimates are partly explained by high internal mobility rates, but also by the phenomenon of Irish Traveller international seasonal migration between Britain, Ireland and beyond. Both international seasonal and more permanent migration has not been researched academically in recent times but research interview evidence from Irish Travellers indicates complex patterns of migration related to particular modern Traveller economies and individual families’ responses to these opportunities [Irish Traveller interviews 2000-2002].

Since the CJPOA 1994 removed the statutory duty on LAs to provide sites, very few new sites are being built to compensate for site closures and Traveller population growth.<sup>(6)</sup> Population estimates for Travellers and Gypsies in the United Kingdom range between 90,000 and 120,000 (Niner, October 2002: 10). The age profile of Irish Travellers is exceptionally young: they tend to marry early and families average eight children, therefore the population is growing quickly (ibid, 2002: 9-10). Irish Travellers form a large proportion of the nomadic and semi-nomadic Traveller population in Britain. Recent research estimates that about 15,000 nomadic Irish Travellers live in Britain (O’Dwyer, 1997: 9). Again this estimate does not include ‘housed’ Travellers - often inaccurately assumed to be assimilated. The Irish Travellers interviewed on the ‘Room to Roam’ project who were at that time living in settled accommodation between January 2001 and the Census in June 2001 all indicated that they didn’t intend to return the Census form [Traveller interviews 2001]. This reaction was due mainly to their distrust of all official information gathering exercises. Irish Travellers are often institutionally and spatially invisible as a distinct ethnic community in Britain, relegated to ‘defiled’ and neglected inner city or urban peripheral areas whether sited or housed (Sibley, 1995: 72-88). The irony for Irish Travellers is that while they are an officially recognised ethnic group since August 2000 in England and Wales (O’Leary vs Allied Domecq cited in Discrimination Law Association, February 2002: 10) for the purposes of the Race Relations Act (RRA, 1976) and the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA, 2001), their nomadism and much of their traditional way of life is still criminalised.

### 1.3 Select review of literature

A substantial body of research about Irish Travellers has been conducted and published in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland over the past twenty years. This research has invariably raised serious concerns about the very high levels of poverty and disadvantage experienced by this community and has underlined deep concerns around the very poor health profiles, mortality rates, lack of suitable accommodation, social exclusion, and lack of provision and access to appropriate education, welfare and support services for Irish Travellers (see bibliography for details; see also Clements and Morris, 2001b). Much of the research referred to above is employed and critiqued throughout this report where it is deemed appropriate to particular chapters. The research reviewed below is chosen because it is directly relevant to Irish Travellers' experiences in England.

Little detailed research has been carried out in England into the particular welfare needs of Irish Travellers. Much of the research carried out has examined Gypsies and Travellers' needs in a 'general' sense without specific reference to the particular disposition or needs of Irish Travellers as a distinct ethnic group, or has treated Irish Travellers as an addendum to other indigenous nomadic groups or as a 'sub-group' of the settled Irish population in Britain. This research project treats Irish Travellers as a distinct ethnic group in their own right. The following paragraphs review some of the research undertaken that concentrated on Irish Travellers in England over the last twenty years.<sup>(7)</sup>

A 'London Strategic Policy Unit' report compiled by Debra L'Esteve (1986), a Policy Advisor on welfare benefits to 'The Travellers and Welfare Benefits Working Party' set up in June 1986 because of the serious concerns of Education Welfare Officers, Health Visitors and the Child Poverty Action Group about the treatment of Travellers, outlines high illiteracy rates, the racist attitudes of some benefit staff and related poor access to social security benefits by Travellers. As of 1985, Circular S50/85 required the Department of Social Security (DSS) to demand original birth certificates, National Insurance numbers and wage slips which Travellers often do not possess. These guidelines were issued because of assumptions made by the DSS that Travellers were committing fraud, though no evidence was produced to backup these claims. This heralded a move away from service delivery to investigation of fraud by the DSS. This policy was taken to extremes by the North London DSS who issued Identity (ID) Cards to be filled out by their staff when dealing with Travellers that required such information as hair colour, height, darkness/lightness of skin, and whether the claimant has a known criminal record, among others.

A 'Nomadic Claims Working Group' was set up by the DSS which involved developing a regional/national computerised record of claimants including physical appearance etc. During any fraud investigation, Travellers could receive 'Urgent Needs Payments' but these are lower than supplementary benefits. Travellers are also rarely informed by DSS staff of other benefits which they are entitled to such as 'Attendance Allowance'. The take up of 'Child Benefit' is proportionately much lower amongst Travellers and when supplementary benefit is assessed it is often assumed that Travellers have already claimed/received 'Child Benefit', therefore many Travellers lose out completely on this. Camden Citizens' Advice Bureau brought the existence of the DSS ID card system to light, and challenged it. Wood Green Citizens' Advice Bureau also challenged this ID card practice and eventually it was agreed that Travellers could pick up their claims from Wood Green if copies of birth certificates were obtained through the Wood Green Citizens' Advice Bureau. The report concludes that even when Wood Green Citizens' Advice Bureau had developed good working relations with Travellers around benefits issues, police actions undermined their work. A police raid resulted in all Travellers over the age of eight being arrested and fingerprinted. Stoppage of some benefits occurred due to this raid with no reasons proffered by the DSS.

Hyman (1989) emphasised disparity in access to health care between those living on authorised, legal sites and those on unauthorised encampments; the ability to register with a GP was much higher for those on a safe and permanent site. She stresses the importance of outreach work by health visitors for those without a legal site and remarks on the reluctance of GPs to make home visits to unauthorised sites.

'Rights for Travellers' (1995) produced by the London Irish Women's Centre (LIWC) surveyed LA provision for Irish Travellers in London. The report revealed that the Irish Traveller population has substantially increased in recent decades despite the CJPO Act 1994. Approximately 3,200 Traveller families (mainly Irish) in London did not have access to an authorised site in 1992, so Irish Travellers have been under increasing pressure to move into housing. The report points out that Irish Traveller children are more at risk of being taken into care and a social worker's visit to a juvenile detention centre in 1990 found eleven percent of boys there were Travellers. The report criticises popular assumptions that Irish Travellers are somehow getting 'a better deal' than settled people. This survey was distributed to thirty-three London Local Authorities (LAs) and twenty-two responded.

Most LAs had no standardised method of collecting data on Travellers. The report criticised the lack of security for Travellers' tenure on sites. Travellers pay rent and Council Tax but do not have equal rights with 'settled' tenants. In 1994 the highest rent charged (for a permanent licensed site) was in Hackney at £55 per week, while Harrow was charging £38.40 per week rent and £7 per week Council Tax. Brent council, as well as being the most expensive was also the only council to charge rent and Council Tax on a temporary site which was £68 for a double and £55 for a single pitch. Only six of nineteen LAs provided play facilities, nineteen of the twenty-two LAs surveyed provided water and electricity; nineteen provided flush toilets and refuse collections; sixteen provided amenity huts and ten offered a laundry service. Only Brent provided electricity on their temporary site. The report suggested a large number of Travellers are missing from official estimates because they rent private housing, while those in housing also tend to be more nomadic.

O'Dwyer's (1997) local work in London found that fifty percent of Irish Traveller respondents to a survey on a Brent LA site felt that the site was unhealthy. Poor skin conditions and rashes were common among site residents after moving to the new LA site. Some residents blamed the landfill underneath the site, others pointed to problems with the site sewage system. On another site surveyed refuse collection was said to be erratic causing problems with pests and other safety risks particularly for children playing near decomposing refuse. Some Irish Traveller women respondents suffered mental health problems such as stress due to their children having no play areas and nothing to occupy their time.

Gaffney's (2001) local investigation into the needs of Travellers (dealing mainly with Irish Travellers) in the London Borough of Southwark gives a comprehensive overview of the social needs and lack of provision and support that characterise most LA responses to the needs of Irish Travellers and Travellers generally. Accommodation was the highest priority need felt by Travellers in Southwark. Overcrowding on three sites has become a serious fire hazard, Sites lack basic amenities and repair, maintenance and cleansing were poor. Sickness and mortality rates are extremely high in the Traveller community with foetal and infant mortality rates running at between three and ten times the rates in the general population, while accident rates were very high. Problems occurred when accessing emergency treatment and in getting diagnoses of disabilities at the primary care level. Disabled access to equipment and benefits appeared to be minimal while carers lacked adequate support. Racist abuse and a lack of vocational training for teenage Travellers contributed to extremely poor school completion rates. Child care responsibilities and difficulties in accessing nursery education were a serious barrier to the participation in training and employment by female parents and childless young women. Consequently unemployment and reliance on casual manual work was high. Young Travellers were particularly at risk of becoming embroiled in the criminal justice system. Travellers were ill-informed of their rights regarding many welfare and support services.

This research also reports physical attacks on Traveller children, racist abuse and graffiti, and rejection of Traveller families by settled neighbours that were clearly racist, but Travellers are often unaware of the police and LA support and sanctions available in these cases. Gaffney (2001: 6) concludes that:

*The degree of marginalisation and disempowerment shown in this research suggests that many of the services required by Travellers in Southwark need to be earthed in community development. The development of women's support groups, childcare projects staffed by trained Travellers, a community arts programme and advice and advocacy services will meet community needs. Community development will also enable the targeting of services and support a joined up approach to delivering them. However the community has little or no experience of voluntary sector practices or of project management. They therefore need resources dedicated to intensive support in the short and medium term. This would aim to set up viable structures, access funding and begin developing projects. Their exclusion from regeneration funding to date indicates a considerable need to link Travellers into mainstream initiatives. They need to be represented in the planning and implementation of local initiatives ... and national initiatives such as New Deal and Health Action Zones. The community does not have this capacity at present.*

The above selection of research reports concentrated on Irish Travellers generally and were located in London areas. A much larger body of research exists in England, Wales and Scotland that deals with other Traveller and Gypsy groups or with all indigenous Travellers (Irish Travellers are a distinct recognised ethnic group in England). This body of research usually reflects to some degree the social marginalisation and service disqualification suffered by Irish Travellers as outlined above and in this research report, as does the considerable body of research carried out into the particular social situation of Irish Travellers in Ireland, North and South (see Clements and Morris, 2001b).

## 1.4 Travellers and assimilation in twentieth century Britain

Repressive anti-Traveller laws were only repealed in England and Ireland during the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century Irish Travellers (particularly after the Great Famine in the late 1840s) emigrated to many countries including Britain, the United States and Australia though many Irish Travellers has traditionally plied regular migratory routes between Britain and Ireland over the centuries (McDonagh and McVeigh, 1996) [Irish Traveller interviews 2000-2002]. In the twentieth century economic changes made many Traveller trades obsolete while urbanisation and planning laws closed numerous traditional stopping places to Travellers throughout Britain. Economically successful Irish Travellers bought sites to live on, but this option was severely curtailed by the 1960 Caravan Sites (Control of Development) Act in Britain. The majority of Irish (and other) Travellers struggled to adapt their economies successfully in the new post-War climate of rapid economic change and expanded government sponsored social planning and development in Britain that took either negative or no account whatsoever of indigenous nomadic needs, consequently nomadically based groups, including Irish Travellers, were plunged into a crisis for survival. The Irish Traveller population in Britain also increased during this period as emigration reached its zenith during the late 1950s. Rapid population growth since then has led to an extremely youthful demographic profile among Irish Travellers while urbanisation has placed huge strains on the extended family unit, breaking down traditional constraints in some cases without replacing them with a culturally sensitive alternative social structure. High mobility rates, coupled with the dearth of stopping places and the criminalisation of nomadism have brought many Irish Travellers increasingly into reluctant conflict with the police and the criminal justice system.

Attempts during the twentieth century by the British state and its institutions to assimilate Travellers into the settled population have taken various forms. This has included overt and covert coercive legislation that has made it increasingly difficult for Travellers to use traditional stopping places, or access authorised sites and services. Local Authorities (LAs) have progressively abandoned their responsibility to provide health, education and welfare services to exclude transitory Travellers since the 1968 Caravan Sites Act (see relevant chapters in this report). Some legislation has also unintentionally impacted negatively on the lives of Travellers. Legislation included the Public Health Act 1936, the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, the Highways Act 1959, and the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 (Hawes and Perez, 1995: 56). The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA) criminalised unregistered scrap metal collection, and consequently further undermined one of the major economic occupations of Irish Travellers (O'Nions, 1995: 10). The dearth of adequate temporary and permanent site provision is a primary determinant of the extremely poor life-chances of Travellers including low health and education indicators, escalating criminal justice issues, and a deteriorating nomadic economy. Indigenous nomadism has been gradually outlawed in Britain in the course of the twentieth century.

The Caravan Sites Act (CSA 1968) and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (CJPOA) are the most recent legislative manifestations of the state's negative attitude to nomadism. The CSA made it a statutory obligation for LAs to provide permanent camp sites for all Travellers 'residing or resorting' in their particular area (while also exempting some LAs from the need to provide – see Gander related Sections 2.4 and 2.5 in chapter 2). Many of these new LA authorised sites, built since the 1970s were poorly or dangerously situated close to polluted motorways, flyovers, industrial estates, hazardous technology (for example electricity pylons), and in poorly serviced and inaccessible areas (CIEH, 1995; Sibley, 1995). Hawes and Perez (1995: 29) outlined the salient defects inherent in the CSA (1968):

*First, the initial assessment of numbers and needs was, with hindsight, lamentably underestimated; second the Act is concerned with site provision only, disregarding issues of social provision; and third it failed to set a time-scale within which the mandatory duty to provide sites was to be completed.*

When LA's site provision reached 'Designated' status their territorial areas were virtually closed to transitory nomadic Travellers who often happened to be the 'new' Irish Travellers.<sup>(8)</sup> The act was deeply flawed on its demographic premise, the nature of the accommodation prescribed, the absence of a holistic approach, and at an operational level. With an unsatisfactory level of enforcement the CSA (1968) was interpreted as loosely or inadequately as was deemed appropriate according to the preoccupations and prejudices of particular LAs. The predictable result was a continuous and escalating shortage of site provision coupled with accelerated commercial encroachment on traditional Traveller stopping places, and a continuation of unauthorised Traveller camping with increasing friction from sections of settled society as the Traveller (and settled) population both increased in and concentrated around urban centres. The CJPOA's (1994) pernicious impact on indigenous nomadic people resulted in the criminalisation of Traveller's nomadic lifestyle and the further undermining of their various economies (Turner, 2000). It abrogated the (already weak) statutory obligation of LAs to provide some local site facilities. The CJPOA (1994) moved policy from a deeply flawed state assimilationist response to site provision for Travellers to the virtual outlawing of indigenous nomadism.

## 1.5 The mediation of anti-Irish Traveller racism

Britain's indigenous nomads (usually semi-nomadic even when supposedly settled) include Gypsies (also known as Romanies - with Welsh, English and Scottish subgroups), Irish Travellers, Scottish Travellers, fairground, circus and show people, and 'New Age' Travellers. In the post Cold War period significant numbers of Roma (European Gypsies) have migrated from the former Soviet bloc to the UK due to systematic discrimination and persecution in the new liberal democratic states of central and eastern Europe. Confusion reigns at all levels of settled society as to 'who or what are Travellers?' Colloquial, derogatory terms like 'Gypsy', 'Tinker', 'Knacker', and 'Pikey' are often used incorrectly (both ignorantly and/or pejoratively) to describe Irish Travellers at all levels of settled society.

This confusion as to who Irish Travellers are is exacerbated by hierarchies of authenticity generated historically by economic competition, ethnic and national rivalries, ignorance, and prejudice between indigenous Traveller groups and is exploited by some politicians at all levels of government in Britain. Historically British Travellers and Gypsies who claim Romany origins are accorded (and sometimes claim) a privileged nomadic and essentially romanticised ethnic 'authenticity' denied to their Irish nomadic counterparts (and other indigenous Travellers) in official discourses ranging from academic to political arenas. Irish Travellers eschew a Romany connection, though some opportunistically adopt common English Traveller sobriquets when accessing services in Britain – proof itself of this pervasive hierarchy of authenticity [Irish Traveller interviews, 2000-2002] (Okely, 1983: 15). This hierarchy of authenticity and its concomitant prejudices are replicated throughout society's various engagements with Travellers.

Levitas (1998: 178) outlines the contradictions, multiple interpretations and conflicting policy options that the adoption of a social exclusion agenda affords to governments allowing them to create a hierarchy of legitimacy of need and consequently support offered:

*Social exclusion is a powerful concept, not because of its analytical clarity which is conspicuously lacking, but because of its flexibility. At an individual level, it mobilizes personal fears of being excluded or left out, which reach back into childhood as well as having immediate reference. At a political level, it has a broad appeal, both to those who value increased participation and those who seek greater social control. Crucially, social exclusion facilitates a shift between the different discourses in which it is embedded, so that the contested meaning of social exclusion now lies at the heart of political debate. The boundaries of this debate are set both by the real configuration of political forces and by the language in which it takes place. That language reflects and reproduces underlying ideas about what society is and how it works.*

In this context New Labour's variable concept of 'social exclusion' can tend to encourage opportunist political 'spin' at the expense of substantial policy and practice. The janus faced nature of New Labour's ideological and policy response to the concepts of inequality, poverty, discrimination and racism, and to Irish Travellers' structural position and needs in particular is exemplified by juxtaposing some of the contradictory views of powerful politicians below including Labour ministers. In an interview with BBC Radio West Midlands in July 1999 the then Home Secretary, Straw (cited in Guardian, 20 August 1999) made a wide ranging attack on 'non-Romany' Travellers:

*There are relatively few real Romany gypsies left, who seem to mind their own business and don't cause trouble to other people, and then there are a lot more people who masquerade as travellers or gypsies, who trade on the sentiment of people, but who seem to think because they label themselves as travellers that therefore they've got a licence to commit crimes and act in an unlawful way that other people don't have.*

Cardiff University's Law School member Rachel Morris (cited in *ibid*) commented on Straw's motives: 'He is a very canny politician ... He knows that he will be able to get away with this.' Straw's outburst also illustrates how the 'hierarchy of authenticity' is articulated at the highest levels of national power to delegitimise certain Traveller groups, while also undermining pan Traveller solidarity by reproducing the concept of 'elect' and 'reprobate' Traveller populations. In effect, New Labour's ideology of social inclusion has reinvented the Victorian concepts of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, but applied in this particular context to two recognised ethnic groups both with origins rooted in indigenous nomadism (Levitas, 1998).

In a damage limitation exercise following Straw's outburst, a Home Office spokeswoman (cited in Guardian, 20 August 1999) maintained that:

*His comments have been misconstrued. He was referring to people who are engaging in criminal activities and anti-social behaviour, not to the traveller population as a whole. The government has a policy of toleration towards those who choose this lifestyle but that does not extend to crime or disruption of the local community.*

This Guardian report ends in a curious fashion by switching incongruously to an unrelated controversy about an Irish Traveller wedding and the resulting temporary closure of pubs in two small towns in Ireland. The newspaper ends the Straw article by quoting from a spokesman for the Vintners' Federation of Ireland: *'These people [Irish Travellers] seem to think they have a right to fight in pubs and wonder why they are not being served.'*

As the above excerpts from ministers' discourse illustrate the Home Office tolerates rather than celebrates ethnic groups whose cultures include nomadic characteristics. A correspondent, to the Guardian Letters page (Imrie, 21 August 1999) placed Straw's comments in the recent historical context (see Appendix 11 above on cultural genocide) of the disqualification, racism and genocide inflicted on European nomads in the middle twentieth century:

*Jack Straw's outburst about "so-called travellers" has a long pedigree, as I discovered reading the new English translation of Otto Rosenberg's first-hand account of the persecution of Gypsies by the Nazis, A Gypsy in Auschwitz, published at the end of this month. In 1936, Dr Robert Ritter, director of the "Racial-hygienic and Genetic Research Office" claimed that many so-called Gypsies were "half-breeds" and should be distinguished from "racially pure Gypsies". It was not clear who belonged to the latter category, but the former, having "inferior genes", were "highly unstable, unprincipled, unpredictable... lethargic or restless and irritable... work-shy and asocial". Surprisingly, perhaps, he didn't actually claim that they defecated in doorways. The distinction between real and fake Gypsies made little difference in the concentration camps where many thousands of them were murdered indiscriminately.*

Some months after Straw's outburst Home Office minister Boateng (cited in Monbiot, Guardian 4 November 1999) informed parliament that *'the home secretary's remarks did strike a chord throughout the country [accordingly he was considering strategies to] strengthen the hand of both local authorities and police'*. Monbiot (ibid) suggests that this was yet another attempt by New Labour to not only maintain but enhance its 'law and order' image with 'Middle England' (essentially the white 'indigenous' conservative middle-classes) by stigmatising even further extremely marginalised Traveller groups who have historically been subjected to forced assimilation and even genocide.

Turner (Guardian, 24 August 1999) outlines how the language used by some politicians and media coverage not only negativises Travellers but through the use of aggressive heightened language constructs the meeting of sedentary and nomadic lifestyles in a one dimensional negative manner:

*The terminology used in reporting stories about gypsies and travellers [sic] is often conflictual and derogatory to both travellers and their supporters. When gypsies arrive anywhere in numbers, they "invade". A proposal for a new caravan site sees local residents "battle" to stop it. If they succeed, they score a "victory". It is the language used about enemies.*

By using such warlike and emotive language a state of endemic conflict is seen to exist between Travellers and sedentary society and also between state and local institutions embedded in sedentarism. Official discourse at many levels has rooted in it this presumption that Travellers have a criminogenic disposition. When a Home Secretary feels free to pronounce on public radio that 'certain' kinds of Traveller are illegitimate (and receives no reprimand or sanction from parliament or prime minister), it is hardly surprising that ordinary policemen feel it is legitimate to stereotype Travellers as a criminogenic group and police them accordingly (see chapter five in this report).

Travellers generally, and Irish Travellers in particular, though a relatively small minority in numerical terms, seem to have become one of the main indigenous recipients (refugees and asylum seekers are open to similar abuse) of the most negative and racist discourse that reaches from ministerial heights, through many institutional levels and often manifests itself as overt discrimination operationally (police interviews 2001-2002, see chapter 5). Conservative MP Andrew Mackay (cited in The Guardian 15 January 2002), a former shadow Northern Ireland secretary, moved the 'debate' towards a dangerous dehumanisation of Travellers when he railed against Traveller "invasions" of his constituency insisting that these Travellers did not deserve the same human rights as his constituents and asked whether the police were 'doing a proper job' in a Westminster Hall debate:

*Ordinary, innocent people, hard-working, normal, straight-forward people, who live around Bracknell want to get on with their lives in peace. But they want to have protection under the law when invaded by the scum [Travellers]. And they are scum, I use that word advisedly, because people who do what these people have done do not deserve the same human rights as my own decent constituents going about their everyday lives.*

In reply Junior Home Office minister Angela Eagle (cited in ibid) condemned Mackay's 'scum' reference and continued:

*We do not recognise that the minority status of travellers and gypsies [sic] should allow them to indulge in crime or anti-social behaviour or excuse that behaviour if they do. The law should be enforced equally towards them.*

Eagle's rejection of the 'scum' label for Travellers is followed by an insidious discourse linking criminal and anti-social behaviour to Traveller and Gypsy ethnicities. Again the inference is that these are criminogenic communities. The law (for example the CJPOA 1994) is not enforced equally with respect to them – it criminalises nomadism, a central tenet of their cultures. What other ethnic minority could a government minister label in such negative terms? What does this say about the narrowness of the parameters of New Labour's social inclusion policies (see Levitas, 1998)?

## 1.6 Particularly vulnerable sections of the Irish Traveller population

### *Women*

Irish Traveller women face discrimination as Travellers, as women, and as Irish people in Britain. Hence, promotion of gender equality, both internally within their own community, and externally in the wider social context, is fundamental to their empowerment. However, most of the recent research work around women Travellers tends to focus on health issues. Specific health statistics for Irish Travellers are extremely scarce, partly due their relative ethnic invisibility. The health profile of all Travellers in Britain is significantly worse than other settled sections of British society. Stillbirth is seventeen times higher than the national average; infant mortality is twelve times higher than average rates – twice as many Traveller infants fall into the low birth weight category (Linthwaite, 1983). Traveller women's use of family planning, developmental screening, immunisation, and antenatal care services are very low in relation to other minority ethnic groups and society in general (Pahl and Vale, 1986). Prenatal and antenatal eviction of women is thought to impact very adversely on the immediate and long-term state of their health and on that of their babies (Durward, 1990; Sadler, 1993). A high incidence of congenital malformation occurs in traveller children – common assumptions link this to high rates of inter-marriage, but little research has been carried out into the possible socio-economic and environmental factors that may have an influence (Linthwaite, 1983; see also chapter 3 in this report for more detail).

### *Children*

There is a lack of continuous primary and virtually no advanced secondary education and training among young Irish Travellers in Britain, while participation in further and higher education is extremely low. Traveller children are often bullied and verbally abused by other children and their defensive reaction is usually to stick together, resist integration, fight back and trade racist insults and violence with opponents. Travellers' use of violence and racist language results in high rates of temporary and permanent exclusion from some schools, particularly those that do not value or recognise their ethnicity, while settled children who use 'unrecognised' racist terms like 'gippo', 'pikey', 'knacker' etc. often go without reprimand by authority figures. These instances indicate either an unwillingness to recognise or a lack of awareness of Travellers ethnicity and culture by many school administrators, teachers and pupils [research interviews 2000-2003].

### *Young men*

Many traditional rurally based Traveller economies have disappeared and rapid urbanisation has eaten away at the social fabric of the extended Traveller family as unsuitable 'nuclear' family housing physically divides up the extended family and can lead to a breakdown of internal group discipline. Due to tight restrictions and discipline within families young men (and sometimes women) break away from Traveller constraints and conventions in urban situations. High rates of marriage break-up and alcohol abuse due to cultural breakdown result in low self-esteem and can lead to violence within and between Traveller families. Young male Travellers become 'youth at risk' as they rarely attend secondary school and spend much time on the streets where some come into contact with drugs, gangs, petty theft, car crime and attract the attention of the police as 'street people'. This often results in imprisonment in Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) sometimes progressing to adult prison. Lack of a 'fixed abode', poor culturally insensitive or overtly prejudiced pre-sentence reports by probation officers, and Travellers' own ignorance of the judicial system result in a high proportion of custodial sentences (Devereaux, 1999) [Probation interviews 2002-2003]. The aggressive attitudes and machismo of some Travellers, staff and other inmates, and similarly entrenched anti-nomadic prejudice to that faced externally by Travellers from prison officers and other inmates often results in fights and disobedience in prison and consequent high rates of disciplinary measures and sanctions [Irish Traveller YOI and prison interviews 2001-2002].

The continued urbanisation and criminalisation of Irish Travellers has impacted severely on the lives of young male Travellers in particular. Social alienation, illiteracy, and low self-esteem, make it difficult for young males to access education, training, and leisure facilities in urban areas. They spend much of their time in overcrowded

accommodation or on the streets. High levels of boredom can lead to tension and friction in both these arenas. Young males are extremely prone to discrimination as Travellers, Irish people, and as young men. A report by the London Gypsy and Traveller Unit (LGTU, September 1995: 1), a voluntary Traveller support group in London), states that:

*They meet prejudice and intimidation from many quarters but particularly from the police. They are a highly stigmatised group that are sometimes turned away from leisure facilities and shops because they are perceived to be thieves, dirty and unruly.*

The relationship between the Irish Traveller community, the settled population in general, and the police in particular is one that is often characterised by hostility, prejudice, discrimination, and conflict (Crawley, 2004).

## 1.7 Aims and Objectives of Research

1. To use an interdisciplinary and reflective research approach to develop theoretically informed insights that will challenge some of the traditional assumptions, thinking, policy and practice around health, welfare, and criminal justice service provision for Irish Travellers and positively inform national debates on these and related subjects.
2. To generate a new body of information about the individual and group experiences of Irish Travellers with health, welfare, criminal justice and educational agencies - and English society in general. This data is innovative in its sensitivity to the relationships and conflicts within, and between, different sections of the Traveller community (identified as extended families; men and women; children; young women; and young men). The research explores ways in which these Traveller groups, vulnerable to social conflict, poor health, social instability and social exclusion, survive and deal with their severely marginalised position vis-à-vis settled society.
3. To review and reinforce, where appropriate, the insights of other research on Irish Travellers and Travellers generally with new evidence.
4. To produce Britain's first detailed examination and evaluation of voluntary support groups and official institutional practices and policies that have recognised Irish Travellers' unique needs and delivered services appropriately, and developed successful models of Traveller empowerment in particular service areas.
5. To adapt, develop and use research methodologies that bridge traditional divides within and between settled social groups and nomadic communities in empirical investigations and theoretical analysis. To employ research observation, focus groups, and in-depth semi-structured interviews to generate data that continually modified the theoretical frameworks of this research, and that produces results that are useful to Irish Travellers, key informants, service providers and the wider community.
6. To contribute to and enrich the developing national debate around social exclusion (specifically with regard to Irish Travellers, but also with other nomadic groups and in a more generalised context) and the theoretical, policy and practical responses to it. The research contributes specifically to national and international debates around the issue of the rights of nomadic peoples and other severely marginalised ethnic minorities.

## 1.8 Research Brief

This report is based on primary qualitative research conducted as part of 'Room to Roam: England's Irish Travellers', a Community Fund resourced research project run by a consortium that includes Action Group for Irish Youth, BIAS Irish Travellers Project, and St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill. This three-year project involved qualitative research including focus groups and 140 in-depth interviews with Irish Travellers and relevant service providers (health, education, social services, politicians, voluntary services, police and criminal justice system) in two major English cities (LENC – a large English northern city, and SEEM – south east England metropolis). The criminal justice element of the research project was enhanced after the project began as a result of growing research evidence suggesting that the relatively high numbers of Irish Travellers in the Criminal Justice System were experiencing discrimination. The research aimed to assess the impact of social marginalisation, ethnic disqualification, and criminalisation on Travellers' health and life-chances and to identify positive policy and practice developments and produce recommendations. (see chapter 6 and highlighted sections throughout the text).

This research provides the statutory and voluntary agencies involved with Irish Travellers' health, education, social welfare, and criminal justice provision, with locally specific information that can be mobilised for culturally sensitive policy development, service provision and delivery throughout England. It also provides models adaptable throughout Britain and informs Traveller policies generally at a national level. The research also attempts to relocate Irish Travellers as an integral constituent of the ongoing inclusive development, and positive ethnic recognition, of the many Irish communities extant in Britain.

For a comprehensive background to the research project see Appendix I. For a list of the primary research respondents' background and competences; and the main organisations and locations involved in the research report see Appendices III and IV. A list of primary research respondents referred to by name in the report is given in Appendix V. Data collection methods and practice are discussed in detail in Appendix VI, while the use of appropriate research methodologies is examined in Appendix VII.

## 1.9 Summary and comments

This social research report is concerned with the social exclusion and disadvantage in terms of accommodation, health, education, welfare, and criminal justice of a severely disadvantaged and marginalised minority in British society. As demonstrated by comments from politicians above (see Section 1.5) Irish Travellers are discriminated against and excluded both institutionally and socially, and as such are one of the most marginal and misunderstood groups in society. The predominant (but confused and contradictory) trajectory of recent government policy has largely been towards assimilation into settled society. The actual history of Irish Travellers in Britain (commonly linked in both settled British and Irish psyches to negative stereotypes), combined with their 'whiteness' means that they fit uneasily – or are ignored consistently in policy formulations, race equality schemes and official discourse and initiatives centred on ethnicity and diversity. The failure to include 'Irish Traveller' as an ethnic category (or sub-category) in the Census (2001) is indicative (and partly a cause) of the institutional blindness that Travellers endure as an ethnic group and of their outcast - even outlaw status in institutional and colloquial discourse and practice. This burdens them with distinct disadvantages in accessing health care, educational support, and social welfare. In some cases the breakdown of their cultural supports, particularly the extended family, linked to the criminalisation of nomadism and the undermining of Irish Traveller economies has led to them being over-represented in the Criminal Justice System. This research identifies and evaluates some of the causes of poor health, inadequate social care, institutional discrimination and disadvantage suffered by Irish Traveller communities. It explores ways of developing and providing more reflective and culturally sensitive institutional policy and practice in key areas of service delivery, including strategies that promote Irish Traveller empowerment and influence in the design and delivery of key services.

- 1 They also have a number of recognised long-term settlements in the United States.
- 2 This contributes greatly to recycling of scrap metals and other materials.
- 3 Both Census 2002 in Republic of Ireland and Census 2001 in Northern Ireland had categories for Irish Travellers.
- 4 Formerly the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR).
- 5 These figures include all indigenous nomadic groups and are not specific to Irish Travellers.
- 6 LA sites lost a total of 234 trailer pitches in Britain from 1998-1999.
- 7 These reports concentrate on urbanised and 'sited' Travellers who happen to be, in the main Irish Travellers in these particular reports.
- 8 Settled Irish people who emigrated to Britain after the War were often regarded with deep suspicion, as a result Irish Travellers attracted this opprobrium coupled with settled antipathy to nomadism.

## 2. ACCOMMODATION AND ECONOMY

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter Sections 2.2 and 2.3 examine legislation in England and Wales that provided for and/or impacted on the accommodation situation of Irish Travellers from 1960 to the present. Sections 2.4 to 2.6 look at the contemporary accommodation situation for Irish Travellers in two neighbouring boroughs (Gander and Painham) in SEEM - an English metropolis. The former has a densely populated and very mixed population both from an ethnic and class perspective and is close to central SEEM, while the latter has more open spaces and is somewhat less densely populated, has a higher proportion of middle class residents and stretches from the borders of Gander to protected countryside on its outer periphery. The inner-city area of LENC, a large city in northern England with many of the accommodation and social problems associated with most northern inner-city areas is also discussed here. Sections 2.5 and 2.6 concentrate on what it is like to live on Local Authority (LA) sites in these areas. The following Section 2.7 looks at examples of prejudice against Irish Travellers emanating from the settled Irish community in SEEM and LENC. Homelessness and its impact on Irish Traveller families is dealt with in Section 2.8 which concentrates on access and barriers to accommodation in Gander specifically, and SEEM generally. This leads to a discussion in Section 2.9 concerning how Traveller women suffering domestic violence are discriminated against in very culturally specific ways. Travellers have responded to lack of suitable accommodation provision by buying their own plots or by camping illegally on private and publicly owned land. This has again brought Travellers into conflict with settled society and a number of concerns are explored in this area. The final Sections (2.10 to 2.12) focus on the Irish Traveller economy and how it adapts well to economic change but struggles due to adverse legislation, lack of suitable accommodation and no government recognition or support.

Interviews relating to Travellers' accommodation and economy issues were carried out in Greater LENC (Large English Northern City) and in Painham and Gander boroughs in SEEM (South East England Metropolis). Interviews were carried out with a wide range of pertinent professionals in these research locations and elsewhere, where their expertise was relevant and appropriate. All the specific research areas have large but generally 'invisible' Irish Traveller populations. A minority live on authorised sites or on unauthorised encampments. Most of the Irish Travellers interviewed now live in, and move regularly through, settled forms of accommodation either permanently, or to a lesser extent seasonally. All Traveller respondents were asked to comment generally on and to relate their specific economic and accommodation experiences (see Appendices III and IV for a detailed itemisation of all respondents and their competences).

### 2.2 Legal background to Travellers' accommodation situation

An Irish Traveller [McDonagh, 1994: 95] describes the concept of travelling or nomadism from his own perspective:

*[W]hen Travellers speak of Travelling, we mean something different from what country people [sedentary people] usually understand by it... For Travellers, the physical fact of moving is just one aspect of a nomadic mind-set that permeates every aspect of our lives. Nomadism entails a way of looking at the world, a different way of perceiving things, a different attitude to accommodation, to work, and to life in general.*

In England and Wales Travellers' traditional stopping places have come increasingly under threat and in many cases have disappeared due to the enclosure and/or commodification of marginal land by the proliferation of urban, suburban and rural developments in the housing, commercial and industrial sectors since the Second World War. The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act (1960) legislated to control private caravan sites and gave Local Authorities (LAs) the power to close public commons to Travellers, thus creating a dire shortage of stopping places where Travellers could legally stop for even short periods. This legislation made it difficult for Travellers to buy and winter on small plots of land, unless they obtained a licence through planning permission. Travellers Also, could no longer legally reside for extended periods on private farmland where they had previously worked seasonally. Even though Section 24 of the 1960 Act recognised the accommodation plight of Gypsies by allowing LAs to provide sites, this was not compulsory, and few LAs took advantage of the provision due to local antipathy to Travellers and the cost factor. As a result, even more Travellers were pushed on to roadside verges and marginal wasteland as a result (Halfacree, 1995).

In response, the Caravan Sites Act (CSA 1968) was enacted to provide municipal sites, enable private provision

and provide basic amenities for 'indigenous' Gypsies this came into operation in 1970. The provisions have rarely been adhered to by the LAs responsible [Painham, Gander and LENC interviews, 2000-2002] (Acton, 1974; Halfacree, 1995). Section 6 (1) of the Act obliged LAs to '*provide adequate accommodation for gipsies [sic] residing in or resorting to their area.*' When provision was made, LAs could apply to the appropriate Secretary of State for "Designation" under the Act which if granted, gave additional draconian powers to evict any other Travellers illegally camped in the LA area concerned. Exceptions were applied to some areas and all SEEM boroughs where the provision of fifteen trailer pitches would suffice to achieve designation, or if no Travellers resorted to these areas in the five years prior to the Act's implementation, "Designation" could be achieved through zero provision of sites. Sibley (1981: 102) asserts that these "exceptions" stressed official belief that Gypsies and Travellers were not and should not become an urban phenomenon.

The CSA (1968) envisaged a network of LA sites throughout Britain complemented by private sites. Section 9 of the CSA empowered the relevant Secretary of State to direct particular LAs to provide sites if deemed necessary. The reality of this legislation was that, at best, the minimum number of pitches and sites were provided and those Travellers not able to find a pitch were either forced out of the area or into inappropriate housing. Eighty percent of official trailer pitches provided by the end of 1976 had been extant before the CSA (1968) was implemented (Hawes and Perez, 1995: 30). Bureaucratic procedures made it difficult to apply for a licence and many LAs pleaded lack of finance for site provision. The Department of Environment tried to secure the original purpose of the Act through a number of circulars to LAs in the 1980s, by tightening the criteria for designation and requesting that LAs be less stringent about the use of eviction powers. Due to ongoing evictions and strife during the 1970s Section 70 of the Local Government and Land Act (1980) provided for capital grants for LAs to provide sites for Travellers. It also rescinded the previous 1968 Act exemptions for some LAs including SEEM boroughs, but allowed districts within counties and boroughs to be designated individually (Local Government and Land Act 1980: Sections 173 and 175). Traveller site grants became independent of central government's overall resource allocation to LAs due to Section 173 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Halfacree, 1995).

Official site provision increased and the incidence of illegal encampments reduced as a result of these new provisions: this was particularly due to the independent government grants to LAs for building Travellers' sites. Designation of districts within LAs also increased significantly. Another government report (Wibberley, 1986) criticised the lack of central government pressure on LAs to meet their obligations under the 1968 Act (Hawes and Perez, 1995). '*The crux of the problem [with the CSA 1968] was that whereas [Section] 6 had all the appearances of being a mandatory statutory duty imposed upon local authorities, the mechanism of enforcement provided under [section] 9... rested upon the relevant Secretary of State (Beale and Geary, 1994: 61).*' So the tensions between the central state's legislation and the implementation duties of local political entities served to undermine the effective implementation of the CSA 1968. The 1968 legislation only referred to Gypsies and by definition excluded other Travellers. LA "Designation" also meant that the Travellers were subject to special legal sanctions with regard to trespass that didn't apply to any other individuals or communities. Halfacree (1995: 22) shows that there was a correlation between increases in the granting of "Designation" status and powers and incidences of legal action by LAs under Section 10 of the CSA (1968). So "Designation", in reality the imposition of quotas on Travellers, created areas of "purified space" for the few "elected" Gypsies while excluding all other "reprobate" Travellers (Sibley, 1995). This also meant that Traveller families were reluctant to leave municipal sites due to the unavailability of alternative LA or private pitches elsewhere. The traditional structure of Traveller families was being systematically undermined as there was rarely room for expansion to accommodate new generations as licensees' children began raising their own families. Visiting extended family and friends had nowhere legal to stay and chronic site overcrowding caused social tensions and exacerbated inter-family animosities. Sibley (1990) considered that SEEM boroughs particularly used the "Designation" provisions to control and exclude other Travellers.

### 2.3 The current legal situation

As 'New Age' Travellers took to the road from the middle 1980s onwards, the Conservative government reacted by passing the Public Order Act (1986) and later, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJPOA 1994). The CJPOA (1994) has virtually outlawed the traditional nomadic lifestyle of Travellers in Britain. Unauthorised halting on traditionally used marginal land and roadside verges has been criminalised, and Section 80 of this Act also removed the duty of LAs to provide permanent trailer sites for Travellers while ending Department of Environment statutory grants for LAs to build permanent sites. "Part Five" (especially Sections 61 and 77) of the CJPOA also extended powers contained in the Public Order Act 1986 (Section 39) giving the police powers to direct trespassers to leave if they have damaged the land itself (as distinct from property on it), or if they have

six or more vehicles parked there. It also extended the application of Section 39 to common land, highway verges, byways, green lanes and other minor highways, and included new police powers to remove vehicles without recourse to any court of law (Clements and Smith, 1997; LIWC, 1995; Hawes and Perez 1995; LGTU, n.d.; Rutter, 1997). Most of these provisions were inserted in the CJPOA (1994) to criminalise and destroy the developing 'alternative culture' of New Age Travellers, but have impacted severely on all nomadic Traveller groups since then. Commodification of marginal land through commercial and housing development on city peripheries and inner city areas has destroyed unofficial stopping places traditionally used by Travellers for short-term stays (usually from a few days to a fortnight) over many years.

The Conservative government's justification for this 'full frontal' attack on nomadism by the abolition of the CSA (1968) clauses pertaining to the accommodation of Gypsies and the introduction of the CJPOA (1994) is summarised by Halfacree (1995: 17):

- (1) *There are now far more Gypsies and other travellers than had been predicted in 1968, including additional categories of non-Gypsy travellers;*
- (2) *Some families settle permanently on official sites and consequently block access to these sites to mobile families;*
- (3) *Modern-day Gypsy occupations, such as car-breaking and scrap-dealing, no longer necessitate adopting a semi-nomadic lifestyle;*
- (4) *Gypsies have a privileged position in respect to planning law.*

Points one two have some validity: as far as Irish Travellers are concerned their numbers have risen and LA sites have consequently become overcrowded and largely permanent residences notwithstanding the lack of tenure afforded by site licences (ibid). The irony is that this trend is being reinforced by the CJPOA's (1994) anti-nomadic provisions outlined above. The population is growing while the number of LA sites and pitches are diminishing due to permanent occupancy and closures - so where can Travellers go?

An Irish Traveller [interview 2002] in his late teens and born in Ireland gives some indication of how some Travellers deal with the criminalisation of nomadism by the CJPOA (1994). He describes how his family lived nomadically since arriving in England:

*[W]hen I was born me mother was staying in a trailer [in Ireland]. ... All my family was on one site... I was staying in [a] proper house and my grandfather used to sell trailers... Never done much travelling until I came over to SEEM and moved around England [and] SEEM an awful lot. I come over with family about fourteen year ago.' Did you travel through the housing stock? 'Through the housing, yeah. We moved from one council place to another. No, never stayed in one place too long just for the maximum a couple of years, and then we would be moving somewhere else we never really settled down very much.' This could be four, five, six houses a year? 'Yeh, that's what I am saying, still travelling, and if it was nice weather we would be out travelling in trailers but if it's Winter we would be moving into houses 'cos it would be too cold. ... They were doing building, selling, whatever, anything they could do to make money to get by.*

The above interview and many other Irish Traveller interviews [2000-2003], indicate that Irish Travellers have found other more limited means to pursue a semi-nomadic lifestyle by Travelling through housing, and/or seasonal nomadism in trailers. This Traveller also describes a small scale mixed business economy that requires high mobility point three <sup>(3)</sup> above negates the variety of Traveller economies, not to mention nomadism or semi-nomadism as a central constituent of Irish (and other) Travellers' culture. Point (4) refers to exceptions made for Traveller sites on Green Belt land and arising from the CSA (1968): in 2003 a Labour government planning minister reiterated that Green Belt land will not be re-zoned for any site development [McNulty, House of Commons meeting, 23 January 2003].

In retrospect, the government's arguments justifying the anti-Traveller provisions of the CJPOA (1994) and abolishing legislative provision for Travellers accommodation (no matter how flawed) in the CSA (1968) are deeply damaging, particularly when viewed from a human rights perspective. The CSA's (1968) failures to address the needs of indigenous Travellers were many including a lack of recognition that other nomadic ethnic groups existed in Britain apart from Gypsies. But this legislation failed just as the CJPOA (1994) is failing due to what Halfacree (1995) describes as '*considerable tension between two "interpretative communities", the courts [and central government] and the local state responsible for enforcement, or between the "abstraction" of the former and the "immersion" of the latter.*' As for the CJPOA (1994), it is interpreted and applied differentially across police forces, courts and LAs. This legislation also brought back the politics of confrontation to Travellers' accommodation issues, though interviews with Irish Travellers [interviews 2000-2003] suggest that this has led to a slow but burgeoning politicisation of Traveller communities around issues of cultural rights and nomadism. A young Irish Traveller [interview 2002] understands the need to engage politically but expresses the reluctance that many Travellers have in challenging racism and discrimination openly:

*I think there ... is not a lot of Travellers that's in the government - is there really? They have to make a stand. Because they are not doing that, that's why people are saying [negative] things about [them] and getting away with it.... If there was something said about a black man or an Indian man they would be up straight away about it, but that's racism... but the Irish [Travellers], they don't [count]. ... It would be hard for us because people would be saying: "Who wants to listen to him?" But people like you lot can get up with no criminal record or anything ... and start saying things like that and they listen to you.*

The 'you lot' he refers to are the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (ITM) and other voluntary support groups for Travellers who have formed a coalition between Travellers and settled people to lobby for Travellers rights.

The next section looks at the background and contemporary vicissitudes of living on Travellers sites in SEEM and LENC

#### 2.4 LA sites: Barry Site in Gander Borough

Sibley's (1981: 102) avowal that the urban "exceptions" of the CSA (1968) underlined official belief that Gypsies and Travellers should not become an urban phenomenon probably accounts for the fact that Gander Council's first site, Barry Site, was not opened until early 1997. Prior to that there was no official Travellers site in Gander Travellers had moved onto vacant land that was adjacent to where Barry Site is now, but they had no basic facilities provided [Irish Traveller interviews 2000-2001]. Gander Council came under a lot of pressure from various interested parties including some of its own representatives to provide an official site from 1995. Gander had land available at the time to develop the site and obtained government funding to build it. A former site manager [Buggy interview 2001] commented on the site design: *'It's not the world's best-built site; the pitches are too small ... because people haven't got the privacy here because the pitches are too small and there's lots of overcrowding - it's very badly designed ... That's the problem here ... two or three different families and there's lots of fighting and arguing. It's too big and [people are] too close.'* Focus groups with Travellers [2002] at Barry Site have identified that Traveller children need and want day trips and access to more leisure amenities on site such as sports groups, hobby groups, tutorial help with educational based activities. The activities recently organised by SEEM ITP (Irish Traveller Project – voluntary group based in Gander) including visits by staff from local zoos, have been greatly appreciated and enjoyed by Travellers both old and young. Adult Travellers said that racism was still endemic in some schools, notably Catholic ones. Many priests have a very cautious attitude to the Traveller community, balancing the anti-Traveller prejudices of powerful elements in their settled congregations with the needs of the Traveller community [O'Rourke interview 2002; also Parish of the Travelling People, 1998].

Each pitch is fenced off, has its own hard standing, and a utility block that has a kitchen, bathroom and toilet. When first built, there was only a small open area within the site, but this was resurfaced in 2001 with soft-core material and it's now a designated play area for children. *'Providing the facility for the children has made a big difference as well, they haven't been going further afield ... and getting in trouble [Buggy interview 2001].'* A high wall surrounds the site on all sides giving it an air of invisibility outside and a feeling of isolation inside, while there is only one entrance/exit. There are thirty-one pitches on the site and many are overcrowded with up to three trailers on some pitches. There are about two hundred children and seventy adults living on this site [Irish Traveller interviews and focus groups 2000-2003]. Residents pay Council Tax, utility bills are above average and: *'The rent is ninety-eight pounds a week and the money pays for salary costs, for the Barry Site manager, a bit of my time, ... repairs [and] maintenance work that we carry out, and for the cleaning that we do on the site' [Pedes interview 2001].* The site Health Visitor [Barry Site meeting 2001] objected to expensive electricity supplies rather than the provision of gas. Travellers on Barry Site spend £20-25 per week on electricity rather than the £7-8 that settled people spend per week in a house while the rent seems excessive for a small plot with very basic amenities and no security of tenure. A Traveller interviewed [2001] on Central Site in LENC, said utility charges were extremely high there while the facilities provided were minimal. This site looks more like a transitory 'short-stay' site unlike many others that have a 'permanent' residential feel to them.

Once on site, Traveller licensees may have to deal with what could be construed as culturally insensitive management regulations and practices such as stipulating no dogs, no bonfires and no onsite businesses - the latter rule is particularly punitive since many Travellers' businesses are run from home and work is often carried there. Ms. Simon [interview, 2002] is a lawyer at Gander Community Law Support who represents Irish Travellers living on Barry Site and in Gander housing generally:

*Gander Council always seem to take the confrontational approach [on Barry Site]. ... The Council's very keen on putting [information] on paper which isn't much good for many people there. So, they've adopted things that they'd have in tenanted housing. ... Its cultural differences but I don't think that's always taken on board. ... You've got a*

*housing management service, particularly in Gander, where Traveller site management is by the housing office. So for dealing with the bulk of people ... they send heavy-handed letters out... But that approach doesn't work with the Travellers. Travellers have said: "If there was somebody down there we could talk to, could approach and say there is this problem or..." They feel that would work far better. ... And there doesn't seem to be a willingness [on housing management's part] to ... say 'Well hang on, is there any other way we can do this?'"*

Cultural sensitivities on Barry Site are met to some degree by Gander's housing department as the manager Ms. Pedes [interview 2002] explains:

*The previous Traveller Site Manager went on a course ... specifically geared for management of Traveller sites and he found that very useful. And if another such course came up again then obviously I'd send the new person on the same course.*

Later in the interview, Gander's Housing manager Pedes, displayed an ignorance of the link between the ethnic designation 'Irish Traveller' and one its chief cultural attributes – nomadism:

Some of them will want to move into houses and I actually think it's a fallacy to call it a Travellers Site because they don't travel. Ninety-nine percent of the residents that live on that site have lived there for years ... so in fact they're not Travellers. I don't know why we call them Travellers, they ... just happen to live in a caravan.

The delegation of responsibility for sites from central government to local councils meant that before 1995 many LAs either operated a NIMBY (not in my back yard) policy, or at best provided the minimum site space required to achieve 'designation' (meaning adequate provision for 'local Gypsies' only) under the terms of the CSA Act (1968). Councils like LENC, one of the first LAs to be "Designated" in 1973, have since disposed of their direct responsibility by leasing sites to private management groups [Player interview 2001; Stryder interview 2002]. Management of sites (as with Central Site in LENC) have in some cases been leased to particular Traveller groups. This policy often excludes many other Travellers from these sites due to perceived animosities between different extended families and selective letting by site management, thus leaving Central Site's fifteen pitches usually less than fifty percent occupied though many LENC based Travellers would gladly move from housing onto the site if they felt welcome [LENC Irish Traveller, Traveller Education Service [TES] and Irish LENC Care interviews, 2001-2002]. LENC bailiff Henby [interview 2002] agrees that many of the illegally encamped Irish Travellers he evicts will not consider staying on certain sites 'Central Site LENC ... there is probably six caravans on there - it will take quite a few and ... they won't go on it.'

Municipally run sites such as Barry Site in Gander are chronically overcrowded due to population growth and the wish of Irish Travellers to maintain the integrity of their extended family. Ms. Simon [2002] comments again on the Barry Site in Gander:

*The Barry Site ... it's very overcrowded. When the site was built some of the older Travellers said that they told the Council that it wasn't going to work. There is some history of a couple of family groups that don't get on ... reasons for it have got lost in time. So ... in some ways the site was never going to work. It didn't allow family groups to expand. ... We've got parents, and the kids get older and get married and they can't get their own pitches and so are crowded on their parent's pitch which is increasing the problem. There's no room for natural expansion. ... Travellers that are on the road, there's nowhere for them to stay in Gander. And quite often their camps spring up around the Gander's major trunk road, it's ... a traditional stopping off place.*

These conditions can result in internal family and external social tensions that manifest in poor health, depression, stress, violence, feuds and substance abuse that often engenders emergency or 'fire brigade' insensitive confrontational policing and unsympathetic sanctions from council officials [Traveller interviews 2000-2002].

## 2.5 Site management by LA coercion

During this research a number of Travellers on Barry Site were accused by Gander Council's Housing Department of anti-social behaviour and served with eviction notices. Gander Community Law Support defended the Travellers and Ms. Simon [interview 2002] explains the peculiar circumstances:

*[I]t wasn't the Travellers that complained, it's the police. Now, my understanding from talking to Travellers is generally if there's a problem they prefer to sort it them[selves]. ... [T]here was an incident in 2000 and from that the police*

*started complaining to Gander Council... The incident that the Council is talking about ... nobody's even been charged. ... [I]t's actually quite difficult to get the Housing Department to do anything [about] racial harassment. ... [W]hat's happened is that the police ... [are] responsible for detection... They've chosen not to do that, instead [they are] leaning on the Council to use their rights as the licence holders of the site to solve the problem. That also raises quite fundamental Human Rights. ... By putting this onto the Council, you've got the situation where the penalties are really draconian. ... [The Travellers are] quite an easy target ... I think it is motivated by prejudice. ... The proper way for the police to deal with this is criminal charges and that's not being done. ... [I]t moves away from having a complaint about an individual to actually penalising the whole family. And the loss of a home, particularly for Travellers on sites now is absolutely draconian because where are they going to go? ... They're not going to get a place on another Council site because they've been evicted. There aren't any sites anyway.*

The police have a duty to serve and protect all citizens (including Council Tax payers such as all the residents on Barry Site, who contribute directly to their budget) but are not attempting to solve any reported crime on the site. Instead, they have been persuaded the Council's Housing Department to take punitive action against whole families – not particular individuals. The twisted irony is that Gander's Housing Department's civil proceedings against Traveller families are being substituted for criminal charges against individuals, where the burden of proof is lower but the negative social and psychological impact is much greater and may result in many families being made homeless.

Ms. Pedes [interview 2002] Area Housing Manager for Gander Council explains the site's problems from her perspective:

*Well none of the action that we take against Travellers is in any way, shape or form dependent on evidence or information from other Travellers. So any action that I'm taking against the Travellers in terms of anti-social behaviour and eviction comes purely from the police and what we might witness ourselves. So ... we are not putting any evidence from any other resident Traveller up to be used. There's two main issues at the moment one is the issue regarding the dogs, a breach of their licence agreement, and ... anti-social behaviour...*

Gander Housing department are also trying to obtain eviction orders on some tenants because of the threat posed by their dogs, Ms. Pedes explains:

*[O]ver the last couple of years I've tried negotiating [with] Travellers to get them to understand that they can't have dogs running around loose on the site which are actually biting either residents or our staff... So after a number of meetings, the number of threatening letters that I've sent clearly having no impact ... we are going to have to look at legal action. So we issued everybody [those who had dogs] on the site with a notice, and as a result the Travellers then went to see a couple of Gander Councillors who then called a meeting of senior staff in the Council ... TES, SEEM ITP went along and the purpose was to find any possible alternative to eviction. ... I firmly believe that if we got ... eviction orders ... [that would] force the Travellers to remove the dogs from the site. ... [I]t was agreed that a senior member of staff [Mr. Gravelle] from our Education Department who worked with the Travellers would act as an independent arbitrator.*

The sending of standard 'warning' letters was used here to 'communicate' to a community with widespread literacy difficulties. Pedes tone is somewhat condescending throughout. The politics and interactions of the various interested department and elected representatives of Gander Council are complex, but they managed a compromise:

*So Mr. Gravelle ... invited residents from the site along to those meetings ... and actually it was quite a good turn out. Everyone agreed that they would be allowed to keep one dog each in a secure pen ... then there would be no threat to contractors or staff. And the Council agreed that we would provide them with collars for the dogs with a little tag ... and the label would be numbered to correspond with their pitch number. And we wrote to everyone and ... I ... knew it wasn't going to happen because we've tried this before with residents on the site and they don't comply ... which is why I am going ahead with the legal action regarding the dogs. ... The way I would approach that with the residents is: "We've now got a court order to evict you so ... either get rid of the dogs or be evicted and that is a powerful [incentive]"*

The Post Office usually does not deliver post to individual trailers on permanent sites, but leaves it in communal, frequently vandalised, post-boxes at the gate, so written correspondence can go missing. Pedes clearly believes that culturally sensitive engagement with Travellers is useless and has instead defaulted to a common institutional coercive strategy.

Municipal Traveller sites are specifically excluded from the security of tenure provisions in the Mobile Homes Act (1983) and rely instead on a uniquely discriminatory licensing system that provides virtually no security of tenure while still requiring the holders to pay rent and Council Tax. Travellers also complain that they cannot get home and/or contents insurance because they either reside on a Traveller site or in a mobile home. An Irish Traveller male [Irish Traveller Focus group at Barry Site 2001] discusses site licences:

*Under the licence agreements of the site, Travellers have no rights. There is no gas on site only electricity, which is expensive to use. I think this is connected to health and safety issues and trailers. With respect to fires on site we received a letter from the council telling us that we should all gather across the road from the site. Now we can't get any insurance. Some people have paid up to £6,000 for caravans, so a fire would completely destroy all our homes, and lives. Who is going to wait for the fire brigade? We were told we could have our own personal hoses but not be able to use the hoses outside the trailers. Buggy [then site manager] said that we weren't trained to use the hoses. His attitude is aggressive and abusive but he accuses us of being aggressive and abusive. The drains outside are terrible when it rains. They really need cleaning out. Ms. Pedes [Gander housing manager] told us that major work will commence on the drains at Barry Site when evictions for violent behaviour are pushed through in August.*

Notices left outside his office by this former site manager Buggy for Travellers' information were curt and had an aggressive and condescending tone. A home, by implication, provides family security, yet many LA Traveller site dwellers have no access to home or contents insurance, no security of tenure, suffer emergency insensitive confrontational policing, and feel extremely vulnerable to conflagrations.

A male Traveller [Irish Traveller Focus group at Barry Site 2001] discusses proposed improvements and lack of consultation on the site:

*There is a lot of work to be done on the site but we get no consultation whatsoever from anybody. There is a lot of money coming into the site at the moment and we would like to ask where it is going. They are starting a community centre going and a few other projects to help pre-school kids - so that's coming from SEEM ITP and the Education Department, not Gander Council. They have built a football pitch and a play area for kids so that's one improvement. It will keep the kids in one place.*

Services can be intermittent and repairs slow on Barry Site. During one period of research on the site there was no refuse collection for three weeks. This was resolved when a local paper featured photographs of the accumulating refuse and the contractors arrived next day to dispose of it. Ms. Richard [interview 2002] became Barry Site manager, some six months after Mr. Buggy, resigned and she developed a good rapport with most Travellers:

*I've gone to the [housing] manager and said: "Look I've asked [the contractor] to come to do [some repairs] ... not only has he not done it, he has decided to send me an invoice for it." So I suggest [to contractors]: "You come down and do the work first because you are not getting any money off me". And they say: 'You don't live here so what's it got to do with you, are you a Traveller?' ... There's no pavement and when ... it's raining you get really bad potholes. I've seen kids face down - a child could drown.*

Richard has since left the job and the position has been unfilled for some time. She indicates that the pressure to assimilate into housing is intense on the site but that 'housing offers' rarely meet Travellers' expectations (and needs) for their extended families:

*I've applied for housing for quite a few of the families here. That's the only reason they're applying for a house, because there are no pitches available. ... I mean they want top of the range. I explain to them that you've got to wait and see what you are offered.*

Residents allege that statutory service staff can be dismissive and even racist in dealings with Travellers, especially during phone calls from the site to police, Council staff, and utility staff (ODPM, 2004; LIWC, 1995; Hickman and Walter, 1997). Many Travellers [focus groups 2000-2002] on Barry Site indicated that they saw no future 'on the road' due to legal sanctions and felt they would be better off in appropriate housing rather than living on a poorly serviced overcrowded site with all its attendant social and psychological pressures. Barry Site residents are also very concerned about their lack of representation at Council level and they believe they need empowerment through a Traveller delegate being elected and trained to represent them at official functions.

## 2.6 Painham Traveller policy and Hadria Site

There is a wide disparity between LA settlement policies on Travellers throughout England. LENC LA has had no major policy development in this area in the recent past while Gander LA have developed policies that resulted in Barry Site being built in the late 1990s. Painham Council's Unitary Development Plan (1st deposit draft 28 June 2001: 155) states under a heading entitled "PROPOSALS FOR SITES TO MEET THE ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS OF TRAVELLERS" that these proposals will be judged against the following criteria:

- A) *The suitability of the site and the effect on the amenities of surrounding areas;*
- B) *The location in relation to facilities such as shops, schools and other services;*
- C) *The impact of the proposed development on the surrounding areas;*
- D) *The impact on highway safety and traffic flow.*

This report then mentions that there is a need to give:

*due regard to accommodation for travellers [sic] as part of the Government strategy to create an inclusive society. [Also that:] the council currently has little or no provision for travellers and the only site, Hadria Site has only one family left. This policy, however, will enable the Council to deal with proposals or applications for any future development. The Council will assess proposals against criteria set out in the policy.*

This was the only evidence unearthed by this project's researchers of a policy statement and/or commitment to Travellers by Painham Council. One other reference to culturally specific accommodation occurs in this report (ibid: 223) and is a commitment to:

*Address the environmental planning requirements of ethnic communities in the borough. The council recognises the need to consider adequately different ethnic communities in the planning process. These groupings have distinct cultural identities and distinct social needs. To ensure the plan adequately serves the needs of Painham's population, it is important that the needs of ethnic communities are addressed.*

The only official site in Painham has been practically closed for a number of years after family disputes occurred during the 1990s. The site is situated at the semi-rural edge of Painham Borough, it is close to a motorway is quite distant from services school buses had to collect the children. It is now occupied by one Irish Traveller family. Mr. Ardwick [interview 2001] is Gypsy Liaison Officer (GLO) at Painham's Hadria Site since 1985. The site had fifteen plots when it opened in 1975, and was completely refurbished in 1985. In 1989, Painham Council decided to develop the site and fill the empty plots and another Irish Traveller extended family moved. Ardwick thinks the change in local policy may have been precipitated by councils having to pay back government Gypsy grants because CSA (1968) "Designation" had not been achieved and he believes that Painham Council counted housed Travellers to ensure that they achieved "Designation". Ardwick has tried to bring on other Travellers but they were 'dealt with' by these dominant families.

The newer Traveller families clashed with the dominant Traveller families in situ. Hadria Site went through a number of turbulent years due to inter-family disputes when different families came and then moved on – some into permanent housing in Painham. One elderly female member of the original dominant family now remains as the only license holder. Following a meeting with Painham Council they decided to increase her plot size and demolished all remaining blocks effectively ending their responsibilities to Travellers in Painham in the late 1990s encouraged no doubt by the CJPOA (1994). A young Traveller woman explains why her family left the site:

*Until I was about ten we were travelling. We moved into Hadria Site ... for five year and then we moved ... into a house because the site was too dirty and my little sister scratched her toe and she nearly got gangrene and its kind of ruined her whole childhood and so my Mammy kept going to the Council and tried to get [a house]. People were dumping rubbish ... who didn't even live on the site ... no taxis would come ... there was no shops nearby ... there was a big motorway out in front ... it was like you're excluded from everything...*

GLO Ardwick believes that at its busiest there were eighty children and fifty adults on Hadria Site. During the conflict between Travellers police cars were sometimes stoned from the bridge over the road near the site. The police used this behaviour as an excuse to get heavy handed and arrive en-masse at Hadria Site. Mr. Ardwick believes that this was very bad practice and exacerbated poor relations between police and Travellers. He was often angered by police attitudes. Some police patrols would park up late at night on the site and then speed off with sirens blaring just to aggravate the Travellers. The SEEM police Special Patrol Group (SPG) also patrolled

the site on some occasions and would occasionally arrive wielding riot-shields in an aggressive manner [Ardwick interview 2002]. The GLO believes he could have introduced the police to Travellers gently, alleviating the aggravation that the police caused by being heavy handed on Council property. A young Irish Traveller woman [interview 2002], who was then a child on the site, and later moved into Painham housing is now semi-nomadic and describes the police raids:

*[A] number of times there was police raids there and some of my family members arrested for questioning but were released that day. ... These police raids were real early in the morning and no one was allowed to leave their caravans and each caravan, each shed, everything got searched and loads of people were arrested for no reason but because they looked or talked suspicious - like a lot of them were illiterate and couldn't speak properly to the police... A lot of the boys got handcuffed and their hands were bleeding they were that tight ... but they were released later on, they'd no charges...*

After the on-site conflict in the late 1990s the remaining Travellers decided that it wasn't worth refurbishing the site as it existed, as they considered the original development model (replicated on most English LA sites) had partly contributed to the conflict. However, in consultations with LA about the future of Hadria Site Travellers proposed developing the site on the Irish model of extended family 'group housing' (See Section 2.10) plots in order to lessen tensions by keeping rival families separate. Painham Council however decided without any adequate explanation that Hadria Site did not suit this kind of culturally sensitive development. Permission was only granted for strictly mobile trailers as are designated in all LA Traveller site licence agreements [Ardwick interview 2001]. Although the licence tenure conditions of all LA sites underline the temporary and transitory nature of these dwelling places, the reality is that they have usually become sites of permanent overcrowded residency with little or no movement from or between sites due to the severe shortage of legal pitches in England (Kenrick and Clark, 1999).

GLO Ardwick said that electricity bills on site in Winter were extremely high - one family received a bill for £46 for one week's heating (see also *ibid*). He believes that some of this was their fault for leaving doors open and not getting thermostats fitted, but he does have sympathy for them because of how they are treated particularly by the Council. He believes that Traveller solidarity is strong when the police appear on site, then they return to internal arguments after police have gone. However, he believes that the site conflict was blown out of all proportion by local press coverage - the worst thing that happened was when a car ran over a dog. But the Council takes no notice of sites until there is trouble. He says that because Travellers don't complain issues simmer over time and then they get angry and demand immediate action. He believes that more Traveller involvement in running sites is the best way forward but that it takes a strong internal leadership to activate the community positively.

**A young Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] received the enthusiastic support of the other focus group members when she demanded consultation by LA and other site providers in England as she had observed in Ireland:**

*Travellers were consulted in building some houses in Ireland. Accommodation was built on one level in bungalows in Dublin. Consideration was given to ground level accommodation.*

One recent example of this approach has developed on the Westway Travellers' site in west London. This site has a "Sure Start" programme to improve child care and support for families with children aged under four and a "UK On-Line" programme to improve information technology access for economically and socially disadvantaged communities among others. A range of innovative educational initiatives have been instigated by co-operation between strong site leadership, the Catholic Children's Society and other agencies to develop a comprehensive culturally sensitive support package. The Westway initiative may provide a development model for other sites in the future (Catholic Children's Society, <http://www.cathchild.org.uk/TRAVELLERS.HTML>). The public success of this co-operative venture at the Westway Site is indicated by the attendance at the launch of the site's new computerised suite for training Travellers in information technology by a Cardinal, the local LA Deputy Mayor, and eighty other organisation representatives. This partnership approach providing appropriate training and support facilities on-site may become a paradigm model of site development in future, but the effectiveness of the particular measures for Travellers themselves need to be monitored and assessed over time to gauge their impact and effectiveness. Also, no matter how good these new developments are on the Westway site, they do not address the fundamental environmental and health problems of a site surrounded by heavily polluting motorways.

## 2.7 Travellers and the settled Irish community in Britain

This section examines prejudice in the settled Irish community in Britain and gives an example of combined community and institutional prejudice and racism directed against Irish Travellers. Although the general settled Irish community in Britain has established a more positive and visible presence in recent years, this has not been reflected in Irish Travellers' experience. Prejudice and racism from institutional sources, from society generally but often centred in the settled Irish community in Britain, has rendered them virtually powerless and left them with few allies. In a Federation of Irish Societies (FIS) sixty page report (1998: 55) on the health of the Irish in Britain, only one page is dedicated to the specific needs of Irish Travellers - and this is located in an addendum. Ó Meachair (cited in FIS, 1998: 55) recognises the unique cultural character of Irish Travellers in the context of the Irish in Britain, but given the deep prejudice towards Irish Travellers prevalent in large sections of the settled Irish community, its hardly surprising that their plight goes generally unrecognised, and their needs are inadequately resourced or researched in the broad context of institutional health, education, and social welfare provision in Britain (LIWC, 1995; Hickman and Walter, 1997). In effect, as a distinct ethnic community, they are often institutionally, politically and spatially invisible, as they are relegated to the 'defiled' and neglected inner city or urban peripheral areas (Sibley, 1981 and 1995).

An Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] commented on the prevalence and openness of anti-Traveller prejudice in the settled Irish community and then illustrates how these anti-Traveller prejudices are mediated and reproduced throughout institutions and society generally in England:

*It's hard to stop discrimination in pubs. Irish landlords can spot Travellers a mile away. English landlords are not so bad but Irish buffers [Cant/Gammon pejorative for settled people] are used to getting their own way. It's their 'law' that they can discriminate against Travellers. They bring it with them from Ireland. ... Like Germans were taught that Jews were dirty, Irish are the same ... most of them are born, bred and reared ... to keep Travellers in their place. Buffs think that they have the right to put Travellers off the road and take parking spaces away but they won't offer homes in place of that. Even the people who kind of likes Travellers doesn't really want them next door but one to them. English Travellers akin themselves more with Gypsies - they don't want to be us - they don't want us to be them either [laughter]. How are you going to prove that people have been prejudiced? You would need a video camera stuck under your arm!*

This Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] also highlights the deep antagonisms that can divide the different indigenous nomadic groups in England. These antagonisms can be taken-up, interpreted and amplified by powerful definers like sedentary politicians and the media to create a hierarchy of nomadism and further marginalize and denigrate groups of Irish Travellers (see Section 1.5 for details on the persecution of Travellers by some politicians and media).

The following two paragraphs document an example of exclusionary and discriminatory practices in a Gander Catholic parish club arising from research evidence. Father Francis [interview 2001] parish priest of St. Enda's parish Gander, refused a taped interview but was friendly and talkative. He related how he is sometimes called out to 'domestics' on Barry Site to officiate while, the particular husband and wife involved in domestic violence 'swear on the Holy Bible' never to fight again and to respect each other in future. Father Francis [interview 2001] related how a recent large Traveller wedding resulted in a fight outside his church: The wedding guests apart from the nuptial couples' immediate families had to remain outside the church during the ceremony. Father Francis [interview 2001] thought that the whole idea of a social club at the church didn't make sense. He said that clubs had been established in the 1950s when the settled Irish were not accepted in Britain, but that situation had changed so there was no need for church based clubs anymore. There had been trouble with Travellers coming to the club from Barry Site, he said, but this was partly the fault of the club manager who let them come in without membership and then 'all hell had eventually let loose'. At present only two Irish Travellers from Barry Site have been accepted as members, but they can sign in other Travellers if they wish.

Mr. Berry [interview 2001] is an Irish Traveller living on Barry Site with his wife and eleven children and is one of the Travellers who gained membership of the local parish Catholic club referred to above. Mr. Berry used this local Catholic Church social club for two years (though not officially as a member) and never had any problems until two Travellers who he didn't know personally had a fight in the club. On his next visit he was told he was excluded as he wasn't a member and that Irish Travellers from Barry Site were not welcome. He applied for membership and was refused by the club committee chaired by his own parish priest Father Francis who refused to explain his exclusion. Berry sought help from SEEM ITP but the priest and committee refused to change their decision. It was only after taking the case to Diocesan level and warning of adverse publicity and legal action that the parish priest was forced to recant under pressure from his Church superiors and agree

to 'convince' his club committee that Mr. Berry should be accepted as a member. At this Diocesan meeting Berry [interview 2001] stated that he only wanted to use the parish club for an occasional drink with his wife: *'and to maybe bring his kids down at the weekend.'* His parish priest [Fr. Francis cited in Berry interview 2001] then asked pointedly: 'But how many kids have you Mr. Berry?' Mr. Berry [interview 2001] answered: *"Eleven Father, I've been a very good Catholic, Father"*. The thrust of the priest's and committee argument was that if one Traveller was admitted all would then apply and the club would be 'swamped'. Anti-Traveller racist attitudes and associated discriminatory practices are replicated in the 'unofficial' admissions policies of many public houses, community centres, commercial centres and entertainment venues reflecting the social and institutional prejudices of the settled Irish community and those of British society generally. Mr. Berry [interview 2001] feels that this particular case exemplifies the racism against Travellers in the settled Irish community and reflected how all Irish Travellers are stigmatised and persecuted because of the actions of a few individuals and asks: *'Would you ban all the people from the tower blocks [situated locally] because a few of them caused trouble? No. But its ok to ban all Travellers.'*

Father O'Rourke [interview 2002], a Roman Catholic parish priest in inner-city LENC for nearly two decades, talked about the deep rooted prejudice that exists in the settled Irish community towards Irish Travellers. Many of the more influential and powerful people in the emigrant Irish community with whom he worked and socialised held trenchant anti-Traveller views with which he disagreed fundamentally. But Father O'Rourke [interview 2002] said that these members of the immigrant Irish bourgeoisie who were often his friends, were influential locally and substantial benefactors to his parish work, so he had to tread a fine line in order not to isolate them and lose their patronage. Father O'Rourke [interview 2002] recognised the unique Catholic spirituality that Irish Travellers brought to his ministry, adding that he would oppose anti-Traveller racism when it happens overtly but had to balance the rights of Travellers with the risk of isolating other powerful sections of his congregation (see comments by Mrs. Stryder about differing attitudes of some Catholic teachers and the Church hierarchy in Section 4.4). The next section looks at how Irish Travellers are treated by LAs when presenting as homeless for various reasons including intimidation by sections of the settled community and domestic abuse.

## 2.8 Homeless Travellers and housing

There are specific cultural and gender dimensions affecting how social exclusion impacts adversely on Irish Travellers access to accommodation and welfare provision. Lack of adequate living spaces, severe economic marginalisation, and denial of cultural identity severely affect Irish Travellers life chances in Britain. Ms. Kelly [interview 2002], Irish Traveller Families Worker with SEEM ITP, deals with a range of issues relating to poverty and chronic homelessness, and also gives support to those suffering domestic violence in the Traveller community. She worked with Travellers previously with Woodlawn Borough and in the Irish voluntary sector throughout SEEM accepting before this post, which concentrates on the west and north-west sectors of SEEM:

*My clients undoubtedly comprise of the hidden homeless - families in B&Bs [bed and breakfasts], in temporary accommodation. ... A lot of the women will present at times of crisis, fleeing violence and I constantly dispute [that] the rates of domestic violence in this community are higher than those in the settled community. They are not, no way and I am very careful about pathologising the community in that way. It's obvious because of issues such as poverty and lack of economic independence and the patriarchal nature of the community, the women will more often than not present particularly to voluntary agencies for help, they do not have economic independence. ... When the [Traveller] women present here fleeing domestic violence, the first port of call will be to ring round various refuges. But because of the large family sizes for these women, inevitably they are not able to access those refuges. And therefore they are forced to follow what I feel is the most stressful route, seeking refuge in each borough's Homeless Person's Unit (HPU).*

This mirrors the experience of Irish Traveller women accessing health and social services (see chapter 3 for comparison) that are designed around the nuclear family, sedentary living patterns and institutional regimes. Ms Kelly [interview 2002] explains the convoluted, lengthy and stressful experience:

*And ... when you get them making a homelessness application ... they'll be in a B&B for four months; the Borough then make what they call "necessary" investigations. And that will often be very highly intrusive, going as far back as contacting Parish Priests in Ireland, Health Visitors in Ireland, as to the legitimacy of this woman's claim and all with a client group that often cannot read and write. ... [Y]ou will often get phone calls that this client hasn't presented for her interview, but with not reading and writing they are often going to forget about appointments and the like. So when that happens if the women are either waiting for a decision on their case or have a duty issue*

*towards them it inevitably means that they are gonna be residing within B&B accommodation and they will be on our books as temporary accommodation/homeless clients for up to nine months. Following which they will be referred to various housing associations for a short-hold tenancy where they will remain perhaps for two or three years. The borough will then decide perhaps to issue or extend its duty for another accommodation for two or three years and so it goes on.*

The Caravan Sites Act 1968 led to inadequate provision for 'indigenous' Gypsies, but often meant the exclusion of Irish Travellers from municipal sites as they were not considered 'indigenous'. A variant of this discrimination still occurs for Travellers coming into densely populated urban areas like Gander looking for accommodation close to relatives on Barry Site or in housing, as Gander local community lawyer Simon [interview 2002] explains:

*The local Council has a shortage of housing stock which means keeping a very tight control over who gets allocated properties, who gets accepted as homeless. If they accepted that somebody is homeless they have a duty to house them [but] they've got nowhere to put them. ... Compared to some other Councils in SEEM, Gander takes a much harder line in homelessness cases. So they'll look for things to suggest that you're intentionally homeless. ... So, if you're a Traveller living in housing and you're being harassed, because, for example, you're living in the north of Ireland people recognise you're a Traveller, so it's specific harassment. You can't get it sorted out so you think: "Well I can't cope with this, I'll go to England and be near the rest of my family". The housing department's line is: "You may need to get out of Northern Ireland, you didn't need to come here."*

Ms. Richard [interview 2002] worked for Gander Council in the temporary accommodation section [Housing Department] dealing with homeless families. She explains that having surmounted initial barriers to temporary accommodation Travellers then encounter a host of other problems with the form of accommodation and settled regimes:

*We put them into B&B accommodation, made sure they've got their housing benefit ... set them on the right road for a council property. I dealt with a number of Travelling families who [visited] the Housing Resource Centre (HRC)... [they] had a really bad name because quite a few of the larger families that are put into B&B cannot cope - its totally unsuitable accommodation. The children tended to run wild therefore B&B managers [were] constantly complaining. Some of the families we've got to know quite well moving from one B&B to the next... [A] lot of the housing associations don't want to accommodate Travellers. One way of finding a Traveller family on an application form is to look at the amount of children or look up their previous addresses. ... They are more dependent on private rented accommodation or else B&B. ... The biggest shortage of the housing crisis at the moment is with three, four, five and six bedrooms which is the category most Traveller families would fall into. ... Families can be up to ten years in temporary accommodation [in a] three bedroom flat ...*

But even if housing policy was more sensitively attuned to the cultural needs of Travellers there is a dearth of suitably designed houses available to satisfy that need.

Ms. Kelly [interview 2002] illustrates how the particular social experiences of Travellers are not recognised or are ignored in the housing allocation system, so creating another barrier to accommodation access:

*If it's a family who have fled inter-communal disputes in Ireland, they will present to us often 'cos they will have a local connection with Gander. They again are not being believed by HPU's about the clannish nature of the community and ... about serious disputes ... family members being shot and so on. So they will be temporarily accommodated up to four to five months, their case will be rigorously investigated and then families will be issued with what's known as a "184 Notice" citing them with intentional homelessness. They have twenty-one days to ask for review. ... [I]f they cannot read these notices they will come in [here] in a highly distressed state not realising that they have got two days to lodge a review. So we then will lodge the review on their behalf, access a decent housing solicitor for them and then try gathering supporting information which [usually] will be statements from other families, a priest, Health Visitor or even providing newspaper cuttings as proof [of] inter-family disputes.*

Even with such an array of evidence Travellers find it difficult to persuade the authorities of their legitimate need and often need to resort to advocacy by specialist voluntary organisations such as SEEM ITP that lead to a Judicial Review as in this illustrative example:

*I've had a client recently; she came to us via Bingen Borough. She was homeless because [of] an inter-family dispute with another family who were higher in the hierarchy of the community, who bullied her family out of the property. She presented to Bingen Borough as homeless [who] referred her to a B&B, it's a notorious converted ex-school property. She said that she couldn't accept that accommodation because the very family she was in dispute with had*

members in that B&B. They wouldn't believe her and said: "No, by refusing you are presenting as intentionally homeless". She then presented to Gander HPU 'cos she has family here. Gander had the duty to accommodate because she was priority need, having dependent children, her husband has serious medical problems, and she has depression. They have now carried out their investigations, accused her of intentional homelessness, citing this case with Bingen Borough. We've got her a lawyer and are now getting evidence in her defence. [M]eanwhile Gander wouldn't extend its duty to accommodate in B&B whilst [the case is] being heard. So I went to the Council leader and the local MP ... and now they have continued to accommodate. Bingen Borough issued her with a housing duty by mistake, therefore if it goes to Judicial Review, the court will have to err on the side of the family so it looks like she will win that case. But that's a typical homeless case for this community.

Others will present as homeless having been content in three-year short-hold tenancies with housing associations, but due to issues of illiteracy will simply not have renewed housing benefit - this is perceived by housing associations as rent debt. The [debt] limit is a £1000 which can trigger a Section 21 eviction notice and clients, not knowing their rights, let that go. So they will present as homeless, and have a charge of intentional homelessness brought against them.

A senior Housing official [Pedes interview 2002] from Gander Council wouldn't entertain illiteracy excuses because she argued Travellers' children could read official documentation. Ms. Kelly [interview 2002] comments:

*This is a cultural issue ... the community are now covered under the RRA and RAAA. They wouldn't dream of using that against a client whose principal language was say Gujarati. ... Because of discriminatory factors the older community have remained an essentially oral community. It's just not acceptable for [the Council] to say they have got official documentation ... are you expecting a child to interpret that? ... I have had to accompany a client when presenting to a homeless person's unit. They will [be given] a very large housing benefits book in Gander, along with a standard yellow housing application form. On the client's behalf it will take you an hour or more to go through that. And they are not offered assistance ... they are told to fill it in and are there up to four hours waiting for an interview.*

Many impediments are placed in the way of Irish Travellers seeking emergency accommodation and benefits. Councils and the Benefits Agency have an inbuilt distrust of nomadic groups. Large families, the presentation of non-standard documentation such as baptismal rather than birth certificates<sup>(2)</sup>, lack of a permanent address, or just being 'Irish' or a Traveller attract distrust and often precipitate fraud investigations from welfare agencies (O'Flynn, July 1993). Richard [interview 2002] highlighted that young single Traveller men and women have great difficulties finding accommodation outside their sites. Private landlords and housing associations often will not accept them while they are not entitled to council housing ... 'there really is nowhere for them to go.'

## 2.9 Fleeing domestic violence

There is an uncomfortable contradiction between ethnic rights and women's rights in the context of domestic violence against women in the Irish Traveller community. Richard [interview 2002] also dealt with cases where women were fleeing their husbands through domestic abuse and describes one of these:

*Because she couldn't have children her husband just couldn't accept it and started fights between the Traveller families. She had to flee in the end. She came in to see me, she was black and blue... After a lot of persuasion we managed to put her into B&B with the Council while they were doing her assessment. But unless she was vulnerable in their eyes, like sick or pregnant, she wasn't going to be accepted. So single Travelling people have got nowhere to go ... they have to have the proof on paper.*

In cases like this women can be excluded from the support of their extended family due to the stigma attached to women who quit unhappy or violent marriages. This could be lessened by the sensitive intervention of Catholic clergy in the preparation of couples for marriage. This kind of marriage preparation work in Ireland on issues such as domestic violence has had an appreciable impact on the viability of Traveller marriages and the lessening of domestic violence by encouraging prospective Traveller marriage couples to talk openly about these particular concerns in their relationship (Parish of the Travelling People, n.d.).

Ms. Kelly [interview 2002] asserts that cultural blindness de-legitimises Travellers' ethnicity and typifies Irish Travellers as a suspect and criminogenic community, even impacting adversely on women seeking refuge from domestic violence:

*When the [Traveller] women present themselves for domestic violence, it should be standard practice that they are offered gendered interviews ... [but] it's in housing practice guides that it's not required... They are not picking up ... that the [Traveller] women have the same dilemmas as some women from the Asian sub-continent - they cannot report to the police. To do so it would mean they would be ostracised from the community, and in turn it may even affect their daughters' marriage prospects. These are women who have to put their ethnicity before gender.*

These tensions between gender and ethnicity have been investigated by Pavee Point (2000) in Ireland who demonstrated the reluctance of Irish Traveller women to report domestic violence to the police or to use women's refuges. These factors accentuate their vulnerability to attack but do not support the stereotypical presumption that Travellers are somehow more prone or predisposed to domestic violence than settled society. Lentin (2001, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/5/4/lentin.html>) comments on the results of this research which has resonances for dealing with domestic violence within other marginalised ethnic groups also as it was conducted in a innovative manner by giving the Traveller community the tools, training and power to confront the challenge in a manner suited to their community:

[I]t also demonstrates the power of the racialised group, who, by training Traveller outreach workers and by making clear policy recommendations, is naming its own demands, in its own words, charting new ethnicised gendered spaces in a sedentary Ireland.

In Ireland, Pavee Point is a voluntary support organisation based on a partnership working between Travellers and settled people, rooted in a desire to rebuild in more equitable terms the relationships that have broken down between sedentary society and Travellers. The pooling and sharing of skills and knowledge between the two groups allows for a cross-fertilisation of ideas that informs both communities and can lead to ground breaking initiatives such as the project described above. This model has been adopted by some organisations such as the ITM in Britain but should be adopted by all voluntary Traveller support organisations in Britain. Funding organisations should make partnership working (including significant Traveller involvement in management committees) a prerequisite when considering grants for voluntary organisations. This particularly applies to Irish community based organisations in Britain working with Travellers where Irish Travellers can be excluded from management, planning and decision making through the maintenance of arcane 'club' rules, domination by exclusive community élites, and personal and institutional prejudice and racism.

Ms. Richard, [interview 2002] formerly of Gender Housing Department, comments on the particular problems faced by Traveller women fleeing domestic violence:

*It's a really difficult situation with the housing crisis, the housing staff have got to make an assessment very quickly. ... Is she intentionally homeless, does she have another property to go to, has she got police records? If the Traveller woman is fleeing domestic violence she's [usually] got no information ... there's nothing there to back up her story, so she is not usually believed - they are turned away.*

A combination of bureaucratic inflexibility, racism and lack of cultural awareness about Travellers specifically and 'invisible' minorities generally, coupled with the difficulties experienced by women from a closed patriarchal culture who are conditioned to prioritise the general 'good' of the ethnic group over their personal and group rights as women, serve to severely marginalise and disadvantage Irish Traveller women.

## 2.10 Plots, planning and sedentarism

Travellers are now facing immense social and cultural upheaval as many of them become isolated from supportive and secure extended family groups. Many traditionally nomadic Travellers have raised families on permanent authorised sites over the last thirty years, but the next generation and their children are often forced to leave authorised sites and either live as outlaws on the road or move into inappropriate conventional housing for the first time. The overcrowding, lack of tenure and poor conditions on many sites also drives Travellers into inappropriate settled housing. Some Travellers have tried to ameliorate the paltry state accommodation provision and the outlawing of indigenous nomadism by buying their own plots for trailer sites. Section 19A of the RRAA (2001) makes it unlawful for a statutory planning authority to discriminate when carrying out planning functions. Local Race Equality Schemes (RESS) can also be utilised to combat anti-Traveller discrimination.

A young Irish Traveller [interview 2002] outlines the accommodation needs from the economic perspective of many Travellers but juxtaposes this with a description of the climate of negative legal, political, media and social representations that serve to thwart any government action to ameliorate Travellers desperate accommodation crisis:

*They won't give them no planning permission. They are always on the news - that's not good - [saying]: "They are destroying the area - get them out of here". It's very hard for them these days. When people start talking and looking at the bad side of them [Travellers] they don't realise we are just [a] different culture we are not used to settling into houses and settling in one spot. ... If they were classed like everyone else ... instead of being classed as outcasts they would ... t have a nice plot of land... [Travellers] can go off working and then that place would be [there] when they come back - all clean. They have got their own tools, their own lorries ... they can just pick up their own rubbish and drive off to the nearest skip... I always think travelling is the best. ... I love it, you meet people, see places ... it's always different.*

Travellers who purchase land for sites are often refused planning permission to station their trailers as this is considered a change of land use. Travellers who have resorted to buying their own residential trailer plots are often undermined by a conflict of interest with 'NIMBY' inspired objections to planning permission (Chapman, 1999; Kenrick and Clark, 1999). Refusal of planning permission can be challenged, especially since LA Development Plans rarely provide for Travellers' needs. The RRA and RRAA can be invoked at every stage of the planning process. Planning authorities should be sensitive to accusations that by ignoring the needs of Gypsies and Travellers they are in breach of their general statutory duty under Section 71 of the RRA. However anomalies exist in UK law, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 obliges public bodies to proactively equality-proof all their policies including Traveller-specific equality-proofing. This has engendered much new research and monitoring of Travellers' social situation in NI. An Irish Traveller [interview 2002] comments:

*They [settled people] are not used to us, they can't handle us at all 'cos their mind is just ... so settled. We are wide [street-wise] we are broadminded... Once they have got their own little prison well they are locked in twenty-four-seven, they don't want to know no one else. But us, we are ... always seeing people, open for new changes and openings... They ... could be born and die in that same place... [I]f they are happy doing what they are doing, we are happy, everyone's happy ain't they, there is no need for trouble and all.*

Few fully nomadic Travellers ever consider housing unless through extremely poor health or stress induced by evictions and harassment [Traveller interviews, 2001-2003]. Travellers frequently get offered housing that is 'hard to let' on 'sink' estates. To get on housing waiting lists they have to reside in the area, but often find themselves evicted from the same area. When Travellers do move into housing, harassment from some settled residents often ensues. There is a lack of any statutory support mechanisms to help and advise Travellers adjusting to living in houses and to protect these families from prejudice and discrimination. Statutory officials can worsen situations through ignorance and insensitivity to Travellers' cultural predilections. Tarrington [interview 2002], an outreach worker in LENC, describes a 'Group Housing' project he visited in Irish City in the Republic of Ireland:

*He took me to one particular project that they ran in the Traveller community - a house ... set up like a Traveller community. It had a central area and ... there were trailers outside but it was a family house - to reconstitute a family that had become very split up ... to get some stability back, but at the same time [meeting] their needs.*

Here Tarrington describes Group Housing - essentially residential housing developments with additional

facilities and amenities specifically designed to accommodate extended families of Irish Travellers on a permanent basis. It has become very popular with some LAs in the Irish Republic and Travellers as it maintains the unity (and exclusivity) of the extended family combining the utility and comfort of a house with the mobility of trailers. One Irish Traveller male [interview 2001] who had experienced group housing felt that a major flaw in the system was that extended families settled in Group Housing would grow apart naturally over a number of generations through inter-marriage entailing new alliances, thus introducing social friction and splits into the system as original family loyalties diminished.

## 2.11 Illegal Irish Traveller encampments

The dearth of legally recognised transit or temporary stopping places, and specific culturally sensitive educational, social, or medical support for Irish Travellers, has had an extremely detrimental impact on their community and culture in Britain (LIWC, 1995; FIS, 1998). Estimates indicate that twenty-five percent of all Travelling people in Britain have no legal place to stop - this has a devastating impact on their primary and secondary health care, mental health, education, and general welfare. ODPM figures indicate that in Greater SEEM alone twenty-five percent live on unauthorised sites (these people can be summarily evicted by a police constable without reference to a court of law); twenty-seven percent live on local authority sites; and just under twenty-eight percent live on private legal sites. Ethnically, a large majority of Travellers based in the main English metropolitan urban areas are Irish (O'Dwyer 1997).

An Irish Traveller woman [interview 2002] of nineteen describes her new life on the road since she got married:

*I'm travelling, so I haven't got a permanent home. I got a trailer when I got married and been living in that. There's two families travelling round, there's only me my husband and my brother and his wife but we'll travel to where other Travellers are - so the other day there was sixteen other trailers plus ours then after that there was four of us... I have nowhere else to live but with Travellers who have got houses they come out for the summer...*

The prevalence of unauthorised stopping places condemns large numbers of Irish Travellers to regular harassment from the police and municipal authorities under the CJPOA 1994 trespass provisions. One young Irish Traveller [interview 2002] in his early twenties describes the difficulties imposed by LAs and police action on nomadic Travellers:

*Its all going to be in a house or on a site because the way its going if you pull your trailer round this area [SEEM] and all that you are getting [is] twenty-four hours on a camp and they are kicking you off. Then you are moving to a different quarter and you are there twenty minutes and they coming on with Section 61 or Section 64 [of the CJPOA] telling you: "Look, you got to go..." Drive round the corner, then they are stopping you and checking out your caravans, have you got ID, have you got receipts for this, log book for your car, is the car registered? You've got no tax on your car blah blah blah. How can we get tax on our car if ... you have to have an address to have insurance? ... [T]he Government [are] saying: "Well we ain't giving you nowhere to live". [I]f you could go to any borough yea and there could be like a designated camp site like a big field ... you've got two weeks. ... Then you're getting a bit of stop, you can relax, you ain't up all the time looking around and driving off and just doing that four or five times a day. That's not healthy, is it? You are pulling into a camp and they are moving you, pulling on, moving you, starting from nine o'clock in the morning.*

Nomadic Travellers respond to official harassment of unauthorised encampments and constant evictions by seeking safety in numbers and sometimes resorting to desperate forms of resistance:

*We got sick of it one day ... a year ago we were [on] five stars roundabout ... there must have been about a hundred trailers ... and everywhere we stopped they kept moving us... [T]he same police was following us so ... we all stopped [on a roundabout], jumped out of our motors, took out the key and said: "We are not moving, if you want to move our caravan you do it." And we all gave the police our keys... There was children roaring, screaming, and starving hungry [as we] couldn't stop to make them ... something to eat... So when we done that the [police] inspector come down and said: "Look we are going to have to do something blah blah blah." Reporters started to come down, [we were] in the middle of the roundabout for an hour and a half. Then ... we got a campsite. They took us to a field. We were there three weeks so when you stand up to them... [but] that's only if you are in a big group...*

Travellers are often forced into inadequate settled accommodation that removes them from the social and psychological support of their own extended family and community, often exposing them to extreme degradation and discrimination (LGTU, n.d.; LIWC, 1995). The current restrictions on the availability of appropriate sites and accommodation can lead to problems and disputes within family units and between different extended families, while planning laws restrict new Traveller developments. The CJPOA 1994 gives draconian powers to both LAs and the police to evict Travellers camped unlawfully. Although hundreds of evictions take place every year, case law and statutory guidance advises that before any eviction is begun, detailed enquiries should be made into the particular Traveller family's circumstances. LAs and the police forces have a duty to address the relevant welfare issues in their Race Equality Schemes.

Mr. Hazel [interview 2000] is Technical Officer for Parks and Open Spaces at Gander LA. When an illegal Traveller encampment begins his office can receive up to eighty phone calls from local residents. Some callers have threatened to shoot Travellers or cause them harm if the LA will not take immediate action to evict them. Firstly the illegal encampment is closed off and two security guards are put in position twenty-four hours per day. Travellers who are living within the enclosed encampment are allowed to come and go, but security will not allow any other vehicles to enter. Then an official notice relating to health, education and welfare matters is distributed to every encamped Traveller instructing them to contact the Housing and Social Services Department of the LA for assistance within twenty-four hours. When asked if assistance was offered with literacy problems Mr. Hazel said that help should come from Social Services if they are contacted. As a matter of course, he then informs both Social Services and the Education Department that Travellers are illegally encamped, and then it is up to these departments to carry out their particular duties to the Travellers. Hazel [interview 2000] also requests receipts from these departments stating that they have been informed by him, but these are often not forwarded. Local Travellers believe there is no Traveller Education Service (TES) provision for children on illegal sites in Gander [Barry Site focus group 2002].

Mr. Hazel [interview 2000] was informed by the researchers that the DETR (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1998)<sup>3</sup> "Good Practice Guidelines" suggested that LAs should have a written statement of their policies concerning unauthorised encampments, but he had no knowledge of such a statement. Mr. Hazel [interview 2000] was informed that these DETR Guidelines also recommended that local authorities should give serious consideration to identifying acceptable temporary stopping places. He declared that much of Gander's available land was waterlogged and unsuitable for encampments. Rubbish skips are provided when illegal camping occurs... Fresh water and toilets would only be provided after a court had given consent for Travellers to stay on an illegal site. When informed of the negative health implications of not providing these utilities, Hazel [interview 2000] replied that he had never thought about the implications of a lack of water supply. Mr. Hazel counts people by age and sex and asks their names but he didn't know if or how this information was used by the LA. Gander LA had no links with other LAs regarding Traveller issues and no national co-ordination exists between LAs regarding Traveller issues [Hazel interview 2000]. Hazel believes public relations are weak within and between Council departments and agreed that Travellers should to be incorporated into a needs assessment exercise. Mr. Hazel [interview 2000] believes that large stores with extensive car parks will become sites for illegal Traveller encampments as Gander LA continues to block off its own open spaces. He would welcome a more proactive support mechanism within Gander LA concerning all Traveller related matters in order to expedite his responsibilities safely and efficiently.

Mr. Henby [interview 2002] is a bailiff based in LENC who carries out Traveller related evictions for councils and private clients in greater LENC and beyond. He describes how the process begins:

The Council solicitor applies to the magistrates' court under the ... Public Order Act. Then I go before the magistrates ... and hopefully they will make an order for possession. Then we go and say: "There is an order, now can you go"? Mr. Player usually gets hold of TES straight away ... housing contacts, medical, everything that a normal human being would need. We find out if it is genuine first of all ... and if the doctor says: "Yes the child is quite ill and should go to hospital..." If they can stay there then ... the child gets sorted out, off they go. They are human beings when all's said and done - according to how they react. There are occasions when we drag them off.

Henby [interview 2002] constantly complained in his interview about the lack of support he received during evictions from police forces, while also indicating that the human safeguards LAs perform do not apply to private evictions so he has no need to concern himself with welfare issues:

Its slightly different because there is no council involved so they don't have to get involved in finding out if there was genuine illness or genuine reason... [O]nce you start to move caravans ... you grab the first one and take

it about two miles away dump it and come back for another, they all start pulling up the jacks. ... Once you have a proper conversation with these people you find the majority of them go ... with the court order ... that's on private land. Yes, but the clients probably pick up a tab of about five or six grand [thousand pounds] with all the fees and by the time they clear ... the mess ... you are probably looking at about two or three thousand pounds to do that, so its an expensive exercise.

Here Henby [interview 2002] corroborates Morris and Clements (2002: 50) assertions about the huge financial costs incurred in the management of illegal Traveller encampments. They calculated six million pounds as an extremely conservative estimate of costs incurred by private and public landowners per year in the UK. This money would be better used to provide adequate and appropriate accommodation for Travellers.

Research undertaken by the Community Architecture Group in a number of English counties, estimated that sixty-seven percent of traditional Travellers' sites and stopping places had disappeared between 1986 and 1993 (cited in Monbiot, *The Guardian* 4 November 1999). This contemporary bout of common and marginal land 'enclosures' combined with the CJPOA (1994) provisions criminalising nomadism and rescinding the onus on LAs to provide adequate sites, has propelled Travellers into direct confrontation with the police, settled communities and the state through no choice of their own. Traveller economics have always depended on good relations with their customers – the settled community. They need to preserve those good relations in order to maintain their lifestyle and culture. Yet government policy serves to subvert Traveller entrepreneurialism and undermine a small but active hidden economy whilst eulogising mainstream entrepreneurs.

## 2.12 Traveller economies

A combination of social exclusivity, nomadism, cohesive extended families, and a strong resistance to wage-labour underpinned the nature and structure of the Irish Traveller economy (see also 1.1). Travellers' entrepreneurial skills adapted as the 'mainstream' economy changed post 1945. As a consequence of modernisation the Irish Traveller economy has shifted to casual building work, tarmac, market stalls, gardening and scrap metal collection. Some have developed successful businesses dealing in antiques and furnishings [Traveller interviews 2000-2002] (Adams et al, 1975: 172-187). The various Traveller economies have always been dependent on niche markets and opportunities. Travellers have tried to adapt to modernisation but the concentration of populations in urban spaces and consequent commodification and development of the most marginal areas once used for encampments, combined with state coercion has squeezed out many nomadic and semi-nomadic Travellers, forcing them to abandon self-employment in many cases and creating more welfare dependency. A young Irish Traveller [interview 2002] discusses past and present relationships with settled people:

My grandfather made a great business out of it ... he got on with all, Indians, English, the whole lot of them. He used to sell them trailers. They used to come from England to Ireland just to buy his stuff ... about forty year ago. ... I have been doing it now since I was young and I have met a lot of people who like doing business with us, but we just got to be more settled and more business-wise. [Travellers] do a lot of business with furniture, carpets, antiques and building, so if they can do all that then what's to stop them from doing anything...

Not only was LA site provision carried out under the CSA (1968) woefully inadequate and often poorly located, but it often served to undermine the very culture and economy it purported to sustain. Kiddle (1999: 61) criticises the CSA for its insensitivity to the logistics of Traveller economic organisation that forces many Travellers into the benefits system:

Regulations on some (sites) only permit short periods away, after which entitlements to the pitch have to be relinquished. So it becomes more difficult to travel seasonally for work. The shortage in the number of site places overall means that there can be no guarantee that another one will be available on a family's return. Very few sites provide working areas within their boundaries for such activities as collecting and sorting scrap metal and so work opportunities from a settled base are curtailed. The limitation of self employed work possibilities has not been counterbalanced by an equivalent increase in waged job opportunities for those settled Travellers who would take these up, as much discrimination occurs and for some a lack of literacy inevitably reduces chances of employment. Therefore in many cases on settled sites adult Travellers will come to depend on state benefits and resent and exploit the system which erodes their pride in their identity.

The CSA inspired sites often served to reproduce and exacerbate the negative stereotypes of Travellers current

in settled society and served to undermine the social, cultural and economic base of all indigenous Travellers. Travellers are often accused of not paying taxes but many of their business transactions make marginal profits and would be uneconomic if regulated and taxed in the same way as mainstream economic small business. Yet they satisfy niche needs in the economy providing services that the mainstream economy does not satisfy. The economy is often centred on the work of a family unit with contributions from various members, so conventional income tax regimes should not apply (Clark and Ó hAodha, 2000). However, a male Irish Traveller [interview 2002] refutes the accusation of not paying taxes:

*I pay tax 'cause I am self-employed – if I am doing work. I have [a] card but at the end of the year all that tax I pay I get half back. [Travellers] are paying their taxes one way or the other. To buy food you have to pay taxes, on fags, petrol - it's all tax isn't it? It's not that we don't pay tax directly to the government, we are paying ... 'cos we are buying stuff...*

But many Travellers have struggled to adapt to rapid urbanisation and the professionalisation of large parts of the economy. A high incidence of poor literacy and numeracy skills in this population has excluded them from many mainstream economic opportunities. Mr. Simpson [interview 2001] works for an Irish community voluntary organisation that provides training and support for job seekers throughout SEEM. He provides training support on Barry Site and believes that Travellers are interested in further education to finish GCSEs, and also in beauty therapy courses for women and construction training for men. Most of the Travellers on Barry Site do not have much trouble finding work, but CIS cards<sup>(4)</sup> have cut down on cash in hand work on building sites, therefore casual work now means registering with the Inland Revenue first. Some of the men want to do mechanics courses so that they can service their vehicles. Travellers are often unaware that they can get reduced rates at colleges when they are claiming benefits, while many of those in employment have shown a strong interest in learning a trade according to Simpson [interview 2001]. Poor literacy is a major barrier for many Travellers who want further education. One Traveller who approached Mr. Simpson wanted a private tutor to teach him literacy as he was too ashamed of his illiteracy to go into an adult classroom.

What Simpson [interview 2001] implies is that Travellers are short of mainstream economic skills but are eager to study and learn if given the chance in a culturally sensitive learning environment. Ms. Richard [interview 2002] comments on the skills base of young male Travellers on Barry Site:

*Most of the young men have been through college. I think the parents realised that they don't want their children to grow up the same as they are. I could name a brickie, plumber, electrician, painter and decorator, a landscape gardener - proper trained tradesmen, not just collecting someone's rubbish or making a few pounds for doing a paving job here and there.*

So many younger Travellers see the advantages of accessing the mainstream economy but have difficulties accessing training, while self-employment is still a central goal for most interviewed in this research as this Traveller [Heath YOI interview 2002] born in SEEM explains:

*When I get out ... I'm gonna buy me own little place ... that will be like a little office. I can work off that and go off do me own little jobs 'cos I know plenty people in the building trade and I have got me own CIS card [tax exemption], so I have got all my papers at home. I have got a folder of all the companies I have worked for and all references, so anyone that wanted me to do a job, I could just show them my papers, whatever they wanted to know. As soon as I get a couple of trades behind me... then I would have the NVQ's for that as well... I just need to get out and make a new start for meself...*

Traditionally Irish Traveller women played an important part in the earning capacity of families through seasonal farm work, hawking goods (selling door to door or on the street) and associated services like fortune telling (Kiddle, 1999). Many of these economic opportunities have now disappeared so older Traveller women tend to be more confined economically within the community, although younger women (and some men) are accessing new opportunities in the service and welfare sectors of the economy including the health and education sectors and also youth and community work [SEEM ITP, Irish LENC Care interviews 2001-2002] (Ryan, 1995: 37).

Clark and Ó hAodha's (2000: 3) research on recycling of waste materials in Ireland by Irish Travellers is particularly pertinent as they estimate that about fifty percent of scrap metal delivered for recycling: 'is sourced, collected and transported by the Traveller community. This percentage may be significantly greater for some of the more valuable non-ferrous metals.' Clark and Ó hAodha (ibid) believe that the contribution of Travellers to the recycling industry is generally unappreciated and not taken seriously by

either those in power or society in general because the work is carried out on a small scale by many family members. Settled people equate large scale operation with efficient production, while Travellers' contribution to recycling is much more intensive and family based involving the collection of various metals that are stored when market prices fall and sold when the price rises and, extend to the resale of salvaged vehicle spare parts. Clark and Ó hAodha (ibid: 5) indicate that low labour costs in the Traveller recycling economy make recycling viable where settled businesses could not make a sufficient profit for viability:

Traveller recycling operations are labour intensive with many members of the extended family contributing to the income generation. The labour input is not considered as a direct cost with an accompanying set hourly wage. Instead it is considered in terms of family-based self-employment and labour input is not seen as a negative cost factor as is the case in the cost structure of recycling programmes in the settled community.

The European Union is putting increasing emphasis on recycling in conjunction with proposed legislation to reduce pollution coming from commitments made in the Kyoto Convention. The British government could capitalise on the entrepreneurial and recycling skills of all Traveller groups in Britain by encouraging and supporting recycling in the Traveller community. Sites should not only be designed for residence but should also accommodate adequate spaces for work and storage. Recycling could regenerate Traveller communities if given this culturally sensitive business and employment support by government through well aimed legislation and policy, while also changing the negative perceptions of Travellers held by many sedentary people.

Far from being inclusive the Labour government's agenda excludes many of those providing services in informal sectors of the economy, such as Irish Travellers. Its conservative remit only recognises conventional settled forms of economic participation so pressurising economic non-conformists like Travellers to adopt the regimented discipline of sedentary conformist models. New Labour's constricted definitions and discourse on social inclusion does not sit comfortably with the idea of diversity in an economic sense. Has the idea of cultural diversity been debased to become little more than a commodity to be packaged and sold like 'Irishness' or 'Caribbean carnivals' or just another marketing tool used to target particular sections of society? Whatever the case, Irish Travellers and other similar groups who have a unique culture rooted in an economy based on varying degrees of nomadism, have had no incentives or support from government, but instead have been criminalised and vilified.

### 2.13 Summary and comments

Government legislation, policy and practice relating to Travellers accommodation needs have proved disastrous for the various communities affected since its beginnings in 1960. The first comprehensive attempt to accommodate Travellers was the CSA (1968) which did provide limited sites specifically for Gypsies (creating competition with other then unrecognised Traveller groups for pitches). The major flaw in this government legislation was that responsibility for building sites was devolved from central to LAs so that local settled interests subverted the legislation's intentions. Also, provision was not nearly adequate for actual populations leading to overcrowding and permanent occupation of pitches so that LA sites became a halfway house to full assimilation into settled accommodation. Site provision did improve in the 1980s when government provided grants for Traveller accommodation to LAs, only to be undermined again by the CJPOA in 1994 that repealed the statutory requirement for LAs to provide sites for Travellers.

Contradictory and coercive sets of legislation enacted over the last forty years purported to deal with Travellers accommodation needs but often underestimated and exacerbated the problems. Barry Site in Gander, Hadria Site in Painham and Central Site in LENC all illustrate some of the problems that afflict Travellers sites. Management of the sites by LAs or subcontractors has resulted in insensitive practices while service providers to these sites also leave much to be desired. The overall impression from the sites studied is one of ghettoisation of a 'forgotten' people that will lead eventually to their 'assimilation' into settled accommodation. The negative relationship between Irish Travellers and the settled Irish population is embedded in the context of racism and discrimination. Some positive initiatives are happening like the Westway site in west London.

Homelessness and all the stresses it produces has become a major issue for Travellers denied a nomadic lifestyle. Significant barriers inhibit access by Travellers families to accommodation in Gander, but also throughout SEEM. Traveller women who suffer domestic violence are discriminated against in very culturally specific ways throughout the housing system and can be excluded from accommodation by dint of discrimination based on multiple criteria: being a woman, a Traveller, being Irish, having large families. Poor literacy and insensitive institutional procedures also create barriers to Travellers in the housing system.

The difficult planning situation for Travellers, particularly in relation to the development of privately owned family plots in response to the dearth of LA site provision, is juxtaposed with the treatment of Travellers living on illegal encampments by LAs. Travellers who have responded to this situation by buying their own plots have been stymied by the planning system and sedentary objections to Travellers' plans. Travellers, who once had access to traditional stopping places that are now gone, have little option but to camp illegally on private and publicly owned land if they are to remain nomadic. This has again brought Travellers into conflict with settled society, LAs and the police, thus criminalising some Travellers and forcing many more into inappropriate housing where severe mental and physical stress often occurs.

Irish Traveller economies change and adapt well to economic transformations, but Travellers can struggle economically due to adverse legislation, lack of suitable accommodation and no government support for Traveller entrepreneurship and businesses based on extended families and/or marginal profits. As Irish Travellers have been progressively excluded their economies have suffered, although research into recycling and the Traveller economy in Ireland points to a more positive outlook in the future if the British government, European Union and relevant agencies engage positively to support what could be an extremely productive Traveller recycling economy.

Accommodation for Travellers must be appropriately designed to meet their varied social, extended family and economic needs. Government and LAs should both provide and facilitate a range of site provision ranging from a national network of traditional and new temporary halting or transit sites, linked to good quality, well located and sensitively planned and managed private and public permanent sites. Accommodation policies should be informed and developed in an integrated way that takes into account the specific health, education, economic, employment and training needs of Travellers and the protection of Traveller culture. A co-ordinated, holistic approach to these interrelated needs is required to improve services for Irish Travellers taking into account, that for many Travellers, their accommodation space is also their workplace.

- 1 The report does apologise for its lack of coverage.
- 2 In Irish Traveller culture the baptismal certificate is often regarded as more important than a birth certificate.
- 3 DETR responsibilities with regard to Travellers and Gypsies have now passed to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).
- 4 Construction Industry Scheme cards are a government scheme to prevent tax evasion.

### 3. HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

#### 3.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter will explore procedures and developments in primary health delivery to Irish Travellers focusing on access and barriers to healthcare in Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), general practitioners (GPs) and National Health Service (NHS) hospitals. It does not intend to attempt a comprehensive examination of health statistics or particular medical conditions pertaining to Irish Travellers. This chapter does highlight some of the more stark disparities in mortality statistics between settled people and Travellers, but concentrates more on the environmental, cultural and social parameters that influence the general health of Irish Travellers. In this context it intends to appraise the quality and availability of basic Health Services (HSs) for Travellers in England whether nomadic, sited or in settled accommodation by concentrating on research respondents experiences in LENC (Large English Northern City) and SEEM (South East England Metropolis) where appropriate. Interviews were conducted with health and social welfare professionals in these research locations and anywhere else where relevant expertise was available. All the specific research areas have large but generally 'invisible' Irish Traveller populations. A minority live on authorised sites or unauthorised encampments. Most of the Irish Travellers interviewed now live in, and move regularly through, settled forms of accommodation either permanently or seasonally. All Traveller respondents interviewed were asked to give their opinions on and relate their experiences of health and social welfare issues. See Sections 1.6 and 1.9 in this report for a detailed breakdown of all respondents and their competences.

The second part of this chapter will examine how Social Services Departments (SSDs) respond to the needs of Irish Travellers in LENC and SEEM. It will also examine the often negative and fractious nature of the relationship between statutory SSDs, voluntary sector support and Travellers themselves. An in-depth illustrative study (see Section 3.10) from LENC is used to investigate problems and barriers to service delivery, while also pointing to positive ways of engagement. The role of specialist voluntary sector organisations, both general and dedicated to specific work with Irish Travellers, is examined and appraised.

Irish Traveller's health is closely linked to the form and quality of accommodation that is available to them. A contemporary nomadic lifestyle in England is characterised by various negative determinants: lack of basic hygiene facilities, insecurity on roadside and temporary (illegal) camps, regular forced eviction and harassment, and frequent conflict with Local Authorities (LAs), police, landowners and sections of sedentary society (Hawes, 1997; Hyman, 1989). These negative aspects of contemporary nomadism in England are accentuated by the lack of running water, bathrooms, electricity, uninterrupted schooling for children, and access to medical facilities that permanent sites or settled accommodation ostensibly seem to offer. The stark reality on legal sites can mean poor sanitary conditions, overcrowding, lack of tenure, and stigmatisation and criminalisation by local settled residents and the police. Irish Travellers in settled types of housing often suffer stress through separation from extended family supports, overcrowding, and local intimidation. Poor nutrition and dental care, tobacco and alcohol abuse, and to a lesser but increasing extent drug abuse can be factors in Irish Travellers' poor health record. Chronic illnesses such as respiratory diseases, rheumatism and digestive illnesses are also common [Irish Traveller interviews and focus groups, 2000-2003] (Fincham, 2001; Hyman, 1989; Niner, October 2002).

Travellers can suffer high levels of anxiety, distress and depression due to the pressures of leading an outlawed nomadic lifestyle, or living on a 'ghettoised' overcrowded authorised site with no security of tenure, or being confined to inappropriate settled housing on 'sink' estates. All these modes of accommodation can undermine extended family support structures with possible dire consequences for communal and individual physical and mental well-being. The breakdown of traditional Traveller economies and the erosion of cultural self-esteem severely undermines the health and life-chances of Irish Travellers (Dunn, 2000). There are long-term mental health implications for Traveller women and men trapped on overcrowded and poorly resourced municipal sites or inappropriate housing stock with no prospect of resuming a nomadic lifestyle, or obtaining more suitable accommodation [Irish Traveller interviews and focus groups, 2000-2002]. The criminalisation of nomadism, evictions and other Traveller vicissitudes, often results in cursory treatment of medical symptoms rather than determining actual causes, and can result in possible misdiagnosis and late detection of abnormalities and lack of continuity in care and treatment (Fincham, 2001; Hawes, 1997; Hyman, 1989; Clements and Morris, 2001b).

Research carried out in Ireland (cited in Pavee Point website 1998, <http://ireland.iol.ie/~pavee/>) illustrates the wide gulf between Irish Traveller's health status and that of settled people generally:

*Because Irish Travellers are a distinct ethnic group, with many members living in intolerable circumstances, they have different and significantly worse health and disease problems than their settled counterparts. The average life expectancy of a Traveller man is 10 years shorter than a settled man's. Traveller women live on average 12 years less than their settled peers. ... Travellers have higher death rates for all causes; their rates are significantly higher for: accidents, metabolic disorders in 0-14 age group, respiratory ailments, congenital problems.*

These negative findings are mirrored in general medical research into the health and well-being of all the distinct Traveller groups in Britain, but also in the few local studies carried out specifically with Irish Travellers (O'Dwyer, 1997; see also Clements and Morris, 2001b; Daniel, 1999; Fincham, 2001).

A recent government sponsored investigation reported that all Gypsies and Travellers suffer significantly poorer health and lower life expectancy than is the norm in the settled community throughout Britain (Niner, 2002: 10). For example, studies of a specific location in London mirror these Irish findings: on two Traveller sites in north-west London based on a study group of ninety adult Irish Travellers, only four were over sixty-five years of age (O'Dwyer, 1997). Lack of knowledge of bureaucratic systems, widespread illiteracy, and a failure to understand 'settled' timeframes and the failure of health and other organisations to recognise and address these aspects common to some black and ethnic minority communities impede Irish Travellers' access to services. Rutter (1997: 10) maintains that bureaucratic structures and procedures exclude Travellers from services: '*Public services are offered on condition of settlement, e.g. signing on [social security], GP registration, Education. All instil the virtues of regularity, punctuality and responsibility.*' So these bureaucratic regimes serve to exclude many nomadic Travellers, but even ostensibly settled Travellers suffer exclusion in the HS, due to cultural blindness, illustrated by some of the research interview evidence below.

The context of Irish Travellers' lives includes the negative stress generated by living in a hostile society where discrimination and harassment is a constant reality, whether in housing, on unauthorised camps, or on 'permanent' sites. Small localised research studies have been conducted to date into the health of Travellers in Britain, but extensive research on Irish Travellers has only been undertaken in Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Gypsies and Travellers life expectancy in Britain was forty-eight years in 1998 (Daniel, 1999; Fincham, 2001). Daniel (ibid) suggests that for Travellers in Britain the rate of stillbirths for Travellers was seventeen times, perinatal mortality was twice and infant mortality five times the national average in 1998. A range of morbidity statistics for Travellers in Britain are consistently higher than national averages (Fincham, 2001). The following Sections will examine provision, access and the actual health needs of Irish Travellers.

### 3.2 PCTs: The new primary healthcare regime

The following sections are dedicated particularly to illustrative examples of Irish Travellers' access to, and experience of, healthcare through PCTs, GP practices and NHS hospitals as indicated in the introduction to this chapter. There are now three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in LENC and each one has the responsibility to provide services for the population within set district boundaries and are also liable for general health improvement since 2000. Most of the fifteen hundred PCT staff work in health centres and GP practices, delivering primary care services such as physiotherapy, chiropody, district nursing, health visiting. The PCT's responsibilities cover all GP practices, ophthalmologists, opticians, dentists and pharmacies in its designated area. The PCT also has responsibility for NHS hospital contracts including people's access to hospital, quality of treatment and commissioning staff training. Mr. Earl [interview 2003], manager for Central LENC PCT, explains the background to this initiative begun in 2000:

*New Labour is trying to do two things. One is make Health Service [delivery] consistent wherever you live. ... The second thing ... was to bring power and accountability down to local levels by having front-line staff and local people involved in NHS. The model used to achieve this are called PCTs... So in 2004 all PCTs will have seventy-five percent of the local budgets in NHS. So there is a lot of power coming out of PCTs... established in October 2000... We haven't got the management or the resources to do everything across the City ... so the three PCTs have ten [responsibilities] each, for example North branch do district nursing across LENC ... Central - we've got a lead on ethnicity [and] race...*

PCT manager Earl sees the future of community based health in already constituted pseudo-democratic health forums that will eventually have some control over local healthcare budgets:

*We are concerned about how a community feeds into it and how we feed out to our population. [So we] set up these local groups in five areas [consisting of] a group of local people elected on to it, a couple of our staff, a GP and a city councillor who meet monthly to talk about health issues. So what you tend to have is local [community representatives] who come to ... their group and say look ... a group of Irish Travellers arrived on that piece of land down there ... and that alerts us to issues...' So they are your sensors? 'That's right ... it's like saying what's going on in the local area. And the idea over a period of time is to give them more budgets and delegation to run more local HSS... it's about democracy..*

The problem for Irish Travellers with this PCT 'democratic' strategy is that they are not an organised political community and have little access to or knowledge of mainstream political processes. LENC Council provides no funding or direct support for Travellers and the deputy leader of the Council [interview 2002] stated that he would only engage with Irish Travellers when they could present to him as an organised community group.

Travellers are organised around the extended family, and are generally not integrated into the surrounding community. Moreover, many local political and community representatives would tend to mirror much public and media opinion in their strong prejudices against Travellers, so 'representative committees' are not likely to prioritise this particularly needy group.

Most Irish Travellers live in settled accommodation (there are only a few sites) in LENC and other cities. They usually live in the same area for long stretches of time, though some families may quite often move through the housing stock in that area (and beyond) – but there are no paradigms of behaviour in this respect. For the minority of Travellers who still live a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle the geographical specificity of PCTs will serve to exclude them from services. Voluntary groups like Irish LENC Care who work with Travellers often treat them as an insignificant section of the general settled Irish community and so their health needs would tend to be marginalised against the needs of more organised and empowered sections of the settled Irish communities. Therefore, PCT's should ensure, when collaborating with Irish community organisations that they have specialist knowledge of and services for Travellers and do not treat this ethnic group as an ad hoc addendum to their general outreach work. Irish LENC Care is represented on the LENC PCT local group committees. Some examples of Traveller linked health concerns related by PCT manager Earl [interview 2002] as being discussed at the PCT Multi-Agency Health Forum were specific to settled Irish – not Irish Travellers. Even more troubling was that these examples were garnered from Irish LENC Care representations who had not characterised Traveller specific health issues at this forum so perpetuating the 'culture of poverty' canard that Irish Travellers are just an impoverished subset of the Irish community (McCarthy, 1994). In fact PCT manager Mr. Earl [interview 2002] conflated both ethnic groups and struggled to appreciate the differences between settled Irish, homeless and Irish Travellers:

*[W]e have hostels people move in and out of - they might be Travellers but it's not clear ... what is a Traveller in that context? Because if that is the case we certainly have specialist services [for Irish Travellers], the nurses and Health Visitors who work with those families in a specific specialised way - so therefore we do have a policy on that group.*

This answer indicates that this PCT manager who has special responsibility for ethnicity and race in LENC does not know that Irish Travellers, who have one of the poorest health profiles of any group in Britain, are a recognised ethnic group under race relations legislation!

Central LENCs PCT manager [interview 2002] comments on the territorial limitations of his service apropos the specialist needs of nomadic families:

*They are very real issues ... someone leaves area "x" then "y" needs to know about them, otherwise you go through the whole process again replicating all the issues of that family, all their history. ... in the past there has been too much of a one box fits all: there's a GP, there's a practice, what's the problem?*

With so many new arrivals in LENC such as asylum seekers, refugees and indigenous marginalised groups like Irish Travellers and Gypsies still settling in the city permanently and temporarily, how does LENC PCT identify and engage with these groups? PCT manager Earl [interview 2002] replies (See Sections 3.9 onwards for related information on SSDs):

*[LENC PCT have] got a Health and Well-being Team (HWT) that works in the local communities ... listening to what groups want and need from the HS. HWT make sure they receive the services; and to make them more appropriate and localised to peoples needs. So we do work with more marginalized groups in two ways. One is people access our general services (GP or Health Visitor etc.) in the normal way. The second way we do it is through specialist services that [address] peoples needs in a more defined way. ... Is this a little chaotic? Well yes its not brilliant at all ... especially for Travellers who might be moving around the country ... but we can only work with what we know ... putting the feelers out... [We] work with the City Council ... with Social Services, so we know where people are.*

But how does the PCT provide support for marginal groups like Travellers? The PCT manager [interview 2002] explains:

*We've got the Multi-Agency Health Forum to ... provide services [for] ... people coming into the system who are marginalised, vulnerable from a range of communities. They arrive in the system later than the general population and with more complex needs ... we haven't got maybe the expertise ... in terms of specific work with the Irish community and Travellers [so] we have had a contract with Irish LENC Care. [Its] about picking people up earlier in the system, so for example we've got Health Visitors who are homelessness experts ... getting them accommodated ... with social services quickly. ... We recognise the general [health] system just isn't flexible enough in the right place at the right time for those groups.*

It was becoming clear that the PCT manager was struggling to understand the particular nature of Irish Travellers culture and ethnicity although the interviewer tried to explain. Have LENC PCT developed any policies and procedures for Irish Travellers?

*No. But most Travellers in your area are housed? Yea, that's right. ... [For instance] a GPs situation where ... an Irish Travelling family [with] eight people just show up and say: "Can we register?" Because little boy or daughter is ill or the mums got a problem – that's what tends to happen. There are [logistical] problems that some of the GPs just can't get into because you need more time... A Health Visitor is then given responsibility to go out and make an assessment of the children's health etc. So then they are referred to the Specialist Service ... there are no rules about your child's got to go to school on this day... Its about understanding how families culturally exist and what is the custom and habit behind all that ... recognising that for some families its difficult for them to do "xyz" which a middle-class white family might do and we are aware of those issues much better than GPs. ... [It also] stops practices becoming clogged up with families of that nature because their needs are more complex.*

Flexible responses to service delivery are being developed by LENC PCT in order to include marginalised groups, but the special circumstances and health needs of Irish Travellers or indigenous nomadic groups generally have not as yet been recognised officially or factored into these initiatives. None of the Irish Travellers interviewed in LENC mentioned the Specialist Service when asked about healthcare [interviews and focus groups 2000-2003]. Mr. Earl did assure the researcher that specialist services would be developed for Travellers and be in place within three years.

### 3.3 Healthcare access for Irish Travellers

PCTs are a relatively new health institution, but presently much of the positive health outreach and development work with Travellers is done independently by individual health agents operating in the community (Friends, Families and Travellers, 1998). Hyman (1989) highlighted the crucial outreach role played by some Health Visitors in linking Travellers to appropriate health support. Research carried out by a specialist Traveller Health Visitor in Sheffield found that eighty-two of the women she questioned would be reluctant even with serious health concerns to visit a GP (Van Cleemput, 1995). Central LENC PCT Health Visitor Mrs. Gorman [interview 2002] with twenty-three years experience outlines the general ignorance of Irish Traveller's culture in primary healthcare services and explains how she attempts to ameliorate this:

*Apart from midwives, all the other health workers GPs, hearing doctor, practice nurse, whatever, don't go into peoples' homes as they are all based in their centres and I would say that [they] quite probably don't have an appreciation of [Traveller's culture]... If I don't pave the way with other health professionals to deal with them appropriately and sensitively all my hard work is down the pan because I might have really worked hard to get a mother to bring the child in because her child has got a chronic condition... If I don't get the GP to handle the family sensitively then ... she certainly won't attend the hospital appointment... I can't deal with it every step ... I can at least liase with the others. There is probably a mass ... ignorance in health professional [circles] in terms of what the cultural and specific health needs are of Travelling families because we don't see enough of them to build up our own experience at first hand. ... From a managerial aspect it should come down to the GPs from their managers: "You are required to give your Health Visitor information on new registrations every month." It has to come from both sets of management.*

Health Visitors and other community health professionals will sometimes have difficulty recognising Irish Travellers. They may conflate them with settled Irish people and have great difficulties knowing how to ask "that" question: "Are you Travellers?" Health Visitors, other health professionals and Social Workers often lack basic knowledge or make uninformed assumptions about 'who' Travellers are, about their culture and traditions, and about particular health and social problems. These institutional health barriers to Irish Travellers are exacerbated by anti-nomadic and anti-Irish Traveller racism, lack of culturally appropriate practices and a reluctance to deal with settled professionals due to previously poor service experiences. Mrs. Gorman [interview 2002; see also Mrs. Lot health visitor interview 2002] comments on this:

*Absolutely, you've got to pick up on possible clues and be brave enough to maybe ask them. You might have them for six months before somebody phones and says: "I am from the TES [Traveller Education Service] I've been working with this family for four years. You think: "Oh right, they are Irish, they are a Travelling family - I wasn't quite sure, I didn't like to ask". It's great to get a phone call like that and think: "Oh God, there is somebody else working with this family." ... It's great to have people like Irish LENC Care [Traveller Project] around ... they seem to understand the needs of these people. And the TES ... they know exactly what it is all about ... they are educating me ... because that's what we need. I can have a family for a year or two and not even know TES are involved and because these families don't tell you much ... its like getting blood out of a stone getting information out of them.*

LENC PCT's Multi-Agency Health Forum, set up to access and facilitate social groups with complex health needs is not the panacea described above by PCT manager Earl [interview 2002] for this Health Visitor. Rather she describes coping on her own with the complexities of health outreach work in a matrix of ethnic communities. She supplements her knowledge and work by ad hoc networking with the local TES and the voluntary sector [Irish LENC Care Traveller Project] for information and social support for her Irish Traveller clients.

Some GPs regard Travellers and Gypsies (based on research carried out in Dorset by Friends, Families and Travellers, 1998) as an excessive drain on resources in terms of time and money due to poor take-up of appointments, not following recommended treatments, poor immunisation rates that impact on set targets, and higher levels of poor health in general. These issues can lead to difficulties in registering with some GPs. Private medical practices have 'the right' to refuse patients – Health Visitors have the power (and sometimes use it) to insist on temporary registration in particular circumstances [Lot, Gorman, interviews 2002]. But some Traveller women choose doctors who give them 'what they want' in the form of anti-depressants and other prescription 'coping' drugs [LENC Traveller women's focus group, 2001; LENC support worker's focus group 2001; Irish LENC Care worker's interviews 2002]. This reflects the reality of their lives where problems won't go away but medication, alcohol and tobacco may make them more bearable. The wish for medication indicates more about Travellers' coping mechanisms in the absence of appropriate and culturally sensitive services than it does about any predilection to depression.

Irish Travellers' health has been indirectly affected by health related legislation such as the 'NHS and Community Care Act' (1990). The resultant new General Practitioner (GP) contracts mean that GPs are penalised if they fail to meet set immunisation targets. This has created an invisible barrier for newly contracted GPs registering Travellers due to their low immunisation rates – one study indicated that forty-three percent of Traveller children had not received any pre-school immunisations or boosters (Clements and Morris, 2001). Dental health is very poor amongst Travellers (Daniel, 1999). The privatisation of most dental services has also excluded some Travellers from treatment. There can be difficulties when registering with a GP. Health staff can be unaware or intolerant of Travellers' culture and customs, and GPs receptionists sometimes refuse to register Travellers or can display "unwelcoming behaviour" and "hostility" to prospective Traveller patients (Hawes and Perez, 1995: 104). Some GPs only register Traveller families as temporary residents, which excludes them from screening services and leads to inappropriate use of hospital A&E departments. Central LENC's PCT manager Earl [interview 2003] comments on the assertion that Travellers have difficulties registering with some GPs:

*Certain [GP] practices have got tough receptionists who discriminate. ... Where prejudice comes in is when particular practices get swamped with large numbers of people who are vulnerable... [Some] receptionists ... are more enlightened, more just ... racist. ... We can't insist on everybody doing that [accepting all potential patients]. From a strategy and policy [perspective] we don't want people refused, but [if the] practice says: "We are too busy here so we are closing our list - I can't argue with that. I say to them: "Show me the numbers, prove it." They can refuse - what they shouldn't do is be selective. ... But there are some practices who say: "Do you take drugs, are you permanently accommodated?" before they actually register you and that's not on at all.*

The latter practice is discriminatory and possibly illegal but illustrates the arrogance of some GP surgeries who presume that they are dealing with people who will not complain because they do not either know their rights or how to pursue a complaint. As the PCT manager hints, 'closed lists' are sometimes used to refuse registration to 'high maintenance' groups. Also, given the examples of Traveller mother above (see Section 3.2), they would simply not have the time (and in many cases literate skills or verbal confidence) to pursue these issues. Irish Traveller mothers prioritise their families and try to find another more accessible route to the healthcare their family needs. This certainly underlines the need for advocacy services to represent the needs of Irish Travellers when dealing with certain elements of HSs. Informed advocacy is necessary for primary, specialist and hospital care.

Health Visitor Gorman [interview, 2002] explains the advantages of having a non-exclusive GP practice base while regarding selective exclusion by some GP practices more as a local management policy rather than the random racism or prejudice of individual receptionists. As the PCT manager maintained:

*Unfortunately GP practices are a law unto themselves. ... I'm employed by the community nursing section of the Primary Care Trust. I choose to work in a GP premises ... and that has its advantages in terms of us working closely as a team. ... I work for a GP practice that isn't discretionary so they will have had several Irish Traveller families... I suspect that Irish Travellers might have a problem registering. ... Some GP practices won't take people on if they reside in homeless family accommodation, drug addicts, they might not take Travelling families. That excludes very vulnerable sections of society. ... [P]art of our role is to identify unmet health needs and to help people access services and to improve their health. ... I don't know how discretionary GPs are with Irish Traveller families ... I just know that it goes on.*

This must be an issue for PCTs to pick up and challenge. Part of their remit is to extend quality healthcare to the excluded and vulnerable. It's hardly a proactive health development strategy for PCT manager's to await complaints in the office or depend on selective quasi-democratic consultation forums to expose discrimination. PCTs have a duty to proactively support and advocate the right of vulnerable and excluded groups such as Travellers, to access a basic human right to adequate healthcare either by persuasion or sanctions where appropriate.

### 3.4 Irish Traveller families healthcare

Irish Traveller women face discrimination as Irish people, as Travellers, as women, and as Traveller women in Britain. So promotion of gender equality, both internally within their own community, and externally in the wider social context, is fundamental to their health and empowerment. Specific health statistics for Irish Traveller families are scarce. The health profile of all Travellers groups in Britain is significantly negative compared to settled British society. Stillbirth is seventeen times higher than the national average; infant mortality is twelve times higher than average rates - twice as many Traveller infants fall into the low birth weight category (Linthwaite, 1983). Traveller women's use of family planning, developmental screening, immunisation, and antenatal care services is very low in relation to other minority groups and society in general (Pahl and Vaile, 1986) [Irish Traveller focus group 2001]. This can in part be explained by the conservative Catholic beliefs of many Irish Traveller women. But Traveller women's access to family planning, pre and ante natal care also mirrors the experience of black and other ethnic minority women – the impracticality and cultural insensitivity of clinics, hostility by staff, and lack of childcare facilities. There is a tendency in service providers to blame the victim or presume they have choices, and the 'user friendliness' of the service is rarely considered from a client's perspective, particularly those clients who are severely marginalised (Papadopoulos et al, 1998; Department of Health, 1999b).

Prenatal and antenatal eviction of women is thought to impact very adversely on the immediate and long-term state of their health and on that of their babies (Durward, 1990; Sadler, 1993). Many Travellers have little knowledge of primary and preventive healthcare or access to services which provide it. Not being able or willing to pass on information to other Health Visitors when Travellers move on to another city or jurisdiction is also a problem. Health Visitors have no formal procedures for dealing with nomadic Travellers, relying instead on informal contacts from TES or local council officials for up-to-date information on unauthorised encampments [Lot, interview 2002]. Having no regular postal address can result in missed appointments and delays in diagnosis and treatment. Medical records are often not available through lack of a forwarding address or through the failure of Health Visitors to pass them to the appropriate Health Authority [Lot, Gorman, interviews 2002]. This is something else that PCTs need to investigate and develop a practical strategy to solve.

LENC Environment Department's Mr. Player [interview 2001] has responsibility for evictions from Council land. He described how Traveller evictions had changed over the last fifteen years from a 'gung ho' approach when Travellers were moved quickly without any consideration of their welfare, to a much more sensitive policy that involved co-operation with TES and Health Visitors to ensure that the Traveller family's health and welfare were paramount. A local bailiff Henby [interview 2002]<sup>(2)</sup> concurred with Player's description of LENC Council's health and welfare precautions but described his very different approach to evictions from private land:

*It's slightly different because there's no council involved so they don't have to get involved in finding out if there was genuine illness or genuine reason... There is no hard fast rule, we sit down and talk with them. ... Once you start to move caravans even if there is one hundred of them you grab the first one and shift it and take it about two miles away dump it and come back for another they all start pulling up the jacks.*

Henby [interview 2002] expressed particular negative prejudice against nomadic Irish Travellers arguing that they had access to official sites but would not use them and that most owned houses in Ireland and were given to criminality. Health Visitor Gorman [interview 2003] describes her first experience of visiting an illegal Irish Traveller encampment in LENC:

*I remember being a little terrified really because it was my first visit to a site. Why so frightened? I don't know, fear of the unknown... I am used to knocking on people's houses, flats. Walking onto a site that looked chaotic by virtue of the scrap metal, the dogs... Lots of children around, not knowing which caravan door to knock on, simple things. ... [C]arrying an official looking bag [and] looking much smarter probably than they did makes you feel ... like an outsider. ... So you have to get something going with the first person you spoke to.*

Gorman's fearful reaction is not unusual [Gorman, Lot, TESS, SEEM ITP, LENC ITP interviews 2000-2003]. What makes her unlike many sedentary people is that her job, principles and practice reflexivity led her beyond settled prejudices to appreciate the internal attention to cleanliness that characterise Travellers' homes. Health Visitor Gorman describes her part in an attempted eviction:

*I'd been asked to visit by Environmental Health [LENC Council] and there were a couple of caravans [on] an expanse of grass stuck in the middle of an area of housing. ... Whoever wanted to evict this family couldn't because the [woman] was seven months pregnant and she was within her rights not to be made to move on. They wanted me to ... confirm that she was heavily pregnant and needed to stay there to access care.... I had to walk across this muddy field - it was just a nightmare. ... I am an outsider, a professional and another agency they are not used to dealing with. ... I have to say why I have come and I was taken to the caravan which was absolutely pristine and ... she did need to stay long enough to have the baby.*

But lack of continuity in treatment, and also with health records is not confined to fully nomadic Irish Travellers. Housed Travellers move regularly through the housing stock or sometimes switch to trailers in Summer and so present health professionals with similar problems as Gorman [interview 2002] explains:

*The other families I visited lived in houses. Once I'd been notified ... I keep records on that child until they move out of the area. Then if I know where they've gone to my records follow them on to their respective Health Visitor whichever part of the country they live in'. You give them a card with their health? 'Most families wouldn't show that card to the new Health Visitor... We usually rely on Health Visitors ... to ask that mother where they'd come from. That Health Visitor then contacts the previous Health Visitor and says: "Can you send me the record you've got on this child." They should really then have one Health Visitor record in the country following them around. Of course it does not work like that but it's up to each Health Visitor to do a good tracking job... With the Travelling families [you] are more likely to ask the last three addresses, who the three GPs were and did they meet the Health Visitor. If I then request records from their last address, and [the Health Visitor] never even knew they were there, at least we could request the record from the previous address or the one before ... you just have to work that much harder...*

There are still many districts where some form of self-held record is given out to Travellers who want one. Children do (or should) have a 'parent held record' in the form of what's colloquially known as the 'red book' to health outreach professionals. This is generally used by Health Visitors, particularly for recording immunisations. The 'red book' is not standardised, but a national version is planned and this would be of great benefit if implemented (Van Cleemput e-mail communication, 2003).<sup>(3)</sup> For adult Travellers health records depend on local practice. The Department of Health intend to introduce 'smart cards' for all patients and argue that a national self-held record for Travellers is not necessary as this 'smart card' system will suffice - but no introduction date has been announced as yet (ibid). Gorman [interview 2002] insists that the system of self-held 'health-cards' is ineffective, it would require compliance by all Travellers. At present some detective work is required by committed Health Visitors to trace families but Mrs. Gorman comments:

*I imagine some Health Visitors might just make a temporary record and never send that on... When a Travelling family moves on and you don't know where they have gone you file it in a "no trace" section so that when the next Health Visitor has sussed the family out they will request it from you ... you just hope that someone picks up on them and requests the records. But obviously with a highly mobile family ... you need to keep a history following them because a Health Visitor [may have] done valuable assessment work or input with that family and it is such a shame to have that wasted...' Does continuity normally happen? 'Not with the two caravan families. I had no previous records. I had nowhere to pass them onto when they moved... I had a really good relationship with one particular Traveller mother and I managed to wangle the mobile telephone number. She went to SEEM so ... I managed to speak to her on the mobile ... so I sent my records on to the SEEM Health Visitor.*

Trust is difficult to establish between Travellers (whether housed or in trailers) and health outreach workers. Consequently, Health Visitors control the Traveller's health data but often struggle to pass on vital information to the Traveller's next destination – because this information is usually privy to the Travellers themselves. This lack of trust and information sharing interrupts continuity of support and treatment, but also undermines the professional dissemination of good health practice with particular Traveller families and can undermine the maintenance of detailed case histories that enhance prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Hawes (1997) and Hyman (1989) identified heavy tobacco smoking and poor diet as negative factors in Travellers health. Health Visitor Gorman [interview 2002] (also Dunn 2000) agrees, but adds that in her LENC experience overcrowding and inappropriate housing, combined with the pressures of single parenthood impact particularly on Traveller women, many of whom are poor, often dependent on meagre state benefits and isolated on 'sink' estates or in poorly maintained private housing:

*When you think about the effects of chronic stress, constant overcrowding, the difficulty in accessing Health Services, and the fact that there is no time to meet their needs or they don't go and have [necessary] operations done, or they are heavily dependant on cigarettes, have a poor diet and [drink] lots of caffeine. Is there a poor diet? I wouldn't like to generalise but the Traveller I am working with at the moment lives on loads of cigarettes and coffee, doesn't sleep too well, hardly eats and is depressed ... no way could her life expectancy not be affected. It's a combination of prioritising the kids and their crutches are the coffee and the cigarettes. They will be adding to her stress levels unfortunately, but they will give her an instant buzz, but then later on they will negatively affect her stress levels... And also ignorance about the value of good diets - having a cream cake for tea and missing out on two meals will make her feel ill enough. But there is no time for her to tackle that because the other needs of the family are so great...*

Poor family support mechanisms and lack of culturally sensitive SSDs condemn many Traveller mothers to poor mental and physical health through overwork, poor health education and a dearth of resources forcing them to rely on readily available stimulants and cheap sugar based 'foods' in order to prioritise their children's needs. Unfortunately this can also lead to generational poor health as children learn their mothers unhealthy coping strategies. Gorman [interview 2002] continues:

*Another lady that I visited with about nine children who really could have done with being sterilised not just because of the nine children and not having the father around - because she had a bad uterine pro-lapse - she hadn't sought medical attention and the uterus was literally hanging out. ... [T]he barrier to her having that surgery, the sterilisation and the pro-lapse repair was basically: "How would she look after the kids?" Her eldest he was seventeen ... he was dabbling in drugs ... so this mother never really got that healthcare she needed. Are many Traveller women fatalistic? Absolutely ... their needs are de-prioritised whether its because they are overwhelmed with everybody else's needs or whether it is just that they accept their situation as their lot. It's multi-factorial ... why they don't get the help they need.*

So Traveller women, particularly when coping alone, have to sacrifice their own wellbeing for that of the children. Traveller women's health issues can also be concealed due to reluctance by some Traveller women to speak about these issues to health practitioners who are strangers or have not developed a relationship of trust with the particular woman concerned. Large families exacerbate this situation whereby mothers have to cope with siblings ranging from dependent infants to young adults in high risk urban situations and without the support of the traditional extended family which has increasingly fractured under the pressures of rapid and often forced pseudo-assimilation into overcrowded inappropriate housing. Traveller mothers are forced by circumstances to make short-term decisions for the good of their children which will adversely impact on their own health and may also effect on the wellbeing of their children if the mother can't cope in the long-term due to ill-health or even premature death. Under such stresses, usually exacerbated by poverty and often by a lack of extended family supports in urban settled situations, its hardly surprising that women often use the most readily available drugs (cigarettes, alcohol, cheap processed sugar-laden food etc.) to ameliorate stress and keep them going in their constant struggle to cope. In contrast, the mainstream HS can be a difficult, embarrassing and perplexing bureaucracy that attracts unwarranted interference in the family and is sometimes insensitive to Irish Travellers cultural norms.

### 3.5 Family access to secondary and specialist healthcare in hospitals

Pahl and Vaile (1986) asserted that Travellers used hospital Accident and Emergency services (A&E) very frequently. Mrs. Gorman [interview 2002], a PCT Health Visitor, discussed what happens when A&E services are accessed regularly by families:

*[A]ny child that attends A&E under the age of four and a half, a copy of the medical records is sent to the Health Visitor ... It could be that a child [or] the parents need some support ... or health education because they have not got a fireguard or a safety-gate. And if they have had repeated A&E attendance we would act on that and ... sometimes a sister or doctor on A&E will phone us... If they are not [GP] registered its sent to a Health Visitor or school nurse who covers that area, so somebody Health-wise has a responsibility for a family.*

The National Association of Health Workers with Travellers (NAHWT) (cited in Traveller Law Research Unit, 1997) believe that Travellers face difficulties and barriers obtaining referrals to secondary healthcare and when dealing with specialist medical services. Gorman [interview 2002] describes the difficulties encountered by a single parent Traveller woman and her large family when accessing specialist healthcare in hospitals:

*I've just got one Travelling family at the moment and eleven children in a two-bedroomed house. Privately rented, she is desperate to try and get a more stable address, presumably a council one. The council are aware, yet when she was recently offered a property [the offer was quickly rescinded] because they magically found some arrears from years ago that she owed. ... But she just seems to have that many hurdles put into her way... chaos to do with schooling, offending behaviour in the children. They can't read or write so she just can't keep appointments or follow instructions, finds it difficult to act on advice given by [agencies] because they didn't know she couldn't read or write and they haven't had the nous to be able to explain things in her terms.*

This illustrative study encapsulates the difficulties faced by many Traveller women (and some men) with multiple disadvantages who struggle desperately to manage the complex logistics of large families in the face of a pervasive cultural blindness from the majority of hospital staff as Gorman [interview 2002] explains:

*For example, she goes to hospital to see a paediatrician with her child and who prescribed some very important medicine for a chronic condition and his dosage is increased because his problem isn't well managed and she is given a hospital prescription. But nobody thought to tell her verbally that it had to be given in to the hospital pharmacy. ... So she gives it in the local chemist and they say: "I'm sorry this has to be taken to the hospital." Well that's a massive task for her to get back to that hospital because the boys are such bad offenders that she can very rarely leave them unattended. They are aged from two years to seventeen and so the actual practicality of getting down to the hospital which was two buses [away] is horrendous and ... she can't afford it.*

Poverty and lack of social supports condemn this woman and her family to a constant round of crises no matter how hard she tries – Gorman [interview 2002] again:

So I said to her: "Well if you can come back later with the hospital prescription ... I'll hopefully persuade [the GP] to write you [a duplicate] prescription..." But she didn't come back because she couldn't get anyone to look after the boys and so the child is minus his very vital epilepsy drugs and having fits. But that's a typical problem and of course from a GPs perspective he might just see a harassed mother with poor communication skills and might not, without my intervention, be willing to write that prescription. ... Whereas I understand her better... and spell it out for her to the GP. So I fill the gap between the patient and the GP if they are chasms apart, which they often are. Part of my job is to empower parents, to improve the health status of their children and help her understand a better way of getting something out of the GP... She's built more trust with me ... she might listen more carefully next time I say to her: "Look Mrs. X this is how you need to tackle this".

For PCTs to deliver a culturally sensitive and responsive HS to Irish (and other) Travellers it needs well trained and motivated Health Visitors and community nurses who have access to specialist knowledge and advice about the culture when needed. Most Traveller women come from very patriarchal families and many suffer from low self-esteem, poor literacy and can be deeply embarrassed by their accents in the company of settled people [Irish Traveller interviews and focus groups 2001-2002]. Mrs Gorman [interview 2002] continues:

*Just ... getting her to get the kid to his appointment is a massive task and getting her to convey ... a clear history to the paediatrician. ... They feel that disadvantaged they don't have the confidence to speak up. Who knows what the paediatrician will ask her ... and if necessary ask her to say it again five times if he hasn't understood..? She would need to remember [she might see different staff every visit] every time she saw a doctor, the senior registrar, the registrar ... the nurse in out-patients, to say to every-one of them: "Look I have a difficulty, I don't read. Can you tell me what to do with this?" And it takes a brave person to say that to lots of different people each time they go back if the child's got a chronic condition. But that is something that I am in a prime position to try and help her do. But because there are so many problems, you often can't get down to giving her advice on those levels...*

Therefore, even the logistics of getting to a hospital can be horrendous for Traveller families, but low self-esteem

and poor literacy or illiteracy among Traveller women can be compounded by the insensitive bureaucracies and hierarchical structures of large hospitals when it comes to accessing and understanding treatment. All nurses have a duty to act as advocates for their patients but there is an almost total absence of specialist advocacy services in hospitals where staff could seek advice about the particular ethnic or cultural needs of minorities. Medical treatment can be intermittent, understanding of medical conditions, dosages and treatment regimes poor or non-existent – a recipe for catastrophe when treating serious illness or disability. Travellers need an appropriate health education programme that is practical and deliverable (Hennink et al, 1993; also Acton, 1994). But health education programmes can be very individualised and shift responsibility for health back to the person. What's needed is a model that would develop people's capacity to know and assert their rights while addressing their particular socio-economic difficulties and providing them with the support and skills to cope with ongoing problems in a healthier way. The insight and commitment of frontline health outreach workers like the above Health Visitor (and the good practice of TES and dedicated voluntary services) should be developed and collated into a good practice guide for frontline workers, while frontline and non-frontline health professionals need some INSET-type training about Travellers' cultures to develop an awareness. Indeed, the whole concept of white minority ethnicities and cultures should be incorporated into HS training regimes.

### 3.6 Environmental health

Pahl and Vaile's (1988: 203; also Smith, 1997; Pahl and Vaile 1986; CIEH, 1995) study of encampments and official sites found that Traveller women have deep concerns about dirt, speeding traffic, unsafe play areas, rats, injuries from glass, among others. They found that eleven percent of Traveller under-fives suffered serious accidents. LENC Health Visitor Gorman [interview 2002] discusses her reactions to an illegal camp environment she visited:

*My major concern with that particular family was the safety aspect of ... the camp. It was extremely dangerous, there was lots of discarded glass, rubbish and scrap metal. The kids were ... without shoes and socks and I was just [thinking]: "Do people have to live like this." It was quite a shock for me, but I was very surprised at the high quality of the interior of the caravan. It didn't seem to fit with what you saw outside.*

Illegal encampments are rarely serviced by LA environment or refuse departments. The absence of cleansing and refuse services, considered essential by settled society, has a grave negative impact on the health and safety experiences of Irish Travellers living on illegal and temporary encampments.

Gmelch (1982: 365; also CIEH, 1995; Pahl and Vaile, 1988) states that many Travellers sites are located in environmentally parlous areas '*adjacent to railway lines, motorway flyovers, city dumps, and sewage treatment plants ... or in the middle of industrial zones*'. Bancroft et al (1996) reported on the impact on Travellers of living on legal private and LA sites of possible environmental hazards including railways, waterways, quarries, dumps, power cables, pylons and busy roads. In 319 interviews with Travellers, Gypsies and associated professionals seventy percent of LA sites were deemed to have two or more, while twenty-three percent had at least four environmental hazards (ibid). Half the respondents to a research survey on one west London site felt that their site was unhealthy. The then new site was built beside an aggregate factory and residents complained of a high incidence of skin abnormalities and rashes since moving on. Poor sewage systems, irregular refuse collection and associated vermin infestations, fire risks and dangerous environments for children were also cited (O'Dwyer, 1997; also Hyman, 1989).

Gander's Council's Barry Site is located beside an industrial estate and close to a major trunk road in SEEM. Residents are extremely concerned about dust from the local aggregate concrete factory. They complained about babies '*choking with dust and having very bad coughs*'. Travellers suggested that the factory be closed down or that the Travellers' site is moved. The factory was built in 1999 and the management maintain that letters were sent to Travellers asking them about the factory proposals. However, Travellers on the site did not receive them and some residents believe Gander Council want to move them in order to develop the site commercially. Travellers suggested that it would have been much more effective if someone from the factory had visited the site to explain about potential health hazards. Travellers (when asked about moving) said that they would prefer to be moved to another area of Gander so children could stay on at their present schools and women could remain near supermarkets and services. There is only one exit off the site and that exit is rarely clear due to vehicles parked and children playing. "*This is an obvious fire hazard ... as are the fire hoses that don't work properly. The drainage system is very poor - when it rains, it floods. There should be only one trailer per pitch but most have three, so overcrowding is a major problem*" [Barry Site women's Focus Group, 2001]. SEEM ITP

worker Brody [interview 2002] comments: *'Maybe the asthma has a connection with the factory because you couldn't even see through the windscreen [on her car] with the dust on it. The general health of the Travellers on site is pretty good ... a lot of them are registered with the medical centre.'*

Barry Site Irish Travellers [focus groups, 2001-2002] complained about poor amenities, services and vermin:

*The kitchens are too small, you can't let the kids in there 'cos of boiling water etc. And then there are rats. They are becoming immune to the poisons. With rats we get one or two every night. We are badly infested with rats and mice. They come from the railway lines. The site manager said to put down poison. We see the rats walking along the roofs of the utility buildings. Problem is that they can eat through trailers. The rubbish doesn't help either. We never get a regular day for collections - sometimes it can be four weeks.... The bin men wouldn't come on the site because of problems with dogs. ... The council did bring the RSPCA with dart guns once and took a lot of dogs away.*

This evidence demonstrates the lack of a regular refuse collection and poor basic hygiene facilities provided on many municipal Traveller sites although these site residents are all council tax payers. This indicates possible institutionalised racism in the LA cleansing department and the subcontractors it uses to service the site. It also highlights not only the environmentally inappropriate location of the accommodation but the lack of agency that Travellers have when choosing where they live. Irish Travellers speaking in one mixed focus group [2001] (see also Feder, 1994) on Barry Site said they saw no future in nomadism due to the CJPOA 1994, constant evictions and police harassment. They found it increasingly more difficult to endure the poor conditions on site and were prepared to move into appropriate housing if provided. Their rationale was that though sited they still couldn't travel seasonally as they might lose their pitch so they might as well have the improved sanitary, space and tenure conditions afforded by suitable housing. So the regime of limited and poor quality official sites combined with the criminalisation of nomadism is forcing some Travellers to accept that the only feasible option for their families wellbeing is moving into settled type accommodation. These twin pressures give support to the painful and disturbing process of cultural breakdown that leads to assimilation into the most marginalised and excluded sections of society. Nomadism is usually recognised by settled society as the sole (or salient) ethnic qualifier for Travellers, so its criminalisation and eradication erroneously signals the cultural assimilation of Travellers and Gypsies. This 'blindness' to the depth, complexity and strength of Traveller culture leaves 'settled' Travellers with little sensitive health and welfare support when they are forced into settled accommodation and it is most needed. The inability or unwillingness of many institutional support agencies to engage actively, supportively and sensitively with settled Travellers is creating a well of discontent among many young settled Travellers that is already evident in the high levels of criminalisation particularly in the settled Irish Traveller population (see Sections 5.1 to 5.12 for more details).

### 3.7 Traveller men's health

Many Travellers (particularly men) will only access mainstream healthcare when absolutely necessary or it becomes unavoidable, and then often through the relative anonymity of an A&E unit [see Irish Traveller interviews 2001-2003]. A Health Visitor [Gorman interview, 2002] explains how many Traveller men 'disappear' when she arrives illustrating the often strict gender demarcations within the culture:

*In all of the [Traveller] households the adult males have been hiding in the background. I make a point when visiting any family, particularly with a new baby, trying to get dad on board because research indicates that their role isn't valued by professionals. ... I haven't engaged with men in the Travelling families because they've either been absent fathers [either in prison or deserted their family] or they lived with another woman, but come to this other household to make this woman pregnant... Certainly the men have never come to clinic...*

An Irish Traveller male [interview 2002] of thirty explains how difficult it is for men to express vulnerability or illness within a very patriarchal culture:

*My father was ill and then he knew he had cancer but he wouldn't go to the hospital ... the doctors wanted his blood but he wouldn't give his blood ... and he died. ... [Y]ou can't talk with a Travelling man and say: "I've got problems" ... that's making a show of yourself.*

These evasive and 'macho' attitudes to personal health (only accessing healthcare when incapacitated) were expressed by many male Traveller respondents. A young male Irish Traveller [interview 2002] in Heath Youth Offender Institute (YOI – see Appendices V1 and V11 for details of prison research) outlines his health priorities: *I do the gym ... I am thinking about my health. ... I don't drink a lot anyway. ... I don't like smoking ... I don't go out*

*shagging and all that. ... I like my morals. I like to respect myself. I have smoked cannabis ... I don't touch other drugs. All Travellers think about health. For us to survive we have to know it's the only way forward. ... This is a new age ... and everything's changing now. I think the only way for us to go forward now is to stop doing things we used to do ... be more healthier, be more stronger, be more wiser, be more spiritual ... and to communicate more and just bond with each other stronger than we ever did.*

Fitness and exercise tend to be a recurring theme with Irish Travellers in prison. Contrary to the latter's evidence, two other young male Travellers (late teens) in Heath YOI described having unprotected sex with a number of partners and were only shocked into seeking medical checkups having watched a television programme about sexually transmitted diseases – both said they hadn't realised the dangers.

### 3.8 Mental health

Qualitative research (Ginnetty, 1993) carried out in Northern Ireland indicates that the curtailing of nomadic lifestyles and forced settlement in housing has had a negative impact on the mental health of Irish Travellers bringing on feelings of isolation, confusion and loss of identity, loneliness and claustrophobia. Immigration, urbanisation, poor settlement conditions, low self-esteem and the breakdown of extended families has taken its toll on Travellers' mental health [Irish Traveller interviews 2000-2003]. The pressure and social tensions of overcrowding on official sites as the next generation matures but have nowhere to go is building up much negative stress and anxiety. Young Traveller families who have never travelled or only ever travelled seasonally have few options as lack of site space forces them to accommodate elsewhere while anti-nomadic legislation (CJPOA 1994) and the wish for a better life for their families often precludes travelling. Traveller children are fearful during evictions from illegal temporary sites and suffer a sense of loss afterwards (Children's Society, 1998). But many are also excluded from the housing market through relative poverty and a reluctance to abandon extended family supports – so often there's literally nowhere to go.

Interviews and focus groups carried out on Barry Site [2000-2002] indicated a high degree of mental health related problems often described by respondents as 'depression' and also a willingness by people (including men) to discuss mental health problems openly. Health problems became common knowledge in such a small overcrowded space and were discussed discreetly and sympathetically by both men and women. A fieldworkers' research diary (see 'appendices V1 and V11' for more detail) commenting on this openness about mental health problems suggested that it might be due to the "Oprah" effect as so many Travellers have televisions running constantly in their trailers.<sup>4</sup> Environmental problems associated with site conditions were most often cited as a root cause of depression. Extended family and neighbour support was very important. One focus group was held in the trailer of a woman whose husband was seriously depressed and receiving medical care. This situation was discussed openly and sensitively by the neighbours and this woman. All six neighbours donated their focus group expenses (£10 each) to this woman. Other men spoke openly of her husband's depression and the similar pressures and negative stress they themselves felt. Women also spoke of their mental health problems in the context of overcrowding and stress brought on by a general lack of amenities for their children [Barry Site focus group and interviews, 2000-2002] (O'Dwyer, 1997).

The maintenance of the supportive extended family is crucial for the health and wellbeing of Travellers. Accommodation that undermines extended families also undermines Traveller's mental and physical wellbeing. But Travellers are very resilient and resourceful if given the information, support and resources to look after themselves. PCTs have a duty to develop health services to support and empower extended families and communities to help themselves and this would satisfy statutory requirements concerning best value and race equality schemes. Dennis [interview 2002] is nineteen and a Traveller in Heath YOI and believes his '*paranoia schizophrenic sort of thing*' stems from emigration, the death or absence of influential male relatives, the breakdown of relationships with his immediate family and police harassment. He is receiving counselling in prison:

*I feel like I was suffering from paranoia... It's been building up since I have been on the run. ... I find it hard to trust me own family because they have a banning order against me. ... You start getting very angry and upset with people ... that you loved and I would say things that I would never even dream of... I need help ... about communication ... because when I was out there I wasn't talking to anyone. I had a lot of things on my mind I had no one to help me. Yeah, I was losing family contact ... it's dangerous ... they [his family] are always together ... you got that support ... and when you lose that you have nothing - you just fall down, don't ya? My mother was there, I had my brothers and uncles ... to keep me right. And now as I have got older the police ... come down on me very heavy... I have so much feelings inside of me, so much to talk about to people I need to sit down and talk about it for hours.*

The above comments illustrate the importance of the extended family dynamic to the health and well-being of Irish Travellers and the isolation and mental stress that ensues when these support mechanisms are lost or unavailable to them. Like many other Irish Travellers in prison Dennis finds solace, some stability and support in his Catholic spirituality that, in a certain sense, links him to a spiritual extended family:

*That's why I go to church this morning because I feel ... I am talking to the Lord - he is the only one that can help me. [R]eligion comes first because that keeps my head together...*

The mental health impact of anti-nomadic legislation like the CJPOA 1994, chronic overcrowding on official sites, and settlement in inappropriate housing has barely been investigated. Some measure of the impact of a creeping cultural genocide on Irish Travellers mental wellbeing can be ascertained by comparison with literature on other excluded pre-modern ethnic groups (Brown, 1970).

### 3.9 Social Services Departments (SSDs) and Irish Travellers

Cemlyn (1998) comes to the interesting conclusion that Travellers may have much less need of orthodox SSDs than settled people because extended family support and supportive relationships between families on sites can provide a comprehensive safety net. What they do need however is culturally sensitive support and resources to bolster and maintain the extended family itself particularly when it comes under the severe stresses of urbanization and inappropriate accommodation, whether it be on overcrowded official sites or nuclear family housing. But CJPOA (1994) related evictions and prosecutions, while undermining the extended family, have increased SSDs involvement with Travellers due to welfare issues, though few Social Service departments have developed any specific policies or good practice in this area – the Traveller People's Unit (TPU) that operates in Woodlawn Borough in SEEM being a notable exception [TPU interview 2001]. But where Travellers at their most vulnerable come into contact with SSDs is when living in inappropriate accommodation. Lack of awareness about Traveller culture in SSDs can lead to serious misunderstandings that exacerbate problems especially in crisis intervention situations. Families may be destabilised and pathologised by insensitive treatment that undermines the very family supports that SSDs purport to encourage thus explaining why Travellers reaction is often to move on due to the intrusive involvement of SSDs (Cemlyn, 1998) [Tarrington interview, 2002; Irish Traveller interviews 2000-2002]. Government and media negative misrepresentations of Travellers also permeate into SSDs so contributing to prejudicial, insensitive and poor quality service delivery (Traveller Law Research Unit, 1999).

The geographical breakdown of statutory SSDs into regional and council boundaries militates against support for nomadism generally and Irish Travellers specifically. There is unwillingness by SSDs to acknowledge responsibility for transient populations due to bureaucratisation, self-imposed territorial limitations, understaffing, poor morale and lack of awareness about Travellers, but also SSDs will usually only engage with 'at risk' people on their own set terms and criteria. LENC SSD lacks co-ordination and co-operation with TESSs, other relevant statutory bodies and specialist Traveller voluntary sector support organisations [Tarrington and Stryder interviews, 2002; LENC Interdisciplinary Forum discussion, 2001]. Recent research carried out into the 'management' of illegal Traveller encampments noted that SSDs were the least likely of all local statutory welfare agencies to visit these sites – which is strange given their remit to support and protect families and children (Cowan and Lomax, 2003: 307). This may be partly explained by the deep antipathy to Social Workers that many Irish Travellers hold – they are often regarded as child stealers (ibid). Though Garrett's (2003) recent research into the treatment of Irish families and children was actively supported by the Association of Social Services Directors only forty-four percent of SSDs contacted in England and Wales responded to his questionnaire. Of these, forty-two percent claimed to have specific services for Travellers while the other SSD respondents did not provide any special support.

Lord Laming, a former director of Social Services and chair of the inquiry into Victoria Climbié's death, challenged the government to act on his report (2003).<sup>5</sup> Lord Laming's (cited in Perkins, Guardian: 28 March 2003) evidence to the Parliamentary cross-party health committee warned that there would be more SSDs related 'children at risk' deaths unless crucial changes were made to management practice:

*I hope that before any of these people in key positions think of going on summer holidays they will have satisfied themselves that those recommendations that should be in operation are in operation. ... It's no use parliament producing good legislation ... if parliament can't be sure that legislation is implemented at the front door. That is the acid test - it's about whether children and families get a good service. I believe there is a yawning gap between the aspirations and expectations of parliament and what is delivered at the front door. ... But, if those principles ... are*

*not addressed then I think there is every likelihood that there will be more inquiries like mine. ... The safety of children and the well-being of staff should not depend on protecting incompetence in management. ... Why are these well-intentioned people [frontline social workers] put in the situation where they felt defeated by the task in front of them? ... We need to rediscover the basic principle that the public services are there to serve the public and not just some people who can get through eligibility criteria.*

Dennis [interview 2002], a young male Irish Traveller in Heath YO1 from a family living in settled accommodation in SEEM, explains how his background, relationship breakdowns and deaths in his extended family contributed to his mental health problems:

*It's bad in a way cos [father] just got up and left like that... Would that happen in Ireland? 'No way, I don't think that would have happened in Ireland. ... [W]hen I come to England that's when it all went wrong, they separated straight away. ... [Big cities] don't help families. I think for a businessman this is the best place 'cos they make plenty money, but it's no place for a family ... there is too much pressure... I have lost a few uncles through ... sudden deaths and one of them got murdered. I was under a bit of stress, that's what done my head in. ... But when you lose that person in your life it's like losing your whole life because ... I was always brought up with my uncles ... now that they are gone I just feel a bit lost...*

The break-up of his immediate family and the loss of important male role models in his extended family destroyed much of Dennis' social support network and his sense of self and being. Dennis [interview 2002] describes his first encounters with SSDs in his early teens as he increasingly rejected secondary school and got involved in petty crime:

*I was going to school ... I just met these couple of boys who said: "Let's go out and do this", and I thought ... "What's the harm?" ... I was doing cars and silly little things like ... shoplifting. I was only fourteen and I was thinking: "I can do what I like, I don't care." I would be walking around in brand new clothes and ... my mother thinking: 'Where is he getting all the money from?' ... My family was getting too worried about me... Then the school started getting on top of me as well 'cos I would be taking two weeks off school. ... They would ring up me mother and she would say: "Dennis wasn't sick." We ended up in the head's office telling the school governors ... the truth because my mother was next to me and I couldn't lie... That's when the social workers ... come down on me, that's when I start getting into it deep.*

Dennis' loyalty and respect is given almost exclusively to his extended family. That's his social world. By taking a coercive and intrusive approach the SSDs' intervention exacerbated the situation. Instead of sensitively supporting the family's existing internal control structures to encourage a change of attitude the SSD dictated the agenda forcing the whole family to flee as Dennis relates:

*They were going to pick me up every morning to bring me to school and then get me after school to drop me back home, but that never happened 'cos my mother moved away. ... I didn't carry on [stealing]. I started working. Would you ever use SSDs? 'No, I have thought it over [about] Social Services. [T]hey want to know too much about you, and then ... they take over your life. [B]ut the charities ... they don't want to know about your life, it's direct help instead of like trying to get information... [SSDs] start throwing in the police ... you will be out on the streets. I don't trust [SSDs]... [voluntary services] are the best people to have.*

Dennis makes a direct link between his disaffection with school, the consequent involvement of SSDs followed by increasing police interest. His experience confirms many Irish Travellers' preconceptions and suspicions about the motives and remit of SSDs, while he feels that voluntary sector support is more culturally sensitive and unintrusive. The most worrying aspect of Dennis' experience is that instead of a sensitive intervention to support a family who were proactively willing to engage with his school to curb Dennis' truancy and petty crime: the school, SSDs and then the police tried to impose a coercive regime without sensitive consultation. The family moved to avoid insensitive official interference, Dennis didn't get the support he needed and eventually ended up serving a custodial sentence. This antipathy to SSDs runs deep with many Irish Travellers as a Traveller male of thirty [Baton prison interview 2002] relates: *'My two sisters was taken into foster care ... for maybe eight years and ... when my mother died the Social Services wouldn't let them attend the funeral...'*

### 3.10 Homeless Traveller children and SSDs

The illustrative study that follows underlines Lord Laming's point about the remit of SSDs being to serve the public and not the 'eligibility criteria' invented by its own bureaucracy. Unfortunately, this saga is also another indictment of SSDs policy and practice. This study is also fascinating from the perspective of doing outreach and support work with so called 'hard to reach' groups as it documents how a non-specialist voluntary support organisation struggled to find a working relationship with Irish Traveller children. Mr. Tarrington [interview

2002] is a voluntary sector project worker with “City Safe” project which works with homeless people and he describes his project in LENC:

*The ... project has been in LENC for about thirteen years [and] specifically works with young people who have run away [and] ... are at risk on the streets... The young Travellers that we worked with we picked up through street work. ... I first met their family working for another organisation in LENC doing street work and I used to know a lot of the older brothers and cousins. I did resettlement work ... attempting to find them accommodation, which wasn't largely successful. I was working with older [Traveller] lads. We now work with seventeen and under ... so through street-work we met them at twelve, thirteen and worked with them up to about fourteen, fifteen. As a group of young men they were very suspicious, very hard to engage, [and] as very chaotic. We would see them out and about in town and give them resources ... for a number of months and then they began to come to the building here.*

Tarrington [interview 2002] confirms here the deep suspicion that many Travellers have of outreach workers and the need initially to concentrate on the building up of trust over a period of time. The boys' nomadic circuit between LENC, LMC (Large Midlands City) and Irish City made it difficult to maintain the continuity of the relationship. As Tarrington [interview 2002] relates:

*There were others [Travellers] who popped in and out, but they [twelve-year-old Irish Travellers twins] were the two constants - their pattern of movement was between LMC, LENC and Irish City. [T]hey were born in LENC and they had family who were relatively settled for a time. They were known to Social Services [LENC and LMC] through their previous addresses in LENC, and then through bereavements etc., the family split up. They had surviving relatives, an older sibling in LMC ... would look after them ... for so long and they would go off somewhere else. ... They were well known to the Health Authority in Irish City ... and they were in care and accommodated by the Local Authority in Irish City.*

*In Irish City ... the social worker I met had managed to encourage their participation ... educationally. So, one was an avid reader ... a Harry Potter fan... Their writing was less practised, [they] were very creative, very capable. ... They ran rings round us ... the twins [were] identical for us. For example, they would be arrested for each others offences in Britain. ... [T]hey were very astute although there were some big gaps in their knowledge. ... [I]f there were warrants out ... they thought they would be sent straight to prison... They gave us very limited information. Initially it was purely practical resources ... chocolate, clothes ... buy them a bus ticket.*

Here Tarrington corroborates the interview evidence of Jay, Gorman, and Cassidy [interviews 2002] that many Irish Travellers have a very poor understanding of institutional and bureaucratic structures and systems despite their street-wise knowledge. Tarrington [interview 2002] continues:

*They were twelve, and there was a lot of learning for our Project because they presented as street-wise, as very resourceful. ... We had very little picture of what was actually happening. Where were they staying, were there adults in their lives? They wouldn't say. With hindsight we learned a lot about child protection ... because ... a twelve-year-old who is sleeping rough in LENC would cause concern. And yet, they didn't push the same buttons for us as an organisation at the time because of their apparent ease with [the] situation. So we made a lot of mistakes. ... There were major concerns which surfaced later and led to child protection referrals... They as good as admitted they were involved in selling sex. They challenged some of the gay men who worked here about their sexuality ... evidence of their involvement in selling sex, because they were obviously meeting gay men who were approaching them to buy sex. ... We said: “Listen we are worried about you because of these particular activities”.*

*They'd come here and they would get food, a shower, clothes ... but again ... interaction ... was one way and they gave nothing back. ... [W]e were saying: “Well we are not a soup run ... by all means come and use it, but we actually do more in-depth work - we work around your lifestyle, around your risk...” We built a relationship, but it was managed by them ... where they would just run us ragged and turn up at all times of the day. They play[ed] workers off against each other to get what they needed. ... They'd bring friends; they'd bring relatives from time to time. We would have a whole crowd of them just pitch up at three o'clock in the afternoon and all want washing and feeding.*

A similar experience was evidenced by staff at a post prison hostel in LENC [Gonzales interview 2002] who had similar experiences to those of Tarrington with a sixteen-year old resident Irish Traveller girl and members of her immediate family who turned up daily and used the hostel facilities as if they themselves were bona fide hostel residents. Returning to the main illustrative study of two young Traveller boys, Tarrington [interview 2002] continues his narrative:

*So they presented us with a number of challenges about our own methods of working. Was it fair to say to them:*

*"You can only come and have something to eat if you tell us what you were up to." ... They were from the Travelling community... If you asked them a question they would have a discussion [in Cant/Gammon]... We got stuck in a bit of a stalemate with first gate-keeping, and then pushing the boundaries, and us feeling very frustrated. ... We were perhaps perpetuating their [risky] existence. ... They were selling sex, they were in the city centre at risk of assault ... they were [now] fourteen. They were at risk ... of solvent abuse, which was massive - absolutely frightening!*

The 'City Safe' project eventually decided to make a child protection referral that would have to involve LENC SSD at the statutory investigator. Tarrington [interview 2002] continues:

*They were [then] with another young woman ... and we were so concerned about their situation that ... we made a child protection referral. ... [W]e did it particularly for her, but also for the boys and that changed the relationship utterly - but not in a way that we expected. They had more trust, became more communicative, less chaotic... They felt that ... we were trying to do something to change their situation - and we cared. They then learned of my planned trip over to Irish City. We held ... a case conference here and invited one of the managers from [LENC SSD] department to whom we had made the child protection referral. And the social worker from Irish City came over to that case conference. ... We didn't get a representative from LMC [SSD] - they had closed the case ... SSD in LENC came [due to] the child protection referral...*

*What we did do was say every time you come to the Project we are going to inform the social worker or call the police. Now in reality that means nothing because the social worker wasn't going to get down here quickly and the police could not be asked. But what we were saying is: "We would take responsibility ... we have to tell these people and give them their progress report". [The young woman] was fine with that... We don't do the investigation around child protection - it's [LENC SSD's] ... statutory duty to investigate. They waived their statutory duty to investigate, because they said: "Well, if the young men meet with us then we ... will be able to investigate, but until they agree to sit down and do some work with us, we can't investigate it." It didn't progress any further than that and that's quite common. ... They weren't prepared to offer services unless they would engage on [SSD's] terms ... [and didn't] promise accommodation or even support. What we wanted to do was to set up a package whereby LMC, LENC, and Irish City would respond.*

The logistics of the 'package' would not only mean liaison and co-operation between LENC and LMC SSDs about one hundred miles distant, but also Irish City in another national jurisdiction and another island. This didn't present a major problem for Irish City SSD who have a history of working with Irish Travellers, but LENC SSD required the Traveller children to acquiesce to their disciplinary regime before any official engagement could be instituted. So social exclusion of the young Traveller twins was the SSD penalty imposed for 'Those who refuse to become responsible...' (Rose, 1999: 267). Tarrington [interview 2002] continues:

*The [Irish City] social worker involved knew [the Traveller boys] and was their individual social worker... He was prepared to offer services... so they could access a small payment... What they were getting was from street robbery, stealing from shops, the usual things. So they were at risk in terms of criminal justice activities, [and] due to their lack of resources to keep their health good... One of the [Traveller twins] said to me: "All I want is a flat and a girlfriend, and settle down", an interesting comment... [as] he slept in cars ... or warehouses.*

*They were really chuffed to hear that I was going over to Irish City to meet with the social worker. ... They realised we were all working together and we weren't trying to control them - we were trying to provide a support network... They ... weren't going to stop moving around, they weren't going to stop their lifestyle. "Let's look at how we can make them safe", that was the whole thrust of what we wanted to do. ... They weren't old enough to get accommodation on their own and children's homes would have been totally inappropriate for them... The Project leader here was clear about thinking outside of 'the box'. Let's not apply what we applied to young people indigenous to LENC. Let's ... do something that meets their needs.*

*I came back from Irish City, ironically I got a message the next day [that] they are coming back to LMC and they have not been back [to LENC since]. When I was in Irish City I saw a number of extended families who I knew from here - the older brothers and so on - I met a load of them. I also met some of the other young people that they brought with them 'cos they used to just bring someone new each time ... [T]hey were really street kids from Irish City and they found it hard work over here because their support networks were [gone]. In Irish City I met them on the street ... which was so ironic because to travel to a different country and the young people you work with in this city [LENC] are there as well. ... I visited a project called 'The Loft' which works with young homeless people in Irish City ... and had really done very similar things to us. ... [They] gradually built a relationship and they were gonna be signed up with a package of support for them. They agree to attend 'The Loft' and would get money passed through 'The Loft' - so it's quite a creative way of doing it.*

In the above passage Tarrington [interview 2002] indicates that these transnational migration routes used by

Irish Traveller children between Britain and Ireland are far from unique to these particular children but are used regularly by other Traveller children who have become estranged from their families for various reasons. These routes may also be used by settled children who have fallen through social security safety nets in Ireland and/or Britain and have developed an association with these young Traveller groups. Research interviews [2002] with a number of Irish Travellers in Baton prison confirm this trend. Two of the offenders interviewed spoke about having travelled to Britain from Ireland in their pre-teenage years (about eleven or twelve years old) and their moving around a number of English cities using informal networks associated with the Travelling community to survive. Again, the most innovative work Tarrington [interview 2002] encountered was in the Irish voluntary sector, but Irish City SSD had been open to co-operative work also:

*We hadn't worked with young Travellers before, but we could [have instigated a] child protection referral [earlier but] they don't get investigated properly. ... It's a resource led reluctance for LENC SSD ... particularly so in this type of urban inner-city area. I have every sympathy with social workers - you can tell the frustration in their voices. Some of them will justify [this] in terms of [the young person] being stroppy, aggressive, not engaging with the process. ... The investigation would have been them [SSD] coming to the case conference ... that would have been them discharging their duty because they have checked it out. ... I don't know how they get away with it sometimes? They were saying that [the young Travellers] weren't LENC residents. Now Social Services technically have a duty to any young person.*

[Y]oung Irish Travellers have got left off the list. What we took from it [the Traveller case] was a lot of learning around how we worked. ... The biggest thing would be around confidentiality and ... that a child protection referral ... doesn't mean the end of the relationship - actually it can strengthen it. And we said: "These are our concerns, this is what we are going to do. We want you to be a part of it. If you don't want to be a part of it - that's fine, but we have to do it for these reasons", and [its] usually ok. *They saw themselves as Travellers, but even they were marginalised from the Travelling community. ... They had been pretty much on their own from the age of ten and had this lifestyle for some time. ... Social Services were never going to get there because you needed appointments, a case worker, a social worker assigned to your case work - you had to tick boxes.*

The young Travellers that Tarrington [interview 2002] struggled to cope with are far from an isolated example. A thirty-year-old English born Irish Traveller [interview 2002] in Baton Prison described how he struggled with family breakdown, domestic violence and being taken into care:

*I'm very streetwise, I knew my way around. All the children's homes I've been at I've just ran away from them ... and they couldn't control me. They had to put me in secure accommodation ... three years of going in and out of those accommodations where I had so much temper. [Due to] domestic violence ... I used to run away from home for days and then I'd be arrested for burglary. Most of my crime started because I ran away from home and then have nowhere to stay. ... I'd have no money for clothes and food so I had to rob to survive and then they caught me again and put me in security in Scotland. ... It stopped me getting back home but ... they take you out on the town. I got out the door and robbed a car, I was about fourteen and drove to SEEM...*

*When the Social Workers come I'd hide. ... I'd get arrested for something and ... the Social Services would pick me up. But when I was young I was just too wild with loosing my Gran and domestic violence ... it was mad. In ninety-one my mother died and that just led to more crime... I started taking drugs, cocaine, cannabis and drinking alcohol. I was about sixteen ... and she died ... and then all my family started splitting up and things started going wrong. I just carried on committing crime. ... Mainly the drugs was to take away the pain ... it used to cause me inward wrath. [A]s you look back you say: "Well that's not the way to do it".*

In Tarrington's illustrative study, vulnerable migrant Traveller children were not engaged or supported by two large statutory English Social Service departments even when their plight was represented to them by a respected charitable organisation and a child protection referral was instituted. The development of City Safe's work with the young Travellers is interesting and instructive about engagement with this hard to reach group. The development of a level of mutual trust was crucial, as was the setting of 'rules of engagement' between the charity workers and the children. It was particularly interesting how the young Travellers' attitude to the project warmed when the Safe City workers showed real interest in them by instituting child protection procedures combined with open consultation on the issue. An understanding of Irish Traveller culture by the workers could have led to an earlier resolution of the communication problems initially experienced, but there was no liaison between City Safe and Irish LENC Care's Traveller section – though this has developed since. Links should be developed between all organisations working in similar fields to this with specialist Irish Traveller organisations both in Britain and Ireland so that expertise and advice is immediately available if needed. The most disturbing aspect of Tarrington's [2002] interview, apart from the boys' involvement in selling sex and LENC SSD's inability to engage positively, were the numbers of other children that he encountered both in Irish City and LENC had similar lifestyles, but that are not cared for due to SSD institutional blindness to these Irish Traveller children.

### 3.11 SSDs that work for Travellers?

The Traveller People's Unit (TPU) in central SEEM's Woodlawn Borough is the only established team of statutory Social Workers dedicated to working exclusively with Travellers in Britain. Woodlawn has had many illegal encampments, so rather than constantly moving Travellers on, the Council decided to develop a rapport with Travellers. In Woodlawn Gypsy Welfare Officers make first contact with nomadic Travellers in the Borough to ascertain their needs and the CJPOA 1994 is not invoked by Woodlawn Council. Woodlawn SSD had many reports from the public concerning the neglect of Traveller children, but TPU [interview 2001] believe that many of these were malicious referrals. The Council is obliged under the Children's Act (1989) to investigate referrals whether malicious or not. TPU now visit people who have made false referrals to inform them about Traveller culture, though most referrals are anonymous. TPU believe that some teachers over-react if they think Travellers are abusing their children, and many settled people interpret Traveller lifestyle and culture as a threat, therefore malicious referrals are common. Woodlawn SSD only dealt with two serious Traveller related child protection issues in the past two years. TPU believe that some Travellers are genuinely interested in their work, but agreed that Travellers generally dislike social workers. TPU are viewed by Travellers more as Outreach Workers than Social Workers due to their realistic and culturally appropriate attitude to Traveller concerns. TPU do not become directly involved in child protection issues, believing that if they removed a child from a Traveller family this would undermine their work with this community as a whole. TPU have established trusting relationships with Traveller families that would be damaged by acting specifically in a 'traditional' Social Worker role. Therefore TPU's work is mainly supportive of Travellers, though they also deal with domestic violence which can concern abuse of Traveller elders, and violence between female Travellers.

TPU [interview 2001] believe that they meet a specific need for Travellers. The TPU offers a drop-in service for Travellers, though appointments are necessary. Acute social welfare needs are addressed, such as housing, disabilities, and domestic violence. When contact is made with a Traveller family, TPU can offer specific supportive help, so a holistic approach is encouraged by Woodlawn SSD. TPU believes that this service is unique as statutory social work teams usually offer crisis intervention only. TPU are trying to build up Social Workers' knowledge of Traveller issues. They work currently with children with disabilities and special needs. Recently TPU have started development work with youth and women. Community work includes a bi-weekly boys club with some weekend trips away. These boys aged between twelve and nineteen years don't attend school, and some are already involved with the criminal justice system. The TPU are setting up a twelve-week course in horticulture for young men and beauty salon training for young Traveller women. A young mens' football team co-ordinated by TPU also serves to encourage friendly relations between Irish Travellers and other similar culturally nomadic groups. They play in a league that includes Roma and Gypsy teams. TPU believe that getting groups of boys together on trips and encouraging teamwork through football may lessen hostility and feuding, and encourage better inter-Traveller relations. A literacy group operates at the Education Centre in Woodlawn, but TPU believe that Traveller specific literacy classes are needed, though a valid methodology has not yet been developed.

### 3.12 Summary

Accommodation and health are closely linked so Irish Travellers constant struggle for culturally appropriate accommodation impacts very negatively on their health and life chances. The available academic medical research supports this, but the quantity and localised nature of much of this research in Britain needs to be supplemented with more comprehensive and contemporary work.

PCTs are the new government health regime charged with democratising and localising HS delivery and quality. Unfortunately the PCT manager interviewed had little idea about Irish Travellers ethnicity and their particular health problems. One of the functions of PCT local forums is to inform the HS about the particular needs of minorities. Though Irish LENC Care sit on this local forum, it seems that Travellers' needs have been conflated with and subordinated to the needs of the settled Irish Community. The PCT manager has specialist services for marginalised groups, but Travellers are not considered specifically. He did agree to develop a strategy for Travellers that would be operating within three years.

Health Visitors and other community based nurses are the real HS interface with Irish Travellers. Health Visitor Gorman was unaware of any PCT initiatives though employed by them. She works independently and in some isolation. Part of her role is to facilitate interaction between ethnic minority groups like Irish Travellers, and GP services and to help them get the medical support they need. Community based health workers often don't realise when they are dealing with Irish Travellers – particularly those in housing. They need to be skilled and motivated to pick up on clues. Health Visitor Gorman found the local TES invaluable and has also used Irish LENC Care's Irish Traveller Project for necessary background and cultural information on clients.

Irish Travellers have problems registering with GPs for a number of reasons including reluctance by some surgeries to take on 'high maintenance' patients and the 'unintentional' impact of HS related legislation. Traveller women and their families have multi-factorial health problems which centre on poverty, literacy, the geographical specificity of health services, cultural estrangement from settled norms, and the impact of forced assimilation on the integrity of Irish Travellers' extended families and culture. Women's health suffers particularly as they prioritise the needs of large dependent families, often without the traditionally supportive extended family in urban settled situations. Traveller women have particular problems accessing specialist services in hospitals and clinics for both cultural and logistical reasons related to poverty, overwork, poor literacy, inflexible HS regimes and a lack of advocacy services for marginalised groups in the HS. Traveller men tend to delegate responsibility for the family's health as the mother's/woman's responsibility. Physical fitness is their priority and there is a tendency to eschew checkups and ignore symptoms until health conditions become chronic.

Environmental conditions also impact on the physical and mental health of Irish Travellers, including overcrowding, evictions, poor sanitation, vermin and accident prone environments on both illegal encampments and poorly maintained official sites. Housed Travellers suffer the mental stress of isolation, family break-down, and inappropriate housing that fails to take account of their extended family and cultural needs. Housing also means having to integrate with other unfamiliar cultures and sometimes results in social friction and intimidation of Travellers. Irish Travellers' spirituality helps them cope with adversity. Culturally appropriate accommodation for Irish Travellers would help resolve many of their primary health needs.

The geographical specificity of statutory SSDs and their reluctance to offer services engaging with people who don't fit strict residential or behavioural criteria preclude them from offering supportive services to many Travellers. The managerial, training, morale and resource problems outlined in the Laming Report (2003) that afflict statutory SSDs in many areas mean that marginalised and 'hard to reach' groups like Irish Travellers are often left off the service agenda.

Irish Travellers are also deeply suspicious of statutory SSDs and perceive them as 'spying' and threatening the break-up of their families. As with Dennis' [interview 2002] story above, when the school involved SSDs, his mother quickly moved location with her family in order to avoid their unwanted attention. The prevalence of these negative perceptions among Travellers is rooted in a long history of cultural insensitivity from SSDs and their association with coercive assimilation strategies – particularly the removal of children from families.

Tarrington's [interview 2002] example reveals a world where Traveller children in their early teenage years lead a homeless existence at the extreme edge of society due to family breakdown and an absence of sensitive involvement by SSDs from an early stage in their development. Tarrington's [interview 2002] experience in Irish City and LENC indicates that quite a few Irish Traveller children have been abandoned or excluded by society's support systems and migrate between cities in Britain and Ireland living a precarious lifestyle, surviving by sleeping rough, selling sex, petty crime and whatever else helps them stay alive including substance abuse in this particular case.

It took a voluntary organisation to identify and develop a working relationship with these children, though more speedy progress may have been made if Safe City had engaged the support of a Traveller specific support organisation. Even when called in to effect a child protection order, LENC SSD failed to act quickly and decisively, instead imposing bureaucratic conditions on any engagement with the children. Tarrington's [interview 2002] engagement with Irish City SSD did result in a positive response and they did have appropriate strategies in place, something statutory SSDs in Britain might look to as a development model for working with Travellers. This Dickensian phenomenon of young Irish Traveller children living by their wits in urban areas with little or no social supports needs to be addressed by the very agencies, SSDs, that in this case eschewed responsibility in at least two large English cities. LENC SSD is a powerful institution with many resources, but its decision to eschew their own duty of care by transferring responsibility for two vulnerable twelve year olds to a voluntary organisation can only be construed as a highly inappropriate and unprofessional act on their part. However, Woodlawn Borough's SSD has developed the TPU that works in a culturally sensitive and innovative way with Irish Travellers.

- 1 Sheffield University have recently undertaken extensive research into the health of Travellers in Britain to be published in mid 2004.
- 2 Though this interview excerpt has already been used in chapter two it is important to repeat it here as it illustrates that Travellers have little health and safety protection during private evictions.
- 3 Ms. Van Cleemput is a Health Visitor and researcher – see bibliography for details.
- 4 Oprah Winfrey - US TV show where 'ordinary' people talk frankly about taboo subjects.
- 5 Eight-year-old Victoria arrived in Britain from Ivory Coast and died in February 2000 after ten months of severe abuse inflicted by her guardian despite being referred to social services, hospital and the Metropolitan police.

## 4. TRAVELLERS' EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to examine some of the main obstacles to accessing educational support and to investigate processes of discrimination and racism within the education system that adversely affect Irish Travellers. It does not purport to comment or advise in any detail on matters of pedagogy, practice or in-depth curriculum content in relation to Travellers. It does attempt to contrast different approaches to Traveller education by particular education services and types of school and to highlight 'good practice' where it has been found.

There has long been official recognition through government sponsored and independent research of the particular educational barriers, underachievement, and other related problems encountered by all Travellers and Gypsies in Britain. A series of government commissioned reports have underlined the parlous situation of Travellers in the British education system over the last forty years. The Plowden Report (1967: 57) described young Gypsies and Travellers as '*probably the most severely deprived children in the country. Most of them do not even go to school... The children's educational needs are nevertheless extreme and largely unmet...*' Eighteen years later the Swann Report (1985: para. 25-26: 756) outlined some of the ideological and structural barriers to Travellers in the education system:

*[T]he degree of hostility towards Gypsies and other Traveller's [sic] children if they do enter school is quite remarkable even when set alongside the racism encountered by children from other ethnic minority group. ... [The] situation of Travellers' children in Britain today throws into stark relief many of the factors which influence the education of children from ethnic minorities - racism and discrimination, myths, stereotyping and misinformation, the inappropriateness and inflexibility of the education system.*

The Swann Report 'Education for All' (1985) devoted 'Chapter 16' exclusively to Traveller and Gypsy educational concerns, yet very little obvious improvement or progress in this area is discernable from the comments of relevant official reports over nearly half a century. For instance, an OFSTED report (1996) 'The Education of Travelling Children' estimated that fifteen to twenty percent of Travellers were enrolled at "Key Stage 3" and only five percent at "Key Stage 4". A later OFSTED report (1999: 7) which examined the education of Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Gypsy and Traveller children concluded that:

*Gypsy Traveller pupils are the group most at risk in the education system. Although some make a reasonably promising start in the primary school, by the time they reach secondary level their generally low attainment is a matter of serious concern.*

The Parekh Report (2000, para. 11.9: 146) noted with 'serious concern' the poor educational attainment of Traveller children in Britain:

*Gypsy and Traveller pupils are particularly at risk. Although some make a reasonably promising start in primary school, by the time they reach secondary level their generally low attainment is a matter of serious concern. In 1996 it was estimated that as many as 10,000 Gypsy and traveller [sic] children of secondary school age were not even registered for education in English schools.<sup>(1)</sup> "Often schools do not want them" it has been said, and "often Gypsies themselves do not want the schooling that is on offer".<sup>(2)</sup>*

The above are examples of research carried out over the last four decades that underline the discrimination and disadvantage suffered by Travellers and Gypsies throughout the British education and training systems. The one salient conclusion from these and many other investigations into educational provision is that Travellers are still the most educationally excluded group in England – a situation that seriously stymies other institutional efforts at social inclusion particularly during their teenage and adult lives.

When examining the provision of education for Travellers it is important not to separate it from the wider social context particularly Traveller related issues such as accommodation, health, access to other services and inter community relations in general. In particular the question of education has been inextricably bound to the ongoing and key issue of site provision. The Traveller Law Research Unit (TLRU, 1998: 73) at Cardiff University contended in relation to education that:

*The provision of reasonably secure accommodation and humanitarian treatment at the hand of public authorities cannot be separated from the entitlement of the children to a quality experience of education in schools.*

The Save the Children report 'Denied a Future?' (2001: 228) reiterated these views generally and stressed from Traveller parents' perspectives that in relation to school attendance: '*...site stability was seen as a relevant factor in deciding whether or not to send children to mainstream school.*' A Department for Education and DfEE Research Brief 168 (Dobson and Henthorne, October 1999: 4) into Pupil Mobility stated:

*Pupil mobility, its causes and consequences, link in with other policy areas and cannot be seen as concerns of the education system alone.*

*Child and family mobility have implications, not only for education, but for health improvement strategies, urban regeneration and social inclusion/exclusion policies.*

*A wide range of policy at national and local level can have an impact on the scale and pattern of population movement: for example ... provision of Travellers' sites; welfare benefits and family income; children in care...*

*Collaboration between services is essential: the school may be the first point of contact with the mover.*

So again, as in other support areas aimed at Travellers (see other chapters in this report), educational services need to work and think 'outside the box' of institutional prerogatives and disciplinary and geographical boundaries if they are serious about reaching and delivering a relevant and culturally sensitive educational experience to this group.

Some Travellers and Gypsies express fears about the purpose of some educational provision particularly in the secondary sector and the negative effect this may have on their culture generally, and on their family's structure and cohesion specifically. Kendall (1997: 86) comments on the fears that underlie some Travellers resistance to formal education in schools while stipulating that there is a strong aspiration within many Traveller families to access education:

*Since school attendance removes children from the spatial arena of the "homeplace" and its cultural influence, education can be perceived as a form of cultural assimilation... Education can also however be seen as a way that the community, via literacy, can gain skills in order to access resources denied them by the dominant society due to their non literacy.*

Every Irish Traveller family has its own particular views on the usefulness or otherwise of education provision in relation to the perceived needs of their children in the context of Traveller culture and their particular economies [Irish Traveller interviews, 2000-2003]. Central to Travellers resistance to some forms of education are fears based around total assimilation into the dominant sedentary culture. Engagement in and commitment to educational provision by Travellers is usually predicated by its perceived practical utility in the maintenance of a particular Traveller family's economic and social viability. Educational authorities and providers must proactively demonstrate the advantages that formal education (particularly in the secondary sector) will bring to Travellers in order to engage their commitment and the commitment of their children to the system. If and when Travellers realise that culturally sensitive and practically useful education and training are available in schools and colleges, their assimilation fears will diminish and their engagement increase accordingly.

Education related interviews were carried out in Greater LENC (Large English Northern City) and in Painham and Gander boroughs in SEEM (South East England Metropolis). Interviews were carried out with a wide range of education related professionals in these research locations, and elsewhere to a lesser extent where relevant expertise was appropriate. All the specific research areas have large but generally 'invisible' Irish Traveller populations on authorised sites and also experience unauthorised encampments. Most of the Irish Travellers interviewed now live in, and move regularly through, settled forms of accommodation either permanently or to a lesser extent seasonally. All Traveller respondents were asked to give their opinions on and relate their experiences of education and training in their lives (see 'Appendices 111, 1V and V' in this report for a detailed breakdown of all respondents and their competences).

#### 4.2 Education support for Travellers

The Department for Education and Skills 'Aiming High' report (July 2003: 3) puts the nature and extent of the situation for all Travellers and Gypsies in Britain in some perspective:

*A large percentage of the total population of the Gypsy Traveller communities, estimated at 350,000, live in housing, though exact figures are not known. Others live on local authority, or privately owned caravan sites or are resident on their own plot of land. Approximately one-fifth of the non-housed Gypsy Traveller population have no secure*

*place to stay, and are moving between unauthorised encampments. Living in housing is not seen as an ultimate goal for many families.*

Much of the 'Room to Roam' research work concentrated on purportedly 'settled' Irish Travellers and found high rates of mobility within particular cities, between British cities, and between Ireland (north and south) and Britain itself [Irish Traveller, TES and voluntary sector interviews and focus groups, 2000–2003] – see Section 1.1 for some examples of migration patterns in relation to economy and Stryder's [interview 2002] comments later in this section. Again, due to poor or non-existent official monitoring systems, it is impossible to give any accurate breakdown of the above DfES figures, but the qualitative results from 'Room to Roam' indicate particularly high mobility rates among supposedly 'settled' Irish Travellers who regularly move through the housing system and will often engage in seasonal nomadism (see Accommodation and Economy chapter for more details).

No national statistics relating specifically to educational attrition rates for Irish Travellers are available in England and no distinct monitoring is conducted. The government now requires all schools to undertake ethnic monitoring of all pupils by January 2003. The DfES guidance to schools on those to be monitored includes the two recognised ethnic groups within the indigenous Travelling communities, Irish Travellers and Gypsies. However, ethnic monitoring when it is carried out needs to be done with great care. Low literacy rates combined with a mistrust of ethnic monitoring can lead to low response rates and false or confused responses. The one positive government policy initiative delivered through Local Education Authorities (LEAs) that has received general approval from both Travellers and educationalists in this field has been the development and funding of local Traveller Education Services (TESs).<sup>3</sup> Most LEAs provide a TES service of some sort though the extent, types and quality of provision and delivery do differ markedly throughout the country.

Ms. Hutchinson [interview 2000], assistant head-teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator at a Painham LA High School, argues that legal dispensations to schools which allow for Travellers sometimes erratic attendance are necessary to protect schools and not discourage Travellers from accessing some level of literacy:

*If I don't have that law and I have Travellers on my roll I am then responsible to the DfES for my attendance figures. Now if that person is an identified Traveller I can authorise those absences and say that person is a Traveller. ... If I don't the DfES will come and say: "Why have you got that level of absence." I think that people should be given that freedom also so that schools aren't then being berated for not keeping the students in the school. Primary schools up to age twelve tend to get families [who] are quite interested in their children having ... a passing knowledge of reading and writing. If you suddenly say: "There's no dispensations", families will ... choose not to register their children.*

Ms. Hutchinson [interview 2000] describes the attitude of many Irish Traveller's to schools and the education system generally while assessing some of the support mechanisms provided by the local LEA:

*I think there's a mistrust of school, a mistrust of people who are not Travellers ... that's why I was quite disappointed to find that Ms. Sutherland (Painham TES) was leaving ... that has slowed down the process of getting the students back into school because we value that link with people who are trusted by the community, who have known the families for a long time and can give us some indicators about how to deal with the students. We do have an Education Social Worker, but sometimes it seems that she's the one that's whipping them to get them into school rather than looking at what they need...*

Some Education Social Workers [Knock interview 2003] 'collude' with secondary school heads to 'turn a blind eye' to the extended absences of particular Travellers as they regard their attendance at secondary school as virtually useless in relation to their training needs and the economic lifestyle that the particular family are pursuing. This 'collusion' occurs where the school head and the Education Social Worker believe that the Traveller pupil is working with his family and acquiring useful skills and work experience that an orthodox secondary education fails to offer many Travellers. Knock [interview 2002], who has worked extensively with Irish Travellers both as an Education Social Worker and outreach support worker in LENC, believes that this is a rational response by some secondary school heads and Education Social Workers to a culturally insensitive secondary system that excludes Travellers by virtue of its inappropriateness. Knock [interview 2002] believes that the above 'collusion' also serves to prevent the prosecution and criminalisation of the young Travellers who are directly involved and their parents for not attending compulsory schooling. See Section 3.9 in this report for Dennis' (a young Irish Traveller) description of his secondary school experiences in relation to truancy and the Education Social Workers' coercive responses.

Where specialist Traveller education support is provided there is a tendency among some school heads to displace their own particular responsibility to provide specialist in-school support on to the local TES. But Mr. Gravelle [interview 2002] manager of Gander TES believes that schools can rely too much on the TES and neglect to develop their own expertise and rapport with Travellers:

*[T]he negative thing is that schools can be dependent on the Traveller Education Team. And we really want schools to be working, putting in "Good Practice" ... with families, liaising with families, visiting families on site and in their homes and getting children to really achieve, and be a part of the school community. The plus is better staying on rates at secondary, and uptake at nursery - Early Years provision on site; a better uptake of the trips that we organise for families; a better uptake of college...*

LENC and Gander LEAs continue to resource the outreach and development work of their respective TESs, but Painham LEA have restructured their approach to Travellers and education with a more coercive and less culturally sensitive education social work. Mr. McCardle [interview 2002], head-teacher of a central LENC RC High School, finds that the coercive approach to attendance does not work:

*Our biggest issue is attendance ... we're running at about eighty-four percent. ... OFSTED have commented ... that attendance is a major issue, but every time they've spoken to me they've said: "I can't imagine what more you can do." Court cases don't seem to produce a lot of action. We chase it up, we write letters, we've got attendance welfare officers, we try to make school as attractive as we can.*

Ms. Sutherland [interview 2002], manager of Painham TES, has been in this position since September 1966 and prior to that she worked with Traveller communities throughout SEEM:

*The issues don't differ much over the years: access to school, attendance at school, and attainment. These are the three main issues although they fluctuate in priority throughout the year.*

She then described her staffing situation apropos a substantial settled Irish Traveller population and high numbers of transitory Traveller groups:

*An LEA is not obliged to have a TES service... It's bad enough in Painham - I mean you should never really have one member of staff in a service because that's poor professional practice. Is Painham TES reduced to one full-time staff? 'No - not even one full-time. I am [employed] three days...*

Ms. Sutherland [interview 2002] maintains that Painham Council want to cut down the social work and outreach element of TES work by placing the team solely in schools working with Traveller students rather than visiting Travellers outside to gain the community's confidence. Ms. Hutchinson [interview 2000,] assistant head-teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator of a Painham LA High School, believes that the rundown of the TES in Painham goes against best practice in education:

*Do you know who is taking over from Ms. Sutherland's team? The manager of the EMAS (Ethnic Minority Achievement Services) and in a way the Travellers fall under EMAS. And when you look at services like that people will be rightly concerned if they were staffed by white middle-aged women it wouldn't reflect the culture. I'm going to sound racist myself, we have a very multi-cultural EMAS team and ... have in that service representatives from Asian, Somalian, white, whatever, but you won't have somebody with that depth of Traveller knowledge - I think that would be missed. ... Travellers don't take part in [Painham's race equality] dialogue ... to ensure that their interests are met. ... If ... you are incorporating Traveller education in EMAS that ought to be reflected in how you are displaying and promoting it ... Painham hasn't thought it through...*

In relation to this, Gander TES have four while LENC TES have ten full-time staff – though evidence from both areas suggest that many Irish Traveller families are missed completely by inadequate under-resourced education support services [TES and voluntary sector interviews in Painham, Gander and LENC]. There are no formal institutional connections between schools and TESs across LEA boundaries thus isolating these services from the mainstream educational policy and developments. However, the National Association of Teachers for Travellers (NATT) documents and collates 'good practice' and distributes that to TESs and other interested parties and organise national Traveller education related events and conferences. NATT also co-ordinate practitioner's initiatives and responses to the DfEE where appropriate. Sutherland [interview 2002], manager of Painham TES, explains the historical and political context:

*You only get strong leadership if you give strong leadership from the top. ... But since I have worked with TES we have*

*had five if not six Secretaries of State for Education. ... I think there is a lack of direction from the top from the DfES through to the LEA's and [from] the LEA's through to the [TES] services. ... We were obliged [up to] two or three years ago to send in an accurate report and that used to help to clarify and re-value your priorities... But we have not been asked to do that recently ... which is affecting delivery of service.*

Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002], head of LENC TES, gives some indication of the numbers of mainly Irish Traveller pupils they support in LENC:

*There may have been others, but we knew about seven hundred children [of school age in LENC] last year... We do induction on every child, so in primary that would probably be an intensive literacy programme for half a term. In secondary it would be about assessing the need, observation in the classroom, passing good information through to the teachers in terms of additional literacy support... The [government] say there is no more money coming to Traveller education - there's a lot more money going into schools ... [for] social inclusion...*

Here Stryder outlines the large number of Traveller school children that LENC TES supports with only ten full time staff. While Traveller specific funding is limited LENC TES in conjunction with some schools, tries to meet the legitimate educational needs of Travellers by accessing general education support funds for all pupils. Stryder [interview 2002] then describes the various nomadic and migratory patterns that operate beneath the seemingly 'settled' lives of most Irish Travellers living in LENC:

*It's hard to find anywhere to put a trailer in LENC so they put their trailer into storage or they park it in the driveway of a house that they've got. They move into a house and stay for winter or ... stay in the house for a few months then they'd go off again. ... In LENC its transient all the time and we have families who come back to us but then you can work with the family for a couple of years and then ... you might see them in six months, or in two years and you might never see them again.*

These nomadic and migratory patterns set up a whole series of educational challenges that mainstream education has barely begun to identify or grapple with – see for instance examples of good practice used in the education of Gypsy and Traveller pupils as outlined in DfES Circular 10/99 (6 July 1999), and particularly on attempts to improve the continuity of learning for Traveller pupils by permitting dual registration at schools in different geographical locations. Research (Bhopal et al, November 2000: 1) commissioned by the DfES and carried out by the International Centre for Intercultural Studies Institute of Education at the University of London identified key elements of successful educational schemes that promoted more effective teaching of, and learning by, Gypsy and Traveller pupils:

*The support provided by the TESs to schools with Gypsy Traveller pupils is critical to the development of best practice. TESs can provide Gypsy Traveller communities with information about schools, secure school places for Gypsy Traveller children by supporting admission procedures and help to devise induction schemes for new children. They can also promote and facilitate regular attendance by organising transport arrangements, helping with the provision of uniforms and support during the immediate period after admission. They can also assist parents in their dealings with schools and help ensure that there is continuity in the educational experience. The TESs also provide essential support for schools by providing appropriate curriculum materials and training for teachers.*

As the above excerpt demonstrates specialist TES services are crucial in informing Traveller families of their educational responsibilities, opportunities and rights, enabling access to schools, and ensuring the delivery of a regular and positive educational experience to Travellers, but individual TES resources and practices can differ widely depending on the particular LEA's policy. A former TES worker in Painham, now head of LENC TES [interview 2002], maintains that the main difference between the work of the TES in Painham and LENC was one of resources. The staff in Painham were so stretched that the service they could offer was very limited. In LENC there are higher staffing ratios and resources available. This would seem to be reflected in the attitude of many primary school heads interviewed who generally found the LENC and also Gander TES to be very supportive [LENC and Gander teacher interviews 2002].

Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002], head-teacher and acting head of LENC TES, comments on the complexities of working with Irish Traveller children from pre-school, through primary and into secondary education:

*[P]rimary is the simplest in terms of working with the family because the families can see a purpose for reading and writing and primary school education. They see secondary school as places where young people are beginning to mix with the other sex and ... and then you are actually dealing with big organisations where [primary] children have one teacher for the whole week, [secondary] will have twelve.*

When a TES is dealing with a primary school it can deal with the head-teacher for most eventualities, but there

is a more complex picture when it comes to older children in secondary schools (and early years children) as Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002] explains:

*[Secondary schools are different] because you are dealing with ... young people in the Travelling community who feel much more adult. There is a longer history in primary education with the Travelling community than with secondary. Early Years has a similar problem because mothers don't like letting their children out of their care too young and [with] secondary schools its because the parents [want] children back in their homes before they get too assimilated by [the] mainstream, you know girlfriends, boyfriends - temptations.*

Complex structures need to be negotiated when TES are accessing and advocating for Travellers in secondary schools – so how much more difficult is it for Traveller children and their parents to deal with this bureaucratic matrix? Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002] explains:

*You are dealing with a bureaucracy; with communication systems within the school. In secondary schools you have [a] special needs co-ordinator, social inclusion co-ordinator, a deputy-head that does admission, a head-teacher that does disciplinary matters, a head of department who wants some support for literacy and wants to look at how ... it is being delivered by the whole department rather than the class teacher that's teaching Johnny. It is much more complicated and you need a good contact person to link you with [any] new system in secondary schools. For example when we send children up to secondary school, we send a letter to the head-teacher through the social inclusion co-ordinator, to the head of year and to the school of educational welfare and we say these are the children that are going to come to ... your school and this is their involvement with TES. ... Yes it is about pathways and it's about pulling the right services together so that everybody is linked at the right point.*

The following section examines, compares and contrasts aspects of TES service delivery and related issues in the three 'Room to Roam' detailed research areas of LENC, and Painham and Gander in SEEM.

#### 4.3 LENC, Painham and Gander Traveller education delivery perspectives

TES funding originally came out of a fund called "No Area Pool" and this was for children that didn't fall into a particular territorial area. Councillors would submit a bill for what they had provided in the last year to the Education Department as one TES head [interview 2002] explains: '*[N]obody ever knew to what extent the claim would be met at the end of the year ... it just felt like we were on a complete shoe string all the time.*' In 1991 a new head of TES began to reorganise the service in order to provide broader support for Travellers in LENC. This coincided with the 1988 Education Act that provided funding specifically for Travellers' education through the "Section 288" grant introduced in 1991 guaranteeing specific amounts to finance TESs and thus regularising funding throughout the country and minimising the variations of "No Area Pool".

Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002], head-teacher and then acting head of LENC TES, describes how she began working directly with Travellers and LENC TES:

*I was already working with children who were going back to Pakistan for extended holidays and ... being quite isolated within the school community and I could see that there were [similarities] that immediately sprang to mind. And then the next thing was the prejudice that I got from other teachers when I told them I was applying for the job - it shocked me. I didn't really think that Travellers were anything to worry about. So I started working for the TES in LENC in 1989. ... So when I came in [as a secondary school support teacher] there was staff based in a whole range of primary schools and they just waited for the children to come to them and they had half a day to go and visit the families.*

*It was a really inefficient way of working and that there were children in other schools that weren't getting anything whilst I was sitting in this school seeing an occasional Traveller and then only when they were timetabled for my [special needs] groups. So ... I talked my way into going out to visit three or four different schools and going out to visit the families ... and that was the beginning of starting that kind of outreach model of support in Secondary. The work that we do now really has grown out of that notion that you don't base yourself in one place and wait for people to come to you, but you ... go out and find the Travellers wherever they are [and] assess the need of the child...*

Ms. Hutchinson [interview 2000], assistant head-teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator of a Painham LA High School, underlines the need for TES outreach support as she struggles to understand the nature of nomadism and the nature and organisation of Traveller's extended families:

*Patterns seem to change which is why I value TES because they've got more experience - addresses are quite fluid if*

*you want to contact somebody. I remember doing a visit with Ms. Sutherland and they were around the corner with Auntie "whatsit" ... and that seems to be a stable base for some members of the family. ... The young boys may be travelling for a percent of the year, which seems to be the pattern. We get a pattern where the student will be with us for maybe six months, but then might disappear for a while and come back again. ... If you come into a school [in] the middle of the year it's actually quite hard to build up friendships. Teenagers are particularly wary, I think it is quite difficult for them and the family.*

Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002], head-teacher and acting head of LENC TES, discusses the "two year rule" sometimes applied to 'settled' Travellers up to recent times but now practically defunct:

*[A]ll of the [Department of Education] guidance told us you could only work with Travellers that had been settled for less than two years. It was all absolutely clear [then] that there was a two-year rule... It was people who were mobile or lived on sites ... but it was a real problem because of the Travellers who were in houses. You could have a situation where you have a family move into a house for the first time when the child that you were working with was eleven and he couldn't read and he'd never really been to school, and then two years later their "two year rule" cut in and you'd never work with that child anymore even though the needs might still be quite great. People used to sort of bend the rules all over the place to try and get round it and with some encouragement centrally...*

Many of the TES staff had been working in the same schools for some years and the new TES head withdrew them and completely changed working practices. Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002] continues:

*[A new head of TES] came here [SEEM] to make it into a different kind of support service but she wasn't given much guidance from the Council [LA] on how to do it. ... Its quite clear from talking to officials that they still expected us to be based in the school long-term and as we did more research into what the needs of the community were it was obvious that we should be a centrally based support service ... whilst [other TES services] around the country were discovering that for themselves. You all found the same answer? When we would ask questions about how it should be done we were told that we should respond to local need... The Council didn't really know what it should be doing except that it should be making provision for Travelling children ... the legal documents say: "Children who resort ... to or reside in the area." So the Council knew that it had to make provision for those children ... it's been that way ever since really. ... We had to do an annual report to the Department of Education... [though] we did have an inspector who came to see us...*

Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002] explains and changed political context in which TESs operate in the highly charged space between sedentary and nomadic mindsets and lived experiences:

*There were issues about data collection and if you did data collection the information might be used against Travellers. There is still lots of Travellers who are anxious [about] the current government ethnic monitoring. That's ok so long as you are absolutely certain that you are going to always live in a democracy but a lot of Travellers will talk to you about Nazi Germany... More and more Irish Travellers are beginning to get politicised ... none of the families would have said that when I first came but now there are a few families that would. ... I really welcome it - it's about standing tall saying: "I know who I am and what I am..."*

Again, data collection on and monitoring of Travellers can be contentious and inaccurate for TESs whose statistics are based solely on actual contacts made with Travellers in the course of their education support work as Stryder [interview 2002] explains:

*Gradually over the years we have got a quite comprehensive database that tells us what families have been here - there are Travellers who come into parts of the city like the extreme south who we never hear about because the schools don't know a great deal about our service. ... It's almost as though the schools have had to ... begin to work with [TES] before they can start to realise that: "Oh, I think those children are Travellers." So if some children turn up they might just ... take them in and there may be all kinds of issues that they don't know how to handle... Sometimes Travellers might go into school but the person who is responsible for contacting outside agencies didn't know so they never contacted us, and so the class teacher with children don't get any support.*

Ms. Epsom [interview 2002], Head of LENC TES and formerly a TES teacher in Painham, believes the main difference between the work of the TES in Painham and LENC was one of resources. TES staff in Painham were so stretched that the service they could offer was very limited. In LENC there were much higher staffing ratios and resources available. This would seem to be reflected in the attitude particularly of the primary school heads in LENC who all found LENC TES to be very supportive. There is a more complex picture when it comes to older Traveller children due to the relatively small numbers who attend secondary school.

As the previous discussion demonstrates, TES services only cover a certain proportion of the actual need in any given area and there are large disparities in provision by different LAs (see Section 4.2 also). Lack of monitoring at all institutional levels and resistance to perceived state surveillance by many Irish Travellers means that no real accurate statistics are available for school attendance or eligibility as an ethnic group. Policies and teaching practices aimed specifically at Travellers have often been confusing and even contradictory. The purpose of the infamous 'Two-year Rule' was never properly explained or justified by the DfES and seems to have been quietly rescinded – it no longer applies but was never a 'compulsory' rule. The 'Rule' did expose the 'assimilationist' motives behind much government education policy directed at Travellers in the past and confirmed many Travellers suspicions that the 'real' purpose of education was to de-ethnicise Travellers by imposing sedentary disciplines and regimes from an early age.

TEs have also had to define, develop and defend their operational role in schools and with Travellers outside of schools in a broader social context. This broader social context and understanding is crucial to the production and delivery of culturally sensitive education to marginalised ethnic groups particularly those with nomadic values like Irish Travellers. Funding constraints, staff shortages and pedagogical disputes throughout the education sector have exerted particular pressures on TES managers and teachers to commit more of their time to in-school teaching to the detriment of their trust building and community development work with Travellers. These pressures have presently intensified on TEs as governments and LAs have concentrated on funding educational efforts to incorporate and assimilate asylum seekers and refugees.

#### 4.4 Irish Traveller's under-achievement and absence in LA and RC schools

Zipfel (cited in Fulton, March 2001: 7) argues that poverty is a central determinant of the poor performance of ethnic minority children in schools:

*Given the correlation between poverty and achievement documented by OFSTED ... and the fact that ethnic minorities are concentrated in schools in poor areas, the issue of poverty must be taken into account in any discussion of the under-achievement of some ethnic minorities.*

Mr. Gravelle [interview 2002], manager of Gander TES, sets out the particular impact that the education system has on Irish Travellers in relation to the settled population in general:

The education system obviously caters for the vast majority of kids, very little goes into making provision for Travellers per-se. Lots of Travellers miss public examinations; and once they have missed it then there is not an opportunity for them to do as well. Now I will give you an example from one of our schools. "Year 9" English SATS and "Key Stage 3": there were only four students in the whole of "Year 9" that weren't there on that day. Two of those students came from the Travelling community. There are only five [Traveller] students in that year group: so nearly fifty percent of the Travellers were not present. The settled population was less than one percent who didn't turn up - you can see the difference.

These relative levels of Traveller under-achievement would and could not be tolerated in any other ethnic group. Unmonitored and ethnically invisible in many schools, Irish Travellers and other similar nomadic groups suffer comparable low achievement throughout the education system [education related interviews, 2000-2003] (Parekh, 2000; OFSTED, 1996; Swann Report, 1985). However, very little in any of the latter research highlights the inappropriateness of sedentary education to the actual needs of Irish Travellers. An Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] explains why her children stopped going to secondary school:

*Some Travellers want to keep their own ways/identity. That's why I took my kids out of school, didn't want them bufferised [Cant/Gammon pejorative for assimilated]. Once they came home complaining what other kids had or were going, then that was the end of school. Country [settled] people seem to have no moral codes. Traveller kids get brainwashed into being 'English'. It's hard to remain a Traveller in England because of cultural outside pressure. Asians et cetera are not made to feel like they are living some silly existence [like] Traveller kids are. Country girls have a bad influence on Traveller girls. A Traveller becoming a buffer is like somebody died.*

As this woman illustrates there is a deep fear within Traveller communities about the purpose of the education system. Secondary schools, particularly, are regarded by many Travellers as aiding cultural assimilation into sedentary society. The Traveller woman cited above [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] also commented on the prevalence of overt anti-Traveller prejudice by teachers in her own schooling experience in England:

*When I first came here I went to junior school. A couple of teachers were pigs. They said to me: "You will have to go to speech therapy, [we] can't understand a word you are saying".*

A young Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] commented with much more recent experience of school attendance illustrating how the denigration of Travellers and their culture is reinforced by discriminatory interactions between staff and pupils:

*When I was at school, kids would take turns to serve other kids dinner. When it was my turn the [other] kids would say: "We don't want her to serve us." Used to make me feel like crying. Instead of the dinner lady having the sense to say: "She is going to serve you", she used to skip me over and say: "I'll serve you then".*

Another young Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] commented: *'We were called names on the [school] bus, we would walk back home three miles to avoid the bus journey.'* A nineteen-year old Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] describes how discriminatory treatment by teachers in school undermined her confidence and made her feel marginalised:

*When I was at school I was put in a corner to play with plasticine while everyone else got taught. When it came time to read from a book, I wasn't asked to read. I was late and left school early to look after younger sisters and brothers. I was ashamed to arrive late for first lesson because teachers would make a show of me, and likewise I would not attend last lesson because I had to leave early.*

The discriminatory behaviours outlined by the Traveller women above are rooted in a lack of recognition and respect for Irish Traveller culture despite official recognition as a distinct ethnic group in England and Wales. A nineteen-year old Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] proposed a solution for many school teachers' lack of recognition and appreciation of Traveller culture:

*If teachers could be given training and visit Traveller families before they start teaching just so they get a notion of Traveller culture. For example, a child might swear at home, therefore don't punish it too much for swearing at school. A six month training programme for teachers' might be a good idea.*

Yet some TES staff complain that a number of school teachers and head-teachers try to displace their own responsibility to support and engage with Irish Travellers in a culturally sensitive manner on to their local TES and further neglect their responsibility by attempting to extend TES support to settled children in class. TES staff [research diary 2002] in Painham discussed 'institutional theft' whereby the LEA arranged for a TES teacher to assist a Traveller boy, then the class teacher encouraged her to support other settled children (see Appendix VII for details about the formulation, content and use of the research diary). Eventually this resulted in the TES teacher giving preferential treatment to settled children as they had more chance of sitting and passing SATS examinations thereby improving the school performance records. Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002] head of LENC TES discusses some of the differences between TESs and schools when dealing with Travellers:

*Schools will ask us to do things that they should be doing. They will ask us to do home visits ... the whole point is you get the children in, get an assessment of their needs done, begin to get provision in place. ... The ultimate goal is to withdraw from the situation. ... [I]ts about making the system flexible to meet the needs of lots of different people [and] giving children the same chances as everybody else... People don't understand that social inclusion could be assimilation if you see social inclusion as about getting all the children exactly the same.*

Mr. McCardle [interview 2002] is the head-teacher of an RC High School in the centre of LENC. The school has about 750 pupils and one of the most significant issues for the school is the high pupil mobility - about a quarter of the pupils change every year. How many Irish Travellers are in your school?

*It's actually between fifty and sixty. It is high isn't it? They go off and they come back ... but I would say half of them will be settled. The three schools [now amalgamated into St. Paul's] all had Traveller children and we came together as one school. That's why our numbers are slightly larger. And they come and they settle in various parts of LENC and they do move. ... Quite often they go through the TES and that can be a bit tense sometimes.*

McCardle [interview 2002], outlines the tension between the school management's expectations of the TES service and the service actually delivered:

*If TES aren't careful they become advocates for families. I mean ... there's this one high school and then there's nine [feeder] primaries. And we have had a number of meetings to try to thrash out protocols for Traveller children. When the Traveller children come in they're often... without much history of schooling, right? So their behaviour can sometimes be a major problem. So the teacher gets a child in and where do you start? Because they're miles behind,*

*they've got different experiences altogether, they quite often have been working outside, so it's quite difficult for the kids themselves to [adapt]. So we support with uniform ... and the TES have an induction program. ... [T]hese kids are not necessarily special needs. It's just that they're behind. Some of these kids are really bright, it's just that they're not into conventional schooling. And one of the difficulties is that ... the Traveller children can ... become a little unit in school. ... So we try... to integrate Traveller children and by-and-large the majority are pretty well integrated. We've got some very supportive Traveller parents. What we want [TES] won't give us ... we need a full-time person based in school, not two or three different people popping in doing an hour here and an hour there, because a lot of the problems are pastoral and social...*

Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002], head of LENC TES, comments on how negative attitudes in some Catholic schools are influenced by the imported prejudices of an older generation of Irish born settled teachers:

*Have a look at the Catholic schools who have this [attitude] based on ... everybody that comes through the door here is Catholic... There is an awful lot of Irish [teachers] settled in LENC schools and who've been here a long time so some of the changes that are happening in Ireland haven't necessarily made it to some Irish staff in LENC. The Catholic Church used to bring hundreds of young men across from Ireland and do teacher training with them through the 60s and 70s. ... Those people can be in quite senior positions now in the school with the views that they had then ... towards Travellers ... the views can get set.*

*So you will get told that Kathleen is doing very well and that's great because you are hearing about an individual. [B]ut when [school teachers] start talking about the Travellers you hear some bad stories and they may be true but they won't represent the whole picture. ... They'll say: "Oh we had a terrible incident with the Travellers ... and there was a great big fight." [TES] realised this [incident] happened two or three years ago and it's colouring opinions and ... it doesn't matter how many children that have been fine. The fact that there was this thing ... takes hold in some schools and it's more likely to happen in the catholic schools.*

A nineteen-year old Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] spoke about her experiences in a Catholic primary school:

*I thought I was getting special treatment playing with plasticine while everyone else was learning to read. My dad went mad when I couldn't write my own name. He went down to the school and had a go at the nun.*

Another Irish Traveller woman in her forties [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] believed that Traveller parents rarely complained about the lack of appropriate educational support for their children:

*That was the way of the school, no special needs were provided, because Travellers didn't complain. I would always see the teachers about this. A priest said he would rather have Muslims than Traveller children in his school.*

Mr. McCardle, [interview 2002], head-teacher of an RC High School in central LENC, confirms the TES assertion about the prevalence of stereotyping in some RC schools:

*I've got involved in some bizarre situations with Travellers you know. We had a memorable situation here ... I ended up excluding for a lengthy fixed period four girls, would you believe, who's behaviour was totally atrocious. ... The TES then came with the mothers ... because I excluded them. ... I probably should have permanently excluded them for what they did, but I didn't and I got them back. ... I can understand, up to a point, that there are great pressures on the families and school is a problem for them and high school is a particular problem. ... There are some "good kids" who, in conformist terms, are quietly getting on with their work.*

McCardle seems to divide Travellers into two categories – the 'angry ones' and the 'good kids'. A twenty-year old Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] explains that different attitudes to parental nurturing of young children are behind some of the culture clashes that occur between Traveller and settled children in schools:

*Traveller kids can appear tough because they are used to the cold. English kids are watched all the time. Traveller kids are [cared for] but they are allowed more freedom, therefore English don't like their kids to mix with Traveller kids. This is another form of prejudice.*

A middle-aged Irish Traveller woman in her forties [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] believes that the situation is so serious that the only answer is separate Traveller schools due to the tensions between Travellers and settled teachers and pupils:

*I went to the school and asked to see the bullies who ... had been spitting at my child. I would prefer a separate school for Traveller kids to be educated together. ... They are telling Travellers: "You could be us too if you are very good". It's like ethnic cleansing. ... We need qualified teachers in Traveller schools. ... Parents would have to join in too, not just sit back and relax. If a child was disruptive, then parents would need to address the situation.*

Mrs. Stryder of LENC TES believes that LA schools have a generally more positive and enlightened attitude to Irish Travellers as they view them as an ethnic minority and apply equal opportunities criteria when dealing with them:

*But at the county [LA] schools they've all had anti-racist training and they expect to have ... around fifty different cultures. So the local authority schools expect to have to deal with cultural difference but the Catholic schools can be very [sectarian]: "We are Catholics and ... that's our culture. So we can have children from the Indian sub-continent or from Africa or from Ireland but ... we are all Catholics." And the need to look more widely at intercultural, multicultural or anti-racist education comes underneath that...*

Fulton's (March 2001) study of the treatment of ethnicity and race in Catholic schools documents a whole series of initiatives since 1975 by the Catholic hierarchy in Britain, but the report itself fails to address the particular needs of Irish Travellers. Stryder [interview 2002] agrees that the Catholic Church's local dioceses try to impose fair treatment for Irish Travellers in Catholic schools:

When a Catholic school head-teacher said: "We've got ten Travellers now that should be our limit." The diocese ... said: "No, if you've got places and the children want places ... if you try and turn them away because they are Travellers you are contravening the Human Rights Act, the Race Relations Amendment Act. You are going to get yourself into big trouble." I heard them say it exactly like that to head-teachers [who] would be trying to get us to have limits on the number of Traveller children ... in a few schools here in LENC...

However, Hickman's (1995) historical work on the cultural assimilation into British society of settled Irish people through the Catholic school system in Britain has strong resonances today in relation to the education of Travellers in Catholic schools. But Fulton (March 2001: 8) also points out that:

*[W]hat the statistics on governors (and later on school staff) show is that, in terms of the institutions of the Roman Catholic community in Britain, first-generation Irish ... have traditionally played a major role as both clergy and school teachers in [its] affairs...*

Many of the TES workers and also Irish Travellers interviewed for this research [2000-2003] believed that much of the 'knowing' and 'informed' prejudice in schools came from governors, staff and parents with strong Irish connections. As one Irish Traveller [focus group 2001] put it: '*They [settled Irish] brought the virus [of anti-Irish Traveller racism] over with them*'. But even in the schools where equal opportunities policies and diversity awareness are prioritised in staff practice problems can occur between settled and Traveller children, while funding constraints limit the mainly positive contribution of TESs and school teachers alike.

#### 4.5 Excluding Travellers from schooling

Problems can begin when attempting to get Traveller children into some schools. Some schools refuse to take Traveller children at all while others attempt to limit their numbers. In one London borough which commissioned research into the needs of the Traveller community, it was found that parents experienced difficulties when registering children once it became known they were from Traveller families, whether settled, sited or nomadic. Difficulties were also found by Travellers attempting to access Early Years nursery provision (Gaffney, 2001: 28-29; also Clark et al, October 1998). Research carried out in Wales (Save the Children, October 1998) confirms this reluctance to admit Traveller children. Issues range from the complete refusal by some schools to admit Traveller children, through discriminatory attitudes by staff and inadequate responses to anti-Traveller racism and bullying, to low take-up of preschool provision and higher education (Clark et al, October 1998: 211).

A young Irish Traveller [interview 2002] describes how he was permanently excluded from school for causing damage and the school failed to diagnose his dyslexia:

*I was kicked out at the age of six. [I caused] fifteen thousand pounds worth of damage to the school. They couldn't realise my problem [was] dyslexia, I cannot read and write. They didn't ... put me in for assessment they was telling me to do this, to do that. I am saying: "Look I can't". ... And they are saying look ... your thick. ... Its their duty ... their fault that I cannot read and write. If they said to me at the age of six: "You are dyslexic, we are going to put*

*you in a special school to help you", ... I would have been happy, but not even an apology. I am twenty now... [M]y mother is fighting a court case now and ... there's very good grounds for suing the education department because they really refused to put me into schools...*

Ms. Sutherland, manager of Painham TES [interview 2002], discusses school admissions policy and barriers to Traveller education access in Painham:

*Well one of the things that hinders it is Painham's admission policy [it] is quite rigorous, not very flexible and most of the school places are taken up year in, year out on certain days by certain procedures that are well known by the settled community and followed quite rigorously by the [Local] Authority thus leaving very little room for any kind of movement of migratory populations in or out. The schools that do have places find it quite difficult to have mid-year entries because within the schooling system, we have this rigorous quite tough policy of putting children in year groups and people don't like placing children in age inappropriate year groups. So if you have children from the Traveller community that are living in housing, then the access isn't that difficult...*

Painham experiences large throughputs of mobile Irish Traveller groups who largely fail to access any formal school education as Ms. Sutherland [interview 2002] explains:

*Last year, 2000-2001, we had over a thousand children move through the Borough that could be designated as coming from highly mobile groups and not one of those children accessed a place. That doesn't mean to say that they didn't have any education, but their average length of stay was anything between three to five days. These figures we collected and collated ourselves [TES], so they are as accurate as we could make them. ... These youngsters did have access to TES ... that is our main priority to try and give some form of distance learning to any youngster who belongs to a highly mobile group.*

Ms. Sutherland [interview 2002] discusses the issues around Traveller's attendance at school:

*One of the most serious attendance issues is that the school does not necessarily feel comfortable with the Traveller child or the Traveller family. ... The Traveller students at schools don't actually ring up [when] they are ill like your ordinary pupil so it has been known from schools within Painham to actually put down the wrong coding and use "T" which means they are travelling when they are not...*

*We find it's a complicated issue if the Traveller child has interrupted schooling then the Traveller child will demonstrate gaps in his or her learning. To differentiate for that child within a classroom can cause an individual class teacher quite a lot of extra work. Now this needs to be talked through with the TES team because if not the frustration of the child can sometimes lead to social behaviour that is inappropriate and [this] can get out of hand and the child then finds it difficult to come to school and then the issues of attendance gets bigger and bigger. We do have in Painham a designated post for a specific "Traveller Education Social Worker" ... but I am not convinced that model of having a designated team post for Traveller children actually is the best because it ... sets the Traveller children as being that particular post holder's responsibility. I think it would be better [to] make sure that if a school had Traveller children [it] assumes exactly the same responsibility for their attendance and got into the reasons why they were not attending which can be just as complicated.*

Ms. Hutchinson [interview 2000], assistant head-teacher at a Painham LA High School, describes how the student exclusion system operates in her school:

*Our school has a pattern, [a] kind of escalation: detentions, phoning home, head's detention, community service ... depending on the nature [of the offence]. If there is a serious incident they can be excluded and that's usually for fighting or serious rudeness and length of exclusion can vary from a day in the first instance to two or three days. ... Students [can have] quite a number of short-term exclusions yet still manage to go through school. If they seem to be beyond our control ... we can then give them a governors warning [after] three fixed-term exclusions of ten days... A governors warning doesn't always mean [permanent exclusion] the next time [but] if they were extremely violent they would...*

The Department for Education and Skills 'Aiming High' report (July 2003: 4) maintains that more Travellers and Gypsies are excluded from school than any other ethnic group. Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002] head of LENC TES discusses some of the reasons why this occurs:

*The teachers in school would say that as a Traveller teacher [I] should be professionally in the same boat as them,*

*when actually what I am doing is trying to achieve some progress with Traveller children. And it can be quite a subtle thing: "Are you a real teacher", is the sub-text ... of what's being said. If you are trying to keep Johnny in school and he has had a temporary exclusion and you are really battling for him, then the school can feel: "Whether I am trying to exclude somebody [or not] we should be standing shoulder to shoulder and we should be up against the parents. When a school really doesn't want to admit a child and you help the parents do the appeal they [contend] that's not your role. We [TES] say: "No, we are doing outreach support ... helping someone to write a letter." There are whole areas that are quite dicey ... the Local Authority is paying you to affect the system... I think there is a point where you have to stand up and ... say: "Well you've got places and this child needs a school place and I'm here to help the family to appeal for that place... I think that really behind it all there is a game going on: "How strong will you keep at it if I say no." There are rules that if schools have a place and somebody applies then they get it and you can't say: "We don't like the look of that person or we don't think we can meet that child's needs".*

One DfEE/OFSTED report (1999) noted that teacher expectations of Gypsy and Traveller school children are generally unfairly low. Though schools celebrate ethnic diversity, there is often reticence where Traveller culture is concerned. Ms. Potts [interview 2001] is deputy head and Learning Support Co-ordinator at a LA primary school in Painham and stresses the importance of celebrating diverse cultures but struggles due to the workload imposed by the national curriculum:

*We don't celebrate backgrounds enough partly because we have to be so focused on the curriculum nowadays and there's almost no time. But I did hear about a school that was celebrating various aspects of Romany culture and I thought: "Yea we should do that..." What about INSET training? 'I was just thinking we've not done anything on the Travellers...' Do you have any materials about Travellers? 'Yes we do have a couple of boxes ... but the schools have a tradition of having Traveller children and the TES come in quite a lot ... either working with the children or working with classes on stories which have Romany backgrounds and the children act them out, so we do a little bit of consciousness raising.*

Discrimination and prejudice is common and can lead to low attendance levels as well as poor communication between schools and Traveller parents. Factors range from the outright refusal by some schools to admit Gypsy and Traveller children, through discriminatory attitudes by staff and inadequate responses to racist anti-Gypsy and Traveller bullying, to low take-up of pre-school provision and higher education. These factors and many more contribute not only to low levels of attendance but also to relatively high levels of illiteracy. League tables and attendance tables have proved a barrier to increasing the access of Traveller children who are assumed to have literacy and attendance problems and to educational opportunities by pressurising schools to accept only academically successful students and good attenders. Ms. Potts [interview 2001], deputy head at a LA primary school in Painham, takes a radical line on attendance and views travelling as part of a Traveller's education:

*I could be seen as ... not taking Government targets seriously, or not taking education of Traveller children seriously. I don't care about them because I am saying: "They should follow what they need to do". ... The Government keeps a very watchful eye on attendance figures and they are published too now. Travelling families [when] they're travelling those children are learning a lot in their own way. True they are missing schooling, but that's a parental decision. But ... [the head-teacher] is saying to [one of the Traveller families] if you go travelling again then we will take your children off roll because it looks better for the attendance figures. ... Why shouldn't the Traveller child go travelling and then be able to come back? ... And there are heads of very high attaining schools who have admitted openly not wanting low [achievers], but we pride ourselves in our inclusion...*

Mainstream education initiatives like the 'Literacy Strategy' and the 'Numeracy Strategy' do not address the specific needs of Travellers. Government is trying to make schools self-contained, so this would leave no appropriate mechanism to meet Travellers needs – particularly those with high rates of mobility and nomadism. The proposed decentralisation of schools coupled with the centralisation and standardisation of school curricula will probably have a further adverse impact on Irish Traveller attendance and achievement.

Some teachers reflect the negative attitude to Travellers prevalent in sedentary society. Professional collusion between teachers can result in negative stereotypes of Travellers being perpetuated in schools. TES, who are independent but staffed by qualified teachers, can feel this tension between professional loyalty and duty to Traveller children especially when intervening in school disputes. Particular schools can see the TES as taking exclusive responsibility for Traveller pupils and as the interlocutor with the parents. Consequently, school management and teachers can neglect to confront discrimination, bullying, and their own internal prejudices about Travellers, so racist name calling and bullying as a problem experienced by Traveller children in school often goes unchallenged.

Mr. McCardle [interview 2002], the head-teacher of an RC High School in the centre of LENC, comments on assertions that Traveller children are bullied by settled children:

*Well allegedly ... there is bullying ... slapping in the face, that kind of thing. But, on the other hand, they [Travellers] are quite aggressive and ... have their supportive system of their cousins and relatives so if something goes wrong somebody will sort you out... So social inclusion, by definition causes a tension by raising standards because they [Irish Travellers] certainly [are] not going to raise standards... Are they involved in more disputes than other children? One of the answers will have to be yes. ... I'm not saying who's to blame, but the reality is they are. Traveller kids are generally pretty articulate, forceful, quite often if they have come from Ireland they have a broad Irish accent. But the reality is they do end up in more disputes and some of the fights can be appalling.*

McCardle blatantly blames Travellers for causing most of the fights in school. A twenty-year old Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] gives a very different perspective when discussing young Traveller children's experience of staff prejudice and violence at the hands of settled children in school:

*In schools you get on ok till they know you're a Traveller, once the teacher finds out they wait for you to do something wrong. I went to a catholic primary school. Did you get picked on? Yes, but the boys get it worse than the girls. One day I collected our Joe and two boys jumped out on him and smacked him in the face and told him to go home to his wheely-bin.*

An Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] explains how she feels many Travellers are intimidated by school hierarchies and bureaucracies and resort to more direct forms of dispute resolution:

*I've never had trouble now with my kids when I go to the school, but I won't stand for it. But a lot of Travellers wouldn't go down to the school, or would be ashamed or embarrassed. I think a lot of Travellers would just tell their kids to make sure that they hit the other child.*

A thirty-year old male Irish Traveller [interview 2002], brought up around SEEM, describes how he received early tuition on sites in religious but missed out on formal education due to name calling and bullying though his parents wanted him to attend:

*The only time I went to education was in eighty-eight ... fathers and nuns and that used to do some reading and writing and that and then these stopped coming. Then my father and mother sent me to school. But I never stayed in school. They used to bring me to the school - in one door and out the backdoor - and I used to pretend I'd been to school all day ... and then social workers came round to the site asking a lot of questions: "Has he been to school?" People knows you're a Traveller, slagging and calling you Gypsy ... just all the hassle and aggro that you actually get in there. [My parents] wanted me to go but I kept running away.*

In contrast to McCardle's [interview 2002] comments above, Ms. Hutchinson [interview 2000], assistant head-teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator of Painham LA High School. comments on relationships between settled and Irish Travellers in her non-denominational school:

*Staff are fairly open-minded but what my concern is with students - I've noticed recently maybe as a result of a film [Snatch] - that now Pikey and Gyppo are used as terms of insult ... We usually find is that once the [Traveller] students are in the school that children are fairly tolerant it's just [if] anybody's slightly different ... you can tease or needle if you wish to.*

However, the tendency in many schools (particularly Catholic ones) at present is to de-emphasise Travellers' ethnicity. One respondent [Irish Traveller male interview 2002] relates how he was advised by the headmaster of his son's new primary school that he use a pseudonym while in school to avoid the negative attention that his commonly recognised Irish Traveller surname would elicit from other school children. The child then demonstrated how he could switch at will between a LENC and Irish Traveller accent when necessary. To survive stigmatisation and bullying in school many British born Irish Travellers can move seamlessly between Traveller and colloquial accents. An Irish Traveller woman elder [interview 2001] in Painham describes how her English born children have developed a sort of dual identity/personality from childhood in order to deal with the two almost exclusive worlds they populate – the Traveller and settled school domains:

*I feel Irish but I'm years in this country, years. I was married in this country. Me children was all born here and went to school here... A holiday's is all they have been to Ireland but they're the very same as me speaking now [strong Irish Traveller accent]. No difference, although they never was in Ireland. School hasn't given them an English accent? No ... Billy can speak cockney, Josie, Paddy, the lot of them can speak the very same as you're speaking to*

*an English person. But they never picked it up.*

Bullying and fighting make it difficult for Travellers to integrate into schools and are two of the major barriers to their educational progress.

The Bhopal et al report (November 2000: 1) recommends that:

Schools have a crucial role to play in promoting access and raising achievement for Gypsy Traveller pupils. It is essential that there are Race Equality and Equal Opportunities policies in place that specifically mention Gypsy Traveller children and their educational needs, in order to establish an inclusive ethos in the school. It is also important that the head teacher and other staff members demonstrate a commitment to these policies and that schools have effective behaviour codes and anti-bullying strategies.

The report (ibid; see also Department for Education and Skills, July 2003) stipulated that initial induction programs are crucial to the future attendance and progress of Traveller children and suggests ongoing special support measures for Traveller children such as 'study support, mentoring programmes, homework clubs and sanctuary areas ... [including] pastoral care systems, in particular building strong and trusting relationships with parents'. Yet, the pressure from some head-teachers [McCardle, interviews 2002] is for more classroom teaching support:

*With Irish Travellers and asylum seekers, we have a big problem and we need extra help. But the amount of help we get from TES is only about twenty hours. Now, that could go [on] admissions and induction. There's a high turnover with these children, so it's not satisfactory.*

Racially motivated bullying can be viewed as a wider attack on parents, family, community and cultural traditions of particular ethnic groups (Swann Report, 1985).

A 1996 OFSTED report commended the efforts of some TESs in trying to overcome barriers to Travellers in education through outreach and development work that involved building relationships of trust between Travelling families and schools. The report (1996: 20) included the following management recommendations for schools with Traveller students:

A serious commitment to meet the educational needs of all pupils including Travelling pupils, recognised within a school equal opportunities policy and the School Development Plan;

The recognition that the educational responsibilities for the pupils rests not with the TES, but the school in general and the classroom teacher in particular;

Taking seriously the need to involve parents in partnership, and having a realistic notion of what that involves;

TES support is viewed as a partnership in which policy and practice are shared;

The implementation of administration structures which try to ensure continuity of education by the promotion of record card procedures and the provision where necessary of distance learning packs;

The acquisition of appropriate resources and information to facilitate curriculum developments which would include positive images of the Travelling communities.

These recommendations should apply initially to any pre-school' early years' training' and be maintained throughout primary and into secondary school education. The positive involvement of Traveller parents in education coupled with proactive equal opportunities policies and the provision of appropriate Traveller related materials for teaching purposes would focus schools on their duties to this particular ethnic group. This would also allow TESs to concentrate on their areas of specialist provision while encouraging Travellers and schools to develop a positive partnership that would greatly enhance young Travellers quality of educational experience and life chances. Models based on educational provision already extant for circus and fairground children could be adapted for those Travellers who are permanently or seasonally nomadic.

#### 4.6 Secondary Education and Training

An inappropriate education system in England and Wales often fails to appreciate the distinct cultural identity and sensitivities of the Irish Travelling community in Britain. Institutional and societal prejudices further marginalise young Travellers from mainstream paths of development. Consequently, they struggle to develop

knowledge and skills within existing mainstream educational and training regimes. A twenty-year old Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] explains how she feels the whole school system excludes Travellers while teachers' low expectations undermine most Travellers' interest in furthering their education beyond primary level:

*No one speaks to you at meals [and] break times. If someone slaps you and you win the fight then dinner ladies, teachers will rush to stop it. If you are being beaten, then teachers come to your aid more slowly. Teachers wouldn't ask what subjects you would like to do after thirteen as they expect Travellers to leave. Only a few stay on at school.*

Later, this often results in an inability to compete successfully for employment opportunities (Clements and Smith, 1997; LGTU, n.d.; LIWC, 1995). In Ireland, where culturally sensitive intercultural<sup>(4)</sup> educational practice is beginning to be promoted (however slowly), only twelve percent of Irish Traveller children manage to progress into secondary school, most of these drop out within the first two years (Pavee Point, 1998). No comparable figures exist in England for Irish Travellers. A twenty year old Irish Traveller [interview 2001] in Baton Prison describes his experiences at school and why he left:

*I was the second youngest. My brother and me sisters never went to school. Sometimes I used to go to school, I remember a couple of times being very happy in school. ... I was always an outsider ... being a Traveller, kids used try to fight me. ... So that's how really I started bunking off from school. ... I dropped out of school when I was fourteen. I was afraid because I'd missed so much school by bunking off, I was afraid of me exams. And then when I did miss me mock exams, and I thought I'm not going to pass anyway - I'm not going back.*

Ms. Hutchinson [interview 2000], assistant head-teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator at a Painham LA High School, believes that present government's anti-truancy policies actually reveal the deep ideological tensions that exist between many educators and the functional economic needs of the state and industry as determined by a combination of government educational and youth justice policy:

*The undercurrent is also about youth crime and that goes with the stereotype about when Travellers are nearby [they] nick your cars. My job is to educate people to think, be creative and to take responsibility for themselves ... with the national curriculum people are always expected to conform. The Government wants educators to churn out whatever kind of person we need... We want them to be useful and be able to work and be able to compete with Japan in the electronics market ... so there's always that tension between what educators ... want to do and what the Government wants. ... Probably the only group of people that don't conform to a certain extent are Travellers. Should you now try and confine what they do rather than allow people to choose. If I'm more affluent [and if I] chose to live in a commune and educate my children myself that would be a perfectly acceptable choice ... but somehow along the line it doesn't seem to be that Travellers are making a choice and that is racist...*

Ms. Hutchinson [interview 2000] discusses issues that affect male and female Travellers in secondary schools and the type of educational support and training they require themselves:

*One of the big difficulties is the continuity in particular because our curriculum is based on reading and writing. ... Most of the girls seem to go to single sex education and they learn to read and write and do quite well. In Traveller culture you are almost adult at fourteen ... boys are away being useful so school is a bit of a nuisance. ... What the family is interested in is them having some reading and writing practice, how to use a computer. ... Very rarely somebody wants their son or daughter to change the way of life... They are now more residential ... therefore need to have some skills suited to a static job... Now the TES is coming under the EMAS in Painham and I'm quite concerned about the support for Painham schools where there will be Travellers.*

Traveller parents want their children to learn to read and write but consider much of the other material covered in schools as irrelevant (or even damaging) to Traveller culture and lifestyle, particularly secondary education (see 'Section 4.3 to 4.5). They often favour a more practical approach to education that would equip males with a trade and females with skills useful in a 'traditional marriage' situation. Parents also fear losing their children (particularly girls) to settled non-Traveller boys in secondary school once they reach puberty [Traveller interviews, 2000-2002].

A Traveller woman in her forties [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] discussed what life is like for many young contemporary Traveller women and how some aspects of younger women's lives are slowly changing and modernising:

*Traveller girls are not brought up to go to pubs and discos. Nowadays girls don't get married as young, there's less pressure to have kids young, seventeen used to be on the shelf. I had an aunt get married at fourteen, which is*

*ridiculous. Marriage is still arranged in most families. Birth control is not discussed with husbands. Mum will say to daughter to have some freedom for a couple of years ... before having kids.*

An eighteen year old Irish Traveller woman [interview 2002] now living in settled accommodation in Painham discussed life from her perspective and the particular aspects of schooling she missed out on:

*Sex education. I missed out on History, Geography, English because I would attend school maybe one day a month ... due to travelling, having things to do at home, chores, mum being sick, having younger brothers and sisters. ... I had seven older brothers and sisters who done most of the chores at home so when they got married I done everything up until recently when I got married myself.*

She proceeds [interview 2002] to explain why many young male Travellers tend to show little interest in secondary and further education:

*Boys don't have chores in the house, they bring in the money ... they usually follow their dads from a young age which is why they miss a lot of school. They are self-employed and then by the time they are fourteen they know how to drive.*

Traveller girls of secondary school age often begin a kind of home 'apprenticeship' for early marriage that substitutes for formal secondary education and training as this same young woman [interview 2002] explains:

*[We] do the cleaning and keeping the house organised and making sure the boys and dad have eaten when back from work. [We] try and get part-time jobs or do car boot sales to bring some money into the house so that you can buy your own stuff if you've got a big family.*

The eighteen year-old [interview 2002] then explains some of the reasons why she avoided secondary school:

*[I]t was so embarrassing wearing a school uniform - you felt I'm a big girl and I should be getting married not going to school ... you didn't know who was going to be visiting ... because other [Traveller] girls didn't go to school and you're like fifteen going to school...*

Low self esteem is also a reason for avoiding school and this young female Irish Traveller [interview 2002] explains how proud she became after a visit to the site she used to live on by her head-teacher:

*They got a new porta-cabin in for the young ones ... and the Bishop came and cut the [ribbons] and they got all the head teachers from schools to come and it was really good because I remember my head teacher was there. I was real proud because I was showing them my caravan and it was like when you went back to school: "Oh he knows me".*

Similar views to those above were expressed by many young male and female Irish Travellers during the research interviews and focus groups, though some older Travellers were against the idea of children having sex education while others recognised the necessity for advanced schooling and training where it provided appropriate skills for their children [Irish Traveller interviews 2000-2003].

A Traveller male [interview 2002] explains the divergent attitudes among Irish Travellers to educating their children:

*A lot of Travellers they don't get the right education - some of the fathers and mothers don't bother with school because they want an easy life ... well I know a lot of Travellers who've got children at school today... Yes, my sister, now she [was] brought up on a site and she never had a proper education ... so she wants to give her children something she never had...*

Ms. Hutchinson [interview 2000], assistant head-teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator of a Painham LA High School, agrees that Travellers often need special attention because of their particular backgrounds:

*Because of the nature of the Travelling community ... lack of regular schooling and also attitudes towards literacy in some families there is often an allied special educational need and two other [Traveller] students are 'statemented' to special educational needs as well.*

A 1996 OFSTED report estimated that up to 10,000 children of secondary school age were not registered in schools while asserting that 'the number of Travelling young people who have access to, and take advantage of post school vocational training and further and higher education is worryingly small' (OFSTED, 1996: 3). Connolly and

Keenan's (2000) [also Traveller prison interviews, 2001-2002] research found that most Travellers do not continue to attend school long after primary education and linked this estrangement to some Travellers' beliefs that teachers had poor expectations of Traveller pupils, so leading to a self fulfilling prophecy of failure. Mr. McCardle [interview 2002] is the head-teacher of an RC High School in the centre of LENC and has a very negative and generalised view of Irish Travellers attendance rates, and of their reasons for being in school when they do attend:

*We have a major problem ... about attendance, we can't remove them from our school roll even though they don't attend. Now I've just got the "year 9 SATS" results and there's a few Travellers on that we've not seen ... we are burdened with responsibility for those children and no one knows where they are. Education Welfare Service has responsibility for all children but with the Traveller children they find it quite difficult. They are, allegedly, taking some of them to court but I'll believe it when I see it. ... There are obviously things more important, such as the funeral in Dublin, so off they go. And occasionally, [school is] important when it's convenient ... while the mum's away... we act as a baby sitting service.*

Connolly and Keenan's (2000) [also Traveller prison interviews, 2001-200, see 'Sections 1.6 and 1.9] research also cited fear of bullying and violence from teachers and settled students in secondary schools. An OFSTED report (1996) highlighted the disproportionate number of Traveller pupils who were formally excluded from schools particularly at secondary level despite the general assessment by OFSTED that Gypsy and Travellers children were well behaved. The report asserts that Traveller exclusions are caused by 'disruptive outbursts' due to frustration brought about by academic under-achievement or racial harassment from settled children. Mr. Leab [interview 2001], who teaches at an RC girl's secondary school in Gander, believes a more tailored, specialist and focused approach would suit Travellers education and training needs better:

*I think a college situation might suit them better because they are not actually there every day. They are just working on the stuff they are interested in - which is what the problem is here. They are not interested in some subjects so they don't bother with it. When they are actually focused ... you get some decent work.*

The British government has increasingly emphasised that the link between employment and education is crucial and needs particular development (Miller, 1998; DfEE, 1999). Ryan's (1995: 37) research on Irish Travellers in the Republic of Ireland identified certain 'mainstream' employment fields as being potentially accessible to the Traveller community with some work on the part of the main statutory and non-statutory agencies, such as Government departments, Trade Unions, Traveller organisations and other such bodies. Areas of employment included the health and education sectors, as well as youth and community work. Ryan (ibid: 20-22) also suggested that the 'apprenticeship approach' might be one specific way of bringing Travellers into the mainstream economy; that is, 'a person working for an employer in a chosen occupation and... [learning] the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to become a qualified craftsman'.

A young Irish Traveller in Heath Young Offenders Institute (YOI) describes what he has and needs in the way of education and training:

*I could be in here [YOI] for a year and a half ... so I will just do the best I can while I am in here, go to education, go to church. ... I am trying to do bricklaying... I have got NVQ's already for English, maths and literacy and numeracy and I have got GSEs [GCSEs]... Have you got a driver's license? I haven't, I have got a provisional? ... I have been reading that book - with the road signs. I know my way [driving] around SEEM, but I need to do the actual course ... and pass it... 'Cos when I left school ... I never actually read books... Now I have started to write loads of letters [and] read loads of books.*

The government's 'Connexions' aspires to provide all students in Britain between the ages of fourteen and nineteen with a personal advisor and plans to create good quality education and training prospects that will be tailored to meet every individual's needs. These years have been identified as key years during which students can become badly disaffected with school and disillusioned with further education and employment prospects. Mrs. Stryder [interview 2002] head of LENC TES discusses how TESs can (and do) inform and instruct the government's social inclusion strategies (like Connexions) to offer Irish Travellers practical and constructive culturally sensitive paths to economic and social development:

All the Connexions personal advisors are all coming in here for training about the work that TES do with Travellers and the needs of Travellers. [Connexions is a government sponsored] combination of youth work and careers and it's a brand new service. They have outreach advisors who try and get to young people who maybe aren't at school. [It's] no good linking a Traveller child in with a personal advisor trying to get them on a course and talking to them about working long-term for an employer. We've been talking about how to get the skills Traveller children want - they might have skills in their hands that they can take with them wherever they go. ... [Give] them twenty minutes and that will build up literacy skills quite quickly because its continuous and intensive, not in its duration but its frequency...

There is a good deal of scepticism in Traveller communities about the efficacy of secondary and further education and related training schemes [Irish Traveller interviews 2000- 2002]. More than this, many Irish Traveller parents (particularly men) regard secondary and further education as largely useless and an impediment to a young Traveller's career development as this male Irish Traveller expressed at a men's focus group [Barry Site Gander 2001] to the general agreement of all the participants:

*You could go [to school] everyday and get nowhere. You don't get no money for it. I wouldn't want to struggle until I was twenty-four and then start off fresh trying to do something. If you start off at fifteen by the time you get to twenty-four you have a few thousand in the bank.*

An Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] believed that secondary education was of little use to Traveller children: *'It wasn't worth keeping kids at school as they don't learn anything.'* She believes that Traveller women want vocational training related to their lives and culture while underlining the importance of basic literacy:

*Most Travellers in LENC are housed. Would be nice if they had women's schemes doing what women want to do. Make a nice quilt, gorgeous cushions, cooking, knitting, using machines. Traveller kids need to learn to read and write. Got to think of the child.*

A young Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] explains the problems that poor literacy brings in adulthood: *'My husband can't read so I have to fill out forms ... Travellers are only getting half an education.* Mr. Gravelle manager of Gander TES [interview 2002] describes how the service in Gander is developing educational services that include Traveller adults in the process and taking it to where Travellers reside when feasible:

*[T]he parent's illiteracy impacts on a child's development just as it would in the settled community - children lose out in a lot of ways. ... Parents can support their children at home, in terms of home-work, completing assignments, even teaching basic numeracy and literacy. So we focus on parents' literacy. We have set up a project on [Barry] site every Friday where there are lap-tops in the Porta-cabin. We have six parents going in and ... developing their literacy skills, developing their IT skills and accessing the internet. We want them to do this for various reasons, to support their children, but also ... they can engage their children in discussions around the internet, help them surf, [but also] for their own self development and self-esteem. It's important that Travellers move away from the notion that, education is out there, it's never really for us - but [that its] all part of life-long learning.*

There is a perception in many Traveller communities that education authorities do not value their culture. Commenting on previous Travellers' experiences, an Irish Traveller woman in her forties [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] asserts that Irish Traveller culture does not receive parity of respect with other ethnic minority groups in schools:

*They could have shown consideration for the fact that Traveller children may have childcare responsibilities or need to go to the shops. Teachers don't consider different ways of life. ... With Asians etc., education authorities look after them, but [They] don't cater for Travellers.*

A nineteen-year old Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] explains how she feels teachers can be ignorant of and culturally insensitive to her culture:

*Asians [Muslims] in school can pray five times a day. But if I say that I have to collect younger children, 'cos mother is unwell, teachers will say: "Can your dad not collect them?" I say: "No, he's working". They don't understand that Traveller children have responsibilities.*

In a further development, Ms. Sutherland [interview 2002] Manager of Painham TES sees the future of Traveller education and training in self help schemes and empowerment models:

*I am totally convinced that the future does not lie with an identified TES, it lies with the Traveller communities themselves saying: "Enough is enough, we want to be part of the mainstream", and it's giving Travellers the confidence to access funding and sustain projects like "Family Learning". [I'm] convinced that the future is through different styles of learning and giving families from different Travelling communities confidence that their experiences are of equal importance to others. At the moment it's dreadful to think that some people ... are still too ashamed and actually say: "Please don't tell them that I am a Traveller".*

Education authorities have a major chasm to bridge if they are serious about culturally sensitive social inclusion policies for Travellers, while Travellers themselves have not yet developed the social, political and organisational skills that would enable the negotiation and development of specialist Traveller related education and training schemes as envisaged by Sutherland above.

#### 4.7 Summary and comments

Many Traveller mothers are reluctant to permit their children to spend extended periods in the care of outsiders in 'early years' pre-school education at such a formative time in relation to their personal development and the consolidation of internal family relationships. 'Sure Start' is a government sponsored programme that involves large investment in 'Early Years' pre-school support for disadvantaged children. The rationale is that if disadvantaged families have a good experience of pre-school education the children are more likely to continue on to primary and then into secondary education. It's too early to evaluate if this programme has had any real success with Irish Travellers as it is only beginning to address Travellers' specific needs in some areas [Knock interview 2003].

Once Irish Travellers enter formal education they begin to suffer racism, discrimination and disadvantage and this occurs at all levels in the education system. At primary school Travellers are often stereotyped negatively as being inattentive, slow learners, poor attenders and even sometimes as having a predilection to violence by ill-informed and/or racist staff. They also suffer bullying because of their ethnicity and are often blamed exclusively for retaliating violently. Irish Traveller culture does not attract the same level of positive interest and celebration as other ethnic minority cultures in many schools.

TES support in schools is crucial for alleviating much of the above discrimination, though TES support varies in quantity and quality throughout England with some excellent services, other areas having no service, or where the service is severely overstretched. The three geographical research areas studied in-depth in 'Room to Roam' vary considerably in their staffing and outreach work. TES resources are now further stretched by changes in funding criteria and management structures. The type and quantity of service delivery can cause friction between schools, TESs and Travellers, with some schools pressurising TESs to act as pseudo-supply teachers to augment staffing shortages while decrying TES 'extra-curricular' development and outreach work with Traveller families.

There are ideological and attitudinal differences between Local Authority and some Roman Catholic schools to issues concerned with Irish Traveller ethnicity. The prevalence of Irish born teachers in RC schools is alleged by some TES and Irish Traveller respondents to lead to enhanced levels of discrimination and racism compared to many LA schools. LA schools also tend to be more 'race aware' than RC schools whose ethos tends to emphasise Catholicism as the essential binding identity apropos ethnicity.

Exclusions of Irish Travellers from schools begin with the refusal by some schools to take them on to their rolls because they do not want Travellers at all, or because they want to limit the number of Travellers in their particular school. Travellers in schools suffer a high rate of temporary and permanent school exclusions due to their perceived poor behaviour by school authorities. Extensive research has documented these high rates and some school exclusions are due to misunderstandings and prejudice about Irish Traveller culture and behaviour by teachers.

Irish Travellers have a very low take up rate for secondary education and training schemes. This is partly due to cultural factors that encourage male Travellers to begin work at an early age and female Travellers to begin preparing for early marriage. Secondary schools are regarded by many Travellers as not providing appropriate skills for Irish Travellers. Secondary school teachers expect basic literacy skills to have been acquired by pupils in primary school, but often Travellers who do continue into secondary school or training courses find that they quickly fall behind due to inadequate basic educational skills like literacy and numeracy. Approaches that could mitigate these disadvantages include teaching appropriate skills, family oriented learning, and devolving control of the learning experience to Travellers themselves through forms of educational empowerment.

- 1 Arthur Ivatts, HMI, in his Afterword to Jean-Pierre Liegeois (1998) *School Provision for Ethnic Minorities: The Gypsy Paradigm*, Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press (cited in Morris and Clements, 1999).
- 2 Royce Turner, 'Gypsies and Politics in Britain', in *The Political Quarterly*, 2000.
- 3 TESs are funded from the Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG) that has a section allocated to Traveller communities, and also to other ethnic minorities that need extra support within the education system including the refugee population.
- 4 'Interculturalism means creating the conditions necessary for minorities and marginalised groups to preserve and develop their cultural heritage' (O'Connell, 1994: <http://ireland.iol.ie/~pavee/>).

## 5. POLICING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines a number of concerns for Irish Travellers related to policing and criminal justice policy and practice. It does not attempt a comprehensive overview, partly for logistical reasons but more importantly because of a particular lack of relevant literature and research in this area. So the first section on policing sets the context for anti-Irish Traveller racism by looking at how powerful definers in society reproduce and amplify negative stereotypes of Travellers that undermines the race relations and equality legislation that is a cornerstone of this government's social inclusion policies. Policing is examined in the context of the Macpherson Report (1999) and of Irish Travellers legal recognition as an ethnic group. Institutional racism and operational prejudices are investigated through the research interview testimony of a range of police officers from policy, through training to practice and juxtaposed by the opinions of Irish Travellers where appropriate. Rather than a systematic examination of the policing of this community, certain themes are developed and explored.

The second half of this chapter on Irish Travellers in the Criminal Justice System follows the previous template and examines pertinent themes and processes. New institutional mechanisms for youth justice are examined to the context of nomadism and Irish Traveller ethnicity. One aspect of the probation process, pre-sentence reports, is investigated as the general literature in sentencing policy and practice identifies this process as vital in court decisions on whether to impose custodial sentences on offenders. The prison experience of Irish Travellers is then examined in the context of their ethnicity and culture. So these sections consist of detailed snapshots of experience contextualised in the nexus of state and institutional policies and practices that serve to criminalise this ethnic group and remove them from many of the protections and respect afforded mainstream society. See Appendices III and V in this report for a detailed breakdown of all respondents and their competences that are referred to in this chapter.

The Conservative government reacted to 'New Age' Travellers by passing the Public Order Act (1986) and then the more draconian CJPOA (1994). The Act has virtually outlawed the traditional nomadic/semi-nomadic lifestyles of all Travellers. Unauthorised halting on traditionally used marginal land and roadside verges has been criminalised, and this Act also removed the duty on Local Authorities (LAs) to provide permanent trailer sites while ending DETR statutory grants for local authorities to build permanent sites. Part Five of the CJPOA also extended powers contained in the Public Order Act 1986 ('Section 39'), giving the police draconian powers to direct trespassers to leave if they have damaged the land itself (as distinct from property on it), or if they have six or more vehicles. It also extended the application of this Section to common land, highway verges, byways, green lanes and other minor highways, and included new police powers to remove vehicles without recourse to any law court (Clements and Morris, 2001: 10). The Criminal Justice Act (1994) virtually outlaws nomadic/semi-nomadic lifestyles. Its trespass provisions are often invoked against Irish Travellers on unofficial or illegal encampments bringing them into regular confrontational contact with police forces in Britain. This law also abolished the duty of LAs to provide sufficient sites for Travellers. Traveller reaction to LA and police harassment of small nomadic groups (usually between two and six trailers) is to travel and congregate in much larger groups of fifty or more trailers organised through mobile phone contacts. This tactic serves to prevent harassment or intimidation by settled vigilantes and police that can result in the confiscation of Travellers trailers, generators and other vital equipment often at night [Irish Traveller interviews 2000-2002]. However, the appearance of large trailer groups also encourages sections of the media to exacerbate sedentary moral panics about 'Traveller invasions' and supposedly resultant 'crime waves' more aptly construed by Sharpe (1983: 210) as state sponsored 'enforcement waves'.

Evictions of Travellers amounted to 236 in 1995 and 187 in 1996, thirty-three percent of which were carried out under the CJPOA (1994) (Clements and Smith, 1997). The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (cited in *ibid*, 1997: 18) reaction to the elements of the CJPOA 1994 Act that affected Travellers was to express:

*[R]esistance to the proposal to 'criminalise' the act of living in a caravan. It is felt to be a unique situation to proscribe a way of life, formerly accepted as being within the law and then to introduce penalties. Whilst recognizing the problems, the police do not have any great difficulty in 'policing' the Gypsy and itinerant communities.<sup>(1)</sup>*  
Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002] of LENC Police concurs:

*[W]hen the 1994 Act [CJPOA] came in regarding moving people off ground, one of the things that occurred to me then was a lot of chief constables of police didn't always use those powers because there was a massive concern about some of the backlash that would actually [come] from the community.*

A LENC bailiff [Henby interview 2000] constantly complained about the lack of support he received during evictions from police forces across the north of England. So there is a marked reluctance by many police forces to use this legislation due to its extremely draconian nature.

Sivanandan (1982: 105) argues in relation to black immigrants that '*the economic profit from immigration had gone to capital, the social cost had gone to labour, but the resulting conflict between the two had been mediated by a common "ideology" of racism.*' In the wake of Macpherson that common 'ideology of racism' that blurred class and ethnic divisions in white society was addressed at managerial levels for a period of time by some police forces in England and Wales - but this debate was being conducted almost exclusively in the context of colour - that of black ethnic minorities in a predominantly white homogenous society. The concept and condition of white ethnic minorities including Travellers and Gypsies was almost completely missing from the debate (Parekh, 2000). A Metropolitan Police Authority member [Irish Community Consultation meeting, 4 May 2001] admitted that the Authority had not considered or discussed the Irish Community (the largest ethnic minority group in England) in the context of the Macpherson report and institutionalised racism - let alone talk of Irish Travellers. The Parekh Report (2000: 129) found that: '*Black and Irish people are differentially treated at all stages of the criminal justice system, from policing on the streets through to sentencing and imprisonment.*' So Irish Travellers suffer double discrimination as part of the Irish Diaspora and as Travellers (ibid, 34).

## 5.2 Policing Irish Travellers in SEEM and LENC

Greater LENC (Large English Northern City) has a large but generally 'invisible' Irish Traveller population. LENC's periphery has a number of authorised sites but the city itself has only one small LA site, though until recently many unauthorized encampments existed. Most Irish Travellers now live in, and move regularly through, settled forms of accommodation. Urban regeneration and the consequent commodification of land has closed off many of the traditional stopping places for Travellers. Partly as a consequence the vast majority of Irish Travellers live in settled-type accommodation such as houses, flats and hostels - though many move regularly through the housing system and some migrate occasionally to other British cities or to Ireland, and some are seasonally nomadic as explained in Section 2.3 of this report [LENC interviews 2001-2003].

The SEEM (South East England Metropolis) Police service covers a large metropolis that is divided into thirty-two Borough police areas overseen by a large centralised bureaucratic structure situated in central SEEM. Overtly and at a central bureaucratic and policy level SEEM police have instituted a wide range of reviews and policy initiatives since the Macpherson Report (1999). As part of these post Macpherson initiatives SEEM Police set up a Police Diversity Directorate (PDD) to develop and advise on policies in the areas of ethnicity and race. Unfortunately, its role is essentially advisory and areas of particular interest to Travellers such as public order policy remain the sole responsibility of an unrelated department. Sergeant Humphry [interview 2002] works for SEEM PDD and has special responsibility for Traveller related questions:

*I work for the Policy and the Planning Unit [PPU] which is a bit of a misnomer ... I'm responsible for pushing forward the SEEM Police diversity policy on Gypsies and Travellers. ... The Directorate covers the whole of SEEM, but [its] got no prescriptive powers at all - it advises Boroughs. Boroughs ... produce their own policies and they've got their own systems liaisons officer ... the Directorate merely advises on ways of doing things. That really is one of the problems with the Diversity Directorate ... it has no prescriptive powers. ... I help to do what I call Community Intelligence briefings. I suppose a perfect example would be ... a large Traveller funeral - then I ... speak ... with the families, advise the police officers of local customs and what they can expect because many police officers have never policed a Traveller/Gypsy funeral. The idea of people wailing at the side of the grave, they wouldn't know how to deal with it ... chat with the family about the [number of] mourners that will be expected*

Here Humphry sees no incongruity between the needs of a Traveller family to grieve for a lost loved one with some dignity and the presumed public order threat a funeral poses for the police. Are public order police tactics appropriate for family funerals even if large by settled standards? Can't the police find a more sensitive means to police Traveller funerals?

An Irish Traveller's [interview 2002] description of policing operations at his family's traditional cemetery resembles paramilitary funerals in Northern Ireland:

*If there is a funeral there's a lot of police. Most of my people are buried over here in Oakshire. Every time I've been to that graveyard there are thousands of police - all the roads blocked off.*

Humphry's description of the PPD's impotency and the PPU's role within that nexus of policy development and implementation structures has disturbing resonances with much of the historical attempts to legislate positively for Travellers. The 'buck was passed' from central to local government as with the Caravan Sites Act (1968) or recommendations were non-mandatory as with the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act (1960). SEEM Police PPD, despite all the post Macpherson hype, is an advisory organ separate from the real policy makers like 'D12' Public Order Department, while the real power to act and change operationally resides at the local Borough Commander managerial level. The Macpherson Report's (1999: 6.13; also Whyte, June 2002) explanation of institutional racism laid particular emphasis on its unwitting, unconscious and unintentional nature. The report located institutional racism in the Metropolitan police as being rooted in ignorance of *'the behaviour and cultural traditions of people or families from minority ethnic communities ... [and] stereotyping of black people as potential criminals or troublemakers'* (ibid: 6.17). Whyte (June 2002: 7; also McLaughlin, 2000) asserts that institutional racism in a policing context:

*involved the simultaneous targeting of black communities by the police and other branches of the state alongside a project of political and cultural assimilation ... at the centre of the strategies of assimilation ... were community-police relations forums that started to evolve in the 1960s.*

It seems that virtually the same formula that Whyte outlines above for black people is being extended to non black ethnic minority groups like Irish Travellers – a 'difficult to reach group' who have not as yet developed the political and organisational networks extant in many black and south Asian communities. But how have the new post Macpherson *'community-police relations forums'* developed, and have they impacted positively on relations between black ethnic communities and the police?

An Irish Traveller woman [LENC Irish Traveller women's focus group 2001] thinks that Travellers should engage more with the authorities when they have complaints about the police: *'I think that Travellers don't complain enough about these incidents. The police attitude is "dirty gippos'.* Sergeant Humphry [interview 2002] of SEEM PDD describes how Traveller's policing concerns are being incorporated into the community consultation networks that have developed since Macpherson was published in 1999:

*Each Borough has got its own Independent Advisory Group (IAG). They are groups of people who live in the community, represent the community ... they advise the Borough Commanders of what's going on... There are also people called mediators who we are also looking to recruit from each Traveller community ... where you get incidents within the Travelling community. ... What you get with a mediator is again a trusted third party who stands between both groups [police and Travellers] and can represent ... the reasons why police are doing what they've got to do to Travellers and then Travellers can soon reflect these back to police - so hopefully you end up with is a middle path that doesn't annoy everybody... What they are advising is police officers who know nothing about the subject ... also advising Travellers who [know] nothing at all about police procedures. ... I don't think it's ever been envisaged that they are a grass [police informer]. ... In an ideal world it would be another Traveller [sic]. ... I think once that first person has established themselves ... we will start getting people once trust is established.*

Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002], a former diversity trainer at LENC Police College, and now a sub-divisional trainer has a more cynical slant on how LENC Police management were reluctant to acknowledge ethnicity and links this to the selection 'process' for their 'community consultation representatives':

*Now my argument is who are these community leaders? [Someone] from maybe the Asian communities come to the police station to make a complaint one day and ... the chief super[intendent] says: "Oh, come along to this meeting." And this guy then becomes the community leader, but who does he represent? Does he really represent the young people? And [police management] also used to link it in perhaps with the Imams in some of the mosques. ... What effect can this guy have ... would you go along to see the local priest or vicar to say we've got a problem with youths? ... It all links into ... the whole thing of values and saying: "Well this is the way that [ethnic minorities] see the world", [and the police] not understanding that. And that is perpetuated on so many occasions by thinking we've got a problem with the Travelling community - well go and get the guy in from [there]...*

Here Plummer is arguing that there are no particular criteria for selection onto IAGs and he suspects the representative 'quality' of some of the members. He also intimates that 'representative' IAG members can be used by the police not only to deflect damaging criticism through claiming that the police consult with ethnic minority leaders, but that they are used over time to displace the charge of institutional racism levelled by Macpherson. More ethnic minorities again become 'the problem' and the police resume their function as the state's crisis solvers in relation to the unincorporated outside our 'inclusive society' (McLaughlin, 2002; Whyte, June 2002). Mr. Hijaz [interview 2002], a civilian LENC Police Community Race Relations Officer, believes that the IAG is not diverse enough, it has too many men and Asians though this situation is improving. Its main

agendas are raising awareness of 'hate crime'. Hijaz believes local politicians are 'a waste of time – always sticking up for the police.' One SEEM IAG member confided to a researcher that they felt they were picked on by the police because they were perceived as easily manipulated – most of the members nodded their assent to discussions and contributed little while an active core seemed to dominate any initiatives [research diary 2003].

Inspector Wood [interview 2002] is a Community Affairs police officer in South LENC. Here he peddles the oft repeated opinion that Travellers are the 'problem' as they are so 'difficult to reach':

*It's about building links with the community. I know the sort of group [Irish Travellers] you are talking about ... in as much as they are difficult to make contact with...' Is it necessary to include Travellers? 'It is necessary. But it's extremely difficult ... if there is distrust from one side, then it means that whatever we do - not only the police but agencies such as the Council - if they don't want to access those services then ... there is little we can do... They can be quite transient, and they are quite invisible. So ... we might not know that there is a particular preponderance of Travellers in an area. ... If problems that arise they are just seen as problem families. ... I don't think the police ... differentiate between Irish people, Travellers, Gypsies whatever, but certainly certain sections of the community do cause problems. ... But ... we don't label people. ... We just treat each incident as it comes, but obviously each incident builds up a picture doesn't it?*

LENC Police don't stereotype or label, they just build up a picture of a community over time that will surely develop into a negative representation of the group if no positive engagement is sought by the police. Wood also places the police in a multi-agency context and uses that to bolster the legitimacy of the police perspective on Travellers.

Scotland Yard established the IAG (and its local borough equivalents) to consult ethnic communities in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) area after Macpherson. Four prominent members of the IAG (Dr. Ben Bowling law lecturer, Andrea Cork MPS race relations trainer, Jennifer Douglas Home Office advisor, and Kirpal Sahota a forensic psychiatrist) who resigned together in early 2001 issued a joint statement that accused the MPS of subverting its original remit:

*The IAG has ceased to function independently, or collectively. We cannot in good faith continue to be part of a group that is supposed to be comprised of the organisation's "sternest critics", when this is clearly no longer the case. ... We feel that the IAG process is no longer contributing to the restoration of confidence and trust in the MPS in any meaningful way. We feel that we can no longer remain members of the IAG because it is now explicitly controlled by the police. As a result it can no longer claim to offer independent advice and is, therefore, failing in its responsibility to improve policing for Londoners (cited in Dodd, in Guardian, 13 February 2001).*

Interestingly, Whyte (June 2002: 40) asserts that the most serious problem from a state and police perspective was not police racism or institutional racism, but 'the reluctance of the black communities to co-operate with the police'. Also, McLaughlin (2000) asserts that police discourse since the 1960s has regularly re-emphasised the 'difficult to reach' aspect of particular ethnic minority communities in response to social unrest.

Sergeant Humphry [interview 2002] of SEEM PDD also envisages developing and extending a system of 'third party reporting' to help extend the police service to Travellers and so tackle unreported crime, and to develop trust over time:

*I will try and push what's called third party reporting. ... It allows groups of people [or] individuals who either have no particular faith in the police or the police have been unable to deal with their problems ... [to report] any crime at all to a neutral trusting third party [who] then passes that information on to police for investigation. ... The feeling is that quite a lot of minority groups are victims of what isn't being reported - experience has shown with the black and Asian community that that's the case. ... We are pushing this ... system specifically [for] Gypsies and Travellers. Travellers are really the last group that society ... thinks its fair game to have a pop at. ... Once we've started winning people's confidence we can go further with more imaginative schemes...*

An Irish Traveller male [interview 2002] gives his opinion on what it means for someone from his community to report a crime to the police:

*[F]or example someone cuts me up ... I say to myself: "Well if I go to the police then I mark myself and the family is marked." ... It wouldn't be just me and him having problems, it would be his brothers as well, And then it would be my brothers and then outsiders come in and start getting involved... No you can't go to the police - you can't! If ... you go to the police you're known as a grass, a squealer, and then that will go against you for the rest of your life among Travellers.*

Sergeant Humphry [interview 2002] is creating a space for Traveller issues in diversity training while also trying to develop a more positive image of Travellers within SEEM Police force, but has difficulties recruiting members with a Traveller background as mentors for new recruits:

*We've got a Diversity Training School ... if you've got a ... big Traveller population in the Borough ... senior management will say: "In our second phase we would like a big input on Gypsies and Travellers..." I placed an advert in the internal [police] newspaper [for officers with a Traveller/Gypsy background]. It's been two months and only eight people feel confident enough to come forward ... so it's fairly limited. I am hoping to use these police officers who've identified as having a Travelling background like a support network for those Travellers who do join...*

But evidence from one of SEEM Police's own diversity trainers indicates that police culture is ill-prepared to engage with the idea of Irish ethnicity not to mention that of Irish Travellers. Sergeant McCarthy [interview 2002] has an Irish background and teaches at the SEEM Police Training College and makes a connection between the negative stereotypes of Irish Travellers and those stereotypes that have been applied historically to the settled Irish community in Britain (see also Hillyard, 1993; Hickman and Walter, 1997):

*I was intrigued by the link between Irishness and Irish Traveller and some of the stereotypes that attach to Irishness. ... [An unmistakably Irish name] was enough for people to get on your case in the past... [SEEM Police has] about thirty-thousand [officers], but of those police officers just 0.5 percent identify as white-Irish. Either we are not recruiting [Irish] or people from that background don't identify, which is alarming given that in the SEEM area there is probably a million people [with] an Irish background... [T]here's no Irish police staff association where now we have ... Italian, Greek, Jewish, black police associations running for a long time. I [considered] starting an Irish police association and ... [would it be] all things Irish culturally or ... subversive to further political things and ... you think well this is ... a can of worms [do] I really want to get involved...*

This link between Irish identity, state security, a suspect community and Irish Travellers is a recurring theme with many research respondents in this chapter.

### 5.3 Operational policing and Irish Travellers

The Irish Travelling community in particular have been routinely labelled as petty criminals and socially undesirable by many powerful definers in society. Yet Morris and Clements (1999: 33) state that:

*ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) continues to assert that they have no disproportionate problems with criminality in the Travelling populations, and the continuing presumptions stem largely from stereotyping.*

Conflict has arisen between urban settled denizens, local authorities (LAs), police forces, and Irish Travellers as urbanisation dissolved the traditional socio-economic ties that bound nomadic and settled communities together (McCarthy, 1994; Sibley, 1995). As a result their traditional nomadic rights (and those of similar groups) in Britain have been severely curtailed by increased commodification of marginal land and the CJPOA (1994), while the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE 1984) may be used disproportionately against Travellers as Sergeant McCarthy [interview 2002] explains:

*[When police stop Travellers] they don't know what they are looking for so the police officer [thinks]: "I want to quickly establish myself in a position of control. Therefore if I can latch onto a criminal offence that's a starter". From that point on he thinks: "What are my options here? ... I can deal with that where I've got more safety, more control." And because of things like the PACE Section 25 ... where if you weren't satisfied with the person's name and address ... that gives you power to arrest them and then "slow-time" deal with what you don't know enough about back at the station. It might be about possession of equipment [or]... an Irish registration, so you don't know enough about the legitimacy of national driving documents. But once you are back in the station in "slow-time" you can actually deal with this more thoroughly. The experiences that most police officers have are short negative [ones] ... society almost condones you to do whatever with a transient group: "Whatever you do that gets rid of them, its ok by us".*

Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002], of LENC Police discusses how his own received prejudices about Irish Travellers developed and concurs with the opinion of Sergeant McCarthy, not on the misuse of Section 25 PACE, but how these extra police powers encouraged police to intervene and look for criminality where previously they used their discretion not to engage:

*As a traffic officer for twelve years I only had about three or four experiences [with Travellers]. I worked in outer LENC,*

*but when I go back to [19]83 ... you had an awful lot of Travelling families who moved into one particular estate and ... it ghettoised it so much that when they did it up they changed the names of the streets to ... cover-up. One of the prejudices that was handed down to officers was [when] you'd see what was perceived to be a Travellers vehicle: "Don't bother stopping them, they won't have any documents and you won't ever be able to serve a summons on them". Now when Section 25 PACE came out ... this changed things because ... you can arrest anybody for anything under certain conditions ... the name and address was unsuitable [for] ... serving summonses... You impound the vehicle, arrest them - bring them in to establish where they are. On one occasion the prosecutions department issued summonses there and then when [Travellers] been brought in... They presume they will disappear and not come back. ... So under Section 25 gives a huge amount of discretion ... for dealing with Travellers.*

Strengthening police powers almost begets abuse. Macpherson's refusal to limit the power that PACE (1984) and police discretion allowed, meant that the Report reinforced by default the legitimacy of police stop and search powers. Thus the Macpherson Report can be viewed as a hegemonic rebuilding process following the Lawrence murder and its institutional aftermath. Another by-product of Macpherson is its affirmation of the unbalanced targeting of some ethnic minority communities. Whyte (2002: 40) asserts that: *'In this sphere, Macpherson has played a central role in the reproduction of discriminatory practices that are embedded in police work'.*

Traveller Liaison Officers (TLOs) are not envisaged as an integral constituent of SEEM police's response to Traveller concerns in the wake of the Macpherson report, but are really part of a public order initiative related to the policing of illegal Traveller encampments. As with many Traveller related initiatives the "buck" seems to have been passed from the police central authority to local area management. The PDD can advise local Borough Commanders about the cultural sensitivities of Travellers, but the nature of TLO's liaison remit was decided by SEEM Police Public Order Branch, while the interpretation, commitment and operational trajectory is left to local Borough Commanders. So there is little continuity or networking built into the TLOs role. The designated TLOs in both northwest SEEM research areas took some time to locate and felt unable to contribute to this research due to their deficient seniority. The research team had great difficulty finding out the identity of the TLOs and received no response from local management to requests to assist this research [research diary 2002]. Sergeant Humphry [interview 2002] of SEEM PDD comments on the concept, recruitment and actual function of TLOs:

*SEEM Police is a big organisation. I lead on a diversity aspect ... D12 lead on the public order part of Gypsies and Travellers. [D12] were responsible for publishing the policy on unauthorised camping ... that policy created the post of TLOs, but the role of the TLO ... was to liaise with Local Authorities about Travellers, the role wasn't designed for liaison with Travellers. I can't comment on why, because it didn't originate in this department ... and the policy was about unauthorised encampment rather than specifically about Gypsies and Travellers. ... It wouldn't be a great deal of work for TLOs so they [are] a part-time post within other responsibilities. Borough Commanders ... had a choice. West SEEM is a good example, [it] has a full-time TLO - PC Noonan. Now he's something of an exception as he's appointed under that Public Order policy notice ... but he's developed that into a community based role with the support of his Borough Commander ... Travellers and their [support] groups feel the role of TLOs need to be redefined or renamed [because] if you call it a TLO then they should liaise with Travellers.*

PC Noonan [interview 2002] is a full-time TLO in west SEEM (he would not be recorded). Noonan, a beat officer with an Irish background, was asked to expand his duties to Traveller sites in his area eighteen months ago. He believes most officers do not want the TLO post and he himself occasionally feels stressed and isolated. He thinks that depression, fear and substance abuse is common amongst Travellers and the abuse of illicit drugs now predominates over alcohol. He believes that the culture of Travellers gives them a propensity to crime and that travelling is a ploy to commit crime that goes undetected. Noonan alleged that large groups of Travellers encamp and take stolen cars. back to illegal sites for dismantling and sale. Noonan said that 4,000 caravans were stolen in the UK last year and he estimates ninety percent of those thefts were committed by Travellers. Noonan believes that many Travellers are extremely wealthy from various ventures including crime. The walls of Noonan's office at the police station are covered in photos of Travellers wanted for serious crimes. He asserts that the more common Traveller related crimes are stealing household goods and selling them at boot-sales, and selling stolen video cameras at the roadside and then swapping the bag so buyers get a bag full of soap instead of the camera. Noonan believes that few Travellers earn a legitimate living and are generally given to idleness. TLO Noonan estimates that some young Traveller males make up to £1,800 per week from benefit fraud and other dealings and that many Irish Travellers claim Child Benefit in Ireland and collect it at ATMs in Britain as the payments are higher in the Irish Republic and there are no links between the two benefit systems. O'Flynn (July 1993: 46-55) presents much evidence that contradicts Noonan's assertions, and documents the difficulties and barriers to Social Security payments experienced by Irish Travellers. It is somewhat surprising that someone with Noonan's trenchant anti-Irish Traveller views is chosen to be a SEEM police TLO.

Sergeant McCarthy [interview 2002], believes that the anti-Traveller prejudice prevalent in society generally is amplified in the police by the very nature of policing:

*In all of society there's unhealthy attitudes towards Travelling people that are based on very little information and even police officers don't have that much contact and ... the unfortunate thing is the few contacts they have, tend to be negative ones and that colours the judgement for all.*

A twenty-five-year-old Irish Traveller in Baton Prison [interview 2002] describes his experience of 'street justice' with police in SEEM:

*The police ... think automatically that they can stick a burglary on us. ... I've had loads of beatings off police ... I broke about twenty cars [joyriding] but they couldn't charge me, [they] handcuffed me for godsake and set the dogs on me in the back of the police station. ... It's terrible for Travellers in [certain SEEM boroughs] ... they can spot Travellers.*

The police are part of society and as such are part of and party to societal power politics and Reiner (1992: 137) argues that policing practice is:

*differentiated according to the power of particular groups to cause problems for the police... [thus the]... power structure of a community, and the views of its elites, are important sources of variation in policing styles.*

The crucial aspect of the relationship between the police and the white majority community is the police perception that significant power elites exist there. Conversely PACE (1984) stop and search and other intrusive powers (CJPOA 1994) are part of a generalised surveillance of 'high risk' socially excluded groups like Irish Travellers.

#### 5.4 Police diversity training and Irish Travellers

Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002], was a until recently a diversity trainer at LENC Police College and is now a sub-divisional trainer in LENC police:

*I've been in Greater LENC police for twenty-seven years. I have worked in youth service, traffic, within training. My first training roll was ... training recruits ... I have been on a six-week community and race relation trainers course ... on behalf of the Home Office after the Scarman Report. ... The ultimate aim [of training] is ... fair service delivery... If you are a police officer working in an urban area where ... most of the time you are dealing with criminals because the incidents are burglaries, assaults etc., it's very easy to believe that everybody in that area is a potential criminal... So the way that [police] come across [to locals] is: "Well are the police ... really trying to help me out here or [have] they got some other hidden agenda in terms of their views on me." [P]rior to [19]81 [policing] was very much law based rather than interpersonal skills based... [After] Scarman police training ... started looking at the way that we deal with people and different cultures. ... [L]ets also provide some specialist training that specifically looks at community race relations, ...equality of opportunity...*

There was internal bureaucratic and institutional resistance to these changes in LENC Police, Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002] continues:

*The senior management ... at that time looked at it and said: "Oh, do we really need this ... sort of stuff?" ... But in [19]94 it was [decided] to bring in community race relations training [with] specific aims and objectives ... primarily effective service delivery. I also assumed there was an issue regarding equality of opportunity. ... [T]he majority of people we trained were middle-management. ... [O]ne of the models ... from America was the paradigm of prejudice and discrimination: ... you can get a prejudice discriminator: somebody who has a prejudice and acts upon it. You can get a non prejudice discriminator - maybe a manager who ... didn't have a prejudice but discriminated because he or she thought ... "If I don't ... what will happen?" [A] lot of people [police diversity trainees] would argue and disagree. ... I used to say: "Well ... would there be a difference say between history taught in England as in Scotland ... William Wallace, was he a terrorist or was he a freedom fighter?" ... By the end of the day people come up and say: "I never thought about that before." ... In the seventies ... [police trainees] used to go out [to] division for a couple of weeks and when they'd come back we'd say: "Right... what do you see your key elements as?" [They'd say:] "Oh, getting out there and get them locked up." The six-week course ... that I had, I delivered in two days... [from 19]95 to about '97...*

A Home Office report (1997) found many very basic problems with police training, but the Lawrence Inquiry revealed the generic problem of translating written policy into action by operational ranks and the failures and lack of provision of police training, indicating the need for a complete overhaul of police training regimes (Macpherson, 1999). Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002], a former LENC diversity trainer, comments:

*The most difficult thing that came out the Part Two Lawrence Inquiry was the LENC chief constable saying: "Yes we do have institutionalised racism", and that hurt. ... I have seen people get very angry in training sessions... The media ... left out the bit where he said: "I accept that there's institutionalised racism but the majority of my staff are doing a very good job under very hard circumstances." People interpret institutionalised racism as saying you are all ... racist rather than ... you've always provided services to [a] predominantly white English community ... It was bad for morale because people literally hated the Chief Constable and I found that I was defending what he said and I ended up getting it in the neck and my colleagues did as well.*

Inspector Wood [interview 2002], Community Affairs officer in south LENC, comments on how he feels the force has dealt with the rapid change post Macpherson:

*The police are one of the most receptive organisations going. ... There have been a lot of changes, the police embraced them all. There was resistance? No, no I don't think so. Did the Chief Constable's admit the force was institutionally racist? But to be honest, the term institutional racism, what does it mean? And I am not sure that he realised ... the impact ... Now people have a better understanding.*

But Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002] a former diversity trainer with LENC police believes that the impact of Macpherson and its aftermath had an extremely negative influence on training and other race related initiatives like racial incident reporting:

*I mean the hardest thing that people had to accept in "race group" was racist incidents ... we were saying if somebody tells you it's a racist incident you've got to report it as one regardless of whether you see it that way.... [T]hey had no discretion ... for the first time ever we were saying: "It doesn't matter if there isn't any evidence, put the form in". But the point that we wanted to get across was investigate it, find out. But that didn't really come across... LENC has got a large Jewish community racism can occur there, an Irish community as well where again people might have their prejudiced views... I think most [police] people saw it as a black and white issue...*

*[T]here are two ways of doing this training. One way is by just going through the components without challenging any[thing] ... this is racism, this is sexism... so people will start getting the feedback sheet to say: "Wow this is good, no problems here." If ... you've gone deeper touching some sensitive areas, making people think, then they say: "Rubbish, I didn't buy that," because you've actually done what you are supposed to do. I made myself ill ... I was out for six months.*

Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002] sums up the real problem with police training regimes here – resources and commitment. A six week diversity training course is shrunk to two days and committed training teams are undermined by the impossibility of challenging embedded prejudice with so few resources and so little time.

## 5.5 Community Policing and Irish Travellers

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (1999: 9) with particular responsibility for police, race and community relations suggested that: *'what commentators and journalists have referred to as "the canteen culture" . . . . is as misleading as it is mischievous'*. Yet police occupational culture at all levels is grounded in received 'commonsense' assumptions and prejudices at the operational level, and so is a crucial determinant of how all policy initiatives are translated into practice and is also the foremost barrier to change (McConville et al 1991; Chatterton 1993). Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002] explains that prejudices concerning Irish Travellers and Gypsies are deeply rooted in LENC Police culture:

*When we start looking at peoples prejudices people are not going to open-up in certain areas, but one particular area where people felt quite ok about airing their prejudices would be the Travelling community. They will be quite happy to say: "Yea, I don't like Travellers – can't stand them. Because they are all thieves, and they will always have a story." It was flagged up at [College] by our trainers that there was an acceptance that it was ok to be prejudiced against Travellers.*

In contrast PC Tudor [interview 2002], a LENC Police Youth and Community Officer, comes across as concerned and interested in reaching out to 'hard to reach' nomadic ethnic groups but negative stereotypes of Irish Travellers still permeate much of his discourse:

*I mean we could go back to your Travelling family again where maybe the males in the family do like to drink ... and they come home and they have an argument with the wife ... about anything ... and there's bricks going through the window.*

Again, the following comment from PC Tudor exonerates many Traveller parents from their children's criminal activity, but implicates others by insinuation:

*Half the time the adults of some of the children who go out stealing, having accidents, being chased by the police, arrested, detained and put on remand, maybe don't want them to do that... they are afraid...*

LENC has not as yet developed a TLO network like SEEM Police. Inspector Wood [interview 2002], LENC Community Affairs officer, explains that Travellers are not particularly prone to criminality, but that the police are driven by the reported prejudices of some in the settled communities:

*If somebody had whatever stolen ... they may blame those [Traveller] folk down the road. Given that they suspect we are duty bound to follow that up. ... [I]n the areas I have worked, I would say it's not the Travellers that have done the criminal acts. They quite often do other anti-social things but not necessarily criminal things. So people may think they lower the tone of an area, but I don't necessarily think that converts itself into criminality. If you are talking about driving without documents then ... its the most common [offence] and mainly young men. How do you stop and search? They might have had information that cars are being driven without insurance, without road tax ... it should all be intelligence led. But it's not just he looks like [a Traveller].*

In contrast PC Tudor [interview 2002] gives an example of how as a Community Officer he used to collect 'intelligence' about the presence of Irish Travellers in his beat area – again linked directly to crime by the sedentary reporters:

*[T]he neighbours would hint at it, then the local bobbies would hint at it. ... They would say: "We've got huge car crime lately [in] this couple of streets." I know we are being judgmental, but sometimes people are right, aren't they? They [police] go look and ... at forty-two will be your Travelling family.*

PC Tudor [interview 2002], a Police Youth and Community Officer for twelve years in North LENC, explains how his job is now focusing more on those already in the Youth Justice System:

*It's tending to go away from traditional community policing. Its now coming into crime solving and crime management unified in operational policing ... [so] crime "stats" ... lead me ... to look at reducing car crime. ... The best way is to get into your schools and ... community groups. ... dealing with the young people that have been involved with car crime when they've been through the arrest stage... We try and give them an alternative ... It's no good the courts ... fining you and sending you litter picking ... because it doesn't have any relation to the offence. ... We do educational stuff based around teamwork just through football ... NACRO [National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders] provide the expertise and ... instead of being individuals and kick a ball at each other and swearing ... we get them to work as a team. ... [W]e discuss ... about taking drugs, drinking alcohol.*

This is not dissimilar in approach to some of the football based work undertaken by Woodlawn Social Services' Traveller People's Unit (TPU) in SEEM (see Chapter three). But this approach to community policing also involves a drive to improve police efficiency as Tudor explains:

*You look at an area, at the problem the police had identified, say its burglary and then you go in there and you think: "How can I link with ... young people ... its about changing attitudes and about confronting other ones ... [A]ll we are going to do is look at things on a divisional basis foremostly to reduce the amount of calls to police so the uniformed bobby ... has time. This department are looking to [bring] officers stress levels down and so sickness levels come down.*

Tudor [interview 2002] admits that the recent changes to his community policing role and his targeting of 'at risk' youth in schools and youth clubs would probably overlook many young Travellers who move regularly through housing and don't have strong settled community connections:

*[Travellers] have to loose their cultural background of being free and living off the land ... to [become] a*

*neighbourhood based static kind of family and it doesn't work like that does it? ... If you've committed a serious offence you won't be bailed unless you've got a fixed address. ... My job lends itself to working with stable groups and there are so very few Travelling sites. They are all centred around housing now and ... if you did a survey of how long they [Travellers] stayed in one set of houses ... six to twelve months at a maximum.*

LENC community policing in its old guise intervened with Travellers using intelligence garnered from local sedentary sources likely to be influenced by negative perceptions and prejudices. The 'new' community approach misses many young Travellers through the limitations of its community outreach methods and only comes into contact with elements of the community who have already been implicated in criminality, so reinforcing perceptions of a criminogenic community.

The yawning gap between policy and practice in the LENC Police force at operational level in the aftermath of Macpherson can be gauged from the response Mark, an Irish LENC Care worker, received when he gave a presentation about Irish Travellers on the LENC Police College diversity course. Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002; also Mark interview 2002] relates this episode:

*Mark was talking about how some young Traveller chap came over from ... Northern Ireland because he'd been threatened ... for stealing cars... He'd come over to LENC ... to live and the venom that came out: "But the man's a thief." We said: "Well yea, let's look at the situation. He's come over and we are trying to sort him out." [Police on race training say]: "But he shouldn't even be in this country ... why should he come here and get this [help]." All this stuff came out and Mark linked it into situations from southern Ireland ... and it was quite frightening to see... I've got representatives from the Muslim community [etc.] ... but when it came to Mark giving his input on Irish Travellers and the Irish community in general ... they felt quite open to express those feelings. I'm glad Mark said it to you because ... I sat back and I was shocked, I could not believe it. But on the other hand I could because I had experienced it before. That certainly did concern me in terms of the way that [police] view Irish Travellers - it certainly is negative... They put a difference between Gypsies and Tinkers and said: "Even the Irish don't like the Tinkers".*

This training episode also underlines that the black/white binary underpins received 'commonsense' assumptions and prejudices at police operational levels. It also points to a particular prejudice directed at the Irish generally and one that is particularly prevalent in policing and the criminal justice system – the Irish as a suspect community – where security predominates over ethnicity in the social construction and perception of an immigrant community and its descendants (Hillyard, 1993; Hickman and Walter, 1997). This is particularly the case for Irish Travellers born in Britain as many retain strongly identifiable cultural attributes including accent and various degrees of nomadism. The black/white binary relegated the Irish from ethnic group to a politically 'suspect' community during thirty years of war in Northern Ireland, while Irish Travellers are systematically dealt with as a criminogenic group, pathologised rather than ethnicised as Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002] explains:

*I have never known a time ... that we are having a discussion on the community ... [anyone] say: "Oh lets invite a member of the Irish community... I just want to put this back to the whole issue of skin colour issues when we look at ... racial communities and ethnic communities ... obviously Travellers were included in that. They are not dark skinned so they are not seen that way. A quick example perhaps - I actually ended up going along to a tribunal some time ago and it was a crime prevention panel within the police service "Homewatch". And they were having burglaries in an area, so ... they sent out flyers saying: "We've had a lot of burglaries in such and such an area. Observations please for Gypsy vehicles and Gypsy looking people." So of course this went along to CRE who obviously dealt with it ... about ten, twelve years ago - I think it was a £10,000 pound fine for the police.*

*I tell this story [at Police College] and there are clients who say: "We are having similar problems and the [police] boss has told me to do that recently..." It was a situation where they'd had burglaries in area's and somebody said: "Oh it's the Gypsies, stick a flier out so that people know who to look for." They didn't do it of course, but these are people who have come to me and said the superintendent ... said: "We've had a lot of trouble with the Travellers, we are having burglaries in areas. It must be Travellers because the sort of jobs that are going down. Let people know what's going on in the area." So I've said: "Well you know it's not right." He said: "I didn't think it was right in the first place." But again this links into the fact that people feel quite comfortable to do this... management tried to encourage it. Where there has been a spate of crime in an area ... [police management] sit round these meetings and say: "Right - who could be responsible for this?" And someone will say: "Oh there are some Travellers have moved into so and so estate, I bet it's them. Right, let's fire something out." The people who came to me said: "Oh I stopped it from happening." Now whether they did stop it from happening ... I don't know ... but this came from their commander...*

A research contact in SEEM also provided an example of one of these flyers that had been distributed to houses and left on vehicle windscreens in an area where Travellers had just set up an encampment [research diary 2000].

There has been some anecdotal evidence from Traveller support groups that police forces use a system of unofficial memos to 'warn' settled communities of the impending arrival of Travellers and the consequent possibility of a rise in crime in their area. This is the first evidence from the police (see Sergeant Plummer above) that this highly discriminatory and racist practice does occur. This practice subverts the RRAA (2001) and can hardly be construed as unwitting institutional police racism but is a deliberate and orchestrated racist targeting of an ethnic group. Plummer also indicates above that this deliberate racist targeting of Travellers is devised by some police managers who pressurise constables to carry out these illegal acts. Instead of blaming Macpherson's 'de-personalised' institutional racism, or the 'bad apple in the barrel' thesis, or police 'canteen culture' racism, Plummer's evidence points to the commission of deliberate racist and discriminatory acts against a recognised ethnic group (Irish Travellers) by police managers. Sergeant Plummer continues:

*[Police] will always come up with an example by saying it must be true because look: "I stopped a [Traveller] and they are always telling ... you lies..." So I will say: "I've had similar experiences, but ... with a whole bunch of other people as well." ... Nobody is going to admit to something if they think they can get away with something by giving you false details ... its just human behaviour its not necessarily an ethnic [indicator]... I guarantee you I'll go into a classroom and start talking about Travellers and people will be coming out with examples ... the whole conception of ethnicity/race is all linked to seeing colour that's my ... experience in training.*

Inspector Wood [interview 2002], disagrees with Sergeant Plummer's analysis:

*I have worked in east LENC and it did have a lot of Travellers and it's surprising the first time you stop [and] speak to them and they don't know their date of birth. You say: "How old are you?", and they say: "About thirty-two". ... Coming from my background it is hard to understand but ... that is no reason to brand them a criminal. No I wouldn't agree that officers brand Travellers or treat them any different ... just because somebody gives [an Irish Traveller] name, and says I live wherever, that's not a reason to refuse him bail.*

Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002], continues:

*We used to have a quiz ... one of the questions was who are the largest ethnic [group] ... and they'd all say West Indians - they would never say the Irish community so that really highlights it. ... If they [meet] ... working-class Irish they will be very tempted to think they are Tinkers... [Here Plummer casually uses the pejorative 'Tinkers' to describe Irish Travellers] You are speaking to somebody with an Irish accent, he comes up with [a Traveller] name, most bobbies are going to go "ding" and ... say: "Just hang on a minute mate." They do a check and if it came back "no trace" they would start thinking: "Hang on, is that your right date of birth." We are also told that the ... Tinker [sic] communities use more than one name ... these are the things that come out.*

This is part of a trend toward 'actuarial' social control emphasising the management of high risk groups rather than focusing on criminal offenders (Feeley and Simon, 1994; Johnston, 2000). Sergeant Plummer [interview 2002] comments again:

*How do you measure how effective you've been in delivering that training? Do we look at that in the terms of racial incidents for reporting? Do we look at that the increase or decrease of complaints against the police on racial grounds? Do we look at that in terms of the amount of recruits we have from different groups? ... How are we going to measure the way that we are improving relations ... with a group say like Irish Travellers who really aren't up at*

*the top of the pile? ... The main prioritisation ... with race relations [RRAA 2001] is going to [the] Asian community, because the community development officers ... are predominantly Asian. ... It takes something [like] "nine-eleven" [or] September [19]81 in London to a lesser degree with the riots there - and politics becomes involved. ... Are we looking at inclusion or just making sure that we are safe and we've got the right intelligence? ... I guess ... there is not really this political drive to look at the Irish community ... so therefore Travellers [are] not a priority.*

Sergeant McCarthy [interview 2002] of SEEM Police outlines the need for anti-discriminatory legislation and sanctions as the only effective way to influence police (and sedentary) attitudes to Travellers positively:

*There's still an unhealthy attitude towards the Travelling community ... because police officers or the police service reacts more effectively to law and also when the balance sheet indicates that we've got to do something. [If we're] being sued - we'll do something. So its law and the threat of litigation [and liability for] compensation makes us react. I think its trying to find more opportunities ... to interact on a positive front would pay dividends. But ultimately we are driven by performance on the case, by things like response times.*

Sivanandan (cited in Whyte, June 2002: 40) sums up the real dilemma for the state and its institutions in the post Macpherson period:

*[It] is the state which – through its laws and its edicts, its administration of the public services - sets the tone and the tenor, the climate, of race relations in society. By refusing, therefore, to examine and outlaw racism in its own structures, the state gives a fillip to popular racism and embeds it in popular culture. Since public officers such as the police are drawn from that society and culture, the virus of racism is carried back into the body politic. State racism contaminates civil society.*

Again, responsibility returns to the state and its institutions. Government, from the top down, must take responsibility for the implementation of policy and associated legislation that protects ethnic minorities from racism and discrimination instead of taking a pragmatic and selective approach that de-legitimises ethnic groups like Irish Travellers. Doreen Lawrence has accused the government of losing interest in tackling racism as recorded race hate crimes rose by two percent to 54,351 in 2001-02 while nearly 9,000 people were cautioned or prosecuted for racially aggravated offences, double the previous year's number (Guardian 21 March 2003). These statistics are somewhat ambiguous possibly indicating either increased reporting and detection, a rise in racist attacks, or a combination of all these factors. Similarly the state's contradictory attitude to Irish Travellers encourages the virus of anti-Traveller racism. Whilst affording them ethnic recognition by the judiciary, they are simultaneously criminalised by the legislative assembly and persecuted by state and local institutions.

## 5.6 Irish Travellers in the Criminal Justice System

The Parekh Report (2000: 130, 139) asserts that the specific concerns of the Irish community in general are ignored in the Criminal Justice System while the training regimes of probation and prison officers is 'a major issue'. A 1994 study by Stanton (cited in Fletcher et al, February 1997: 16) in Newark highlighted Irish Travellers over-representation in the criminal justice system. The research concluded that the police targeted Travellers particularly for vehicle related (mostly minor) offences. As a result Irish Travellers were often held overnight so the police could request that magistrates impose bail conditions for alleged road traffic offences (not usual practice). Consequently Travellers struggled to claim unconditional bail and were more likely to be remanded into custody. Disqualification from driving also heightened the probability of further charges and resultant imprisonment [Irish Traveller interviews 2001- 2002].

Research carried out over one year by the Association of Chief Officers of Probation and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) published in 1994 (cited in Fletcher et al, February 1997: 17) found that significant numbers of young 'Travellers' were remanded into custody from courts in the London region to a Young Offenders Institution. Fletcher et al (ibid: 18) comment on this research:

*They found that a significant number of young people were identified as Travellers. This group of young people accounted for 38% of admissions of all young people classified as white from these courts. This abnormally high figure reflects prejudice at court about the mobility and therefore risk of absconson [sic] of Travellers.*

Irish Travellers are not as yet ethnically monitored within the criminal justice system, so this percentage stands in shocking isolation. Little research to date has been conducted specifically relating to Irish Travellers in Britain's

criminal justice system, but data from research carried out into the overall Irish Community in Britain and Travellers and Gypsies generally, can cast some light on particular anti-Irish Traveller institutional and direct racism.

## 5.7 Youth Offender Teams (YOTs) and youth justice

Recent innovations by criminal justice and other government social control agencies reflect a growing interest in 'evidenced based' practices. These depict a pragmatic turn in the management of social deviance and an almost managerial obsession with benchmarking, best value and monitoring. This application of research through policy to practice should augur well for future developments in youth justice due to the large body of applied research that exists and has been shown to work in this area, but Goldston (2001) argues that many of the youth justice initiatives being developed and deployed at present pay little heed to this previous proven research. Minor offending for most young people is a transitory phase – part of growing up, but an 'institutionalised intolerance' has grown from a developing government ideology that favours coercion over toleration (Muncie, 1999; Goldston, *ibid*). The link between social deprivation, educational disadvantage, poverty, poor health and offending behaviour is well established both in research and practice. Goldston (*ibid*: 78) asserts that the 'young offender' in criminal justice terms is the janus faced 'child in need' in the context of child support and protection legislation.

YOTs came into being as a result of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), part of a range of measures designed to reduce crime that also included 'detention and training orders' and elements of restorative justice. YOTs have an inter-agency multidisciplinary approach with staff drawn from a range of relevant backgrounds and are organised on a local area basis. The north LENC team has twelve staff. Mr. Norton [interview 2002] head of North LENC YOT discussed his service in relation to Irish Travellers and nomadism:

*Now the core system is based around people having a fixed address ... and that essentially becomes the biggest single problem we will have ... working with someone who has a nomadic lifestyle. ... [M]ost of our young people ... having a nomadic lifestyle will move around within LENC ... from one flat to another within a small area... [W]e do have an Irish Travelling family who have been based in this area for years, and they don't travel anymore. But they are still a Travelling family ... based in LENC and in ... east SEEM. People from the family move up and down ... sometimes deliberately because ... they are trying to get away from something. ... For instance ... a lot of their children were on the Child Protection Register at LENC, so the family moved them all down to SEEM. Now the Child Protection Register followed and they were all registered in SEEM but that was a strategy from the family to try and escape what they felt was prying intervention. [T]he biggest single problem that we would have is because we are based around where people live, if by definition they move round ... then we start having difficulties from our viewpoint, not necessarily from theirs...*

Youth justice plans drawn up by parent agencies (probation, police, health, education, social services) across England and Wales have been prone to major variations in how resources are allocated and about the relative financial contributions of the parent agencies. YOT clients are usually expected to reside in a particular geographical area that coincides with that of the particular YOT itself which is based on municipal boundaries. Stanley (2001: 96) refers to these YOT variances as a return to 'justice by geography'. YOT manager Norton [interview 2002] gives a practical example of how this impacts on service delivery to Travellers:

*An example now of another Travelling family: the kid committed an offence in Welshtown ... where his family were living. The supervision order was made out to Welshtown [YOT]. When mum and dad and he came to LENC ... before they even paid their rent at the caravan site [Central Street], Welshtown [YOT] was saying: "It's a LENC case". ... One of the reasons why the family upped from Welshtown YOT [was] because he had been convicted of a sex offence. They wanted to leave that behind them, lay low for a while. They [his family] were in LENC for a period so we said to Welshtown we will take the case, we will report back to you. Now within a fortnight they upped and left again. So we had seen this kid twice. We had reported to Welshtown [YOT] what we had done... Next thing they are saying: "No, we transferred it to you". The problem wasn't with the lifestyle of the family, but Welshtown need to have the responsibility for the case. You can't just say "boompf" they are out of our area and then it is somebody else's problem because this family had links with LENC - but closer links with Welshtown ... that's the lifestyle.*

The reaction of Welshtown could be driven by poor resourcing or a reluctance to engage with a nomadic group or both, Norton [interview 2002] continues:

*Sometimes some of the other statutory and voluntary services see a Travelling family move, and before the family has arrived at wherever they are going, the case file has gone because ... the family has moved therefore it is the end of*

*the problem. That's a normal institutional reaction? It is yeah, when this kid does come back to LENC, we will accept an official transfer... when he is here longer than [a] fortnight... we would normally look at between eight and twelve weeks to get into a [supervision] path. Now we would do that whether someone is giving the caravan site as an address or a flat address, so in that respect being a Travelling family makes no difference ... Within that period we would be ... establishing a relationship so that they would be coming to see us. If they were saying: "I am only here for six weeks and then we are off to Milton Keynes", we would go: "Oh that's fine" and we would report back to Welshtown so everybody knows what is happening. If everybody takes that responsibility ... it can be worked. I can well understand why Welshtown [YOT] just want well rid of this family because they travel all around the country. ... He did get locked up in LENC for an offence that he committed in Welshtown, which Welshtown magistrates referred to LENC because they thought it was here.*

*This other case was an indecent assault - one of the reasons why the family moved from Welshtown to lay low in LENC for a while and then moved back to Welshtown. There was a theft... it wasn't unlawful sexual intercourse, it was indecent assault - a sex offence. He's only fifteen but the victim of the offence was eleven. And if you have a collusive family ... a Travelling family [can] just up sticks and go, for instance in LENC we do have an adolescent sex offenders programme [provided by NSPCC], in Welshtown we don't. So if they actually want the young man to avoid looking at some of the issues about sex offending, and this family actually do want to avoid that, they can just by moving. ... But the best thing for this kid is do some work on his sexual morality and his attitudes about patriarchy.*

Poorly resourced YOT areas are pressurized to meet national standards that leech vital resources (Stanley, 2001). So Norton [interview 2002] believes that the Traveller family's nomadism was considered too much of a drain on Welshtown's resources so they tried to shirk responsibility:

*In this case the biggest problem [was] the individuals operating the system weren't flexible enough. We had a kid who came here for three weeks, committed an offence while he was here; got himself on an order to us 'cos he was living in LENC, then immediately moved to SEEM. ... Now we did not transfer that case, until there was somebody to transfer it to. Now he ended up in ... Heath [YOI], and Heath were asking us to do all these visits because technically he was on an order to us. Now we did manage to do a deal with a local YOT eventually ... we could have said: "It's nothing to do with us, he lives down there. I think it depends on management, on integrity, ethics... Well in the end I had to speak to the YOT manager at Welshtown [YOT], threaten official complaints etc... That youngster is now in Northeast England and not getting the service from Welshtown he should get. He is in a secure unit, because Welshtown tried to put it all onto us...*

Stanley (2001) argues that lack of resources for YOTs and the punitive elements of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) have shown an initial increase in custodial sentences for young people. The young Irish Traveller in this case didn't fit the settled criteria on which YOT operations are based and is incarcerated hundreds of miles from the nearest city to which his family resort and he is not receiving the service he is entitled to get from a statutory body so this possibly contravenes the RRAA (2001). Norton [interview 2002] discusses YOT work in YOIs:

*We are at the initial planning meeting. ... Because the secure units for the younger age range are few, so this youngster being in Northeast County has got nothing to do with them being a Travelling family. And that is one of the problems with the youth justice system, is that the levels of funding across the entire system are very inconsistent. I have got a probation background ... and it is interesting to me that the probation service has merged into a national organisation, but the youth justice system has actually moved into a local base.'<sup>2</sup> So you're working in opposite directions? 'Well, exactly so! The Youth Justice Board (YJB) were responsible nationally, but the YOTs are responsible locally and they have very different levels of funding, different expectations. ... Would Welshtown Council be particularly worried that their manager had booted out a potentially troublesome case? ... But this is the single biggest problem for anybody from the Travelling lifestyle ... all the services are located geographically. ... Residency, when [and where] you get the [detention] order ... and young people of ... a more nomadic lifestyle fall foul of that system. But some of them alternatively play that system ... young people can just disappear!*

*The YOTs are in a much better position than the Probation Service in monitoring people because [they] have an extremely close relationship with the police. ... We have access to the police national computer ... if there were major concerns about an individual's whereabouts. ... [As regards data protection implications] Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act basically applies. And as long as we are sharing data with other statutory agencies particularly for the prevention of crime it is not a problem. ... So I share information with Irish LENC Care for instance, as long as that information is about the prevention of offending or the welfare of that child.*

Norton may pursue an enlightened path within the confines of his local YOT service, but lack of adequate resources and the local disjointed nature of YOTs intimate that a patchy, localised and uneven youth justice service is developing across the country (Stanley, 2001).

## 5.8 Dealing with complex Irish identities

Though Irish Travellers are an officially recognised ethnic minority in England very few institutions have as yet included them in ethnic monitoring exercises. The YOT does not monitor ethnicity Irish Travellers but Norton [interview 2002] describes the difficulties of monitoring white ethnicity in LENC:

*This is one of the issues particularly for Irish Travelling families ... although the ethnicity definition for the YOT does have a section ... for Irish Travellers. Most of our kids coming from an Irish background describe themselves as white British. ... We were going to a family where the kids described themselves as white British and have a LENC accents. Our workers visit and everyone in the house has an Irish accent. It's an extended Irish [Traveller] family, but on the "stats" it's white British. ... [Many] young people within that Irish community haven't an Irish accent... yet everything about their ethnic background is Irish. ... That is one of the problems ... when looking at the ethnicity figures ... it will be a hidden issue. Virtually all kids from any community don't want to be seen as different to anybody else. He's got a LENC accent, a LENC City shirt - how am I to know? That worries me on service delivery - we may be missing a huge [number].*

A young male Irish Traveller [interview 2002] describes his reaction to being "different" at school:

*I used to get into a lot of fights. I used to get angry because I wasn't the same, I was different from everybody else. ... Yeah even when I am in prison now - it's the same all the way through my life - I am not accepted as I am sort of an outcast to the society. ... You can't explain to them... It's like he's Irish, he's bad. [W]e are just different ... to everyone else. It's not bad, it's not good, it's just the way we are brought up. We are not used to staying in the one place, we travel round an awful lot and just try to do the best we can to survive - it is not nothing bad.*

The LENC YOT manager [interview 2002] continues on the difficulties of identifying and providing a service to Irish Travellers:

*To be culturally sensitive you have got to be aware that there is a different culture in the first place. ... I know Probation is finding exactly the same with the adult community, it's like: "Oh, there is a huge hidden area here". ... But that's the thing with something when it's hidden, if nobody is looking then nobody is making the decision: "Do we need to do something, or don't we". ... I have been asking in the office for examples of Irish families and people are going: "What do you mean?" I go: "You know, kids from an Irish background". ... [They reply]: "Yeah, that family is from Dublin" or whatever. And I say: "Yeah, but what do they describe themselves as?" And most of the kids put white British, because they see their family as a British/Irish family.*

Again much of this obfuscation is based on fear and the fallout from being a suspect community. Travellers will also pander to the presumptions of the powerful if it gets them what they require. Of course this reaction is a rational survival strategy often employed by severely oppressed groups or individuals in the face of the kind of sustained and endemic hostility and racism faced by Irish Travellers as an ethnic minority in England. It is only recently that many people from the settled Irish community in Britain behaved similarly in the face of open hostility from sections of the state apparatus and society generally (Hillyard, 1993).

School exclusions and lack of appropriate educational or training provision is a major problem for young Travellers and can lead to offending [Irish Traveller interviews 2001-2002]. Would YOTs pick up on school exclusions? Norton [interview 2002] replies:

*I would anticipate any Irish Travelling young offender to have major problems with it. ... Some schools are very quick to exclude because most young offenders do not do academically well at school. So there is a lot of pressure on schools to get rid of behaviourally difficult and academically poor young people because their averages then go up. Would schools tip you off? Some would ... yeah. We heard the head-teacher of a fairly major school in LENC ... say only this week in a public forum that what children do outside the school gates is nothing to do with him. Now the Crime and Disorder Act seems to have zipped this [teacher] by. ... Lots of our kids offend because they don't do particularly well at school. There is a very close correlation.*

*They really don't want to be seen as different, so if they are excluded from mainstream, they develop an alternative area to belong to. ... But kids need respect, want to be liked, want status. The kid who nicks cars, breaks into houses, or beats the shit out of someone, ... within their peer group that's [seen as] good. ... If we exclude a kid from those positive [school] influences we can't be too surprised that they pick up on the negative ones. Any of the cases here that we are working with we would know whether they were Irish Travellers. ... If we were to be [asked] how do we work with the Irish Travelling community about crime prevention ... I wouldn't know where to start. I mean we would*

*go through our normal routes to that community which would be TES and Irish LENC Care ... We are still struggling ... I have to say that if an Irish Travelling family wanted to evade the YOT all they do is ... keep out of trouble and keep travelling.*

One of the main research findings brought out by the 'Irish 2 Project'<sup>(3)</sup> is that the children of Irish migrants find it difficult to claim an Irish identity even when they feel they have a strong Irish persona. Their wish and need to express an Irish identity is denied by both Irish and British people (Hickman, Morgan and Walter, 2001). Similarly, Irish Travellers are denied their 'Irishness' and Irish citizenship by many settled Irish people in Britain (and in Ireland), and Irish Travellers born in Britain are denied their dual heritage as British born Irish Travellers by many powerful definers in British society, while their rights as European Union citizens are undermined by the anti-nomadic policies of both the British and Irish governments.

## 5.9 Good YOT practice with Travellers

The localised nature of YOTs structure and funding leads to disparities in policy and practice across England and Wales. Links between different YOT regions are largely informal and sometimes non-existent so examples of good practice like those illustrated below can remain localised or filter through the regional networks very slowly. The YOT manager [Norton interview 2002] in LENC describes how he dealt in a culturally sensitive manner with one Irish Traveller offender in relation to community sentence programmes, the agency's own geographical specificity, and nomadism:

*[N]ational standards issued by the YJB do say that our supervision of young people should take into account any ... education, religious requirements, beliefs ... cultural demands. ... I will deviate from national standards in areas where I can justify it. Now with this particular young woman, we fitted in with the lifestyle from the cultural aspect, but it was with a view to preventing offending and because the family did engage with it. We could be accused of cultural meddling ... but she was sixteen, seventeen, we felt she was being far too controlled by her father, but on the other hand that control also was preventing her offending.*

This is an ethical question that all agencies dealing with Irish Travellers must face. How do they square their legal requirements, rules, policies and procedures with some of the 'pre-modern' cultural attributes of traditional patriarchal Traveller families? Norton [interview 2002] continues:

*She got arrested for ... violence, yeah it was a family feud. ... They didn't want to come back to LENC too often because that was where the feud was. So [there] was also an awful lot of logic about why they should move round. But we kept the order rather than trying to send it off to [another YOT] for them to say: "Oh ... this is too much trouble..." I think it was a flexible application of discretion, which is still within the rules.*

*The sanctions [on Irish Travellers] will be exactly the same as for any other child. ... One of the issues with her was that national standards couldn't be applied, because she couldn't report twice a week because she was literally travelling the country. So what we said was: "Right when you know where you are gonna be, we will have a programme." ... And we would have rung her, and said: "Right your local YOT where you are is this one. We will arrange for you to go in and see them, and as long as - and this is the deal - there are no reports of any problems, and you report to them - once a week." ... [A]nd at one point we felt that she might have been wobbling a touch. So we made her come back, and her mum and dad did bring her back to LENC. There was a meeting with the officer and we said that we are being flexible, don't mess us about - everything after that was fine. We did take it back to court at the nearest point for her to get the order revoked on the grounds of good progress. ... We did tell the court there were some logistical problems and [the court] accepted that. ... She had behaved herself and there were glowing reports, and ... if there was any doubt in the magistrate's mind [about] her being from a Travelling family, that would have swayed it in her favour.*

In this YOT case the application of locally administered discretion based on a working knowledge of Irish Traveller culture and nomadism led to a good non-custodial result for all concerned. Good practice brought a number of YOT areas, the magistrates' court, the offender and her nomadic Traveller family to an enhanced degree of understanding and co-operation on all sides. Thinking and acting 'outside the box' but within regulations enabled the YOT to prevent a custodial sentence for the young Traveller woman offender and impressed on all involved that a nomadic lifestyle did not preclude a non-custodial sentence. A family of Irish Travellers themselves experienced positive engagement, communication and respect from a number of criminal justice agents and reciprocated in kind.

## 5.10 Probation pre-sentence reports (PSRs) and sentence outcomes for Travellers

This section looks at Irish Travellers in the probation process by concentrating on the use of language and the representation of Irish Travellers and nomadism in probation pre-sentence reports (PSRs) and their influence on sentencing outcomes. Denney's (1992) study of 'language use' in probation practice illustrated how subjective judgements made by probation officers were often afforded undue validity in criminal justice sentencing processes, demonstrating how officers' assumptions and perceptions about black people could contribute to prejudicial judgments through courtroom verbal submissions and written PSRs.

PSRs have a profound influence on sentencing practice, while there is also an increasing awareness that differential treatment of minority ethnic groups occurs routinely within criminal justice processes (Bowling and Phillips, 2002; Hood, et. al. 2003; Denney, 1992; Bhui, 1999). This has led - particularly in the wake of the Macpherson investigation into police racism and the duty imposed by the RRAA (2001: appendices 3, 5) on public authorities to promote equal opportunities, good race relations and eliminate unlawful discrimination - to an examination of institutional racism in all major state institutions. It is also leading to the establishment of formalised bureaucratic quality control systems in national organisations like the Probation Service (Macpherson, 1999: 46.25). In the case of PSRs these controls involve the scrutiny and discussion of reports prior to their submission so that all content and sentencing proposals are compliant with anti-discriminatory practice. These safeguards are now applied to black and female defendants, but not to white ethnic minorities like the settled Irish population<sup>(4)</sup> or nomadic groups like Irish Travellers and Gypsies despite published research and much qualitative evidence that indicates considerable discrimination against these groups in the criminal justice system (Power, 2003b; Murphy, 1994; Fletcher et al, 1997; Devereaux, 1999; Hillyard, 1993 and 1994; Hadden and Hillyard, 1973) [Irish Traveller prison and YOI interviews 2001-2002].

Devereaux's (1999: 77) detailed study of PSRs conducted on Irish people in the Greater Manchester area concluded that:

*Irish defendants are more likely to receive custodial sentences than any other group even when they have committed the lowest rate of more serious offences.*

Previous published research by Murphy (1994)<sup>(5)</sup> and Fletcher et al (1997) support Devereaux's (1999) findings that Irish defendants generally are more likely to face incarceration than any of the other major ethnic groups in Britain. Devereaux (ibid: 80) examined thirty-five PSRs on Irish people, finding that twenty-nine contained information considered irrelevant, while twenty-seven '*were judged likely to be harmful to the individual and to trigger prejudice.*'<sup>(6)</sup> Devereaux (ibid: 80) continues:

*The critical question concerning the relevance of information is the impact its presence or absence has on triggering prejudice. If part of the role of the pre-sentence report writer is to present information and make a sentence proposal in an anti-discriminatory fashion, then they should consider the impact of information and take that into account.*

The most disturbing aspect from an Irish Traveller perspective was the particular negativity with which information or even suspicion of nomadism or transience was treated in some of the PSRs examined. Similar findings were highlighted in Pizani Williams' (1998) study of Gypsies and Travellers in Kent magistrate's courts.

Twenty percent of the Manchester PSRs introduced nationality and place of birth with no obvious relevance to the particular case. In some PSRs these references were coupled with non affirmative comments on the transient nature of the particular subject such as: '*...moved back to Birmingham and has lived in Birmingham and Galway intermittently during the last 4 years.....lived in various hostels...*' (cited in Devereaux, 1999: 82). Another PSR (cited in Devereaux, 1999: 83) involved a reluctance to sanction a referral to a community service team '*until the defendant has an address to go to.*' Uncorroborated hearsay could be the basis for sentencing as in this extract from a PSR where the probation officer (cited in Devereaux, 1999: 83) did not recommend transferring a community based order to the south west, but asserted that the defendant '*had indicated to staff at the bail hostel that he was considering travelling to the south west for the summer.*' So to be Irish, have nomadic or transient tendencies, or to be presumed to have these predilections was construed negatively by PSR writers in the latter cases. Devereaux (1999: 88) also found in her Manchester case studies that '*the recommendation in court reports bear least resemblance to the eventual sentence for this [Irish] group*', and asserted that LENC Probation Service (LENCPS) have a case to answer in relation to Irish defendants and 'institutional racism' as defined in the Macpherson Report (1999).

Two experienced probation officers<sup>(7)</sup> [interview 2002] discussed anti-Traveller racism and discrimination in the

LENC PS generally and around PSRs specifically, adding more experiential and qualitative weight to Devereaux's (1999) findings:

*[T]he criminal justice system has not been a safe [place] for Travelling families. I have certainly seen [PSRs] reports in the past that I have taken along to managers and complained about where I've seen people's background [Irish Travellers] referred to in such a way that it is clear that it is derisory and ... we're upping the ante really in terms of risk. ... I mean people who have lived in settled addresses for ten years and their [nomadic] origins were being discussed - well I mean there was no need to whatsoever.*

*[Irish Travellers] have not been considered for ... community sentences because it would be awkward if they were ... moving. You would definitely get a lot of people [Travellers] serving short custodial sentences where really they should have had a community sentence, but because of the [perceived] lifestyle dangers they would [not] be considered in the first place, [or] they wouldn't have done very well on [probation] previously.*

*I was really concerned that ... someone from my team ... was writing a [PSR] report in a way which was very markedly bringing out the fact that someone was a Traveller ... If you read the report you would know the hidden message that this person is a Traveller and that they're a bit dodgy. So given that attitude to the young [Irish Traveller] people - it's obvious that they are going to accumulate really hefty criminal records within a very short space of time. ... So by the time they hit the adult scene they will have [a very poor record]. ... I took that [PSR] report to a manager and I didn't get any decent response actually... And the other thing... the woman never complained about her report. She has literacy problems ... no one [had] sat down with her and gone through it, so she was really unaware.*

The concluding comment of the latter discussion is very revealing in that Irish Travellers themselves rarely understand probation processes in general and the particular importance of PSRs to the sentences they receive [Irish Traveller prison and YOI interviews 2001-2002].

A young male Irish Traveller [interview in Heath YOI 2002] described his anxieties following conviction and his experience of a PSR interview:

*I was thinking about going to prison. Someone do something for me please. ... I tried to get probation and ... he said to me: "You're not explaining to me about your burglaries." ... I said: "I was mixed up with the wrong crowd. That's not like me to go out and do ... burglary... And he went: "Well you're not explaining why you done it." I said: "It's me first time in prison ... I am trying to explain to you." He wrote a report out saying I was a high risk - not to let me out. ... He knew I was Irish ... he knew my [Traveller] background... He asked: "Was I suicidal - was I willing to do probation? I said: "I will do probation. ... I don't know why I done it. ... I am very sorry for what I done, to myself, my family, the people I done it to. ... I put people through so much pain".*

Both LENC probation officers [interview 2002] discussed the racism and prejudice directed against Irish Travellers, but also the fear that probation staff have of this community. Are you saying that magistrates usually know?

*Oh, yes. Everybody knows that within the criminal justice system [Irish Travellers] do very badly. ... You look at [PSRs] and you will see short custodial sentence after short custodial sentence whereas you would not expect it [in a] a white English [context]. Colleagues ... will acknowledge that they do struggle with Travellers, how to approach them, they're suspicious of them. They don't know how to get over that barrier.*

There has been little detailed research on Irish Travellers and other culturally nomadic groups in the criminal justice system, but that which does exist underlines the need for more concentrated work in this area. PSRs are a particularly good way to analyse and determine degrees of prejudice in the probation process and are crucial in determining the custodial fate or otherwise of offenders. Devereaux's (1999) PSR research on offenders claiming Irish ethnicity underlines not only the inclusion of much spurious information that could obfuscate clear understanding of an offender's circumstances and motivations, but an extremely high incidence of potentially harmful and prejudicial content. Many of the examples quoted above from Devereaux allude to Irish people with transient or nomadic 'tendencies' and those with no fixed abode in LENC Probation Service - without specifying Travellers. This evidence is corroborated and reinforced by the experiential and detailed examples of prejudice and racism against Irish Travellers alluded to by the two LENC probation officers generally and in the construction of PSRs specifically. They explain how PSRs with a particular prejudice against nomadism lead to short custodial sentences for Travellers that can spiral into accelerated criminalisation over a short time as repeated custodial sentences reinforce the presumed criminality of Travellers within elements of the Probation Service and elsewhere. Bridging the difficulties indicated by both probation officers in communication and understanding between Travellers and criminal justice operatives is central to dealing with anti-Traveller prejudice and racism in the criminal justice system.

Bhui (1999: 173) states that PSR writers should understand and recognise the importance of structural factors in offending behaviour '*such as unemployment, poor housing, racism and discrimination.*' But nomadism (rather than transience) and the criminalisation of nomadism are barely recognised structural factors, though they underpin much of the negative stereotyping applied to Travellers. The probation officers [interview 2002] explain that Travellers are invariably settled in LENC's sink estates:

*[I]nstead of looking at people in terms of the individual problems, they have been looked at [as a population] just as problems ... there are strong notions [prejudices] around that even these people [Travellers] carry with them... that they are violent, that they will be very heavy binge drinkers, that they will be particularly into domestic violence and that the women just put up with it because they think it is part of the culture. They'll have kids who will become very unruly and unmanageable teenagers ... they're into car crime ... they are seen as just representative of all those things [stereotypes] just lumped together.*

Both LENC probation officers [interview 2002] discussed the crucial issue of confused and contradictory understandings of what accommodation and economy means to Irish Travellers (whether in trailers or housing) on the one hand, and probation policy and practice (the importance of a fixed abode and a sedentary attitude in PSR recommendations) on the other, resulting in the reinforcement of distrust and ignorance on both sides:

*[Accommodation] issues when dealing with nomadic people is a problem for us [Probation Service]. If somebody is not in settled accommodation it immediately ups their risk. Somebody, for example, who would want to go on to one of the accredited programs they basically need to be in [a] fixed abode. ... Availability is another one. The notion that [Irish Travellers] don't do anything, they tend to be doing a lot of things but because they can't verify; that's a big issue... Verification, if they've got any illness... Travellers [are] suspicious... they are hard to engage... When I first started in probation ... I naively thought that because I was Irish [Travellers] would treat me differently from the English. ... [Probation] services have to go to the sites, they have to relocate. ... It needs a different approach...*

Irish Travellers are discriminated against as nomads and as Irish people in the probation process. This double prejudice is particularly exemplified in the construction of PSRs on Irish Travellers where conscious and unconscious assumptions by some probation officers about Travellers exacerbates anti-Traveller discrimination even further. A more sensitive ethnographic approach needs to be adopted by the Probation Service in order to combat the severe discrimination endured by Irish Travellers in the probation process.

### 5.11 LENC Probation Service responses

In terms of equality of assessment in the National Probation Service (NPS) there are some positive signs, though progress will not be straightforward. One of the probation officers [interview 2002] commented on the new probation computer assessment tool - OASys:<sup>(8)</sup>

*The moves are away from discretion. ... We are moving on to this tool now ... called OASys, and what's good about it is that you can actually see why you are asking questions - what they are trying to get at, so subjectivity will be able to be measured [with] more certainly than in the past. There will still be issues around the particular questions you're asking in the first place but it will be national and available for scrutiny. And it actually should assist research much better in terms of what we should be about. ... I haven't actually been thinking about Traveller families whenever I've been [studying OASys], but I will make sure that forms a part of my thought process.*

These probation officers demonstrate that positive awareness of nomadism and an informed working knowledge about the various indigenous nomadic groups is crucial if the NPS wishes to dispense real justice to nomadic ethnic groups like Irish Travellers. But the use of informed discretion and intuition, and the authorisation to depart from set procedures to work 'outside the box', is central to the delivery of a fair and balanced service to nomadic groups, as exemplified in the YOT (see Section 5.9).

Political action both within and beyond the NPS is necessary to challenge the negative stereotypes of Irish Travellers. Both these probation officers [interview 2002] are active members of the Irish Probation Forum in LENC (IPF) made up of probation practitioners at all levels in the LENC PS concerned about racism and discrimination against both settled Irish and Irish Travellers in the criminal justice system:

*[Irish Travellers] have not been included in any specialist provision ... it's what the [IPF] is about - putting these things on the agenda. ... When I worked at one [probation office] we had a checklist about different minority groups and they did agree to put Travellers on, and that was really helpful. ... Probation have actually been quite supportive in Manchester about the Irish and Travellers. ... And a lot has changed, although there are still an awful lot of people working in this service [who think] that equality is treating everybody the same. If you set up a good service to meet a special need they see that as a step too far. ... [there is] a complete lack of realisation that we don't all start the same. ... I've actually seen it in training. ... One of the videos being used ... was of a loud mouthed aggressive Irish woman, drunk and using other substances. ... Not one person commented on the Irish issues ... I did voice my concerns but ... I was completely dismissed. ... One of the big problems though is that for a long time ... there's been no discussion. [W]hen I first came to probation ... anti-racism training ... was very high on the agenda and some of it wasn't handled very well. [So] people really got set back and they felt that they couldn't challenge. ... The [probation] area that I moved to had a very stagnant group of very long serving staff ... The majority of staff were middle class, very white and very English.*

Though senior probation personnel are generally supportive around equality issues, there are pockets of resistance to change among practitioners at the crucial interface between the public and LENC PS. Improved training and 'awareness raising' generally on Irish related issues, and specifically about Irish Travellers, is essential to the delivery of a fair and effective service. The simplistic black/white binary that underpins much of the discourse and understanding about race and ethnicity should be challenged, so highlighting discrimination and 'invisible' racism against minority white ethnic groups like Irish Travellers (Fenton, 1999).

The LENC probation officers [interview 2002] indicate that officers who are positively aware of Irish Traveller issues face moral and ethical dilemmas when writing PSRs due to the lack of recognition and monitoring of Irish Travellers in LENC Probation Area and the criminal justice system generally. In this example discretion is used in PSRs to counteract the prejudice and ignorance of the courts:

*There is a fine balance now between mentioning things which you know just from your experience [that] the courts will react to badly and in those instances my instinct has always been: "I'm not going to make a situation worse for somebody because of x, y, or z". But ... until the service gets its act together in terms of considering [Irish Travellers] ... it's almost wrong to acknowledge things unless you've got a solution.*

But culturally sensitive risk assessment depends on knowledge and understanding of the particular subject and their background. Irish Travellers will sometimes disguise their ethnicity when confronted by officials, and stressed probation officers sometimes fail to ask (or don't know how to ask) the question, or decide the subject's ethnicity themselves (Devereaux, 1999: 101; Power, 2003b). So how often are discriminatory PSRs written by officers whose 'knowledge and competence is challenged' during risk assessments, and whose intuition in these circumstances may default to embedded assumptions and prejudices about Irish Travellers (Bhui, 1999: 179)?

In most areas PSRs on black people and women now attract automatic scrutiny and discussion prior to their submission so that all content and sentencing proposals are compliant with anti-discriminatory practice. Denney's (1992) systematic examination of the complex relationships between probation officers' perceptions of offending, probation practice, and the multiple meanings that inform probation intervention with black offenders should be adapted and applied to marginalised ethnic groups like Irish Travellers. In LENC Probation Area Afro-Caribbean and Asian Voluntary Support Groups (VSGs) with specialist background knowledge assist probation officers with the writing of PSRs [IPF meeting, 2003]. The NPS should develop a similar system so that 'partnership' groups with expertise in working with Irish Travellers (and other nomadic groups) are co-opted to advise on PSR background and content.<sup>(9)</sup> In other probation-related areas like parole for a home detention curfew license, a fixed abode is regarded as extremely important for eligibility. This sedentarist approach should be modified and advice and guidance sought from VSGs with Irish Traveller expertise as to suitability. The need for comprehensive monitoring of Irish Travellers by the NPS is acute and more research is needed into their experiences in the criminal justice system generally.

### 5.12 Travellers' Prison experiences

This section examines some aspects of Irish Travellers experiences in Heath YOI and Baton Prison in SEEM. Much of the prison interview material with Travellers was particularly useful as the men had time to reflect on their lives both before and during their incarceration. Unfortunately the research was unable to extend to Traveller women's experience of the criminal justice system due to constraints on access, time and resources.

Fitzgerald (1996) argues that the social and economic circumstances of all prisoners including ethnic minorities are directly related to their criminality, but that black prisoners are remanded from custody for sentencing at a much higher rate leading her to assume that direct and indirect discrimination are partly responsible. Hood (1992) locates much of the race based discrimination at the remand stage in the justice system where unemployed black ethnic minority defendants are disproportionately remanded into custody. Irish Travellers are also disproportionately remanded into custody pending trial. Earlier analysis of data on Probation Service PSRs in this chapter indicate that Irish Travellers suffer racism and discrimination in the way that some PSRs are negatively constructed in relation to aspects of their culture and ethnicity. Negative and discriminatory content in PSRs would contribute to the likelihood of a custodial sentence. The few specific studies completed indicate that Travellers in general are less likely to receive bail and more likely to receive custodial sentences (Murphy, 1994; Fletcher et al, 1997; Devereaux, 1999; Stanton 1994; Fletcher et al, February 1997; Pizani Williams, 1998; NACRO/ACOP, 1995; Power, 2003b).

Irish Traveller offenders are not ethnically monitored in HM prisons or YOIs. Since 1992 offenders have been asked to self-identify on reception in prison but the categories available for white minorities are either 'white' or 'other', so Irish Travellers as a recognised 'white' minority in law go unrecognised officially in prison (and throughout the Youth Justice and Criminal Justice Systems). Yet Irish Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic group by many staff and other prisoners, while prisons such as Baton and Heath YOI now have official prisoner groups that cater for Irish Travellers and settled Irish people. So, recognition is coming from within the system by practitioners who recognise the unique characteristics and particular problems adapting to prison conditions of this ethnic group [Irish Traveller and staff prison interviews 2001-2002]. A HM Prison Service report (Heavens, 2003: Section 9.37) admits that there is virtually no understanding of Traveller culture and ethnicity by prison staff and '*very little knowledge*' of Irish Travellers provided in Prison Service training and concludes that this is an issue '*for the Prison Service as a whole*' [see also Heath YOI Diversity Manager Jay interview 2002].

Four percent of inmates in Brixton prison are Irish, but seven out of ten prison suicides there since December 1999 have come from the Irish community in Britain. The MPS is also investigating an alleged serious sexual assault of an Irish prisoner by Brixton staff in 2002. A number of voluntary groups allege that anti-Irish British ex-servicemen have been responsible for intimidation of Irish prisoners leading to deaths in custody on a number of occasions (Irish Deaths in Custody Campaign, <http://www.mojuk.org.uk/bulletins/terry.html>). The Careers Transition Partnership trains about 100 ex-servicemen as prison officers each year. Father McFlynn of the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) has raised the issue of former military personnel in the Prison Service. A CRE investigation into racism in Brixton is currently being conducted (no completion date has been set as yet), but racism against Irish Travellers and settled Irish people was only included in this research remit sometime after the project had begun and in response to complaints about their exclusion by Irish prisoner support groups. This is yet another example of the black/white binary (surprisingly coming from the CRE) that underpins much discussion around race and ethnicity in England (Hickman, 1998). McFlynn (cited in Observer, 27 October 2002) believes that this anti-Irish racism and intimidation is prevalent in some areas of the Prison

Service: *'Brixton is one prison where this is happening but we also see it in other London prisons and some in the Midlands ... I have been told by prisoners over the past four or five years of this intimidation.'* Similar experiences are documented by research interviews with Irish Travellers in this project [Irish Traveller prison interviews 2001-2002].

John McDonnell MP raised allegations of ex-Army bullying of Irish prisoners in a number of parliamentary questions to the Home Office but has had a negative response. In one suicide case Prison Officers failed to respond to an alarm in his cell. A fellow prisoner at the Coroner's Court (cited in Irish Deaths in Custody Campaign, <http://www.mojuk.org.uk/bulletins/terry.html>) said: *'He told me the officer opened the door, and said "Your brother's just died in a car crash," and shut the door on him.'* Inquests at Southwark Coroners' Court into four of the Irish suicides in Brixton produced one open verdict, two suicide verdicts and one suicide with contributory neglect. More worryingly for Irish offenders in the Criminal Justice System, the evidence at these inquests uncovered patterns of ill-treatment of the prisoners including a shocking insensitivity for the prisoners' human rights and personal dignity by prison staff and a poor standard of medical care. Each doctor stood by their clinical judgement that the man in question was not a suicide risk, even after suicides and emergency services were hindered in some cases. The Prison Service report (Heavens, 2003) of the investigation into the deaths recommended disciplining of two prison staff for anti-Irish remarks - but did not link the deaths with racism.

One Prison Officer [interview 2002] at Baton who had served in the Royal Navy spoke about Irish Travellers *'making it hard for themselves'* by not *'playing by the rules'*. He felt unlike most other prisoners that Travellers deliberately challenged authority and rejected the system. But this behaviour is often indicative that Travellers don't understand how the prison system works and are not socialised into accepting any authority that comes from outside their extended family patriarchs. So clashes do occur between Travellers who are taught to fight and defend themselves when threatened - whether in the school playground or in prison. The strict disciplinary attitude of some Prison Officers (many ex-servicemen) can exacerbate confrontations and many Travellers feel that anti-Irish sentiment fuels some of this staff/prisoner friction. A thirty-year-old Irish Traveller [interview 2002] in Baton Prison explains why he's acquired many disciplinary charges (adjudications):

*I've got fifty-nine nicks [adjudications]. ... I'd say a good fifty of them are for assaulting prison officers ...but if you get nicked in jail even if you've been provoked by an officer, they will never hear your story... You get a lot of Irish people in prison who get victimised. Yes Irish and Travellers... I think it's because of the war and the IRA ... most of the [prison] officers today who patrolled Ireland ... got stones and bottles thrown [at them] by "fucking Irish bastards". ... So far as they believe he's a Traveller and he's Irish - no different between that Irish blood and these Travellers. Prison officers actually tried to smother me in a puddle of water ... and tried to knock me out. ... I did smash up a cell and I kicked up but ... I just sat there with my hands up, [officer] come running - bounced me off the wall ... they say: "If you don't like it don't come to prison".*

This nineteen year old male Irish Traveller [interview 2002] in Heath YOI recounts his initial experiences while being temporarily held in the alien and threatening environment of a high security adult prison:

*[T]his is the first [YOI] I was ever in. I was in here for four days and then ... I went back to court, but the same judge ... put me back on remand and he said: "We are not letting him out because he's ... a high risk [offender]". The government [have] just ... said re-offenders should be locked up... But I haven't got a bad past record ... only been arrested a few times... They know I am Irish. They put me in [Dingbog] because it was the nearest prison to the court. ... That's an "A category" prison - a high security prison. ... Once I went in there I did start to lose my head 'cos it was a different regime - more a man's prison ... I was very confused. ... It was tough, I was in with three people in the cell, [then] they put me in the suicide cell 'cos they were scared in case I commit suicide 'cos they said I was on drugs...' First couple of days the man next door hung himself, so that's when I thought I need to move. ... But I never thought about killing meself ... till I come to prison. ... I thought: "Would I be better off killing meself ... just to get me away from what was happening?" ... I am too young to do something stupid like that ... if I can sort my head out.*

This young man with mental health problems was remanded into a men's high security prison because it was 'convenient' for the system to do so. The criminal justice system thereby neglected to have a duty of care to this particularly vulnerable teenage ward subjecting him to mental and physical stress instead in order to expedite a minor criminal case.

The Race Relations Liaison Officer [interview 2002] at Heath YOI commented on the lack of bureaucratic and institutional nous amongst Irish Travellers when they arrive in his prison:

*A lot of the Traveller lads come in ... acting very street-wise... I think that's very important that ... you realise that they don't actually understand the sentence, the magistrates court, the judicial procedure generally, they don't understand*

*the prison remand and allocation procedure.*

Ms. Cassidy [interview 2002] criminal justice worker with SEEM Irish Traveller Advisory Project (SEEM ITP) runs regular meetings with Irish prisoner groups (mainly Irish Travellers) in Heath YOI and Baton prison in SEEM:

*Yes, a lot of Travellers ... are coming into prison on remand. ... Take Heath YOI as an example ... there must be at least twenty young Travellers [here]. Now rather than being given non-custodial sentences or bail ... they are refused bail ... for not having driving licences, but the majority would be drink driving and driving while disqualified. ... Driving offences [tend to become] drugs related offences, fraud or GBH... once they are over twenty-one.*

Is there any cultural awareness training for prison officers about Irish Travellers?

*They have no idea who the Travelling community are. When I first came into [post] ... I phoned a SEEM prison and asked about their Traveller population and they said: "Who?" ... I ended up going to Baton prison ... got speaking to Balgit who ... was working on a foreign national strategy. ... We set up the first 'Irish foreign nationals group' and that's how we monitor [Irish] Travellers. A lot of people have problems with the name 'Irish foreign nationals group' because many of the Travellers are British citizens ... but it's a support group for anybody who identifies as Irish...*

As Ms. Cassidy asserts Travellers may not be recognised at prison management level but staff 'on the wings' do recognise Irish Travellers' 'difference', if not their ethnicity. A Race Relations Prison Officer [interview 2002; this view also corroborated by Senior Prison Officer at Heath YOI, interview 2002]<sup>(10)</sup> at Baton Prison believes that their complaints are not excessive and centre round staff and prisoner relationships such as:

*They say: "It's because I'm Irish, he thinks I'm a Gypsy or a Pikey", that sort of thing. I've got to investigate it and if there is anything I will speak to the officers. Have Travellers a negative reputation? I could not say that about Irish Travellers ... but it's very difficult to get away from stereotyping. I have personal issues where my son had his mobile phone taken ... farmers fields and fences broken down ... if the Travellers move on. They leave a lot of mess - I've seen it.*

Staff, either through personal experiences, or more often by a process of social osmosis, carry unchallenged prejudices about Travellers and nomadism. These are now often concealed in the case of black and Asian prisoners due to vigorous attempts by the Prison Service to tackle colour based racism and discrimination, but Irish Travellers are still often perceived as a criminogenic rather than an ethnic group. One Traveller [interview 2002] inmate in Heath YOI commented on staff attitudes to racism in that institution: *'That's one thing about the screws, they don't [tolerate] racist [abuse], they don't have no discrimination.'* These vigorous anti-racist policies are very helpful and should be extended to all prisons, but staff may often need regular diversity training updates to deal with newly arising issues and particularly to dispel the black/white binary that obfuscates culturally sensitive appreciation of minority white ethnicities.

Ms. Cassidy [interview 2002] struggles to quantify numbers as there are no accurate statistics collected by the Prison Service on either Travellers or Irish settled people as recommended by the Parekh Report (2000: 300) so estimates are sketchy at best:

*If you break it down into religion, Roman Catholics ... feature hugely within the criminal justice system (religion is ... monitored). The majority of Roman Catholics will be Irish [or of] Irish decent ... a lot of the Irish Travellers are [second generation]. ... There doesn't seem to be that prejudice or animosity between settled Irish and Traveller [that often exists outside].*

One Irish offender [Baton prison interview 2001] interviewed in Baton Prison identified himself as and associated closely with Irish Travellers. His mother was a Traveller though he was brought up as settled and was embarrassed by his mother's kin, but he would not associate with Travellers outside prison, he *'wouldn't be seen dead with them.'* In many cases the solidarity between Irish settled and Traveller is pragmatic and defensive in the face of generalised anti-Irish racism in the criminal justice system.

Cassidy [interview 2002] (see comments earlier in the probation section of this chapter by Heath YOI Diversity Manager Jay in Section 5.11) discusses how ignorance of the prison system impacts adversely on Irish Travellers:

*The fact that a majority of them can't read and write. Huge problems in terms of accessing services and following prison rules and regulations. The majority of Travellers that I have met have between twenty and thirty adjudications within the first two to three years of sentence. This can add up to two years onto your sentence. ... I have one*

*particular [Traveller] who has about 324 extra days added on - most for [not] following prison rules and regulations. But a lot of his behaviour was because he didn't know how to access services. If you want a toothbrush in prison you have to put in an application. If you can't read and write that's incredibly frustrating. Prisons are so overcrowded at the moment. A lot of inmates are locked up practically twenty-three hours a day, so ... you don't even have a television in your room. You can't read a book. What are you going to do? ... Prison is about loss of liberty ... not loss of human rights and that's what prison is actually doing to Irish Travellers ... its not a rehabilitative environment at all.*

Ms. Cassidy [interview 2002] discusses prison visits in relation to Irish Travellers:

*What can be difficult is if the families are nomadic ... you need a fixed abode. ... Traveller families can be large so when mum comes down she wants to bring thirteen children. [Prison authorities] just will not allow [it]. Then a lot of times the community have difficulty in hearing and receiving that news, but ... the majority of them don't have huge problems with visits...*

A young Irish Traveller [Heath YOI interview 2002] prisoner comments on the difficulties he's had keeping in touch with his family:

*I would always think about my family. I would do anything for my family. ... I have been here six months now ... they still write to me, they still let me know: "We are missing you, we love you"... I am trying to get a phone call today so I can speak to them but ... they don't know I am here. ... I was in Dingbong for three month, then in Pilchester - that's two hundred and fifty mile away.*

Another young Traveller [Heath YOI interview 2002] describes difficulties that result due to poor literacy and numeracy rates in the Traveller community generally, but also highlights a culturally sensitive solution devised by Heath YOI staff:

*She's [his wife is] a Traveller ... she don't know how to fill out postal orders and all that stuff [or] read and write ... I spoke to the number one governor and he's going to arrange for when I get my visits once a week. My wife can hand me money and ... I can hand that to the wing staff in there and he's going to put it onto my account you see?*

The Irish Traveller [Heath YOI interview 2002] cited above also describes how he's facing a possible three or four year sentence for burglary and how this will impact on his wife and child outside as well as himself:

*I was drinking, on drugs ... so now I've had time to clean up ... my wife's having a child. Is that your first child? 'My first, yea - we're both still young. Very tough ... it's like she's done a prison sentence as well ... so it's bad enough.*

A thirty-year old Irish Traveller [Baton Prison interview 2002] describes how the disadvantages of illiteracy and lack of education are further compounded by a criminal record that excludes him from many opportunities in the mainstream economy every time he gains his release:

*Well what makes it even harder is when you are young and start getting into a load of trouble and you've got a previous conviction and then you do get to sixteen and you want to try and get a job it's not very easy, because you've got previous convictions people don't want to hire [you].*

When leaving prison Irish Travellers can face particular problems directly related to their culture and ethnicity, as well as those difficulties common to most other ex-prisoners. Ms. Cassidy [interview 2002] highlights the issue of prison aftercare for Travellers:

*There are no services and this is where Irish communities really need to ... start providing support. You can refer people to [Revolving Doors and NACRO], but they refer them to Irish organisations, [who] refer them back. So its, refer, refer, refer, but nobody seems to be doing good solid work with them. They need help with housing, getting into the labour market, getting skills. ... I've got three young [Irish Travellers] in Baton Prison with severe drug problems, all willing to do drug rehab courses, but where do I refer them to? ... A SEEM Irish Centre said to me: "Well they have to have a local connection." They don't have local connections because they have been homeless. This is where we need to start putting strategies in place for these unmet needs.*

Yet again Irish Travellers fall foul of sedentary boundaries - even those of voluntary Irish community organisations with a stated policy to support them. The recurring unobvious message for Travellers coming from sedentary society and its major institutions is settle and assimilate. If Irish Travellers behave nomadically as is their way of life or aspiration, they are criminalised, but ironically recognised as different. When Travellers settle in a

sedentary fashion they are shorn of their ethnicity by the state, its institutions and much of the settled population who do not recognise or appreciate Travellers unique and rich cultural attributes. This supposedly 'inclusive' society seems to reject 'real' cultural difference that demands compromises, negotiation and human understanding, for 'neat' and 'clean' commodified cultural identities that can be modified to suit prevailing fashions. Indigenous nomads are a rich and living part of this country's cultural heritage who should be respected, engaged with sensitively and celebrated as part of a genuine process of social inclusion that respects real cultural diversity.

### 5.13 Summary and comments

The state has a responsibility to challenge anti-Traveller racism in its institutions. Aspects of criminal law (for instance the CJPOA 1994) discriminate against Travellers culture and lifestyle in the context of the Human Rights Act (1998) and the RRAA (2001) and should be amended or abolished as they have created an 'outlaw' community and intensified forced assimilation of Irish Travellers into settled accommodation. The cultural breakdown that has resulted from these policies has undoubtedly led to a degradation of Irish Travellers social and cultural bulwarks, such as extended family structures, thus leading to the social alienation and criminalisation of young Travellers. Media reporting of stories about Travellers have usually reinforced negative stereotypes and these are exacerbated by opportunistic and ill-informed statements by (often senior) politicians that further alienate Irish Travellers.

Many police forces have been reluctant to use the draconian anti-Traveller measures in the CJPOA (1994). Diversity led initiatives to combat negative stereotypes and improve service delivery to Travellers by some police forces in the wake of the Macpherson Report (1999) recommendations have produced some interesting material, but have not had either direct influence or input into Public Order policy around crucial issues such as protocols on illegal encampments. TLOs are a new diversity initiative but their remit is essentially based around public order concerns and their control and remit is delegated to local police commanders, thus undermining a more comprehensive police approach to Traveller related issues. Independent Advisory Groups set up to improve relations between ethnic minorities and the police have produced little positive policy changes for Travellers to date and are seen as 'talking shops' and unrepresentative by many critics, while 'third party reporting' initiatives for Travellers have not as yet materialised. Evidence from a number of police forces also indicate that PACE 'stop and search' powers are used disproportionately against Travellers. Diversity training in police forces has been under-resourced and very little attention has been paid to white minorities such as Irish Travellers. Police trainers identify the concept of 'Irishness' as having very negative connotations in some police forces and acknowledge that there is widespread and overt police racism directed at Irish Travellers.

YOTs have the potential and actual capability for positive intervention (as evidenced above) but the illustrative studies featured in this report indicate that YOTs local territorial basis makes it difficult for them to work with Irish Traveller offenders. The positive work by LENC YOT and others needs central co-ordination in order to spread good practice throughout the country and prevent inter-area disputes between YOT teams over responsibility for transient and nomadic people. YOTs and the Probation Service have not got the resources to have specially trained staff for dealing with relatively small minority groups like Irish Travellers, so partnerships with specialist Traveller voluntary groups and links with local Traveller Education Services (TESs) need to be enhanced to improve knowledge of and service delivery to Travellers. The negative stereotypes of Irish Travellers and settled Irish that permeate the police are again prevalent in the Probation Service. There seems to be recognition at managerial level that problems exist and local and national initiatives are planned to tackle these. The involvement of specialist Traveller support groups in monitoring and advising on Probation and YOT PSRs on Irish Travellers could contribute greatly to a reduction in discriminatory PSRs leading to unnecessary custodial sentences. The suspension of national standards by local managerial initiative (as in the illustrative nomadic Traveller case by LENC YOT) would be problematic in the NPS, so a more flexible policy approach should be adopted by Probation where nomadic groups are concerned.

The link between the employment of ex-servicemen as officers in the Prison Service and the racist intimidation of both Irish Travellers and settled Irish that allegedly contributed to some prisoner suicides, needs an independent comprehensive investigation. Disabilities such as literacy and numeracy problems prevalent in the Irish Traveller community need to be addressed in the context of Prison Service bureaucratic policies and procedures. Ignorance of these procedures contributes to high rates of disciplinary action against Irish Travellers. The remanding of young offenders especially with mental health problems into high security prisons for expedient reasons should end. Group meetings based on the 'foreign nationals' model have helped Irish

Travellers to negotiate prison regimes and provide them with a supportive social and cultural environment. No suitable provision is available for accommodation of Travellers following their release.

- 1 This quote is taken from a letter dated 15 January 1993 from ACPO's Honorary Secretary to the Labour Campaign for Traveller Rights.
- 2 The YJB grant is dependent on the number of children in your area, not the number who offend.
- 3 For details see (<http://www.apu.ac.uk/geography/progress/irish2/publish.htm>) on the internet.
- 4 The largest minority ethnic group in Britain.
- 5 Murphy's research examined ninety-one PSRs on Irish male and female defendants in magistrates and Crown courts in Nottingham.
- 6 For Devereaux's (1999: 78) research Probation Support and Information Services (PSIS) at LENCPS ... supplied PSRs on Irish defendants by probation offices throughout Greater Manchester for the period 1996 – 1999.
- 7 These officers have twenty-nine years probation experience between them.
- 8 OASys is a new computer program used by probation officers throughout the service that purports to standardise and diminish prejudicial risk assessments of offenders in PSRs.
- 9 'Partnership' in this context refers to VSGs based on settled/Traveller co-operation and who include Traveller representatives where possible and appropriate.
- 10 Both officers referred to had served in HM armed forces.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Ethnic monitoring

Precise ethnic monitoring of employment and service provision policy and practice is required under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA). Ethnic monitoring is important for a number of salient policy and service delivery purposes. This includes playing a crucial role in the identification and development of culturally appropriate services for severely marginalised ethnic minorities like Irish Travellers, the identification of gaps and poor delivery systems in service provision, inappropriate and under-use of some services such as health, education and social services, or the over-representation of Travellers in other areas like the criminal justice system. The CRE (July 2002: 3) recommendations on ethnic monitoring state that:

*Without ethnic monitoring, an organisation will never know whether its race equality scheme or policy is working. There is a risk that people will just see the policy as paying lip service to race equality. ... To have an equality policy without ethnic monitoring is like aiming for good financial management without keeping financial records.*

*Ethnic monitoring can tell you whether you are offering equality of opportunity and treatment to all ethnic groups. It can also tell you how and why you are falling short of this ideal. You can then concentrate on finding solutions and making changes, rather than using guesswork or assumptions.*

Irish Travellers were not included as a distinct ethnic group in the last Census, but CRE guidance recommends the use of expanded categories where justified by locally significant ethnic minority populations. The CRE guidance recommends that, where possible, the expanded category should be placed under the nearest relevant ethnic category. For instance, a local authority might place an additional 'Irish Traveller' category under the 'White Irish' box. Irish Travellers were only recorded as a separate category in the last Census in Northern Ireland so the government should extend this monitoring throughout Britain. Without this vital monitoring the RRA Act will struggle to impact positively on the lives of this and other 'invisible' minorities. In relation to the RRAA the Discrimination Law Association (February 2002: 219) assert that: '*Local pressure will be needed to ensure that the needs of Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are addressed. Authorities may need reminding that both are racial groups under the Act.*' Without this recognition and monitoring for Travellers provision will continue to be piecemeal and patchy at best (Parekh, 2000: 139).

### 6.2 Key strategic recommendations

All institutional service providers and all public bodies should focus on:

Following CRE guidance on ethnic monitoring and implement an additional category to monitor Irish Travellers.

Producing national statistics that include 'Irish Traveller' as a category in all its future survey and census work and update recent guidance to reflect that Irish Travellers ethnic minority status.

Including Irish Travellers, other recognised Traveller groups and Gypsies in their race equality schemes (RES) and consulting with Irish Travellers and Gypsies in relation to RES implementation.

Ethnically monitoring service delivery to Irish Travellers, other recognised Traveller groups and Gypsies and to analyse the data and take corrective action as and where necessary.

Consulting and involving Irish Travellers, other recognised Traveller groups and Gypsies in framing major future policies and services (particularly when these could have negative effects on Travellers' particular culture and lifestyle).

Providing targeted services to Irish Travellers, other recognised Traveller groups and Gypsies where needs warrant it, for example: Travellers' education, accommodation, job and skills training schemes, and healthcare.

Responding robustly to discrimination against Irish Travellers, other recognised Traveller groups and Gypsies in a similar manner as they are required to do for all ethnic groups.

Reporting progress annually on provision of services and opportunities for Irish Travellers, other recognised Traveller groups and Gypsies as part of routine annual reporting on services and supports to all communities and ethnic groups.

### 6.3 General recommendations

Listed below are some general proposals in relation to Irish Travellers for all public and private service providers and governmental institutions to adopt:

The need to acknowledge Irish Travellers as an ethnic group in Britain which encompasses Irish and British born generations.

A requirement to identify and research the unique migration patterns of Irish Travellers between Britain and Ireland and also within Britain where appropriate.

The need to comprehend and accept cultural difference in a positive way through culturally sensitive policies while tackling discrimination against Irish Traveller extended family groups.

The necessity for an appreciation of the literacy and numeracy problems of this group and a commitment by institutions to finding alternative suitable methods of communication.

An acknowledgment of their acute accommodation problems and the grave impact this has on the whole spectrum of Traveller lifestyles.

Agreement for Travellers to have input and empowerment in deciding where and how to live, and in negotiating access to services.

Acceptance by institutions and services that nomadism is not the sole ethnic qualifier for Irish Travellers as many now live in settled forms of accommodation.

Commitment to combat overt and institutionalised racism against Irish Travellers which is often ingrained, regarded as acceptable and part of commonsense dialogue and discourse.

### 6.4 Central and local government, and associated agencies

The government through its laws, policies and administration of the public services has a significant influence on race relations in society. Particularly since the passing of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the policies and practices engaged in by many police and local authorities of continually moving Irish Travellers from one area to another are both financially wasteful to all concerned and socially and psychologically damaging to Traveller families. There has been a general hostility to Travellers and a dearth of positive planning policies from central government coupled with a determination by many LAs not to provide sites and accommodation. A number of policy changes need to be implemented:

The reintroduction of a statutory and funded duty on local authorities to provide adequate and appropriate sites for all Travellers and Gypsies or an equivalent enabling and enforcement mechanism that achieves the same policy objective (see chapter 2).

Anti-nomadic sections of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJPOA 1994) particularly 'Part Five' and 'Section 39' of the Public Order Act (1986) serve to criminalise Irish Travellers and should be repealed (see chapters 2 and 5).

Current biannual 'Gypsy counts' should be replaced by assessments of Travellers' needs in the context of normal local planning processes (see chapter 2).

Local independent advisory committees (not controlled by the police) should be set up to encourage and foster better relations between the Travelling and the settled communities (see chapter 5).

Government subsidies for the provision of Travellers' sites should be reintroduced and available to any potential vetted provider (see chapter 2).

Government should co-ordinate a national register of permanent, transit and large 'gathering' sites (see chapter 2).

A formal toleration policy should be adopted towards unauthorised sites where inadequate authorised provision exists (as is now current in Scotland - see chapter 2).

The issue of racial harassment of Travellers in settled accommodation and in and around sites should be investigated as 'Hate Crime' by the police (see chapters 2 and 5).

Relevant local authority staff should receive training in aspects of Irish Traveller culture to enable them to deliver local services sensitively (see main report).

Aspects of criminal law (for example parts of the CJPOA 1994) are unjust in relation to Travellers and should be amended or abolished where necessary (see particularly chapters 3 and 5 in this report for details).

Statutory service providers (see relevant chapters in this report) are geared towards standardisation of services and deliver to a sedentary geographically bounded population. Voluntary support groups or specialist autonomous statutory services like TEs with specialist knowledge of Travellers are more flexible and appropriate for efficient service delivery to hard-to-reach groups like Irish Travellers. Partnerships between voluntary and statutory service providers are the key to service delivery in these sectors and should constitute a target strategy for providers.

## 6.5 Voluntary sector support

Small dedicated organisations with specialist knowledge (whether statutory or voluntary) who have built up trust in Traveller communities have a key role to play in the delivery of services in a culturally sensitive manner to difficult to access marginal groups like Irish Travellers. When statutory organisations agree to work in partnership with Irish community voluntary based organisations on Irish Traveller specific issues, they should ensure that these organisations have specialist knowledge of and services for Travellers and don't treat this ethnic group as an *ad hoc* addendum to their general outreach work with settled Irish people. They should also ensure that Travellers are represented adequately at management committee level and that a proactive programme exists to attract volunteers from the Traveller community and to recruit Traveller workers where appropriate. Specialist expertise with Irish Travellers is very important but access and permissions into hard-to-reach communities is a particular strength of the better run voluntary organisations (see Appendix VII for examples).

Problems can sometimes arise with voluntary Irish community organisations undertaking support work with Irish Travellers. The racism directed at Irish Travellers can be virulent in some Irish communities and is at times reflected in the management, ethos and practice of settled Irish community support groups. The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (ITM) is a dedicated 'second tier' voluntary organisation with direct Traveller involvement and a network of links to Travellers and support groups throughout the country and beyond. It is building a more positive profile for Travellers in sedentary British society.

ITM is a partnership between Irish Travellers and settled people and is actively engaged in political lobbying at all levels in co-operation with other Traveller and Gypsy bodies. National, local government and statutory agencies should consult, access, enable and support its information resources, Irish Traveller community contacts, initiatives and programmes (see Section 2.9).

Also, most voluntary organisations suffer the performance challenge of having to refund themselves in regular cycles and much time, effort and insecurity is engendered in this pursuit. Voluntary support groups lose trained staff due to poor pay rates and insecurity of employment. Continuity of funding linked to regular independent appraisals of service delivery, quality and efficiency, staff and management committee training and awareness are required to sustain and enhance service delivery to Travellers (see main report).

Traveller 'Culture and Awareness' projects should be developed and deployed in schools, prisons, YOIs, local government agencies etc. to help develop consciousness and understanding (see main report).

## 6.6 Accommodation and economy

Dealing with the issues around nomadism and accommodation are central to alleviating all the other welfare disadvantages of Irish Travellers. Any consideration of meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers has to have at its core a strategy for respecting the extended family structures of Travellers and the need to maintain

this. Specially purchased (or built) appropriate housing, permanent trailer sites and transient halting sites are among the viable options that support the extended Traveller family. The broad definition of Traveller 'accommodation' should take into account the distinct needs of Travellers and within this both permanent trailer and transient sites. It should also consider the issue of provision for Travellers in public sector accommodation through specialist housing associations that cater for extended Irish Traveller families by making available four, five and six-bedroom housing. Safeguards should be built into planning laws to prevent discrimination based on anti-nomadic prejudices.

Accommodation for Travellers should be appropriately designed to meet their varied needs. Government and local authorities should both provide and facilitate a range of site provision ranging from a national network of traditional and new temporary halting or transit sites, linked to good quality, well located and sensitively planned and managed private and public permanent sites. Accommodation policies should be informed in an appropriate and integrated way taking into account health, education, training, discrimination, plus Traveller employment and economic activity and the protection of Traveller culture. For many Travellers, their accommodation is also their workplace. A co-ordinated, holistic approach to these interrelated needs is required to improve basic services for Travellers.

The toleration and non-harassment policy adopted in Scotland includes Travellers camped on private land as well as those on government and LA property. The toleration policy in England and Wales should reflect this Scottish advance and measures should be introduced to make encampment on private land similar to the health and welfare provisions that apply on government and LA owned land. This policy should last for at least as long as it takes to provide suitable and sufficient accommodation options for Travellers (see Chapter 2).

The allocation of vacant pitches and specialist housing should be decided in consultation with Travellers to meet community needs and sensitivities. Although this appears to go against good practice in allocation and equal opportunity considerations, it has to be accepted that the cultural and economic needs of Travellers and the need to support the extended family become the guiding factors, if the provision and management of accommodation is to be successful. The sensitive management of Travellers' accommodation schemes is another factor that influences their success or otherwise. The fact that visitors may be restricted from sites by strictly imposed regulations further isolates already isolated women and the older generation (see Sections 2.4 to 2.6).

As EU, government and local authorities are considering ways of dealing with waste material a key strategy is to develop recycling as part of the Irish Traveller economy. The knowledge that Travellers have of this activity (scrap metals, gardening, house clearances etc.) should be used to develop a recycling strategy based on Traveller self-employment that would benefit both nomadic and sedentary communities. Space should be made available for recycling activity in or near whatever type of suitable accommodation is developed (see Section 2.12).

Travellers' involvement in the running of accommodation sites need to be formalised and enhanced. Training programmes should also be offered by LAs and other service providers to develop strong internal leadership to activate the Traveller community positively (see Sections 2.4 to 2.6).

A number of accommodation alternatives need research and evaluation: group housing; permanent LA sites; private sites; private family plots; and temporary or halting sites for short term stays (see Section 2.6).

The government should 'exceptionalise' the accommodation needs of Travellers particularly given lack of suitable trailer sites and the deep prejudices extant in settled communities to Traveller site projects. Mechanisms that prioritise the accommodation requirements of Travellers need to be instituted without delay (see Sections 2.4 to 2.6, 2.8, 2.10 and 2.11).

All dedicated accommodation provision should be designed to facilitate the extended family structure of Irish Travellers and enable visits by members of the extended family who may be travelling (see Sections 2.4 to 2.6, 2.8, 2.10 and 2.11).

Better temporary and permanent site provision with improved sanitary standards and water quality would improve Travellers' quality of life (see Sections 2.4 to 2.6, 2.8, 2.10 and 2.11).

## 6.7 PCTs, GP Surgeries and Hospital Trusts recommendations

There are a distinct lack of policies, procedures and inter-area co-operation for delivering healthcare to Travellers by health districts and a general ignorance of the needs of Irish Travellers, their distinct cultures and living conditions. Good practice in health work with Travellers is generally dependent on the initiative and commitment of interested individual professionals rather than any co-ordinated policies by PCTs as yet. There is no continuity of policies and practices for Travellers health throughout the country and a lack of appropriately designed and targeted information and materials to empower the extended family. A plethora of reports relating to Traveller health have highlighted various problems, and made recommendations, but very few if any of these have been implemented into mainstream HS policy and practice.

Accommodation that undermines extended families also undermines Traveller's mental and physical wellbeing. Part of the remit of PCTs is to extend quality healthcare to excluded and vulnerable so-called hard-to-reach groups. PCTs have a duty to proactively support and advocate for the right of vulnerable and excluded groups like Travellers to access a basic human right to adequate healthcare either by persuasion or sanctions where appropriate (see Sections 3.1 to 3.8 in this report for details).

INSET (in-service training) training should be provided by PCTs for all health service employees that provide a service for Travellers (see Section 3.5).

PCTs should develop a strategy in conjunction with Hospital Trusts to launch a training programme for Irish Travellers and other nomadic groups particularly aimed at Traveller women becoming qualified Health Visitors as health is traditionally regarded by Travellers as primarily women's responsibility (see Chapter 3).

All Hospital Trusts and PCTs should include a statement on the specific healthcare of Irish Travellers in their published strategic plans (see Section 3.2).

Culturally sensitive health education materials in appropriate formats should be developed by PCTs covering areas such as first aid, immunisation, cancer, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, preventative medicine, consanguinity issues and made available at and distributed by voluntary support groups, TESs, hospitals, Health Visitors and GPs (see Chapter 3).

An efficient format and workable system for keeping Traveller patient records and tracking and transferring them when families move needs to be researched and developed by PCTs and Hospital Trusts. This could have positive spin-offs for other marginalised and transient groups like refugees and asylum seekers (see Section 3.4).

PCTs should ensure when collaborating with Irish community organisations on Traveller issues that they offer appropriate specialist Traveller support as part of their outreach service (see Section 3.2).

PCTs have a duty to proactively support the right of vulnerable and excluded groups like Travellers to access a basic human right to adequate healthcare either by persuasion or sanctions on GPs, dentists and other health service providers where appropriate (see Section 3.2).

Simplify the GP registration procedure by the promotion of a sensitive approach to disabilities including poor literacy by medical and reception staff (see Section 3.2 and 3.3).

GPs should provide the appropriate Health Visitors and community nurses with regularly updated lists of their new clients (see Section 3.3).

A mobile telephone system of reminders for Travellers about booked dentists and doctors appointments using text messages and/or calls could be easily and cheaply developed by surgeries (see Section 3.4).

## 6.8 Social services departments (SSD)

In order to improve SSD's responses there should be more research into social services policy and delivery – very little has been undertaken to date. Inter-agency networking, planning and co-operation need to be encouraged with SSDs developing more sensitive Traveller related policies and practices through engagement with other service providers such as voluntary sector organisations, and TESs with expertise in the area. SSDs Community Care Plans plans should contain a detailed statement of the provision of services offered to Travellers. SSDs must

incorporate working practices that allow them to work with vulnerable people (especially children) who are homeless, transient or nomadic in a sensitive manner (see Sections 3.9 to 3.11 in this report for details).

Travellers may have much less need of orthodox Social Services than settled people because extended family support and supportive relationships between families on sites can provide a comprehensive safety net. What they do need however is culturally sensitive support and resources to maintain the extended family itself (Section 3.9).

SSDs need to be aware of the deep distrust that many Irish Travellers have of their service and work to change their authoritarian image as 'child stealers' (Section 3.9).

SSDs should develop links with community leaders in Traveller communities but caution needs to be exercised in the selection of suitable candidates to ensure they have the trust and backing of their communities (see Section 5.2).

SSDs could engage through the mediation of faith communities and/or support groups given the spirituality and religious observance of many Travellers (see Sections 3.9 to 3.11 and 2.6).

There is need for more work with women in particular to equip them with the skills to advocate or to support others in times of crisis (see Chapter 3).

#### 6.8.1 Other Services

Women's refuge centres need to have appropriate accommodation and support for Travellers fleeing domestic violence (see Section 2.9).

Those organisations and individuals providing support for Irish Traveller children in 'public care' must be aware and sensitive to their cultural needs (see Sections 2.8 and 2.9).

### 6.9 Education and training

There has been pressure on TEs to extend their work to new immigrant communities, but without extra funding (see Section 4.3 for details). LEAs have a legal responsibility for the compulsory schooling of pupils (appropriate to their age, abilities and aptitudes and any special educational needs they may have) aged five to sixteen years in their geographical area. This duty extends to all children residing in their area whether permanently or temporarily - and therefore includes Traveller children. The Education (Grants) (Travellers and displaced Persons) Regulations 1993 empowers the Secretary of State to pay grants to LEAs in support of expenditure to promote and facilitate the education of Travellers. Traveller Education Services aim to improve attendance, access to the curriculum and higher levels of achievement for Traveller children, including their full integration with other children in mainstream education. The grant mainly supports the provision of specialist peripatetic teachers, Traveller-related educational resources, classroom assistants, and specialist education welfare officers for Traveller children, distance learning packs, support for mobile provision and staff training (see Chapter 4 in this report for details).

A designated person on the school staff with appropriate cultural awareness training should liaise with Traveller families regularly by getting to know them and giving them a point of contact in school (see Section 4.2).

This liaison person should work in close contact with the education welfare officer (EWO) and arrange regular meetings to discuss current issues, concerns and achievements (see Section 4.2).

Legal dispensations should be granted to schools by the DfES to allow for some Travellers 'erratic' attendance in order to protect schools and not discourage Travellers from accessing some level of literacy (see Section 4.2).

When secondary school heads and Education Social Workers believe that a particular Traveller pupil is working with his family and acquiring useful skills and work experience, some discretionary mechanism should allow this arrangement to be formalised (see Sections 3.9, 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6).

Discrete Traveller Education Services capable of outreach community work should be maintained and properly resourced in areas with large settled and/or transitory Traveller populations (see Sections 4.2 , 4.3 and 4.6).

Recognition and respect for Irish Traveller culture should be encouraged in schools and appropriate 'inset' training given to staff (see Section 4.3, 4.5 and 4.6).

Traveller parents should be encouraged to give schools plenty of notice of any extended travelling in order for distance learning arrangements to be put in place (see Sections 4.2 and 4.5).

Vocational and skills training with an emphasis on self-employment should be developed specifically for Irish Travellers and other Travellers and Gypsies as part of a social inclusion programme that recognises Travellers unique and vital place in the overall economy (see Sections 2.12 and 4.6).

Driver training schemes should be developed to encourage young Travellers to obtain full licences - this could include positive police inputs (see Sections 4.6 and 5.12).

#### 6.10 The Criminal Justice System and Travellers

Operational policing is a crucial determinant of how all policy initiatives are translated into practice and can be particularly problematic in the case of Irish Travellers (see Sections 5.2 to 5.4). One of the central problems with police training regimes is the low priority given anti-racism and diversity training. There is an onus on the police to provide an appropriate service to all groups under the RRAA (2001), so positive engagement with all ethnic groups is essential and obligatory. Some of the recommendations below are intended to develop Traveller/police relationships towards a position of positive engagement (see Sections 5.2 to 5.5).

The negatives stereotypes of Irish Travellers and settled Irish that permeates the police are again prevalent in the National Probation Service. There seems to be some recognition that problems exist and some local initiatives are underway to tackle these (see Section 5.11). The involvement of specialist Traveller groups in monitoring and advising on Probation and YOT PSRs on Irish Travellers should contribute greatly to a reduction in unnecessary and harmful custodial sentences (see Sections 5.6 to 5.11).

Prisons are a particularly threatening and hazardous place for Irish Travellers, who find the tight and claustrophobic conditions of prisons particularly difficult to endure, due to their general aversion to enclosed accommodation. Monitoring of Travellers is not carried out by YOIs or prisons but some staff prejudice means that Irish Travellers can be subjected to harassment for being both Irish and Travellers. A strategy needs to be developed to enable culturally sensitive resettlement of Travellers. Many Irish Travellers interviewed [2000-2002] for this research found it extremely difficult when leaving prison (particularly if they had committed a violent offence) to find temporary hostel accommodation in either the dedicated Irish voluntary or mainstream sectors (see Section 5.12).

Review current diversity training for the police and put the emphasis in future training on appropriate standards of police behaviour. White and nomadic ethnic minorities must be included, with a particular emphasis on the Irish and Irish Travellers due to the historical legacy of mutual distrust and the issues around deconstructing the label of 'suspect community' in police (and prison officer) attitudes (see Section 5.4).

The issue of the racial harassment of Travellers in settled accommodation and in and around sites should be prioritised and investigated as 'Hate Crime' by the police (see Section 5.2).

PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) stop and search powers need to be reformed. Its use against Travellers deepens mutual antagonism. Section 5.3 in this report indicates that police utilise these powers often when unnecessary and inappropriate and current use of legislation is tantamount to systematic harassment and evidence of police institutionalised racism (see Section 5.3).

The development of a system of 'third party reporting' to help extend the police service to Travellers and so tackle unreported crime and develop trust over time, needs to be handled very sensitively if any real progress is to be achieved (see Section 5.2).

Police initiatives like Traveller Liaison Officers (TLOs) must have the full backing of police authorities. Within this

remit TLOs should have a defined role and local commanders be tied to a centralised policy that emphasises positive engagement and liaison with Travellers (see Section 5.3).

Police diversity policy on Gypsies and Travellers must be linked directly with Public Order policy development. Police diversity departments need to be given policy and operational 'teeth'. Their central responsibility should be to ensure police compliance with human rights and diversity legislation (see Section 5.3).

The alleged use of unofficial police memorandums to 'warn' settled communities of the arrival of Traveller encampments in their area should be investigated (see Section 5.5).

The National Probation Service need to develop and adopt a policy for dealing with nomadic offenders including the sanction of local managerial discretion in particular cases (see Section 5.11).

Similar protocols need to be put in place by the Youth Justice Board and applied to all YOTs (see Section 5.9).

Special arrangements and centralised funding should be made available to allow all YOTs to deal with nomadic and transitory offenders who cross YOT boundaries (see Section 5.3).

An operation and training interface needs to be developed between YOTs and the Probation Service in order to exchange good practice and enhance co-operation (see Section 5.7).

YOTs have the potential (and actual as evidenced here) to be capable of very positive intervention but the illustrative studies indicate that YOTs territorial basis make it difficult for them to work with Travellers. Special arrangements and centralised funding should be made available to allow for dealing with nomadic and transitory offenders moving from one YOT base to others, that all YOTs can access. The positive work by LENC YOT and others needs some sort of central co-ordination in order to spread good practice throughout the country and prevent inter-area disputes between YOT teams over responsibility for transient and nomadic people.

YOTs and the Probation Service have often not got the resources to have specially trained staff for dealing with relatively small minority groups like Travellers, so partnerships with specialist Traveller voluntary groups need to be established to enhance service delivery to Travellers (see Section 5.3).

Traveller culture awareness training should be provided for prison officers given the complaints from Irish Traveller respondents in prison about lack of cultural sensitivity and respect (see Section 5.12).

The remanding of young offenders particularly with mental health problems into high security prisons for expedient reasons should be discontinued (see Section 5.12).

More educational opportunities should be afforded Irish Traveller prisoners: one-to-one support was adjudged as particularly culturally sensitive by Irish Travellers (see Section 5.12).

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## APPENDIX I

## Background to the Research Project

The research project entailed a three-year investigation into the extent and consequences of social marginalisation, ethnic disqualification, and criminalisation on England's Irish Traveller community. The focus was to assess the impact of these socially excluding factors on the health and life-chances of Irish Travellers. The methodology was designed to promote research perspectives driven by the expressed concerns of Travellers themselves. Resultant data was used to evaluate and compare the extent and quality of health and welfare provision delivered by relevant government, statutory, and voluntary agencies. The research aimed to identify gaps, promote good practice and cultural sensitivity, and advance Irish Traveller empowerment when interacting with the state and institutional service provision. Britain was the original focus of this research. But as the project progressed and the sites for specific primary research were all located in English cities it was decided to focus the research on Irish Travellers experiences in England. Also, as devolution progresses in Britain, Traveller related policies in Scotland and Wales are developing and diverging from those extant in England. For these reasons it was deemed appropriate to concentrate the research on England, though the research and its results still hold significant relevance throughout Britain.

This social research project is concerned with social disadvantaged in terms of health, education, welfare, and the criminal justice involvement of a severely disadvantaged and marginalised minority in English society. Irish Travellers are discriminated against and excluded both institutionally and socially while their status as a distinct ethnic group in Britain is barely recognised. As such they have received scant attention from government, academic social researchers, policy formulators, or statutory service providers. These cumulative assimilationist policies and social exclusionary factors burden them with distinct disadvantages in accessing healthcare, educational and training support, and general social welfare. The impact of anti-nomadic legislation, covert assimilation policies and modernisation stresses have resulted in the partial decomposition of Irish Traveller cultural tenets, extended family structures and self-esteem leading to a marked involvement of the community in the Criminal Justice System. This research identifies and evaluates some of the causes of poor health, inadequate social care, institutional discrimination, educational disadvantage and criminalisation of Irish Traveller communities. It explores ways of developing and providing more reflective and culturally sensitive institutional policy strategies and resultant practices in key areas of service delivery, and that promote Irish Traveller empowerment.

The remit of this research report is to critique, synthesise, develop, and re-interpret distinct and fragmented bodies of knowledge regarding nomadic Irish Travellers in Britain that have been previously produced. Previous research work often reflects the piecemeal development of Irish Traveller social policy and practice by institutional agencies inappropriate to the specific cultural disposition of this distinct ethnic grouping. Research carried out by voluntary bodies or local authorities often betrays a localised and disjunctive focus due to the vicissitudes of funding research into marginal or 'invisible' ethnic groups. It draws attention to the contingent, shifting, and multiple boundaries that generate individual, collective, and institutional practices of social exclusion and inclusion. European nomadism and indigenous nomads are increasingly drawing the attention of European wide institutions and international human rights organisations in the context of social exclusion.

As a result of discussions between St. Mary's College Strawberry Hill and voluntary sector groups Brent Irish Advisory Service Irish Traveller Project (BIAS ITP) and Action Group for Irish Youth (AGIY) a consortium was formed to bid for a Community Fund research grant to finance a major social research project into the social situation of the Irish Traveller community in England. Titled, 'Room to Roam: England's Irish Travellers', the project bid was successful. The research work began in March 2000 and was completed in June 2003. The original consortium of AGIY, St. Mary's College and BIAS ITP was joined by an associate voluntary group Irish Community Care Manchester's Irish Traveller Project (ICCM ITP). AGIY managed the consortium, St. Mary's managed the research and BIAS ITP and ICCM ITP provided facilitation and support for data collection.

## APPENDIX II

## Historical background to nomadism in Europe

Travellers and Gypsies found a significant social niche in medieval and renaissance European society up to the sixteenth century and were recognised in legal agreements by popes and sovereign governments (Acton, 1994a). Commercial nomadism was an ethnically diverse, dynamic and sanctioned sector of the medieval European economy. Acton (ibid: 44; also Liégeois, 1987) believes Traveller and Gypsy<sup>(2)</sup> history in Europe:

*is marked by two relatively short periods of intense genocidal persecution – let us say 1520-1600 (varying a little between countries) and 1930-1945.<sup>(3)</sup>*

By the beginning of the seventeenth century Travellers and Gypsy's previous contribution to European culture and learning had been obliterated from most official historical discourse. Special legislation was enacted in many western European states that made it a capital offence to be nomadic (Acton, 1994a). Countless Travellers and Gypsies were 'judicially murdered' under the aegis of these laws. As Acton (ibid: 44) charges: '*Gypsy groups in Western Europe today are the survivors of a genocide that has never been repudiated by the states involved*'. In Britain the Vagrancy Act of 1822 incorporated most of the earlier anti-nomadic provisions originating in the Tudor period, but directed this legislation at controlling the displaced populations resulting from the industrial revolution.

The adaptation and application of Darwin's theories to human society during the later nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries (Social Darwinism) contributed to the scientific justification of numerous episodes of genocide. A disturbing historical continuum exists between the genocide of Travellers, Gypsies and bands of dispossessed feudal peasantry during the sixteenth century and the evolution and dominance of centralised European nation-state colonialism and imperialism based on forced assimilation and/or destruction of minority ethnic groups. The Holocaust of the Nazi period that included the killing of over one million Gypsies was only exceptional in the manner of its organisation and the numbers murdered. Throughout Europe social democratic and liberal politicians backed eugenicist policies enthusiastically through most of the twentieth century. For instance, the Swedish social democratic welfare system sanctioned the sterilisation of about 63,000 people (mostly women) for reasons of '*ethnic hygiene... under a racial purity programme approved by the state until 1976*' (Mazower, 1998: 99). Pavee Point (1998, cited in <http://ireland.iol.ie/~pavee/>), the Irish based Travellers support group, explain how these processes serve to create negative stereotypes of Travellers, but also how Travellers long folk memory of persecution by the state have made them a 'difficult to reach group':

*Roma/Gypsies/Travellers have survived centuries of forced assimilation and persecutions, which has contributed to their mistrust of mainstream society and a sense of alienation. Consequently they are perceived by many people as adopting a suspicious and defensive stance towards society in general. Against this background and in the context of ongoing social ostracism, Roma/Gypsy/Traveller ethnic identities have a tendency to become totalizing thereby rendering almost irrelevant their other identities and loyalties within civil society.*

British state discourses and policies in relation to indigenous nomadic ethnic groups like Irish Travellers and Gypsies are contradictory and sometimes betray a more sinister trajectory and logic centred around notions of 'acceptable' and 'degenerate' ethnic group identities.

## APPENDIX III

## Primary research respondents' background and competences

## Irish Traveller focus/discussion groups

Three Irish Traveller focus groups (two mixed, three women only) completed in Brent.

Two mixed young Irish Traveller focus groups.

Two male Irish Traveller focus groups were held in prison.

## Irish Travellers interviewed

Approximately sixty Irish Travellers were interviewed for this research project. These included females and males, covered an age range from about seven to seventy, and included an assortment of nomadic, settled and sited groups. Some were individual and some were group interviews.

One service provider focus group was held in LENC

## Prison interviews

Ten male Irish Traveller prisoners were interviewed in a local SEEM prison (Baton) aged between twenty years-of-age and early thirties.

## Prison staff

Race Relations Officer

Prison Officer working on prison wings

Foreign national prisoners' co-ordinator

## Young Offenders Institution (YOI) interviews

Ten male Irish Traveller prisoners all in their late teenage years were interviewed in a YOI (Heath) in SEEM.

## Young Offenders Institute staff

Race Relations Liaison Officer and Deputy Governor

Deputy Race Relations Liaison Officer

Senior prison officer on wings

SOVA volunteer prison teacher

Roman Catholic chaplain

## Two Irish Traveller women post prison

(twenty-one and mid-thirties respectively)

## Parish clergy

Three Roman Catholic parish priests were interviewed

## Police personnel

Two Traveller police liaison officers

Two police Diversity Trainers from Police training colleges

Two police Community Affairs Officers

Police Youth Officer

Community Race Relations Officer GMP LENC (civilian)

## Youth Offender Team (YOT)

Two personnel interviewed

## Probation service

Three community probation officers and one probation officer based in prison were interviewed.

## Non-statutory agencies and other miscellaneous respondents

Two race relations/equality advisors

Eleven workers (various operational competences) on Irish Traveller projects (one management committee member)

Homeless hostel manager

Homeless project worker  
 Community law partnership lawyer  
 Sure Start worker on Travellers' site  
 Head of Voluntary Services  
 Community Care Development Co-ordinator for major Irish community organisation  
 Specialist Social Services Traveller Team  
 Employment and training expert  
 Settled middle class partner (2 children) of an Irish Traveller prisoner

Primary schools  
 Teachers (heads, deputy heads, special needs co-ordinators) in seven schools comprising both state and Roman Catholic sectors

Secondary schools  
 Teachers (heads, deputy heads, special needs co-ordinators) in six schools comprising both state and Roman Catholic sectors

Traveller Education Services (TES)  
 Twelve TES teachers (ranging from heads to outreach teachers)

Other education workers  
 One education youth worker  
 One educational psychologist  
 One principal of Education Social Work  
 One Education Social Worker with Travellers  
 One School Advisory Service officer

Health authorities  
 Three Health Visitors with Irish Traveller experience  
 One PCT manager

Local Authority (LA) council personnel  
 Two Traveller Site Managers  
 One Area Housing Manager  
 Three Parks and Open Spaces managers  
 Youth Services worker  
 Homeless Unit manager  
 Gypsy Liaison Officer for Traveller site  
 Valuers Department operative with responsibility for Traveller evictions  
 Local Social Exclusion Unit deputy manager

Politicians  
 Seven local Councillors, one MEP and the Policy Advisor to London's Mayor

## APPENDIX IV

## Main organisations and research locations in report

Barry Site:	the only Local Authority (LA) site in Gander
Baton Prison:	male local prison in SEEM
Bingen borough:	situated close to central SEEM
Central Site:	LENC official site in leased to private management by LENC Council
D12:	SEEM Police Public Order Policy Department
Dingbog Prison:	high security prison in outer SEEM
Gander borough:	situated in northwest SEEM
Hadria Site:	the only LA site in Painham – one Irish Traveller family resident
Heath YOI:	Young offender Institution SEEM
Irish LENC Care:	Irish community voluntary group in LENC working with Irish Travellers
Irish town:	large city in the Irish Republic
LENC:	large English Northern City
LMC:	large Midlands City in England
Painham borough:	large borough in outer Northwest SEEM
SEEM ITP:	Irish community voluntary group based in Gander and Painham (in SEEM) working with Irish Travellers
SEEM:	South East England Metropolis
TPU:	Traveller People's Unit - specialist Social Services team at Woodlawn Borough in SEEM
YOT:	Youth Offender Team – see chapter seven
Welshtown YOT :	town in Welsh borders whose YOT was in dispute with LENC YOT

## APPENDIX V

List of primary research respondents referred to by name in report  
(all names listed are disguised - unnamed people cited in the report are not listed)

Arwick, Mr. [2001]	Painham Gypsy Liaison Officer for Hadria Site
Balgit, Mr. [2003]	Developer and co-ordinator of the Foreign Nationals Groups initiative in Baton prison
Berry, Mr. [2001]	Irish Traveller on Barry Site.
Brody, Ms. [2002]	Youth Worker with SEEM ITP in Gander and Painham
Buggy, Mr. [2001]	Barry Site official Traveller site manager in Gander
Cassidy, Ms. [2002]	Criminal justice worker with SEEM Irish Traveller Advisory Project (SEEM ITP)
Dennis [2002]	Male Irish Traveller in Heath YOI aged nineteen
Earl, Mr. [2003]	Central PCT (Primary Care Trust) Manager in LENC
Epsom, Ms. [2002]	LENC Head of TES (Traveller Education Service) and former TES teacher in Painham, SEEM
Farrell, Mr. [2002]	Deputy Head of LENC Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
Fleming, Ms. [2002]	Educational Psychologist with Painham Borough Education Department
Francis, Fr. [2001]	Roman Catholic parish priest in Gander
Glass, Mr. [2001]	Painham Youth Services worker
Gonzalez, Ms. [2002]	Manager of a post prison hostel in LENC
Gorman, Mrs. [2002]	Health Visitor in south LENC who has worked with Travellers
Gravelle, Mr. [2002]	Head of TES (Traveller Education Service) in Gander Borough

Hazel, Mr. [2001]	Gander Council Parks and Gardens manager
Henby, Mr. [2000]	Bailiff in LENC who carries out Traveller evictions
Hijaz, Mr. [2002]	LENC Police Community Race Relations Officer (civilian)
Hopkins, Fr. [2003]	Heath YOI Roman Catholic chaplain
Humphrey, Sergeant [2002]	SEEM Police Diversity Unit worker with responsibility for Travellers and Gypsies.
Hutchinson, Ms. [2000]	assistant head-teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator at a Painham LA High School
Jay, Mr. [2002]	Heath YOI Diversity and Race Relations Manager
Keith, Mrs. [2002]	Headteacher in Gander school
Kelly, Ms. [2002]	Family Worker with SEEM ITP
Knock, Mr. [2002]	Formerly an Education Social Worker and now an outreach support worker with Irish Travellers in LENC
Laterra, Ms. [2002]	Primary TES support teacher in Gander Borough
Leab, Mr. [2001]	Teacher at an RC girl's secondary school in Gander
LENC Probation Officers [2002]	Two experienced women officers discussed anti-Traveller racism in the LENC Probation Service
Lot, Mrs. [2002]	Health Visitor in LENC who has worked with Travellers
Mark [2002]	Worked for Irish LENC Care, a voluntary group in LENC working with Irish Travellers
McCardle, Mr. [2002]	Head-teacher of a central LENC RC High School
McCarthy, Sergeant [2002]	SEEM Police College diversity instructor
MPA [4 May 2001]	Irish Community Consultation meeting with the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA)
Noonan, PC [2002]	Police Traveller Liaison Officer (TLO) in west SEEM
Norton, Mr. [2002]	Head of north LENC Youth Offender Team (YOT)
O'Rourke, Fr. [2002]	Roman Catholic parish priest in inner-city LENC
Pedes, Mrs. [2001]	Area Housing Manager in Gander with responsibility for Traveller site
Player, Mr. [2001]	Environment department of LENC Council responsible for illegal encampments
Plummer, Sergeant, [2002]	LENC Police Training Officer
Potts, Ms. [2001]	Deputy head and Learning Support Co-ordinator at a LA primary school in Painham
Prison Officer [2002]	Works at Baton Prison who has served in the Royal Navy
Race Relations Officer [2002]	Senior Prison Officer in Baton Prison, SEEM
Richard, Ms. [2002]	Barry Site Manager and worker in Homeless section of Housing Department in Gander
Ryan, Mr. [2002]	Head of LENC primary school
Senior Prison Officer [2002]	Prison Officer in Heath YOI
Sidhu, Mr. [2001]	Gander Labour Councillor
Simon, Ms. [2001]	Lawyer with Gander Law
Simpson, Mr. [2001]	Works for an Irish community voluntary group that provides training and support for job seekers in SEEM
Stewart, PC [2002]	LENC Police Youth Officer
Stryder, Mrs. [2002]	Former head of TES (Traveller Education Service) in LENC
Sutherland, Ms. [2002]	Head of Painham TES (Traveller Education Service)
Tarrington, Mr. [2002]	Street Support Worker with City Safe charity in LENC
TPU staff [2001]	Traveller People's Unit Staff in Woodlawn Borough SEEM
Trevor, Mrs. [2002]	Manager of Painham Association Voluntary Service
Weet, Ms. [2002]	Painham Youth Worker
Wilson, Mr. [2002]	Gander TES teacher
Wood, Inspector [2002]	South LENC Police Community Affairs Officer

## APPENDIX VI

## Using appropriate research methodologies

Only culturally sensitive qualitative work based on close informed observation and detailed sympathetic interviewing techniques and research approaches can gain the respect and confidence of groups and individuals that have been marginalised and disqualified by the State or its coercive institutions. Culturally sensitive qualitative work based on in-depth interviews and their careful analysis is necessary to access the alternative perspectives and lived experiences of oppressed groups. Statisticians from the government's own Social Exclusion Unit such as Lessof and Jowell (22 November 1999: 156) who specialise in developing quantitative methods to measure the responses of those on the margins argue that qualitative methods are crucial when attempting to locate and understand the mechanisms that underpin exclusion:

*Although qualitative research projects are not "measurement tools" per se, they too can be powerful tools in helping to understand elements of social exclusion [or any form of discrimination] that quantitative research often only reveals rather than explains.*

They proceed to praise some recent qualitative research work based on in-depth interviews and focus groups with immigrant communities in Britain relating to the impact of racism on their lived experience. Mundane household activities such as hanging out clothes to dry became 'strategic events' due to endemic racist abuse from neighbours (Chahal and Julienne, 1999). Ostensibly comfortable suburban homes could become traps, where to venture into the garden was perceived as dangerous by non-indigenous ethnic groups.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (2001-2002: 22-23) has also emphasised the need for more local qualitative ethnographic research studies in order to improve service delivery in the criminal justice area:

*[T]here is a relative dearth of studies of a more ethnographic nature on the daily work of probation staff with offenders and how they regard each other and the activities in which they engage.*

This research project also recognises the need to represent the 'lived experiences' of all research respondents in this research project, thus a qualitative ethnographic perspective is employed. This strong ethnographic element ensures that respondents are not judged solely by the standards and norms set by the dominant culture in society – as a result the research is grounded in specific cultural contexts that appreciate and legitimise the particular dispositions of the various Irish communities involved (Baszanger and Dodier, 1997).

Community development principles offer an appropriate model for working with Irish Travellers (Gaffney, 2001).<sup>4</sup> Simplistic explanations of the social situation of Irish Travellers are inaccurate and unhelpful. Consequently, the specific social and health problems Irish Travellers experience prompt a holistic, multi-dimensional research approach. Irish Travellers and settled people are most effective in a research and development partnership recognising their respective responsibilities, strengths and competencies (Pavee Point, 1997). There is also value in developing a range of associations with other agencies, both voluntary and statutory. The structure and trajectory of this research project attempts to develop these ideas into potential policies that promote positive practice with Irish Travellers and other nomadic communities.

## APPENDIX VII

## Data collection methods and reflections on their practice

This is a detailed interdisciplinary research project that investigates the source and effect of various socially excluding factors on the health and social welfare of Irish Travellers. It examines the personal and group strategies of specific Irish Traveller individuals and communities in relation to health, education, welfare and criminal justice institutional practices and service accessibility in two distinct geographical areas incorporating two SEEM Local Authority (LA) boroughs (Gander and Painham) and the LENC City Council area. Through analysis of the welfare needs and experiences of Irish Travellers in relation to their gender and age profiles; their geographical locations; and settlement status;<sup>5</sup> the research attempts to evaluate and compare the extent and quality of health, educational, criminal justice and welfare provision and delivery by statutory (local and national) and other agencies to the Irish Traveller population in England. Data is analysed to detect gaps in service provision and delivery, and identify both poor and positive culturally sensitive practice by the health, educational, criminal justice and welfare agencies dealing routinely with Irish Travellers.

The extensive fieldwork focused on Irish Traveller communities in west SEEM and in LENC. These areas have some of the highest concentrations of Irish Travellers in Britain. The study encompasses Irish Travellers living on local authority sites, unauthorised encampments, and those either temporarily or permanently settled in these study areas. The project used a range of qualitative research methods. The research began with a preliminary general examination of Traveller related welfare issues, fact finding, and an assessment by observation and discussion with local Traveller support groups of the research locales to be studied. The research partnership with these voluntary groups<sup>6</sup> greatly facilitated the building of trust with Traveller communities that are extremely wary of settled people, particularly those who are perceived as representing 'official' authorities. This partnership with voluntary sector workers greatly facilitated the development of relationships of mutual trust with Irish Travellers over time, and contributed greatly to the depth and quality of primary research data obtained. Field research at these sites comprised three main methodologies: a rolling programme of field observation by the research team for the duration of the research programme; generative focus groups; and a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with Travellers and local authority, national, and voluntary sector service providers.

Ethnographic observations (that do not judge Travellers by the standards and norms of sedentary society) were conducted throughout the project's duration and were recorded in research diaries that contributed to the data and its analysis. These diaries were based on short weekly reports containing commentary and context to provide a broader appreciation of the formal data collection exercise (in-depth interviews and focus groups) by researchers when active in the field. This observational element adds a strong ethnographic element to the research, grounding it in a specific cultural context (Baszanger and Dodier, 1997). Joint de-briefing sessions for the researchers helped to produce a reflective and reflexive 'collage' of shared, though also individualised observational experience on all aspects of the fieldwork research. These insights were used both to inform and positively critique the researchers' own knowledge base and considerably inform content in the resultant research report.

The generative focus groups were used to encourage Travellers to express their views and help determine the main research questions thus focusing the enquiry on areas of particular concern to Irish Travellers. Both gender specific and mixed Traveller focus groups (between five and eight members) were arranged in each main research location. A lack of formal internal community organisation within Traveller groups hindered consistent research feedback. The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) in Britain is now developing a national network of Traveller groups and associated parties (while also lobbying centres of political power) in order to develop a coherent 'grassroots' Irish Traveller pressure group. These developing networks should greatly aid the dissemination of the research results and recommendations in future.

The in-depth interviews pursued the issues and concerns highlighted in the generative focus groups, but in a more personalised, reflective, and detailed format constituting a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with a loose cross section of Irish Travellers in each selected research area (see Appendix III). The original research plan envisaged about ninety-six interviews in total. These in-depth interviews were conducted with a wide range of Irish Traveller respondents, key local informants and service providers (voluntary groups, social workers, teachers, homeless support, Traveller Liaison Officers and Traveller Education Services [TESs], health visitors, council services, police forces, probation services, the prison service and Catholic clerics). In the event about one hundred and forty interviews were completed (though a few could not be used for various technical reasons explained later). The in-depth interview and focus group results were analysed using a range of analytical tools including the 'QSR N6' qualitative analysis computer program.

Initial research evidence indicated that large numbers of young Travellers were involved negatively with the criminal justice system; consequently data collection was significantly expanded in these areas. Focus groups were conducted with Travellers in Baton prison and led to ten in-depth interviews with individual Travellers. Ten Travellers were subsequently interviewed in Heath Young Offenders Institution and appropriate staff also interviewed in both institutions. This work provided insight about Irish Travellers experience and paths into and through the criminal justice system, but was also a valuable source of data about Traveller men's experiences generally. This was particularly important as Irish Traveller adult males were often reluctant to give interviews outside of prison. Many Traveller men felt that the prison regime afforded them the time to reflect on their lives and they often welcomed the chance to talk intimately to a sympathetic outsider and were generally very forthcoming in interviews. Interviews with Traveller women could usually be arranged relatively easily through trusted voluntary workers and women were very concerned about their children's futures and interested in any project that might improve their life chances.

Research of an in-depth qualitative nature with marginalised and vulnerable groups poses a number of complex ethical considerations. The research fieldworkers respected the ethical guidelines of the BSA<sup>7</sup> and provided guarantees about disclosure, information on the aims of the research, assurances of confidentiality, and anonymity to all respondents. The research promoted Traveller empowerment by including them where practicable in the research, writing, and dissemination processes.<sup>8</sup> The research process incorporates features designed to utilise Traveller knowledge systems including 'Traveller Consultation' sessions<sup>9</sup> that contributed to the cultural capital of Irish Travellers by forming the basis for a 'Traveller Advice' booklet that compliments this report.

There were many complications and resultant vicissitudes when taping interviews and focus groups on sites, in prisons and other difficult acoustic locations and group situations. For example, children and adults sometimes entered and exited during interviews and focus groups, prisons echoed with the clamour of inmates and staff – there were very little that could be done about these interruptions. The use of 'mini-disk recorders' was shelved early in the process as battery life proved short and 'power' indicators were unreliable prompting a return to the poorer sound quality but better reliability of cassette tape-recorders. Some data was lost as a result of this. Transcription of some interviews also resulted in problems as transcribers had difficulty with some accents, poor sound quality in parts due to reasons explained above, and this resulted in minor loss of data. Also, due to a dearth of transcribers a small number of tapes were not transcribed. Staffing, timetable and technical hitches did create a number of difficulties, but these were relatively minor in the context of such a large research project and had minimal impact on data collection, analysis and writing-up.

- 1 All people, including Irish Travellers, should have access to resources that enable them to meet '*basic human needs, to reach a socially acceptable standard of living, and to live with dignity in society*' (cited in Pavee Point, January 1998).
- 2 Landless peasant itinerants joined Gypsy and Traveller bands and coercive state laws were directed indiscriminately at both groups (Hawes and Perez, 1995).
- 3 This latter period refers to the Nazi extermination of Gypsies during the Second World War. The intervening period was characterised by sporadic and habitual harassment.
- 4 This means working with, rather than for, Travellers. It supports collective action, participation and empowerment of Travellers, and gives priority to preventative actions.
- 5 This includes nomadic; unauthorised, LA and private sites; and 'settled' housing categories.
- 6 Consortium members and associated voluntary workers in the Irish Traveller sphere.
- 7 British Sociological Association.
- 8 Real improvement in Travellers' social situation requires the active involvement of Travellers themselves. Settled people have a responsibility to address the various processes that operate to exclude Travellers from participating as equals in society (Pavee Point, 1998).

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