

Response to A City for All Londoners

London Gypsy and Traveller Unit

December 2016



LGTU welcomes the Mayor's commitment to equality, fairness and community participation. However it is disappointing to see that London's Gypsy and Traveller communities are not mentioned anywhere in the Mayor's vision. London's Gypsies and Travellers have been actively involved in discussing their concerns and formulating suggestions for the GLA in the [London Gypsy and Traveller Manifesto](#). We would hope the Mayor has seen this document and can begin to consider the crosscutting issues facing these communities and the need for a policy approach that recognises their identity and heritage in London, their contribution to London's diversity, but also, importantly, the systemic discrimination and marginalisation they face both in institutions and in wider society.

London's Gypsies and Travellers want to have a voice in shaping the future of London and want to have a place in the city where they can access opportunities to thrive. This requires:

- Recognition and respect for their culture, identity and traditional way of life in all the Mayor's strategies and London Plan
- Leadership from the Mayor, Deputy Mayors and GLA officers to address discrimination and stigmatising attitudes
- A comprehensive evidence base, detailed assessment of cross-cutting impacts and inclusion in the SHLAA and SHMA, IIA, Equality Framework and other relevant documents
- Inclusive and innovative policy approaches that draw from the expertise of the community and best practice models from across the country, such as the [Negotiated Stopping model](#)
- Resources and capacity building for community members, local authority and GLA officers, elected representatives and other public institutions to work collaboratively
- Targeted interventions to address priority concerns related to accommodation, health, education and employment issues
- Recognition of the [London Gypsy and Traveller Forum](#) as a stakeholder in preparation of the Mayor's strategies and London Plan and invitations to working groups such as the Strategic Housing Market Partnership and other forums, stakeholder groups and boards. The direct expertise and experience of community groups in London needs to be represented in the governance structures that oversee these strategies and their delivery, to substantiate the Mayor's commitment to strong communities and active citizenship. In particular we wish to participate in the production of the Equality Framework, Health Inequality Strategy, Housing Strategy and the London Plan.

LGTU has been working closely with Just Space on the production of the [Towards A Community-Led Plan for London](#) and we would like to see the Mayor engaging proactively with these policy proposals.

We also wish to make a number of comments and suggestions related to specific proposals in A City for All Londoners as follows.

Housing

The Mayor needs to acknowledge that meeting the housing needs of Londoners and particularly those on low incomes and those who are systematically excluded from secure, good quality, culturally appropriate accommodation requires deep and urgent changes of approach in policy, funding and decision making. Significant efforts should be directed to the delivery of not for profit, socially rented homes, caring for existing homes and communities and securing devolved powers to create the mechanisms to achieve this, as recommended in the more detailed proposals on the Just Space publication.

London's Gypsies and Travellers share very similar housing struggles with many other communities and face extreme negative impacts in terms of health and wellbeing, family life, access to education and employment, identity and the ability to maintain traditions and culture. Their particular accommodation needs should be met through:

- Protecting and investing in existing Gypsy and Traveller sites to ensure they are not closed or relocated due to redevelopment plans and to address the systematic lack of care and management that has led to many sites falling into disrepair and creating tensions and lack of trust as well as impacts on the health of residents
- Pro-actively supporting local authorities to identify and meet the need for additional caravan site accommodation, through a clear and inclusive policy direction in the London Plan and Housing Strategy, encouraging councils, housing associations and community-led groups to work collaboratively on innovative models of delivery and securing funding and identifying capacity for Gypsy and Traveller sites through the London SHLAA.
- Taking a strategic and coordinated approach to address the causes and impacts of unauthorised encampments, recognising that this is often the only option for some Gypsies and Travellers to continue to live their protected traditional way of life. In a previous letter to the Mayor we proposed a London wide Negotiated Stopping Charter, which would minimise the need for costly and frequent evictions and consequently the impacts on children, women, older people and those with disabilities.
- Giving consideration to the negotiated stopping model as an option for Gypsies and Travellers who are placed in temporary and emergency accommodation, very often in highly unsafe and unsuitable conditions, for example by assigning this as a meanwhile use. This would minimise costs to local authorities and reduce the impacts on families who are otherwise displaced from their community and family networks and face discontinuity in health care and education.
- Delivering more socially rented accommodation suitable for families and meeting high standards of accessibility.
- Addressing the serious concerns of discrimination and exclusion facing Gypsies and Travellers in the private rented sector.

Economy and education

As highlighted in the London Gypsy and Traveller Manifesto, a very high proportion of the community is not economically active and compared to the London average, a higher percentage of Gypsies and Travellers provide unpaid care or face a long term illness or disability. Children and young people from the Gypsy and Traveller community still have lower educational outcomes than the London average and other ethnic groups. To address these issues there is a need to:

- Take steps to address the discrimination faced by Gypsies and Travellers in the labour market
- Recognise the entrepreneurial spirit in the community, support those in low-paid self-employment to access better and more sustainable opportunities and dedicate funding to help Gypsies and Travellers and especially young people to set up their own businesses in traditional sectors and trades.
- Diversify apprenticeships and training opportunities, including for adults, and support and resource third sector organisations who provide tailored, culturally sensitive skills and training programmes.
- Develop a better understanding of the relationship between insecure and unsuitable accommodation and economic inactivity and the subsequent multiple inequalities facing women, young people and those with limiting illness and disabilities in the community which do not allow them to be in paid employment or run their own business

Health

Gypsies and Travellers suffer from worse health outcomes than any other ethnic minority group. Common health issues affect members of the community at all stages in life. There are higher incidences of maternal death, stillbirth, miscarriages, long-term illnesses, diabetes and chronic conditions particularly of the respiratory system. Life expectancy is 12 years less for Gypsy and Traveller women and 10 years less for men, compared to the UK average. Gypsies and Travellers are also more likely to suffer from mental health issues such as depression and anxiety than other marginalised groups. Some of the factors which affect the health and well-being of Gypsies and Travellers are barriers to accessing services, discrimination, recent changes to the health system, employment, education and family circumstances. Research also shows that insecure, poor quality and unsuitable accommodation together with isolation from family and community can have negative impacts on the health of Gypsies and Travellers.

There is an urgent need to acknowledge these issues and ensure that they are included and addressed in the Mayor's Health Inequality Strategy, London Plan and other relevant strategies and delivery plans.