



Hate Crime and its violent consequences: CSAN response

1. CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network) is the domestic social action arm of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Our network includes 44 Catholic charities and dioceses who work with vulnerable people throughout England and Wales.

2. The response below is formed from the frontline experiences of members of the CSAN network who work with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (GRT): The Irish Chaplaincy, The Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ), and catechists and pastors for children from GRT communities in Catholic schools.

3. We welcome the Committee's inquiry and are pleased to be able to respond. In particular, we have responded to points 1, 2, 4 and 6 of the terms of reference of the inquiry, highlighted in red.

4. Summary of key points

4.1 The members of our network who work with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have reported an increase in reports of racist incidents since Brexit, in particular against Roma.

4.2 Incidents of hate crime against members of GRT communities are underreported due to a lack of confidence that reports will lead to effective action and a mistrust of both criminal justice agencies and the police.

4.3 There is a lack of pressure on these bodies from above to prosecute perpetrators of hate crime against members of GRT communities because there is little sympathy for these groups. Negative stereotypes of members of GRT communities are perpetuated in the media and the attitude which leads to hate crime has gone unchallenged.

5. Key recommendations

5.1 The primary requirement to increase the reporting of hate crime is the creation of trust amongst GRT communities in the police, the CPS and those who scrutinise these bodies. The key to achieving this is showing that reports of hate crime from GRT communities will be treated with equal gravity to those from other communities.

5.2 Successful prosecutions should be publicised in order to give victims the confidence that their complaints will be taken seriously and perpetrators will be prosecuted.

5.3 Engagement with the support which churches can offer to members of the Traveller community would be welcome. Roman Catholic dioceses can play an important role in welcoming the Traveller community into the local area, in the parishes and in schools. This can help challenge the persistent attitudes that underpin hate crime against this community. Our members recommend support for faith-based organisation advocacy projects which use catechists or pastors to GRT communities as mediators both for reporting hate crime and engaging with the community generally.

The effectiveness of current legislation and law enforcement policies for preventing and prosecuting hate crime and its associated violence.

The barriers that prevent individuals from reporting hate crime, and measures to improve reporting rates.

6. Lack of enforcement of hate crime legislation

6.1 There is suitable legislation to address discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. However, we believe that progress could be made in improving staff awareness within criminal justice agencies of the issues facing GRT groups, and in the application of current law where incidents have occurred.

6.2 Our members report that GRT communities believe that even if hate crime is reported, it is unlikely to lead to prosecution. The Irish Chaplaincy's Traveller Equality Project has liaised in a number of cases with the police regarding discrimination against GRT community members. In two cases they were provided with no detailed explanation as to why the CPS would not prosecute despite substantial evidence of discrimination.

6.3 Whilst police forces are required by the government to record the ethnicity of users and employees, 81% of UK police forces do not currently have a category for GRT communities.¹ Therefore, there is limited data on the prevalence of hate crime against this community or the efficacy of the authorities in dealing with it.

6.4 Our members have found that by not pursuing prosecutions in cases of anti-Traveller racism, the police and the CPS reinforce a 'them and us' mindset in many Travellers, thereby (albeit indirectly) risking the increase of criminality and disenfranchisement amongst this community.

6.5 Furthermore, there is little pressure on the police and the CPS to prosecute from those of positions of authority within these bodies, or politicians. Both The Irish Chaplaincy and CARJ

¹ The Traveller Movement; Inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers in ethnic monitoring systems of Police forces in the UK (2016), p.7

have noted that levels of criminality amongst GRT communities tend to be well publicised,² but there is little coverage of the racism directed at these communities. Consequently, members of the communities feel alienated within society, are less likely to become engaged with mainstream society, and even less likely to believe that society's mechanisms will rectify injustices committed against them.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Priority should be given to making the implementation and enforcement of current anti-discrimination laws for GRT communities equal to that for other ethnic groups. The police and the CPS should demonstrate through more visible action on racism and eventual prosecution (where appropriate) that the law is there as much for the protection of GRT communities as it is for other communities.

7.2 Criminal justice sector agencies should be required to include the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in their ethnic monitoring systems, as classified in the Office for National Statistics 2011 National Census.

7.3 The government should give victims the confidence that their complaints will be taken seriously and perpetrators will be prosecuted. A clear indication by word and deed from government ministers and agencies that anti-Traveller racism is illegal and will be challenged vigorously by the state could be publicised, and successful prosecutions could be brought to the public's attention both through official statements and the media, as suggested in the Government's July 2016 *Action Against Hate Crime* strategy.³

7.4 In view of the cost of bringing a prosecution, the government may wish to consider courses in diversity and equality – similar to the speed awareness courses for drivers caught speeding – if the alleged offender is willing to take that route instead of going to court.

8. Lack of determination to recognise and act on hate crime against the GRT communities

8.1 In addition to lack of enforcement, our members have noted a lack of will among the police and the CPS to enforce the legislation and policies to prevent hate crime. The general sentiment is that there is an unwillingness on the part of the police and the CPS to regard anti-Gypsy and anti-Traveller discrimination as seriously as other forms of racism.

8.2 For evidence of this unequal approach to anti-Traveller racism it is worth noting the work of

² Recent examples from the Daily Mail: [One policeman vs 30 TRAVELLERS: Invasion of caravans and vehicles](#) (24.08.16); [Travellers are evicted from London park after getting in through gap in the fenceposts](#) (19.08.16); [£3m taxpayer-funded gypsy camp housed a giant cannabis plantation](#) (14.06.16)

³ *Action Against Hate: The UK government's plan for tackling hate crime* (2016) p.21



the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association, and the substantial allegations of anti-Traveller social media posts by serving police officers in 2015.⁴

8.3 As such, there is very little trust between members of GRT communities and the police. Reasons given for not reporting hate crimes included low expectations of a satisfactory response, deep mistrust of the authorities and fear of not being believed.

9. Recommendations

9.1 The primary requirement to increase the reporting of hate crime is the creation of trust in the police and CPS amongst GRT communities. This can be achieved with increased understanding of GRT communities within the police force, for example through the development of a community policing model, dedicated police units working alongside representatives of the groups being affected, and police forces engaging with the valuable work of the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association.

The type, extent and effectiveness of the support that is available to victims and their families and how it might be improved.

The role of the voluntary sector, community representatives, and other frontline organisations in challenging attitudes that underpin hate crime.

10. Third party support and advocacy

10.1 In the experience of our member charities, people from GRT backgrounds are much more likely to approach the police regarding a racist incident with the support of a third party than without.

10.2 Initiatives which offer useful advocacy schemes are particularly useful: Irish Community Care Merseyside, Community Law Partnership in Birmingham and the Equality & Social Justice Unit at the Traveller Movement on Holloway Road, London are good examples. Such advocacy often bridges the huge levels of distrust that some GRT communities have as a result of heavy-handed and/or punitive policing experienced in the UK or in other countries.

11. Recommendation

11.1 The role of third party organisations in aiding the victims of hate crime both with reporting it and dealing with its consequences should be recognised and advocacy projects supported.

12. The attitudes which underpin hate crime

⁴ 'Met Police to face racism probe after secret online Facebook page filled with abusive comments discovered'; [The Independent](#), 18.07.15



12.1 Roman Catholic pastoral staff working with children from GRT communities in the education system have highlighted bullying in schools. One even reported her own daughter suffered second-hand racism as it was known that her mother teaches Irish Travellers and Gypsies.

12.2 Additionally, they have found that school staff who have little understanding of this community and schools are in a difficult position as they are bound by targets and league tables which do not make any allowances for this group.

12.3 Our member charities have highlighted that members of the GRT communities are the victims of hate crime from their local neighbourhood. They face prejudice from local people when Gypsies and Travellers need planning permission for sites, but if they are housed it is made clear they are not welcome in permanent accommodation either – anecdotal evidence from Roman Catholic pastoral workers tells of members of the GRT communities having had faeces posted through their letter box and abuse from neighbours.

13. Recommendations

13.1 Support in dealing with the bullying in schools would help the children of these communities to recognise the need to report verbal abuse and discrimination from an early age.

13.2 Our members have stressed the support which churches can offer to members of this community. There are churches across the country who can influence their local communities, with the Irish Traveller community in particular either actively practising or retaining strong links to Roman Catholicism. If support is to be offered to voluntary and community organisations, Roman Catholic dioceses can play an important role in welcoming the Traveller community into the local area, and in parishes and schools in order to challenge the persistent attitudes that underpin hate crime against this community.