

# Irish Traveller Movement in Britain



## A Time for Change

November 19th 2009 at The London Resource Centre

## Conference Report

### 5 KEY CONFERENCE POINTS

1. Delays, poor consultation and research in very slow implementation of the Housing Act, 2004 and Planning Circular 1/2006
2. Opportune time for GTR to be pro-active, rather than re-active and consultative.
3. Need for greater solidarity and cohesion within and between GTR communities.
4. Consultative expertise of GTR community members, especially youth, should be better recognised and valued
5. Media continues to negatively target GTR communities with little public challenge.

# Chair and Speakers

**Pauline Anderson (Conference Chair)** *ITMB Advisory Group Member*

**Bill Holland** *ACPO Lead on Gypsies and Travellers*

**Andrew Slaughter MP** *All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform*

**Shami Chakrabarti** *Director - Liberty*

**Barry Mussenden** *Deputy Director, Policy and Strategy Directorate, Department of Health*

**Julie Joyce** *Irish Traveller, Greater Manchester*

## What was explored at this conference

What are the challenges for service providers for the next year? How can conflict resolution be used between the settled and Traveller communities? What are the issues for Traveller youth and how do we give them a voice? How can we reach out to women and the community as a whole to improve health? How can we develop effective resident groups? How can we meet the accommodation needs of the Traveller community through planning legislation?

More broadly, we will explore the pressing concerns of delegates as a whole through our speakers, panels and question sessions.

## Delegates and fees

**The conference provided an information sharing, gathering and networking opportunity for:**

Members of the Traveller/ Gypsy communities

Social Services

Community workers

Youth Workers

Local authority employees in accommodation

Health workers

Prison and Parole staff

Civil servants

Social inclusion and elected members

Teachers

The Police

Statutory service pro-

Statutory Sector: £190

Voluntary Sector less than 10 employees £70

Voluntary Sector/ Traveller Education Services £140

80 Free tickets for Traveller/ Gypsy population



R: Delegates were able to network between sessions.



L: Workshops were delivered by old and young.



## Pictures from the conference

L: In the workshops groups of people from all different back grounds worked together to tackle issues facing Irish Travellers

# Speakers Summaries

## **PAULINE ANDERSON - CHAIR**

Pauline opened the Conference briefly outlining her background and what inspired her to become involved in Traveller issues with the ITMB Traveller Advisory Group. For personal reasons, she has a particular interest in early deaths in the Traveller community and housing. She also is interested in tackling Traveller ethnicity denial in all it's forms and in establishing a culture of Traveller pride.

Pauline announced that there was a free "Pavee Ceilidh " DVD for all Conference delegates.



## **ANDREW SLAUGHTER, LABOUR M.P.**

Andrew kindly stood in for Lord Avebury, who unfortunately could not attend the Conference due to illness. Andrew is the Labour M.P. for Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush in London and, like Lord Avebury, is a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform, chaired by Julie Morgan M.P. Andrew has been in politics since 1986.

Andrew opened by stressing the importance of what Government does in relation to the Traveller and Gypsy populations, citing the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and the Housing Act 2004 as key legislation having a major impact on GTR communities.

Andrew described the work of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform, of which he is a member. The Group seeks to raise awareness of the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities; to highlight disadvantages and to challenge discrimination and promote good community relations. The Group challenge anti-Traveller or Gypsy sentiment expressed by politicians and tries to keep the Gypsy and Traveller agenda to the forefront in Parliament. The Traveller and Gypsy dimension is often buried deep in housing and planning papers.

Andrew has a particular interest in the implementation of the Housing Act 2004 locally in London, seeking a just and fair distribution of site provision. He remarked that there had been little progress on the expected outcomes of the 2004 Act in London.

The Assessment of Traveller and Gypsy accommodation needs required by the Act is a work in very slow progress. He believed that a shortage of social housing and housing density issues are being used as a reason for delay. He anticipated with the recent change of London Mayor that a revised best case Assessment scenario would be for 550 new pitches to be needed in London. He also affirmed that there was no barrier to stop Local Authorities from proceeding immediately under the Act, should they so choose. He felt that local targets required under the Act should be clearer and that a stick & carrot approach should be implemented for Local Authority pitch development. Andrew said there was a low take-up of Department of Communities and Local Government site development and improvement grants

### **Question from the floor:**

*How likely is the Equality Bill to be passed into law with a change of Government?*

### **Speaker Answer.**

*It is still likely to go through, although the effects on implementation would then remain to be seen. Sometimes, plans and strategies are not translated into meaningful action.*



## **BARRY MUSSENDEN –Department of Health**

Barry outlined the current Department of Health strategy affecting the health and well-being of the nation's Traveller and Gypsy populations. He described the measures as twofold: 1) building of capacity and improved quality throughout the NHS and 2) Specific developments for the Gypsy and Traveller populations. He remarked that achieving fairness and equality in health are matters of life and death.



### **1) NHS Capacity Building and Quality**

The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NHS in 2008 led to a next stage review, outlining changes needed for the future. The resultant “High Quality Care for All” report contained new measures related to ensuring better accessibility, fairness, personalisation and better quality, as distinct from the traditional “one size fits all” approach. The NHS is to become more patient-led. The first year review of the report’s strategy has seen improvements but the Department of Health acknowledges there are still health inequalities. Traveller Gypsy Roma outcomes remain poor, especially in the areas of life expectancy and infant mortality. Underpinning changes to further improve the strategy is the notion that if services prove right for society’s most vulnerable, then this can be taken as an overall indicator of system effectiveness. A Quality Outcomes Framework is being prescribed for GP’s.

### **2) Specific Traveller and Gypsy measures**

The Department of Health recognises that Traveller Gypsy Health is falling behind other populations, hence the introduction of the Pacesetters programme. This programme addresses specific Traveller Gypsy Roma difficulties such as disadvantage, lack of records, health service access, lifestyle, diet and exercise. An Equality and Diversity Council is also being set up within the NHS to set and monitor standards.

Barry finished his speech with the NHS Constitution, cited directly from the Health Bill just cleared for Royal Assent:

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“The NHS provides a comprehensive service, available to all irrespective of gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. It has a duty to each and every individual that it serves and must respect their human rights. At the same time, it has a wider social duty to promote equality through the services it provides and to pay particular attention to groups or sections of society where improvements in health and life expectancy are not keeping pace with the rest of the population.”

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## BILL HOLLAND-ACPO

Bill outlined his role at the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). He is Assistant Chief Constable at Warwickshire Police. He described his duties at ACPO and also accounted for progress made on recommendations made at the previous ITMB Conference.

Job aim: to work towards developing normal community relations between Traveller Gypsy & settled communities and to protect people from harm...

- 1) By stopping people from being injured or killed
- 2) By stopping people having their property stolen or damaged
- 3) By stopping people living in fear

Progress on recommendations from previous ITMB conference

1. Neighbourhood policing & Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) are now working well together. PCSO's can now engage with Gypsy Traveller sites, where previously this was not the case. There are now Borough-wide Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officers.
2. Operations now target individual suspects, not all residents when sites are raided by police. ACPO now has a closer relationship with the National Association of Gypsy and Traveller Officers (NAGTO), building stronger community confidence.
3. There is more staff training in progress than before. The aim is to treat Travellers and Gypsies, whether victims or suspects, as members of the local community. The Traveller Awareness Training Package developed by Surrey Police was launched this year. Bill is hopeful of rolling this training package across all UK police forces.
4. The ACPO Guidance on Unauthorised Encampments was re-published this month (November 2009) with minor revisions and following further consultation. Feedback so far has been positive. This guidance is not mandatory, but implementation is being closely monitored by an ACPO working group.

Bill outlined 5 threats he viewed as real dangers to the development of better inter-community relations: a) prejudices b) media representations c) economic pressures d) criminals reinforcing prejudices e) wider community tensions. He felt these challenges could be overcome through:



1) Building confidence and trust 2) Building partnerships with other agencies 3) tackling crime and 4) Better communications within police forces and with the public.

### **COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS:**

*It was noted that the Local Government Association is not working with ACPO, but with Department of Communities and Local Government*

*A Friends Families and Travellers (FFT) representative perceived an ongoing “Them and Us” attitude from the police, mostly from Police Community Support Officers. The identifying and recording of Gypsy Traveller Roma is not accurate. It was commented that for the first time, the next Census Form will provide opportunity to identify as a Gypsy Traveller Roma ethnic minority.*

*Richard Sheridan of the Gypsy Council lives on the Dale Farm Travellers site in Essex, where mass evictions are proposed. Richard asserted that Gypsy Traveller Roma is an ethnic minority and that the site actually saves millions of pounds for Government.*

*Henry Chapman of Friends Families Travellers FFT questioned Bill as to why when the term “pikey picnic” was published in newspapers, the press were not prosecuted for making racist comments. Bill responded by saying that in the UK racism is not a crime, but incitement to racial hatred is, therefore it is very difficult to obtain a prosecution. This was said to be yet another form of institutional racism.*

*Irish Traveller Councillor Candy Sheridan commented that the Press Complaints Commission didn't uphold a single complaint made by or on behalf of the Gypsy Traveller Roma community. She indicated that she would like to work with ACPO.*

## SHAMI CHAKRABARTI-LIBERTY

*“There are hawks and doves everywhere.”*

Shami introduced Liberty as a small organisation of people who campaign to protect basic rights and freedoms. To further this aim, Liberty carries out test case litigation, lobbies Parliament, is involved in the analysis of related public policy and carries suitable campaigns to the general public. Liberty tries to protect the rights and freedoms of people by using rational argument. Liberty is concerned with raising a “culture of justice” rather than a “culture of victim hood.”

Shami spoke of the successful 2004 case where Liberty represented the European Roma Rights Centre and individual Romany Czechs. Law Lords found that the British Government were acting unlawfully in screening for and preventing Roma asylum seekers from travelling to the UK from Prague airport. The Government maintained they were aiming to prevent all asylum seekers, not just Roma from entering the U.K. via the airport through this screening practice. However, statistics showed that the overwhelming majority detained and prevented were from the Roma population. The case had previously been discounted by the High Court and Court of Appeal. The House of Lords found the practice systematically discriminatory.

**Comment:** *Candy Sheridan asked Shami for Liberty to help stop Gypsy and Traveller evictions. Candy commented that Local Government are ignoring Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights: “the right to respect for private and family life, a home and correspondence” in respect of the Gypsy Traveller Roma population.*



## **JULIE JOYCE- Irish Traveller**

Julie outlined her background as a Traveller based in Greater Manchester, who is especially interested in educating Traveller mothers. She is employed as an interviewer in the Traveller Economic Inclusion Project, which is currently under way at the ITMB. Previously, Julie had been a sessional worker for Gypsy Traveller Roma History Month. She also was involved in Pavee Ceilidh in both London and Manchester and has received awards for her service to the community. She expressed great pride in her community and thanked ITMB for the various opportunities presented to her.



**Question (Irish Traveller Leanne O Leary):** *I wish to embark on Traveller initiatives in the Harrow area. Is there help I can get?*

**Response:** *Leanne was referred to ITMB Capacity Development Worker Phil Regan.*

**Comment: (Joe Hurn, Cheshire Gypsy Traveller Voice)** *For proper Gypsy Traveller Roma site production and development, only 300+ MP votes is needed. "Anything is possible."*

## **YVONNE MACNAMARA- ITMB Director**

Yvonne closed the third ITMB Conference. She said that it was now a time for change in “the long and winding road” of Gypsy Traveller Roma issues. She felt it was time to move away from dialogue and consultation into meaningful action. It was time for the Gypsy Traveller Roma communities to be pro-active, rather than reactive. She called for solidarity and unity among the various Gypsy Traveller Roma communities. She said that the ITMB is prepared to network and co-operate with all interested in moving the Gypsy Traveller Roma agenda forward.

Yvonne thanked all the speakers, workshop leaders and delegates for their contributions during the Conference. She hoped that today had moved the Gypsy Traveller Roma issues a further rung up the ladder.



# Work shop Reports

## YOUNG VIEWS

**Bridy Purcell (young Traveller activist), Rebecca Palmer (Greater London Authority) Patsy Cummings (Catholic Association for Racial Justice ) Rocky Deans (Brent Council)**

*Young Traveller views are all too often left unheard. In September 2009, with support from the GLA, ITMB formed the “Who R We-Traveller Youth Forum”. The Forum provides a space for younger Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people to explore their life issues and solutions. This workshop involved presentations by three speakers followed by a general discussion on Traveller education, the main issue arising from the “Who R we” group.*

**Speaker 1) Rebecca Palmer** outlined her role as support to the Mayor of London and his staff to involve children and young people in making decisions about how London is run. She is the Greater London Authority link with various young people's groups and Projects. Rebecca outlined the human rights aspects of youth and child involvement and the values and principles which should underly best practice in youth involvement.

**Speaker 2) Patsy Cummings** described the various ways that the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ) is involved with both the Traveller community and youth in general.

She highlighted the Young Peoples Forum for World Citizenship (a Conference) and Indigo (a major event) where young people do the talking and adults supply the stage. The most important issue presented to the CARJ by young people is street and community safety.

**Speaker 3) Rocky Deans** similarly gave an account of how Brent Council engage with young people in general and from the local Traveller Gypsy Roma communities. He praised the roles of Sure Start and Brent Connexions in empowering young people to become involved in their own welfare. Key issues emerging from young Travellers were society's negative portrayal of GTR communities and the local need for more educational trips with youth of other communities.

There was a general discussion on Traveller child and youth education. It was felt a lot of barriers needed to be removed to improve education services. It was expressed that education services are very rigid and do not cater very well for later training and development for Travellers who leave school early or who travel a lot. There was little provision or encouragement for home education. Young Travellers were hardly ever asked their opinions on education services.

## DEVELOPING YOUR RESIDENT GROUP

**Scott Phillips (ITMB), Joe Hurn (Chair-Northern Network of Travelling People, CEO-Cheshire Gypsy & Traveller Voice), John Day (MENTER-East of England Black & Minority Network), Andrew Ryder (ITMB), Diana West (Capital Community Fund)**

*Communities and Local Government's 2009 report "Gypsy and Traveller Site Management: A Good Practice Guide" specifically calls upon Local Authorities to ensure the development of residents associations on Traveller and Gypsy sites. This development will provide a means of encouraging participation and serve both the residents and landlords through the creation of a forum for discussion and debate. The Residents Workshop discussed 1) What residents Groups are 2) How they can be useful to the Traveller communities and 3) ways to pursue the creation of a Resident group.*

It was noted that there has been a substantial increase in the number of residents groups on Traveller sites across the U.K. over the last year. The workshop agreed that resident groups should be grassroot Traveller and Gypsy-led, adequately resourced and be able to achieve meaningful outcomes for their community. However, it was felt that fledgling groups should accept that only minor changes to their Local Authority agenda may be achieved initially, this being the platform for stronger outcomes as the capacity and skills of the group increase.

It was felt that residents groups should acquaint themselves with all of the Local Authority's involvement and engagement policies as soon as possible after start-up to assist in their effectiveness.

Groups should require transparency, openness and honesty of the Local Authority while also operating in similar fashion. Problems with engagement should be addressed by both parties quickly and in an open way.

Suitable awareness, empowerment, negotiation and engagement training for resident group members should be provided by the Local Authority, as well as providing sufficient resources to host on-site resident group meetings.

It was felt that there is much good practice occurring across the country and there was a need for residents groups to network, share common problems and solutions, as well as establishing best engagement practice. There was a discussion on the capacity building of residents groups. It was felt that one way of building capacity would be for established and experienced residents groups to shadow and provide mentoring to emerging groups.

A number of initiatives supportive to resident groups were discussed including the Northern Network of Travelling People and Irish Traveller Movement's separate Capacity Builder projects and MENTER's East of England Regional networking initiative.

## TRAVELLER WOMEN, HEALTH AND THE PACESETTERS PROGRAMME

**Grace O Malley and Rose McCarthy (ITMB), Jenny Kenward (The Royal Free NHS Hampstead Trust) Roisin Kavanagh, minutes**

*The workshop explained and discussed the national Pacesetters Programme initiatives being developed with a particular emphasis on the ITMB and the Royal Free Hospital partnership pilot project aimed at using patient and user involvement in the design and delivery of services to help reduce health inequalities for the Traveller Gypsy Roma communities . The workshop included sharing of Traveller experience of accessing the National Health Service and the Pacesetters Programme, as well as the comments of some staff working in Pacesetters initiatives.*

Jenny Kenward made a presentation on the development, successes and lessons learned so far of the Pacesetters Programme at the Royal Free Hospital in North-West London. She felt the keys to the replication and success of the initiative involved meaningful dialogue and increased understanding and engagement between hospital staff and the Traveller community. Better training and development of Traveller community facilitators is also required.

This was followed by a discussion on people's experiences of Pacesetters and the NHS. It was felt that many hospital staff require training in Traveller awareness, as cultural misunderstanding often arises.

It was acknowledged that some patients carry misconceptions of staff and services and that this also needs addressing. The aim should be to establish trust between health staff and the community it serves. It was felt that coalitions of voluntary and community groups, specialist health staff and Traveller community advocates is an excellent way to begin achieving this.

One Pacesetters worker in Hackney spoke of producing an accessible leaflet on Pregnancy and Childbirth, which included guidance on self-representation and negotiation while engaging with Maternity services. Many people had found existing information literature to be remote from their experiences. Another workshop attendant spoke of having organised a nurse training package, partly delivered by Traveller trainers. Rose McCarthy (ITMB) felt that more support should be given for Travellers to become health professionals.

The group had a brief discussion on the benefits and risks of engaging in a shared community project. Most attendants agreed it was now time for more grassroots action, rather than continuous top-down dialogue and policy-making. It was also noted that the expertise of community members should be recognised and utilised more often by service providers. It was also suggested that health initiatives should not go for the "quick fix" option, but for longer term sustainable change.

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## Caroline Keane/ Winnie Keenan (Pavee Point Centre), Brigid McCarthy and Yvonne MacNamara (ITMB)

*This workshop explored conflict resolution both within the Traveller communities and between the settled community and various, including settled Traveller communities. The Pavee Point Centre has been involved in conflict resolution between the various parties in Dublin, Ireland operating a mediation service since 1999. The workshop outlined the work of Pavee Point, including the personal experience of Winnie Keenan, an Irish Traveller and also recounted how ITMB tackle the various conflicts in it's work. These presentations were followed by a general discussion on conflict and it's solutions.*

**'Without contraries is no progression'** (William Blake "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell")

Caroline and Winnie recounted the various relationship building initiatives carried out by Pavee Point to resolve various internal and external conflicts involving the Traveller community in Ireland. Winnie commented that community conflict and violence had escalated in the last decade and that innocent parties have been drawn in. Pavee Point try to get people to talk to each other to resolve issues and there are numerous related initiatives throughout Ireland.

Caroline spoke about Pavee Point's relationship building with authorities, including the police and councils.

She emphasized that poorly thought out, vague and unconsulted policies can directly lead to conflict, especially in the areas of pitch and site allocation.

Yvonne said that ways of resolving conflict are woven into each ITMB project, as there is no specific conflict ITMB resolution project or initiative. However, ITMB are capacity building the Traveller community and offer Traveller training in areas such as negotiation, communication and community engagement. Like Pavee Point, TMB are also working with authorities to design and implement culturally sensitive and user friendly policies and procedures affecting Travellers.

Bridget spoke about the role of drugs in the escalation of recent conflicts. She called for help and information to be made available to the Traveller community on how to deal with abusive or threatening situations. She added that local policies and procedures should contain appropriate measures to protect frightened people.

The workshop felt that conflict has negative connotations but can and should be viewed in a positive light. Conflict can be resolved and viewed as an outlet for positive change. It was also felt that clear rules and a level playing field provides a framework for less conflict and thus people not being viewed as victims or victimized.

## PLANNING ISSUES

**Steve Staines (Traveller Law Reform Project), Ros Corbett (Planning Aid for London), Andrew Ryder (ITMB)**

*The Housing Act (2004) and Planning Circular 1/2006 place a duty on Local Authorities to carry out needs assessments for the Gypsy and Traveller population and to identify suitable sites for related accommodation provision by 2017. Where a clear and immediate need is identified, planning authorities are obliged to take immediate action to assess and meet that need. This workshop explored how different parts of the UK have responded to the legislation through Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) covering several participating counties.*

Steve and Andrew gave a current overview and critique of the current situation regarding the effectiveness of Regional Spatial Strategies across the country. Ros presented an outline of the London plan. It was noted from the workshop that:

- Some regional authorities intend to meet accommodation need by a high proportion of “bricks and mortar” provision (e.g., London)
- The statistical data of Travellers and Gypsies underlying the Strategies is of very poor quality and unreliable.
- Some local authorities insist there is no public land available for sites (e.g., Epping Forest and Crawley)
- Some local authorities are very deliberately allocating provision in unsuitable areas and some distance away from other housing and facilities. (e.g., Norfolk, near a dual carriageway)
- Some local authorities are “foot-dragging.”
- Some are allocating pitches away from existing provision to another area (e.g., Cambridge to Norfolk).
- Some “Examinations in Public” (EIP) are dominated by local authorities who are reducing the size of need to fit their own agenda (e.g., Northwest Region reduction by a third of 1250 pitches initially assessed).
- There is little or no Gypsy Traveller involvement in Regional Spatial Strategies.
- It was estimated that assessments reflect less than half of actual need in some areas.

It was pointed out that Travellers have an ignored need for innovative permanent residential sites. It was also noted that all land zoned for residential development should be equally available to everyone locally. It was pointed out that the next Census affords opportunity for the Traveller Gypsy Roma populations to identify as such for the first time. This could prove critical in establishing more accurate Traveller Gypsy Roma population figures.

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**The London Plan** is out for consultation until 2012. Proposed pitch numbers have been knocked down from 768 to 539. There is still time to get involved and to comment on the Plan. Contact [rosalind@planningaidforlondon.org.uk](mailto:rosalind@planningaidforlondon.org.uk) or ITMB.

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## DEVELOPING A CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

**Martin Howe and Fr. Joe Browne (ITMB), Kieran O Rourke (Howe & Co), Conor McGinn (Labour Councillor, Islington Council)**

*This workshop considered ways in which Traveller and Gypsy groups and individuals may better engage in the political process and influence the policy debate. A particular emphasis was given to the recently successful Justice for Gurkhas campaign, in which one of the workshop leaders, Martin Howe of Howe & Co., Solicitors, worked with and advised Joanna Lumley, the most public face of the campaign.*

This workshop primarily focussed on the lessons learned and successful practice which could be transferred from the successful Justice for Gurkhas\* 2009 campaign into Traveller and Gypsy campaigning initiatives.

A pre-requisite for any successful campaign, it was felt, was that the campaign itself should be legitimised and supported by the people or community concerned. It should be solidly consensus-based and totally focussed on the main objective, rather than getting bogged down in a series of ancillary issues. The campaign should have a united front and not be hijacked by individuals having their own agenda. The campaign should have an agreed strategy from the outset.

The Justice for Gurkhas campaign sought to bring a human dimension into their strategy. Very early the campaign enlisted the support of Joanna Lumley a well-known and loved actress nationally,

whose father had fought with the 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles. Her championing of the cause attracted widespread media coverage and the general public identified with the human aspects of the campaign.

A catchy slogan “Good enough to fight for Britain, good enough to live in Britain” was devised to amplify the cause, but the slogan also subtly served to keep opponents on the wrong side of the argument. The campaign was pro-active, not reactive, dictating the pace and thus making it very difficult for opponents to gain any advantage.

The lobbying of individual politicians and their parties was effected using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed) objectives.

It was felt by Traveller and Gypsy activist workshop attendants that many of these aspects of the Justice for Gurkhas campaign could be adopted to suit their campaigning requirements, especially around the much needed area of Gypsy and Traveller health.

*All ex-Gurkhas who have served more than 4 years in the British Army now have the legal right to settle in the UK if they wish.*