

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Race Equality: Briefing on Travellers

May 2018

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide Commissioners with an update on progress towards improving the situation and experiences of Travellers.

Summary Overview

In 2014 the Commission published 'Racial Equality Policy Priorities & Recommendations'¹ setting out areas for action by government and partners. This collated and updated the Commission's race recommendations, including those relating to Travellers. Since then, Commissioners have affirmed or approved updated positions in some policy areas, for example, with regards to housing and education.

This paper summarises key positions and provides an update on the current context and progress relative to the range of Commission recommendations associated with advancing equality for Irish Travellers.

While progress on more general race recommendations (e.g. race law reform) is not reported here, it should be noted that progress on these would also have benefits for a range of groups, including Irish Travellers.

Action Required by Commissioners

Commissioners are asked to note the update and offer any comment.

¹ ECNI (2014) [Policy Priorities and Recommendations for Racial Equality](http://www.equalityni.org/race). Further information is available via: www.equalityni.org/race

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Advancing Race Equality: Update on Progress regarding Travellers

May 2018

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Irish Travellers continue to experience inequalities. Since its inception, the Commission has worked to highlight the extensive disadvantages experienced by the Traveller community.
- 1.2 Although the draft Programme for Government consultation document and a number of the draft delivery plans acknowledge the disadvantages experienced by Travellers, the draft plans themselves do not include actions specifically targeted at Travellers.
- 1.3 Further, despite evidence of some action by some public authorities, for example, with respect to promoting access to education and health, there is a paucity of data available and little evidence of significant improvement in population outcomes for Travellers across the full span of public policy domains.
- 1.4 The Commission's current policy recommendations regarding Irish Travellers are set out in *our Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations*², with some updated positions included in the policy Positions developed in response to our rolling publication of various Statements of Key Inequalities³.
- 1.5 The Commission continues to work to secure advocacy and adoption of our general and Traveller-related policy recommendations by the appropriate public authorities.

² Equality Commission for Northern Ireland: [Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#)

³ See: <http://www.equalityni.org/addressinginequality>

- 1.6 Indeed, subsequent to recommendations by the Commission and others, recently a number of Treaty Monitoring Bodies have made recommendations aligned Commission policy priorities.
- 1.7 The Commission will continue to use a range of policy levers, including the international human rights treaty reporting system, towards securing change at the local level.
- 1.8 Recently, we have drawn attention to the need to address inequalities faced by Travellers in our submissions to the consultation on the draft Programme for Government and associated relevant draft delivery plans⁴ as well as highlighting these to the treaty monitoring bodies of a number of regional and international human rights bodies⁵.
- 1.9 Going forward, the Commission will continue to raise the need for action to address the key inequalities experienced by Travellers with individual public authorities, including through the draft Programme for Government, and to international treaty monitoring mechanisms.
- 1.10 We currently have a particular focus on seeking a strategic and coordinated focus on Travellers through promoting the establishment of a Travellers and Roma Thematic Group, aligned to the Executive Office's Racial Equality Sub-Group. We consider that this would be an important provision to facilitate members of the Traveller community to work in partnership with Departmental Racial Equality Champions and other relevant officials to identify actions to address key inequalities

⁴ See: <http://www.equalityni.org/pfg>

⁵ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016): [*Shadow Report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*](#)

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016): [*Shadow Report from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on the Fourth Monitoring Report of the United Kingdom*](#)

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016): [*European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance - fifth monitoring cycle - submission by the Equality Commission NI*](#)

2 Commission Policy Actions to advance Traveller Equality

2.1 Irish Travellers continue to experience inequalities across a number of public policy domains, including education; housing/accommodation; employment and health. They are also subject to prejudice and poor social attitudes. These persistent inequalities have continued to be periodically documented over the last twenty or more years⁶.

Commission interventions over time.

2.2 The Commission has highlighted the extensive disadvantages experienced by the Traveller community since its inception. At local level this has included through representation on the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers⁷ and currently through The Executive Office's Racial Equality Sub – Group⁸. The Commission also co-ordinated a Traveller Focus Week for a number of years to promote awareness, discussion and debate on the Traveller community's experiences of everyday life⁹.

2.3 We have continued to highlight the deficit in Traveller accommodation, for example, through our 2004 response to the Unauthorised Encampments legislation¹⁰ and our 2011 publication '*Outlining Minimum Standards for Traveller Accommodation*'¹¹.

2.4 The Commission has sought to highlight the educational disadvantage experienced by Travellers through a number of

⁶ See for example: Noonan P (1994): *Travelling People in West Belfast* (Save the Children Fund); Connolly, P.; Keenan, M. (OFMDFM, 2001) [Consultation With Travellers On The Recommendations Of The Final Report of the PSI Working Group On Travellers](#); Kelleher, C. et al (2010): *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*; Taskforce on Traveller Education (2011): [Report of the Taskforce on Traveller Education to the Department of Education](#); Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (March 2018): [Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Travellers Accommodation in Northern Ireland](#)

⁷ Connolly, P and Keenan, M. (2002): *Consultation with Travellers on the Final Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers*, OFMDFM.

⁸ See: <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/racial-equality>

⁹ See, for example:

<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/News%20and%20Press/Press%20Releases/2009/Traveller-Focus-Week.pdf?ext=.pdf>

¹⁰ See: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2350>

¹¹ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2011): [Outlining Minimum Standards for Traveller Accommodation](#)

initiatives¹² including through engagement with the Department of Education to establish the Traveller Education Taskforce¹³ and currently as part of a working group to review the Intercultural Education Service.

- 2.5 We have highlighted issues relating to the employment of Travellers through our involvement in the Roma EDEM project which included convening a series of seminars with key stakeholders to promote the need for a policy response to the high unemployment experienced by Travellers¹⁴.

Current Focus

- 2.6 The Commission's current policy on Irish Travellers is set out in *its Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations*¹⁵, with some updates included in the policy Positions developed in response to our rolling publication of various Statements of Key Inequalities¹⁶.
- 2.7 Recently, we have drawn attention to the need to address inequalities faced by Travellers in our submissions to the consultation on the draft Programme for Government and associated relevant draft delivery plans¹⁷ as well as highlighting these to the treaty monitoring bodies of a number of regional and international human rights bodies¹⁸.

¹² See: McMahon, M. (2006): *Consultation Report with Travellers and Traveller Children*, ECNI, Belfast.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2006): [Mainstreaming Equality of Opportunity for Travellers in Education: Towards a Strategy](#)

Hamilton, J., Bell, J., Bloomer, F. and Holohan, J. (2007): [The Adequacy and Effectiveness of Education Provision for Traveller Children and Young People in Northern Ireland](#) (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People).

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2008): [Mainstreaming equality of opportunity and good relations for Traveller children in schools](#), Public Policy Statement No.2

¹³ See: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13623/1/taskforce_on_traveller_education_-_report_of_the_taskforce_to_the_department_of_education.pdf

¹⁴ See:

http://www.gitanos.org/romaedem/National%20seminars%20Employment%2005_archivos/NST05%20Ireland_archivos/EmploymentseminarNorthernIreland.pdf

¹⁵ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland: [Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#)

¹⁶ See: <http://www.equalityni.org/addressinginequality>

¹⁷ See: <http://www.equalityni.org/pfg>

¹⁸ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016): [Shadow Report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)

2.8 Aligned to Corporate Plan 2016-19, Strategic Priority 2: 'Challenge and Support Government to advance Equality and Good Relations', the focus of the public policy team is centred on supporting and challenging government to mainstream equality into the delivery of law and public policy via three broad goals:

- Secure support and commitment at the highest level (e.g. via overall Programme for Government (PfG); International frameworks etc.);
- Secure the implementation of cross-government equality framework;
- Improve equality provisions in law and public policy.

2.9 The sections below consider each of these in turn.

3 Secure support and commitment at the highest Level (e.g. via PfG; International frameworks etc.)

3.1 We consider that securing high-level commitments will assist us in levering Departments to improve equality provisions in law and public policy.

Programme for Government

3.2 The potential for securing commitments in a finalised Programme for Government and associated delivery plans is currently limited due to the absence of a functioning NI Executive and Assembly. In the absence of an Executive, Departments are working to pre-existing Ministerial direction,

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016): [*Shadow Report from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on the Fourth Monitoring Report of the United Kingdom*](#)

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016): [*European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance - fifth monitoring cycle - submission by the Equality Commission NI*](#)

including that set out in the draft PfG and associated delivery plans.

Draft Programme For Government 2016-2021

- 3.3 Whilst the consultation document¹⁹ on a draft Programme for Government acknowledged that *‘particular issues and difficulties may be experienced...by sub-groups within communities, for example...travellers (sic) and ethnic minorities...’*, the broad focus of the draft delivery plans for the PfG, with the exception of some specific actions targeted aimed at disabled people and children and young people, is on population wide actions (and thus does not contain any high level commitments specifically directed at advancing Traveller equality).

Draft PfG Delivery Plans

- 3.4 A small number of the draft delivery plans for some PfG indicators acknowledged that Travellers experienced particular disadvantage.
- The draft delivery programme for indicators 2,3,4,7, including ‘healthy life expectancy at birth and preventable mortality’²⁰, references the All-Ireland Traveller Health Survey’s (AITHS) reporting of poor life expectancy among Travellers²¹.
 - The draft delivery plan for indicator 5, ‘% of people satisfied with health and social care’, likewise cites evidence from the AITHS of the poor experiences of Travellers with respect to health services²².
 - The draft delivery plan for indicators 26, 31 and 35, including a ‘Respect Index’, acknowledges that lack of respect and difficulties using shared space may be experienced by Travellers²³.

¹⁹ Northern Ireland Executive (2016): [Programme for Government Consultation Document](#), page 120.

²⁰ One of the indicators for Outcome 3: We have a more equal society.

²¹ Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/newnigov/dp-healthy-life-expectancy-at-birth.PDF>, pages 29 and 34.

²² Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/newnigov/dp-people-who-are-satisfied.PDF>, pages 30 and 33.

²³ Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/newnigov/dp-a-respect-index.pdf>, page 10.

- The draft delivery plan for indicators 8 and 48, including the 'number of households in housing stress', acknowledges that adequate accommodation for Travellers is limited²⁴.

3.5 However, despite these references to the particular detriment experienced by Travellers, there are no actions within the same draft delivery plans that are targeted specifically at improving the position for Travellers.

3.6 The Commission's 2016 response to the draft Programme for Government makes the following specific references to Travellers amongst its recommendations:

- the identification and removal of barriers to health, social care and well-being experienced by particular Section 75 equality groups, including Irish Travellers;
- the need to address the housing needs of members of particular equality categories, such as Irish Travellers;
- the need to address education inequalities, including those experienced by Irish Travellers²⁵.

3.7 The Commission has also sought to raise the need to advance equality for Irish Travellers in a number of its 2017 responses²⁶ to draft PfG delivery plans – see for example '[Equality Commission response](#) to the proposed Delivery Plan for Programme for Government Indicators 8 and 48' (housing / accommodation).

International Human Rights Frameworks

3.8 In 2016, the Commission raised the key inequalities experienced by Travellers and Roma to the attention of:

²⁴ Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/newnigov/dp-number-of-households-in-housing-stress.PDF>, page 31.

²⁵ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (May 2016): [Response to the Executive's consultation on a draft Programme for Government 2016-21](#)

²⁶ See Commission responses listed at 'Commission Responses to Programme for Government (PfG) Proposed Delivery Plans (Jan 2017)' on the 'Commission Responses' tab at <http://www.equalityni.org/pfg>

- United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)²⁷;
- Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM)²⁸; and
- European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)²⁹.

3.9 Subsequent to recommendations by the Commission and others, these international human rights bodies have recommended action by government which, if implemented, would advance racial equality in Northern Ireland both generally and with respect to Travellers.

3.10 We welcome that the Treaty Monitoring Bodies have made a number of recommendations (alongside wider recommendations) aligned to areas that the Commission has identified as priorities for change:

- [CERD 2016](#) - develop a comprehensive strategy in consultation with members of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities...and ensure its effective implementation by adopting specific action plans and effective oversight and monitoring mechanisms.
- [ECRI 2016](#) - draw up, in consultation with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma groups, a detailed programme of integration strategies and measures to address the disadvantage suffered by all three of these communities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, including concrete targets, timeframes, and resources, in all areas of daily life, such as education, employment, health care and accommodation, in particular addressing the shortage of caravan sites.

²⁷ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016): [Shadow Report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)

²⁸ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016): [Shadow Report from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on the Fourth Monitoring Report of the United Kingdom](#)

²⁹ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2016): [European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance - fifth monitoring cycle - submission by the Equality Commission NI](#)

- [FCNM 2017](#) - set up a multi-agency taskforce on Traveller sites in Northern Ireland to cater to the needs of Irish Travellers.
- [FCNM 2017](#) - to further improve training of law enforcement to detect, investigate and bring to justice all hate speech and hate-motivated offences, and to monitor more closely hate crime against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.
- [FCNM 2017](#) - monitor the Traveller Education Support Service to ensure that access and attendance of Traveller children to education is effective and that funds provided to schools in relation to children belonging to ethnic minorities are used to improve their attainment.

- 3.11 The Commission has sought to lever this international support locally. For example we raised the CERD Concluding Observations at the first meeting, in December 2016, of the Racial Equality Sub-Group (established by TEO to advise on the implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025).
- 3.12 In May 2017, the Commission also disseminated an e-zine to key stakeholders, including the Executive Office, which highlighted the Concluding Observations of the international treaty bodies in support of key Commission recommendations in respect of racial equality.
- 3.13 Commission officers will continue to use this high-level advocacy to further lever our positions with officials and elected representatives.
- 3.14 Most recently, in May 2018, the Commission highlighted our policy positions and associated international framework Concluding Observations during a meeting with the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as part of her country visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

4 Secure the implementation of cross-government (race) equality framework

- 4.1 The focus of this area of work is on securing the development and effective implementation of a cross-government equality strategy, in this case a Race Equality Strategy – to include a focus on Travellers.

The Racial Equality Strategy (RES) 2015-2025

- 4.2 Ahead of the finalisation of the RES in 2015, the Commission advised that:

‘the inequalities experienced by some groups, such as Roma and Travellers, are multi-faceted, complex, intractable and persistent and best addressed through a separate Strategy³⁰’

- 4.3 We therefore welcomed that the finalised Racial Equality Strategy 2015 -2025 states that, while it is not desirable to have a proliferation of strategies:

‘there may be a need to develop and implement specific programmes of work to address particular challenges and vulnerabilities facing particular groups such as Irish Travellers and Roma³¹’

- 4.4 The Racial Equality Strategy (RES) also set out that it ‘will consider these strands of work within its programme of activity’³².

- 4.5 The Commission is concerned that, more than two years after the Strategy was published, no implementation / action plan to address racial inequalities has been developed by the Executive.

³⁰ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2014): [Response to the consultation by OFMDFM on 'A Sense of Belonging - Delivering Social Change through a Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-2024'](#), paragraph 8.47, page 28.

³¹ Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (2015): [Racial Equality Strategy 2015 - 2025](#), paragraph 6.20, page 31.

³² Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (2015): [Racial Equality Strategy 2015 - 2025](#), paragraph 6.21, page 31.

- 4.6 There remains a lack of clarity around what is to be done to deliver the goals of the Race Equality Strategy, including with regards to timelines, funding or expected results from specific actions.

Programme of Work for Irish Travellers and Roma

- 4.7 We are not aware of any development of a dedicated Programme of Work for Irish Travellers and Roma, aligned to that suggested in the Racial Equality Strategy 2015 -2025.
- 4.8 TEO has however proposed the establishment of a Travellers and Roma Thematic Sub-Group (see next section). If such a group was established, it could potentially inform the development of a programme of work.

Travellers and Roma Thematic Sub-Group

- 4.9 In the absence of effective participation from Travellers in the development of public policy, progress is likely to be slow and of limited effectiveness. We therefore consider that a key strategic mechanism to underpin the advancement of Traveller equality will be the establishment of a Travellers and Roma Thematic Group under the Race Equality Strategy 2015-2025.
- 4.10 Such a group could give a voice to Travellers in the policy development process, in contrast to the current situation in NI where policy for Travellers is largely developed by non-Travellers and often without effective participation from Travellers.
- 4.11 The establishment of a Travellers and Roma Thematic Group³³ was proposed by TEO officials at a meeting of its Racial Equality Sub-Group (established to oversee and advise on the implementation of the RES)³⁴ in 2017.
- 4.12 Since then, Commission officers have taken steps to assist TEO convene an initial meeting with Traveller and Roma stakeholders to discuss terms of reference, membership and working methods of the Thematic Group.

³³ Belfast City Council's Travellers Liaison Officer is also currently undertaking capacity building work with a number of individual Travellers in the Belfast area with a view to supporting the establishment of a formally constituted Traveller-led NGO which could inform the delivery of policy and services for Travellers, at least in the Belfast City area.

³⁴ The Commission is represented on the Sub-Group.

- 4.13 Securing the participation of Travellers is however not without difficulty. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are issues, of confidence, capacity, and also considerable feelings of alienation within the Community (in part driven by a lack of confidence in government to address persistent Traveller inequalities). To this end, Commission officials have therefore also been proactive in holding some preliminary discussions with some Travellers and Roma to encourage participation.
- 4.14 We are however concerned at this stage that, despite significant efforts by the Commission to assist the Executive in the co-design of a Traveller and Roma Subgroup, a Subgroup has yet to be convened (over a year since the group was first proposed by TEO). We continue to raise the matter with relevant TEO officials, and will continue to support and challenge TEO to deliver this outcome.
- 4.15 We consider that the group, once established, should be tasked with identifying, together with members of the TEO Racial Equality Sub-Group and Departmental Race Equality Champions, the key interventions and an associated action plan that might best serve to tackle the identified inequalities.
- 4.16 When established, the Commission will seek to participate in the Thematic Group with a view to seeking advocacy and adoption of our policy recommendations (see below for further details).

Racial Equality Champions

- 4.17 Racial Equality Champions have been named for each of the government departments. These champions provide a direct means to mainstream actions to address inequalities into the work of their respective departments, and to assist in the coordination of work between departments.
- 4.18 However, it is currently unclear how often the Champions have met or what work has been taken forward, either on an individual or collective basis.

5 Improve equality provisions in law and public policy

- 5.1 Equality needs to be mainstreamed into the core work of government and departments to effectively drive improvements to equality provisions in law and public policy
- 5.2 A number of the areas of public policy set out below are interlinked. For example, low educational attainment³⁵ may partially account for the large employment gap between Irish Travellers and other ethnic groups. Another major barrier is prejudice and discrimination both in society and in the workplace with discriminatory attitudes preventing Travellers from participating more generally³⁶.
- 5.3 We set out below some key Commission recommendations across a number of areas of public policy, along with progress to date.

Social Attitudes and Prejudice

- 5.4 The Commission has continued to capture public attitudes towards Travellers through our periodic Equality Awareness surveys.
- 5.5 Whilst the Commission's most recent Equality Awareness Survey (2017) revealed that negative attitudes have improved since the last survey in 2011, Travellers continue to be the group perceived most negatively (19%) of the 15 equality groups presented³⁷.

Tackle Racial Discrimination and Prejudice

- 5.6 In 2014 we reiterated our recommendation that the Executive and Departments implement specific long-term measures to: eliminate racism and racial discrimination; to tackle prejudicial

³⁵ Irwin, J., McAreavey, R. and Murphy, N. (2014). *The economic and social mobility of ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland* | Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York

³⁶ Scullion, G. and Rogers, S. (2014). *Traveller Voices for Change. Mapping the view of Irish Travellers on integration and their sense of belonging in Northern Ireland.*

³⁷ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2017): [A Question of Attitude](#), page 3.

attitudes and to promote values of acceptance and respect for difference, as part of the revised Racial Equality Strategy³⁸.

Progress to date

- 5.7 The *Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025* includes a number of related proposed actions i.e.
- Work with DE to tackle racist bullying in schools;
 - Work with DOJ to develop an approach to tackling hate crime;
 - Develop and roll out a collaborative design process with the Minority Ethnic Community to identify linkages with the Delivering Social Change and Together: Building a United Community.
- 5.8 The Commission's 'Racial Equality Priorities and Recommendations'³⁹ was referenced as a basis for informing targets 'that will make a real impact on the racial inequalities that people experience' in the consultation document on the draft Racial Equality Strategy issued by OFMDFM in 2014⁴⁰ but not in the final RES document⁴¹.
- 5.9 The need to develop a collaborative design process, linked to the role of Departmental Racial Equality Champions (appointed under the RES) to address key inequalities experienced by BME communities has been raised by Commission officials and acknowledged by the senior TEO representative.
- 5.10 An initial meeting took place in December 2017 between members of the Racial Equality Sub-Group and the DOJ Racial Equality Champions to scope issues (some reference made in respect of hate crime experienced by Roma made during the meeting).

³⁸ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2014): [Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#), pages 11-12.

³⁹ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2014): [Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#)

⁴⁰ Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister (2014): [A Sense of Belonging: Delivering Social Change through a Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland](#), page 52.

⁴¹ Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister (2015): [Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025](#)

Education

- 5.11 The Commission has highlighted the educational disadvantage experienced by Traveller children over a number of years⁴².
- 5.12 Irish Traveller and Roma children have lower rates of participation and attainment than any of the other equality groups. Although the statistical base is small, evidence indicates that many Traveller children consistently leave school early, and with few or no qualifications⁴³.
- 5.13 We have recommended a series of actions to improve the educational experience of Traveller children.

Data on Performance and Attendance

- 5.14 In 2016⁴⁴ we recommended that the Department of Education systematically collect data on the educational performance of Traveller children particularly to facilitate better transitions when moving between schools⁴⁵.
- 5.15 In 2008 the Commission had also highlighted⁴⁶ the need for more comprehensive data on attendance and performance levels of Travellers at key stages so that comparisons could be made with non-Traveller children.

Progress to date

- 5.16 The need for more comprehensive data on attendance and performance levels of Travellers was echoed by the British/Irish

⁴²McMahon, M. (2006): Consultation Report with Travellers and Traveller Children, ECNI, Belfast.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2006): [Mainstreaming Equality of Opportunity for Travellers in Education: Towards a Strategy](#)

Hamilton, J., Bell, J., Bloomer, F. and Holohan, J. (2007): [The Adequacy and Effectiveness of Education Provision for Traveller Children and Young People in Northern Ireland](#) (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People).

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2008): [Mainstreaming equality of opportunity and good relations for Traveller children in schools](#), Public Policy Statement No.2

⁴³ Over the 2007/08-2014/15 period, anywhere between a half to over eight in ten Irish Traveller children left school with no GCSEs. This is in stark contrast to the proportions of all school leavers with no GCSEs, which has reduced from 3.5 percent in 2007/08 to 0.5 percent in 2014/15. Source: <http://www.equalityni.org/KeyInequalities-Education>

See also: Burns, S., Leitch, R. and Hughes, J (2015): [Education Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#), page 177 (Queens University Belfast for Equality Commission NI).

⁴⁴ Our 2017 policy position updates our 2008 position in '[Mainstreaming Equality and Good Relations for Traveller Children in Schools](#)'.

⁴⁵ Equality Commission (2017): Equality in Education: *Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, paragraph 3.121, page 61.

⁴⁶ Equality Commission (2008) [Mainstreaming Equality and Good Relations for Traveller Children in Schools](#).

Parliamentary Assembly in its 2014 inquiry into Travellers, Gypsies and Roma's access to public services⁴⁷.

- 5.17 The Commission has very recently received⁴⁸ updated information on attainment and attendance from the Department. While dealing with small numbers, it suggests that while there have been some improvements in recent years in attendance and attainment by Traveller children, this has not continued into the most recent year (2016/17). DMDM

Outcomes from Intercultural Education Service

- 5.18 In 2017^{49 50} we recommend that the Intercultural Education Service (IES) publishes, and takes account of, key outcomes arising from its delivery plan.

Progress to date

- 5.19 Most recently, Commission officials have raised the need to review provision for Traveller education policy and provision at the Department of Education's Newcomers Policy Review Group.
- 5.20 It is understood that a review of Traveller education may be a consequence of the forthcoming final Newcomers Policy Review Report, as a result of the departmental policy similarities between the two groups. For example, this includes access to the common funding formula. Furthermore, the review may consider the accountability and transparency of the IES as regards delivery and outcomes.

Monitoring of bullying

- 5.21 In 2015⁵¹ we recommended improved monitoring of bullying incidents by education providers across the equality grounds⁵².
- 5.22 The Commission retains its concerns about the potentially limited range of motivating factors which are monitored as

⁴⁷ British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, Committee D (2014). [Travellers, Gypsies and Roma: access to public services and community relations](#). As cited in Equality Commission (2017): *Equality in Education: Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, paragraph 3.102, page 56.

⁴⁸ Email received from DE 30.03.18

⁴⁹ Updated from 2014 ECNI Racial Equality Policy position

⁵⁰ Equality Commission (2017): *Equality in Education: Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, page 59.

⁵¹ ECNI (2015) Response to the DE consultation on addressing bullying in schools.

⁵² Equality Commission (2017): *Equality in Education: Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, page 31.

outlined in the anti-bullying legislation⁵³. We have outlined where we think this should be extended, including listing ‘Traveller’ separately under the race category⁵⁴.

Progress to date

- 5.23 The Commission is now represented on the Department of Education’s Anti-Bullying Forum which has been tasked to advise on the development of guidance for Boards of Governors and teachers to accompany the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Monitoring Impact of Budget Allocations

- 5.24 We recommend that budget allocations for identified groups are monitored to assess how they improve outcomes for pupils^{55 56}.
- 5.25 The Commission has raised concerns that while the common funding formula provides schools with a per capita payment, calculated on an annual basis for Traveller, Roma and Newcomer pupils, this payment is not ring-fenced and can be spent at the school’s discretion⁵⁷.

Progress to date

- 5.26 The Commission understands that the issue of budget allocations for identified groups is being considered in the context of the current Newcomer Policy Review which will, inter alia, examine the possibility of collecting relevant data through School Development Plans.

⁵³ Equality Commission (2017): Equality in Education: *Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, paragraph 3.19, page 32.

⁵⁴ Equality Commission (2017): Equality in Education: *Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, paragraph 3.20, page 33.

⁵⁵ Equality Commission (2017): Equality in Education: *Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, page 54.

⁵⁶ Revised from the ECNI (2013) response to the DE consultation on the Review of the Common Funding Formula for Schools, which repeated the Commission’s 2006 call for ring-fencing.

⁵⁷ Equality Commission (2017): Equality in Education: *Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, paragraph 3.95, page 54.

Appropriate education provision for Travellers and Roma

- 5.27 In 2017⁵⁸ we reiterated our 2008 recommendation⁵⁹ that the Department examines the issue of segregated provision for Traveller and Roma children.
- 5.28 Our recommendation acknowledged that Traveller-specific provision exists in many forms, such as on-site pre-school provision, Education Other than at School Programmes, and at St Mary's Primary School in Belfast. We stressed the difference between targeted provision to groups such as Travellers and Roma in a mainstream setting to address known inequalities, versus separate or segregated provision per se.
- 5.29 A 2016 Belfast City Council Traveller Needs Assessment⁶⁰ found that most Traveller parents sent their children to St. Mary's Primary School, even though it is rarely their nearest because they feel it is safer. This school is situated in inner city Belfast and in 2011/12⁶¹ had 104 pupils of which 90% came from the Irish Traveller community with the remainder from Newcomer communities whose first language is not English. The average attendance figure for 2011/12 was 59% by comparison to a Northern Ireland average of 94.7%.

Progress to date

- 5.30 In November 2017 Commission officers raised with DE that the 2016 Belfast City Council Traveller Needs Assessment appeared to be indicating that parental concerns about safety appeared to be leading to de facto segregated provision. We highlighted the need to address underlying causes.
- 5.31 We also noted the personal and financial costs to some children travelling over 30 miles to get to the school. We will continue to engage with the Department on this point towards securing follow-up action.

⁵⁸ Equality Commission (2017): *Equality in Education: Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, paragraph 3.108, page 58.

⁵⁹ Existing from Equality Commission (2008) [Mainstreaming Equality and Good Relations for Traveller Children in Schools](#).

⁶⁰ Belfast City Council (2015) Traveller Needs Assessment 2015, a report by Trademark

⁶¹ Education and Training Inspectorate (2011) [St. Mary's Primary School Belfast, Report of an Inspection in October 2011](#)

Mainstreaming equality into teacher education and Continuous Professional Development

- 5.32 In 2017⁶² we reiterated our recommendation that equality and good relations issues are mainstreamed into initial teacher education (ITE) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD).
- 5.33 The Commission has previously called for equality and good relations to be embedded in teacher training, both initial and continuing. Research carried out on behalf of the Commission in 2012 reinforced that the need to mainstream equality and good relations⁶³.
- 5.34 Training continues to be an area requiring ongoing attention, for example there is a need to have greater awareness of the needs of children and young people in a number of groups including Irish Travellers.

Progress to date

- 5.35 The Commission published draft education policy priorities and recommendations in October 2017 and subsequently engaged with key stakeholders including the Department of Education and Traveller Support Groups on all our key recommendations, including the above and is currently in the process of finalising the policy position paper in light of feedback received.

Housing

- 5.36 For over a decade the Commission has highlighted the inadequacy of accommodation for Irish Travellers⁶⁴.
- 5.37 Our 2017 Statement of Key Inequalities in Housing and Communities⁶⁵ identified as a 'key' inequality that that access to appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of Irish Travellers is limited.

⁶² Equality Commission (2017): Equality in Education: *Draft Policy Priority Recommendations*, page 74.

⁶³ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2012): [Indicators of Equality and Good Relations in Education](#), paragraph 10.1 D, page 133 (Belfast: The Equality Company).

⁶⁴ For example: ECNI (2004): *Response to the Department for Social Development's Draft Unauthorised Encampments (NI) Order 2004*; ECNI (2009): [Outlining Minimum Standards for Traveller Accommodation](#); ECNI (2011): [Shadow Report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\)](#).

⁶⁵ ECNI (2017) Statement on Key Inequalities in Housing and Communities in Northern Ireland, page 25, 8.1

- 5.38 A 2018 report by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)⁶⁶ found thirteen systematic concerns around Traveller accommodation including inadequacy of sites and racial discrimination and that there had been '*an erosion of nomadic life through the policies and practices that have been developed and applied to Travellers and Travellers' accommodation*'. Among other "systematic concerns" highlighted in the report was provision of Traveller-specific accommodation, resources for Traveller accommodation and a lack of emphasis on Travellers being involved in the decision-making process. The Equality Commission understands that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are committed to reviewing all aspects of the NIHRC's report.
- 5.39 The NIHRC recommendations include that the Equality Commission should issue a code of practice on the elimination of discrimination in housing (to include the private rented sector). The Commission developed a Code in the early 2000s, the final version of which was submitted to the then Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 2009. Whilst there was on-going contact with the Department as regards securing progress, none has been forthcoming.

Ensure that the accommodation needs of Travellers are met

- 5.40 We have recommended that action is taken to ensure that the accommodation needs of Travellers are met, including through strategic partnerships in consultation with the Traveller community⁶⁷.
- 5.41 Whilst the NIHE Traveller Needs Assessment (2015)⁶⁸ identified three council areas in 2014 that presented the most need for Traveller accommodation (Belfast; Dungannon; and, Craigavon) the planning data supplied by the NIHE shows that, of the eight applications, none were in two (the Belfast or Dungannon council areas) of the three areas of identified need.

⁶⁶ Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (March 2018): [Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Travellers Accommodation in Northern Ireland](#)

⁶⁷ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2017): [Equality in Housing and Communities - Draft Policy Recommendations](#), page 38.

⁶⁸ NIHE (2015) Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2014.

5.42 While acknowledging that some progress has been made, our draft policy recommendations⁶⁹ continues to advocate for an adequate programme of accommodation to meet the needs of the Irish Traveller community.

Progress to date

5.43 The NIHE has verbally advised that it is seeking to address our identified key inequalities and policy recommendations in the development and delivery of its current business and corporate plans.

5.44 The Commission is also represented on the Project Advisory Group for the 2018 Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, and therefore has the opportunity to encourage NIHE to address data gaps and inform the methods used to maximise Traveller participation in the survey. The data yielded is used help to shape NIHE policy around the provision of Traveller accommodation.

Review the appropriateness of a separate planning process for Traveller families

5.45 In 2017 we reiterated⁷⁰ our 2011⁷¹ recommendation to review the appropriateness of a separate planning process for Traveller families applying to establish serviced family sites in the countryside.

5.46 The Commission remained concerned that Travellers, who were in a position to buy their own land and develop culturally sensitive provisions for themselves (rather than relying on the availability of social provision), were subject to different and additional processes relative to those who wish to establish 'bricks and mortar' accommodation⁷².

Progress to date

5.47 The Equality Commission is currently engaging with stakeholders with regard to our 2017 draft policy priorities and

⁶⁹ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2017): [Equality in Housing and Communities - Draft Policy Recommendations](#), page 38.

⁷⁰ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2017): [Equality in Housing and Communities - Draft Policy Recommendations](#), page 41.

⁷¹ Revised from ECNI (2011) response to DSD consultation on draft policy HS3 Traveller Accommodation.

⁷² Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2017): [Equality in Housing and Communities - Draft Policy Recommendations](#), paragraph 6.24, page 41.

recommendations with respect to housing, including the above-mentioned recommendations.

- 5.48 Recent engagement suggests that the final policy may have been amended to make planning requirements the same for bricks and mortar and site accommodation. Accordingly, officers will give consideration to the removal (if achieved) of this recommendation in the drafting of a finalised Commission policy position (for consideration by Commissioners later in 2018).

Employment

- 5.49 The Commission and its predecessor bodies have previously highlighted^{73 74} the widespread unemployment experienced by Irish Travellers.
- 5.50 Irish Travellers are less likely to be in employment⁷⁵ and more likely to be economically inactive⁷⁶ than other ethnic groups. Traveller women, in particular, are less likely to participate in employment and are more likely to be economically inactive⁷⁷ than women from all other ethnic groups.
- 5.51 Irish Travellers were more likely to be economically inactive and less likely to be in employment than: White; Asian; Black;

⁷³ For example, the Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland raised the issue with Government as part of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers in the late 1990s. The Final Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group (2000) found that that only 11% of Travellers were in paid employment of one form or another, while 70% of those who are economically active have had no paid work in the last ten years and made a series of recommendations to address this.

⁷⁴ In 2005 the Equality Commission hosted a series of local seminars as part of a transnational initiative which advocated the integration and equal treatment of Roma and Travellers in education and employment (Source: [Equality Commission for Northern Ireland \(2005\): Travellers Employment Roundtable – Roma EDEM Project](#))

⁷⁵ The Commission's analysis of Census 2011 data revealed that 20.0% of Irish Travellers were employed compared to: 57.6% of White; 64.0% of Asian; 56.7% of Black; 54.4% of Mixed; and, 58.5% of Other ethnic groups.

⁷⁶ The Commission's analysis of Census 2011 data revealed that 69.0% of Travellers were economically inactive compared to 33.9% of White; 27.8% of Asian; 26.3% of Black; 29.8% of Mixed; and, 28.3% of Other ethnic groups.

⁷⁷ The Commission's analysis of Census 2011 data revealed that, among women, 77.9% of Irish Travellers were economically inactive compared to 38.7% for White; 33.2% for Asian; 32.2% for Black; 30.7% for Mixed; and, 35.6% for Other ethnic groups.

Mixed; and Other ethnic groups^{78 79}. In addition, Traveller women were more likely to be economically inactive than women from all other ethnic groups.

- 5.52 Educational attainment and prejudice likely also represent barriers to employment. In addition, a greater traditional emphasis on family and home, as well as cultural resistance to the use of formal childcare present further barriers to the participation of Irish Travellers in employment⁸⁰

Deliver long-term and mainstream training and employment initiatives

- 5.53 In 2014⁸¹ we reiterated in general terms our recommendations from over a decade earlier for action by the Department for the Economy, in collaboration with relevant training providers and NGOs, to deliver Traveller specific, long-term initiatives to improve employment opportunities.
- 5.54 We also again recommended that there should be a greater focus on including Travellers in mainstream employment training provision including support in employment and training. Initiatives should incorporate learning from projects such as Belfast Health and Social Services Trust (BHSST)⁸².

Progress to date

- 5.55 The employment inequalities experienced by Travellers have been referenced in the draft Commission Statement of Key Inequalities in Employment (2017)⁸³ and highlighted by our research team during associated engagement with representatives of the Departments of Communities and Economy.

⁷⁸ Raeside, R., McQuaid, R., Canduela, J., Graham, H., Chen, T., Egdell, V. and Pearson, M. (2014) Employment Inequalities in Northern Ireland.

⁷⁹ Whilst 69.0% of Irish Travellers were considered economically inactive, only a third (33.9%) of White and less than a third of: Asian; Black; Mixed; or, Other⁷⁹ ethnic groups were economically inactive at the time of the Census.

⁸⁰ See: Cemlyn, S., Greenfields, m., Burnett, S., Matthews, Z. and Whitwell, C. (2009). Research Report 12: Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities: A review; and, McQuaid, R., Graham, H. and Shapira, M. (2013) Child Care: Maximising the Participation of Women. ECNI: Belfast.

⁸¹ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2014): [Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#), paragraph 5.19, page 23.

⁸² Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2014): [Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#), paragraph 5.19, page 23.

⁸³ Available at: <http://www.equalityni.org/KeyInequalities-Employment>

5.56 Whilst the Commission is aware of small-scale employment opportunities undertaken by the Belfast and Southern Health and Social Care Trusts to train and employ Travellers in a health promotion role with the Traveller community⁸⁴, we are unaware of any current Traveller-specific training or employment initiatives from the Department for the Economy or the Department of Communities to address these recommendations.

Health

5.57 The 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study highlighted that:

- a male Traveller men can expect to die 15.1 years before his non-Traveller counterpart;
- life expectancy of Traveller women is still 11.5 years lower than women in the general population⁸⁵;
- suicide rates are almost seven times higher for Traveller men than in the general population⁸⁶;
- mortality rates are considerably higher than the general population at all age ranges for both men and women⁸⁷.

5.58 In our 2011 submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, we drew attention to the need for ‘a holistic, integrated, long-term approach to improving the lives of Travellers and reducing their deaths’⁸⁸.

Co-ordinated actions to address known health inequalities of the Traveller population

5.59 In 2014 we recommended that the Executive and DHSSPS co-ordinate actions to address the known health inequalities amongst the Traveller population, ensuring that all policies

⁸⁴ For example, see: <http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/services/2185.htm>

⁸⁵ Kelleher, C. et al (2010): [All Ireland Traveller Health Study](#), Table 37, page 94.

⁸⁶ Kelleher, C. et al (2010): [All Ireland Traveller Health Study](#), page 94.

⁸⁷ Kelleher, C. et al (2010): [All Ireland Traveller Health Study](#), pages 89-91.

⁸⁸ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2011): [Shadow Report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\)](#), paragraph 79, page 25.

result in measurable improvements in health outcomes for this group⁸⁹.

- 5.60 In 2014 we also recommended that the DHSSPS and HSC Trusts, provide information and services in a way which is consistent with equality of access and that staff are trained in anti-racism and cultural awareness. We also recommended that HSC Trusts work with BME, newcomer and Traveller populations to increase knowledge and confidence around access to services⁹⁰.

Progress to date

- 5.61 The Travellers Health and Wellbeing Forum's⁹¹ most recent (2016) Action Plan⁹² is based on a number of key themes reflecting priorities from the all-Ireland Travellers Health Study:
- Improved inter-sectoral working under Community Planning;
 - Early Years Support and improving access to and uptake of educational support services;'
 - Employment Skills;
 - Reducing Stigma;
 - Traveller friendly Health and Asocial Care Services;
 - Monitoring, evaluation and research;
 - Targeted programmes;
 - Monitoring, evaluation and research;
 - Collaboration and Joint Working.

- 5.62 The plan identified a focus of mental health and emotional wellbeing, promoting increased access to Health and Social

⁸⁹ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2014): [Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#), paragraph 7.14, page 32.

⁹⁰ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2014): [Racial Equality Policy Priorities and Recommendations](#), paragraph 7.16, page 32.

⁹¹ In 2010, the Public Health Agency (PHA) and the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) established a Travellers Health and Wellbeing Forum. The Forum, includes the PHA, the HSCB, Health and Social Care Trusts, the Education Authority, Traveller Support and relevant voluntary organisations.

⁹² Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board (2016): *Health and Social Wellbeing Thematic Action Plan 2016/17- Travellers*.

Care, men's health and uptake of cancer screening services as key priorities.

- 5.63 The Commission is aware of a range of activities undertaken under the aegis of the Southern Health and Social Care Trust's Travellers Action Group⁹³, including training for Travellers as Community Health champions to undertake health promotion work with their community including such issues as healthy eating and mental health awareness as well as the provision of cultural awareness training⁹⁴.
- 5.64 The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) has also taken forward a series of actions relating to the health of Travellers. In 2014 a previous strategic group on Traveller health was merged with the Trust BME Forum to form an Operational Group which subsequently met on a quarterly basis. The Trust, in consultation with Traveller Support organisations and Travellers, drew up a three year action plan (2014-17), employing three Traveller Community Health Workers during 2015/17 to support implementation of the plan.
- 5.65 In parallel, the Trust, in partnership with Belfast City Council, established an interagency working group on Travellers in Belfast which has now superseded the Trust's Operational Group. A number of workshops were held in 2017 to develop a multi-agency response to supporting Travellers in Belfast. The Public Health Agency have replicated this approach and are currently reviewing all Traveller support programmes they fund regionally.
- 5.66 BHSCT in partnership with the PHA and the inter-agency forum developed a Traveller Health project for 2017/18⁹⁵. BHSCT and PHA are currently supporting work by a number of third sector bodies including An Munia Tober⁹⁶, The Heart

⁹³ See: <http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/services/2185.htm>

⁹⁴ See: http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/pdf/Final_Newsletter_SHSCT_Traveller_Action_Group_29th_June_2017.pdf

⁹⁵ The project has four overarching areas for prioritisation: Early Years; Employability; Capacity; Building/Engagement; and Accommodation.

⁹⁶ An Munia Tober ('The good road' in Traveller's cant) is funded to undertake capacity building with the Traveller community, promote 'a Traveller voice', support mothers and children, foster health improvement and healthy living; and promote access to mainstream services.

Centre⁹⁷, Community Restorative Justice⁹⁸, Barnardos⁹⁹ and Extern¹⁰⁰ to take forward actions within this framework to enable Travellers to access a range of services. A Year 1 evaluation of the project has ‘shown a substantial uptake of all these services (and) greater engagement with the Traveller community’¹⁰¹.

- 5.67 However, we are not aware of any further data relating to the current health status of Travellers in the public domain, so that it is difficult to assess the impact of the various activities undertaken by the health bodies on the health status of the Traveller community.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 Irish Travellers continue to experience inequalities across a number of public policy domains, including education; housing/accommodation; employment and health. They are also subject to prejudice and poor social attitudes.
- 6.2 Although the Programme for Government consultation document and a number of the draft delivery plans acknowledge the disadvantage experienced by Travellers, the draft plans themselves do not include actions specifically targeted at Travellers.
- 6.3 The Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025 references both CERD and FCNM as relevant international human rights standards¹⁰². However, the Northern Ireland Executive has not, to date,

⁹⁷ The Heart Project (on behalf of all Healthy Living Centres in Belfast) is funded to provide an intervention project to support Travellers in accessing mainstream services e.g. Surestart.

⁹⁸ Community Restorative Justice was funded to provide mediation within the Traveller community and between the Traveller and settled communities and to ensure that barriers in accessing mainstream services were addressed.

⁹⁹ Barnardos were resourced to provide a bridging/support service for Traveller children transitioning from Primary to Post Primary School.

¹⁰⁰ Extern were supported to ‘compile a Traveller experience narrative in Belfast to identify issues of concern and Traveller views on the way forward’. Work is also underway, facilitated by Belfast City Council, to develop a Traveller forum for Belfast.

¹⁰¹ Progress is monitored via monthly returns by contracted third sector organisations to the Trust.

¹⁰² Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister (2016): *Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025*, paragraph 1.24, pages 10-11.

formally responded to any of the recent international treaty body recommendations pertinent to respecting, protecting and fulfilling international human rights standards as they apply to racial equality in Northern Ireland.

- 6.4 It is however recognised that the potential for a formal response will be limited by the absence of a functioning NI Executive and Assembly.
- 6.5 With respect to progress on the RES itself, more than two years after the Strategy was published, no implementation / action plan to address racial inequalities has been developed by the Executive. Such progress as has been made largely relates to process rather than outcomes i.e. the establishment of the Racial Equality Sub-Group, the appointment of Racial Equality Champions, the allocation of staff to commence a review of racial equality legislation etc.
- 6.6 With regards to developments to public policy to tackle identified inequalities, while there is evidence of some action by public authorities, there is a paucity of data available and little evidence of significant improvement in population outcomes for Travellers across the full span of public policy domains.
- 6.7 We consider that a key strategic mechanism to underpin the advancement of Traveller equality will be the establishment of the Travellers and Roma Thematic Group under the Race Equality Strategy 2015-2025.
- 6.8 We are concerned at this stage that, despite significant efforts by the Commission to assist the Executive in the co-design of a Traveller and Roma Subgroup, a Subgroup has yet to be convened. We will continue to support and challenge TEO to deliver this outcome.
- 6.9 In parallel, we will also continue to work to secure advocacy and adoption of our general and Traveller-related policy recommendations by the appropriate public authorities. We will also continue to use the international human rights treaty reporting system as a lever for change at the local level.

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