

Sent via email

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17<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Dear Home Secretary,

I am writing to you in my role as the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) Portfolio Lead for Equalities, Diversity and Human Rights which includes Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT), specifically on the subject of unauthorised traveller encampments. You will be aware that this year has seen an unprecedented number of these encampments across the country, and these have caused considerable community tensions in some areas. They have also put a significant strain on policing and local council resources.

Although councils in partnership with the police and other agencies such as social services have become much better at tackling this issue, and there is excellent work being carried out in many areas, I believe we need a more coordinated approach nationally. I have consulted informally with my PCC colleagues and can say there would be broad support for a more joined-up approach tackling not only the management of encampments but also the root sources of the problems they can cause. I can see merit in examining the following areas as a start:

- A renewed drive to make greater provision for permanent and transit sites through the planning process.
- Greater cooperation and a more consistent approach between police forces and local government.
- The role of the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Department for Communities and Local Government.
- A greater focus on working more closely with traveller groups themselves and local settled communities on the impact unauthorised encampments can have.
- A better national and regional understanding of traveller movements – too often the arrival of large convoys of travellers are unexpected in our local communities.
- A review of the legislation governing the balance between travellers' rights and those of settled communities.
- More widely, greater emphasis on ensuring that GRT communities engage better with education, health and social services authorities.

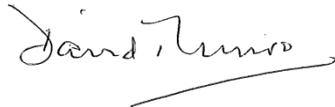
I am sure there are other areas which could do with a spotlight. It's important, I believe, not to lose sight of three issues:

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- Whilst there have undoubtedly been tensions caused by some of these encampments, this does not apply to all, and we must be careful not to over-generalise the problem.
- We must maintain the general principle that the law is there for everyone and transgressions from wherever they spring from will be dealt with effectively and fairly.
- A primary aim in dealing with encampments should remain the safeguarding of vulnerable travellers such as children.

A positive way forward would be to commission a wide-ranging and detailed government-led report on this whole issue. The recent Lammy Report and the Race Disparity Audit which both drew on the expertise and experience of a very diverse range of contributors set a good example which in my view is worth repeating. Indeed, the Lammy Review highlighted that according to unofficial estimates, GRT are substantially over-represented in youth custody - making up 12% of children in Secure Training Centres (STC) - and that young GRT males in custody often face issues accessing the public services that could support them on release. The Review additionally found that issues relating to GRT communities in the Criminal Justice System are often “overlooked”; that GRT are all too often missing from published statistics about children in the Criminal Justice Service.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Munro". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

**David Munro**  
Police and Crime Commissioner