

# Annual report 2019



**LONDON  
GYPSIES &  
TRAVELLERS**

Challenging perceptions, changing lives

## LONDON GYPSIES & TRAVELLERS

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# A message from the LGT Chair

## **Claire Cooper, Chair of the London Gypsies and Travellers Board of Trustees, reflects on achievements at a time of social division.**

It has been a turbulent year. Brexit debates have dominated the political agenda and our society is more divided than it's been in my lifetime. It's at times like these that the work of London Gypsies and Travellers is more important than ever, helping members of the community make their voices heard in the midst of all the noise.

I'm proud of what we've achieved in 2019: from supporting Gypsies and Travellers to speaking out on the London Plan: from celebrating the rich heritage of the community in London to challenging injunctions that discriminate against a way of life and demonstrating potential alternatives.

And alongside that, we've continued to offer our valued services – providing accommodation advice, tackling domestic violence and supporting young people through training and mentoring.

None of this would have been possible without the continued support of our funders, the commitment of my fellow trustees, and – most of all – the hard work and dedication of our wonderful staff. It has been a privilege to work with you all.



**London Gypsies and Travellers is an organisation which challenges social exclusion, working to support Gypsies and Travellers living in London as they seek more influence on the decisions that affect them, more opportunities and an end to the discrimination they experience every day.**



# Influencing policy

## The London Plan

In February LGT took part in the public examination of the London Plan proposals on Gypsy and Traveller accommodation – marking a significant step in LGT's push for a fair and strong policy that would see new sites built in London.

The debate was chaired by an independent planning inspector and there was strong representation from Travelling communities, with powerful speakers from LGT, the London Gypsy and Traveller Forum, the Showmen's Guild and National Bargee Travellers Association. They presented arguments about the failure of authorities to make provision for their needs and the exclusion and inequality this is causing.

Under debate was the definition of Travellers whose need for pitches should be counted by local authorities. According to the London Mayor it should include all members of the community, whether they live on sites or in housing. Despite planning inspectors' recommendation against the more inclusive definition, the Mayor has decided to keep it in the London Plan on the grounds that it meets City Hall's equality duties.

## The London Forum

LGT continued to encourage participation in the London Gypsy and Traveller Forum – an open meeting of community activists, support organisations, professionals and elected representatives held every quarter at London City Hall. The main aim is to ensure that politicians and policy makers recognise the needs of the community and develop inclusive policies.

Meetings in 2019 included presentations and discussion about Universal Credit, the new London Housing Panel, LGT's exhibition "Mapping the Histories of London's Travellers" (see page 8) and producing a forum manifesto for the Mayoral election in May 2020.





## Building City Hall links

LGT has continued to build relationships and understanding within City Hall. The London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, attended an event in June to celebrate the rich culture and heritage of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showmen communities in London, and met with members of the community and organisations representing them including LGT. He said he was determined to improve the quality of life of these communities in the capital.

**“I’m confident that we can break down some of the barriers and negative stereotypes that sadly still exist.” Sadiq Khan**

LGT helped organise the event alongside the Mayor’s office and other Gypsy, Roma and Traveller organisations. Mena Mongan, LGT’s Community Engagement Officer, spoke of the need for the community – especially young people – to stand up, be proud of who they are and challenge discrimination.

# Protecting our way of life

## Challenging injunctions

In May, London Gypsies and Travellers won a major legal victory in the fight against local authority injunctions banning encampments on their land. The High Court backed its stance that the injunctions are a disproportionate and discriminatory response given the accommodation crisis of Gypsies and Travellers.

In the test case, LGT lawyers opposed Bromley Council's application for a "wide" injunction, threatening fines and imprisonment on Gypsies and Travellers camping on open land in the borough. They argued that the bans effectively criminalise the way of life of a group recognised as ethnic minorities under the Equality Act 2010. The judge refused to grant an injunction against those occupying the land and instead made a more limited injunction preventing people from fly-tipping.

LGT and its lawyers, backed by the organisation Liberty, returned to court on 3rd December to fight an appeal by Bromley Council and seven other intervening councils. Over the past two years, 37 councils have taken out similar injunctions.

In October, in the run-up to Bromley's appeal, LGT launched an "End racist injunctions" campaign, gathering widespread input and support from the community. It also launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds towards the cost of the legal representation required to challenge the injunctions, with an associated video highlighting the issue to the public.

LGT is hugely grateful to Chris Johnson from Community Law Partnership, Tessa Buchanan and Marc Willers QC from Garden Court Chambers for their legal representation, and to Damian Le Bas for contributing to the campaign video and fundraising.



# Examining potential alternatives to eviction

With local councils around England taking out court injunctions banning Gypsies and Travellers from public land, LGT published an important new report in December examining the potential of alternatives.

Funded by the Mayor of London and written in collaboration with Professor Jo Richardson at De Montfort University, the report assessed the value of a negotiated stopping approach and how it might be implemented across London.

The study presented the results of research – policy reviews, online surveys, focus groups and interviews with local authorities, housing associations, members of the Traveller community and other stakeholders. It concluded that there are a range of negotiated approaches which could both meet local authorities' duties and decrease not only social costs for the Gypsy and Traveller community but also lead to savings in public spending and improvements in community relations.

It called on the Greater London Authority to take the lead in adopting non-confrontational, negotiated responses to Gypsy and Traveller roadside camps.



**“Eviction and injunction does not lead to fewer encampments – instead it creates a merry-go-round of fractured social cohesion, poorer health and education outcomes, mounting legal and clear-up costs and dissatisfied residents.”**

The Potential for a Negotiated Stopping Approach in London report



# Mapping Traveller history in London



## Heritage resource and exhibitions launched

London Gypsies and Travellers' "Mapping the Histories of London's Travellers" project came to fruition this year with the online resource going live and two major exhibitions charting Traveller history going on show.

Supported by a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, LGT has worked in partnership with Mapping for Change to build the first interactive, online maps of London from the 19th century to the present day to bring to light the knowledge, skills and cultural lives of Travellers. The maps link to a combination of sound and voice, photography, video and archive material.

The maps were launched online in June, and showcased at an exhibition at City Hall where visitors could view interactive online maps charting Travellers' camps, yards, long-term settlements, and routes between London and the surrounding counties.





They could listen to first-hand accounts from Gypsies and Travellers and view display boards showing the rich cultural and economic connections that Traveller communities have with different parts of London, with a focus on the East End.

In collaboration with Peabody, London's oldest housing association, LGT showcased the exhibition at the Information Hub in Thamesmead during November and December. The team working on the project have continued to expand their reach and work with different Traveller communities across London and beyond.



**"The project has allowed me to claw back some of my claim to London. While allowing me to reconnect with the experiences of my parents and grandparents, it has also reaffirmed a love for not only the site where I grew up but for the city I live in."**

Chelsea McDonagh, a Traveller who worked on the heritage mapping project



# Supporting families and residents

## Accommodation advice

There has been increased demand for LGT's accommodation advice service due to the continued shortage of social housing and available pitches, along with the migration to universal credit. There are particular challenges for Gypsies and Travellers when navigating universal credit claims and we have made representations to raise awareness of these concerns to local and central government.

However, we have been pleased to see an increase in the skills and confidence of service users, many of whom have become more proactive in managing their own affairs, using online portals and emails and liaising directly with statutory services. We have supported a number of families to challenge local authorities on the suitability of temporary accommodation.

**In 2019 we supported 231 families facing difficulties with accommodation and benefits**



## Working with residents

London Gypsies and Travellers has supported residents in the boroughs of Haringey, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, and Greenwich as they have pressed for sites and facilities.

For example, it provided advice to the Hackney Travellers Action Group as it campaigned for land previously designated for Travellers to be made available to them, rather than sold to housing developers. The Group launched a petition and asked

the Mayor of London to intervene. The land could provide nine desperately needed pitches for Gypsy and Traveller families who have been on the waiting list for 25 years.

In Haringey, LGT supported Travellers who took a deputation to Haringey Council calling for action on new sites and poor site management. The group says new sites are desperately needed, with only 10 pitches in the borough.

## Phoenix Arise

Phoenix Arise is a unique programme for Gypsy and Traveller women that has been tailored by LGT in partnership with Solace Women's Aid. It is designed for those experiencing domestic abuse and supportive family members..

The aim is to raise awareness and increase understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on individuals and children and to empower people to make positive choices.

**"I found the sessions very interesting. They taught you a lot about your marriage and it made me much wiser about what's going on."**

Participant on Phoenix Arise programme

# Offering young people opportunities

**Our young people's vocational taster workshops create a safe space where young Travellers can be themselves and develop practical skills.**

This year we collaborated with a local charity, Made in Hackney, to deliver a healthy cooking course which also gave young people the chance to explore employment options.

Our popular makeup course, delivered by professional makeup artist who is an Irish Traveller, combined engaging life-skills training with personal development, exploring issues such as identity and aspirations in a relaxed atmosphere. Many participants expressed a desire to complete further training.

Our Bright Futures initiative offers one-to-one mentoring with young people, giving them frameworks for thinking about choices and aspirations. Another focus this year was advocating for families on school and education issues. Schools are often not aware of the law as it relates to Traveller children. We have built a successful partnership with King's College which aims to increase access to further education for Gypsy and Traveller young people.



**48 young people experienced positive change through involvement in our Bright Futures programme in 2019**



# Staff

DEBBY KENNETT

Chief Executive

ILINCA DIACONESCU

Policy Officer

TRACIE GILES

Community Campaigner

TYLER HATWELL

Youth Outreach Worker (to October 2019)

ANNA HOARE

Community Research Officer

TANYA MURAT

Community Development Officer (April to November 2019)

GERALDINE LINDSAY

Skills Development Coordinator

MENA MONGAN

Community Engagement Officer

WARREN LEE

Accommodation Advice Support Worker

RICHARD LUSH

Administration and Operations Support Worker

CHELSEA MCDONAGH (July to December 2019)

Community-based researcher

SHERRIE SMITH (July to September 2019)

Community-based researcher



Staff pictured above, left to right.

Back: Richard Lush, Chelsea McDonagh, Geraldine Lindsay, Mena Mongan, Tyler Hatwell, Anna Hoare, Tracie Giles. Front: Debby Kennett, Warren Lee, Tanya Murat, Ilinca Diaconescu.

# Income and expenditure 2018-2019

This is London Gypsies and Travellers' Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31st March 2019.

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.3.19 Total funds £	31.3.18 Total funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>					
Donations	2	97,864	227,678	325,542	279,253
Investment income	3	150	-	150	111
Other income	4	23,122	-	23,122	9,174
<b>Total</b>		<b>121,136</b>	<b>227,678</b>	<b>348,814</b>	<b>288,538</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>					
<b>Charitable activities</b>					
Policy/ Strategic Development		2,254	100,566	102,820	90,270
Youth		286	40,101	40,387	43,754
Community Development		220	90,244	90,464	110,651
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,760</b>	<b>230,911</b>	<b>233,671</b>	<b>244,675</b>
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>		<b>118,376</b>	<b>(3,233)</b>	<b>115,143</b>	<b>43,863</b>
<b>Transfers between funds</b>	13	<b>25,000</b>	<b>(25,000)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>143,376</b>	<b>(28,233)</b>	<b>115,143</b>	<b>43,863</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>					
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>		<b>62,107</b>	<b>58,347</b>	<b>120,454</b>	<b>76,591</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b>205,483</b>	<b>30,114</b>	<b>235,597</b>	<b>120,454</b>

# Funders

Thanks to our funders during 2019  
IRISH GOVERNMENT EMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAMME  
JOSEPH ROWNTREE CHARITABLE TRUST  
THE GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY  
LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY  
THE HERITAGE FUND  
LLOYDS BANK FOUNDATION  
BBC CHILDREN IN NEED  
TRUST FOR LONDON  
THE TUDOR TRUST

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