



Annual report 2020

**LONDON
GYPSIES &
TRAVELLERS**

Challenging perceptions,
changing lives

LONDON GYPSIES & TRAVELLERS

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A message from the LGT Chair

Sarah Taylor, Chair of the Board of Trustees, reflects on LGT's achievements in a uniquely difficult year.



The year 2020 was dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. It was a challenging time for Gypsies and Travellers who suffered anxiety, financial strain, sickness and bereavements, all in the face of the same prejudice and discrimination as in any other year.

The work of London Gypsies and Travellers has been more important than ever, helping members of the community make their voices heard in the midst of a public health crisis. I'm proud of the way LGT responded quickly, continuing to support Gypsies and Travellers, but in new ways.

This report tells stories of incredible adaptability, resilience and generosity. Despite Covid, a lot happened in 2020 that we can look back on with pride.

We challenged negative media portrayals, discriminatory laws, and

racist policies. We advocated for families left during lockdown without access to sanitation or support. And we showcased the community's contribution and culture, including the incredible generosity of many Gypsies and Travellers towards those in need.

Alongside this work we continued to provide our valued services, but remotely – including giving accommodation advice, tackling domestic violence and supporting individual young people.

The experience of 2020 showed how strong we are together. LGT's supportive funders, committed trustees and brilliant, dedicated staff team demonstrated just how far we can rise to a challenge.

So we start 2021 undaunted by what the future may bring, and with hope for better things. Thank you.

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.

Supporting families during the pandemic

From the moment the threat of COVID-19 became apparent in early 2020, LGT recognised the physical, mental health and social impact the virus might have on Gypsy and Traveller communities.

The close-knit nature of the community meant that the risk of the virus spreading was high and there were clear difficulties self-isolating when living on overcrowded sites, in insecure accommodation or facing eviction on the roadside.

“Never have the calls by the Gypsy and Traveller community for safe and adequate accommodation, access to healthcare and dignity and rights been more urgent,” said Debby Kennett.

Minimising risk

In March, LGT urged London councils to put into place measures that minimised risks for families, and ensured that everyone had access to water and sanitation and all evictions were stopped. It joined with 30 organisations in calling for the government to set out guidance for supporting the community and asked the Greater London Authority to ensure that no evictions took place on their land during the pandemic.

In April and November, the Minister for Communities responded by telling local authority leaders how they should support Gypsy and Traveller communities, including those living on



the roadside. It wasn't until September that the government issued guidance, but evictions were allowed to continue.

Throughout the year, LGT was in touch with residents' groups and families facing the reality of COVID without access to basic amenities such as running water, sanitation or electricity. Many were being given no support, and LGT supported them to liaise with local authorities to seek solutions. We drew attention to their situation in national and local media.

We communicated vital information to the community about staying safe and where to find support via videos on social media, and answered questions via live Zoom

events on Facebook. Members of the community had the opportunity to speak out about how COVID was affecting them, their housing, healthcare and education at online meetings of the London Gypsy and Traveller Forum attended by representatives of the London Mayor's office, deputy mayors and councils.

Accommodation advice

The accommodation advice team delivered weekly appointments by phone and after a period of adjustment this worked well. Demand for the service increased significantly since March as council services became less accessible during the pandemic and community members turned to our team for support.

Phoenix Arise

LGT's Phoenix Arise programme for women experiencing domestic abuse adapted by producing a powerful video about domestic abuse and the support LGT could provide. It featured women who had been on the programme talking about their experiences, and members of the community talking about broader issues of mental health, shaming and the links with domestic abuse.



"Why are travellers forgotten about at times like this? We are human beings."

A Traveller living roadside with her family, who had no access to electricity, running water or toilets for six weeks

Responding in a new world

The pandemic had an immediate effect on the way that LGT could work. But the challenge proved a prompt for creativity, and we found we could still meet our objectives effectively – even as we shifted to online and distanced work.

The LGT office, based at Mildmay Community Centre, had to close in March and staff started working remotely. The accommodation advice team continued to deliver the service by phone, with some face-to-face support continuing as COVID restrictions allowed.

In-person outreach work necessarily became more limited, but social media,

Zoom and other online technology allowed our community development team to keep in close contact with those in need. Team working, if anything, became closer as staff liaised and met regularly through online conferencing.

The community response

The community itself responded to the pandemic with characteristic generosity. We heard many accounts of Travellers giving generously to the NHS and foodbanks for those in need in London.

For example, residents from the Bow site in Tower Hamlets organised food deliveries to NHS staff at the London Hospital (Lisa Buttigieg is pictured delivering food, left). Hackney Travellers organised donations to their local foodbank.

The Lister family in Sussex loaded up with provisions and fresh fruit trays and donated it to a charity supporting NHS staff. The NHS workers said: “It’s greatly appreciated. Gypsies and Showmen have been so generous.”



“Our local hospital has been so good to the Traveller community over the years, so we wanted to show our appreciation to NHS staff for everything they are doing at this time.”

Lisa Buttigieg

Getting our message across

Throughout the year, LGT has been producing videos and written material to inform the community about issues affecting them. At the same time, it has also worked with the media to communicate to the public and politicians the realities being faced by families: COVID, evictions, lack of accommodation, injunctions, preventing stopping, misinformation, discrimination and hate crime.

LGT contributed to positive coverage of the community in The Guardian, Metro, BBC news stories and podcasts, and various London news outlets.

Dispatches and after

Channel 4's Dispatches programme "The Truth About Traveller Crime" rightly caused wide outrage in the community and beyond. LGT urged members of the community and the public to complain to Channel 4 television and Ofcom – resulting in 900 complaints and an Ofcom investigation.

But the damage was clear: an #afterdispatches campaign mounted by the community charted the hatred and discrimination that the programme had prompted, and the anger and fear Gypsies and Travellers felt as a result. LGT had declined to take part in the programme, and submitted its own complaint to Ofcom about the way the programme makers had proceeded.

Matt Cooper, who owns a roofing and construction business, said: "We are



being discriminated hugely and this programme will now have an effect on our children even further in schools. This will cause huge amounts of bullying, racial abuse and discrimination to be thrown at our children."

Media that moves

LGT has launched a new project to better understand the forces working on the media that so frequently result in false and damaging portrayals of a whole ethnic group. With funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, and in collaboration with Leeds GATE, we have started a "Media that Moves" research project that will examine media representation of Gypsies and Travellers and propose ways to challenge this by "reframing" how the community is presented.

Challenging injustice

Throughout the year, LGT's policy and legal work focused on challenging the injustices that the Gypsy and Traveller community has to endure – particularly those related to rules on stopping, accommodation, planning and trespass.

Injunctions battle

In January, LGT and its legal partners triumphed at the Court of Appeal, where judges upheld an earlier ruling against Bromley's application for a "wide" injunction against "persons unknown" stopping on public land in the borough.

The judges emphasised that law makes plain that "the Gypsy and Traveller community have an enshrined freedom not to stay in one place but to move from one place to another".

This ruling has major implications for local authorities who have, or are seeking, similar bans, and also potential ramifications for the government's proposal to criminalise trespass. For the rest of the year into 2021, LGT worked with London councils to explain the implications of the ruling and bring councils round to more humane approaches such as negotiated stopping.

With funding from the Baring Foundation, LGT continued to work with lawyers from the Community Law Partnership and Garden Court Chambers as local councils explore and test in court what they can and cannot do in relation to Gypsy and Traveller stopping on open land. It has been preparing for a new High Court

Hearing in early 2021 involving several English councils who are still seeking to extend or renew their wide injunctions. The case has the potential to put an end to such discriminatory injunctions.

LGT has also been examining how it communicates issues surrounding the London injunctions, and looking at new ways of conveying key messages to the community and policy makers.

Criminalising trespass

Meanwhile, LGT joined with 10 other organisations for Gypsies and Travellers and urged Home Secretary Priti Patel to withdraw proposals to criminalise trespass and strengthen police powers to evict from "unauthorised encampments". In their letter, the groups pointed out that



the automatic criminalisation of trespass would be a breach of human rights and equality legislation, in the light of the recent Bromley Council ruling upholding the “enshrined freedom” of Gypsies and Travellers to move from place to place.

A petition against criminalising trespass signed by over 134,000 people is due to be debated in Parliament in early 2021.

Planning definitions

LGT joined with other groups to challenge the government’s planning definition of “Gypsies and Travellers” in another court hearing in December.

The current definition means that Gypsies and Travellers who have permanently stopped travelling in a caravan for work

“Our human rights are being abused right now, so let’s hope that Lisa can win this court case and have the planning definition changed.”

Mena Mongan

do not have their accommodation needs counted and struggle to get planning permission on their land. In a new legal challenge brought by Romany woman Lisa Smith, LGT along with Friends Families and Travellers and Southwark Travellers Action Group, joined as “interveners”, bringing evidence of the discriminatory effects of the government’s definition on the wider community. The judgement is expected in early 2021.



Working together

Throughout the year, LGT collaborated with a range of other organisations for Gypsies and Travellers and human rights in an attempt to combine skills, maximise resources and increase impact.

Elsewhere in this report are examples of the way LGT has worked in partnerships on legal challenges, objections and petitions, media initiatives and history and heritage events.

Moving for Change

LGT joined the exciting new Moving for Change project, involving a wide range of Gypsy and Traveller civil society groups, communities and individuals from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The network aims to support and encourage collaboration between individuals and organisations in the UK who share a common purpose to

improve the lives of nomadic Gypsy and Traveller people by providing funding and opportunities.

Roadside Futures

A new Roadside Futures project was launched as part of the Moving for Change initiative.

Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, this project aims to provide opportunities for members of nomadic communities in the UK to develop innovative projects which, informed by their own lived experience, have potential to improve the lives of Gypsies and Travellers.

In 2020 the project supported Gypsy and Traveller communities across the United Kingdom. It provided funding for grassroots organisations to support communities during the pandemic and supported the legal work challenging wide injunctions.



Supporting young people

LGT relaunched its Bright Futures programme, which aims to increase opportunities for young Travellers and Gypsies and support them in their life choices.

Bright futures

During 2020, we broadened the reach of the programme, producing leaflets, publicising the programme widely and supporting young people in 14 boroughs. Due to COVID restrictions and remote working, support for education was a particular focus.

As part of the service, LGT's youth development worker supported parents and children at school, meetings with staff, open days, inductions and first days. The service also advocated for cultural needs such as travelling and worked with parents so they fully understood the needs of the school.

LGT recommends staying in school but it also provided support for home education – which became especially important due to COVID restrictions.

“We are capable people that just need the same opportunities as others to receive an education and find employment.”

John Casey, who has just received a degree in Business Management



Videos and facebook event

A new LGT video featured stories from Gypsies and Travellers who had changed their lives through education. In August, another new video for parents explained the government's plans for children and young people returning to school after the first national lockdown.

And in December, LGT staff hosted a Facebook live conversation to promote the Bright Futures programme and the support available.

Showcasing our heritage

In June, London Gypsies and Travellers with the Greater London Authority and other organisations staged a spectacular online event showcasing the community's contribution and culture. The event was supported by London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who said the week highlighted the huge contribution of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Hosted by ex-LGT staff member Tyler Hatwell, the event included contributions from a wide range of community organisations, academics and performers including the music collective Ando Glaso, the Roma Support Group, Traveller Pride, the Traveller Movement, Circus 250, the

National Fairground and Circus Archive, Faith i Branko and the Newham Bridging Sounds Orchestra.

To mark the month, LGT also posted a series of videos on YouTube collecting stories, memories and photos from Gypsy and Traveller families.

History project evaluated

LGT's "Mapping the Histories of Gypsies and Travellers" project aimed to make Gypsy and Traveller communities in London visible, and document their stories and experiences through an interactive online map and exhibition.

The project was delivered by LGT in partnership with Mapping for Change between March 2018 and December 2019, with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. In May 2020, Mapping for Change produced an evaluation report outlining achievement and making recommendations for the future, including increasing the reach of the project and using the maps as a tool for education.



"As a Gypsy or Traveller, one of the things you face is that you don't belong but the project made me realise that we do belong and we've always belonged."

Contributor to Mapping for Change project evaluation

Staff

DEBBY KENNETT
Chief Executive
ILINCA DIACONESCU
Policy and Campaigns
Coordinator
LIZA DODDS
Youth Development Worker
TRACIE GILES
Community Campaigner
GERALDINE LINDSAY
Skills Development Coordinator
MENA MONGAN
Community Engagement Officer
MARGARET NOLAN
Youth Work Assistant (from Nov 20)
WARREN LEE
Accommodation Advice Support Worker
RICHARD LUSH
Administration and Operations Support
Worker
LAUREN TAPP
Community Development Worker
(from March 20)



Awards

LGT received the Trusted Charity award (level 1) from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations after an external assessment which concluded that LGT “has a clear planning structure, strong governance and robust values which they put into practice by ensuring that users are at the heart of everything they do”.

At the Friends Family and Travellers' Community Awards in February, three people connected with LGT were shortlisted for awards: Angela Mahoney (for most inspiring young person), Tyler Hatwell (who won the most inspiring project category for work on Traveller Pride) and Mark Penfold (in the same category for work on One Call Away).

Trustees

SARAH TAYLOR (Chair)
MARIAN MAHONEY (Vice Chair)
RICHARD BENNETT (Treasurer)
TESSA BUCHANAN
CLAIRE COOPER
STEPHEN COTTLE
SARAH EDWARDS
HELENA KIELY-SAVIN (from Sept)
TUNJI MAKANJU
GIORGIO MARIANI
HOLLY-GALE MILLETTE
MARK PENFOLD



Accounts

LONDON GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(INCORPORATING AN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.3.20 Total funds £	31.3.19 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations	2	18,435	258,096	276,531	325,542
Investment income	3	657	-	657	150
Other income	4	<u>7,570</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7,570</u>	<u>23,122</u>
Total		26,662	258,096	284,758	348,814
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities					
Policy/ Strategic Development		29,474	127,751	157,225	102,820
Youth		8,078	37,801	45,879	40,387
Community Development		<u>25,882</u>	<u>86,854</u>	<u>112,736</u>	<u>90,464</u>
Total		63,434	252,406	315,840	233,671
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(36,772)	5,690	(31,082)	115,143
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		205,483	30,114	235,597	120,454
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>168,711</u>	<u>35,804</u>	<u>204,515</u>	<u>235,597</u>

Funders

Thanks to our funders during 2020

THE BARING FOUNDATION

BBC CHILDREN IN NEED

HERITAGE FUND

THE IRISH GOVERNMENT EMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAMME

THE JOSEPH ROWNTREE CHARITABLE TRUST

LLOYDS BANK FOUNDATION

LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY

LONDON COMMUNITY RESPONSE FUND

TRUST FOR LONDON

**The Baring
Foundation**



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eacnamaíochta
Department of Foreign Affairs



Trust for London

Tackling poverty and inequality

Hackney



England & Wales



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& Wales no. 802052 and Scotland
no. SC039557

**LONDON
COMMUNITY
RESPONSE FUND**



Annual report produced for LGT by Simon Crompton www.simoncrompton.com

Photos by Mary Turner

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