



Presentation Format

- Setting the Scene
- Policy Background/Supporting Literature and Data
- A Social Justice Approach to Producing Research and Practice Recommendations
- Underpinning Participatory and Longitudinal/Iterative Research
- Principles of 'The Pledge'
- Core Requirements
- Where We Are Now (5 months after the Launch)
- Looking to the Future – Where We Want to Be
- Personalising the Higher Education Experience (Sherrie and Charmaine's journey to Higher Education)





Setting the Scene

Enhancing access to education as a social justice imperative + good practice focus on Widening Participation and Access to HE.

Increasing policy emphasis and recognition of the educational exclusion of **Romany Gypsy, Traveller and Roma** (ethnic communities) - but less acknowledgement/recognition of the challenges facing **Showmen and Boaters**

See further Women and Equalities Committee Report (2019) and work by NGOs have re-emphasised the educational exclusion of GTR communities and challenges within compulsory school context – linked to employment exclusion ([literature and refs on GRTSBintoHE website](#))

Major problems disaggregating data to explore situation of Roma when compared to Romany Gypsy communities

No data sets enumerate Showman and Boater young people but NGOs/organisations such as Showman's Guild will have varying degrees of information – nb 2021 Roma and Showmen included for the first time in the UK Census which will capture highest educational qualification information.





Policy Background/Supporting Literature/Data: School to HE pipeline

GTR people have the lowest levels of educational attainment of any ethnic group in school, achieving poorer outcomes in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2 and at GCSE, (KS4) (2019 5 A*-C GCSEs: Gypsy Roma 13%, Irish Travellers 19%) v. 64% of 'mainstream' pupils (2020). Nb: impossible currently to disaggregate fully by Gypsy/Roma

GTR children are also more likely to be absent from formal education, to have ceased attendance by the age of 16 and to be excluded from school than non-GTR children (Traveller Movement, 2019; WEC, 2019; DfE, 2020; Tidman, 2020).

March 2021 (DfE/Guardian, 2021) - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children identified as excluded from school at much higher rates than any other ethnic group - , with Roma children nine times more likely to be suspended in some localities in the UK.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/24/exclusion-rates-black-caribbean-pupils-england>





Retention Y6 – Y11

Year 6 pupils who ascribed to Gypsy Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage ethnic categories in the national dataset in 2005 were tracked using their Unique Pupil Numbers (Wilkin et al)

Year Group	Travellers of Irish heritage		Gypsy/Roma		Roma - EAL		National	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Year 6	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Year 7	74.2	78.0	82.3	83.4	71.9	70.8	96.4	96.3
Year 8	65.4	67.2	76.8	78.2	73.7	76.9	95.6	95.8
Year 9	50.0	55.6	68.3	70.5	68.4	69.2	93.7	94.1
Year 10	47.5	51.5	64.0	70.5	68.4	64.6	93.9	94.4
Year 11	35.0	41.5	52.3	61.4	64.9	61.5	91.9	93.0
Base (n)	240	241	400	386	57	65	310244	296124



Push and pull factors

Family withdrawing from education

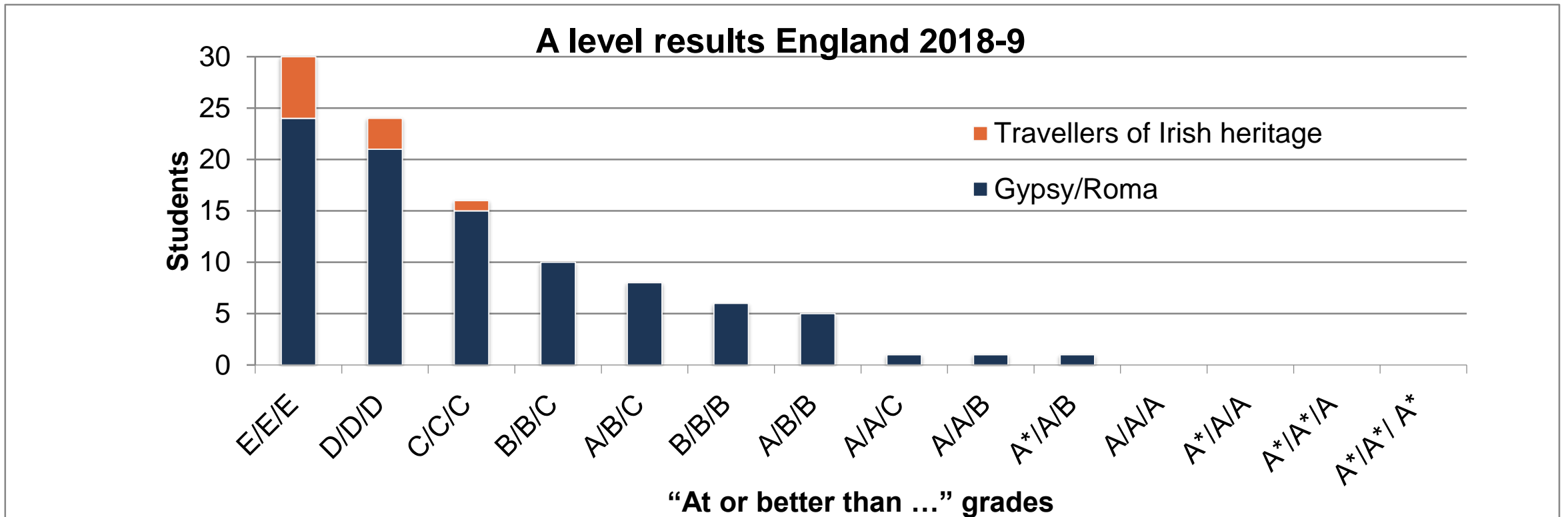
- Mobility and travelling
- Concerns about physical and moral safety
- Experiences of racism and bullying
- Parents wanted children to learn life skills at home
- Relevance of curriculum and qualifications

Schools excluding students

- Lack of flexibility and respect
- Failure to protect children adequately
- High rates of exclusion
- Low or unreasonable expectations
- Concerns about impact on results and standards



The ‘traditional’ starting point for University Access





Available Data (HE)

- Only 3-4 per cent of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population aged 18-30 years accessed higher education compared with 43 per cent of 18-30 year-olds in the general population (Mulcahy et al. 2017; Greenfields, 2019)
- Between 2012-13 to 2019-2020 (most recent figures) an increase in self-identification of Romani/Gypsy/Traveller U/G students from 90-325 (predominantly between 2017-2019)
- P/G 2012-2020 increase from 25-55 R/G/T students with the most noticeable increase over the last 2 years.
- 35 students (most recent year for which data was available e.g. 2018-19) are on taught masters (hence max 20 students on doctorates/PGR etc).
- 2019-2020: Only 350 Apprentices from GRT communities enumerated (we posit this may also relate to barriers to access/completion re functional skills/GCSEs)





Educational Co-Production as Social Justice Practice

The model of **collaborative co-production** is an explicitly socio-political model of research/practice activism.

Embedded within the model is the principle that:

- Participants practice critical reflexivity (cf Gramsci),
- Seek to democratise/disrupt power relations
- and focus on processes; knowledge development and skills enhancement of the team **not** just outcomes/publications/meeting the funding brief
- Our work requires that we engage actively in collaboratively designed policy and practice recommendations arrived at through an iterative process.





Underpinning Participatory and Longitudinal/Iterative Research

- Literature Review/Briefing/Roundtable Report (2019)
- Jisc-Mail Network (GTRSBintoHE) membership survey (2020)
- Practice Based Workshops re Pledge Development (x 1 – GTR Graduates/academics = n=12) + online consultations on format with NGOs/community members
- Survey – collaboration on content of survey with stakeholders (2020) – 66 (33 respondents employed by HEIs/in Educational Policy roles e.g. Network Coordinator)
- Interviews (1-2-1) [n = 10 community members inc. 1 GTRSB academic]
- Focus Groups x 3 [STAFF n=10]
- Consultation on content of Pledge with participants from diverse groups/steering group (2020/21)
- nb part of longitudinal iterative/participatory research practice involves constant cycles of shared data capture e.g. via conferences/workshops, focus groups with staff on inclusive curricula and feed-in from collaborative partners/'Pledged' universities etc.
- Summer 2021 – update on Network membership/survey will take place to capture latest data/membership demographics/interests and practice
- This model invites 'shared ownership' of Data and practices to enhance inclusion



Key Themes/Challenges we hear from FE and HE staff in supporting GTRSB students (focus group and email enquiries)

- Lack of Knowledge of GTR communities (even less knowledge of Showmen and Boaters)
- Requiring someone within the Institution/HEI network who can be approached for information/guidance on supporting the communities
- Dealing with stereotypes and racism – students and also inbuilt (personal) bias/knowledge gained through television/media – how to challenge respectfully when may have limited knowledge oneself?
- Access to tailored resources – which are fit for purpose
- Challenges faced by communities – what are they?
- Communication styles – being challenging/rude or engaged?
- How to provide in-reach or increase one's own knowledge?
- Resources/Curricula inclusion issues – where to start?





“I would be really reluctant to make suggestions of ways that I could be inclusive [of GTR students] without knowing more about it. I suppose I would want the reassurance of, sort of, speaking or engaging with the community a little bit because I think that there is a real risk if I just say, “Oh well, if I have this information I can do that.”

“I think for me having someone...who is knowledgeable in the area, has experience, has the network to draw on, it would be helpful to have that kind of presence on campus for consultation when you are designing syllabuses and so on. I mean it's all very well having written materials and videos and things but actually having a person who can actually have a discussion with would be I think the most beneficial”.





University Focus Group Examples – but potentially helpful in School Settings?

“It would be helpful maybe to look through those with somebody to say, “Is there anything else that we need to do differently or need to look at differently?” [Social Work programme lead]

“There are probably a couple of things that would be useful for us to consider .I think firstly looking at it [per] students that maybe coming from these backgrounds and how we can support them, particularly, if there are any cultural aspects that maybe we need to take into consideration .. in clinical practice [as do Muslim students] and .. from a broader point of view in terms of bringing service users in to address cultural aspects, not just medical conditions, if that makes sense to you, from our curriculum point of view.” [Senior Academic Lead – health school]



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FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF THE PLEDGE

- Co-production /collaboration between communities/NGOs, Universities and Colleges tailored and adapted to local circumstances and populations.
- “The Pledge” as an Organic, Living Response to a Social Justice Issue embedded in an participatory activist paradigm
- Collective focus on enhancing and developing ‘networks of practice’ between GRTSB students & graduates; communities/NGOs and universities/colleges to develop good practice which supports GTRSB people into and within Higher Education.



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INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

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Core Elements of the 'Pledge'

Requires commitment at highest level – e.g.VC/Principal etc to ensure institutional support

Light touch 'monitoring' – complete a survey each year to say what has done and where an institution might require more support

No cost to 'take the pledge'/join the **Network**

Membership of the network encourages dissemination of activities/support from peers/community members/ sharing of good practice etc.

Potential to collaborate with network members on designing materials, shaping/providing input to training programmes, developing local/regional partnerships etc.





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Core requirements I (additional good practice suggestions/stretch targets on website)

DATA GATHERING

Monitoring the number of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller students and staff currently at the university (nb: stretch target to include Showmen and Boaters per OfS briefing)

Evaluating year on year trends in these numbers

INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Designating a key named contact for working with GTRSB students to oversee workstreams/ attend regular training/EDI meetings

Encouraging the formation of GRT student and staff societies, possibly in local or regional groups of HEIs





Core requirements 2 (additional good practice suggestions/stretch targets on website)

OUTREACH

Having a distinct stream of work which focuses on GRTSB students within widening participation activities

Strengthening links to schools/FE colleges or NGOs working with local GTRSB communities

Developing/expanding mentoring opportunities for GTRSB graduates/students to work with community members who are considering entering HE

INCLUSION, CELEBRATION & COMMEMORATION

Foreground GRT inclusion and culture within the university (e.g. events such as GRT History Month, Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day, visibility in posters, curricula inclusion, etc.)





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Where we are now (June 2021)

Pledge formally launched January 2021 with 5 full signatory 'pathfinder' HEIs

June 2021 (8 signatories – 7 HEIs and 1 FE College) and at least five more Universities are in the process of seeking approval/near sign-off in the next few months

One Professional Association as a Signatory – GRTSW Assn.; The GRT Police Association are in discussion about adoption, and enquiries have been made by the GRT branch of Equity as well. Hopefully other professional associations will follow this lead.

The Network has now grown to 85 members from communities, HEIs and NGOs spread across the country and we are beginning to see the triangulated approach work in practice – GTRSB students, community (or other) mentors within HEIs, professional mentors for those on programmes such as Social Work etc and HEI wrap-around packages of bursaries/staff training and supportive environments/inclusive curricula coming to fruition.

We continue to receive regular enquiries from additional HEIs; FE colleges on occasion schools and local authorities re the Pledge and what it means for them/processes of sign-up





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Where We Want to Be: One

We are continuing to enhance awareness of the 'Pledge' amongst universities and higher education colleges committed to equalities and social justice, and hope to see signatory universities in Northern Ireland and Wales as well as Scotland and England.

We are keen to encourage international adaptation/take-up and have had some conversations with European partners about this ambition.

Target of 20 HEI signatories by end of academic year 2021-22

We will continue to monitor progress of 'the Pledge' to see how institutions engage and develop good practice in supporting GRTSB students (see role of Network)

Ambition of wider take-up of 'Stretch Targets' e.g. encourage HESA/UCAS to expand categories of student self-identification

Measurable increase in GTRSB students self-identifying and enrolling in HE/FE (*and acting as role models if they feel comfortable to do so*)

Enhanced (and appropriate) visibility of the communities in Curricula





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Where We Want to Be :Two

Ongoing developing local/regional and national 'networks of practice' between GRTSB students, communities, graduates; NGOs and HE/FE providers and the development of University Student Societies for GTRSB students.

Shared participatory development of a 'good practice bank' which can disseminate/evidence successful models (e.g. videos, training resources, etc.)

Outcomes for GRTSB people in HE comparable to/mappable against other communities

Grow engagement with increased number of professional associations (e.g. GRTSWA; BASW; GRTPA; Health Professional bodies etc), to encourage universities to 'take the pledge' and ensure inclusion of the communities in learning which impacts understanding and quality of service in practice.

Encourage/Support professionals from GTRSB communities to connect with local HEIs and enhance community visibility through providing input to curricula, guest lectures, etc.





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Keep in Touch and Find Out More:

- <https://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/gtrsb-into-higher-education-pledge>

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QUESTIONS??

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