

## **Review of the twice yearly count of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland**

### *A response from Article 12 in Scotland*

*Article 12 in Scotland* is an organisation which values the opinions of both our workers, and those whom we wish to aid in having a voice of their own, in equal measures. With this in mind, the following points have been raised with regards to the government's bi-annual count of Scottish Gypsy/Travellers.

Firstly, we realise there is a need to try and ascertain roughly how many Gypsy/Travellers are currently living in Scotland today. Reasons such as the provision of adequate health care and education, decent sites on which to camp and proper facilities through which information and representation can be sought, allowing Gypsy/Travellers to fight for their own rights from a well-informed and educated stand-point, necessitate this. However, as no other ethnic minority has their population measured in such a way, we feel that the count is, by its nature, racist and inappropriate. Also, the fact that the count simply notes the numbers of trailers found, and not the actual amount of people residing inside, or the fact that many people who identify as Gypsy/Travellers live in actual houses, not to mention the many families who, through their transient lifestyle, slip under the radar, makes the count pretty inaccurate and we feel we can say with confidence, that the amount of Gypsy/Travellers living in Scotland must be much higher than the numbers projected by the count.

Secondly, the count is not widely publicised, or indeed accessible to people who do know about it. Factors such as literacy issues and limited/no access to the internet (for many) seem to have been overlooked. No progress looks to have been made off the back of the count in terms of helping to aid in the fight against discrimination towards Gypsy/Travellers, or indeed to provide the community with better facilities and representation, rendering this a costly and ineffective exercise. It is hoped that the inclusion of 'Gypsy/Traveller' as an ethnic status in the 2011 Census will help to give us a more accurate picture of the real number of Gypsy/Travellers living in Scotland today.

Thirdly, it would be more useful if an annual report concerning the findings of the count was published – and indeed promoted, perhaps combined with feedback conferences held with professionals and members of the Gypsy/Traveller community itself in order to discuss the findings and, rather importantly, what needs to be done to improve the situation. Less written data would be extremely helpful - and less daunting - to those with literacy issues and perhaps the use of easy-to-read graphs and charts could be included in the final report.

This small change would allow information to be absorbed easily and quickly, encouraging data to reach a wider audience.

We would like to see more information surrounding the following points:

- The quality of sites.
- Amenities available on sites.
- Issues/concerns surrounding tenancy/waiting lists.
- Encampments - frequency of being moved on, how the authorities go about doing this etc.
- The wider Gypsy/Traveller population, for example; those living in houses.

It would also be useful if liaison groups were established, at both local and national levels, in order to use the information collected to represent and better meet the needs of the Gypsy/Traveller community, and also to ascertain what sort of information the population itself would like to see collected.