Article 12 in Scotland

Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives [YGTL]

Discrimination and On-Line Media
[Analysis focused on Scotland]

On-line Media Audit, Year 3: 1\textsuperscript{st} April 2013 - 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2014

July 2014

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Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities [1995]

Article 6 [1]: The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons' ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media.

National Union of Journalists: Code of Conduct

9] Produce[s] no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

Press Complaints Commission: Editors’ Code of Practice

1] Accuracy:

i] The press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, including pictures.

12] Discrimination:

i] The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.

ii] Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.

Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives volunteer:

The media targets us, there is never anything positive said about Travellers and they always stereotype us. It makes people judge us.
Summary

*Article 12 in Scotland* is committed to addressing the unethical reporting exhibited by many publications concerning Gypsy/Travellers, not only in Scotland, but also UK wide and further afield. Misleading and unbalanced articles are a key driving force in the discrimination experienced by Gypsy/Travellers living in Scotland, and indeed the UK as a whole, today. Our concerns regarding media coverage have been echoed by the young Gypsy/Travellers who lead *Article 12 in Scotland’s Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives* project; prejudice on the grounds of their ethnic identity is part of their, their families’ and their community’s everyday reality. *Article 12 in Scotland* finds this unacceptable.

Not only is this type of journalism immoral and unethical, it also directly violates journalistic codes of conduct; fuelling negative myths and stereotypes, demonising the Gypsy/Traveller community and further segregating them from their settled peers.

This report details the findings of Year 3 of our annual media audit. This annual media audit is focused on the on-line media in Scotland, and has been instrumental in providing members of *Article 12 in Scotland’s Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives* project Management Group with new skills [a key objective of the project being the ‘skilling-up’ and empowerment of young Gypsy/Travellers in order to enable them to have their own voices heard by governments, professionals and wider society in general]. This report is intended to provide an up-date to the previous two audits produced by *Article 12 in Scotland*¹, and will form an important part of the research for our final, more comprehensive, report which will be published at the end of the current Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives project in 2015.

*Article 12 in Scotland* found:

- 195 articles over 12 months in 21 publications – meaning an average of around 4 articles per week. This number has increased slightly since 2012-2013, indicating that press interest in the Gypsy/Traveller community in Scotland is still high and showing no signs of decreasing. Indeed, the number of articles have increased every year since the beginning of this audit. *Article 12 in Scotland* finds this worrying and feels this number is disproportionate to the population size of Gypsy/Travellers living in Scotland.

- Once again, the single publication with the largest amount of articles was *The Courier* with 19% of audited articles [an increase of 8% since last year]; *The Daily Mail* [Scotland] came in as the publication with the second highest number of audited articles totalling 14%. This indicates that there is still a national tabloid interest in the Gypsy/Traveller community and that articles are not simply confined to ‘local interest/information’.

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¹ A copy of the *Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives* pilot media audit may be downloaded here: [http://www.article12.org/A12_Media_Audit_Pilot_2012_Final.pdf](http://www.article12.org/A12_Media_Audit_Pilot_2012_Final.pdf), and Year 2 can be downloaded here: [http://www.article12.org/pdf/YGTL_MediaAudit_Year2_Final%20%281%29.pdf](http://www.article12.org/pdf/YGTL_MediaAudit_Year2_Final%20%281%29.pdf)
• The publication with the third highest amount of articles was the *Evening Express*, with 13% [and if you include the total of its sister publication *The Press and Journal* this number increases to 20%, a fifth of all published articles, indicating a high proportion of reporting in the North East through these two publications alone].

• *The Scottish Sun* was found to have published 12% of audited articles, once again indicating the interest that tabloid papers have in the Gypsy/Traveller community.

• 11% of audited articles for the year 2013-2014 came from the *Guardian*, however, it is worthy of note that all *Guardian* articles audited by *Article 12 in Scotland* were classed as either ‘positive’ or ‘neutral’ indicating a much more balanced approach to reporting on the Gypsy/Traveller community when there are no local agendas present.

• 62% of articles were focused on sites [unauthorised encampments, official sites, plans for new official sites and so on], 38% discussed the Gypsy/Traveller community in general, 24% of articles contained negative stereotyping, 12% focused on crime and 1% of articles were concerned with the *Channel 4* ‘documentary’ *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*. Only 0.5% reported on life from the perspective of a member of the Gypsy/Traveller community, indicating that the press is still focused on reporting from the view-point of the settled community.

• 7% of articles were classed as positive, however, negative reporting still accounted for over half of audited articles, with a further 15% falling within the categories of discriminatory and racist – this means that an overwhelming majority of articles are still portraying the Gypsy/Traveller community in a negative and misleading light.

• We are pleased to note that the majority of publications audited did not appear to be using old archive/stock photos, indeed this number has remained static since last year, however, we feel that 18% is still completely unacceptable.

• A quarter of articles used the word ‘illegal’, with 19% mentioning ‘rubbish’, 3% focusing on ‘fear’ and 5% discussing ‘invasion’. These leading words are not helpful and are instrumental in fostering negative stereotypes and mistrust.

• Nearly a fifth of publications audited still do not capitalise ‘Gypsy’ and/or ‘Traveller’. This is disrespectful and does not give due regard to ethnic status. It is also worthy of note that a large majority of publications are being assimilated into larger, tabloid, news-groups. A worrying trend with regards to prejudicial reporting and a lack of varied articles.

• *Article 12 in Scotland* finds the increasing popularity and reliance on social media, in particular social networking sites, extremely worrying. These sites have created an environment from which individuals and groups can make worrying statements and suggestions regarding Gypsy/Travellers [and indeed other ethnic minorities] via public platforms; these range from ridiculing on the grounds of a person’s ethnicity, to inciting racial hatred and, increasingly, establishing race hate groups. *Article 12 in Scotland* believes that these on-line groups are instrumental in stirring-up ill-feeling, and sometimes violence, towards the Gypsy/Traveller community, providing a dangerous platform from which people can spread lies and encourage hatred. They are dangerous, they are on the increase, and they are one of the fundamental causes of
the tension and dislike towards the Gypsy/Traveller community – not only in Scotland, but the rest of the UK, Europe and further-afield.

*Article 12 in Scotland* believe that journalists and their editors have a duty and responsibility to ensure that they are not only engaging in ethical reporting, but also effectively monitoring any affiliated on-line forums for racially motivated, pejorative comments made by their readers. In spite of having recognised ethnic minority status from the *Scottish Government*, the Scottish Gypsy/Traveller community continues to be marginalised from mainstream society. This is, in part, fuelled by the media – both news and social - coverage of their culture, and is sadly unlikely to change until the media, in all forms, ceases publishing negative, misleading and unbalanced articles. The campaign continues.
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**Introduction**

*Article 12 in Scotland* is a non-governmental organisation that works, through the medium of peer education, to promote young people’s rights as set out in international human rights charters. Through our *Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives* project, *Article 12 in Scotland* aims to significantly improve relations between the Gypsy/Traveller and settled communities, particularly, but not exclusively, between young people; thus building bridges, bonds and links between people and communities of different cultures, and enabling young Gypsy/Travellers to contribute as equal citizens to decision making processes and live their lives free from prejudice.

The *Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives* project - which is led by a group of young Scottish Gypsy/Travellers, and staffed by members from both the Gypsy/Traveller and the settled community - is committed to addressing the discrimination and prejudice faced by Gypsy/Travellers living in Scotland today.

The negative, disrespectful, and, at times, downright racist way in which certain representatives of the British media portray the Gypsy/Traveller community has long been one of *Article 12 in Scotland*’s key concerns: not only for the safety and well-being of the Gypsy/Traveller community, but also as a barrier to positive change and bridge building with members of the settled community. Our concerns have been echoed by members of *Article 12 in Scotland’s Young Gypsy Travellers’ Lives [YGTL]* project Management Group, who have identified negative media coverage as one of the main driving forces in the discrimination faced by their community.

Unbalanced reporting can and indeed does create prejudice; perpetuating dangerous and offensive myths and stereotypes and helping to foster racial hatred – further fuelling the division, fear and mistrust between the Gypsy/Traveller and settled communities. The *Equality and Human Rights Commission* rightly state that the negative portrayal of the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller community ‘serves to validate the idea that somehow Gypsy Travellers are fair game - that it is not racist to stereotype or discriminate against a Gypsy Traveller.’

Consequently, *Article 12 in Scotland* has committed to an extensive on-line Scottish media audit; starting in September 2011 [as part of a 6 month pilot and training for the YGTL Management Group], this audit will be on-going until the end of September 2014, allowing us to track changes in reporting and will be updated regularly via an annual statistical report.

NB: The *Scottish Government’s* official terminology ‘Gypsy/Traveller’ has been employed throughout this report. However, it is important to note that this term is not accepted by all families. Indeed, many Scottish Gypsy/Travellers prefer to self-define as ‘Traveller’.

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Rationale

*Article 12 in Scotland* believes that Scottish Gypsy/Travellers are an extremely vulnerable group in the hands of the media. Entering key words such as ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Traveller’ into the search facility of many on-line publications will usually reveal myriad negative articles and racist commentaries; ranging from ridiculing and ‘poking fun’, to inciting racial hatred and talk of evoking the ‘final solution’: ‘Send them to Hazelhead [a crematorium located in Aberdeen] where the final solution is obvious’.³ As evidenced by the above comment, tensions in Aberdeen City and Shire have reached crisis point, a lack of authorised sites and the blocking-off of traditional stopping places have heightened animosity between the transient and settled communities; a theme which is replicated throughout Scotland.

*Article 12 in Scotland* has been monitoring certain publications in the North East of Scotland since 2009 [it is noteworthy to mention here that many articles have now been removed and the on-line reader comments/full articles section is disabled for those who do not have a paying subscription]. A seemingly innocent article in the *Press and Journal*, a daily publication in Scotland [read by 138,000 readers every day⁴], entitled *There are all sorts of ways to give people a bad name* is just one example of the media campaign against Gypsy/Roma/Travellers here in Scotland. This article draws you in with a commentary concerning a respectful silence at a Scottish football game, but half-way through turns into an anti-Roma rant; the commentary includes:

‘You can’t walk 10 yards without tripping over some old girl in a shawl or having your ears assailed by some swarthy bloke playing the Romanian national anthem on his accordion. [...] Within minutes, they had hobbled and wheeled themselves off in every direction in search of kind-hearted Dubliners. [...] The worry is that, with the dire collapse of the Irish economy, these gangs will set their sights on Scotland. Thanks to the diversity training that the Scottish constabulary have been undergoing of late, in which they have been taught to treat these travellers with the utmost respect, the beggars could clean up over here with impunity. [...] If anyone dares to criticise them, they will probably find themselves up on a charge of inciting racial hatred. [...] Perhaps I should start packing a bag for an extended stay at Her Majesty’s pleasure [sic].’⁵

*Article 12 in Scotland* believes that this type of misleading journalism is unethical and dangerous. *Article 12 in Scotland* does not accept that representatives of the Scottish media would report on any other ethnic minority in the same way in which many publications currently report on, and demonise, Gypsy/Travellers. We believe that the media plays a fundamental role in keeping anti-Gypsy/Traveller sentiment alive; it is for this reason that we have committed not only to such a lengthy audit, but also to eradicating this unacceptable form of ethnic discrimination.

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³ Reader’s comment, *Press and Journal* on-line [July 2010]: article and comment since removed.


Methodology

This report outlines the findings of our Year 3 on-line Scottish media audit of local, national, daily and weekly Scottish publications. We have focused solely on on-line media as, despite being one of the most important and influential means of [instant] information sharing around today - particularly with a readers’ comment facility available for most larger on-line publications, this is an area that [in terms of impact on the Gypsy/Traveller community] has not been analysed in the past.

*Article 12 in Scotland*’s fundamental goal for the YGTL project is to empower and ‘skill-up’ young Gypsy/Travellers in order that they may speak for themselves – and their community – to bring about real and lasting positive change and to enjoy the fundamental human rights that members of the settled community take as given. The key to this goal is participation; with this in mind, all members of the YGTL project team were invited to take part in the auditing process, allowing them to become involved in the regular checking and analysing of relevant articles published in their local press. The publications audited have been chosen to reflect not only every jurisdiction in Scotland, but also to cover various types and sizes of publications: daily and weekly, local and national. Internet searches are also undertaken and, out of interest, ‘Google Alerts’ for keywords have been set up [which generate thousands of on-line hits globally every week for racist terms such as ‘pikey’, ‘gypo’, ‘tink’ and so on].

In order to ensure a sense of continuity, *Article 12 in Scotland* created an ‘audit form’. This form was broken up into various sections and gave a sense of structure to the audit. Nonetheless, due to the fast-paced nature of the internet, the pre-requisite for expensive on-line subscriptions, differing news stories between on-line and print editions, a lack of an interactive on-line presence for certain publications and the inability to read the full story on-line [various publications do this in order to try and up print media sales], *Article 12 in Scotland* does not claim to have captured every article within our specific remit.
Findings

[A visual representation of our findings may be viewed in the appendix to this report.]

NB: Due to rounding up/down, and the overlapping of certain categories, some percentages may not add up to 100.

Article 12 in Scotland found:

Volume:

- 195 articles over 12 months in 21 publications [averaging around 4 articles per week]. This number indicates an increase in reporting on the community from our 2011-2012 media audit which found 72 articles over a 6 month pilot period, and the 2012-2013 audit which found 193 over 12 months. Article 12 in Scotland feels, once again, that this number is disproportionate to the population size of Gypsy/Travellers living in Scotland, and highlights the significant ‘interest’ the media has in reporting on the Gypsy/Traveller community. We also feel it is worth noting that many smaller, regional papers are becoming assimilated into larger, tabloid, news groups – meaning even less variation in the reporting on the Gypsy/Traveller community.

- The publication with the largest amount of articles was The Courier with 19% of audited articles, accounting for nearly a fifth of all articles published. The Courier is a widely read regional paper, covering Angus, Tayside and Fife – all areas with on-going issues concerning Gypsy/Traveller sites and a lack of authorised pitches.

- The second highest amount of articles concerning the Gypsy/Traveller community were found in The Daily Mail [Scotland], which was found to have published 14% of all articles audited. This indicates that there continues to be a national tabloid – and often sensationalist - interest in the community, and not simply just articles confined to ‘local interest/information’.

- The publication with the third highest volume of articles was the Evening Express – which accounted for 13% of audited articles [an increase of 3% since last year], equating to over a tenth of all press correspondence audited by Article 12 in Scotland during our Year 3 audit. If you combine this figure with that of the Press and Journal, the Evening Express’s sister publication [7%], this figure accounts to a fifth of all articles. Considering that these two publications are both regional papers, with an extremely high readership in the North East of Scotland, Article 12 in Scotland finds this statistic worrying. It is worthy of note, that a further 7 articles in the Press and Journal were found by Article 12 in Scotland, but were removed before auditing could be done. These articles have not been included in this audit, but if they had, they would have taken the number of articles published by the Press and Journal up to 11%, putting them in joint fifth place.

- The Scottish Sun came in as the publication with the fourth highest number of audited articles with 12%, double the amount published the previous year. This indicates, once again, that there is still a national tabloid interest in the Gypsy/Traveller community.
• Once again the Guardian, which was added to give this audit a sense of balance, was found to have the fifth highest number of relevant articles. 11% of audited articles for the year 2013-2014 came from this publication, however, it is worthy of note that all Guardian articles audited by Article 12 in Scotland were classed as either ‘positive’ or ‘neutral’, indicating a much more balanced approach to reporting on the Gypsy/Traveller community and culture when there are no local agendas present.

Themes:

NB: Many articles had two or more themes.

• 62% of articles were focused on sites [unauthorised encampments, official sites, plans for new official sites and so on].
• 38% discussed the Gypsy/Traveller community.
• 24% of articles contained negative stereotyping.
• 12% focused on crime.
• 1% of articles were concerned with the Channel 4 ‘documentary’ My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding.
• Only 0.5% reported from the perspective of the Gypsy/Traveller community, 0.5% concerned education, 0.5% were about the community’s history and 0.5% spoke of the health issues affecting the Gypsy/Traveller community.

Although reporting on sites decreased from 72% in 2011-2012 to 59% in 2012-2013, we have seen a small increase to 62% in 2013-2014. This indicates that the issue of sites is still one of the fundamental driving forces in the media coverage of the Gypsy/Traveller community, with well over a half of all articles reporting on this issue. Until the issue of sites is resolved, unauthorised encampments will continue to be the norm, the media will persist in reporting on them and tensions will continue to rise. This combined with the fact that articles reporting on the Gypsy/Traveller community account for over a third of all articles, indicates a continuing trend within the media regarding their interest in the community as a whole.

Reporting on crime has decreased once again, from 25% in 2011-2012, to 14% in 2012-2013, down to 12% in 2013-2014. Although this in a positive trend, Article 12 in Scotland feels that this volume is still unwarranted: the Association of Chief Police Officers states that they have no disproportionate problems of criminal activities within the Gypsy/Traveller community. Yet, over one in ten articles focused on ‘crime’ within or as a result of the Gypsy/Traveller community. There has been an increase in negative stereotyping within articles, going up from a fifth to a quarter of all relevant articles. This gives a clear indication that the Gypsy/Traveller community is still being subjected to press demonisation and ridicule.

Tone:

NB: Many articles contained two tones e.g. negative/discriminatory.

- 7% of articles were classed as positive.
- 52% were overwhelmingly negative.
- 36% were audited as neutral.
- 10% we classed as discriminatory.
- 4% were identified as downright racist.

In 2012-2013, Article 12 in Scotland noted that various publications reported on the Scottish Government’s Equal Opportunities Committee’s Enquiry ‘Where Gypsy/Travellers Live’, this not only increased the volume of relevant articles but also decreased the amount of negative articles from 58% in Year 1 to 38% in Year 2, and increased the amount of ‘neutral’ reporting [rising from 27% in Year 1 to 54% in Year 2]. In our 2013-2014 audit, now the dust from the Enquiry has settled, we have noted some significant changes in the tone of audited articles: the amount of positive articles have decreased from 10% to 7%, with negative articles increasing significantly from 38% to 52%; articles classed as neutral have decreased from 54% to 36% and we have seen discriminatory articles increase from 7% to 10%, with articles classed as racist more than doubling from 1% to 4% this year.

Article 12 in Scotland had hoped that the positive changes recorded last year would continue [and increase] during Year 3, but, unfortunately, this has not been the case. Last year nearly 50% of articles portrayed the Gypsy/Traveller community in a negative light; this year, the figure has risen to nearly 70%. Once again, Article 12 in Scotland finds this not only disproportionate to the community as a whole, but also completely unacceptable and indicative of the very long way we still have to go in order to ensure fair and balanced reporting for this marginalised community.

Article 12 in Scotland finds these figures extremely worrying and reiterates, once again, that we feel this would not likely be the case with any other recognised ethnic minority. It is also important to note that of the articles classed as neutral, many were only available on-line in an edited form [with the comment section unavailable] – the full article could easily take on a different tone.

Use of Archive/Stock Photos:

- Yes: 18%
- No: 62%
- Unsure: 20%

Although we are pleased to note that the majority of publications audited did not appear to be using old archive/stock photos, indeed this number has remained the same since last year, we still feel that 18% is completely unacceptable. The premeditated use of old, misleading and unconnected photos is unethical and goes against the Press Complaints Commission’s Editors’ Code of Practice. The practice of using old photos to deliberately misrepresent a
situation reinforces myths and stereotypes [e.g. concerning mess] and adds to the negative view of Gypsy/Travellers held by members of the settled community.

Key Negative/Leading Words:

NB: Many articles had two or more ‘leading words’.

- Illegal: 25%, increasing from 13% in Year 2.
- Rubbish: 19%, increasing from 12% in Year 2.
- Eviction: 8%, increasing from 6% in Year 2.
- Fear: 3%, remaining the same since Year 2.
- Intimidation/threat: 2%
- Invasion: 5%, increasing from 1% in Year 2.
- ‘Other’, examples include: revenge, concern, ill-feeling, theft, brawls, urination, fury, Traveller problem, jobless, benefits, abuse, reckless, out of control dogs, [settled] community helpless [against Travellers], outrage, enraged, anger, increased crime, unlicensed, not paying taxes, camps spreading, unlawful, eject, unauthorised, crack-down and Roma invasion. Some articles were also guilty of racial profiling and the use of emotive words such as relief.
- Article 12 in Scotland also noted a significant amount of ‘mafia’ and ‘war’ style terminology, such as: Gypsy gangs, crime gangs, occupation, under-siege, war-zone, no-go-zone, taken over etc.

The use of leading words is irresponsible and can be likened to subliminal messaging; repeated use of words such as ‘illegal’, ‘invasion’ and ‘fear’ can lead to all sorts of negative doubts, misunderstandings, frustrations and myths about the Gypsy/Traveller community and culture; which in turn keep division and hatred alive. The fact that these leading words have increased significantly this year indicates the ill-feeling that continues to thrive amongst sections of the press towards the Gypsy/Traveller community.

Capitalisation of ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Traveller’ in audited articles:

In addition to the media audit that is the subject of this report, Article 12 in Scotland is annually auditing 87 Scottish newspapers [covering a cross-section of Scotland] in order to monitor use of capitalisation:

- Yes: 7%
- No: 17%

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7 Press Complaints Commission: Editors’ Code of Practice: Section 1] i:
• N/A [e.g. the paper has now gone into administration/been assimilated into another publication/family of publications/no articles since last audit]: 76%

In April 2011 only 2% of the publications in question capitalised ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Traveller’, in April 2012 this had increased to 4% and by April 2013 this increased again to 28%. During Year 3, 2013-2014, this has decreased to 7%.

Across the duration of this audit, Article 12 in Scotland has noted a high volume of regional papers becoming part of larger news groups or ceasing to exist altogether. Indeed, we have seen the increase in publications classed as ‘N/A’ rise from 27% in 2011 to 32% in 2012, remaining the same – 32% - in 2013, and more than doubling to 76% in 2014.

Article 12 in Scotland will however continue to monitor these publications for the duration of this audit.
Social media:

An area of increasing significance is the world of social media; the readers’ comments section of on-line news sites, and social networking sites such as Facebook, are becoming ever more popular communities where there seems to be a sense of misplaced anonymity with regards to what people post [the Facebook presence of many local papers are guilty of hosting inflammatory ‘debates’ concerning the Travelling community]. Indeed, anti-Gypsy/Roma/Traveller groups are prolific on social networking/question and answer sites; unfortunately as soon as one of such pages is reported and removed, another takes its place. It is worth noting that despite their content violating site terms and conditions, the removal process can take weeks - or in some cases the pages are not removed at all.

Nonetheless, far from being anonymous, it is relatively easy to trace someone’s real details on-line. Aberdeenshire has seen a number of individuals charged for racially aggravated comments made on Facebook regarding Gypsy/Travellers in the past couple of years. Anti-Traveller sentiment is rife on social networking sites, with groups such as North East Travellers – which has changed its name and was formally known as Aberdeen Travelers [sic] - [https://www.facebook.com/AberdeenTravelers?fref=ts] encouraging anger towards, and the surveillance of, the Gypsy/Traveller community in the North East. Article 12 in Scotland is closely monitoring this page, and others, such as Aberdeen Against Travellers. Aberdeen Against Travellers has now been removed by Facebook, however, a selection of some of the worst comments, which use Nazi style far-right terminology, have been logged and include:

- “Burn them out.”
- “Hear hear. I would dig a hole to get rid of the pikeys [sic].”
- “I think we should all go picky hunting burn the vans and big a big f****g hole and chuck all the pricks in it [sic].”
- “They should have a special camp with special treatment lol.”
- “Gas em.”
- “This s***t wouldn’t be tolerated in the US. Someone would shoot the b*****s. I’ve said it before, I’m saying it again. Petrol bombs. Every f****g night. Footballs covered in tar booted into their camp and dog food with laxative in planted amongst their s**tpiles. Plus car horns up their asses, day and night. Not only will they leave they won’t ever b****y come back. The police are b****y useless it’s time the citizens of Aberdeen took matters into their own hands. Stop the nicey nicey horses**t and drive the thieving b****y nomads out”.

This is an example of only one group, these types of pages are prolific across the UK as a whole, and are indicative of the huge amount of work that still needs to be done in order to address the racial tension directed towards the Gypsy/Traveller community living in the UK today.

These types of comments are not restricted to Facebook groups, the readers’ comments of many on-line publications are a hive a racial bigotry too:
• *Daily Mail*, 10th April 2013, den101151: “They are on their way here. So be ready for a rise in crime everywhere. Cameron refuse to act or to stop them. All his false promises have led to no action or anything positive at all yet. Get double padlocks for your garages and sheds and make sure you don’t go out on your own...[sic]”

• *Daily Mail*: 10th Jan 2014: Im: “Traveller is a life style choice not an ethnic group.”

• *Daily Mail*: 21st Jan 2014: Melvill: “Unhealthy, uneducated and unemployed: unwanted, unwashed, under our feet.”

• *Evening Express*, 16th August 2013: owainty: “so it looks like an end to having to pay rates - at least this is some small consolation for having these people live in our area.”

• *The Courier*, 7th May: Jerry48: “I’m fed up with the Courier using a capital “T” when writing about travellers. They’re a bunch of tinkers who don’t like paying taxes in any shape or form...[sic]”

• *The Courier*, 22nd August: Midser: “What’s the criteria for being classed as a Traveller in the UK? A gypsy passport, golden earrings, a spooky look or a rusty old trailer [sic]? ”

• *The Scotsman* 12th June, Hippohunter: “A M79 with a couple of dozen rounds and half a dozen 66mm LAW, problem solved.”

• *The Scottish Sun*, 11th June, whattttt: “You have got to admit these vermin are consistent wherever they land -------- filthy animals.”

• *The Scottish Sun*, 21st July, firebird: “I know a cheaper way to get rid of them, can’s of petrol and matches [sic].”

Once again, the above comments show just how engrained the negative attitude towards the Gypsy/Traveller community actually is. The fact that people think it is acceptable to make such comments, in a public forum, about a recognised ethnic minority highlights how much still needs to be done in order to put a stop to this ‘socially acceptable’ form of racial discrimination.

*Article 12 in Scotland* believe that social media – social networking sites, blogs, on-line news presences and other on-line communities and groups – have a duty to thoroughly monitor all racially aggravated content within their sites. On-line social spaces provide a worrying platform for promoting racial intolerance towards Gypsy/Travellers; ranging from ridiculing and stereotypes, to inciting racial hatred and violence.
A right to fair reporting

Journalists, editors [and indeed anyone else who is involved with any form of media] have a duty and responsibility – under UK Equality Law – to make sure that they report in an ethical fashion [the Scottish Government now recognises Scottish Gypsy/Travellers as an ethnic minority, which brings them under the protection of the Equality Act 2010].

Regulatory bodies:

- **Press Complaints Commission [PCC]**

- **Office of Communications [Ofcom]**
  Ofcom is a statutory body, and therefore has the backing of the law [guidelines can be found at]: [http://www.ofcom.org.uk/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/)


Journalists and editors have a responsibility to ensure fair and ethical reporting for all. Tensions between the Gypsy/Traveller community and the settled community will never cease if the media continue to vilify and misrepresent Gypsy/Travellers. It is also imperative that all on-line publications step-up to the plate and implement a robust monitoring system in order to eliminate racist, insulting and dangerous reader comments.

**Article 12 in Scotland** does not claim that all Scottish – and indeed UK-wide - publications, deliberately mislead the public and strive to criminalise the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller population, but we do know that some do. This deliberate misrepresentation [via leading words and the use of archive/stock photos] of an already marginalised community is not only unethical – it also serves to put a whole community in danger.

“...it is this language that is used to achieve the marginalisation of, and discrimination towards, Gypsies ... Gypsies are presented generally as a problem and more specifically as in need of controlling, dirty and, through the use of the war and invasion analogies, as a very different group who are in direct conflict with the [British] in group ... such talk can be used to delegitimise and dehumanise the people it is aimed at...”

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The Leveson Enquiry: Culture, Practice and Ethics of the Press

The Leveson Enquiry was set up by Prime Minister David Cameron in order to examine in-depth the culture, practice and ethics of the British press. It was a public, judge-led enquiry and was established as a result of the phone-hacking scandal caused by the now defunct News of the World. The Enquiry looked at the relationship between the press and the public, and also between the press and the police/politicians.

Lord Justice Leveson made several broad and complex recommendations relating to how the press is regulated, including:

- Newspapers should continue to be self-regulated - and the government should have no power over what they publish.
- There has to be a new press standards body created by the industry, with a new code of conduct.
- That body should be backed by legislation, which would create a means to ensure the regulation was independent and effective.
- The arrangement would provide the public with confidence that their complaints would be seriously dealt with - and ensure the press are protected from interference.9

The current system, where the press is self-regulated voluntarily through the Press Complaints Commission, is widely agreed to be failing: “The Press Complaints Commission is currently in a phase of transition; and it will soon be replaced by a new structure of independent self-regulation for the newspaper and magazine industries. Following the recommendations Sir Brian Leveson made in his Report published in November 2012, the magazine and newspaper industries have been creating a new, self-regulatory body - the Independent Press Standards Organisation [IPSO], in accordance with the Leveson principles. It is expected that IPSO will commence operations in September 2014. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the PCC will therefore be closing down in September.”10

Although the Leveson Enquiry has not dealt directly with the issues surrounding reporting on the Gypsy/Traveller community, Article 12 in Scotland feels that such an in-depth and public enquiry into the morals and ethics of the British media has in itself been a good thing. It is hoped that by shining the spotlight on unethical reporting, more journalists and editors will think about the dangerous repercussions of unbalanced journalism before publishing.

9 Press 'need to act' after Leveson, 5/12/2012, on-line at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15686679

10 Press Complaints Commission: About the PCC: http://www.pcc.org.uk/about/
Where Gypsy/Travellers Live: Equal Opportunities Committee Enquiry, March 2013

Last year the Equal Opportunities Committee conducted an enquiry in order to follow-up on the recommendations produced by a previous Equal Opportunities Committee concerning the lives of Gypsy/Travellers living in Scotland and how to improve them.

Under the discrimination section of the report, the Equal Opportunities Committee stated the following concerning the media:

‘19. The media, including ‘new media’ such as blogs and comments boards, were cited in submissions as encouraging bad relations, primarily through the almost exclusively negative reporting of Gypsy/Traveller issue. There is an encouragement towards a ‘not-in-my-backyard’ attitude, and few examples of reporting from the Gypsy/Traveller perspective. Sections of the print media target criticism towards the planning for and establishment of private and public sites and place a focus on the notional impact on house prices. Witnesses from support services called for more stringent action on defamatory and racist reporting. Nigel Firth [NHS Grampian] suggested that negative reporting often left a ‘legacy’ of negative attitudes.

20. The negative and unrepresentative television portrayal of Gypsy/Travellers, including the sexualisation of children in broadcast media and publicity for television shows, was described as having put back progress on tackling racism by 10 years. It is clear that this approach would not be taken using any other ethnic community.

Guidance for the media

21. The EHRC plans to revise its guide to the media in 2013. The previous guide was sent to 7000 media outlets in Scotland, and aimed to help illustrate some of the issues around Gypsy/Travellers and their interaction with the settled community in a non-legalistic way.’

During our Year 2 audit, Article 12 in Scotland found that the publication of the Where Gypsy/Travellers Live report had a positive impact on reporting methods in Scotland; indeed we logged a decline in the prejudicial reporting experienced by the Gypsy/Traveller community. Unfortunately, this year, we have found there to be a sharp increase in the amount of negative reporting concerning the community.

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Conclusions and recommendations

Article 12 in Scotland concludes that, once again, the on-line media, both here in Scotland and UK wide, is guilty of publishing a disproportionate amount of articles about the Gypsy/Traveller community [in particular with regards to local sites]; four articles per week, of which nearly two thirds are of an overwhelmingly negative tone, concerning a community which is reported to make up less than 0.5% of the Scottish population\(^\text{12}\), smacks of victimisation. The sheer volume of these articles serves only to perpetuate negative myths and stereotypes - via means of tone, leading words and headlines, disregard for ethnic status by not capitalising ‘Gypsy’ and/or ‘Traveller’ and the use of archived photos - fostering a negative attitude towards Gypsy/Travellers. We believe this is not in the public’s interest and is serving solely to demonise an already marginalised community.

The increase in negative reporting that we have seen during this section of our audit is not only disheartening, but also extremely worrying. The media has a duty to report ethically and in an unbiased fashion, on all articles published. Article 12 in Scotland does not feel that this is the case where reporting on the Gypsy/Traveller community is concerned. The media has a very powerful voice: Article 12 in Scotland believes that, with willing, the media could be instrumental in changing, rather than fuelling, negative attitudes towards the Gypsy/Traveller community. The media should use its power to effect positive changes in the public’s mind-set, thus eradicating what many describe as the last ‘socially acceptable’ form of racism in Scotland.

Recommendations:

- The lack of adequate sites, both transit and permanent, has become catastrophic; local authorities have a duty to push through the creation of more, decent, appropriately located authorised sites. This would in turn reduce the amount of unauthorised encampments, a key driver in tensions, and lead to less negative media coverage.
- An increase in more neutral and ethical reporting. Article 12 in Scotland would like to see Scottish publications taking a lead in this.
- All publications to familiarise themselves with the Equal Opportunities Committee’s Enquiry Where Gypsy/Travellers Live and the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s updated guide: Gypsy Travellers in Scotland: A Resource for the Media. Article 12 in Scotland would also like to see more self-regulation with regards to biased reporting on the Gypsy/Traveller community.
- The implementation of a more robust monitoring system for on-line reader comments/social media sites, and penalties for those who do not comply with regulations concerning ethnicity. This area is of utmost concern to Article 12 in Scotland. There is currently a very high level of tension towards the Gypsy/Traveller

community to be found on these sites, and with little-to-no official monitoring, they quickly become a vitriolic breeding ground, whipping up racial hatred and vigilante style talk, which will, naturally, lead to actual violence towards the community.

- Publications to stop posting inflammatory ‘debates’ on their Facebook pages – these threads are instrumental in fuelling hatred and can lead to dangerous discussions.
- The implementation of stricter guidelines regarding the reporting of Gypsy/Travellers. *Article 12 in Scotland* strongly advocates freedom of speech and the right to personal choices/opinions, however, this cannot extend to racial profiling. Gypsy/Travellers should be treated with the respect due to any other ethnic minority.
Appendix: Visuals

1] Publications audited by *Article 12 in Scotland*:

NB: Due to rounding up/down some percentages may not add up to 100.
2) The main common themes found by *Article 12 in Scotland* during the auditing process:

![Pie chart showing percentages]

- Negative Stereotyping: 24%
- Crime: 12%
- The Community: 38%
- Sites: 62%

NB: Due to rounding up/down, and the overlapping of certain categories, some percentages may not add up to 100.

Many articles contained more than one of the common themes above.
3] Tone of articles audited:

NB: Due to rounding up/down, and the overlapping of certain categories, some percentages may not add up to 100.

Many articles contained more than one of the common tones above.
4] Use of stock – or archived – photos:

NB: Due to rounding up/down some percentages may not add up to 100.
NB: Due to rounding up/down, and the overlapping of certain categories, some percentages may not add up to 100.

Many articles contained more than one of the identified key negative/leading words.
6] Capitalisation of Gypsy/Traveller, taken from a cross-section of Scottish publications:

NB: N/A has been used where there have been no new articles since the previous audit in 2012-2013, or where the paper in question no longer exists/has become assimilated into another, larger, publication.

NB: Due to rounding up/down some percentages may not add up to 100.