



The Traveller Movement Annual Conference 2024

An Era of Change

“Revolutionising tomorrow”

Keynote Speaker: Jacob Sakil

*Lead for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for
the Youth Justice Board*

#TMconference24

Lambeth

Town Hall

Thursday
21st November 2024

Workshops

include:

Shaping Tomorrow's Education

Empowering Her

A New Dawn

Who do you think you are?



Overview

The Traveller Movement 2024 conference, 'An Era of Change' will celebrate the beginning of a new chapter and will explore innovative policies that can bring about substantial improvements in the lives of these communities. While the challenges we face loom ever large now is the moment to chart a new path and call upon decision makers to break down barriers for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities to bring about a new dawn.

Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities face multiple interconnecting disadvantages which have worsened since the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing cost-of-living crisis. Poor access to services, lack of access to adequate education, over-policing, overrepresentation in the criminal justice system, and an unfolding mental health crisis are among the barriers these communities face. Coupled with the persistent discrimination faced by the communities across every facet of their lives there is no doubt that Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities face systemic challenges in the UK.

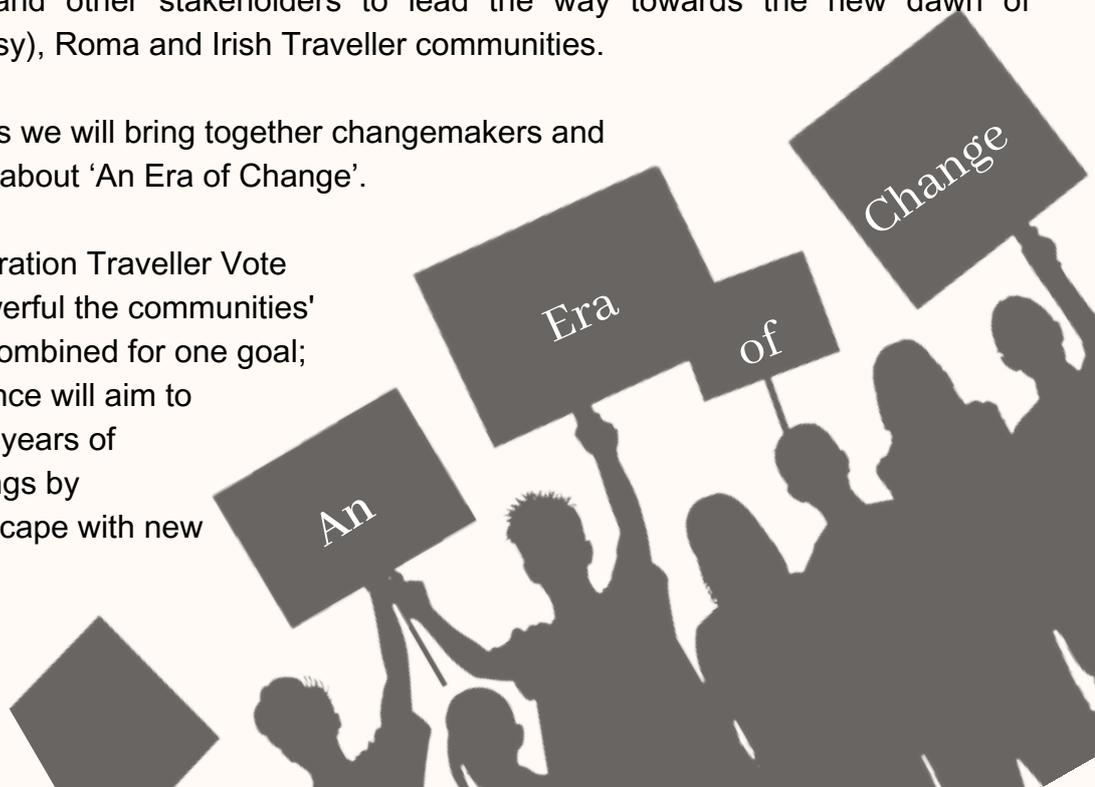
The communities also face chronic democratic underrepresentation, with their inequalities often ignored by policymakers and labelled as unimportant. Often left out of conversations about systemic racial discrimination and pushed to the side in broader equality and improvement initiatives, their unique challenges and needs remain unmet.

But with a new Government comes a new opportunity for policymakers and community members to the table to collaborate on revolutionary policies which will break down barriers which have long held communities back. Only with innovative policy solutions can the multiple, interconnecting crises facing Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities be tackled.

To address these challenges and bring about bold new ideas, the 2024 Traveller Movement Conference will bring together Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller community members, campaigners, policymakers, and other stakeholders to lead the way towards the new dawn of policymaking for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities.

Through panels and workshops we will bring together changemakers and passionate advocates to bring about 'An Era of Change'.

The Traveller Movements Operation Traveller Vote campaign highlighted how powerful the communities' voices can be when they are combined for one goal; change. This year our conference will aim to channel those voices to tackle years of structural and institutional failings by revolutionising the policy landscape with new and creative ideas.



Keynote Speaker: Jacob Sakil - Lead for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for the Youth Justice Board

Panels

Panel 1: Charting the Way Forward: Empowering Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers under the New Government

Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard - London's Deputy Mayor for Communities and Social Justice; Dr Thomas McCann - Travellers Counselling Service; Simon Hood - Researcher at The Runnymede Trust; Mick Cash - Former General Secretary of the RMT Union and a Ward Councillor; Jeffrey Greenidge - Director of Diversity and Governance of the Association of Colleges;

For decades, our communities have faced marginalization and token gestures. Now, as we stand at the threshold of a new political era, it is time for substantive change.

This session will focus on outlining key actions and a strategic plan needed from the new government. From dismantling barriers to meaningful inclusion to implementing targeted interventions, we advocate for policies that prioritize Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers. Our esteemed panelists will discuss the urgent need for joined-up thinking and genuine

representation at decision-making tables. We will explore pathways to ensure our voices are heard and our issues addressed effectively. Together, we will articulate a vision for a future where Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers thrive, empowered by policies that uphold dignity, equality, and justice for all.

Panel 2: "Beyond the Campfire: Exploring Identity, Heritage, and Equality among Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller Communities"

Chair: John McCarthy – TM Trustee. Speakers: Betty Billington Smith – Kushti Bok; Patrick O'Leary; Lourdes Green – TM; Charlie Doherty – TM Advisory Group; Olivia Morrison – TM; Sarah Dunne - TM.

Join us for an enlightening and compelling panel discussion delving into the rich tapestry of identity, evolving dynamics of cultural heritage, and equality among Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities. From the diaspora that spans continents to the evolving roles and gender dynamics within these communities, we will explore the complex relationships with mainstream society and the internal conflicts faced in defining cultural identity.

What does it mean to be a "real" Romani (Gypsy), Roma, or Irish Traveller in today's world? How do we navigate the complexities of cultural preservation amidst changing social landscapes? This session will address these critical questions, focusing on how embracing change can strengthen cultural identity rather than dilute it.

Our expert panellists, who bring a wealth of personal experience and professional insight, will discuss the challenges and opportunities that come with protecting heritage.

They will share strategies for fostering inclusion and celebrating the rich diversity within the Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller populations.



Workshops

WORKSHOP 1: Shaping Tomorrow's Education: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities

Liv Hammond (TM); Shaun Mongan (TM); Pauline Melvin-Anderson OBE (TM Chairperson); Clare Cruise (Southwark Law Centre); Philippa Sadgrove (Co-op Academies); Sam May (Romani Gypsy Teaching Assistant, Kent);

Join us for a dynamic workshop designed to equip young Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers, educators and policymakers with the knowledge and tools to navigate the evolving educational landscape. In this session, we will explore the latest trends and pressing issues that shape the future of Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers accessing and attaining a good education. We will discuss topics like the T code use, reasonable classroom adjustments, productive elective home education and the benefits of a great education. Through interactive discussions, expert insights and collaborative problem-solving, participants will gain valuable perspectives and practical strategies to create future-ready, inclusive, meaningful and positive learning experiences.

WORKSHOP 2: A New Dawn: From Retribution to Reform – Innovating Criminal Justice Practices

Grace Preston (TM); Mark Watson (TM Trustee); Mark Blake (Criminal Justice Alliance); Abimbola Johnson/Katrina Ffrench (Police Independent Scrutiny and Oversight Board for the Police Race Action Plan) Kathuna Tsintsadze (Zahid Mubarek Trust); Risteard McDonald (Independent Academic)

With the dawn of a new government and hopefully a new agenda, it is more essential than ever to begin charting a new path from a criminal justice system focused on punishment to one that emphasizes prevention and rehabilitation. This workshop aims to seize this moment for bold ideas and innovative reforms, building on years of accumulated knowledge and research.

Participants will explore evidence-based strategies and practices that prioritise community-based solutions and foster long-term community safety. Discussions will cover sustainable models of policing, sentencing, and probation.

This workshop is designed for policymakers, criminal justice professionals, community leaders, and advocates who are committed to transforming the criminal justice landscape. Through a collaborative session and expert insights, attendees will gain practical tools and frameworks to advocate for and implement transformative changes for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities.

WORKSHOP 3: Empowering Her: Advancing Gender Equality for Women and Girls

Aoife Delaney (TM); Annalise Corcoran (TM); Bridget McCarthy (TM Trustee); Lizzie Brothers (Plan International); Hayley Dean (Young Womens Trust); Florie Chiriac (Surrey Modern Slavery & Organised Immigration Crime Unit)

There is a long history of strong Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women who have paved the way for future generations. Whether it was working on the roadside, fighting against discrimination or advocating for their families, women have not only been empowering themselves but empowering their communities. In this workshop, we want to harness the powerful voices of inspirational Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women and ask them, in this era of change, what are the next steps we need to take to advance gender equality for women and girls?

In answering this question, this workshop will explore the value of role models, the importance of building one another up and the actions the government must take to support a community-led definition of empowerment and gender equality.

WORKSHOP 4: Who Do You Think You Are?: Evolving Identities on the Road Less Travelled

Olivia Morrison (TM); Lourdes Green (TM); Liza Mortimer (Traveller Times); John McCarthy (TM Trustee); Crina Morteau (Luton Roma Trust); Sarah Dunne (TM)

The old ways are changing, you cannot deny..." These are the first lines of the famous song titled The Thirty Foot Trailer but are the days of the Traveller really over? Join us as we explore what it means to be a Romani (Gypsy), Roma and/or Irish or Scottish Traveller in the 21st Century. In this session, we will discuss evolving cultural expectations, norms and identities. Through interactive discussions and activities, we will also consider the importance of representation, maintaining cultural traditions and changing attitudes.

9.30 – 10.00: Registration and Networking

10.00 – 10.05: Welcome from the Conference Co-Chairs

Pauline Melvin-Anderson OBE (TM Chairperson) and Shaun Mongan (TM Education Officer)

10.05 – 10.30: Keynote Address: Jacob Sakil - Lead for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for the Youth Justice Board

10.30 – 11.40: Panel 1: Charting the Way Forward: Empowering Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers under the New Government

Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernards - London's Deputy Mayor for Communities and Social Justice

Dr Thomas McCann - Traveller Counselling Service

Simon Hood - Researcher at The Runnymede Trust

Mick Cash - Former General Secretary of the RMT Union and a Ward Councillor

Jeffrey Greenidge - Director of Diversity and Governance of the Association of Colleges

11.40 – 11.50: Refreshment break

11.50 – 13.00: Panel 2: Beyond the Campfire: Exploring Identity, Heritage, and Equality among Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller Communities

Chair: John McCarthy – Traveller Movement Trustee

Betty Billington-Smith – Kushti Bok

Patrick O'Leary

Lourdes Green

Charlie Doherty

Olivia Morrison

Sarah Dunne

13.00 – 14.00: Lunch and Networking

14.00 – 15.30: Workshops:

Workshop 1: Shaping Tomorrow's Education: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities

Workshop 2: A New Dawn: From Retribution to Reform – Innovating Criminal Justice Practices

Workshop 3: Empowering Her: Advancing Gender Equality for Women and Girls

Workshop 4: Who Do You Think You Are?: Evolving Identities on the Road Less Travelled

15.30 – 16.00: Closing Remarks

16.00: Conference ends

Workshop 1

Workshop 2

Workshop 3

Workshop 4

Our **Co-Chairs** this year are **Pauline Melvin Anderson OBE** and **Shaun Mongan**



Pauline, an Irish Traveller and long-time chair of the Traveller Movement, has expertly chaired our conference for many years. She brings extensive expertise in education and was recently appointed chair of the Department for Education's Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Advisory Group.



Shaun, also an Irish Traveller, joined the Traveller Movement through a six-month community internship program earlier this year. He holds an excellent degree in Politics and International Relations and, in September, became our Education Policy Officer.

Meet our Speakers

#TMconference24

Keynote Speaker: Jacob Sakil

At the age of 16, **Jacob Sakil** was elected for a year's tenure as Young Mayor of Lewisham. Since 2017 he has followed a career in Youth Work sharing his passion about ensuring children and young adults have an accessible and transparent avenue to engage in local democracy and civic life. Jacob is also the founder of American Bites start-up, Youth Justice Service representative and sits on the Business in the Community's (BITC) Place Taskforce supporting the collaborative potential of business to strengthen communities around the UK.



Panel 1, featuring **Mick Cash, Jeffrey Greenidge, Dr Thomas McCann, Simon Hood & Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard**



Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard chairs the Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory group, as well as London's Strategic Migration Panel and is co-chair of the Diversity in the Public Realm Commission. She is also a member of the TUC Anti-Racism Taskforce and the World Economic Forum Global Future Council on Systemic Inequalities and Social Cohesion. Debbie worked at the Runnymede Trust as Head of Research, running their work on inclusive curriculum development, education attainment gaps and school exclusion as well as work on community cohesion, race and criminal justice and youth transitions. She also worked as a Lecturer of Social Psychology and Criminology, teaching students in both the further and higher education sectors.



Dr Thomas McCann is a member of the Irish Traveller community, a longstanding activist for Traveller rights and a founder of Minceir Misli, the first Traveller-only organisation. Thomas has been employed as the Equality worker and as a Director in the Irish Traveller movement, where he campaigned for crucial legislative acts, such as, the Equal Status Act, the Traveller Accommodation Act and recognition of Travellers as an Ethnic group. Thomas holds a Diploma in Community Development, a BSc in Psychotherapy and MSc in Counselling Supervision and Doctrate in Social Studies, Thomas serves on the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy Committee and is also a member of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. Thomas established and currently manages the Traveller Counselling Service which was launched in 2008.



Simon Hood supports numerous major projects across the Runnymede Trust's research portfolio. He has research expertise across race and migration, criminal justice and the cultural sector. Simon is the co-author of 'Confronting Injustice: Racism and the Environmental Emergency', 'Visualise: Race and Inclusion in Art Education' and 'Racial Segregation and the Asylum System'. He is currently leading the development of new research relating to Traveller and Roma communities within Runnymede.



Over the years, **Mick Cash** has carved a career in the rail industry, engaging actively in the NUR, later the RMT, where he eventually became Senior Assistant General Secretary. Elected as General Secretary in 2014 after the passing of Bob Crow, he worked extensively in the rail sector and sat on the Labour Party NEC. Concurrently, he served as a Labour Councillor in Watford until 2002. Retiring as RMT General Secretary in May 2021, he remained involved as Trustee Director of the Railway Pension Scheme, non-executive director of Railpen, and trustee of the Railway Benefit Fund charity. Mick is very proud of his Irish Traveller Heritage.



Jeffrey Greenidge is an experienced teacher, coach and leadership mentor who has worked across the education and training sector. His career in education began as a teacher of modern languages and physical education. This was followed by a three-year tenure as Head of Modern Languages at Llanrumney High School in Cardiff, before he joined the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, advising the Government on matters relating to language teaching and learning. Jeff joined the Board of Governors at Bridgend College in January 2021 and became Chair in December of the same year. During his tenure, Jeff oversaw the College's most recent Estyn inspection, which highlighted the strong, supportive and inclusive culture for learners and staff.

Panel 2, featuring **John McCarthy, Betty Billington-Smith, Patrick O'Leary, Lourdes Green, Charlie Doherty, Olivia Morrison & Sarah Dunne**



John McCarthy is an Irish Traveller and has been a Trustee of the Traveller Movement for many years. Prior to that John was on several boards of management with national and local Traveller groups in Ireland. John is a qualified Social Care Worker having obtained a BA Honours degree in Social Studies Trinity College Dublin. John is currently work in the caring profession supporting adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues in a community setting.



Betty (Elizabeth) Smith-Billington BEM, is a proud Romany Gypsy who has campaigned for many years for the rights of all Travellers. Betty is CEO for the Kushti Bok charity which acts as a voice for the Travelling communities in Dorset and beyond. As well as that Betty is vice chair of Dorset Council G&T Forum. She has attended TM conference for many years and has been honoured to work with them over the years. She has gathered many awards (over the years) in Dorset including "Women of Impact " and "Women's Achievement". Betty was the first to achieve the Susan Alexander Lifetime achievement award from FFT.



Patrick O'Leary is a proud Irish Traveller man from West Meath, Ireland, and an advocate for the rights of his community. In 2000, he played a crucial role in securing ethnic minority status for Irish Travellers in the UK, marking a significant victory against discrimination. As a proud father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Patrick has encouraged his family to take pride in their heritage and continue the fight for Traveller rights. His dedication to justice and equality has left a lasting impact, with his family following in his footsteps to gain respect and recognition for the Irish Traveller community.



Lourdes Marie Green is an Irish Traveller and the Women's Research & Development Officer at the Traveller Movement. Coming from a family of advocates, her mother and many relatives also worked at the Traveller Movement over the years, while her Grandfather played a key role in gaining ethnic recognition for Travellers. Lourdes was one of the first in her family to complete high school and sixth form, and the first to attend university, where she graduated with a first class degree in Law and Criminology from Roehampton University. She aspires to pursue a career in law and hopes to one day become a solicitor advocating for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers.



Charlie Doherty is a young Irish Traveller from London. He left school at 11 to work in the family business, but then returned to education at the age of 19, starting an access course in business studies. Alongside his studies, he also became an Intern with the Traveller Movement moving up to the position of Youth Engagement and Development Officer. Charlie is a member of the TM's Advisory Group and has recently started University life.



Olivia Morrison is the Head of Partnerships and Advocacy and joined the team in January this year. She is of Romani (Gypsy) heritage, with strong family ties to South London. Olivia began her career in the non-profit sector in Stockholm, Sweden after graduating from the University of Edinburgh with an MSc in International Development. Having worked for several years within the grant management sector, she decided to pursue her passion campaigning for the rights of Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities and undertake a new challenge at The Traveller Movement.



Sarah Dunne has recently joined the TM team as the Advocacy and Campaigns Officer. Sarah, from Ireland is also an Irish Traditional musician, and singer who learned the traditional Irish Traveller style of music and song from her Father, the very famous Pecker Dunne. She moved to the UK ten years ago to begin her career in teaching, after completing her Masters Degree at Trinity College Dublin.

Thank you to everybody who has attended the Conference from Speakers, Guests, Delegates, Trustees, Advisory Group, Volunteers and the Staff Team.

Save the Date: TM Annual Conference 2025

**20
November
2025**

Legal Disclaimer: The Traveller Movement are not liable for any adverse reactions or health issues resulting from the consumption of the food provided at this Annual Conference 21.11.24