

'Is this how we treat our older people in 2019?'

September 11 2019

Vulnerable older Gypsies and Travellers are being forced to live unlawfully or in squalor because of planning policies that have cut the number of legal stopping places in the UK, according to a research report published today.

Life on and off the hard shoulder: Older Gypsies living on the roadside and in housing, published by academics from Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), compared the experience of older English Gypsies living in housing with those living nomadically—which is part of the cultural heritage of much of the Gypsy population.

Interviewees, all of whom were between 60 and 90 years old, told of their struggle with accommodation issues. Many nomadic Gypsies said they were forced to stop in unsafe or unsuitable locations because planning regulations by successive Governments have reduced or restricted the number of available legal stopping places such as official trailer sites.

Many also claimed they had been reluctantly forced into housing due to ill health or poor facilities, and some faced isolation from their travelling families as a result.

Some interviewees, the majority of whom were not literate, said they struggled to keep pace with developments in technology, which caused problems with accessing health services.

Dr. Pauline Lane of ARU, co-author of the report, said:

"Life on the road is part of the cultural heritage and identity of the Gypsy people. For centuries, nomadic Gypsies and Travellers have been allowed to use common land as lawful stopping places, but successive Governments have removed their access to traditional stopping places through changes to land and planning laws.

"As a result, we have seen [vulnerable people](#) forced to make their homes on rubbish dumps, on roadsides or in locations several miles from adequate facilities. Is this really how a civilised nation treats its older people in 2019?"

Gypsies and Travellers are legally recognised as ethnic groups and have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. However, despite this legislation, members of the communities frequently experience hate discrimination.

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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