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22nd March 2020

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.
By E mail

Dear Secretary of State,
Gypsy and Traveller communities Covid-19 virus

I understand we are at a time of utmost urgency and that there is much to do in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic but, we are extremely concerned that there has been no statement in relation to Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Community groups were expecting a statement from the Government in relation to families who do not have a legal place to place their home, they are in fact, legally homeless but our contacts from the MHCLG have been pulled away from their posts to undertake pressing pandemic work. At this present time, it cannot be useful for families to be moved about.

We feel that it is urgent to provide local authorities with a statement that reiterates that they should not move families on at this moment in time and that all families should have access to facilities, most important for increased hand washing.

I was advisor for, the Women and Equalities Committee report on Gypsy and Traveller communities. The report highlighted that many Gypsy and Traveller people still face much inequality regarding health. It is a well-known fact that Gypsy and Traveller communities suffer from more health inequalities than the general population and we fear that there will be many with underlying health issues, whereby the Covid -19 virus will be deadly.

Please consider urgently issuing a statement to all authorities for them not to evict, unfortunately we have received information that this is still happening, this cannot be good in an environment whereby people need to stop moving. Please see following link.

- <https://www.eagleradio.co.uk/news/local-news/3066265/farnborough-police-issue-eviction-notices-to-traveller-encampments/>

The above concerned us as a quick eviction will not pick up anyone who may be ill, and that illness be moved to another part of the country.

- It is extremely urgent that you instruct local authorities across the UK not to carry out evictions and instead undertake negotiated stopping. (whereby there is agreement and services can be put in place).
- It is especially important that families on unauthorised sites have access to water and sanitation'
- The majority of families that travel carry out their own self- employment, there is no support for people who are self-employed.

We do understand that we are facing some very worrying and troubling times and Gypsy and Traveller people are concerned not just for their health but for the health of all.

May you keep safe in these unsafe times

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dr Siobhan Spencer MBE". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light blue rectangular background.

Dr Siobhan Spencer MBE

Copy to: Rt Hon Matt Hancock
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care