

Children's Commissioner for Wales' guide for

# CHALLENGING THE **NEGATIVE** MEDIA REPORTING

of Gypsies and Travellers



# About us

The Children's Commissioner for Wales wants children and young people to have safe and happy lives. We work for every child and young person in Wales who is under 18 or up to 25 if they have been in care.

## We:

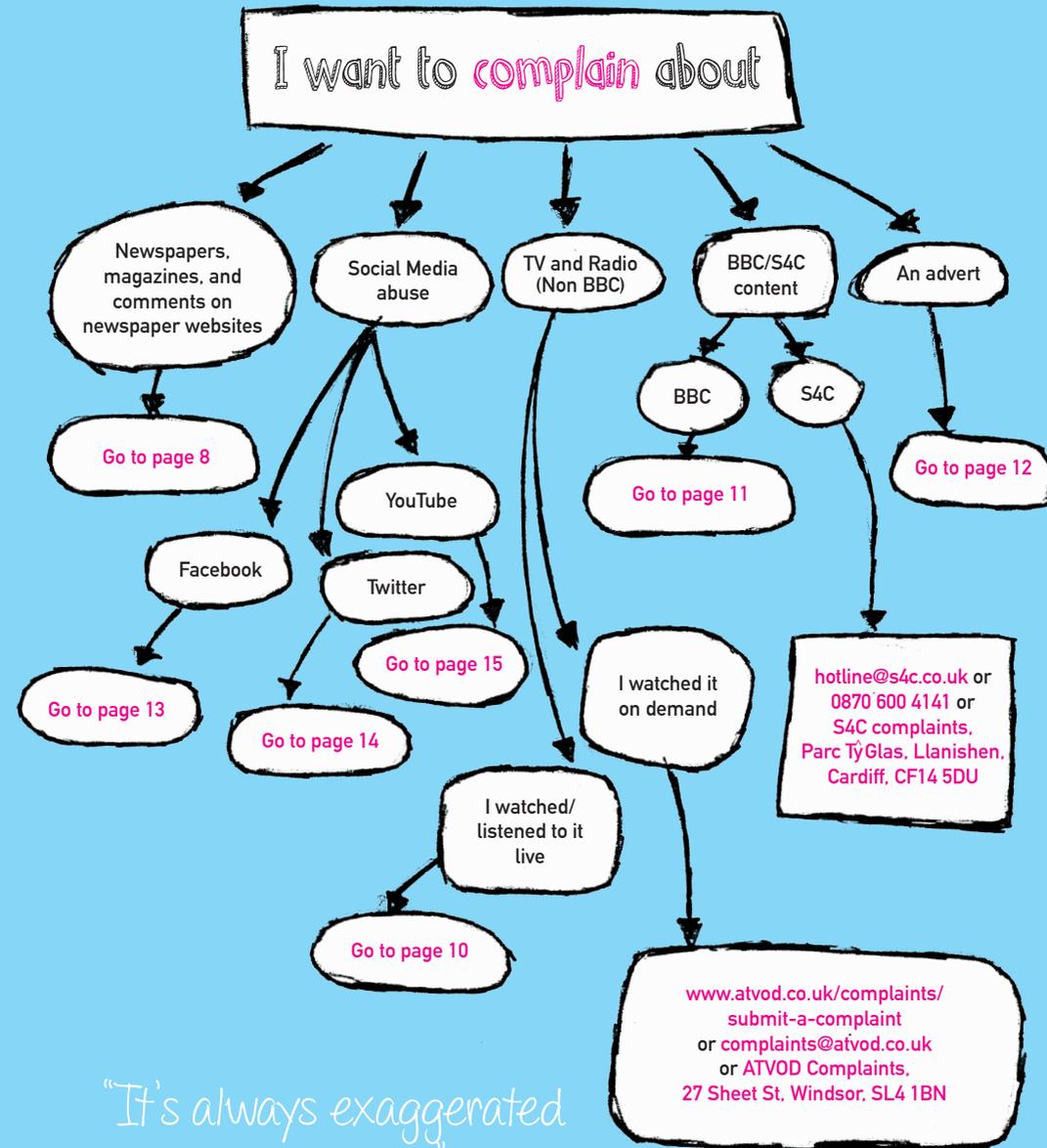
**Support** children and young people to find out about children's rights.

**Listen** to children and young people to find out what's important to them.

**Advise** children, young people and those who care for them if they need help with their problems.

**Influence** politicians to make sure they make positive differences to the lives of children and young people.

**Speak** up for children and young people in Wales on important issues - being the children's champion in Wales.



"It's always exaggerated and never positive"

# The guide

This guide has been made so that you can take action against something you've read in a newspaper, seen on TV or the internet, or that you've heard on the radio that you think is offensive or damaging.

Gypsies and Travellers are some of the most discriminated against groups in the country. *We've heard from young Gypsies and Travellers who feel that they get looked down upon, treated unfairly and racially abused on a regular basis.*

One of the reasons for this is the way Gypsies and Travellers are negatively portrayed *by some members of the media in the UK.*

*Young members of the Gypsy and Traveller community have told us programmes like Channel 4's 'Big Fat Gypsy Weddings' and newspapers like the Daily Mail have regularly made all Gypsies and Travellers look like bad people. We know that this is unfair. And chances are, so do you.*

Do we have to accept *everything* that's broadcast or printed by the media? No. Can we make a difference? Yes. Should we? Absolutely.

As a young person living in Wales you have a right to be treated fairly. A list of rights called the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC for short, says that all children and young people have the right to be protected from discrimination and that the media should not make material that causes harm to children and young people.

The UNCRC also says that children and young people have the right to have their voices and opinions heard.

By saying no to negative reporting we can change the way Gypsies and Travellers are made to look by *SOME* journalists and TV producers.

*Standing up to the media* really does work. Back in 2012 adverts that showed Gypsies and Travellers in a negative light were taken down after hundreds of complaints to the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA).

## Your opinion counts.

Let us put an end to the way Gypsies and Travellers are portrayed. Let us help different communities to understand and respect each other and let us create a world where people are judged by what they do, and not where they come from.

## Key words:

**Discriminated** – Treated differently because of things like race, age, or whether you're a man or woman etc.

**Broadcast** – Shown by the media, especially TV and radio.

**Convention** – An agreement made between countries.

**Portrayal** – The way people are shown or described.

**Myths** – Beliefs held by lots of people that are not true.

**Inaccurate** – Not true.

**Conveyed** – Shown or described.

**Confidential** – Kept a secret.

**Ostracised** – Left out, ignored.

# Why is this guide for me?

We want you to be treated as fairly as possible in all parts of your life. If you're a Gypsy or Traveller and you've been treated differently because of *who you are - your race* - then this means that you aren't being treated fairly at all.

The media has a huge effect on how other people see and think about things, and it's no different when it comes to race. This means that the negative portrayal of Gypsies and Travellers that you see or hear on the TV, the internet and the radio has a direct effect on the lives of *all* Gypsies and Travellers. It makes lots of the settled community think that Gypsies and Travellers are just like they're often shown in the media: often violent, not to be trusted, likely to steal, not intelligent, and untidy.

This *can* harm young Gypsies and Travellers' chances when it comes to things like getting on in school, getting a job, or even just making friends.

If you're a Gypsy or Traveller, there's a good chance that you've been affected in this way.

## What can you do?

When you see something in the media that you think is offensive or something that reflects badly on all Gypsies and Travellers, pick up this guide.

Choose the right section, and follow the instructions to make a complaint.

Help us to put a stop to the negative reporting of Gypsies and Travellers. *Now.*

# What's unacceptable?

That's a difficult question and it can have lots of answers depending on what you've read or watched. If you see or hear something, and your gut feeling is that it's unacceptable, you should read or watch it again (if you can). If you still feel the same way then you should make a complaint.

Generally though, if a media piece does any of these things then you may want to make a complaint:

- It paints all Gypsies and Travellers in a *bad light*.
- It talks about the fact that the people involved are Gypsies or Travellers when it is *not important to the story*.
- The facts are *exaggerated* to make the story sound worse.
- People reading, watching or listening are made to feel *hatred or dislike* towards all Gypsies and Travellers.
- It plays on *myths* about Gypsies and Travellers that are untrue.
- It uses *offensive* words.
- It uses a photo that isn't an *accurate description* of the story.
- It says that people *do things* because they are Gypsies (e.g. steal).

*"We feel ostracised and worthless"*

# Newspapers, magazines, and comments on news/ magazine websites.

*'Romany Gypsy offers £3,500 for a 15-year-old wife for his son'*

It doesn't matter that this man is a Romany Gypsy. How would it sound if you swapped Romany Gypsy with 'Black person', 'Jew', 'Asian' etc?

*'Operation Big Fat Gypsy Bare-knuckle Fight: Dozens of armed officers, dogs, a helicopter and EIGHTEEN police cars raid a Fight Club-style boxing match after violence breaks out among hundreds of travellers.'*

The fact that they are Travellers is not relevant. **EIGHTEEN** in capital letters exaggerates the size of the trouble to readers. Using the slogan 'Big Fat', as seen on Channel 4, taps into the myths already promoted by their programmes and could make readers think that all Gypsies and Travellers are violent.

*'TV documentary exposes how gypsies are happy to exploit British benefit system.'*

The headline suggests that all Gypsies 'exploit' the benefit system. There's also no capital 'G' in the word 'gypsies'.

## WHO to get in touch with, and HOW to complain.

The people who look into complaints made about the press (newspapers etc), and the comments made on news and magazine websites, are called the Independent Press Standards Organisation.

According to the IPSO, the press 'should not publish inaccurate or misleading information, including pictures' and details of a person's race should only be included if it is 'genuinely important to the story.'

There's also a group called the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) who try to make journalists' reporting as fair and truthful as possible. The NUJ state that information should be 'honestly conveyed, accurate and fair' and that nothing that is 'likely to lead to hatred or discrimination' should be published.

If you see an article that you find offensive or unacceptable, first of all you should contact the person who's written the article to complain. Details of the writer can usually be found at the top of the article. You can also flick to our 'Useful links' page to find the address of the British Media Information website, who hold the contact details of lots of newspapers, magazines and TV broadcasters. If they don't reply, if you can't find their details or if you don't manage to get the result you were hoping for, contact the IPSO. The IPSO will look at complaints within four months of the article being published, or 12 months if the complaint is about an article on a website.

Complaints should be made in writing using an online form which can be found here:  
[www.ipso.co.uk/oxbxApps/app/complaint1.html](http://www.ipso.co.uk/oxbxApps/app/complaint1.html)

You can also email  
[complaints@ipso.co.uk](mailto:complaints@ipso.co.uk)

Phone  
0300 123 2220

Or you can send them by post to  
IPSO  
c/o Halton House  
20/23 Holborn  
London  
EC1N 2JD

## Complaining about a comment on a newspaper or magazine website

Use the same steps as above, but be sure to give the URL (the web address at the top of the screen, e.g. [www.url.com/website/complain](http://www.url.com/website/complain)) when you make a complaint.

You should also quote the comment (write it word-for-word) or use a screenshot if you're complaining using the online form.

## If you can't:

- Say if you've been in contact with the person who's written the article, and if you have, explain what they said.
- Say where you read the article you're complaining about (e.g. Daily Mail, The Sun).
- Say what date it was published.
- Write the headline (title) of the article.
- Say why you are complaining (e.g. discrimination, racism).
- Say how it has affected you.
- Say why it's important that it's removed.
- Give your details, including your name, address, phone number, email address etc.

# TV and Radio (Non BBC)

## Examples

Perhaps the most well-known example of the negative portrayal of Gypsies and Travellers is Channel 4's 'Big Fat Gypsy Weddings'. Other examples include Channel 5's 'Gypsies on benefits and proud' and Channel 4's 'Gypsy Blood'.

These programmes make lots of people think that all Gypsies and Travellers are like the people that are portrayed. They don't give a balanced view of Gypsy and Traveller life and they rarely focus on positives.

## WHO to get in touch with and HOW to complain

Ofcom (*The Office of Communications*) looks into complaints made about TV and Radio programmes that haven't been broadcast by the BBC.

Ofcom only deals with complaints about programmes that have already been broadcast. If you need to complain about a programme before it comes on, you'll need to contact the broadcaster directly (e.g. Channel 4, ITV, Channel 5)

Ofcom has a set of rules that all broadcasters must follow. The rules are there to protect people from content that may be harmful to them or could cause them offence.

If you have seen content that has offended you, try to contact the broadcaster directly. You'll find their contact details by flicking to our 'Useful Links' section and visiting the British Media Information website.



If you don't get a response from the broadcaster, or if you're not happy with their answer, use Ofcom's online complaint form.

The complaint form can be found here  
[consumers.ofcom.org.uk/complain](http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/complain)

If you want to complain by phone, contact  
0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040.

To write to Ofcom  
Ofcom Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HA

## When you contact Ofcom, try to:

- Say the name of the programme.
- Say what channel it was on and what date it was broadcast.
- Say why you are complaining.
- Say how it has affected you, or how it could affect others.
- Leave your details so you can be contacted.

# TV and Radio (BBC)

The BBC also has a set of rules that their programmes must follow. They say that their programmes aim to 'reflect fairly all of the UK's people and cultures'. If you feel like a BBC TV or Radio programme hasn't done this and you want to complain, visit [www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/complain-online/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/complain-online/).

To complain by phone, contact  
[03700 100 222](tel:03700100222).

To complain by post, write to  
BBC Complaints  
PO Box 1922  
Darlington  
DL3 0UR

# Adverts

## Examples

In 2012 an advert was removed by the Advertising Standards Agency, or ASA, because the pictures used were likely to offend. They showed Gypsies and Travellers in a negative light by making members of the community look aggressive and violent.

The ASA cover advertisements on/in:

- Magazines and newspapers
- Radio and TV
- Websites (e.g. banner ads)
- Social media (e.g. a promoted Tweet)
- Email
- Posters and brochures
- Cinema adverts
- Smartphone apps
- DVDs and CD ROMs

To make a complaint to the ASA, fill in the online form which can be found here

[www.asa.org.uk/Consumers/How-to-complain/Online-Form/Step1.aspx](http://www.asa.org.uk/Consumers/How-to-complain/Online-Form/Step1.aspx)

Alternatively, you can phone 020 7492 2222.

Or write to

Advertising Standards Authority Limited  
Mid City Place  
71 High Holborn  
London  
WC1V 6QT

## When you contact the ASA, try to:

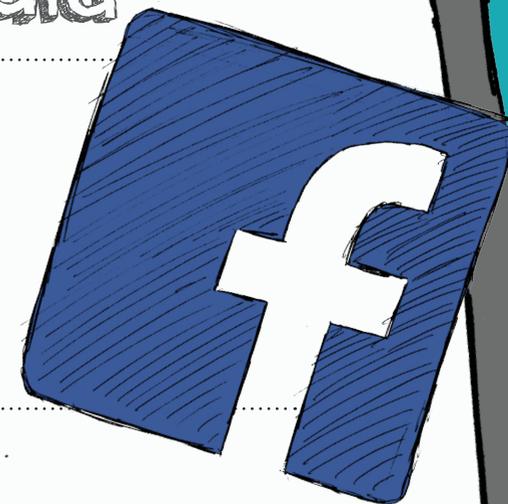
- Give your details (i.e. name, address, contact number, email address).
- Say what type of advert you're complaining about (e.g. television advert, radio advert, newspaper advert, internet advert etc).
- Say where you saw/heard it (e.g. on Channel 4, in the Daily Mail, on Capital FM, on [www.website.com](http://www.website.com)).
- Say when you saw it (time and date).
- If you saw/heard it on the tv/radio, say what programme you were watching/listening to at the time (e.g. [Coronation Street](#)).
- Say who the advertiser was (e.g. Cadbury, Ford).
- Say what was being advertised (e.g. a new programme, a bar of soap, a bicycle).
- If you are complaining about a website and you're complaining through email or the online form, include a screenshot of the advert.
- Say what was offensive about the advert.
- Say what effect it has on Gypsies and Travellers.
- Say why it's important that this advert is removed.

# Social Media

## Facebook Example

*'Shouldn't think the pikies give a monkeys just so long as they got some money for doing sod all.'*

This post contains an offensive and derogatory word and suggests that all Gypsies and Travellers cheat the system financially.



## How to complain

### To report a profile, a page or an event

Click or tap the 'More' button (three dotted symbol) on the top right hand corner of the page. Select 'Report' from the dropdown menu and follow the instructions.

### To report a post (status, link etc)

Click or tap the downward facing arrow (v) in the top right hand corner of the post. Choose 'I don't want to see this' or 'I don't like this post' from the dropdown menu and follow the instructions.

### To report a comment

Click the small cross in the top right hand corner of the comment box. Click 'Report' and follow the instructions. If you're using a smartphone or tablet you'll need to press and hold the comment to display the options.

### To report a photo or video

Click on the photo or video to make it bigger. Click 'options' at the bottom of the photo/video and then choose 'Report' and follow the instructions. If using a smartphone or tablet tap the 'More' button at the bottom and select 'I don't like this photo'.

### To report a message you've received

Open the message and click the 'Options' wheel and select 'Report as spam or abuse'. If you're using a smartphone, open the message and tap the 'More' button in the top right hand corner. Select the 'Report' option from the dropdown menu and follow the instructions.

## Twitter complaints

### To report a tweet

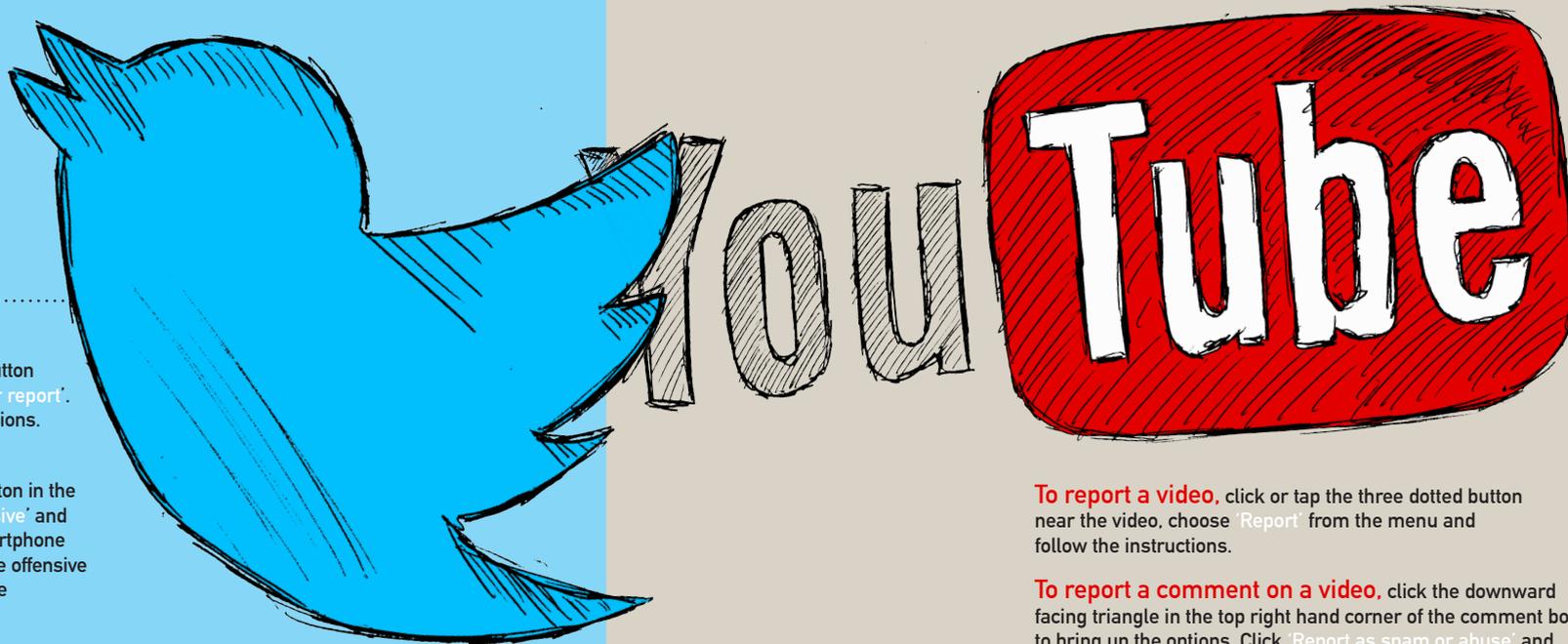
Open the tweet and click or tap the 'More' button (the one with three dots) and select 'Block or report'. Choose 'File a report' and follow the instructions.

### To report a direct message

Open the message and select the 'More' button in the top right hand corner. Choose 'Mark as abusive' and follow the instructions. If you're using a smartphone or tablet, open the message, tap and hold the offensive comment, select the 'Flag' option and choose 'Mark as abusive'.

### To report a profile/user

Open the user's profile and click or tap the gear icon. Select 'block or report' and follow the instructions.



**To report a video**, click or tap the three dotted button near the video, choose 'Report' from the menu and follow the instructions.

**To report a comment on a video**, click the downward facing triangle in the top right hand corner of the comment box to bring up the options. Click 'Report as spam or abuse' and follow the instructions. If you're using a smartphone or tablet, tap the comment itself, tap 'Report' and follow the instructions.

**To report a channel or user**, visit the channel's page, click 'About' and click on the flag icon. Click 'Report user' and follow the instructions.

"I am proud to be a Gypsy because it's my family. You are born into it and my family make me proud."

"The wonderful and positive actions of this community are rarely made public"

## Other social networks

Usually, the network you're using will have a procedure for dealing with complaints. A Google search like this: '[report abuse on "name of social network"](#)' should give you the information you need.

If you have difficulty finding the information, please feel free to contact us.

Children's Commissioner for Wales  
Oystermouth House  
Phoenix Way  
Llansamlet  
Swansea, SA7 9FS

01792 765600

post@childcomwales.org.uk

## What if I need help?

We hope that this guide has given you the information you need to be able to challenge negative reporting confidently.

But if you need help with a complaint or if you need more information, you can contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales' free and confidential advice and support service. It's there to help and support children and young people or those who care for them if they feel that a child or young person has been treated unfairly.

## You can contact us by

**Twitter:** @childcomwales

**Phone:** 0808 801 1000 (Freephone) or 01792 765600

**Email:** post@childcomwales.org.uk

**Post:** Children's Commissioner for Wales  
Oystermouth House  
Phoenix Way, Llansamlet  
Swansea, SA7 9FS

Remember, you should never be treated differently because of your race.

When you see something harmful, pick up this booklet and make a difference.

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## Useful links

Note: In the future it's likely that all of the links in this guide could change. If you follow a link and it has been moved, either follow the on-screen instructions to find the new address or type the underlined words into a search engine, like [Google](#).

The British Media Information Website (Contact details for newspapers, TV companies etc)  
[www.media.info/uk](http://www.media.info/uk)

Editors' Code of Practice  
(Rules that all journalists should follow)  
[www.ipsa.co.uk/IPSO/cop.html](http://www.ipsa.co.uk/IPSO/cop.html)

The Ofcom Broadcasting code  
(Rules that TV and Radio broadcasters should follow)  
[www.stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/](http://www.stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/)

The UK advertising codes  
[www.cap.org.uk/Advertising-Codes.aspx](http://www.cap.org.uk/Advertising-Codes.aspx)

Facebook's terms of service  
[www.facebook.com/legal/terms](http://www.facebook.com/legal/terms)

Twitter's terms of service  
[www.twitter.com/tos](http://www.twitter.com/tos)

YouTube's community guidelines  
[www.youtube.com/t/community\\_guidelines?hl=en-GB&gl=GB](http://www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines?hl=en-GB&gl=GB)

ATVOD's Rules and Guidance  
[www.atvod.co.uk/rules-and-guidance](http://www.atvod.co.uk/rules-and-guidance)

The BBC's editorial guidelines  
[www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/)

The Travelling Ahead Forum  
[www.travellingahead.org.uk/](http://www.travellingahead.org.uk/)

Save the Children  
[www.savethechildren.org.uk/where-we-work/united-kingdom/wales](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/where-we-work/united-kingdom/wales)

Thanks to the young Gypsies and Travellers of Wales, particularly the pupils of Greenhill School, Tenby, and the Travelling Ahead forum, for sharing the ideas that contributed to this guide.