

CLiNKs

Supporting the voluntary sector
working in the criminal justice system



Campaigning in the face of hostility



**Hibiscus Initiatives and
the Traveller Movement**

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Introduction

The voluntary sector working in criminal justice has extensive knowledge and experience in bringing about tangible changes in the criminal justice system.

Clinks has been funded by the Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales to deliver the Stronger Voice Project – a three-year project with the aim of strengthening the voice and influence of the voluntary sector working in criminal justice through a programme of information, collaboration, training, and capacity building.

As part of this project, we are running a series of expert seminars; the below case study seeks to highlight the different approaches and strategies voluntary organisations working with in the criminal justice system take in their advocacy work. We hope that through sharing these varied examples organisations can develop a greater understanding of policy influencing work and gain new knowledge about different approaches that can then inform their activity.

We would like to express our thanks to Hibiscus Initiatives and The Traveller Movement for delivering an expert seminar on campaigning in the face of hostility. The following provides a written case study of Hibiscus Initiatives anti-trafficking work and their work on tackling double disadvantage, as well as The Traveller Movement's approach to Parliamentary campaigning, building networks and partnerships, and media management. You can find an [online recording of this expert seminar on YouTube](#).

Hibiscus Initiatives

About Hibiscus

Hibiscus is one of the UK's leading organisations enabling marginalised migrant women trapped in the immigration and criminal justice system to rebuild their lives. The organisation works with over 1,000 clients from over 119 countries in three prisons, five detention centres, and through a women's centre in London. Its vision is to build a fair and just society where inequalities are eliminated from the criminal justice and immigration systems.

Hibiscus provides welfare, advice, advocacy, volunteering, and mentoring in prisons; reintegration assistance and practical and emotional support for people in detention and those released from immigration removal centres; community resettlement support for people in contact with the criminal justice system; and identification of potential victims of trafficking and awareness-raising on the risks of being trafficked to the UK.

Introduction to Hibiscus' influencing work

Hibiscus set out some of the influencing work it was undertaking at the time around the Nationality and Borders Bill, now the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, which would greatly impact the women they worked with. They were particularly concerned about provisions that would penalise and criminalise refugees and give people different rights if they made dangerous journeys to the UK, even when there were no safe routes for them.

Hibiscus' anti-trafficking work

In 2021, Hibiscus supported 200 potential victims of trafficking in prison, detention, and the community. Of the women Hibiscus supported in the community, 85% were survivors of trafficking. Hibiscus's frontline team members work with racially minoritised women at all stages of the NRM process.

The organisation engages, manages, and develops partnerships with other organisations and stakeholders working with victims of modern slavery and who conduct research to contribute to Hibiscus, feeding into policy debates.

Hibiscus partnered with five organisations to produce a 10-point action plan for change to end inequality for racially minoritised women in the criminal justice system.

It has also published a series of reports and publications on issues relating to modern slavery and victims of trafficking. In 2021, Hibiscus published a report on the importance of cultural mediation as an inclusive solution to help reduce the cultural and language barriers experienced by survivors of trafficking. This led to the production of some accompanying training.

In 2019, Hibiscus published its Closed Doors report, which highlights the lack of safe housing for victims of trafficking. The report found most potential female victims of trafficking are unable to access safe housing, with some even facing homelessness.

Tacking double disadvantage

Hibiscus also spoke about some of the work they do around double disadvantage, where people face intersectional discrimination based on both gender and race.

It partnered with Muslim Women in Prison, Zahid Mubarek Trust, Agenda, Criminal Justice Alliance, and Women in Prison, as well as women with lived experience of the criminal justice system to work on the issue of double disadvantage.

As part of this, a stakeholder engagement event was held with specialist organisations and women with lived experience in order to identify key challenges. Existing literature, evidence, and policies on racially minoritised and migrant women's rights were also analysed. The organisations conducted a series of thematic seminars with women with lived experience to discuss the challenges they faced at different stages of the criminal justice system, including policing in the community through the courts, to serving a sentence and re-entering the community. After the Action Plan was produced, a round table was also held with senior government officials across the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office, and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, as well as with MPs, voluntary sector organisations, and women with lived experience.

Hibiscus said that by working in partnership with organisations with different expertise, including some who focussed on policy and others providing support to women, the Action Plan was able to carry greater weight and have a larger impact. The work went on to be featured in the national press, and Hibiscus have been holding meetings with government officials on different aspects of the Action Plan.

The Traveller Movement

About The Traveller Movement

The Traveller Movement is a leading national charity committed to the fulfilment of human rights for ethnic minority Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller People. It delivers work in a number of different areas including: research, policy and lobbying, campaigning, access to justice, community development, and economic inclusion.

Its vision is of a world in which members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are fully recognised and respected as minority ethnic groups, are proud and confident in their cultural identity, and are able to reach their full potential. Its mission is to contribute and create opportunities to aid systematic change that leads to an improved quality

of life for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people through self-determining processes and their proactive participation in influencing and shaping policy and practice.

The Traveller Movement's ambition is to extend its influence and remain the most effective UK resource, information, and lobbying charity for groups, organisations, and individuals working for and with the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities in Britain.

The organisation's work

The work of the Traveller Movement generally falls across six different areas:

- Criminal justice, including things like the Prison Strategy White Paper, Female Offender Strategy, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system
- Education, including outcomes of not in education, employment or training for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller people, exclusion and off-rolling, and racism, discrimination, and bullying
- Discrimination/hate speech, including strategic litigation, media and public campaigns, and research and analysis
- Civil liberties, including the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (now Act), Human Rights Act reform, and the Elections Bill (now Act)
- Women and girls, including reducing violence against women and girls, gender-based shaming and online harms, and the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill (now Act)
- Casework and advocacy, including frontline support for community members which primarily relates to education and criminal justice.

Approaches to parliamentary campaigning

Generally, priority is given to the lobbying of MPs over peers, with the House of Commons generally seen as the centre of UK political gravity. MPs' accountability to their constituents can often provide greater campaigning leverage, and they are generally easier to engage than peers. For instance, many peers do not have a publicly available email address.

In addition, the House of Lords can often be less keen to interfere in legislation that was contained in a manifesto commitment, or when faced with a large government majority. This means that it can be harder to get traction with peers.

The make up of the House of Commons is also a key consideration when considering campaigning strategies. During the previous hung parliament, there was value in focussing efforts on individual MPs because of the difference their individual vote could make. However, with the current large government majority, other approaches need to be considered.

Despite this general picture, the House of Lords did show that it was prepared to amend legislation that was in the government manifesto, defeating the government on a number

of amendments during the passage of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, and the Nationality and Borders Act. Whilst many would be later overturned in the Commons, there is real prospect for change in the House of Lords which should not be ignored.

This change to the way in which the House of Lords views itself and its role, particularly with regards to civil liberties means there is renewed focus on engaging and influencing peers, as well as MPs who remain important.

Even when campaigning on an issue where change appears impossible, it is important to continue to work on it and maintain the influencing infrastructure, as external events can have the ability to change a situation dramatically.

The approach for campaigning would ideally involve engaging both MPs and peers, but many organisations have a resource constraint on the numbers and groups of Parliamentarians they are able to engage with on any particular issue. This is where the importance of partnerships and network building comes in.

Partnerships and network building

The Traveller Movement is generally involved in one of three types of partnerships/networks. Whilst these are not perfect categorisations, they help to conceptualise the different approaches taken.

Strategic coalitions

Strategic coalitions are cross sector coalitions with a specific intention, generally to change legislation. They allow for an aggregation of resources for greater comparative impact. This also helps to ease the burden on smaller organisations. Within these coalitions there are still opportunities for organisational specialisms or expert knowledge to come to the fore.

Given the size of the current government's majority, we might have to accept that a win might not be defeating a piece of legislation or passing an amendment, but might be developing these strategic coalitions or deepening relationships between organisations.

For example, working as part of the Democracy Defence Coalition allowed The Traveller Movement to highlight the implications of the Elections Bill (now Act) that would have particularly affected the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities in a way that they would not have been able to do, had they not been working together with some much larger organisations. Having groups that work in other areas adding their voices to The Traveller Movement's helped to strengthen the message as well.

Issue-based partnerships

Issue-based partnerships tend to be developed in response to policy at a more technical level, and they often work more with officials, rather than politicians. These partnerships generally focus on less 'hotly contested' areas. Building these partnerships with people who are not considered traditional allies or supporters has helped to bring these issues closer to the mainstream. For

instance, The Traveller Movement has been able to communicate the benefits of some of the work it has done on education and employment in terms of wider groups of people, rather than solely Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller people, helping it gain greater interest from officials. This approach can also be effective for building support from potentially hostile audiences.

Resilient networks of people with lived experience

Resilient networks of people with lived experience are perhaps the most important in terms of the politically hostile environment many organisations are operating in. These might also be called peer networks or grassroots networks. They can be an effective way to target and nullify tactics that aim to divide and drive wedges between different communities. These networks can also provide opportunities for mutual learning and support, as well as emphasising the similarities of lived experience. They can also highlight differences, especially the different ways communities are treated by the government. Here, it is important to try to build networks that will last after the moment of maximum pressure has passed.

Media management

In a stage show recording made available on the online streaming service Netflix in December 2021, comedian Jimmy Carr made a joke about Roma victims of the Holocaust being a positive. In early February 2022, one of the Traveller Movement's community members contacted them to make them aware of this segment of the programme. This led to The Traveller Movement tweeting about the issue.

Sometimes things take off without it being something for which was planned, and this happened with this issue. It was not something that became lost in news cycle and a number of senior Conservative MPs and Ministers spoke about it, being supportive of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities.

In light of this experience, the Traveller Movement raised several points to help guide media engagement. These included:

- What is the purpose of the media engagement? Is it to raise awareness, apply political pressure, advance an argument, etc.?
- Choose moments for engagement carefully, especially if you are a smaller organisation. Always be ready to say no to something. Some opportunities may not be approached with the necessary sensitivity or nuance and so it might be better to not engage, rather than receive a couple of lines at the end of an otherwise problematic piece.
- Do ask journalists questions as well as answering their questions. Do you need to ask about who else is being spoken to for a piece, how it is being framed, is there another perspective that is going to be introduced and can something be given in response to that.
- Remember that everything can be up for negotiation. Consider asking what they are looking for in terms of their headline, or getting the piece above the fold.

Our vision

Our vision is of a vibrant, independent and resilient voluntary sector that enables people to transform their lives.

Our mission

To support, represent and advocate for the voluntary sector in criminal justice, enabling it to provide the best possible opportunities for individuals and their families.

Join Clinks

Are you a voluntary organisation supporting people in the criminal justice system?

Join our network of over 600 members.

Clinks membership offers you:

- A voice to influence change
- Practical assistance to be effective and resilient
- Support from a community of like-minded professionals.

www.clinks.org/membership

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