



1. combined work, mutual assistance
2. cooperation, partnership

Irish in Britain: Policy Bulletin – November 2019

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General Election

With the general election on 12 December fast approaching, we've created a [guide](#) about how to organise a hustings, contact candidates and key questions to ask.

The stakes are high at the election: the future of Brexit and the consequences for the UK's constitutional settlement; a new immigration bill; and new spending priorities. These issues are deeply important to our community. The Irish in Britain are a diverse and politically active constituency, our voice is needed now more than ever.

We have also compiled some questions for candidates which have been formed from conversations with our members and friends:

- What will your party do to ensure that the Northern Irish border remains open and that free movement of trade and citizens on the island of Ireland is protected?
- What will your party do to ensure that Irish people, Travellers and minority groups in Britain are part of a meaningful and respectful discourse?
- How can your party ensure that the rights and settlement status of different migrant groups are protected through consistent and fair application of Home Office guidelines?
- How will your party ensure that Irish people and other migrant groups receive culturally sensitive care so that their health issues can be better understood and tackled?
- Evidence shows that Britain's Irish community is disproportionately affected by mental health issues but is less likely to access care services. Is there anything your party will do to change this?
- Cuts to social welfare and local councils have undermined health and social care capacity across the country. How will your party respond to social care underinvestment?

Home Office consultation on 'unauthorised encampments'

In early November, the Home Office [announced](#) that the government will "launch a consultation on proposals to give police new powers to arrest and seize the property and vehicles of trespassers who set up unauthorised caravan sites." The Home Office is consulting to make trespassing a criminal offence, rather than a civil matter.



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller organisations have come out strongly against any proposal to criminalise trespassing. Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) have [criticised](#) the government for political manoeuvres ahead of an election and not having a “real appetite” to address the issue by failing to invest in site provision. FFT have since released a [report](#) which found that the overwhelming majority of police responses to the government’s consultation on unauthorised encampments in 2018 did not want more eviction powers.

The government is yet to release its new strategy to improve outcomes for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in England and Wales.

Northern Ireland Historical Institutional Abuse Bill

On Tuesday 5 November, a bill to secure compensation for survivors of historical institutional abuse in Northern Ireland was passed by the Houses of Parliament. It sets out a redress board to be administered in Northern Ireland which will ensure that survivors receive a publicly-funded, tax-free lump sum payment. It also creates a statutory commissioner who will support applicants to the redress board. This follows recommendations laid out in the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry report from 2017.

Legislation had been delayed due to the collapse of the Assembly at Stormont nearly three years ago, until the UK government said it would put forward a bill this year. There were fears that the bill would be delayed further with the calling of a general election. However, after campaigners, victims’ groups and politicians from all Northern Irish parties put pressure on the government, the bill was quickly pushed through the House of Commons. It is estimated that there are around 5,000 people who could make use of the redress scheme.

Crosscare: Coming Home in Crisis report

Last month, Crosscare Migrant Project published a report about emigrants returning to Ireland in crisis circumstances with several recommendations for the Irish government, including improving access to healthcare, housing and financial support. You can read the report [here](#).

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