Gypsy, Traveller and Roma Communities National Conference

Friends House
Euston London
February 6th 2014
BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

In February 2013, a two day residential was held at Trafford Hall in Chester for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community groups funded by the Tudor Trust, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, The Barrow Cadbury Trust and the Travellers Aid Trust.

The residential brought together 17 groups with 35 delegates over the two days and sought to;

(a) reach agreement on a collective identity
(b) agree a campaign & networking structure and
(c) and that these have a broad base of support from within the community.

At the end of the two days, the following points were agreed:

• The term Gypsy, Traveller and Roma Communities will be used in future
• Groups will aim to meet nationally twice a year
• The following four initial Hubs will be set up:
   - Voter Registration
   - National Roma Strategy
   - Health & Wellbeing (existing Hub to be expanded)
   - Bi-annual Events

In addition, it was agreed that:

• The next event would seek to include more small groups and young people.
• Chris Whitwell would cascade and feedback from his meetings/attendance at the Equalities and Diversity Forum
• The Travellers Aid Trust would seek funding to facilitate national meetings

In July 2013, the Travellers Aid Trust secured 18 months funding to put on two one day national conferences and one two day residential, with additional funding to support a number of issue specific hubs. Once again, the funding was awarded by the Tudor Trust, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Barrow Cadbury Trust.

Shortly after the funding was announced, those people who had identified themselves during the residential as wishing to be part of the Event Hub were contacted by the Trust and the planning for a national conference in February 2014 was set in motion. Beginning with only six members, the Event Hub eventually grew to include seventeen members who helped plan and deliver the event.
Planning the conference
The purpose of the conference was to bring together Gypsy, Traveller & Roma (GTR) communities to build on the strengths and experiences of working together. In this respect, it was decided that only representatives of GTR organisations and community members would attend, unless specifically invited. It was agreed to hold the event at Friends House, Euston Road, London on the 6th of February 2014.

The Event Hub agreed that there would be two areas of focus for the conference. The first of these would be to create greater awareness of the development of a national Shadow GTR Integration Strategy prior to the election in 2015. People felt that it was important for the conference to encourage greater awareness and participation in this area of work from within the community.

The second area of focus would be on engaging more young people and it was agreed to hand over one session of the conference for them to plan and deliver. Finally, the event was designed to enable more community members and smaller GTR groups to attend and participate.

Much of the work of the Event Hub was done by email, but members met face to face twice during the planning of the event. The six groups active in the Event Hub were The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, Friends, Families and Travellers, Munya, Stableway Residents Association, One Voice, Roma Support Group and Save the Children Wales. Candy Sheridan, a community member and Jo Richardson of De Montford University also participated. Leeds GATE was initially involved in the Event Hub but later withdrew.

The first meeting took advantage of the Traveller Movement annual conference in November 2013 and was used to finalize the event programme, facilitators and workshops so that flyers and booking forms could be sent out. The second meeting, held in January 2014, focused on the role young people would play in the event.

During this meeting, it was agreed to run a youth session in parallel to the main morning session (on the Integration Strategy) to allow young people from different groups to meet, share stories and ideas and allow them the option of presenting a session to the main conference if they chose to. It was agreed that expecting them to deliver a session to the main conference was unrealistic without having had the opportunity to get to know each other and work together prior to the event.

A pre-event dinner was planned for the night of the 5th of February as there had been strong feedback from the Chester residential that time for delegates to socialize outside of the main conference was very important. Accommodation was provided for delegates travelling from outside of London at the Imperial, President and National Hotels near Russell.
The Conference

With a two day Tube strike and severe storm damage to rail links and roads, the conference began with an extended registration period to allow people time to arrive, network and contribute to a Vision Tree.

The Vision Tree was designed to help illustrate peoples’ goals and aspirations as well as the challenges and obstacles communities face. There were two Vision Trees, one for adult delegates and one for young people.

Examples of what delegates saw as Goals and Aspirations:
- have a voice
- Gold in the Olympics
- to be treated as equals
- accepted in society as individuals
- to have freedom of movement
- more opportunities for young people
- peaceful common sense.

Examples of what delegates saw as Challenges and Obstacles:
- low aspirations, expectations and education
- loss of common land
- changing laws and politics
- racism, peer pressure
- police stereotypes
- education failing children
- communication.

Shadow Gypsy, Traveller & Roma Integration Strategy

The conference proper began with a welcome by Janie Codona of One Voice who sat as Chair. She then introduced Siobhan Spencer and Adrian Jones of the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups who made a presentation on a project they were funded to deliver for the Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat. They set the context for work on a national GTR Integration Strategy and explained that there would be ten community interviewers and invited delegates to get involved as well as stressed the importance of letting others know about the work that was being done. They informed delegates that once the research was collected, there would be a Panel Review in Westminster, most likely in September 2014. The full Power Point presentation can be found at the end of this report.
Panel Discussion
Following a break, a Panel discussion was held with representation from Equality, The Roma Support Group, The Traveller Law Reform Project, The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, Garden Court Chambers, Friends, Families and Travellers and The Traveller Movement.

Delegates heard comment and input from (left to right) Alan Anstead, Przemek Kierpacz, Gill Brown, Siobhan Spencer, Marc Willers, Chris Johnson and Matthew Brindley. The panel was facilitated by Siobhan Spencer and Adrian Jones noted down key points. Following comment by panel members, the floor was opened to comment and questions.

Youth Session
The Youth Session was facilitated by Avril Fuller of Friends, Families and Travellers, Phil Regan of the Stable Way Residents Association and Rebecca Jordan of Save the Children Wales. This session ran throughout the morning in parallel to the conference proper and feedback was presented to delegates during the Open Session after the lunch break. A total of twenty-one young people attended and took part in the sessions. The sessions focused mainly on ice-breaker exercises and the Vision Tree. Some of the issue that were identified were discrimination and racism, equal access to education (including further education), human rights and insurance. Discussions also took place about issues to take forward to next two day residential in the autumn.
Four workshops were held during the afternoon covering Women (facilitated by Jo Richardson and Janie Codona), Supporting Smaller Groups (facilitated by Phil Regan), Electoral Registration (facilitated by Charmaine Valler) and Site Provision & Gypsy Co-ops (facilitated by Candy Sheridan). Feedback from the workshops was made during the Open Session following the lunch break.
After the lunch break, a range of issues were raised during the Open Session. These included the need for health issues to be addressed during the next two-day residential in the autumn and the need for a Media Hub to be set up as soon as possible. This was felt important as it was agreed that preparation and national coordination would be needed to cope with a potential media backlash following the launch of the Shadow Gypsy, Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy in September. Examples of work with broader ethnic minorities forums and coalitions was also raised as something that groups should consider in relation to tackling anti-GTR racism and inequality.

The other important issue discussed was the on-going situation with regards to support for the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Gypsy, Traveller and Roma, which up until January 2014 had been serviced by the Traveller Law Reform Project (TLRP). Despite having extended the TLRP for 18 months (through contributions from the London Gypsy & Traveller Unit, Friends, Families and Travellers, individual donations and additional grants from The Travellers Aid Trust and other funders), no further funding had been found and the project had now come to an end.

However, since September 2013, the APPG Hub had been meeting on a regular basis to look at a long term project to continue this vital work. The APPG Hub has 22 members representing eleven organisations, both local and national as well as individual community members.

Delegates were informed that the APPG Hub had worked up a draft long term project proposal that reflected the desire expressed by community members that they have more direct involvement in the delivery of policy work in Parliament.

However, it was noted that unified community backing was needed for any long term project. To this end, delegates voted unanimously in support of seeking funding for this. It was agreed that the draft project proposal be circulated to all delegates to offer an opportunity to those who had not participated in the APPG Hub to feed back on the proposal before it was taken further. It was suggested that, once a final project proposal was agreed, a few of the lead organisations request a meeting with funders to seek long term support this important area of work. Susan Alexander of the Travellers Aid Trust offered to facilitate this meeting.
Closing Session
Adrian Jones of the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups summarised the key points from the day before delegates left for home.

Shadow Gypsy Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy
It is vital for community members and organisations to participate in the development of shadow strategy.

All Party Parliamentary Group
The good work carried out by the APPG was recognised by those attending the conference. There remains a need to take this work forward and unified community backing is needed if there is to be an application for long-term funding. A proposal to seek the necessary funding was supported unanimously.

Equality
It was suggested that anti Gypsy/Traveller/Roma racism might be set in the context of racism more generally, with BME groups (including Gypsy/Traveller/Roma) being seen to be working together on a common cause.

Identity
Identity is of key importance and there is a need for policy makers and others to get the words right e.g. just because an Irish Traveller is living in bricks and mortar that doesn’t mean that they are no longer and Irish Traveller. Issues of individual identity as compared to assimilation were discussed – you can be both “British” and Gypsy/Traveller/Roma. Rather than talking about “integration” (which people sometimes see as “assimilation”) we should be talking about “inclusion”.

Pressure is needed from the community with regard to the planning definition. The definition used should be one that the community itself wants.

There remains a need to ensure that “Gypsy” and “Traveller” are both capitalised.

Site Provision
Site provision strategy needs to be inclusive of all – not everyone wants the same thing e.g. one attendee raised the issue of pulling up on green lanes.

Education
Roma children should not automatically be assumed to need “special needs” schooling -
this was one of the reasons why the Roma had come to Britain, as this was happening in their countries of origin.

**Heath**

Changes in health service delivery (e.g. the introduction of clinical commissioning groups) have implications for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma health. The Traveller Health Visitors no longer exist – community groups might lobby to get them back.

**Media Strategy**

When the Shadow Integration Strategy is produced, there will be a massive backlash from the Government and the media that support it. As a result, there is a need for a media strategy to deal with this. A number of key elements were identified:

- The use of social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) which give the writer control over content.
- Creating a media “hub” with nominated people across the regions to respond to the media.
- Using the True Vision website to report hate crime
- Giving positive messages (e.g. using music/art) to counter negative ones in the media

The two things that particularly need to be done are to “challenge” misinformation and biased reporting and to “educate” the wider population.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination is the common thread underlying all of the above.
Delegates

A total of ninety-five delegates registered for the conference and seventy-nine attended on the day, including representatives from twenty-three organisations. Forty-three of the delegates were community members, twenty-one of which were young people. With a London-wide Tube strike in force and sever disruption to travel due to storms, a significant number of cancellations was expected.

Budget

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<th>Actuals</th>
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<td>Main room hire, break out rooms, equipment &amp; catering x 70</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td><strong>£10,638.24</strong></td>
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Notes
1. £1000 from underspend on Hubs
2. £5 each cash for lunch for young people x 21

Feedback

The Feedback forms for the event set out four objectives for the day. Eighteen forms were returned and the responses in relation to whether the event succeeded in meeting the objectives were as follows.

Bring together GTR communities to share ideas, information and knowledge
16 yes, 1 no and 1 unsure

Create greater awareness of and participation in a national Shadow GTR Integration Strategy
16 yes, 1 no and 1 unsure

Engage young GTR
14 yes, 1 no and 4 unsure

Engage more community members and smaller GTR groups
12 yes, 1 no and 5 unsure

The feedback form also asked delegates to score how important it was to have the opportunity to socialize at a pre-event dinner. 7 responded that it was very important, 7 that it was quite important and 1 said it was not important with 3 non-scores.

In relation to workshops, 12 scored their workshop as good and 4 scored them as average with 2 non-scores.
In relation to the venue and catering, 11 scored Friends House as excellent and 7 as good.

In relation to the event overall, 8 gave a score of excellent, 8 a score of good with 2 scoring the event as satisfactory.

Some of the comments from the feedback include:

Brilliant! ○ need for more colour ○ loved the conference and enjoyed the chance to meet everyone ○ need for simpler language ○ well planned ○ a delegates list would have been good ○ learned lots and had a great day

Lessons Learned

The largest financial loss for the conference was the pre-event dinner. Forty-five delegates booked in for the dinner on the 5th of February, but only twenty-four attended. Although a few people cancelled in advance, the majority did not, so it was difficult to amend the catering order. The feedback is that some delegates felt uncomfortable attending as they were on their own and did not know other people there.

At the last residential at Trafford Hall in Chester, the venue stood on its own and delegates were greeted upon arrival with a more intimate and friendly atmosphere. Although there was an attempt to monitor the arrival of delegates across the three hotels and welcome them by phoning through to their rooms, this proved quite difficult as arrival times were varied and many had checked in and gone straight out again. It is clear from the feedback that the opportunity to socialize before the event is important but thought needs to be given on how to better manage bookings and catering in future.

One of the targets for the event was to engage more young people and this was a success. However, it was only possible due to the hard work and planning put in by individuals and organisations working with young people. It was clear from discussions prior and during the event that more planning and preparation needs to go into future events to ensure that engagement is sustained and meaningful. A number of the young people who attended were keen to be involved in the planning of future events.

Five new groups attended and forty-three of the delegates where community members, which was also very positive. However, although there was a workshop on supporting small groups, perhaps more could have been done during the day to focus on this area. Additional though needs to go into planning future events to ensure that smaller groups and community members new to conferences and campaigning feel able to participate fully.

What happens next?

The Event Hub will meet to start planning a two day residential for the autumn and a final one day conference in Birmingham in February 2015. Delegates were invited to join the Event Hub and a number of people expressed an interest in contributing to this process. It is expected that more young people will participate in the planning.

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone on the Event Hub who took time and energy to make the event such a success. A big thank you to Janie Codona for chairing the event, to Adrian Jones for noting down key points and to Sarah Cemlyn who took notes throughout. And finally, a very special thank you to all the young people who came along to join us for the day.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Delegate List</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Cobs Gypsy &amp; Traveller Forum</strong></td>
<td>Lillie Bramley</td>
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<td>Louise Jolly</td>
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<td><strong>Community members</strong></td>
<td>Candy Sheridan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jimmy Wenman</td>
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<td>Joseph Wenman</td>
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<td><strong>Changing Lives</strong></td>
<td>Gail Williams</td>
<td>Young Person</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theresa Price</td>
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<td><strong>Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group</strong></td>
<td>Siobhan Spencer</td>
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<td>Joanna Price</td>
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<td><strong>Equal Project / West Glam TES</strong></td>
<td>Sue Morgan</td>
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<td><strong>Friends, Families &amp; Travellers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Westway Development Trust</strong></td>
<td>Phil Regan</td>
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Evaluating UK Progress in the European Union Framework on Gypsy Roma Traveller Integration Strategies (NGRTIS)

The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups

WHAT IS IT?

EU members have been requested to make strategies on helping Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in:
- Discrimination
- Engagement, dialogue and partnership
- Accommodation
- Education
- Health
- Employment

Strategies have to be evaluated—What is working? What is failing? This is what our project is trying to do.

OUR PROJECT – OUR TEAM

- The EU has said that Gypsy, Roma Traveller groups must be involved by government in making strategies and measuring their success
- The Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat selected the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups (The Fed) to project manage
- Dr Sarah Cemlyn and Dr Andrew Ryder of the University of Bristol are helping us draft the report

TEAM APPROACH

- An experienced team of Gypsy Roma and Traveller interviewers are making the interviews – are involved in making the questions with our researcher and weighing up answers (capacity building)
- We are asking other Gypsy, Roma and Traveller organisations to provide us with ideas and information
- YOU! – we want to hear about your experiences today and we want you to keep telling us about your experiences up to May 2014
  
  The more people who back the report and get involved, the stronger it will be!

CONCERNS

- Oh no, not another bleeding piece of research!! Nothing ever happens afterwards!!
- This is what some might say and we are sympathetic

BUT:
- We need to know what the government is doing or not doing and the effect is on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers
- If the politicians and civil servants know their actions are being measured they will work harder for us
- We have powerful friends in the EU - they want to help us and our report will help them put pressure on the UK
- The report may increase UK efforts to get EU money for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Giving up and not bothering only helps those who want to hurt us or those who don't care!

TEAM EFFORT

- Sent a questionnaire to civil servants and other stakeholders asking for written responses
- Our interviewers are interviewing Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, service providers in education, health,
the police etc.

• Cemlyn and Ryder are sifting through reports and articles

• The draft report will be available to interested people for comment

• A Panel Review will meet in the Westminster Parliament in May including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and other key stakeholders to discuss the final report

MESSAGES TO MR PICKLES I.

• The Government is not listening to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

   Action – we must be listened to and shown respect

• Localism is failing - not enough sites are being made and some of us are suffering because of bad private landlords

   Action - duty on councils to provide sites, with clear targets and deadlines. We need better regulation of private landlords and more social accommodation

MESSAGES TO MR PICKLES II.

• The cuts to education, especially to the Traveller Education Services for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma, are hurting

   Action

   Funding needs to be restored and support is needed to create an inclusive and culturally flexible learning experience for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

• Work—the recession has hit Gypsies, Roma and Travellers hard

   Action

   Scrap the Scrap Metal Dealers Act, create more direct business support, crack down on gangmasters who treat workers badly

WHAT MESSAGE SHOULD WE SEND TO GOVERNMENT?

NFGLG
C/O DGLG
Unit 3
Molyneux Business Park
Whitworth Road
Darley Dale
Matlock
Derbyshire
DE4 2HJ

Telephone 01629 732744
info@nationalgypsytravellerfederation.org

The funding for the event and all bookings, invoices, catering and expenses were dealt with and administer by the Travellers Aid Trust.