

Awards For All Research Project 2016

Educating Gypsies & Travellers

What Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their parents really think of the education service they receive and what do they really want?



An interactive fieldwork research project conducted between January 2016 and May 2016

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1. Background information on Isaac Blake and the Romani Cultural & Arts Company

The Romani Cultural Arts Co. is the leading Romani and Traveller community-based organisation in Wales, traditionally using the arts and culture as a vehicle for advocacy and empowerment, amongst the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) communities and Showpeople. RCAC is also supporting individuals to become “Community Champions”, as actors and agents of change in their own communities, making a difference for themselves and the wider society. RCAC is managed by a Board (voluntary management committee) made up of representatives from the GRT communities, meaning that community members have a role as decision-makers and are part of the process of shaping the advocacy and rights agenda that RCAC promotes. The Company believes it is essential that the GRT communities be at the forefront of social progress and positive developments in social inclusion, in the struggle or the recognition of GRT rights and promoting inter-cultural understanding. Within Wales and increasingly across the UK, our advice and expertise is sought by local governments, policy-makers, decision-takers and local or national institutions. We are asked to evaluate the effectiveness of their policies and strategies or to support them in consultation to ensure the voice of the GRT communities they serve, is heard. We lead on advocacy for these vulnerable communities, influencing the policy and strategy agendas in the context of a devolved Welsh Government and increasingly internationally across the UK and we deliver quality training for those who work with Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showpeople communities and who wish to improve their reach and their impact. Recently we have been able to:

- Influence the Welsh Government through a robust consultation process in relation to the drafting and implementation of a new Scrap Metal Act (UK) and Horses Act (Wales) that is likely to have a profound effect upon the GRT community;
- Support an EU project, led by Dr Andrew Ryder (Corvinus University, Budapest), to survey Welsh Gypsy, Roma and Traveller views on the current Welsh National Roma Integration Strategy, 2014 to 2020, for the EU;

- We have used funding to train individual GRT community members as key advocates who can influence developments affecting GRT communities in Wales – our “Community Champions” programme. These people have taken the lead in a variety of initiatives and advocacy activities at local and national levels;
- RCAC has managed funds from a local donor to research the NEETS (Not In Education, Employment or Training) phenomenon in relation to the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in Wales. We have commissioned a trained researcher to work alongside our Community Champions to examine the questions of early leaving (‘drop out’) from school and the significant differences in educational attainment, between the majority community and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller children and young adults.

Our organisation was founded in September 2009, initially using small grants to develop work with GRT children aged 3-16, in the area of South East Wales, where we began working on Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites and with housed Roma families. We have gradually built up our position as a leader in “best practise” with our community-centred approach to arts and advocacy workshops for GRT children and young people.

Why is the work of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company needed?

The work of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company is intended to challenge the prevailing, negative stereotypes and myths relating to Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showpeople living in Wales and to promote knowledge and reliable data about GRT communities in wider society, as part of developing evidence-based practice and inclusive services and provision that meets the needs of the GRT communities and recognises the contributions and positive benefits brought by Romani and Traveller people to Welsh society. Challenging racism and discrimination in order to build a better, more diverse and representative society based on social justice, equity and inclusion will bring improvements for all, as more egalitarian societies that demonstrate tolerance and appreciate diversity have shown (see Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do*

Better, 2009). The RCAC also works to achieve a greater sense of self-worth among members of communities, who have largely internalised the racism and discrimination that they experience on a daily basis.

Racism is widely recognised as anti-social, at least in most cases. However, there is plenty of evidence, in the everyday lives of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showpeople and in academic text, that racism against these people is still perceived as socially acceptable. The following quotes explain why and what affect this has:

- Nearly 9 out of every 10 children and young people from a Gypsy background have suffered racial abuse and nearly two thirds have also been bullied or physically attacked...

This is who we are, – Children's Society, 2007

- Go to most museums, libraries and schools and nothing about their history and culture is kept or taught. The result is a widespread ignorance about who they are, which sometimes turns to hatred, fear and misunderstanding. In schools, children learn more about the Romans, Vikings or even fairies than they do about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures and what they have contributed to this world. As a result they are misunderstood, feared and loathed...

GRTHM – www.grthm.co.uk

- The two groups identified as the most threatening – asylum seekers and Travellers – were the only groups with whom most interviewees had had no contact...

Understanding Prejudice, Stonewall, 2004

The Welsh Assembly Government's own report on the accommodation needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people (Niner, 2006) spoke of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people having 'distinct demographic and economic characteristics' and being one of the most socially excluded groups in Britain. It also spoke of the extent to which that social exclusion was reinforced by their experiences of discrimination.

- They noted the tendency of the settled community to stereotype and lump all Gypsy-Travellers together, and felt that Gypsy-Travellers are the population group against whom it is still 'acceptable' to make racist remarks...(*Accommodation Needs of Gypsy-Travellers in Wales, Niner, 2006*)

2. Background information on the education of and outcomes of Gypsy & Traveller children in Wales and the UK

In 1975, in *The Education of Travelling Children*, Reiss wrote about 1971 UK Government commissioned research into the education of Gypsy & Traveller children that the research was:

“...a timely response to the rediscovery that most Gypsy and other nomadic children were receiving irregular or, in many cases, no schooling.”

The word “rediscovery” highlights a recurring theme that appears in commentary and reports in modern times about Gypsy & Traveller children in the UK - the fact that research raises the issues and proposes the same recommendations; yet progress and improvements are either non-existent or very slow.

Subsequent government and HMI reports in 1982, 1999 and 2003 continued to highlight that the situation had not improved in terms of adequate provision nor improvements in educational outcomes.

In 2003, Ofsted commented in a report:

“The vast majority of Traveller pupils linger on the periphery of the education system. The situation has persisted for too long and the alarm bells rung in earlier reports have yet to be heeded.”

(Provision and support for Traveller pupils, Ofsted 2003)

The Traveller Movement Resource for London states the current general situation for Gypsies and Travellers in the UK clearly:

“Accommodation insecurity, poor living environment, low education attainment, economic exclusion, community isolation and discrimination all have a negative impact on Gypsies’ and Travellers’ physical and mental health. Approximately 14-20% of Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans are situated on illegal sites and as such are legally classified as homeless, whilst these communities also experience low rates of economic activity and

have the highest proportion with no qualifications for any ethnic group (60 per cent) – almost three times higher than for England and Wales as a whole (23 per cent). All these factors are compounded by high levels of discrimination and marginalisation.”

There appears to be endless, repeated information relating to the barriers facing the Gypsy and Traveller communities and their young; yet far less information about the positive and significant impact of direct intervention put in place to improve the education provision, health, accommodation and lives of these highly vulnerable, marginalised members of society. The vast majority of recent UK research into successful strategies to improve outcomes for children and young people usually has involved interviews with local authority officers and senior leaders of schools - very little has involved at a deep level, genuine consultation with Gypsy and Traveller families, children and young people themselves. Commentary and findings have predominantly been based upon the views of and submitted documents from the very leaders of the provision and services that are wholesale failing to make significant progress with the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

In 2010, in ‘Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils: final report’ (DFE, 2010), Anne Wilkin et al wrote about several successful strategies being used in some settings with evidence of some improvements in the areas of identified concern:

- social and emotional health and well-being
- school attendance
- transition to secondary school
- retention in school

The Wilkin et al report draws attention to the striking data on exclusion rates, poor educational outcomes, low transfer rates into secondary schooling and high incidence of special educational needs and free school meal entitlement; citing cultural reasons for this data. The report then proposes the TARGET model for service providers to identify, monitor and improve the situation for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people. Since 2010, no follow-up

research can be sourced, highlighting the impact of any implementation of any of the Wilkin et al recommendations nor the TARGET model.

As with previous and subsequent research findings and recommendations, ways forward have centred in the main on:

- building sustainable relationships between schools, local authorities and Gypsy, Traveller families
- providing role models, high aspirations and expectations of education for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people
- making schools as welcoming and inclusive as possible, working directly alongside families and communities to improve provision
- improving local authority and school tracking of attendance, academic performance and exclusion rates for the Gypsy and Traveller cohort so that intervention and resources can be appropriately targeted and monitored for impact

In the Welsh Government Circular 03/2008 'Moving Forward – Gypsy and Traveller Education', it was stated that:

“Most Gypsy and Traveller parents agree that primary school is good for their children because that is where they learn to read and write. But most Gypsies and Travellers believe that school only provides part of a child’s education, the rest coming from within the Gypsy and Traveller group. For example, boys often work with their father and girls often help to run the home and raise children. And many Gypsy and Traveller parents do not want their children to stay in secondary school because they are unhappy about sex education, drugs and the bad behaviour of other teenagers.”

This circular investigated the barriers to improving educational outcomes for Gypsy and Traveller children outlined in the 2006 report by the National Foundation for Educational Research entitled: 'Research into the Education of Gypsy Traveller Children in Wales'. The report identified; for those specific researchers, the four key barriers that stop Gypsy and Traveller children accessing the school system effectively:

- Gypsy and Traveller parents' perception of school, especially secondary school
- Gypsy and Traveller lifestyle involving moving from one place to another
- Local Authorities getting in contact with Gypsies and Travellers in inappropriate or misunderstood ways, leading to Gypsy and Traveller people becoming suspicious and losing contact
- The negative 'school' experiences of Gypsy and Traveller parents

The concern again with the findings of this style of research is subtle or direct 'blaming' of parents, lifestyle or culture - this has been shown only to compound the sense of mistrust and unease amongst the Gypsy and Traveller community who can feel judged and blamed, with the idea that it is for Gypsies and Travellers to assimilate themselves to the pre-existing public service as apposed to the public service moulding around their needs.

In 2014, Damian Le Bas wrote an article for The Guardian newspaper. In the article with the title: 'Yes, Gypsies lag in education, but the reasons are complex and cultural' (Wednesday 22nd January 2014), Damian Le Bas quotes a Headteacher who said:

"Why are [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller] pupils underachievers? Probably, persecution and racism. They are very self-sufficient, and not trustful of routes society provides for progression."

Recent research does draw attention to bullying, discrimination and persecution as direct reasons for parents withdrawing their children from school. Damian Le Bas also outlines the more typical comments by educators about inadequate parenting or excuses for poor school attendance "trotted out" by the community. The point Damian is highlighting is that the system is not aligning with the needs of a very resilient, resourceful people who have immense capacity to be successful and self-sustaining.

Recent educational policy in England has seen the near-on winding down of TESS services at local authority level. In Wales, local authorities can still apply for Welsh Government grants to support work with Gypsy and Traveller

children and their families; yet any funds are no longer ring-fenced and can be used according to the wishes of local administrations. Therefore, cuts at local authority level have also seen a significant reduction in some places in their capacity to intervene and support Gypsy and Traveller children and young people.

In the main both throughout the UK, support for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people seems to be:

- Local Authority officers or teachers with responsibility for intervening with and monitoring Gypsy and Traveller children
- Additional teaching assistant capacity to support and liaise with Gypsy and Traveller children and their families

In some rare cases, Local Authorities and schools offer distinct, separate 'withdrawal' provision for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people. In these provisions, Gypsy and Traveller children are sometimes taught separately to establish stronger relationships between staff and parents and to provide the necessary trust and a 'safe-base' so that children and young people are more likely to attend school or the provision regularly and remain in education for longer. In the majority of cases, support for Gypsy and Traveller children and their families seems scant, poorly considered, with children and families expected to 'fit in' to the existing systems and expectations.

In Wales, the government has attempted to establish a policy framework entitled 'Travelling To A Better Future' covering health, accommodation and education amongst other themes. The framework and resulting legislation has established some broad and balanced ambitions for the Welsh administration to improve the life chances and educational outcomes for the Gypsy and Traveller community; including the objectives 7 to 10 of the framework that relate to education services.

These 4 objectives centre around:

- checking out the progress since the 2008 Welsh Government Circular 03/2008 'Moving Forward – Gypsy and Traveller Education'

- improving attendance
- improving the curriculum and access to appropriate qualifications

In 2013 and more recently in March 2016, the Welsh Government published an update on the progress of the 'Travelling To A Better Future' delivery plan. The update report does not include much in the way of solid data nor clear measurable evidence of impact. It does not report on data highlighting improved health or improved educational standards for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people. The update of March 2016 appears to be a list of activities and actions without little reference to the difference made. This is in part down to the original delivery plan which does not layout clear measurable expectations around impact in terms of data and outputs.

In January 2016, Freedom of Information requests were sent to the four education consortia in Wales and all 22 Local Education Authorities asking for their data over the 2010 to 2015 period, relating to some specific foci:

- school attendance rates for Gypsy and Traveller children in primary and secondary sectors
- school performance data for the Gypsy and Traveller cohorts in primary and secondary sector
- local authority data relating to numbers of Gypsy and Traveller children fixed term and permanently excluded
- the numbers of Gypsy and Traveller children at local authority level on roll or dual-registered at a pupil referral unit or special school

The majority of local authorities but only one of the four education consortia responded. Several local authorities found it difficult to respond initially, claiming that they did not hold the data as collection was the responsibility of the Welsh Government or schools themselves. Four local authorities did not respond to the freedom of information request at all. The requests raised several concerns:

- the differences in how data was presented and has clearly been tracked
- gaps and omissions in some data requested

- the confusing relationship between the education consortia, local authority and Welsh Government in relation to data collection, monitoring and intervention

It is clear that the management of data is an issue for the different partners in the education sector, highlighting inadequate monitoring of key indicators of progress for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people. If the data is not being managed adequately or used to inform policy and practice at a local or school level, then it is very much likely that appropriate intervention will not be provided for the children, young people and the families who need it. The 'Travelling To A Better Future' plan does not include impact statements, outlining clearly what measurable changes will be seen following action and intervention; with specific data-driven expectations, compounding the impression that there is not a firm grasp of the data at a finer level; this being needed to be specific around the exact areas of concern that require attention in terms of attendance, exclusion and academic performance.

Given the confusing context with respect to data and provision within the current Welsh educational landscape, it is perhaps unfortunately inevitable that improvements in school attendance and academic performance are slow. This, coupled with the fact the large numbers of Gypsy and Traveller children and families refuse to ascribe themselves; for fear of persecution, to appropriate ethnic categories on the national census or at school level, indicates that the group is less likely to be getting the support and intervention required to counter barriers to attending school, remaining in school and achieving their potential and meeting national expectations.

In 2016, in spite of rhetoric and policy:

- Gypsy and Traveller children remain the lowest attending group in schools
- Gypsy and Traveller children are more likely to be excluded from schools
- Gypsy and Traveller children are the lowest attaining ethnic group in schools

3. Research methodology, questions & design

Following an initial investigation and research into previous studies and reports into the education of Gypsy and Traveller children and young people, it was decided to structure a simple research process with one overarching question at its centre:

- ***What Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their parents really think of the education service they receive and what do they really want?***

It was then decided to break this main question down into three sub questions / components:

- What do children, young people and parents think of the education they receive currently or previously?
- What do children, young people and parents think of the support they receive currently or previously?
- What do children, young people and parents think should happen to make education more accessible and a more successful experience?

The chosen methodology was questionnaire and open discussion, with three distinct groups of participants, all from site-based Gypsy and Traveller communities:

- Primary-aged children
- Secondary-aged young people
- Parents and carers

The reason for the decision only to use participants from site-based Gypsy and Traveller communities is that they are less likely to have been used for consultation and research before and represent the hardest to reach. The ease of access permitted by The Romani Cultural and Arts Company removed the normal barriers that other agencies and organisations face when attempting to access the community for consultation.

The questionnaire was structured to allow for a mixture of qualitative and quantitative information gathering, using a basic 'feelings scale' and imagery to ensure the fullest comprehension of expectations on participants. The subsequent discussions then allowed for follow-up comments to be made, with Community Champion facilitators asking open questions such as:

- If you could change anything, what would it be?
- What do you think would make school better?

The purpose of the simple design and structure of the process: questionnaire followed by open discussion, was chosen to ensure that:

- Individual participants could be given space and time to think freely and respond honestly in a more personal way without being influenced or intimidated by others
- Individuals could respond but anonymously
- Some degree of consensus could be gauged during the open discussion
- Emotional feeling; whether positive or negative, could be gauged when discussing key themes or ideas
- Participants could engage and discuss their feelings and ideas in an open, non-judgemental way, therefore encouraging greater honesty and transparency
- The attitudes of primary-aged children, secondary-aged young people and their parents / carers could be compared

The expectation was that children, young people and participating adults were not led or directed in their responses and Community Champion facilitators were to speak as little as possible, only intervening to ask an open question when there was no response or poor understanding of the meaning of the original question.

It is accepted that access to site-based communities for consultation and research and trust are genuine barriers to being able to conduct any studies of significance. Given the deep-rooted links between the Romani Cultural & Arts Company and the Gypsy and Traveller communities of South Wales,

access and trust were not concerns and did not end up being so throughout the research. In order to secure the fullest of participation and the greatest number of respondents, all participants were promised that their personal identity and their home site would be kept completely confidential. This report shall honour these promises.

In order to demystify the research for children, young people and parents, a small team of Community Champion volunteers were used and trained to support the completion of the three questionnaires and to conduct open discussions around the 'question foci' following completion. The Community Champions were also available to read questions out loud and explain the meaning of them should children or adults have any comprehension or literacy issues.

It has to be acknowledged that all facilitators and the principal researcher were from the Gypsy and Traveller communities. The intention here was to enable the fullest access possible and therefore honest, transparent answers to questions. All reasonable steps were taken to prevent facilitators and the principal researcher from 'culturally influencing' or 'over guiding' participants into responding in a particular negative or positive vein. Community Champions and the principal researcher were not expected to speak very much; just enable access to the process. Nevertheless, it is important to draw attention to the potential for the cultural and ethnic identity of the facilitators to influence outcomes. The research project was presented to all participants in the same standard way so not as to presume a positive or negative framing of the reasons behind the study:

“We have been given the opportunity to give our opinions and ideas on how Gypsy and Traveller children get on in school.”

4. What Gypsy & Traveller young people, their parents & carers think of their school experience to date

Each of the three questionnaires started with a section to gauge opinion and feeling on current or previous education experiences.

The first five questions focused on:

- 1) Overall opinion of current or most recent school
- 2) Opinion on how welcoming the school and staff are to Gypsy and Traveller children and their families
- 3) Opinion on how well the school tackles discrimination
- 4) Opinion on ability of teaching staff / school to accommodate for Gypsy and Traveller children and their issues
- 5) How effective the school is / has been in improving basic skills such as literacy and numeracy

Further sections also covered questions relating to:

- Transition from primary to secondary school and how effective this was managed by the schools

There were three separate questionnaires, one for each of the following groups:

- Primary-aged children
- Secondary-aged young people between the ages of 11 and 18
- Parents and carers of Gypsy and Traveller children and young people

Primary-aged children

There were 100 questionnaires completed by primary-aged children; of which 60 were female and 40 were male.

The scale offered to respondents for answering the first five questions of the questionnaire was:

AWFUL (1 point)

NOT VERY GOOD (2 points)

GOOD (3 points)

REALLY GOOD (4 points)

BRILLIANT (5 points)

The average response for each question was ascertained by dividing the total given by the number of boys or girls. This has provided an average score out of 5 for each question.

QUESTION ONE:

What do you think of your primary school?

The average score awarded by boys was 3.

The average score awarded by girls was 2.

QUESTION TWO:

What do you think of your class teacher?

The average score awarded by boys was 3.

The average score awarded by girls was 2.

QUESTION THREE:

How well does your school make you feel welcome as a Gypsy or Traveller?

The average score awarded by boys was 2.

The average score awarded by girls was 2.

QUESTION FOUR:

How well does your school deal with any name-calling or bullying?

The average score awarded by boys was 2.

The average score awarded by girls was 2.

QUESTION FIVE:

How well do your teachers understand your needs as a Gypsy or Traveller?

The average score awarded by boys was 2.

The average score awarded by girls was 2.

QUESTION SIX:

How good is your school at getting you to read?

The average score awarded by boys was 3.

The average score awarded by girls was 3.

The total possible score that could have been awarded for opinion on current school experiences was 30.

The total average score for boys was 15 / 30.

The total average score for girls was 13 / 30.

There were no respondents who offered a score over 3 for any question, with the weight being placed on awarding 2 points (not very good) for most questions.

What has been gaged from the questionnaires from primary-aged children?

- The majority of primary-aged girls and boys rate their current or most recent school experiences as 'not very good' with girls less satisfied than boys.
- Girls appear to be having a less favourable experience than boys in the primary sector
- The areas that the children appear less satisfied with relate to:
 - the school ethos and inclusivity
 - the school's and staff's ability to deal with sensitive issues such as discrimination and bullying
- Primary-aged children consider their support and progress in basic skills as good on average; this being the area given the highest score by this group.

Follow-up discussions and group interviews with primary-aged children

Five follow-up discussions took place with around 53 children participating in total in approximately, five separate groups of 10 to 11 children.

The groups were mixed, boy-girl.

Follow-up questions related to the initial findings and areas of interest from the original questionnaires.

The first question put to the primary-aged groups of children was:

Why have you not had a better time at primary school?

What has not made your time at primary school the best?

We have categorised the responses under distinct areas:

SCHOOL STAFF	OTHER CHILDREN	WORK	MISSING HOME
Teachers not friendly	They pick on us all the time	Boring lessons	Want to be back on site with my mam and dad
Teachers shouting all the time	Name-calling in class and outside	We don't learn about Gypsy things	Want to work with my big brother
Teachers saying bad stuff about us	Laughing at us		Happier and better at home
Saying stuff about us being Gypsy	Keep punching me when the teacher's not watching		Learn more at home than at school
Picking on us because we are Gypsy			
They are Gorjas (non-Gypsy) and they don't like us			

The second question put to the primary-aged groups of children was:

What has happened to make you feel welcome as a Gypsy and Traveller at school?

We have categorised the responses under distinct areas:

SCHOOL STAFF	OTHER CHILDREN	WORK & SCHOOL EVENTS
Some teachers can be nice sometimes	Having friends from my site in the same class	Post card and badge competitions

The third question put to the primary-aged groups about their school experiences was:

Do you think your teachers are doing a good job?

Do you think you are doing well at school?

We have categorised the responses under distinct areas:

YES	NO
Good at reading, writing and maths	Boring
We read loads	I feel picked on
Good at painting and PE	When bad things happen, the teachers pick on a Gypsy
Teachers are strict and get you working	Want more on Gypsy life
My teacher phones my mum and dad to tell them good things I'm doing	

What has been gaged from the discussions with primary-aged children?

- School ethos and culture is not very welcoming to Gypsy and Traveller children
- Children perceive that school staff do not like them and are judging them
- There are issues with bullying and direct discrimination towards Gypsy and Traveller children by non-Gypsy and non-Traveller children
- Many Gypsy and Traveller children find breaking ties with home very difficult
- Many primary-aged children feel they are doing well at school
- Many primary-aged children feel they should have more direct teaching about their cultural way of life and heritage

Secondary-aged young people

There were 51 questionnaires completed by secondary-aged children; of which 30 were female and 21 were male.

The scale offered to respondents for answering the first five questions of the questionnaire was:

AWFUL (1 point)

NOT VERY GOOD (2 points)

GOOD (3 points)

REALLY GOOD (4 points)

BRILLIANT (5 points)

The average response for each question was ascertained by dividing the total given by the number of males or females. This has provided an average score out of 5 for each question.

QUESTION ONE:

What do you think of your secondary school?

The average score awarded by boys was 2.

The average score awarded by girls was 3.

QUESTION TWO:

What did you think of your primary school?

The average score awarded by boys was 2.

The average score awarded by girls was 3.

QUESTION THREE:

How well does your school make you feel welcome as a Gypsy or Traveller?

The average score awarded by boys was 2.

The average score awarded by girls was 3.

QUESTION FOUR:

How well does your school deal with any name-calling or bullying?

The average score awarded by boys was 1.

The average score awarded by girls was 1.

QUESTION FIVE:

How well do your teachers understand your needs as a Gypsy or Traveller?

The average score awarded by boys was 2.

The average score awarded by girls was 2.

QUESTION SIX:

How good is your school at getting you to improve your reading, writing and Maths skills?

The average score awarded by boys was 2.

The average score awarded by girls was 3.

QUESTION SEVEN:

How well managed was the transition from primary to secondary school?

The average score awarded by boys was 1.

The average score awarded by girls was 1.

The total possible score that could have been awarded for opinion on current school experiences was 30.

The total average score for boys was 11 / 30.

The total average score for girls was 15 / 30.

There were no respondents who offered a score over 3 for any question, with the weight being placed on awarding 1/2 points (not very good) for boys and 2/3 for girls.

What has been gaged from the questionnaires from secondary-aged young people?

- The majority of primary-aged girls and boys rate their current or most recent school experiences as 'not very good' with girls less satisfied than boys.
- Girls appear to be having a less favourable experience than boys in the primary sector
- The areas that the children appear less satisfied with relate to:
 - the school ethos and inclusivity
 - the school's and staff's ability to deal with sensitive issues such as discrimination and bullying
- Primary-aged children consider their support and progress in basic skills as good on average; this being the area given the highest score by this group.
- Secondary-aged young people do not feel that the transition from primary to secondary was very well managed

Follow-up discussions and group interviews with secondary-aged young people

Five follow-up discussions took place with around 30 children participating in total in approximately, three separate groups of ten young people.

The groups were mixed, boy-girl.

Follow-up questions related to the initial findings and areas of interest from the original questionnaires.

The first question put to the secondary-aged groups of children was:

Why have you not had a better time at secondary school?

What has not made your time at secondary school the best?

We have categorised the responses under distinct areas:

SCHOOL STAFF	OTHER CHILDREN	WORK	MISSING HOME
Teachers can be the problem	You can feel very alone at high school	Boring	Want to work with my dad
Teachers target us all the time	Name-calling and offers of fights are common	Not practical and hands-on enough	Better off working with my dad and family to learn a trade
Teachers talking about us as Gypsies	Some of the things others say are real nasty	I couldn't see how it was going to help me get a job doing what I wanted to do	I learnt more about life and working with my family and brothers than I did being stuck in a classroom at school
	I used to get tripped up and pushed a lot		
	Other pupils used to scream nasty things in my ear as they walked past me in the corridor and on the fields		

The second question put to the secondary-aged groups of was:

What has happened to make you feel welcome as a Gypsy and Traveller at school?

We have categorised the responses under distinct areas:

SCHOOL STAFF	OTHER CHILDREN	WORK & SCHOOL EVENTS
Nothing	I have loads of friends	Nothing
I have heard teachers making comments and talking about 'Gypsy kids' - we don't feel welcome	Most kids ignore us Gypsies Gorja (non-Gypsy) kids want to fight us all the time	We have been invited to special events out of school - once or twice A lot seemed to happen in primary school
I have one teacher I can go to who listens to me and has been helping me	I was badly bullied all the time so I stopped going to high school	
I don't think they get us - they can seem frightened or they are horrible to us	Not many Gypsy kids stay at high school - I have one friend from site	
I have been accused of three different things by teachers - stealing and other things - for the first two times, I wasn't even in school on the day - Gypsies are always blamed		
High school isn't made for Gypsies - the schools can't get us		
A special teacher from the council told my parents to take me out of school - I can't remember why - I get 5 hours a week - it's crap		

The third question put to the secondary-aged groups about their school experiences was:

Do you think your teachers are doing a good job?

Do you think you are doing well at school?

We have categorised the responses under distinct areas:

YES	NO
<p>Some of my teachers really help me</p>	<p>We don't stay in high school long enough - it's crap at high school</p> <p>I got some help from the council for a bit; then it just stopped - I have been out of high school for over a year - nobody has come to see me - I was asked to leave by the council and my parents had to sign a letter to take me out - I want some help</p> <p>No - they are horrible to us Gypsies</p> <p>I was doing really bad at high school - the subjects are crap - boring - teachers just don't get kids - they don't get Gypsies</p> <p>I couldn't stay in high school - no one stopped me from being bullied - my parents asked for help - the teachers did nothing - I don't think I'm going to get any GCSEs</p>

The fourth question put to the secondary-aged groups about their school experiences was:

How was your move from primary school to secondary school managed?

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
	<p>We got no help</p> <p>I was really scared - my older brother and sister never went to high school - I did not know what it would be like</p> <p>It just seem to happen</p>

What has been gaged from the discussions with secondary-aged young people?

- School ethos and culture is not very welcoming to Gypsy and Traveller children
- Secondary-aged girls have a more positive view than boys of their secondary school experience
- Young people perceive that school staff do not like them and are judging them
- There are issues with bullying and direct discrimination towards Gypsy and Traveller young people by non-Gypsy and non-Traveller young people
- Many Gypsy and Traveller young people still leave secondary school before they should - discrimination and bullying seem to be the main reasons
- Secondary-aged girls perceive they are making more progress at secondary school than boys
- Secondary-aged young people perceive the curriculum not to be meeting their needs
- Secondary-aged young people consider that the transition from primary school to secondary school was managed very badly

Parents and carers

There were 52 questionnaires completed by parents and carers; of which 36 were female and 16 were male.

The scale offered to respondents for answering the first five questions of the questionnaire was:

AWFUL (1 point)

NOT VERY GOOD (2 points)

GOOD (3 points)

REALLY GOOD (4 points)

BRILLIANT (5 points)

The average response for each question was ascertained by dividing the total given by the total number of men or women. This has provided an average score out of 5 for each question.

QUESTION ONE:

What do you think of your child's school?

The average score awarded by men was 2.

The average score awarded by women was 3.

QUESTION TWO:

What did you think of your child's teachers?

The average score awarded by men was 2.

The average score awarded by women was 3.

QUESTION THREE:

How well does your school make you feel welcome as a Gypsy or Traveller?

The average score awarded by men was 2.

The average score awarded by women was 3.

QUESTION FOUR:

How well does your school deal with any name-calling or bullying?

The average score awarded by men was 1.

The average score awarded by women was 3.

QUESTION FIVE:

How well do the teachers understand your needs as a Gypsy or Traveller?

The average score awarded by men was 2.

The average score awarded by women was 3.

QUESTION SIX:

How good is your school at getting your child to improve your reading, writing and Maths skills?

The average score awarded by men was 2.

The average score awarded by women was 4.

QUESTION SEVEN:

How well managed was the transition from primary to secondary school?

The average score awarded by men was 1.

The average score awarded by women was 1.

The total possible score that could have been awarded for opinion on current school experiences was 30.

The total average score for men was 11 / 30.

The total average score for women was 19 / 30.

The weight has been placed on awarding 1/2 points (not very good) for men and 2/3 for women.

What has been gaged from the questionnaires from parents and carers?

- Women have a more positive perception of their child's current or most recent schooling than men.
- Parents and carers' opinion of school staff places them as one of the most positive elements of their child's schooling
- The areas that the parents appear less satisfied with relate to:
 - the school ethos and inclusivity
 - the school's and staff's ability to deal with sensitive issues such as discrimination and bullying

Follow-up discussions and group interviews with parents and carers

Three follow-up discussions took place with around 30 adults participating in total in approximately, three separate groups of ten.

The groups were mixed, male-female.

Follow-up questions related to the initial findings and areas of interest from the original questionnaires.

The first question put to the parents and carers was:

Talk about the good and bad in your child's schooling to date.

We have categorised the responses under distinct areas:

SCHOOL STAFF	OTHER CHILDREN	WORK	CULTURE	Primary School	Secondary School
There are some good and some bad - not many know what to do with us	There is a lot of bullying towards Gypsies and Travellers - schools don't know what to do and if they do, they don't do anything about it anyway	I wish I could help them more with their work	I just don't think schools get Gypsies and know what to do with them	Primary school has been better than high school	Primary school has been better than high school
They just don't get it - I think they think we're all stealing stuff	I worry a lot about my youngest because of the things other children get up to at school	They always have reading to do at home and sometimes Maths stuff	You can feel like you're being judged when you go into school	Teachers are more friendly at primary school	Bullying got worse when my son tried it at high school
They can blame the Gypsy children for everything	Most of my children's friends are Gypsies and Travellers	They make them work so hard at school now	I just don't think many teachers like Gypsies	They seem to be happy coming home some days, excited from the day	I didn't want my daughter around those kids with what they were all doing - drugs and like
One or two really care and are always on the phone for good and bad reasons		They don't seem to get much help at school if they have problems - you have to push and push to get anything done for them			I think the work gets more boring for them and they get less help from teachers

The second question put to the parents and carers was:

What has happened to make you feel welcome as a Gypsy and Traveller parent at school?

We have categorised the responses under distinct areas

SCHOOL STAFF	CULTURE	SCHOOL EVENTS
Nothing much	Nothing much	Nothing much
One teacher always phones	They don't get it do they	I did get a letter about sports day and a Christmas play
They don't get it do they		
You feel like an alien going in to school some times		

The third question put to the secondary-aged groups about their school experiences was:

Do you think teachers are doing a good job?

Do you think your children are doing well at school?

We have categorised the responses under distinct areas:

YES	NO
Some teachers really help and seem to care	Mine at primary are working hard and their reading is good - I am very scared about them going to high school - their older brother was bullied bad and I was asked to take him out of school - he doesn't get any help now
Some of them try to help but I don't think they understand or know what to do	
Mine at primary are working hard and their reading is good - I am very scared about them going to high school - their older brother was bullied bad and I was asked to take him out of school - he doesn't get any help now	All of mine tried it out at high school and it didn't work - my daughter was bullied and my son was so bored, he stopped going - he runs his own business now and is doing well. My daughter has had no help out of school and will not have any GCSEs
Mine get put into a special group and that has really worked well - the other kids were the problem - it's much better now	

The fourth question put to the parents and carers about their children's school experiences was:

How was your child's move from primary school to secondary school managed?

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
<p>They got treated the same as everyone else</p> <p>There were some visits to the high school with all the other children</p>	<p>My children were really scared because their older brother didn't last very long at high school</p> <p>I asked for more help cos my kids were so scared - no one helped</p> <p>It just happened suddenly</p> <p>I wish we had had more information and help in understanding the change</p> <p>It's a big thing for us Gypsies, sending our kids to high school with all those other kids</p> <p>I don't think the schools get what it is like for us to go to the bigger schools</p>

What has been gaged from the discussions with parents and carers?

- School ethos and culture is not very welcoming to Gypsy and Traveller children
- Mothers have a more positive view than fathers of their child's school experience
- Parents and carers perceive that school staff do not understand their needs or culture and do not know how to address difficulties when they arise
- There are issues with bullying and direct discrimination towards Gypsy and Traveller young people by non-Gypsy and non-Traveller young people
- Many Gypsy and Traveller young people still leave secondary school before they should - discrimination and bullying seem to be the main reasons
- Mothers perceive their children are making more progress at school than fathers
- Parents and carers perceive the curriculum not to be meeting their children's needs at secondary school
- Parents and carers consider that the transition from primary school to secondary school was managed very badly

Summary of findings from questionnaires and group discussions

- Children, young people and their parents and carers generally perceive school culture and ethos to be unwelcoming and non-receptive to their needs
- Children, young people and their parents and carers generally find that bullying and discrimination is not appropriately prevented or tackled, with some evidence of both school staff and other children making inappropriate comments
- Bullying and discrimination, coupled with the perception of an 'inappropriate' school culture are cited as some of the reasons why young people either never move from primary to secondary or do not remain in secondary schools for very long
- Generally, female respondents have had a more positive experience than male respondents and therefore hold more positive views of the education journey
- There is a consensus that the school curriculum; as children move towards and into secondary education, does not meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- Children, young people and their parents and carers generally feel that transition from primary to secondary schools is not managed well
- Many children and young people feel that their schools are adequately teaching them basic skills for life
- It is being suggested that many young people not in secondary school are offered no support at all, or are offered inadequate support

5. What Gypsy & Traveller young people, their parents & carers think are the strengths and weaknesses of the education system

The questionnaires and group discussions have provided a very clear picture on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the education system. It must be noted that the overall perception is not particularly positive; in spite of some aspects of education and schooling being awarded more favourable scores and commentary.

As a reminder to ourselves about the average satisfaction score of children, young people and their parents / carers:

GROUP	AVERAGE SCORE OUT OF POSSIBLE 30
PRIMARY-AGED CHILDREN	14
SECONDARY-AGED YOUNG PEOPLE	13
PARENTS AND CARERS	15
OVERALL AVERAGE SCORE OUT OF 30	14

The simple table highlights that the overall average satisfaction score out of a possible 30 is 14. This is not particularly high and on the questionnaire's 'per question scale' equates to a 2.3 which is 'not very good' in terms of a general rating.

The group discussions pulled out many positives about specific school staff and other elements of the education journey; again, the overall commentary offered was negative in feel with some precise statements and examples offered with respect to direct experiences of the issues children, young people and their parents / carers were currently facing or had recently faced.

Looking at the average scoring of the distinct areas of the questionnaire and group discussion foci, below is a guide to the ratings awarded to enable us to highlight perceived strengths and weaknesses of the education system.

The total possible score of 30 for each aspect is; on this occasion, the result of adding up the average per-question-rating taken from each of these groups:

- Male primary-aged children
- Female primary-aged children
- Male secondary-aged young people
- Female secondary-aged young people
- Male parents and carers
- Female parents and carers

The average rating falls within the ‘not very good’ category of our basic satisfaction scale.

From the outcomes of the questionnaires and the group discussions, we can ascertain that the following are considered by the respondents to be the strengths and weaknesses of schools and the education system:

SIGNIFICANT STRENGTHS	SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESSES
Teaching of basic skills	Tackling of bullying and discrimination
	Transition from primary to secondary school

SPECIFIC ASPECT or FOCI	SATISFACTION SCORE OUT OF 30	SATISFACTION SCALE RATING
Overall rating of schools and education system	14	NOT VERY GOOD
Overall opinion of how welcoming the school and staff are towards Gypsy and Traveller children and their families	14	NOT VERY GOOD
Opinion on how well the school tackles bullying and discrimination	10	AWFUL
Opinion on how well the school staff accommodate for Gypsy and Traveller children and their culture (incorporating curriculum and support)	13	NOT VERY GOOD
How effective has the school been in improving basic skills (incorporating English, Literacy, Reading, Maths and Numeracy)	17	GOOD
How effectively has transition from primary to secondary schools been managed	6	AWFUL

6. What Gypsy & Traveller young people, their parents & carers hope for the future and want to see change within schools and the education system

As part of the questionnaires and group discussions, children, young people and their parents and carers were also asked about their thoughts and aspirations in relation to the school curriculum, the school day and more openly and generally about what would make school and the education process more appropriate for Gypsies and Travellers.

The questionnaires asked primary-aged children, secondary-aged children, parents and carers to:

- Rank aspects of the school curriculum that they feel are the most and least important
- Comment on which aspects of the school curriculum they would want more and less of; should they have a greater choice
- Comment on the starting and finishing times of the school day
- Comment on the type of schools available to Gypsies and Travellers
- Comment generally on the most significant barriers to high attendance and high achievement at school

The above will now provide a clear structure, coupled with further comments from group discussions and the outcomes of the first section of the questionnaire to give an indication of what Gypsy, Traveller children, young people and their parents wish to see change within schools and the wider education system.

Children, young people and parents / carers would like to see change in:

- The school curriculum
- Types and range of schools on offer

- School culture and ethos
- Training for school staff
- Tackling bullying and discrimination
- Expectations around the management of transition from primary to secondary
- Support and challenge for Gypsy, Traveller children, young people and their parents / carers - both in school and out of school

It is clear from discussion groups with primary-aged children that the aspirations for their futures can start out being very high. When asked the question:

‘What job can you see yourself doing when you are older?’

, the following were the answers given. It must be noted that some children could not answer the question or simply did not know.

‘What job can you see yourself doing when you are older?’

Hair & Beauty
 Football player
 Working to help own community
 Setting up own business
 Police Officer
 Dentist
 Nurse
 Builder
 Tree surgeon
 Maths teacher
 Working for the RSPCA

When the same question was asked of secondary-aged young people, the responses were quite different. Again it must be stressed that some of those taking part in group discussions did not respond because they did not know what they wanted to do.

'What job can you see yourself doing when you are older?'

Tree surgeon
Working with my dad and my brother
Working with horses
Looking after our animals
Doing odd-jobs
Rubbish removal work
Child minder

The more professional jobs and careers did not figure into the answers given by the secondary-aged young people.

The changes and hopes for the future in part need to examine this aspirations-gap and transformation in expectations between primary-aged children and secondary-aged young people from the Gypsy and Traveller community.

When both primary-aged children and secondary-aged young people were asked about their worries and concerns for their future; the responses were uniform across the two age groups:

'What worries you about your future life?'

Getting a job and a place to live
People not accepting or understanding Gypsy, Traveller life and culture
Teachers not liking us and not helping us in our classes
Being able to pay own way in the world

When asked about the biggest barriers to Gypsy, Traveller children and young people achieving their potential in school, the following responses were offered:

Primary-aged children	Secondary-aged young people	Parents and carers
<p>Bullying</p> <p>Being blamed for everything</p>	<p>Bullying</p> <p>Teachers not understanding Gypsies & Travellers, and what we need</p> <p>School subjects we don't need</p> <p>Support from teachers</p> <p>Very poor or no support from local authority teams once out of school</p> <p>Moving from primary school to secondary school</p>	<p>Bullying</p> <p>Staff understanding and being sympathetic to GRT culture and needs</p> <p>We don't feel welcome - schools don't want us there</p> <p>The move from primary to secondary</p> <p>Concerns about male/female student relationships at secondary school - perception around big schools and drugs, smoking, etc</p> <p>Proper support from school staff and the local authority, especially when children and young people are taken out of school</p> <p>Local authority officers insisting that parents remove their child(ren) from school</p>

When asked about changes that could be made to make the situation better for Gypsy, Traveller children and young people, the following responses were offered:

	Curriculum offer - less of	Curriculum offer - more of	School day	Specialist support	Improve results
Primary-aged children	Welsh, cooking	More hands-on, practical subjects More reading, writing, Maths & ICT	Start later, finish same time	Teachers that understand us	Teach us about our own history and culture Teachers that understand us Specialist Gypsy & Traveller schools or classes
Secondary-aged young people	Welsh, cooking, Science, humanities	Reading, writing, maths, ICT, more practical vocational subjects	Start later, finish same time, practical subjects in afternoon to stop boredom and poor behaviour	Someone from the local authority that makes sure you get onto courses and helps you contact colleges	Time to learn about our own language, history and culture Proper support from the local authority Specialist Gypsy & Traveller schools or classes

	Curriculum offer - less of	Curriculum offer - more of	School day	Specialist support	Improve results
Parents and carers	Welsh, cooking, science and humanities	Reading, writing, maths, ICT, more on Gypsy & Traveller language and culture More 'real' work experience and more practical, vocational subjects	Leave the same but more time out learning 'on the job'	Work experience and 'on the job' learning Support for parents to understand letters and what help is out there Support from local authority in getting courses set up when children are taken out of school	Get staff trained so that they can help Gypsy & Traveller children and young people properly Specialist Gypsy & Traveller schools or classes

The desire to see Specialist Gypsy & Traveller schools or classes established in local areas became a constant theme with all groups, both out of the questionnaire and the group discussions.

From the questionnaire, approximately 90% of respondents felt that establishing specialist schools or classes would see improvements in attendance, retention and ultimately results for Gypsy & Traveller children and young people.

During group discussions, the theme was picked up and explored in more detail. Primary-aged children, secondary-aged young people and their parents / carers were presented with some potential options for progressing the idea of specialist schools and classes and were then asked to vote for the option they felt would be of the greatest benefit to children and young people. The mean percentages were then calculated across all participating groups:

OPTION	PERCENTAGE OF VOTES
Specialist classes within mainstream school - only for Gypsy & Traveller children - for all of the week	0
Specialist classes within mainstream school - only for Gypsy & Traveller children - for part of the week	0
Specialist classes away from the mainstream school - only for Gypsy & Traveller children - for all of the week	0
Specialist classes away from the mainstream school - only for Gypsy & Traveller children - for part of the week	12%
Specialist classes on the home site- only for Gypsy & Traveller children - for all of the week	10%
Specialist classes on the home site- only for Gypsy & Traveller children - for part of the week	0
Gypsy & Traveller Centre / school based on the England FREE SCHOOL MODEL - set up in sympathy with Gypsy & Traveller culture and lifestyle - for whole of week - open to any children who want to attend from any background	71%
Gypsy & Traveller Centre / school based on the England FREE SCHOOL MODEL - set up in sympathy with Gypsy & Traveller culture and lifestyle - for whole of week - open ONLY to Gypsy & Traveller children.	7%

The majority of respondents felt that the most appropriate option was to establish centres or schools which were founded upon the principles and values of Gypsy & Traveller culture and lifestyle, similar to the Free School model in England. These schools and centres would be open to any children who wish to attend as long as they are sympathetic to the founding principles and values.

One primary-aged child stated:

“I think there should be a school run by our own people to teach us our own ways, not the way they teach us now. If I was in charge, I would let Gypsies and Gorjas come to the school.”

(Gorjas are non-Gypsies)

Secondary-aged young people and their parents / carers in the main felt that something radical had to happen to improve the situation for Gypsy & Traveller young people as they move into secondary education and start planning for work and their future.

Respondents generally felt that specialist centres, classes and schools; staffed by many people from the Gypsy & Traveller communities, would help improve significantly:

- School attendance rates
- Transition from primary school into secondary school
- Retention of young people in the secondary sector
- Improve results at age 16 and age 18
- See more Gypsy & Traveller young people go onto higher education

Further probing exposed deep-rooted concerns about the current school system which; in their minds:

- Did not reflect the community's values and culture
- Did not effectively prevent or tackle bullying and discrimination
- Did not effectively prepare children for secondary school
- Did not effectively support young people at secondary school or when they 'dropped out' and were 'out of formal education'
- Did not offer an appropriate curriculum
- Did not minimise the risks of exposure to inappropriate behaviours in relation to 'over-sexualised' language and behaviour and risk-taking with alcohol and drugs
- Did not effectively train school and local authority staff to adequately understand the needs of Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their parents / carers

More specific comments / suggestions

The school curriculum:

Comments were made around the need to effectively prepare children and young people for the world of work. Respondents wanted more of the basics and then a lot more practical, vocational options supported with extended work placements / experience.

It was generally felt that the school curriculum did not formally reflect the Gypsy & Traveller language, history and culture of which they are proud.

School culture and ethos:

Comments were made around the perceived lack of understanding and empathy with the needs of Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their parents / carers. Many respondents had a story to tell about school or local authority staff behaving in ways which were considered inappropriate and in some cases 'direct discrimination'.

Many respondents did not feel welcome in their schools. All respondents agreed that there needed to be training and support for teachers, school staff and local authority officers to enable them to better accommodate for and make improved provisions for Gypsy & Traveller children and young people.

Comments were made around the perception that primary schools were far more welcoming than secondary schools and that the older children became, the less 'in-tune' or 'able to accommodate' the schools became. This 'implied' system-wide inability to make appropriate provision for Gypsy & Traveller children as they move up and out of the primary phase and towards the

secondary phase is perhaps an explanation for the decline in expectations and genuine interest in school as Gypsy & Travellers grow older.

Tackling bullying and discrimination

It was generally felt that this was a major concern for children, young people and their parents and carers from site-based communities. The suggestions made mainly around further training for school staff and awareness-raising for non-Gypsy children and young people.

It is accepted that mistrust of authority is a significant barrier to gaining access to and building bridges with the Gypsy & Traveller site-based communities. Many adult respondents suggested more regular, planned meetings and contact with parents / carers to discuss concerns, rather than always waiting for something 'big' to happen; or before gets 'out of hand.'

Expectations of support in preparing for transition from primary school to secondary school

For many respondents; particularly those of secondary school age and older, this was again about training for school staff. It was also highlighted that poor school-home links, especially for children and young people living on sites was something that needed to be improved as this would support preparation for transition.

It was felt that Gypsy & Traveller children would benefit from a more prolonged transition with greater parental involvement and more visits to secondary school.

Support and challenge for Gypsy, Traveller children, young people and their parents / carers - both in school and out of school

In the second section of this report, we noted an attempt to establish a model for assessing the needs of Gypsy & Traveller children and parents and for providing for them. The TARGET model was not something any respondents had heard of before.

Again, the issue of training for school staff was brought up, along with the perception that parental involvement and contact became less and less as children moved up through primary and into secondary schools. Transition was another theme that was discussed and improvements required to make it a more thorough and successful experience for Gypsy & Traveller children.

With respect to Gypsy & Traveller young people who are out of formal education, young people and parents / carers were very vocal. The general narrative is that there is very poor; if any, support for young people and their parents / carers (from site-based communities) once a young person stops attending secondary schools. Parents / carers suggested that schools and local authorities no longer knew how many young people were not in formal education under the age of 16 and that they had to 'hound' schools and the local authority to get any support.

One set of parents spoke about how they had been forced to sign their son (then aged 14) out of school before he was permanently excluded. There was no support or continuity of education put in place. At the age of 15, they tried to get him back into another school. They got support to complete the admissions forms which they sent to the local authority. Their son was never offered a place in a school and missed out on his education from the age of 14 upwards.

It is suggested that the Welsh Government insist that local authorities review their support and provision for site-based Gypsy & Traveller young people and their parents and make sure that they have a full, accurate picture on the number of secondary-aged young people who are not currently in formal education or training. It might be more appropriate that this review is carried out by an external body to local authorities to ensure that the figures reflect the reality.

Summary of suggested changes and improvements

- Improve the school curriculum so that it better reflects the needs and aspirations of the Gypsy & Traveller community
- Improve the support for Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their parents / carers from Reception Class upwards so that the high aspirations and expectations of children at the start of their school journey are maintained and encouraged
- Improve contact between schools, local authorities and site-based Gypsy & Traveller parents / carers so that the needs of their children are better assessed and accommodated for
- Improve the information provided by schools, local authorities for site-based Gypsy & Traveller parents / carers so that parents and carers are better informed and rely more on fact rather than misconceptions or exaggerated 'perceived' issues
- Improve the training of school staff and 'awareness-raising' for 'non-Gypsy' school children so that school culture and ethos is more welcoming and receptive to the needs, culture and aspirations of Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their parents / carers
- Improve school's response to bullying and discrimination so that Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their parents feel more confident in the ability of schools to meet their needs and address their concerns
- Improve the range of provision available for site-based Gypsy & Traveller children and young people, including in-school and out-of-school facilities that rapidly address and remove barriers to learning and success before it is too late
- Raise local authority expectations on site-based Gypsy & Traveller children and young people and improve the awareness of, and therefore the support for those site-based young people who are not currently in formal education or training

7. Key findings summary

- In spite of report after report and undeniable improvements in the school attendance and results for Gypsy & Traveller children and young people, there still remains significant gaps when compared to non-Gypsies / Travellers
- In spite of investment in progressive policies such as 'Travelling To A Better Future' on the part of the Welsh Government, very little has improved with respect to outcomes for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people since 2010, particularly site-based children and young people. There is poor evidence or no evidence of the direct impact of policy on the lives of children and young people
- There is evidence of incoherence in the collection of data at school, local authority, regional consortia and Welsh Government levels in relation to the attendance, performance and exclusion of Gypsy & Traveller children and young people within every phase of education. This suggests that there is inadequate tracking of these children at any level, implying that without an accurate picture of need, it is impossible to make appropriate provisions and improvements
- Overall, site-based Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their parents / carers do not feel that the current school and education system meets their aspirations and needs
- Preparing children with a solid grounding in reading, writing, ICT & Maths is considered very important by all groups taking part in this research and is also considered a strength of schools and the education system, particularly in the primary phase
- Bullying, discrimination, poor support and intervention coupled with an unwelcoming school ethos and culture are cited as principal barriers to children and young people being able to access education as fully as possible
- Poorly managed 'primary to secondary' transition and a gradual decline in support for site-based Gypsy & Traveller children, along with poor communication between schools and parents / carers are cited as principal barriers to Gypsy & Traveller young people being able to attend secondary school or remain in school until the age of 16

- Perceived inadequate training for school and local authority staff is causing problems and misconceptions
- There is poor or no support and intervention for many secondary-aged, site-based Gypsy & Traveller young people who are out of formal education and training
- There is great support amongst site-based young people and their parents / carers for special centres or schools which are founded on the principles and values of Gypsies & Travellers

8. Recommendations and ways forward

As a result of this research coupled with RCAC's deep understanding and knowledge of the current issues facing the Gypsy & Traveller communities in Wales, it is felt that a radical, fresh examination is required of key systems, structures, policies and expectations to ensure that; without too much delay, schools and education services become:

- More tolerant and accessible to Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their culture
- More receptive to the specific cultural and educational aspirations and needs of the Gypsy & Traveller community
- More accountable for the attendance, performance, retention and exclusion of Gypsy & Traveller children and young people
- More 'communicative' with the parents and carers of Gypsy & Traveller children and young people
- More challenging towards each other and the children and parents / carers from other backgrounds in relation to conduct, use of language used to denote or describe the Gypsy and Traveller community
- More able to prevent and tackle bullying and discrimination
- More able to aspire to all Gypsy & Traveller children experiencing effective and successful transition from primary school to secondary school and subsequently remaining in full time education until at least the age of 16
- More inspiring and relevant so that all Gypsy & Traveller children remain in education until at least the age of 16
- More innovative in relation to delivery models and alternative provision facilities

Key findings 1 & 2

- In spite of report after report and some improvements in the school attendance and results for Gypsy & Traveller children and young people, there still remains significant gaps when compared to non-Gypsies / Travellers
- In spite of investment in progressive policies such as 'Travelling To A Better Future' on the part of the Welsh Government, very little has improved with respect to outcomes for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people since 2010, particularly site-based children and young people. There is poor evidence or no evidence of the direct impact of policy on the lives of children and young people

A1) It is recommended that the Welsh Government commission a wholesale review of the Travelling To a Better Future framework. This review should examine the 'expected outcomes' for all objectives to make them more data-driven and more measurable in terms of the direct benefit and impact on the lives of Gypsies & Travellers; particularly site-based Gypsies & Travellers

A2) It is recommended that the Welsh Government also commission an organisation with direct community links with site-based Gypsy & Traveller communities to project manage 'meaningful' consultation, so that genuine 'deep' consultation can take place with respect to aspirations and expectations around the contents of the policy framework

A3) It is recommended that the Welsh Government particularly reconsider the 'education-focussed' objectives of the Travelling To a Better Future policy framework and action plan so that these make direct reference to data-driven, proven, measurable outcomes and impact expected at school, local, regional and national levels with respect to improving the attendance and performance of Gypsy & Traveller children and young people and reducing exclusion from school and in-school, local and regional variation, within every phase of the education sector

Key findings 3 & 4

- There is evidence of incoherence in the collection of data at school, local authority, regional consortia and Welsh Government levels in relation to the attendance, performance and exclusion of Gypsy & Traveller children and young people within every phase of education. This suggests that there is inadequate tracking of these children at any level, implying that without an accurate picture of need, it is impossible to make appropriate provisions and improvements
- There is poor or no support and intervention for many secondary-aged, site-based Gypsy & Traveller young people who are out of formal education and training

When Freedom Of Information requests were submitted to all Welsh Local Authorities and the four Regional Education Consortia, it was noted that:

- There was confusion as to which body would collect, hold and be able to present the requested information
- Many LAs and consortia did not respond at all on the first request; some suggesting that the Welsh Government directly collected the information from school data systems
- Some LAs provided scant, incomplete data with no explanation as to why there were gaps
- Some bodies responded by stating that they had never been expected to collect or use the data; however other bodies did provide the requested data

B1) It is recommended that the Welsh Government commissions a root-and-branch review of the 'data-collection' relationship between itself, schools, local authorities and regional consortia with respect to Gypsy & Traveller children and young people

B2) It is recommended that this review and its findings are used to develop robust expectations and a clearer understanding of which educational body collects which data and then how this data is used to hold schools, local authorities and regional consortia to account for the attendance, performance,

retention and exclusion rates of Gypsy & Traveller children and young people, particularly site-based children and young people

B3) It is recommended that the Welsh Government provides clear expectations to school Governing Bodies and to Local Authority Traveller Education Services around the tracking, monitoring and appropriate intervention for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people to ensure that their needs are high profile and met

B4) It is recommended that revised guidance and expectations are provided to Local Authorities with respect to their statutory duties to ensure that all school-aged children and young people are in education or training. Clear 'minimum-expected' standards for how Local Authorities should track, support and challenge young people, their parents / carers should be established without delay so that all site-based Gypsy & Traveller children and young people have appropriate provision in place to meet their needs and aspirations

B5) It is recommended that the Welsh Government establishes clear 'reporting' requirements on Local Authorities and Careers Wales with respect to being accurate about the numbers of site-based Gypsy & Traveller young people out of formal education and what actions they have taken to address the issue, with data highlighting impact

B6) It is recommended that the Welsh Government establishes a clear accountability framework for improving the outcomes of Gypsy & Traveller children and young people; particularly site-based Gypsies & Travellers, and make this framework and expectations as high profile as other policies and initiatives such as those focused on 'children facing disadvantage' or accessing 'free school meals'

Key findings 5, 6 & 7

- Overall, site-based Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their parents / carers do not feel that the current school and education system meets their aspirations and needs
- Preparing children with a solid grounding in reading, writing, ICT & Maths is considered very important by all groups taking part in this research and is also considered a strength of schools and the education system, particularly in the primary phase
- There is great support amongst site-based young people and their parents / carers for special centres or schools which are founded on the principles and values of Gypsies & Travellers

C1) It is recommended that the Welsh Government review their 2014 'Travelling Together' non-statutory guidance for schools, published to encourage the promotion of the integration of Gypsy and Traveller culture into the national curriculum

C2) It is recommended that the Welsh Government commissions genuine consultation with site-based Gypsies & Travellers to establish their 'deep' aspirations and expectations around the school curriculum and whether the subjects within the national curriculum reflect the community's needs and wishes

C3) It is recommended that the Donaldson Review of the school curriculum in Wales is seized as an opportunity to expect those schools and Local Authorities with established site-based Gypsy & Traveller communities to reconsider the curriculum required that will lead to greater engagement, higher attendance and improved outcomes for Gypsy & Traveller children and young people

C4) It is recommended that; as part of the moving forward with the Donaldson Review, there is a 'real' examination of other educational delivery models, nationally, UK-wide and internationally that are showing impact on outcomes for Gypsy & Traveller young people

C5) It is recommended that the Welsh Government ensure that schools and Local Authorities are not restricted in their ability to 'think outside the box' and 'innovate' with respect to making appropriate, evidence-based provision to meet the needs of Gypsy & Traveller children and young people; particularly site-based children and young people. Innovation should also include the

establishment of specialist centres and alternative provisions that meet the cultural and educational needs of Gypsies & Travellers, where this is clearly the best option for improving life chances

Key findings 8, 9 & 10

- Bullying, discrimination, poor support and intervention coupled with an unwelcoming school ethos and culture are cited as principal barriers to children and young people being able to access education as fully as possible
- Poorly managed 'primary to secondary' transition and a gradual decline in support for site-based Gypsy & Traveller children, along with poor communication between schools and parents / carers are cited as principal barriers to Gypsy & Traveller young people being able to attend secondary school or remain in school until the age of 16
- Perceived inadequate training for school and local authority staff is causing problems and misconceptions

D1) It is recommended that the Welsh Government use current, established Kite Mark frameworks such as the Inclusion Quality Kite Mark and Healthy Schools Standards to develop clear 'minimum-expected' standards with respect to schools and local authorities being open, tolerant and welcoming institutions for all members of society, and how they evidence this

D2) It is recommended that the Welsh Government commission 'deep' consultation with site-based Gypsies & Travellers to establish their detailed expectations on schools and local authorities with respect to preventing and effectively responding to bullying and discrimination

D3) It is recommended that the Welsh Government commission 'deep' consultation with site-based Gypsies & Travellers to establish their detailed expectations on schools and local authorities with respect to planning for and supporting the transition from primary school to secondary school; using the collected information to establish clear 'minimum-expected' standards for schools and local authorities

D4) It is recommended that; where relevant and depending on the nature of a school's intake, the Welsh Government expect schools to have a designated member of staff with direct responsibility for Gypsy & Traveller children and

the provision of their cultural and educational needs; similar to the role of Designated Person for Looked After Children. This will ensure that a member of the school staff is accountable for maintaining the needs of Gypsy & Traveller children high on the agenda. Where it is felt that this role is to be subsumed within an existing role (such as SENCo / ALNCo), the direct responsibility for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people should be clearly visible on the post holder's Job Description

D5) It is recommended that the Welsh Government ensures that schools and local authorities are reporting, monitoring and addressing evidence of anti-gypsyism or hate crime and provide clear guidance on how publicly-funded bodies need to be complying with the provisions for Gypsies & Travellers under the Equality Act 2010. This guidance needs to directly outline what action should be taken when there is evidence of employees using inappropriate discriminatory anti-gypsy terms such as 'Gypo'

D6) It is recommended that the Welsh Government directs the four Regional Education Consortia to collaborate on planning for or commissioning specific Equality & Diversity Training for the education workforce with a specific focus on conduct, the use of language, communication and appropriate pedagogy relating to Gypsies & Travellers. This training needs to clearly outline how 'hidden' and 'unchallenged' anti-gypsyism within the education workforce is preventing many Gypsy & Traveller children, young people and their families from fully accessing their entitlement

D7) It is recommended that the Welsh Government facilitates and explores innovation in the methods used to provide information to and to communicate with Gypsy & Traveller parents and carers; particularly site-based Gypsies & Travellers. It is recommended that; where required, schools and local authorities should be encouraged to enable communication via more appropriate, accessible means: brief summary format and enlarged print, short summary video clips using QR codes on letters and through brief audio recordings that can be made available on school and local authority websites

9. Appendices

9A - QUESTIONNAIRES

If I were the Education Minister For Wales - (Child - KS2)

Questionnaire (A) BOY / GIRL

Opinion current schooling:

1. What do you think of your primary school?



2. What do you think of your class teacher?



3. How well does your school make you feel welcome as a Gypsy / Traveller?



4. How well does your school deal with any name-calling or bullying?



5. How well do your teachers understand your needs as a Gypsy / Traveller?



Basic skills / personal development:

6. How good is your school at getting you to read?



7. What do you think are the most important things to learn at school?

Thing to learn		TICK		Thing to learn		TICK	
		1-5				1-5	
A	How to read			K	History and Geography		
B	How to spell and write			L	How to get on with other people and be a kind person		
C	Science			M	Sport and exercise		
D	How to use basic sums (Maths)			N	How to make things from scratch		
E	How to use computers and email			O	How to fix and mend things when they are broken		
F	How to cook			P	Welsh		
G	Romani / other Gypsy languages			Q	How to get a job and manage money		
H	Art and Design			R	About Gypsy / Traveller history and life		
I	How to sing and make music			S	OTHER: _____		
J	OTHER: _____			T	OTHER: _____		

Tick all the things in the list above that you think are the most important (no more 8 things)

Look at the things you have ticked - now rank your TOP FIVE (1-5) by writing the numbers 1-5 next to the most important things: 1 is the top (really important) and 5 is the bottom (not so important)

How would you make your school better?

8. What would you do to the school day?

What would you do?	CHOOSE ONE
Start the school day earlier	
Start the school day at the same time as now	
Start the school day later	

9. What would you do to learning time?

What would you do?	CHOOSE ONE
Keep it the same as it is now	
Only have normal lessons in the morning and then 'choice time' in the afternoon where you can choose what you learn	
Have 45 minutes classroom learning x 5, followed by 15 minutes personal choice time at the end of each lesson	
Have three hours of normal lessons in the morning and then 'hands-on' practical learning in the afternoon	

10. What would you like to do more of?

GO BACK TO QUESTION 7.

In the chart below, note down the letters of the 3 things you would like to do more in school:

More of	More of	More of

11. What would you like to do less of?

GO BACK TO QUESTION 7.

In the chart below, note down the letters of the 3 things you would like to do less in school:

Less of	Less of	Less of

If I were the Education Minister For Wales - (Child KS3/4)
Questionnaire (B) BOY / GIRL

Opinion current schooling:

1. What do you think of your secondary school?



2. What did you think of your primary school?



3. How well does your school make you feel welcome as a Gypsy / Traveller?



4. How well does your school deal with any name-calling or bullying?



5. How well do your teachers understand your needs as a Gypsy / Traveller?



Basic skills / personal development:

6. How good is your school at getting you to improve your reading, writing and Maths skills?



7. What do you think are the most important things to learn at school?

Thing to learn	TICK	1-5	Thing to learn	TICK	1-5
A How to read			K History and Geography		
B How to spell and write			L How to build good relationships		
C Science			M Sport and exercise		
D How to use basic sums (Maths)			N How to make things from scratch		
E How to use computers and email			O How to fix and mend things when they are broken		
F How to cook			P Welsh		
G Romani / other Gypsy languages			Q How to get a job and manage money		
H Art and Design			R About Gypsy / Traveller history and life		
I How to sing and make music			S A trade / on the job training		
J Practical skills			T OTHER: _____		

Tick all the things in the list above that you think are the most important (no more 8 things)

Look at the things you have ticked - now rank your TOP FIVE (1-5) by writing the numbers 1-5 next to the most important things: 1 is the top (really important) and 5 is the bottom (not so important)

How would you make your school better?

8. What would you do to the school day?

What would you do?	CHOOSE ONE
Start the school day earlier	
Start the school day at the same time as now	
Start the school day later	
OTHER:	

9. What would you do to learning time?

What would you do?	CHOOSE ONE
Keep it the same as it is now	
Only have normal lessons in the morning and then 'choice time' in the afternoon where you can choose what you learn	
Have 45 minutes classroom learning x 5, followed by 15 minutes personal choice time at the end of each lesson	
Have three hours of normal lessons in the morning and then 'hands-on' practical learning in the afternoon	
OTHER:	

10. What would you like to do more of?

GO BACK TO QUESTION 7.

In the chart below, note down the letters of the 3 things you would like to do more in school:

More of	More of	More of

11. What would you like to do less of?

GO BACK TO QUESTION 7.

In the chart below, note down the letters of the 3 things you would like to do less in school:

Less of	Less of	Less of

12. What would you make the school day look like?

I would start school at _____ o'clock in the morning.

I would finish school at _____ o'clock in the afternoon.

You need to fit the following into the blank timetable below:

Break time

Lunch time

You need to think about your own times for each activity and write them onto the timetable.

You need to write down the things you want to learn in each lesson:

Time:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

13. How was your move from primary school to secondary school managed?



14. Do you think there should be special centres for Gypsies and Travellers to learn together from the age of 11 - 19?

YES / NO

15. What would help Gypsies / Travellers get better results at school?

If I were the Education Minister For Wales - (Parent / adult)
Questionnaire (C) MALE / FEMALE

Opinion current schooling:

1. What do you think of your child's school?



2. What did you think of your child's teachers?



3. How well does the school make you feel welcome as a Gypsy / Traveller?



4. How well does the school deal with any name-calling or bullying?



5. How well do the teachers understand your needs as a Gypsy / Traveller?



Basic skills / personal development:

6. How good is the school at getting your child to improve their reading, writing and Maths skills?



7. What do you think are the most important things to learn at school?

Thing to learn	TICK	1-5	Thing to learn	TICK	1-5
A How to read			K History and Geography		
B How to spell and write			L How to build good relationships		
C Science			M Sport and exercise		
D How to use basic sums (Maths)			N How to make things from scratch		
E How to use computers and email			O How to fix and mend things when they are broken		
F How to cook			P Welsh		
G Romani / other Gypsy languages			Q How to get a job and manage money		
H Art and Design			R About Gypsy / Traveller history and life		
I How to sing and make music			S A trade / on the job training		
J Practical skills			T OTHER: _____		

Tick all the things in the list above that you think are the most important (no more 8 things)

Look at the things you have ticked - now rank your TOP FIVE (1-5) by writing the numbers 1-5 next to the most important things: 1 is the top (really important) and 5 is the bottom (not so important)

How would you make your school better?

8. What would you do to the school day?

What would you do?	CHOOSE ONE
Start the school day earlier	
Start the school day at the same time as now	
Start the school day later	
OTHER:	

9. What would you do to your child’s learning time?

What would you do?	CHOOSE ONE
Keep it the same as it is now	
Only have normal lessons in the morning and then ‘choice time’ in the afternoon where you can choose what you learn	
Have 45 minutes classroom learning x 5, followed by 15 minutes personal choice time at the end of each lesson	
Have three hours of normal lessons in the morning and then ‘hands-on’ practical learning in the afternoon	
OTHER:	

10. What would you like to see more of?

GO BACK TO QUESTION 7.

In the chart below, note down the letters of the 3 things you would like to do more in school:

More of	More of	More of

11. What would you like to see less of?

GO BACK TO QUESTION 7.

In the chart below, note down the letters of the 3 things you would like to do less in school:

Less of	Less of	Less of

12. What would you make the school day look like for your child?

I would start the school day at _____ o'clock in the morning.
I would finish the school day at _____ o'clock in the afternoon.

You need to fit the following into the blank timetable below:

Break time
Lunch time

You need to think about your own times for each activity and write them onto the timetable.

You need to write down the things you want to learn in each lesson:

Time:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

13. How was your child's move from primary school to secondary school managed?



14. Do you think there should be special centres for Gypsies and Travellers to learn together from the age of 11 - 19?

YES / NO

15. What would help Gypsies / Travellers get better results at school?

16. What are the biggest barriers to stopping Gypsies / Travellers doing well at school?

9B - EXAMPLE OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST MADE

To whom it may concern,

This is an official freedom of information request.

Please pass it to the relevant FOI officer within your organisation.

My organisation would like the following information / data:

- a) How much money has the local authority assigned for specific work with children from the Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities (grant, staff, materials, facilities, educational courses) in 2010-11 / 2011-12 / 2012-13 / 2013-14 / 2014-15 / 2015-16?
- b) What is the school attendance percentage for children from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities of primary-school-age in 2010-11 / 2011-12 / 2012-13 / 2013-14 / 2014-15?
- c) What is the school attendance percentage for children from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities of secondary-school-age in 2010-11 / 2011-12 / 2012-13 / 2013-14 / 2014-15?
- d) How many children from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities of secondary-school-age were permanently-excluded from their school in 2010-11 / 2011-12 / 2012-13 / 2013-14 / 2014-15?
- e) How many children from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities of primary-school-age were permanently-excluded from their school in 2010-11 / 2011-12 / 2012-13 / 2013-14 / 2014-15?
- f) How many children from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities of primary-school-age were dual-registered or on roll in a local authority PRU or special school in 2010-11 / 2011-12 / 2012-13 / 2013-14 / 2014-15?
- g) How many children from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities of secondary-school-age were dual-registered or on roll in a local authority PRU or special school in 2010-11 / 2011-12 / 2012-13 / 2013-14 / 2014-15?

I look forward to receiving this information in a timely fashion,

Yours sincerely,

Isaac Blake

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