SUBMISSION FROM GRAMPIAN REGIONAL EQUALITY COUNCIL

Where Gypsy/Travellers Live

Undertaken at Clinterty Traveller Site by GREC’s Gypsy/Traveller Health Engagement Worker, May-July 2012

1. What is it like finding somewhere to stay?
6 out of 7 said that it was difficult; they felt unsafe and kept being moved on. Only 1 said that it was not bad.

2. Are sites in the right parts of Scotland, or in the right parts of towns?
3 out of 7 said they were fine, the next 3 thought that they were too isolated, said that they were hidden away like wild animals.

3. What happens to your pitch or house when you spend some time travelling?
4 out of 7 said that it was fine, 1 had no comment, 1 said that a letter would be sent if you were away for too long and 1 said that it could be broken into.

4. What is your site like to live on?
4 said that it was okay, 2 said that it was peaceful but dirty and 1 had no comment.

5. What do you think makes a good site?
2 said ‘a good warden’, 1 of those 2 also mentioned having pitches fenced in and repairs done quickly, 1 said ‘people keeping things clean’ and 1 said ‘friendly people on site’ and 2 said ‘safe environment for kids, activities, walks and home schooling’.

6. How is the site you live on managed, does it have a site manager or private landlord?
All said ‘site manager’.

7. What happens if you want to report any problem on the site?
All said ‘tell the site manager’.

8. What happens when you need to see a doctor or a dentist?
All said they just go, they drive or relatives take them.

9. How easy or hard is it for children to get into and go to school?
4 said ‘easy enough’, 1 said ‘the school bus comes to the site’, 1 said ‘quite hard’ and another did not know as she never tried.
**Where Gypsy/Travellers Live**

Undertaken at various Gypsy/Traveller encampments in the Aberdeenshire area

A more informal consultation was undertaken in Aberdeenshire as part of the on-going health engagement project which has involved visiting Gypsies and Travellers at encampments across the area, discussion of various health topics and engagement with an arts focus. This is a multi-agency project between GREC, NHS, Peacock Visual Arts, and Aberdeenshire Council. As part of the project 7 Scottish Travellers and 3 Romany Gypsies were interviewed around the issues raised in the consultation.

In terms of finding somewhere to stay the consensus was that it was very difficult and becoming increasingly difficult. Issues cited were those such as councils and other landowners blocking off access to sites, lack of space on sites, long waiting lists to get on official sites, and other difficulties with sites. The issue of lack of sites and location seemed to be pertinent for those travelling in Aberdeenshire. Clinterty Site (council-run site in Aberdeen City) was cited by 3 participants as not being an appropriate site or location.

Most of those that were involved did not stay on a permanent site. Of those who did stay on sites in the past a number of problems were raised. One couple had had many difficulties at their previous site where the site manager had seemingly abused his power and made life extremely difficult for the family when he decided that he wanted them off of the site. One issue often raised by participants was the need for strong management of sites, and two participants mentioned that this shouldn’t be someone from within the Travelling communities as this leads to bias and lack of fairness. The issue of territoriality was raised several times with regards to sites, i.e. sites that start off well but that soon become seen as “belonging” to one group or family.

The issue of accessing services was pertinent to those involved in the interviews as none were staying on official sites and were generally staying by the side of the road, in a car park, field or old road. Most participants said that they were registered with a GP wherever families were based for most of the year. All participants said it could be difficult to see a GP whilst travelling, though these difficulties did not seem to be a particular problem in Aberdeenshire. Difficulties cited were not having a permanent address and attitudes of health professionals.

The issue of schooling was relevant to three participants. One said that they had a tutor when they stayed on one site in the Highlands, but that other than this her children had not had any formal teaching because the family were constantly on the road. Another mother was very interested in her children getting tutoring at the encampment, but did not put the children into school whilst travelling, again because
of the frequency of moving on. One further participant said that their children were in school for the majority of the year when the family was at their more permanent base in England, but did not access schools when away from there, instead opting to teach from home.

**GREC and Interagency work done in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City—October 2010 to present**

*Education*

The work of the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Worker (GLTW) role at Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) includes close work with Aberdeenshire Council services. One such service is education and particularly close work with the Additional Supports Needs Project Officer. So far this work has involved setting up lines of communication between the GTLW and education services. This was done by establishing a clear written procedure for education-related communications before and after the GTLW makes an encampment visit. For example, the GLTW phones the local school before visiting an encampment to make them aware that there is a possibility of new pupils enrolling and to check if there are spaces available. After visiting the encampment the GTLW forwards the needs assessment on to relevant education staff which includes how many children are on the site and if they are accessing education.

It has recently been agreed that the GTLW should be the Named Person (relating to GIRFEC) for Gypsy/Traveller children staying on unauthorised encampment. This came about through an Aberdeenshire Council Strategic Development Officer (Education, Learning & Leisure) coming along to a meeting of Aberdeenshire Council’s Gypsy/Traveller Officer’s Group (which includes council officers from environmental health, education, housing, social work, and corporate equalities, as well as other partners such as GREC, NHS, and Grampian Housing Association) to discuss the departments desire to find someone to fulfil this responsibility. After discussion within the group it was decided that the GTLW role would be suitable and a further meeting was set up.

A meeting was recently held at Clinterty Community Centre with residents as well as the GTLW, Article 12, NHS (Aberdeen City) public health staff and education officials from Aberdeenshire Council. Although the Clinterty site is in Aberdeen City the children on the site tend to go to schools in Aberdeenshire. The meeting centred around asking residents what they would like to see happen with the community centre on the site. Residents expressed an interest in seeing some kind of secondary education provided for older children (parents on the site tend not to want their children to attend secondary school, for a variety of reasons). Those agencies present will continue to work together (and with the residents on the site), to see what can be developed. The community centre also offers significant opportunities
for engagement work and the possibility of setting up a residents group that may be willing to engage with the wider public by sending representatives to public meetings.

Health

Much in the same way as with education, the GTLW has met with members of public health teams in the NHS in Aberdeenshire and agreed a clear and written procedure for the encampment visits. The main aim is to link up the GTLW role with that of health visitors. On visiting a site where there are children under 12 staying the GTLW will tell the Gypsy/Traveller family that there will be a health visitor coming out to visit. Unless there are objections the GTLW will then contact the local health visitor team, informing them of the location of the encampment and any relevant issues. When a health visitor visits the encampment they should ask the family if they have Handheld Health Records and if not then offer these to the family. The GTLW is then to inform the local HV team again when the family moves on; this allows any relevant issues to be passed on if it is known where the family has moved on to. In cases where there are no children on the site the GTLW will ask the family about the Handheld Health Records.

A small working group has been set up with the a public health coordinator from Aberdeenshire North (with a remit for Gypsy/Travellers in Aberdeenshire), a member of NHS Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, and the GTLW. Initially this group discussed ways in which a more positive approach could be taken to engage Gypsy/Travellers with wider health issues (such as preventative health). An initial pilot event was organised (with the assistance of a member of the Travelling community) and this took place in late summer 2011. The team worked with a member of Community Learning and Development who provided a van (equipped for community engagement) for the event at the Greenbanks Site in Banff. Various methods of engagement were used – a Wii Fit for the children to use and a healthy barbecue – and some health officials were present who spoke to Gypsy/Travellers about health issues such as healthy eating. Some health checks were also undertaken. The informal format of the event made a success and it was therefore decided to use the pilot a basis for a 3-month health engagement project in 2012. This will involve similar partners working together and taking the project to unauthorised encampments around Aberdeenshire on a weekly basis over the period, as well as including Peacock Visual Arts to undertake engagement around photography and film that will allow improved engagement with families (especially children) and also a way of documenting the project that will allow something of the community to be shared with the wider community and therefore serve as a means of opening dialogue and breaking down barriers.

Dialogue Day

In January 2011 GREC was asked to organise and facilitate an event to improve relations and progress areas relating to Gypsy/Travellers in the Grampian area.
A steering group was set up to plan the organisation and format of the event. The group brought together council officers from Grampian's three local authorities, members of Grampian Police, members of GREC, and the clerk to the Grampian Joint Police Board.

From the start of the planning process there was wide agreement that the overarching focus of the event should be to improve relations within the Grampian area. As it became clear that what was being planned was the start of a new approach focussing on participation and dialogue, the following was agreed upon as the aim of the event: *To facilitate a process allowing multiple stakeholders to contribute to a dialogue that enhances cross-community relations.*

The day was a success, with almost 70 delegates attending, including around 20 Gypsy/Travellers.

Participants were asked to put forward topics for discussion and a diverse range of issues were covered. The issues that were raised were education, equalities, unauthorised sites, sites and facilities, policing and legislation, short-term sites, economics and employment, media, health issues, and cultural awareness.

Suggestions were made by participants as to how to progress the issues related to these identified topics. One of the main positives to come out of the day was the way that a diverse range of people came around the table to discuss such issues and attempt to progress them. This model of participation has been identified as a key way in which to progress dialogue in the future and to improve relations among and between communities.

Many of the issues that were raised on the day have already been incorporated into documents such as the Grampian Inter-agency Action Plan (based on the recommendations of the Craigforth report) and the Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Gypsy/Traveller Issues Working Party Strategy. The Dialogue Day re-focussed energies on the content of such strategies and action plans and allowed for the type of multiple stakeholder dialogue that has often been missing from previous attempts to address the relevant issues.

*Consultation*

So far the GLTW has helped undertake a number of consultations. Planned in conjunction with council officers in environmental health, housing, and planning, one such consultation has involved asking Gypsy/Travellers staying on unauthorised encampments about potential short stay sites (there location and possible facilities). Another such consultation was undertaken on behalf of the housing departments in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Council and the Ethnic Minority Forum. Across City and Shire 80 responses were collected to feed into the Local Housing Strategy. The nature of GREC (a charity) allows work to be done with volunteers. Much effective work has been done with the help of a member of the Gypsy/Traveller community which significantly helped in breaking down barriers and reaching people that normally couldn't be reached. The GTLW is currently recruiting a small team of volunteers to help take forward the project at Clinterty Community Centre.
New project in Aberdeen City

The short term goal of the new Gypsy Traveller Health Engagement Worker's project is to engage and interact with Gypsy/Travellers at Clinterty Travellers Site and develop an understanding of the health needs of the residents there.

By the end of the first year of this project it is hoped that the community will feel empowered with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed choices regarding their holistic health and to help address any identified gaps in health needs.

Project Objectives:

- Regular engagement activities held at the Clinterty Community Centre with Gypsy/Traveller communities starting on May 1st.

- Engagement with Gypsy/Travellers staying on encampments in Aberdeen City.

- A health needs assessment produced based on the engagement with Gypsy/Travellers outlined above.

- Undertaking Confidence to Cook training so that cooking sessions can be offered.

- Work with health professionals alongside Gypsy/Traveller volunteers to foster awareness of these communities.

- Assist other professionals in their outreach to this community, enabling more efficient and effective transfer of information and services.

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