



The Traveller Movement

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Traveller Movement note on challenges and opportunities for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in education, skills training and employment

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Introduction

In the last 50 years traditional Gypsy, Roma and Traveller work practices and culture have been under extreme pressure and seen significant change, in many cases having a negative impact on the education, skills and employment opportunities open to GRT young people. At the same time in recent years significant opportunities for improving skills and employment prospects have arisen, influenced by a tradition of self employment and entrepreneurship amongst GRT, greater educational participation, more GRT women entering work and the development of third sector agencies working with these communities. This note summarises the challenges and opportunities and follows with some brief recommendations.

Challenges

- Dramatic decline in Gypsies and Travellers traditional work areas in last 50 years due to mechanization of agriculture, cheap labour etc (TM research found 50 per cent decline of community members working in traditional practices over the space of just one generation.)¹
- High levels of discrimination and racism experienced by these communities both historically and in present day settings such as schools, local communities and businesses, media, politics etc.
- Over representation in the criminal justice system with 5% or 1 in 20 inmates in prisons in England and Wales identifying as Gypsy, Romany or Traveller.²
- Chronic shortage of Travellers sites nationwide with approximately 20 per cent of Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans stationed on unauthorised sites and legally classified as homeless.³
- Gypsies, Roma and Travellers historically have low engagement with formal education and education institutions are all too often unaware of these groups, their culture and how to engage with them

¹ Traveller Movement, 2011, *Roads to Success: Economic and Social Inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers*, Executive summary, p ii

http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/images/roads_to_success.pdf

² HM Inspectorate of Prisons, March 2014, *People in prison: Gypsies, Romany and Travellers*

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmiprobation/joint-thematic/gypsies-romany-travellers-findings.pdf>

³ DCLG caravan count 2013

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257022/Traveller_Caravan_Count_release_-_July_2013_2_.pdf

Opportunities

- There is an increasing emphasis on the importance of participation and achievement in formal education within the communities. (TM research found that in 2011 Gypsies and Travellers were nearly 7 times more likely to have experienced formal education when compared with their parents.)⁴
- There is a strong tradition of self employment and entrepreneurship within the communities
- There are now more Gypsy and Traveller women entering education, training and employment than ever before.
- There are significant opportunities for community members through GRT third sector training initiatives like the TM and Construction Youth Trust GRT youth construction course. For 16-24 year olds, the course involved six whole sessions resulting in participants completing a test to enable them to get a CSCS card⁵ and gaining vital experience and future opportunities in a variety of trades.
- There are also key internship opportunities through third sector initiatives such as TM's Community Internship Scheme, which since 2010 has a proven track of providing community members with gainful employment and skills training.

Recommendations

Schools and early education

- Need for greater advocacy and training for GRT parents to support them to more effectively engage and develop relationships with schools, to understand their rights and responsibilities ensuring their children see their right to an education fulfilled.

Peer Support Networks

- Establish a GRT Graduate Support Network to guide and promote the increased numbers of community members pursuing further education and careers in the professions. Should also establish a GRT Business and Trades Support Network to guide and promote greater numbers of community members establishing business and better understanding existing legislation.

Skills, internship and employment opportunities through the third sector and policy development

- The Government should reinstate targeted provision for focused schemes with a proven financial return on investment. This would enable effective training and internship initiatives to be led by trusted third sector GRT organisations.
- In line with Commitment 27 in the 2012 MWG progress report, the DWP should establish a joint working group with the Department for Education and BIS to address the root causes and bring forward policy solutions to the inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers in employment, education, skills training, access to benefits etc.

⁴Traveller Movement, 2011, *Roads to Success: Economic and Social Inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers*, Executive summary, p ii

http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/images/roads_to_success.pdf

⁵ Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) This is the recognized construction industry recognized card the provides the holder access to work on construction sites, and it emphasizes all aspects of construction site safety and well being.