



Call for Priorities for Children, Young People and Education Committee: Response from Travelling Ahead September 2016

Travelling Ahead is a Wales-wide project working with young Gypsies, Roma and Travellers to support their voices and promote their rights and participation. Please see www.travellingahead.org.uk for more information. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Children, Young People and Education Committee about their future priorities.

Q1 What do you consider to be the priorities or issues that the CYPE Committee should consider during the Fifth Assembly?

1.1 Travelling Ahead believe that the CYPE Committee should consider the Committee on the Rights of the Child's Concluding Observations 2016 pertaining to the rights of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children alongside recommendations from young people themselves (referred to in the below mentioned reports) and review the extent to which the Welsh Government and other public bodies and organisations are monitoring and implementing these rights to improve outcomes for young Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

1.2 Children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities around Wales have raised some consistent issues with Travelling Ahead over our six years of operation. The need for **secure accommodation** with access to decent services and facilities along with the need to **tackle discriminatory attitudes** and actions in the media and amongst professionals and the wider community have remained of huge importance.

1.3 Gypsy and Traveller children from Wales were involved in developing a report¹ for the Committee on the Rights of the Child which was considered by the CRC Committee in Geneva this year. The areas of discrimination and accommodation affecting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children were in particular highlighted and recommendations made to the governments of the United Kingdom through the CRC Committee's Concluding Observations²

1.4 The third issue which remains of real significance to the young people we work with is that of **education** and we would like to draw the CYPE Committee's attention to the following points:

¹ I Witness http://www.article12.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IWitness2015theUNCRCintheUK_YoungGypsyTravellersVoices.pdf

² Concluding Observations to the UK2016 <http://www.travellingahead.org.uk/news/united-nations-committee-report-uk-record-childrens-rights/>



1.5 Children and young people from Gypsy and Traveller families continue to have the lowest attendance and attainment rates of all pupils in Wales³; there is a strong correlation between the two factors.⁴

Travelling Ahead notes that in those areas where there is positive engagement, good practice and bespoke approaches embedded in education support services these statistics are reversed and outcomes are dramatically different

1.6 In our **Young People's Report on Good Practice in Education**⁵ young people told us that many experience a lack of understanding of their culture from their schools and teaching staff; an inappropriateness and inflexibility of the curriculum and negative experiences such as bullying - all of which can lead to a lack of confidence with and low engagement in the education system as it stands at the moment. The young people's recommendations are:

- Teachers in school need to try and understand our culture. They should have training on understanding Gypsies and Travellers to help us achieve our best.
- Supply teachers need to be made aware of us as Gypsies and Travellers and understand our learning needs.
- Make sure we have access to up-to-date equipment and access to computers and the internet if we don't have it at home to help with our homework.
- Access to more hands on courses, like building and Hair and Beauty, and not just academic courses.
- Assessments on each individual to see what level they are at to help them get back into education if they're not in school. This would also work for those in school too.
- Better support and guidance when we move up from primary school to secondary school to help make the transition easier and less scary.
- We must be consulted and asked our opinion on any changes to our education or where we learn.
- If we are being bullied or experiencing/have experienced a hate crime, there must be a teacher or adult we can go to who we can talk to and who can help us report things if we need to.
- Extra funding put in place to create and/or develop specialist support for us in school or for trained tutors to help us learn if we want home tutoring.
- Find a way to build relationships between our families and schools to break down barriers and increase our participation.
- We should have an equal chance to learn and get an education like those from the settled community.
- Schools should make sure they listen to our voice to make sure we are happy in school and to make sure we attend regularly and help us if we have problems.
- There should be a tailored curriculum for Gypsy and Traveller pupils which are flexible for our needs.

³ Welsh Government, (2014) 'Academic achievement by pupil characteristics, 2013,' SB 29/2014, Statistical Bulletin, 27 March, Cardiff: National Statistics

⁴ Welsh Government, (2014) 'Academic achievement by pupil characteristics, 2013,' SB 29/2014, Statistical Bulletin, 27 March, Cardiff: National Statistics

⁵ <http://www.travellingahead.org.uk/projects/education/>



Q2 What do you consider to be the key areas that should be considered during 2016 to 2017?

2.1 Travelling Ahead considers that education as identified by the young people we work with to be the key area for immediate consideration. We recommend the Committee focus on the following:

- **Scrutinise the impact of the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) on the educational achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils**
 - **Scrutinise the use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) to target and improve outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Learners**
 - **Review the effectiveness of the guidance and outcomes framework available to schools and education services on supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.**
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2.2 Scrutinise the impact of the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) on the educational achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

2.2.a We remain concerned that the Welsh Government's decision in 2015 to remove the previous per-pupil ring-fenced Gypsy and Traveller Education Grant and its incorporation into the new EIG was undertaken without formal consultation process with relevant persons, against representation from experts in the field, and without informed and adequate Children's Rights Impact (CRIA) and Equality Impact Assessments (as required by the Rights of Children and Young Persons Measure 2011 and the Equality Act 2010).

2.2.b Welsh Government stated that *"The grant for the education of Traveller's children and the minority ethnic achievement grant will merge together and then into the larger grant for school improvement. There will be a decrease to the overall quantum of funding in this area; this could reduce the positive impact on the protected characteristic of race and those below 16..."*⁶

2.2.c The Integrated Impact Assessment and CRIA that were published **after** the decision was taken went on to state that *"Gypsies and Travellers are recognised ethnic groups and depending on the priorities of local authorities there is the potential for a negative impact on the race strand. However, the impact should be negligible as these learners should continue to be supported through the new grant arrangements."*⁷

Neither document identified any actions or strategies to mitigate against the potential for negative impact on probably the most vulnerable group of pupils in education in Wales

⁶ Page 20 Section 9:4 Draft Budget 2015-16 Welsh Government

⁷ page 9 - 150519-incorporation-of-the-specific-grant-for-the-education-of-gypsy-and-traveller-children-in-the-education-improvement-grant-2015-16-en)



2.2.d Since that time there would appear to be no transparent process for monitoring the '*priorities of local authorities*' and ensuring that this change of funding arrangement leads to improvements in educational support and resources for Gypsy and Traveller pupils.

2.2.e The lack of a specific grant also means that there is now a **lack of monitoring** in terms of data i.e. numbers of pupils accessing education.⁸ Research carried out by an independent expert⁹ has found that whilst front-line services have been protected in education, as per Welsh Government commitments, the year-on-year reductions to the amount of funding available to provide bespoke and flexible support to Gypsy and Traveller pupils has in fact been cut with the majority of the EIG now going to schools rather than specialist services - without ring-fencing it's now harder to protect these valuable services that were previously supported under the bespoke grant.

2.3 Scrutinise the use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) to target and improve outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Learners.

2.3.a The Welsh Government has also said that the PDG would mitigate against some of the negative impacts of the changes in funding, yet Travelling Ahead, and others, remain concerned that there is no direct link between the PDG and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (in part due reluctance to self-identify; poor ethnic monitoring and the inadequacies of the PLASC system which underestimate the number of GRT children in school by as much as 1200 pupils¹⁰) and it is recognised that many of the barriers to education are cultural and systemic rather than only about poverty. We have no evidence that any of the evaluations of the PDG note any specific initiatives to support Gypsy and Travellers pupils.

2.3.b In particular those children who are not attending school (not on school roll) that need support to engage positively with education will not be eligible (or countable) or benefit, from **either initiatives** under the PDG or indeed the EIG.

⁸ In addition to PLASC figures, LAs supply data on the number of Gypsy and Traveller pupils in their area when applying for the Gypsy and Traveller education grant. The numbers provided for the grant consistently far exceed those reported in PLASC. This higher number is perceived to be a combination of TES staff having better intelligence about the communities they support and the reluctance of some parents to disclose their ethnicity on official documentation. This affects the capacity to monitor ethnic groups robustly (Padfield, 2005; Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008).

⁹ J Brentall as presented to the Budgetary Advisory Group on Equalities (BAGE) 2016 – available on request

¹⁰ 2.7. In addition to PLASC figures, LAs supply data on the number of Gypsy and Traveller pupils in their area when applying for the Gypsy and Traveller education grant. The numbers provided for the grant consistently far exceed those reported in PLASC. (Page 11 2:7 <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/21443/1/141125-gypsy-traveller-education-engaging-families-en.pdf>)



2.4 Review the effectiveness of the guidance and outcomes framework available to schools and education services on supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

2.4.a Welsh Government Guidance 'Moving Forward' was published in 2008 and is now dated and inconsistent with current inclusion thinking – consequently schools have been, and remain, reluctant to now follow some of its guidelines despite the proven effectiveness of provisions such as flexible curriculum or part-time attendance if appropriate.

2.4.b Business Plans developed by each regional education consortium we understood from Welsh Government officials were to have developed 'clear outcome measures to support Gypsy and Traveller learners'; however a desk top review of the current business plans for all four consortia shows no specific mention of any outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.

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