



# Gypsy, Romany & Traveller Education

The 2008 review of the impact of  
recommendations by the  
Central Services Policy Development Group in 2004  
and  
Executive & Audit Committee in 2007

**September 2008**





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## **Preface**

This report covers work carried out during July to September 2008 by a Scrutiny Task & Finish Group, looking at the implementation and impact of two previous scrutiny reviews of the access to education by Gypsy, Romany & Traveller Children. It forms part of a larger review of the work of the previous Policy & Development Groups.

The report will be sent to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education, and also to the relevant Head of Service. As outlined in pages 3 & 4, each new recommendation has an implementation review date attached to it. The Children & Young People's Policy & Scrutiny Committee looks forward to receiving a response by those dates.

It is most pleasing to note that both of the previous reviews have helped improve the education support provided to GRT children and their families. I am sure that all Members of the Scrutiny Board will join with me in commending staff within the Traveller Education Service for the continued commitment and dedication towards ensuring that these improvements continue.



Hopefully this report demonstrates the determination of the Scrutiny Board to both recognise the good work of the previous Policy & Development Groups and to ensure that appropriate action is taken to implement their recommendations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Twitchen." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kay Twitchen OBE,  
Chairman,  
Essex County Council  
Scrutiny Board

## Glossary of terminology

C&YP	Children & Young People
CYP PSC	Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Committee - <i>see PSC below</i>
DC	District Council
DCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families
ECC	Essex County Council
EWS	Education Welfare Service
GRT	Gypsy , Romany & Travellers
HOSC	Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee
LAs	Local Authorities
LEA	Local Education Authority
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PDG	Policy Development Group - predecessors to the PSCs
PSC	Policy & Scrutiny Committees - <i>for further information please see the Scrutiny Board publication 'Essex County Council Policy &amp; Scrutiny Committees -an explanation of how they operate'</i>
RRA	Race Relations Act
SAIS	Standards And Improvements Service
SENaPs	Special Educational Needs and Psychology Service ( <i>now SEN-CAN Special Educational Needs and Children with Additional Needs</i> )
SDA	School Development Advisor ( <i>no longer in existence replaced by School Improvement Partner SIP</i> )
TASCCs	Teams Around Schools & Children's Centres
TES	Travellers Education Service
TFG	Task & Finish Group - short term working group established by either the Scrutiny Board, PSC or HOSC
UPN	Unique Pupil Number
YOTS	Youth Offending Teams

## Summary

This report details the review of recommendations arising from the scrutiny exercise carried out by the previous General Scrutiny Committee during 2004 into access to education for Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) Children, and the review of those recommendations in 2007. It forms part of a formal review process established by the County Council's Scrutiny Board to monitor the implementation and impact of previous scrutiny reviews.

The main section of the report details the approach taken during both the 2004 and 2007 reviews and examines the impact of each recommendation. Supporting evidence gathered as part of the 2007 review is available from Janet Mills either by e-mail from [janet.mills@essex.gov.uk](mailto:janet.mills@essex.gov.uk) or telephone 01245 430565.

Details of the Members of the Task & Finish Group who undertook this review can be found on page 6 of this report. They concluded that there have been significant improvements to the provision of educational support to GRT children.

The Group was satisfied that, at the least, the two scrutiny reviews highlighted the educational needs of GRT children and helped ensure improvement measures were put in place. It also concluded that both the 2004 & 2007 reviews were examples of substantial scrutiny of an important public service and that the 2007 review demonstrated the importance of monitoring scrutiny recommendations.

In reaching their conclusions Members of the Task & Finish Group came to a number of findings and established five additional recommendations. They have been consolidated into the table below.

Findings	Recommendations
<p><b>Finding 1 (see page 20 )</b>                      The 2004 &amp; 2007 reviews were examples of substantial scrutiny of an important public service and subsequent monitoring of the original recommendations.                      Whilst it is difficult to establish whether some of the resultant improvements may have been achieved as a result of other local and national initiatives, the two scrutiny reviews highlighted the educational needs of GRT children and helped ensure improvement measures were put in place.</p>	
<p><b>Finding 2 (see page 21 )</b>                      The current staffing difficulties within the TES service is a matter of concern and may detract from the continued improvement in GRT provision recommended in both the 2004 and 2007 scrutiny reviews.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 1 (see page 21 )</b>                      Staff within the Travellers Education Service should be commended for their dedication and initiatives to improve education provision for GRT children.  <b>Implementation Review Date: October 2008</b>  <b>Impact Review Date: Not required</b>  <b>Owner: Executive Director for Schools Children &amp; Families Services</b></p>

Continued ...

Findings	Recommendations
	<p><b>Recommendation 2 (see page 21 )</b>                      That the Chairman of the Task &amp; Finish Group raise the staffing shortages within the TES with the appropriate officers within the Schools Children &amp; Families Service.  <i>Implementation Review Date: October 2008</i>  <i>Impact Review Date: Not required</i>  <i>Owner: Chairman of the Scrutiny Board</i></p>
<p><b>Finding 3 (see page 21)</b>                      Whilst the current review of administrative posts was important in terms of driving efficiencies such processes should not be so inflexible to detract from service provision, especially within relatively small front line units.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 3 (see page 21 )</b>                      The Scrutiny Board should ask the Central Services Policy &amp; Scrutiny Committee to review the effects of organisational reviews on small services within ECC.  <i>Implementation Review Date: March 2009</i>  <i>Impact Review Date: To be decided by the CYP PSC</i>  <i>Owner: Chairman of the Scrutiny Board</i></p>
<p><b>Finding 4 (see page 22)</b>                      The lack of support from some schools for the TES service should be highlighted in the this report.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 4 (see page 22 )</b>                      The County Council should issue a press release highlighting the improvements in provision of services to GRT children and their families, and urging all schools to co-operate with the TES in delivering further improvements.  <i>Implementation Review Date: October 2008</i>  <i>Impact Review Date: To be decided by the CYP PSC</i>  <i>Owner: Director of Communications</i></p>
	<p><b>Recommendation 5 (see page 22 )</b>                      The Children &amp; Young People's Policy Scrutiny Committee should be asked to consider reviewing access to education for GRT children next year and, in particular to review the outcome of the response to the TES staffing issues.  <i>Implementation Review Date: March 2009</i>  <i>Impact Review Date: To be decided by the CYP PSC</i>  <i>Owner: Chairman of CYP PSC</i></p>

## Introduction

This report outlines the findings and additional recommendations of a Task & Finish Group (TFG) established by the Scrutiny Board to review the impact of a previous scrutiny of Gypsy, Romany & Traveller (GRT) Education. It is part of a suite of reports covering the Group's review of other scrutiny recommendations from the work of the previous Policy Development Groups (PDGs).

A copy of each report can be viewed on the County Council's website (*link to be inserted*) or hard copies can be available from Janet Mills, Committee Officer, tel 01245 430565 e-mail: [janet.mills@essex.gov.uk](mailto:janet.mills@essex.gov.uk).

The membership of the Task and Finish Group was comprised of the Chairmen of the Policy & Scrutiny Committees (PSCs), Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and the Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Executive & Audit Committee. They are listed in the box opposite.

The group above and the four Area Forum Chairmen form the Scrutiny Board which oversees the scrutiny process within Essex County Council.

A list of the TFG's meeting and its minutes can be viewed on the web-site or obtained from Janet Mills as above.

In reading this report it is important to note that the GRT Community is not a single entity but embraces a number of groups that have their own history, culture and needs. Previous reports have at times referred to Gypsy/Traveller children but to maintain consistency those references have been changed to GRT within this report

## The 2004 Review

In 2004 the former General Scrutiny Committee carried out a review that took a fresh look at the way that GRT children access the education system in Essex.

In developing the focus of this scrutiny review the Committee avoided duplicating earlier reviews undertaken by the County Council into GRT issues. It also sought to identify an area where it could develop a better understanding of what is occurring in practice and ultimately to contribute to greater

### 2008 Scrutiny Impact Review Reports

- GRT Traveller Education
- Highway Fault Reporting
- Quality Care
- Diabetes
- Summary of lessons learnt from the review process

### Membership of the TFG

- County Councillor Kay Twitchen OBE, Chairman of the Children & Young Peoples PSC and chairman of the Scrutiny Board, who chaired the Task & Finish Group
- County Councillor John Aldridge, Chairman of the Environment & Economic Development PSC
- County Councillor Phil Baker, Chairman of the Central Services and Safer & Stronger Communities PSCs
- County Councillor Susan Barker, Chairman of the HOSC
- County Councillor Bill Dick, Chairman of the Community Wellbeing & Older People PSC
- County Councillor Paul Kirkman, Chairman of the Executive & Audit Committee
- County Councillor Tom Smith-Hughes, Vice-chairman of the Executive & Audit Committee

**'Recent research shows that the public hostility to Gypsies and Travellers is unmatched by that shown towards any other community – even asylum seekers and refugees'**

*Commission for Racial Equality's draft strategy on Gypsies and Travellers (2003)*

social inclusion for this minority ethnic group within the community.

This review took a fresh look at the way GRT children are able to access the education system in Essex, which is reflected in the way that it identified the issues to be explored.

Rather than being a formal snapshot of the services available to the pupils, it was intended that the review should raise awareness about those issues that needed to be addressed if access to education is to be improved for the children, to suggest ways of facilitating more successful continuity in secondary education, and to raise levels of educational attainment.

There was an expectation that, by understanding what is happening to these children and their early experiences in life through their contact with schooling, the review would:

- cause people to ponder upon the real issues that those children may face
- foster more positive attitudes and effective action in the education of travelling and other disadvantaged children.

The terms of reference that guided the review are detailed in the box above.

## **How the Scrutiny Review was undertaken**

The Committee decided against simply inviting the Council's own Service Groups to present a case for Councillors to cross examine and draw some conclusions from. At the outset it was recognised that this would be a difficult subject to tackle and that it was necessary for the Committee to challenge what is happening in practice

It therefore chose to adopt an alternative approach to the review whereby its Members identified the issues to be addressed by actually gathering their own evidence by speaking to teachers and GRT parents, before seeking the views of the Council's own Education Services.

This enabled the review to be approached from the experience of families and schools, and the impact of policies and procedures upon individuals rather than the effectiveness of the administrative systems themselves. In doing so it reflected one of the important objectives for scrutiny established by the Centre for Public Scrutiny i.e. to reflect the voice of service users.

During their investigation Councillors were faced with contradictions between what

### **Terms of Reference**

'In carrying out this review the Committee will explore the existing provision and facilities available both to Gypsy, Romany & Traveller (GRT) children and schools, how to encourage increased levels of school attendance, as well as contributing to more positive attitudes across both the GRT community and the population at large to the positive inclusion of all children in schools.'



is supposed to happen in theory and what may be happening in practice, and how legislation and formal procedures actually impact upon some sections of our society.

The first stage of the review was to tackle the need for Councillors to become more familiar with some of the issues that underpin access to education for GRT children. To achieve this the Committee took part in two seminars.

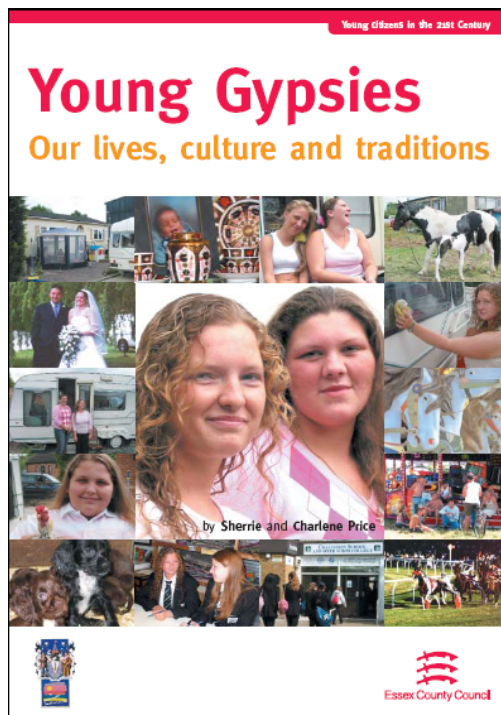
The first was given by the Essex and Southend Traveller Education Service and provided background information on the services that it provides in Essex, the way that GRT children are able to access the education system, a child's educational needs, and some of the statistics were reproduced in the original full report.

The second seminar focussed upon diversity and equality issues, and the Council's own statutory responsibilities within those areas. It provided Councillors with an opportunity to take an impartial look at some of the sensitive cultural issues including prejudice and practical obstacles to the way that GRT children may be engaged in schools, before actually visiting schools and families.

The seminars were designed to provide Councillors with the background that they would need as the review developed. The general questions that the seminars sought to address were:

1. What are Council's responsibilities towards minority ethnic groups like the GRT communities?
2. Are there moral issues such as prejudice that Councillors must address in order to take forward a review that focuses upon a minority ethnic group?
3. What are the cultural issues linked to access to the education system?
4. What are the educational issues surrounding GRT children?

The next stage of the review involved the Committee going out into the community in order to visit schools and GRT sites, and to challenge the status quo. As part of a scrutiny piece of work this worked well. It enabled Councillors to explore issues based upon their own experience and the information shared with them by the schools and GRT parents and pupils. It also enabled them to discuss first hand with recipients how the Council provides



*The document from which most of the images in this report were drawn*



its services, and to develop ideas as to how in practice those services could be improved.

As the review progressed Ofsted reports provided a very useful source of reference material because they are based upon formal research conducted over a longer period of time than was available to complete this scrutiny review.

Although it had been hoped that the Committee would meet with more witnesses to gather its initial evidence, in practice it was not possible for various reasons including time and resource constraints. Given the potential breadth of the subject, it also became necessary to narrow down the number of issues to be considered in greater depth. Evidence from the visits in fact highlighted the same sorts of issues that ongoing Ofsted reports and research had uncovered, and therefore it was possible to focus its activities.

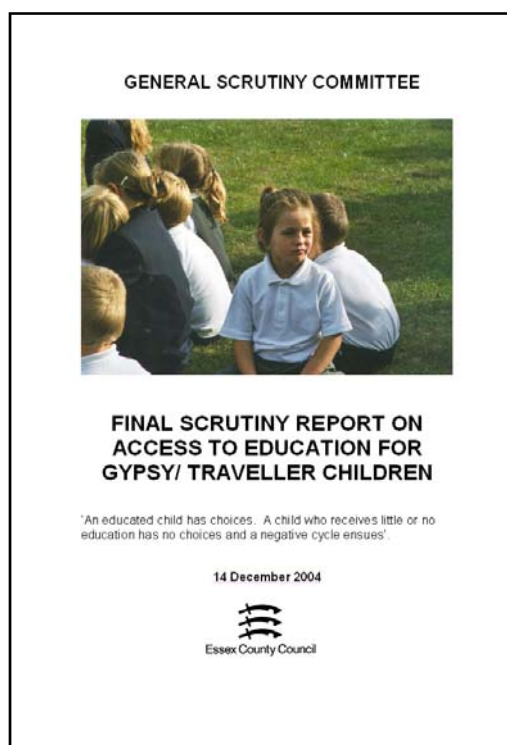
One of the Committee Members also attended a national conference on 9 June 2004 entitled 'Working Together: Raising the Educational Achievement of Gypsy and Traveller Children and Young People', and the papers from the Conference were used to inform the review.

Having gathered some field evidence it was necessary to collate the information and to develop some of the issues by asking further questions of the Local Education Authority in particular, and to feed the information into a draft report in order to seek further clarification from key Education Services upon its content. As many of the LEA services were not involved in the initial stages of the review, it is fair to say that they were faced with a number of challenging questions based upon the information that had been gathered so far.

In view of the approach adopted for the review and the need to represent fairly the views and advice given to the Committee, it was necessary to reflect on how to set out information that was sometimes contradictory in the report. The formal advice and comments from the LEA were set out in boxes so that they may be clearly distinguished. It is acknowledged that there are discrepancies

between some of the information explored in the report. This reflected a problem that the Committee had experienced in conducting the review but it would have been extremely difficult without more in depth investigation to come to satisfactory formal conclusions on all issues. Therefore a number of the recommendations contained in the report proposed that further work should be carried out.

After consultation with the LEA the Committee held a seminar to which a number of people who had contributed to the review were invited to take part in discussions on



its draft findings, and to develop some conclusions based on the evidence gathered. The seminar not only allowed the Committee to seek more clarification on some of the issues but through discussion a number of recommendations emerged.

Following the seminar, revisions were made to the draft scrutiny report and some further consultation was undertaken. A final draft scrutiny report was presented to the General Scrutiny Committee on 14 December.



At the meeting, the Committee learned that the Cabinet Member for Education had recently approved a revised 'Statement of Race Equality and Actions' relating to schools and schools-related services, which reflects the latest legislation and good practice. The Statement included a number of principles around the promotion of equal opportunities and social inclusion, and made specific reference to Gypsies and Travellers. It was notable that a number of issues considered by the Committee were referred to in the statement such as rigorous monitoring and effective follow-up actions. Although it was not possible to scrutinise the new Statement as part of the review due to the timing of its publication, Councillors hoped that this Scrutiny Report would be able to support its implementation.

The Committee believed that the review had been an important initiative for the Council to undertake, and hoped that it would promote positive improvements in the way that children from the GRT children communities, and other minority ethnic groups are engaged within formal education in Essex.

While it was recognised that some of the recommendations would be difficult to achieve, Councillors hoped that this important report did not become yet another document containing empty aspirations for greater social inclusion for GRT children.

#### **Aspirations attached to the original scrutiny report**

While it was recognised that some of the recommendations would be difficult to achieve, Councillors hoped that this important report did not become yet another document containing empty aspirations for greater social inclusion for GRT children.

It was also considered essential for the Council to be able to demonstrate the actual impact from such a scrutiny. Consequently, further consideration was to be given to the way that the report was launched, recommendations forwarded to Cabinet Members and how effective monitoring of those recommendations could be achieved.

In conclusion, the Committee approved the recommendations set out in the next section below. These recommendations were forwarded to the Cabinet Members, with a request that the Committee was kept informed as to what action they proposed to taken in response to their report.

## The impact of the 2004 Review

### Monitoring

The 2004 Review resulted in nineteen individual recommendations. These are repeated in the light shaded boxes within this section of the report together with an explanation of the actions taken to implement them and the impact they have made to the way services are provide to GRT children. Outcomes are shown in bold with additional recommendations made by the Task & Finish Group highlighted in the dark shaded boxes.

Since 2004 the Database held at TES, has been upgraded and is regularly matched with the county UPN (Unique Pupil Number) database to ensure all appropriate pupils are included. EMAS commissions Data Services to provide reports on ethnicity and data services are commissioned by "Lowest 20%" group to provide reports on groups at risk of not accessing education fully.

However, the data is imperfect because parents do not always describe themselves as GRT. Despite this it is still useful as data revealed underperformance at Foundation stage and significantly reduced numbers transferring from Year 6 to Year 7. **In the light of this a project focusing on Year 1 pupils has been instigated and increased levels of support for transition from Year 6 to Year 7.**

Members raised concerns over the incomplete data, and considered it would hinder their ability to make judgements on whether recommendations had been implemented or effective.

**Three particular initiatives have been put in place in response to both the Race Relations Act 2000 and the issues raised during the 2004 review:**

- 1. Training and support materials on Race Equality provided for all schools and taken up by most which has resulted in the overwhelming majority of Essex Schools being deemed by Ofsted to be meeting their responsibilities under the RR(A) Act.**
- 2. Inclusion and provision mapping training offered to all schools with "Supporting Inclusion in Schools" materials distributed to all schools. Consequently many schools used the audit tool contained in this package to identify areas for development and SDAs ensured that all schools were engaging with provision mapping.**
- 3. Community Cohesion training offered to all schools which resulted in 125 schools attending this training, although it is too early to assess the impact of this.**

#### Original recommendation 1

That the current monitoring systems used by the LEA in Essex be reviewed in terms of their ability to target action effectively for instance in terms of minority ethnic groups and social inclusion.

#### Original recommendation 2

That the importance of ethnic monitoring in terms of the Race Relations legislation and in targeting effective action to increase the levels of attainment of different racial groups, be emphasised throughout the educational system and in the way the practices and procedures are undertaken to overcome any barriers identified from an analysis of the data collected.

Following the implementation of recommendation 3, benchmarking data on the performance of Traveller and Gypsy pupils is collected annually for Traveller Education Services in the Eastern Region and analysed.

This is valuable in helping to target action to tackle areas of weakness but the same reservations apply as with recommendation 1 in respect of the quality of the data.

### **Communications with GRT Families**

There were four sets of recommendations in the 2004 report covering issues associated with the way in which public services across Essex communicate with GRT families.

Some of the measures outlined below have been on-going since the enactment of the Race Relations Act 2000. The findings and recommendations of the 2004 Review raised the profile of these and other measures to improve communications with GRT families.

As the TES recognise some of the adult Travellers are non-literate it uses alternative methods of communication, sometimes in conjunction with other services. The TES continues to communicate with families in the course of their everyday work. This is supported through an outreach team and formal surveys of parental views in 2006 & 2007. Partnership working with Gypsy and Traveller Services, has also helped improve communication with residents of County Sites.

**These initiatives have resulted in:**

- **the views of parents been taken into account when planning provision for Traveller pupils.**
- **Parents are also more aware of the systems and procedures regarding, school admissions, transport, attendance and qualifications.**
- **Communication with parents have improved.**
- **Increasing numbers of parents contact TES office and team members direct.**
- **Meetings held with representatives of Dale Farm to discuss entitlement to secondary educations**

#### **Original recommendation 3**

Based upon OFSTED criteria, that the LEA rigorously analyses, on an annual basis, data on the attainment, attendance, exclusions, mobility and admissions of minority ethnic groups, including Gypsies and Travellers, so that co-ordinated action may be taken to tackle areas of weaknesses, and to provide the basis for encouraging consistent improvement.

#### **Original recommendation 4**

That it be acknowledged that Gypsy Traveller families may have special needs in the communication channels used in the formal processes around their children's education, which should not rely on written communication alone but on developing proven communication links.

#### **Original recommendation 5**

That proactive steps be taken by the LEA to encourage the establishment of more effective communication links with GRT families both in terms of service provision for the children, and in fulfilling the Council's duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
- b. Promote equality of opportunity; and
- c. Promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

The recent move to the Standards and Improvements Service (SAIS) has also given the TES a higher profile amongst those responsible for school improvements. Training is made available to a wide range of services, including the Police, Fresh Start, Adult Social Care, PCT, EWS, TASCCs, Fire Service, Basildon D C., Libraries and YOTS.

**This has resulted in other professional partners being better informed about the role of the TES and the importance of:**

- **forming their own positive relationships with GRT families**
- **acting with greater sensitivity to cultural issues.**
- **Developing the involvement with TASCCs**
- **Expanding joint working with other services .**

#### **Original recommendation 6**

That the role and services provided by the Traveller Education Service be clarified and promoted within Essex. However the importance of other LEA services and schools in forming their own positive relationships with parents be emphasised for those bodies to raise the levels of attainment of Gypsy/Traveller pupils in line with OFSTED advice.

#### **Original recommendation 7**

That in reviewing the outcome of any activity taken as a result of this scrutiny review, the LEA be requested to provide evidence that communication links with GRT families are improved.

The outcome from this recommendations is exemplified in the review of recommendation 4 on the previous page i.e. **the views of parents are recorded and analysed.**

### **Access, Awareness & Social Inclusion**

The TES manager is now involved at a more strategic level within Children and Young People's services and attends the following groups:

- Inclusion
- Pupil Support,
- Lowest 20%
- Induction Planning
- School Governance
- Vulnerable Children and Young People ( SENaPS)
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Service

#### **Original recommendation 8**

That GRT issues be incorporated as part of the Council's approach to Social Inclusion, and the benefits of such an approach be promoted.

**As a result of a revision to the Council's strategic approach to Equality Impact Assessment, the needs of GRT children are better understood and taken into account.**

The following developments have been put in place during the period following the original scrutiny review:

- Cultural Issues training days held for a wide range of professional partners twice a term
- Customised training to schools and other services
- Arts project and links with Libraries continue to grow
- Mobile libraries attend most caravan sites.
- Partnership agreement with Connexions

**This is further evidence to support the outcome associated with recommendation 6 showing that professional partners are better informed about the role of TES and the importance of them forming their own relationships with GRT families.**

The Council's race equality scheme is reviewed and updated annually with the 2008 version fully legally compliant.

As a result there is greater awareness within the County Council and the general public of the Authority's commitment to race equality and actions being taken.

The TES has regularly conducted Equality Impact Assessments on its policies, which have been disseminated as examples of good practice across the council. Until 2008, Equality Impact Assessments were implemented in a piecemeal fashion. From 2008 a strategic approach supported by the Authority's Cabinet is being implemented in a rigorous and systematic manner.

**This has resulted in a more equitable delivery of services such as older residents at Dale Farm being in receipt of Social Care provision following training for carers and providers.**

In implementing recommendation 12, the County Council played an important part in responding to Government consultation which led to a review and changes in the legislation in respect of school transport.

**This has resulted in families who are in receipt of benefit having access to transport, where they may not have under previous criteria. This is important because transport to school is a key factor in improving, access, attendance and retention.**

#### **Original recommendation 9**

That consideration be given to the promotion of more positive understanding of the GRT culture and the issues that they face in modern society.

#### **Original recommendation 10**

That in reviewing the outcome of any activity taken as a result of this scrutiny review, the Committee would welcome an update on progress in the implementation of the Council's Race Equality Scheme.

#### **Original recommendation 11**

That the introduction of the new Equality Impact Assessment process as part of service planning is welcomed as part of the Council's approach to ensuring that new and revised policy and practice take into account equality implications, and that in reviewing the outcome of activity relating to this review the LEA be requested to illustrate how the process has operated in practice.

#### **Original recommendation 12**

That the Council lobby the Government for a review of the school transport legislation set out in the Education Act 1996, and its impact upon some disadvantaged children.

Exploratory meetings with an external organisation with a view to resourcing an advocacy service did not come to fruition. In fact very few GRT pupils have been permanently excluded. The data for 2006/07 shows that only 1 GRT pupil was permanently excluded from school and was supported by an officer from the then Pupil Support Service.

### **Original recommendation 13**

That consideration be given to establishing a framework for independent advocates to support GRT pupils through the formal procedures associated with school exclusion.

However the possible advocacy role of the Essex Racial Equality Council is to be explored.

## **Promotion of Good Practice**

Three National Strategy regional advisors have been appointed with a remit for developing examples for Traveller Education Services. The DCSF guidance 'Aiming High' Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils is regarded as a starting point for planning effective provision. This has recently been supplemented by further guidance, 'The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children and Young People'

### **Original recommendation 14**

That the Council lobby the Government for the introduction of a National Statutory Code of Practice on the education of GRT children.

National guidance has been produced. **In July 2008, Essex CC was invited to join the second phase of the National Strategy Project to improve attainment levels of GRT pupils. This will run for two years**

Effective practice in schools is achieved through the strategic deployment of Advisory Teachers and Specialist Support Assistants, who work directly with schools and pupils. Training is also provided for schools on responding to the needs of GRT pupils. Information and resources are posted on the Essex Grid for Learning and the Schoolsinfolink and are regularly updated.

**The impact of this is that Schools are empowered to meet the needs of their GRT pupils and they have easier access to information regarding the education of GRT pupils.**

### **Original recommendation 15**

In the absence of a National Code of Practice, that the County Council promote good practice throughout the educational system in Essex towards raising the levels of attainment of GRT pupils, and ensure that the information is easily accessible e.g. via the website.

*The photograph opposite shows GRT children accessing computer equipment in one of Essex's secondary schools*



Essex TES was involved in a DCFS funded project aimed at addressing a relevant and flexible curriculum at KS 3 and 4, which culminated in materials that help raise awareness and share good practice in secondary schools and which can be used in the Citizenship curriculum.

**As a result of this, all secondary schools will receive a copy of the materials and Exemplar Citizenship lessons are being demonstrated to some secondary schools.**

The promotion of good practice (e.g. through meetings with head teachers, school governing bodies etc) remains an area for development. However, the move to the Standards and Improvement Service (SAIS) will assist this with better access to consultants working across the county. For example, the TES manager has planned input to the Maths Team.

Training is being delivered to other services in Essex and professional colleagues have job shadowed members of the Outreach team when visiting families. Surveys by other organizations have also been assisted by TES introductions. **Consequently, other professional partners are better informed about the role of the TES and the importance of forming their own positive relationships with parents.**

In July 2008, Essex was invited to join the second phase of the National Strategy Project to improve attainment levels of GRT pupils. This will run for two years. Schools involved in the project will have opportunities to share good practice. It is too early to assess the impact of this which will only become apparent as the project proceeds.

The Audit & General Scrutiny Committee reviewed progress with these original December 2004 recommendations in March 2007. The way in which that review was undertaken and the outcomes from it are considered in the next section of this report.

#### **Original recommendation 19**

That the Chairman and Lead Member for the Review consider proposals for the launch this scrutiny report.

#### **Original recommendation 16**

That consideration be given to suggestions made in this report to promote good practice and raising awareness of the needs of GRT pupils within Essex including:

- Promoting good practice through meetings with head teachers, school governing bodies, and between LEA services.
- A programme for job shadowing and exchange visits both between LEA services, and between schools

#### **Original recommendation 17**

That consideration be given as to how schools might be encouraged, with other schools, to share and challenge their experience in raising the levels of attainment GRT children in order to provide benefits not only for the children but the schools themselves.

#### **Original recommendation 18**

That the Committee will review the action that has been taken in response to its recommendations set out above in November 2005, and Cabinet Members will be asked to provide evidence of how those recommendations have been put into practice, or alternatively the reasons why it was not possible to do so.

## **The March 2007 Review**

In January 2006 (Minute 10) the General Scrutiny Committee took on the responsibility for monitoring the outcomes of the original scrutiny report. It set up a Panel comprising Councillors Tony Durcan (the original lead member for the review), Tony Hedley, and Tom Smith-Hughes, to find out what had happened to the Committee's recommendations and to report back its conclusions.

The outcome of this monitoring of the original scrutiny report was published in March 2007

## **How the Scrutiny was undertaken**

### **Analysis**

The Panel approached the monitoring of the Scrutiny Report from two angles. This took account of the original concerns of the former General Scrutiny Committee i.e. the issues being addressed should be considered in terms of what is actually happening in practice.

First of all the Cabinet was consulted on its reaction to the report. Secondly, some of the original people who took part in the review were asked to comment upon any changes that they may have witnessed in practice that were linked to the four themes identified in the Scrutiny Report.

### **Cabinet Response**

A letter was sent to the relevant Cabinet Members seeking feedback on what had been achieved in relation to the recommendations set out in the Scrutiny Report. Councillor Mrs Chapman replied on behalf of the Cabinet and her reply is available by e-mail from [janet.mills@essex.gov.uk](mailto:janet.mills@essex.gov.uk) or by telephone 01245 430565. From a corporate perspective the Cabinet Member's reply set out the systems that were in place to support greater access to education for Gypsy/ Traveller children; and the initiatives being taken to promote an understanding of the issues that need to be addressed with schools and families in order to raise levels of educational attainment.

With reference to the original recommendation 16, the Scrutiny Report contained several suggestions for promoting good practice and raising awareness of the needs of Gypsy/ Traveller pupils within Essex. This was an area where the Cabinet Member acknowledged that development was outstanding.



**County Councillor  
Tony Durcan**



**County Councillor  
Tony Hedley**



**County Councillor  
Tom Smith-Hughes**

## Schools

Replies were received from three of the four schools that took part in the original review. The main points that emerged at that time were:

- Information was being forwarded to the Local Authority for monitoring purposes.
- The Traveller Education Service and other special needs services were well regarded.
- Attendance continued to be an area of concern particularly at secondary schools.
- Those schools who replied maintained direct communication links with families.

## Traveller Education Service

Councillors Hedley and Smith-Hughes visited the Traveller Education Service at Braintree to discuss current practice and experience with those officers who provide support for Gypsy/ Traveller pupils and families, and schools. A note summarising some of the issues discussed is available by e-mail from [janet.mills@essex.gov.uk](mailto:janet.mills@essex.gov.uk) or by telephone 01245 430565.

## Conclusions of the 2007 Review

From the evidence gathered on activity relating to the recommendations of the former General Scrutiny Committee, the Panel was pleased to learn that progress was being made on support for greater access to education for GRT children as detailed in the Cabinet Member's response, and from the practical examples that were shared with Members at the Traveller Education Service.

In general, the Panel noted that low attendance at secondary schools continued to be an area of concern and hoped that ways could be found to overcome this ongoing problem. The Traveller Education Service was involved in work that was seeking to address the issue of low attendance. It was an area where it would be useful to focus on identifying and implementing some best practice with

**Essex  
Traveller Education Service**

## Go for it!

These leaflets are aimed at giving children, young people, parents/carers and schools a clear picture of the career pathways for a range of appropriate occupations, to help raise aspirations and encourage young people to have a realistic understanding of their career options. The leaflets are beautifully illustrated and held within a presentation folder.




**Essex  
Traveller Education Service**

## BROADENING HORIZONS

EDUCATION AND TRAVELLING CHILDREN  
By  
SALLY NAYLOR &  
KANTA WILD-SMITH

An invaluable and unique resource book for teachers and other professionals. Travelling communities, legislation, education and lifestyle are included in a rich cultural overview.



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Traveller Education Service**

## Playground Games

A unique collection of games suitable for primary school children.

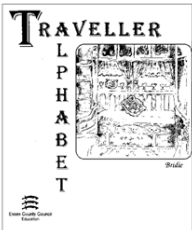
Skipping rhymes; Clapping songs; Running, Circle and Line games; Role play and games with equipment – to be enjoyed outside or in a wet play environment.

Help make 'break time' fun and inclusive!



**Essex  
Traveller Education Service**

## Traveller Alphabet



An unusual and unique addition for any library or school.

*Examples of supportive material available from the Essex Travellers Education Service*

schools to encourage and support the children in a way that raises their school attendance.

Arising from the discussion of the original review, the Panel felt it was necessary to draw attention to the importance of making education relevant for individual pupils through a more flexible approach to the curriculum.


While GRT parents may have recognised the benefits of primary and junior education as providing their children with a general foundation in reading, writing and arithmetic which would prove useful to them; there was less identification with the curriculum that secondary schools offer and consequently less engagement with formal education at that level.

There was evidence that the GRT communities preferred more vocationally orientated education which had relevance to their culture and way of life, and consequently there was more positive support from families for children to attend secondary school leading to increased levels of educational attainment. One example of action being taken to address this issue was the involvement of the Traveller Education Service in a project on flexible/relevant curriculum which aimed to raise the aspirations of GRT children at Key Stage 4.

Further examples of the types of resources available from the Essex TES are shown on the right and above right .

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Traveller Education Service**

## ONE IN A MILLION



One in a Million is recounted by Margaret Biddulph, who has researched this story with a Kent family.


The life of a Travelling family unfolds through the text, with all the added richness and diversity of Traveller culture.

Against a backdrop that reveals hardship and poverty, and the eventual loss of their Wagon, the family survive and prosper, the return of their Wagon symbolises their triumph over adversity.

This publication can be used as a valuable tool for the Literacy Hour as well as for other curriculum subject areas. Extensive teachers notes support the text.

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Traveller Education Service**

## WHEELS OF CHANGE




Everything begins anew in the spring, especially for an itinerant travelling family who have just survived the hardships of wintertime. That is why Suzie, describing a year from her childhood, begins in the spring.

"Wheels of Change", a comparative account of 50 years of earning a living, from the perspectives of a Gypsy Traveller family, local farmers and a blacksmith. This publication is particularly appropriate for English, geography, ICT, and PSHE at KS2 and also for PSHE at KS3.

Personal memories, photographs and maps are included.  
**A sequel to 'One in a Million'...**

**Essex  
Traveller Education Service**

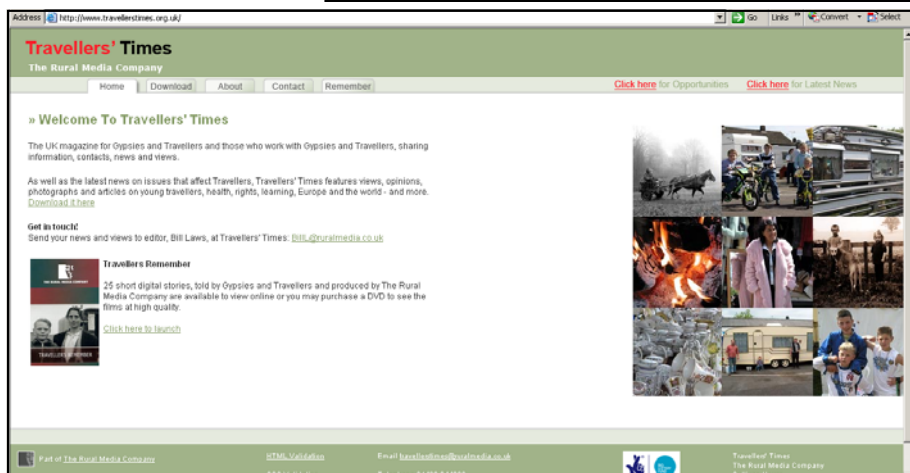
## Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils Ethnic Monitoring – CD rom



Many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents, whether living in caravans or houses, have been reluctant to choose one of the two specific ethnic categories, Gypsy/Roma or Traveller of Irish heritage in admissions paperwork. Parents have been fearful that if their identity is made public in any way, their children will be turned away before admission, or be more at risk of racist bullying once in school.

As part of a drive to improve everyone's knowledge of the attainment and progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, the Traveller Education Service has produced two eye-catching and informative leaflets for school staff and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents. The purpose of the leaflets is to explain the importance of accurate and sensitive ethnic monitoring for children's education, and to inform and reassure parents.

For other local authorities who would like to use the leaflets with their own logo displayed, the text and graphics are available to purchase on CD-rom for £25.00 (text fully editable by a printer/designer).



The Panel was mindful of the difficulties that can arise in the way that different schools may handle issues associated with Gypsy/ Traveller pupils due to the fact they operate to a large extent as autonomous bodies. In effect, it was the individual school which decided whether or not to seek assistance from support services such as the Traveller Education Service, albeit that the Service may approach schools in the case of those pupils and families who are known to require support. One of the original themes of the scrutiny report was on the promotion of good practice, and it remained an important area for development to ensure there was more positive responsiveness from all schools in Essex to the needs of GRT pupils.

From the evidence received from the Cabinet Member and the schools, the Panel concluded that the Traveller Education Service continued to fulfil an important role in support of GRT pupils within Essex. To achieve the aims of the original review recommendations, the Service needed to continue to market its services not only to parents but to those schools with less experience.

It also needed to review the current projects it was engaged in to establish whether certain courses of action provided evidence that the children are able to benefit educationally. This would allow the service to find ways of prioritising the promotion of good practice among schools to help them adapt their approaches to address the needs of individual pupils.

## **The impact of the March 2007 Review**

The continuation of activity to improve access to education for GRT children as supported by the March 2007 Review can be demonstrated by the following:

- Meetings between TES and the Admissions and Transport Services
- The TES Outreach Team assisting families to make applications for school places
- Close working with the Education Welfare Service and TASCs
- Meetings with Dale Farm representatives about opportunities for secondary pupils
- Local multi agency for a established in both Wickford and Maldon to establish a co-ordinated approach, with a further forum planned for Chelmsford

**As a result of the above, access to primary education is in line with other LAs in Eastern Region.** However, access to secondary education is much lower with an increasing number of families opting for home education. This is an issue which must continue to be addressed.

In addition to the actions taken to address recommendation 1, there are regular meetings of the TES, EWS, Home Education Service, Planning & Transport, Children Missing Education and GRT Services to discuss attendance of GRT pupils.

**In line with other LAs in Eastern Region,**

### **2007 recommendation 1**

That the Committee welcomes the response from the Cabinet Member and supports the continuation of activity to improve access to education for GRT children.

### **2007 recommendation 2**

That the Committee highlights the need to address the continuing concern about the low levels of attendance of GRT children at secondary schools in Essex

**attendance levels remain around 70%.** Although low for settled communities, this is typical for GRT families.

Advisory teachers now offer advice on ways of developing a flexible and relevant curriculum, the use of appropriate learning and teaching materials including the use of exemplar materials in the 'Alpha Box'.

There is support from Specialist Support Assistants for targeted pupils in the Key Stage 1 Project. The 'Go For It' project helps raise the aspirations of secondary pupils providing packs showing appropriate career paths and qualifications required. A spin off from the Go For It project resulted in a pack of teachers' activity sheets for us in citizenship education.

In July 2008, Essex County Council was invited to join the second phase of the National Strategy Project to improve attainment for GRT pupils. This will run for two years and schools involved in the project will have opportunities to share experiences and good practice.

It is too early to assess the impact of the above initiatives.

## **Conclusion**

The Task and Finish Group was pleased to note the substantial progress made towards implementing the recommendations contained in the reports of both the 2004 and 2007 reviews.

In doing so it acknowledges that there were other local and national drivers and initiatives aimed at improving educational support for GRT children and their families. The Group found it impossible to identify which improvements resulted solely from the two scrutiny reviews is undeniable is that the reviews raised the profile of this important service and of the measures needed to improve provision for GRT children.

The 2004 review stands as an example of good practice which the new Policy & Scrutiny Committees will seek to build on, and the 2007 monitoring review demonstrates the value of scrutiny committees monitoring their previous work, of that of their predecessors.

### **2007 - Recommendation 3**

That the Committee supports the adoption of more flexible approaches to the school curriculum designed to ensure that it is relevant to the needs of individual pupils.

### **2007- Recommendation 4**

That in view of the issues identified in the original Scrutiny Report and the need to ensure that there is greater awareness of the needs of GRT children, the Committee would wish to see more priority being given to the promotion of good practice between the Local Education Authority and schools in Essex.

### **2008 - Finding 1**

Both the 2004 & 2007 reviews were examples of substantial scrutiny of an important public service and subsequent monitoring of the original recommendations.

Whilst it is difficult to establish whether some of the resultant improvements may have been achieved as a result of other local and national initiatives, the two scrutiny reviews highlighted the educational needs of GRT children and helped ensure improvement measures were put in place.

The Group were fully supported throughout their review of these scrutiny projects by staff from the Traveller and Education Service. They were impressed by their dedication and commitment to continued improvement and recommend that they be commended for this.

In response to a number of questions regarding the level of staffing within the TES department, the Group were advised that the current low staffing level impacted upon the department's ability to provide a full service. If the staffing situation was not addressed the department may not be able to undertake a high profile project next year or be able to disseminate good practice to schools. One team member was on long term sick leave, loss of another team member would mean there would only be one teacher available in September and there was currently no administrative support which meant that the managers needed to undertake administrative tasks as well as their own remit.

Members were further advised that the department was unable to directly recruit from outside the organisation. This was due to the current organisational review of the number of administrative post within the county council. **It was agreed that the Chairman of the Task & Finish Group would raise these staffing issues with the appropriate officers within the Schools Children & Families Service.**

Members agreed that reviewing the number of administrative posts within Essex County Council, was beneficial to the whole organisation in terms of driving efficiency. They were however concerned that in some cases inflexible organisational processes, where small vital front line departments were not able to directly recruit to vacant posts, might lead to disintegration of service provision and be counter productive upon remaining staff. Members questioned why small departments could not be given special circumstances in times of organisational staffing reviews.

The Group agreed to ask the Scrutiny Board to recommend to the Central Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee that it review the

### **2008 - Recommendation 1**

Staff within the Travellers Education Service should be commended for their dedication and initiatives to improve education provision for GRT children.

### **2008 - Finding 2**

The current staffing difficulties within the TES service is a matter of concern and may detract from the continued improvement in GRT provision recommended in both the 2004 and 2007 scrutiny reviews.

### **2008 - Recommendation 2**

That the Chairman of the Task & Finish Group would raise the staffing shortages within the TES with the appropriate officers within the Schools Children & Families Service.

### **2008 - Finding 3**

Whilst the current review of administrative posts was important in terms of driving efficiencies such processes should not be so inflexible to detract from service provision, especially within relatively small front line units.

### **2008 - Recommendation 3**

The Scrutiny Board should ask the Central Services Policy & Scrutiny Committee to review the effects of organisational reviews on small services within ECC.

effects of organisational reviews had on small services within ECC including associated Human Resources (HR) policies.

In reaching their conclusions the Group also questioned whether schools were playing their full part in assisting the TES service. Members were advised that schools were not always helpful as they could be as they did not necessarily consider the topic of GRT children to be one of their key priorities.

The Group did however find significant examples of progress towards further improvement in the provision of educational support to GRT children and their families and agreed that this should be reflected in a press release. The press release could also promote the need for all schools to co-operate in delivering even better services and the continued implementation of the previous scrutiny recommendations.

It concluded that it is important that attention continues to be given to the implementation of the 2004 and 2007 scrutiny recommendations and the five additional recommendations arising out of this review report. It therefore recommends that the Schools, Children and Families Policy & Scrutiny Committee undertake a further review of access to education for GRT children as part of its 2009 work programme.

#### **2008 - Finding 4**

The lack of support from some schools for the TES service should be highlighted in this report.

#### **2008 - Recommendation 4**

The County Council should issue a press release highlighting the improvements in provision of services to GRT children and their families, and urging all schools to co-operate with the TES in delivering further improvements.

#### **2008 - Recommendation 5**

The Schools, Children and Families Policy & Scrutiny Committee should be asked to consider reviewing access to education for GRT children next year and, in particular to review the outcome of the response to the TES staffing issues.



**This report is issued by**

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