



ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE
EDUCATION OF ROMANY AND OTHER TRAVELLERS

Annual Report

2010- 2011

ACERT
PO Box 526
Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 9PF

Email: info@acert.org.uk
Website: www.acert.org.uk
Telephone: 0208 374 1286

President: Lord Avebury

Registered Charity Number: 800267

AGM 2011 Agenda

Morning Session

- 9:30** Coffee and Registration
Welcome and Apologies
Chair's Report
- 10:15** Treasurer's Report
Adoption of Accounts
Election of Officers 2011-2012
Election of Committee 2011-2012
- 11.00** Lord Avebury - Update
- 11:30** Cuts to Traveller Education Services – Michael Doherty
Traveller Education: a DfE perspective - Angela Overington
Open Discussion The Way Forward -
Angela Overington and Lord Avebury

13.00 Lunch

Afternoon session

- 14:00** The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (this item was deleted)
The Roma Support Group - Laura Grearson and Gabriella Smolinska-Poffley
Equality – Alan Anstead
- 15:00** Plenary and Close

AGM ATTENDANCE: 24 SEPTEMBER 2011

Members

Thomas Acton
Alan Anstead
Helen Blow
Felicity Bonel
Heather Bottomley
Ruth Dewhirst
Bill Forrester
Brian Foster
Astrid Hutchinson
Sally Palmer
Verity Nelson
Amy Rogers
Cecily Taylor
Hazel Terry
Margaret Wood

Speakers

Lord Avebury
Mike Doherty
Angela Overington
Laura Greason
Gabriella Smolinska-Poffley
Alan Anstead

APOLOGIES

Members

Jose Batchelor
Pat Barr
Eve Bearne
David Cannon
Stephen Cartwright
Sarah Cemlyn
Jean Clark
Pamela Cowan
Helen Creedon
Kate D'Arcy
Robert Dawson
Tim Everson
Peter Fifield
Arthur Ivatts
Chris Johnson
Heather Kopp
Ian Luke
Angie Millsom
Verity Nelson
Chris Rush
Carol Tonks
Anne Walker
Linda Walker
Hazel Whitaker
Drew Wilkins
Paul Winter
Anthea Wormington

Non-Members

Sean Risdale

Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members 2011-2012

		Proposed	Seconded
Chair	Brian Foster	Margaret Wood	Sally Palmer
Vice-Chairs	Bill Forrester	Hazel Terry	Helen Blow
	Tim Everson	Margaret Wood	Helen Blow
Hon Treasurer	Hazel Terry	Helen Blow	Brian Foster
Committee	Thomas Acton	Brian Foster	Verity Nelson
	Pat Barr	Bill Forrester	Sally Palmer
	Helen Blow	Margaret Wood	Sally Palmer
	Kate D'Arcy	Margaret Wood	Sally Palmer
	Verity Nelson	Margaret Wood	Sally Palmer
	Sally Palmer	Hazel Terry	Brian Foster
	Anne Walker	Margaret Wood	Brian Foster
	Margaret Wood	Helen Blow	Heather Bottomley

Welcome and Overview: Lord Eric Avebury

Once again I'm delighted to be with you at this AGM, though we're looking at a somewhat depressing picture as far as the Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities are concerned, from most but not all angles.

The abrupt change of policy on accommodation, signalled by the Secretary of State Eric Pickles the minute he got his feet under the desk, means that after seven years of gradual reduction in the proportion of the caravan-dwelling Gypsy-Traveller population who are homeless, from a quarter in 2004 to 17% in 2011, the trend is likely to go into reverse. Not only is it likely that, following the example of the inhuman treatment of the residents on the Dale Farm site, whose eviction is being subsidised by £18 million of public money, other local authorities will be acting tough against the 3,100 unauthorised caravans, but they will also decline to renew the 900 temporary permissions whenever they expire. The psychological impact on the whole community is already traumatic, and there will be unfortunate side effects on the education of those affected, such as even higher rates of absenteeism and lower records of achievement.

The direct effects of Government policy on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are also negative on balance. The gradual extinction of Traveller Education Support Services, initiated by the end of ring-fencing in 2007, seems to be accelerating with the squeeze on local authority budgets. Freelance journalist Michael Doherty found in a survey of 127 local authorities that 24 were abolishing their TESS altogether and another 34 were cutting more than a third of their staff. The total number of staff in these authorities was 480 in April 2007 when the service was at its peak to 354 in the next academic year, a 38% reduction. The actual situation may be worse than this, because 20 councils were unable to say what their projected staff levels would be because they were "under review" or some equivalent. The Pupil Premium is a very welcome development, but isn't likely to be spent on retaining dedicated support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, when schools are accountable to parents on how the money is spent. There is to be limited guidance on how the money is to be used, but this may not require that all parents, rather than those most actively engaged with their children's education, get to know what's proposed to be done with the money.

Last week the Department's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Stakeholder Group considered and finalised responses to the School Funding Consultation, and I hope you would agree that it was a useful exercise. I want to pay a special tribute to Margaret Wood, Brian Foster and Arthur Ivatts for their input to this exercise, without which it would have been impossible to reach any conclusions. The questions demanded knowledge of both the existing system of funding and the changes which were likely to be proposed, which few members of the public including representatives of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities were likely to possess. We now have before us an inquiry by the Children's Commissioner on exclusions, which I'm very much hoping we can also get some help on, with so many of the Stakeholder Group members totally submerged in the Dale Farm catastrophe.

One of the lessons we have learned from this exercise was that the Stakeholder Group doesn't have the necessary mix of experience and skills to comment on the educational funding system, and we were very lucky to have enlisted the advice of ACERT members to help put the submission together, and to have Arthur Ivatts, who is a member of the Group, guiding the meeting through his own very useful additions to the draft.

The response emphasises that significant numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are not on school rolls and aren't considered in the funding formulae. The proposed simplification isn't helpful from a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller point of view because it eliminates the categories 'underperforming ethnic groups' and 'turnover' that were covered by the Additional Educational Needs (AEN). The additional funding for 'deprived pupils' should be extended to

underachieving groups, and ought to refer specifically to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, and EAL children as well to bring in Roma children.

We said that Free School Meals were a relatively good proxy indicator of financial deprivation and related educational needs, but the Department's own statistics showed that fewer than half of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children were claiming. The questions in the consultation don't take in the observation of the Equality Impact Assessment that AEN which aren't deprivation-related should be considered.

Here perhaps I should mention that the Minister, Lord Hill, helpfully wrote to me setting out how deprivation is defined and presumably, since he was writing in the context of a New Clause I had tabled to the Education Bill requiring the Secretary of State to issue guidance on how local authorities could promote and improve the education of vulnerable children, how it would continue to be defined in the new funding system. [A few copies of the letter are available if anyone would like one, and also of my speech on the New Clause in the Grand Committee on the Bill]. To summarise, I argued that the definition leaves out a sizeable number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and especially those missing education or ostensibly being home educated. I suggested that we need to make far greater efforts to improve the attendance of secondary age children, bearing in mind that over a third of Irish Traveller children don't make it through to school leaving age.

We ducked the problem highlighted by the Badman report, that many parents who claim to be home educating their children are manifestly incapable of doing so, but a system of inspection that concentrated on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller home educators would violate the Equality Act. Intervention would have to be based on some other characteristic that wasn't ethically specific.

Two more thoughts on this: The E-Lamp project, using laptops and distance learning, was reported to have been successful, with 75% of participants gaining qualifications. When public funding for this work ceased in 2010, the project was taken over by the Ormiston Children and Families Trust, and the learning materials infrastructure remained in place. With the arrival of low cost netbooks, surely this would be an effective way of getting dropouts to come back to education. I gather from some of the comments on the scheme that some participants didn't think the laptops or the total package including internet access provided by the nominated suppliers, were good value for money, and a more flexible scheme might allow users to take advantage of the rapid developments in both hardware and ISP pricing on the market.

Second, we need to find a more effective way of re-engaging with all Children Missing Education that would include those who withdraw at or after the transition from primary to secondary. The virtual schools, which I believe have been successful in the pilots on looked-after children, could be extended to CME, an idea which I understand is already being considered in the DfE. I mentioned this in the debate on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller education in the Lords, and expect to get a response from Lord Hill, who is always meticulous in writing to pick up details that weren't covered in his reply to the debate itself. Clearly the tasks of a Virtual School Head would be quite a bit different in the case of children missing education from that of a VSH dealing with looked after children, and the blueprint might start with the Ofsted survey of August last year. Some of their work would be preventive, such as ensuring that pupils failing to attend for more than 20 consecutive school days were followed up, and that agreed procedures for exclusions were observed.

I spoke to David Berridge, one of the team at Bristol University's School of Policy Studies who carried out the evaluation of the pilot VSH studies, and his off the cuff answer was that a small team with a central overview of Children Missing Education could have a useful role to play if the funding was available, and that it could be lead by someone with the status of head teacher, though a different terminology might be appropriate when most of the children covered aren't actually in contact with the educational system.

Speaking of exclusions, I'm hoping that the Stakeholder Group will put together a response to the Children's Commissioner's School Exclusions Inquiry, the deadline for which is October 5. On this, as with the schools funding, the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities themselves may not be well placed to deal with some of the questions, such as how for instance the inequalities seen in the figures for exclusions be addressed, or how schools should address the imminent equality duty and whether schools have been made sufficiently ready to implement the duty; and if the Group is to cover these broad questions of policy, they will need input from allies in ACERT beyond those who are actually members of the Group. I've asked the members of the Group to let me have their comments on the questionnaire and Arthur Ivatts has very kindly agreed to collate the replies.

A couple of other matters I'd like to share with you today. At the April meeting of the Stakeholder Group we discussed the European Union Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, which proposes that all member states should adopt a comprehensive approach to Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities, covering access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. The Framework recommends that the national strategies should set achievable goals for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in each of these four sectors, with funding by governments, supplemented, where appropriate, by the EU. Money is available through the European Social Fund, in which there is a ring-fenced 172 million Euros for actions aimed at integrating the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in the period 2007-13.

The Framework suggests that the strategies should be designed, implemented and monitored in close cooperation and continuous dialogue with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller civil society, but up to now the Group is unaware of what is going on. We have written to the CLG Secretary of State, Eric Pickles, asking to be included in the policy- and decision-making processes stemming from the European Commission's Framework, and I hope the cross-departmental Ministerial Task Group on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Inequalities of which he is chairman will set out our response to this initiative. {A copy of the letter is on the table}. The House of Lords EU committee will also be looking at the Framework in the light of the Government's response, and I'm sure that in the meanwhile the DfE is bearing in mind the possibility of applying to the Social Fund for help to meet the cost of projects we would like to launch or retain, but are otherwise going to be lost in the cuts.

Finally, Margaret Wood, Brian Foster and I had a useful meeting with Christine Gilbert the former Her Majesty's Chief Inspector on June 17, after a conversation I had with the Minister Lord Hill. She told us it may be possible to conduct a survey on how the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are being met towards the end of their current 18-month programme, that's towards the end of 2012. Notes on the meeting are on the table, and you will see that we have an assurance that a further meeting with the new Chief Inspector could be arranged at an appropriate time. Subject to what the meeting thinks, it might be an idea to suggest that it should be an annual fixture.

That great lady who founded ACERT in 1973 Bridget Plowden, asked a rhetorical question in an article she wrote on the 20th anniversary of her Committee's report on primary education: "Is there not a place for knowledgeable people, not only politicians and those from the educational world, to look at intervals at what the educational world and the politicians are doing for the nation's children, who belong to all of us?"

Alas, there are few enough politicians, let alone those knowledgeable people, who take an interest in what's being done for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, and the national media ignore the connection between the failure to do enough for those children, and the problems faced by their communities as adults in terms of health, social isolation and inability to access public services. But perhaps amid the gloom, there's an opportunity. Dale Farm, a cliff-hanger experience for the families involved, has focussed unprecedented media attention on the

overall environment in which society has allowed such a barbaric event to develop, even if the application for judicial review on the grounds that Basildon made insufficient efforts to find an alternative site for the residents is successful on Monday. And the European Union will be keeping watch over us until 2010 at least, ensuring that the Government have to account for themselves internationally. After nearly forty years, ACERT has a more important role than ever in these circumstances, and I'm sure that we will play a very full part in keeping up the constructive pressure which is the very reason for our existence.

ACERT Chair's Report: Pat Barr

I would like to begin by thanking the ACERT Executive Committee for all their support over the last year. I have been Chair since 2006 and I would like to hand over the position to a new person. This is especially since my move to Cornwall has made the travel to London for Executive Committee meetings more difficult. I would however like to stay on the Executive Committee and my interest in the organisation remains as strong as ever.

Despite political uncertainty the year has been a very productive one. ACERT has responded to numerous reviews for the DfE, Ofsted and others and fully engaged in the consultations. These include

- Consultation on the Changes to the Admissions Framework
- The Independent Review of the Children's Commissioner
- The National Curriculum Review - Call for Evidence
- The Pupil Premium
- Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage – Call for Evidence
- OFSTED Inspection arrangements for maintained schools and academies from January 2012 (for OFSTED)
- The Schools' White Paper 'the importance of teaching'
- The U.N. Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) consultation
- Future Target Setting
- Consultation on tackling child poverty and improving life chances
- The Wolf Review of Vocational Education
- The Traveller Site Planning Policy Framework
- DfE proposals to pilot a new hand held Record of Attainment for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

There was a meeting at the end of last year with the minister Nick Gibb regarding GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER lack of attainment and our concerns at the DfE. There have been 2 joint meetings between the DfE, ACERT and NATT+ where Traveller issues were discussed, and we are beginning to see ways forward to building partnerships, and informing political players. There has also been a meeting at OFSTED with Christine Gilbert, HMCI and her colleague Sue Gregory the National Director for all school inspections. I would like to offer my thanks to Angel Overington and Andrea Smith who continue to keep Traveller issues high on the agenda of the DfE. I would also like to offer my thanks to Lord Eric Avebury, who ensures Traveller issues are considered in the House of Lords and has supported the Traveller people by providing a voice in parliament on areas that impact on Traveller families. He is currently actively involved in tabling amendments to the Education Bill 2011 as it goes through the House of Lords.

The ACERT website goes from strength to strength. This has been a huge development for our communication links and ACERT is grateful to all the support we have from Graham Alexander. His expertise and commitment have really been appreciated. The website has enabled ACERT to provide support to Travellers concerned about funding for higher education, advice to prison staff and prisoners, information about Appleby and other Traveller fairs such as Saintes Marie de la Mer, and responses to local authorities regarding planning.

In November 2010 we held the ACERT Conference, *All Change? The Future of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Inclusion in the New Coalition Era*, which attracted a high calibre of speakers and a renewed interest in the membership of ACERT. We had successful feedback. I would like to offer my thanks to Margaret Wood and Tim Everson as the prime organisers of this event.

In the past year we have liaised with a number of other organisations and individuals with whom we share concerns. These include:

- The Children's Rights Alliance for England (ACERT has joined CRAE)
- The Gypsy Council, whose Big Society workshop In Cambridge was attended by ACERT EC members
- Robin Richardson at Insted (www.insted.co.uk)
- The Travellers Aid Trust in connection with their Panel Enquiry into Gypsy Sites Policy
- David Sheard at Cumbria County Council regarding our continuing, though reduced support, for Appleby Fair Education on the Hoof
- The Romany Theatre Company who launched their education pack, Atching Tan, and requested endorsement for a new funding bid
- Thomas Deacon Academy in Peterborough concerning Roma students
- A correspondent who is interested in Gypsy music
- Michael Doherty, the journalist
- Equality www.equality.uk.com a national support organisation for Roma

We have also worked with Delaine Le Bas to enable the ACERT artworks from the Second Site Exhibition could be more widely used in Suffolk schools.

Early in 2011 Lord Avebury wrote on behalf of ACERT to all Directors of Children's Services in England requesting information and reassurances with regard to continuing support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller education. Almost 40 local authorities responded. Despite significant cuts to Traveller Education Services the message was that local authorities understand their obligations to these groups and that they are working to improve pupil performance. ACERT has written back offering further advice and training.

The AGM was very successful last year with a number of issues covered. These included

- Lord Avebury who feedback on the new political development
- David Sheard Community Officer for Cumbria gave feedback with Hugh Stanners from Norfolk TES on the successes of the Appleby Fair project
- Katy Swaine spoke from the Children's Rights Alliance for England
- Emma Nuttall spoke from Friends , Families and Travellers
- Lucy Beckett spoke from the Traveller Law Reform Project
- We had a successful discussion about how we could support the TES in the new political climate

The AGM ran very smoothly and this would not have happened without the hard work of Hazel Terry who works tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the day is a success. I would also like to thank our treasurer Helen Creedon, also Hilary Fothergill who ensures the accounts are in order and has always been in the background providing support.

Finally, I would like to finish by thanking David Cannon who has worked with ACERT over the years and whose expertise and support have been invaluable.

His decision to stand down, following thirty years in the field and focusing on future priorities is completely understandable in the present political climate of redundancy and change. He has asked me to pass on his deep thanks for the fond memories and his sincere best wishes for the future of ACERT. We as the ACERT Committee wish him all the very best for his future journey.

ACERT Treasurer's Report 2010 – 2011: Helen Creedon

As always I would like to thank Hilary Fothergill for preparing the accounts for the year ending March 2011. The accounts have been independently examined and thanks also for that. Again, as always, I would also like to thank both Hilary and Hazel Terry for the dedicated work they put in behind the scenes that makes the role of the Treasurer so straightforward and trouble free.

Our gross income for the year has been £6,853.44. ACERT was able to support Appleby 'On the Hoof' Project for this year but it is uncertain how long we will be able to sustain the support for the project. ACERT have offered £200.00 to support the project in the 2011/12 financial year. This may have repercussions on the project and ACERT are keen to support it in the future in the way they feel appropriate. Cumbria County Council continues to take on a much bigger role in accessing funding for the continuation and expansion of the project.

The conference, organised to raise the profile of ACERT and to help increase membership numbers attracted some influential and excellent speakers. Unfortunately, it made a loss of £3,732.46. However, there are still monies outstanding from this event.

We are aware that in recent years membership has been slowly falling and are making the raising of membership numbers a priority for the future. The web site has begun to raise the profile of ACERT and we have received some requests from this. The conference has also been planned to highlight issues, raise the profile and increase membership.

Expenses for the year were £13,212.72 leaving a deficit of -£6,359.28. The year began with a balance of £13,361.00 and the end of year balance was £7,002.00.

Due to the loss we face this year, it has been decided that the opportunity for small grants to support specific projects will not be available this year.

Again, I would like to extend my thanks to those who have supported me in the new role as Treasurer. Your help has been invaluable.

**ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE EDUCATION OF
ROMANY AND OTHER TRAVELLERS
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2011**

	2011	2010
Subscriptions	680.00	750.00
Donations	308.00	372.90
Conference	5833.00	
HOOF Project		4000.00
Sundry Income		225.08
Bank Interest Received	32.44	179.91
	6853.44	5527.89
Less expenses		
HOOF	2000.00	8553.18
Conference	9565.46	
Travelling	111.45	65.75
Printing/post/stat	387.14	227.52
Advertising		
AGM & Hall hire	190.63	269.05
Accountancy Fees	356.26	237.50
Insurance	172.50	167.50
Sundry expenses/resources	429.28	895.78
	13212.72	10416.28

**ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE EDUCATION OF
ROMANY AND OTHER TRAVELLERS
BALANCE SHEET
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2011**

	NOTES	2011	2010
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	2		
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	3		
Cash at bank etc	4	7002	13361
CREDITORS			
Amount falling within one year	5		
Loan Provision			
NET CURRENT ASSETS/ LIABILITIES		7002	13361
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			
TOTAL NET ASSETS			
REPRESENTED BY:			
Reserve B/Fwd		13361	18249
Plus surplus/(deficit)		-6359	-4888
		7002	13361

Date:.....

Approved.....
Chair

Date:.....

Approved.....
Treasurer

**ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE EDUCATION OF
ROMANY AND OTHER TRAVELLERS**

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2011

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Depreciation

Depreciation is provided on all Tangible Fixed Assets at annual rates calculated to write off the cost or valuation, less estimated residual value of each asset over its expected useful life as follows:

2. TANGIBLE ASSETS

COST OR VALUATION	Office equipment: 25% reducing balance.	O/Equip 2011	2010
At beginning of year		0	0
Additions		0	0
At 31 March 2010			

DEPRECIATION

At beginning of year	0	0
Charge for year	0	0
At 31 March 2010	0	0
Net book value at 31 March 2011	0	0
Net book value at beginning of year	0	0

3. DEBTORS

Amounts falling within one year:	2011	2010
Lottery grant		
Donation		

4. BANK BALANCES/CASH IN HAND

	2011	2010
Bank of Scotland	4376	1383
Alliance & Leicester	704	4319
Scottish Widows	0	7659
CAF	1922	

Cuts to Traveller Education Services – Michael Doherty

INTRODUCTION

You already know that the cuts to Traveller Education Support Services (Tess) are bad. I guess I am here to tell you how bad. The trouble is this would only take five minutes and I would still have another 15 to fill. So I am going to tell you a bit about why and how I did the research and what I think it means.

I realize that there is a hell of a lot of experience of working within and for the Romany Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community in this room and it's a bit daunting because I am up here about to tell you how it is – with all of 4 months of research and experience behind me. In short - It feels like I am just about to teach you all how to suck eggs.

WHY I DID THE RESEARCH

The research into the cuts to Tess was part of my final dissertation project at City University, London. I have been there for the last academic year studying for a Masters Degree in investigative journalism. A previous Assignment to this involved making a short film about Traveller reactions to Firecracker Production's TV series My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding (MBFGW).

During the making of this film I managed to tag along to a protest by members of the Traveller community targeting a Firecracker Films presentation at a Royal Television Society back-slapping event.

From this I managed to get published a short opinion piece for the Big Issue and a tiny little news piece for the Guardian Media section – for which I got paid £90.

Protests, publication and payment! I was hooked and decided to switch my MA project from an investigation into British Waterways to something to do with Roma, Romany Gypsies and Travellers.

HOW I DID THE RESEARCH

Didn't have much time so I quickly formulated a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. I wanted to capture the data for the numbers of staff that worked within education Teams that were mainly or wholly targeted at Travellers. The team, or individual within that team, might be part of another team that had a wider remit – that didn't matter – as long as most of their work was solely with Travellers.

I sent the FOI'S off in two batches over two weeks – one to every LA with responsibility for education in England.

Two days after I sent the first batch I got a full reply from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. This told me that the FOI Worked.

In addition, Bury – which also came in early – kindly told me that the FOI cost £12.50 to process – good news – but I do realise that my dissertation cost the tax-payer £1,687.50 – so all you tax – payers out there - Thanks and possibly a story for the Daily Mail?

THE RESULTS

135 Local Authorities replied. 24 of them, or one in five, are completely 'deleting' their dedicated Traveller education support team and a further 28 are cutting more than a third of their staff,

The responses also reveal that the Total number of TESS full time staff, or equivalent, has been reduced from 519 in April 2006/7 when the service was at its peak, to 425 ON April 4th, this year. The projected figures for this term – which of course has now started – is 372. This IS a 27% reduction in staff from when the cuts started to bite BUT the actual situation may be much worse as 17 Local Authorities declined to anticipate their projected staffing levels

because they were 'under review', 'undecided', 'unknown', or being 're-structured'. It would probably be safe to say that some of these Local Authorities (LAs) may be making further cuts, or even deleting the service completely, adding to the carnage.

Most LA's deleting the service indicate in their FOI responses that they are passing the responsibility onto other staff/teams - usually EMA, BME, attendance and inclusion and vulnerable children teams.

Another noticeable feature of the FOI responses, and one that may be transforming the type of service that the individual TESS's give, is the annihilation of the qualified teaching staff and those who are given the title of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller teaching assistants. 300 in 2007 and 150 now.

On a national scale the impact of the cuts is patchy. Some regions – such as London - having severe losses and some only minor losses. A few LA's - mainly in the North of England - are even adding one or two staff because of the increasing number of Roma being added to their remit.

Back to London

The London TESS's serves the cities 35 official Traveller sites which have 494 pitches with space for 740 caravans and chalets.

Freedoms of Information Requests were sent to all 32 London Boroughs.

30 replied. (Bromley and Enfield didn't)

10 London TESS's have now been deleted completely since 2007, most during the last academic year; (Greenwich, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Hillingdon, Lambeth Lewisham, Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Camden, Kingston Upon Thames and Newham.

Inner South London is particularly badly hit.

At its peak in 2007, the London TESS staff stood at 61. By April this year the total staff count was down to 40 and is now at 29. From the responses it is clear that almost all of these are front-line staff.

SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

I will let Vanessa, a 17 year old Irish Traveller woman I met during my research tell you in her own words.

"My father wasn't happy with me going to secondary school. I could read and write and he didn't see the point of me carrying on," she says. "I could blame Mr Cannon. I could say Mr Cannon is making me go or mum will have to go to prison," she says. "I could say that to my friends as well – I have to go to school today or Mr Cannon will find out," she says. "Mr Cannon knew that and he would just laugh and say that as long as we went to school he didn't care what he was blamed for. Mr Cannon understood us – he knew we had to clean house and look after the younger ones and sometimes might be late. He would talk to the teachers if we had to go to Ireland for a funeral or christening and miss school. He would explain that funerals are important for our community and work out how to settle us back in so we could catch up," she says. My dad completely changed his mind about education when I got my qualifications and got a job," she says. "He is proud of me. He now tells my sisters to go to school to get their papers, and that is a shocking thing to have happened if you knew him," she says.

SO WHAT TO DO?

My job is to tell people. The research has been part of a UN report, has appeared in two articles in the Traveller's Times, has been published as a news story in The Independent. I am currently working with BBC London TV to make a short news clip.

There is still room for an in-depth feature somewhere.

What you can do – I don't know.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Travellers are starting to get more of a public voice. This can only be a good thing. Dale Farm – Travellers, young and old, fighting back and engaging with and using the media (and this includes Paddy Doherty) - telling the public that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are not mythical stereotypes or one dimensional folk devils. It's the same in the printed press. Some Journalists are seeking out and talking to Travellers and their voices are being listened to. And they are being told to do that by editors who realise that their readers are curious and want to know more. But there is also a backlash – the way the recent slavery raids were racialised in media reports show that for many sections of the press its business as usual.

I want to work on something – anything - that helps to challenge this racism in the media.

I am going to focus on something I came across when I manned the online comment thread the day the Independent published the cuts – to – Tess news story.

And that's Anti Traveller racism in the online versions of the mainstream broadsheet press.

I have read through one thread after a sympathetic Dale Farm opinion piece in The Observer and separated and counted the racist comments.

500 comments - 150 of which have at least one racist statement in them. I don't mean they are just negative about Dale Farm or even are just abusive about the Travellers living at Dale Farm - they are racist generalisations about the different Traveller ethnic groups.

There are common themes to this racism.

One is: 'You wouldn't want 'them' living near you' (meaning ALL Travellers - not just the ones at Dale Farm. If it was clearly just about the Dale Farm inhabitants then it's abusive - but not racist).

Another type is that Gypsies and Travellers are not ethnic groups - just drop-outs and free-loaders who cry 'race' if challenged.

Another type compares bad 'Irish tinkers' to good 'true Romany Gypsies'.

Then there are the unsubstantiated anecdotes about Travellers spreading human excrement, leaving rubbish and thieving. And these anecdotes are then ascribed as traits that are cultural or even genetic traits of the different Traveller ethnic groupings.

Gypsies 'who own shiny 4 x 4's' having lots of money 'obviously' obtained from criminal activities is another. Not paying tax or contributing to society - yet getting more than a fair share of its benefits is yet another. Beating their women. Drugs and alcoholism.

All the racist comments are posted anonymously under avatars. These avatars have names like 'Haardvark', 'Doughcnut' and 'Fart Like a Creaky Hinge'. The same names and statements crop up regularly in other articles on Travellers.

I am going to crunch a few articles and start counting the different types and percentages, number of racist comments per commentator, etc etc. Other ways to analyse them will come to mind. The initial aim of the research is to shock people with both the repetition, the bullying and cowardly abusive inanity of them, and just the sheer numbers. Some threads go on for days. To be honest – I'm gobsmacked by what is out there – A far right website yes – but the Observer?

But Why worry? – it's just trolls and trolling isn't it? A small minority of bedroom dwelling pizza munchers? Misfits and low-life? Billy no-mates?

Yes, it might be – but their scrawlings are legitimized and given authority by being published by what should be the quality press. A press that's read by opinion formers, elites, professionals, mp's policemen, teachers, planning officers, potential jurors AND Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. And editors are legally and – I would say – morally – responsible for this racism.

A quick scan suggests that other ethnic minorities do not get the same treatment – or, rather, the racist comments are deleted by the papers online moderators. It seems like Travellers are a special case.

I suppose that's one of the reasons why it's called the last socially acceptable racism. And this racism does make Traveller children a special case.

And this is one of the reasons why I think that Traveller children going through formal education need special targeted help.

And TESS exists to do that – so why delete and replace it?

Angela Overington's contribution to ACERT AGM September 24 2011

Department for Education

Underperforming Groups Team

Improving Pupil Performance Division

www.education.gov.uk

1. Angela Overington (AO) thanked ACERT for the opportunity to speak with them on an informal basis and share some initial thinking about next steps for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller education policy. She informed the group that on 9 September 2011, the Department will release national attainment data for different minority ethnic groups based on teacher assessments at Key Stage 1. In late November/early December, Key Stage 2 attainment data by pupil characteristics will be published. Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 attainment data, broken down by pupil characteristics, will be published in mid-December.

2. AO explained that, as a general principle, the Government believes that schools and Local Authorities are best placed to respond to local needs and priorities, and should take a lead in tackling the underperformance of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. She explained that just over £201m has been provided to schools this year via the Dedicated Schools Grant to help schools improve the performance of ethnic minority and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, as well as those learning English as an Additional Language. Schools can use this funding to 'buy in' support or specialist advice, to employ an additional teacher or teaching assistant or to fund community outreach work with local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. Where Schools Forums wish it, the funding may be retained at Local Authority level to provide centralised Ethnic Minority Achievement and Traveller Education Support Services.

3. AO explained that the Government wants schools to have the same high expectations for all their pupils, regardless of background or ethnicity. The Department for Education will continue to monitor and publish information about the progress and attainment of individual pupil groups, based on national tasks and tests, and will continue to pay particular attention to the achievements of disadvantaged, underperforming or vulnerable groups, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The Government is also refocusing school inspection around the core areas of achievement, teaching, leadership and behaviour/safety. Within this more streamlined approach will be a requirement for Ofsted to consider the extent to which the education provided at the school meets the needs of all its pupils. This means considering the data on all groups and individuals, with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

4. AO updated the group on the progress that has been made by the Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy and Traveller Inequalities. Chaired by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Ministerial Working Group is due to report on the outcomes of its work before the end of the year. The intention is that the report should form the basis of a cross-Whitehall strategy for tackling Gypsy and Traveller inequalities.

4. AO explained that Education Ministers were still considering the content of the education strand of this report. Among the ideas currently under consideration, and on which she sought feedback from the group, were:

- Seeing whether any of the lessons learnt from the Virtual Head teachers pilot for Looked After Children could be applied to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils;
 - Looking at ways in which attendance among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils could be improved;
 - Identifying and sharing latest models of effective practice in schools in raising the attainment and attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils; and
 - Exploring how Gypsy, Roma and Traveller role models could be used to raise educational aspirations among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.
5. AO said that, in addition to these key areas of interest, the Department is already:
- closely monitoring a three year pilot focusing on groups of pupils who are disproportionately affected by exclusion. The pilot is now running in 300 schools and will look at the impact of making schools directly responsible for arranging and paying for alternative provision for excluded pupils; and
 - supporting the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Education Stakeholder Group – chaired by Lord Avebury - in putting together combined responses to the School Funding consultation and the Children’s Commissioner’s inquiry into the disproportionate exclusion of vulnerable groups (including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils).
6. AO said that, in line with its Schools White Paper commitment, Ofsted is currently conducting a survey on prejudiced-based bullying. This will involve inspectors talking to pupils about their experiences of bullying and the way in which it is handled in their schools. Bullying of minority groups, such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, will be picked up in this survey, and the results will be published early next year.

Roma Support Group: Laura Greason and Gabriella Smolinska-Poffley

The Roma Support Group (RSG) is a community organisation that has been working with East European Roma refugees and migrants since 1998.

- The origins of the organisation and its ethos are strongly based within the grassroots movement of the Roma community in London. The RSG was established by the Roma people and it is led by them today.
- Since its humble origins of working from private kitchens and sitting rooms, the RSG has moved on to become a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.
- We are now working with over 900 Roma families in London, (mainly in East London), offering them a variety of services, mobilising a community through volunteering schemes and promoting an understanding of Roma culture in the UK.

The key to our work with the Roma community is:

- trust built over the years
- respect
- unconditional positive regard
- holistic approach

Holistic Approach

- Roma families often have complex needs ranging from welfare, housing, health, education, employment, cultural issues, etc.
- It is important to listen to the community, assess the situation thoroughly before addressing individual problems, e.g. education. The family might need you to address their welfare problems first before tackling other issues. This is the key in gaining trust and respect within the community.
- It is important to engage with the whole family, not just individuals so that the working relationship is a dialogue and partnership.

Advice and Advocacy Project

- The need for Advice and Advocacy was the reason why the Roma Support Group was established and it is still as important as it was 10 years ago.
- Since the beginning of the project, we have provided advice/advocacy in health, welfare, housing, debt, employment and other issues to approximately 900 Roma refugee and migrant families from Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and former Yugoslavia.

Elder Roma Engagement Project

This project aims to empower Elder Roma to become a catalyst for positive change in their community through:

- peer advocacy schemes
- intergenerational work with young Roma
- activities to enhance community cohesion and understanding of Roma culture

Roma Young Refugees' Advocacy and Campaigning Project

- One-to-one advice and advocacy for young Roma in the fields of health, welfare, housing, debts, employment
- Empowering young Roma to engage in campaigning activities at local and regional level to:
 - Achieve recognition of Roma children's needs and barriers to integration;
 - Achieve and oversee implementation of changes in policy and practice;

Roma Art & Culture Development Project

The main aims of the Art Development Project are:

- To advance public awareness on Roma culture, arts, history and contemporary issues through organising cultural workshops, music/dance events, and art exhibitions
- To create opportunities for Roma to practice and develop their creative skills in art theatre and music

Education Support Project

The Roma Education Project provides help to Roma parents and young people with:

- School admission and placements in college
- School uniforms
- School meals
- School appeals, school transfers
- After school activities
- Educational trips and outings
- Promoting Roma culture and traditions amongst schools and professionals:
- Particular attention is given to opening up access to Roma heritage to a wider audience through organising Roma Culture workshops in local primary and secondary schools
- To date these workshops have created an opportunity for over 1,000 school children to learn about and experience Roma culture through presentations, storytelling, video material, music and dance
- Mentoring and tutoring schemes – manpowered by volunteers:
- One-to-one tuition in the home environment to encourage confidence in educational abilities
- As a result, young people are able to find employment, engage with various creative projects, secure places at colleges and universities and some young people access support from the specialised health services.

London Councils – Judicial Review

- In July 2010, the London Councils announced that, due to funding cuts, they were planning to terminate some of the funded projects, including the Roma Education Support Project. The Roma Support Group's service users decided to challenge this decision in court.
- In February 2011, Mr Justice Calvert Smith allowed a judicial review challenge of London Councils' decision to cut £10 million of funding from voluntary sector organisations in London. The Judge held that London Councils' decision making process was flawed and that they had failed to meet their statutory equality duties. He quashed all the funding cut decisions for the 200 plus projects and he said that London Councils must re-run the process, fully in accordance with their equality duties.

- As a result Roma Education Project was saved.

The Roma Support and Engagement Programme

The Roma Support & Engagement Programme is our response to a growing need amongst service providers to ensure specialist and cost-effective interventions for Roma families across the UK. The Programme offers the following services to statutory and voluntary organisations working with Roma refugees and migrants:

1. training
2. expert advice
3. regional forums
4. capacity building workshops
5. resources

Our resources

- Colours of Hope: A Little Book by Roma Refugee Children for Everybody
- Be Roma or Die Tryin' DVD
- The Roma: An Introduction to their History and Customs – An Introductory Information Pack with DVD
- Journey – CD – a collection of 16 traditional Romany songs performed by young Roma refugees from Poland and Slovakia

Contact Details:

- Laura Greason – Education Support Worker
Email: laura@romasupportgroup.org.uk
- Gaba Smolinska-Poffley
Email: gaba@romasupportgroup.org.uk

Website: www.romasupportgroup.org.uk

Equality – Alan Anstead

Alan Anstead reported on recent research by Equality: *The School Attainment of Roma Pupils: from segregated schooling in the Czech Republic to mainstream schooling in the UK*

This was a pilot research project aiming to analyse what, if any, impact UK mainstream schooling has had on Roma pupils who were previously placed in special or *de facto* segregated schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia:

- To show the benefits (or disadvantages) of UK mainstream education for Roma pupils/students
- To use the findings to work with all levels of government in the Czech Republic and Slovakia on how they educate Roma pupils
- To identify models of good practice

Methodology

Between June and August 2011, in eight locations in England, Equality conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with:

- 61 Czech and Slovak Roma primary and secondary school pupils
- 28 Roma parents
- 25 school and other education staff working with Roma pupils.

Key Findings

- Large majority of Roma students said they had experienced racist bullying or verbal abuse by non-Roma peers at Czech and Slovak schools, as well as discriminatory and unequal treatment by teachers.
- Roma students in seven out of the eight locations reported that they were not experiencing racism in UK schools and that teachers were kind, helpful and willing to give them individual time.
- The large majority of Roma students said they preferred school in the UK because of equal opportunities and the lack of racism and discrimination
- All the parents interviewed valued the near absence of discrimination, racism and anti-Gypsyism in the UK school system, and said that their children's chances to succeed in life were better in Britain than in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Recommendations

- Use research findings to dispel myth that special or segregated education is in the best interest of Roma pupils.
- Use the learning to engage education professionals in the Czech Republic and Slovakia on proven practices that improve academic attainment of Roma pupils
- In the UK, the learning should be promoted and shared with other schools in the towns and cities that have Roma Communities living there.
- Schools that took part in the research should consider forming a network to share experience and practice and invite other schools to join.
- The UK Department for Education should consider how it can help to disseminate good practice identified in the research.
- Central and local government in the UK should consider the impact of spending cuts on services that help increase the attainment of Roma pupils, in particular Roma mediators, TESS and EMAS.

- The Council of Europe and European Commission should extend their Roma mediators programme to include the UK.
- National governments, the European Commission and the Council of Europe should consider the introduction of a universal EU wide educational 'record' or 'passport' for all children.
- The pilot research should be developed into a substantial scientific survey in the UK covering all national groups of Roma, now that the methodology has been piloted and important initial findings are now available.

The report is available on the websites of Equality and the Roma Education Fund from October 2011. <http://equality.uk.com/Education.html> .

Alan Anstead, Chief Executive, Equality alan@equality.uk.com