



Travelling Ahead: Evidence Submission to Inquiry on the Education Improvement Grant and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people for the Children, Young Peoples and Education Committee November 2016

1. Introduction

Travelling Ahead has worked across Wales since 2009 with young people from Romany Gypsy, Irish Traveller and more recently Roma young people from the EU. The project works to support young people's rights and participation; offering opportunities to build their confidence and skills and to influence decision-makers, policy and practice that have an effect on their lives. We generally work with 11 – 19 year olds and run Regional Forums in three areas in Wales, hold an annual National Forum and we have a Youth Advisory Group made up of a dozen young people who work with us to plan project activities and respond to key policy areas that they would like to see changed. For further information on our project activities please have a look around our website www.travellingahead.org.uk

We are very pleased that the Children and Young People Committee are undertaking this inquiry into the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and the Education Improvement Grant and welcome the opportunity to provide evidence

2. Background and context

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has consistently commented on the right to education for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in the UK and in 2016 noted '*Substantial inequalities persist in educational attainment particularly for..... Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children*' and that '*Among children subject to permanent or temporary school exclusions, there is a disproportionate number of boys, Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children...*' (CRC Concluding Observations UK 2016)

Welsh figures show Gypsy and Traveller pupils remain the lowest achieving group¹ according to Welsh Government benchmarks and that they have the highest rates of absenteeism from primary and secondary schools (this includes authorised absences²).

High levels of absence and low levels of attainment are of course linked and it's been recognised in Welsh Government guidance that poor levels of attendance correspond to a 'distinct set of barriers that Gypsy and Traveller pupils encounter while at school' (Moving Forward 2008). The guidance goes on to say:

Gypsy and Traveller groups have specific cultural and life-style characteristics which may not be generally understood and which can contribute to the prejudice that they many experience from the non-Traveller population. Their long-held culture is not static, however, and a feature of Gypsy and Traveller communities is their ability to adapt to changing economic and social circumstances whilst

¹ Table 8: Key Stage 4 by ethnic background, 2013-2015 (aggregated) (a) Stats Wales, aggregated data for 2013-15 showed only 15.5% of Gypsy/Gypsy Roma pupils achieved the Level 2 threshold (including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh First Language and Mathematics) – no data recorded for Irish Traveller children

² Wales National Attendance Codes: Code 'T' is used by schools to record authorised 'Traveller absence' i.e. absence for travelling for work purposes and for significant cultural or family events notified to schools may be regarded as authorised absence. Gypsy and Traveller parents will not be prosecuted for poor attendance where a pupil has attended for 200 sessions in the preceding year and absence has been authorised for work or cultural events. (Moving Forward Guidance)

retaining their cultural identity.....Recognition, understanding, and acceptance of these cultural differences are key to effective educational support for Gypsy and Traveller pupils. (pages 9-10 moving forward)

The formal data that is collected by Welsh Government of course doesn't either monitor or reflect all the outcomes and the achievements and progress made by many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils across Wales; including those who might for example be the first in their family to transition to and remain at secondary school; achieve qualifications despite not attending formal education until the age of 12 and those who have gone on to further and higher education, training and employment with success in a variety of areas.

The statistics also don't reflect where the work of some local authorities and Traveller Education Services, who together with families, have over time been able to buck the trend of low achievement and supported a generational change that has resulted in increased engagement with mainstream secondary school education in their area, excellent GCSE and A level results and unprecedented numbers of Gypsy and Traveller children going on to further education. In one area over a nine year period the numbers of Gypsy and Traveller children transitioning and completing their secondary school education has increased from one to thirty, in another last year every secondary school pupil has gone to further education. This kind of progress just isn't captured by solely measuring how many A-C Grades are achieved at GCSE.

But similarly the formal outcomes framework doesn't monitor how many children struggle to access mainstream education, drop out of school or are excluded and are then registered as Electively Home Educated; this is a significant minority of Gypsy and Traveller children, who then don't have opportunities to re-engage with formal education and whose outcomes are never monitored at all.

Young people's views

Education is a consistent theme brought up by the young people that we work with; in our peer education research report young people identified from their experiences a number of issues that they feel affect their education:

- A lack of understanding and low levels of awareness of schools and teaching staff about their culture and experiences;
- Discrimination and bullying that can result from this,
- Lack of a culturally relevant or flexible curriculum,
- Their own and parental anxieties about their safety and exposure to teachings and practices that conflict with their cultural values (drug taking, sexual activity, PSE) ;
- Tensions that can exist between 'formal education' and a sense that mainstream school doesn't either respect or prepare them for life with their families and communities

The improvements they recommended included:

- Teachers in school need to try and understand our culture and how we work with our families
- They should have training on understanding Gypsies, Roma and Travellers to help us achieve our best.
- Find a way to build relationships between our families and schools to break down barriers and increase our participation in education
- If we are being bullied or experiencing a hate crime, there must be a teacher or adult who we can talk to and who can help us report things if we need to.

- Make sure we have access to up-to-date equipment and access to computers and the internet if we don't have it at home to help with our homework.
- Access to more hands on courses, like Building and Hair and Beauty, and not just academic courses.
- Extra funding put in place to support us in school and for trained tutors to help us learn if we want home tutoring.³

Recognition of all the issues above are what led to the establishment and continuation of Welsh Government's specific grant for the education of Gypsy and Traveller learners⁴ to 'improve educational opportunities and/or improve standards of educational achievement for this group of learners'.

In 2014-15 the grant stood at 1.1 million and supported 2,447 Gypsy and Traveller children across 19 local authorities in Wales.

The majority of these monies supported the work of Traveller Education Services (TES) across 19 local authorities who typically worked flexibly, across schools and local authorities, who had built up trust, relationships and knowledge of the families in their area, including those who regularly travelled away, or through, their area. They not only acted as links between families and schools, offered additional academic and pastoral support that helped children engage and re-engage with education but also acted as champions, advocates and raised awareness with their education colleagues through offering training and by holding culturally relevant resources that could be used throughout the county by schools and others as needed.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children then are probably the most 'vulnerable' in the education system in the sense that they are more at risk of not fulfilling their potential without a distinct approach that helps them access the education system and takes account of their lives, their views and experiences.

It's this 'vulnerability' that has led to us being so concerned about the decision of the Welsh Government to remove dedicated funding that has resourced dedicated services to work with these children, young people and their families over more than 40 years. Our concerns have been raised in writing with the Minister and Welsh Government officials at the time of the decision and since that time throughout this period of implementation of the Education Improvement Grant.

In responding to this call for evidence we have a number of key points we would like to make:

- The decision making process
- Consequences of removing the ring fenced grant
- Impact on educational support and outcomes
- Effectiveness of other Welsh Government policies and strategies

³ Good Practice in Education Report 2015 Travelling Ahead
<http://www.travellingahead.org.uk/projects/education/>

⁴ The relevant legal powers are in Section 14 of the Education Act 2002. Section 14 sets out that the National Assembly for Wales may give, or make arrangements for the giving of, financial assistance to any person for, or in connection with, the provision, or proposed provision of education or of educational services. Those powers are powers of the Welsh Ministers by virtue of paragraph 30 of Schedule 11 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

4. The decision making process

Whilst we appreciate that the decision to amalgamate the ring-fenced Gypsy and Traveller Grant in to the Education Improvement Grant was taken some time ago now we believe that there are some lessons to be learnt from the decision - making process that could address any negative impact going forward. We believe the following issues should be addressed:

- The failure of Welsh Government to carry out adequate Equality Impact Assessments and Children's Right Impact Assessments even when they had identified that a negative impact on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children was highly likely
- The lack of effective engagement and consultation with stakeholders i.e. children, young people, parents and professionals who work with the Gypsy Roma and Traveller community
- The need to properly review the evidence 'what works' in supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in education and update legislation, guidance, policy accordingly

4.1 Impact assessment process Under the Equality Act 2010 the Welsh Government have a duty to ensure that their actions will not affect any of the 'protected characteristic' groups disproportionality and do all they can to promote equality; under the Rights of Children and Young Persons Measure 2011 Ministers have to give 'due regard' to the rights under the UNCRC in any decision affecting children.

Impact assessments are the main tools for ensuring these duties have been considered and for reviewing the evidence as to the likely impact a decision or change of policy or practice will have on a particular group; stakeholders have also to be consulted as impact assessments are intended to *inform* decisions as well as to assist with *ongoing monitoring* of the impact of decisions.

We were therefore concerned from the start at an apparent lack of openness and transparency about the decision to amalgamate the grants; the draft budget document in Autumn 2014⁵ contained no reference to the detail of the proposed changes to the Gypsy and Traveller Grant; this was only to be found in the accompanying Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) <http://wales.gov.uk/funding/budget/draft-budget-2015-16/?lang=en> which stated:

*The grant for the education of Traveller's children and the minority ethnic achievement grant will merge together and then into the larger grant for school improvement. There will be a **decrease to the overall quantum of funding in this area**, this could **reduce the positive impact** on the **protected characteristic of race and those below 16**, however there is not expected to be any impact on any other protected characteristic. There is a strong correlation between socio-economic background and attainment, for example Gypsy and Traveller children are three times more likely to receive free school meals than the national average. (Page 21 our bold)*

At this point there were no further actions set out as to how any negative impact would be militated against or how the Minister or Welsh Government should seek to promote or safeguard the rights of this group of young people that they had themselves identified were likely to be negatively affected.

⁵ (<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/publications/141001-narrative-en.pdf>)

The later DfES Grants Rationalisation 2015-16 Impact on the Specific Grant for the Education of Gypsy and Traveller Children⁶ (prepared August 2014, revised April 2015 and likely written retrospectively) then offered us these worryingly general assurances against a negative impact on children and young people:

*However, new funding arrangements are being put in place to replace the discrete grant. **Arrangements will mitigate** against any negative impact.*

And against a negative impact on race:

*However, the impact **should be negligible** as these learners **should continue** to be supported through the new grant arrangements. (our bold)*

In our view Welsh Government have a duty to offer concrete actions which will ensure negative impact does not take place and also to continuously monitor the effect on protected groups – to our knowledge neither of these actions have happened.

We also believe that the government failed in its duty to promote children's rights and have due regard to the UNCRC; they have not demonstrated any evidence that the amalgamation of the grants was in the *best interests* (Article 3) of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children (or any other ethnic minority children); there was a failure to assess the impact on the Right to Education under Articles 28 and 29 and indeed the document was quite open in saying that it was primarily an administrative and money saving exercise that motivated the changes⁷. Given that and their own admission that a negative impact was likely they then failed to take or propose steps to either promote equality or to protect the rights of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children

4.2 Engagement with stakeholders There was a failure to engage with stakeholders throughout this process (by which we mean pupils and parents as well as professionals working with Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities). Not only is there a legal duty under the Equality Act to engage with people with 'protected characteristics', this is also a core part of the children's rights assessment process.

Effective consultation gives young people and others a voice in policy making and helps inform law and policy makers of the likely impact of the changes they propose on any affected groups. Welsh Government stated in their SIIA that there was no need to engage with stakeholders as '*the changes introduced are to the structure of funding arrangements previously administered to local authorities*' rather than a change of education policy per se

We requested face to face meetings with the then Minister for Education and Skills in writing twice and also asked for reassurance that consultation would take place; neither our or other organisations' requests were agreed to and no offers to facilitate consultation were taken up. Numerous letters were in fact sent from a variety of other projects and individual professionals yet none of the issues we raised have been addressed.

We were however concerned to see that two meetings were cited as consultations under Section 2 in the later Impact Assessment document; the first was the scheduled meeting of the GT and MEALEA Education Professionals Forum in November 2015 at which the plans were presented to members of the group. It is noted in the record of that meeting that many concerns were expressed

⁶ <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150519-incorporation-of-the-specific-grant-for-the-education-of-gypsy-and-traveller-children-in-the-education-improvement-grant-2015-16-en.pdf>

⁷ "The rationale for the change to these grant arrangements is to enable local authorities and regional consortia to reduce the bureaucracy of administering several smaller grants and offering greater flexibility around targeting resources at local priorities. Section 1 Equality Impact Assessment Template

however none of this was offered as evidence of impact by the Welsh Government. Of interest is that Travelling Ahead is a member of this forum in order to represent the views and interests of young people but we were specifically 'uninvited' by Welsh Government officials from this particular meeting.

Similar representations were made by attendees at the second meeting, in January 2015, of the annually scheduled meeting between the Minister and EALAW and again their concerns about the potential for impact on services and pupils have not been reflected in the impact assessment documents or acted upon

4.3 Reviewing the evidence When asked what evidence the decision to amalgamate the grants was taken on the Welsh Government stated that:

Despite the resources directed at the educational achievement of gypsy and traveller children, the rate of progress for some has not demonstrated sufficient improvement (Section 3 SIIA) and went on to say

The Welsh Government believes that based on the evidence a different approach is required and that local authorities need to take greater responsibility for improving the life chances for certain cohorts of these children, supported by a robust delivery framework. Within the new funding regime, local authorities will decide the level of financial investment they wish to make in this area from the Education Improvement Grant and explore other means of ensuring that their needs are met. (SIIA)

We are not sure how the Government has assessed the 'rate of progress' and believe there hasn't been enough attention to the evidence of 'what works' in supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children into and through school - much of this has been encapsulated in reports from Estyn; in the Moving Forward Guidance, and in Welsh Governments own 2014 research on Engaging Families.⁸

What we do know is that much of the best practice, policy and guidance had consistently **not** been embedded into mainstream education services; schools were still failing to implement recommendations from successive Estyn reports (2005 and 2011), and mainstream services schools were not always providing the essential mix of 'academic and pastoral' support' and family engagement that is needed leaving Traveller Education Services continuing to be relied upon to provide core support to many children who struggled to access mainstream provision in a consistent way.

Our work with young people, and what they tell us⁹, supports this position; whilst many children are now successfully attending and achieving in mainstream education there are a significant number either not accessing school at all or who feel that schools and teachers lack any understanding of their families' lives and their culture, who experience bullying, who feel that the curriculum isn't flexible or appropriate to their aspirations or who have dropped out of formal education and find it impossible to find a way back in.

The learning from those local authorities whose services **are** making a real difference to the attendance and achievement of young Gypsies, Roma and Travellers is not consistently applied across Wales leading to a very different level of support and approach depending on where you live.

⁸ Gypsy and Traveller Education: Engaging Gypsy and Traveller Families - A Research Report
Amber Fensham-Smith Welsh Government 2014

⁹ Report on Good Practice in Education Project. Travelling Ahead 2015

Given that, we are not at all convinced that a move towards a non-ring-fenced, non-directed grant which primarily goes to schools is the best way forward in supporting young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and would like to see a proper evaluation of what work is going on, best practice, and a more creative view of 'progress' that measures the distance travelled for many of these young people rather than solely their achievements at GCSE level

5. Consequences of removing the ring fenced grant

We believe that there are a number of consequences to removing the previously ring-fenced grant and replacing it with the general EIG without direction to local authorities on how to spend it. The following are our key concerns:

- That the majority of the grant is intended to go directly to schools
- The invisibility of an outcomes framework that *specifically encompass* Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils
- The loss of a central monitoring system that ensures adequate resources are allocated

5.1 Allocation to schools A particular aspect of this decision that worried us was the intention for the EIG to be allocated directly to schools. We note a percentage is now at the discretion of regional consortia but that the Cabinet Secretary stated again in November 10th's Committee scrutiny session of her intention to ensure that the majority, at least 80%, of the EIG should go to schools. The emphasis on 'all learners' in the EIG can lead to the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils being less recognised by schools with an accompanying lack of resources

The previous per-pupil grant generally supported centralised, flexible and local authority-wide services (usually the Traveller Education Service) that had knowledge, experience and relationships built up over many years with the GRT families in their areas and supported them to access schools or maintain educational links wherever they were living in the county or indeed in the country.

Schools just aren't in a position to undertake this sort of support with pupils who are 'travelling' as they may well be moving from one school to another or indeed not be in school at all. Whilst there are of course many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children who live in permanent accommodation and are fully engaged in mainstream education, a significant proportion of children and families are mobile, either by choice or through necessity; many still have no access to secure accommodation, either in housing or on a local authority or private site; they may be living on unauthorised or short term tolerated sites and moving frequently (being evicted) or be travelling for some or all of the year. School based support is really important – but if pupils move away from the catchment area then it's crucial that there is also support that can keep in touch and respond to families' changing circumstances. In one area where there is no official site available one family were moved several times a week for months a time – the TES link is crucial

Schools will of course generally only be working with pupils on school roll; many Traveller Education Services will also be working with children who are waiting for school places (timescales vary between local authorities) or who may have disengaged with education but with whom a link is kept to work towards re-engagement, a significant minority are registered as Electively Home Educated (EHE) and of course some young people are over school leaving age but wanting to access further education.

We don't see this work being resourced by individual schools and would argue that the additional support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils should not go into school budgets as much of the support needed isn't or can't be done by schools.

5.2 Outcomes framework We raised a number of concerns in writing about the removal of the ring-fenced grant with the then Minister for Education and Skills in November 2014 and again in March 2015; we asked for reassurances that the new EIG would specifically retain a focus on the support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. We were told by officials that an 'outcomes framework' was being developed and the Minister confirmed in writing that

For the first year of the grant, local authorities and consortia will be required to develop a series of outcome measures and headline activity to be agreed by Welsh Government.....

.....we will be scrutinising business plans for 2015-16 to ensure that consortia and authorities are considering carefully the needs of those children we know are not performing to their full potential in education

We will be scrutinising the outcome measures and alongside that will be working for a more robust, agreed and jointly developed outcomes framework to accompany the second and subsequent years of the grant.

*We expect these outcome measure to **explicitly encompass both minority ethnic and Gypsy Traveller learners**. While we have not ring fenced specific amounts within the overall grant, we will continue to be very clear that the needs of these learners must be addressed discretely. (our bold)*

In July 2015 officials in the Diverse Learners and Safeguarding team had confirmed to us that no Outcomes Framework had been published; that Regional Consortia were responsible for leading on developing these outcomes and we were being directed to local authorities if we had concerns about specific impact on services. In February 2016 an update from the Schools Management and Effectiveness Division stated:

I am unable to provide you with further information at the moment; however I trust you are engaged with Local Authorities, either directly or indirectly through the ADEW group which represents the interests of these learners. The EIG provides additional grant funding to improve outcomes for all learners and local authorities and their regional consortia are responsible, through their governance arrangements articulated in the National Body for Regional Working, for determining the appropriate resource (grants, core or other) to support delivery of their local, regional and national priorities for school improvement. Our national priorities will continue to focus on improvements for all learners, including those young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Since that date we have sought to unpick where in the Regional Consortia Business Plans lie the targets, monitoring and outcomes framework which would guarantee that support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils remain a focus. We have been unable to find mention of this group of pupils in any publically available document and cannot help but draw the conclusion that focus on services, support and monitoring outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children has simply disappeared from regional and national view.

5.3 Monitoring numbers With the introduction of the EIG the Welsh Government have now lost a centrally collated system that gave an overview of numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in Wales.

Collecting disaggregated data of this kind is a requirement of the UNCRC precisely because it enables government to monitor enjoyment of rights and to *effectively allocate resources*.

The numbers collected through the administration of the previous per-pupil grant consistently exceeded the data collected by PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) - and were considered to be the most accurate – Welsh Government themselves noted a discrepancy of 1,770 between the two sets of figures in 2011¹⁰ and this disparity continues. Ethnic monitoring by schools is recognised as needing to be improved and in addition many parents/ pupils don't wish to self-identify. Traveller Education Services were able to supply the larger figure to Welsh Government in the past due to their knowledge and links with local families who would identify to TES staff but not state their ethnicity on a school form. As already noted TES often work with children not on school roll and of course PLASC doesn't count these numbers either.

The numbers of Electively Home Educated children show a similar discrepancy - official data collated by Statistics Wales are recorded in just single figures for each year between 2011 – 2016¹¹; whilst a survey of local authority TES put the number of children registered as EHE (including alternative provision) at 77 across Wales¹²

Estyn also noted in 2011¹³ that the data is not generally accurate and has the potential to lead to inequalities in funding; we remain concerned that without more accurate figures then the regional consortia, local authorities and schools will not be in a position to accurately allocate resources to all the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in need of education support in their areas.

6. Impact on the levels of educational support available to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and Minority Ethnic children and their educational outcomes

6.1 Impact on resources Taking into consideration all the points raised above then we believe it is difficult for the 'lay person' to accurately assess the impact of merging the grants into the EIG precisely because the new grant is **not** ring- fenced and in the words of the Cabinet Secretary for Education *"The EIG, then, in a number of areas, looks to support a whole variety of work, because we're not dictating to people how they use it. So, it would be quite difficult to be able to pinpoint the exact impact. It's felt, Lynne, in whether we are reaching our targets at GCSE level. That's where we can ultimately see the success and the impact of that programme."*¹⁴

Independent research¹⁵ presented to the Welsh Government's BAGE Group in 2016 stated though that *'By the end of August 2015, the impact of these policy changes and funding reductions had resulted in a combined reduction of FTE specialist EMA and GT staff of -17.7%.'*

6.2 Impact on services Prior to the change in funding the old grant contributed to varying levels of support and approaches across different local authorities; some but not all through TES. So for

¹⁰ Travelling to a Better Future page 37 Welsh Government 2011

¹¹ Pupils Educated other than at School Statistics Wales 2015

¹² Gypsy and Traveller Education: Engaging Families. A survey of LA provision 2014

¹³ The education of Gypsy Traveller pupils: An update on provision in secondary schools - June 2011

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/education-gypsy-traveller-pupils-update-provision-secondary-schools-june-2011>

¹⁴ Transcript CYPE Committee Session with Cabinet Secretary for Education on Budget Scrutiny Senedd November 10 2016

¹⁵ Paper by Jonathan Brentall for the Budget Advisory Group on Equalities Spring 2016

example in one area children not attending school or who are EHE would be offered support but not in others. Some schools have a dedicated Gypsy and Traveller link teacher, others do not. Some local authorities offer a 'safe space' in school settings, alternatives to formal education, homework clubs on sites or dedicated support within mainstream school settings and others have no such provision. There are Traveller Education Services supported young peoples' participation in youth forums, Travelling Ahead events and citizenship activities whilst others played a key role in providing training and awareness raising or 'expert' advice for colleagues across the local authority and of course Traveller education services often play a crucial role in ensuring access to the universal services that families are entitled to but may struggle to engage with – health, youth provision, play, employment, family support

All of this work contributes to the support and educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils but without dedicated funding some local authorities may not prioritise or protect these services because they are not seen to directly link to the school improvement agenda – these services have a wider remit and impact.

Funding cuts are being felt across the education sector, anecdotally we are aware that cuts have impacted on the level of support in some local authorities i.e. in one area a staff of three working with families, primary school pupils and secondary/FE pupils respectively are now down to at one full time staff member – a consultation (not concluded by the LA) was carried out with parents and pupils to the effect that one of the posts had to be cut - it's not been made at all clear if the cuts required were a direct result of the amalgamation of the grants but fundamentally the resources previously allocated to the Traveller Education Service have **not** been safeguarded.

In another local authority the small TES team have in fact had a slight increase in staffing following a complaint from a school that they needed additional resources to support a Gypsy or Traveller pupil – whilst this is obviously positive it does make one wonder if a parent or pupil had asked for more support if the same result would have been achieved?

6.3 Impact on outcomes There are also problems with evaluating the impact on educational outcomes at this relatively early stage –many of the outcomes achieved by pupils in this last academic year will have been the result of many years of work and varying levels of support; any impact on 'outcomes' will become more obvious in subsequent years. As previously noted in order to get a clearer picture of the effectiveness of services and different models of support then there is a need to broaden out the formal outcomes that are recorded to reflect distance travelled and progress made by pupils.

During a consultation meeting at a local level parents and pupils (current and former) made their views clear to council officers that the existing relationships, trust and support over many years from that TES had been the crucial factor in supporting their access to education, attendance **and** achievement - without that crucial mix there is a risk that many pupils simply won't go to school.

This would of course result in those children not being on school roll, registered as Electively Home Educated and subsequently no outcomes will be recorded for them at all.

7. The effectiveness of other Welsh Government policies and strategies for supporting the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Minority Ethnic children

We believe that overall there is now a lack of relevant policy, guidance or a strategic approach that focusses on supporting the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in the ways that we know have been most successful.

We have concerns that the new emphasis in school improvement on 'all learners' can mean that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children's needs are overlooked and we know that schools who receive the majority of the EIG (and all of the Pupil Deprivation Grant) are not always in the best position, able, or willing, to engage and deliver the most appropriate support to Gypsy and Traveller children and their families. Welsh Government's statement that 'its time for a change of approach' and wanting local authorities to 'take more responsibility' for some groups doesn't in itself make it happen!

We also believe that of the education programmes and strategies that exist there is a lack of evidence to show that they consistently benefit these learners and we suspect that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people are often 'missed' from these programmes and don't benefit from many universal services as they should

7.1 Guidance and policy In 2011 Estyn published 'The Education of Gypsy Traveller pupils: An update on provision in secondary schools'; a summary of their findings included that:

'Although traveller education staff often provide high-quality support to schools and the traveller community, the attendance rates of Gypsy Traveller pupils and their attainment levels still remain low. This is often because of the negative attitudes of many Gypsy Traveller parents to formal secondary education. Few schools have policies or practices that specifically address the needs or views of these pupils and their parents, and nor do they offer a curriculum that actively promotes Gypsy Traveller culture.'

'Too few local authorities and schools use attendance, exclusions or attainment data to measure the impact of their support for Gypsy Traveller pupils. National data collected on Gypsy Traveller pupils is not always accurate and this can lead to inequalities in funding. Most local authorities use aspects of the Welsh Assembly Government's circular 'Moving Forward – Gypsy Traveller Education' to inform their policy and provision, but its overall impact has been limited.'

Estyn also noted that only **one of the five** recommendations made in their report of six years earlier in 2005¹⁶ on '

Five years later we are unsure that many more of those 2005 recommendations would have been addressed particularly those around school policy, curriculum and data collection. We remain concerned that the Welsh Government guidance for schools and local authorities Moving Forward - Gypsy Traveller Education (March 2008) is now so out of date that schools and local authorities no longer use it to guide them in their practice with Gypsy and Traveller pupils and that it should be reviewed and updated to provide better guidance to schools and education providers

The move seems very much to be towards 'all pupils' rather than acknowledging that there are particular experiences and barriers that may exist for Gypsy and Traveller pupils. Schools have stated that they are unwilling for example to offer flexible timetables or curriculum (both contained in the guidance) to Gypsy or Traveller pupils as this would result in a perceived difference of treatment of

¹⁶ Estyn (2005) The education of gypsy traveller learners: a survey of provision made by schools and local authorities to meet the needs of gypsy traveller learners. <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/6026/>

one group. This ignores the evidence that bespoke, flexible approaches not only work but are part and parcel of overcoming barriers so that people can enjoy equal access to services – ‘inclusion’ seems to have come to mean treating everyone ‘the same’

7.2 Pupil Deprivation Grant In his correspondence to us the Minister for Education and Skills referenced the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) as a resource, due to be increased, that would benefit Gypsy and Traveller learners in mitigation of any losses from the old grant. There is evidence that around 73% of Gypsy/ Roma / Traveller learners are eligible for Free School Meals¹⁷ which would make the PDG a very relevant programme for improving their outcomes.

All schools must publish online their PDG allocation and an outline of their plans to use the funding to improve outcomes for deprived children. A mapping report 2015-16 carried out for Travelling Ahead¹⁸ examined a selection of school plans setting out their PDG expenditure and found no mention in any of additional support for Gypsy and Traveller learners per se. At the time Ipsos MORI and the WISERD team at Cardiff University were undertaking an evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant over the period April 2013 to July 2015 which did not intend to include any information on the experiences of, or benefits for, any particular sub-groups within the e-FSM cohort.

As part of our mapping exercise we looked for examples of actual spend and examples of good practice that benefitted Gypsy and Traveller pupils; Welsh Government officials were not aware of particular projects funded under the PDG benefiting Gypsies and Traveller learners although they reiterated the position that if a Gypsy and Traveller pupil was e-FSM or LAC they could get extra support from the PDG. In talking to practitioners we found just one really good example of a Communities First team using some of their allocation of the match funded PDG to provide additional support for Gypsies and Travellers to improve basic skills, parental engagement and re-integration to mainstream schools.

7.3 14- 19 Learning Pathways The 14-18 Learning Pathways monies were amongst those subsumed into the new Education Improvement grant. We don’t have particular evidence as to how that previously ring-fenced spend was or is now allocated but we wanted to make the point that many Gypsy and Traveller pupils who haven’t made the transition to secondary school do look to re-engage at around the age of 14 years. This is the stage when they are often seeking opportunities for a more vocational education that they feel is more appropriate for their aspirations for the future.

These young people are likely to be registered as Electively Home Educated by their parents - the EIG grant is primarily held by schools and fundamentally this makes it problematic for young people not on school roll to access this funding.

Anecdotally then, in one area the Traveller Education staff have supported 4 young people to access and attend college placements but the funding for this doesn’t come from their local school but from the (already limited) traveller education budget. In another area where young people have requested that they attend college now that they have turned 14 they are unable to access financial support for this unless they register with the local school, something they, and their families, are not happy to do as there is no guarantee that the school will either accept them or support their attendance at vocational education.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/deprivation-and-education-the-evidence-on-pupils-in-england-foundation-stage-to-key-stage-4>

¹⁸ A mapping report from Travelling Ahead: To what extent are the Welsh Government tackling poverty and attainment programmes reaching and benefiting Gypsy and Traveller communities in Wales? Unpublished 2015

Re-engaging at 14 is a key opportunity for these young people and one that local education authorities should look to seek a positive and creative response to – we are not sure that the way in which the new EIG is allocated promotes this approach

7.4 Rewriting the Future Back in September 2014 the Welsh Government launched Re-writing the Future: raising ambition and attainment in Welsh Schools. While the strategy makes no specific mention of Gypsy and Traveller learners the accompanying Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) notes that: *'the proportion of pupil's eligible for free school meals varies by ethnic group. Compared to the average, high proportions of Gypsies and Traveller pupils are e-FSM'*. The assessment continues: *Re-write the future will help to promote equality of opportunities for a number of groups including Gypsies and Travellers'* but neither the EIA or Rewriting the Future itself, gave an indication of how this might happen.

We note that Re-write the Future is to be updated this year and would recommend that specific consideration is given to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in this strategy

**For further information please contact: Trudy Aspinwall Senior Programme Officer
Travelling Ahead**

Email: t.aspinwall@savethechildren.org.uk Tel: 02920 803267