



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE 16 September 2004

Report of the Director of Education

Community Cohesion – Traveller Communities

RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Romany Gypsies and Travellers of Irish Heritage are recognised minority ethnic communities under the Race Relations Act 1976.
- 2.2 The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 gives public bodies a statutory duty to positively promote race equality. This requires authorities to have due regard to the need, in everything they do, to:
 - tackle racial discrimination
 - promote equality of opportunity
 - promote good relations between people from different racial groups.
- 2.3 Public bodies (including local authorities, the Environment and police authorities) are required to promote good race relations, including the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and to ensure that these communities are integrated into 'race equality' initiatives under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
- 2.4 The "Guidance on Community Cohesion 2002" from the Local Government Association highlights education as one of the best ways to introduce positive values because the opinions formed by young people will often be those they carry with them into adulthood. Education, including pre-school activities, should bring with it enlightenment, knowledge, tolerance, understanding and appreciation of others.

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Background papers:

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Implications

Appendix 2 – Community Cohesion – Traveller Communities

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1 No direct financial implications.

Legal

- 2 None.

Personnel

- 3 No direct implications.

Corporate Themes and Priorities

- 4 The initiatives undertaken contribute to the themes and priorities of the Council as follows:
 - tackling underachievement in schools
 - enhancing our community leadership role through partnership working and listening to, and communicating with, the public
 - improving customer service through a customer focused culture.

COMMUNITY COHESION – TRAVELLER COMMUNITIES

Background

The Gypsy/Romani Community

1. It is believed that Gypsies originated from northern Indian nomadic tribes and that they began to move west in the ninth and tenth centuries, across the Middle East, into Europe. Romani, the language of the Rom, is derived from Sanskrit. Words and phrases from the Romani language are still used by Gypsy/Romani Travellers today. Records show that there have been Gypsies living in Britain since the sixteenth century.
2. Gypsy Travellers comprise by far the largest community of Travellers in Britain and also in the county of Derbyshire. However, in Derby they represent the third largest identifiable Traveller community. There would seem to have been a decline in the visible Gypsy population residing in Derby over the last few years. The reasons for this are varied and complex. Many Gypsy Travellers find it easier to sustain their cultural identity and community cohesion by living on official Traveller sites and there are sites in neighbouring Derbyshire. Gypsy Travellers living on permanent sites are, more often, accepted as part of the broader local communities in which they live and their children attend the local schools. Many Gypsy/Romani Travellers are also keen to purchase their own land so that they can maintain their cultural traditions.
3. There has been some general reluctance on the part of some housed Gypsy/Romani families to declare their ethnicity, often because of fears of discrimination or not being accepted by the wider communities in which they now live. The experiences of Gypsy/Romani persecution both recently and during the Second World War have meant that some Travellers do not wish their ethnicity to be recorded. However, it is estimated that the number of families that descend from or have connections with the Gypsy/Romani community in Derby is much higher than statistics would suggest.

Travellers of Irish Heritage

4. Travellers of Irish Heritage have a long history of living in Britain. The now derogatory term 'tinker' which actually means 'tin crafter' first appears in written documents in the twelfth century and in the thirteenth century laws were passed in England to curtail the movements of the 'wandering Irish'. Travellers of Irish Heritage speak English although among themselves their speech will include Gaelic and some words from the ancient languages of Gammon/Shelter.
5. There are no official sites in Derby and fewer opportunities for Travellers to encamp unofficially than a few years ago. Consequently, many Travellers live in houses or find other permanent stopping places particularly during the winter months. However, it would be inaccurate to regard the majority of families living in houses in Derby as 'settled' because many travel during the spring and summer months. Like Gypsy Travellers, most people prefer to be self-employed. Many Travellers still deal in trades that require a 'one off' service such as carpet trading, window fitting, block paving, and furniture selling. Consequently, many travellers move as part of a seasonal pattern to find new work or casual work opportunities. There has been an increase in the number of Travellers travelling from Ireland over the last fifty years.

Increasing mechanisation in Ireland has eliminated the need for many of the traditional skills and much of the basis for the traditional nomadic way of life. Consequently, many Travellers of Irish Heritage both in Britain and Ireland have moved to urban areas in search of new sources of income.

6. There are some clear comparisons in the life-styles and cultures of Travellers of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Romani Travellers especially in the rituals of cleanliness and there has been some intermarriage between the two communities. However, Travellers of Irish Heritage are not Gypsy/Romani Travellers and understandably object when their ethnicity is incorrectly ascribed. There are very strong kinship and family ties within the community. Families generally travel together in extended family groups and when they 'settle' in houses often prefer to live close to other family members. Many 'settled' Travellers of both communities continue to keep a trailer (caravan) for travelling.

The term 'Traveller' is acceptable to both of these communities.

East European Roma

7. European Roma have the same cultural origins as Gypsy/Romani Travellers settled in Britain for hundreds of years. The East European Roma community in Derby is mainly from Bosnia-Herzegovina, part of the former Yugoslavia. There are also a small number of Roma people arriving from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Kosovo who have come to Britain in recent years to seek asylum.
8. The Roma community in Derby was established almost ten years ago under a programme organised by the United Nations with the support of the United Kingdom Government to negotiate the release of people from the Bosnia-Herzegovina region following a bitter fought war. Only a relatively small number of people in the Bosnian community are Roma and relationships between Bosnian Roma and the rest of the community are very good. The Bosnian Roma community are recognised as members of the broader Bosnian community although they comprise a distinct cultural group with their own traditions and language. Roma people have recognised the need to maintain their own culture and language and this has been supported by the Bosnian community.

Progress made in Traveller Community Cohesion

1. In January Gypsy Travellers were included in the council's corporate commemoration of the Holocaust. A member of the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group joined the service at the Cathedral and read a poem. It is estimated that approximately half a million Gypsies were murdered in concentration camps during the Second World War. There have also been subsequent persecutions of Gypsies in Europe.
2. The Osmaston Housing survey included consultation with Travellers and their comments have been included in the study.
3. Traveller families participated in a Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) project in which they contributed to a book about their experiences.
4. The Education Service ensures that links exist with other agencies, including the Connexions Service, so that young people can access this service irrespective of

attendance at school under the provisions for 'hard to reach' groups. These initiatives include the Roma community

5. The Education Service has a specialist worker who has formed close links with the Bosnian Roma community and, as well as undertaking classroom support, networks with other areas of service such as Social Services.
6. Close links exist between the Education Service's Traveller Education Team and other areas of service to promote access to other services
7. The Bosnian Roma take part in sports and leisure activities organised by the Bosnian Community. These activities have been supported by the Education Service particularly when they were first being established.
8. The traditional Roma festival of St George's Day was celebrated by the Roma community in the Bosnian Community Centre.