

By: Managing Director (Children, Families and Education)  
To: Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Board – 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2008  
Subject: Update: Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month 2008  
Classification: Unrestricted – for information

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Summary: This report updates members on the activities that took place in Kent to celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month in 2008.

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### **Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month – June 2008**

1. (1) In January 2008 the Department for Children, Schools and Families designated June 2008 as the first Gypsy Roma Traveller Month. This reflects the recognition by Ofsted and other that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are the most marginalised groups who continue to suffer extreme levels of prejudice and discrimination.

The aims of the GRTHM were to:-

- Explain the history and culture of the communities
- To challenge myths and break down barriers
- To celebrate the richness that these communities contribute to everyday life

(2) Following a series of national meetings facilitated by the DCSF, it was agreed that planning would be led by community members on a regional basis. The contact for the South East is Jake Bowers. Kent was represented at regional network planning meetings by an MCAS member of staff and members of the local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community also attended. This enabled the exchange of information and ideas for the implementation within the region. 'Education Leeds'<sup>1</sup> received funding from the DCSF to establish a website to promote Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month ([www.gypsyromatravellerhistorymonth.co.uk](http://www.gypsyromatravellerhistorymonth.co.uk))

(3) In Kent, schools were encouraged to take part in a national poster competition led by Education Leeds launched in the House of Lords and endorsed by Lord Adonis, Parliamentary Under Secretary of state for Schools and Learners.

(4) Locally MCAS planned to use the event to draw attention to the projects and developments already in place to promote a greater understanding of Gypsy Roma and Traveller history and achievements, for example, curriculum resources to address the absence of factual information relating to the genocide of Gypsies and Roma in the Holocaust.

(5) CFE Equality and Diversity Strategy Group and the Equalities Lead Officer Group were made aware of the Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month. Members of

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<sup>1</sup> Education Leeds is a company contracted to provide education services by Leeds City Council. The Traveller Education for Leeds is provided by 'Education Leeds'.

KCC Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Board were briefed at their meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2008.

## **Activities within Kent**

2. (1) Within the SE Region Jake Bowers co-ordinated the production and publication of a GRT History Month magazine with funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families. A copy will be circulated at the meeting for members' information.

(2) Within Kent Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month was the catalyst for a whole series of events focused on bringing communities and people together to celebrate and develop a better understanding of history. Events included:

- 15 primary and secondary schools hosted major events, many of which included members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community either in the planning, facilitation or delivery of an aspect of the programme;
- KCC Libraries & Archives hosted displays, story telling and school visits in a number of towns including Cranbrook, Edenbridge, Gravesend, Herne Bay, Margate, New Ash Green, Rusthall, Sittingbourne, Stanhope in Ashford and Swanley. Displays in some libraries also included material from the KCC archive.
- KCC Youth Service and MCAS hosted creative activities at the Emmanuel Baptist Church Youth Club in Gravesham.
- Hawkhurst Film Club promoted a showing of the film 'Kino'.
- Romany Life Centre in Cranbrook and the South East Romany Museum in Marden held Open Days as part of their on-going programme of events.
- Provision of a display by KCC MCAS at the Kent Police College focused on local GRT History.

## **Promoting Community Cohesion**

3. (1) Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month is one of a number of initiatives supportive of KCC and schools statutory duty to promote community cohesion. Schools have had a statutory duty to promote community cohesion since September 2007 and will be inspected on the implementation of the duty from September 2008.

(2) Recent guidance to schools and local authorities<sup>2</sup> defines community cohesion as working towards 'a society in which there're is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community.'

## **4. Recommendations**

Members are asked to:-

- (a) Note the report for information.
- (b) Consider at a future point plans for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month 2009.

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<sup>2</sup> DCSF and DCLG: Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion2007

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