

# London Gypsy and Traveller Forum

14<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

## Venue

London City Hall. Committee Room 4.

## Attendance

Brenda Downes- Lewisham, Matt Brindley- Traveller Movement, Debby Kennett- LGTU, Georgina English- ECHR, Geraldine Lindsay- LGTU, Mena Mongan- LGTU Trustee, Sherrie Smith- Sherries Flowers, Rose Palmer- Kensington and Chelsea, Lorraine Sweeny- LGTU, Michael Reilly- Hackney, Daniel Mongan- Hackney, Harriet Ballance- STAG, Anthony Howard, Simon Shaw- GLA, Ilinca Diaconescu – LGTU, Emma Milne – LGTU

## Chaired by

Tracie Giles – LGTU,

## Apologies

S. Mutter – Redbridge, N. Wilson – Kingston, Lizzy Lenferna De La Motte- Richmond and Kingston, John Wilson

### **1. Minutes and Matters Arising:**

Minutes were agreed from February 2015.

### **2. Presentation: Mayoral Election and Introduction to Employment and Training Theme- Ilinca Diaconescu**

Ilinca presented the census statistics around qualification, economic activity and occupation and highlighted some of the issues with access to employment and training. These included issues of cultural awareness and discrimination, as well as traditional jobs and trades disappearing. She also highlighted that there is not enough data available, and that a lack of evidence normally leads to bad policies.

Ilinca concluded by highlighting what the current Mayor is doing in this area. She mentioned the London Enterprise Panel, the London Plan, the Mayor's Economic Development Strategy and the Mayor's Apprenticeship scheme. What should we be asking the next mayor to do?

### **3. Presentation: Sherrie's Flowers- Sherrie Smith**

Sherrie has had a florist shop in Hertfordshire for the last ten years. Sherrie gave some background about how she started up and then talked about the charity that she has set up from the shop premises. She is currently teaching women floristry and beauty skills to increase their confidence and employability. She now has also been awarded funding to open a larger training school including a coffee shop. She is a believer in self-employment and promotes this to the women who attend her

training. She says she has learnt everything about her business bit-by-bit believes that her story can encourage others to do the same.

She said that she sees that the Gypsy and Traveller communities have always needed to evolve in order to survive and that the situation now is no different, especially now that traditional trades are becoming less of an option. "We need to develop types of education which suit us".

Discussion:

- GL: Issues of cultural barriers to employment such as being 'scandalised'
- SS: The trainees in the shop are working everyday with members of the public who come in to buy stuff and gradually these barriers are being broken down through experience
- MM: Girls around us would love this
- RP: There are some restrictions on people travelling too far and on their own- have you thought about bringing training to sites rather than people coming to you?
- SS: We want to have a year in these premises and make it self-sufficient first and then look into delivering training at other locations.

#### **4. Presentation: LGTU youth training introduction- Lorraine Sweeney**

Lorraine gave an introduction to the youth training that LGTU runs in Hackney. It started as just providing training for young men from 2002-2004. It is currently for both young men and young women. It includes college taster courses, some voluntary placements, embedded literacy and numeracy and it is an accredited training course so the trainees leave with a qualification.

#### **5. Presentation: Experience of attending a Building Lives apprenticeship- Daniel Mongan and Michael Reilly**

Daniel and Michael were at different stages in their apprenticeships when the funding got cut to the scheme and they ended up leaving with no qualifications. They were both on the path to achieving their NVQ level 2 and gaining a CSCS card. They both reflected on the disappointing and frustrating experience they'd had. They felt they put themselves out there and ultimately had spent a lot of time on something which in the end didn't come to anything.

SS: Would you feel confident to go self-employed. You have learnt lots of skills from this experience, could you advertise in a paper and get your own work on the go?

#### **6. Presentation: LGTU adult training- Emma Milne and Mena Mongan**

Emma showed the Second Chance film made about LGTU's adult Literacy and IT training which has been running for two years. In the film some women who have been attending the training gave their reflections on the experience.

Mena then talked about her experience of the training and the difference it has made in her life. She talked about how she is now employed by the NHS and has control of her own income.

## **7. Presentation: GLA Economy Committee- Fiona Twycross**

Fiona gave a presentation about the Economy Committee, of which she is chair, and how it works as well as what they are seeking to achieve. She said that they have a lot to do with skills and employment and have a particular focus on young people. This has led to them doing lots of work on apprenticeships- an area in which London lags behind the rest of the UK. The Mayor had promised 250,000 apprenticeships by 2016, but this is not going to happen- Why?:

-Large firms are the ones who can support apprentices, but they tend to use unpaid internships instead, so the economy committee has learned that it needs to be doing more to encourage large firms to take on apprentices

-The Majority of apprenticeships in London are in Health and Business admin- the building industry for example has quite a low level of apprenticeships. More needs to be done to ensure that apprenticeships are spread across a range of industries.

- Employers don't always recognise the value of apprenticeships.

- There needs to be better careers advice. Across London there needs to be academic and vocational careers advice which exposes young people to all post- 16 pathways, including apprenticeships.

### Discussion

BD: Lewisham has no site, and this has a big effect on access to education and skills training. The different committees such as housing education and employment need to join together otherwise it won't work.

FT: Access to education is an issue across all families in temporary accommodation so they do need to look into it.

LS: There is a lack of confidence to access apprenticeships. Some money should be invested in grassroots organisations that can provide stepping stone courses to help people access the next stage of training.

GE: has anyone talked about TfL apprenticeships.

FT: These have academic requirements such as GCSEs. We need to be going one stage further back so as to provide opportunities for those without qualifications too.

SS: Need to be careful not to insult people's intelligence by asking them to go back and do GCES's, but instead be providing practical apprenticeships.

FT: we know that there's an issue with a lack of practical apprenticeships. We need to make sure we come at this from the right direction

## **8. Group discussions- what do we want to ask the mayoral candidates? What points shall we put in the manifesto around employment and skills?**

We broke into groups to discuss what we wanted to ask from the new mayor around employment and skills.

Discussions included themes of raising awareness of discrimination community members face from employers- there has also been experience of this whilst on apprenticeships. This needs to be tackled to give people confidence to access courses, apprenticeships and employment.

Also that more could be done in terms of evidence gathering, and that community members should be encouraged to 'tick the GRT box'

There was mention of ring fencing some apprenticeships for the community, and taking positive action to fill them.

It was discussed that Gypsies and Travellers are highlighted as a target group in terms of EU funding for youth employment. This mention needs to be turned into a more targeted plan. One way of doing this could be finding a way for grassroots organisations to access some of this funding, rather than it only being open to big consortiums which don't have any experience in this area.

Also people mentioned wanting to see representation of grassroots organisations and charities on the London Enterprise panel and the formation of a working group on equality as part of this.

#### **MANIFESTO POINTS ON EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS**

- 1. Recognise and address the discrimination Gypsies and Travellers face from many employers and apprenticeship providers**
- 2. Diversify apprenticeship opportunities to better suit the needs and skills of the Gypsy and Traveller communities and provide targeted support to allow members of the communities access apprenticeships**
- 3. Develop representation of grassroots organisations on the London Enterprise Panel and establish a working group on equality.**