

London Gypsy and Traveller Forum

17th September 2015.

Venue

Esmee Fairbairn, Kings Place

Attendance

Rose McCarthy – ALERT, Amy Rogers, Val Smith- L.B.Havering, Farah Hussain- GLA Labour Group, Viola Petrella- Healthwatch Newham, Brian Hanley- Mind Yourself, Grantley Bispham- LB Tower Hamlets, Mark Haythorne- Surrey CC, Nathalie Wilson- Kingston Council, Rose Palmer- RB Kensington and Chelsea, Shelley Eugene- Homerton Hospital, Cleone Henry – LB Merton, Marin Mahoney- Old Willow Close, Patrick O'Donnell- Stable Way, Sue Mutter- Redbridge, Hilda Brasil- Surrey CC, Kathleen Ryan- STAG, Matthew Brindley- Traveller Movement, Noel Baxter – Southwark CCG, Helen Bedford- NHS, Anthony Howard- Cambridge, Clemmie James- LGTU, Miranda Waterworth- Ealing, Owen McCarthy , Emma Milne- LGTU, Ilinca Diaconescu- LGTU, Debby Kennett- LGTU, Sarah Clarke- Hounslow

Chaired by

Tracie Giles – LGTU,

Apologies

1. Minutes and Matters Arising:

Minutes were agreed from May 2015.

2. Presentation: New Planning Policy for Travellers Sites- Ilinca Diaconescu

Ilinca gave a summary of the consultation and the changes that came out on the 31st of August. The main points covered were:

- What are the changes?
- More Green belt and Open Space protections
- 'Large Scale' unauthorised developments
- What does this mean?:
 - o The need to demonstrate a nomadic lifestyle
 - o Immediate impact on those applying for planning permission
 - o Uncertainty around council site provision
- Further Changes :
 - o Housing act definition change to bring it in line
 - o Replacing G&T Accommodation Needs Assessment guidance

Discussion:

- AR: will people on permanent sites be evicted?

- MB: It will not have an immediate effect impact on those living on sites now. The real impact will be generational, and it will be the next generation who will feel it.
- HB: How do we challenge the definition? They already do what they want in Needs assessments anyway.
- DK: The real key now is to stop them changing the Housing Act definition as well.
- FH: Was there much political opposition? Will Local Authorities have to publish how they will interpret the changes?
- ID: Mentioned the Lib Dem Minister who stopped the original announcement
- Po'D: what are these supposed privileges that Travellers are supposed to be getting in the current planning system?
- MB: Traveller sites are actually 15% less likely to get planning permission on Greenbelt land. Also unauthorised sites have decreased from 2000 onwards. There's lots of grounds for a legal challenge.
- EM: keep to set up a working group to think about how to move forwards with this together. Will email round the list to begin discussions.
- HB: Parish Councils are good places to start. Make sure you're in the local plan.

3. Community Reflections: Main Health concerns facing the community

Rose McCarthy:

From what she sees in the Irish Traveller Community is that the main worry currently is problems with drugs and alcohol.

- It effects nearly every family
- People are private about it and try and sort it out themselves so they don't access services for it
- Then it becomes an emergency and people are first given help when they are in A&E but this is crisis intervention rather than lasting support
- Families are frightened about which services may get involved if they seek help eg will social services turn up.
- There must be some kind of service which could be developed to fill this gap?

Hilda Brasil:

It's the same in the English Gypsy Community. G&T's need to take some responsibility and there needs to be some education for parents about what signs to look out for, what different drugs are and what they do so you can tell when someone is using them. There should be better knowledge in the community.

Amy Rogers:

A lot of this education goes on in schools as part of the curriculum so maybe the lack of knowledge is linked to lower school attendance rates in the community.

The fear of social service is long standing and leads to issues accessing lots of services including mental health and things to do with a mother's health or anything to do with a child's health for fear of them being taken away.

Tracie Giles;

The issues with drugs and alcohol in the community is linked to the big problems with mental health. It's all linked to what's happened to the community in the last generation or two- taking away of livelihoods and way of life.

Marian Mahoney:

Anxiety and mental health issues. For young people I see boredom as one of the main issues and this has come about from the changes to their lifestyle. Where they used to be out looking after the horses and doing jobs together they now are left to fill their time.

Also midwives and other healthworkers often won't come onto the site because of stigma or fear. People need to speak up about what's going on.

Pat O'Donnell:

There could be better knowledge about drugs and mental health so everyone knows what they are looking out for. We've got health visitors who come onto site and that works well.

4. Presentation: Health in the Gypsy and Traveller Community- Ilinca Diaconescu

Ilinca presented some of the current evidence and statistics around health issues facing the community using a mixture of sources including the census and reports from FFT. She also highlighted some factors which have been identified as contributing to the health inequalities the community faces; Accommodation, access to services, discrimination, employment, education, family circumstances, changes to the health system.

Ilinca then went on to outline the health system in London and the different bodies/organisations which are part of the overall picture. The simplified version included; Local Authorities (hold most responsibility for health and well-being), CCGs, Service providers, local community healthwatch. She also talked about the example of JSNAs and how they are meant to work. She pointed out that of all 33 London boroughs only 2 have chapters on G&Ts in their JSNA.

5. Presentation: NHS Data Collection- Matthew Brindley

In 2012 TM did some research on primary care trusts to see if they were monitoring G&Ts at all. They said that the reason that they couldn't monitor was because, despite being included in the census, there was no entry in the NHS dictionary. TM followed this up, including asking questions in parliament, but they were told it wouldn't be added to the dictionary as this would cost £1,000,000. In the last 6 months EHRC has been pushing the issue and the NHS have now said that it will happen. However it might take up to 2 years. When it does happen though it will hopefully provide us with better data and more evidence to support arguments for action on the issue.

HB: is there local monitoring?

MB: Some ad hoc local data collection but nothing on a national/official level.

6. Presentation: Kingston JSNA- Nathalie Wilson

Nathalie has been asked to do a 'deep dive' on G&Ts in Kingston for thier JSNA. She asked the group for advice on how to ask the right questions on sites to get the right information?

DK: contact FTT as they have done lots of work on this

AR: How will yo make contact with housed G&Ts?

HB: I can help you do that

7. Presentation- Healthwatch Newham- Viola Petrella

Viola laid out what a Healthwatch does; they are designed to gather the views of service users and feed this back to service providers and CCGs. IN Newham they ran a consultation recently with the Roma Support Group. One of the main things which came out of that was that language was a large barrier to Roma community access healthcare. Ever since the translation service had been cut there was a breakdown in communication- and there was no information being passed on about the service which had been set u p to replace it so people weren't accessing it.

8. Group Discussions – Health points to put to Mayoral Candidates

Questions that the groups discussed:

- 1) What can we do at a local level?
 - When are your local CCG meeting- find out if you can send someone to it
 - Get G&Ts into every London JSNA
 - Training and sharing good practice; if we do something with someone that works well share that information with each other
 - Doing local awareness raising projects
- 2) What do we want to say to the Mayoral candidates?
 - Prevention; Focus on activities and sport and make these about inclusion rather than segregation
 - Ask candidates about their perceptions and understanding of G&T communities
 - Ask them to recognise G&Ts as distinct groups
 - Ask them to complete health needs assessments
 - Set up programmes to raise cultural awareness for service providers- eg through colleges such as nurses and doctors colleges.
 - Gather more evidence on G&T health issues

MANIFESTO POINTS ON HEALTH

