

The Highland Council
ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
21 August 2013

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| Agenda Item | 10. |
| Report No | ACS/70/13 |

Education Services for Gypsy/Traveller Families - Session 2012/13

Report by Director of Health and Social Care

Summary

This report summarises the work of the Interrupted Learning Development Officer's work with Gypsy/Traveller families in Highland during session 2012 – 2013.

1. Background

- 1.1 This school session has highlighted a continued positive response from Gypsy/Traveller children, families and schools. The majority of families are engaging with school whilst they are in the area and parents comment positively on the support given and on the achievements of their children.
- 1.2 Using the Highland Practice Model, different approaches are used to meet the needs of individual families to maintain good relationships, encourage attendance and support children's needs whilst families are staying in the area.
- 1.3 The families fall into the following categories:
- *Travelling* - families who visit an area and attend school
 - *Settled* - families who stay in a house and rarely travel
 - *Travelling/Settled* - families who stay in Highland, either on site or in a house, and travel regularly
 - *Settled/Travelling* - families who have a 'permanent' address in Highland, either on site or in a house and occasionally travel
 - *Showground* families, who work within the showground community and are termed as *Occupational Travellers*.
- 1.4 There was one child enrolled in school as Roma Gypsy.
- 1.5 The total numbers of traveller children known to us in session 2012 – 2013 were as follows:

| Nur 3 | Nur 4 | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 | S5 | TOTAL |
|-------|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| 10 | 16 | 12 | 21 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 11 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 133 |

- 1.6 These children and families are supported to access education by the authority's Interrupted Learning Development Officer.

2. Sites and Schools Attended

- 2.1 The schools attended are evenly distributed throughout the Mid, West and South areas, with a smaller number in the North area.
- 2.2 Local authority sites can be found at the Longman, Inverness, Spean Bridge, Newtonmore and Kentallen
- 2.3 There is a facility at the Longman site that can be accessed for nursery, secondary and occasional primary provision for children not in mainstream education. Two sessions a week are offered to nursery children while at the site. This allows for early links with families and eases the transition to P1.
- 2.4 Attendance at mainstream is strongly recommended to families from P1, as it is at nursery and secondary stages. However, short term teaching sessions are provided for primary aged children who are on the Longman site for relatively short periods of time. For secondary age children, not accessing mainstream schools while at the site, 2 – 3 sessions a week are run with a focus on individual needs and reinforcement of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- 2.5 A few Travelling families stay on tourist sites during the summer season and occasionally access mainstream school and the service. Private and tourist sites used by Gypsy/Traveller families can be found at Beaully (Lovat Bridge), Inverness (Bught Park) and Bunchrew Caravan Site near Inverness.
- 2.6 There are Occupational Traveller yards / showground sites at Invergordon, Inverness, Nairn and Fort William. Visiting showground families have not accessed school this past session in Highland. Due to the economic climate, there appears to be less travelling by showground families.
- 2.7 There have been a number of unauthorised encampments around Highland, particularly in the Inverness and surrounding areas, but also in Dingwall, Alness and Wick. More families attended school last session from unauthorised encampments than previously.
- 2.8 Most families who do not access school from unauthorised encampments are only in the area for a short time, or it has been close to school holidays. While we can never have totally accurate figures for the number of families with whom we have no contact, the well-established contacts that the Development Officer Interrupted Learning has with families, ensures that we have a strong baseline for our figures.

3. Looked After and Accommodated Children

- 3.1 One looked after and accommodated child attended Merkinch Primary, Inverness and Macdiarmid Primary, Isle of Skye; one child attended each of Strathconon, Marybank and Sleat primary schools; 3 children attended Merkinch Primary and Central Primary, Inverness; 2 children attended Stepping Stones Nursery, Tain and 1 child attended a private nursery in Raigmore, Inverness.

4. Key Points from Session 2012 - 2013

- 4.1 The Development Officer Interrupted Learning had contact with 57 families, i.e. a total of 146 children from age 3 – 16, including: 26 nursery age, 86 primary age, and 21 secondary age.
- 4.2 108 children were on a mainstream school roll in Highland – 17 children in nursery; 85 children in primary; and 6 children in secondary. (Note: there are some children for whom there is no class allocation, usually because they are in the area for a short time and date of birth is not ascertained.)
- 4.3 38 children were not on a mainstream school roll while in Highland. 12 children were provided with alternative provision when in the area. 26 children either did not engage, or were only in the area for a short period of time and arrangements were not able to be made to support the children. In any week, there have been between 62 and 92 children in the area.
- 4.4 Attendance at school has ranged from 55% - 83%; travelling has ranged between 0% - 34%; out of school provision has ranged from 8% - 24%. Generally, the number in school in any week has risen, with only a very few weeks having less than session 2011/12, and highlighting a year on year increase in the number of children on a school roll.
- 4.5 Those travelling in any week have been less, for a greater part of the year and, overall, the number travelling in any week is less than in session 2011/12. The pattern of travelling has been different, in that there were more families travelling at the start of session 2012-13 than at the end - the opposite pattern to session 2011/12.
- 4.6 A small number of children regularly stay in the area but attend school in their 'home base'. Links were made with all base schools for the purposes of Children Missing from Education (CME) data and some were supported whilst in Highland. Children who move out of the area appear to be accessing their next school quicker, or inform Highland of their plans more quickly, which ensures that records are kept and transferred to support continuity of learning.
- 4.7 Those receiving alternative provision were either nursery or secondary, apart from one primary aged child who has since returned to school in another area. One S1 year aged child received an English Language Short Course ASDAN Award.
- 4.8 Six children have enrolled to start or continue nursery in August 2013. Fourteen children have enrolled for a Primary 1 start in August 2013. Four secondary aged children have agreed to attend an 'out of school' pilot group in Lochaber. An estimated 20 –30 children might pass through the area in the school session that are 'unknown'.

5. Implications

There are no legal, resource, risk or climate change implications associated with this report. It does, however, strengthen our commitment to equalities duties.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and comment on the work of the Interrupted Learning Development Officer's work with Gypsy/Traveller families in the past school session.

Designation: Bill Alexander
Director of Health and Social Care

Date: 13 August 2013

Author: Karen McMaster, Development Officer (Interrupted Learning)
Calum MacSween, Head of Education

Background Papers: