



Irish Traveller Movement in Britain

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Travellers News

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Director's Welcome

Greetings from ITMB and a warm welcome to the first edition of Traveller News, our newly revamped newsletter which aims to capture a flavour of the varied and wide ranging work that we are involved with, both in terms of our innovative capacity building projects and at strategic level, our leading and active involvement in the policy making process.

The relaunch of the newsletter also coincides with major internal changes within ITMB, which has seen our organisation double in size in recent months and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of our new staff to the organisation.

These are exciting times at the Irish Traveller Movement and 2010 is a big year for us in which we intend to build upon our existing strengths as we make progress towards our goal of becoming an even stronger voice for the communities that we represent.

I do hope that you will enjoy finding out more about who we are and joining us on our journey.

Yvonne MacNamara
Irish Traveller Movement in Britain

Working in Partnership with BIHR

As a result of the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) receiving funding by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, City Parochial Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Oxfam this has enabled them to provide much needed invaluable support for up to six London based voluntary and community sector organisations – working with and for people facing poverty or social injustice.

The support is enabling organisations to use human rights to strengthen their voice and influence with policy makers. The ITMB is one of those six participating organisations.

During the past year, a handful of Traveller women have been involved in training and awareness raising to enable them to understand human rights principles and standards and how to use them. For example, understanding how the right to

private and family life (Article 8 in the Human Rights Act) could be used to challenge the provision of sub-standard accommodation to the Traveller community.

Over the next year BIHR will continue to support this group and also ITMB in applying a human rights based approach to their work and will be providing additional support around using human rights in order to influence those in power, in dealing with the media and advocacy.

As part of this Poverty Project, ITMB intends to raise understanding of human rights wider across the Gypsy Roma and Traveller community and those organisations working with them in 2010. This strategy is designed to put human rights at the heart of the Gypsy Roma and Traveller policy and campaigning.

Awareness Training in Hackney

As part of their Public Service Promise, Team Hackney (part of Hackneys Local Strategic Partnership) commissioned a programme of awareness raising training to run throughout last year.

ITMB and Hackney Homes (part of Hackneys Housing Management team) offered a short programme of training to support organisations working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in London.

The half-day sessions raised the awareness of front counter staff, to the needs of the

Traveller community with a view to improving their access and use of mainstream services. Co-delivered by Travellers, the sessions aimed to develop an understanding of the difficulties Travellers may face in accessing mainstream services together with identifying positive measures and a clear understanding of methods of building anti-racism equality into the ethos, policies and practices of organisations.

The training was well received –80% of participants indicated the sessions had fully achieved its objectives. Forty-six people from fourteen bodies or organisations took part in a creative debate.

If you would like to know more about the training please gets in touch.

Snapshot of Projects

Traveller in Action: Raising Awareness

Julie Joyce, member of ITMB's Advisory Group and part time sessional worker, has recently delivered a training session in Manchester to raise awareness of the culture and lives of Travellers. A local school contacted Julie and asked if she could work with their staff and students in order to provide training on Travellers.

Julie worked with ITMB capacity development staff, which provided support for the development and delivery of the awareness training. Julie delivered the session to over 50 pupils and staff, including senior staff from the Catholic Children's Society.

Julie has often worked with ITMB and has received significant personal development support through attending training and via 1-2-1 coaching.

Refurbishment, CCTV and Resident's Actions

The Oak Lane Caravan site in Dudley has been in place for almost 40 years. Over the past year ITMB have been working with residents on a variety of issues. This joint work between ITMB and the residents has resulted in the development of strong partnerships and alliances which has aided residents in their efforts to refurbishment and repairs that they have long called for.

In addition, the residents have successfully challenged a project to place CCTV cameras on site, leading the Council to

place these plans on indefinite hold until proper consultations are carried out.

The residents have worked with ITMB and local authority participation officers to develop a resident's forum that meets bi-monthly to express concerns and issues to the council staff that manage the site.

This forum is geared up to shift into a recognized formal Residents Association, that will have even more leverage with the local authority and serve as a real means of empowerment for the residents. The development of this Residents Association will be directly supported through ITMB's capacity development programme.

The initial meetings and trainings provided by ITMB with the residents sparked off a number of other partnerships. One of these is the development of the Oak Lane Youth Group, which brings together youth oriented workers from the council, third sector organisations, and statutory agencies, as well as community members.

This group has worked to ensure continuation and improvement of some of the services accessed by the youth on site, as well as the development of three new projects. These projects include: a Family Learning bus which visits the site, a play scheme on site, as well as initiating the involvement of a few young residents in a youth council in the city.

Listen to us: Developments on the Griff Caravan Site

Residents of the Griff Caravan Site in Nuneaton have been working with ITMB over the past few months to seek advice and guidance on the issues facing them on site. The issues raised are familiar; the need for repairs, for security, for safety, in short protecting their right to an acceptable and appropriate living environment.

The residents have been promised refurbishment will occur soon as the council have the funding, but various obstacles arose in delaying the commencement of this work. ITMB initially spoke with residents who were unhappy with the way they had been ignored for so long. This feeling of disenfranchisement and marginalisation lead to discussions about how this could be addressed. Residents wished to take on a more active role in impacting decisions made about their lives.

The option of a residents association was well received, and an initial training session to learn about residents associations was arranged. This session provided participants with a clear understanding of what a residents association is, as well as many of the processes involved in the establishment, recognition and operation of such an association. The residents were even more anxious to get the process started.

ITMB has also worked with council staff and local third sector organisations to begin laying the groundwork for local recognition and support to help facilitate the development of this residents association.

In addition, these early meetings have also helped spark interest in other training desired by residents on site, including public speaking, IT skills, delivering awareness training and many more. One resident of the site stated, 'we have been quite too long, they can't just ignore us. We have to speak up and we have to speak up the right way.'

Capacity building of Advisory Group

It is three years since the formation of the Executive Advisory Group in 2007. The group meets around five times a year to advise on policy priorities for ITMB for the foreseeable future as well as working closely with ITMB staff team.

The Advisory Group members are all Irish Travellers and have been recruited from a wide range of backgrounds and diverse skills.

In the upcoming months ITMB will be working even more closely with the Advisory Group in order to build the skills and capacity of its members.

This will include carrying out a skills audit and delivering appropriate group training as well as provision of 1-on-1 support. Training will include such sessions ranging from public speaking and leadership, to media and policy training.

The Advisory Group is also currently seeking to recruit new members who will work regionally as well as nationally.

ITMB is looking for individuals with a genuine interest in raising the profile of Traveller issues and contributing to the development of national policies that ensure the inclusion of Travellers in all levels of civic society.

Pacesetters Programme

Giving birth is often the most important, exciting and frightening experience of any woman's life. It should be a time to celebrate and relax but all too often as with many health provisions the Gypsy and Traveller community have many problems accessing a fair and equal service.

ITMB and their advisory group have recognised many problems from simple registration with a doctor right through to unfriendly, unhelpful and sometimes discriminatory attitudes of NHS staff towards Gypsies and Travellers.

Sadly some community members reported problems early on in the care cycle with G.Ps refusing them temporary or permanent registration and therefore access to antenatal care. One woman reported feeling victimised by the reception staff who shouted out, in front of the whole waiting room, that she lived on a site.

It is this failure to work effectively with people who have different lifestyles, needs and expectations of health and social services which means that women are missing out on key appointments during pregnancy. It has been found that there is an almost total lack of information materials on pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period geared towards Gypsies and Travellers, many of whom cannot read and write, as well as little or no information on how to access and use maternity services.

Compounded by the fact that Gypsy and Traveller women are reluctant to attend antenatal classes and health professionals often fail to reach out to this group there is a huge information gap for pregnant women in these communities.



It is recognised that some of these problems may be down to the lack of monitoring for Gypsies and Travellers in the NHS or on ethnic monitoring forms, making them invisible to health service planners. With all this in mind the ITMB along with several women from the Irish Traveller Community in north London embarked on a project with the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead to address some of the issues highlighted above.

As there are thought to be an estimated 20-50,000 Traveller families across North London undoubtedly this is a worthwhile project for a hospital to take on and equally for ITMB to be involved with. Put into action by the NHS Pacesetters project, the women have been liaising with the team at the Royal Free for over six months. Through a series of training, cultural awareness events, consultation and networking it is hoped both the staff from the Royal Free and the Travellers involved will develop a broader understanding of how maternity services effect and interact with Gypsy and Traveller women. Staff from every level of the maternity department have been involved from health care assistants to registrars and consultants.

ITMB have been successful in securing Department of Health funding to roll this project out nationally.

Traveller Economic Inclusion Project Update

The ITMB together with key partners and collaborators that include Friends Families and Travellers, Buckinghamshire New University, Christ Church University and Birmingham University are carrying out research to find out how some Gypsies and Travellers have secured economic inclusion (that is, set up a business or got into paid/professional employment). The project is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and started in July 2009.

To date close to a hundred interviews with members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have been carried out across England. The Project has used a participatory action research model which has focused on conducting research that works explicitly with and for the community rather than undertaking research on the community.

As part of the action research, both members of the Traveller and settled community have been employed to conduct the interviews and will be disseminating its findings to the interviewees in seminars across England. The seminars will allow the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to analyze and question the Projects findings and further participate and influence the final project report. The Project has also utilized computer aided research methods which have allowed more in depth analysis of the qualitative data.

The Traveller Economic Inclusion Project with the support of the Big Lottery Fund is hoping

to challenge the racism and exclusion suffered by Gypsies and Travellers by bringing together practice and research in a research partnership that is led by third sector and policy and voice groups and community members. The final Project report is due for completion by early autumn 2010 and will be publicly available on ITMB's website.

Contributing and supporting London Borough's Gypsy and Traveller Strategies

The London Borough's of Hackney, Brent and Lewisham have recently, or are in the process of developing Gypsy and Traveller strategies of which ITMB has been centrally involved. Consultation with the Gypsy and Traveller communities and Traveller organisations is crucial for a Local Authority in developing a successful strategy that's in touch with the needs and interests of the community.

In consultation with the three London Boroughs, the ITMB played a crucial role in representing the interests of members of the Traveller community living in these localities while also offering the Local Authorities guidance and expertise in the areas of Gypsy and Traveller policy, service provision, best practice and research in the field. Through the establishment and facilitation of Inter-Agency Forums, Community Groups and the provision of training, the ITMB acts as a bridge builder between the community and policy makers and service providers. In this respect the opportunity to contribute and support Local Authorities in the development of Gypsy and Traveller strategies is always welcomed.

Annual Conference



Once again the annual ITMB national conference was a massive success. Delegates travelled from across Britain and Ireland to see a range of influential policymakers, campaigners and practitioners addressing the issues of equality for Gypsies and Travellers.

There was a broad range of workshops hosted by both community members and ITMB staff and a plenary session. For the third year running, the conference was a true example of an empowered community in control with a large proportion of participants being from the GRT community. It's a great example of how ITMB brings together its own members with advocates and experts to determine together how they can improve their own lives.

Keynote speakers included Shami Chakrabarti (Director, Liberty), Bill Holland (ACPO Lead on Gypsies and Travellers), Barry Mussenden (Deputy Director Policy and Strategy Directorate, Department of Health), Julie Joyce (ITMB Advisory Group Member) and Pauline Anderson (ITMB Advisory Group Member)

One of the highlights was a colourful dialogue between Shami Chakrabati and Bill Holland debating the rights and responsibilities of the Gypsy and Traveller community. It really got people debating during the refreshment breaks. After analysis there were 5 key conference points concluded;

- 1 Delays, poor consultation and research in very slow implementation of the Housing Act, 2004 and Planning Circular 1/2006
2. Opportune time for GTR to be proactive, rather than re-active and consultative.
3. Need for greater solidarity and cohesion within and between GTR communities.
4. Consultative expertise of GTR community members, especially youth, should be better recognised and valued
5. Media continues to negatively target GTR communities with little public challenge.



You can read the full conference report now at www.irishtraveller.org.uk

Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month (GRTHM)

Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month 2010 takes place throughout the month of June. The launch of GRTHM will take place on 27th May at Portcullis House which will kick off the month long series of events.

Associated with this, Irish Traveller Movement in Britain are organising the annual Pavee Ceilidh event which is held as part of the history month. There will be two of these events, one will be

held in Manchester on the 11th June and another one will take place in London on the 18th June.

Last year was a great success. We had the Bishop attending the event along with great activities and workshops and this year will be bigger than ever.

Another of the GRTHM events which is being organised by ITMB, along with other

Traveller organisations is a competition called 'Travellers Got Talent'. The auditions will be held at different locations around the country culminating in the final during GRTHM,

Keep checking the ITMB website and facebook page for up to date information on the aforementioned events together with all the other GRTHM activities.

New Personnel

Radmila Vujnovic-Operational Manager

Radmila joins us with almost 9 years experience in the charity sector, the majority of this time she spent working as Finance Officer at the London Irish Centre in Camden. Radmila is in the process of completing her ACCA accountancy training. Radmila is leading on our stage 2 development of PQASSO quality assurance scheme.

Matthew Brindley- Research and Policy Officer

Matthew joined us with a wealth of knowledge and experience. He has recently graduated with a postgraduate degree in human rights where his thesis focused on Irish Traveller issues. Matthew is currently employed part time working on the Economic inclusion research project and part time on policy.

Cassie Marie McDonagh- Floating support officer

Cassie joined ITMB in January and sits on the National steering committee for Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month. She is also leading on the development of the Pavee Ceilidh Annual event associated with this. Cassie previously was involved with volunteering with the "Who R We" Youth Forum group.

Mairead Moore- Policy Officer

Mairead joined us in March and she has been working on policy matters. Mairead has a legal background and has a particular interest in European law and policy, as she was previously working for the European Commission prior to taking up her position here.

We are funded by:



Did you know?
ITMB has a face book page which you can join by becoming a fan. By signing up to the page you will be kept informed about upcoming events and other useful information for Travellers such as conferences, forums and social events.

If you would like to make any contributions to our next issue or simply to make a comment on this policy newsletter, please get in touch:

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