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Special edition to mark Gypsy/Traveller History Month

Welcome to a special edition of Equality News to mark Gypsy/Traveller History month.

This edition features articles highlighting positive partnership and engagement projects that are taking place across the North East of Scotland. There is also an article by Bernadette Williamson, Chair of Article 12 in Scotland, an organisation working to empower young Gypsy/Travellers. Bernadette will also be speaking at a special event on June 22nd at the Citadel in Aberdeen – see the poster later in this bulletin for more information.

The month is also being marked by the display of an Article 12 exhibition at Aberdeen City Libraries: at Central Library until June 13th, Airyhall Library from June 14-18th, and Bucksburn Library June 20th-26th.

We hope to see you on June 22nd!

The GREC Team

Other news...

Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) publishes their Strategic Plan 2016-2020

The SHRC recently published their new strategic plan, setting out priorities for the promotion and protection of human rights in Scotland over the next four years. Click here to see the plan.

Refugees Welcome Survey 2016

The Refugees Welcome Survey, published by Amnesty International, presents the willingness of residents in 27 countries around the globe to accept refugees. 87% of UK participants would accept refugees into the country and 29% would accept refugees into their homes. Click here to read the survey report.

New initiative by Aberdeen Muslims organisation

Aberdeen Muslims have recently launched a new project, providing free, hot meals for those in poverty. Read more here.
Bernadette Williamson: Young Gypsy/Travellers’ Lives (YGTL) Peer Mentor and Chairperson of Article 12 in Scotland

We travelled about until I was about 10 years old. After that time we settled in a housing estate then only travelled a bit throughout the year visiting family.

In terms of my schooling I didn’t get put into a classroom with other children, I was put in the remedial class/ lower level classes. I felt like an alien and totally out of place. I felt because I was different they didn’t know how to deal with me.

I heard about the YGTL project from my cousin when I was visiting her in Aberdeen. I went to a meeting in Dundee with her and was welcomed with open arms from the start. I don’t know where to begin when I think about all the opportunities and experiences I have had thanks to the project over the past five years.

I was trained as a peer educator and have delivered training about my community to a wide range of people- such as in schools, with young people from the settled community, with professionals and practitioners- from all levels of society.

Delivering training to a group of journalists from the BBC was one of the best and a real highlight for me. It’s about an exchange of views and perspectives- they learn about our community and we learn from them. One of the most memorable times was when we were in London taking part in a consultation against a Bill of Rights replacing the Human Rights Act.

Being part of Article 12 and the YGTL project has made a major difference in my life, personally and professionally. It’s shown me a lot of skills I didn’t know I had. I can’t really put into words what Article 12 has done for me, without it I have no clue where I would be now. I think still sitting in the house or maybe I would’ve got married out of boredom! Now I feel that there are so many opportunities out there for me and the world is my oyster.

Bernadette Williamson (pictured), will be speaking at an event to celebrate Gypsy/Traveller History Month on June 22nd at the Citadel. Click here to book a place.
Equality News – Gypsy/Traveller History Month

Adult Learning at Clinterty Traveller Site

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) History Month is an opportunity to celebrate the histories, cultures and languages of Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities in Scotland and beyond. GRT History Month is an opportunity to hear the diverse voices from the past, present and future. Travellers in Scotland have a long and varied history that reflects the changes that wider society has experienced and this is a great way to share that history and the positive contributions Gypsy, Roma and Travellers have made to Scottish culture.

GRT History Month is important for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and non-Traveller. People with a travelling background are still one of the most marginalised in Scotland and face discrimination in their day to day lives. GRT History Month is a tool to challenge stereotypes and fight inequality. It heightens the confidence and awareness of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people to their cultural heritage and increases understanding between communities.

Aberdeen City Council is committed to ensuring that GRT people have the same rights and opportunities as settled people and are delighted to support GRT History Month. As part of their wider commitment to equality Aberdeen City Council’s Lifelong Learning Team has been working at the Clinterty Traveller site over a number of years.

The work at Clinterty has taken a collaborative approach and has been shaped by the residents and is based on their interests and needs.

For any adult learning initiative to be successful it needs to foster self-belief in the learners. This has been an important stepping stone for the work at Clinterty. Over the last two and half years the learners have started to flourish and this has been reflected in their self-confidence and sense of ownership at Clinterty. This resulted in the residents supporting one another to improve the site to make it more welcoming and create an atmosphere of inclusion.

Over the last year a homework club has been established for the children, this has been successful in raising their attainment levels. The success of the club has encouraged more parents to access adult learning. The young women on the site have started a cooking group where they can share recipes and skills.

There has also been an increase in the number of men asking for support as they start their own businesses and need to do their own accounts.

A summer programme has been developed by the families and it covers a range of activities from a mini Olympics for the kids to jewellery making with a professional silver smith for the adults reflecting the tradition of jewellery making in the Traveller community.

We hope that by taking a collaborative approach the work will become self-sustaining and have a long term impact on the lives of those living at Clinterty and beyond. We are delighted by the response from the families at Clinterty and look forward to working with them now and in the future to not only celebrate their achievements but, the achievements of those who have gone before us.

Stats & Facts

There is only one council-run, permanent Gypsy/Traveller site in Grampian: Clinterty Traveller Site in Aberdeen City. The site has been full for several years and there is a significant waiting list to get on to the site.

With a lack of site provision, and the closing off of most traditional stopping places, there are a relatively high number of “unauthorised encampments” in the North East of Scotland. For example in 2015 there were 45 encampments in Moray, 42 in Aberdeenshire and 28 in Aberdeen City (down from an average of 100 in recent years).

The Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Interagency Group works to share best practice across the region in terms of developing site provision, engagement with Gypsy/Traveller communities, and related issues.
The Big Blue Bus Summer Project by Jane Verity, Community Learning, Aberdeenshire Council

During the summer holidays each year the ‘Big Blue Bus’ travels around, predominantly the North of Aberdeenshire, engaging with Gypsy Travellers. We use a partnership approach to ensure the success of the project and to ensure we meet our key outcomes. We aim to work with Gypsy Travellers on both authorised and unauthorised encampments to see how we can best support them to access the services and information they require in the area. In turn we hope that this will promote positive relationships with the Traveller community.

During the last 4 years the project has evolved and is now led by Community Learning and Development using a multi agency approach involving: NHS Grampian (childsmile and wellbeing teams), Aberdeenshire Libraries, Active Schools, Fastforward and the Scottish Football Association.

We have a skilled team delivering family learning, youth work and adult learning, including literacy support and are committed to achieving the best outcomes for all the communities in which we work.

As stated in Aberdeenshire Community and Partnership strategy 2013-15 - CLD will “provide learning that makes a difference, by inspiring learning”, “personal development experiences and opportunities which support positive transitions, offer progression and develop skills for learning, life and work”, and “provide particular support to... Traveller children”. To date we have:

- Used informal approaches to address the importance of a healthier balanced diet
- Provided a fun and interesting programme involving parents and children in making sweet and savoury healthier themed snacks
- NHS health and wellbeing, and child smile staff integral to multi agency delivery, on hand offering health checks and advice to the Travelling community on site
- SFA and Active Schools team developed and delivered sports based activities on site encouraging children and young people to become more active
- Libraries delivering story telling sessions on sites throughout Aberdeenshire
- CLD engaged with adults, children and young people on site, identifying literacy needs and provision of information and resources to support parents with development of early literacy skills of their children.

We have provided local contact information to Travellers on the sites visited and carried out some early literacy work with children and parents. We are beginning to build up a trust base and relationships with Gypsy Travellers. The Blue Bus is now recognised on the sites and the children and young people look forward to seeing us appear. In addition to this information is now flowing better between agencies and the engagement opportunities are increasing.

For the 2016 project we are going to be looking at how social media can support the work that we do and the distribution of information in relation to the project. We are also engaging with Gypsy Travellers to ensure their voice is represented in the delivery of the project for this and future years.
Gypsy/Traveller Health Engagement in Aberdeen City

The 2011 Census data highlight that 4000 Gypsy/Travellers live in Scotland (0.1% of the population). In Aberdeen, approximately 0.1% of the population recorded ‘Gypsy Traveller’ as their ethnic grouping which equates to approximately 223 individuals. It is thought to be an underestimation given the transient nature of the population, an unwillingness of identifying as a Gypsy Traveller and the low levels of literacy which may have an impact on the number of people completing the census questionnaire.

There is currently one official Aberdeen City Council site located at Clinterty, near the border with Aberdeenshire, providing 21 pitches (100% occupancy since April 2013). In addition, there is a Gypsy Traveller developed private site at Pitmedden Road near Dyce. There are 15 plots on the site, which are sold to each occupant who is responsible for their own pitch.

As there is a national shortage of official pitches, many Gypsy Travellers are on the roadside because there is nowhere else for them to go. Between 2012-2015 there have been approximately 95 encampments on an annual basis across Aberdeen.

Since April 2012 Aberdeen CHP Health Improvement Fund has provided £54,731-00 to fund a Gypsy Traveller Health Engagement Worker (GTHEW) in conjunction with Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC). The focus of the project was to identify the healthcare needs, establish engagement between community, primary care and various partners, improve on procedures relating access to health and facilitate outreach engagement events.

It has been noted GP registrations tend to concentrate around the 3 main practices; Links, Bucksburn and Whinhill. In a recent study carried out by Health Scotland - which echoes a local survey with the 3 practices – highlights that barriers to GP registration principally relate to service design being at odds with the cultural characteristics and lifestyle needs of the community, registration form completion presenting difficulties for those with literacy problems, a desire or need for immediate appointments, continuity of care and lack of understanding of how the system works.

Among some in the Travelling community there is also a belief that poor health and pain must be tolerated and an ability to deal with it themselves. Opportunistic health interventions were organised through the Gypsy Traveller Health Engagement Worker (GTHEW) such as Keep Well health checks and Child smile interventions has enhanced discussions in relation to need and support for self-care /management.

Building over last 3 years of activities it is recommended future work should focus on mainstreaming an inclusive and equalities-driven approach to Gypsy Traveller health. To take forward such a project the following are recommended:

- Build a relationship of trust and confidence particularly with those living at encampments.
- The cultural awareness raising resource be delivered to health and social care professionals; students in training.
- The Primary Care survey work undertaken is rolled out to all GP surgeries.
- Health and Social Care Partnership is engaged both at a strategic and operational level with key Service Leads to build in an action plan for Gypsy Traveller health.
- Enhance a proactive approach to continuity of care and the handheld record for Gypsy Travellers is well-promoted and coherent with the approach at a national level.
An event to celebrate

Gypsy\Traveller
History Month

Exploring the challenges facing Gypsy and Traveller communities in Scotland

- Speaker from Article 12 in Scotland & the Scottish Traveller Community
- Exhibition & Traditional Music with Lunch provided

12 Noon - 2PM, 22nd June at THE CITADEL, CASTLEGATE, ABERDEEN

BOOKING IS REQUIRED

To book a place please phone GREC on 01224 595505
Job Opportunity:

Development Officer (Disability Access) wanted for Aberdeen City Council

29.6 hours (4 days) per week £23,918 - £27,299

This is fantastic opportunity to make a difference to the lives of disabled people. Collaborative working with staff, partner organisations, volunteers and supporting agencies is of key importance so proven partnership working skills will be absolutely essential to this role.

This new post will establish a single point of contact within the Council for people with disabilities and disability community groups, so that we provide accessible goods, services and buildings for all our Aberdeen citizens. You will be educated to HND level or equivalent in a building related subject, have an understanding of Community Planning and legislation relating to disability access and equality issues and most importantly, be committed to improving access to equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Key aspects of this role include:

- Providing guidance on policies, procedures and impact assessments to Council staff, customers, disability groups and Elected Members.
- Carrying out access audits for both Council and commercial properties, identifying Council properties and environments which require access.

Applications from all candidates, including those with disabilities, are welcome. Interviews to be held on 28th and 29th June 2016.

Please follow the link to apply: http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/JobsOnline/JobDetail.aspx?id=ABC01973

For enquiries please contact:

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Equality News – Gypsy/Traveller History Month

Open Day

June 29th 2016

Drop in between 12 noon and 2 pm to find out about GREC's recent research findings, new Language Cafe project & find out more about our training and In-Trans services.

Talks at 12.30 pm
Cakes and sandwiches throughout!

41 Union Street, Aberdeen, AB11 5BN