

Outreach Report post Covid 19 –

Impacts on the GRT Communities: -

Employment

High levels of people in the GRT communities were impacted by covid with regards to earnings. Many people from the GRT communities are working on a self-employed basis and have now begun going back to work although this may not be at the same level as before.

Although some services are now allowing some face-to-face meeting, accessing benefits and services is still a struggle online due to many from the GRT community having low literacy levels and limited access to the internet, also the option for over the phone is not always simple with multiple options which some struggle to understand for example GP services, housing services, domestic violence support, benefits etc.

Health

We have begun doing weekly health days on sites across Essex as a pilot project. So far, we have seen success on sites which we have been able to attend although due to lack of organisations/staff we have had to cancel some. These health days are a great way to bridge other organisations and the traveller community, building trust and cultural understanding.

Education

Post lockdown, many children from the GRT community are now back into education although many did not return to school until September due to fears of COVID. Many children from the GRT communities will have had difficulty accessing the online learning, either because of lack of devices, lack of internet access or lack of parental guidance as some parents will find reading through work set impossible, this means many have returned to school further behind than their peers.

The move to online application and interviews for colleges is also greatly increasing barriers to GRT Young People accessing college places. Often the young people of parent may not have an email address, once on the website for a course, navigating the application process is very difficult. Without support to access many YP wanting Page 15 of 36 to get onto courses will be unsuccessful and lose their places if they do not respond on-line to further requests for information etc. The relative success for some organisations of moving to mostly if not all, online service, will probably mean that this is not reversed, leaving many people from the GRT communities at greater disadvantage when trying to access services. Outreach during lockdown period

We have continued to support via phone and in person when needed: -

- School applications
- Nursery places
- Tracing missing pupils
- Access to FSM vouchers
- GP registrations
- Referrals to housing support services
- Referral to domestic violence services

- Applications to colleges
- Supporting families re accessing education during the lockdown, liaising with schools to support with distance learning, provision of IT equipment etc.
- Support with benefit claims

We have begun meeting services users of and on site but keeping distance as appropriate.

On a strategic level the Outreach Team has: -

- We are working with the social media team to develop a Facebook page which will hopefully extend our reach and be a valuable source of information for Essex GRT residents. As Covid restrictions lift, we are starting to be able to return to attend schools and colleges to support students when necessary, with regards to any issues re attendance and behaviour.
- We have been working on an Education project with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities , including work on raising the number of GRT pupils transferring from Year 6 into secondary school, delivery of cultural awareness training to secondary schools and also working with the Youth Service to deliver sessions for Young People not in education, training or employment to support them into college places, apprenticeships or employment with the opportunity to join a 6 week programme.
- The Outreach Team has also started to work on the development of e-learning packages which could be delivered to other agencies/professionals. This project could be distributed across ECC.

Education Project:

- The Project focus's on supporting pupils from the GRT communities in year 6 across Essex to raise transfer rates to year 7, by the provision of a dedicated secondary development worker who will work with parents and schools and support with school applications.
- So far all primary Schools on the data provided by ECC with Traveller pupils in year 6 have been emailed and parents who have given permission have been contacted. Secondary's are now being contacted to help support the current traveller pupils they have.
- We have employed the new project lead for the Secondary Development Worker to share workload. The role will be to provide intensive outreach support to year 6 cohort, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils and their families in Essex, to increase the number of year 6 pupils transferring to secondary school. It will also work on delivery of a 'drop in' service with the Youth Service to support GRT Young People into Education, Training or employment.
- Drop-in service: Provides young people with information, advice and guidance for secondary school, apprenticeships, training, and college.
- At least 1 YP has been supported into college by helping with application and attending introductory day at the college, we are keeping in touch with this family to monitor progress. Our proposed target for the next year is 15, we are still aiming for this number.
- Friends and Families of Travellers Training and E- Learning that is helping raise cultural awareness will be completed and sent out to agencies and other professionals in January.
- We have drop ins with the youth service in Braintree and Wickford that are going well but we do want to work on spreading the word, which is why we are putting news of the project into the council's newsletter.

- The Project also provides an NEET six-week programme in two areas, Basildon and Braintree. That will provide career and education advice, alongside accredited courses that are in high demand within the GRT community such as Hair and Beauty.
- We are working with the social media team to develop a Facebook page which will hopefully extend our reach and be a valuable source of information for Essex GRT residents.
- The Team Leader of the GRT division, alongside other teams of the council such as the evaluation and planning team and housing will be coming to visit our schools and sites to review project and see how it is progressing.