



# **ROMANI GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SKILLS BASED PROJECT (South East Wales)**

**Report by  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION:**

The aim of the project is to engage with the Gypsies and Traveller community and to establish a dialogue with them regarding their interests and aspirations.

'Travelling to a Better Future' Gypsy and Traveller Framework for Action and Delivery Plan endorsed by the Welsh Government has identified that some of the issues that need to be addressed in order to ensure that Gypsies and Travellers in Wales no longer feel excluded and vulnerable in Welsh society are social exclusion and racism; educational disadvantage; cultural and safety issues and social and economic issues.

These issues are interlinked, and whilst the key to address these issues is not to deal with each issue in isolation, it is widely accepted that marginalisation and bullying particularly for young children at school can affect self-esteem and community attainment. Levels of isolation and depression within the community are high, and the need for increased self-confidence and respect and acceptance of cultural identity has never been higher.

Re-establishing traditional skills can create a sense of confidence and re-enforce cultural identity, and engaging in a trade can provide an opportunity for positive interaction with the "non Gypsy and Traveller" settled community.

The purpose of this research was to establish to what extent if any, the Gypsy and Traveller community is engaging in or has interest in traditional gypsy skills, crafts and trade and further, to assess the demand for regeneration or re-establishment of interest in such skills.

This research therefore examines the extent of current engagement or interest in traditional skills; identifies a growing pattern of interest in other non-traditional skills and highlights the aspirations of a range of Gypsy and Traveller community members, including children of school going age.

## **2. A WORD FROM THE EXPERT**

### **Dr. Adrian Marsh**

Adrian Marsh is of Romany-Traveller heritage and has been working with Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities in the UK, Sweden, Turkey, Egypt and central eastern and south

Eastern Europe. Dr Marsh has taught Romani Studies in London, Malmö, Stockholm, Cairo Istanbul and Diyarbakir and has held an ERSC fellowship, as Researcher in Romani Studies at Greenwich University, London. He is currently Senior Programme Manager for the Open Society Foundations' Roma 'Kopaçi' projects.

Dr. Marsh states that traditional Romani Gypsy trades that included mending watches, sharpening knives, sign writing and metal work such as repairing pots were mobility based in that communities had to travel from place to place searching for jobs. This meant that Romani Gypsies were dependent on non-Romani settlements for a series of occupation patterns that were mobility based and dependant on niche markets. He adds that upon completion of jobs, for example, sharpening knives or selling a horse, people would have to move on to look for the next job or sale as there were only so many knives that could be sharpened or so many horses sold in any one locality.

Over the years, with changes both in environmental and technology, the demand of such skills began to decrease. For example, tin smiths were no longer in demand as people began to increasingly replace old pots and pans with cheaper newer alternatives and scrap dealers (rand and bone) were edged out as bigger and larger organisations carved a new niche for themselves in the world of recycling.

Dr. Marsh notes the gradual transition from horse trading to the sale of cars and the breeding of pedigree Spaniels in preference to Lurchers. He also notes that over time, Romani Gypsies were unable to find a market for the rabbits that they hunted, or make a living out of cleaning wires for scrap, sharpening knives or painting signs as these skills ceased to be in demand by the non-Romani settlements.

Dr. Marsh firmly believes that if Gypsies and Travellers could re-skill, then what the Gypsy and Traveller community has in terms of its heritage of mobility could assist in the transition of community members to highly successful careers. He notes that prominent and successful members of the community are those who are highly mobile with a few notable exceptions of those who return to work with the community. One such exception is of course, Isaac Blake, Director of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company who had to leave the community in order to take up opportunities which allowed him to hone his talent and skills in contemporary dance, music and arts; and who has now returned to work with and amongst the community in which he was born and raised.

However, Dr. Marsh notes that whilst mobility is very much a state of mind, there are those who are mobile but face the risk of being exploited, quoting the example of the European Bulgarians. He also notes that there is a deliberate attempt to keep the Gypsy and Traveller community as the “outsider”, a ploy the non-Romani community adopts to give itself the identity of being the “insider”.

As a way forward, Dr. Marsh believes that the Gypsy and Traveller community should develop a process that would enable them to transition from being “an insular and isolated outsider that seeks to resist” what the non Romanis have to offer to “an engaging an active part of the larger community”. He states that the Gypsy and Traveller community ought to consider whether they are willing to engage in education and then market their own chosen trades with the use of modern day technology.

He adds that if all young Gypsy and Traveller children were given mobile technology, this could increase their interest in education and becoming educated. He quotes the examples of Kenya and Australian where distance learning has proved to be highly successful. Dr. Marsh also calls for the development of an education model tailored to meet the needs of Gypsy children as opposed to an assimilative education system.

On a final note, Dr. Marsh states that the community needs to recognise that its more resistance creating separation will no longer function or enable it to survive unless these insular separatist issues are dealt with at childhood.

### **3. THE ACHIEVERS:**

This section identifies members of the Gypsy and Traveller community who have grown up on and around Gypsy Sites in Wales and others who have achieved success and fame in their chosen careers. They have all branched out in trades of their choice, all of which are based on traditional Gypsy skills that are drawn from Gypsy heritage and identity, the arts, storytelling and fortune telling.

It also illustrates that given the correct encouragement and opportunity to develop and progress, children and adults will excel in their chosen fields. However, what is also required is determination, self believe, proper training and the right opportunities. As some of our role

models illustrate, age and lack of formal education is no barrier either at the start of their careers or to succeed in their chosen disciplines.

#### **i. Dr. Adrian Marsh**

Born and raised in Cardiff within a Romani-Traveller heritage, Adrian recalls leaving school at the age of 13 years. His father worked (as he still does at the age of 78) window dresser and his uncle was a sign painter. After leaving school, Adrian commenced an apprenticeship in sign painting with his uncle, learning the art of Jimmy Berry's style of motifs and lettering styles.

He recalls learning the practice of copying patterns patented by Jimmy Berry on sides of vans and lorries and at fair ground carousels and popcorn stands. He learnt the art of mixing and preparing paints for sign painting and remembers being taught to gradually add thinners to paint, starting at nine parts thinners to one part paint, and then transitioning to nine parts paint and one part thinners to create a "shine" to the paintwork. He said that his toolkit contained different brushes for different strokes. He also learnt the art of using paint to create the illusion of wood carvings representing horses, silk screen hand printing, and etching glass.

As he grew older, the demand of such work decreased and Adrian found that by the time he was 22 years of age, Perspex signs, ready formed letters, computer and laser technology had become popular and the demand for sign painting gradually started dying out. Coincidentally, his mother had around that time opened a nursery at their family home, looking after vulnerable children and was soon accepting Social Service referrals. This led to his first introduction to working with children. However, over the next five years, new legislation, increasing awareness of his family's Gypsy roots and the label of "child stealers" meant that the local Social Services team were reluctant to work with his mother and the nursery was shut down. This was of course, not before the scene was set for Adrian's desire to work with children and thus Adrian progressed to working with children with various local authorities.

Adrian credits his interest in Romani history which has led to his impressive academic career to his maternal grandfather, who started out as a boat builder, spent many years in Hong Kong, got captured by the Japanese during the First World War and died at the grand age of 102 years.

Now armed with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Ottoman History, a Master of Arts degree in Russian History and a PhD in Romany Ottoman Gypsies Postmodern Deconstruction of Gypsy Identity, Adrian is a leading academic figure in the Roma Gypsy history and identity and indeed a true force to be reckoned with.

## **ii. Isaac Blake**

Born a Romani Gypsy, Isaac Blake is a professional choreographer and Artistic Director of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company, which is currently funded by the BBC Children in Need, Big Lottery, Cardiff City Council and Newport City Council.

In 2000 Isaac received a scholarship to attend a 3 year undergraduate Dance Theatre Course at Laban in London. Whilst at Laban, Isaac worked with numerous artists and companies including Adventures in Motions Pictures (AMP), DV8 and Rambert. Since graduating from Laban, Isaac has furthered his studies in New York and has choreographed performances at the Wales Millennium Centre and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Utilising his skills, Isaac Blake, as Artistic Director of this Third Sector organisation, has raised the necessary funds to take arts development onto Gypsy / Traveller Sites and Gorjer (non-Gypsy) communities across Wales. This project is close to his heart as Isaac knows how artistically barren these Sites can be. And by using arts, Isaac has found a way to stimulate and engage the interest of children and young people in traditional and modern arts.

Isaac grew up on the Shirenewton Site in Cardiff, one of four boys. His parents were both clairvoyants and to bring in additional income, Isaac's father also worked as a farm labourer ploughing fields. He also helped with the day to day operations of the farm, which included the hiring and management of other farm labourers. Most of the farm labourers were drawn from the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Isaac's father trained younger members of the community in business development by coaching them in door to door salesmanship in scrap metal. With some education behind him, he would coach and mentor younger members in the community and help them improve their oral and written communication skills, book keeping and marketing. He also trained them in the technique of executing certain work like tree chopping and lopping and landscape gardening. He was step dancer in respect of which he won several local awards

and trophies and indeed, perhaps it would not be incorrect to say that Isaac can trace his interest and talent in dancing to his especially gifted and talented father.

Isaac and his brothers went to mainstream schools, and at the age of ten, the Traveller Education Services came on to Site and provided tuition in Maths and English. After Isaac progressed to secondary school, he and his brothers encountered severe racism and discrimination by non-Romani children, as a result of which they were withdrawn from school by their parents. This was a self-protection exercise, as the extent of threats and verbal abuse levelled against them showed no sign of dissipation. Sessions on Site in Maths and English continued, with Isaac then progressing to Youth Training Schemes and City and Guild Programmes in English, Maths and BTEch in Computer Literacy. Isaac then proceeded to Glan Hafren College where he studied for GCSEs in English, Maths, Art and Design.

Isaac subsequently proceeded to study Art, Dance, Photography at "A" levels, and it was at Glan Hafren College that Isaac first stepped into the world of contemporary dancing. Then there was no holding back for Isaac and armed with the encouragement of a very enthusiastic and supportive dance teacher, Isaac auditioned at Laban. He was accepted and awarded a Dance and Drama Award which encompassed a full scholarship for three years to study Dance Theatre.

Isaac has also attended the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York where he enhanced his practice, both technically and creatively. This included dance and choreography and repertoire work. Since completion of this undergraduate programme, Isaac has worked with Ragdoll, the BBC, Chapter Arts, FIND, S4C and with local housing and education authorities in and around London. To secure work, Isaac has had to be mobile and he travelled to places where opportunities were to take him, and to date, has worked throughout England and Wales, and in Montreal, Canada. Indeed, Isaac says that he has always found it difficult to secure work in Wales, an experience commonly shared by many members of minority ethnic groups.

Having lived away from Cardiff between the period 2003 and 2009, Isaac is the first member of the Shirenewton Site to have received a University education and world-wide fame as a talented dancer. In 2009, Isaac founded the Romani Cultural and Arts Company, and to his credit, he has in the short period of three years, raised the profile of the Company from local to national and international level.

A recent report for the Arts Council Of Wales entitled “Beyond the Stereotypes: A review of Gypsies/Roma/Travellers and the Arts in Wales” acknowledged the impact of the work of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company and made a clear recommendation that organisations working for and within the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities should:

*‘Team up with the Romani Cultural & Arts Company in addition to providing project funding.’*

The report’s author states that she:

*‘has uncovered nothing but praise for Isaac Blake – his work is universally acknowledged by academics, Gypsies, Travellers, politicians, public bodies and international organisations. This is a unique Welsh-based company that should be supported in every possible way’.*

More recently, in January 2012, out of nearly 162,000 charities throughout the UK, a select number were invited to No 10 Downing Street as an appreciation of the Charitable work done with Children in the Country’s The Romani Cultural and Arts Company was one such charity. Isaac, in his capacity as Director was one of the selected delegates that had the opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister and his wife, where a range of celebrities like Gary Barlow, Peter Andre and Stacy Solomon and key officials from the Country’s prime charities were also present.

Isaac is probably one of the first Gypsies who has attained recognition at an event of such magnitude, where the work undertaken by organisations that have delivered significant growth and understanding with children throughout diverse communities was celebrated. For those present, the event served to raise a better understanding and awareness of children from varied backgrounds and provided an opportunity to help foster partnerships future activities with those involved. And for Isaac, this was “... a wonderful opportunity to meet people and share the great work we have achieved this year so far...”

Isaac’s aim is to make a positive difference and impact to people’s lives at ground root level. Certainly, to a great extent, he is doing so by working in partnership with other third sector organisations, local authorities and the Welsh Government with the objective of advancing education amongst the Gypsy and Traveller community in Wales and beyond. Some of the partners that Isaac works with include Save the Children, Traveller Education Service throughout England and Wales, Chapter Arts, Heritage Lottery, BBS Children In Need, Media Trust, Arts Council of Wales, Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Isaac targets not only young school going children but also adult members of the community. He runs programmes that include arts and crafts workshops aimed at increasing engagement and participation amongst children and their families. Equally, he seeks to breakdown some of the myths and barriers relating to Gypsies and Travellers and to build bridges between communities. For example, Isaac recently organised the Holocaust Memorial Day Exhibition in the Vale of Glamorgan, which provided into the on Gypsy and Traveller Community. Having organised the Gypsy, Roma Traveller National Symposium 2012, Isaac is currently engaged in organising the Symposium for 2013. If the 2012 Symposium is anything to go by, the forthcoming official celebration of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history scheduled for June 2013 is certainly an event to look forward to.

Many leading academics would endorse Isaac Blake as a leading Romani Gypsy of our times.

### **iii. TELERI GRAY**

Teleri is a retired teacher and now a leading story teller and advocate of the Romani Gypsy heritage. Her father was a leading Welsh academic and her mother, a Romani Gypsy who left school when she was 14 years of age. The daughter of Ernest France Roberts, a harpist, Teleri's mother also played the harp. Teleri enjoys the status of being the one of the only two Gypsy teachers in Wales, the other being her sister who is an art lecturer at a University in South Wales.

Teleri's maternal ancestors are famous Romani musicians. Her grandfather, her great-grandfather and her great great grandfather played the harp. They were descendants of Abram Wood, the first gypsy who ever came to Wales, in or about 1700. As famous musicians, they travelled all over Wales, performing in the homes of the wealthy. They also travelled all over England playing the harp and played before Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace. They were very popular as entertainers, and at the same time, they helped farmers to catch rats and collect hay. In addition, they undertook a range of other farm work, organised barn dances and narrated store, much to the delight of the farmers.

Proud of her Romani Gypsy roots, Teleri was not aware of her Roma Gypsy heritage until she was fourteen years of age. After that, there was no stopping Teleri. She says that she felt that her Gypsy heritage had given her a licence to be free. Free to express herself to anybody and about anything, without having to comply with the constraints of rules and regulations.

A short stint as a library assistant at the University College Cardiff library made Teleri wish for a student life for herself. To her regret, she realised that she did not have the requisite “A” levels, but soon discovered that she could gain entry into a Teachers Training College. Teleri was initially refused admission because a reference from her former headmistress described her as “totally unsuitable” as a teacher on the grounds that as she was unable to control herself, she would be unable to control school children. However, the college principal had faith in Teleri and soon she was studying arts and crafts, history and drama. Upon qualifying, Teleri started her teaching career and taught children in schools in London and then in Cardiff, where she taught for fourteen years. Following a spell of ill health, Teleri retired from teaching, and since then, she has been enjoying her second life, chaperoning children who act in the theatre and television, and of course her career as a story teller.

In addition, since retiring, Teleri has undertaken in depth study of her Gypsy heritage, and has very successfully transferred her teaching skills into story telling. She visits schools, targeting young Gypsy and Non Gypsy audiences all over Wales. She tells stories about Gypsies and the Gypsy way of life, thus helping to raise awareness of the Gypsy way of life amongst young people. Teleri has a charismatic personality to which all, old or young are drawn. She makes her story telling as interesting and entertaining as possible; for example, she introduces an element of craft work into the story telling sessions. This creates a lasting impression in the minds of young children for whom the Gypsy way of life is a new and different concept. Teleri also gets invited by television companies, Women’s Institutes, and colleges where she is very much at home, entertaining all with her stories based on Gypsy Heritage and Culture.

Thanks to Teleri, there are many young children who now realise that whilst Gypsy children and their families may have a different lifestyle, they are nevertheless human beings, just like them, albeit with a different way and style of living.

#### iv. **Jimmy Blake**

Jimmy Blake hails from a family of psychics and has lived primarily on permanent Sites within Wales for many years.

Jimmy practices the Gypsy arts and cultures of divination, which include Tarot reading, astrology, numerology, and Romani witchcraft. He also practices palmistry, Arab coffee reading, Latino and Gypsy cards, and uses crystal balls, rune stones, and sage in readings.

In addition, Jimmy also practices Santos magic, which is the worship of the Saints, whereby he uses the power of the Saints to promote the change in life, for example, removing black magic spells, and bringing good health and prosperity. He is also a Reiki master and teacher which he says heals at a mental level, physical and emotional. Jimmy has a booth at the Cardiff indoor market and trades under the name of Lee Petulengro.

His grandmother was also a psychic who set up their first family booth in Pontypridd many years ago. She read palms, did crystal ball and tea leaves leadings and sold herbs for healing. He says that his father, his grandmother and great grandmother were all fortune tellers. Jimmy grew up watching his grandparents practice the art of telling fortunes. They taught him how to meditate, read and construct cards. It was not long afterwards, when at the tender age of 11 years, he started working at shows, reading palms and telling fortunes.

Jimmy believes that he was born with psychic skills, and he says that with his parents' guidance and nurturing, he has been able to develop these over the years. He says that his father did not charge for any clairvoyance work that he did, because he felt that he was only predicting what he could see or feel. He also recalls that when he was young, his mother's late brother, whom he did not know of at the time, would come and talk to him. He says that he had begun to see and predict things which would then come true. He adds that for him, fortune telling is second nature.

Although Jimmy relies on word of mouth for promotion of his art, he also runs a website which has helped to build up his worldwide client base. His clients include doctors, lawyers, business men and women and world famous celebrities. His clients pay him to travel to places as far afield as Morocco, Turkey, North Africa, Egypt and Spain for readings and he has plans to visit Mexico next year. He has won awards which include "the most popular male medium in Wales" for the last three year and he writes as an astrologer in various magazines.

Jimmy says that the manner in which he practices his art depends upon what his clients are looking for. He says that he usually starts off with the Tarot or Palmistry. He says that he first focusses on the past, then the present, and finally, he directs his clients to a more positive future. He adds that all readings are guided by the spirit and that cards, palmistry, astrology, numerology are all just tools.

Jimmy says that his clients look to him for advice in connection with love, health, family issues and when they want to contact loved ones who have passed over. Many of his clients describe him as their 'rock' and he says that because he is able to see problems, see how, what and why something as happened that hurts a clients, and why and what the client has to let go, they prefer to consult with him rather than a professional counselor who can only give a client possibilities. He says he provides answers and solutions.

To prepare for sessions with his clients, Jimmy says that he meditates grounds himself, and he calls upon the spirits to come to him and help him. Like any other trade, he has to comply with legislation and regulations. He needs a license from Cardiff Council, a counseling certificate and insurance cover. He says that by law, he is required to include a disclaimer when working to the effect that his work is purely for entertainment purposes, that consultations are not scientifically approved and that no specific results can be guaranteed.

He notes sadly that none of his children presently show an inclination to follow in his footsteps, although his youngest seems to be gifted. He firmly believes however, that no one should be pressurized into working as a psychic; he states that people should naturally be drawn to the art.

Jimmy recognizes that as a Roma Gypsy, it is unlikely that people would communicate with him had it not been for the fact that he is a psychic. He is aware that there are those who, because of his ethnicity, are likely to look down upon him, not place any trust him or treat him as a thief.

Despite this negativity, Jimmy Blake, alias Lee Petulengro has managed to carve for himself a reputation of international fame, as world famous psychic with a huge fan following; an enviable reputation which many in his field wish they had.

#### **4. METHOD**

The 'Travelling to a Better Future' Gypsy and Traveller Framework for Action and Delivery Plan ("The Framework") endorsed by the Welsh Government recognises that engaging the help and assistance of organisations/groups or individuals who have an existing good relationship and track record with the community in consultation processes would be very beneficial. The Framework identifies agencies like the Traveller Education Services as

having good existing relationships with the Gypsy and Traveller community and considers them as being ideally placed to facilitate introductions and help with consultations.

It was with this recommendation in mind, that four local authorities were approached with a view to establishing contact with members of the Gypsy and Travelling community. There are Cardiff, Merthyr, Torfaen and Swansea Councils. The responses were very disappointing.

One local authority failed to respond and the "Social Inclusion" Officer of another stated that they had no links with the Gypsy and Traveller community. An attempt was made to visit Gypsy Sites within the area of latter local authority but regrettably, the response from the site manager(s) was not overly encouraging. The view of the Site Manager was the Gypsy "mind set" was not open to engagement with outsiders. However, it is noted that an offer was extended to enable an accompanied visit to one of the Sites.

The Site Managers of two sites within the area of the third local authority was initially encouraging, but a stumbling block was encountered when the Council expressed its wish to orchestrate the manner in which the interviews ought to be conducted. This issue was subsequently resolved. Individuals on one of these Sites were identified as possible sources of information, interaction and engagement. Initially, little progress was made on this Site and this was because of a culmination of factors. Firstly, a young boy had been tragically killed in a road accident on Site and community members were still reeling from this shock when a serious incident between two community members occurred. All this left feelings running high within the community.

It must be noted that the loss of the little boy has resulted in a rippled of shock and mourning across Gypsy and Traveller sites in South Wales. The period that followed proved to be difficult for community members and out of compassion and respect for their feelings, research for this Project on at least one of the sites was temporarily stayed. However research was subsequently commenced and assistance of some community members was sought to secure access to their friends and families so that their views and information for the purposes of the Project could be obtained.

The initial response from the fourth local authority was very disappointing, with the Site Manager suggesting that little would be achieved from meetings with community members. However, the "Equal" Project Team (attached to a school within this local authority) was very

forthcoming and offered to help, confirming that it had good links with the community. The response and assistance received from this Team; its commitment and dedication to the work it carries out for and within the community and the spirit of the young children and their families that it engages with is indeed remarkable and heart-warming.

A total of forty three (43) individuals resident at four Gypsy and Traveller Sites were interviewed during March and April 2013. Of these, nineteen (19) were between the ages of 12-17, four were between the age of 17-21, fourteen (14) were over the age of 21 and three were over the age of 40. Of the forty three individuals, twenty one were female and nineteen were male.

All participants were advised at the outset that their participation in this study was voluntary and that they were at liberty to refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the interview process at any time. Every effort has been made to ensure that the participants are not identified by their responses. However, this anonymity may not have been achieved, particularly in respect of those participants who have been willing to identify any special needs which may help to address future review processes.

The local authorities that were approached for the purposes of facilitating access to Gypsy and Traveller communities and Gypsy Sites have been identified for validation purposes, as this study was based on a proposal *inter alia*, to engage with "...community members on two - five South East Wales sites...".

The "High Achievers" referred to in this report are members of the Gypsy and Traveller community. Two of whom have grown up and lived on Gypsy Sites in South Wales. The third, a leading academic has wide experience of living on Gypsy Sites in England and Wales and the fourth, whilst having been brought up in the settled community, has very close connections with the Gypsy and Traveller community resident on Sites across Wales.

## **5. TRADITIONAL TRADES AND SKILLS**

Gypsies and Travellers are considered to be versatile and make their living by various means. Historically, their lifestyle, influenced by living in different countries has enhanced their capacity to adapt to changing conditions. Hence, they have developed an ability to

provide services that cater to occasional needs and an ever-changing clientele was well suited to the Gypsy and Traveller way of life.

The four main occupations that Gypsies and Travellers have engaged in are metalwork, arts and crafts, entertainment (including fortune telling) and general trading. Over time, these trades have devolved and the Gypsy and Traveller community have added other skills depending upon need and demand. However, it would be fair to say that many Gypsies still follow a modern version of these original occupations.

Horse-trading features greatly in the Gypsy and Traveller way of life. Horses have always been an important economic factor in the life of the Gypsy and Traveller community. They devote their time in tending to the illnesses of horses who have served them well. Historically, they would trade a good horse for a less healthy one, and by tending for these sick horses and putting them into good health, they would later sell them for a higher price than the price originally paid. Horse fairs continue to play an important role in the life of Gypsies and Travellers.

Peddling was also predominant, with Gypsies and Travellers selling what they were able to buy cheaply or selling items that they would make themselves. Women played their full part in helping to earn a livelihood. They would often sell their wares going from door to door and on occasions would offer fortune telling to those interested. In addition, they made Christmas wreaths.

Gypsies and Travellers have traditionally excelled in metalwork. They have engaged in making nails, tools, and cooking equipment. They are skilled at plating objects with tin, embossing and engraving jewellery. They are experts in all forms of metalwork, whether it is as tinsmiths, coppersmiths, silversmiths, or goldsmiths.

Gypsies and Travellers are excellent in devising relatively light equipment such as forges and hammers. These tools are necessary for their work and are specifically designed to be easily transported. Indeed, knife grinding or blade sharpening was a common occupation for many Gypsies and Travellers.

Wagon painting (Vardo) and sign painting was also a highly specialised skill. Whilst horses and wagons were increasingly replaced by motors and trailers well before the emergence of legislation relating to the creation of permanent Sites for Gypsy families, a revival of interest in more traditional means of expressing a Gypsy identity brought with it an increased interest

in horse drawn Carts. Thus, wagons soon became an important symbol of Gypsy identity and this brought with it a competitive desire to own the best turned out wagon for show purposes at the Appleby Horse Fair, Epsom's Show Sunday and fairs at Stow -on- the-Wold. Carts painted with serpents and carved heads of horses and scenes of lurchers running down a hare, fighting cocks and engraved mirror panels are just some of the decorative details adopted by painters and artists. Noted artists include Jimmy Berry and Thomas Gaskin who are famed for their motif repertoire.

Gypsies and Travellers are also famous for fortune telling which is a relatively simple way of earning money. They make many kinds of predictions and read palms and tea leaves and use crystal balls, scrying bowls and tarot cards for this purpose. They analyse the future by reading cards and practice numerology, which entails the analysis of the significance of numbers. They practice palmistry by judging a person's fate, character, and aptitudes from the shape of hands and fingers and the designs of lines in the palm of the hand. Some Gypsy and Travellers also practice healing powers and offer good luck charms, amulets, and talismans. In addition, they practice herbalism, rune magic and the druidic arts.

In Wales, Gypsies and Travellers made their living from harp and fiddle playing; horse dealing; basket making; wood cutting; peg, net and lace making; fishing and fortune telling. The extent to which this is still being carried out amongst the Gypsy and Traveller community in South Wales is considered below.

## **6. CURRENT TRADE / ACTIVITIES**

### **i. Knife sharpening, fence painting, landscape gardening, scrap metal (rag and bone), farm labouring, and bricklaying**

Of the forty three individuals interviewed, thirteen men engaged in knife sharpening, fence painting, landscape gardening, scrap metal (rag and bone), farm labouring and bricklaying. Of these, seven were over the age of 21 years and three were over 17 years.

Six females over twenty one said they helped in the family business of landscape gardening, farm labouring and fortune telling. All of these men and women stated that these activities had been the family "trade" for generations.

6 young boys aged between 12-17 years engage in gardening, either with older members of the family and as time has gone by, with practice and experience, on their own.

When asked what training they had received to help them carry out their current trade(s), all said that they had watched older family members carrying out activities, and when growing up in their teenage years, they would be invited to join along in the activities. During this process, each received guidance and coaching in the skills relevant to each activity. Older male community members said that they started out by accompanying their fathers or older male members of the family at a very early age, say between 6 -7 years. They receive on the job training and experience in scrap dealing and knife sharpening (grinding), as well as selling carpets and knives.

Some said that family members, for example the wife of the male community member helps with book keeping and accounting.

New business is sought by advertising with flyers and business cards. In addition, knocking at doors in selected areas also leads to work and a high proportion of work comes their way by recommendation, that is, by word of mouth. Driving around areas and calling for scrap (rag and bone) material generates a lot of interest and trade as does having stalls at local markets and car boots sales.

A variety of gardening tools and equipment is required for garden landscaping. These range from small tools for cutting grass and wood to larger tools for chopping small to medium sized wood and tranches, and chainsaws for tree trunks. Wood shredders are used to dispose of waste. Special loading trolleys or a van with a trailer cage are used to carry large scrap metal items; hence vans and trucks are an absolute essential. All equipment and vehicles are purchased, and there is no practice to use hired or borrowed equipment.

Landscaping and heavy labour brings with it health risks. Those interviewed acknowledged that there were obvious risks with gardening and tree cutting but added that they take every step to ensure that they are and remain safe as they recognise that if they were to injure themselves, they would lose the capacity to work for weeks.

## **ii. Horse Trading**

Thirteen male community members said that they engaged in horse trading.

Horse trading is an inherent part of Gypsy and Traveller life. Some community members stated that in the older days, horses were considered a sign of wealth, although many families kept them as pets. Horse trading was an important source for income generation.

Smaller animals or those in poor health are purchased at a lower value, then being raised to good health and sold at a profit. Of course one of the most important and traditional uses that Gypsy and Travellers made of horses was to pull their wagons, hence the honour of the title "Gypsy Vanners" given to such horses for pulling old wagons.

Horse breeding and engaging in horse trading can be an expensive exercise. Horses have to be taken to Horse Fairs which tend to be located at a long distance from established Gypsy and Traveller Sites. Horse boxes are expensive to purchase, and can cost up to £450. Fodder for twenty horses can cost up to £300 per week and veterinary fees are at a minimum, in the region of £95 - £100 per visit.

One male community member spoke with great regret of the gradual eradication of the Gypsy and Traveller community's ability to continue with horse breeding, trading and keeping. He stated that horses, like dogs were an inherent part of the Gypsy culture; they served as the main mode of transport for business and travelling purpose before modern forms of transport became popular. With increasing pressure brought about by local authorities; planning legislation and regulations and the resultant constraints on site design, layout governing Gypsy Sites; community members are prohibited from bringing horses onto Sites. In addition, complaints against keeping horses on Site lodged by other residents on Site who wish to be re-homed in flats or houses has meant that local authority policy on allowing horses on Site is next to non-negotiable. Putting horses only second in importance after his children, the community member expressed great sadness and regret in the "killing of Gypsy culture" by policies adopted by statutory authorities which curtail horse keeping on Site.

### **iii. Hawking**

One woman over the age of 50 years had a pedlar's licence and called herself a hawker. She purchased lace, bracelets and other trinkets from places as far afield as Manchester, and conducted door to door sales in selected areas. She stated that her mother had been a pedlar and that as she was growing up, she would go door to door with her mother who would sell pegs made by her father.

A small number of community members over 21 years recall their fathers making flowers, pegs and baskets at home, which their mothers would sell by hawking, mostly by going door to door, knocking for sales opportunities.

#### **iv. Fortune Telling**

6 women and one man, all over the age of 21 engage in the art of fortune telling.

These individuals use the same pitches that have previously been used by family members. They believe that this helps with continuity as people continue to come to the same place with repeat visits and with family and friends. Advertising is by flyers and for some, via the internet.

All have a family history in the art of fortune telling and at least one of those interviewed is a psychic of world fame.

Use of crystal balls and cards is common and booths or stalls are set with make shift arrangements using tents, tables and chairs.

#### **Regulatory compliance**

When asked about the need for complying with licenses or other regulatory processes in connection with the above mention trades, all those interviewed confirmed that they were aware of the need for a pedlars licence to enable them to make door to door calls in order to generate business. They were also aware of the need for appropriate driving licences, including those required for heavy goods vehicles and the need for waste carriers licences. They also recognised the need for towing licences for towing horse boxes.

When working on land belonging to others, all said that they relied on property owners and land owners to have an understanding of permitted and lawful activities.

#### **v. Child Care and Youth Engagement**

Three women over 21 have been engaged in child care, teaching /support assistants in a school, with one having achieved a distinction in Child Care - Level One.

One woman is currently employed at a school as a support worker working with young Gypsy and Traveller children. Currently 24 years of age, she added that she had previously worked with 5-6 year old children from the Gypsy and Traveller community and has some 3 years on the job training and experience. She believes that she is lucky to have a job.

The other two women have not worked for about two years. The older of the two had to give up her job as a support worker in a school where she had been working for eighteen months in order to look after her mother. She received training from qualified teachers and youth workers and has learnt to teach young Gypsy and Traveller children to read and write, social

interaction, and had acquired basic knowledge in health and safety relevant to working with children. She also helped look after children on excursions and outdoor trips. Whilst she has no formal training, she claims that raising her three children gives her hands on experience in looking after young children. She would like to secure a job which involves working with children but has been unable to so.

The 21 year old woman with the Child Care – Level One qualification has been trying to get a job in a school or nursery for the last two years. She has submitted numerous applications, sought guidance and help with the applications to help her secure at least an interview, but to date has had no success. Although she has only been fortunate enough to have secured one six month placement in a school looking after 7-8 year old children, she has previously looked after children of family and friends. She would like to study towards Child Care Levels 2 and 3, get a job and /or set up her own nursery. She recognises that in order to achieve the latter, she needs to attain higher formal qualifications or work with others who have higher formal training and experience.

All those interviewed recognised the health risk that working with children entails. These range from passing infections on to children or contracting infections from them. They recognise the need for ensuring that they have proper health checks and relevant injections against infection.

#### **vi. Fortune Telling**

One female and male over twenty one engage in fortune telling. The female advised that she became involved in fortune telling when as a child, she would help elders in the family to prepare charms in readiness for the following day's trading. Initially, training in the art of fortune telling began by working closely with older members of the family. Subsequently, she used the same pitches as that used previously by the family. Clients are individuals who have previously visited these pitches and families of such individuals who make repeat visits to the pitches expecting a reading. New business is sought by advertising with flyers and internet marketing.

The male fortune teller, whilst not currently resident on Site has strong connections with the Site, and has lived on Gypsy Sites on and off since birth.

#### **vii. Dress making/sewing**

Seven females between the ages of 14-17 years expressed an interest in dress making and sewing and one 15 year old is due to start studying fashion and design in school later this

year. She has also professed a desire to study fashion design at University level. However, she has no knowledge of the grades or experience required to secure entry for such a degree level programme.

All those who were interviewed have a desire to make fabulous designer dresses and clothes items. There was an underlying desire to produce clothes with a lot of “bling”! At least one of those interviewed has attended formal Vintage Fashion and Arts Programmes, and has been engaged in designing clothes items and working on clothing articles to make them more fashionable and trendy. She has a vision of creating beautiful clothes that would be in great demand and would like to become famous dress designer someday.

The desire to learn dress making was very strong and at least one wanted to take it up as a career. All acknowledged the need of equipment like sewing machines, fabric, threads, needles, pins and material to cut out pattern. One complained of the fact that her sewing machine had broken down and felt that a new sewing machine would be too costly.

At least three of those interviewed wanted their mothers involved in any dress making training or leaning process.

One mentioned the risks to fingers and hands when cutting or sewing.

#### **viii. Hair and Beauty Therapy**

Three females fifteen years of age and one fourteen year old expressed a desire to train as hair dressers and in beauty therap. One of them was also had an overlapping interest in dress making, whilst another said that she would also like to study child care just in case she “tired” of hairdressing. All were currently attending a hair dressing and beauty therapy programme at a local college. All said that they had wanted to become hair dressers from an early age.

Their current skills do not extend beyond washing hair and all would like to learn more; they currently practice on each other. Two expressed a desire to set up their own business and at least one that thought about setting up a mobile hairdressing service.

One young female raised an issue currently relevant to their ability to continue attending college. This related to their transport to and fro the College. The Gypsy Sites where these young females reside are not situated near public modes of transport. She said that she and several of her friends who attend college have to rely on their mothers to drive them around. She felt that a bus facility would help them get to college and back without having to rely on their respective mothers for transport.

All were aware of the need for equipment like hair dryers, curling tongs, hair straighteners, shampoos, conditioners, hair dye and the specialist knowledge required in terms of colouring hair and working with chemicals. They were also aware of the potential health risks that customers faced in the event of allergies to products use.

One female was aware of a two year hair dressing programme at college with a work placement could help her qualify as a hair dresser. However, all those interviewed did not have any detailed knowledge of the minimum grades required and / or experience necessary to secure admission at college for a relevant course. Furthermore, all expressed concern over getting a placement or a Saturday job with a hair dressing salon. Similarly, whilst they were aware that they may have to comply with some legal or regulatory requirements when setting up their own hair dressing salons or mobiles salons, none had any in depth knowledge of any specific requirements.

#### **ix. Arts**

One female aged 15 years who is also interested in hair dressing and beauty is very good in artwork and would like to study art at a higher level. She expressed a strong desire to draw and paint but seemed unsure or uncertain about how to pursue this further. She did however state that artwork material like paint, canvas, brushes, plaster of Paris and pencils could be very expensive.

#### **x. Football**

One seventeen year old male who worked in the construction trade with his father is an amateur footballer. He has played football since he was a little boy.

He is currently training with a football club in Bridgend in which connection he is driven from Torfaen to Bridgend by his mother twice a week. He has played with local teams in London and Torfaen. Whilst in London, he was picked for playing two matches, and had he been able to live in London, it is likely that he would have made further progress in the club. However, whilst he lived in London, he was too young to engage in paid work, but believes that once he is eighteen, he could play at a more professional level and make a good living.

He would like to train at a football college but he cannot gain admission as he does not have the necessary "O" levels in English and Maths. He recognises the value of a formal training with a professional coach and apprenticeship with a good club. But he is also resigned to the fact that unless he can train at a higher and more professional level, he will not be able

to succeed in this ambition. When asked if he has any other interests, his response was “Football, Football and Football!”

He is very confident that he has the skill to play at national level, but regrets very much that should the status quo continue, he will never be in a position to do so.

He accepts that he could get hurt when playing or injuring fellow players, but feels that comprehensive insurance cover would take care of issues.

#### **xi. Boxing/Plumber**

A 14 year old male who has been formally training as a boxer for a year wants to become a professional boxer. He states that he had been boxing on and off since he was eight years of age, but it is only recently that he has been undergoing professional training. He said he has built upon his experience by practising with older and young members within the Gypsy and Traveller community. He added that he first became interested in boxing as he felt that it would help him to look after himself.

He was aware some of the regulations that boxers have to comply with in terms of being the right weight, age, medically fit and being certified. He also added that boxing gear like gloves; head guard, gum shield and shorts were all expensive but that he relied on his family to purchase these for him. Another expense was travelling to boxing venues, but at present, he said that family members were driving him to his training classes.

In terms of health and safety, he understood that boxing was a dangerous career, fights must be licensed, the need for medical check-ups before each fight and that it was crucial to be properly trained and to wear the correct protection equipment. He pointed out the dangers of brain or other injury to the body, and emphasised the need to have an experienced referee in place, whose presence he felt was necessary to secure cessation of fights at the right time, that is, before a party become severely injured.

He feels that he could make a good living boxing, but added that if that failed, he would like to become a plumber. He was aware that he could train as a plumber at a local college and secure an NVQ level qualification as a plumber, which he believed would take some two years to complete. He recognised the value of apprenticeship and/ work experience. He pointed out that he would need a tool box and emphasised the need for a spanner, gloves, a driving licence and transport to get about. He thought that his family would pay for all the equipment he needed, He was confident that the college would arrange a work placement

for him and recognised the need to formally set up a business. However, he felt that it was too early at this stage to look into these issues.

## **7. ASPIRATIONS**

The aspirations and the desires for community members vary. Nevertheless, at least 50% are engaged in and wish to continue with traditional occupations like knife sharpening, fence painting, landscape gardening, scrap metal (rag and bone), farm labouring, horse trading and bricklaying. This to some extent appears to be related to the age groups and the gender of those questioned.

Amongst the younger males, interest in boxing and football was strong, with plumbing opted for as a safe fall back profession.

The younger females were inclined to favour beauty and hair dressing and dress making, although child care and art were also areas of interest.

### **i. Female aspirations**

The majority of the females aged 21 years and over were happy to continue with either helping in the family trade of landscape gardening, farm labouring and even brick laying. Over 75% of those interviewed expressed an interest in branching out on their own but said that they would need help in setting up and running a business. In addition, all said that they would like to see course in hair and beauty therapy in place for their children. They were also interested in having in place dress making classes designed not only to suit their children but also for themselves.

Child care emerged as an option with three females, with at least two expressing a strong desire to work.

One female had some well thought out proposals. Living not far from the Shepherds Hill Site, the community member made reference to a “Pod” which has remained unused virtually since the time it was constructed. With community engagement in mind, she has a distinct vision of running a play group for women and children, providing child care facilities and running snooker and billiards club for teenage boys. She believes that this could bring the Pod into useful and effective use and encourage community engagement and confidence, and give young people a place to meet and interact. She added that running a play group and a pre-school group would be an excellent way forward to expose the children

to a school like environment. She pointed out that even the practice of sharing toys and books is a concept not understood by many Gypsy and Traveller children who often have no experience of playing with others until they attend school; hence they tend to react adversely to the concept of sharing when they first attend school.

She feels that with some guidance and resources, she could set up these facilities, but recognises she would be unable to organise and put in place that entire she envisions without assistance, both in practical terms and strategic planning. This she believes could be forthcoming from statutory agencies like the local authority and community projects, and of course those experienced in organising youth work. She added that there were suitably experience young women within the community who could assist in running the various schemes that she has in mind and her enthusiasm and commitment is evidenced by her declaration that she could get together a group of community members to wash down the Pod and make it a little more habitable with some fresh paintwork. However, it is understood that more work would be required as the roof of the Pod has been leaking for several years.

The female community member currently trading as a hawker/pedlar has visions of expanding her trade. However, she expressed a desire only to undertake work in areas and in materials or items that she was already trading in. Furthermore, she was not currently open to trading in any manner other than door to door trading, for example setting a stall in a market or a car boot sale.

Amongst females under 17 years, the predominant desire is to learn dress making and sewing. They felt that with professional training and the assistance of their respective mothers, they could produce party wear and “designer like” clothes for themselves and their families. Some felt that they could even make a living out of this but again, probably because of their youth and inexperience in such matters, wanted their mothers involved in the training and related processes. They added however that a defined and enclosed area should be provided on Site where sewing machines and other dress making equipment could be stored and which they could use when dress making as their homes provides limited living accommodation.

Beauty therapy and hair dressing also features strongly in the aspirations of young girls under the age of 17 years. They would like to train as hair dressers and beauticians and almost all would like to run their own businesses. However, being of an age where they are still at school, it would appear that they do not recognise the need to seek the basic qualification required to secure admission for the relevant qualifications. This ambition would be further frustrated by the fact that many of them want to leave school at the age of

13 years so that they can stay at home and help with housework and looking after younger siblings. One young girl even said that "... us Gypsies do not believe in education..." However, such declarations are in direct contradiction to the success rate in school attendance that has been achieved in the area of one local authority.

The desire to study at graduate level was expressed by one female aged 14 years who wished to study fashion design and indeed was going to commence study for this subject at college later this year. Similarly, another female also aged 15 years also wanted to study art at university. However, neither was aware of the minimum educational requirements to secure admission at university for the relevant graduate programmes, and further, had no knowledge of funding any degree programmes of their choice.

## ii. **Male aspirations**

Save for three males, all wished to continue with or undertake traditional trades like knife sharpening, fence painting, landscape gardening, scrap metal (rag and bone), farm labouring, horse trading and bricklaying. This applied men over 21 as well as younger males aged between 12 to 17 years. Indeed, six males aged 12 – 17 were already engaged in gardening and wished to continue with the trade when older. They have all worked with older men in the family who are already engaged in what they referred to as "tree topping and garden work". Some of the males at the top of this age range are already working in partnership with others or have their own businesses.

All but two males interviewed expressed an interest in undertaking carpentry, chalet building and blacksmithing and all expressed an interest in learning the trade. They also wanted training in setting up their own businesses and were interested in ways and methods of developing businesses. They expressed interest in learning more about marketing, using the internet, electronic accounting, setting up web sites, e shopping. When asked if they would be interested in setting up social enterprises or co-operatives, they said that they would like to learn more about this so that they could decide if this was something that they would like to pursue. All also expressed a desire to be updated on changes in laws and regulations that are relevant to their trades, for examples, carrier licences or waste permits.

Sport invoked interest in two younger males, with one aspiring to be a footballer and the other a plumber. The 17 year old youth has an immensely strong desire to play at local and national level. He understands that this will require hard work and commitment and this is evidenced by the long distance he and his mother travel to attend the football coaching at a club located within the area of another local authority. He would like very much to attend

“football college”, but cannot secure admission as he does not have the required minimum qualifications. Regrettably, he is unable to attend college on a full time basis to secure the minimum educational requirements of an “O” level in English and in Maths. This is because he helps his father in the family business during the day. Therefore, any study for the “O” levels would have to be conducted in the evenings. However, he is not keen on studying, but would like a solution to the predicament he finds himself in. He states that if he is able to secure entry to a football college, he would be willing to study for the required “O” levels in the evenings.

The young male who wishes to become a boxer recognises that this is a difficult and dangerous profession. He would however like to continue to be coached professionally, and be able to box at professional matches when older. He also has a backup plan should he fail as a boxer, and that is to train as a plumber. He believes that with appropriate training and apprenticeship, he could make a successful living as a plumber and should the opportunity arise, he would like to set up his own business.

## **8. EMERGING PATTERNS**

Amongst the older male and female members of the community that were interviewed, that is those over the age of twenty one, all save four females are engaged in the traditional trades and skills, namely, knife sharpening, fence painting, landscape gardening, scrap metal (rag and bone), farm labouring, horse trading, bricklaying, peddling and fortune telling. It would appear that all of them had been to primary school, but there is limited information about any secondary school education.

Save for two male members of the community between 17 – 21 years, all were engaged either with their families, or in partnership with others or as sole traders in landscaping and gardening. One of the male community members who wants to move away from the traditional garden landscaping trade that he is currently engaged in with his father aspires to become a professional footballer and another hopes to become a professional boxer. There is a history of bare knuckle fighting in the Gypsy community and it is understood that many modern day Gypsy boxers are descendants of historically famous bare knuckle fighters.

Whilst both are prepared to undertake training to master their chosen professions, formal education is not predominant in their thoughts or indeed wishes. However, both recognise that they will have to meet any minimum requirements for admission should they wish to secure training at a higher level. Both express preference for hand on training,

apprenticeship and training. However, a pertinent question that arises in this connection is the relevance of the minimum standards imposed by colleges for admission on courses that are suitable for such training.

It should be noted that both young men with sporting aspirations have fall back options in the shape of landscape gardening and plumbing respectively.

In contrast, female community members demonstrate the desire to move away from the role of home maker traditionally expected of Gypsy and Traveller women, in that all want learn some new and some modern day skills.

Just less than three quarters of those under the age of 17 want to learn dress making and just one quarter wanted to learn hairdressing and beauty, with two wanting to study art and fashion and design respectively. Three females over the age of 21 want to undertake work that involves children, either in terms of child care, nursery or teaching assistant. Only one woman over the age of 21 is engaged in the traditional trade of hawking / peddler and has visions of building up her trade but at a slow and steady pace.

This suggests that amongst the younger female community, there is a distinct move away from the desire to engage in or play a supporting role in the traditional family trades of landscape gardening, farm labouring, fortune telling and hawking. However, all chose roles traditionally regarded as being more suitable to women, namely dress making, hair dressing and beauty therapy. This to some extent contrasts with the attitude that the non-Romani community view such professions, with men playing a leading role in fashion design, hair and makeup. Nevertheless, at least two females under 17 years expressed the desire to study for their chosen fields of art and fashion and design at university level, and all others were keen to receive formal training.

The third strong contender in terms of work that women, certainly those over the age of 21 years wanted to engage in was that which involved children. Only one of these women had raised children herself, although the others indicated that they had helped their mothers and other community families in looking after their siblings. Of these, only one had pursued formal training in child care and had aspirations to study further.

Females from two Sites within the area of one local authority were keen to drop out of school soon just after primary school level. In contrast, a 100% school attendance rate is boasted by a school in a neighbouring local authority which has adopted a highly supportive model that focusses on encouraging engagement and interaction designed specifically to meet the

needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community. Here, all females appear to be more certain and more committed to their wish to learn and study further.

## **9. "ISSUES"**

### **i. Literacy**

Literacy amongst the older members of the community ranges from being limited to a reasonable level.

The older members of the community have identified the need for information relating to changes in law and regulations that affect their trades as they find it difficult to keep up with changes.

Younger members of the community who wish to specialise in areas like dress making, fashion and design, and hair dressing do not appear to have much idea of the minimum education requirements even those they profess to make careers in these fields.

Those that do, for example the young man who wishes to go to football college is barred from entry because he does not have the minimum required "O" level grades in English and Maths.

### **ii. Further education**

At least four young community members wish to secure further education to achieve their goals in their chosen careers. Here again, literacy is an issue, because at least one who is old enough to attend college does not have the minimum grades required for admission. Interestingly enough, the young male wishes to train as a footballer, the emphasis placed on "O" levels in English and Maths is a little lost on the youth, who fails to understand the significance of such academic ability to his ability to train as a footballer and play football at a local and national level.

The young females who wish to pursue graduate programmes at University have limited knowledge of the minimum educational requirements, the range of graduate programmes on offer and how to go about preparing for admission to University.

### **iii. Funding /Financial Arrangements**

The young community members who wished to pursue further education in their chosen fields appeared to be unaware of the fees payable for any educational programme of their

choice or how they would fund these. They need advice and guidance on the possibility of obtaining funding, either in the form of loans or bursaries.

#### **iv. Accommodation/Transport**

All young community members made reference to local colleges when expressing their desire to pursue further education. Nevertheless, all Gypsy and Traveller Sites that were visited were situated a considerable distances away from public transport routes. In addition, some of the universities / colleges offering the requisite graduate programmes are located in neighbouring towns. Transport is therefore an issue as many young community members may start college before they are able to drive, or indeed even able to afford to run a motor vehicle. They will therefore be reliant on transport from family members. However, older male members of the family are engaged in their trades during the day, and not all older females members are able to drive, therefore, transport to and fro colleges of further education will present a problem for these young people, until such time that they are able to secure a driving license and own a car.

A fifteen year old female currently attending hair dressing and beauty therapy course at a local college raised the issue of accessibility to the college in terms of transport and very pointedly stated that if the Site was located along the route of public transport, then she and her friends would not have to be dependent on their mothers or older friends of the family drive them to and fro college.

#### **v. On Site Training**

Almost half of those females wishing to pursue hairdressing, beauty therapy and sewing expressed the desire for provision of onsite facilities to help them practice and/work on their college courses. Those wishing to study expressed a desire to have access to accommodation on Site with equipment like sewing machines, iron and ironing board, so that they are able to undertake sewing and related activities in their spare time.

The majority of the male community over the age of 21 years expressed interest in carpentry, chalet making and blacksmithing. They were all keen to have training in these trades. In addition, those with male children wanted their children to undergo farriers training so that they could specialise in equine hoof care. This would include the trimming and balancing of horses' hooves and the fixing of shoes on their hooves. This training could prove to be immensely useful as legislation prohibits anyone other than registered farriers to refer to themselves as a farrier or to carry out any farriery work. The purpose of this legislation is to "...prevent and avoid suffering by and cruelty to horses arising from the

shoeing of horses by unskilled persons". Such specialist knowledge could prove to be immensely useful for a community that is keen on horse breeding and trading.

#### **vi. Apprenticeship/Training**

All those wishing to pursue a college education recognised the importance of apprenticeship, be it as a plumber or hair dresser. All were aware of the difficulty in securing training or apprenticeship contracts, but felt that their colleges could help them find placements. On a negative note, older members of the community believed that when potential employers discover that an applicant resides on a Gypsy and Traveller Site, this automatically eradicates any possible job opportunities, work placement, training or apprenticeship.

#### **vii. Commercial acumen**

Older community members engaged in traditional trades asked for training to set up their own business, marketing, use of internet and maintaining electronic accounts. They also expressed an interest in setting up websites to publish their trades and to learn on line purchasing.

#### **viii. Horse Trading**

The layout of present day Gypsy and Traveller Sites do not accommodate and further, many prohibit the keeping of horses on Site. This prohibition has gradually eroded the prevalence of horse breeding and trading, although the use of horses as a mode of transport has gradually declined over the years. To some extent, many have turned to trading in cars instead of vehicles, but ownership of horses is still regarded as an inherent part of the Gypsy identity. Nevertheless, despite the many obstacles faced by the community which prevent to horse keeping on Site, many community members still engage in horse trading, renting fields from local farmers and attending events like the Appleby Horse Fair.

Gypsy and Traveller Sites tend on the whole to be located away from other residential areas. With proposals for new Sites in the pipeline, local authorities could demarcate suitable areas designated for horse stables and exercise areas that could help bring back and allow the Gypsy and Traveller community to continue to nurture this traditional practice for which there is intense passion.

Many of those interviewed believe that the conflict between the Gypsy and Traveller way of life and the imposition of modern day living conditions has adversely affected and impacted upon the bond between the Gypsy and the horse and the interaction between both in terms of wagon pulling, cart pulling and breeding and trading.

## **ix. Trade Equipment**

With the rising costs of living, finding money for materials and equipment necessary to further the aims and ambitions of those interviewed is a significant consideration. Landscape gardening equipment ranging from chainsaws, strimmers, shredders, bush pruners, ladders, safety harnesses, lawn mowers, horse boxes, construction tools are essential, expensive and in constant need of replacement.

In addition, these trades can only be carried off Site and therefore, transport is crucial. Trucks, pickups, trailers and other bigger vehicles suitable to towing and pulling are required. Running costs coupled with maintenance and insurance costs drain resources from these vehicle reliant trades.

Sewing machines and related material are expensive, as is material for art work. Hair dressing equipment and make up continues to get expensive with the rising costs of living and cannot comfortably be sustained by the relatively low income earning capacity among community families.

## **10. BARRIERS**

There is an overlap between the issues discussed in the foregoing paragraphs and the barriers faced by the community.

Apart from literacy which can play a major role in progress and development of a trade, the community lives in isolation in areas which are far removed from town centres and residential areas, and lack of public transport cuts off those without immediate access to motor vehicles from the settled community. Admittedly, with the growth of out of town centres, some of these sites are now closer to major grocery stores and new residential developments.

### **i. Site Conditions**

Save for one Gypsy and Traveller Site, the conditions on three of the Sites visited are not conducive to a healthy and harmonious environment for both adults and children. Even within a fairly modern Site, the design lay out and lack of play areas for children and recreation for adults is distinctly absent.

Some Sites look like ghettos and the lack of facilities and appalling conditions at ground level, with unmade up narrow roads give Site the appearance of shanty towns. For a

majority of those interviewed, these Sites are the only homes that they have known, with their parents and grandparent having made their homes on these Sites. Some community members state that the impact of growing up in and living in such an environment is certainly not a conduit for instilling confidence, self-esteem and high aspirations amongst those who reside here.

Indeed, it is recognised in the Framework that better living conditions on Site will have an impact on the level and frequency of education received and the resultant improved literacy levels will have long term impacts on the employment potential of these children as adults and go some way to breaking the poverty cycle. However, for the majority of those interviewed, better living conditions do not appear to be in the offing.

## **ii. Self Confidence /Self Esteem/Role /Role Models**

Living and growing up in conditions which are visibly poor when compared to those enjoyed by the settled community cannot but have a detrimental impact both in terms of self-confidence and self-esteem amongst the Gypsy and Traveller community. This in turn is likely to result in low aspirations and rejection, albeit inadvertently, of heritage trades and skills.

Discouraged by the Government from travelling place to place and making unauthorised settlements, the designation of Gypsy Sites has gradually resulted in the eradication of the use of wagons for habitation. Some community members believe that because sites cannot accommodate wagons, they have no option but to live in modern caravans. Whilst such caravans undoubtedly provide more practical living space, over the years, the ability to use and own a traditional Gypsy Wagon and linked with it, wagon or Vardo painting has been hampered and to some extent eradicated.

This study shows that where local authorities or schools deliver well designed projects aimed at encouraging inclusion of the Gypsy and Traveller community and particular young children, this has had a positive influence on school attendance records and has helped to raise confidence and aspirations of young children, particularly amongst females. Introduction to hair and beauty vintage fashion has promoted interest in the area of fashion, art and design.

This study also finds that young males want to continue with traditional family trades carried out by older male members of the family. Thus, fathers, grandfathers and brothers continue to act as role models.

The experiences of one school illustrates that investment of time and a well thought out strategy can have a positive impact of children who can be open to new ideas and visions if confidence in their own capabilities and self-belief is nurtured. The school advises that one young male who is still at school has decided to train as a fire fighter, following a visit to the local fire station and meetings with professional fire fighters. It is regrettable that it was not possible to meet with this young person as his interest in a main stream profession would have lent to this report.

Academic aspirations, although to some extent limited, point to young females identifying roles for themselves beyond that of a house maker.

### **iii. Lack of opportunity – jobs/apprenticeship**

There appears to be a distinct lack of opportunity for the Gypsy and Traveller community to secure job/training related opportunities. Whilst this can be greatly attributable to the lack of formal education particularly amongst older members of the community and younger males, there is evidence that even those community members who have relevant experience and some formal qualification do not fare well in the job market. This is illustrated by the fact that one young female with child care qualifications continues to be without a job for over two years, despite numerous making numerous job applications, and willing to be reasonably mobile in terms of job location.

### **iv. Lack of on Site Facilities**

When asked for the reasons for the absence of traditional trades and skills like Gypsy wagon (Vardo) painting, weaving, basketry, music, community members stated that the Gypsy and Traveller Sites are not set up or designed to accommodate these skills. For example, whilst some of the older male community members engage in horse trading, there is no provision for horses to be raised and kept on Site for trading. Indeed, some of the Sites expressly prohibit the retention large animals on Site. This means that horse breeding, raising and trading is discouraged and community members have to locate any horse trading activities that they may wish to engage in farther away from their homes. Those who are able to rent fields and purchase horse trailers are able to continue with this trade, but lack of facilities means that this trade is at great risk of completely dying out, and events like the Appleby Horse Fairs could gradually decline.

The age old tradition of community members gathering outside their wagons, cooking on a fire, exchanging stories and folk lore is extinct. The lack of community areas within Sites means that community members are unable to engage and come together as a community

as was the tradition, when groups would gather around fires at the end of each day and discuss their day to day activities, trades and engage in social discourse. Indeed, open fires are for obvious safety related reasons prohibited. This has had a detrimental impact upon the art of storytelling; hence the art of handing down by word of mouth to generation after generation, stories about Gypsy and Traveller culture and way of life has declined. None of those interviewed expressed any interest in the art of storytelling.

Whilst some Sites provide a “pod” or a community hall for social use by community members, from those viewed, only one is barely fit for human habitation. More shockingly, one pod currently designated for the purpose of running arts and crafts sessions for children is located adjacent to sewerage works. The area around this pod is filthy and dirty, with litter, discarded knives, pieces of metal strewn all over and huge skips located at its entrance. It is essentially used as a dumping ground. The hygiene and facilities offered at this area for use by children is not fit for purpose. Nevertheless, children ranging from 3 years to 17 years gather around as and when any activities are arranged, for example art work, T shirt competitions, dress designing, beauty workshops for the purposes not only of up skilling but also encouraging community engagement and interaction. Thus work by of third sector organisations, for example, the Romani Cultural and Arts Company is hampered and to some extent frustrated because of lack of clean and decent facilities to run workshops from. Better facilities would attract a higher turnout of children and this in turn could result in positive interaction and engagement both within and outside the Site.

These pods are built with pre-fabricated material and even if they were fully operational, they offer a dismal and gloomy environment for children and adults alike to convene in. Certainly, it is unlikely that any parent from the non-Romani settled community would be willing to have their children exposed to the unhealthy and unhygienic accommodation that these Sites offer for community engagement purposes.

One community hall that could be put into better use is subject to very restricted policies in terms of operation, with opening /use hours restricted to 9am to 4.45pm. The community hall is not available for use at weekends. This means that the community is deprived from making use of the hall in the evenings and at weekends, which is in actual fact the only time that adults and school going children to be able to use the hall.

#### **v. The Role of Local Authorities**

The ethos of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company is inter alia, the promotion of racial harmony for the public benefit by promoting knowledge and mutual understanding between

different racial groups and advancing education and raising awareness about different racial groups to promote good relations between persons of different racial groups. The Organisation works in partnership with existing networks and public resources and whilst it seeks to work at ground root level across Wales, it has limited human resources.

Working in partnership with government and other stakeholders and agencies can therefore be a very useful and powerful conduit. With this in mind, initial contact was made with Gypsy and Traveller Inclusion Officers / Liaison Teams working with Gypsy and Traveller children and adults. The response from these local authorities was, as mentioned above discouraging with one local authority failing to respond.

The Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer of one local authority put forward the view that "...Gypsy and Traveller men can be very reluctant to discuss their livelihoods (particularly with those from outside the community with whom they have no previous contact) and source of income?..." The Officer further added that this Project and the manner in which the conduct of the research was proposed was "unrealistic and misunderstands some of the basis of Gypsy and Traveller culture."

However, it was very fortunate that the "Equal Project" Manager within one local authority came forward with the following reassuring words: "... We will help your project as much as possible and added that "...we have good links with the community and feel we are trusted..."

The "Inclusion Manager" (Access and Inclusion) of one local authority stated that "...Although I am responsible for the GT pupils I do not have any real links with community members who may be able to help unless you want to speak to the young people themselves...". The Site Manager of a Gypsy Site within the area of this local authority was approached and whilst he was co-operative and offered an accompanied visit to the site, he added that it would be virtually impossible to find any male members of the community on site during the day, and should any be present, none would be forthcoming enough to speak about their trades or activities. Plans to visit this Site were abandoned.

One local authority was initially quite receptive of this skills based Project, with the Site Manager believing that this Project would be welcomed by some members of the community. Regrettably, obstacles were raised regarding the manner in which meetings with the community members should be conducted. In addition, the Site Manager demanded copies of "CRB" checks on those individuals who were to work on this Project. Hence a written confirmation that relevant checks had been carried out had to be

supplemented with copies of the official results. The Site Manager also insisted that the Project Lead be supervised by the Organisation's Director during meetings with residents on the Site. This issue was resolved only after the Organisation made very strenuous submissions opposing this requirement. It must be noted however, that the Site Manager eventually identified potential community members for participation in this Project. Regrettably, because of an incident on Site, this avenue for meetings with community members had to be abandoned out of respect and regard to feelings that were then running high on Site. Other conduits and resources were subsequently identified and used in order to gain access to community members for the purposes of this study.

It is noted with regret that the very agencies that purport to establish links with the Gypsy and Traveller Community are by their own admission ineffective. Links have to be made, nurtured and maintained with the community. The "Equal" Project Team note that an inclusive approach requires involvement of the entire family unit. For it is only when older members of the community, for example, parents and grandparents are engaged that the foundations of trust and mutual respect can be laid. Furthermore, any links that are then forged must be strong enough to embrace children and young people.

The Team also believes that working in isolation with children will not be effective unless their parents are engaged in the process. This is because children feel more comfortable when the support of their parents is evident. Thus, by involving parents or older member of the family, the entire family unit becomes engaged. It is heartening to note that this Team has managed to strike the right balance. Here, parents and grandparents bring their children in to school and actively seek out Team members for help on issues not only connected with their child's education, but also beyond. For example, they often contact the Team when they need help and advice on issues ranging from help with job applications to applying for driving licences. Needless to say, the Team members go the extra mile and help in any way that they can.

## **11. DATA AND ASSUMPTIONS**

Just under 60% of those interviewed engage in in scrap, metal work, garden landscaping 13% of these are female (over 21 years) and 6% are male under the age of 21 years.

44% (male only) also engage in horse breeding and trading but the level and scale of this trade is very low key.

6% (all female) of those interviewed want to work with children.

6% (all female under 17 years) of those interviewed want to learn dress making.

3% (all female under 17 years) expressed an interest in hair dressing and beauty therapy.

10% wish to engage in art, design and fashion, football, boxing and plumbing (under 17years).

5% engage in hawking and fortune telling (over 21 years).

Of the forty three community members interviewed, none was engaged in traditional skills and trades that include wagon painting, weaving, basketry, arts and music, although one young female expressed the desire to learn art and another wished to learn design and fashion.

Save for three females over 21 years who wish to engage in child care, all other female under 17 years have identified new roles for them. These include child care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, dress making and sewing, fashion and design and art. They all recognise that this requires college education and work placements and to secure admission for relevant course, they accept that they will need to attend college. However, there is a distinct lack of awareness of admission requirements and funding.

Young females under the age of 17 years from at least two Sites located within the area of one local authority have expressed the wish to leave school once they attain the age of 13 years. In sharp contrast, a neighbouring authority has managed to secure 100% school attendance amongst the Gypsy and Traveller children within its area. The latter local authority has excellent communication and engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller Community and gets involved with parents as soon as children become of school age. Practices like telephoning parents of absentee children on the day to get them to bring children into school, providing school uniforms, and arranging events that involve or encourage, community growing, vintage fashion courses, visits to the fire stations, volunteering work for older people and career advice appear to have had a positive influence on the Gypsy and Traveller community in this borough.

At least thirteen community members under the age of 17 years want to progress to college. Of these only two are male and they have a bias towards sports like football and boxing.

## **12. THE WELSH GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORK**

The broader issues faced by the Gypsy and Traveller Community are documented in the “Travelling to a Better Future” Gypsy and Traveller Framework for Action and Delivery Plan.

The Welsh Government is committed to combating poverty of aspiration and opportunity which it recognises is an issue for the community and in particular for Gypsy and Traveller children and young people. Based on the responses from the members of that community, it would appear that the poverty of aspiration and opportunity continues to thrive. Those interviewed called for more urgent and immediate attention to the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community if the community is indeed to make the progress that the Government envisions.

This study to some extent supports the findings set out in the Framework, as it illustrates that all adult male members of the community who were interviewed engage in traditional trades. However, this study also finds that the role of women is changing, with an increasing number engaging in trades traditionally undertaken by men. Young females are also looking outside of the community to seek training and work in fields that call on their creative skills, for example, as in the case of dress making, fashion and design and hair dressing.

The Framework identifies sex education in schools as one of the reasons that parents cite for taking young teenagers out of secondary education. This can be easily addressed, by operating separate classes in sex education for male and female children. Indeed this has proved to be highly successful in one local authority, where separate classes in sex education are held. This together with the adoption of other more inclusive practices and classes tailored to suit the needs of the children has managed to secure a school attendance rate of 100% amongst young Gypsy and Traveller children. This success rate has been further helped by working closely with parents and older members of the community - evidence that mutual trust can secure positive results.

Issues like Site accommodation, health and education are interlinked and improvement in these areas is essential. Whilst the Welsh Government has endorsed the Framework, the views and experiences of at least some of those interviewed suggest that much work is required in this connection before there is any evidence of progress in addressing some of the issues and barriers identified in this study.

### **13. THE WAY FORWARD**

#### **i. Traditional skills/trades**

There is evidence that younger males wish to continue with family trades of knife sharpening, fence painting, landscape gardening, scrap metal (rag and bone), farm labouring, horse trading and bricklaying. They do not identify any need for training in these trades.

However, they identify a need for the following:

- i. Training in setting up businesses
- ii. Funding for setting up small business
- iii. Information of setting up social enterprises/co-operatives
- iv. Marketing
- v. Computer literacy
- vi. Electronic accounting
- vii. Setting up websites
- viii. "E" shopping
- ix. Solutions to accommodate Horse breeding/raising and trading on or near Sites.

#### **ii. Child Care/Youth Clubs**

- i. Investigate use of existing community halls/pods on Site for running schemes for children and teenagers.
- ii. Help with setting up pre-school groups, mother and toddler groups, sporting activity like snooker, billiards, pool for young teenagers.
- iii. Work in conjunction with local schools to provide placements for individual seeking to work with children.
- iv. Approach private nurseries to secure work placements/training
- v. Funding for potential employers to offer employment/training

### **iii. Dress Making / Hair and Beauty Therapy/Art/Fashion and Design/Plumbing**

- i. Information on minimum qualifications for admission on College run courses
- ii. Information of fees/funding
- iii. Course Module information
- iv. Resolve travel issues to and fro college
- v. Skills/information in setting up businesses.
- vi. Accounting, advertising, promotion of business
- vii. Computer literacy

### **iv. Football**

- i. Secure entry to Football College.
- ii. Investigate possibility of home study on a one to one basis for the required minimum "O" level grades for entry to College
- iii. Investigate if College is willing to accept student on the basis that student will simultaneously study for minimum required qualification.

## **14. CONCLUSION**

This study maps the current trades and the hopes and aspirations of a select number of residents at four Gypsy and Traveller Sites in South Wales.

Based on the responses, it is apparent that some traditional skills and trades continue to be the career choice for a majority of the older interviewees and younger males.

Younger females are looking outside the traditional roles adopted by females and are attracted to careers in fashion, design, dress making, hair dressing and beauty therapy. They are also aware of the need for further education and training to achieve their goal.

However, a lot of investment, in terms of commitment, dedication, resilience both from within the Gypsy and Traveller community and external agencies, coupled with funding and other resources will be required if the hopes and aspirations of this community and the vision of the Welsh Government as set out in the Framework are to materialise.

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