

## PETITION OBJECTING TO THE DECOMMISSIONING OF THE TRAVELLER EDUCATION TEAM

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor David Simmonds
<b>Cabinet Portfolio</b>	Education and Children's Services
<b>Officer Contact</b>	Mike Merva/Sally Chandler
<b>Papers with report</b>	Appendix 1 - Informal consultation with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Community. Appendix 2 - Impact Assessment Form & Action Plan - School Improvement Service: Ethnic Minority and Achievement Support Service (EMASS)

### HEADLINE INFORMATION

<b>Purpose of report</b>	To inform the Cabinet Member that 26 identical letters (which constitute a petition) have been received at the Bell Farm Christian Centre objecting to the decommissioning of the Traveller Education Service.
<b>Contribution to our plans and strategies</b>	BID (Business Improvement Delivery) programme
<b>Financial Cost</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
<b>Relevant Policy Overview Committee</b>	Education & Children's Services
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	All Wards

### RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member:

1. Notes the views of the petitioners.
2. Advises the petitioners that:
  - (a) The council has investigated and taken into account the possible impact of the loss of this service;
  - (b) An impact assessment was completed for the Ethnic Minority Support Service (EMASS) including the Traveller Education Service, see Appendix 2;
  - (c) All options were fully investigated including retention of all or part of the Traveller Education Service;

**(d) Informal consultation with the Traveller Community was undertaken by Traveller Education Service in terms informing them of the process and possible outcomes.**

## **INFORMATION**

### **Reasons for recommendation**

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service (EMASS) is currently funded by a central government ring-fenced grant from the 2010/ 2011 budget settlement. The policy of the coalition government is to devolve previously ring fenced grant funding retained by local authorities to schools. The EMASS grant is one of these.

The EMASS grant is in two parts and funds the Ethnic Minority Achievement / English as an Additional Language service and the Traveller Education Service. When it became clear that this grant funding was no longer going to be ring-fenced, the School Improvement Service together with Headteacher representatives from a range of schools established a steering group to consider what could be included in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the local authority beyond 2011. An SLA (service level agreement) was developed which included the option of continuing EMASS provision for the schools to buy back with monies that will be passed to them from April 2011.

All Hillingdon Schools were sent details of the SLA offer and asked to express interest by 10th December. Regrettably, there was insufficient buy-in from the schools and it was not viable to continue this service and a number of other services offered by the School Improvement Service. An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed for the whole of the EMASS Service.

The local authority will continue to provide Principal School Improvement Officers to support schools and monitor any adverse impact on the attainment of Black and Minority Ethnic pupils, including GRT pupils at Key Stage 2 and 4.

There are an increasing number of schools in Hillingdon that are rated as good or outstanding by OFSTED. The responsibility will now pass to schools, to use the money previously retained to maintain central support teams, to provide the support themselves. The schools felt that standards and attainment levels could be maintained and improved without the current extensive/comprehensive support of the School Improvement Service, especially at adviser level. It is expected that schools will continue to work closely with the GRT Community to support the best possible educational outcomes for all children and young people.

### **Comments of Policy Overview Committee(s)**

None at this stage.

### **Supporting Information**

#### **1. Summary of Petition and the former Director of Education and Children's Services letter of response**

An identical letter dated 14 February 2010 was sent from Diane Faichney of the Bell Farm Christian Centre, to Hugh Dunnachie - Chief Executive, Chris Spencer – Former Corporate Director, Anna Crispin – Deputy Director, Councillors Ray Puddifoot and David Simmonds of Hillingdon Council, John McDonnell MP and Irish Traveller Movement for Great Britain,.

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Petition Hearing with Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services – 12 July 2011

The letter was written on behalf of many residents of the GRT Community expressing concerns relating to the decommissioning of the Traveller Education Team at its possible impact on the education of their children. More specifically, it states that the recent trend in GRT children staying on longer in school and becoming more literate than their parent, which is attributed to the work of the Traveller Education Service, will now be in jeopardy. It requests an investigation into the reasons and manner of the decommissioning of the service including issues of consultation and an impact survey.

The petition letters which were received mirror many of the concerns stated in the Bell Farm letter above and are summarised below:

- Express serious concerns that the entire Traveller Education Team was decommissioned;
- Describe in depth the perceived value of the support of the Traveller Education Team to the community in a range of areas;
- Employ the Education Act 1996 (Section 13), The Swann Report (1985) and the Standards and Framework Act (1998) as evidence to indicate the need for the retention of the Traveller Education Team;
- Query whether an equality impact assessment was completed.

The then Director of Education and Children's, Mr. C Spencer, responded directly to Ms Faichney's letter on 28 February, 2011. The content of this letter has been set out in full in the section of this report entitled Reasons for recommendation.

## **2. Reasons for proposals**

The decision to decommission the provision of the EMASS service was justified on the grounds that the council needed to adjust its level of spending in response to a considerably reduced level of financial support available from central government.

The responsibility and the funding to provide the support to these groups of children and young people now reside with schools.

## **3. Consultation**

Informal consultation revealed that families from the GRT Community were concerned as to the direct loss of an identified team which specialises in working with the communities, particularly the loss of the Traveller Community Liaison Officer post. This post holder supports access to and promotes attendance at schools. However, the majority of families were confident in their relationships with school staff and were generally satisfied with the progress being made by their children. Please see Appendix 1.

As a result of this, the possibility of retaining the role of the Traveller Community Support Liaison Officer was considered. However, funding did not allow for this role to be retained.

The table below sets out the services and support that are currently provided to the GRT Community on Traveller issues.

**Table**

THEME	POINT OF OBJECTION / CONCERN	LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSE
GENERAL	Not in favour of proposal	The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for its residents, and an education that meets the needs of all children.
ACCESS	GRT families with low literacy skills will need support to access admissions process	The Schools Admissions Service will have trained officers to support families, orally, in writing and online.
ATTENDANCE	GRT families respond well to identified staff who understand the culture and lifestyle of the GRT communities.	The Education Welfare Service has trained staff who have worked with the Traveller Education Service supporting GRT families for a number of years. Attendance of GRT pupils has significantly improved.
ADVOCACY	GRT families need support to access a range of services	The Council does not provide an advocacy service to specific Ethnic Minority Groups. The council offers a help desk for all residents.
SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	GRT families need additional support to understand the SEND process	The council has a Parent Partnership team to assist all families with this process.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

The EMASS service was primarily funded by Standards Fund grant. With the withdrawal of the grant funding in 2011/12, the authority no longer had sufficient funding to maintain the service. As a result, the service was decommissioned with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.

#### **5. Conclusions**

The concerns raised by the GRT community in their petition have been noted and the Council considers that their concerns have been addressed in the Impact Assessment and Action Plan, which is included as an appendix to this report (Appendix 2).

#### **EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES**

##### **What will be the effect of the loss of service?**

GRT families will have the same access to services as all council residents. The loss of the Traveller Education Service will mean that other teams in Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services will have to ensure they are meeting the needs of the families.

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Legal**

Hillingdon Council has various duties under the Education Act 1996 to:

- Secure efficient and sufficient schools to meet the needs of the local population in view of the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes.
- Promote high standards.
- Ensure fair access to opportunity for education and training.
- Promote the fulfilment of learning potential.
- Secure diversity in the provision of schools, increasing opportunities for parental choice as well as considering parental representations having regard to any guidance.

As of the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011 Hillingdon Council also has a duty under S.149 of the Equality Act 2010. This duty is called the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The new duty covers the following eight protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission states that a Public Body can comply with the general duty contained in s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 by having regard to the following principles when making decisions that engage the duty:-

- assessing relevance
- collecting and publishing equality information
- engagement
- equality analysis
- equality objectives
- commissioning and procurement, and
- business planning and reporting.

Hillingdon has undertaken an informal consultation and an Impact Assessment, both of which are attached to this report as appendices, in order to make sure that all relevant duties have been complied with regarding the future treatment of the groups affected by this decision.

### **Background Documents**

26 Identical letters (which constitute a petition)

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Petition Hearing with Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services – 12 July 2011

PART 1 - MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

## **Appendix One**

An informal consultation was carried out with Gypsy, Roma & Traveller families (GRT) regarding the decommissioning of the Traveller Education Service in January 2011.

These families were concerned that the service was to be decommissioned as they viewed the Traveller Education Service as the one organisation in Hillingdon that :

- Understands the Gypsy Traveller culture and way of life and how this affects access to mainstream service providers
- Is a non-judgemental team that offers support to all Travellers, and shows respect for the communities
- Always works for the best interests of the children
- Acts as an advocate for families to enable them to gain information and support for their children
- Explains how to access help from a wide range of agencies, e.g. health services, and children with disabilities team, by explaining the process
- Enables families with low levels of literacy to read letters, reports and complete forms
- Supports families by accompanying them to education meetings e.g. Special Educational Needs reviews and explaining the process and the language, and ensuring that families understand the outcomes for their children.

Furthermore, almost all families expressed the sentiment that losing the Traveller Education Service was like “a kick in the stomach” as there is very little provision for the Gypsy Traveller communities who are the most marginalised ethnic minority groups in Britain, and to lose such a service increased their feelings of isolation.

It was explained to Gypsy Traveller families that they would need to contact services directly to gain support, and voluntary agencies e.g. The Advice Service at Bell Farm Community Centre in West Drayton. A booklet was given to all families with contact details of mainstream and voluntary services in Hillingdon, and nationally.

Sally Chandler  
25.01.11



**Appendix Two**

**School Improvement  
Service: Ethnic Minority and  
Achievement Support  
Service (EMASS)  
Impact Assessment  
Form & Action Plan**

## Impact Assessment (IA) Form

Name of service, function, policy (or other) being assessed

Decommissioning of Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service (EMASS), part of School Improvement Service

Directorate or organisation responsible (and service, if it is a policy)

Education & Children's Services

Date of assessment (DD/MM/YY)

12/01/11

Date next assessment due (Annually for service planning, 3 years if no change in service, function or policy or if no relevance to equality)

N/A

Names and job titles of people carrying out the assessment

Mike Merva – Head of Service School Improvement Service  
Sunny Mehmi – ECS Equalities Lead

Accountable person (e.g. Head of Service, Corporate Director)

Chris Spencer – Corporate Director ECS

Date INA Form approved by accountable person

13/01/11



What are the aims or main purpose of the service, function or policy? What does it provide and how does it provide it?

EMASS provides a service to Hillingdon schools to help raise the achievement of minority ethnic pupils. They work in partnership with teachers and staff in schools, parents and the voluntary sector, and with other teams in the local authority, to make sure they provide the best support to help children enjoy and achieve.

The key groups in Hillingdon are bilingual learners, newly arrived refugees, children from Somali and other African backgrounds, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils, Traveller children, pupils from African- Caribbean heritage, as well as children from mixed heritage families who are at risk of underachieving

The service is in two parts:

- the Ethnic Minority Achievement / English as an Additional Language Service (EMA/EAL)
- the Traveller Education Service (TES)

The service offers the support for:

- advice and support for headteachers, teachers, governors on effective strategies for meeting the needs of black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups in schools
- collecting and analysing data relating to minority ethnic achievement across Hillingdon
- continuing professional development and training across 4 key stages and the foundation stage (including networking groups for practitioners)
- development of an inclusive curriculum which embraces race equality and known best practice
- pre- and post- OFSTED support relating to issues of minority ethnic achievement and EAL
- schools in home language assessment.
- isolated pupils and new arrivals, particularly for those new to the English language, and highly mobile Traveller families.
- training modules for schools in supporting pupils learning EAL.
- specialist teaching assistant training programmes
- Headteachers and senior management teams new to issues of minority ethnic achievement and EAL
- management support and advice on policy development, action planning with regard to inclusion, attendance and achievement for Traveller children
- in-class support for groups of Traveller children from teachers and classroom assistant
- development of parental partnerships to include Traveller families in the life of the school
- specialist outreach for Traveller children in the early years

List any key policies or procedures to be reviewed as part of this assessment

N/A

What is the intended benefit of the service, function or policy?

To support Hillingdon schools to help raise the achievement of minority ethnic pupils.

Who are the users or beneficiaries of the service, function or policy? What is their equality profile?

The following table shows the ethnic breakdown of the school population in Hillingdon as of January 2010.

School population (all pupils) by ethnicity (percentages*), January 2010					
Ethnic Group and school type		Nursery and Primary	Secondary	Special	LBH*
White	White British	43.9%	53.2%	53.0%	47.9%
	Irish	0.8%	0.6%	1.0%	0.7%
	Traveller- Irish heritage	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%
	Gypsy/ Roma	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
	Any other White background	7.1%	4.3%	6.6%	6.0%
Mixed	Mixed White/ Black Caribbean	1.5%	1.5%	1.7%	1.5%
	Mixed White/ Black African	0.8%	0.5%	0.2%	0.7%
	Mixed White/ Asian	1.8%	1.2%	1.6%	1.6%
	Any other mixed background	5.1%	3.7%	5.4%	4.5%
Asian or Asian British	Indian	12.1%	13.2%	9.5%	12.6%
	Pakistani	4.2%	2.8%	3.5%	3.6%
	Bangladeshi	1.5%	1.3%	1.0%	1.4%
	Any other Asian background	4.9%	3.6%	3.1%	4.3%
Black or Black British	Black Caribbean	1.8%	2.4%	2.3%	2.1%
	Black African	7.9%	5.9%	7.4%	7.1%
	Any other Black background	0.4%	0.7%	0.8%	0.5%
Chinese	Chinese	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%
Other	Any other group	5.3%	4.6%	2.1%	4.9%
<b>Ethnic minority groups</b>		<b>56.1%</b>	<b>46.8%</b>	<b>47.0%</b>	<b>52.1%</b>

The following table shows current figures of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) population in Hillingdon at January 2010, as understood by the EMASS service. It does not include those families unidentified as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller to the Traveller Education Service. Some families choose not to ascribe ethnicity to the schools.

Ethnicity	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Traveller Irish Heritage	6	146	96	5	253
English Gypsy	10	47	64	5	126
Roma	0	11	11	0	22
Total	16	204	171	10	401

Who are the stakeholders? What is their interest?

Cabinet Member for and Director of Education and Children's Service in ensuring that the minority ethnic pupils in Hillingdon maintain levels of achievement.

Heads, teachers and governors of Hillingdon schools in that they will need to identify resources to provide this service themselves if needed locally.

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities in ensuring their children access and receive an education which is relevant and appropriate to their needs and mobile lifestyle.

Ethnic Minority (EM) and GRT children in Hillingdon have an interest in receiving an education which supports and empowers them to achieve to their full potential

EM / GRT parents are keen to ensure that their children have the same equality of opportunity as other children, in order to attain their aspirations.

PCT are keen to maintain positive relationships with GRT community achieved by close liaison with the Traveller Liaison Officer, particularly crucial when working with marginalised and hard to reach families who historically distrust mainstream services.

Voluntary sector staff rely on close working with the Traveller Liaison Officer to identify and support vulnerable families, and those with disabilities, in which the children are at risk of low attainment.

State why the service, function or policy is / is not relevant to equality

The decommissioning of this service is relevant to equality in that it is provided to benefit specific children based on ethnic origin.

How relevant to equalities is it? <b>Y/N</b>	Not relevant?		Low?		Medium?		High?
							<b>Y</b>

Identify which equality strands or community issues are relevant to the assessment:

Age	Y	Sexual Orientation	
Gender (men and women)		Religion or belief	
Transgender		Disability	
Race/Ethnicity	Y	Community Safety	
Community Cohesion	Y	Other – please state	

Any other factors:

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and refugee children

Some EM families on very low incomes

#### Consideration of information and data

The following table shows the direction of travel for educational attainment at Key Stages 2 and 4 for BAME pupils in Hillingdon. There is no information for GRT pupils as this is not disaggregated at national level.

While the direction of travel for all groups is upward, pupils from Black backgrounds are attaining below their peers. Attainment levels for all groups in Hillingdon are in line with national averages.

	National Indicators	2008	2009	2010	Latest SN Rank (10)	Latest Eng Com	2010 (p)	DOT
EA	NI 107 Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups - Mixed group	71.6	72	NYA	8	D	74	↑
EA	NI 107 Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups - Asian group	78.2	78	NYA	2	A	82	↑
EA	NI 107 Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups - Black group	60	60	NYA	8	C	61	↑
EA	NI 107 Key Stage 2 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups - Chinese group		86	NYA	-	-		↑

EA	NI 108 Key Stage 4 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups - Mixed group	47.1	48.0	NYA	4	C	52	↑
EA	NI 108 Key Stage 4 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups - Asian group	56.7	65.0	NYA	8	B	65	↑
EA	NI 108 Key Stage 4 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups - Black group	36.8	37.0	NYA	4	C	44	↑
EA	NI 108 Key Stage 4 attainment for Black and minority ethnic groups - Chinese group	77.8	50.0	NYA			80	↑

Who was consulted or engaged? What were the findings?

A Standard Level Agreement was developed which included the school improvement 'Core Offer'. This offer included the provision of EMASS. All schools were offered 2 EMASS advisors as part of the Core Offer arrangements.

All 90 schools in Hillingdon were sent details of the SLA 'Core Offer' on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010. They were asked to submit their expression of interest by the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2010. 56 Primary schools and 1 secondary school indicated they only wished the core SLA which left a loss of £118k.

Academic Year 2011-12					
	Core SLA	Core SLA Plus ICT	Core SLA Plus ICT 0.5 FTE	Core SLA Plus MFL	Core SLA Plus EAL
Number of Primary Schools	56	34	4	17	22

There was insufficient buy-in from schools and it was therefore not cost effective to provide the service at a loss.

Schools felt that standards and attainment levels could be maintained and improved without the support of the school improvement service.

Describe other research, studies or information to assist with the assessment.

#### Financial Context

It is predicted that public sector funding will reduce by about 28% over the life of the current parliament. Hillingdon Council has to achieve a minimum of £60 million in savings over the next 4 years.

#### Legal Context

The Council has a public duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations (Race Relations Amendment Act 2000);
- eliminate sex discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between women and men (Gender Equality Duty 2007);
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities, promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other, take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities even where that involves treating them more favourably than others, promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life (Disability Equality Duty 2006)

#### National Government Context

The Education White Paper has de-regulated funding from ring fenced LA held grant to schools to use as they wish.

In addition, the government Education White Paper 2010 removes the requirement for local authority to provide an intensive school improvement support to schools,

#### Other background information to assist the assessment

The EMASS service is not a statutory service and schools now have the funding directly to ensure the provision is provided directly.

Describe the POSITIVE impacts:

User Group/Equality Strand/Community	Impact ( <i>how</i> they may be affected).
	None identified

Describe any ADVERSE impacts (actual or potential):

User Group/Equality Strand/Community	Impact ( <i>how</i> they may be affected) and identify in the action plan what action you need to take to address this impact or mitigate against it.
Black, Asian and Ethnic	The decision to decommission this service may potentially

Minority groups	<p>have an adverse impact on BAME pupils in respect of their achievement. This will be determined by the decision of schools into how they support underachieving minority groups.</p> <p>The council can monitor achievement levels to monitor any adverse impact.</p> <p>It should be noted that as the primary function of EMASS service is to support the schools and staff, rather than provide a front line service, there no evidence of a direct correlation between the EMASS provision and achievement of these groups.</p>
Gypsy, Roma and Travellers and refugees	<p>The decision to decommission this service may potentially have an adverse impact on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and refugee pupils in respect of their achievement. This will be determined by the decision of schools into how they support underachieving minority groups.</p> <p>The council can monitor achievement levels to monitor any adverse impact.</p> <p>It should be noted that as the primary function of EMASS service is to support the schools and staff, rather than provide a front line service, there no evidence of a direct correlation between the EMASS provision and achievement of these groups.</p>

## Conclusions and recommendations

The decision to decommission the provision of the EMASS service is justified on the grounds that the Council needs to adjust its level of spending in response to a considerable reduced level of financial support available from Central Government.

The responsibility and the funding to provide the support to these groups of children and young people now resides with schools.

The Council will continue to provide Principle School Improvement Officers and schools are open to buy in services as needed.

The Council's Schools Improvement Service will monitor attainment results at key stage 2 and 4 of BAME pupils to identify any adverse impacts and then act accordingly as resources allow.

**Signed:** Head of Service.

Name: Mike Merva Signature:\_\_\_\_\_ Date: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011