

Scrutiny review on Maternal Health and Early Years services for the Gypsy and Traveller communities in Southwark.

Notes of mini stakeholder meetings on 16th January 2013

Present:

CLlr Mark Williams - Chair
CLlr David Noakes - Vice chair
Jin Lim - Public Health
Kevin Dykes - Community Engagement
Julie Timbrell - Scrutiny
Alex Trouten - Public Health
Archie Utley - Southwark Travellers Action Group (STAG)
Ann-Marie O'Brien - Southwark Travellers Action Group (STAG)
Eva Gomez - Community Safety
Paul Jeffery - Housing
Paul Cutler - Centre for Public Scrutiny

1. Apologies, introductions & welcome.

2. Review of work done so far & emerging recommendations.

Julie and Ann Marie fed back on the consultation event on 18 December with Traveller women.

Access to Children's Centre activities & Nursery Schools

The Leyton Square O'clock club used to hold a weekly session, specifically for Traveller women, on a weekday morning at 10:30 am. This initiative was well regarded. The session provided a space for women and children to meet and access early years activities. There were crèche facilities so that the women could attend the anti natal clinic and do parenting classes. Supplementary activities were also held, such as talks on obesity, dentistry, the toy library visited etc. This activity was well regarded. Leyton Square has been taken over by Nell Gwyn Nursery School and East Peckham Children's Centre and it could be worth exploring if they have the resources to restart this activity, particularly if a similar session would be well used. There are good links with Nell Gwyn Children's centre to build on and better links could be forged with Pilgrims Way children's centre. Data and anecdotal reports are that very few families access the Children's Centers, and only a few children access the Early Years offer/ nursery schools. The midwife at the session was from Peckham and the Early Years and Childcare Development Officer, also present, covered Bermondsey and Rotherhithe.

Draft Recommendations:

Nell Gwyn Nursery School and East Peckham Children's Centre to work, with the support of STAG, to restart a dedicated session for Traveller parents and children. This will focus on improving access to Children's Centres activities, Nursery school

(Early Years offer), anti natal care, health and social care (such as weaning, parenting skills, immunisation etc)

Pilgrims Way Children's centre nominate a dedicated officer to build outreach links with the Gypsy community and the Traveller community to improve access to Children's Centre activities and Nursery schools.

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence has been raised as an issue and contact has been made with Community Safety who are the lead commissioner for domestic abuse services within the council and Solace Women's Aid who are the council's commissioned domestic abuse service provider. Archie and Eva explained that a Safer Southwark Partnership funded programme is already running with one of its aims being to reach out to young men and prevention, including addressing perpetrator behaviour. STAG explained that they do not want to be put in a difficult position and deal with domestic violence incidents directly, as they need to work across the community. They explained how in the past, the lack of an adequate service response had led to a family seeking shelter in their office for some time whilst a Refuge space was allocated, which compromised their position. Eva explained that in April 2012 SOLACE Women's Aid was appointed the council's domestic abuse service provider, offering a wide range of services, and although access to a particular shelter might not always be possible or appropriate, now that Solace is the lead agency in our borough, responses to situations like the one mentioned above have improved. Eva explained that SOLACE has a dedicated London wide worker for Travellers (Bernie). Referrals concerning members of the Traveler community to MARAC for serious incidents will also be looked into. Eva will continue to work with STAG and provide a briefing note for members.

Draft Recommendation:

Community Safety & SOLACE to work with STAG to improve access and referrals to the domestic abuse service (including MARAC referrals where appropriate) and to minimise STAG involvement in domestic abuse cases.

Primary care

At a previous meeting access to primary care had been raised as an area of interest and possible concern, because of this STAG consulted with Travellers more about their experiences. Experience at GP practices are very variable; some Travellers are experiencing a poor service and prejudice from health staff, such as receptionists, however others are receiving a good service. People not accessing primary care are more likely to use A & E and receive treatment for health conditions late. Ilderton Road practice was identified as offering a good service to Travellers, but East Street Practice and Acorn Practice on Meeting House Lane less so. Alex is advising STAG on doctor's practices and have put STAG in touch with Lynn Lock of PALS to advise on alternative GP surgeries that may suit people better where they are dissatisfied with the service or making frequent use of SELDOC and A and E. The key NHS service is Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

http://www.southwarkpct.nhs.uk/patient_information/patient_advice)

Draft recommendations:

Public Health to work with STAG to improve access to doctor's practice by providing information and support.

Southwark Clinical Commissioning / Public Health / STAG to develop a training programme for health professionals.

Safeguarding and Social Services

Safeguarding and relationships with Social Services were discussed. There had been incidences where the consequences of liaising with Social Services has raised concern. For example, when a Domestic Violence incident is reported to police it is standard practice for a MERLIN alert to go to Social Services – this may lead to children's schools being contacted. STAG reported that on an occasion this had led to local gossip because of possible breaches of confidentiality. The consequences of reporting domestic violence could also inhibit a report to the police. Likewise, there was concern about health incidents leading to a Social Service referral. People in the community had fears of their children being unjustly removed, and that had led to a breakdown in at least one relationship between a family and Social Service. STAG also reported that child and health professional sometimes did not understand that space on site was viewed differently by Travellers : a child playing in the yard outside would be looked after by the whole community.

Draft Recommendations:

Social Service/ Community Safety organize hold a session on their safeguarding role and explain how referrals work , ensuring that accurate information is given and myths death with.

Social Services / Community Safety identify lead officers to work with Travellers, who are appropriately trained, and understand issues such as Health and Safety on site. This will enable relationships to established and promote understanding.

The importance of confidentiality in child protection is emphasised with Social Workers on all occasions, but particularly where there are extended and close nit communities.

Miscarriages and stillbirths

The national data for child deaths, stillbirths and miscarriages is very high. Local anecdotal evidence does not indicate that child deaths are a problem (and this might be partly because the sites are of an above average standard) , however there is some evidence, though not conclusive, that miscarriages and stillbirths could be high locally. The level of smoking is high for men and women and this can raise the risk of miscarriage.

Draft Recommendation:

Smoking cessation courses are offered to Travellers

Sexual health.

This was an issue of concern and best discussed in same sex groups, such as via starting the parent and child group at Nell Gwyn.

Breast-feeding , weaning and obesity

Breast feeding rates are low in Traveller communities and weaning can start earlier than recommended – through taster foods being introduced at two and a half to three months. These are practices, alongside healthy eating and exercise , that it was thought could be best addresses at the proposed parent and child group at Nell Gwyn

Draft Recommendation:

Breast-feeding , weaning and obesity are raised at the proposed parent and child group at Nell Gwyn.

Mental Health was briefly discussed; there is a national awareness campaign being conducted by the national Irish Travellers group.

Enterprise and Employment

Enterprise and Employment was raised by STAG as an issue of concern and that could affect family wellbeing . STAG has provided a number of recommendations on how to improve the situation , including increasing access to apprenticeship for young people.

Draft Recommendation:

STAG proposals on improving employment support are implemented ; where feasible. (See STAG consultation submission for details)

Housing strategy and site provision.

STAG fed back that site provision is very good. Overcrowding is an issue that has been identified at previous events. Provision of sites/ housing is not picked up on in the recently produced Housing Commission report, which is a gap in an otherwise excellent report. This report is out for consultation.

Draft Recommendation:

The final report of the Housing Commission sets out a site strategy for Gypsies and Travellers .

Framework.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) recently proposed that a framework for Gypsies and Travellers is developed. Mark asked Archie to send in his thoughts on how this could be most usefully developed.

Draft Recommendation:

The council develops a framework for Gypsies and Travellers

3. Drafting the final report

The recommendations from the meeting will be circulated for comment. The chair (Mark) and the vice chair (David) will liaise regarding the final recommendations. The committee will receive background information, followed by the draft final report to agree.

4. Return on Investment – measurement and outcomes

Paul Cutler spoke about the Return on Investment model used by the Centre of Public Scrutiny to estimate the value of a scrutiny review. Paul circulated an illustrative draft, which can be developed. All contributors to the review are asked to estimate the hours they have contributed to the review, and help estimate the value of the changes proposed, so this exercise can be completed.

5. Scrutiny review date Westminster venue (Westminster City Hall) 25th January - 11 am to 3 pm

The scrutiny review will be presented and the poster is requested to illustrate the review. Mark and Julie will be attending.

6. AOB