

**Southwark Travellers Action Group (STAG) first submission to scrutiny - issues brought up by Travellers as part of consultation and based on experience**

- One-Stop-Shop workers don't seem to have much understanding of Travellers in Southwark. When Traveller-site residents have housing issues they have to explain basics to One-Stop-Shop workers (such as that the Council owns the sites and they rent land from the council- but the mobile homes are privately rented- therefore people on Housing Benefit have 2 payments to make- one to council and one to mobile home company). There is one member of staff (Moses) who seems more knowledgeable.
- Back-to-work schemes are often not accessible to Travellers as men rarely sign on for JSA. Traveller economy is still over reliant on informal self-employment but there is a cultural shift towards accepting waged employment. The stability offered by waged employment is increasingly desirable. There is a stigma around signing on for JSA and it is also made difficult by demands for documentation and records of previous employment. Back to work schemes such as the Network Rail scheme run by Pecan would have been taken up by Travellers but many are ineligible.
- Grants could be made available for Travellers wanting to get into work (to help pay for HGV licences)- or loans could be made available on a 'student loan' basis- i.e. low-interest- pay back when earning over x-amount per year. Jobs which are generally desirable in the Traveller community for men are labour, construction, driving jobs etc. The value of giving grants for training courses (towards becoming qualified construction workers, lorry drivers, driving instructors) would be in making waged employment seem- for the first time- desirable and achievable- a complete cultural shift. Consequences would be wide-reaching- not only locally but potentially nationally. Knock-on benefits come with greater community cohesion (dispel the wide-spread belief that Travellers don't contribute to society through taxes), improving health especially mental health (Travellers to fulfil their cultural expectations to earn a good living- reliance on informal economic activity leads to accidents and unhealthy practices at work), reduction in crimes which are the result of economic exclusion and reduction in domestic violence.
- Spring Tide Close residents want a new site. Spring Tide Close was originally a temporary site- residents were promised a larger site by the council. Site is overcrowded now that families have grown and children are having their own children.
- Ilderton Road site- wall which separates site from railway tracks is still crumbling. This issue has been unresolved for 8 years- health and safety risk. National Rail or Southwark Council need to take responsibility for repair. Paul Jeffery (Traveller Housing Officer) is aware of this, so is Councillor Bowman (who remembered this issue from 8 years ago).

- Women fleeing domestic violence need a police reference number to stay in the Irish women's refuge run by Camden Women's Aid. STAG is in a very difficult position here as the project is jeopardised if we are seen to be encouraging women to report abusive partners to the police. STAG can offer help and support to women that come to us, but the perpetrators of the DV are our clients also.

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