

Item No. 12.	Classification Open	Date: 26 June 2013	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Response to Scrutiny Report into Access to Maternal Health and Early Years Services for the Gypsy and Traveller Communities	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Peter John, Leader of the Council	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

This council is committed to improving the health of the borough, and that means reaching across the full range of communities who call Southwark home. We take our responsibility to gypsy and traveller communities seriously and play our part in ensuring that members of these communities are able to access the services they need to improve health and ensure that in the early years, all children are given the best start in life.

I pay tribute to the work of the health and adult social care, communities and citizenship scrutiny sub-committee and the work of the overview and scrutiny committee in bringing these recommendations to cabinet. I hope that this report will reassure both the committee and sub-committee that the council is already working across these issues, and I am pleased that the report will compliment this work going forward.

RECOMMENDATION

That cabinet:

1. Note and agree the response to the recommendations of both the overview and scrutiny committee and health, adult social care, communities and citizenship sub-committee on services for the gypsy and traveller communities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Health, Adult Social Care, Communities and Citizenship Scrutiny sub-committee

2. The health, adult social care, communities and citizenship scrutiny sub-committee conducted a review of access to maternal health and early years services for the gypsy and traveller communities in Southwark. It reported its recommendations to overview and scrutiny on 11 March 2013. Overview and scrutiny committee subsequently added two additional recommendations to the report that went to cabinet on 16 April 2013. Cabinet agreed that the recommendations be noted and that all relevant cabinet members bring back a report to cabinet in order to respond to the recommendations within eight weeks.

Report summary

3. The review formed part of a wider review of public health undertaken by the scrutiny sub-committee through the year, looking into health inequalities suffered

by marginalised communities. The sub-committee chose this focus for two reasons: to link the initiative with priorities identified by the Marmot review and the evidence that significant maternal and early years' health inequalities is experienced by Travellers and gypsies.

4. Evidence submitted to the review included responses from Southwark Travellers Action Group (STAG), and notes collated from mini stakeholder and consultation events attended by a range of stakeholders.
5. The original scrutiny sub-committee report identified 15 recommendations, many of which are already being addressed by the council. Overview and scrutiny then added a further two recommendations to the report. This report contains a response to each of the recommendations.

Response to recommendations

6. The original scrutiny report and its recommendations complement ongoing work within the council to co-ordinate activity undertaken by services in respect of the gypsy and traveller community.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Recommendations from OSC and sub-committee/response

7. Both scrutiny committees made a total of 17 recommendations, to which responses, grouped by theme, are set out below.

Early years

8. **Recommendation 1 (Sub-committee):** 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), antenatal care, health and social care (such as weaning, parenting skills, immunisation etc).
9. **Recommendation 10 (Sub-Committee):** The proposed parent and child group at Nell Gwyn to include sexual health sessions for parents.
10. **Recommendation 11 (Sub-Committee):** Breast-feeding, weaning and obesity are raised at the proposed parent and child group at Nell Gwyn.
11. **Response:** A weekly traveller parent and toddler group, based at Leyton Square and run by Nell Gwyn Nursery School, started up on 16 April 2013. Early year's officers engaged with Scrutiny throughout the review and have begun initial conversations with Nell Gwyn Nursery School following publication of the review in order to signpost to information and provide support around possible content of future sessions.

Health

12. **Recommendation 4 (Sub-Committee):** Public Health to work with STAG to improve access to doctors' practices by providing information and support.

13. **Recommendation 5 (Sub-Committee):** Southwark Clinical Commissioning / Public Health / STAG to develop a training programme for health professionals to understand the needs of the gypsy and traveller communities in Southwark.
14. **Recommendation 9 (Sub-Committee):** Smoking cessation courses are offered to travellers.
15. **Response:** The council's Public Health team have recently obtained information from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) regarding GP practices serving the areas where there are traveller sites and provided this information to STAG, alongside suggestions as to alternative practices should people wish to register with a new GP.

The council is able to provide information to support travellers make informed choices, however it is important that travellers inform NHS Southwark CCG if they have concerns regarding access or other issues relating to GP services. This can be done via STAG or directly to the CCG.

The council's Public Health team has also recently commissioned a review to provide an understanding of the range of issues that can result in mental and physical health problems for travellers. Following the outcome of this review the council will be able to consider what if any additional support for health professionals might be required, alongside the extensive training and development packages already in place. When considering any new training programme the sustainability and the link and similarities to other existing programmes must also be considered.

The council currently has in place a smoking cessation team, which has an ongoing relationship with a range of different communities across Southwark to offer smoking cessation support. As well as work across all communities in Southwark, the team has also provided smoking cessation materials and a dedicated Southwark phone line to STAG for further dissemination to the gypsy and traveller community. A smoking cessation counsellor has also visited Nell Gwyn Nursery in April 2013, to provide information and consider ways of working together in the future.

Domestic Violence

16. **Recommendation 3 (Sub-committee):** 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 the handling of domestic abuse cases.
17. **Response:** Community Safety officers have provided information and advice on all of the Council's commissioned domestic abuse support services (Southwark advocacy and Support Service – SASS – delivered by solace Women's Aid) to STAG, including the support they offer for victims, children and perpetrators and how to make referrals. SASS is also planning an outreach event with STAG in June 2013.

STAG were also recently provided with details of a half day domestic abuse awareness training session which participants could attend free of charge.

In addition, the council's domestic abuse multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) coordinator is in the process of arranging a meeting with

Solace Traveller specialist, IDVA, to explore how partners can raise awareness of the existence of MARAC and related services within the traveller community.

Safeguarding

18. **Recommendation 6 (Sub-committee):** Social Services and Community Safety to organise and hold a session for the traveller community in Southwark on their safeguarding role and explain how referrals work, ensuring that accurate information is given and myths dealt with.
19. **Recommendation 8 (Sub-committee):** That the importance of confidentiality in child protection is emphasised with all Social Workers on all occasions.
20. **Response:** It is good practice in child protection to appropriately share information about children and families with other agencies where the child is known or suspected to be at risk of significant harm. The council has detailed information sharing protocols in place with partner agencies to that effect and holds regular multi-agency strategy meetings and conferences to consider the welfare of children at risk.

The council also has very detailed procedures around confidentiality of information received and how to ensure that confidential documents are not lost or inappropriately shared. These are based on the Caldicott principles, which are the principles that all health and social care organisations should use when reviewing its use of client information. These principles are set out below:

- Justify the purpose(s)
- Do not use personally identifiable information unless it is absolutely necessary
- Use the minimum personally identifiable information
- Access to personally identifiable information should be on a strict need to know basis
- Everyone should be aware of their responsibilities
- Understand and comply with the law.

Council officers continue to work directly with traveller parents and those parents to assist them to understand social services and give information, signposting and dealing with any myths. The council is also supporting professionals working with traveller communities, particularly around safeguarding and common assessment framework (CAF) referrals. There are plans for a meeting with traveller women in June 2013 to discuss safeguarding, whilst sessions for professionals on safeguarding and CAF referral thresholds are due to start over the coming months.

Economic wellbeing

21. **Recommendation 12 (Sub-committee):** STAG proposals on improving employment support are implemented; where feasible.
22. **Response:** The council, Southwark Works and STAG met in March 2013 to discuss the issues and barriers to employment typical within the Traveller community in Southwark. One of the main challenges emerging from that meeting was a lack of awareness of existing services and the difficulty that employment support and training providers have in engaging with travellers.

STAG clearly play a significant role and a logical approach was agreed whereby they should be the intermediary through which information on employment and training opportunities could be better communicated.

Through the Scrutiny review and also at the meeting in March a number of specific options were identified for targeting particular employment opportunities in driving, construction, childcare and hair and beauty. This is now taking place through the maintenance of links between STAG and Southwark Works and which has also been widened to include other employment and training providers. All vacancies received by Southwark Works from local employers are now shared with STAG, and a number of referrals have since been made by STAG to Southwark Works.

The council will continue to work with STAG to share information and explore better ways of engaging with and encouraging participation in available support from Travellers in Southwark.

Gypsy and Traveller sites

23. **Recommendation 1 (OSC):** In view of overcrowding on sites that it be recommended that the consultation due to be launched into the future of housing provision in the borough include future provision for gypsy and traveller sites and that these groups be formally consulted.
24. **Recommendation 13 (Sub-Committee):** The consultation that is due to be launched into the future of housing provision in the borough should include future provision for gypsy and traveller sites and these groups should be consulted.
25. **Response:** The Community Conversation based on the outcomes of the Housing Commission report is currently taking place across Southwark and is open for all residents in the borough to respond to. The consultation has taken place in a wide variety of locations and gypsies and travellers are able to submit their views through these mechanisms. STAG has been asked to respond to this consultation.

At present the council has four gypsy and traveller sites within the borough, home to 38 pitches. The Core Strategy planning document safeguards all four sites and sets out criteria for identifying new sites. Southwark has the fourth largest amount of sites of any London borough and the largest of any of the inner London boroughs. Three of the sites have already been refurbished and improved and the fourth site at Springtide has planning permission for improvements.

In terms of future site provision for gypsies and travellers, opinions emerged during the recent consultation undertaken by Housing Operations in relation to the new pitch agreement for council gypsy and traveller sites. Following on from discussions with STAG these opinions have been fed into the appropriate channels in the council. Consultation on the needs of gypsies and travellers, to be used to inform policy in this area, will be organised separately and timescales for this consultation will be discussed at the next gypsy and traveller officer group in early June. It is anticipated that consultation will be concluded by the end of July 2013, with the outcomes from the consultation reported back in the autumn.

In addition, the Department for Communities and Local Government document "Planning policy for traveller sites" was adopted in 2012 and requires boroughs to use evidence to establish accommodation needs. The document requires boroughs to identify a supply of sites, based on an identified need, and in consultation with their neighbouring boroughs, through the preparation of their Local Plan. The council is already in consultation with neighbouring boroughs and will begin preparing a Local Plan, called the New Southwark Plan, and a new Housing Strategy, following the outcomes of the Housing Commission consultation, later in 2013. Any forthcoming consultation with the gypsy and traveller community will therefore be used to support the development of both the new Local Plan, and the new Housing Strategy.

Engagement with the gypsy and traveller community

26. **Recommendation 2 (Sub-Committee):** Pilgrims Way Children's Centre to nominate a dedicated officer to build outreach links with the gypsy and traveller community to improve access to Children's Centre activities and Nursery Schools.
27. **Recommendation 7 (Sub-Committee):** Social Services and Community Safety to identify lead officers to work with the traveller community in Southwark. These officers should be appropriately trained and understand issues such as health and safety on site. This will enable relationships to be established and promote better understanding between all parties.
28. **Recommendation 14 (Sub-Committee):** The council develops an over-arching framework for engagement with, and providing services for, the gypsy and traveller communities in Southwark.
29. **Response:** In December 2012 cabinet approved 'a future approach to community engagement' for the council. This set out the principles and the vision for engagement across the whole of the community. The report committed to further exploring these principles through the engagement on the Housing Commission report, with officers reporting back to cabinet in July 2013 on the effectiveness of the new approach to community engagement.

Southwark has a dedicated traveller officer, who works within Housing services to specifically manage the four traveller sites in the borough. In addition to this, the council has recently established a Gypsies and Travellers Officers' working group, which includes representation from across the council of officers involved in service delivery to Gypsies and Travellers, including public health, early years, community safety and housing. The aim of the group is to ensure we work together to provide a coherent service offer to Gypsies and Travellers, including in relation to engagement and consultation. The officers also provide a single point of contact for Gypsies and Travellers in their service area.

Specifically at Pilgrims' Way Children Centre, they have recently appointed a Family Support Worker who has begun to draw up an action plan of how the Centre can engage with the gypsy and traveller community. Early year's staff are supporting the Children's Centre with advice and guidance on their service provision as well as specific work to better link the Family Support Worker with the four traveller sites in the borough.

Funding to STAG

30. **Recommendation 2 (OSC) and recommendation 15 (Sub-Committee):** That cabinet explores funding for Southwark Travellers Action Group so that they can maintain their services; the committee firmly believes that the services provided by STAG save the council money.
31. **Response:** The council provided some funding to STAG through the Safer Southwark Partnership Small Grants Programme during 2012/13, in order to develop a specific programme for young Travellers to attend a domestic abuse workshop, a road safety workshop, as well as carrying out a number of volunteering hours in the community in return for driving lessons.

The council provides support for Southwark's diverse communities and builds capacity within the voluntary sector through the Community Capacity Programme. Funding applications for 2014/15 are anticipated to open towards the end of 2013 calendar year. STAG are able to apply for funding through this fund, whilst the council's voluntary sector team in community engagement can provide additional advice on further funding opportunities through the year.

Community impact statement

32. The council has a duty under the Human Rights Act 1998 to 'facilitate the gypsy way of life' in relation to ethnic gypsies. The measures being undertaken by the council in response to the Scrutiny report are based on providing clear, accessible information, and appropriate advice and guidance to the gypsy and traveller community. Through this approach the council is helping to facilitate the gypsy and traveller way of life whilst ensuring appropriate access to council services.
33. The council is required under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, as regards persons with certain "protected characteristics". These characteristics include race, pregnancy and maternity, and sex. The measures set out in the report demonstrate that the council is taking active steps to mitigate the many disadvantages experienced by gypsies and travellers, and improve their opportunities and engagement with the settled community.

Resource implications

34. No additional resources are being requested to deliver the recommendations or actions noted in this report.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services

35. The council does not have a legal obligation to provide sites for gypsies and travellers. The council is required, pursuant to section 8 of the Housing Act 1985, periodically to review the needs of the district with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation, and is obliged to assess the needs of gypsies and travellers when undertaking such a review (section 225(1) of the Housing Act 2004).

36. The Department for Communities and Local Government document "Planning policy for traveller sites" was issued in March 2012 and must be taken into account in the preparation of development plans (Sections 19(2)(a) and 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). The policy requires boroughs to use evidence to establish gypsies' and travellers' likely accommodation needs, and set pitch targets accordingly, working collaboratively with neighbouring local planning authorities, in the course of the preparation of their Local Plan. Consultation on the council's Local Plan is expected to begin later this year.
37. The consultation referred to in section 25 of the report will assist the council in gathering the necessary evidence to inform its housing and planning strategies.

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services (FC13/037)

38. The strategic director of finance and corporate services notes the responses to scrutiny recommendations contained in this report. All financial implications directly arising can be contained within existing revenue budgets.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Access to Maternal Health and Early Years Services for the Gypsy and Traveller Communities http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s36849/Report%20Access%20to%20Maternal%20Health%20and%20Early%20Years%20Services%20for%20the%20Gypsy%20and%20Traveller%20Communities.pdf	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Scrutiny Team 020 7525 0514

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Peter John, Leader of the Council	
Lead Officer	Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive	
Report Author	Simon Chambers, Principal Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive	
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