

Children and Education Select Committee
19 September 2013

Forward Work Programming – Surrey’s strategy for improving outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people

Purpose of the report: Forward work programming

The purpose of this report is to agree an approach for contributing to the development of Surrey’s strategy for improving outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people.

Strategy overview

1. The Equalities Act 2011 requires public agencies to consider equality issues when procuring and commissioning services, and to take steps to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people with ‘protected characteristics’, such as Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT).
2. There is considerable evidence to suggest that GRT needs have often not been fully considered when developing the services intended to support them. This has the impact of compounding poor outcomes and perpetuating inter-generational patterns of exclusion and deprivation. The costs of this are high, both in terms of lost opportunities for GRT children and young people themselves, and the increased financial burden for public agencies supporting higher levels of need when health and social care problems escalate.
3. Surrey’s strategy will aim to identify how the Children, School and Families directorate, and wider partners, can reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for Surrey’s GRT children and young people.

Proposed approach for Select Committee involvement

4. Due to the wide remit of the Children & Education Select Committee, it is not possible to scrutinise all items at formal meetings. However, there are many other methods that the Select Committee can use outside of formal meetings such as task groups, Member Reference Groups, one-off meetings and site visits.

5. Member Reference Groups (MRGs) are an effective way through which Select Committees can contribute to policy development. MRGs consist of a small group of Members who meet informally with officers to act as a sounding board for the policy they are developing. MRGs update the Select Committee update on their work either through the Committee bulletin or brief updates at formal meetings.
6. It is envisioned that this MRG would only need to meet once to contribute to the policy prior to it going to Cabinet for decision in December 2013.

Recommendations:

- a) That the Children & Education Select Committee sets up a Member Reference Group to contribute to the development of Surrey's strategy for improving outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people.
- b) That, should the Committee approve recommendation a), they appoint 2-4 Members to sit on the group.

Next steps:

If the Select Committee approves the recommendations above, a meeting of the MRG will be scheduled for late October. The MRG will be expected to report back to the rest of the Select Committee at the next formal meeting in November.

Report contact: Rachel Yexley, Scrutiny Manager

Contact details: 020 8541 9122/Rachelyexley@hotmail.com

Sources/background papers: None