

# Shifting the Balance Health Conference, Aviemore 13<sup>th</sup> May 2008

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Making Links with Gypsy/Travellers- a community  
approach to health

Parallel Session 8 Community Resilience

# Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland

- Gypsy/Traveller -all traveller communities in Scotland except New Age Travellers and Occupational Travellers
- Scottish Government 'Twice Yearly Count of Gypsy/ Travellers' 3,000- includes local authority and private sites, road side camps but not housed
- The community estimates 15,00-20,000 who identify themselves as being Gypsy/Travellers
- Highland -unclear how many Gypsy/Travellers but count identifies average of 120 – not including housed who travel for much of the year

# Health

- Poor levels of general health especially lung and bronchial disease, heart problems and mental health
- Low levels of GP registration- use of A and E instead
- Lack of health screening- resulting in late presentation of disease and consequent poor prognosis
- Substantially reduce life expectancy

# Housing

- Two Highland Council sites in Lochaber
- Brackletter- Spean Bridge 15 pitches
- Kentallen- 12 Pitches
- Road side camps- increasing difficulty finding sites
- Housed

# Challenges for the community

- Geographical size of area – difficulty / cost of accessing services
- Harsh climate
- Limited economic opportunities especially in rural areas
- Low levels of literacy
- Lack of confidence based on history of discrimination

# Background to project

- Health Issues the Community course adapted-community development approach
- Community identified need for support around smoking cessation
- Funding sought for project focusing on smoking cessation
- Link Worker employed by Voluntary Action Lochaber supported by NHS Smoking Cessation Service

# Healthy Routes project

- Link worker built up relationship of trust with community – takes time
- Training for Link Worker around Brief Advice/ awareness raising with community and smoking and health
- Negotiated time/place of smoking cessation support through Link Worker
- Many very dependant smokers unaware of risks to health- culture of smoking from young age
- Very informal approach using Portacabin on site- word of mouth key

# Next Steps

- Other health related issues identified and brought to SCA and Link Worker
- Further funding from NHS Highland to continue and expand remit
- Link Worker / Community identify need for Tenants Association and One Stop Shops in order to create bridges and connect to services
- Enable two way engagement with service providers- social model of health

# One Stop shop

Held at Fort William Health  
Centre Supported by:

- Oral Health Educator
- Health Visitor
- District Nurse
- Community Paediatrician
- Dietician
- Smoking Cessation Adviser
- Women's Aid
- Lochaber Hope
- Community Education
- Housing
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Princes Trust

# Tenants Association

- Set up facilitated by Voluntary Action Lochaber
- Constituted group with committee for Brackletter site
- Making decisions about One Stop Shop

# Challenges

- Communication with Gypsy/Traveller Community – Link Worker essential
- Literacy skills- many leaflets, forms etc not suitable
- Culture awareness e.g. tides
- Community on the move
- Engaging with men
- Not a homogenous group
- Gaining support from health professionals
- Sustainability.....

# Positive Outcomes- examples

- One person stopped smoking and 19 people have engaged with Smoking Cessation Service
- Diabetic retinopathy screen arranged for patient not registered with GP
- Princes Trust – business start up grant awarded to young person
- 2 young people regularly going to Lochaber Hope based at Fort William College
- 1 family referred and seen by Family Health Nurse for weight management
- Tenants Association now communicating directly with Area Housing Manager
- Several families now registered with dentist and adults now on waiting list
- 1 family registered with GP
- Dietician and Oral Health Educator had informal consultation with several individuals and families
- Many community members now more confident about coming to health centre and know whose who