

Issues facing the Gypsy & Traveller Community which may be addressed by the establishment of self- help groups

A Report by Friends, Families & Travellers (FFT), April 2010

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 ORGANISATION OBJECTIVES

1.2 CLIENT PROFILE

2.0 BRIEF

3.0 METHODOLOGY & RESOURCES

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 CASEFILE ANALYSIS

4.2 ISSUES

Benefits

Discrimination

Education

Eviction

Grants

Homelessness

Housing

Legal Advice

Planning

Police

Sites

Domestic Violence

Health

Work and Trading

Media

5.0 SUMMARY

APPENDIX A – CASEWORKER INTERVIEWS

APPENDIX B – RECOGNITION OF TENANTS ASSOCIATIONS

APPENDIX C – DATA CAPTURING AND REPORTING

APPENDIX D – MARKETING FOR GROUPS

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 ORGANISATION OBJECTIVES

Friends, Families & Travellers (FFT) was established in response to the 1994 Criminal Justice & Public Order Act and is one of a number of leading organisations which have emerged seeking to address the problems facing the Traveller and Gypsy community. Over a small number of years, FFT grew from an informal support group and network helping to deal with crises faced primarily by new Travellers as and when they arose, to a formal advice, information and training organisation providing a wide range of services to all Travellers nationwide - whether traditional or new, settled or on the road. Consequently, FFT does not restrict its services to one particular group nor does it represent one group against another, but rather responds to the needs of the community as a whole.

The overall objective of the organisation is to work towards a more equitable society where everyone has the right to travel and to stop without constant fear of persecution because of their lifestyle.

1.2 CLIENT PROFILE

FFT works with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community, broadly defined in three categories; Gypsies, Irish Travellers and New Travellers. Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognized as distinct racial groups under the Race Relations act. In the past 12 months our casework statistics have shown that the make-up of our client group is 45% Gypsies, 40% Irish Travellers and 15% New Travellers. Clients face multiple issues arising from discrimination, inequalities and the challenges presented by a nomadic lifestyle.

2.0 BRIEF

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has provided FFT with funding to undertake an analysis of current casework files to identify suitable issues around which self help groups might be established, to provide an analysis of the resources needed and a rationale for the chosen options.

3.0 METHODOLOGY & RESOURCES

The analysis was conducted and this report written by a member of FFT staff in 224 staff hours.

An analysis of FFT's casework records for the previous 12 months has informed this report. The restricted time and resources available to caseworkers means that there are limitations to published casework statistics, ie when a client presents with multiple issues, usually they will be recorded under the main issue, with additional issues being dealt with by caseworkers, but not recorded separately in casework statistics. As part of this process, a review of all cases was undertaken to ensure that multiple issues were recorded.

Interviews with caseworkers were another important resource used in this analysis. This allowed for anecdotal evidence to be included. This evidence is especially important in relation to 'background noise' issues which clients do not report, such as repeated minor site problems, or 'minor' racist incidents. Indeed caseworkers reported that clients will not think to mention the day-to-day racism they encounter, as it is something they have become used to. However, these are exactly the sorts of issues which lend themselves to this project.

Provision from other agencies and groups working with FFT's client group were researched, to ensure that the project does not aim to create groups which are already in existence and accessible to FFT's client group.

The casework analysis highlighted the image of Travellers as portrayed by the media as a specific area of interest. This led to a media content analysis to inform certain sections of this report.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 CASEFILE ANALYSIS

At FFT casework is reported under one of the following headings:

- Benefits
- Discrimination

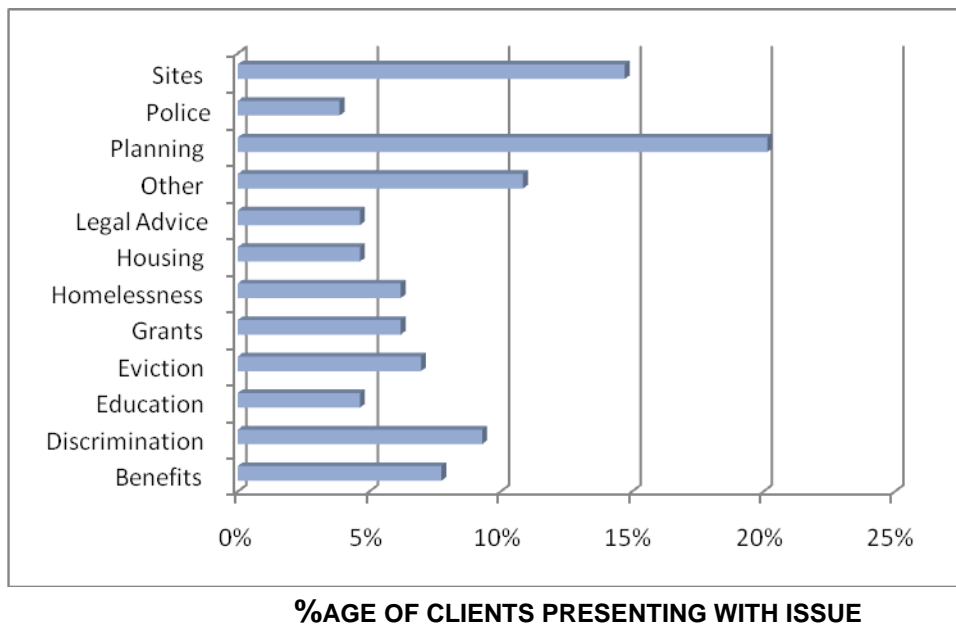
- Education
- Eviction
- Grants
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Legal Advice
- Other
- Planning
- Police
- Sites

No casework reporting list can be exhaustive and these have been identified as the major issues covering the work done by caseworkers.

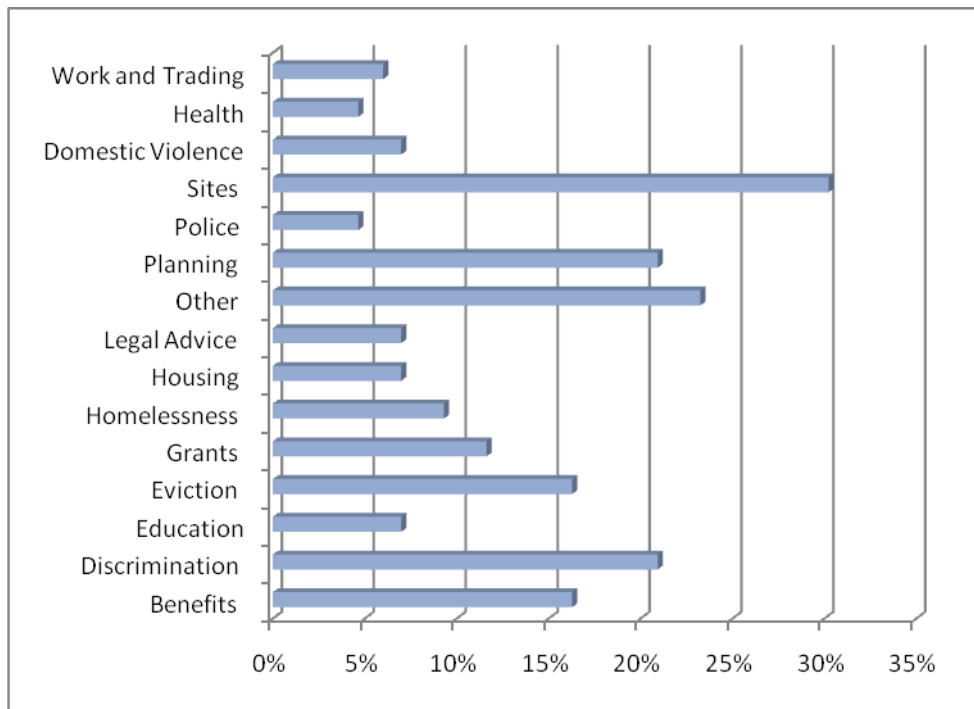
Limited time and resources available to caseworkers result in cases being coded under a single issue. The majority of clients will present with one major issue, but there will be multiple issues either underlying the main one, or that will be revealed during the course of discussion with the caseworker. A review of cases from the past 12 months was undertaken to accurately record those additional issues.

Files were reviewed and issues included where they appeared in the file as relevant to the headline issue or mentioned by the client as an additional issue.

The casework statistics for headline issues in the last 12 months are as follows:



In further analyzing the casework the issues increased by 92%.



%AGE OF CLIENTS PRESENTING WITH ISSUE

'Planning' is overtaken as the main issue when multiple issue cases are taken into consideration. This is largely because those clients who come to us for help with planning are true single-issue clients. The majority of people who come to us with any other issue will have multiple issues to consider.

In conducting the review of case files the category of 'other' has been further broken down to include any issue that occurred more than once in that category. These additional categories are 'Domestic Violence', 'Health' and 'Work and Trading'. 'Other' still exists to include those issues which occurred only once. The list of issues after further analysis is;

- Benefits
- Discrimination
- Education
- Eviction
- Grants
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Legal Advice
- Other
- Planning

- Police
- Sites
- Domestic Violence
- Health
- Work and Trading

4.2 ISSUES

Each headline issue was taken in turn and consideration was given to the appropriateness of establishing a self-help group as prescribed by the brief. Each issue was considered in relation to casework statistics, interviews with caseworkers, research into other agencies' provision and the efficacy of any previous groups.

BENEFITS

It is not appropriate for a group to be set up in this category. The most appropriate help can be provided by professional advisers at FFT and other agencies.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is the category relating to race hate incidents. All cases recorded under this category are racist incidents. There are no homophobic related incidents reported in the casefiles.

Initial casework statistics show 9% of our clients reporting race hate incidents. On deeper analysis 21% of clients had some race-related aspect to their case. This analysis took into consideration the evidence in the casenotes of what the client had described in relation to the issue they were reporting. It is telling to note that many clients did not ever mention words such as 'racism' or 'discrimination' in this reporting.

Consultation with outreach and case workers has shown that clients are heavily under reporting racist incidents. Issues that get reported to FFT are those which people see as either very serious or as something that there may be a solution to. Racism is seemingly

so common that members of our client group have come to accept 'minor' racist incidents as part of their everyday lives.

21% of FFT's clients are experiencing racism. This is an unacceptably high figure, but once the anecdotal evidence of under-reporting is factored in, racism becomes the single issue most likely to be experienced by our client group.

Recommendation

This casework analysis will inform a promotional campaign to encourage the reporting of hate crime by members of the community; working with Community Safety agencies and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to encourage Gypsies and Travellers to report incidents.

The sections in this report relating to the media and Police are also relevant areas of work under this category.

EDUCATION

The creation of a self-help group in relation to Education problems is unlikely to prove useful.

EVICITION

Evictions are common amongst Gypsies & Travellers living on unauthorized sites however the speed required in dealing with eviction issues does not lend itself to self-help groups. This can be most effectively dealt with by professional advisers.

GRANTS

Individual grant applications would not be best dealt with by a group.

HOMELESSNESS

A self-help group is not appropriate in relation to homelessness.

HOUSING

Housing problems affect a small client group spread across a wide geographic region, including many Local Authorities and their varied rating systems. Therefore a localized self-help group is unlikely to be successful.

LEGAL ADVICE

Legal advice is just that, and is best provided by professional advisers.

PLANNING

Planning is an issue where other organizations exist and make provision to assist our client group. Planning Aid provides access to qualified Planners and any self help group would be less effective than currently existing services.

POLICE

Although issues relating to interaction with the Police make up a small number of complaints by our clients they are often the kind of issues that have a serious impact on the lives of our clients and their families. In East Sussex a liaison group with the Police exists which has proven to be extremely successful in challenging inappropriate assumptions by the police and creating a forum for cultural understanding.

This type of group falls outside of the self-help brief of this project. However the creation of groups in additional Police Authority areas should be considered by FFT.

SITES

One of the largest areas of casework, this is the more obvious place to set up relevant self-help groups. Problems on site represent 15% of all reported casework issues, and on further analysis, become a factor in 23% of cases. Caseworker interviews have also shown that people will rarely report minor incidents, even if they occur frequently. Generally there will only be reports from sites for major incidents. So this issue is heavily under-represented in our casework statistics in light of how many of our client-group are affected by it.

Recommendation

Tenants Associations (TAs) will allow residents to have a collective voice on issues affecting their homes. Caseworkers have already identified two sites where TAs could be established.

Case Study A

Residents on one site had problems with a site manager. He was ineffective as a manager and abusive towards residents. The police became involved.

A Tenants Association (TA) may have been able to negotiate with the manager at an earlier stage to prevent issues becoming so inflammatory. Equally, if negotiation had not worked, a TA could have been a central point for the

recording of incidents to allow the police to have the relevant information about the manager in a coherent manner. A recognised TA also has the right to be involved in the appointment of a site manager.

Case Study B

Repeated flooding on a site has led the Local Authority to conduct improvements on site. Unfortunately these improvements have had a significant impact on some residents, as their homes have been moved.

A recognised TA would have the right to be involved in the employment of contractors, the timing of the work and so on. It is also likely that a TA recognised by the Local Authority would be consulted thoroughly on the plans and have their views considered at an early stage.

Creation of TA

TAs can be set up informally however getting recognition from the landlord (or forcing recognition by applying to the Residential Property Tribunal Service) confers certain rights on the Association. They have the right to:

- request information about costs incurred by their landlord in connection with matters for which they are being required to pay a service charge
- view relevant accounts and receipts
- see estimates obtained by the landlord for intended work
- put forward names of contractors for inclusion in any tender list when the landlord wishes to carry out major works
- see a written summary of the insurance cover and inspect the policy
- be consulted about the appointment or re-appointment of the agent managing the services

Since a recognised Association has rights and an informal one doesn't, it would be advisable to start each group with the intention of becoming recognised. A landlord can recognise any group as a TA and individual Local Authorities have their own methods of recognition, these largely match the Residential Property Tribunal Service's guidance (Appendix B).

FFT support

Toolkit: Create a culturally appropriate toolkit for groups. Including items such as a template constitution, template letters to the landlord, information on running meetings and so on.

- Staff support: To assist in setting up the group, attendance at the first meeting, support for the 'officers'. Subsequent attendance at key meetings.
- Funding: Assistance with applying for funding. Recognised TAs will often be able to apply for funding from the relevant Housing Association or Local Authority. The Big Lottery Fund also provide funding for TAs.
- Training: Training for either the whole group or the 'officers' in TAs, use of the toolkit, what rights and responsibilities they will have and so on. This can either be supplied by outside trainers or by FFT staff themselves.

Resources

- Staff Time: Staff time to support groups. This would consist of time to set up the group, 2 or 3 attendances at meetings and minimal support after the initial set-up (e.g. someone to answer the odd question from the Officers)
- Staff time to create tool kit and support the use of it. E.g. Providing training to officers.
- Funding: For staff time, individual groups and physical resources.
- Training: Training needs to be considered. There are several 'off the shelf' training packages from trainers that deal with setting up TAs. It may be that outside expertise is needed with this. However, FFT could put together a training package more suitable for site tenants, as most trainers will be used to dealing with bricks and mortar. The principles are largely the same for either though. If FFT cannot fund or provide training, we should support the group in an application for a grant to provide training, or in looking for alternatives, such as Local Authority provided training for groups.

Summary Workplan

- Contact residents from identified sites to suggest TA as an option
- Create toolkit
- Give training/toolkit to key residents
- First meeting of TAs
- Further training
- Continued support of groups
- TAs conference
- Exit strategy. The members should run the group themselves. Each group will need a different approach to this. Some will need support only for the

setting up of the initial meeting, others will require further support. The supporting FFT worker should create an exit strategy suitable to the individual group.

- Continue to identify, via casework, sites which could benefit from TAs.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There are already projects running dealing with Domestic Violence issues in the community. This is not an area where this project would be useful.

HEALTH

There are several projects running in relation to health issues in the GT community and creation of a group by this project would likely repeat work already being undertaken by FFT.

WORK AND TRADING

This category of problem is under-represented in casework statistics, so much so that there is no category for the issues in the casework recording template. It represents 1% of our recorded issues and further analysis of recorded casework brought this up to only 6%. These cases have been coded under various categories in casework statistics, such as 'legal issues'. Work and trading is one of the issues most frequently brought up by caseworkers in interviews. It tends to be a side issue, mentioned to caseworkers but not recorded as the primary reason for seeking support from FFT.

Recommendation

A Trading Support Group could give training, information and support to GTs working in traditional trades.

Casework example

Mr S. was doing roof-maintenance work and failed to provide the customer with written notice of her right to cancel the contract. He was taken to court for breaching the *Consumer Protection From Unfair Trading Regulations 2008* and the *Contracts Made in a Consumer's Home or Place of Work etc Regulations 2008*. Mr S. has literacy issues and was unaware of his responsibility to provide the written notice. He had a receipt pad that contained the relevant information he just failed to give it to the customer. Customers can waive their right to cancellation in order that work should go ahead before the end of the cancellation period.

Providing training or information to Mr S in advance of this issues would have meant that he was aware of his responsibilities under the regulations. He could have given the customer the written notice, she could have agreed to waive her right and the work could still have gone ahead without any delay.

Creation of a Trading Support Group

A Trading Support Group could provide training in trading areas relevant to our client group such as;

- Licencing e.g. How to apply for a waste carriers licence
- Self Employment and Tax issues

Key members could support those newly setting up as traders; giving advice and information on relevant issues, so this could be provided on a free/subsidised basis. Certainly the creation of a group would allow for training to be accessed by people for whom it may have previously unobtainable.

It could also be created with a view to set-up/support a trading co-operative in traditional crafts. This is an issue brought up in previous groups run by FFT.

The group could also negotiate group benefits such as discounts on group insurance, wholesale prices and so on.

Suggested FFT support

Toolkits: Information about business procedures, regulation and licencing, tax and other issues relating to traditional work pursuits.

Business resources, such as receipt pads and template contracts.

Staff Support: Staff support from a caseworker specialising in trading support issues. Support for the creation of the group, attendance at the first meeting, support for the 'officers'. Subsequent attendance at key meetings.

Funding: The group could be set up as a membership organisation with subscriptions paid by traders. FFT could provide support in applying for funding for training of members etc from Prince's Trust, the Enterprise Directorate etc.

Training: Provide training to key members in setting up the group, either through FFT or by assisting in finding/funding relevant training. Assistance with finding/funding training courses for members.

Resources

Staff Time: To support groups. This would consist of time to set up the group, 2 or 3 attendances at meetings and minimal support after the initial set-up

To either create the tool kit or support key members in its creation.

To assist with finding/funding training.

Funding: For staff time, physical resources and training.

Training: There are four possible streams of training for such a group.

- Training key members in the creation of the group
- Training key members in relevant issues so they can become a point of contact for advice and information for members
- Possible training for an FFT caseworker in trading issues, in order to provide support to the group
- Training that group could provide to members

Summary Workplan

- Identify and recruit key members
- Consult on and identify best way for group to 'meet'. It may be that traditional meetings are inappropriate as it would be most useful if the group could cover as wide a geographical area as possible. A phone group/online space may be more appropriate.
- Train caseworker in trading issues
- Create/assist with the creation of toolkits
- Give training/toolkit to key members
- Continued support of group

MEDIA

Consultation with outreach and caseworkers as well as research into work undertaken by staff at FFT has indicated that Media is a category which should be included in this report.

There have been complaints to FFT by people who have been appalled by certain press articles and their portrayal of a whole community in a negative light.

This ranges from a lack of respect shown to the cultural identity of the community (not capitalising 'Gypsy', or incorrectly spelling it, for example) through to outright racism (use of the word 'pikey', editorials which baldly declare that no Gypsy or Traveller has ever paid tax etc.) and even outright lies ('Gypsy group attacks Police helicopter').

Until now, the complaints have been dealt with by FFT on an ad-hoc basis. There have been some great successes (e.g. The Sun banning the use of the word 'pikey') but these have been in response to the more outrageous pieces in the media.

Recommendation

To support the setting up of a group led by the community to challenge the one-dimensional, discriminatory and racist portrayal that marks the representation of members of the Gypsy/Traveller Community in the media.

A Media Scrutiny Group would allow the community to lobby the media for a more accurate and respectful representation of Gypsies & Travellers.

This could range from very basic but oft repeated issues such as the lack of capitalisation of Gypsy, to complaining about stereotypical representations, to supporting individuals who want advice on libel action.

Example work

When a newspaper publishes an article misspelling Gypsy, the group sends a standardised letter asking that the paper ensures that editors are made aware that this is a mistake, and what the correct spelling should be.

If a columnist writes a racist column about Gypsies or Travellers, the group writes to the Press Complaints Commission.

The group sets up training workshops for media outlets to promote fair and accurate reporting on editorial content as related to Gypsy or Traveller issues. (Or joins any larger BME conferences/training events for media)

The group arranges meetings with gatekeepers of national papers to discuss their portrayal of G/T issues.

Resources

Staff support: To assist in setting up the group, attendance at the first meeting.
Subsequent attendance at key meetings.

ICT: It may be most appropriate to create an online space for this group. This will allow issues to be dealt with more quickly than would be the case with a group meeting in a traditional manner. FFT could assist with setting up this space.

Training: FFT could provide training in media complaints procedures.

Workplan

A group addressing these issues has been created during the writing of this report and FFT can liaise with the new group to provide support where appropriate.

5.0 SUMMARY

There are several areas already where FFT could support the creation of groups as indicated by our casework. Two sites where Tenants Associations would be appropriate have already been identified and undoubtedly more will arise from casework over the coming months. What is clear, is that there is a genuine need for such a project to address the issues faced by our client group. It is unlikely that FFT can provide the support needed to create every group suggested by the casework analysis, or support every element of each of those groups. The Committee will need to assess where resources are best spent in regard to this.

Siobhan McSorley
April 2010

APPENDIX A

Caseworker Interviews

Information came out during research which although is not directly relevant to this project's brief, will be useful in the development of FFTs objectives.

A brief note of each issue is made here.

Mens' Group

A lot of the community involvement/voices are women.

PRIDE Group

Identity politics; people are afraid to speak up, to identify themselves as G/Ts. No confidence in their ethnic identity because they are subject to so much discrimination.

Use of ICT; people are isolated, facebook and text messaging heavily used to keep people together.

Public speaking and meeting skills training; Making sure the potential members value their own voice, are empowered to feel that it is valid.

Assertiveness training

Unionising G/Ts who work in traditional roles.

First Aid training; has been run successfully previously.

Romany language training

Driving training

APPENDIX B

Recognition of Tenant's Associations

There are two ways of seeking recognition. The first of these is for an Association to ask the landlord for written notice of recognition. If this is given, then no further steps to establish recognition need be taken. Such recognition cannot be withdrawn by the landlord without first giving at least six months notice to the Association. If the landlord refuses or withdraws recognition, then the Association can apply for recognition to one of the five Rent Assessment Panels which constitute the Residential Property Tribunal Service.

The information needed to gain recognition is;

- (a) A copy of the Association's Constitution (Rules)
- (b) A list of subscribing members' names and their addresses
- (c) The name and address of the landlord
- (d) A description of the properties whose tenants will be eligible for membership (ie. flats/ houses) and their addresses
- (e) Copies of any relevant previous correspondence with the landlord regarding recognition of the Association.

APPENDIX C

Data Capture and Reporting

In the course of undertaking this casework analysis it has emerged that FFT is significantly underreporting it's caseload.

The manner in which data is both collected and reported does not allow for all issues to be reported on.

There is no mechanism for recording the time caseworkers spend on each case.

Data capture sheets are handwritten and a spreadsheet is used to record the headline issue for each client.

Recommendations

Electronic client data management software should be invested in.

This will allow FFT to more accurately portray the caseload of the organization. It will also allow for more detailed reporting of client demographics and presenting issues.

Resources

The initial cost of the software plus any annual licensing and maintenance costs.

The FFT network and hardware are up-to-date and no additional hardware will be required.

APPENDIX D

Marketing for groups

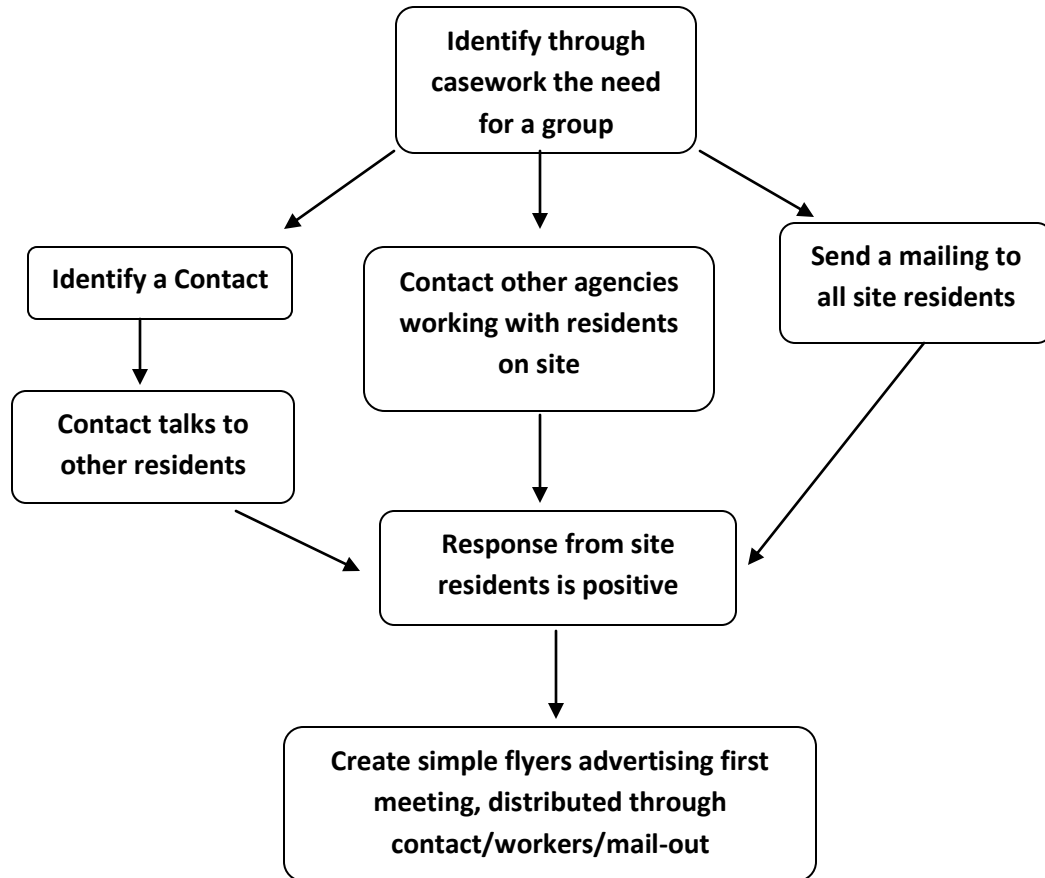
Interviews with caseworkers and previous work undertaken indicate that word-of-mouth advertising is probably most effective and efficient.

Younger travellers are using social networking sites.

Groups will be issue-led and created in response to casework. Some of these groups will therefore need to be marketed to a narrow group of people, e.g. residents groups will be exclusively for people living on a particular site. Other groups will be broader, including people from the wider Gypsy/Traveller Community.

Narrow-focus Marketing

For those groups, such as Residents' Committees, where membership is from a limited group we will use the following format to market the groups



Wider focus Marketing

Identify through casework the need for a group

Identify and make links with any relevant organisations and networks, e.g. other Gypsy/Traveller organisations, relevant local authority committees, forums, charities.

Word-of-mouth promotion via outreach workers, caseworkers and informal networks.

Create appropriate advertising materials for each group, with regard to the lower level of literacy within the community.

Advertise in appropriate places relevant to both the Gypsy/Traveller Community and the networks relating to each issue group. E.g. A health support group could be advertised via GPs surgeries as well as on sites

Possible advertising streams for these groups;

- Travellers Times (print and website)
- FFT Newsletter
- FFT Website
- Other Gypsy/Traveller organisations and websites
- Facebook groups
- Facebook advertising
- Targeted text alerts (identify through casefiles those members who may find the group useful, and have given permission for contact)
- Issue specific places, e.g. doctors' surgeries, carers networks, schools

Resources

Individual campaigns will need to be budgeted. Advertising and published materials will be costed on a group-by-group basis.