The Stopping Place

Advice & Information

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities

Best Practice Evaluation Tool: Closing the gap Early Years Settings

thestoppingplace.eastsussex.gov.uk

Why is GRT considered a vulnerable group?

'GRT' is statistically considered a vulnerable group based on data relating to a wide range of education, health and socio-economic factors. They are more likely to be overlooked or failed by systems based on misunderstanding of their needs. While many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families thrive without any additional support, those who are vulnerable to under-achievement often have challenges that are multi-generational and deep-set, requiring culturally sensitive support.

How should this tool be used?

This evaluation tool should be used alongside the GRT Best Practice guidance available on East Sussex County Council's 'The Stopping Place' GRT website, or from ISEND's Teaching and Learning Provision team. It identifies specific considerations for GRT families, as well as highlighting aspects of best practice that make the most difference to closing the achievement gap for this group.

It can be used by all early years settings, even those who are not currently working with GRT families.

The tool could be used to stimulate reflective discussions as a team, or as a formal evaluation used to identify and take forward developments needed. An initial evaluation can be recorded in the first set of columns, resulting in actions being identified and recorded for each section. Progress can then be reviewed and recorded in the second set of columns.

Not all GRT families will disclose (ascribe) their Traveller background. GRT describes ethnicity, historical background and cultural heritage rather than living arrangements. The majority of GRT families in East Sussex live in houses, and are settled rather than highly mobile. When reflecting on your practice in each area of this tool, consider the extent to which it has an impact on all of your children and parents, **especially those who may be more vulnerable to underachievement, or more challenging to engage**, and consider what small changes could make a significant difference.

Overarching priorities in East Sussex for GRT early years outcomes:

- Even where there are no ascribed GRT children in an early years setting, to support all children to develop an awareness and positive attitude towards GRT culture, countering any negative stereotypes and racist attitudes they may be exposed to elsewhere;
- Ensuring all GRT children, including those who may not be ascribed, can see their culture and interests positively included and valued within their early years setting;
- Building and maintaining parents' trust in the safety and relevance of the education system for their child, including those parents with high levels of anxiety and/or other barriers to full engagement;
- Maximising the success of transitions into early years settings (for parents and children), and improving rates of attendance - building a positive association with the education system, laying strong foundations for parental engagement, and supporting the high levels of wellbeing and involvement that are essential for accelerating progress;
- Increasing the number of children who are ascribed as Gypsy/Roma or Traveller of Irish Heritage on the ethnicity form, so that there is a clear picture of the GRT community's engagement with education, and to ensure any cultural needs are identifiable;
- Promoting high expectations, with early intervention to support any emerging difficulties relating to learning and development, wellbeing and safeguarding.

Please contact ISEND Teaching & Learning Provision for further information or advice.

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Sense of belonging, identity and cultural value

		Date			Review Date:		
		Red	Amber	Green	Red	Amber	Green
1	GRT culture and common interests are reflected within continuous provision (see guidance sheet 'GRT Best Practice – Engagement': Section on 'Relevance').						
2	Practitioners have sufficient knowledge of GRT culture to exploit opportunities to promote children's awareness and understanding, without stereotyping. East Sussex County Council's GRT website 'The Stopping Place' is used to access information and best practice advice.						
3	As part of getting to know a child and their parents, key persons show interest in home life and culture without fear of causing offence. Information about the child is collected verbally as well as/instead of in writing.						
4	The ethnicity section of the registration / EYEE form is explained positively to parents to encourage them to complete it and to feel safe about disclosing their ethnicity.						
5	Children have a named place/peg for their belongings (and any other personalised items that the setting has) from their first session at the setting.						
6	Cultural experiences and related absences are understood and valued. It is clear to the child and parents that they are missed when they are absent.						
7	All staff are aware of correct terminology and unacceptable/racist terminology relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups. Racist or negative comments from children or other parents are challenged.						

Notes/Actions - Sense of belonging, identity and cultural value:

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Building trust and engagement with parents

		Date			Review Date:		
		Red	Amber	Green	Red	Amber	Green
8	The setting understands that it may take additional time and perseverance to build trust and engagement. All staff understand the common cultural issues linked to trust and engagement, and strategies to support these (see guidance sheet 'GRT Best Practice – Engagement').						
9	Parents' first experiences of the setting are informal and non-threatening.						
10	The registration process sensitively supports parents who may find paperwork difficult.						
11	When possible, parents are welcomed into the setting with their children - the routine for dropping off/collecting children requires them to fully enter the setting.						
12	During the first visits to the setting, the focus is on making a connection with the family, showing parents that their child will be safe, and that they will be called immediately if there are any problems.						
13	No assumptions are made about parents' literacy, access to technology, or ability to navigate online systems such as learning journeys or bookings/ permissions. Support is volunteered to access written or online systems.						
14	Expectations are explained informally from the start, and newsletters/ updates are routinely given in person, with verbal explanation, unless it is known that the parent is confident with reading and writing.						
15	Managers and key persons are aware that parents may have heightened anxiety about leaving their child or interacting with professionals, and they actively take steps to relieve this. Having a senior member of staff as key person or co-key person can provide a higher level of reassurance to the parent, but only if they have a positive connection and the opportunity for daily exchanges.						
16	Parents have daily opportunities to build a connection with their key person. Changes to their key person are minimised and supported sensitively.						
17	Management and key persons are aware of cultural etiquette when carrying out home visits (see guidance sheet 'GRT Best Practice – Communication')						
18	There are clear expectations for absences. Systems are agreed for parents to communicate reasons for absences, and what happens if the parent does not inform the setting.						
19	It is clear to parents that their care and support for their children is noticed and valued. Home learning suggestions are carefully matched, manageable and supported.						
20	If the transition process or placement fails, the setting makes every effort to re-engage the family and work together for a successful transition at a manageable pace.						

Building trust and engagement with Parents

Date	Review Date:

Notes/Actions - Sense of belonging, identity and cultural value:

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Sense of belonging, identity and cultural value

		Date			Review Date:		
		Red	Amber	Green	Red	Amber	Green
21	Transitions are planned and monitored particularly carefully, to identify and overcome any child- or parent-related barriers to settling.						
22	Key persons have a strong bond with their children and their parents. A thorough picture of the child is used to support relevant, challenging and engaging experiences to maximise rate of progress.						
23	Children's involvement, wellbeing and development are assessed quickly during the settling in process to identify and support any difficulties.						
24	The setting has high expectations for children's rate of development, and a commitment to overcoming barriers to their long term progress.						
25	Practitioners accelerate the child's literacy development through play and exploration, and planned opportunities – children see the relevance and enjoyment of rhymes, songs, sounds, stories, books, mark making, reading and writing.						
26	Practitioners accelerate the child's mathematical development through play and exploration, and planned opportunities – children see the relevance and enjoyment of number, shape, space and measure.						
27	Practitioners are sensitive to the cultural aspects of speech and language, while ensuring early intervention for any support needs. Parents are supported by the key person or SENCO to engage with the Early Communication Support Team. Barriers to engagement are overcome in partnership between the setting and the Early Communication Support Team (Children's Centres).						
28	Practitioners tap into the child's strengths, interests and motivations so that they develop a positive association with the education system.						
29	Parents and children are prepared particularly well for their transition to their next setting/school, and are supported to feel positive about it. The receiving setting/school is well-informed to support a smooth transition, and the family's key person attachment is used to introduce the next key person/teacher.						

Notes/Actions - Sense of belonging, identity and cultural value:

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