

Inclusion and Education in Europe: The United Kingdom

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Abstract: The United Kingdom team investigated policy and practice in relation to students in four key categories of disadvantage, according to participation and achievement data: asylum seekers and refugees; gypsies and travellers; minority language speakers; and looked after children; and. The link between policy and practice was found to be a tenuous one and although there were many examples of good practice documented, few were systematically evaluated or disseminated in ways that would allow others to learn about, adopt or adapt apparently successful initiatives.

Keywords: Inclusive education, asylum seekers & refugees, gypsies & travellers, minority language speakers.

INTRODUCTION

As in the other countries involved in the research, the UK study was undertaken in two phases. The first consisted of an analysis of educational policy across the four regions: England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. In the UK, the focus was on four particular groups: the children of gypsies and travellers; those children with refugees and asylum seeker status; those who belong to linguistic minorities, either speakers of indigenous heritage or community languages; and children in care or 'looked after' children (LAC). (The last of these is not included in this paper although it does appear in the full report).

In the second phase of the study, the UK team identified and analysed a series of initiatives and projects designed to improve the educational chances of children in each of these four categories, looking for evidence of a relationship between policy and practice, for data on the impact of any intervention and, if so, an indication of the key factors operating. In particular the team sought to identify evidence of sustainability in the longer term.

THE POLICY CONTEXT IN THE UK

The devolved nature of government in the UK means that while some broad principles are common across the four nations that constitute the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), the particular emphasis adopted and the strategies developed to foster social inclusion vary. None had an integrated educational policy for social inclusion that addressed all aspects of potential disadvantage although there was some separate or supplementary policy statements which referred to specific factors associated with disadvantage. All four countries within the UK have a combination of private and state-funded schooling. In this paper, the emphasis is on the state-funded sector in England and Scotland.

The political complexion of the United Kingdom (UK) has changed significantly in the last ten years, most notably as a result of the creation of national parliaments or assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. As part of this process, certain powers were devolved to these parliaments or assemblies, on July 1st 1999 for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly and, on December 2nd 1999, to the Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly.

'Devolved powers' usually include matters such as education, health and prisons, while those powers that remain with the UK Parliament are known as 'reserved powers'. 'Reserved powers' include defence and other matters with a national (UK-wide) or international impact. Issues relating to social inclusion and minority group experiences are therefore the responsibility of individual parliaments or assemblies. Consequently, the UK team looked at the nature of the policy and similarities and differences therein across the four countries that comprise the United Kingdom.

The team looked for both broad policy documents and those that targeted specific factors associated with disadvantage. In educational terms, specific groups of students (identified by gender, social class, ethnic origin or other variable) are defined as disadvantaged if the statistics on participation and attainment are significantly lower than those of the general population and/or in comparison with those of other groups. It is readily acknowledged the four categories considered here are not mutually exclusive and an individual student may belong to more than group, thereby at risk of experiencing multiple disadvantages. Although the study did not set out to investigate factors such as gender, socio-economic class or disability, it did acknowledge them where pertinent.

It should be noted also that, in much of the literature, the terms 'integration' and 'inclusion' are frequently used interchangeably. However, for the purposes of this paper (and the UK report) 'inclusion' refers to efforts to include the child with his/her own culture and values into the school, within a culture that celebrates diversity [1] while integration refers to a process that seeks to equip the child to meet the demands of mainstream education and culture. Good practice

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highlighted within this report relates to the inclusion, rather than integration, of children from diverse backgrounds. Historically, the first efforts were to integrate such students into the mainstream educational culture; more recently, greater emphasis has been placed on inclusion i.e. valuing and respecting the background culture, traditions and values of all students.

PRACTICE: INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES

Government policy typically makes reference to at risk groups such as the disabled, 'hard to reach' (e.g. gypsies and travellers) and those whose home or family language is other than English (e.g. Urdu, Chinese). Sometimes supplementary guidance on good practice is provided and, in some instances, funding has been made available through grants, general or specific. Regional and local educational bodies are then expected to respond by developing strategies and initiatives for ensuring the inclusion of such pupils. In practice, new projects or initiatives have tended to be instigated and implemented at a local or regional level, often to meet what are typically local needs, within the broad framework of national educational policy.

As a result, many of the initiatives identified in the study were relatively small-scale and localised and most lacked systematic evaluation. Consequently, much of the literature was descriptive and lacking evidence that might allow the others to learn from it.

Strategies which are adopted to address social inclusion within the educational sector predominantly focus on measures intended to raise participation and attainment. In addition, many seek to raise self-esteem, self-confidence and motivation as interim outcomes in the drive to improve attainment. These are seen as necessary underpinnings or pre-requisites for educational achievement. The UK team sought to identify both those initiatives that were intended to impact directly on attainment and also those which address various interim outcomes. The types of initiative encountered include:

Children of refugees and asylum seekers

- Mentoring ('buddy') systems
- Specialist/designated teachers working with students and their families
- Staff development for teachers working with such students

Children of Gypsy/Travellers

- The use of ICT to retain contact and support learning
- The provision of materials and information for parents
- The use of integrated services (social work, education and health services) - a more holistic approach

Minority language speakers

- Gaelic-, Welsh- and Irish-medium language teaching and its impact on achievement and integration
- Online resources, information and guidance for teachers to support language-medium teaching

- Pre-service and in-service support for teachers working in immersion units or schools
- Initiatives relating to the support of community languages – typically local.

Each category is considered in turn, firstly with regard to policy and then in relation to practice.

ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS, INCLUDING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS' CHILDREN

The terms 'asylum seeker', 'refugee' and 'immigrant' were often used interchangeably in the literature, with little or no common definition or shared understanding. The Refugee Council offers the following definitions:

Asylum seeker: someone who has fled persecution in their own homeland, has arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities and exercised their legal right to apply for asylum.

Refugee: someone whose asylum application has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country, having proved they would face persecution in their homeland [2]

Other related terms such as illegal immigrant, failed asylum seeker and economic migrant were encountered. Essentially, all are terms used to describe people who, for one reason or another, have left their homeland and arrived in another country. There is no entirely accurate national demographic data in the UK on the numbers of asylum seeking and refugee children although in 1993 it was estimated that there were about 99,000 refugee children of compulsory school age living in Britain.

POLICY

Under the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1949), which has now been incorporated into domestic law (Human Rights Act, 1998), there is '*a right to education*' for all people within a country's jurisdiction (Article 2, Protocol 1). Added to this is the stipulation that the state shall respect the '*religious and philosophical convictions of parents*' concerning the education provided.

The system for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK is complicated and can involve families being dispersed across the country, often somewhat isolated. In addition, it can take a long time for applications and appeals to be processed, creating uncertainty and insecurity. The practices of dispersal and providing temporary accommodation may mean that children are forced to move to new schools frequently, which can have a profoundly negative impact on their capacity for socialising, retaining friendships and receiving support from communities. Because of their experiences and their social grouping in this country, i.e. almost exclusively housed in poor socio-economic areas, children of refugees and asylum seekers are considered more likely to underachieve in school. The results of this can be disaffection with school, low self esteem and in some cases exclusion from school [3].

In England, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) guidance on the national curriculum is expected to play a significant part in planning an appropriate curriculum

for asylum seeking and refugee pupils [4] One of the four goals for the English national curriculum is the establishment of appropriate education for all pupils, irrespective of social background culture, race and gender, among other circumstances.

Scotland has a vision for a society where all its children are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included; this vision applies to asylum seekers and refugee children as well as those born there. Recent Scottish legislation [5] states that all children are expected to be educated in their local mainstream school, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Children (Scotland) Act, 1995, requires local authorities to ensure that they have taken into account a child's racial, linguistic, cultural and religious identity within their service provision. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 states that children may require additional support for a variety of reasons, including those being bullied, the particularly gifted, those who have experienced a bereavement or are not attending school regularly, as well as those who have English as an additional language or learning difficulties, mental health problems, or specific disabilities such as deafness or blindness. Although asylum seeker/refugee children are not explicitly mentioned, the comprehensive nature of the Act ensures their inclusion.

In Scotland, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 has an impact wider than education alone, as it demands a holistic collaborative approach, integrating the activities of a number of professions such as health, social work and so on in meeting children's needs, physical, social and educational. Under the Act, education authorities have a duty to establish procedures for identifying and meeting the additional support needs of every child for whose education they are responsible. They must keep those needs under review. Other agencies will have a duty to help education authorities meet these expectations.

In addition, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which came into effect in Scotland in 2002 sets out the statutory duty of public authorities in the promotion of racial equality. Local authorities must provide nursery places for all children aged 3 and 4 years as well as primary and secondary education between the ages of 5 and 16 years. All children are entitled to this provision, regardless of their immigration status. Compulsory schooling ends at 16 years of age, with an optional 2 years of further study. Refugee and asylum seekers' children are entitled to this additional two years.

There is no specific Scottish education policy for the education of asylum seeking and refugee children although they are covered by the various pieces of legislation outlined above. There are few specific policies at local authority (LA) level either. A study by Candappa *et al.* [6] indicated that out of the 32 LAs in Scotland, the 14 who responded had few specific policies or support structures in place for asylum seekers and refugee children. Eleven LAs reported that there were specific policies for bilingual learners and almost all had, for example, a teacher with a remit to support these learners. Other LAs had policies which were more generic but appropriate for asylum seekers and refugee children, for example those concerned with students' additional support

needs. Most of the authorities surveyed reported that anti-racist and anti bullying policies were in place and that they also had policies relating to vulnerable children which were seen as appropriate for new arrivals. Four LAs had policies relating specifically to asylum seekers and refugee children. In Glasgow, in addition to specific policies related to asylum seekers and refugee children, the Glasgow Asylum Seekers Support Project (GASSP) was formed specifically to support these children and young people.

PRACTICE

In England, initiatives included buddy systems [7] and support systems for learning English as an additional language, although resources at school level were often stretched [8]. Candappa *et al.* [6] found evidence that both primary and secondary schools in Scotland have used buddy systems to good effect.

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant provided resources to English local education authorities (LEAs) for school-based staff who support pupils for whom English is an additional language and who are at risk of underachievement. Schools are expected to set targets at whole school, class and individual levels and to monitor and evaluate the attainment of bilingual pupils [9]. Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education [10] in Scotland found that, in general, there was good support for students to learn English and pupils at all levels were achieving well. They reported that members of staff appeared to value pupils as individuals and that this positive ethos, combined with support for learning English, helped asylum seekers and refugee children to feel included and communicate with other adults and children.

Some schools translated materials for parents/carers and provided interpreters while others used link workers and bilingual support staff as interpreters, both for children and to meet the needs of parents and carers [8]. Other examples of good practice included booking trained interpreters for events such as admission interviews and pupil background assessments [11]. Whiteman [7] found interpreters in one school in the north east of England. They were accessed through the LEA or psychological services but were used only occasionally, usually for meetings with parents.

Many authorities had established school-parent partnership projects. In addition, some schools employed a specific home-school link teacher to support integration. Translators were used at times, mainly for parents' evenings although in some instances, the students or other members of the asylum seeker/refugee community had the task of translating. This was considered to be undesirable but at times unavoidable. However, some schools found the cost to be an issue, as was the ease of access to professional interpreters.

HMIe found in their audit of provision in Glasgow that specialist support staff in particular made good use of the Glasgow Translation and Interpretation Service (GTIS). However more basic requirements for interpreters, for example in issues of discipline or medical matters, were often not met. In many schools there was a need for basic school related information to be made available in arrange of languages and/or plainer English. Similar comments were made by Candappa *et al.* [6].

The needs of refugee and asylum seekers are complex and not confined to mastering English. Some schools used 'after hours' clubs to boost children's attainment and encourage friendships, though these clubs were not always conducted in the mother tongue because of the diverse range of pupils. OfSTED [12] reported on one instance where a school was attempting to support children by running breakfast clubs and another where they were developing mother-tongue classes.

It is notable that a recent OFSTED report [12] does not specifically mention the place of anti-racist and anti-bullying strategies in the inclusion and support of asylum seeker and refugee children. Neither of these is mentioned by DfES [13]. All studies of refugee pupils' experiences indicate that a majority suffer racial harassment in school and in their neighbourhoods. Tomlinson [14] was unable to find any educational policies designed to counter hostility, in part at least due to the media, towards economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Schools are required to record all racist incidents and parents/carers and governors should be informed of these and the actions taken to deal with them. LEAs should be informed, annually, by Governing Bodies of the frequency and pattern of any such incidents [13].

Some schools (especially secondary schools) used the 'Red Card to Racism' Scheme to overcome intolerance, and questionnaires to parents and pupils to scope out the problems encountered by students [7]. Show Racism the Red Card (SRTRC) uses well known professional footballers to help get the anti-racism message across and the charity produces a range of materials for use in schools as well as other educational settings.

A report by HMIe relating to schools in Glasgow detailed that asylum seekers and refugee children felt safer in primary schools than secondary schools although both sectors had anti-bullying and anti-racist policies in place; primary schools on the whole had a more inclusive ethos. Christopoulou and Rydin [15] considered that bullying, although commonplace across a wide range of children was more likely to occur where the children were asylum seekers and refugees: *'Being foreign, in itself, makes migrant children more prone to be excluded by their peers, especially in places where peer groups are already formed'* (p.14). With regard to anti-racist attitudes, Husband [16] emphasises that educational professionals need a personal and moral engagement with the implementation of anti-racist policies at an individual level, through dialogue and interaction.

Arnot & Pinson [17] identify a number of activities and initiatives with good practice seen as relating to integration in three areas: *'the social aspects of integration, whether the children feel safe and secure in school and whether their needs were being met so that they could fulfil their potential'* (p.53). They found that a number of schools ran lunchtime/after school clubs and/or summer schools though these seemed designed to socialise asylum seeker and refugee children rather than support their learning or homework. In one LEA some schools ran homework clubs specifically for asylum seeker and refugee children. Candappa et al. [6] suggest that many schools recognise the importance of friendships for children's well-being and organised clubs to encourage socialising.

An important dimension is the support for the wider family within the community. HMIe reported on work that was being undertaken to engage with parents and build relationships. Schools involved parents in their children's education and school life including support programmes for enrolment, workshops related to the curriculum, homework clubs and social events. This was considered by Christopoulou and Rydin [15] to be significant in the building of friendships and a feeling of inclusion.

Most good practice identified by these studies related to policies at local authority level rather than specific targeted actions by teachers or schools. In some cases this involved the formation of multi disciplinary teams or comprehensive education policies, including recommendations for pre-service teacher training. Citizenship education was perceived to be effective although its greatest impact was in encouraging others to value refugee and asylum seeker children rather than supporting them in their learning.

GYPSY/TRAVELLER STUDENTS

Gypsies and travellers are not a homogeneous group but comprise a diverse range of cultures and traditions. In the UK, the term Gypsy/Traveller is applied to a range of peoples from different backgrounds and origins including Scottish Gypsy/Travellers, Irish Travellers, English Gypsies, Welsh Gypsies, Roma, New Age Travellers, and Occupational Travellers (circus and showground travellers) [18].

Ofsted [19] reported that Gypsy/ Traveller students had the lowest results of any ethnic minority group and were the most at risk group in the education system. They estimated that approximately 12,000 Traveller children were not registered with a school, equating to about just over 50% of such children at Key Stage 4 (the final year of compulsory schooling). Similarly, Derrington and Kendall [20] found high drop out rates of Gypsy Traveller students at secondary school.

In England it is estimated that many Gypsy/Traveller students are not recorded in the Annual School Census and are not present during key stage assessments. Nor do they always continue in education up till Key Stage 4 (14 – 16 year olds); for those that do have a recorded result, attainment is very low. For example, at Key Stage 4, 42% of Travellers of Irish Heritage and 23% of Gypsy/Roma pupils achieved 5+ A*-C GCSE/GNVQs (external examinations at end of compulsory school period) compared to 51% of all pupils [21]: p.9).

In Scotland, there are no clear statistics for the numbers of Gypsy/Travellers, with estimates varying from 3-5000 nomadic Gypsy/travellers and perhaps as many as 17,000 when housed Gypsy/Travellers are included [22]. Nor are there statistics on the numbers of Gypsy/Traveller pupils in Scottish schools. While recent school census procedures can help to identify the number enrolled there is no data on those who have never been enrolled or have already 'dropped out' [23].

Traveller groups in UK schools are becoming more diverse with an increasing number of Roma pupils arriving from Eastern Europe. Recent research has detailed the extent

of risk, deprivation and social exclusion among children and young people of gypsy/traveller communities [22, 24, 25].

POLICY

In England and Wales, raising the achievement of Gypsy/Traveller students is recognised as the responsibility of all within the education system [26]. Under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 Gypsy/Travellers are recognised as an ethnic minority group and the Act gives public authorities a statutory general duty to promote race equality. It states that public authorities and schools have a general duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups. The Act also places specific duties on schools, in particular to improve the educational experience for all children including those belonging to minority ethnic groups.

In March 2003 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Ethnic Minority Pupils*, and *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils: A Guide to Good Practice* in July 2003. The *Every Child Matters* initiative [27] is described on the government website as a 'ten-year strategy to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up'. The *Children's Plan* (December 2007) reinforces this aim. These documents are intended for local authorities, educational organisations and staff working with students from ethnic minority groups and aim to offer guidance to ensure that Gypsy/Traveller students enjoy a positive school experience in accordance with the agenda of *Every Child Matters*.

Significant factors in the low achievement levels of students include disrupted attendance patterns and disaffection with the school system, particularly at secondary levels [12, 19, 22, 23]. There are complex factors surrounding school attendance, exclusion and interrupted learning that are socially and culturally driven, which continue to marginalise this group of learners. Addressing disaffection means considering the tensions between the educational system and the culture and lifestyles of these families and communities.

Efforts to address these problems have not been totally successful due to a failure to establish a co-ordinated and integrated response [23]. The average attendance rate for Traveller pupils is around 75%, well below the national average and the worst attendance profile of any minority ethnic group [19]. Some of this is due to self-exclusion by the children or families themselves.

PRACTICE

In England, several documents have been published with the aim of policy implementation. *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils* was published as a guide to good practice [25]. It recommended that schools respect and address the needs of Gypsy/Traveller students and also identified a need for the development of a culturally-relevant curriculum as well as staff training to support Gypsy/Traveller students.

The DfES also recommended that schools should establish successful relationships with the Traveller

Education Support Service (TESS). In 2005, the DfES published *Aiming high: Partnerships between Schools and Traveller Education Support Services in Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils*. This brief document outlined strategies for developing this partnership and gave advice on effective classroom strategies [28]. More recently the DCSF has published *The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and Young People* (DCSF, 2008), offering guidance and a range of advice and strategies for supporting Gypsy/Traveller students.

Other resources are available. Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) was established in response to the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. A registered charity, the FFT seeks to address the problems facing the Gypsy/Traveller community. It provides an extensive body of resources, documents and information on its website including material that has been specifically designed for teachers and youth workers working with young Gypsy Travellers. In addition, there is a teachers' resource pack specifically tailored for teachers and youth workers who are new to working with Gypsy/Traveller students (www.gypsy-traveller.org). The FFT was short listed for the Human Rights Award in 1999.

The National Literacy Trust also provides a wide range of support materials, resources and documents from its website. Some of these materials are drawn from work carried out within the Literacy and Social Inclusion Project, a three-year project funded by the Basic Skills Agency and delivered by the National Literacy Trust. (<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/database/travellers.html>).

Many of the initiatives encountered were targeted at the student and her/his family and wider community. The ELAMP Project, funded by the DfES, coordinated by the National Association of Teachers of Travellers (NATT) and supported by a number of other agencies [29], took place in 2004 and explored the use of ICT with Gypsy/ Travellers. The evaluation report of the ELAMP Project highlighted the strengths and limitations of ICT and argued for a *more prominent role for home-school learning agreements* [29]: p.2.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) carries out educational research in England and Wales with the aim of informing government policy. In recent years NFER have been responsible for a number of studies focusing on interventions to support Gypsy/Travellers and they are currently undertaking a research project which aims to *conduct a literature review and supplementary investigation of the range of issues around and approaches to working with Travellers, Irish Travellers, Gypsies, Roma and Show people, and the support, training and other programmes available to staff involved*. (See the NFER website for further details: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/change-for-children/gypsytraveller-children.cfm>.)

Other recent research includes studies by Derrington and Kendall [30] and Mason and Broughton [31]. Derrington and Kendall's findings suggest that issues of racism, cultural dissonance and low teacher expectations are contributory factors in the achievement and educational engagement of Gypsy/Traveller students while Mason and Kendal highlight

the need to develop networks between services and communities in order to advance social inclusion for this group.

The UK team looked particularly closely at a project established initially to investigate the absence of Gypsy/Traveller children from Sure Start support projects in Leeds. Sure Start is a government-funded programme which aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by increasing the availability of early years childcare for all children, improving health and emotional development for young children and supporting parents as parents and in their aspirations towards employment. It is part of the Government's Ten Year Childcare Strategy for England - *Choice for parents, the best start for children* - introduced in December 2004. *Achieve* is a network that operates through the General Teaching Council of England (GTC). Its aim is to bring professionals together to promote racial equality and diversity in schools. Following *Achieve's* Traveller Education Conference in Leeds (March 2007) the Traveller Education Services (TES) set up a project to look into the observed absence of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children in Sure Start support projects in Leeds.

A review of the numbers of gypsy/traveller children attending Sure Start projects over a ten year period showed that there was no record of any such children being involved. In response, a new project was established involving Leeds Primary Care Trust's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Advisor, the Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (GATE) and Leeds Play Network. Three main challenges were identified: gaining sustained funding; establishing data exchange procedures for children and their families; and establishing toy library.

The main successes of the project have been demonstrated through the increased status given to the work with Gypsies and Travellers and the award of further funding to extend the project as well as increased staffing. Activities included translation and advocacy support, weekly drop-in sessions for Roma families and, in partnership with play workers, holiday provision for older children. Families could request home visits and children's centres.

A number of positive outcomes were identified including: children with better play and social skills entering early years provision; greater interagency collaboration; better links with the Gypsy/Traveller education service, resulting in improved school and pre-school participation; and improved access to services and better communication and information exchange between Gypsy/Traveller families and services

In 2004, Scottish Executive published guidance to local authorities and schools based on the outcomes of *The Equal Opportunities Committee Inquiry into Gypsy Travellers and Public Sector Policies* in 2001. The Inquiry made 37 wide-ranging recommendations covering legislation and policy, social inclusion practices, terminology and the identification of Gypsy/Travellers, education and housing strategies. A range of agencies and services are responsible for taking these on board.

In education, Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) is a non-departmental public body funded by the Scottish Government that has responsibility for the development of

the Scottish curriculum. Within the 'Inclusive Education' section on their website, LTS make available a wide range of materials, case studies, support literature and documents. In 2003 it published advice which outlined recommended practice for developing an inclusive approach towards Gypsy/Traveller students [32]. The recommendations ask local authorities to take a lead in reviewing enrolment, attendance and achievement levels, to find out about how practice can be improved and to designate member of the senior management as having responsibility for improving provision for Gypsy/Traveller communities. Recommendations also addressed issues such as integrated services and interagency working, funding and resource provision, recording and reporting procedures and the development of pilot projects on the use of ICT based distance learning opportunities [22, 32].

A key source of guidance and advice in Scotland is the Scottish Traveller Education Programme (STEP), based at the University of Edinburgh. STEP has a comprehensive website that can be accessed by interested agencies and individuals. It provides a wide range of books, articles, research reports, work packs, audio and video cassettes, DVDs and a database of useful contacts for those working with gypsy/travellers.

In Scotland, many of the initiatives encountered focussed on providing ways in which schools and travelling communities can remain in touch, notably through ICT. Research carried out by STEP has shown positive results when information and communication technologies (ICT) are used to support Gypsy/Traveller learners [33].

Lloyd *et al.* (1999) [22] found that Scottish schools were faced with a number of challenges when trying to reconcile the cultural diversity gypsy/travellers brought to the classroom with the norms of behaviour and attendance. STEP [18] emphasises the importance of recognising and being sensitive to the diversity of cultures within Gypsy/Traveller communities and recommends that policy and practice be informed by an awareness of the cultural values of these communities (see <http://www.scottishtravellered.net> for further information).

MINORITY LANGUAGE SPEAKERS

The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages [34]¹ defines regional or minority languages as those that are:

1. traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and
2. different from the official language(s) of that State; [34]: Part I, Article 1

The charter specifically excludes dialects of the official languages of the State or the languages of migrants (often referred to as 'community languages' in the literature.). In practice, much of the UK legislation and policy regarding minority languages makes explicit reference to the place of community languages in education.

¹<http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/148.htm>

POLICY

Across the UK, government support for minority languages is typically expressed as a commitment to ensuring that communities retain their sense of identity, that the nation as a whole embraces the cultural diversity that such languages reflect, and that they are integrated into public policy. In addition to identifying benefits to the community, minority language support is also viewed as benefiting the individual, particularly with regard to educational outcomes and life chances. The specific languages thus supported vary across the UK. Scotland, Wales and Ireland all have (different) indigenous minority languages that they seek to protect and preserve. In England, there is no widely recognised indigenous heritage language although there are movements campaigning to have, for example, the Celtic language Cornish recognised as such. In all four countries of the UK a number of minority community languages are recognised and supported within the educational system.

In 2001, the British government ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Scots, Welsh and Irish were given the highest level of protection; Scots and Ulster Scots were given more limited protection.

For indigenous, heritage languages in Wales, Ireland and Scotland, this takes the form of language-medium teaching of various types, from total immersion to single subject study for external certification similar to provision for other modern foreign languages such as French or Spanish. Minority community languages appear to have received less attention, and funding.

PRACTICE

In England, the National Language Strategy [35] identifies a number of pathways to language learning such as specialist language teachers working with individual or clusters of schools; staff development for existing primary teachers; outreach working from Specialist Language Colleges (and an increase in the numbers of these); an increased use of the Comenius scheme to place language assistants in schools, particularly primaries; learning opportunities drawing on wider expertise such as that offered by businesses, universities and colleges, parents and the wider community. In addition, the use of ICT is seen as having significant potential as are innovative partnerships involving schools in other countries.

Many of the projects initiated by the Strategy are being driven by or overseen by CILT (<http://www.cilt.org.uk>). The CILT website hosts or links to other websites and networks which aim to support language learning and, in particular, community language learning. For example, there are two concerned with languages in the primary sector, the National Centre for Early Language Learning (NACELL) and Primary Languages and Languages ICT. The website also has details of community languages training and provides ideas and guidance for teachers in using ICT in language learning. Similarly, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) has developed a resource sharing facility for teachers in a range of community languages.

The National Strategy has identified a series of specific actions and initiatives, with a time line for their

implementation, across each of the sectors identified [36]. Many of the initiatives intended to take forward the National Language Strategy are relatively small scale and are in response to local interests or needs [37]. As there is no indigenous, heritage language in England, much of the activity focuses on community languages; this is discussed in more detail in the final report of the project.

In Scotland, specific policies are in place to protect Gaelic although only around 1.5% of the 5.5 million residents speak Scottish Gaelic. The Scottish Executive has a system of specific grants for Gaelic medium education as well as grants to support other aspects of Gaelic in the community and funding for Gaelic broadcasting. Much of this is addressed through the Gaelic Development Agency, which works in partnership with the Scottish Executive and Gaelic organisations to improve the position of Gaelic in Scotland and beyond (<http://www.bord-na-gaidhlig.org.uk/welcome.html>). Funded by the Government, it has a particular interest in education and a key aim of increasing the number of Gaelic speakers.

Mac an Tailleir (undated, <http://www.cnampshleite.org.uk/tailleir.htm>) identifies 4 stages in the development of provision for minority languages: exclusion, single subject teaching, partial immersion and total immersion. He describes how, at the beginning of the 20th century, Gaelic was excluded from schools, with English as the medium of instruction. Subsequently, in the 1960s and 70s, Gaelic could be studied as a subject in secondary schools for external certification. Since then, Gaelic medium education (GME) units, attached to mainstream schools, have been established to provide some instruction in Gaelic and in 2006, the Glasgow Gaelic School opened, based on total immersion principles.

At present, there are over 60 primary schools offering Gaelic medium education, with additional teaching resources in Gaelic. The government has also taken steps to increase the numbers of Gaelic-medium teachers, both in primary and secondary schools, in a number of ways, notably through the introduction of Gaelic-medium pre-service programmes.

The Gaelic Learning in Primary Schools (GLPS) initiative began in 1998. Funded initially by the Scottish Government, it aims to increase the numbers learning Gaelic in secondary schools by introducing them to the language and culture while still at primary school. Interested primary teachers, whether Gaelic speakers or not, volunteer to take a 20-day course which prepares them for teaching Gaelic. The formal evaluation of the initiative indicates that participants were very positive about their experiences. They thought that pupils benefitted in a range of ways and reported that, in some areas, the local community had also become involved [38].

While there are no official figures for the numbers speaking the Scots language, it is generally considered to be relatively widely spoken and, increasingly, promoted as a living language and the focus of academic study [39]. The implementation of a language policy in response to the European Charter has been '*half-hearted, ill thought-out and buried in a swathe of other 'cultural' issues*', according to Millar [40].

SUMMARY

The study looked at both the policy context and the responses to policy in the form of initiatives or programmes which aimed to support students in schools falling into the four recognised areas of disadvantage discussed here. In summary, educational policy in relation to addressing potential sources of disadvantage tended to be based on underpinning principles including:

- all additional provision should take place within mainstream schooling, unless exceptional circumstances pertain e.g. severe disability;
- strategies developed to support disadvantaged students should take an inclusive rather than an integrative approach;
- strategies should be developed within a holistic, integrated framework with multi-agency input; and,
- such initiatives/strategies should address the context for learning, including the role of the family and community.

Many of the strategies and initiatives identified and analysed within the course of the project had been established in response to policy statements and tended to align with these principles. However, the adherence to policy was neither systematic nor consistent in many instances. And while, for most disadvantaged groups, some national policy statement is in place, there were few if any national initiatives resulting from them. In all instances, the support was provided through local (educational) authorities and/or local community efforts.

The case studies explored in the course of the project reflect a range of approaches from locally-driven needs-based initiatives such as those for Gypsy/Traveller children to those driven by national policy targets such as *Aimhigher*. Most involve some form of intervention, working directly to enhance the life chances of disadvantaged groups.

While local solutions might be most appropriate in some instances, in that they are best placed to recognise and address local issues, long term sustainability remains an issue. Often funding is for a fixed period and the time-scale is insufficient to allow the project to demonstrate its success and become embedded in local provision. In addition, many projects are led by enthusiastic and committed professionals but should key personnel leave, the project may falter and lose impact.

There was some evidence that many of the projects had some impact on the target groups of students. However, as most initiatives had not been systematically, if at all, evaluated, whether by the project team itself or, more appropriately, an external body, much of the evidence appeared to be post-hoc justifications or subjective assessments. As a result, lessons learned in one place are not disseminated or taken into account by others with similar concerns. It was not easy to find detailed reports of successful initiatives or to identify which factors were influential in achieving success. It seems that a great deal of work is being undertaken at local and community levels, which is not visible.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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