SGTCF Joint Chairs’ Report for Forum AGM 12.05.22

Firstly, we want to thank the present committee who have worked so hard, made a brilliant and supportive team and achieved so much. Following the update for the autumn meeting (see below), here is a summary of recent activities.

1. Police Bill. This has now passed into law and will be operational in June despite some opposition in both houses of parliament, especially the Lords. It was mentioned on Radio 4 programme ‘Law in Action,’ where a lawyer stated that it will be challenged at European Court of Human Rights which still applies in UK after Brexit. Relevant Police procedure is being developed. **There will be a presentation by Inspector Bert Dean to update us the Police Bill at the AGM.**
2. Terence Higgins Trust. We have spoken to 2 members of their staff about possible future work about reproductive and sexual health.
3. Jimmy Carr. We put in a complaint following his racist comment on the holocaust and Gypsies. This continues to be pursued in other ways.
4. Mary Frances Trust. We had a meeting with Christine Schauerman, their Programme Manager. She told us they were able to offer group activities and support to people with mental health issues. People could self refer and did not need to be formally diagnosed. They use a ‘social model’ of support. It was felt that it would be useful if they had some cultural awareness training and we referred her to our course.
5. Dee was interviewed by a representative of the Quality Commission Regulator about access to health care, the effects of the Police Bill and the need for cultural training.
6. We continue to respond to planning issues from the Districts and Boroughs.
7. The Merstham transit site has stalled again at present. The need for such sites is being underlined and publicised due to the implementation of the Police Bill.
8. Mental health. Dee and Jean attended training towards being mentors and advocates for the community.

It is planned that the mental health drama, about Freddy and Keziah, should take place again on zoom this summer on zoom. It needs to be advertised to practitioners in Surrey and others. We will mention our cultural awareness training to attendees and maybe use a short section of it.

It’s hoped to have a live performance of the play later in the year. We shall need to consider how we use it after that as we shall have some rights in its performance.

1. Gardening competition. This is to celebrate GRT History Month and to promote mental health. It will run formally during June, but people are starting to plant their gardens and tubs.

It has been advertised with a flier, the schedule for seven classes, and terms and conditions. We have a grant from Moving for Change for prizes, expenses etc. We also need to make sure that people and schools can take part and communicate with us if they don’t use email or Facebook. We have had wonderful support from Surrey Heritage, Surrey Libraries, Surrey County Council and others.

1. Learning Group.

This is a regular and very useful meeting. It helps people concerned with GRT education to keep in touch and develop projects. Amongst other things, we have discussed funded projects already taking place for early years, 16/17 transition and adult literacy and numeracy. The cultural awareness training continues to be updated as appropriate.

1. Romany weekend and the RLLM (Rural Life Living Museum, formerly the Rural Life Centre). We are still negotiating the acquisition of the vardo for the museum. We are also planning the Romany Weekend 2023 which we hope to be a major event for GRT History Month next year.

Jack Ayres and Lalage Grundy

Joint Chairs, Surrey Gypsy Traveller Communities Forum

Here is the autumn report as a reminder of activities in the first half of the year.

* Ryalla Duffy who was a good friend to us and often came to the Romany Weekend, died recently. The Forum sent flowers in the shape of one of her book covers. Jeremy attended in person in Lincoln, Dee, Lalage and others virtually.
* BBC 1 approached us over a ‘Portraits’ programme on prime time TV about ordinary people doing extraordinary things. They were interested in having people from the community take part, but eventually decided against.
* We have been asked to comment on various planning applications for example Runnymede BC asked us to comment on 2 pitches proposed on new development on old Mayflower nursery which we replied supporting.
* The Transit Site in Merstham is on track to be developed. We have promoted and supported such an initiative over the years. We were contacted by Surrey Live to provide views from the community as opposed to the anti GRT views they normally receive. Whatever the outcome of the final piece, it seems encouraging to be asked.
* Cultural Awareness Training, we continue to be in discussion with clients. The online version seems to work well.
* Domestic Abuse meeting with Police and other agencies in East Surrey. We had some involvement but as with many meetings we are invited to, there were technical problems as we are working from personal not work internet.
* Consultation – we get many requests for information and consultation. Like many volunteer run organisations, we have capacity problems in this area. Some are simply tick box exercises which we cannot respond to. Many others are important and we are working on ways to improve our response, including updating online information, or referring on to other agencies such as FFT (Friends, Families and Travellers) Email- fft@gypsy-traveller.org,

SCA (Surrey Community Action), SMEF and others who we keep in contact with.

* SCC have been consulting on how best to communicate with community, especially people who do not use internet. Both John and Jean have provided information.
* Time for Change mental health play. Dee wrote the script. Using Zoom interviews, we have appointed a GRT actress for female lead; we are still interviewing for the male lead. Dee has volunteered as a Time for Change mental health mentor.
* Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service has been awarded to SMEF, John and Jack attended the presentation
* Learning and Training. There are various initiatives and sources of money which may provide support for community members.

SCC GRT Strategy Group have succeeded in a bid for money to finance learning and training for GRT community.

Cheryl Wood of SCA supports young people wanting to get into training. cherylw@surreyca.org.uk or 01483 447118 and 07734 387311

Sue Weston, from REMA, supports school age GRT students. They offer training and support to schools.

Traveller Movement have training and learning opportunities.

Activate Learning contacted us about possible funded learning support.

As there are various agencies involved, it might be helpful to have a group or information exchange to make communication easier and stop people falling through the net.

* Nikki Parkhill, from SCC was unanimously co-opted on to the committee. Lalage proposed, Jean seconded.

Jack Ayres

Lalage Grundy