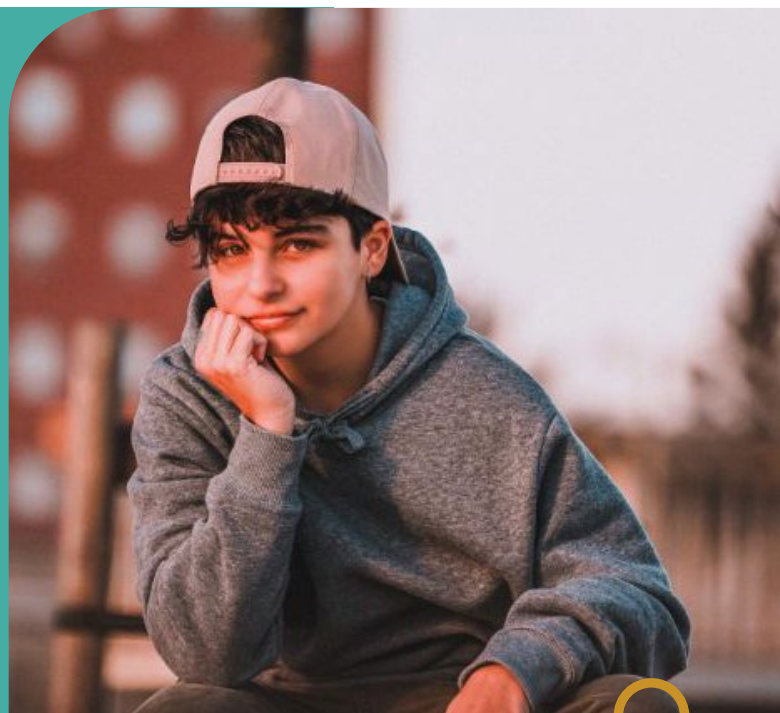


Family, Friends and Travellers Education Awareness Project

Empowering GTRSB young people to decide on their future and supporting them on their journey

The project was delivered by national charity Family, Friends and Travellers (FFT) which works to break down barriers and challenge stereotypes GTRSB communities face. Each year it works with around 4,000 GTRSB young people to open their eyes to opportunities they might not otherwise have been aware of.



The project worked with five Sussex schools and colleges – Hailsham, Bourne and Robertsbridge Community Colleges, Uckfield College and Uplands Academy. The main aim was to raise awareness among GTRSB students of the higher and further education options open to them, to improve access and boost their confidence. Other aims included:

- delivering the Royal Society for Public Health Level 2 Young Health Champion qualification to GTRSB young people at these schools. The qualification teaches the basics of being healthy and how to deliver messages on health issues ranging from smoking to recreational drug use to their community.
- building on FFT's past work to give these young people a sense of attainment through securing a qualification
- using its aspiration workshops, to boost confidence and awareness of how qualifications can improve their post-16 options
- ensuring GTRSB young people feel comfortable at school and that their school is inclusive of their background – something the project work has shown isn't always the case
- building lasting relationships with all the schools so they are aware of FFT and can approach it for support when needed.

METHODOLOGY

FFT worked with educators to create a bespoke GTRSB-dedicated Level 2 Royal Society of Public Health (RSPH) qualification (equivalent to one GCSE) that all GTRSB students were encouraged to take. Some 40 young people across the five schools and colleges took part in the project. Across two days, each young person completed four workbooks that were internally marked by

PROJECT SUMMARY

Context

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) young people are the least likely to enter higher education by age 19, with only 6.3% of Gypsy or Roma and 3.8% of Irish Traveller students accessing higher education, according to a 2022 Higher Education Policy Institute report, which also revealed that:

- only 660 GRT students accessed higher education in 2020/21
- those of Irish heritage had the widest attainment gap in terms of early years development
- GRT pupils have some of the lowest school attendance rates and highest permanent exclusion rate
- in 2020/21, only 9.1% of Gypsy/Roma pupils and 21.1% of Irish Traveller pupils achieved a grade 5 or above in GCSE English and Mathematics compared to a national average in England of 51%.
- The reasons for this are numerous but include a lack of role models and knowledge of their options, fear of student debt and discrimination, and an incompatibility with their community's culture and traditions.

FFT and then sent to RSPH for external marking. At the end of these sessions, students filled in questionnaires and FFT's team noted down any verbal feedback so that areas of improvement could be identified and targeted.

In addition, FFT delivered aspiration workshops at Uplands and Robertsbridge Schools (which it hadn't worked with before). Eleven young learners attended and learned about the wide range of post-16 opportunities open to them (especially those outside of the norm of work their family or peers do). The young people filled in worksheets saying what they wanted to do beyond school and discussed the barriers that might prevent them from achieving these goals. They also looked at college prospectuses. Despite expecting the young people to have a limited knowledge of their career options, FFT found that many had a good idea about what they wanted to do but lacked knowledge about going to university, so the workshops were useful in filling that gap.

The project also donated culturally relevant literature and resources to Robertsbridge and Uplands to help GTRSB students feel included and develop their reading skills, and to ensure schools create more GTRSB-inclusive environments.

Finally, after completing the qualification, the students at Robertsbridge took a taster trip to an East Sussex Group college to build on what they had learned at the FFT aspiration workshops.

IMPACT

The project beat its target of 15, with 38 GTRSB successfully completing the new RSPH qualification, and 11 students took part in the aspiration workshops. This has enabled them to experience a sense of attainment (which many hadn't experienced before) and to build the confidence and self-esteem essential for them to excel at school or further education.

As a result of the course, the young health champions have significantly improved their own health. They are also working to improve health outcomes in their community by pointing out reliable online information sources (such as the NHS website and app) and 'fake' social media posts as well as delivering health sessions on the dangers of smoking and alcohol misuse.

Young people engaged well with the project, and FFT hopes to make the health course a yearly thing for Gypsy and Traveller students entering Year 7 at these schools. The project has also enabled FFT to build an effective model to deliver the qualification to other schools across Sussex in the future.

Through the project, FFT has been able to:

- forge new relationships with staff and students at Robertsbridge and Uplands and build on its existing relationships with the other three schools and colleges
- link with and support more families and schools with a diverse range of issues
- donate culturally relevant resources to support the creation of an inclusive environment for the GTRSB students at these schools
- update the health workbooks to ensure they are more engaging and relevant
- improve teachers' knowledge about their GTRSB students so that they can improve their engagement with them using the inclusiveness resources donated
- increase awareness of its work among staff and students and the support it can provide – for example, training and resources

Duration

November to April 2023

Partners

Hailsham Community College, Bourne Community College, Robertsbridge Community College, Uckfield College and Uplands Academy

Funding source

SLN Community Fund

“As a result of the course, the young health champions have significantly improved their own health.”

- support those schools celebrating GRT History Month in June. FFT hopes to build on this with a different project through the University of Sussex Widening Participation team
- connect students from the Traveller community within schools so they can support each other
- increase its knowledge of why these students aren't accessing further and higher education so it can provide more targeted support to break down barriers to education, such as financial concerns.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding: The young people engaged well with the Level 2 qualification despite the significant amount of work involved. They said they enjoyed it because it had relevance to their culture, for example, it touches on community role models such as Tyson Fury. In many cases, FFT has noticed that young people do better when their learning has relevance to their culture.

Recommendation: For anyone carrying out similar projects, FFT recommends ensuring that they ensure it has cultural relevance and that the group's culture is represented in any materials.

Finding: The young people enjoyed FFT's informal and fun delivery of the qualification which included games.

Recommendation: FFT will use this approach for future cohorts.

Finding: FFT received a few negative comments about the extensive amount of writing involved in the qualification.

Recommendation: FFT will address this feedback and look at alternative ways for students to study and complete the qualification.

