BUCKINGHAMSHIRE NEW UNIVERSITY
EST. 1891

NERUPI Convention

15th-16th September 2021

"Transforming the Higher Education Learning Environment for Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities - a whole university approach"

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INSPIRED.
EMPOWERED.
EMPLOYED.

Session Outline

Whistlestop introduction to GTRSB inclusion in HE – the policy and practice context (10 minutes)

Developing a Whole University Framework (instructions for template use)

Workshop Exercise (20 minutes)

Plenary/Discussion/Feedback (15 minutes)

The GTRSBintoHE Pledge – takeaway presentation
https://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/gtrsb-into-higher-education-pledge

Policy Background/Supporting Literature/Data: School to HE pipeline

GTR people have the lowest levels of educational attainment of any ethnic group in school, achieving poorer outcomes in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2 and at GCSE, (KS4) (2019 5 A*-C GCSEs: Gypsy Roma 13%, Irish Travellers 19%) v. 64% of 'mainstream' pupils (2020). Nb: impossible currently to disaggregate fully by Gypsy/Roma

In 2019 <100 self-identified GTR children achieved A Levels and of these only 22 attained A/B/C or higher (with the highest achieving young person being awarded A*/A/B)

In addition to lower exam grades, GTR children are also more likely to be absent from formal education, to have ceased attendance by the age of 16 and to be excluded from school than non-GTR children (Traveller Movement, 2019; WEC, 2019; DfE, 2020; Tidman, 2020).

March 2021 (DfE/Guardian, 2021) - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children identified as excluded from school at much higher rates than any other ethnic group - , with Roma children nine times more likely to be suspended in some localities in the UK.

https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/24/exclusion-rates-black-caribbean-pupils-england

Barriers to Entry/Retention and 'belonging'

- Only 3-4 per cent of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population aged 18-30 years accessed higher education compared with 43 per cent of 18-30 year-olds in the general population (Mulcahy et al. 2017; Greenfields, 2019)

- However - between 2012-13 to 2019-2020 (most recent figures) an increase in self-identification of Romani/Gypsy/Traveller U/G students from 90-325 (predominantly between 2017-2019

- P/G 2012-2020 increase from 25-55 R/G/T students with the most noticeable increase over the last 2 years.

- 35 students (most recent year for which data was available e.g. 2018-19) are on taught masters (hence max 20 students on doctorates/PGR etc).

- 2019-2020: Only 350 Apprentices from GRT communities enumerated (we posit this may also relate to barriers to access/completion re functional skills/GCSEs)

GTRSBintoHE Network and Pledge activities

Aim: to bring together community member graduates/universities and NGOs to use evidence based best practice to increase social access to HE for members of the communities
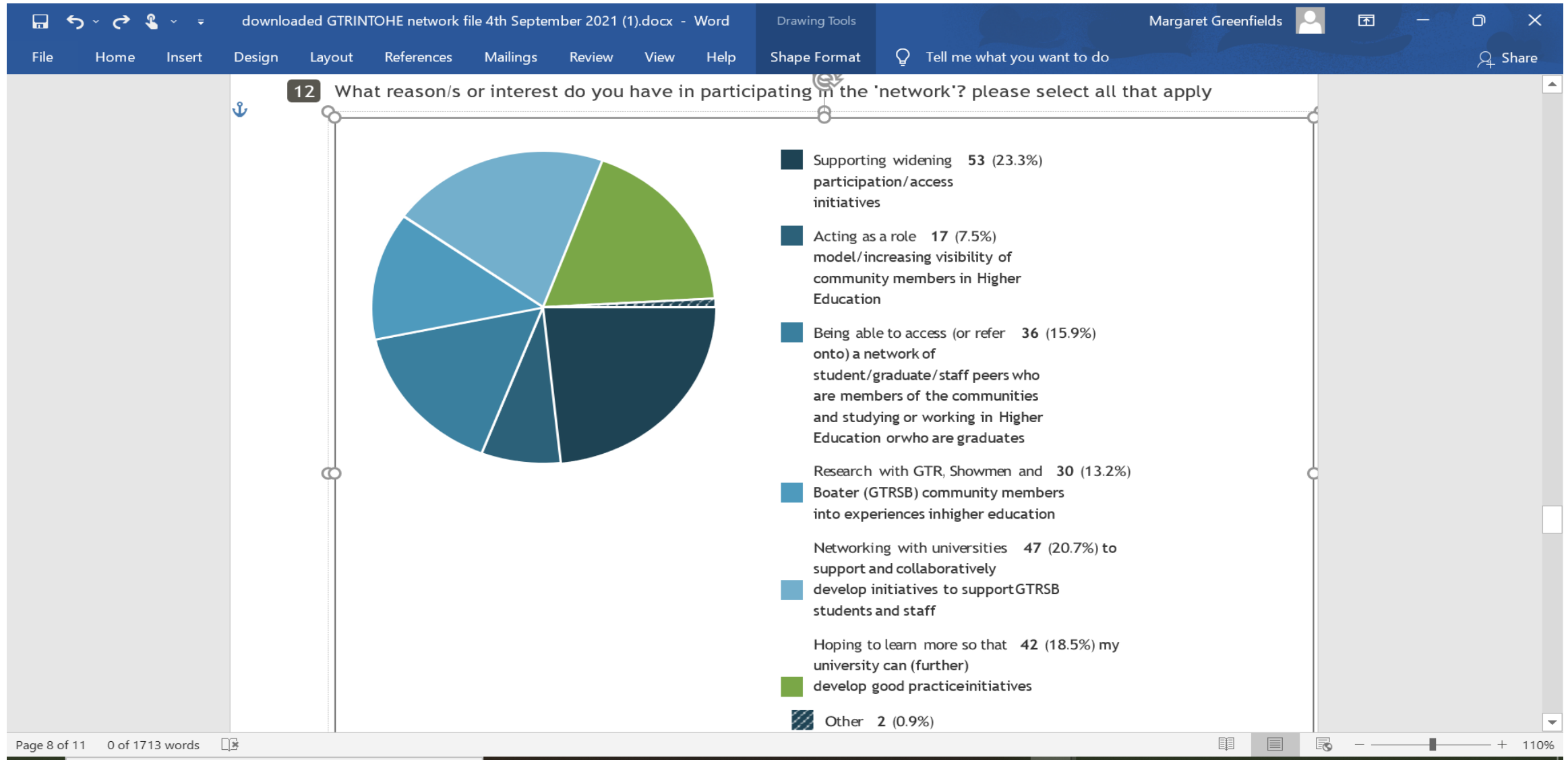
The **Jiscmail Network** was set up in January 2020 – now has 104 members 62 of whom are directly employed by Universities in WP/academic/PSE/Support roles

A further 3 UniConnect networks are members of the list as are the OfS

Methods to underpin staff knowledge expansion/knowledge transfer: Survey responses + focus groups with academic/PSE colleagues + virtuous cycle of feedback from conference/workshop sessions re information required

Reasons for joining the network (HEI + associated staff)

12 What reason/s or interest do you have in participating in the 'network'? please select all that apply

- Supporting widening **53** (23.3%) participation/access initiatives
- Acting as a role **17** (7.5%) model/increasing visibility of community members in Higher Education
- Being able to access (or refer **36** (15.9%) onto) a network of student/graduate/staff peers who are members of the communities and studying or working in Higher Education or who are graduates
- Research with GTR, Showmen and **30** (13.2%) Boater (GTRSB) community members into experiences in higher education
- Networking with universities **47** (20.7%) to support and collaboratively develop initiatives to support GTRSB students and staff
- Hoping to learn more so that **42** (18.5%) my university can (further) develop good practice initiatives
- Other **2** (0.9%)

Email Inquiries + 'Other' comments – survey (examples)

"We are interested in obtaining more information on how to ensure outreach materials are appropriate, culturally accessible and meet the needs of potential learners" (WP Coordinator, University Network)

"We are at the early stages of our research and development of activity to support access into HE with these groups, wanting to learn, collaborate and develop understanding and offer more in the future to support these learners". (WP lead, University A)

"Interested in improving educational experiences starting in primary school for GTR children and also increasing cultural awareness and curriculum content development for teachers" (Lecturer in PGCE Team/Researcher)

Key Themes: Focus Group/Interviews with Staff

- Lack of Knowledge of GTR communities

- Requiring someone within the Institution/HEI network who can be approached for information/guidance on supporting the communities

- Dealing with stereotypes and racism – students and also inbuilt (personal) bias/knowledge gained through television/media – how to challenge respectfully when may have limited knowledge oneself?

- Access to tailored resources – which are fit for purpose

- Challenges faced by communities – what are they?

- Communication styles – being challenging/rude or engaged?

- How to provide in-reach or increase one's own knowledge?

- Resources/Curricula inclusion issues – where to start?

Example Comments: Focus groups (front-line teaching staff)

"*I would be really reluctant to make suggestions of ways that I could be inclusive* [of GTR students] *without knowing more about it. I suppose I would want the reassurance of, sort of, speaking or engaging with the community a little bit because I think that there is a real risk if I just say, "Oh well, if I have this information I can do that."*

"*I think for me having someone…who is knowledgeable in the area, has experience, has the network to draw on, it would be helpful to have that kind of presence on campus for consultation when you are designing syllabuses and so on. I mean it's all very well having written materials and videos and things but actually having a person who can actually have a discussion with would be I think the most beneficial*".

Focus Group/Interview Quotes (Slide 2)

It would be helpful maybe to look through those with somebody to say, "Is there anything else that we need to do differently or need to look at differently?" [Social Work programme lead]

"There are probably a couple of things that would be useful for us to consider . I think firstly looking at it [per] students that maybe coming from these backgrounds and how we can support them, particularly, if there are any cultural aspects that maybe we need to take into consideration .. in clinical practice [as do Muslim students] and .. from a broader point of view in terms of bringing service users in to address cultural aspects, not just medical conditions, if that makes sense to you, from our curriculum point of view." [Senior Academic Lead – health school]

EXERCISE (20 minutes)

Instructions:

Using the template below discuss/think about the core priorities and areas of activity of the various stakeholders, their responsibilities and potential actions (which might include how they can best network with other stakeholder groups to bring about an outcome) whilst considering resources, responsibilities and approaches to engagement.

- **Intellectual capital: inclusive curriculum**

- **Habitus: celebration of community and culture**

- **Academic and social capital/outreach to communities**

Identifying motivations, approaches, resources (including human) and barriers to success, as well as preparing concrete suggestions for overcoming challenges will assist you in designing a tailored/granular approach in your own institutional context if you are working with this group of learners.

Stakeholder	Anticipated Key Priorities/Desired Outcome	Opportunities and Responsibilities of Stakeholders/ Recommended Actions	Barriers to be Overcome/Solutions to perceived challenges
Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities: **Students** (nb may there be different priorities/needs in each year of their study or when Freshers/Preparing to come to University)?			
Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities: **Potential students/Family**			
Other Students/Peers (including SU)			
Academic Teaching/Research Staff			
Non-academic staff Group e.g. librarians; WP/outreach; student support etc.			
University Executive Team/Senior Management			
Other - ??			

Suggestions for resource development to support inclusion activities (Interview/focus group findings)

- *"That in the absence of a physical person I think that video is quite powerful rather than written documents. I think it's quite nice to actually hear somebody speaking about their own experiences"*

- *"Working with LDU* (Learning Development Units/Student Support) *as to how they can support people. Working with staff to help them to think more holistically about what support students might need as well who from those backgrounds and for staff to embed in curricula"*

- *"[supporting] placements with* [GTR] *community groups"*

- *"[Having the] university as a whole recognising (GTR communities) as in the same way they do other festivals and occasions and things like that, to recognise anything that is GTR relevant"*

Plenary Discussion/Feedback

This brief session is part of an ongoing 'community of practice' discussion!!!

Please keep in touch or join/participate in the GTRSBintoHE Network to share experiences/advice/seek information etc

Watch out for the late September workshop – date tba – on *"Taking the Pledge – sharing learning with Network Members : an event for universities working with GTRSB communities"*