Transforming Learning Communities Project

Southern Regional College

September 2015
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Transforming Learning Communities Project

1.0 Introduction
The Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Project was funded for six years (2009 – 2015) through the Big Lottery’s Live and Learn Programme to address educational barriers and inequalities for Irish Travellers and Migrant Workers. The project was delivered by Southern Regional College (SRC) in conjunction with Trademark, a Belfast based social justice organisation who have worked with the College on a range of anti-racism and anti-sectarianism projects in the past.

SRC had the support of a wide range of community and statutory partners who provided advice and support to project staff to access participants including:

- The Education Authority (formerly The Southern Education and Library Board)
- St. Vincent de Paul
- The Southern Health Trust (Promoting Well Being Team)
- Southern Area Action with Travellers, (from 2009 – 2014)
- Craigavon Travellers Support Committee
- Armagh Travellers Support Group
- The Migrant Worker Unit of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and
- Craigavon Intercultural Project

1.1 Southern Regional College
SRC is the largest Further and Higher Education College outside of Belfast in Northern Ireland. With a total of six campuses across the counties of Armagh and Down and covering two district councils, the College has six Schools which currently cater for approximately 50,000 students each year and have in excess of 1,100 members of staff.

At further education level, the College offers programmes of study from BTEC Level Certificates and Diplomas, through to NVQ's and A levels. Many of these are aimed at full time students but are also available on a part time basis. SRC has an extensive range of Apprenticeship Training programmes which allows individuals to undertake vocational trades and experience industrial placement.

At higher educational level, students are offered a diverse range of programmes and learning experiences including higher level professional and technical courses which includes degrees, diplomas, certificates and professional qualifications.

SRC is an award winning College, a Centre of Excellence for teaching and learning and has been a previous recipient of a Beacon Award Enterprise UK Award for Enterprise in 2011 and the TLC Project won the AoC Beacon Award for Widening Participation to Lifelong Learning in 2014.¹

SRC’s vision is
‘To be the leading provider of professional and technical training – prized by individuals and employers in the local community and beyond’.
Our mission statement clearly lays out are aim, ‘To transform lives through meaningful and enjoyable experiences’

At SRC we pride ourselves on our core values. These are:

1. Putting the learner first
   We believe that: teaching and learning is our first priority; it is important to recognise the success of our learners and staff; all staff are here to serve the needs of our learners; we strive to remove all barriers to learner success information, advice and guidance provided to learners should be impartial, accessible and informative.

2. Striving for excellence
   We believe that: we should strive for excellence in all that we do; all staff should be focused on improving the quality of learning and the wider learner experience; staff should have access to high quality and relevant development opportunities to assist them in carrying out their role in the College; all staff should have the opportunity to contribute to College improvement; it is important to recognise and celebrate excellence.

3. Working together to achieve more
   We believe that: we can achieve more through co-operation and partnership with others; staff and learners have an important role to play in the future development of the College; it is important to foster a culture that values innovation, professionalism, and accountability; it is important to develop effective working relationships within our teams; every individual is valued and respected; effective communication is important.

1.2 Trademark
   Trademark was established in 2001 by a group of activists from the community / voluntary, public and trade union sectors. Trademark is a social justice cooperative and a recognised partner of the Irish Congress Trade Unions; it engages with a number of constituencies delivering training, research and evaluation on a range of related themes including anti-sectarianism, anti-racism, equality, and political economy and trade union studies.ii.

1.3 Background to Transforming Learning Communities
   The project was developed in 2006/7 at the height of the economic boom when an estimated 30,000 A8 Migrants were living and working in Northern Ireland, the majority of which were concentrated in the southern region.iii Research undertaken by SRC and Trademark indicated that whilst many migrants were well educated, lack of English language was a significant barrier for many people and that work commitments, costs, transport and lack of information on available courses were preventing them from enrolling in ESOL classes. Hand-in-hand with the growing number of new migrants was the rise in racist incidents with over 1000iv such incidents being reported in 2006/7 alone.

   SRC were also concerned by the lack of uptake from the small Traveller communityv in the Southern area and felt that a greater understanding of their needs and a
commitment to developing sustainable relationships with Traveller Support Groups would enable them to identify and meet their education and training needs. The Project commenced in August 2009 with a Traveller Project Officer and administrator based in SRC and a Migrant Project Officer based in Trademark.

2.0 Courses
We provided accredited and non-accredited training and support services to address the barriers faced by Travellers and Migrants in accessing further education opportunities.

2.1 The Migrant Strand
The focus within the Migrant Strand was pre-ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. These are ten-week programmes which teach the basics of English language and are targeted at those:

- who speak little or no English or
- Who lack confidence in returning to education and training.

Some of the classes were held on Campus, however, the majority were taught in small venues such as Church halls and community centres. This removed transport barriers for many students but also encouraged them to identify other local services and activities which may interest to them or their families and ensured they were visible to community organisations in their local area. Childcare was also provided by a local social economy business and is another example of how we removed barriers for many students, particularly women who otherwise would remain isolated and unable to participate.

All students received a certificate when they completed their ten-week programmes which was used to show employers that the individual was undertaking a course of study in English language. In reality our research shows that it gives many students a significant sense of achievement and a desire to continue to study with us.
Pre-ESOL students in Craigavon with tutor Assia El-Zarruk and Migrant Project Officer Kellie O'Dowd

Our project has also delivered a range of other courses to Migrants including accredited First Aid and Food Hygiene which are particularly important in this geographical area as the majority are employed in the service and food processing industries. These courses were delivered with interpreters and materials translated into seven languages to ensure students gain maximum understanding and benefits of their learning.

Students in Portadown receive their Level 2 Food Safety Certificates.

2.2 The Traveller Strand

The focus within the Traveller strand was pre-essential skills Literacy, Numeracy and IT targeting those who have not previously engaged in adult learning or who may have had a poor or limited experience of formal education. The vast majority of our students had left formal education by the time they were 12 years old. The boys then become informal apprentices within their own communities and are taught the trade of their families

- horse husbandry,
- tarmacing,
- steam cleaning,
- chimney sweeping,
- market trading etc.

The girls tend to spend their time looking after siblings and other domestic duties. They are often married by the time they are 18 and immediately start their family. As a consequence, many Travellers do not see the benefits of formal education or training and our challenge was to make it relevant, interesting and achievable.
Craigavon Students receive their Pre-Essential Skills Literacy certificates.

All of the courses on offer included an essential skills element for example Art and Craft classes always included an element of reading instructions / budgeting for materials or researching online. Our most popular course, Driving Theory included an element of literacy, maths and IT and throughout the six years of the project, 92 Travellers successfully passed their Driving Theory test which would have been impossible for them to achieve independently because of their low levels of literacy and lack of IT skills.

The majority of our students were female and very few, if any will ever work outside the family home; therefore their interests tended to lie in creative subjects such as altering and repairing clothes or making curtains. One student who completed a dressmaking course now makes a small income carrying out repairs and alterations within the Traveller community.

Engaging Traveller men has always proved difficult because these men tend to be self-employed and find it difficult to commit to a training programme. There is also a level of stigma attached to engaging in education from within the community. In order to meet this challenge we delivered 5 accredited Health and Safety in the Workplace programmes to 35 men focusing entirely on the types of work they were engaged in to promote increased awareness of the dangers associated with working at height, use of chemicals and machinery.

All our courses were based on demand as many of our students were unable to plan long-term. They ran for a maximum of ten weekly sessions to allow for any travelling the community might undertake and we were aware of such movements in advance, by working with the Travellers and the Traveller Support Groups to ensure they could complete their studies.
Travellers in Bessbrook receive their Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificates.

In the last six years we have delivered 309 courses to over 2800 Students including 2226 Migrants and 616 Travellers (101 within the Travellers Strand and 208 within the Migrant Strand) as illustrated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migrant Strand</th>
<th>Traveller Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-ESOL</td>
<td>194 Pre-Essential Skills Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 First Aid</td>
<td>5 Hair / Beauty 6 Level 3 Food Safety 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 Food Safety</td>
<td>6 Driving Theory (IT &amp; Literacy) 15 Patchwork 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 Child Protection</td>
<td>1 Level 2 Food Safety 4 Level 2 Working Safety 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>1 Pre-Essential Skills Maths 3 Personal Development 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Crafts</td>
<td>1 Crafts &amp; ES 13 Level 2 Child Protection 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>208</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We delivered training to organisations and individuals working with Travellers and Migrants including:
• An ILM Level 3 course in Coaching and Mentoring to 15 representatives of communities supporting Travellers and Migrants in the southern area to strengthen their capacity to meet the needs of the target communities

• A Level 2 Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults to 18 representatives of community organisations working with Travellers and Migrants

2.3 Advice and Guidance Clinics
Alongside the courses on offer we also facilitated up to 20 Advice and Guidance Clinics each year to communities and individuals across a range of information needs including Immigration, employment rights, housing, social security and education systems and opportunities. We worked with specialist agencies as appropriate including the:

• Citizens Advice Bureau,
• Irish Congress of Trade Unions,
• Education and Library Boards and
• Careers and Students Services

This ensured information was relevant and specific to their needs. These Clinics helped project participants make informed choices as well as ensuring they built links and strengthened their knowledge of what services exist, how they work and how to access them.

At the outset of the project, the Traveller Support groups requested that we focus our advice and guidance clinics on education and training issues. They had spent many years encouraging Travellers to use existing generic services in their local area such as the CAB and felt this may undermine efforts to make services more accessible to Travellers. Thus we delivered 77 Advice and Guidance Clinics to Travellers covering a range of primary, post primary and lifelong learning topics including SRC accredited and non-accredited training programmes and led to a number of positive outcomes including:

• 5 Traveller men completing their Level 2 in Door Supervision through a Neighbour Renewal Programme in Craigavon (these men went on to complete their Level 2 in CCTV monitoring with another programme within SRC)

• Identifying new programme participants in rural areas who were not connected to any Traveller support groups – two if these participants went on to Level 2 programmes in Hair and Beauty with SRC

• Transferring classes from community venues in Armagh onto the Campus as Travellers expressed a wish to experience classes in the formal college environment. This indicated an increase in confidence, a reduction in barriers to access and a desire to continue learning.
• 16 Traveller men who came to a clinic in Dungannon successfully completed the IOSH Level 2 in Working Safety which is an industry-recognised health and safety qualification.

In the Migrant strand, we facilitated 72 Clinics covering a range of topics from employment rights, immigration issues, housing, social security and education and training for all ages. We worked alongside other professional and statutory agencies including the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Education Authority, The Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the SRC careers department so that individual cases could be followed up by the most appropriate agency. We also provided interpreting at these events to ensure participants gained the maximum benefit from them. A number of cases required further legal advice in relation to employment rights which have been taken up by a caseworker in Trademark.

![Education Clinic in Portadown in September 2013 with the Filipino Community and the Southern Education and Library Board.](image)

Issues discussed at the clinic pictured above ranged from enrolling children onto preschool, segregated education, transfer tests, GCSE and A-Levels as well as costs of Higher Education. These Clinics are well attended and feedback is extremely positive:

"We just got so much information in the same place at the same time. It was so great not to have to make lots of telephone calls, go on hold for many minutes and then maybe not understand what the person on the other end has just told you".

"I just don't feel anxious anymore about where my child will go to school this year, thank you for this night, it means a lot to me".
3.0 Achievement and Progression

3.1 Enrolments
Our target was to deliver training to 1600 students (1200 Migrant Workers and 400 Travellers) over the six years of the project. The table below illustrates the number of enrolments to our courses during the six years of the project September 2009 – June 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Migrant Workers</th>
<th>Travellers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2226</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>2842</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Year 1 our efforts focused on promotion of the project, identifying participants and their training needs. During years 2 and 3 demand continued to rise and when we reached the mid-way point of the project we began to focus on progression routes for our students. So whilst our project enrolment figures are lower than the previous two years, the number of students supported elsewhere in the College has risen. (See 3.3 below). In years 5 and 6, demand continued to rise and we identified communities who had lived in the area for several decades who had never undertaken formal English languages classes. We also worked with new EU citizens from Bulgaria and Romania and linked with other training organisations and employers to work with job seekers and improve language skills in the workplace.

3.2 Achievement and Retention Rates
Our achievement and retention rates are consistently high year on year with the vast majority of our students finishing their course and achieving qualifications were offered. Staff, lecturers and project volunteers support each individual student in the project as and when required and we have been able to deal with issues including:

- lack of confidence,
- lack of self esteem
- language barriers,
- learning disability,
- transport to and from venues.

This has resulted in almost 100% achievement and retention rates throughout the last six years as shown in the table below.
### 3.3 Progression and Re-Engagement

Progression routes and building on successes are vital to retaining students and ensuring they gain maximum benefit from their experience. All participants on the migrant strand undertake ESOL assessments before they are enrolled in the most appropriate ESOL class for them. ‘Graduates’ of our programme continued to receive support from the Project Officers when they progressed to Level 1 within the College and we also transferred 92 students from Pre-ESOL to Level 1 ESOL and above and provided one-to-one language support for one young Polish student and two Portuguese students studying Level 2 Hospitality and Tourism.

Progression routes for Travellers has been challenging due to the culture of the community. We have linked Travellers to other SRC programmes delivered in their geographical area and to further education and supporting 12 Travellers to progress in further and higher education courses including:

- 1 young woman completed the Level 2 Gym Instructor qualification
- 1 young woman completed Level 2 beauty Therapy
- 1 young women completed Level 2 Hairdressing and is currently completing Level 3
- 1 young man completed Level 2 Joinery and is currently completing Level 3
- 5 Traveller men completed the Level 2 in Door Supervision and have part-time employment with a local entertainment security company
- 1 young women is currently completing Level 2 Hairdressing
- A further two young women will be completing Level 2 qualifications in Nail Art and Bridal Styling this term

These are highly significant achievements for our students as all of them had left school by the age of 13.

### 3.4 Other Successes

The Project has enjoyed other successes in relation to changing attitudes and increasing participation including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Migrant Achievement</th>
<th>Migrant Retention</th>
<th>Travellers Achievement</th>
<th>Travellers Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Average</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td>95.3%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• 15 Travellers actively sought to have their classes transferred from community venues to their local SRC Campus. This was a huge step forward and we believe this is a further example of how the project has addressed the barriers to participation in adult education.

• Project staff have delivered anti-racism training to over 200 FE students through Student Services

• The project has been shortlisted twice for an AONTAS All-Ireland Adult Education Award recognizing partnership, accessibility and additional support for out students.

• 20 students successfully completed their TEFL certificate and provided a minimum of 20 hours English language teaching within their own community groups.

• Two former Project participant is now a part-time ESOL lecturer in SRC

• Four Traveller volunteers and project students assessment were awarded the Jim Maye Perpetual Cup for their 'contribution to promoting education and training to Travellers in the Southern area'. The award was made as a direct result of their engagement with the project and for their continual promotion of it within their own community.

• The Assistant Director for Community at SRC was the guest speaker at Armagh Travellers Support Group AGM. He spoke about the opportunities open to Travellers to engage in learning and the support available to them. We believe this was a significant milestone for the project as it acknowledged SRCs role and achievements in working with Travellers through the project and beyond over the previous 5 years.

• The Community Team were awarded an 'Outstanding' grade in the recent ETI Inspection of SRC. They made specific reference to the TLC project in their report and highlighted the innovative methods of engaging with hard-to-reach students.

• We linked with a local employer in the Kilkeel area to provide English language classes for staff undertaking the first Fish Processing Apprenticeship in the UK. These students are now undertaking a Level 2 qualification in the School of Hospitality in SRC but would not have been able to complete the course without the support of the TLC project.

• We worked with Craigavon Intercultural Project to host a workshop on Working with Roma as a direct response to documented racist incidents against the community in Portadown. CIP invited the TLC project to host this event as a direct result on the anti-racism work carried out by the project. The event was attended by a range of statutory and voluntary agencies including the PSNI, the Southern Trust and the Education Authority.
• We identified a growing Bulgarian community with little or no English in the Armagh area who arrived as a result of EU enlargement and provided a language volunteer placement for a Bulgarian speaker in a new pre-ESOL programme.

• We also worked with staff at a Primary school in Armagh to provide pre-ESOL classes to parents in the school. This is part of a wider school programme to support parents to help children with reading and homework.

• We delivered a Level 2 Food Safety to a group of Migrants in Portadown who have been offered employment in a new Brazilian restaurant but did not have Level 2 Food Safety. We worked with the business owner and the staff and delivered the programme in the new restaurant which secured their employment.

• We were delighted to have been awarded an Association of Colleges Beacon Award for widening participation to Lifelong Learning. The project staff received the award from Matthew Hancock, Minister for Skills & Enterprise in London and hosted an event in Newry Campus with Stephen Farry, Minister for Employment and Learning. The Award was given 'in recognition of effective and imaginative approaches to attract and motivate adult learners... and for making a real, noticeable and positive impact in local communities'.

Pictured at the local celebration event for the Beacon Award from left to right, John Quinn (SRC Director of Workforce Development & External Relations); Caroline Coleman (SRC Project Officer); David Vint (Assistant Director Community, Schools Partnership and External Funding); Rosaleen Curran (Big Lottery Live and Learn Programme Manager); Stephen Farry, Minister for the Department for Employment & Learning; Dr. Stephen Nolan (Trademark); Ewa Babicka (SRC ESOL Tutor) and Brian Doran (SRC Chief Executive)
4.0 Project Promotion and Engagement

4.1 Partnership Working
The key to the success of the project lies in its partnerships with Migrant and Traveller Support Groups and staff in other community and statutory agencies working with them as well as the excellent relationships with SRC staff. The project had a Steering Group comprising of ten external organisations who advised and supported staff to access potential students and deliver the project. SRC staff are now active members of several Traveller and Migrant Support Groups. This ensures we contribute to issues both at ground and strategic level and share experiences.

The Project hosted a seminar in Craigavon Intercultural Project in Portadown in October 2014 to explore ways of meeting the needs of the growing Roma community in the area in light of a rise in racist incidents and anti-Roma comments on social media. The event was attended by representatives from local community organisations, the PSNI and the Southern Trust who heard guest speaker Sorina Toma, a Roma Community Development Worker with Bryson Intercultural Project in Belfast discuss her multi-agency approach to meeting their needs. Several more of these seminars are planned across the Southern region.

Kellie O’Dowd (TLC Project Officer), Sorina Toma ((Bryson Intercultural Project), Colin McCusker (Mayor of Craigavon Borough Council), Constable Rachel Balfour (PSNI), Lynda Gordan (Director of Equality, Southern Trust) and Stephen Smith (Director of Craigavon Intercultural Project)

4.2 Translation and Interpreting
Within the Migrant Strand, all materials were translated into a range of languages and interpreters were available as an when required. SRC contracted an external agency to ensure we had support in over twenty languages when required.
4.3 Community Outreach
Within the Traveller Strand, our work was promoted through the Support Groups and word-of-mouth. We visited homes and Traveller sites to ask about their interests and needs. We then returned to them with dates, times and venues for courses. We recognised that mainstream SRC promotional materials (the Prospectus, Website, newsletter and fliers) tended to have no impact on the Travellers as many cannot read or don’t have access to the Internet so we talked face-to-face about what we can offer.

4.4 Volunteering
Thoughout each year, up to twenty volunteers from the Migrant and Traveller communities give up their time to support the project. They carried out a range of vital support to promote the project to new and existing participants and help us to engage with those whom we might otherwise not reach. This engagement included:

- Two volunteers providing 3 hours of additional support with reading and writing in English per week to 3 full time Hospitality and Tourism students. (Feedback from lecturers indicate this has had an extremely positive impact on the quality of their written assignments and contribution in class).
- Volunteers providing additional language support to students in Pre-Esol classes in which has resulted in increased confidence in class.
- One volunteer worked with unemployed migrants to recruit students onto a new Pre-Esol class and develop links with a range of agencies including the local Jobs and Benefits Office.
- One volunteer worked with the Project Officer to identify isolated parents in a rural area which has resulted in a new Pre-Esol class.
- One volunteer worked with the Polish Supplementary School to establish a Pre-Esol programme for parents whilst their children are attending the school.
- One volunteer successfully engaged 6 Traveller men to the accredited CCTV programme and provided additional literacy support to two Travellers on the course to enable them to gain their qualification.
- One young Traveller man worked with the Project Officer to enrol 5 Traveller men to the IOSH working safely course. They all successfully gained the qualification.
- One Traveller woman provided weekly transport to a group of young women in Bessbrook to enable them to attend the IT/Driving Theory class.
- One Traveller woman worked with project staff to enrol 9 students to the sewing and alterations class. These students will commence the Level 2 Programme in Year 5.
- One young Traveller women has worked with the project to identify and enrol participants to Pre-Essential Skills Literacy in Cullyhanna which was the first time we have worked in this area.

We provided a total of 171 volunteer placements through the six years of the project including 64 on the Traveller strand and 107 on the Migrant Strand. These volunteers tended to provide two hours per week for 10 weeks which equates to an additional 3420 hours support to Migrants and Travellers engaged in the project. Initially, there was no interest in volunteering within the Traveller community as there was generally no culture, history or perceived employment benefits of volunteering. However, we
adapted the programme to make it more suitable to their needs and by the end of year 6, we had engaged 64 Travellers in a variety of volunteering roles.

We also had 20 volunteers complete their ESOL certificates so that they could continue to deliver English language in their own communities when the project finished.

In addition, two of our language volunteers are now registered part-time ESOL tutors at SRC.

Our volunteer Sylvia Krzystofik with BTEC Level 3 Hotel and Tourism student Damien Gutkiewicz.

5.0 TLC Within SRC
The Transforming Learning Communities Project exemplified our vision, mission and core values as a community college transforming lives through meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences. We put our learners first and strive to remove all barriers to learner success; information, advice and guidance provided to learners is impartial, accessible and informative. Each student has an individual set of needs and experiences and through co-operation and partnership, our project seeks to overcome barriers and disadvantage.

As our project connects strategically to the life of the College, our students are in regular contact with Student Services, have graduation events on Campus and attend other SRC events. During a recent EU Transversal visit, Travellers and Migrant participants spoke to staff from Colleges across Europe about their experiences with the project.
6.0 Evaluation
The Project was externally evaluated at the end of each year and students, project staff, lecturers, partners and other stakeholders discuss and reflect on how successful or otherwise they year has been.

The feedback has been extremely positive

‘Some of the Travellers noted their awareness of Further Education Colleges across the Southern area now enables them to speak with their peers in other localities and advise / urge them to access these centres to see what is available. They accepted this would not be easy but that their own experience of coming into that environment as a group and working together as group had given them the necessary confidence to look forward to what opportunities they might want to explore ahead’.

‘There is evidence that there has been an increase in Traveller confidence and this is very important for future participation as word of mouth is a key factor in reaching this service user sector. On this basis it can be said that Transforming Learning Community programme has filled a gap in the market.’

‘Evidence was obtained across all those interviewed of greater flexibility in the programmes offered by SRC to non traditional students. Among these students there was a clear and repeated emphasis on ‘practical employment-oriented skills such as security guard training and forklift driving’

‘The facility to run the programme with small group sizes may be considered essential to the programme’s success and this can be regarded as an important learning point for the future’.
Due to the low levels of literacy and English language, students were encouraged to speak to Project volunteers at various times during their ten week programmes and a final oral evaluation was carried out at the close of the course. Students also completed monitoring forms however, we have found a low level of uptake for them because an element of literacy and written English was required.

7.0 Learning Materials and Promotion of Exemplary Teaching and Learning

Our tutors developed ten week programmes for both Pre-ESOL and Pre-Essential Skills courses based entirely on the learning needs of students. We asked Travellers at the outset to talk about their motivation and literacy and numeracy needs and our tutors developed classes on those topics, for example reading appointment cards and telling the time or reading the television listing in a newspaper.

In order to retain students, the learning needed to be relevant ‘we have gone generations without learning to read or write another one will hardly make a difference to most of us’. There are changing attitudes to the value of education within the Traveller community and more adults are now expressing the wish for their children to remain in school. Unfortunately most still follow tradition leave early and the majority of adults are unable to help children with homework.

SRC’s TLC team met all the tutors before they took a class and provided background information on the group e.g. literacy levels, previous enrolments or specific needs so that the tutor was aware of any issues that may impact upon them or the learners. One tutor contacted the Traveller men before the class started to ascertain the types of work they carried out before they completed the IOSH Working Safely Course. The students were surprised how relevant the course was to them and as a result promoted it to other men in their community.
8.0 Promotion of Equality and Diversity
Ultimately this project was about promoting equality of outcome for Travellers and Migrant Workers by identifying the barriers they had in accessing education and training and working to remove them. We established a project with dedicated staff to identify, listen to and deliver services to two ethnic minority communities whilst addressing barriers such as childcare, lack of information and knowledge, delivering anti-racism training in a more open and inclusive environment.

We delivered Anti-racism training to staff and mainstream students within SRC to further address the barriers and perceptions that may exist. Student Services staff have actively promoted the training which we have delivered to over 200 students and all lecturing staff involved in the delivery of the project. This has in turn increased the awareness of the needs of and barriers faced by those who speak little or no English and Travellers in accessing education and improved the quality of delivery of training as courses are more tailored to meet those needs.

9.0 Contacts
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References:
1 www.src.ac.uk
2 www.trademarkbelfast.com
5 Estimated to be 1500 in the 2011 Census