**Education meeting for circus parents and ELOs hosted by NATT+**

**Further reporting:**

**Details on Guidance for families approaching schools in a new area:**

Natalie re-distributed the guidance (previously distributed) for families approaching schools in a new area – with a draft letter, which included the duties and responsibilities of Local Authorities in England and the rights of the child.

There were also top-tips on how to get children into a school at short notice.

This was seen positively as” more ammunition” by the delegates.

Natalie said that schools have no limit on numbers in a class after year 2, so the high numbers-in-a -class cannot be used as an excuse

The details of the document were as follows:

**Checklist for Circus and Showmen Families**

**When trying to secure a short term school place for children**

* **Go directly to the school if possible and ask to speak to the head teacher. Take your children with you.**
* ***Bring ID with you if possible, passports, birth certificates*.**
* **Give details of previous school the children have attended with a named link person for the school to contact.**
* ***Let the school know if the children have a base school in the winter.***
* **Bring any distance learning materials that the children are using.**
* ***Give the school as much notice as possible about when you need a place (this may be difficult/not possible).***
* **Understand that the head teacher may not know whether or not the school is allowed to take the children. Tell them about circumstances when you have successfully got your children into school and be aware that there are no statutory limits on numbers after year 2.**
* ***Maintain links with the school for future visits (particularly if you have an annual travel pattern)***
* **Offer them some tickets for the show (if possible!)**

Natalie said that Head Teachers may not know what to do (when they do meet parents) with some being more flexible than others.

Natalie emphasised that meeting the Form Teacher of a child face to face is important

**More details on Apprenticeships:**

Details of Apprenticeships were distributed of the December 2017 document from the Department for Education with Anne Milton MP, Minister of State for Skills and Apprenticeships; as well as a further document distributed ‘A Parent’s guide to apprenticeships from the National *Apprenticeships Service.*

Natalie explained that the government are pushing this now (they have done variously in previous years also). She urged delegates to spread the word that there will be a wide range of courses available to family members covering many skills beyond just welding. She expanded on this adding that:

* the November 2017 information on apprenticeships at several levels are equivalent to GCSEs ; a Levels and even degrees and
* Concluded that “This is another way to keep your education going alongside formal qualifications.

Natalie reassured that there are apprenticeships based around leisure “your industry” which are available.

* It was the Government’s drive to be top of economic and cultural development to compete internationally in the future (especially post-Brexit).
* At the moment, Singapore and Japan are top of the international league tables with the UK siting at 15th, although above many other European countries.
* The PISA scores (of 15 year olds’ students’ assessment) on the science scale were distributed to demonstrate this.
* (Scientific performance, for PISA, measures the scientific literacy of a 15 year-old in the use of scientific knowledge to identify questions, acquire new knowledge, explain scientific phenomena, and draw evidence-based conclusions about science-related issues).
* There was concern expressed, however that Far Eastern countries pushed their children more, perhaps too much.

*This all comes as the 11th National Apprenticeship Week (NAW 2018) is about to launch from 5 to 9 March 2018. During the week employers and apprentices from across England will come together to celebrate the success of apprenticeships whilst encouraging even more people to choose apprenticeships as a pathway to a great career.*

**Regional / ELO round-up of the year’s experiences:**

**Circus and Fairground news:**

**Natalie Stables, NATT+ Interim President /:**

Natalie described schools experience in the North West where she works; dealing with website content and enquiries and education working Salford.

Natalie reported many enquiries from Showmen accessing schools and fines for those absent from them. She described many families now working in Dubai and Singapore

There was a family who had a school place in a good school then went to Singapore. The school appointed a Head and an Admissions Team who said they would take the child off the register after 20 days. Natalie intervened successfully.

Natalie warned not to confuse genuine travelling with going on holiday and urged families to tell the truth.

Natalie recalled an enquiry regarding a static caravan site; challenges regarding schools willing to be Base Schools

Hearing this, other delegate’s spoke of the “T” code not being recognised and reiterated the need to tell the truth regarding ravelling for work vs going on holiday. This was said to be an increasing issue in the absence of TESs these days. Siobhan also reported dealing with many Planning issues.

**Helen Hatt, AIS Circus & Fairground nationally / Majical Youth in Wales**:

Attending the meeting with Jen Taylor, Magical Youth Circus;Helen spoke of an issue this year of an ADHD diagnosed boy who signed up for school in September. This was not done: sending the other child on school trips, but not him without a support worker (Natalie highlighted this as an SEN issue).

Another (case): spoken to school re a 16 year old doing catering; and was told a govt, grant would be available, but the place was withdrawn as the family are travelling

Many issues with the departure from school after 20 days absence; they need to re-apply.

This is a difficult with children having to have schools at opposite sides of town so that the children are late and they are punished and bullying ensues and issues being discussed in front of class. This was seen as wrong.

Circus people are being refused places in school on a three-week (short-say) basis. This is mainly occurring in Academy schools.

Schools are also said to be too lazy to give out Distance-Learning Packs. This destroys engagement with the school and she said that it was a shame that the Red Book (with a pupil’s details and work achieved so far recorded) has gone

Natalie highlighted the concern regarding monitoring Distance-Learning and highlighted the Statutory Responsibility to set work for children on the school-roll.

Helen added that the AIS were also moving on Licensing in Scotland and thus thinking of also joining the ESU, adding that the ESU will get stronger on issues in the UK.

On Apprenticeships, Helen cautioned that there were not enough places for post-16 year old pupils who have to stay in education or other learning until 19 years old.

She encouraged spreading the word that there will be a wide range of courses available to family members covering many skills beyond just welding; and advised saying that you are an ELO when asking for courses to be set up.

However Helen voiced concern at the four-day commitment a college and she spoke of the need for Scotland and Wales apprenticeship opportunities to be followed up. Plans to contact the Welsh Development agency were being made.

Helen picked up on the discussion of ‘Grooming online’ warning that children cannot tell when they are talking to an adult online. Natalie provided guidance on this.

Regarding NATT+ closing Helen agreed that “Collaboration (with other groups) was the future”

**Circus News nationally and internationally:**

**Paul Archer, Secretary of the Association of Circus Proprietors (ACP),**

Paul said that overall the ACP members are not having such a problem with schools; with the example of his daughter attending a Grammar School / academy. Members appear happy with more fixed routes for circuses across the country. He also reported receiving NATT+ help with a T code issue.

Paul agreed with the observations expressed at the meeting that that some families are leaving circuses generally as they have to educate their children which will affect the culture of the children, settling down rather than being on the road with the circus with the UK people. European and international artistes are coming in to UK versus the UK stream of circus community circus instead.

On planning issues (as they affect education) Paul Archer spoke of a positive experience in Warwickshire with sites identified separately for Circus; Showmen and Gypsy families for potential development.

On the way schools are rated, Paul was concerned at the pressure that head teachers are under from the government to keep standards up in schools, which could be having a detrimental effect on short-stay children if they are not counted are not on the longer-term attainment records

**Circus parents Association (CPA):**

While not able to make the meeting, there was word from Zoe Munn, Circus Parent from No Fit state Circus, who plans to be a stronger member of the Circus Parents’ Association (CPA). No Fit State’s travelling season has changes making attending this meeting difficult, as well as difficulty in accessing education for children.

**Carol Gandey from Gandey Worldwide Productions;**

Whilst busy with three shows running at the moment, Carol still takes time out to highlight the issues facing education of circus children. Carol spoke with passion on the effect that education and other governmental policies are having on the culture of Circus families and education of their children. On a personal level, she added that her daughter will leave to buy a house in order to educate her children.

Carol spoke of the difficulty of case studies of children from the Circus community in the UK now, compared to Lia Fossett’s time with the Circus Parents Association as many families have settled down

Carol drew on the possibly more enlightened experience of the Circus community in mainland Europe. She reminded that following the demise of EFECOT (European Federation for the Education of the Children of Occupational Travellers) the now defunct European platform for optimising the education of occupational travellers in Europe;

that there is still ENTE (European Network for Traveller Education) who she met the previous week; and who were undertaking a variety of projects and who pledged support for show children in the UK. “They will help as much as they can.”

Carol spoke of going to a Brussels meeting where travelling people number more than us in Circus, with fruit-pickers and more. She discovered that they have problems too, but are facing up to them. Issues discussed included:

* Tutoring on site with banks of computers paid for states fund education. Carol also spoke of children logging onto computers too in Holland.
* the growing sector of EU people without education or skills would be a growing problem ;
* Either they stay at home when their parents go abroad to work or hey stay a home when their parents work in their own country.
* Education Dept had 300,000 children in the UK beyond us who also cannot get an education.

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**Fairground News nationally:**

**Valerie Moody, Showmen’s Guild national and Northern ELO:**

Valerie reported that there are not many problems in the North East area with a good set-up there.

Parents who have benefited (from the education system) themselves and appreciate the needs. Valerie added that the Travelling pattern does not stop children going to school and confirmed that Distance-learning is working; some schools visited regarding interesting them in Distance-Learning for Travelling children. There’s a good learning curve and feedback from teachers; it is good to be invited to schools.

However Valerie reported that being home-educated is discouraged.

The Newcastle Town Moor Fair is successful, growing from 23 to 80 children. The Local authority funded this but there are costs. The Freemen were also supportive. Sir Len Fenwick used to visit us to hand out certificates;

Valerie added that The Showmen’s Guild and the Freemen match-funded the school in 2017 and that there is now also a nursery that includes Valerie’s four year old grandson and there is a 19 year old there too.

Glen Miller, from the Showmen’s Guild Northern Section, funded a Mowtown Night with half the profits going to the Town Moor School.

Dorset Museum recorded ‘A Fair Kind of Life’ for visiting children there while Newcastle Discovery Museum has arranged an exhibition about the Town Moor Fair including loaning Valerie’s MBE and an audio recording. There are many visitors and the exhibition has been extended to April 2018.

Showmen from around the country have contacted Valerie with queries; there are not many problems now as plans from Pat Holmes have helped.

Her daughter is a doctor; there are many teachers and doctors; nurses and plumbers now qualified, achieved from the fairground community. There is an aspiration to go to university; but Valerie assured that these graduates are still Showmen though.

Regarding Apprenticeships, Valerie acknowledged that courses are available at local colleges, government-funded, but reiterated the low attendance from students within the community attending the courses.

On Planning, Valerie assured that there were both Showmen’s and gypsies’ sites recognised in Middlesbrough.

**Michaela Derry, Showmen’s Guild Notts. & Derby ELO:**

Michaela spoke of the continuing situation of a child moving from one (private) school to another. There was assistance offered after the Guild Section lunch, within two days. Then there was a meeting with the Head Teacher regarding Distance-Learning Packs.

The school did not know about them.

Michaela explained this and the use of the ‘T’ Code and she introduced NATT+ and their website. The class teachers updated themselves and welcomed Michaela and got things sorted out.

Michaela also spoke of a child not at school; this was chased-up to get the child to attend school. There were also several phone calls and emails dealing with educational issues.

Michaela said that schools have no limit on numbers in a class after year 2, but even though the high numbers-in-a -class cannot be used as an excuse this has been an issue in her area, Notts & Derby and others.

Regarding guidance tips for parents communicating with schools Melanie added that it was helpful to make an appointment for a meeting, acknowledging that this is difficult but emails and registered / signed -for-letters can be used. She added that on occasions “We have had to doorstep the Head Teacher”

**Melanie Allen, Showmen’s Guild Midland Section ELO**

Melanie spoke of a 9 year old autistic child in mainstream school who cannot cope. A new possible school cannot admit him until September Thee was a useful discussion on this with helpful advice from Natalie for the group including using the SEN Statement / Care Plan to gain assistance from the LEA.

Melanie asked about a Special autistic Schools and heard that there are few specialist schools but there are SEN Units in mainstream schools

There was an example given of an autistic child who was being home-educated, with the LEA having a duty to support them. Melanie reported that the child had been doing well in school up to this point.

On Apprenticeships, Melanie spoke of driving them; they were organised but required two days in college and unfortunately show children did not attend; this has been a continuing drawback to organising the programmes.

Melanie advised to make sure that the funds were there first before promoting courses.

It was reported that the Education Dept in Solihull wants background information on Showmen; the CEO has been invited to the Midland Section Luncheon.

**Lawrence Crick, Showmen’s Guild London & Home Counties Section ELO.**

On apprenticeships, Lawrence recalled the value of courses in Welding and other practical skills, relevant to Showmen, but no more was heard about them since.

Lawrence recalled the courses themselves, arranged by Charles Presland (when he was London Section ELO, as being good and well-supported with students arriving from yards some distance away to attend. He was looking forward to the new courses that are being made available.

Lawrence was interested to publish the details of courses on Social Media and felt that student classes did not have to consist of just Showmen students.

He added that “many Showmen are naturally-gifted on fabrication and not just fairgrounds. Showmen may not be good literally but do like to compete and are good with figures.”

On the funding gap in education, with the demise of NATT+, Lawrence echoed other delegates in asserting that “We want to be supportive of the education of our children.”

Lawrence spoke of his working with the European Showmen via the European showmen’s Union (ESU) and acknowledged the common language and international sense of community: Germany; France; Portugal; Belgium and Italy are reported to have recognised Showmen’s Cultural Heritage

On Planning, Lawrence referred to the 30 yards for Gypsies and 30 for showmen that have been earmarked in Essex within new plans.

**ENDS.**

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**2800 Words.**