



**GYPSY, ROMA
AND TRAVELLER
LIASION**



Gypsies and Travellers are:

56



3x
as likely to experience anxiety

6x
more likely to die by suicide than the general population

20x
more likely to experience the death of a child, as a mother¹

GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS significantly more likely to have a long term illness, health problem or disability

2x
as likely to experience depression

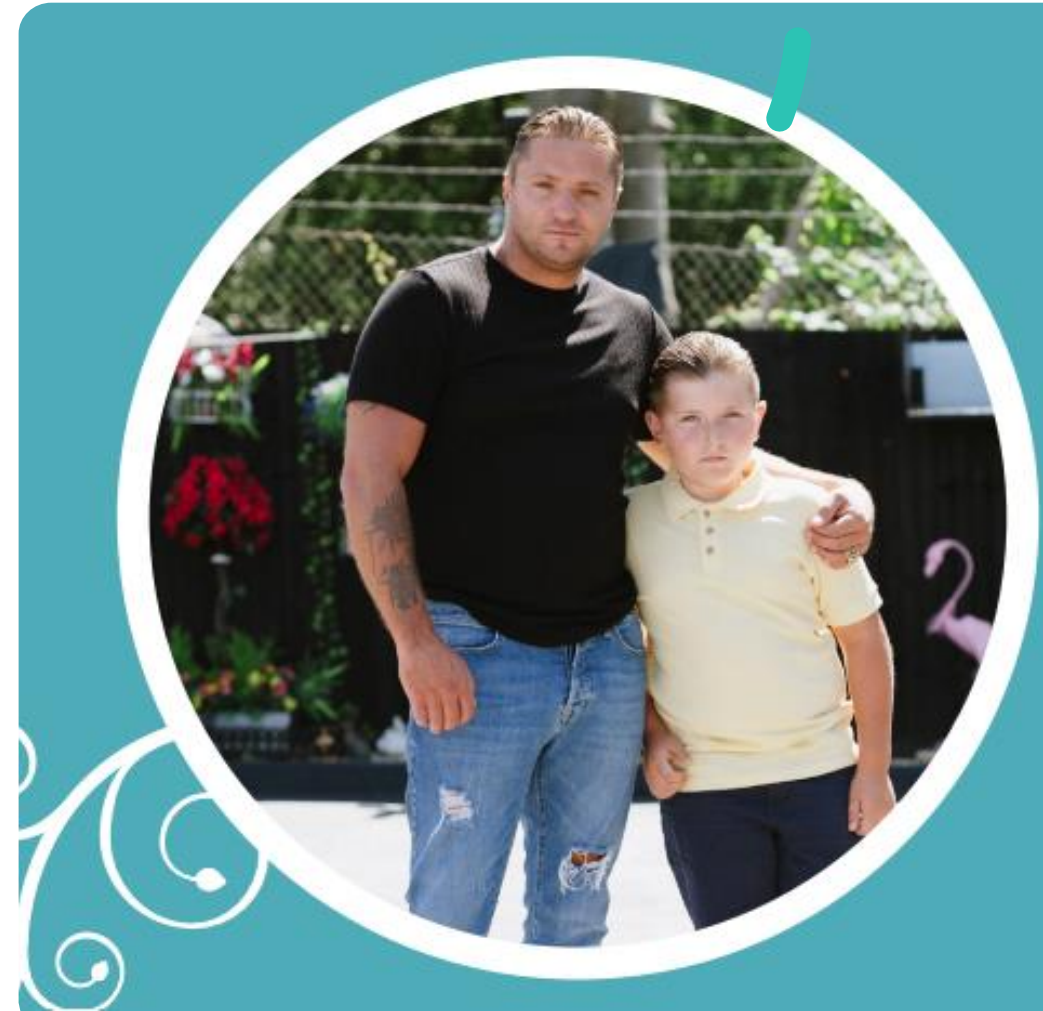
GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS more likely to experience chest pain, arthritis and respiratory problems



The phrase 'GRT or Traveller Communities' is used as a term to describe the multiple cultural and ethnic groups with diverse histories and customs.

The Travelling community includes Romani Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Welsh Travellers, Scottish Travellers, English Travellers, Roma, New Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, Circus People and Boat Dwellers.

Only estimated figures for the GRT community are available. There is thought to be 300,000 Gypsy and Traveller and 300-500,000 migrant Roma persons in the UK.



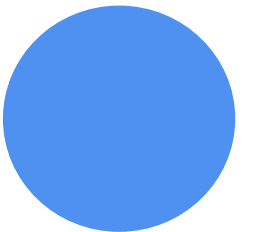


The GRT community experiences significant health inequalities and, as a result of their experiences of discrimination and eviction, may distrust settled people and services.

Meeting the multiple and complex needs of excluded groups requires a degree of flexibility and co-ordination across health and social care.

Due to longstanding experiences of discrimination, it can often take time to build trust with members of Gypsy and Traveller communities. Community members may not be aware a service is available, may not be sure if they will be welcome there or may not feel confident that it will be delivered in a culturally appropriate way.

Gypsy and Traveller
communities are estimated to
have life expectancies between
10 and 25 years shorter than
the general population.



Accessing services on the road

Life circumstances often results in costly patterns of service use by the Travelling community. For example multiple or frequent attendance and reliance on acute services such as accident and emergency (A&E).

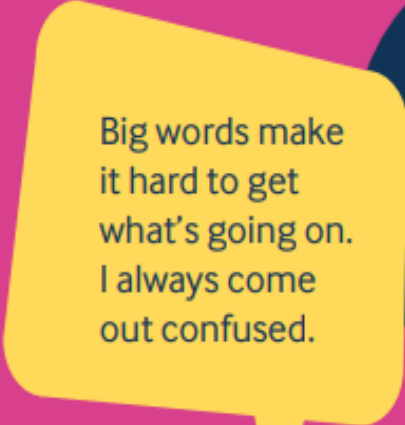
There are also problems with accessing healthcare and follow up care. If travelling further afield from their base in a local authority, people may miss appointments, or not receive letters if the address is not a secure one.



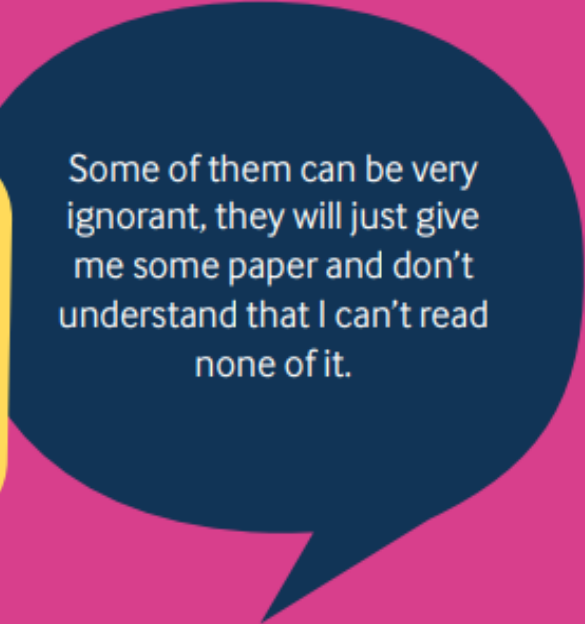
Communication

According to research we conducted, over one third of Gypsies and Travellers report that they find information from health professionals hard to understand.

Over 45% of our service users have low or no literacy so without support may find it difficult to read medical letters, get registered and understand information given by health professionals.



Big words make it hard to get what's going on. I always come out confused.



Some of them can be very ignorant, they will just give me some paper and don't understand that I can't read none of it.



Communication

In light of literacy and language challenges faced by some members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities but also in wider society, it's important that all health professionals are ready and able to explain health information in easy to understand English.

People might be embarrassed to say they struggle with reading and writing so instead of saying,

“Can you read?” you should ask,
“Can I help you with this form/letter?”




TOP TIP

You can use Voice Notes to communicate with patients with low or no literacy.



Supporting GRT Patients – top tips from the Margaret Clitherow Trust

- Think with the mindset of accommodation not confrontation
 - Understand that Travellers are a marginalised and discriminated against community
 - Ask what the patient/visitor needs – treat them with respect
 - Build trust – this may take some time.
 - Don't make assumptions.
 - If you're unsure of culture or traditions, ask people or patients who you have built trust with.
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Supporting GRT Patients – top tips from the Margaret Clitherow Trust

- Speak in language people can understand – plain language, no jargon. Be clear and concise.
- Think about the language being used – especially acronyms. Use reflecting back techniques to ensure they understand. As an example don't use the word 'suicide'. Use 'thinking of taking your own life' as an alternative.
- Be aware that 'mental health' is often discussed as 'nerves'. Note: Avoid using the words 'cancer' and 'possessed', if at all possible.





Supporting GRT Patients – top tips from the Margaret Clitherow Trust

- Gypsies and Travellers may have preferences around the gender of the person caring for them - Use a same-sex practitioner where possible.
- Gypsies and Travellers tend to maintain very high levels of cleanliness to prevent cross contamination. For example:
 - One bowl for washing up, one bowl for cleaning trailers etc. Another for washing the body, with some people keep another bowl for washing the face as well.
 - Gypsies and Travellers may worry about not being able to stick to such standards in a hospital or other accommodation.

Supporting the extended family involvement

The extended family is very important, especially during illness or crisis.

Most families care for their own family members.

Family members will want to stay with their loved one while they are in hospital, they will want to help to take care of them and will take meals into hospital if their loved one will not eat hospital food.

Home care for the terminally ill is often preferred to hospital care. Families will usually opt for home care for as long as the health condition will allow.



Supporting GRT Carers

The Gypsy and Traveller communities provide more unpaid care than any other ethnic group within the UK, and have the highest proportion of carers providing more than 50 hours of unpaid care per week.

Research in 2017 found that carers had a risk of suicide that was almost twice the national average.



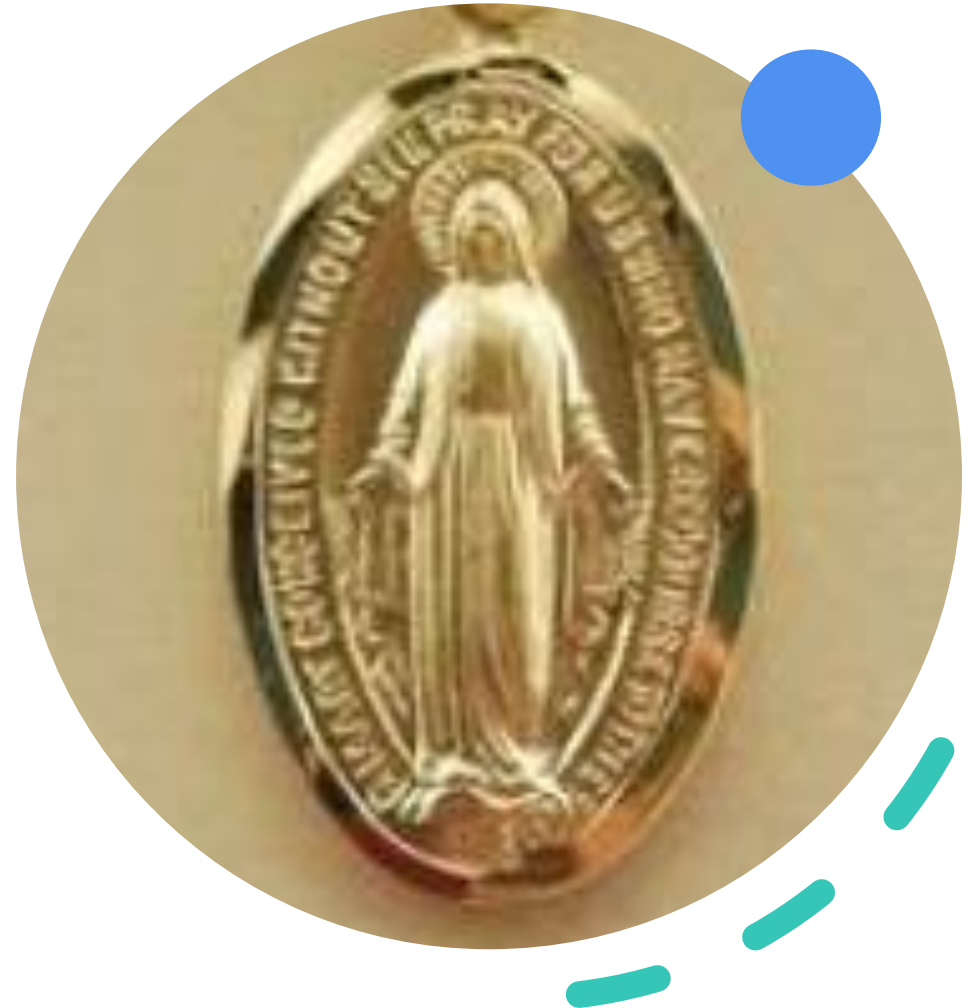
The role of faith

According to the 2011 Census, the majority of people who identified as Gypsy or Traveller identified were Christian (64 per cent).

Many members of Irish Traveller communities are Roman Catholic. This can be a source of source and hope during pain, suffering and bereavement.

Members of Roman Catholic communities may be interested in taking pilgrimages in the hope of healing.

Roman Catholics will usually call a priest to read the last rites and confession just before death.



Taking a preventative approach that is informed by a cultural and social awareness of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities can improve the health outcomes of community members, but can also offer cost savings to health services.

In a cost-benefit analysis of health pathways of Gypsies and Travellers, researchers found significant long-term cost savings for health and care services when services understood and responded to the social and cultural needs of patients from these communities.



Sources of information

- Friends, Families and Travellers Charity - <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/>
- Margaret Clitherow Trust – <http://margaretclitherow.org>
- The Traveller Movement - <https://travellermovement.org.uk/>