

Meeting the Requirements of Equality Legislation

# A Fairer NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde 2013 – 2016

Briefing Paper:  
Roma and Gypsy Travellers

June 2013

# Briefing Paper:

# Roma and Gypsy Travellers

## Demographics / Health needs

### Demographics

#### Roma

The Roma people have been identified as the most vulnerable and deprived ethnic group in Europe and are vulnerable to the combined impact of being migrant workers and an ethnic minority. They have experienced historic and, at times, systematic abuse across Europe. They are affected by discrimination in employment, housing, education and in accessing services.

#### Gypsy Travellers

Gypsy Travellers have been in Scotland for many centuries and still retain their own cultures and customs.

The term 'Gypsy Travellers' refers to distinct groups – such as Romany Gypsies, Scottish and Irish Travellers – who regard the travelling lifestyle as being part of their ethnic identity.

There are also other types of Traveller, such as Occupational Travellers and New Age Travellers – distinct groups who do not regard themselves as Gypsy Travellers.

It is estimated that there are anything between 1547 (official figures from the Scottish Government) and 15,000 Gypsy Travellers in Scotland. This discrepancy is due to the fact that Gypsy Travellers are not willing to identify themselves due to discrimination and stigma.

In Scotland today many Gypsy Travellers live on authorised council sites, while others live on private sites or roadside encampments. Access to health, education and social services can be difficult for Gypsy Travellers.

In 2008, the Scottish Government reported that there were local authority sites in Glasgow (10 pitches), West Dunbartonshire (20 pitches) and East Dunbartonshire (15 pitches) although not all were filled. In 2008 there were a small number of unauthorised sites (typically short term) in Glasgow, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire.

## Health issues

### Roma

Roma people face language and cultural barriers when accessing health services and research has shown that they have high levels of health problems as a result of poor access to services and overcrowding<sup>1</sup>.

### Gypsy Travellers

Some GP surgeries refuse to register Gypsy Travellers as patients and are reluctant to visit sites. As a result Gypsy Travellers sometimes have no alternative but to seek care through accident and emergency. Research among young Gypsy Travellers has shown that 84% feel that access to a doctor or dentist has not improved or has got worse since 2001. Health Improvement programmes are rarely designed to engage Gypsy Travellers.

Accommodation issues have a negative impact on Gypsy Travellers' health and English research indicates that they suffer from poorer health than other UK-resident English-speaking ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged white UK residents. They also have one of the highest maternal death rates in the UK<sup>2</sup>.

## Patient experience

A wide range of consultation with Roma people has taken place in Govanhill as part of the Equally Well test site and other initiatives.

The Corporate Inequalities Team has held focus groups with Roma people on equalities issues. They fed back that community knowledge of NHS services is poor in the Roma community and access to services and communication are an ongoing issue.

The use of emergency services is difficult due to communication/interpreting issues. Discrimination from the local population and from NHS staff was cited.

## Experience of discrimination

Roma and Gypsy Travellers experience discrimination in health, housing, education, work and from settled communities, due to negative stereotypes and prejudice. Many Gypsy Travellers face harassment and verbal and physical hostility from local communities.

## Resources to help

Resources are available on the Equalities in Health website –  
[http://www.equalitiesinhealth.org/public\\_html/gypsytravellers.html](http://www.equalitiesinhealth.org/public_html/gypsytravellers.html)

## Training available in house

NHS staff can access an E-learning module on Gypsy Travellers StaffNet –  
<http://www.staffnet.ggc.scot.nhs.uk/Human%20Resources/Learning%20and%20Education/E-Learning/Pages/E-Learning%20Homepage.aspx>

## Engagement

Engagement work with Gypsy Travellers may need to be carried out locally. The Corporate Inequalities Team can provide advice on engagement work on inequalities issues if required.

## Activity to address discrimination

### **Roma**

A wide range of activity has been carried out in Glasgow with the Roma community by Glasgow CHP South Sector. Work with health practitioners is planned for 2013-14 to assess their training needs.

### **Gypsy Travellers**

There are Gypsy Travellers sites in different areas in Greater Glasgow and Clyde. In integrated Community Health & Care Partnerships there is work taking place through housing, environment and economic development. Some areas are also exploring involvement with third party reporting centres in relation to hate crime as part of a police roll out. Fixed sites in East Dunbartonshire use local GP and other health services.

## References

1. Briefing on the Situation of the Roma Community in Govanhill, Glasgow (2007) Oxfam.
2. Gypsy Travellers in Scotland; a resource for the media (2010) EHRC.

## Briefing Papers – A Fairer NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

1. **Age**
2. **Asylum Seekers and Refugees**
3. **Bowel Screening**
4. **Gender Reassignment and Transgender**
5. **Homelessness**
6. **Inequalities Sensitive Practice**
7. **Learning Disability**
8. **Prisoners**
9. **Roma and Gypsy Travellers**
10. **Sensory Impairment**
11. **Sexual Orientation**