

Case Study 1: Improving Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community

Knowing Our Communities

Gypsies and Travellers are one of the largest distinct ethnic groups in York. Information from the 2011 Census showed York's 269 (although it is widely recognised that members of the community are very reluctant to self identify due to perceptions that they will be discriminated against) Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community had a higher proportion of females, children and young people and a lower proportion of older people than York's general population. York has three council run Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Census data reveals that Travellers reported their health as either 'Very Good' or 'Good' (75%) compared to the general population of York (84%) and England (81%). Similarly, double the proportion of White: Gypsy or Irish Travellers recognise their health as 'Bad' or 'Very Bad' (8%) compared to York generally (4%). National research indicates reduced life expectancy, higher rates of infant mortality and greater likelihood of ill health within the GRT community.

A lower proportion of York Travellers are economically active (42.9%) and in employment than nationally.

In 2003, less than a quarter of Gypsy and Traveller children obtained five GCSEs and A*- C grades, compared to a national average of over half. (*Equality and Human Rights Commission 'Simple Solutions for Living Together' 2009*). York figures for 2012 show that there were 5 Gypsy/Roma (no Irish Travellers) of which 60% achieved 5+ A*-C compared to the national equivalent figure of 80%.



Census_2011_York
_Gypsy_and_Iri...

During 2009 the Gypsy and Traveller Area Assessment (GTAA 2009) reported a shortfall in pitch numbers in the City of York of 36 up to 2015. It is recognised across the city that there is a high demand for pitches and the need for additional pitches is included in the Local Plan.

Leadership Partnership and Organisational Commitment

Following Feedback from our LGA Equality Framework for Local Government Inspection in 2011 we have taken a strategic overview to improve outcomes for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community and strengthened our engagement mechanisms with them.

In spring 2012 we commenced work in leading a city wide strategy, in partnership with agencies and the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. The purpose being to further explore the significant and complex issues relating to Gypsy Roma and Travellers communities across the City, and the steps required to improve the opportunities and outcomes for one of the cities biggest minority ethnic groups. Partners included in the development of the strategy were:

- City of York Council
- North Yorkshire Police
- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
- York Traveller's Trust
- IDAS (Independent Domestic Abuse Service)
- North Yorkshire Fire Service
- North Yorkshire and York Foundation Trust
- Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group
- National Farming Union
- The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community
- The wider community

The York Gypsy Roma and Traveller Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2013 and has six priorities.

- a health needs assessment will provide the evidence needed in order that healthcare resources are targeted most effectively;
- an increase in the availability of land for Travellers to develop sites and improve the condition of the city's three sites;
- increasing levels of literacy among adults to enable them to support their children at school, thus enabling higher levels of attainment amongst the children;



York_Gypsy_Rom York_Gypsy_and_
a_and_Traveller_... Traveller_strat..

Involving Communities

In developing the York Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategy and taking forward the above priorities there has been a wide range of engagement with this community.

York Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategy

A mix of engagement activity was undertaken to ensure that the Gypsy Roma and Traveller Community was able to influence the development of the strategy. The knowledge and experience of frontline staff working closely with the GRT community was seen as fundamental to engagement activity. Professionals who had taken the time to build relationships with the community enabled trust to be gained and support to be accessed. This required sensitivity to cultural attitudes and beliefs along with acknowledgement of the importance of family and traditions in shaping decision making and behaviour change.

Consultation with Gypsy and Travellers took place on all 3 Gypsy and Traveller Sites. Visits were made to roadside Travellers. Visits were made to Gypsy and Travellers living in houses who had self identified.

A focus group brought Gypsy and Travellers across the city to explore issues arising following consultation to be explored in greater detail.

To oversee the delivery of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategy Gypsy and Travellers are represented on the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategic Board. The format of the board changed from being formal to informal to ensure the Gypsy and Travellers attending felt more comfortable.

Gypsy and Traveller Health Needs Assessment

Little was known about the Health Needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community. Therefore work was undertaken to produce a Health Needs Assessment.

Engagement with front line staff working closely with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller Community informed the development of York's Gypsy and Traveller Health Needs Assessment.



As part of this process, a number of professionals were asked to feedback about what health concerns they have seen whilst working with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community locally in the past year. The aim of this was to help build up a local picture of complex issues. Engagement with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community took place via a survey about their own health and wellbeing needs (please see appendix 2). Frontline staff, who already have established relationships with the community, circulated the surveys and supported individuals to complete it where appropriate.

The findings were analysed as a whole and then separately by site or tenure, to reflect the three sites, those living in bricks and mortar (B&M) and roadside. 38 surveys were completed in total. Based on the 2011 Census figure of 156 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller adults aged 18 or older in York, this is potentially nearly a quarter of the population (24%). Overall, 33 (87%) surveys were completed by females and 5 (13%) by males. The majority of respondents were aged 25-44 (45%), with only 2 (5%) aged 65 or over. Although 80% of respondents were female, it is encouraging to have at least 10% males in the sample, as research shows they often do not engage in health related activities.

The low proportion of respondents aged over 65 was somewhat anticipated, as we know that the proportion of older adults in the community is relatively small. There may also be reluctance from older generations to engage with frontline staff and to participate in surveys and information gathering, plus lower levels of literacy may have been a barrier.

Findings revealed that:

- 97% were registered with a GP but usage of the Emergency Department was high at 45%.
- 79% were happy with the health services available to them,
- 89% did not feel they had problems accessing health services or information about health (92%).
- Over half of respondents reported good health but 20% reported very bad/bad health, five times greater than that of the general population(2011 census)
- Nearly 60% of respondents identified as having a long term condition
- 45% reported experience of mental health problems, predominantly stress and depression, either themselves or within the family;
- 21% of respondents had experienced the loss of a baby within the family

- 81% of eligible females had attended a smear test in the past
- Under 20% of eligible females had attended breast screening
- 79% of parents had children who had received their childhood immunisations

Fostering Good Relations.

In January 2014 York hosted a Gypsy and Traveller Conference 'Moving Forward Together' a partnership conference funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The conference brought together professionals and people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. Over 140 delegates from all over the UK attended a variety of sessions on subjects ranging from health to literacy.

The aim of the conference was to achieve a greater awareness of the barriers to communication in order to build stronger relationships with the Gypsy, Roma and Travelling community.

Those attending had the opportunity to discuss language barriers, myths, barriers to accessing health and education amongst other areas.

The conference was organised in partnership by:

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

York St John University

CYC Traveller and Ethnic Minority Support Service

York Travellers Trust

CYC Adult Family Learning

Citizens Advice Bureau

City of York Council Workforce Development Unit

Two of the keynote speakers were from the Traveller community, and community members also delivered several of the workshops. They were able to speak with the authority of first hand experience about the barriers Travellers can face in accessing services, and give examples of how these can be successfully addressed by professionals

The evaluations received from delegates show that the event was thought provoking, dispelled some myths and raised awareness of issues encountered by the Community. Many of the delegates stated that they will be working with and involving the community more in any future decision making and will be mindful of the barriers.

Responding to evaluations, plans are in place for a second conference in Jan 15.

This will provisionally focus on the cultures of different Traveller communities, e.g., English, Irish Travellers, and European Roma, responding to requests from evaluations from first conference. Community members will again be involved in the delivery of workshops and as keynote speakers.

A video of the first conference is available on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4dh99z_Mkk



Travellers moving
forward toge...



Travellers
conference agenda...



Travellers Session
- Evaluation...

Following on from this conference, for the first time over a 4 week period we have supported a public residency by the Le Bas Family 'Grace in thy Sight' to explore issues surrounding perceptions of 'the outsider' and 'otherness', migration and belonging, social inclusion and exclusion. The Le Bas family draw on their Roma Gypsy and Traveller heritage to engage audiences, using immersive installations, performance, and poetry, visual and digital art to encourage dialogue.



DLB Grace
flyer.pdf

Responsive Services

Health and Wellbeing

Building on the findings of the Health Needs Assessment further work has been commissioned through 'deep dive' work of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to research the social needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community to give a complete picture of the needs of this community. In addition work is underway to establish the feasibility of this community having a dedicated Health Visitor.

Improving Housing and Increasing Pitches on Gypsy and Traveller Sites

During 2009 the Gypsy and Traveller Area Assessment (GTAA 2009) reported a shortfall in pitch numbers in the City of York of 36 up to 2015.

To increase the number of pitches for the Gypsy and Traveller Community a successful bid to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) enabled the council to provide an additional six pitches at the Osbaldwick site and includes amenity space and grazing land. A 'Tethered Horse Protocol', outlining the Councils approach to managing horses in the City.

A 'Traveller's Choice' programme has been developed, in line with the 'Tenant's Choice Policy' for tenants living in houses to secure investment and plan ongoing improvement works on the sites in future years. This is based on current evidence of condition and will keep apace of any guidance and best practice nationally on standards expected on the sites.

Developing adult literacy classes for the Traveller Community

Traveller women living on one of the council run sites approached their Housing Support Worker to ask about literacy classes due to their concern that they didn't have the skills to support their children's school work.

A multi-agency meeting involving housing, the local children's centre and Family Learning Service was convened to explore a way forward.

A series of educational taster sessions were offered to this group of women. To encourage attendance lunch was provided. Following on from the taster session a beginner's literacy class was established at the local children centre. The venue was chosen because it was familiar to the women.

Attendance and retention for the first course were extremely high and the women keen to continue into a second year. For most the accreditation gained was the first they had ever achieved. In its third year, parallel classes were established into the Travellers Trust base, located on the other side of the city enabling a different group of Traveller women to attend.

Building on this, parenting classes have also been delivered.

The literacy classes have been very successful with many of the original group of women completing second and third year courses. Developing literacy skills has been life changing for the women, they are better able to support their children's learning and many have been able to move into employment.

Quote by one of the women '*I felt like I was laid on the floor. Then I felt like I was standing up and now I feel like I am just starting to take steps*'.

The women have published a book of their own stories and delivered a workshop at a Gypsy and Traveller conference to inform others how developing literacy skills has had such a positive impact. Most of the women attending literacy courses were between 25 - 45 years of age. Seven women received formal accreditation this year; qualifications obtained are:

Two x Entry 2 - Skills Units in Reading
One x Entry 1 - Full City & Guilds Award in Reading
One x Entry 1 - Skills Unit in Reading
Two x Entry 2 - Skills in Writing
One x Entry 3 - Skills Units in Writing

Reducing the numbers of Traveller Young People not in Employment, Education or Training

Historically many Traveller young people in York have chosen not to engage in learning or training beyond Year 11. Many young women decide to start a family at a young age, missing the opportunities further education might have provided. Many young men were choosing to follow their fathers into self employment.

The Traveller and Ethnic Minority Support Service (TEMSS) wanted all young Traveller people to have the opportunity to raise their aspirations through access to:

- careers information
- advice and guidance
- practical support and mentoring

TEMSS formed a partnership with the Youth Support Service which resulted in the permanent secondment of a Connexions Adviser to the TEMSS team. The Connexions Advisers brief is to work exclusively and intensively with young people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community in York. Delivery includes providing careers information, advice and guidance as well as support to help young people achieve a successful transition to post-16 education, employment and training.

There has been a significant reduction in Traveller young people NEETs.

The majority of Traveller young people in York now continue studying at a further education college. Some have continued to attend college for three years.

