Guidance produced by the NHS Employers organisation with support from the Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange
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1. Background

The definition of individual Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities and community members is complex. Some of the reasons for this include:
- Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are not one homogeneous group.
- The perceived identities of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are affected by myths and stereotypes and historical interaction between communities.
- Even within communities, some words are acceptable to some and not to others.

The term Gypsy, Roma and Traveller is a collective term which is being used to describe a wide variety of cultural and ethnic groups. The use of umbrella terminology is sometimes necessary shorthand for practitioners and policy, but should not be taken to suggest that all these communities have common cultures and heritage or face the same challenges. Therefore we must resist generalisations - positive or negative - and stress the focus on barriers to equality. Within collective terms that reference Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, a number of specific groups are taken to be included. It is worth giving some attention to detail as inclusion without clarity can lead to confusion and risks offence or misdirected resources. Some of the groups are described by their legal ethnic status. Others define themselves as a group without the legal implications of ethnicity. Ethnically defined groups include:

- Gypsies (English or Welsh Gypsies, together described as Romany Gypsies)
- Scottish Gypsy Travellers
- Irish Travellers
- Roma

Non-ethnically defined groups include:

- Showmen
- Circus People
- New Travellers
- Bargees

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month was established in 2008 in England. Every June, projects and events bring Gypsies, Travellers and Roma people together with people from other UK communities to share culture and understanding, celebrate achievement and to challenge negative images and stereotypes.
2. Key facts

Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are legally recognised as ethnic groups, and protected from discrimination by the Race Relations Act (1976, amended 2000) and the Human Rights Act (1998). In addition, they are protected in line with the Equality Act 2010. Scottish Gypsy Traveller ethnicity has been recently confirmed in Scottish case law. Irish Travellers, Scottish Gypsy Travellers and Romany Gypsies appear in UK records as far back as the 12th Century and earlier. The term Roma is also a collective term. It refers to a number of different European groups including Roma, Sinti, Manouche and others. The term Roma accurately distinguishes between European Roma and UK Romany Gypsies. Data about the number and circumstances of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma living in the UK can be difficult to find. Monitoring data gathered by agencies and services, has rarely included Gypsies, Travellers or Roma. These groups were not included in the ONS National Census until 2011. More accurate data will become available as the results of the 2011 Census are analysed and where agencies increasingly understand the need to monitor. Community members can understandably be very wary of what monitoring data is used for, which might lead to a margin of under reporting.

Estimates suggest that between 90,000 and 120,000 Gypsies and Travellers in the UK live in caravans with up to 360,000 living in conventional housing (Ivatts 2005). Updated research in 2010 from the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that 5,821 new pitches (a pitch is equivalent to one home) were needed across England.

Roma people have usually been living in housing for many generations in their country of origin and do not want site accommodation. Overcrowding in housing is a significant problem for Roma families. See Local government report on site provision for the Gypsy and Traveller community.

The achievement levels of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are the lowest of any of the BME communities and the gap is widening (http://www.natt.org.uk/). The Children’s Society reports that children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families often face discrimination by the media, bullying at school and rejection from their local communities.

Traditionally, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have worked self employed in trades linked to their culture. However, this is not always the case now and Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are employed in many roles and sectors. Useful research from Bucks New University outlines barriers to mainstream employment in the health and social care fields.
3. Key points for the NHS

Gypsies and Travellers are a small but significant group who continue to suffer from poor health and low life expectancy. Less is known about the health of Roma people in the UK, although some work around this is being done for joint strategic needs assessments (JSNAs). Unfortunately some inclusions in JSNA documents are not making clear the differences between groups and how that might impact on what is understood about health outcomes.

- *The health status of Gypsies and Travellers in England*, University of Sheffield, 2004
- *The health status of Roma*, Equality

A research study, published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2009, presents evidence of Gypsies’ and Travellers’ experiences of inequalities in a wide range of areas and has highlighted “the extent to which many of their experiences remain invisible and ignored within wider agendas” (Cemlyn *et al.* 2009, p.252). The report covers the experiences of Gypsies and Travellers in England, Scotland and Wales.

Neonatal and maternal health outcomes are of particular concern. Other issues such as high infant mortality rates, high maternal mortality rates, low child immunisation levels, mental health issues, substance misuse issues and diabetes are also seen to be prevalent in the Gypsies and Traveller community. (Parry G., Van Cleemput C. *et al.*, *The Health Status of Gypsies and Travellers in England*, The University of Sheffield, October 2004.)

Studies consistently show differences in life expectancy of over 10 per cent less than the general population. However, there is considerable ‘grey’ research that indicates that the general population may be living 50 per cent longer than Gypsies and Travellers.

Gypsies and Travellers are reported to be more likely to visit accident and emergency departments than a GP, because of a lack of trust of some GP surgeries. (Social Exclusion Task Force research (2009). Barriers to health care access were experienced, with several contributory causes, including reluctance of GPs to register Travellers or visit sites, practical problems of access while travelling, mismatch of expectations between Travellers and health staff, and attitudinal barriers. (*The Health Status of Gypsies and Travellers in England*).)

Other common challenges faced by Gypsies and Travellers include health professionals lacking the knowledge, confidence and expertise about the beliefs and culture of the Gypsies and Travellers communities. (Van Cleemput, P. *et al.* (2007) *Health-related beliefs and experiences of Gypsies and Travellers: a qualitative study*: Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.)
4. NHS good practice

Pacesetters Programme - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller core strand evaluation report
This report presents the findings from an evaluation of the core Gypsy and Traveller health strand of the Pacesetters Programme, a partnership between local communities who experience health inequalities, the NHS and the Department of Health, launched in March 2008. The Equality and Human Rights Group (EHRG) of DH worked with six strategic health authorities (SHAs) and 18 participating trusts to deliver equality and diversity improvements and innovations that aimed to enhance patient and public involvement in the design and delivery of services.

How to engage with Gypsies and Travellers as part of your work
This guide dispels myths and raises confidence for practitioners from health and other services in understanding who local Gypsy and Traveller people are and advises on best engagement practice. The guide is endorsed by Gypsies and Travellers and by the Inclusion Health Board.

Maternity care and Irish Travellers – A guide for NHS and Irish Travellers
The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain has produced this DVD for community members and maternal health practitioners.

Gypsies and Travellers – The truth – Leicestershire together
A fact sheet developed by Leicestershire & Rutland SHA to dispel the myths and provide a comprehensive information base to support better understanding.

Improving access to services for the Gypsy Traveller community
NHS Doncaster improved access to breast cancer screening among the Gypsy Traveller community. This was achieved by testing out appropriate communication methods, resulting in the production of a photo guide to breast screening.

Community engagement and the Gypsy Traveller community
Brighton and Hove PCT investigated the use of A&E by members of the Gypsy Traveller community.

Health needs assessment Gypsy Traveller community
NHS Bedfordshire undertook an assessment to deliver patient centred care to the Gypsy Traveller community.

Health trainers working with Gypsy and Traveller communities in Barnsley
Case study looking at how the use of health trainers and engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller community has paid dividends.
5. Further information

**BBC Kent - Romany Voices**

**The EU and Roma**

**Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange**

**The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain**

**Friends Families and Travellers**

**Equality**

**National Association of Teachers of Travellers + Other Professionals**