



Equality of Access to Services and Employment for Gypsy and Traveller Communities

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper is one of a suite of documents used as part of our Community Integrated Risk Management planning. A number of groups have been identified as potentially being at greater risk of fire or are potentially not accessing services such as Safe and Well visits. There are a range of equal access cases presented which require focus and additional resources to evaluate further whether this is the case. In the public consultation we will ask people in our communities to work with us to understand further any issues from their perspectives. We also want to work in partnership to re-design services or access pathways where needed.

1.2 There are a number of other separate documents relating to becoming an employer of choice for Gypsy and Traveller people. Issues are outlined in this document as a means of underlining the link between more engagement with communities for access to services and how that makes us a more attractive employer and vice versa.

2. Further understanding of Equal Access

2.1 As a public service focused on excellent service to our customers, we need to ensure equality of access to Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) for every person.

2.2 We know through our incident data that certain groups are more likely to have a fire and they include people who are living with Dementia, mobility issues, and mental health issues.

2.3 There are however other groups who aren't necessarily showing as being at higher risk of a fire but they may not be accessing our services such as safe and well visits or reporting fires because of other barriers which may be language, perceived prejudice and other societal factors. Equality of access means actively seeking to engage these groups who may be unaware or choosing not to access services from us and other public sector providers.

2.4 We need to work to reduce fire risk and other life risk which may need different approaches. Within our equality of access approach, we also need to consider:

- How we identify all the communities and customers we serve
- Consider how we may develop and improve the provision of goods, facilities, services and access to all those communities across a range of variables including ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age



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- Learn from and enhance good practice identified through equality monitoring
- Use the results of equality monitoring to mitigate any adverse impact of our goods, facilities, services and access on diverse communities, and on groups within communities
- Eliminate any unlawful discrimination identified through equality monitoring
- Promote good community relations
- Apply the rules of social marketing to make customers safer through changing unsafe behaviours

2.5 Over and above the data from other sources we have gained additional insights from people impact assessments and insights of these communities, charities and groups. This outlines the case for additional work needed for individuals across these communities.

3. Gypsy and Traveller Communities

3.1 The labels Gypsies and Travellers are catch all terms used to identify a wide range of people including Romany Gypsies, Scottish Travellers, Travellers of Irish heritage, show people (fairground travellers), circus people, new travellers, Bargees, Boat Dwellers and currently for monitoring purposes Roma. Although there is interaction amongst these differing communities and some similarities in nomadic lifestyle, each has its own cultural heritage and individual beliefs (Lane and Tribe, 2010).

3.2 The definition of Gypsies and Travellers under the Housing Act 2004:

‘Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependent’s educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, and all other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism and/or caravan dwelling. It is crucial to recognise that this ethnic and cultural identity does not simply evaporate when a household moves into conventional housing.

3.3 Due to the specific needs and locations of the Roma travelling community, a separate case has been prepared for this community and will not be included in this paper.

3.4 Important Note:



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There is still patchy evidence of fires in relation to this community and evidence presented is more related to socio-economic factors. (We have focus here on socio-economic factors but we must be mindful that ethnicity and race, and racism play a part as to why certain ethnic groups experience socio-economic disadvantages giving rise to the socio-economic factors identified. It is a circular and an interlinked process). The main evidence presented here is therefore an amalgam of work carried out by many organisations which suggests some Gypsy and Traveller Communities may be at more risk of fire because of prevailing social or economic history and current discrimination.

3.5 Consideration of these factors are presented here to form a case for our further commitment to getting informative data and evidence, recognising the reality of lived experience and needs assessment. At the heart of this work is a pledge to ensure we are tackling racism and discrimination in our workplace and society.

3.6 Why now? We are refreshing our commitment to anti-racism and equality of access as part of our next five-year customer safety strategy.

4. Geography and history

4.1 Data on Gypsy and Traveller communities is limited. The first census to include these communities as an ethnic category was in 2011. In total around 63,000 people in the UK identified themselves as members of these groups, of which 58,000 were living in England and Wales.

4.2 As with the introduction of equality monitoring for other groups, early data outputs should be viewed with caution since it is likely they're under-counted. Furthermore, in the Gypsy and Traveller communities there are frequently a lack of birth certificates and a duplication of names, meaning that there is very little reliable data about the size of the Gypsy and Traveller population.

4.3 That said, it is believed the South East region of England had both the largest number of Gypsies and Irish Travellers and the largest number per 10,000 people. It is also estimated there are at least 200,000 Travellers in the UK but estimates have ranged from 120,000 (the Traveller Movement) to 150,000 – 300,000 (the Council of Europe).

4.4 Recent discussion with the Friends, Families and Travellers Group (FFT) suggest a baseline generalised figure of 300,000 to be a more up to date and accurate figure - often thought as 0.5% of the population or a more relatable 1:200.

4.5 In a FFT (2020) report it was estimated by the charity, around 10,000 Gypsy and Traveller people were living roadside on unauthorised encampments. Around 70,000



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people were living on Gypsy or Traveller sites and around 15,000 people were living on canals and waterways.

4.6 The FFT state the population is generally evenly distributed across the country although there are areas to the East of England, South East and South West that have historical migratory relationships for work/business. This means geographically it is often a challenge because the group representation is small in terms of demographics.

4.7 From the information we have researched, we have identified equality of access issues pertinent to the Roma community specifically requires a separate equality of access document and therefore there is little reference to this group in this paper.

5. Gypsy and Traveller Communities contextual background

5.1 On 5 April 2019 the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee published the Tackling Inequalities Faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities report. Within this report it was found that:

- These communities have the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime meaning they were significantly worse off than the general population on almost every measure.
- The committee found there has been a persistent failure by national and local policymakers to tackle these inequalities in a sustained way, leading to services that are ill-equipped to support Gypsy and Traveller communities. In turn, this has led to a lack of trust in these public services.
- It is noted that domestic abuse and violence against women and girls in gypsy and traveller communities has been identified; there is a known correlation between fire and domestic abuse.

5.2 Gypsy and Traveller communities are present across the UK. Irish Travellers historically have lived in more urban areas (initially horse trading but later influxes were driven by manual work following the rebuilding of cities post WW2, as labouring was required for rebuilding and road construction). Gypsies historically bound to agriculture and seasonal work such as hop and fruit picking have lived in more rural locations.

5.3 On the basis of a population of approx. 300,000 it is believed approx. two thirds are in “settled” housing, private or Local Authority (LA) sites.

5.4 Evidence indicates that neighbours of Gypsies and Travellers struggle with Gypsy and Traveller social, employment or cultural practices such as: scrapping



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vehicles or metal, work vehicles parked outside houses, objections to families spending considerable time in their gardens or the street with groups of friends and children, the number and frequency of visitors, or even cooking outdoors around a fire – all activities which may be much treasured and regularly practised by Gypsies and Travellers who have moved into bricks and mortar accommodation (Greenfields, 2006; LGTU, 2001).

5.5 The total number of traveller caravans in England in July 2018 was 22,662, an increase of 29% since July 2008. In July 2018, there were 3,093 caravans on unauthorised sites. Of these, 2,149 caravans were on land owned by Travellers and 944 caravans were on land not owned by Travellers. The proportion of Traveller caravans on unauthorised sites has fallen from 22% in July 2008 to 14% in July 2018.

5.6 In part this is explained by the reduction of rights of way over the last five decades which has resulted in a significant decline in stopping places for communities (historically forty to fifty stopping places, reduced to a handful, sometimes one or even none). Local authorities have a duty to provide housing in the same way as non-travelling people. It is worthy of mention therefore, that pressure on local authorities to “move people on”, means that often local authority sites have been born out of a need to provide space to resolve a considered existing problem of people perceived to be in the wrong place and that the sites themselves are unfortunately often poorly located. A number of studies have raised concerns about environmental conditions on some Traveller sites, including: the poor location of sites (for example, under motorways, next to sewage works or on poor quality land); health hazards (such as contamination by vermin); decayed sewage and water fittings; poor-quality utility rooms; and failings in fire safety. The knock-on effect is impacting health and social equality.

5.7 It is also worthy of note, that many local authority sites were originally set up to move an extended family but high demand out-stripping availability means, the addition of other groups. This of course has the capacity to create further difficulties with families both exposing and hiding difficulties exacerbated by isolation and containment.

5.8 The remaining 100,000 struggle as a result of fragmented access routes; homelessness is a significant issue for travelling people. When forced to stop travelling due to existing ill health, they often find the change mentally challenging, resulting in high levels of poor mental health.

5.9 Travelling people being forced to stop also creates conflict with the settled population. Presently local authorities have a duty to the welfare of the travelling



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5.10 people and the protection of the land. This is often a tick for welfare such as the safe delivery of a baby for example, balanced against a requirement for eviction from the land. Following Covid-19, progressive local authorities such as Leeds and Bristol, provide good examples of implementing effective negotiated stopping approaches with the Traveller and Gypsy communities. There is a push for better services.

5.11 In the context of Boating; most travelling communities are self-sufficient and some are continual cruisers. However, the popularity of boating, conservation and tourism have led to similar challenges in terms of mooring and a testing relationship with the Waterways Trust, the impact of which is having a similar effect to that of stopping points in terms of health and social outcomes.

5.12 The difficulties experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities in England Scotland and Wales are long standing and seemingly intractable. While some progress has been made i.e. in relation to site standards and the production of a model tenancy agreement in Scotland and specific guidance on site safety including fire safety advice for Local Authorities in Wales, much more needs to be done if we are to succeed in improving outcomes for these marginalised communities in terms of our service provisions.

5.13 Research and initial engagement with this community suggests inequality, risk behaviour and an inherent lack of engagement with “authoritative” public sector organisations.

5.14 Generally speaking, little work has been explored at unregulated camps. Similarly, seasonal agricultural work often lends itself to travellers and we could also explore the opportunities this provides.

5.15 In terms of waterways, determining where you are located can be a significant factor impacting our service delivery. Many use bridges and bridge numbers, but this is not universal knowledge.

6. Living conditions

6.1 This community mainly lives on Council-run sites, tolerated/permissive sites or privately owned land and do not tend to travel that much. The showmen, those who live and work at fairs, are the exception as they are frequently travelling.

6.2 Irish Travellers are often only on the mainland for certain periods as they may own land in Ireland. In those periods, they do move around stopping several weeks at a time in fields, car parks and private land without permission.



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6.3 The issue of toilets, sanitation and refuse collection was described as non-existent for families living on roadside camps. Difficulties around safety are also experienced by those living on roadside camps and on Traveller sites, given the communal and confined nature of nomadic living. A lot of (social) support available to those living in a fixed location, is inaccessible to those with no fixed address (registering with a GP surgery, dental surgery, school etc.), adversely impacting daily life, health conditions and general wellbeing.

6.4 On many council owned sites, trailers are council owned and people rent these. It is likely that these sites and trailers conform to rules around fire safety, but it cannot be guaranteed. It is a completely different situation on tolerated sites and privately owned land, much so on the latter, in that measures to prevent fire spread, prevent fire from occurring or reducing the loss of life are unlikely to be present. Of the various groups within this community, the Show people are most likely to live in very low standard accommodation.

7. Health

7.1 A number of studies (including a House of Commons Library briefing paper number 08083* - 9 May 2019) identified the poor health experiences of Gypsy and Traveller groups compared with the general population. These included higher rates of mortality, morbidity and long-term health conditions, low child immunisation levels, and a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression.

7.2 The age profile of Gypsy/Travellers is much younger when compared to the population as a whole. Only 28% of Gypsy/Travellers were aged 45 or over compared to 44% of the population as a whole, and only 4% were aged 70 or over compared to 12% of the population as a whole.

7.3 Gypsy and Traveller communities have lower levels of overall health and wellbeing and have less access to services providing health care than do other communities (Cemlyn, Greenfields, Burnet, Matthews, & Whitwell, 2009)

7.4 A range of factors, such as poor accommodation, discrimination, poor health literacy, and a lack of cultural awareness and understanding by health professionals of Gypsy and Traveller health and social needs, are thought to create barriers to accessing healthcare.

7.5 Given over half of economically inactive Gypsies and Irish Travellers were long term-sick or disabled, the National Inclusion Health Board has called for more joined up working by local authorities, the NHS and health agencies, and other services to improve the health outcomes of Gypsies and Travellers. It also emphasised the



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importance of building community cohesion in order to develop a healthy and sustainable environment for the Traveller community.

7.6 As a result of pre-existing health inequalities, combined with poverty, overcrowding and historic issues related to accommodation, Gypsy and Traveller communities are at higher risk of being infected by COVID-19. Difficulties have also been experienced by those living on roadside camps and on Traveller sites for those who need to self-isolate, especially those who are extremely vulnerable and needed to shield, given the communal and confined nature of nomadic living.

7.7 Support offered to individuals to shield is inaccessible to those with no fixed address and does not include essentials required for survival in nomadic households, adversely impacting daily life, health conditions and general wellbeing. Obtaining access to appointments whether medical or other was also not possible for those with no Wi-Fi.

8. Education

8.1 Children from Gypsy and Traveller communities attain and progress significantly below the national average throughout compulsory education.

8.2 Research suggests that the education gap has widened further for Gypsy and Traveller pupils during the COVID-19 pandemic and is exacerbated due to the families' inability to access online resources, provide a suitable educational environment for their children or simply do not have access to laptops or other digital devices.

8.3 A lack of confidence in the use of digital communication and limited digital capability is significant in relation to modern access to information. It is essential that 'alternative access routes' are made more readily available for people with low literacy (including computer skills), low numeracy and limited access to internet.

8.4 Obtaining access to appointments whether medical or other was not possible for those with no Wi-Fi.

8.5 Accessing information and keeping up to date on public health and safety messages is a challenge for some Gypsy and Traveller people. Important information is difficult for those who have limited literacy skills and digital exclusion is a common barrier.

8.6 Some Gypsy and Traveller people rely solely on information they see on social media and there is a risk some information is fake or offers incorrect advice. Even when GRT organisations are doing their best to produce targeted and legitimate information, false news and information can spread fast.



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8.7 Traveller-specific awareness raising campaigns or materials being distributed by local authorities is inconsistent across the country and information coming from central government is limited.

8.8 Some NGOs, charities and Councils have created specialist resources, but this is unlikely to reach the entire community. Given the paucity of information, Travellers are highly susceptible to hoax theories, false news and misinformation.

8.9 Boat Dwellers have also raised concerns about the lack of information they receive, especially in areas where they are unable to connect to the internet. With most canals running through rural areas, poor connection is still common despite internet connection improving tremendously in the recent decade in most major cities and urban areas. Boat Dwellers often rely on physical interaction with other people, but this type of engagement is limited at certain times. The COVID-19 lockdown is a good example.

9. Employment

9.1 These communities also face barriers in accessing employment with factors including deprivation, social invisibility, stigma and stereotyping all being contributory factors. Half of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have experienced discrimination in the workplace. Examples of this discrimination ranged from being dismissed due to the individual's traveller heritage once it became known to their employer to colleagues refusing to work with them because of their ethnicity/traveller status.

10. Hate Crime and Engagement

10.1 Despite broader shifts within the UK on how minority communities are presented, racism against Gypsy and Traveller communities remains entrenched, with a 2017 report by the Traveller Movement describing it as 'the last acceptable racism'. This research found that almost 77 per cent of surveyed Travellers had been the targets of hate speech (or incidents) or hate crime, including discrimination in education and employment, with many Gypsy and Traveller people choosing to hide their ethnicity as a result of the abuse they experience.

10.2 It is important to note that research and initial engagement with this community suggests inequality. Risk behaviour has been identified and there is an inherent lack of engagement with "authoritative" public sector organisations, due to historic mistrust and discrimination experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities.

10.3 This is important because suspicious views held by Gypsy and Travellers of authorities impacts access to services, Working with Police, FRS may be able to offer places of sanctuary to people who report these crimes. It has been identified



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that regular engagement to keep fostering and building on established relationships is essential.

10.4 Various GRT charities have raised their concerns about Gypsy and Traveller communities being mistreated during lockdown. Examples provided include local authorities still having powers to evict Gypsy and Traveller communities and some continue to utilise these powers despite the potential risk of spreading COVID-19. These situations will surely do very little to building any rapport and trust with Gypsy and Traveller communities.

10.5 Although it should be acknowledged that some Gypsy and Traveller community groups have poor relationships with the police and other public sector organisations, so there is huge potential for local and regional equality charities to work with Gypsy and Traveller communities to act as a medium and provide the relevant support, information and advice.

11. Fire and Other incident risks for Gypsy and Traveller Communities - Risk of Fire

11.1 The communities' privately owned land is more likely to be outside urban areas and, therefore, more likely to be within an area with longer response times.

11.2 There are various ignition sources, electrical/gas/solid fuel, which are particular risks among people from this community. It appears the younger generation are in the habit of building and installing their own wood burners/stoves (which may not be regulation compliant) with chimneys being installed without the proper fire resistant material to separate the hot chimney from the trailer roof.

11.3 The state of maintenance, particularly of gas supply systems, may not be a priority, resulting in a risk of non-compliant (and thus unsafe) gas supplies to usually small, confined spaces. Besides the explosion risk, it is also the risk of death by gas inhalation.

11.4 Limited amounts of sockets in trailers, the increased use of electrical appliances, alongside DIY alterations and low maintenance means the possibility of unsafe electrics and over use of electrical extension leads.

11.5 These specific risks are recognised and addressed in the specific Fire Safety Leaflet for Gypsies & Travellers published in 2015:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/475182/Fire-Safety-for-Gypsies-and-Travellers.pdf

11.6 Due to the building material of trailers, when a fire develops, it is likely to engulf the entire property within a matter of minutes. This means that the occupant loses all their belongings. On private sites (or permitted ones) the owner cannot insure their property, so when it is lost, they literally have nothing left.



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11.7 There are customs within the communities after the occupant has died to burn the occupier's trailer. As with swailing (controlled burning of moorland), this should be a controlled burning and these sorts of 'incidents' may never be reported through 999 and therefore, it is likely data on this is lacking. More information on cultural practice is available here. http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Cemetery-Culture-and-Traditions_v2.pdf

11.8 In the event of an accidental fire, it may be unlikely that the Service will be able to prevent loss of the trailer. Even if FRS staff arrive within the response time, any delayed response can allow excessive fire spread to other trailers (with similar devastating effects) and or for other materials, like gas bottles, to become (if not already) involved in the fire with subsequent need for full evacuation for a significant period of time.

11.9 On some sites, the legally required space of 6 metres between trailers is maintained rigorously, however outbuildings or general rubbish can appear in that space, negating the fire spread measures. All but a few members of Gypsy and Traveller communities use gas bottles for cooking and/or heating, increasing the risk of spread if fire was to break out.

11.10 Sites where planning permission has been requested or will be requested, are likely to have some means of fighting fire, like a fire hose or fire extinguishers. However, the functional order of this equipment cannot be relied upon. Illegal sites are unlikely to have water supply either for residents or firefighting.

11.11 Some Council owned sites, and possibly other sites (extent unknown), have a height restriction entry bar. This bar potentially prevents a fire appliance from entering. If all is well, the Service has the codes. This does still however consume valuable time. Without the code, longer hoses will be required and equipment may need to be carried longer distances, also impacting the response time.

12. Customer segmentation across the Gypsy and Traveller Communities to improve equality of access to employment and services

Identified segments in our Gypsy and Traveller Priority Group

12.1 *'An investigation into accidental fatal fires in the South West of England Report'* (2013-17) identified 8 characteristics which predict fire death; mental health issues, alcohol use, drug use, smoking, poor housekeeping, limited mobility, living alone and low income. The following table highlights specific risks within these communities relating to these factors;

12.2 Mental Health

12.3 In its December 2017 update the EHRC reported that: *'Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were found to suffer poorer mental health than the rest of the population in the UK and they were also*



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more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression. It is highly likely that mental health problems within Gypsy and Traveller communities will intensify while self-isolating and socially distancing during Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions.

12.4 Some of the reasons negatively affecting Gypsies and Travellers mental health are:

- not being able to mourn their loved ones properly;
- having to home school their children without access to digital resources and without appropriate skills (low literacy and numeracy levels). 'One Call Away' (Traveller mental health and suicide assistance phone line) have had a small increase in people calling.
- There is a great deal of anxiety in Traveller communities in relation to Covid-19 transmission, but also misinformation in relation to its elimination. There is a real risk of poisoning, especially among those with lower levels of literacy.
- A lot of older Travellers are very worried for their physical health, especially those site-based Travellers who cannot easily self-isolate. Approximately 25% of Gypsies and Travellers live on sites, while the remainder live in bricks and mortar accommodation (ONS, 2014; WEC, 2019).

12.5 In 2017, research conducted by the Traveller Movement found discrimination experienced by 214 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community members across the UK. They found that 91% of respondents had experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity, and 30% had experienced discrimination in relation to accessing health care. The experience of discrimination or the perception of discrimination, *'is likely to lower a sense of efficacy and self-esteem and this is damaging to mental health and wellbeing'*.

13. Alcohol & drug use

13.1 The findings of the Traveller Movement study (2017) mirror results from existing studies regarding feelings of pride and shame being a barrier to accessing services as well as fear of discrimination.

13.2 It is clear from the findings that some Gypsies and Travellers do have drug or alcohol problems, or both, in their communities and that they do not know where they can go for help. There were two overarching themes from the responses to all the questions asked; 'shame' in admitting they had a problem and services not understanding their culture. Many suggested that people from their own community who understand them, working in services would be helpful. (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/jpoc.21083>)

13.3 There are no official statistics on substance abuse among Gypsy and Traveller communities (Papadopoulos & Lay, 2007). However, there is a wealth of anecdotal evidence that it is a growing problem (Parry et al., 2004). Exclusion and discrimination against Gypsy and Traveller communities may be linked to a growing trend of substance abuse within such communities, with alcohol likely being the biggest problem (Perry et al, 2004). The literature suggests Gypsy and Traveller communities do not access health care services due to poor prior experiences of these services. Gypsy and Traveller communities also express concerns that health care staff members often lack understanding of their culture. There are high levels of anxiety, depression, and self-destructive behaviour in these communities (e.g. suicide and substance abuse) (Cemlyn et al., 2009).



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However, where health care staff are well informed and demonstrate understanding of Gypsy and Traveller culture, their services are highly valued by these communities (Van Cleemput, 2009).

13.4 There are issues around drug addiction, mainly amongst the new/young travellers, both in selling and using drugs. The using may lead to irresponsible behaviour in relation to preventing fires occurring, the selling and involvement in criminal activity (and the fall out within gangs) may lead to arson incidents.

13.5 Health needs assessments in Twiselton and Huntington (2009) found that smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug abuse were particular issues within these communities, particularly for young men.

13.6 Qualitative studies in Ireland in recent years show excessive alcohol use in Traveller men and unmarried Traveller women (Van Hout, 2011). Research has also shown worrying trends in illicit drug use among Traveller women in the form of prescribed medications, such as antidepressants (Fountain, 2006; Van Hout, 2009a, 2009b).

14. Smoking

14.1 A study on smoking behaviour in Roma gypsies¹ revealed that smoking was a strong part of the cultural, ethnic and individual identity of the Roma. Even children smoked. Doctor's advice to quit smoking was usually not followed and the attempts to quit were usually unsuccessful. Difficult financial situation was never mentioned as a possible motive to quit. Roma held a tenacious belief that the harmful effects of smoking were in the hands of destiny and did not associate the smoking-related illness with the habit.

14.2 No such research appears to be available for other travelling communities. However, smoking cessation services are generally not well accessed by travelling communities for a variety of reasons².

1 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2080393/>

2 <http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/SmokeFreeProjectFinal-Report-1-11.pdf>

15. Poor housekeeping

15.1 Gypsies and Travellers are extremely proud people however, those who live on sites can be faced with overcrowding, having to share kitchens, bathrooms and toilets. Waste collection is likely to be non-existent on temporary and illegal sites.

15.2 Gypsies and Travellers who are homeless, will face the constant threat of eviction, poor living conditions at the side of the road without access to clean water or electricity and are thus the most vulnerable community members.

15.3 Around 3000 families living on unauthorised encampments and developments have historic issues with accessing water and sanitation. This has been exacerbated by events related to coronavirus, such as leisure centres and water points closing, making it harder or impossible in some cases to access.

14. Limited mobility



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14.1 Key issues in Bath & North East Somerset identified and tackled by Travelling Community Support are outlined below: <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/your-council-and-democracy/local-research-and-statistics/wiki/travellers-and-gypsy>.

15. Living alone

15.1 This may occur less in Gypsy and Traveller communities, except possibly boating communities, due to the family structure and ties.

16. Low income

16.1 Gypsy and Traveller communities face financial barriers and experience poor access to income support. Many Travellers are self-employed and unable to work at this time.

16.2 Many do not know the self-employment scheme will apply to them. It is also estimated that Travellers perform the highest amount of unpaid caring work of any ethnic group (ONS, 2014), but are often unaware of their rights and entitlements.

16.3 Members of travelling communities are more likely to have seasonal and/or low paid work.

17. Health and wellbeing issues

- Mental Health Issues, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- Mobility problems.

18. Economic issues

- Lack of money to pay for counselling.
- Difficulties navigating the benefits system, including the Disability Living Allowance.
- Long periods without any income due to mistakes and/or missed benefits appointments.
- Support with grants for white goods.
- Non-payment of rent, council tax and credit union loans.

19. Accommodation issues

- Threat of eviction and homelessness.

20. Issue with access to services

- Poor literacy.
- Support needed with GP registration.
- Support required for accessing drug and alcohol services.
- Support needed with accessing mental health groups and counselling.
- Signposting required for domestic abuse survivors.
- Signposting needed for debt and money management.
- Support needed for accessing school places, including access to special needs schools.

21. Issues experienced by live aboard boaters

- The Canal and River Trust changed its guidelines for continuous cruisers without a home mooring and has started to issue short term licences as a penalty for boaters non-compliant with the terms of these new guidelines.



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- Vulnerable boaters have found themselves without licences and feeling hounded by CRT enforcement.
- Injuries affecting mobility, leading to severe depression and isolation/loneliness.
- Confusion with benefits, leading to increased stress and poor health.
- Risk of homelessness.
- The new CRT guidelines call for a specified range of travel which means live aboard boaters must cruise much further than before.
- Boat fires.

22. Data limitations

22.1 The National Fire statistics, which are most likely to capture data from these communities indicating specific issues, are in tables:

23. Fire Statistics Table 0205a: Dwelling fires attended by fire and rescue services in England, by dwelling type and fire and rescue authority.

23.1 Incidents within this community are most likely to be captured in the 'other dwelling' category which includes: caravan/mobile home (permanent dwelling), castle, houseboat (permanent dwelling), other dwelling, self contained sheltered housing, stately home and tenement building. This is a very wide category, including anything from casual camper, pensioners living on canal boats and lords and ladies, which does not allow for particular issues with the Gypsy and Travelling communities to become apparent. The available data sets, therefore do not allow for a business case to be developed around the particular fire (& RTC) issues these communities face and neither does it give an insight to FRSs what prevention work and targeted response is thus required.

24. Fire Statistics Table 0503b: Non-fatal casualties by age, gender and type of location, England.

24.1 Data for the Gypsy & Travelling communities is captured in the Dwellings category – 'other/unspecified' which includes: caravan/mobile home, houseboat and other dwelling. Similar issues as in the previous data table arise in that it is not specific enough to identify group needs.

25. Fire Statistics Table 0703: Smoke alarm failures in dwelling fires by type of alarm, England

25.1 If Gypsy and Travelling communities' members have a fire alarm at all, it is likely to be battery operated. This may be different in mobile homes on county run sites. Nearly twice as many (38%) of battery operated smoke alarms had failed to operate at incidents in 2018/19, against mains powered (21%). This could imply a disproportionate impact.



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25.2 Carbon monoxide poisoning is a serious issue amongst this community. Anecdotal stories report regular lives saved due to carbon monoxide (CO) detectors, distributed by Devon & Somerset FRS through a community contact, being activated. <http://www.dsfire.gov.uk/news/newsdesk/PressReleaseArticle.cfm?ReleaseID=1239&siteCategoryId=3&T1ID=26&T2ID=36>

25.3 None of these would be captured in data as they wouldn't for other communities either. There are no statistics on deaths within this community relating to CO poisoning. The lack of data is highlighted in the CO enquiry.

25.4 The current capturing of (ethnic background) data for fires, and especially house fires, the data is better than for rescues and RTCs. However it depends, if a household self-evacuate, aren't injured and are waiting outside when the FRS turn up then not that much information will be collected about them (other than household occupancy). As a rule of thumb, if someone is rescued and/or injured we are more likely to capture age and ethnicity, and we collect lots of information about fatalities in fires.

26. Safeguarding

26.1 The level of domestic abuse has increased within Gypsy and Traveller communities during Covid-19 lockdown. This is extremely dangerous for Gypsy and Traveller women in particular, who even in normal times are faced with numerous barriers in accessing help and support.

26.2 Domestic abuse services are not always aware of the specific dangers and cultural issues of Gypsy and Traveller women and therefore not able or willing to support them.

26.3 The close-knit nature of their families and communities means that the women have to be extra careful when seeking help from family members as their loyalties might be with their husband. Furthermore, the historical discrimination experienced by these communities and therefore distrust towards social services and the police means that many will not contact these authorities in fear of losing their children.

26.4 There is some anecdotal evidence (see Channel 4 Dispatches: the Truth about Traveller Crime) that the police and the ambulance service will not always respond to calls to some Gypsy and Traveller sites because they perceive them to be too dangerous to enter. The victims of abuse on those sites are then left to their abusers' mercy. Some effort must be made to ensure these people are included in any new responses and they are not simply forgotten.

26.5 Gypsy and Traveller charities have claimed the government should do more to support organisations that provide support for domestic abuse survivors and service providers to these communities. This includes funding organisation's such as the



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Traveller Movement and Solace Women's Aid who already have designated services.

26.6 Safeguarding considerations should be high on the list of priorities when FRS staff visit sites either in a prevention or response capacity.

27. Recruitment

27.1 Less than a quarter of Gypsy and Traveller children obtained five GCSEs and A*-C grades, compared to a national average of over half. This community consistently has the lowest attainment in all school groups and this needs to be considered.

27.2 This has an adverse impact on recruitment of members from these communities because many FRSs require qualifications on entry.

27.3 Further adverse impacts may be present in the recruitment process(es), but if (any) members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities engage with the process, their numbers are normally so small that calculating adverse impact at any of the recruitment stages will be nigh on impossible.

28. Conclusion

28.1 We conclude Gypsy and Travellers should not be considered a monolithic group, but communities, ethnically and non-ethnically based, for whom a travelling lifestyle is part of their identity and although there will be similarities there is also divergent needs relating to the contextual environments. For example, show people will have safety issues in respect of their equipment yards, boaters on canals, waterway use and water safety.

28.2 We would wish to highlight the fact the The Race Disparity Audit also established that although the importance of having data, both for policy-making and resource allocation, is clear, most public bodies do not provide the option for Gypsy and Traveller people to disclose their ethnicity across their function. Therefore, its essential FRS's secure a good understanding of localised diversity.

28.3 Distribution of information within these communities is likely to be through trusted gatekeepers. Visibility and continuity from FRS's is expected, although the community will move. This needs to be supported with better engagement on the ground as it is perceived by the community that front line staff are reluctant (anxious) to go on sites.

28.4 There is a lack of Fire Service data specifically relating to the Gypsy and Traveller communities to identify the risks and impact of fire and road traffic incidents. This business case relies on relating the known fire death factors to the living circumstances within these communities.



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29. Actions

29.1 Improving Engagement

29.2 Health, social and economic inequalities impact the average age of this group. Life expectancy for Gypsy and Traveller men and women is 10 years lower than the national average. Regrettably intelligence suggests this is a minority group often present with the same type of safety and health needs, despite ongoing engagement. All the time this situation exists they remain a high-risk group.

29.3 There is a relationship between visibility in the community and trust, so this requires FRSs to ensure sustainable ongoing activity.

Actions:	<p>29.4 It is thought that women in the community are largely responsible for the health issues of the family.</p> <p>29.5 Services need to establish if there is a high turnover of residents on sites as this may mean that any programme of activity must be longer term as Gypsy and Travellers rotate the sites they visit.</p> <p>29.6 Due to the suspicious views held by gypsy and travellers of authorities, regular engagement is needed to keep fostering and building on established relationships.</p> <p>29.7 In the longer term there is scope to develop gypsy and traveller champions from within the sector/services. Seeking specific Gypsy and Traveller groups' representation for consultation on design of services and IRMP.</p> <p>29.8 Working with partner agencies or in the case of county council FRS's in which the authority may have outreach or liaison workers, utilise the opportunity to gain useful insight and expertise.</p> <p>29.9 Services would benefit from ensuring that staff working with Gypsy and Traveller communities are culturally aware of their way of life. This would most likely require bespoke training and where possible this should be delivered by local Gypsy and Traveller communities. Support for services can be sourced from charities such as Friends, Families and Travellers and through partner agency Gypsy and Traveller liaison teams.</p> <p>29.10 Links to local and national services need to be made to ascertain other areas of good practice and to facilitate dialogue across regions.</p> <p>29.11 Services need to be aware that a range of communications are required and traditional methods used by FRS's may not always be effective; engagement and consultation is key.</p>
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	<p>29.12 The communities have significant use of social media (Facebook (primarily) and Instagram (younger people) and Twitter (less) - Travellers Times has a subscription of 15,000 and Friends, Families and Travellers have 10,000. Although well used, this is a fragile communications infrastructure, as it is often dependent on free Wi-Fi.</p> <p>29.13 It is essential FRS's monitor equality outcomes for Gypsy and Traveller communities and seek qualitative evidence to support how to bespoke future services.</p> <p>29.14 There is a Gypsy and Traveller Police Association and so it would be useful to see collaboration with FRSs in supporting people of travelling heritage to apply for employment through explicit leadership, inclusion in language and approach.</p>
<p>30. Hate crime is experienced across the Gypsy and Traveller communities and domestic violence is reported to be in these communities</p>	
<p>Actions:</p>	<p>30.1 Working with partner agencies to identify if FRS may be able to offer places of sanctuary to people who report these crimes.</p> <p>30.2 Services need to be accessible, neutral and perceived as completely confidential as fear of discrimination is a recurrent theme.</p>
<p>31. Working for the FRS</p>	
	<p>31.1 There is little association by Gypsy and Traveller people that working for the fire service is something that they could do due to a lack of knowledge, understanding and access, including imagery of themselves within the service. A factor to accessibility is the educational attainment of the communities, as less than a quarter of Gypsy and Traveller children obtained five GCSEs and A*-C grades, compared to a national average of over half.</p>
<p>Actions:</p>	<p>31.2 As mentioned, sites may be on the outskirts of town, providing opportunity for on-call/rural recruitment. Services need to maintain a highly visible and sustained approach to inclusion of these communities such as providing access opportunities, visibility at sites, have-a-go-days and celebrating Gypsy and Traveller specific events (history month) in our workplaces</p> <p>31.3 Services may wish to target recruitment activity towards these communities as part of recruitment for all posts.</p> <p>31.4 Services may wish to build long term trust with the Gypsy and Traveller communities, using distinct and targeted messages as part of their educational offer and in other areas such as road safety.</p>



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	<p>31.5 Although, not applying to all, this community have consistently the lowest attainment in all school groups and challenges with WIFI. This needs to be considered in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services' use of social media campaigns• Recruitment messages• Gypsy and Traveller events• Celebrating Gypsy/Roma/Traveller history month and beyond to signal an open culture for all• Offer our stations to develop Gypsy and Traveller specific engagement opportunities
<p>32. Response Considerations</p> <p>32.1 It is believed many sites are locked and/or have limited access to water. Access to emergency services and water access must be assured.</p> <p>32.2 Control rooms need to assure systems mapped with good knowledge of access routes and boating locations.</p> <p>32.3 There is concern from the communities regarding markers being appropriately used on persons, not the site, as many sites are multi-family. The site is then seen as troublesome.</p>	
<p>33. Older Gypsy and Travellers</p> <p>33.1 Focused interventions for Traveller and Gypsy communities are required for older people in these communities because of the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health inequalities of this community.• Higher mortality rates.• Employment rates are low and poverty high. This impacts upon the income that older Gypsies and Travellers can count upon.• Many older Gypsies and Travellers may have had little, if any, formal education• Accommodation is a crucial issue for older Gypsies and Travellers, and difficulties in this area have a great impact on health and well-being.• Policy initiatives and political systems that are designed to promote inclusion and equality frequently exclude these communities.• There is a lack of access to culturally appropriate support services for people in the most vulnerable situations, including older people.• Gypsy and Travellers' culture and identity receive little or no recognition, with consequent and considerable damage to their self-esteem.• They may face lengthy waits to obtain adaptations to caravans on authorised public sites. As a result, they may be confined to their homes without ramps or other adaptations.• Accommodation policies may preclude older people having a carer to live with them on site through lack of space, or regulations on numbers of caravans at a	



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location, forcing them to live alone, in contrast to their social and cultural expectations.

FRS Data Gaps

Actions: Data gaps to be reviewed and considered by the NFCC Data Hub

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