Beyond Acronyms: Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the Criminal Justice System

Guidance, Information, and Intersectionality
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Introduction

Prior to reading this guide, we advise that you read this page to assist in your understanding of the intentions of the document.

Purpose
This guide was created to provide information on the variety of GRT identities and to provide a range of facts and practical signposts to further support and information.

Our aim is to help you by providing effective support for, and communication with, GRT individuals, and to support efforts to tackle the disparities in treatment and outcomes faced by some GRT individuals.

Who is this for?
The Ministry of Justice’s Race Disparity team have developed this guide for criminal justice staff about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities. The booklet is intended for both operational staff and policy makers within the criminal justice system (CJS), as we recognise knowledge of GRT communities is not consistently high today.

A word of caution
While we do go into some detail about the intersecting and compounding issues GRT communities can face in the CJS, every GRT person is an individual. We cannot speak for each of them and do not want to caricature their experiences. Gypsies, Romas and Travellers are also not homogenous groups again meaning their experiences can be very different. This guide does however draw out the common insights and experiences we collected from academics, GRT organisations and GRT individuals which we have put together to help inform you.

We ask that you read this document as a series of useful 'detailed generalisations', and take this page as a firm caveat that while, for example, this guide gives advice about how to approach gender and sexual identity in regards to GRT communities, it is ultimately down to CJS professionals to assess people and situations on an individual basis, and not to make assumptions about anyone's background.

This document is the first comprehensive guidance of its type and we recognise that there may be omissions or errors. If you think it can be improved, please contact race_and_ethnicity@justice.gov.uk as we will be gathering feedback to be used in developing further editions.
The Lammy Review and Public Sector Equality Duty

The Lammy Review
In 2017 David Lammy MP published his independent review \(^1\) into the treatment and outcomes of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Lammy made 35 recommendations following his findings and whilst none of these recommendations were specific to Gypsy, Roma and Travellers within the CJS, the review did highlight these communities as having some of the worst disparities of all groups.

Public Sector Equality Duty
The Public sector equality duty (PSED) came into force in April 2011 (s.149 of the Equality Act 2010) and public authorities like the Ministry of Justice are now required, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

As groups of people with distinctive ethnic origins, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers fall under the definition of sharing a ‘protected characteristic’ of race \(^2\) under the Equality Act 2010. Case law under previous race equality legislation has established that protections from discrimination and the public sector equality duty extends to the majority of these groups \(^3,\) \(^4\).

It is therefore your duty to ensure those from GRT communities are not discriminated against due to their ethnicity.

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1. [The Lammy review](#)
2. c.15 Equality Act 2010, s.9 (1) 8
3. Id. at 5, p.4 9
4. However, Occupational Travellers and New Travellers are not afforded the same protections in the same way. These groups are protected from discrimination based on perception of belonging to a group that share the protected characteristic of race. See C15. Equality Act 2010, Sec 13,s.(1)
A 2014 HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) report estimated that 5% of the prison population in England and Wales is made up of Gypsies and Travellers. There remains widespread ignorance that being Gypsy, Roma or Traveller represent distinct ethnicities which are protected under the law. A 2018 YouGov poll found that **66% of people in Britain (wrongly) did not view GRT to be an ethnic group**. This has important implications for the freedom with which people discriminate against the GRT community. **More than 70% of GRT individuals try to hide their ethnicity** according to the YouGov poll, suggesting that stigma and fear of discrimination is very real for this group. Linked to this, the exact number of the GRT prison population is not known because levels of self-reporting are known to be low. However, there is still undeniably an overrepresentation of GRT people in the prison population, with **4% self-declaring as Gypsy/Irish Traveller in a 2013/14 HMIP survey**. This is compared to just **0.1% of the general population** declaring themselves Gypsy/Irish Traveller in the 2011 Census. Whilst declaration rates mean neither figure is fully accurate, the picture is stark.

Members of the GRT community have shared their impression that they are disproportionately given custodial sentences because of the fear they will abscond when supervised in the community. However, **only 2% of GRT still travel continually** and the 2011 Census found that the majority, **76%, of Gypsies and Irish Travellers in England and Wales lived in conventional bricks-and-mortar accommodation**.

It is important to recognise the disadvantage faced by GRT communities upstream of the justice system. The educational disadvantages experienced by GRT children should give us pause for thought: the Race Disparity Audit in 2017 identified the **Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller groups as having the lowest educational attainment of any ethnic group** throughout their school years. In 2016/17, a **quarter of Gypsy/Romany and 20% of Irish Traveller children did not go into education or employment after reaching the age of 16**, with some disengaging from education much earlier on. This compares to a national average of 5%. It is important we acknowledge the vulnerability of GRT people and ensure we provide additional support where appropriate.
1. Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Roma are legally recognised as ethnic groups, and protected from discrimination by the Race Relations Act (1976, amended 2000) and the Human Rights Act (1998)\(^1\).

2. It is believed that they were likely called “Gypsy” for the first time by Europeans who mistakenly thought they were Egyptians\(^2\).

3. 58,000 people identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller in the 2011 England and Wales Census\(^3\). Government accepts this is likely an undercount and estimates there may be between 100,000 to 300,000 Gypsy/Traveller people\(^4\) and up to 200,000 Roma people living in the UK\(^5\).

4. Gypsy and Traveller people have been present in England since at least the 16th Century and the first recorded mention of Gypsies in England can be found in a document from 1514\(^6\). Roma migrants from eastern and central Europe have tended to arrive much more recently, from the 1990s onwards\(^7\).

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2. [https://travellermovement.org.uk/about/gypsy-roma-traveller-history-and-culture](https://travellermovement.org.uk/about/gypsy-roma-traveller-history-and-culture)
5. University of Salford, Migrant Roma in the United Kingdom: Population size and experiences of local authorities and partners, (October 2013), p7
6. Colin Clark and Margaret Greenfields, Here to Stay: the Gypsies and Travellers of Britain (University of Hertfordshire, 2006), p 23
Top 10 facts about GRT

5. The **2011 census** found that only 24% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers lived in caravans or other mobile or temporary structures.

6. The 2011 census found that 76% of GRT in England and Wales now lived in houses, flats or **maisonettes**.

7. Although Gypsies and Travellers are often seen through the prism of high-profile unauthorised sites, the vast majority of traveller caravans (80%) are on authorised sites that have planning permission.

8. During the Second World War, approximately one quarter (250,000) of the Roma population of Europe was exterminated by the Nazis in an act known as the ‘Porrajmos’—the Gypsy Holocaust.

9. Gypsies and Travellers place great value on family bonds and networks.

10. GRT communities face some of, if not, the worst discrimination and outcomes of any other community.

10. DCLG, **Traveller Caravan Count January 2011**
11. Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, ‘The Porrajmos,’
12. [https://travellermovement.org.uk/about/gypsy-roma-traveller-history-and-culture#values](https://travellermovement.org.uk/about/gypsy-roma-traveller-history-and-culture#values)
Differences Between Gypsies, Travellers, and Roma

The terms ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Traveller’ are often misleadingly used interchangeably to cover Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Scottish and Welsh Travellers, New Travellers, Showmen and Roma. In Britain all these communities are categorised under the acronym 'GRT'. These communities have several characteristics in common: the importance of family and/or community networks, the nomadic way of life, and experience of disadvantage in almost all aspects of life. However, the communities that are included under the umbrella term ‘GRT’ each have different customs, religion, language and heritage.

GRT face high levels of racial discrimination, contributing to and exacerbating the inequalities they experience. Under the Race Relations Act 1976, Romany Gypsies, and Irish Travellers are recognised as ethnic minority groups¹. Gypsy, Roma and some Traveller people are protected against discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 in England, Wales and Scotland. Roma are also an ‘ethnic group’ in terms of the law, and therefore protected by equality legislation². However, at least two Traveller groups fall outside of these definitions and may therefore not be protected against discrimination: Showpeople and New (or New Age) Travellers.

Irish Travellers

‘Irish Traveller’ is actually a state imposed term. These communities instead refer to themselves as ‘Pavee’ or ‘Mincéir’. Traditionally Irish Travellers are a nomadic group of people that originate from Ireland and have a separate identity, heritage and culture. An Irish Traveller presence can be traced back to 12th century Ireland, with migrations to Great Britain in the early 19th century³. Unlike Romany Gypsies, they are of Celtic descent and speak Cant/Gammon, which has its roots in the Celtic language rather than Romani. Irish Travellers are mainly Roman Catholic. As well as sharing traditions of ‘nomadism' and living in caravans or ‘trailers’, and an oral tradition of passing on knowledge; Bowers (2013) also suggests that they share other cultural values as Romany Gypsies, in that they have a preference for self-employment.

² Ibid
³ www.nationalgypsytravellerfederation.org/uploads/3/7/5/2/37524461/working_with_older_gypsies_and_travellers.pdf
https://travellermovement.org.uk/about/gypsy-roma-traveller-history-and-culture
Differences Between Gypsies, Travellers, and Roma

Romany Gypsies
Romany Gypsies have been in Britain since at least 1515 after migrating from continental Europe during the Roma migration from India. The term Gypsy comes from “Egyptian” which is what the settled population perceived them to be because of their dark complexion. In reality, linguistic analysis of the Romani language proves that Romany Gypsies, like the European Roma, originally came from Northern India, probably around the 12th century.

There are other groups of Travellers who may travel through Britain, such as Scottish Travellers, Welsh Travellers and English Travellers, many of whom can trace a nomadic heritage back for many generations and who may have married into or outside of more traditional Irish Traveller and Romany Gypsy families. There were already indigenous nomadic people in Britain when the Romany Gypsies first arrived hundreds of years ago and the different cultures/ethnicities have to some extent merged.

Roma
European Romani-speaking groups are descended from the same people as British Romany Gypsies but have moved to the UK more recently from central and eastern Europe, many as refugees/asylum seekers fleeing persecution. They are recognised as an ethnic minority in the same category as Gypsies and also speak Romani. They are, however, distinct from the UK’s Gypsy community and there is little interaction between the two (Travellers Aid Trust, 2009). Many Roma consider the name Gypsy to be offensive. Others prefer their own ethnonym and object to being called Roma.

Roma are traditionally traveling people who originated in northern India but live now worldwide, mostly in Europe. The group is known by a variety of names throughout Europe—including Sinti (Germany), Gitans (France), Cigány (Hungary) and Gitanos or Calo (Spain). Due to Roma often having a visibly non-white appearance and distinct linguistic differences, they often face an added layer of racialisation from wider society which can compound prejudice they may face.
Differences Between Gypsies, Travellers, and Roma

New Travellers, Barge Travellers and Show People

There are also Traveller groups which are known as ‘cultural’ rather than ‘ethnic’ Travellers. These include ‘new’ Travellers and Showmen.

‘Showmen’ do share many cultural traits with ethnic Travellers. Show People are a cultural minority that have owned and operated funfairs and circuses for many generations and their identity is connected to their family businesses. They operate rides and attractions that can be seen throughout the summer months at funfairs. Most Show People belong to the Showmen’s Guild which is an organisation that provides economic and social regulation and advocacy for Show People. The Showman’s Guild works with both central and local governments to protect the economic interests of its members.

The term New Travellers refers to people sometimes referred to as “New Age Travellers”. They are generally people who have taken to life ‘on the road’ in their own lifetime, though some New Traveller families claim to have been on the road for three consecutive generations. Members of this community tend to call themselves simply Travellers and may find the term 'New Age' or 'New' offensive (Travellers Aid Trust, 2009).

Barge Travellers are similar to New Travellers but live on the UK’s 2,200 miles of canals. They form a distinct group in the canal network and many are former ‘new’ Travellers.
Interacting with GRT individuals

Don’t make assumptions
➢ Don’t assume that someone is or isn’t from the GRT communities. Many GRT individuals may choose not to disclose their identity. See the next page for more about GRT and disclosure.

Terms to use
➢ Always ask the person what they identify as: don’t make assumptions.
➢ Terms such as ‘pikey’, ‘tinker’ and ‘itinerant’ (an old phrase used in Ireland for Nomadic people) are highly offensive
➢ ‘Gypsy’ is a contentious word. Some GRT people may use it to self-identify, and some may find it highly offensive. For example, Irish Travellers and Roma never use the term Gypsy. Roma find the word highly offensive.
➢ ‘Romanian’ refers to people from the country of Romania, and does not relate to Roma/Romany, although there are sizeable Roma populations in Romania

Building Trust
➢ Building trust is key. Never make promises that can’t be upheld as this can lead to disengagement in the future and destroy any trust previously built.
➢ Try to minimise staff changes as much as possible as this can also breakdown trust levels
➢ Don’t be afraid to take on a more informal approach to your conversational style. Try and put people at ease by leveraging your personal experience, express empathy, humility, and take time to listen. Use eye contact and affirmative body language.

How you talk and write
➢ Try and utilise plain language when delivering information on complicated legal/medical topics. Be clear, informative, and concise.
➢ Illiteracy levels are quite high throughout the GRT communities, although this is not the case for all those identifying as GRT. Therefore it is good to ensure you have resources and information in alternative formats such as videos and audio which avoid lots of text for those who need.
Disclosure

GRT population
The 2011 Census allowed respondents to identify as Gypsy or Irish Traveller for the first time, and 58,000 people selected this option (this does not include people who identify as Roma). This made it the smallest ethnic group (with a tick box) in 2011, accounting for 0.1% of the population of England and Wales. A tick-box for “Roma” was not included in that census, although the Office for National Statistics has recommended that a box be added for the census in 2021.

A 2014 HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) report estimated that 5% of the prison population in England and Wales is made up of Gypsies and Travellers. Although it is likely neither the census nor prison figures are 100% accurate. Even so, there is still undeniably an overrepresentation of GRT in the prison population.

Why is disclosure low?
Discrimination against these communities is common and greatly impacts the amount of GRT people who will declare their ethnicity for fear of negative repercussions. There may also be a lack of ‘tick-box’ that an individual feels accurately describes with their identity.

Why is disclosure important?
Without knowing somebody’s ethnicity, it is difficult for their unique cultural needs to be met.

How to encourage disclosure
• Ensure that any discrimination towards GRT individuals is not tolerated, and it is dealt with correctly. This will help GRT individuals to feel more comfortable that by self identifying they will not be negatively impacted. Awareness raising amongst staff will help to tackle any misconceptions surrounding these communities.
• Having a GRT Rep in reception may help encourage disclosure and provide confidence that this is a safe space to be a member of a GRT community.
• Ensure GRT individuals know how to identify themselves correctly. There may not always be a tick box and in such cases GRT individuals should be encouraged to tick the ‘other’ box and write in their identity.

However, it is important that we allow people to identify themselves as and how they want and we should not pressurise anyone into doing so if they do not wish to.
The next pages look at GRT and intersectionality. Intersectionality is a theoretical and legal framework for understanding how aspects of one's social and political identities (e.g., gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, etc.) might combine to create unique modes of discrimination.

We use it here to explore the complexity of GRT identities, and to provide advice on how to interact with GRT individuals in the CJS inhabiting multiple identities (Krenshaw, 1989, pp. 57-61).

**Intersectionality is understanding a person in their entirety.**
Religion is of great importance to many, but not all, Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, in terms of their daily lives and through rituals and gatherings. Irish Travellers are often devout Roman Catholics and their children attend Catholic schools. Romany Gypsies have traditionally belonged to either the Church of England or the Catholic Church. However in recent years many Gypsies and Travellers have become part of a growing Christian Evangelical movement. Roma do not typically follow one specific religion and instead often adopt the religion of their host country. The most common religions practiced amongst Roma people being Christianity and Islam.

Key Facts and Figures

- Funerals, marriages and christenings are a huge part of life for those from GRT communities with religious beliefs.
- The Pentecostal movement has grown rapidly in the past 30 years - it claims up to 40% of British Gypsies belong to it. There is no concrete evidence for this claim, but most Gypsies and Travellers will agree that there is a surge in people joining.¹

Things to think about

Attending Mass whilst in prison is often very important. The priest is usually one of the first people GRT individuals will look for once incarcerated so, try to introduce the individual to the prison chaplain as early as possible.

Many GRT may find it difficult being in custody, especially when there are funerals and marriages taking place. If the individual is prohibited from attending a funeral, consider holding a service within the prison, at the time of the funeral, for them to attend. You should not underestimate the positive effect religion and the chaplaincy service can have on the wellbeing of GRT people in the CJS.

Some travellers are sceptical of the Pentecostal movement. The movement often calls for others to leave the Catholic or Anglican faith that many Gypsies and Travellers are born into which can cause friction and clashes. Due to this scepticism be wary of grouping GRT together simply because they are GRT and try to take into account their beliefs.

¹ https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-38016090
GRT and Religion

Case Study: Irish chaplaincy Service

Irish Travellers, because of their religious, social and cultural traditions, constitute a specific ethnic group within the prison population. Many of them have a great attachment to the Catholic faith based on generations of sacramental practice and defined by a love of holy pictures, rosary beads, statues and religious objects. Consequently, their spiritual and pastoral care requires understanding and sensitivity.

Many Travellers have difficulty coping with long periods of confinement. That's why they greatly value regular meetings and Chaplaincy events where they can socialise and express their anxieties, fears, etc.

The Traveller project of the Irish Chaplaincy has facilitated numerous such meetings over the years, providing Travellers with a forum for music, literature and general entertainment. On the religious side, Travellers tend to look to the Chaplaincy for help and support. They feel more comfortable talking to members of the Chaplaincy team about their issues and problems believing that they can be trusted and make more of an effort to understand them.

Bringing a Traveller to the prison Chapel to light a candle and pray (alone or with a Chaplain) for a relative who is seriously ill or who has died, may seem to be a rather small gesture but in fact it is hugely important and significant. Funeral obsequies are a hugely important part of the Traveller tradition. Chaplains who have provided this service can vouch for the difference it has made in helping the prisoner deal with distress and grief and even bringing closure to a situation. Similarly with the Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation, where the prisoner can be reconciled with his/her past and given the strength to move on.

These are some of the practical ways in which the spiritual and pastoral needs of Travellers in prison can be met. They don't need "special treatment", just understanding and sensitivity.

- Fr. Gerry McFlynn and Ellena Costello, Irish Chaplaincy, May 2020
Gypsies, Roma and Travellers have some of the worst health outcomes in the country. This means shorter, less healthy lives. GRT individuals often face structural barriers when accessing healthcare, often facing prejudice. Nomadic GRT individuals are frequently turned away from healthcare services due to not having an address. Therefore, some GRT individuals may only access healthcare for the first time in prison. Self-reliance and a cultural pride may also impact on health beliefs, leading to a tendency of denial and/or delay in seeking health care.

Key Facts and Figures

- Studies show that Gypsy and Traveller women live 12 years less than women in the general population and men 10 years less.\(^1\)
- The 2011 census for England and Wales revealed that 14% of Gypsy/Travellers described their health as “bad” or “very bad”, more than twice as high as the white British group.\(^2\)
- Research on Roma health across Europe suggests that the Roma also have poorer overall health, with life expectancies between 5 and 20 years lower than the majority.\(^3\)
- Roma individuals are also more likely to report unmet health needs.\(^4\)

Things to think about

Many women will only discuss their health with female practitioners and likewise, males will only discuss their health with male practitioners. Try to always give the individual the option of seeing a male or a female practitioner.

Comments of a gynaecological or sexual-health nature need to be treated with tact and sensitivity. Leverage open questions or statements, such as: "If there is anything related to intimate or personal matters you wish to discuss, please know that you can talk to me in the strictest confidence".

Due to the before mentioned structural barriers, many GRT may struggle accessing health care or because of cultural pride and self-reliance may not feel they need to. Ensure to provide easily accessible information on how to access health care and when to access it.

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\(^2\) Office for National Statistics, ‘2011 Census analysis: What does the 2011 Census tell us about the characteristics of Gypsy or Irish travellers in England and Wales?’

\(^3\) Roma support group, Awareness Training Programme for NHS staff; Working with Roma in Health and Safeguarding context, P6

GRT and Mental Health

Many of those from the GRT communities often face issues with mental health at a higher rate than the general population. Depression within these communities is often common but seen as something shameful and should be kept hidden. This denial of depression may result in a delay or not asking for help. Surveys undertaken by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) highlighted differences in Gypsy and Irish Traveller individuals’ experience of prison. Mental health was a particular concern with GRT prisoners more likely to report feeling depressed or suicidal on arrival, but less likely to report receiving information about the support available.

Key Facts and Figures

➢ GRT are nearly three times more likely to be anxious than average and just over twice as likely to be depressed1
➢ Irish Travellers are 3 times as likely to die by suicide than the general population2
➢ In 2014 an HMIP report found GRT prisoners were more likely to have problems in mental health eg 27% compared with 13%
➢ GRT family members report experiencing higher levels of stress as a result of a family member being imprisoned, including concerns about mental health of individual detained.
➢ Bullying increases risk of suicide and self-harm. Discrimination against GRT is common with the Traveller Movement reporting 70% of GRT having faced discrimination in their findings.

Things to think about

Ensure to inform all new arrivals to custody of the services and support available.

Many GRT individuals may find it difficult to discuss personal issues with non-GRT. It is therefore important to have support in place for Travellers to discuss such issues; for instance through access to a Listener or a Traveller Rep. Traveller groups are also a great way to improve mental health allowing a safe space to talk.

Often GRT communities will talk of 'nerves' rather than the term 'mental' as this is often viewed as suspicious and linked with madness.

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1 The Health Status of Gypsies and Travellers in England [here](#)
Case study: HMP Birmingham

On arrival into custody if a resident declares as W3 I make sure to introduce myself the following morning and explain my role. I always have copies of the Travellers Times which normally breaks the ice and have found over the years that sometimes the men know about me even if we have never met.

Discrimination impacts negatively on mental health so, I deliver equality and diversity training to staff and always make sure to include GRT in this to improve awareness. I talk about discrimination, including terminology that is offensive, and also about the high suicide risk and poor mental health that is more common amongst these communities.

I started a Traveller Group which is held monthly and over time I have gained the trust of the men. Every resident that declares as being GRT is invited to the group. Some men do not want to engage but the invite is always there in case they change their mind, which many do. We have had men that are on ACCT documents* that really enjoy coming to the group. They are always glad that they come and find time spent in the group helps them not to self-harm and relieves the stress of isolation. The meeting always starts with a “cuppa” and general chat and I ask if there are any issues that I can help with. The priest always attends, ending the meeting with a prayer which the men really appreciate. We also have really good links with the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas who try to attend a meeting at least once a year.

I currently have one GRT Rep who is also a Listener and Shannon Trust Mentor. He has told me that when he does his shift in reception GRT men are more likely to speak to him due to him also being GRT and he encourages them to declare as GRT too. We still find some men reluctant to declare due to stereotyping by other residents and unfortunately staff. Our Traveller Rep and myself always try to encourage the men to engage in activities and education. It can be hard to change the “I can’t because I’m a Traveller” attitude but our Rep is a brilliant example of what can be done. He taught himself to read and write and now teaches others, especially young Traveller men.

Every June we have an Appleby celebration for GRT history month. I put information around the jail and normally we have a traditional meal of cabbage, bacon and potatoes. We all eat together which I feel breaks the idea of “them and us” and helps to foster good relations. We have a lot of laughter and watch some cultural DVD’s, we sometimes even sing!

- Joanne Glear, Equalities and Disability Liaison Officer, HMP Birmingham

*document that is used for vulnerable people at risk of self-harm or suicide
GRT and Women

Many young GRT girls leave formal education early on. This can be due to bullying, marrying young and reduced vocational opportunities due to a move towards a more ‘academic’ system limiting options.

Because of a lack of formal education, heightened potential for discrimination in hiring practices, and views from some families that it is inappropriate for women to work outside the home, a majority of GRT women are not in paid work. However many GRT women do provide care for family members full time.

Gendered attitudes and expectations pertaining to education, employment and female roles are broadly similar within many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. GRT women play a central role in society. In the domestic sphere, they assume responsibility for child rearing, care of the home and the welfare of both their immediate and extended families.

Domestic Violence against GRT women and girls may also be common. For many GRT individuals marriage is for life and if a marriage did breakdown this can lead to women being ostracized from the community which could explain why reporting of abuse is low.

Key Facts and Figures

➢ The 2011 census recorded 29,084 Gypsy and Traveller women and girls; 20,063 were aged 16 or over, of whom 5,859 were in employment; 1,047 were self-employed
➢ The 2011 Census also noted Gypsy or Irish Traveller ethnic group was among the highest providers of unpaid care in England and Wales at 11 per cent (10 per cent for England and Wales as a whole)
➢ In HMIP's 2018/19 annual report, 6% of the female prison population reported they were from a Traveler community.
➢ Janie Codona of One Voice 4 Travellers, a domestic abuse charity, estimated domestic abuse was experienced by as many as 75 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women, at some point in their lives
Things to think about

Women's health shouldn't be discussed in-front of men, issues such as sexual health and female hygiene are sometimes considered taboo and shameful. Ask if they would prefer to speak to a female and try to provide female practitioners where possible for GRT women to discuss their health issues and needs.

Chaperones are common for GRT women. However, do not assume that because a GRT woman is with a female chaperone that she can speak freely: a cousin may be an in-law, for example, which may restrict what she can verbalise publicly. Always ask the individual in private whether they require a chaperone so as not to allow someone else to speak for them.

Women entering the justice system may themselves be victims of abuse and therefore may require extra support.

Further support

Women’s Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. As a federation of over 180 organisations, they provide nearly 300 local lifesaving services to women and children across the country. They also offer a Live Chat service on their website if you need to speak to a support worker.

Solace Women’s Aid Irish and Irish Traveller Outreach service provides one on one support to Irish and Irish Traveller women and children affected by domestic and sexual violence in communities across London, helping them to stay safe, find safe accommodation and offering housing, financial and legal advice.
GRT Youth

GRT children are overrepresented in the youth justice system (YJS).

GRT children often do not trust authorities and may refuse to engage. This often stems from the deep disadvantages they face in the community, in a range of areas including health, education and victimisation due to ethnicity. Many of these disadvantages carry through if they enter the YJS.

GRT children often leave school early on, and there is pressure from the community on GRT boys, in particular, to start working and providing for their families when they enter their teenage years/early adulthood.

It is important for professionals to take the time to build trusting relationships with GRT children and their families, that take into account all these factors.

Key Facts and Figures

- Although a lack of reliable data makes it hard to determine exact numbers, survey findings show that GRT children are overrepresented in the YJS. A HMIP report found that 8% of children in young offender institutions (YOIs), and 13% in secure training centres (STCs), identify themselves as GRT in 2018/19. This compares to 0.1% GRT individuals in the general population (2011.Census).

- Whilst in custody, GRT children are more likely than other children to experience bullying or victimisation from other children (19% compared to 6%), and have their canteen or property stolen by other children (20% compared to 5%). They are also less likely to be treated well during arrival and reception (53% compared to 72%) . GRT children have the highest exclusion rates from school. In 2016/17, a quarter of Gypsy/Romany and 20% of Irish Traveller children did not go into education or employment after reaching the age of 16, with some disengaging from education much earlier on. This compares to a national average of 5%.


Things to think about*

Make it as safe as possible for GRT children to discuss and disclose their ethnicity. Not feeling safe is a significant factor in GRT children not wanting to disclose their heritage. Practitioners should reassure GRT children that their identities will not be disclosed without their permission, unless certain safeguarding concerns intervene (e.g. the child is at risk of harming themselves or others), and should ensure that this is understood by all members of staff.

Support GRT children and young people with their education and training, where needed and possible. Recognise that GRT children’s perceived educational ability may reflect family responsibilities and travelling, not a lack of desire to learn. GRT children may be willing to engage with education, if given the right support. Feedback from GRT communities suggests that education and training that catches their interest will be far more effective in engaging these children. Modular learning, with rewards at the end of each module, is also a helpful way of encouraging them to succeed. Support with literacy can also make a significant difference for some GRT children.

Recognise the importance of family, community and cultural practices. Strong family and community ties might mean that GRT children who get in trouble with the law might feel like they are losing the support of their family/community, or that they have let their family down. This might impact on their behaviour and wellbeing. It is important for practitioners to embrace a whole-family approach when engaging with children from a GRT background, including thinking about the role of the father as the head of the family, but also the role of mothers, siblings and extended community. When GRT children talk about their families, practitioners are encouraged to spend time listening - this can be a sign that the child is starting to trust you.

Consider increasing GRT representation in your team and on different decision-making panels. Practitioners are encouraged to consider ways of improving GRT representation in their workforce, but also on different decision-making panels, such as Referral Order Panels. Having a GRT professional involved can help with building trust with the child and their family. It can also help safeguard panels from conscious or unconscious bias, and raise awareness of specific needs that GRT children might have.

Further reading – The Children’s Society study on GRT Children

• The Youth Custody Service have published a detailed Effective Practice Briefing on guidance for staff in the youth custodial estate to support children and young people from GRT communities. The Ministry of Justice will publish more detailed guidance for staff in Youth Offending Teams in Summer 2020.
GRT and LGBT+

GRT LGBT+ often feel shunned both by mainstream LGBT+ culture and by their own Traveller groups for who they are. There is often high emphasis on ‘traditional’ gender roles, and the ‘nuclear family,’ procreation and conservative religious values, therefore many gay and lesbian GRT feel a sense of alienation from the community and develop an ambivalent or conflicted relationship about their own GRT identity.

Depression has nothing in itself to do with sexuality, but due to the social factors, isolation and a sense of loneliness that often comes with feeling apart or different from the norm it can have a part to play in many LGBT+ Travellers lives, with GRT LGBT people facing a drastically increased risk of suicide, see page on mental health for more info. Equally, shame can lead to people not accessing the health services they need and can lead to catastrophic health inequalities.

Key Facts and Figures

➢ There is no empirical research or statistics to evidence the hidden problem of homophobia within the Gypsy Roma Traveller communities against their own LGBT community. However, identifying as LGBT+ is still rarely talked about.
➢ Transgender people more widely (especially Transgender women) experience some of the highest risks in society of murder and assault.¹

Things to think about

If a GRT person is known to be LGBT in prison, caution should be exercised in their socialisation with other GRT people: knowledge of their sexual or gendered divergence could lead to queerphobia and negative responses.

Some LGBT GRT individuals may not have come out to family or even want to talk about identifying as LGBT+ therefore, it is best to let them approach you if they want to discuss this. However, you can help by ensuring they have access to resources and the right people and that they know where to access this help.

More help and resources

➢ The Traveller Movement have produced an Information guide with support for LGBT+ members of the Traveller community which you can find here.
➢ Traveller Pride are a group of LGBT+ travellers which provides information and advice which you can find here.

Organisations, resources and other things you could do

The next slides contain useful links to organisations and resources for GRT which you may find useful, as well as ideas for things you could do in your institution.
Organisations by region

* This is not all GRT charities and organisations, there may be others that you know of not included here

**North West**
- Irish Community Care Merseyside
- The Northern Association of Support Services for Equality and Achievement (NASSEA)

**Yorkshire and Humberside**
- Leeds GATE - Gypsy and Traveller Exchange
- York Travellers Trust

**East Midlands**
- Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group
- Lincolnshire Gypsy Liaison Group

**Eastern**
- GATE Herts
- Luton Roma Trust

**London**
- London Gypsies and Travellers

**South East**
- Surrey Traveller Community Relations Forum

**South West**
- Kushti Bok

**West Midlands**
- Worcestershire Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Partnership - E-mail: Tony.Henderson@rooftopgroup.org

**Wales**
- Romani Cultural and Arts Company
- Gypsies and Traveller Wales

**National**
- The Traveller Movement
- Friend’s, families and travellers
- Roma Support Group
- Gypsy Life
- National Gypsy Traveller Federation
- One Voice 4 Travellers
- Irish Chaplaincy
- Catholic Association for Racial Justice
- Romany & Traveller Family History Society
Useful Links and resources

The following links may be useful to you for running your own events within your institution for things like GRT History Month (see next page for more info).

➢ The Traveller Movement and Twinkl teamed up to produce a free education pack to celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history month (GRTHM).
https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t2-t-16580-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history-month-assembly-pack

➢ Roads From The Past is a short animated film from the Travellers' Times Online about the history of Britain's Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bhBbMrF8Z0&feature=youtu.be

➢ The Liverpool Gypsy Collection - Hosted by the University of Liverpool, a collection of early Gypsy Lore Society resources and photographs.
https://libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/library/sca/gypsyloresociety

➢ National Fairground Archive – A resource for the Showmen and a collection of photographs and information.
www.shef.ac.uk/nfa

➢ Robert Dawson, specialising in Gypsy and Romany books, Gypsy postcards and educational materials for Britain's Traditional Travelling people.
www.robertdawson.co.uk

➢ Pages 28 and 29 of this booklet are posters you could print and display in your institution to raise awareness of GRT and the discrimination they often face.
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month (GRTHM) celebrates the diverse ways in which the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities add to the vibrancy of life in the UK and recognises the varied contributions that these communities have made to British Society historically and today.

Since 2008, GRTHM has been celebrated throughout the UK over the month of June. GRTHM shares the history, culture and language of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, as well as other Travelling communities including Showmen and Bargees. Through celebration, education and raising awareness, GRTHM helps to tackle prejudices, challenge myths and to raise the voices of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in wider society.

Schools, libraries and museums around the UK throw their support to GRTHM each year providing activities and information which support the aims of challenging stereotypes and supporting community cohesion.

Why not have your own celebration during GRTHM using some of the resources available in this booklet or take a look at the example below of what one prison did to celebrate in 2019.

HMP The Verne asked our thriving GRT community how we could celebrate their culture and heritage in June. The residents requested a celebration of Appleby fair which is the largest gathering of the GRT community in the UK attracting over 10,000. With this in mind we are having our own Appleby horse Fair day –

• A special Travellers meal on the main menu of lamb stew and dumplings.
• A quiz.
• In the afternoon a drop-in session for all residents with a presentation by the GRT chaplain and our GRT residents.
• Traditional music in the grounds by our educational staff and residents.
• In the morning all GRT invited to share refreshments /watch DVD to celebrate Appleby fair and develop sense of community amongst each other.

One of most popular developments is the introduction of an Officer S.P.O.C (specific point of contact) for the GRT community. This was introduced after a GRT protected characteristic meeting in which our residents requested an officer they could approach when they had queries about IEP’s issued, being placed on report or any other documents or processes they did not understand due to literacy problems. They requested a SPOC as they stated traditionally they did not like to approach authoritarian figures. We are hoping this will be a collaborative way of solving problems before they become a problem, increase well-being and demonstrate our commitment to the GRT community.

Kim Damen - Equality Lead - June 2019
Being you is not against the law. Discrimination is.

More than 70% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals try to hide their Ethnicity for fear of discrimination.

If you need more information please speak to your equalities rep.
A 2018 poll found that 66% of people in Britain (wrongly) did not view Gypsy, Roma or Traveller to be an ethnic group.

If you need more information please speak to your equalities rep.