

# GYPSY AND TRAVELLER WELFARE IN CROYDON

This report is the result of a local action mini review initiated by Councillor Andrew Rendle into the welfare issues faced by Gypsies and Travellers in Croydon.

The review set out to consider whether the council's approach to unauthorised encampments is consistent and proportionate. It also aimed to review how Gypsies and Travellers in the borough access public services and whether the council and its partners are delivering their statutory responsibilities with regard to the education, health and social care of these communities. During the course of the review the 'hidden' community of Gypsy and Traveller families living in bricks and mortar accommodation came to light. Although this was not part of the original remit of the review, the welfare needs of this group are compelling, are very similar to more transient Gypsy and Traveller groups, and were therefore included albeit briefly.

This report covers the accommodation of Gypsies and Travellers in Croydon although planning issues relating to new sites were never included in the remit of this mini review. It became clear through the review that it is not possible to consider social exclusion and welfare issues without considering barriers to accessing accommodation needs. As one witness informed said, "When you're worried about where you're going to sleep tonight and where your water is coming from, it is difficult to focus on longer term health issues and whether your child gets to school on time or does his homework."

It is hoped that the review will contribute to future council policy for the benefit of both the settled community and Gypsies and Travellers in Croydon along with public services and finances.

September 2016

A local action mini review report  
by Councillor Andrew Rendle

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

Councillor Andrew Rendle is indebted to Dr Lisa Scullion, Reader in Social Policy at the Sustainable Housing and Urban Studies Unit at the University of Salford and Councillor Kathy Bee for forming an investigation panel with him at the Gypsy and Traveller Welfare event on 20 July 2016.

Kathy was until recently the Cabinet member for Traffic and Transportation in Croydon. She is a busy scrutiny committee member, sits on the planning committee and represents South Norwood ward. Lisa has a background in Social Policy and has research experience across a range of social exclusion subjects. More specifically, her research focuses on migrant communities, and Roma, Gypsies and Travellers and the considerable expertise she brought to the review was welcomed.

Thanks also go to everyone who freely provided their time and expertise and contributed to the review through informal meetings or by coming to the event on 20 July 2016:

Brighton and Hove District Council	Rachel Chasseaud, Head of Tenancy Services Andy Staniford, Housing Strategy Manager Karen Amsden, Democratic Services
Buckinghamshire New University	Dr Margaret Greenfields, Professor of Social Policy & Community Engagement
Croydon CCG	Jimmy Burke, Senior Commissioning Programme Lead - Planned Care
Croydon Public Health	Steve Morton, Assistant Director of Health and Wellbeing
Health and Wellbeing Board	Councillor Maggie Mansell, Chair
London Borough of Croydon	Andy Opie, Head of Safety Chris McAvoy, Environment Enforcement Manager Steve Dennington, Head of Spatial Planning Lee Longhurst, Team Leader Spatial Planning Margaret Padmore, Tenancy Manager, Housing Needs Biddy Sobamiwa, Tenancy Officer, Housing Needs Liam Mallon, Neighbourhood Safety Officer, Housing Needs Jenny Duxbury, School Place Planning and Admissions
London Gypsy and Traveller Unit (LGTU)	Debby Kennett Ilinca Dianonescu
Octavo	Sarah Clarke, Traveller and Pupil Premium Consultant
Police	Chief Inspector Peter McGarry Sgt Andy O'Donnell
Scrutiny and Overview Committee	Councillor Sean Fitzsimons, Chair
The Traveller Movement	Patrick Kinsella, Policy and Campaigns Manager
A Traveller family	

## INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the information collected since I began this mini review last October and evidence gathered at a Gypsy and Traveller Welfare event held at Croydon Town Hall on 20 July 2016. During the review, I learned that myths and misinformation abound about Gypsies and Travellers<sup>1</sup>, that they face discrimination and inequalities in education and access to health services and that they do not necessarily thrive when encouraged or forced to become part of the settled community.

My interim report indicated that given the opportunity to pursue their traditional way of life, earn a living, access education for their children and health care for their families, many Gypsy and Traveller households can, and do, live in harmony with the settled community. However, as with society as a whole, some Gypsy and Traveller groups will always want to live outside society's rules and will cause disruption and upset to the wider community - largely through unauthorised encampments and associated issues of anti-social behaviour, crime and fly-tipping.

Looking at ways which might help reduce the number of unauthorised encampments was important. The strategic use of transit sites and/or negotiated stopping places was universally acknowledged by the people I spoke to as a potential way forward for the borough. Transit sites seem to offer many advantages to the settled community - as are negotiated stopping places or tolerated encampments which are becoming recognised as 'best practice' elsewhere. The potential use of Section 62a of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which relies on the availability of transit pitches, could also allow the Police to require Gypsies and Travellers to leave the borough and not return for at least three months. There is an argument that transit sites may make Croydon a magnet for Travellers, so much has been made of boroughs working together.

Other local authorities, including Barking and Dagenham, are encouraging the Mayor of London to take a pan-London approach to the provision of transit sites and I have recommended that Croydon's Cabinet supports this. I have also suggested that we look to work with neighbouring boroughs to consider such provision in addition to supporting a Pan-London approach.

It was **never** my intention to consider planning issues relating to new sites or to look at specific sites within the review - and this is still the case. However, I note that the Cabinet approved a report on Croydon's emerging Local Plan on 11 July 2016. The potential development of Lathams Way is to be welcomed, as our evidence showed an immediate need for four additional pitches to relieve overcrowding. Also to be welcomed is the potential for a new permanent site and I ask those involved in the process of bringing this to fruition to note my findings about the importance of site design, open and transparent pitch allocation policies and consultation with Gypsy and Traveller communities – especially if we move towards a mixed English Gypsy/Irish Traveller site.

I recognise that the housing need of Gypsies and Travellers is part of the council's long term planning and it is hoped this report will be turned to and referenced for many years to come. It should therefore be highlighted that some of the recommendations here will not need to be implemented at the time of writing, but must however form part of the council's long term strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> Where Travellers and Gypsies are referred to (with capital letters) within the report, it refers to Gypsies and Travellers as specific ethnic groups. Where 't' is used in 'Travellers', it refers to people of indeterminate ethnicity who are travelling/nomadic. The focus of the report is on the indigenous Gypsy and Traveller population rather than the migrant population which although sharing some similarities have different experiences and discrimination.

It became apparent as this review progressed that the largest group of Gypsies and Travellers in Croydon lives in bricks and mortar accommodation and that relatively little is known about them, partly due to sparse data and lack of awareness. The problems of social exclusion and mental health issues faced by this 'hidden community' are considerable and are undoubtedly compounded since many deny their ethnicity in order to avoid discrimination and possible abuse.

This mini review report will now go forward to Croydon's Scrutiny and Overview Committee in September 2016. I hope that the Committee will support the report, its conclusions and recommendations and ask the council's Cabinet and partner organisations to respond positively.

**Councillor Andrew Rendle**

# SUMMARY REPORT

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

Two high profile unlawful encampments in Ashburton ward, with associated issues of fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour, provided the impetus for this review. The primary objectives at that point were a need to understand how the Council and Police respond to unauthorised encampments, if they have all the tools needed to protect the rights of all concerned and whether there was more the Council could do in partnership with other organisations, including the Police, to provide a consistent and proportionate response to unauthorised encampments.

However, this review was never just about the protections in place for the settled community. It was also driven by a need to understand the challenges and deprivations which Gypsies and Travellers face as they aim to pursue their traditional way of life in the borough in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The interim findings report, which was produced for the Gypsy and Traveller Welfare event on 20 July, included a quote from a report from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission:

**“Many Gypsies and Travellers are caught between an insufficient supply of suitable accommodation on the one hand, and the insecurity of unauthorised encampments and developments on the other: they then face a cycle of evictions... Roadside stopping places, with no facilities and continued instability and trauma, become part of the way of life. Health deteriorates, while severe disruptions occur to access to education for children, healthcare services and employment opportunities.”**

The conclusions and recommendations in this report are set in the wider context of housing need not just in Croydon, but also both across London and nationally. The need for 36 pitches by 2036 contrasts with 2,800 households currently living in temporary accommodation; 6,000 households currently on the Council’s waiting list for housing; and a need for 30,000 new homes to be built by 2036. While this doesn’t detract from the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities, it is right to acknowledge that the housing shortage across London both in the round and for individual communities cannot be solved by one local authority in isolation.

Similarly, while undertaking the review we heard evidence of how additional services and resources could be provided that would help tackle a number of social issues faced by Gypsies and Travellers. In reaching conclusions and making recommendations on such issues, it is also recognised that these are set in the wider context of local government funding. Due to a combination of dramatically reduced grant funding from Government and increasing demand for services, Croydon Council will have delivered around £200m in savings and service reductions between 2010 and 2018. During this period the Council has reduced its workforce by around a third (1000 FTE). Again, this does not detract from the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities, but these recommendations are made in the context that delivering on them will be challenging in the current financial environment.

Gypsies and Travellers are some of the most excluded groups in society and face significantly reduced life chances than the settled community. Poor education attainment and literacy, and high levels of special educational needs lead to profound educational exclusion for many Gypsy and Traveller children.

Considerable health and social care needs also combine to result in low life expectancy among Gypsies and Travellers – estimated at 10-12 years less than the rest of the population.

Mental health is a significant issue for many - with levels of anxiety and depression running up to three times higher among transient Gypsies and Travellers and those housed in bricks and mortar accommodation, than in the general population. As it progressed, the remit of this mini review therefore broadened to also take account of the 200 Gypsy and Traveller families living in bricks and mortar accommodation in Croydon as it became apparent that the social exclusion this group faces is considerable.

The report is divided into two sections:

1. Accommodating Gypsies and Travellers
2. Social exclusion of Gypsies and Travellers

A brief introduction and the conclusions and recommendations relating to these sections are given on the following pages.

The detailed findings and information gleaned throughout the review and as a result of the Gypsy and Traveller Welfare event on 20 July 2016 are provided in the appendices and frequently asked questions attached to this report:

#### APPENDICES

1. Gypsy and Traveller Welfare Event, 20 July 2016
2. Gypsy and Traveller ethnicity and way of life
3. Gypsies and Travellers in Croydon
4. Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs
5. Authorised sites for Gypsies and Travellers
6. Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation
7. Health inequalities and exclusion
8. Access to education and employment opportunities
9. Discrimination and hate crime
10. Engagement with Gypsies and Travellers

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Sites for Gypsies and Travellers
2. Enforcement and Removal

## ACCOMMODATING GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

The 2011 Census stated that the total population of Croydon was 363,378. The Census also suggested that there were 234 Gypsies and Travellers living in Croydon, although this is likely to be an underestimation. Most – some 200 households – were living in bricks and mortar accommodation. The GTANA 2013<sup>2</sup> indicated that two years later there were 27 families living on sites in the borough - 18 families on the authorised site at Lathams Way (57 individuals) and 9 families on unauthorised sites (39 individuals). It is likely the Gypsy and Traveller population in Croydon is growing due to larger than average family sizes and short generations as they marry and have children at a relatively young age.

**The evidence clearly shows that the overall scale of need for Gypsy and Traveller sites in Croydon is tiny in comparison to wider housing needs - space for 36 pitches (caravans) by 2036 compared to some 30,000 new homes in the same period<sup>i</sup>.**

The report covers Gypsies and Travellers accommodation including:

- Permanent sites at Lathams Way and a potential new site. Lathams Way is largely self-managed including in relation to pitch allocation and is now being considered for redevelopment. Any new sites should be developed alongside clear and transparent pitch allocation policies, good site design and the potential to provide housed Gypsies and Travellers with access to a community facility. There is also the potential for permanent sites to be self-funding and there are benefits to 'quick wins' (such as undertaking repairs and maintenance) in building trust and confidence among Gypsies and Travellers.
- Transit sites. Benefits include providing Gypsies and Travellers temporarily visiting the area with a safe place to stay and the council and Police with powers under s62a of the CJPOA 1994<sup>3</sup> to require others to leave the borough for 3 months. Problems associated with transit sites include getting the balance right between too many/too few pitches, location and the concerns of neighbours. Working with neighbouring authorities and at a pan-London level represents a strong opportunity for identifying future provision.
- Negotiated stopping places (or temporarily tolerated unauthorised encampments) can offer a pragmatic means of reducing cycles of eviction among Gypsy and Traveller groups with a local connection to the area. The use of 'social contracts' can encourage positive behaviour, tidiness of the site and length of stay. This approach is gaining ground as a way forward for many local authorities and Devon County Council has demonstrated it can present considerable cost savings - even taking account of staff, waste services and portaloos costs.
- Bricks and mortar accommodation. Nationally, the reasons for stopping travelling have been given as 'health and support needs (72%), 'age/too old (17%) and 'wanting to settle' (11%) while in the Croydon GTANA 2013, other reasons given were a lack of permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites (30%), being moved on from unauthorised encampments (10%) and a desire to improve access to services for their children (20%). One in five (20%) said they had no alternative. Problems of access to long term tenancies, lack of familiarity with housing bureaucracy, low literacy, issues relating to housing allocation, discrimination and a pervading cultural aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation are among the many concerns housed Gypsies and Travellers face.

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<sup>2</sup> Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2013

<sup>3</sup> Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

## Conclusions

The review concluded that:

- Responsibility within the council for Gypsies and Travellers - whether housed on sites, in bricks and mortar accommodation and for those travelling through the borough - needs to be clearer and could provide the leadership necessary to work with partners across the region and underpin bids for funding (eg. from the Mayor of London).
- Lack of accommodation underpins health, education and welfare issues and there is a heavy price of social exclusion to be paid by Gypsy and Traveller families facing the insecurity of unauthorised encampments and a cycle of repeated evictions.
- The call for a pan-London approach to the need for transit sites by Barking and Dagenham should be supported. The development of transit site(s) and/or the use of negotiated stopping places across London is likely to:
  - Help reduce the number of illegal encampments in the borough.
  - Help bring cost-savings to the Council by reducing the need for enforcement action and subsequent clean up.
  - Help deliver savings in Police time and improved relations between the Police and Gypsy and Traveller communities.
  - Help provide some stability to Gypsy and Traveller families enabling better access to education and health services.
- As London collectively considers how to tackle the growing demand for housing, the council should also explore how it can work with neighbouring authorities and at a regional level to collectively consider the identification and provision of permanent and transit sites in the future as need grows across London – not least because many Gypsies and Travellers have large families at a young age.
- The cyclical repair and maintenance of Gypsy and Traveller sites could be funded and brought into line with other council housing responsibilities at such time as resources allow. Quick wins (such as fixing drains and collecting household waste from sites) would help the council engage with Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- The design of new (or redeveloped) sites should be of high quality and follow guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government wherever possible and lessons could be learned from other local authorities including Brighton and Hove. The development of Gypsy and Traveller Resident Associations based on a tenancy group model can provide those living on permanent sites, and in bricks and mortar accommodation, with a helpful support network. At such time as resources allow, a community centre on the site would aid community cohesion and engagement with the settled community. It would also give a base from which services such as health and education can operate from.
- The settled community faces anxiety when unauthorised encampments occur and the financial cost of enforcement and clear-up can be high. There is therefore a need to find a long term sustainable solution as Croydon sees a pattern of unauthorised encampments where there the same family groups face repeat evictions. Although the council has seen a decline in the number of unauthorised encampments in 2016, the cycle of unauthorised encampments and evictions will resume when one local Traveller family is forced to leave their land following planning permission refusal to develop it as a site.
- Large numbers of Gypsies and Travellers have been encouraged into bricks and mortar accommodation and this group comprises a bigger community than on sites and its needs are largely 'hidden'.
- There are a large number of further questions relating to the housing of Gypsies and Travellers in bricks and mortar accommodation which this review was unable to access (and some of these are provided in the body of the full report which accompanies this summary report).
- A Gypsy and Travellers Working Group with a membership drawn from the council, partners and elected Members could:
  - Encourage better partnership working and 'joined up' thinking through networking
  - Share experiences and best practice through regular meetings
  - Improve relationships with Gypsy and Traveller communities



- Form links with other local authorities and stakeholder groups
- Consider working together on setting up a Stakeholder Event (similar to the session which informed the Croydon GTANA 2013).
- Working with groups such as the Traveller Movement could help change the narrative about Gypsies and Travellers, break down stereotypes and help build positive relationships including with the press and media.

## Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Ensure that Cabinet Members with individual portfolio responsibilities for services affecting Gypsies and Travellers work together in conjunction with a named lead officer in order to co-ordinate the collective Cabinet response to the needs of this community, help unblock any problems they have in accessing services, advocate best practice within the Council and its partners and support bids for funding.
2. Establish a Gypsy and Travellers Working Group with a membership drawn from the council (eg. community safety and enforcement, parks, planning, health, tenancy, housing and education departments), partners (eg. the Police, Public Health, CCG, Octavo, relevant schools) and elected Members.
3. Ask the Gateway service to establish a tailored approach to respond to Gypsy and Traveller needs, specifically in relation to cultural aspects of housing allocation and provision.
4. Urge the Mayor of London to take a pan-London approach to the provision of transit sites across London to cater to Gypsies and Travellers passing through as this would result in fewer unauthorised encampments on both public and private land across the capital.
5. Actively work with neighbouring boroughs to investigate whether the provision of pan-borough transit site(s) is viable to help provide accommodation for travellers passing through the area as working with other boroughs is likely to reduce the amount of time the site(s) would be left empty.
6. Investigate whether the development of pan-borough transit site(s) would allow the strategic use of S62a powers (under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994).
7. Monitor the new combined transit and permanent site operated by Brighton & Hove council in order to assess its viability and whether it achieves its desired outcomes including reducing the number of unauthorised encampments within the city while providing a self-funded site.
8. Explore the option of making an application to the Mayor of London for funding from the Affordable Homes Fund for the development and refurbishment of sites and funding for a Gypsy and Traveller liaison officer.
9. Understand that it is vital that Pitch Allocation Policies for any new permanent site(s) are carefully drawn up and include clear and transparent procedures for allocating pitches and that they are developed in conjunction with Gypsy and Traveller communities.
10. Make sure the council is at the cutting edge of design so any site can be future proof and successfully house both English Gypsies and Irish Travellers. Additionally even though it is not relevant today but other groups such as New Travellers should be considered at the design stage.
11. Investigate the possibility of some Lathams Way residents moving to the new permanent site to make renovation of Latham's Way easier and cheaper, produce two mixed English/Irish camps and give Lathams Way a fresh start so the council can manage and take "ownership" of the site. In addition if a mixed permanent/transit site was to be considered Lathams Way would be then be a candidate as it would have space and is located on a major arterial road.
12. Consider the immediate use of negotiated stopping places and the use of 'social contracts' (as exemplified by Leeds GATE) for Gypsy and Traveller families known to have connections to the borough.
13. Undertake early engagement with Traveller family groups that are at risk of repeated evictions and allow creative and tailored approaches to provision of permanent sites in order to stop repeated evictions for the family and reduce costs to the council and Police.
14. Provide Biffa bins, waste services and portaloos to Gypsies and Travellers at unauthorised encampments and negotiated stopping places to help reduce waste and clean-up costs.

15. Establish Member learning and development sessions to increase knowledge and understanding of Gypsy and Traveller issues (see point 5.20, page 35, GTANA 2013).
16. Continue the good work already achieved in educating residents about un-licensed waste removal operators and encourage the Gypsy and Traveller community to get involved with “Don’t Mess With Croydon”.
17. Instruct the council’s press office to make sure good news stories about Gypsies and Travellers are promoted and help the Traveller community build a good relationship with the local press and, therefore, the wider community.

The Streets, Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Seek and review information from the Council’s housing department about Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation within the borough and the council’s approach to these protected ethnic groups.
2. Review and question how the needs of Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation are being delivered through the Council’s tenancy and homelessness strategies when the Sub-Committee reviews these strategies as part of its work programme 2016/17.

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

For the Croydon GTANA 2013, stakeholders agreed that whether living on sites or in bricks and mortar accommodation, Gypsy and Traveller families are less likely to access health, education and other services. Families living on unauthorised encampments found it particularly difficult to access all types of services.

### Health inequalities and exclusion

Gypsies and Travellers face considerable health inequalities compared to the general population including:

- Twenty times more likely to experience the death of a child.
- Three times more likely to have a chronic cough or bronchitis, even after smoking has been taken into account.
- Higher rates of miscarriage, still-birth and perinatal death.
- Higher child accident rates associated with instability of sites and lack of access to health care.
- Higher levels of mobility problems.
- High prevalence of diabetes and a lack of community knowledge of risk factors or of the implications of diabetes.

**Traveller and Gypsy communities experience worse health, yet are less likely to receive effective, continuous healthcare than the settled population. Despite these greater health needs, Gypsies and Travellers use mainstream health services less than other members of the population. Some of the reasons for this involve practical difficulties, such as registering for and accessing services, while the isolation of sites can create problems in accessing doctors, dentists and opticians for example.**

Gypsies and Travellers have difficulty in accessing health services including:

- Primary care services as proof of identity and a permanent address is required
- Minor injuries units
- Immunisation programmes
- Screening services

Being on the move constantly can result in discontinuity of care and interruption or delays in medical treatment. There is an increased reliance on self-medication and walk-in centres and Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments where there is no follow-up or continuity of care. Poor literacy skills and fear of discrimination (resulting in non-engagement and hiding ethnicity) also affect access. Using A&E as the first port of call for health care is expensive and put strain on an already stretched service so reversing this trend aids everyone. Meanwhile, many health professionals lack the skills, support and cultural understanding/awareness of these communities, and commissioners may not have the financial incentives to deliver high quality care to these groups.

### Access to education

Gypsy and Traveller children's educational achievements are lower than children in the general population (including other BAME children) and declining still further - contrary to the national trend. Literacy tends to be more of an issue than maths. It has been repeatedly suggested in anecdotal evidence from front-line staff and during a review held at Westminster in 2011<sup>ii</sup>, that this is associated with the decline of Traveller Education Services.

Gypsy and Traveller children often start school later than other children (in Year 1) and never attend nursery as Traveller families tend not to allow young children to be looked after by strangers. Although the council has been quite successful in encouraging Gypsy and Traveller children to attend primary school, participation in secondary education is extremely low as Gypsies and Travellers do not always see formal secondary education as meeting their needs which are more skills or trade-based. Many Gypsy and Traveller families will make education choices on an assessment of risk to their child/children – rather than the education benefits a particular school might offer – and a high number are Pupil Premium eligible. Faith (Catholic) and single sex girls schools are preferred by many Gypsies and Travellers which further exacerbates the problem.

**In 2011 just 25% of Gypsy and Traveller pupils achieved national expectations at the end of their primary education compared to 74% of all pupils. At the end of secondary education just 12% achieved five or more good GCSEs compared to 58% of all pupils<sup>iii</sup>.**

Gypsy and Traveller pupils experience the highest rate of exclusions of any group and are approximately 2-4 times more likely to receive permanent or fixed term exclusions (DfE pupils census 2014). In 2012 the Children's Commissioner found that 100% of GRT exclusions it reviewed were overturned on appeal.

Traveller Education Services (TESs) were set up in the 1990s to support Gypsy and Traveller communities. TESs aim to help get children into education and stay in education by maintaining attendance. However many across the country have experienced funding cuts and in Croydon 2 FTE posts have been cut to 1 PT post (2-days per week). In addition, there used to be a library bus which attended Gypsy and Traveller sites including Lathams Way, but this service no longer exists within the borough.

Some schools are more supportive of Gypsy and Traveller needs than others and there are pockets of best practice in the borough including: Kingsley Primary School; Harris Academy, Purley; Meridian High School, New Addington and St Mary's Roman Catholic High School, Croydon.

## Discrimination

There are many negative and entrenched views held by the public about Gypsies and Travellers and the community may face racism and discrimination – individually or as a group - on a regular basis. Reported examples include where a pub puts a sign on the door saying 'No Travellers'. A recent report from the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups found that nearly 9 out of every 10 children and young people from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller background have suffered racial abuse and nearly two thirds have also been bullied or physically attacked.<sup>iv</sup>

**Research from The Traveller Movement shows that 74% hide ethnicity regularly in order to avoid discrimination.**

The Croydon GTANA 2013 reported that 90% of Gypsy and Traveller families living in bricks and mortar accommodation had suffered discrimination when trying to access services. All families (100%) stated that they had been a victim of racism or bullying although only 40% of the Gypsies and Travellers experiencing harassment or bullying had reported the incident to the police. The main reasons for not doing so included wanting to deal with such problems within the Gypsy and Traveller community or believing that reporting incidences to authorities would be ineffective.

National evidence suggests that hate crime is also an issue faced by some members of the Gypsy and Traveller community although there has been a lack of evidence to clarify the severity or frequency of this. Recent research from The Traveller Movement however shows that 69% of Gypsies and Travellers have experienced hate crime, though often individuals are unaware that it is a hate crime.

### Conclusions

In relation to health inequalities and exclusion, the review concluded:

- There was little local knowledge about the health needs and potential inequalities of transient and housed Gypsy and Traveller communities within the borough.
- A Health Needs Assessment for these communities as part of the next JNSA<sup>4</sup> cycle could help provide this information and the opportunities for commissioners to design health services based on need, eg. in relation to MMR immunisations and screening services including for cancers.
- Understanding how services can be tailored to engage with health discrepancies may show that early intervention tailored for Gypsy and Traveller populations (rather than late diagnosis) is cost-effective.
- Increasing understanding and knowledge transfer about the practical and communication barriers Gypsy and Traveller communities face in accessing services among health and social care practitioners could be beneficial
- Targeted health visitor programmes elsewhere have increased immunisation rates dramatically as well as take-up of cervical and bowel cancer screening which is often regarded as shameful or traditionally taboo and there may be lessons to be learned from this and other work with 'hard to reach' communities.
- There may be scope for delivering training to representatives from within Gypsy and Traveller communities so that they can cascade health information to community members (as mentors) and act as liaison points in relation to accessing or maintaining ongoing health care.
- There may be scope for outreach immunisation or smoking cessation programmes as there has been some very successful work in other areas around opportunistic outreach to unauthorised encampments and/or going onto sites or housing estates with high levels of Gypsy and Traveller populations.
- There is the potential for Croydon CCG to:
  - Gather information about the health needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities in the borough
  - Assess the level of existing expertise (or not) in the borough
  - Undertake training and information sharing among GPs and the wider health community
  - Encourage engagement with Gypsies and Travellers and ask how the CCGs services are seeking to ensure inclusion of these groups in relation to core priorities such as dementia, immunisations and screening.

In relation to access to education, the review concluded:

- The dropout rate for Gypsy and Traveller children is unacceptably high, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4, and this damages education attainment and the long term employment prospects of young people.
- There seems to be little or no knowledge of Gypsy and Traveller history, culture and language in many schools and in some cases schools act in an insensitive way when engaging with Gypsies and Travellers.
- Croydon's TES provides valuable support to pupils, parents and schools, increasing the likelihood of Gypsy and Traveller pupils receiving a better education and improving employment prospects.
- The Croydon TES representative who attended the Gypsy and Traveller Welfare event was extremely knowledgeable about welfare and social exclusions issues and seemed to be alone in being in regular contact with all Gypsy and Travellers groups in the borough, whether they are transient or permanent residents on sites or in bricks and mortar accommodation.

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<sup>4</sup> Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - a process that identifies the health and wellbeing needs (ie. problems) and assets (ie. strengths) of the people, communities and populations in order to improve local people's health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

On discrimination facing Gypsies and Travellers, the review concluded:

- Gypsies and Travellers face ingrained direct and indirect discrimination and racism and may also experience hate crime.
- Gypsies and Travellers tend not to report discrimination and hate crime for a number of reasons including a belief that 'nothing will be done' and a desire to maintain privacy.
- Efforts to engage with Gypsy and Traveller communities and build bridges with the settled community have been beneficial elsewhere and lessons can be learned from other local authorities, including Brighton and Hove.

## Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Work with Health partners to ensure that the social isolation and exclusion needs of Gypsies and Travellers are considered within the joint commissioning and volunteering priorities identified by the Fairness Commission, particularly in relation to 'Leaving No Child Behind'.
2. Consider using existing resources to develop an outreach service to cover the healthcare and mental health needs of families possibly using peer Health and Education mentors drawn from Gypsy and Traveller communities.
3. Explore the potential for role models and mentors to be identified to support, guide and encourage other young people from Gypsy and Traveller communities stay in education and/or training from Key Stage 3 and beyond (as highlighted in the 2010 DfE report Improving the outcomes for Gypsy Roma and Traveller Pupils).
4. Encourage all schools and academies to share best practice on the particular cultural needs of Gypsy and Traveller pupils particularly from Key Stage 3, including those needing special education needs support.
5. Explore the opportunity for vocational courses to be offered in Croydon for young people aged 14+ including Gypsy and Traveller young people.
6. Consider the schools admissions process and in particular undertake targeted work to prevent late applications, provide support for online applications and to take into account 'home to school' distance during the school admissions process in order to help drive up attendance at school.
7. Review its funding for Croydon's TES to ensure that this valuable service, which supports pupils, parents and schools and increases the likelihood of Gypsy and Traveller pupils accessing and staying in education, is protected from further cuts.
8. Encourage schools and academies to promote Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month so that Gypsy and Traveller culture, language and history receive greater recognition.

Public Health Croydon is recommended to:

1. Undertake a Health Needs Assessment for housed and transient Gypsies and Travellers within the borough as part of the next JNSA cycle to ensure effective commissioning of health services for these communities; their inclusion in NHS data monitoring systems and up-to-date research; and develop community engagement training for frontline staff engaging with these groups.

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

1. Support a 1-2 year outreach project for a Health Visitor(s) in order to gather information and test interventions eg. for immunisation, diabetes and screening programmes.

## SOURCES:

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- <sup>i</sup> Croydon GTANA 2013, evidence compiled for the Croydon Local Plan (Detailed Policies and Policies) in 2015 and the emerging Local Plan proposed submission sites in the Croydon Local Plan: Detailed Policies and Proposals (publication 5 September to 17 October 2016 and approved by Cabinet 11 July 2016).
- <sup>ii</sup> Source: [http://www.travellersaidtrust.org/big\\_or\\_divided\\_society.pdf](http://www.travellersaidtrust.org/big_or_divided_society.pdf) pp53-59
- <sup>iii</sup> The Traveller Movement – Improving the education outcomes for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils, February 2015
- <sup>iv</sup> ‘Gypsy, Traveller Roma: Experts by Experience’, National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, 2014