

Needs Assessment 2024

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

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Executive Summary

This Needs Assessment is a comprehensive analysis undertaken by local authorities and health partners to understand the current and future health and well-being needs of people of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) ethnicity within The Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames (RBK). The needs assessment process identifies health disparities and inequities between the GRT population and people of other ethnicities, assesses the effectiveness of existing services, and proposes new recommendations.

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities encompass a range of ethnicities, cultures and experiences. These groups are often poorly represented within national, regional and local datasets¹, and have been impacted by significant structural barriers and discrimination², leading to a poor understanding of the health needs of this population³. GRT communities experience significantly worse health outcomes when compared to other ethnic groups. The 2021 census found that 27% of people in England and Wales who identified as Gypsy, Roma or Traveller reported bad or very bad health, compared to an average of 3% across all other ethnic groups in England and Wales⁴. Similarly, a 2022 report on the health of people of Gypsy and Traveller ethnicity (carried out by the organisation Friends, Family and Travellers) found that the health of a Gypsy or Traveller person in their sixties was comparable to that of a White British person in their eighties. The report also found that the Gypsy and Traveller population experiences poor mental health, with a suicide prevalence six times higher than that of the wider population³.

In the context of these inequalities, this needs assessment aimed to explore and summarise the impact of the wider determinants of health on outcomes and experiences within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations. This report combines a comprehensive analysis of census data, grey literature and white literature with a thematic analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews with key stakeholders (including a range of people of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ethnicity who live in Kingston), to outline the major challenges that threaten the health of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Challenges that we identified included:

- Mistrust towards authority structures due to historical discrimination across sectors.
- Lack of visibility in mainstream data sets leading to unidentified needs within services.
- Digital exclusion and limited access to accessible information.
- Inequalities in access to healthcare waiting lists for nomadic populations.
- Lack of education, open discussions and awareness surrounding sexual, reproductive and maternal health.
- Risk of poor educational attainment and low educational participation among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations.
- Gendered structures affecting the well-being of women and girls.
- Vulnerability to poverty, particularly in the context of the cost of living crisis.

The recommendations section within this report addresses the issues outlined above, taking into consideration the needs and concerns raised by stakeholders during our key interviews and focus groups, which invariably echoed issues that emerged from our review of literature and analysis of existing data.

Recommendations:

- Address the urgent need for a Fire Safety Assessment at the Swallow Park site that is currently home to many members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.
- Improve the collection of meaningful data about the GRT community and the utilisation of these data in the creation of health interventions.
- Work with GRT communities to identify and respond to specific needs. These may include:
 - Gender separated support groups
 - Culturally sensitive approaches to family planning, sexual health education and care provision
 - Enhanced mental health support
 - Identification of high-risk families and provision of extra support

- Monitor the uptake of admissions at secondary school level and provide support to those at risk of leaving school early.
- Support widening access programs that facilitate access to higher education among this population.
- Create a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller steering group for Kingston.
- Ensure that relevant RBK communications are reaching Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and are provided in an accessible format.
- Review outcomes from existing “We Want to Look After you” outreach programme initiated by Chessington Park Surgery to address the health needs of the GRT population, and consider expansion or incorporation of principles into other services.
- Further work assessing the social care needs of this population.

Introduction

This Needs Assessment aimed to identify disparities between health outcomes among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities and people of other ethnicities, assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of existing services (with respect to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities), and make recommendations to improve the health of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations within Kingston. The findings and recommendations from this needs assessment should inform the development of Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies and other work and plans.

The needs assessment was created using two sets of analyses: an up-to-date analysis of secondary sources (including the 2021 census, a range of grey literature, and peer reviewed studies), and a qualitative analysis of key interviews carried out with a range of stakeholders (including several Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals living in Kingston). While this report will explore multiple aspects of the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in Kingston, accommodation and housing will not be included, as an accommodation assessment for this population is currently the subject of a [pan-London needs assessment](#) currently being undertaken by the Greater London Authority.

This report is divided into four chapters. The first chapter will provide a brief overview of the history and culture of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations. The second chapter will outline the results of our literature review and analysis of census data, exploring the age distribution, employment patterns, educational pathways and health outcomes of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. The third chapter will describe the methods of our key interviews and focus groups, and will discuss the themes that emerged from this piece of work. The fourth chapter will synthesise the results from our analyses into a set of key findings, and will outline our recommendations for improving the health of the GRT population within Kingston.

CHAPTER ONE

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: An overview

The term 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller' (GRT) is often used in the UK to describe people from a range of ethnic backgrounds. While these populations share certain characteristics - in particular, a tradition of nomadism - the groups encompassed by the term GRT have a diverse range of languages, history and cultures⁵ as represented in [Figure 1](#)⁶.

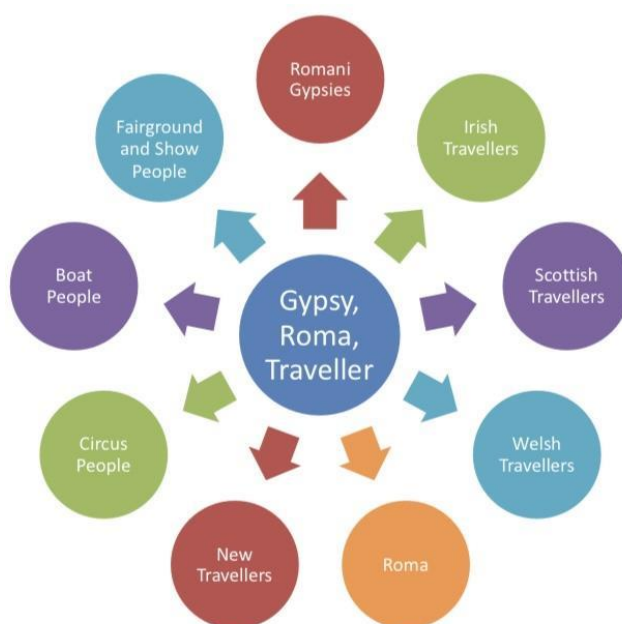


Figure 1. Daisy of Diversity: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Irish Travellers

The Irish Traveller community is a nomadic group originating from Ireland, with historical roots dating back to the 12th century. Some Irish Travellers identify their ethnicity as Pavee or Minceir, utilising terms derived from the Shelta language (spoken among Irish Travellers)⁷.

Romany Gypsies

Romany Gypsies are part of a global Romani community (including people of Roma, Kale and Sinti ethnicity) who are thought to have left India in the 11th century. Romany people arrived in Britain in the 1500s, many migrating from continental Europe. The term "Gypsy" was coined by the settled population, and originated from a perceived resemblance to Egyptians. While some Romani groups in Europe have reclaimed the term, others view it to be a slur⁸.

Other Traveller Groups

Various Indigenous nomadic populations existed in Britain before the arrival of Romany Gypsies, contributing to diverse cultures - in the present day, many other groups traverse the UK, including Scottish Travellers, Welsh Travellers, and English Travellers. In addition, the UK is also home to "cultural" Travellers, such as "new" Travellers and Showmen. Show People are deeply rooted in funfair and circus businesses, with designated winter quarters for preparation. They are represented by the Showmen's Guild, which advocates for their economic well-being. "New Travellers" or "New Age Travellers" emerged from the hippie and free festival movements, while Barge Travellers reside on the UK's extensive canal network⁵.

CHAPTER TWO

Sociodemography of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population

Population

The GRT population in England and Wales

The number of individuals from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller backgrounds who voluntarily disclosed their ethnicity in the UK's decennial census has significantly increased, rising from 57,680 in 2011 to 168,749 in 2021. This surge in disclosure can primarily be attributed to the inclusion of Roma as a distinct ethnic category for the first time⁹. Projects such as the Traveller Movement's Stand up and Be Counted Census campaign have been very successful in increasing participation among those who identify as Gypsy or Irish Traveller, however there still exists a significant trust gap between people from these backgrounds and the state or public services, meaning that the official census record is likely still an underestimation of the true size of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population in the UK, which may be high as 500,000¹⁰. [Figure 2](#) outlines the breakdown of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population in England and Wales by region.

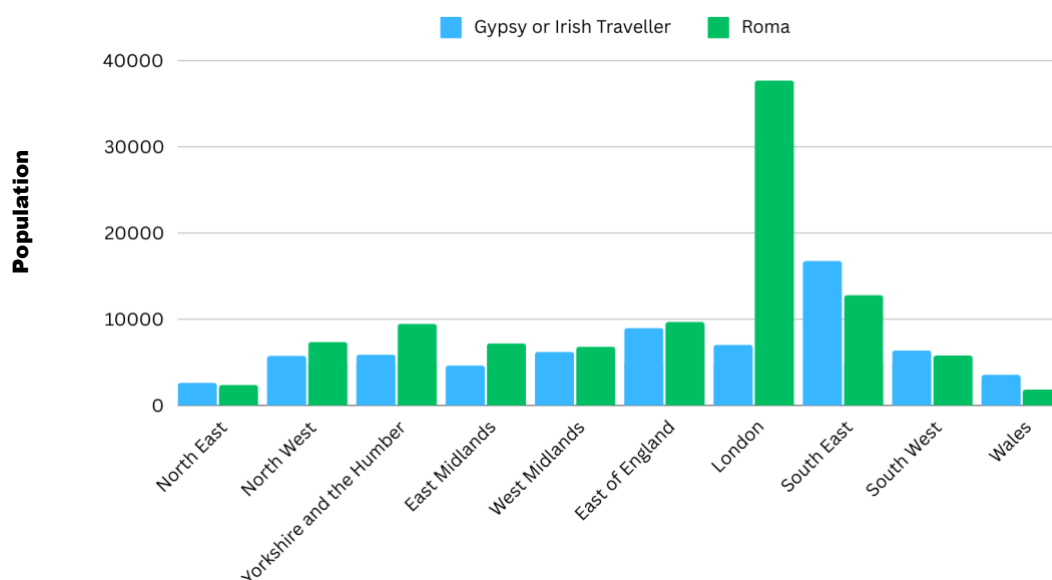


Figure 2. GRT population in England and Wales by region

The GRT population In Kingston

In the 2021 census, 63 residents of Kingston reported their ethnicity as Gypsy or Irish Traveller (a decrease from the 95 people who reported this ethnicity in 2011). The Roma population of Kingston (recorded as a distinct group for the first time in 2021) was 442 people.

In total, people of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ethnicity make up 0.3% of the Kingston population - a figure similar to the proportion of the population of England who identify as Gypsy, Roma and/or Traveller (0.3%), but smaller than the proportion of the population of London who identify as Gypsy, Roma and/or Traveller (0.5%).

Age

Age of the GRT population in England and Wales

The 2021 census found the Gypsy and Traveller population of England and Wales to be significantly younger than the wider population, with 44.6% of people who identify as Gypsy or Traveller aged under 25, (compared with 26.6% of the White British population)¹¹.

The census found the Roma population to be older than the Gypsy and Traveller population (31.3% were aged under 25), and significantly younger than the White British population (97.4% were under the age of 65, compared with 77.5% of the England and Wales population)¹². [Figure 3](#) outlines the population age distribution by ethnicity.

Age of the GRT population in Kingston

The age distribution of the Roma and Gypsy/Irish Traveller populations in Kingston are similar to those seen at the national level. A particularly small proportion of this population are of middle and older age, with 31.7% of the Gypsy/Irish Traveller population and 13.4% of the Roma population aged 50 or older (compared to 39.7% of the White British population in Kingston). [Figure 4](#) outlines the population age distribution by ethnicity.

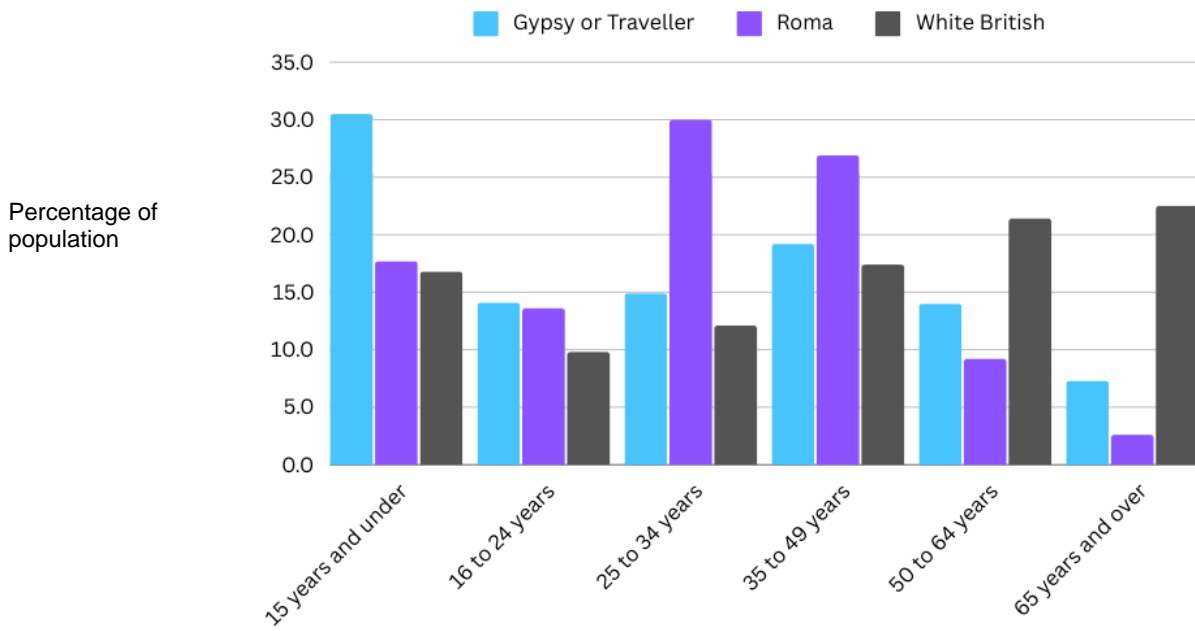


Figure 3. Proportion of population in each age group by ethnicity (England and Wales 2021)

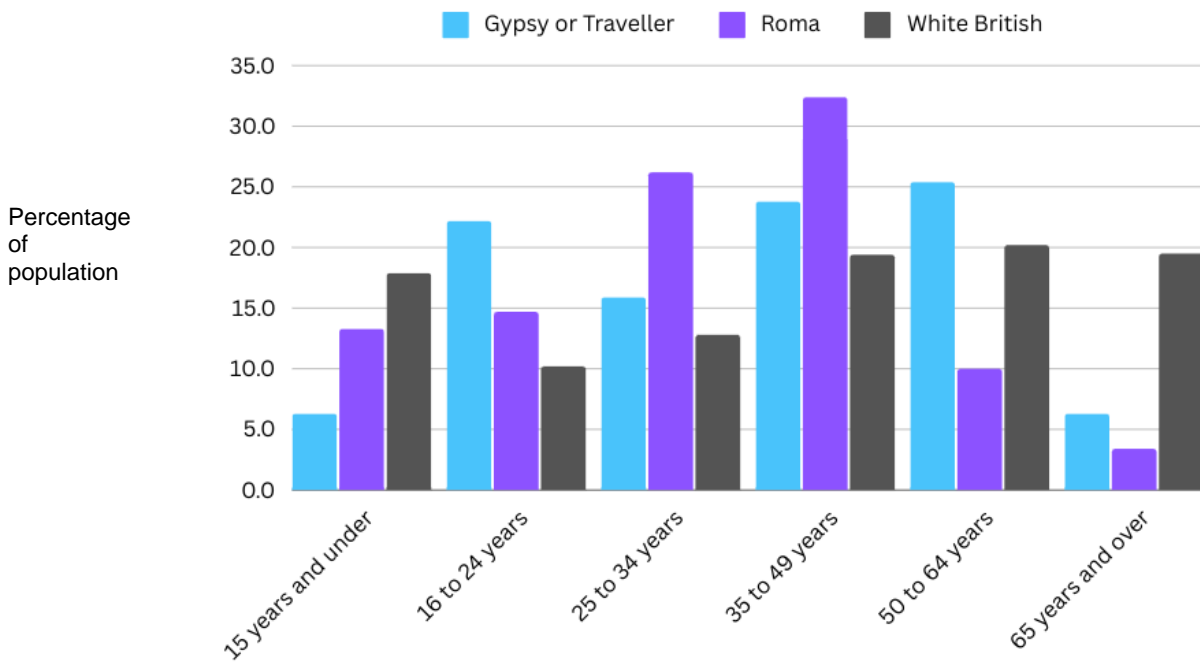


Figure 4. Proportion of population in each age group by ethnicity (Kingston 2021)

Employment and economic activity

Employment and economic activity: the national picture

The 2021 census found individuals who identified as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller to have markedly different patterns of employment when compared to people of other ethnicities. People of Gypsy and Traveller ethnicity were much more likely to be economically inactive (neither in work nor looking for work) - while 52.1% of Gypsy and Traveller respondents aged 16 or older reported being both economically inactive and not in full time education, only 37.0% of White British people in this age bracket reported the same. This disparity is particularly stark, especially given that the Gypsy/Traveller population is younger than the White British population, meaning that individuals in this community are less likely to be of retirement age.

People who identified as Roma reported much higher levels of economic activity than other ethnic groups (only 18.8% of Roma people aged 16 or older reported being both economically inactive and outside of full time education). The type of employment that they reported, however, differed from that reported by people of other ethnicities: 32.2% of working age (16 - 64) people of Roma ethnicity reported working in routine or semi-routine (sometimes described as 'semi- or un-skilled') occupations, compared to 22.7% of working age White British people. Similarly, 35.4% of White British people worked in professional or managerial occupations, compared to 18.7% of Roma people and 10.3% of Gypsy/Traveller people.

These patterns have significant implications for the economic stability of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations. Routine and semi-routine occupations are often lower paid and less secure than professional occupations¹³, and economic inactivity is also directly linked to household poverty¹⁴.

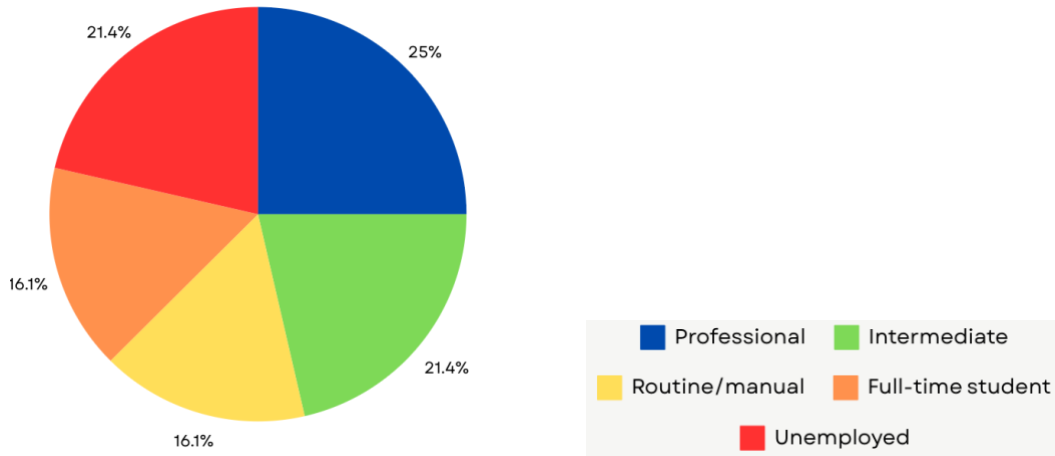
Employment and economic activity: the GRT population in Kingston

Patterns of economic activity and employment among the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population of Kingston are similar to those seen at the national level. In the 2021 Census, 51.8% of Gypsy/Traveller people over the age of 16 in Kingston reported

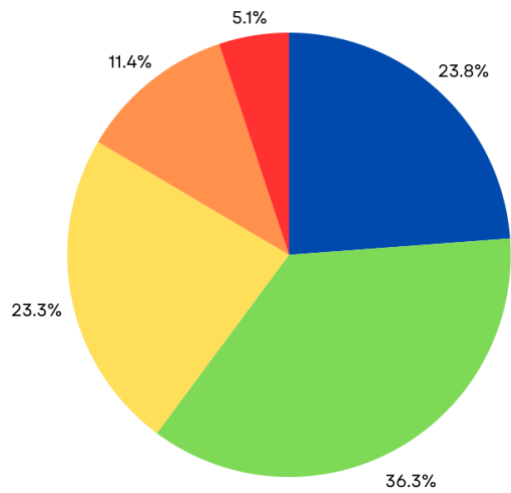
being economically inactive and outside of full-time education, compared to 36.4% of White British people and 20.3% of Roma people. Unemployment was particularly high among Gypsy and Traveller populations, with 21.4% of working age (16 - 64 years) people of this ethnicity reporting long term unemployment or having never worked, compared to 5.1% of working age Roma people and 4.3% of working age White British people. [Figure 5](#) outlines the distribution of occupations among working age people in Kingston, broken down by ethnicity.

Figure 5. Distribution of occupations in Kingston by ethnicity

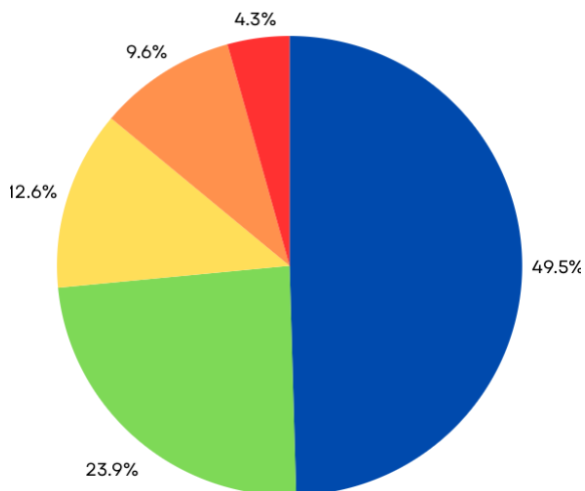
Gypsy/Traveller ethnicity



Roma ethnicity



White British ethnicity



Education

Educational attainment and participation: the national picture

Data collected by the Department for Education (DfE) has consistently shown significantly lower educational attainment among children who identify as Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller when compared to the wider population. During the 2022-23 academic year, 18% of primary school children who identified as Gypsy or Roma, and 21% of children who identified as Irish Traveller achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics (compared to 60% of primary pupils nationally)¹⁵. Similarly, 16% of secondary school children who identified as Gypsy or Roma, and 31% of children who identified as Irish Traveller, achieved a standard pass (grade 4) in both English and Maths GCSE (compared to 65% of state school pupils nationally)¹⁶. Persistent absence (missing 10% or more of school sessions) is particularly high among Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children, with 64.9% of Gypsy and Roma children and 71.7% of Irish Traveller children persistently absent during the 2021 - 22 school year (compared to 23.3% of White British children)¹⁷.

The reasons for this are complex. A 2017 King's College report found multiple structural and cultural barriers to educational participation among the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population¹⁸. Although the majority of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people now live in settled accommodation¹⁹, a significant minority still move frequently, and the King's College report found that this could have an impact on educational continuity. The report also found a range of concerns and beliefs that contributed to reticence among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents surrounding mainstream education. Language barriers and a limited knowledge of official systems were found to prevent parents from accessing the educational system (particularly among the Roma community). In addition, racism and discrimination experienced by both parents and students was found to have a significant impact on willingness to attend school. Qualitative work within the report identified intrafamilial barriers to education as well. Some young people felt pressure to leave school early and enter paid employment (often alongside parents or family members), particularly in the context of poverty and insecure housing.

Many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families also feel that school-based education does not align with their cultural values and norms. For example, a 2011 report by the Pavee Point Travellers Centre found that compulsory sex education in secondary schools was considered a "taboo" among many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, and contributed to parents' decision to withdraw their children from traditional schooling and opt for home education instead²⁰.

Educational attainment and participation: the GRT population in Kingston

Although there is not significant data on the educational experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children currently living in Kingston, the 2021 census gives some insight into the educational attainment level of young people living in the borough. Among young people aged 16 to 20 living in Kingston, 43% of respondents who identified as Gypsy or Traveller reported having no qualifications, compared to 26% of Roma young people and 15% of White British young people. Similarly, while 78% of White British people in this age group reported being in full time education, this fell to 61% among Roma young people and 50% among Gypsy and Traveller young people.

Health

Health of the GRT population - the national picture

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population have consistently experienced significantly worse health outcomes than people of other ethnicities.

The 2021 Census found that 12.7% of people who identified as Gypsy or Traveller in England and Wales reported bad or very bad general health, compared to 5.3% of White British people. As with other outcomes, this is particularly stark in the context of the relative youth of the Gypsy/Traveller population. Studies have found people of Gypsy and Traveller ethnicity to be significantly more likely to be living with a long term condition than white British people²¹, and the health-related quality of life (HRQoL) of Gypsy and Traveller people has been found to be equivalent to the HRQoL experienced by White British people who were twenty years older²². Maternal and infant health is also worse among Gypsy and Traveller populations, with a 1 in 5 rate of baby loss among Gypsy and Traveller mothers (compared to a 1 in 100 rate averaged across other ethnicities)²³. While less data are available about health outcomes among Roma people, they have also been found to have poorer overall health and a significantly lower life expectancy than other populations within the UK²⁴.

A 2022 report by the organisation Friends, Families and Travellers outlined multiple key issues that act as barriers to healthcare access for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations in the UK³. These included:

1. Lack of visibility in mainstream data sets (for example, The NHS data model and dictionary do not include Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller ethnicities), leading to unidentified needs within services.
2. Experiences of discrimination leading to unwillingness to access healthcare services.
3. Wrongful registration refusal in primary care and inequalities in access to healthcare waiting lists for nomadic populations.
4. Digital exclusion and limited access to accessible information.

5. Failure within services to consider the premature onset of conditions typically associated with older age.

There are also numerous structural and cultural factors that also have an impact on the health of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. These include:

- **Poverty and social vulnerability**

As previously outlined, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are often more vulnerable to poverty than people of other ethnicities. This, in itself, is likely to contribute to poorer physical and mental health outcomes²⁵. There are many factors that are likely to exacerbate the impact of poverty on the health of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations. For example, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people living in caravans and mobile homes are disproportionately affected by the increased cost of energy, and are often unable to access household support²⁶. In addition, threats to the health of the wider population have been shown to disproportionately affect the health of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated challenges with digital exclusion, language barriers, and inadequate accommodation^{27,28}, while Brexit has been linked to loss of EU funding for projects aimed at improving the health of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities²⁹.

- **Systemic, institutional and interpersonal racism**

A 2017 report by The Traveller Movement found that 70% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people had experienced discrimination in education, 49% in employment, and 30% in accessing healthcare. Over 75% had encountered hate speech or experienced hate crimes. This pervasive experience of racism can both prevent individuals from seeking support with challenges that impact their health, and impact the likelihood of them receiving appropriate and adequate support from institutions².

- **Gender roles**

Qualitative investigations of gender among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations within the UK have found that many families within these communities adhere to strict gender roles. Such gender division can impact the agency that women and girls have with regards to their own health and wellbeing, particularly given cultural taboos surrounding sexual, reproductive and maternal health³⁰.

- **Cultural perceptions of health**

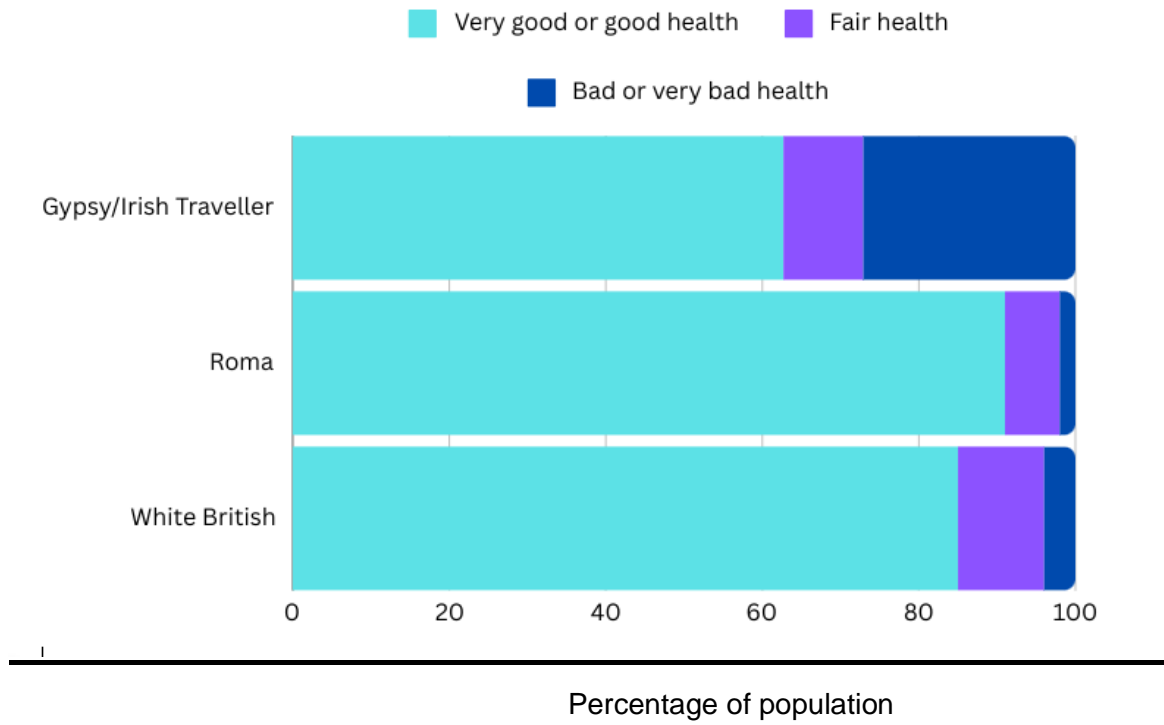
Multiple qualitative studies have described a culture of stoicism surrounding health among people of Gypsy and Traveller ethnicity, along with an expectation of poor health and a reluctance to access healthcare, particularly in the context of systemic and institutional discrimination^{31,32}.

Health of the GRT population in Kingston

As with the wider England and Wales population, the 2021 census found the health status of the Gypsy and Traveller community of Kingston to be significantly worse than that of the wider population (as outlined in [Figure 6](#)). Health was rated as 'bad or very bad' by 27% of the Gypsy and Irish Traveller population of Kingston, compared to 4% of the White British population. This disparity was even more pronounced when broken down by age - poor health was experienced at a particularly young age by people of Gypsy and Irish Traveller ethnicity, with 29% of people aged 25 to 24 in this population reporting 'bad or very bad health' (compared to 1.7% of White British people in the same age group).

Surprisingly, Roma people reported overall predominantly very good or good health (91% of Roma respondents). As this contrasts significantly with research showing poorer health levels in the Roma population, further investigation is needed to fully understand these data among this population.

Figure 6. Health status of individuals in Kingston, by ethnicity (2021 census)



CHAPTER THREE

Key findings from interviews with key stakeholders

A vital part of the needs assessment process was the collection and analysis of qualitative data from people living in Kingston who identify as Gypsy, Roma and/or Traveller, and professionals from a range of organisations who work with local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations. The results of this qualitative work illuminated the findings outlined in Chapter Two, and allowed us to better understand the specific needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population in Kingston.

Interviews with professional stakeholders

A mapping exercise conducted prior to the needs assessment identified the following key stakeholders who work with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations in Kingston:

- Surrey Community Action
- Health Visitors
- Surbiton Fire Service
- Kingston Carers Network
- Young Carers Project
- Kingston Hospital
- Achieving for Children
- General Practitioners
- Surbiton Area Local Schools (Tolworth)
- Community Development (Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames)
- Metropolitan Police (Tolworth and Hook Ward)
- Planning Enforcement (Royal Borough of Kingston)
- Contingency Planning (Royal Borough of Kingston)
- Resident Services (Royal Borough of Kingston)
- Public Health (Royal Borough of Kingston)

Four individual interviews and one focus group session were carried out with professionals from the above organisations. Although we had originally aimed to carry out more interviews, we were unable to due to the availability of the professionals involved. However, on analysis, we found that the four interviews and the focus group took us to "theoretical saturation" (the point where further data collection does not lead

to substantially new insights). An extract from one interview with a professional stakeholder can be found in Appendix 2.

Themes identified through interviews with professional stakeholders:

- **Communication:**
 - Challenges when using leaflets and letters to communicate with this population were discussed - stakeholders felt that face-to-face interaction is more appropriate when working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations.
 - Literacy challenges - stakeholders recommended use of 'easy-read' materials to improve accessibility to printed materials among this population.
- **Education:**
 - Absenteeism in schools was commonly identified as a challenge facing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in Kingston.
- **Health and healthcare:**
 - Stakeholders observed that some members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations have greater confidence in community health knowledge than in professional medical advice.
 - There were concerns about the spread of misinformation and health conspiracies, leading to "anti-vax" sentiment within some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
 - Stakeholders described challenges around discussing taboo topics such as sexual, reproductive, menstrual and maternal health.
- **Working with and supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities:**
 - Stakeholders emphasised the open and responsive nature of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities when relationships are established.
 - Importance of regular Needs Assessments with regards to this population was a recurrent theme during interviews.
 - Stakeholders emphasised the need for Cultural Awareness training for professionals working with people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Interviews with members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

We conducted semi-structured interviews with members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in Kingston. Participants with a range of ages, family backgrounds and health statuses were recruited via purposive sampling. The interview questions explored five domains with four to seven questions on each topic: general health and access to services; lifestyle; vaccination; health beliefs; education and children and early years if appropriate.

Themes identified through interviews with members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals in Kingston:

General Health and Access to Services:

- All of the respondents were registered with local GPs.
- Barriers to accessing healthcare included: gender preference for doctors, fear of diagnosis, lack of internet access, literacy issues, and challenges with online forms.
- People reported that their long-term health conditions were managed with the support of GPs and pharmacies, with positive experiences noted.

Lifestyle and Health:

- Participants had concerns about expensive fresh food and poor quality processed food in supermarkets.
- Mental well-being was a major concern for all participants, with stress, depression, and anxiety commonly mentioned.
- Many participants reported limited physical activity due to a range of barriers, including caregiving responsibilities.
- Some smoking habits were noted by participants, with awareness of its negative impact.
- Participants reported reluctance to seek support for challenges with drug and alcohol misuse, with stigma towards the Gypsy, Roma and community cited as a common barrier.
- Participants reported a desire for women-only services and more accessible summer activities for children.

Vaccination and Health Beliefs:

- There were mixed attitudes towards vaccines among participants, with vaccine hesitancy being common due to perceived side effects and mistrust of information from official sources.
- There were a range of beliefs about causes of illness, including germs, stress, and political drivers.

Education and Digital Access:

- Respondents had varied experiences of the education system, with some respondents reporting that discrimination was a barrier to educational opportunity.
- The gendered nature of educational opportunities and expectations within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities was highlighted by several participants.
- Interest in educational courses for personal and child development was expressed by some participants.
- There was limited interest in higher (post-18) education due to concerns about job prospects.

Children & Early Years:

- Participants noted positive experiences with health visitors, although involvement of these professionals tapered as children got older.
- Concerns about child development and ADHD were raised by participants.
- Desire for more financial support for children and parents was mentioned by several participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary of findings, and recommendations for addressing the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations in Kingston

Challenges threatening the health of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations:

As detailed in the previous three chapters, this needs assessment identified the following challenges faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations:

- Mistrust towards authority structures due to historical discrimination across sectors.
- Lack of visibility in mainstream data sets leading to unidentified needs within services.
- Digital exclusion and limited access to accessible information.
- Inequalities in access to healthcare waiting lists for nomadic populations.
- Lack of education, open discussions and awareness surrounding sexual, reproductive and maternal health.
- Risk of poor educational attainment and low educational participation among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations.
- Gendered structures affecting the well-being of women and girls.
- Vulnerability to poverty, particularly in the context of the cost of living crisis.

Recommendations for addressing the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations in Kingston

We used the quantitative and qualitative data outlined in the previous two chapters to create a range of recommendations for addressing the needs identified within our analyses. These recommendations are as follows:

Fire Safety Assessment

There is an urgent need for a Fire Safety Assessment at the Swallow Park site that is currently home to many members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

Numerous residents have expressed their concerns regarding the site's overcrowded conditions that could seriously hinder the access of emergency services and obstruct escape routes for the residents on-site in case of a fire.

Staff Cultural Awareness Training

Cultural awareness training has been identified by various stakeholders as a measure that will foster inclusivity, improve cross-cultural communication with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and give professionals the opportunity to provide appropriate support.

Communication

Stakeholders were concerned that professionals are not using communication techniques that are accessible to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations. Design of communication materials needs to take digital exclusion, language barriers and low literacy levels into account.

Identify High Risk Families and provide extra support

The needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are not homogeneous. High risk families need to be identified and tailored support provided that addresses their specific needs.

Women Only and Men Only Support groups

Several interviewees within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community suggested that gender separated services could help improve access for this population - both for women (who may face barriers to services that require interaction with men outside of the community) and men (who may feel less stigmatised within services specifically aimed at men within the community, particularly with regards to drug and alcohol support).

Enhanced Mental Health Support

All Gypsy, Roma and Traveller interviewees mentioned experiencing poor mental health, and many expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of mental health services. Tailored mental health services aimed at this community are a key priority.

Tailored Family Planning and Sexual Health support

Many stakeholders felt that sexual, reproductive and maternal health literacy within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities were affected by 'taboos' around the discussion of these topics. Tailored sexual and reproductive education and services may help to address sexual and reproductive health challenges within this population.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Steering Group for Kingston

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames doesn't currently have a network of professionals who work with and for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. We therefore recommend the creation of a steering group to help structurally address some of the challenges identified in the needs assessment.

Outreach and engagement with the Roma population

While much discourse has centred around the Gypsy and Traveller populations, census data indicates that the Roma population of Kingston is substantial, and likely to have their own range of diverse needs that should be explored and addressed.

Monitor admissions at Secondary School Level

We recommend closer monitoring of educational attainment among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children - in particular, identification and support for those who are at risk of barriers to progression from primary to secondary school.

Widening access programs for higher education

We recommend support for educational institutions to widen access to higher education for individuals from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. One example of an initiative that supports this aim is the 'GTRSB (Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, Showmen and Boaters) into Higher Education' pledge that has been signed by 15 universities within the UK ^{33,34}.

Evaluate the “We Want to Look After You” project

To effectively communicate with members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, a WhatsApp project called 'We Want to Look After You' was created by Chessington Park GP Surgery. Community members are invited to join and receive regular broadcast messages, typically sent every few weeks. Members also have access to tailored videos discussing a range of health-related issues. We recommend consideration of the outcomes of this project, with a potential for incorporation of some of the principles into other services.

Further assessment of the social care needs of this population

Many of the findings within this needs assessment have implications for the social care sector, and there are likely social care needs within this population that have not been captured by this piece of work. We recommend that further work be undertaken to specifically understand the social care needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population.

Appendix: Toolkit - Materials providing more information about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and the organisations who support them

Main charities and organisations

1. Friends Families and Travellers <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/>
2. The Traveller Movement <https://travellermovement.org.uk/>
3. Travellers Times Newspaper <https://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/>
4. Council for Education for GRT <https://acert.org.uk/>

History and Culture

1. The Traveller Movement, Film about the history of GRT “Roads from the Past” https://www.youtube.com/watch?embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Ftravellermovement.org.uk%2F&source_ve_path=MTM5MTE3LDI4NjY0LDE2NDUwMw&feature=emb_share&v=1bhBbMrF8Z0
2. History Association, Teaching GRT History Resources: <https://www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/10115/teaching-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history>
3. The Traveller Movement, info about the history and culture: <https://travellermovement.org.uk/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history-and-culture>
4. Animated history of GRT <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/gypsies-roma-travellers-animated-history>
5. Timeline https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/GRTHM_22_Timeline_A4-1.pdf
6. EducationalPack
7. <https://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/features/gypsy-roma-traveller-history-education-pack>
8. HistoryPack
9. <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Crystals-Vardo-Teachers-Pack-final.pdf>

Racism and Discrimination

1. The Traveller Movement, 2017: “The last acceptable form of racism? The pervasive discrimination and prejudice experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities” <https://wp-main.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/The-Last-Acceptable-Form-of-Racism-2017.pdf>
2. Gypsy, Roma & Traveller discrimination discussed on Victoria Derbyshire Live Video Interviews: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSa0pBwcJwM>
3. UK Parliament, 2019: “Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities.” <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html>
4. Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Social Work Association, 2021: “Working Together to Safeguard Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and families” https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/social_work_with_romani_and_traveller_children_11_march_2021.pdf
5. Discrimination on Social Media https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r893_dSlk4&list=PLo48HyAqJDjPXrv0Y5RXY-KEDjH7-yjVo&index=5

Education

1. National Education Opportunities Network, G. Atherton, 2020: “More than luck: enabling educational opportunities and success in Higher Education for Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) Community”.

- https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/GRT_report_August_2020-Split.pdf
- King's College, Department of Education and Youth, 2017: "The underrepresentation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in higher education. A report on barriers from early years to secondary and beyond" <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/study-legacy/assets/pdf/widening-participation/the-underrepresentation-of-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-pupils-in-higher-education.pdf>
 - The Traveller Movement 2022, "A toolkit for working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people" https://wp-main.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/TTM-BESTIE-TOOLKIT-2022_web-1.pdf
 - Free resources for schools <https://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/advice/free-resource-celebrate-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history-month>
 - The Traveller Movement 2022, "Roads to success for GRT Youth" <https://wp-main.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Road-to-Success-Report-1.2.pdf>

Health

- Friends, Family and Travellers, (year): "How to tackle inequalities in Gypsies, Roma and Travellers Communities: A guide for Health and Care Services". https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/SS00-Health-inequalities_FINAL.pdf
- Friends, Family and Travellers, 2022: "Briefing Health Inequalities experienced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers Communities". https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Briefing_Health-inequalities-experienced-by-Gypsies-and-Travellers-in-England.pdf

Role Models: People from GRT background with impressive stories of success

- Jo Clement - academic (PhD), lecturer of creative writing and award winning poet and author <https://newsroom.northumbria.ac.uk/pressreleases/poetry-collection-shortlisted-for-prestigious-international-prize-3239179> <https://www.joclement.co.uk/about>
- Chelsea McDonagh - interdisciplinary researcher, activist and writer, MSc with distinction from King's College London <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRfvvhenllw&list=PLo48HyAqJDjPJIRx7Q1W8I7658XYB320z>
- Luck - Chemical Engineer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyDQbt59G1w&list=PLo48HyAqJDjPJIRx7Q1W8I7658XYB320z&index=2>
- Richard O'Neill - A Romani author and storyteller who has written numerous children's books celebrating Romani culture and diversity <https://www.romaniarts.co.uk/richard-oneill-storyteller-author-playwright/>

Cultural Awareness Training

<https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/training-packages/>

LGBTQ+ in GRT Spoken History Archive

<https://www.romaniarts.co.uk/voices/grt-lgbtq-spoken-history-archive/>

Social Work with GRT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfgAvotpnCo>

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