

# The Travelling Family Service



**Supporting Gypsies and Travellers  
on their road to better health**



Travelling Family Service  
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The team was established in 1995 to assist with and provide access to healthcare for the Travelling community. The team consists of three full time staff including two qualified nurses, one health care assistant and one secretary. The ethos of the service is respect and trust, and over the years, we have built the trust of the communities we serve. We believe that education of both Traveller and service provider is the way to successful outcomes.

We visit Travelling Families in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland – covering a population of between four and five thousand people. On average we make approximately 3,000 contacts a year. All mobile groups in are visited by the team within two - five days of their arrival in our area. Subsequent contact with our service users is arranged by mobile phones or routine visits to where they are located.

Most of our services are provided through outreach to people in their own homes - whether at a static site, an encampment or their house. We also provide services from a variety of bases to suit the Travelling communities' wishes and needs.

We provide the following services to Travellers of all ages

- treatment
- immunisations
- advice and support to access all primary care services, assisting with GP registration where appropriate
- advice on health conditions
- advice on health improvement such as
  - smoking cessation
  - mental health
  - healthy eating
  - screening services
  - exercise
  - substance (drug and alcohol) misuse
- advocacy for Travelling communities
- advocacy for service providers
- promotion of/referral to, other services and agencies including
  - domestic violence
  - housing support and benefits

We visit **parents and new babies** to:

- carry out health, wellbeing and developmental assessments
- give immunisations
- provide support, information and advice
- refer to other healthcare services and external agencies as necessary and support the family through this

We see **older children** and provide:

- support, information and advice
- referrals to other services and external agencies as necessary, supporting the individual and family through this
- give injections and immunisations

**Safeguarding** - we respond to safeguarding issues relating to children and vulnerable adults in a sensitive manner and in accordance with policies.

## Some of the cultural issues affecting gypsy Traveller health

<b>Nomadic lifestyle</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● no continuity of care/no postal address</li><li>● poor uptake of preventative services</li><li>● difficulties in registering with a GP/no past notes</li><li>● no home visits</li></ul>	<b>Literacy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● mobility affects educational progression</li><li>● poor literacy may affect health outcomes, for example, inability to read instructions/complete forms/access health information</li></ul>
<b>Time</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● not time orientated - implications for appointments</li><li>● variable meal times - implications for medication intervals</li></ul>	<b>Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● may have limited water, refuse and sanitary facilities</li><li>● limited food storage</li><li>● lack of appropriate site provision</li></ul>
<b>Family</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● marry young and have distinct gender roles</li><li>● extreme privacy around female issues</li></ul>	

## Gypsy Traveller Health Ambassadors

Our Gypsy Traveller Ambassadors are volunteers from the travelling community who work alongside the Traveller Team. Their aim is to raise awareness of this minority group among statutory services and the voluntary sector by providing valuable insights into their history, culture and traditions. They also advise on how we can best help them to access the services they require.

### Comments from a Gypsy

We meet a lot of people, how many I can't say.  
They come for curiosity or to pass the time away.  
They ask us many questions, the answers we do tell.  
They walk away with knowledge and we can go to hell.  
How can they exploit the Gypsies to people far and wide?  
While they are crying out for help and we are cast aside.  
We are but simple people, hardworking and sincere  
and wish to be accepted to the people we stay near.  
But our hopes are quickly banished, our pride is often hurt,  
when we go amongst these people,  
who we have so often learnt.  
  
They ask about tradition, we tell them all we know.  
But that doesn't help the likes of us who have no place to go.  
We have no rights, we cannot stay, we have no status here.  
My God!  
How we have been persecuted for things we hold dear.  
Of a life that's been to roam, in a country that is free.  
Like a bird that flies onto branches, or nestles in a tree.  
He has a home, a place to stay.  
Alas my friend, this is not for me.

Anon