

## **Working with Marginalised Groups**

### **Gypsy Travellers**

#### **Who are Gypsy Travellers?**

Gypsy travellers form a wider group of Travellers in Scotland who variously refer to themselves as Travellers, Scottish Travellers, Gypsy Travellers and Gypsy Traveller people. Gypsy Travellers are the only one of these groups to be protected by equalities legislation.

The term refers to all travelling communities who regard 'travelling' as an important aspect of their ethnic/cultural identity.

What other traveller groups are there?

#### **a) Occupational Travellers**

Scotland's largest community of Occupational Travellers, Scottish Showmen or travelling show and fairground families, self-define as business communities. They have a strong and distinctive culture and they regularly travel across Scottish towns and cities where people enjoy the "shows".

#### **b) New Travellers**

Formerly referred to as New Age Travellers, New Travellers trace their origins to 'settled' communities, i.e. they were not born into a Traveller family, and made a choice to reject a 'settled' life-style for a range of reasons.

Often borrowing from traditional Traveller life-styles, New Travellers make up diverse communities that typically draw upon different political and philosophical views about society.

#### **c) Travellers from other parts of Britain or from Europe**

Travellers from other parts of Britain often travel in Scotland. These include English Romanies or Romanichals, Welsh Kale or Irish Travellers and English Gypsies.

#### **How many Scottish Gypsy Travellers are there?**

It is estimated that there are approximately 15,000 Scottish Gypsy Travellers, however the numbers are uncertain because people are reluctant to self-identify as a Gypsy for fear of prejudice or official interference. The 2011 Census will include a category 'Gypsy/Traveller', which will provide an official source of information.

## **Employment and Culture**

### **Employment**

Although people tend to associate Gypsy Travellers with rural-based economic activities, such as farm work, like any sector of the population Gypsy Travellers are engaged in a wide variety of employment from forestry to teaching. In addition, many Gypsy Travellers still pass their traditional skills on to the next generation.

### **Culture**

Gypsy Travellers have a very strong sense of their own culture, traditions and community. They are also proud of their Scottish identity, often emphasising the role that their relatives played in the armed forces and the land effort during the two world wars. Gypsy Traveller music, story-telling and art have long been part of Scotland's wider cultural heritage.

### **Discrimination**

Gypsy Travellers experience discrimination in health, housing, education, work and from settled communities. This is due to negative stereotypes and prejudice towards Gypsy Travellers. Many Gypsy Travellers face harassment and verbal and physical hostility from local communities.

### **Protection under Equalities Legislation**

The Equality Act 2010 doesn't specifically state that Gypsies / Travellers belong to a distinct racial or ethnic group. However, judges in England have decided that Irish Travellers and Romany Gypsies are distinct ethnic groups. These decisions aren't legally binding in Scotland, because the Scottish court system is separate, but Scottish sheriffs are likely to agree with the English decision. This means that Romany Gypsy or Irish Travellers are protected from discrimination.

### **Inequality and Health**

Research carried out by the Department of Health in 2004 showed that Gypsy Travellers have significantly poorer health status and significantly more self-reported

symptoms of ill-health than other UK-resident, English speaking ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged white UK residents.

This study also showed an inverse relationship between health needs and use of health and related services. The report concluded that:

*"..it is clear that the scale of health inequality between the study population and the UK general population is large, with reported health problems between twice and five times more prevalent".*

The NHS Role in supporting people from Marginalised Groups

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Gypsy Travellers in Scotland, A resource for the media, The Equality and Human Rights Commission Scotland, 2010.

<http://www.scottishtravellered.net/travellers.html>

Delivering for Scotland's Gypsies/Travellers, An updated Response to the Equal Opportunity committee Inquiry Into Gypsy Travellers and Public Services 2001, published by the Scottish Executive, June 2004.

The Health Status of Gypsies & Travellers in England, Department of Health 2004