

6.6 GYPSY TRAVELLERS

Owing to the nomadic culture of this community, actual demographic data is difficult to capture. However, in the Cardiff area there are two formal sites that provide permanent residential accommodation for 77 families.

The two sites are both situated in Trowbridge Ward in SouthEast Cardiff (Rover Way and Shirenewton). In addition there are approximately 60 families who are housed around the Cardiff area and approximately 12 -15 families living on the roadside who have no official stopping place. Most Gypsy Traveller families have a large number of children.

Studies published in the medical literature and accounts from Gypsy Travellers and people working in the community indicate that the life expectancy and the general health experience of Gypsy Travellers is lower than the settled population.¹ There are many factors that influence the health needs of such travellers, for example:

- Injuries among children are high, especially the number of road traffic accidents².
- Sanitation can be inadequate. The very young are most at risk from gastro-enteritis.
- Gypsy children are at particularly high risk of lead poisoning³.
- Gypsy Travellers tend to be reluctant to seek help and have a distrust of authority.
- Some Gypsy Travellers are illiterate and do not have good access to health information.
- The prevalence of genetically inherited conditions is higher than average⁴.
- The population does not tend to access screening services well.
- They have higher levels of poverty, lack of education, overcrowding and unemployment⁵.
- Gypsy children can experience a higher prevalence of antibodies to hepatitis A⁶
- A relatively high level of infant mortality and higher incidence of low birthweight babies.

6.4.4 VULNERABLE ADULTS – TRAVELLERS

6.4 NEEDS OF SPECIFIC CLIENT GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

Section (8) of the Traveller Law Reform Bill (launched on the 31st January 2002) States that “gypsies and travellers” means persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, but does not include members of an organised group of 30 travelling showmen, or persons engaged in travelling circuses, travelling together as such and a person does not lose his nomadic habit of life merely because he resides (or intends to reside) in permanent accommodation; and “local authority” includes the council of a county.”

A number of different groups, with quite different backgrounds, are caught within the description ‘Gypsies and Travellers’. Gypsy-Travellers or 'traditional/ethnic Gypsy-

¹ Braham M, *The untouchables: a survey of the Roma people of central and eastern Europe*. Geneva UNHCR 1993

² Pahl J & Vailef M “*Health and healthcare among travellers*”. Canterbury. University of Kent Health Services Research Unit 1986

³ Redondo MJ, Guisasola FJ. *An unknown risk group of lead poisoning: the gypsy children*. Eur J Paediatr 1995; 154:197-200

⁴ Williams EM Harper PS “*Genetic Study of Welsh Gypsies*” J Med Genet. 1977; 14:172-176

⁵ McKee M *The health of gypsies*. BMJ. 1997;315:1172-1173 (8 November).

⁶ Cilla G, Perez-Trallero E, Marimon JM, Erdozain S, Gutierrez C. Prevalence of hepatitis A antibody among disadvantaged gypsy people in Northern Spain. Epidemiol Infect 1995;115:157-61

Travellers' include Irish Travellers, Scottish Gypsies/Travellers, English Gypsies and Romanies and Welsh Gypsies.

DEMOGRAPHY

Gypsy Travellers, or the Roma, are recognised as an ethnic minority and receive protection under the Race Relations Act. Due to the nomadic culture of this community, actual demographic data is difficult to capture. However, in the Cardiff area there are two formal sites that provide permanent residential accommodation for 77 families.

In addition there are approximately 60 families who are housed around the Cardiff area and approximately 12 -15 families living on the roadside who have no official stopping place. Most families have a large number of children.⁷

The results of a survey of local authorities by the Welsh Assembly Government January 2003 are set out in the tables overleaf.

⁷ Cardiff Local Health Group (2000) : Health Services for eastern Cardiff

Local Authority	Number	
	Adults	Children
Cardiff:		
Local Authority sites	126	173
Private sites	0	0
Unauthorised sites	0	0
In Houses	76+	246
Total	202	419
Merthyr Tydfil:		
Local Authority sites	20	8
Private sites	0	0
Unauthorised sites	0	0
In Houses	0	0
Total	20	8
Torfaen:	None Given	None Given
Monmouthshire:	None Given	None Given
Caerphilly:	None Given	None Given
Swansea:		
Local Authority sites	16	18
Private sites	0	0
Unauthorised sites	18	12
In Houses	14	7
Total	48	37
Gwynedd:		
Local Authority sites	20	8
Private sites	0	0
Unauthorised sites	0	0
In Houses	0	0
Total	20	8
Carmarthenshire:		
Local Authority sites	60	40
Private sites	80	40
Unauthorised sites	8	5
In Houses	Not known	Not known
Total	148	85

Local Authority	Number	
	Adults	Children
Bridgend:		
Local Authority sites	0	0
Private sites	0	0
Unauthorised sites	3	2
In Houses	0	0
Total	3	2
Neath Port Talbot:		
Local Authority sites	140	140
Private sites	0	0
Unauthorised sites	0	0
In Houses	6	7
Total	146	147
Wrexham:		
Local Authority sites	30	35
Private sites	4	6
Unauthorised sites	0	0
In Houses	21	23
Total	55	64
Total (1)	642	770

Source: Equality of Opportunity Committee, Gypsy and Traveller Survey

Table 1: Number of Travellers in Wales by Type of Accommodation

Type of Accommodation	Number of Travellers		
	All Travellers	Adult Travellers	Child Travellers
Local Authority Sites	834	412	422
Privately Owned Sites	130	84	46
Unauthorised Sites	48	29	19
Living in Houses	400	117	283
All types of accommodation	1412	642	770

NEEDS OF TRAVELLERS

The Discrimination Law association Briefing 230 (2002), regarding the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (RRAA), states that, 'Gypsies and Travellers face enormous difficulty in securing their most basic needs for a home, adequate health care and education for their children⁸.

Racial discrimination against Travellers covers many areas within each particular authority; these include suitable accommodation, education, and health and social services. It is these main areas, which are often poorly organised to suit the nomadic lifestyle of the Travelling community, due to such problems as many having no fixed address, which is often a necessary requirement for many public services.

In addition to difficulties of access to public services comes the compounded problem of legislation contrary to Traveller lifestyles. Ever since the 1960`s when legislation gave local authorities the power to close access to commons for Travellers, this has resulted in a shortage of sites where Travellers can lawfully stop. A result of this limited access is a shortage of suitable accommodation for the Traveller community.

Problems arise in relation to admission and access to the traditional school system for Traveller children. For Traveller children attending school there is a high occurrence of bullying, often resulting in low attendance rates, compounded by differing priorities of the Traveller community regarding education. It is therefore necessary to look at educational and vocational needs of young Travellers and identify suitable training programmes and employment opportunities.

The area of health and social services provision for Travellers is an area worthy of closer examination, as often, policy and practice may not meet Traveller needs. In terms of medical registration, GP`s are required by law to provide temporary or permanent registration to Travellers in their area and failure to do so can be regarded as discrimination. However, the general view among health professionals seems to be that there is a low use of community health services by Travellers but greater reliance on hospitals for the treatment of serious illness and during childbirth. Gypsy representatives have suggested that a greater understanding of health needs of Travellers on official sites and higher levels of access for those on unauthorised sites is needed.

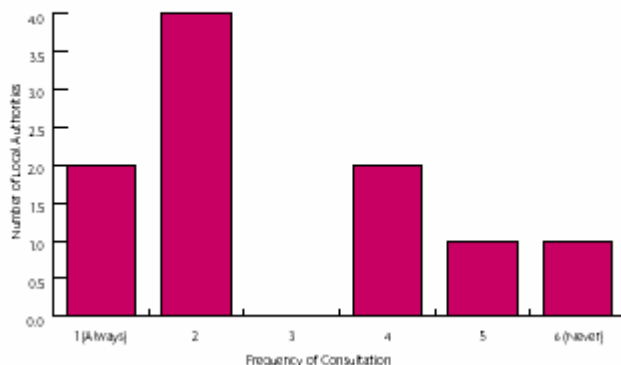
Every effort must be made to respect the choice of housing for the gypsy community. However, there are difficulties in predicting need as the tenants usually comprise large families who marry within the travelling community and want to remain at the site. When they have been re-housed in social housing many do not settle and many apply to return to the sites. There are always long waiting lists for the sites and this can sometimes lead to homelessness because gypsies and travellers have nowhere to legally pitch their caravan⁹.

⁸ Gloucestershire County Council (2002) : Best Value Review of Travellers

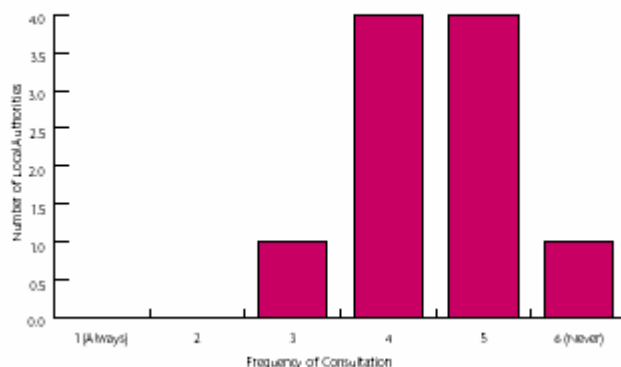
⁹ Cardiff Council (2003) : Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2003 – 2008 Draft Version

It is acknowledged by Health and Social Services that residents should be more involved in consultation so that they can make an active contribution to the decision-making process. The results of a survey of local authorities by the Welsh Assembly Government January 2003 regarding consultation, are set out in the tables below.

Are specific steps taken to include Gypsies and Travellers about services provided by them?



Are specific steps taken to include Gypsies and Travellers in general policy consultation?



6.6.7 PROVISION OF SERVICES AND IDENTIFIED GAPS – TRAVELLERS

There are two sites in Cardiff County, which are administered by the County Council Housing Department and which provide permanent residential accommodation for caravan dwellers. Both sites are to the east of Cardiff on land adjacent to the Bristol Channel. The sites are known as The Shirenewton Site, which is on Wentloog Flats in the electoral ward of Trowbridge and the Rover Way Site, which is on Pengam Moors in the electoral ward of Splott. . Shirenewton was refurbished in 1993 and maintains 56 pitches, it is the biggest site in Europe and is well run despite its unusually large size

Rover Way opened in the 1960's and was refurbished in 1988. It comprises of 21 pitches and is to be extended to provide a further 4 family pitches. Rover Way has received £150,000 from the Capital Programme fund for the first year of a three-year improvement project which will include the addition of more sites and road improvements.

Neither of the sites is served by public transport and they are both at least a mile from the nearest shop, launderette, post office or GP surgery.

The tenants are an equal mix of traditional local gypsies and Irish travelers. Tenants usually comprise large families who marry within the travelling community with some families having been at the sites for as long as 20 years.

Health care provision and health protection/promotion services are provided via the traditional primary health care team and Gypsy-Traveller families need to register with a General Practitioner to access these services. Health Visiting, District Nursing and Community Midwifery services are subsequently provided by Cardiff & Vale NHS Trust via the GP. However many GPs are reluctant to register Gypsy-Traveller families as permanent patients even if they have a permanent site and are even more reluctant to visit the Sites if requested. Anecdotal reports and studies such as Beech (1999) show that in Cardiff Gypsy-Travellers, like elsewhere frequently use the accident and emergency services to gain access to Primary Health Care Services.

Traveller Services in Cardiff

These include :-

- **Cardiff Gypsy Sites Group (CGSG)** - set up in 1981 to act as a liaison project to improve access by Gypsy-Travellers to all statutory and community health, housing and education services and to promote good race relations. They have two liaison officers and an administrative co-ordinator that are based in premises in Splott in Cardiff, close to both sites
- **Cardiff Traveller Education Service** - Established in 1991 to support Gypsy-Traveller children in mainstream education (the communities preferred option for schooling). The service employs a co-ordinator, administrator, two peripatetic teachers and two part time nursery nurses and is based in Greenway Primary School close to the Shirenewton site.
- **Cardiff Health Access Team** – Promoting Access to Health Care for vulnerable groups the team is managed by a nurse consultant based at Lansdowne hospital. The team are currently working with generic health visitors who visit the sites to establish a forum for consultation.

Current service gaps (Headline level only)

In 1996 a consultation by Cardiff Gypsy Sites Group identified a number of concerns and demonstrated that the safety of children and young people living on both sites was a major concern for most residents. (Taylor 1996)

A service user review, which was carried out in early 2000 on the Cardiff Gypsy sites identified the following service gaps for both the Council and the Health Service¹⁰ :-

Council Services

- There is a lack of information presented in an appropriate medium
- There is a difficulty with public transport from the two sites, especially Rover Way, which affects ability to attend appointments at places such as UHW.
- Close collaboration is required between the Council to address the problems

¹⁰ Cardiff & Vale NHS Trust (2001) :‘Level Playing Field’

of sanitation and roadside accidents

- Literacy support/education could be further developed

Health Services

- To ensure equity of access and to co-ordinate service provision a specialist health worker could be appointed
- Difficulty accessing health records due to mobility
- In general registration with GPs was not perceived as a problem although there are some difficulties in obtaining permanent registration or being turned away because the practice had 'already too many travellers registered'
- There is a general lack of dental services which serve the gypsy-traveller population
- There was a wish for some sort of mobile clinic or surgery especially on the Shirenewton site to assist with treatment, advice and accessing mainstream services.

Further consultation on service provision for Gypsy Travellers was conducted at a seminar in Swansea on the 11th October 2002 held by the Welsh Assembly Government . The final findings from this seminar have been published in a recent report by the Welsh Assembly Government a 'Review of Service Provision for Gypsies and Travellers'.