

26 September 2024

Subject: Gypsy, Roma, Traveller & Boater Strategy - Review and Update

Executive Summary

1. The first Wiltshire Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, and Boater (GRTB) strategy was published in 2010 and was refreshed in 2016. An increasing awareness of the specific needs of the boater population led to the first Health Needs Assessment (HNA) for GRTB communities in 2019¹. The current Wiltshire GRTB strategy was published in 2020 is currently set to run until 2025.
2. It is important to note that the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent fuel, financial and housing crises have disproportionately affected these already underserved populations. The housing crisis has had an impact, and whilst many people choose a transient lifestyle, increasing numbers are resorting to living on boats and in vehicles (either at the roadside or in discrete locations across the county) for economic reasons. Consequently, the number of families living on authorised and unauthorised traveller sites across the county has increased. Many are not from traveller heritage but are unable to access other housing.
3. This review was conducted to update understanding of nomadic communities, to assess progress against the existing strategy's ambitions, and to provide basis upon which to update the strategy for the next five years.

Proposals

That the Health & Wellbeing Board:

- a) To note the findings of the review of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller & Boater Strategy (2020-2025);
- b) To note progress against the current strategy, and areas for development;
- c) To encourage partners to work with Wiltshire Council: to raise awareness of the community's needs, and to further develop the aims and objectives for a new Strategy; and
- d) To request an update report from officers on the development of the Strategy.

¹ [Agenda and minutes - Democratic Services - Wiltshire Council](#) (Min 32 refers)

Reason for Proposal

To reduce health inequalities faced by communities, and to improve a range of outcomes that support good health & wellbeing.

Will Oulton**Corporate Support Manager & Chair of the Traveller Reference Group
Wiltshire Council**

Wiltshire Council

Health and Wellbeing Board

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Purpose of Report

1. To present the findings of the review of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller & Boater Strategy (2020-2025), including an updated assessment of health needs.

Relevance to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

2. The review, development and implementation of a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller & Boater (GRTB) Strategy, by using evidence to target action where it will make the most difference, contributes to the Board's four thematic objectives, namely:
 - To improving social mobility and tackle inequalities.
 - To focus on prevention and early intervention.
 - To localise and connect with communities.
 - To promote integration and working together.
3. People from nomadic communities and heritage experience some of the starkest health inequalities of any population group. This is recognised with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the GRTB Strategy respectively. Amongst the relevant links are actions to: 'target outreach activity – identifying particular groups to improve access to services and health outcomes and tackle root causes'².
4. Additionally, as identified in the BSW Integrated Care Strategy for 2023-28³, the recommendations from Core20Plus5 highlight the need to reduce inequalities in the most deprived 20% of the population, with a focus on those with poorer-than-average health access, experience, or outcomes (which in Wiltshire specifically includes the GRTB community).
5. One of the key aims of any successful strategy is to encourage a greater understanding of the different communities and their needs to improve service delivery. Further, supporting local communities to be able to come together to support themselves. With the expansion of the Community Conversation model, and other engagement plans such as the Neighbourhood Collaboratives⁴ model, there is an opportunity to build capacity in communities.

² [WJLHWS 2023.pdf \(wiltshire.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [Integrated-Care-Strategy-Summary-v3.pdf \(bswtogether.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Neighbourhood Collaboratives Presentation](#)

6. Whilst there are examples of good working relationships between partners, e.g. through the Traveller Reference Group (TRG), opportunities for coordination of action should not be overlooked.

Background

7. Under the auspices of the Traveller Reference Group (TRG), partners have come together, led by Public Health, to review the GRTB Strategy. The TRG meets quarterly and provides a forum to develop a new strategy, with the agreement of the Health & Wellbeing Board, and to create actions plans to deliver upon the aims of the strategy.
8. Part of the wider context, and linked to the wider determinants of health, is the need for appropriate housing. The Councils is currently consulting on the Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan Document⁵, which identified sites that can be brought forward to meet the housing needs will be provided for over the plan period, from 2024-2038.

Main Considerations

9. The review of the GRTB Strategy identifies some areas of progress and best practice, whilst highlighting the areas where challenges remain.
10. Chief amongst those challenges, is the need to identify local sources of data to understand how well our services are meeting the needs of the community. This is true of other cohorts in our systems but the challenges in the area are more present.
11. Working with mobile and transient communities presents specific challenges around information sharing. Those still practicing a nomadic lifestyle, especially those living roadside or on boats are forced to move frequently, and maybe reluctant to share information with authorities. For those living roadside and subject to Enforcement action by the Local Authority or the Police, this may mean moving up to fifty times a year. For boaters without a mooring, the conditions of a continuous cruising licence mean they must change locations at least every 14 days.
12. Therefore, improving systems to record appropriate information about the people we work with will be an aim of the emerging new Strategy alongside a commitment to share information.
13. However, a change to systems will not be sufficient on its own, and further action to increase staff awareness of the community and its needs will be required. The aim should be to foster the practice of intellectual curiosity where culturally aware staff are primed to ask people about their backgrounds so that they can be supported in the right way. This, in turn, will give us the data to understand how effective those interventions have been.

⁵ [Wiltshire's Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan Document consultation begins next week - Wiltshire Council](#)

Next Steps

7. With the support of the Health & Wellbeing Board, officers in Wiltshire Council will continue to engage with colleagues, partners, and the community to develop a new strategy, and to identify actions to deliver it.

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