

Wiltshire Council

Health Select Committee

14 January 2020

Subject: Wiltshire Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater Strategy 2020-2025

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek support for the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater Strategy (Appendix 1) ahead of going to the Health and Wellbeing Board in April 2020.

Background

2. The terms Gypsy, Roma and Traveller are used to describe a range of ethnic groups, or those with nomadic ways of life but are not from a specific ethnicity. In the UK context, there is often differentiation made between Gypsies (including English Gypsies, Scottish Gypsy/Travellers, Welsh Gypsies and other Romany people); Irish Travellers (who have specific Irish roots), and Roma (those who have more recently migrated from Central/Eastern Europe). The term Travellers also encompasses groups that travel, including New (Age) Travellers, Boaters (also known as Bargees) and Showpeople.
3. Travellers experience significant inequalities throughout all stages of life. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people experience the worst health outcomes of any ethnic group, and the average life expectancy is 10-12 years less than the general population. Higher rates of miscarriage, a greater proportion of individuals with long-term health conditions, and higher rates of depression and suicide are just some of the inequalities experienced by these communities.
4. The Women and Equalities Commons Select Committee recently published a report assessing the inequalities experienced by these communities. This inquiry found that Traveller communities have the worst outcomes across a wide range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime. They reported that national and local policy makers have failed to tackle these long-standing and substantial inequalities.
5. There is an imperative on all public organisations to address health inequalities, so that all individuals have the same opportunity to live healthy lives no matter their background, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the public sector equality duty highlights the need for due regard of advancing equality of opportunity between those who share protected characteristics (e.g. ethnicity such as Gypsy or Irish Traveller) and those who do not.

6. The importance of tackling health inequalities has been highlighted in the recent NHS Long Term plan. This is reflected in the continued higher share of funding towards areas with high health inequalities, and requirement for local health systems to describe how they are specifically reducing health inequalities.
7. In Spring 2019, a Health Needs Assessment (HNA) was undertaken to better understand the needs of the Wiltshire Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater population. This was the first local HNA (see appendix 2) for these communities, using local data, national resources and published evidence. This intelligence shows that there are inequalities across several areas e.g. poor educational attendance and attainment; reduced uptake of carer support. Whilst local data was limited, the evidence from national and published data shows that Traveller populations continue to have significant needs.
8. The HNA was informed by service user and service provider feedback. Feedback from local Traveller community members broadly corroborated the findings of the HNA whilst highlighting some notable areas of difference (e.g. access to primary care was felt to be adequate).
9. The HNA highlighted the opportunity to improve cultural awareness amongst all services who interact with these communities, to help reduced barriers to service uptake. It also identified the need to improve community representation in the development and implementation of policies and services for Travellers. Furthermore, it highlighted the importance of information and data sharing between services to help support members of the community.
10. The significance of social determinants on health (e.g. housing, education) is also evident from the HNA. These can have far more significant effects on an individual's health than direct health-related interventions – wider determinants include employment status, living standards and educational attainment. This highlights the important interplay between inequalities experienced in all aspects of life, and an individual's health outcomes.
11. The current Wiltshire Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater (GRT&B) strategy is due to finish in 2020. A new strategy has been developed for 2020-2025 using intelligence from the recent HNA, together with feedback from stakeholder consultation. The evidence base for the strategy is based upon key government documents, published literature and evidence of best practice.
12. The strategy has been developed by Wiltshire Council's Public Health team in partnership with the Traveller Reference Group (TRG) and a range of partners across Wiltshire.
13. The TRG oversees and supports the implementation of the Traveller Strategy whilst also addressing other relevant issues related to Traveller communities and has a membership of council and non-council partners. Council departments represented include housing, communications, commissioning, planning, early help, enforcement, public health, community engagement

countryside and councillor representation. External partners include NHS and primary care, fire services, and police service.

14. The GRT&B strategy contributes to the Wiltshire Council business plan priorities of Stronger Communities and Protecting the Vulnerable.

Main Considerations

15. The new GRT&B strategy provides direction for Wiltshire Council and partner organisations to reduce inequalities experienced by Traveller communities, increase Traveller cultural awareness amongst all services, improve local data collation and sharing between partner agencies, and integrate community members involvement in the decision-making processes which affect them.

16. The strategy has a wide remit, looking beyond health inequalities as an acknowledgment that Traveller communities experience substantial inequalities in many aspects of life.

17. Focussing on inequalities will bring together a range of organisations to address the issues, leading to targeted pieces of work specifically for these communities. These will be in addition to the usual business plan of all involved organisations.

18. The TRG and other key stakeholders reviewed the HNA and a draft version of the strategy document. The feedback and comments provided have been incorporated into the final version of the strategy.

19. The new strategy will have 7 strategic priorities grouped by the following themes:

1. Educational attainment and attendance
2. Preventative services (primary, secondary and tertiary) – including management of long-term conditions; screening; immunisations; pharmacy and dental services
3. Safeguarding and violence prevention
4. Mental health
5. Maternal health and early years
6. Carer support
7. Place and Community e.g. site safety, access to refuse points

20. Four cross-cutting themes running through the strategy

- A. Increasing awareness of GRT and Boater culture and health needs
- B. Improving multi-agency dialogue and information sharing to work towards reducing inequalities using current services and resources available
- C. Improved local data collation and analysis specific to GRT and Boater communities in Wiltshire
- D. Integrate community members involvement and feedback as much as possible

21. The development, implementation and evaluation of the strategy will be overseen by the TRG who will be accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board. This will monitor progress, and feedback to relevant committees and boards throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

22. An implementation plan is currently being drafted in conjunction with TRG members. The aim of the plan will define 1-2 key projects/programmes per strategic priority in a bid to achieve better outcomes for Traveller and Boater communities.

The risk of not implementing the strategy

23. If the decision is taken not to support the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater strategy there could be:

- a. Persistent inequalities in many aspects of Traveller community lives, which could worsen if not addressed
- b. Continued poor health outcomes in these communities, with associated substantial costs to wider health and social care budget
- c. Damage to relationships with partner organisations and community members with whom the strategy has been developed
- d. Persistent challenges to engaging with Traveller communities and developing trusted relationships with community members

Conclusion

24. The evidence review and findings of the Wiltshire Traveller and Boater Health Needs Assessment has led to the development of a strategy aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater communities in Wiltshire. The strategy has a vision of reducing inequalities experienced across many domains and throughout the life course. Partnership working with a range of agencies will seek to provide a system-based approach. This will contribute to the Council's business plan and will be in line with recent national policy and strategic direction.

25. Next steps will include formal professional and public consultation of the strategy prior to presenting for approval for adoption at Wiltshire's Health and Wellbeing Board in April 2020.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater Strategy 2020-2025 for Wiltshire

Appendix 2 – Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater Health Needs Assessment (2019)