

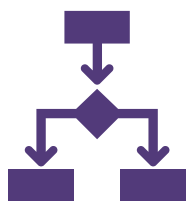


Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater (GRTB) Communities in Wiltshire



Strategy Review

2024



Acknowledgments

This strategy review has been compiled by the Wiltshire Council Public Health Team. The team would like to thank all those involved in the production of this report for their valuable contributions, support and expertise.

For information about public health services in Wiltshire please visit: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/public-health

Further information and data about Wiltshire Public Health can be accessed on the Wiltshire Intelligence Network website at: wiltshireintelligence.org.uk



Pp.3 Key findings and recommendations

Pp.4 Background purpose and scope

Pp.5 Who are Travellers – some definitions

Pp.6 National context – inclusion health

Pp.7 What does the law say? Traveller Reference Group

Pp.8 Section 1: Educational Attainment and Attendance

Pp.15 Section 2: Preventative Services

Pp.18 Section 3: Safeguarding and Violence Prevention

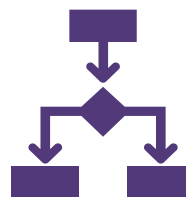
Pp.20 Section 4: Mental Health

Pp.22 Section 5: Maternal Health and Early Years

Pp.24 Section 6: Social Care and Carer Support

Pp.26 Section 7: Place and Community

Pp.28 What works and what's next?



Summary of key findings and recommendations

Executive Summary/ Key findings

- People from nomadic communities and heritage experience some of the **starkest health inequalities of any population group**
- There is **currently inadequate data collection** by Wiltshire Council departments and external partners both statutory and in the VCSE sector to provide a baseline assessment of services from which to evidence improvement and the achievement of the pledges within the current strategy
- The term GRTB encompasses a wide variety of cultural practices and beliefs, and **each individual community needs to be considered separately**

Key recommendations

- The 2020-2025 Wiltshire **GRTB Strategy should be updated** with SMART outcomes and outputs
- **Data collection**, especially as it relates to people's living circumstances should be improved as capturing ethnicity alone will not identify those living on the canal or roadside in vans
- Work to **reduce stigma and prejudice** may encourage those from a nomadic heritage or lifestyle to disclose their ethnicity or living circumstances
- The **established trusted relationships** formed through Outreach and Engagement work should be built upon to take services out to underserved communities as this **promotes better engagement**
- **Cultural awareness training delivered by those with lived experience** should be available to all those working with GRTB community members

Background, Purpose and Scope

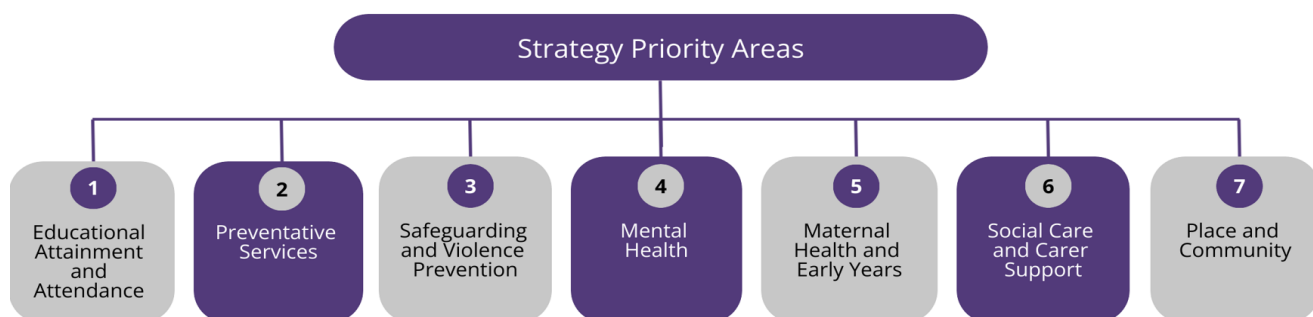
The first Wiltshire Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater (GRTB) strategy was published in 2010 and refreshed in 2016. Increasing awareness of the specific needs of the boater population led to the first Health Needs Assessment (HNA) for GRTB communities in 2019. **The Wiltshire GRTB strategy published in 2020 is currently set to run until 2025.**

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent fuel, financial and housing crises have **disproportionately affected** these already underserved populations. Whilst many people choose or are born into families from a transient lifestyle, **increasing numbers resort to living on boats and in vehicles** (either at the roadside or in discrete locations across the county) and form different communities from those for whom a nomadic lifestyle is an historic and cultural heritage.

In addition, **the number of families living on authorised and unauthorised Traveller sites across the county has increased.** Some are not from a Traveller heritage but are **unable to access other housing.** There are concerns that some people renting caravans on these sites may be vulnerable to exploitation, and there is little to no regulation to help identify or stop this.

This review was conducted to refresh understanding of nomadic communities, and to assess progress against the existing strategy's ambitions.

The Gypsy Roma Traveller and Boater Strategy (2020-2025) **set out 7 priority areas:**



Within each of these areas, a series of pledges were made. The following sections review the pledges made and progress to date.

We approached a broad range of partners, organisations and Wiltshire Council departments to explore the data and information held about these communities; however, there remains a dearth of intelligence relating to GRTB people in Wiltshire and it is therefore difficult to evidence progress against all the pledges across the 7 sections of the current strategy.

Who are Travellers?

The terms Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater are commonly used when referring to people of either a nomadic lifestyle, or those with a cultural history of a nomadic way of life, but who now live in the settled community in bricks and mortar housing.

The [Friends, Families and Travellers](#) charity published the following image to aid understanding of the different characteristics of GRTB populations.

	Romany Gypsies	Irish Travellers	Roma	Travelling Showpeople	New Travellers	Liveaboard Boaters
Ethnicity	Historically originated in Northern India. Gypsies have been in the UK for many generations.	Irish Travellers originated in Ireland as a distinct and separate ethnic group from the general Irish Population, recorded since the 12 th century	Historically originated in Northern India and settled in Europe, including Romania, Slovakia the Czech Republic, and Poland before migrating to the UK more recently.	Anyone who travels to hold circuses, shows or fairs can be a Showperson. Many families have led this way of life for many generations.	New Travellers can describe people from any background who choose to lead a nomadic life or their descendants.	Any person who lives on a boat from all walks of life and backgrounds.
Arrival in England	Before the 16 th century fulfilling the need for seasonal agricultural labour and settling.	Recorded from the 18 th century and probably earlier. Horse trading and then post-war construction work.	Small numbers since 1945 with a number of Roma seeking asylum in the 1990s and early 2000s with a growth in population following EU expansion in 2004 and 2007	According to the National Fairground Archive, the first charter was granted in 1204 to Kings Lynn.	The New Traveller Movement finds its roots in the free festivals of the 1960s, but people of all backgrounds have practiced nomadism throughout history.	People have been living on boats since the canals were built in the 18 th century.
Language	Romany Gypsies speak English, and many Romany people speak a Romani dialect to varying levels of fluency.	Irish Travellers speak English, and some speak Gaelic/Irish. Many Irish Travellers also speak Gaelic derived Gammon or Cant.	Most Roma people speak their European country's language(s). Many Roma also speak a Romani dialect as well as English to varying levels of fluency.	Showpeople primarily speak English.	New Travellers primarily speak English.	Boaters primarily speak English.
Accommodation Type	Around ¾ live in housing and around ¼ on Traveller sites in caravans or chalets. A small proportion live roadside or in public spaces.	Around ¾ live in housing and ¼ on Traveller sites in caravans or chalets. A small proportion live roadside or in public spaces.	Most Roma people live in housing although there are disproportionate levels of homelessness and overcrowding.	Most Showpeople live on yards during the winter months and travel during the summer months.	New Travellers lead a nomadic way of live in vans, mobile homes and caravans and a small proportion are horse drawn.	Boaters live on narrowboats, barges and river cruisers whether on a home mooring, a winter mooring, continuously cruising or in a marina.

Source [SS00-Health-inequalities_FINAL.pdf \(gypsy-Traveller.org\)](#)



Inclusion Health

Research shows travelling communities experience some of the starkest inequalities and significantly poorer health outcomes of any population group.

The reasons for these poor health outcomes are complex and include:

- The impact of lifelong experiences of discrimination and stigmatization
- Labyrinthine nature of health systems
- Effects of the wider determinants of health (the building blocks for a good life), such as housing, transport, available work and education.

The [Marmot report](#) clearly identified that material deprivation adversely affected not only life expectancy, but also healthy life expectancy, meaning the length of time people live in good health.

The [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#) contains specific legal duties regarding health inequalities and required Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) (now Integrated Care Boards) to:

- a) Reduce inequalities between patients with respect to their abilities to access health services, and
- b) To reduce inequalities between patients with respect to the outcomes achieved for them by the provision of health services.

[Core 20 plus 5](#)

The recommendations from Core20Plus5 are **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 describes the GRTB community). GRTB communities are a priority group for Public Health.

What does the law say?

The Equality Act 2010, recognises some ethnic groups as protected against discrimination. These include:

- English, Welsh and Scottish Gypsies
- Irish Travellers
- Romany Gypsies
- Roma people

Showpeople, New (or New Age) Travellers and boaters have no such legal protection, despite also being subject to prejudice and discrimination.

The definition for [“gypsies and Travellers”](#) collectively for the purposes of planning policy has been stated as:

“Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependants’ educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.”

With additional considerations to be given to the following:

- a) whether they previously led a nomadic habit of life
- b) the reasons for ceasing their nomadic habit of life
- c) whether there is an intention of living a nomadic habit of life in the future, and if so, how soon and in what circumstances.

For the purposes of this document, the term Traveller will be used to refer to all members of communities detailed above. Where there is need to differentiate between land-based and liveaboard boating communities, the terms GRT (Gypsy, Roma, Traveller) and boater will be used, respectively.

Local Governance

Wiltshire Traveller Reference Group

The multi-agency Traveller Reference Group meets quarterly; **their overarching aim is to improve outcomes** for GRTB populations including

- The built environment
- Accommodation
- Education
- Health & Wellbeing

Through supporting implementation of the [Wiltshire GRTB strategy 2020-2025](#) and the strategic objectives of the [Wiltshire Council Business Plan](#) and [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#), particularly the “Prevention”, “Localisation”, and “Tackling Inequalities” themes

Section 1: Educational Attainment and Attendance

Strategy Pledges

1. Increase proportion of children attending secondary education from GRT background (as a marker of GRT community attendance)
2. improve educational attainment at both primary and secondary level education
3. Reduce potential barriers to school attendance – tackle bullying; ensure schools are welcoming and culturally aware of GRT & Boater communities
4. Explore models of education delivery to empower educational attendance and attainment within GRT and Boater communities in Wiltshire
5. Involvement of key partner organisation and community members in addressing identified educational needs
6. Gather intelligence (quantitative and qualitative) to better understand the educational needs of the GRT and Boater communities in Wiltshire
7. Explore options to offer skills and vocational training for 14–16-year-olds from Traveller backgrounds, and improve adult literacy

What do we know?

In 2019-20, **nationally**, 30% of Irish Traveller pupils and 27% of Gypsy and Roma pupils had identified SEND, compared to only 12.2% of the general school population. Additionally, only 4% of Gypsy and Roma and 5% of Irish Traveller children had Education and Health Care (EHCP) plans in place

In Wiltshire

GRTB students registered by ethnicity

	2021	2022	2023
Gypsy / Roma	166	168	168
Traveller of Irish Heritage	44	66	68
Total	210	234	236

In January 2023, **43% of GRTB pupils in Wiltshire either had SEN support (37%) or an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) (5.9%)**

GRTB students registered by age

Age (at start of school year)	2021	2022	2023
1-4 years	18	23	29
5-11 years	144	153	150
12-17 years	48	58	57
Total	210	234	236

GRTB students registered by SEN (special educational needs)

	2021	2022	2023
Education, Health and Care plan	20	21	14
SEN support	71	78	88
No special educational need	119	135	134
Total	210	234	236

66%

GRTB pupils entitled to and claiming free school meals

8% of all

Wiltshire pupils entitled to and claiming free school meals

Section 1: Educational Attainment and Attendance

EMTAS

Wiltshire's **EMTAS team (Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service)** is dedicated to supporting schools to meet the needs of learners for whom English is an additional language and other global majority children including Travellers.

The EMTAS service is free at the point of use to maintained primary schools – other settings need to buy in the service. EMTAS works with schools, **so can only support GRTB children who are on role at a school**, although outreach work takes place, primarily on Wiltshire Council owned sites, such as homework clubs.

EMTAS works to overcome systemic barriers to school attendance for GRTB communities such as:

Perceived Barriers to Education

- Low parent literacy levels and limited internet access affecting applications for school places

"Friends, family & Travellers (FFT) and service user data reveals that **47%** of FFT clients have low or no literacy, findings which are corroborated by several broader external studies on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities generally." – FFT [report](#)

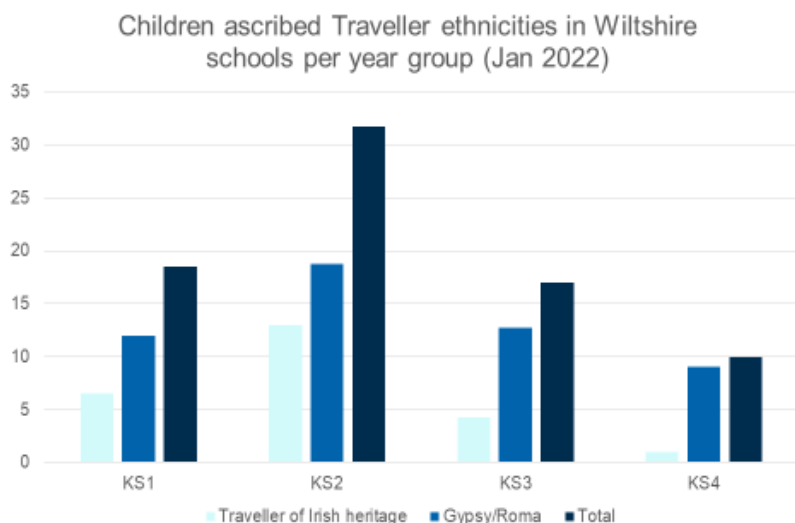
- Transient populations finding it difficult to remain in one school
- Challenges with school transport
- Feeling that school is not a good cultural fit
- Worries that children will be exposed to culturally inappropriate messaging around sex and relationships education
- Feeling that school does not prepare children for a life in the travelling community
- Worries and experience of bullying and stigmatisation
- Some feel that children need to develop practical skills to help support their families

Families may opt to home educate their children because of these barriers

"I was more grown up than any of them; they were like kids. I had more actual experience of life than they did. I went there to try and work and learn but it was like being back in a playground."

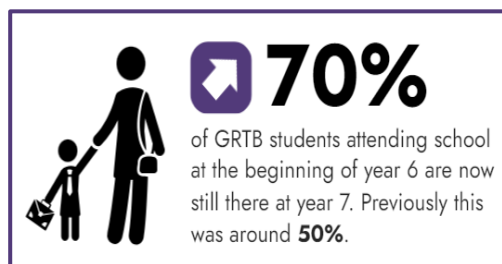
Section 1: Educational Attainment and Attendance

There is a marked decline in school attendance from year 5 through to year 11 particularly for Irish Travellers as illustrated in the graph below.



In Wiltshire transition from Primary to Secondary school is an EMTAS priority and their work has already impacted the numbers of GRTB pupils transitioning to secondary education.

Update: Government has indicated a change to guidance may be coming with parents having a responsibility to register their children as home educated if not attending an educational establishment. [Plans have been announced](#) to create local authority administered registers for children not in school to make sure authorities know where every child is being educated, that it is of the right quality, and that support is offered to home educating families. (Source: Department for Education, Feb 2022).



In Wiltshire : The use of **School Attendance Orders** will be considered where families who are EHE are unwilling or unable to provide evidence of educational activity and progress. This may result in a small number of pupils being required to attend a secondary education placement

Section 1: Educational Attainment and Attendance

Progress

Gathering accurate **quantitative data** will always be challenging in the field of education because there is **no definitive data set in education contexts** that records which children are Travellers.

Parents can ascribe their children as, for example, Travellers of Irish Origin in school ethnicity data (and we have access to this) but this is a very imperfect proxy because:

- not all Travellers identify with a Traveller *ethnicity*;
- many Travellers who do identify with a Traveller ethnicity **nevertheless don't want this to be recorded on school census**;
- some travelling communities **have vanishingly few members who identify in this way** (e.g. boaters) and in some communities almost everybody does (e.g. Irish Travellers) so **looking at attendance and achievement through the prism of Traveller ethnicity data doesn't just underrepresent, it distorts as well.**

Those who are registered as from Traveller ethnicities are a small cohort meaning no conclusions can safely be drawn about how Wiltshire is performing for this group compared to National statistics or about whether attainment is improving.

There is a GRTB specialist working within targeted education in EMTAS. The team are **working to encourage schools** to sign up to the '[GTRSB Pledge for Schools](#)', aimed at:

"Improving access, retention, and outcomes in education for Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, Showmen, and Boaters"



Two Wiltshire schools,

Fitzmorris in Bradford on Avon and St Sampsons in Cricklade are currently participating with **several more working toward** implementing the pledge

Section 1: Educational Attainment and Attendance

Library Services

Anecdotal evidence from libraries staff suggests that GRTB communities use the Wiltshire libraries and have particularly appreciated:

- Use of the service without proof of address
- Free to join
- Borrowed books can be returned to any Wiltshire library (including mobile libraries)
- Free to download e-books, audio books and magazines
- Access to wi-fi, computers, scanning and printing in all 30 library locations



Libraries Progress

Since the 2020-2025 strategy was published, library services have:

- Removed overdue charges on the late return of children's books, hopefully removing a barrier to families using libraries to borrow books, and
- Are taking part in reading literacy initiatives like the annual Summer Reading Challenge. It's expected this will have benefited families from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater communities,

However, families from these communities do not tend to self-identify when using libraries.

- Library managers can (depending on staff capacity) attend outreach events focussing on GRTB communities, and there is willingness to help co-ordinate potential library involvement in any future events.

Section 1: Educational Attainment and Attendance

Recommendations : Education

Pledges in the extant strategy are difficult to evidence progress against. Pledges in a future strategy could be shared across the Education and Skills Directorate as well as with partners and could include:

- A numerical target for Key Stage 2 attainment (based on a 3-year rolling aggregate to smooth out the impact of small cohort sizes).
- A numerical Key Stage 4 target when enrolment at secondary phase improves;
- numerical targets for % of children ascribed to Traveller ethnicities who start Y7; who finish Y9; and who finish Y11;
- A numerical target for how many schools will be signatories to the GRTSB pledge, as a proxy measure for improvement in inclusion and cultural competence in schools. A separate target for how many secondary schools will sign could be considered.
- A numerical target for the number of suspensions and exclusions children ascribed to Traveller ethnicities will be subject to (this figure is currently significantly high);
- A numerical target or targets for Traveller pupils' attendance.
- Numbers in unsuitable EHE and return to suitable education



Recommendations : Library Services

- Engage in further work to better understand how the GRTB community currently uses the library and related services, along with unmet needs with regards to these services (addressing the difficulties in GRTB families not self-identifying).
- Evaluation of services and further information gathering with respect to GRTB communities.
- Increase attendance at outreach events targeting GRTB communities, as has already been attempted

Section 2: Preventative Services

Strategy Pledges

1. Increase uptake of universal screening and immunisation services within GRT and Boater communities in Wiltshire.
2. Review the invitation process for screening and immunisation services within the context of GRT and Boater challenges (e.g. access to facilities, health literacy, postal invitations)
3. Improve local data collation to facilitate better measurement and understanding of inequalities experienced by GRT and Boater communities within preventative services
4. Explore feasibility of at-site healthcare provision as already occurs at some Traveller sites
5. Improve opportunistic interventions for preventative health input at every opportunity (e.g. MECC training for non-clinical staff)
6. Explore options for community health champions or similar community member leadership in health promotion
7. Review the registration process for GP practices for those with non-permanent addresses

What do we know?

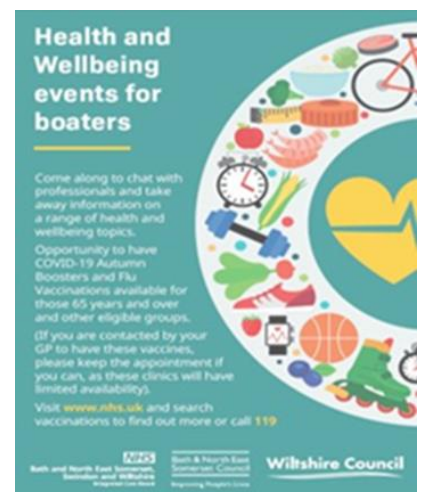
Travelling communities generally have lower immunisation uptake in comparison to the rest of the population. Furthermore, they are also known to be disadvantaged by lack of inclusion in routine screening programmes. This occurs particularly if they:

- Aren't registered with a GP
- Have difficulty accessing transport
- Don't have a fixed address, or other means of accessing postal health correspondence e.g. friend/relative or other post box.
- Are digitally excluded

Progress – Opportunistic Interventions

In November, two **Health and Wellbeing Fayres** were run. These provided further opportunities for vaccination, guidance and support on:

- Smoking cessation
- Substance use
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Mental wellbeing and emotional resilience
- Fire Safety
- First Aid
- Health Screening



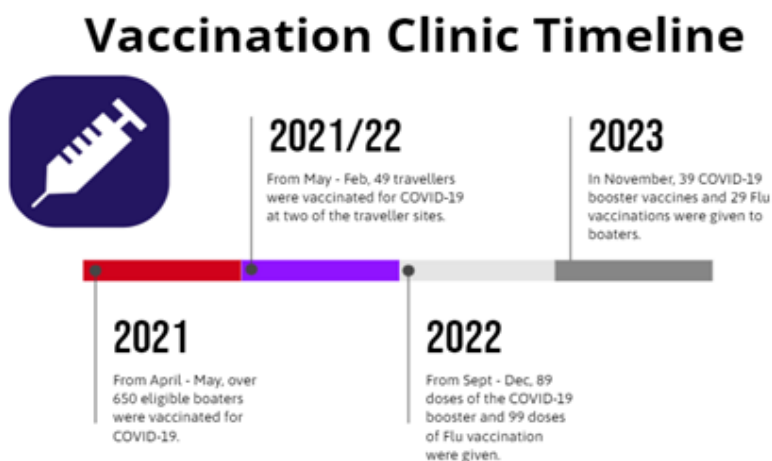
Section 2: Preventative Services

Progress: Immunisations

Wiltshire Council's Public Health team established a range of **additional opportunities**, for boating communities to access COVID-19 and flu vaccinations.. **Over 650 boaters eligible for COVID vaccination were vaccinated.**

The team also worked extensively to **engage local Travellers** in the vaccination programme. **49 Travellers accessed COVID-19** booster vaccinations during 2021/22.

Additional booster vaccination clinics were delivered to boaters. 89 doses of the COVID booster vaccine were given at these, as well as 99 doses of the flu vaccine in total.



Progress: Invitation to Routine Screening and Immunisations

Policy and communications content **are established within national procedures**. However, the Health Protection team have representation on regional screening committees concerning cancers and other health conditions such as diabetes. Such access provides **valuable opportunity to influence processes** such as the method in which people are invited to access screening programmes and reduce inequalities such as those identified above.

Discussions to determine more varied and inclusive methods of health messaging e.g. invitations via text message rather than postal invitations are on-going

Section 2: Preventative Services

Sexual Health

GPs and other providers of sexual health **services don't routinely record data** that establishes ethnicity such as GRT. This leaves a **gap in our understanding** of the current population and their use of such services.

The subject of **sexual health is known to be a 'taboo' subject** within GRT communities. This presents a possible barrier in accessing appropriate support.

Progress - Sexual Health

Wiltshire Public Health are **currently re-commissioning sexual health services** in the county. As part of this process, **ethnicity recording will be strengthened** to improve data capture on GRT communities to facilitate better understanding of who is accessing services and to provide insight into the specific needs of different populations.

Progress - MECC Training Data

The table below highlights numbers trained in MECC during 2023.

Service area	Number of staff MECC trained 2023
Primary Care	11
External Partners (Carer Support, Age UK Alzheimer's Society etc)	24
Military/Prison	5
Mental Health Services	1
BSW staff	3
Ambulance service/ Fire service	11
Drug & Alcohol services	7
College/education/ children's centres	19
Miscellaneous	21
Wiltshire Council Staff	11
	Total 113

Recommendations

- **Continue and accelerate work to accurately gather information on the numbers of people from GRTB communities with Wiltshire Council departments, Health and Care services and with other external partners to build a more accurate baseline from which to measure progress.**
- **Build on work started at Wiltshire Council Traveller sites to identify community champions**

Section 3: Safeguarding and Violence Prevention

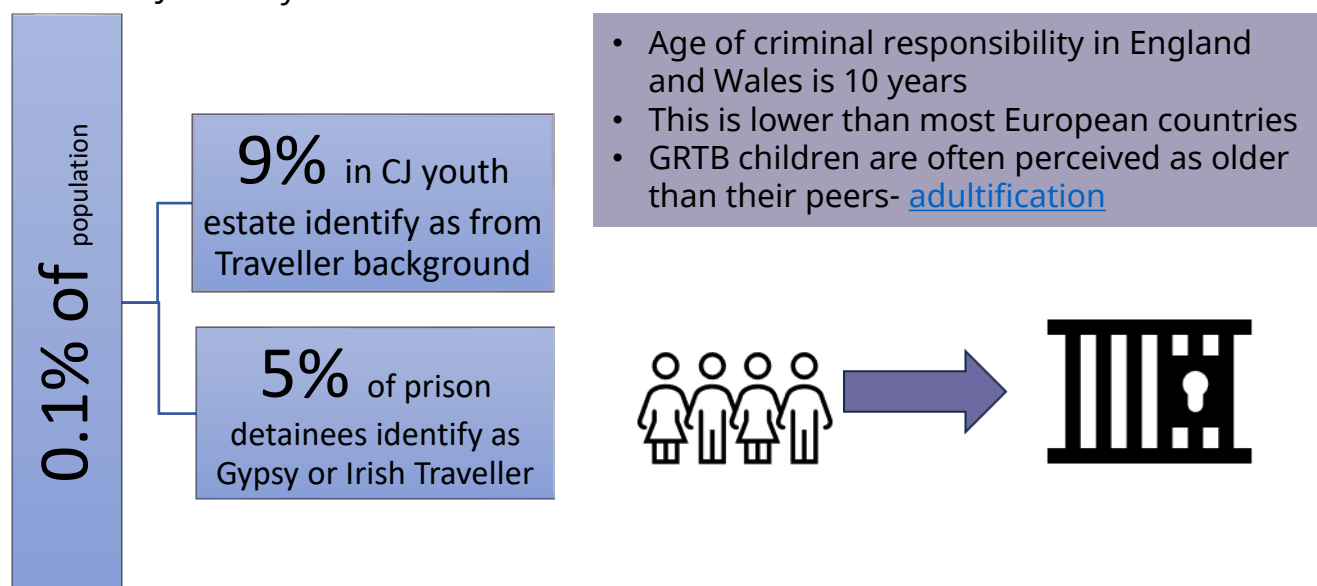
Strategy Pledges

1. Ensure all front-line staff who provide services to GRT and Boater communities have culturally appropriate safeguarding training to be able to identify, sign-post and raise concerns as required
2. Identify any gaps in information sharing particular to GRT and Boater communities (e.g. due to the mobile nature of some groups; good working relationship with some agencies but not all), especially across borders (e.g. between maternity services) and between agencies; improve pathways and information sharing networks to address any identified gaps

What do we know?

National data and evidence indicates that:

- Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller people are heavily overrepresented within the Criminal Justice System.



<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/prisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/04/gypsies-romany-Travellers-findings.pdf>

Recent Legislation

The recent passing of the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) **criminalises trespass and prohibits and criminalises nomadic living**. The potential impact of this is the increased likelihood of many more GRT people finding themselves in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS) and potentially being detained. This further increases already over-representation within the prison service and may [further complicate relationships](#) between GRTB communities and the Police

Section 3: Safeguarding and Violence Prevention

Progress- Safeguarding and Violence Prevention

- **Specialist Domestic Abuse workers are now in post in the Julian House Outreach & Engagement Team and there is specialist provision of refuge places for those fleeing DA**
- **506 Adult Social Care staff and 164 Families and Children’s services staff have completed one or more modules**
- **The Youth Justice Team are working to better understand the needs of this vulnerable group**
- **Staff Training**
- **Four Gypsy and Traveller e-learning modules were made available to Wiltshire council staff on the online training portal.**

Training Module	No. of Wiltshire Council staff completions
Gypsy and Traveller History and Culture	499
Challenges Face by Communities	307
Positive Strategy – Accessing Services	265
Positive Strategy - Participation	249



Recommendations

- Ensure all front-line staff working with GRTB communities have access to and attend GRTB **cultural awareness training** delivered by those with lived experience
- Work with Wiltshire Council departments and partners **to improve information sharing**

Section 4: Mental Health

Strategy Pledges

1. Increase access and awareness of mental health and mental health services (including the spectrum of mental health services available) working with those who already have trusted relationships with the GRT communities
2. Review current pathways to accessing mental health services and consider known barriers for GRT&B communities (significant taboo; health literacy; perceptions of who needs mental health services; need for GP to refer into pathways; intermittent internet access; access to healthcare sites (whilst travelling))
3. Explore options of working with trusted community/charity organisations to help address barriers and stigma associated with mental health, and improve site access for mental health service staff
4. Consider the development of community mental health champions, in a similar manner to Strategic Priority 2 for health promotion

What do we know?

Travelling communities experience poorer mental health outcomes, with adults experiencing higher levels of depression than those in the general population.

Additionally, the 2010, [All-Ireland Traveller Health Study](#) indicated that suicide rates are significantly higher for Travellers.

Following the death by suicide of a loved one, a national survey respondent said "the message from police and authorities was loud and clear, we lived in a caravan, we didn't fit the boxes and therefore didn't matter". One respondent linked higher rates of suicide with these experiences: "when you live in a society which stigmatises you at every opportunity, this is the natural result". – [Friends, Families, and Travellers Report](#)

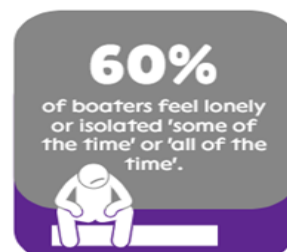
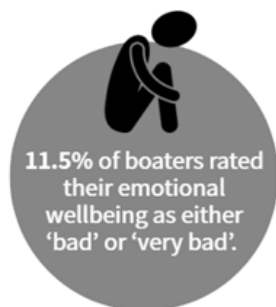
Discrimination and stigma towards GRT and boater communities is still very much present. This includes being subject to derogatory comments and/ or barriers to accessing services. Whilst there is limited GRT data, from the recent boater survey, **over half of respondents had experienced stigma or discrimination in relation to boating life.**

"Gypsies and Travellers suffer more than most due to being outcasts. Our way of life is becoming (even more) criminalised, which is likely to further impact mental health in the Travelling communities". – [Friends, Families, and Travellers Report](#)

Section 4: Mental Health

Boater Wellbeing

Findings from the 2023 Wiltshire Boater Survey suggested that many of the boating community that responded are experiencing poor mental wellbeing.



Suicide

There is **limited local data** on the impact of suicide on travelling populations. Wiltshire Public Health's real time suspected suicide surveillance (RTSSS) database records suspected and confirmed suicides notified by a range of partners including the coroner. **Ethnicity is recorded but there isn't currently an option to select GRT within this.** However, the qualitative aspect of this intelligence based on additional information around the circumstances has, at points, captured data on those part of the travelling communities.

Progress – Mental Health

- Public Health funded a local charity [“Floaty Boat”](#) to provide workshops around managing the systems on a boat, repairs and maintenance, **helping develop skills and resilience** while also providing **an opportunity for social connection** and interaction.
- Two Floating Fairs have also been funded where artists and artisans showcase their businesses and providing **opportunities to link with the settled community** building better relationships and **reducing conflict**
- Work has begun with Avon & Wiltshire mental Health Partnership to support understanding of the prevalence of mental ill-health and increase accessibility of services

Recommendations

- Improve data collection within mental health and wellbeing services
- Continue and expand work with boating communities to reduce loneliness and isolation through funding community-led workshops fayres etc
- Explore opportunities to expand this work to Travelling communities to develop community links
- Work to overcome the stigma around mental ill-health in Travelling communities through providing culturally informed services

Section 5: Maternal Health and Early Years

Strategy Pledges

1. Improve levels of breastfeeding and infant immunisation uptake in Traveller communities in Wiltshire
2. Explore models of information sharing to maximise continuity of care for those who travel during pregnancy
3. Consider any barriers intrinsic to home/site visit risk assessments particular to GRT&B communities which could be modified.
4. Increase number of Traveller sites visited regularly by Health Visitor service
5. Empower maternity and health visitor services, as trusted professionals, to recognise and easily sign-post GRT and Boater community members to other services as required (e.g. dental services, housing information)
6. Work with site providers (e.g. local council, private landlords) to provide basic contacts and information for new/returning residents of local healthcare support

What do we know ?

Women from GRTB communities often report poor experiences of maternity and neonatal care services. There is **very little local data**, but national evidence suggests that:

- One in five Gypsy Traveller mothers will [experience the loss of a child](#), compared to one in a hundred in the non- Traveller population
- [Child accident](#) rates are higher for Gypsy and traveller children
- [Rates of Caesarean section are higher](#) in women from nomadic communities
- Children from Gypsy and Travelling communities are between [1½ and 2 times more likely to die in the first year](#) of life than children in the settled community.
- Rates of breast-feeding vary widely across ethnic groups within the GRTB community



Section 5: Maternal Health and Early Years

Progress

In November 2022, the Maternity Equity and Equality steering group agreed to develop **an ante-natal support pathway for GRTB people**. Each of these groups has their own unique needs, therefore, the pathway will **be co-created** with people from those communities. It will be a phased process commencing with a support pathway for boaters.

“She's very good because she goes on site and she knows you know what, it's, you know. She knows about Travellers. It's not like she's gonna ask silly questions like, 'Where do you get your water from? Where will you sleep?' and stuff like that.” [FFT report](#)

The HCRG Care Group (delivering the Public Health Nursing Service as of April 2024) have **recruited to two posts leading on Health Inequalities** in marginalised communities and will be linking with specialist Outreach & Engagement workers in the Julian House Team

Recommendations

- Continue and expand the work with Maternity services to develop an additional pathway for GRT communities using the learning from boater community
- Work to encourage nomadic peoples and those not in bricks and mortar housing to disclose ethnicity and living circumstances to support data and evidence gathering, setting a baseline against which to measure progress
- Explore possibilities of dedicated staff with a cultural understanding to work with nomadic communities for example specialist midwife and health visitor as has been achieved in BANES.

Section 6: Social Care and Carer Support

Strategy Pledges

1. Increase the uptake of carer support in Wiltshire by members of GRT and Boater community
2. Review any barriers to social care provision for those not resident in bricks and mortar.

What do we know?

In 2011/12 MECOPP ((Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project) a Scottish charity, worked with Gypsy and Traveller Families to gain their views. Some of the issues raised were:

- Most did not identify as carers and did not use this term to describe themselves
- Isolation from the wider community and sometimes within their own communities was a recurring theme
- It is not uncommon for nomadic people to travel hundreds of miles to see a known GP or other trusted health professional rather than risk rejection from locally available services

- Most Gypsy/Traveller carers are not accessing social care services, voluntary or statutory, on a regular basis, and many had never accessed services at all. General knowledge about carers' rights/entitlements within the community is very low; most carers are not in receipt of Carer's Allowance.

Very often families had got into a routine of 'muddling through' or 'making do', both financially as well as with the more practical aspects of caring for a loved one. Those who had tried to access social care services often felt they had not received an appropriate or helpful response and this, in turn, made them reluctant to try again. Cases had often been 'closed' or left hanging with no appropriate care package in place. [HiddenCarers-Unheard+Voices+Report.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)

Carer support Wiltshire were approached for information on the local picture , but do not collect information on whether someone is from a GRTB community as they don't feel this would affect the support offered

Section 6: Social Care and Carer Support Progress

- Meetings including the Julian House Outreach Team, Advice and Contact and Adult Safeguarding have led to **a better understanding of working practices and thresholds on both sides**. This also led to a greater understanding of the challenges and barriers GRTB communities face when attempting to access mainstream services and has improved referral pathways.
- It remains a challenge to quantify the numbers of people within the Wiltshire GRTB communities with caring roles. **Two new roles within the Julian House Outreach Team have been created with the specific remit of working with GRT communities** and will enhance data and evidence gathering and promoting carer support services.



"If one family has a crisis, the family's all there for them, they help out each other. And if it's a disability we would help a little bit more in help as well with the disability, families that has disability, because we don't get much information, like we have to look for it our self (Irish Traveller)" – [Missing Voices Report](#)

Recommendations

- Expand the work begun with the boater community to those from other nomadic backgrounds to **increase awareness of caring roles and available support**
- Ensure **cultural awareness training including contextual safeguarding** training is available to all staff working with GRTB communities
- Work with Wiltshire Council teams, partners & VCSE organisations to **increase the numbers of people who feel comfortable to disclose ethnicity and/or living circumstances**

Section 7: Place and Community

Strategy Pledges

1. Work with GRT community members to improve pathways for addressing housing and site condition concerns, both for local authority owned and private Traveller sites where feasible
2. Work with Boater community members and the Canal and River Trust to ensure adequate provision of amenities, and access to moorings, to provide a safe environment for all
3. Ensure that private Traveller sites have access to a minimum standard of basic amenities
4. Empower front-line staff to recognise and sign-post issues experienced by GRT and Boater community members to the appropriate services (e.g. safeguarding; maternity services)
5. Work across services (e.g. healthcare, education) to maximise utility from sharing data gained when new residents access a site or when a new private site is registered; also consider utilising communication points to provide health promotion messaging (e.g. leaflets on local maternity services sent with housing support information)

What do we know?

- Family neighbourhood and community **are central to many nomadic people's culture and identity**
- There are currently **3 Wiltshire Council owned** Traveller sites in Wiltshire with **66 privately owned sites** with planning permission, **3 sites tolerated** for planning purposes, 8 unauthorised sites and **5 travelling Showpeople yards**
- Many **private sites are very small with only one or two pitches**, a few may have 20- 30 pitches – each pitch may have room for a caravan, a static mobile home and a day room for washing and cooking – little is known about the conditions on these sites.
- Each site **should comply with planning permission** limiting the number of pitches, however recent experience on a larger site in the west of the county, revealed larger numbers than permitted together with dangerous conditions which led to a fire.
- [The Wiltshire Gypsy Traveller Development Plan](#) is currently out for public consultation and is seeking to increase the number of pitches across the county. More available pitches **should help to reduce the number of unauthorised encampments** experienced in Wiltshire which should, in turn, support better relationships with the settled community.

Section 7: Place and Community Progress

- 2 new outreach staff in post working specifically with roadside dwellers and those on traveller sites
- Site infrastructure and facilities are a priority for community members



At some sites across the county, levels of anti-social behaviour and **difficult relationships with the settled community** have been problematic to manage for Wiltshire Council, Police and partners, using a great deal of time and resource. **The new Outreach workers will work to understand this and to foster better relations.**

The established work of the Julian House Outreach Team with the boating community has clearly illustrated **the benefits of having workers with lived experience** of travelling people. Beginning in April 2024, the Team now has an additional 2x 0.5 WTE workers to start to address this with Gypsy Roma and Traveller people.

The Team currently invite those they have supported to **provide feedback** around the service they have received. Some comments are below:

“The fact that Travellers are working with Travellers makes the relationship with staff relatable. The outreach workers understand the lifestyle as they have lived it so I trust them and that they understand the issues we face.”

“Engaged outreach workers have helped me enormously through difficult times.”

Recommendations

- **Extend work** begun on Wiltshire Council owned Traveller sites **to include privately owned sites**
- Build on developing trusted relationships begun through the Community Conversations Lead **aiming to involve community members in co-producing service pathways** to meet their needs
- **Work with community members** to understand the improvements they would like to see and how these might be funded and achieved

Boater Survey



Teams gather for the canal walk

In September 2023 members of the Wiltshire Public Health Team together with Strategic Engagement and Partnership Officers, members of the corporate office and colleagues from the Devizes and District Foodbank, walked the length of the Kennet and Avon Canal in Wiltshire. The purpose was to have strengths-based conversations with boaters to discover what they liked and valued about life on the water and what they found more challenging.

We also publicised a **survey which ran for four weeks** to gain further insight into boater's lives. The survey was available both online and paper copies were left in several "hubs" along the canal frequented by boaters, including marinas, pubs and cafes.

The **Wiltshire survey of boaters attracted 218 responses** – around 10% of the estimated number of boats – which was a very encouraging response rate and **indicated that boaters welcomed being asked for their opinions.**

The **full results and analysis of the survey** are available [here](#), but some key insights were:

- **40% of respondents said that accessing fresh drinking water was difficult or very difficult**
- **60% said they felt lonely or isolated**
- **60% said their boat needed repairs**
- **58.1% were aged over 50 years**

What Works?

Having front-line workers with **lived experience**. The Julian House Outreach & Engagement Team have shown that **taking time to get to know people and what is important to them/for them** increases engagement with mainstream services.

Being **led by the community** results in the feeling that their voices are important and are being heard.

Working at the pace of **developing trust**



What's Next?

Convene a working group from within the Traveller Reference Group membership to develop a **Wiltshire GRTB strategy for 2025-2030 with measurable and achievable outcomes shaped by the views of GRTB communities**

Repeat Boater Survey in summer 2025 to **assess whether change has been achieved**

Co-produce a similar survey for Travellers – pilot with those on Wiltshire Council sites and expand to those on private sites and living roadside in 2026

