

Item 5: Health inequalities of the local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community

By: Kay Goldsmith, Scrutiny Research Officer

To: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 May 2022

Subject: Health Inequalities of the Local Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Community

Summary: This report invites the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the information provided by the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

It provides background information which may prove useful to Members.

1) Introduction

- a) The health experiences and health outcomes of Gypsy and Traveller groups are worse than for those of the general population. According to a House of Commons briefing paper:

“Gypsies and Travellers experience some of the worst outcomes of any group, across a wide range of social indicators. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published a number of reports highlighting the multiple inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers. An EHRC review in 2015 concluded that the life chances of Gypsies and Travellers had declined since the Commission’s previous review in 2010. The contributory factors are complex and often inter-related, but may include deprivation, social exclusion and discrimination.”¹

- b) The briefing paper covered various aspects of life, from employment to education to the criminal justice system. Chapter 8 specifically discussed health and can be read [here](#). In particular, the briefing noted:

“Inclusion of Gypsy Traveller health needs in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments: A review” (2015) was compiled by the charity Friends, Families and Travellers. This review found that Gypsies and Travellers were more likely to develop certain conditions, less likely to access certain services, and more likely to have a poorer experience of health services due to direct or indirect discrimination.... The report concluded that these inequalities arise due to a range of factors – with poor accommodation, discrimination, poor health literacy, and a lack of cultural awareness and understanding by health professionals of Gypsy Traveller health and social needs, all creating barriers to accessing health services.”²

¹ House of Commons Library (2019) Gypsies and Travellers, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8083/CBP-8083.pdf>

² *ibid*

Item 5: Health inequalities of the local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community

2) What can HOSC do?

- a) A Member of the Committee has asked that the local health commissioners provide assurance that they are doing all they can to reduce the health inequalities experienced by gypsies and travellers resident in Kent.
- b) The Health and Social Care Act 2012 gave NHS England and Clinical Commissioning Groups specific legal duties around health inequalities both in terms of reducing access inequalities to health services and the outcomes achieved by those services.
- c) The Kent and Medway CCG have been asked to explain how they ensure equity of access to health services for the GRT community.
- d) This area is a complex and wide-ranging issue, and HOSC must be mindful of its purpose to “review and scrutinise matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in Kent”.³

3) Additional information

- a) According to the 2011 Census⁴, there were:
 - 54,895 Gypsy or Irish Travellers resident in England.
 - Of the above figure, 4,685 lived in Kent.
 - The district of Maidstone was home to the largest number (838).

4. Recommendation

RECOMMENDED that the Committee consider and note the report.

Background Documents

None

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³ Paragraph 17.139 of Kent County Council’s Constitution,
https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/3142/Constitution.pdf

⁴ 2011 Census: Office for National Statistics (ONS) [2011 Census: Key Statistics for Local Authorities in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales)