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'PLAIN ENGLISH' SUMMARY

“A Good Job for a Traveller?”

What do Gypsies and Travellers think about working in Health and Social Care jobs?

What makes it hard to take up a health or social care job, what might make you want to do it and what help would you need?

Written by: Margaret Greenfields, Buckinghamshire New University in July 2008

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THANK YOU TO:

Canterbury Gypsy and Traveller Support Group: Youth Group
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And most of all:

the education, health and social care staff, adult relatives and
young people from Gypsy/Traveller/Showman communities who
took part.

Foreword by

Mary Somerville
Regional Healthcare Strand Manager
Aimhigher South East

This report was commissioned by the Aimhigher South East Healthcare Strand, which is actively concerned with raising the aspirations and awareness of careers and progression routes into and within the Health and Social Care sectors.

There is an accepted requirement to raise the numbers of young people going into these sectors through higher education routes and an imperative to diversify the workforce itself to reflect the population it serves.

Young people from Gypsy & Traveller backgrounds are less likely to progress to non compulsory education and thus less likely to work in these sectors. The objective of this research has been to raise the profile of these issues, identify the barriers to progression that exist for these groups and to begin to examine ways in which barriers can be overcome. We are most grateful to Dr Greenfields for the energy and commitment she has shown in undertaking this work, and I hope that readers find the report illuminating and helpful when actively engaging with the young people involved.

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Introduction

During this research we spoke to a lot of young Gypsies, Travellers and Showmen about what they thought about working in health and social care.

We wanted to find out what they knew about the types of work available – everything from being a nurse to a social worker to a care home worker or a physiotherapist (helping people to walk or move around again after an accident) or a chiropodist (someone who looks after feet).

We asked about their own experience and their family members experience of working in these jobs and if they thought they were good or bad jobs for Travellers – and why they thought that.

We wanted to know what might make it hard for someone to take up a job in health or social care and what help they might need if they wanted to do that sort of work.

We asked if people knew how much someone was paid if they worked in health and social care jobs and what jobs they thought were better for girls or better for boys.

We asked if people would want to work with their own communities (Gypsies and Travellers) or other people too.

We talked to teachers and health and social care workers who work with Gypsies and Travellers to find out if they knew what might make it hard for a Traveller to take up training or a job and how it could be made easier to help and support Gypsies and Travellers who wanted to work in these jobs.

We wanted to find out:

- Why someone might not want to work in health or social care – or why they might
- How we could make it easier to encourage young Gypsies and Travellers to think about trying these sort of jobs

We wanted to know if teachers and health and social care professionals (including some people from Gypsy and Traveller background who were community workers) could help us to work

out how to make it easier for young people to work in jobs which non-Travellers already do.

We made a number of recommendations for health and social employers and colleges which might help to encourage and support young people to think about, take up and stay in health and social care training or work.

What is in the full report?

We talked about the studies and reports on health and social care for Gypsies and Travellers which show that community members often have very bad health, not enough decent places to live and often don't have the opportunity to do well at school or leave school early – because they want to work or because of racism and discrimination.

We then talked about how we carried out the research – and who we interviewed (adults – including some Gypsy and Traveller health and community workers - and young people)

We talked about what the 'professionals' (Teachers, health workers and Gypsy and Traveller staff) told us about what the barriers to recruiting young people to these jobs – and how they thought the problems could be overcome.

We then looked at what the young Gypsies and Travellers and Showpeople told us are the problems, or what might encourage them to take up one of those jobs and what help they might need to work in health or social care.

We then put down the recommendations for colleges, employers (like hospitals) and Government and local authorities for example.– stop racist bullying at school so people stay on longer and get more qualifications, or help to provide more sites as this might mean some people would like to take up training if they had somewhere more stable to live.

We also put down easier solutions which people told us – like recruit Gypsies and Travellers to do the course together so they can support each other when they are learning.

Finally we said how the full report can be found (on websites of Gypsy and Traveller organisations) or by getting in touch with Margaret who wrote it – her email address is on the front of this summary) and how we will try to make sure that people hear about it so that they can work to make it easier to recruit Gypsies and Travellers to work in health and social care jobs.

Who Did We Interview?

“Professionals” - this table show what they do for a living. The numbers (in brackets) shows how many are Gypsies or Travellers – the rest are gorges/country people.

Social Worker/	Health Staff	Education Service	Community Development	Youth Worker	'other' (e.g. academic)
1	2 (1 Romany Gypsy)	5	5 (2 New Traveller; 1 Irish Traveller; 1 Romany Gypsy).	2 (2 Romany Gypsy)	1

“Gypsies and Travellers and Showpeople” (young people who joined in group interviews)

Romany Gypsy	Irish Traveller	Showman	New Traveller
23	12	1	2

We also interviewed two other New Travellers who work as health and social care staff (a nurse and a social care worker with disabled children) and spoke to some Mums and Aunts of Irish Traveller girls who took part in the interviews. Five people posted on the “Savvy Chavvy” website to say what they thought about health and social care jobs and we’ve used some quotes from them too.

Eleven (11) boys took part in the group interviews and the rest (27 people) were girls. Young people were between the ages of 12 and 25. Some young people were married and several were mothers which meant that working might be difficult to fit in around family responsibilities.

In total (including professionals and young people) we interviewed **56** people for the Aim Higher study. **47 of them were Gypsies or Travellers.**



Outdoor Focus Group for Aim Higher project. Photographed by Margaret Greenfields 2008 (these young Gypsies said we could take their photo and put their picture in this report).

What Did the Professionals Tell Us?

That young people's experiences of **racism and discrimination** create huge barriers to wanting to train or work in health and social care jobs where they might experience abuse from other students, staff or patients:

“once you've experienced racism at a very high level at High School you kind of gauge the rest of your life by that base line and that's what's hard to get across to people, that college is an entirely different ball game, 'cos people see it as further education and 'this is my experience of it, so it's going to carry on and there's more people, and they're older' – and I think it is a definite worry for them”

One health professional (Romany Gypsy) said that she *“didn’t tell anyone at work anything about my life, that’s my business and what they don’t know can’t hurt them or hurt me”*

The professionals – Gypsies and Travellers as well as non-Gypsy teachers said that young people often don’t think about doing anything differently from the way their parents did:

“young people need more Gypsy and Traveller role models... their aspirations needs to be raised – helping them to break out of stereotypes of working - having a little job - until they get married [girls] and getting a well-paid job (self-employed by preference) and supporting their family [for boys]”

A Traveller community worker thought that this was because of bad experiences in the past

“the idea that... I won’t be able to do it, so I won’t try – [I don’t know] whether that is because of failure experiences in school, failed job interviews, perceptions that they’ve experienced in the past which been quite negative which then leads them to think that nobody will take them on anyway”

A Gypsy community worker explained that:

“I was the only Gypsy or Traveller in the whole school, and this is what they used to say about me ‘oh Gypsies can’t read or write and are scum’, so if I put my hand up and told the teacher I didn’t understand what she was saying, I was proving them right. So I never used to put my hand up. I just used to cause trouble so that I would get kicked out of that lesson – so then I didn’t have to do the work”

Family responsibilities and worrying about what other Gypsies and Travellers might think were seen as reasons why some people might not want to go to college or work in those jobs:

“they would be laughed at, someone would say they were ‘gay’

“it’s alright for a girl”

“brothers aren’t expected to do things around the house, and so there are expectations that a girl will prioritise her family, anything else is seen as ‘outside work’ and that can include studying”

“well there is a problem [for females] – a lot of Traveller boys – they wouldn’t want you – wouldn’t allow you - out working every day” (unmarried Romany Gypsy youth worker)

Some types of job might not be seen as very good for Gypsies and Travellers to do:

“I’m really doing that now but I’m not going in as a mental health worker, I’m saying I’m a support worker because there is so much stigma attached to mental health”

“one of the things that Traveller culture is particularly hot on is health and hygiene and germs. And the thought of sending a family member into a place where they are possibly going to be infected would be a massive problem”

“I think for a Traveller young person to become a social worker, they will be walking on very shaky ground.

Reading and writing or leaving school without qualifications means that it might be difficult for some people to go to college or get a job:

“I’ve known people on [site] they went to school, but since they’ve left school, they can read and write, but since they’ve left they haven’t built up, haven’t used those reading and writing skills so they haven’t really caught up any more”

Some other young people might have had **trouble with the police or courts:**

“a lot of the kids we work with have criminal records, driving offences, minor assaults, shoplifting, so as soon as they need a CRB check for work or training purposes – well that’s it” (Social Worker).

If someone **didn't have a place to stop or were on a roadside site** they would be more worried about where they could live or the problems with keeping clean than about working.

“turning up in muddy trousers and muddy shoes and stuff... you can't always have a hot bath or shower, not every morning or night”.

“If you were facing eviction, and were being moved on and needed to be at one place for a particular time it would be really difficult, you might let people down. As it is, last time we were evicted I worked all day getting ready to move and then did a night shift so I wasn't there when we had to leave”.

Other young people **might not even know about the sorts of job which are available:**

“you just don't get told about this stuff – they think all Travellers wants is to be a beautician – not get our hands dirty – but if we don't even know about it” (Youth Worker)

What did Professionals think would help Gypsies and Travellers to take up jobs in health and social care?

- **Special advice sessions on health and social care employment for Gypsies and Travellers**
- **Seeing other Gypsies and Travellers working those jobs:**
“you can do what I do – I didn't just go to school for fourteen years, I had to learn because I wanted to improve my life and for my children and I was so embarrassed that I couldn't read a book with [oldest son] that I sat down and cried... then I learnt to read and write” (Romany Gypsy Youth Worker)
- **Taster days on skills/career options taken to sites and community centres to encourage young people to consider careers they haven't “necessarily thought about”**
- **Get employers and colleges to think about support needs of Gypsies and Travellers and “to be realistic about what is needed and what it is like – it's no good paying lip-service ‘oh yes we want to recruit Travellers’ and then not offering support or complaining that someone isn't in college because they are being evicted or there is a family crisis which has to take priority ” (Social Worker)**

- **Leaflets and DVDs about health and social care jobs for parents and families** *“the key is to get the whole family involved – building good relationships with mums, and aunties and grans”* (Teacher)
- **Thinking about cultural and gender issues - meeting student’s needs:** *“don’t just say well you ‘can’t say that’ or ‘of course beauty therapy training isn’t just for girls’..... if we simply..... try to get the boys to train in hair and beauty and the girls to be welders then they (and their families) will vote with their feet”* (Community Development worker)

What Did the Young People Tell Us?

A lot of people had family members who worked in care homes or with disabled children but **Gypsies and Travellers aren’t shown working in those jobs** and people often hide that they are a Gypsy or a Traveller at work: *“you’d be scared they would reject you if they knew you was a Traveller”*

A lot of Gypsy and Traveller girls were interested in working with children

- *“my brother is disabled and the woman who comes to see him and my mum – I think that would be a good job”*
- *“I wouldn’t mind working with chavvies [children]”*
- or as a **midwife** *“I’d love that job, to go round the site and help those girls to give birth”*

Most boys weren’t interested in working in health or social care except as a **physiotherapist** *“you get like male physios in football and like that”*.

Both boys and girls thought that a **lot of jobs weren’t suitable for young Gypsy or Traveller men to do:** *“why would a man want to do that”* or that their family wouldn’t be happy if they wanted to work in health *“he’d go mad – it’s a girl’s job”*

Most people really didn’t like the idea of being a **social worker** because they thought it meant *“they take away children”* but then when they talked to each other about what else social workers might do, some people knew that being a social worker could also mean working with old people *“to get their rights”* or *“helping” disabled children and their families*. Some people thought that:

“there are older people on our site who are going to need health and social care – and what kind of care will they get?” and so it would be a good idea to have

- *“Traveller [social] workers working in their own community”*
- *“you never hear about the good things they do”*

There was a lot of **worry that working with old people** would be really hard because *“Imagine sitting getting to know that old person, helping them, washing them, feeding them, being with them every day and helping them to die. I couldn’t cope with that - I’d go hang myself”*.

Although some people thought there was a **need for mental health and drugs workers from the Gypsy and Traveller communities** *“there isn’t any help (for Gypsies and Travellers)”* they thought it might be really difficult to work with other Travellers because of the embarrassment or people not wanting to ask for help.

- *“I tell you it’s the shame in our community”*
- *“they don’t know what to say, so they don’t say anything, and you get a boy what is [addicted] and they pretend it isn’t happening”*.

Or they were worried that: *“you’d just get more depressed yourself”*.

Even though they knew some work would be really difficult a number of **young people wanted to work for their communities:**

“I want to run a rehab unit... where someone can come and get sorted out and people know that I know what it is about ‘cos I’m not a gorge-breed”.

“a Traveller understands a Traveller, like an Asian person understands an Asian”.

Most young people didn’t know that they could be paid to go to college to train in some health and social care jobs *“£1,500 a term paid in bits”*, or that if they qualified as a nurse they could earn good money:

“Eighteen thousand – now that is sensible enough – I’d work for that”

Things which put young people off from training and working in health and social care jobs were **fear of racism**:

- *“when I went to college no-one knew I was a Traveller. Then they knew half way through. I didn’t want to tell them in case I was treated badly”*(English Gypsy)
- *“being a nurse - some people might feel threatened, some of the patients might feel intimidated by you if you had a lot of piercings and tattoos and things like that”* (New Traveller)
- *“when you become a nurse you’d be scared in case you were turned down by the patients”* (Irish Traveller)
- *“I didn’t tell people I lived on a site ‘cos I was worried about prejudice and discrimination. I was actually with people and they started a conversation about things being stolen in the area because Gypsies had moved to a place near them”* (New Traveller)

Some young people thought it was important that more Travellers and Gypsies were working in health care even if people were racist:

“just because they are prejudice against us – I think we should get the jobs and show what Travellers can do. There is good and bad in everyone – but they [Travellers] shouldn’t have to prove themselves.” (Irish Traveller)

“I won’t walk in and say I’m one – but if they did ask I’d say” (English Gypsy)

Evictions and being moved on could be a problem for people without somewhere to stop. Most young people (apart from the New Travellers) were in houses or on authorised sites but some people said:

- *“if someone doesn’t have nowhere to stop they won’t be going to college anyway”*
- *“you wouldn’t be worried about training if you wasn’t going to be there long”.*

It could be hard getting a job or going to college if you weren’t on an authorised site or in a house:

- *“if you put down a ‘care of’ address as well, they see that you don’t actually have a permanent address that also gives them a sort of picture in your mind that you’re dodgy and not reliable... even though you could be really reliable and turn up every day”*
- *“you might have an eviction just the day before an interview or before you are supposed to start work”*

Wanting to work and family attitudes

Some people thought it might be difficult to work if they had to do **shift work** or had **family responsibilities**. Quite a lot of girls thought if they were married their husbands wouldn’t want them working.

- *“You’d have to marry a gorge boy if you want to go out to work”.*
- *“it’s very unusual for a married woman to get to work”*
- *“you would have to put your children and husband first”*

Other girls said that it was important to have a good job for the future and they could earn to help their family:

“I’d love to get a job – being a nurse, or a social worker it’s better than doing nothing, waiting to get married”

“it’s a good job – have your own money, not asking for nothing”

“it’s a good job for Traveller girl”

Some young people said that it would be hard to get a job in health or social care because they had a criminal record – sometimes because they had stood up to a racist bully:

“But that was violence,, we got our fingerprints taken and a caution that was all - but she was calling us pikey”

“If someone said something really racist to you, you’d want to do them too”

Quite a lot of young people were concerned that they had **reading or writing difficulties or had left school without qualifications:**

“I don’t know anybody with no GCSEs”

“I’ve been working with my Dad since I was 14”

“you don’t go to school once you are a certain age”

A lot of people were **surprised to find that you could take a job in health or social care without qualifications and train on the job and work your way up to earn good money.**

After talking about different types of job although **some young people really didn’t want to work in health or social care** *“why would you want to work if you get married?”*

Several other young women felt that they were really interested in **finding out more:**

“I would like to work with my own kind”

“you’ve interested me now with the midwife and the childcare jobs”

“It would be good – having people to show that Gypsies and Travellers could do that sort of work”

We told the young people about projects in Ireland and East Europe where **Gypsies and Travellers were trained up by their own community members to work as health and social care staff.** Most people thought it would be a good idea to have projects like that in Britain because:

“you wouldn’t be shamed if you didn’t know something – it would be good to be with other Travellers”

“we just want to be together while we are learning”

“that would be good a class with other Travellers”

A lot of young people were really keen to work for the benefit of other Gypsies and Travellers

As they thought being a health or care worker for other Gypsies and Travellers would be:

“doing such a good thing”

“I would love that, I really would”.

After we looked at what the young people and the professionals had told us these are the **recommendations** we have made in the report:

- **Make sure Gypsies, Travellers and schools and Traveller Education staff know that someone can do some jobs in health or social care without 5 GCSEs and work their way up**
- **Offer training at college which fits with family responsibilities and care (say if someone has young children or has to help their family with work)**
- **More and better sites might get people interested in training in health work if they have someone good to live while they were at college.**
- **Recruit groups of Gypsies and Travellers to support each other and go to college together or work on health projects like the ones in Ireland and East Europe**
- **Put together training leaflets (which aren't hard to read) which show Gypsies and Travellers working in health and social care jobs**
- **Make a DVD showing Gypsies and Travellers talking about their work in health and social care and how they worked their way up 'on the job'.**
- **Get colleges and employers to take more notice of 'practical skills' – not so much reading and writing.**
- **Get colleges to take out 'skills roadshows' to sites and community centres to encourage Gypsies and Travellers to find out more about health and social care jobs – including information on jobs boys might be interested in like physiotherapy – and to make sure people know how much they can earn when they are qualified.**

We hope that you were interested by this information on the research. If you want a copy of the whole report you can contact Margaret (address on the front of this report) and she can e-mail it to you or someone who can print it off for you.

Talk to your careers advisors, Connexions workers or local college if you are interested in finding out more about health and social care jobs and don't forget to tell your friends about the types of job which are out there.

Show them that *“Gypsies and Travellers can do those jobs”*

Margaret Greenfields
July 2008