

Primary Schools Pack



Gypsy, Roma,
Traveller History
Month 2026



This resource would not be possible without the hard work and creativity of many other partners, authors, friends and colleagues, many of them Gypsy and Traveller people. You will find them referenced and their work linked throughout this resource pack, but we would like to list them here too.



We'd like to thank:

The Travellers Times

Cath Muldowney - photographer

Richard O'Neill

Danny Hardaker and Karol Wyszynski

Riley, Rambo and family

Go Higher West Yorkshire

Gerardo D'Ambrosio and Becky Taylor -
producers of No Place to Be graphic novel

Leeds GATE members including our young
people



Thank you for downloading
our schools pack for Gypsy,
Roma, Traveller History
Month.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month (GRTHM) celebrates the richness of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities here in the UK, and the many and varied contributions they have made to British society, historically and continue to do so today.

The aims of the GRTHM are to:

Celebrate and promote knowledge of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture and heritage.

Share information on positive Gypsy, Roma and Traveller contributions to British society

Increase the confidence and awareness of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people to their cultural heritage.

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How to use this resource...



This resource pack aims to give you information and access to learning resources that will enable your school to benefit from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month (June) 2024.

This resource comes in three steps:

1. Choose

one or more learning resources from section one. They are categorised by the type of media used and for each one the subject, key stage, cost and time required are indicated.

2. Inform

yourself on the key facts about History Month and Gypsies and Travellers.

3. Commit

to take action beyond History Month

We also recommend gathering feedback and de-briefing after history month to see what worked well and what didn't. Quick and light touch is fine.



Who are Leeds GATE?

Our mission is to **improve quality of life of Gypsy and Traveller people** across **West Yorkshire** through improving access to **homes, health, education, employment, and inclusion in society**. We want a world in which all Gypsies and Travellers have the opportunity to **thrive** and make choices as **equal, valued and respected members of society**.

We support families and individuals throughout their lives with **youth work, community development and advocacy**. **Gypsies and Travellers support each other** and we help people to gain skills, **challenge injustice** and take action on issues that matter to them most. We also **work towards lasting change** on key issues of inequality **at local, regional and national levels**.

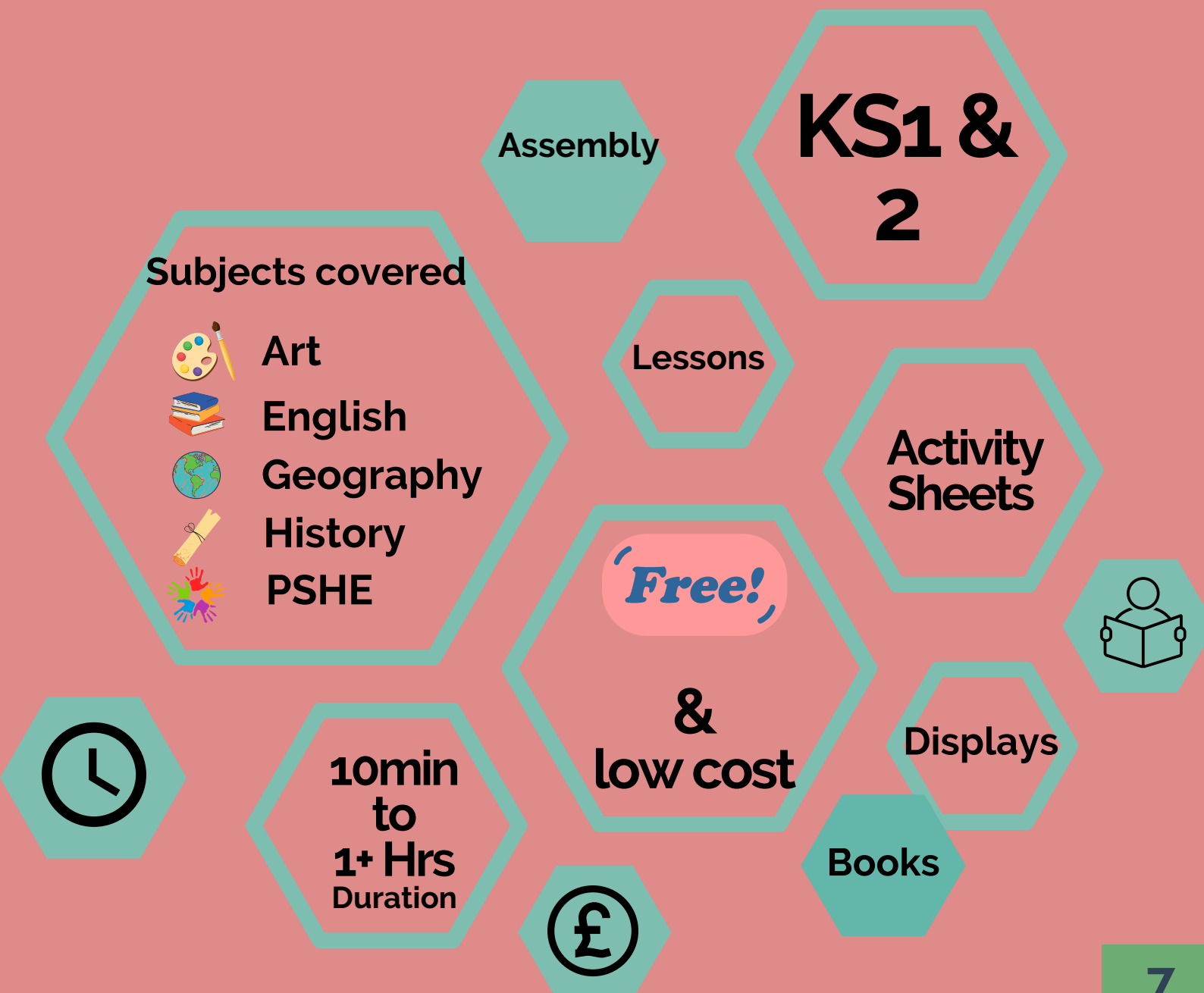
You can find out more about us and our work through [our website here](#) and specifically about our [education and related work here](#).

GET INVOLVED

We encourage all primary schools to get involved regardless of them having any known Gypsy or Traveller pupils. Increasing understanding, and promoting equality and respect benefits everyone and aligns with at least one of the values each school holds.

Most importantly for many Gypsy and Traveller pupils, History Month helps them see themselves represented in school activities, celebrated and valued by the school community, and gives them greater freedom to be open about themselves.

We encourage everyone to do something, even if it is one small thing. This pack has something for everyone...





1. Choose...

one or more learning resources from section one.

They are categorised by the type of media used. For each one the subject, key stage, cost and time required are indicated.

Assembly: Film and Discussion

Learning about the history of our schools and local communities helps us build our understanding. **'Roads from the past'** is a brilliant animated short film about the history of Gypsy and Traveller communities from the Travellers Times.

Double click on the image to play or copy the link below:

<https://youtu.be/1bhBbMrF8Z0>



**History, PSHCE
KS2, teaching staff**



**5 mins to 20 mins
Free**

Show this 5 minute film at an assembly.

The links below are a supporting script and slides, with optional follow up lesson ideas also by Travellers Times. Click them below to download.

Assembly Script

Assembly Slides

Follow-up Lesson Ideas

Watch this award winning local documentary short from 2023 about a Traveller boy, Riley, and his horse Rambo, as he takes joy and finds freedom in continuing the rag and bone tradition in his home of Holmewood.



**History, PSHCE
KS1 & KS2**



**5 mins to 20 mins
Free**



Riley & Rambo (2023)

by Danny Hardaker & Karol Wyszynski

Best Short Doc: Andaras Travelling Film Festival

Best Story: Lancaster International Film Festival

Winner Best Documentary- The White Rose International Film Festival

Click on the image above to watch this short film in full or copy the link below. <https://dannyhardakervideo.co.uk/documentary>

Start a discussion about the film. You can draft your own discussion prompts or use a few from below.

What is Rag N Bone? Have you ever seen one?

What is it about Rag N Bone culture that makes Riley so happy?

Why is it important to keep traditions alive? What traditions does your family have?

BOOKS



₤ **Cost – approx.**
£7 per book.
KS1&2
Subjects: various

Books are a powerful way of including Gypsies and Travellers. Having books available in the school library helps pupils and their families see themselves represented and promotes inclusion to all families.

The stories are great in their own right, and also hold historical and cultural fact and promote the values of the Gypsy Traveller community. Choose your favourites and have a class discussion.

You can download our book list **here.**

Over the page we have provided discussion questions for some of the books.

BOOKS - DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



You can come up with your own questions or use these as a guide.

These questions should work for most books, especially the books written / co-written by Richard O'Neill.

What is the message of the story?

What skills do the characters in the book have?

Choose some values that we highlighted in the book and ask pupils to identify where they appeared in the book. Ask them if they can think of a time they have used those values.

What did you learn about Gypsy and Traveller culture from the book?

What traditions did you spot in the book? What traditions do you and your family have?

The characters in the book live in a mobile home (either modern or traditional caravan). What makes a home? What similarities are there between living in a caravan and living in a house?

COLOURING AND ACTIVITY BOOK



**Art, PHSE
KS1&2
Free**



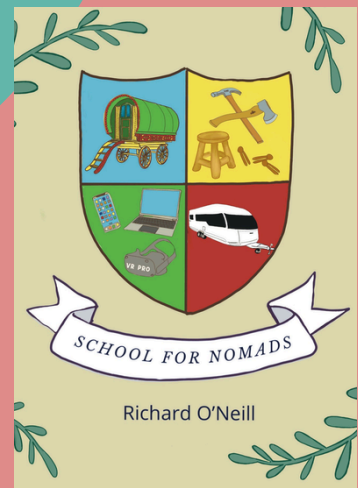
**5mins -
30mins**

Colouring and activities for all ages.

Click [here](#) to download the book as a pdf.

Why not copy this for your class to use and display their work or send copies home with pupils as part of your history month celebrations?

SCHOOL FOR NOMADS



KS2, teaching & non-teaching staff
10 mins - 1 hr
English & PSHCE

Young Gypsy and Traveller people need access to books that positively reflect their lives and experiences.

At the same time, educators must understand the barriers Gypsy and Traveller children often face in both accessing mainstream education and staying in the education system. More understanding of Gypsy and Traveller cultures and learning models is desperately needed.

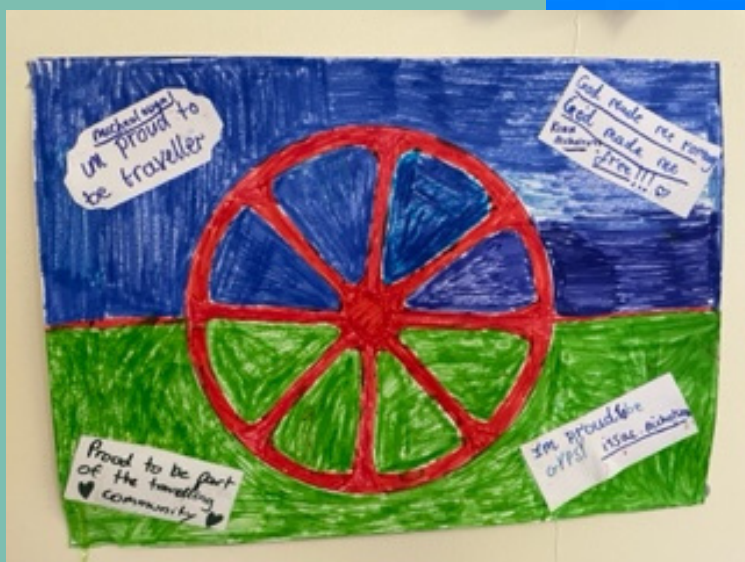
Celebrated children's author Richard O'Neill wrote this book to address this issue. Created with Gypsy and Traveller students, for Gypsy and Traveller students and their teachers which explores what a 'School for Nomads' would look like, based on the lives of Gypsy and Traveller young people living on the roadside. It's a fantastic example of representative fiction.

[You can read more about the project and order book copies for free here.](#)

Richard O'Neill, also recorded a ten minute talk about the book and reads an extract from it. You can view the video by clicking below for your own use or for use in assembly or the classroom.



Gypsy and Traveller Flag



Gypsy and Traveller Flag

KS1, KS2, teaching / non-teaching staff

£4-10. Purchase for display.

Time - 5 mins to 30 mins

Discuss the meaning of the flag – use the meaning information sheet as your guide below.

Either have it to hand to discuss as conversations arise from the display or cover it in a lesson.

Gypsy Flag 2' x 3' for outdoor - Traveller flags 90 x 60 cm -

Banner 2x3 ft Knitted Polyester with rings - AZ FLAG :

Amazon.co.uk: Garden

Click [here](#) to download our flag meaning sheet.

Click [here](#) to download a colour your own flag sheet.



2. Inform...

yourself on the key facts about history month and Gypsies and Travellers.

Community Strengths & Assets

Before we take a dive into what the research has to say about the health outcomes of Gypsy and Traveller people, it is important to highlight community **strengths and assets**. The educational inequalities faced by Gypsy and Traveller people need to be placed in a context of exclusion and racism they face. Communities experience poor health because of the discrimination they are subject to, not because of who they are. Acknowledging and understanding community strengths helps us counter negative stereotypes.

➤ Family Orientated

Firstly our communities identify they are very family orientated and often live in small family units wherein people who are sick and disabled are nearly always cared for. Most people have a strong family support network. Being part of and supporting other family members may take priority over school at times.

➤ Resourceful

Secondly, Gypsy and Traveller people are often adaptable and resourceful people who are often highly attuned to their surroundings. Many people run small businesses providing for themselves and their families through family learnt trades, Having practical skills and handing those down through generations is important and may hold greater value than progressing to secondary school.

➤ Experts in Inclusion

Gypsy and Traveller people have a wealth of knowledge about what good educational inclusion looks like. We encourage any teacher reading this guide to engage with and hire Gypsy and Traveller's. Seek their knowledge and experience in your efforts to make the school more inclusive whilst considering the constraints you may be working in.



“We’re not called Travellers because we travel. We’re Travellers because it’s our culture, our identity and way of life.”

- Testimony from a Leeds GATE member living roadside.

Who are Gypsies and Travellers?



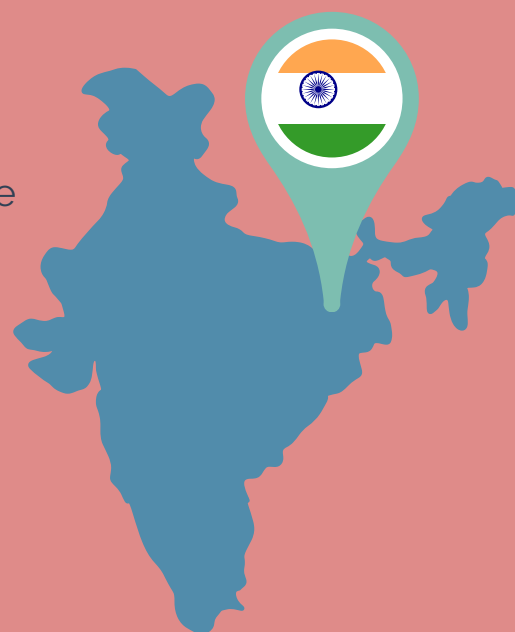
'Gypsies and Travellers' are words used to describe a range of people from several ethnic minorities and some people who identify as cultural or trade groups. The terms hide a lot of history. In the past, these groups have been put together by professionals because they were all nomadic – which means they travel as a way of life.

At Leeds GATE we work with Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers. Other than this brief introduction this resource won't cover Roma, New Traveller, Show people or Bargee communities.

Romany Gypsies

Romany Gypsies, are a group or groups of people who left India over a thousand years ago and dispersed across the globe. Along the way they were defined (usually by others) as being 'Egyptian' and this has become shortened to Gypsy. Gypsy people began appearing in UK records in the 16th century, and have settled here ever since.

Romany is the word that Gypsy people in England and Wales apply to themselves, hence the term 'Romany Gypsy'. Romany Gypsies are recognised as an ethnic minority group in UK law (Race Relations Act 2000 and Equalities Act 2010).



Irish Travellers

Irish Travellers (or Pavee as they refer to themselves) have been a distinct ethnic group within Irish society for over 500 years. They are traditionally a nomadic culture and have a distinct identity, heritage, language and culture to settled communities in Ireland.

Irish Travellers are recognised as an ethnic minority group in UK law (Race Relations Act 2000 and Equalities Act 2010).



Roma

The word 'Roma' is used as a catch-all term for European 'Gypsies'. There are several distinct groups of people, including Roma, Manouche and Sinti in Central and Eastern Europe. During the past 50 years increasing numbers of Roma people, particularly from Eastern Europe, have migrated to the UK. They are often migrating because of poverty and discrimination in their country of origin.



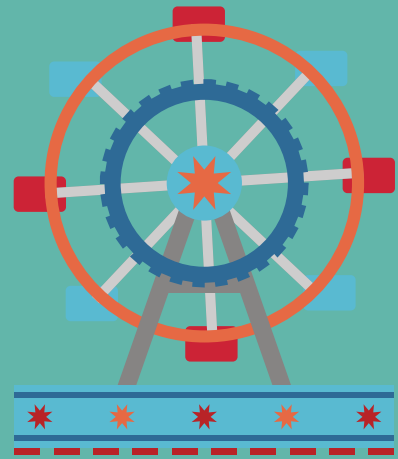
Scottish Gypsy Travellers

Scottish Gypsy/Travellers are also recognised as an ethnic group under UK law (Race Relations Act 2000 and Equalities Act 2010). They continue to retain their unique culture through cultural codes, languages and beliefs.



Showmen

Families with a tradition of living and working in travelling fairs are usually described as Showmen. This group are regarded as a trade group.



Bargees / Boaters

Bargees is a term used to describe people and families who live on the canals and waterways across the UK.



New Travellers

New Traveller is a term used to describe people who live a travelling lifestyle but who are not ethnically defined as Gypsies or Irish Travellers. Some New Traveller families have lived a travelling lifestyle for several generations and no longer regard themselves as part of the 'settled' population.



Education

Many older Gypsies and Travellers didn't get the opportunity to go to school due to travelling and because of racism within schools. Older Gypsies and Travellers might not be able to read and write but rely heavily on word of mouth and relationships to navigate services. Most people under 40 will have had some experience in school, with many people completing primary school but not secondary school.

Many young people are elective home educated due to safety and well-being fears. Unfortunately, racism is still a common experience in education for Gypsies and Travellers. **Poor access to education affects Gypsies & Travellers in the following ways**

Low Literacy

Many Gypsy and Traveller people have low literacy due to exclusion from education. In turn, low literacy affects health literacy and access to services. Services that are opt-in, use self-referral pathways, rely on letters and written communication and more recently, services that use digital booking systems are all particularly hard to access for a person with low literacy. It's not uncommon to find patients that have been referred to secondary care multiple times but never get there as they cannot navigate the systems.

Qualifications

Nationally, **Gypsies and Travellers are much less likely to have post-16 qualifications than the general population at 40% compared to 78%.(1)** Gypsies and Irish Travellers have the highest rates of exclusions from schools.(2)

➤ Employment

Many people in the community are self-employed or run their own businesses. Some people work trades they learn from their family such as gardening, tree work and tarmacking. Of course, Gypsies and Travellers can also be found in many different professions - teaching, nursing, social work, the police force and charitable sector.

➤ Higher Education

There is a growing movement for change and challenge in our education systems and increasing numbers of Gypsy and Traveller people attending university.

Between 2012 and 2020 we have seen an increase in self-identification of Gypsy, Romani and Traveller under-graduate students from 90 to 325 people across the UK. (figures taken pre-Covid-19 pandemic).



SCAN ME



Scan me to see our Go Higher education research with our young people

Social Exclusion



There are many reasons Gypsies and Travellers may feel they can't join or continue in the mainstream school system. The stark statistics below illustrate what young people face outside of school and sometimes within the school. It also demonstrates why getting an education to expand job prospects may be less appealing for young Gypsies and Travellers.

Research shows **44% of British adults openly express negative attitudes against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (1)**. There are strong links between experiences of hate crime and the over-representation of mental health and suicide within the community.

Gypsies and Travellers experience hate so often, the Women and Equalities commission 2019 report (2) described it as “almost a fact of life”. This continues despite Irish Travellers, Romany Gypsies, Roma and Scottish Gypsies all being protected from discrimination as ethnic minority groups under the Equality Act.

The media often link Gypsies and Travellers with criminality. Our recent report quotes research that there is a story in a big national newspaper every 3 days about Travellers - most are about crime and unauthorised encampments and portray the community negatively **(3)**.

When asked in a 2020 study about the prevalence of experiences of hate crime, one respondent described it as “regular as rain”. 78% of those surveyed said incidents were daily (4). Overwhelmingly, exclusion from or discrimination from health and education services was the most commonly reported.



No Place to Be

How did we get here? Our history

A brilliant graphic history of Gypsies and Travellers in modern Britain.

Recommended read to develop your knowledge and understanding. Click [here](#) to download.

TRAVELLERS TIMES

FOLLOW US

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SUBSCRIBE TO THE MAGAZINE

THE GRAFFITI K
YOUNG TRAVELLERS SET OFF

NO ONE EVER ASKED

NATIONAL LOTTERY FUNDED

Esmée Fairbairn

Funding raised by
The National Lottery
and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund

heritage lottery fund
LOTTERY FUNDED

RURAL MEDIA

Travellers' Times describes itself as the producer of “multi-award winning media focussing on things that matter to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people.

For over 20 years, they have sought to provide high-quality news and information about these cultures, and enabled people from them to tell their stories through print and online journalism, film, and other media.

Travellers' Times stands in direct challenge to one-sided views of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller life. Whilst it is not possible to act against every piece of unfair coverage, we try to be at the heart of a different view. But we also support direct responses to unjust reporting and politics.

[Subscribe to receive the magazine here.](#)

[Sign up to their e-newsletter here.](#)

Putting copies available in your school is a great signal of support for Gypsy and Traveller families and keeping informed.



3. Commit...

**to take action
beyond History
Month.**

It starts with you...

History Month

You have made a great start by marking History Month.

Keep doing this annually to increase the benefits for your pupils.

Schools Pledge

Take the Pledge! This is a mark of commitment and will help you take a health check of your current policy and practices and guide you through any changes that are needed.

[Find out more here.](#)

Training

Leeds GATE offers training to schools. We charge for this, as we don't receive funding for it and it shows your support to the community and the work.

We can offer sessions to individual schools and clusters and will be offering access to open access ticketed training sessions.

Contact: rachel.c@leedsgate.co.uk for further information.



Flyers available for download

If you are working with Gypsy and Traveller pupils they/their families can contact us for support. Please use our flyers below.



What do we offer?...

-  Youth groups and education support
-  Help with housing, money issues and filling in forms
-  Someone to talk to if you need help with your physical or mental health
-  A warm place to meet and come to community groups for all the family
-  Shower, toilets, water, washer & dryer for roadside families

...and much more!

 **LEEDS GATE**
Gypsy & Traveller Exchange

0113 240 2444
LEEDSGATE.CO.UK

Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange Cross Green Ln, Leeds LS9 8BD



Click [here](#) to download our Leeds GATE general flyer



COME ALONG TO OUR YOUTH GROUPS



 **LEEDS GATE**

Leeds
Wednesday - 12-2pm

Bradford
Tuesday 12:30pm - 2:30pm

Wakefield
Thursdays 11am - 1:30pm

Contact us for more info 0113 240 2444

Click [here](#) to download our Leeds GATE [youth groups flyer](#)





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