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To the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and  
human rights

Joint Submission

Friends, Families and Travellers

National Federation Gypsy Liaison Groups

12<sup>th</sup> September 2018



**The following submission may be published on the website of the Special Rapporteur**

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*FRIENDS, FAMILIES AND TRAVELLERS (FFT) is a small UK charity working on behalf of all Gypsies, Travellers and Roma regardless of ethnicity, nationality, culture or background. FFT has worked with UK travelling communities for over 20 years, delivering a wide range of projects and programmes relating to health, education, accommodation, criminal justice, racism & discrimination, political representation and other areas.*

*THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF GYPSY LIAISON GROUPS (NFGLG) is a national membership body of 20 GRT Organisations (including FFT) covering England, Scotland and Wales. The “Nat Fed” works closely with all the main Gypsy, Traveller and Roma organisations, co-ordinates the quarterly meetings of the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma Liaison Group in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and administers the national Gypsy and Traveller Consultations and Inquiries Group.*

## Introduction

Our over-arching view is that, whilst there has been some improvement in terms of acknowledgement by wider society that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (GRT) are amongst the most excluded and structurally discriminated against groups in UK society today, the UK Government has taken no substantive steps to address those inequalities. Indeed we believe that the situation of the travelling communities has worsened rather than improved in recent years. This is supported by research carried out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) which found Gypsies and Travellers to be one of the most disadvantaged groups in England (EHRC, 2016).

## Main policies and strategies targeting the Gypsy/Traveller/Roma population

The UK has not developed a National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS). This is because at an EU member states meeting it was agreed that member states were not required to produce National Roma Integration Strategies; instead they could have the flexibility to develop policy measures within wider social inclusion policies as an alternative to producing national strategies (Council of the European Union, 2011). In response to a call for an NRIS, the UK government suggested that existing mainstream laws and policies already offered protection to Gypsy, Traveller and Roma populations and that these policies would in themselves promote integration. However, this is often not their experience. Racial discrimination and social exclusion are common experiences in the lives of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma people and many families find themselves living on the margins of society.

The UK government did establish a Ministerial Working Group (MWG) on preventing and tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers. Rather than produce an Integration Strategy, the MWG produced “*28 commitments from across Government that will help mainstream services work better with Gypsies and Travellers*” (DCLG, 2012). Unfortunately, these commitments lacked specific funding, prioritisation or a timetable, i.e. any kind of real action plan. Furthermore, they did not address the needs of East European Roma communities in the UK, except where they coincided with those of ethnic Gypsies and Travellers. Yet migrant Roma populations across the UK seem to be among the most marginalised in decision-making processes and there are few local Roma support groups in operation. The Parliamentary Women and Equalities Committee has established an inquiry to look at the impact of the 28 commitments and what progress has been made in achieving them.

In the UK, the executives of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible for policy measures within their territories, and they have prepared individual documents regarding their policies to promote Gypsy and Traveller and Roma Inclusion. Consequently, there is no overarching national strategy to promote Roma integration in the UK and the devolved governments have taken different approaches to integration. The only clear ‘Roma’ integration strategy to date has come from the Welsh government (Welsh Government, 2018).

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI, 2016) and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD, 2016) recommendations regarding the need for a National Roma Integration Strategy have not been adopted<sup>1,2</sup>. Prior to the “Brexit” vote, for the 2014-20 period the United Kingdom was to be allocated a total of some €11.6 billion from the European Structural Funds and European Regional Development Funds. However, there appears to have been serious challenges in transferring the intentions into clear, operational and sustainable practices to include benefits for ‘Roma’ communities. These major streams of EU funding are yet to ‘trickle down’ into GRT communities, with little discernible change in the quality of their lives and experiences of social exclusion.

## Recommendations

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<sup>1</sup> “ECRI strongly recommends that the authorities draw up, in consultation with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma groups, a detailed programme of integration strategies and measures to address the disadvantage suffered by all three of these communities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, including concrete targets, timeframes, and resources, in all areas of daily life, such as education, employment, health care and accommodation, in particular addressing the shortage of caravan sites.” (ECRI, 2016 para 109)

<sup>2</sup> “Recalling its general recommendation No. 27 (2000) on discrimination against Roma, the Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Develop a comprehensive strategy, in consultation with members of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, to ensure a systematic and coherent approach in addressing the challenges that members of these communities continue to face in the fields of health, education, housing and employment, and ensure its effective implementation by adopting specific action plans, putting in place effective oversight and monitoring mechanisms to track progress, and providing adequate human and financial resources.” (CERD, 2016, para 25)

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- The UK Government adopts a National Roma Integration Strategy and guarantees the disadvantages faced by GRT groups are addressed in a robust way post-Brexit.
- The UK Government ensures that the 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships take urgent measures to ensure that European Structural Fund is reaching GRT communities and that progress against this is routinely monitored and reported to the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government /NFGLG Gypsy, Traveller and Roma Liaison Group.

## Ethnic Monitoring / Data Collection

There is inadequate ethnic monitoring of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma across numerous government departments in the UK including health, education, welfare, and the criminal justice system (Cabinet Office, 2017). Gaps and inconsistencies in ethnic monitoring result in a lack of accurate evidence on which to base policies to reduce the numerous inequalities faced by these groups.

2011 was the first census to include a Gypsy/Irish Traveller category yet, there was no “Roma” category. 57,680 census respondents identified as Gypsy/Traveller. It is believed that this is a significant undercount because many Gypsies and Travellers do not identify their ethnicity due fear of racism and discrimination. See annex D for the key points from the 2011 census on Gypsies and Travellers which give an indication of the extent of the inequities of Gypsies and Travellers compared with the general population<sup>3</sup>.

## Recommendation

- The UK Government should ensure ethnicity data for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma be fully disaggregated across all government departments, as recommended by the Advisory Committee On The Framework Convention For The Protection Of National Minorities recommendation<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The Cabinet Office’s Race Disparity Audit revealed the inconsistencies both in the categories relating to GRT and the extent of their inclusion in ethnic monitoring (Cabinet Office 2017).

<sup>4</sup> “Collect disaggregated data on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma to help devise policies targeting the socio-economic inequalities that persons belonging to those minorities experience in England; start collecting disaggregated equality data on the situation of persons belonging to national and ethnic minorities to help adopt and implement effective minority protection and equality-promoting policies in Northern Ireland.” (Council of Europe, 2017: 50)

## Under-provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites and poverty

### Key points

- There is a chronic, national shortage of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England. 16% of caravans in the July 2017 national caravan count were on unauthorised land largely as a result of this.
- Site shortage impacts on education, health and income, exacerbating existing inequalities faced by Gypsies and Travellers compared with the general population.

Local authorities are currently under no obligation from the UK government to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers. The root cause of a critical inequalities faced by Gypsies and Travelers can be linked to a lack of suitable accommodation (Johnson and Willers, 2004). At least 16% of Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans are forced to live on unauthorised land and are subsequently subject to a comprehensive array of laws which criminalise their presence on the land (Home Office, 2006). Families are regularly evicted, creating overwhelming barriers to access education, healthcare and employment. Furthermore, those families without a place to stop have no access to water and sanitation, a basic human right (Niner, 2003).

This kind of deprivation has numerous and far reaching implications for poverty and human rights of these two ethnic groups. The implications of this are evidenced in the 2011 census data which revealed Gypsies and Travellers to have the lowest educational attainment and to be the least economically active ethnic group of all other groups in England and therefore, most vulnerable to extreme poverty (ONS, 2011).

### Recommendations

- The government must re-introduce targets, and a statutory duty on local authorities to meet the assessed accommodation need of Gypsies and Travellers, as formerly existed under the Caravans Sites Act 1968.
- The government should adopt a definition of a 'Traveller' in planning terms that incorporates all Gypsies and Travellers who need a pitch to live on.
- See further recommendations for Gypsy and Traveller site provision in Annex B.

## Universal Credit and digital inclusion

### Key points

- Gypsies and Travellers have the potential to be disproportionately disadvantaged by the online Universal Credit System due to low literacy rates and limited internet access/skills among these ethnic groups.
- Gypsies and Travellers who cannot access Universal Credit will be pushed deeper into poverty.

Universal Credit, a new online benefits system which merges six benefits is currently being rolled out nationally. Barriers created by the online Universal Credit system are particularly problematic for Gypsies and Travellers<sup>5</sup>. Currently, 45% of Gypsy and Traveller clients who use FFT's service have no or low literacy. This figure is also supported by 2011 census data which found that 60% of the Gypsy and Traveller population over 16 have no formal education, the highest of any other ethnic group (ONS, 2011). FFT's own research carried out in September 2018, revealed that two in five Gypsy and Traveller participants had never used the internet.<sup>6</sup> See Annex E for full 'Digital Exclusion' research report and other key findings.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have stated that 'alternative access routes' i.e. via telephone will be provided to ensure that individuals who cannot use a computer will not be excluded from the benefits system. However, our experience is that these alternative access routes are not being granted to those with low or no literacy.

Our concern is that Gypsy and Traveller claimants who cannot access the online benefits system will be excluded, unable to afford essentials for an adequate standard of living, exacerbating the financial inequality between Gypsies and Travellers and the general population<sup>7</sup>.

### Recommendations

- The Department for Work and Pensions should ensure that 'alternative access routes' are made more readily available for people with low literacy (including computer skills), low numeracy and limited access to internet.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should ensure that sanctions are not imposed on people who cannot meet Universal Credit requirements due to low literacy (including computer skills), low numeracy and limited access to internet.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should begin to ethnically monitor Gypsy, Roma and Irish Travellers as separate ethnic groups.
- See Annex A for further recommendations regarding self-employment and full briefing on the impact of Universal Credit on Gypsies and Travellers.

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<sup>5</sup> The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) did not include Gypsies and Travellers in the Equality Impact Assessment of an online benefits system.

<sup>6</sup> FFT conducted interviews with 50 individuals from Gypsy and Traveller communities across the UK to find out the extent of digital inclusion and barriers which exist for Gypsy and Traveller communities to digital participation.

<sup>7</sup> Article 25.1 "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." (UN Human Rights)



## Impact of benefit cap and two child limit on Romani Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers

### Key Points

- Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are disproportionately impacted by the reduced benefit cap and two child limit.
- The reforms mean these ethnic groups stand to face debt, eviction, food poverty and the infringement of their human right to an adequate standard of living.

The benefit cap was reduced from November 2016 and limits the total amount in benefits that most people aged 16 to 64 can claim. Previously, the amount a family could claim was partly determined by the number of children in that family. However, the DWP introduced a two child limit, which means that child support related benefits are limited by the cap regardless of the number of children in a family. A number of organisations have highlighted major concerns with such welfare reforms and how it will drive families deeper into poverty<sup>8 9 10 11</sup>.

In light of this, we are particularly concerned about the impact of these reforms on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers due to family structure characteristics which make them more likely to be adversely affected. For example, the 2011 Census found that the most common family type for Gypsies and Travellers was 'lone parents' at 24 per cent - over double that for the general population in England and Wales (ONS, 2011). Lone parents were found to be among the most disadvantaged by these changes (EHRC, 2018). Furthermore, Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are more likely to have larger families and the Children's Society found that the larger the family, the further below the poverty line they will fall as a result of the changes (LSE, 2018; The Children's Society, 2018).

Therefore, Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, who are already found to be among the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in the UK, are being further disproportionately disadvantaged by the reduced benefit cap and two child limit.

### Recommendations

- The Department for Work and Pensions should begin ethnic monitoring of Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller as separate groups.
- The Department of Work and Pensions should carry out a full Equality Impact Assessment of the benefit cap and two child rule on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and mitigate any disproportionate impact on these ethnic groups.

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<sup>8</sup> Analysis by Child Poverty Action Group and Institute for Public Policy Research found that once Universal Credit is fully rolled out, the two-child limit will result in up to 200,000 additional children in living in poverty (CPAG, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> The Children's Society, poverty calculator also found that the larger a family, the further below the poverty line they will fall as a result of the benefit cap and two child limit (The Children's Society, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> The Equality and Human Rights Commission also found that lone parents were one of the groups who were disproportionately impacted by these reforms losing around 25% of their net income (EHRC, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> The Supreme Court has said that the benefit cap breaches the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and that 'it cannot possibly be in the best interests of the children affected by the cap to deprive them of the means to provide them with adequate food, clothing, warmth and housing, the basic necessities of life' (CPAG, 2018).

## Access to medication

Compared with the general population, Gypsies and Travellers are more likely to suffer bad health (ONS, 2011). This includes lower life expectancy, high infant mortality rates, high maternal mortality rates (EHRC, 2016). The NHS have identified 33 conditions for which they plan to withdraw prescriptions (See annex C for full list of medications to be restricted)<sup>12</sup>. Individuals currently eligible for free prescriptions for those medical conditions identified will lose this entitlement. We are extremely concerned because those entitled to free prescriptions are most likely to already be facing financial hardship and any extra cost will push them deeper into poverty<sup>13</sup>.

The NHS carried out an Equality and Health analysis of the proposed change to prescriptions which included a specific section on potential impact of this change on Gypsies and Travellers (NHS England, 2016). However, the NHS do not collect and disaggregate data for Gypsies and Travellers, and therefore, could not carry out meaningful assessment of the potential impact on these ethnic groups (NHS England, 2016).

## Recommendations

- The NHS should carry out an Equality Impact Analysis of the withdrawal of free prescriptions of the 33 medical conditions on Gypsies and Travellers once they have fully disaggregated their ethnicity data.
- The NHS should continue to provide free prescriptions for the 33 conditions listed, to those who are eligible for free prescriptions.

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<sup>12</sup> The NHS reviewed the cost of prescriptions which amounted to £569 million spend on medication which could otherwise be purchased over the counter. They calculated that it costs disproportionately more for the NHS to prescribe certain medications than it does for individual patients to purchase them (NHS England, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Foodbank use is increasing every year, 13% in 2017 (Trussell Trust, 2018) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported 14 million people living in poverty in the UK (JRF UK Poverty report).

## Application Fees for Settled Status for European citizens living in the UK

The UK Government's Statement of Intent outlines the fees imposed on Europeans living in the UK who will be required to apply for 'Settled Status' in order to remain in the country. The fees are currently set at £65 for applicants aged 16 and above and £32.50 for children under 16 (Home Office, June 2018). For example, a family of five, with three children will be faced with a charge of around £260 which would otherwise be spent on rent, food and medicine etc.

We are extremely concerned that this extra financial cost will burden families who are most vulnerable to falling below the poverty line and exacerbating existing hardship. Subsequently families may be unable to pay the fees and therefore, unable to apply for Settled Status. Furthermore, there is an estimated 200,000 migrant Roma living in the UK and the Settled Status application process presents many barriers for Roma beyond the financial cost.

### Recommendation

- The Home Office should extend the 50% application fee reduction to children up to the age of 18 to reduce the overall financial burden on families.

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## Annex

### A. Friends, Families and Travellers policy briefing: *Fairer for all? The negative and disproportionate impact of Universal Credit on Gypsy and Traveller communities, May 2018*

Universal Credit is being introduced across the UK in stages. At the time of writing, rollout across the country is due to be complete in December 2018<sup>14</sup>. Research by The Equality and Human Rights Commission found that Universal Credit will on average lead to a reduction of £625 per year in income per household, with “a complex system of winners and losers”. The Equality and Human Rights Commission note, in particular, lack of evidence on the impact of Universal Credit by ethnicity<sup>15</sup>. In this briefing, we will outline the key issues with Universal Credit which mean it is likely to have a negative and disproportionate effect on Gypsy and Traveller communities.

#### Key Issues

- Gypsies and Travellers were not considered in the 2011 Equality Impact Assessment for the implementation of Universal Credit.
- The move to an online system for Universal Credit has exacerbated barriers to accessing welfare support for Gypsy and Traveller communities, because of low levels of numeracy, literacy and access to the internet.
- “Alternative access routes” which are meant to support people with low levels of numeracy, literacy or no access to the internet are not working.
- Universal Credit will have a negative impact on self-employed people, which constitute 26 per cent of Gypsies and Travellers in England and Wales.

#### Introduction

The 2011 UK government welfare reform represents a radical change in the way the benefits system is set up and maintained and as such it has been implemented through a staged approach in order to monitor its impact. The government claimed that the new system would not result in a decrease in individual benefits and that the system would be ‘fairer for all’. However, the Equality and Human Rights Commission<sup>16</sup> published a report in March 2018 on the cumulative impact of tax and welfare reforms and concluded that those who are most economically vulnerable, are those who have suffered the greatest loss in terms of a reduction in net income;

*“...overall, changes to taxes, benefits, tax credits and Universal Credit (UC) announced since 2010 are regressive, however measured – that is, the largest impacts are felt by those with lower incomes. Those in the bottom two deciles will lose, on average, approximately 10% of net income, with much smaller losses for those higher up the income distribution.” (EHRC, 2018: 15).*

This indicates that the new system is contributing to the exacerbation of existing inequalities, rather than making the system fairer.

#### Barriers to setting up and managing claims for Universal Credit for Gypsies and Travellers

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<sup>14</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/693928/universal-credit-transition-rollout-schedule.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693928/universal-credit-transition-rollout-schedule.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-111-cumulative-impact-assessment-evidence-review.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

We are particularly concerned about the shift to ‘full service’ across the country where claimants will be required to set up and manage their claims entirely online. The 2011 Census identified that Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities had the highest proportion of people with no qualifications for any ethnic group at 60 per cent - considerably higher than for England and Wales as a whole (23 per cent)<sup>17</sup>. This means that a significant proportion of Gypsy and Traveller communities have low or no literacy – at Friends, Families and Travellers, 45% of our service users have low or no literacy. Further to this, limited access to internet is recognised as a barrier to accessing benefits for Gypsies and Travellers<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, we question whether serious consideration has been given to the impact of an online benefits system on Gypsies and Travellers.

### **Lack of consideration of impact of Universal Credit on Gypsy and Traveller communities**

The Equality Impact Assessment carried out in 2011 by the UK government regarding UC gave no specific consideration to Gypsies and Travellers as a protected ethnic group under the Equality Act 2010. There was however, a section for ethnic groups in general in which the document concluded that there is no real evidence to suggest that there are significant differences in internet usage between ethnic groups. Nevertheless the document outlines a mitigation strategy;

*“The Department for Work and Pensions recognises that there will continue to be a minority of people who cannot use online channels. For these people we will offer alternative access routes, predominantly by phone but also face to face for those who really need it. We expect these alternative access routes to be reserved for the minority who can’t use, or be helped to use, online services and therefore kept to a minimum.”*

It remains unclear from this statement how decisions are made regarding who will be given the option of alternative channels because ‘those who really need it’ is a highly ambiguous term. Although numerous government documents state that there will be alternative ‘channels’ available for those who need it to access Universal Credit<sup>19,20</sup>, we have yet to see any cases in which this has been provided.

#### *Case Study: Universal Credit Helpline*

*Friends, Families and Travellers operate an advocacy and support helpline for Gypsy and Traveller communities across the UK. One of our case worker team was advocating on behalf of a Gypsy client who could not read or write and had no access to internet. The caseworker sought advice from the Universal Credit helpline about alternatives for the client and were advised that under no circumstances could claims be set up and managed via any other route than the internet.*

Extra funding has been provided to third sector organisations to give support for the initial stages of implementation. However, there is no guarantee that these organisations will have the capacity to provide the level of ongoing support required for those with low literacy to manage a Universal Credit account. Claimants must log on every day to their online diary in order to evidence their job search activity. Depending on the individual work plan, claimants can be required to evidence up to 35 hours of activity per week. For many of our clients this would mean travelling every day to a Job Centre to use the internet facilities, requiring one to one support with literacy.

<sup>17</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/whatdoesthe2011censustellusaboutthecharacteristicsofgypsyoririshtravellersinenglandandwales/2014-01-21#qualifications>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CBP-8083-9-1.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/48897/universal-credit-full-document.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/48897/universal-credit-full-document.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/220152/eia-universal-credit-wr2011.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220152/eia-universal-credit-wr2011.pdf)

If a person is unable to meet requirements under Universal Credit they will receive a sanction. For example if a claimant was unable to meet 'work search' requirements because they could not access support with literacy in using the Universal Credit system, they may face sanctions which would mean payments would stop for a fixed term until they comply. It can be seen how this system can contribute to the exacerbation financial struggle for those individuals resulting in debt, emotional distress, and possible homelessness. The DWP do not currently ethnically monitor for Irish Travellers or Roma, only 'Gypsy' which makes it very difficult to fully understand and evidence the impact on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

### **Lack of consideration of high levels of self-employment in Gypsy and Traveller communities**

*"I'm currently receiving Working Tax Credits and am terrified of the Universal Credit roll out. Both me and my husband get paid sporadically, so some months we aren't paid at all and others we earn several months money in one go, it all depends when contracts are paid and how long they have been. We are both self-employed plus I am disabled. Universal Credit is going to make us significantly worse off as it currently is assessed."* Holly, Traveller

According to the 2011 Census, Gypsy and Traveller communities have the highest proportion of self-employed people out of all ethnic groups (26 per cent compared to 14 per cent for England and Wales). To demonstrate that they are "gainfully self-employed", people must show that the work they do is regular, organised and developed. This can be demonstrated through receipts, a business plan, copies of invoices, trading accounts from the previous year and proof of registration as self-employed with the HMRC<sup>21</sup>. If someone is unable to show enough evidence, the assessor might decide they're not gainfully self-employed<sup>22</sup>. Under Universal Credit, self-employed people will face in-work benefit cuts if they do not meet the 'Minimum Income Floor', which requires them to earn the equivalent of 35 hours a week at the National Minimum Wage<sup>23</sup>.

There has been no evaluation of the impact this will have on Gypsy and Traveller communities, but it is clear that it is likely to be negative. Due to low levels of literacy and numeracy in Gypsy and Traveller communities, many of those who meet the 'Minimum Income Floor' to qualify as 'gainfully self-employed' are likely to struggle with gather the evidence required to demonstrate this. The message is loud and clear for many self-employed people, they will be 'better off jobless'<sup>24</sup>.

### **Key Recommendations**

- The Department for Work and Pensions should undertake an equality impact assessment on the impact of Universal Credit on Gypsy and Traveller communities and take actions to mitigate issues identified.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should ensure that 'alternative access routes' are established for people with low literacy, low numeracy and limited access to internet as a matter of urgency.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should establish national guidelines for front line workers to exercise discretion in designing work requirements for self-employed people.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should ensure that sanctions are not imposed on people who cannot meet Universal Credit requirements due to low literacy, low numeracy and limited access to internet.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/articles/universal-credit-for-the-self-employed>

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/self-employment-compatible-universal-credit>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/self-employed-universal-credit\\_uk\\_59f1f8d5e4b077d8dfc7dce8](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/self-employed-universal-credit_uk_59f1f8d5e4b077d8dfc7dce8)



12.09.2018

- The Department for Work and Pensions should review the impact of Universal Credit on self-employed people, in particular the impact on self-employed Gypsies and Travellers.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that Universal Credit has a negative and disproportionate impact on Gypsy and Traveller communities, resulting in indirect discrimination and a potential breach of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The lack of consideration of Gypsies and Travellers in the rollout of Universal Credit can and will have a major impact in the lives of those that the British welfare system seeks to protect; our society's most vulnerable groups. If urgent and decisive action is not taken, Universal Credit will have a major impact on the lives of men, women and children, pushing hard working families deeper into poverty.

B. Friends, Families and Travellers policy briefing: *Lack of increase in Affordable Pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in England, December 2017*

**Key Findings:**

- There is a chronic national shortage of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England. *16% of caravans in the July 2017 national caravan count were on unauthorised land, largely as a result of this.*
- There has been only been a 2% increase in socially rented pitches between 2010 and 2017; an insufficient number to address even natural growth through household formation, let alone a historic lack of pitches for Gypsy and Traveller families.
- Official figures produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) on 'new' socially rented pitches are misleading and do not represent an actual net increase in pitches.
- Despite an increase in private pitch provision between 2010 and 2017 there are still insufficient numbers of new pitches to meet Gypsy and Traveller families' needs. Many Gypsy and Traveller families cannot buy land or gain planning permission for private sites.

There is a recognised national shortage of sites for Gypsies and Travellers<sup>1</sup>. The Better Housing Briefing Paper 26<sup>25</sup> found that Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers have the highest rate of housing deprivation of any minority ethnic group in the UK and are 7.5 times more likely to experience housing deprivation than other groups. This means that many families do not have a place to stop or call home. This has serious health and social implications for Gypsy and Traveller families, many of whom cannot access basic water and sanitation and experience difficulties in accessing services such as education and healthcare. Due to the lack of available pitches families are forced to camp in public spaces, where they are often the victim of hate crime, and the existence of roadside camps can lead to damaging relationships with the settled community. Despite this, little progress has been made in the way of site provision for Gypsy and Traveller communities. This report will outline statistics on the provision of socially rented pitches and demonstrate how official figures on pitch increases can be misleading.

**An overview of the number of Gypsy and Traveller caravans**

As demonstrated in Table 1, the number of caravans counted in England is increasing, however little has been done to meet the increasing needs of Gypsy and Traveller families.

**Table 1 – Increase in caravans by type in the Traveller Count<sup>26</sup>, 2010<sup>27</sup> – 2017<sup>28</sup>**

	<b>July 2010</b>	<b>July 2017</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>% of total no. of caravans</b>
<b>Total no. of caravans</b>	18146	22792	+ 25%	
<b>No. of caravans on private sites</b>	7648	12370	+ 62%	54%

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.better-housing.org.uk/briefings/ethnic-disadvantage-housing-market-evidence-2011-census>

<sup>26</sup> On a set date in January and July every year local authorities conduct a Traveller 'caravan count'. The Department for Communities and Local Government collate these figures. The Traveller Caravan Count does not represent a thorough assessment of accommodation need; it is merely a snapshot count of caravans on those bi-annual days.

<sup>27</sup> DCLG Traveller Caravan Count, July 2010, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/gypsy-and-traveller-caravan-count-july-2010>

<sup>28</sup> DCLG Traveller Caravan Count, July 2017, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/659661/Traveller\\_caravan\\_count\\_July\\_2017.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/659661/Traveller_caravan_count_July_2017.pdf)

<b>No. of caravans on socially rented sites</b>	6862	6701	- 2%	29%
<b>No. of caravans on unauthorised encampments / developments</b>	3636	3721	+ 2%	16%
<b>No. of local authority / registered social landlord pitches</b>	4931	5044	+ 2%	

### **Funding mechanisms for new affordable pitches for Gypsies and Travellers (2011-2017)**

Between 2011 and 2017, the government has set up three funding schemes which give local authorities the opportunity to create new affordable pitches for families in their area; the Traveller Pitch Fund (2011-2015), the Affordable Homes Programme (2015-2018) and the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (2016-2021). The only ring-fenced scheme amongst these was the Traveller Pitch Fund which has now been come to an end but produced the highest number of new pitches. However, despite the clearly evidenced need for pitches and the availability of funding, there has been very low uptake across the board and figures released are often misleading. Alok Sharma, Minister of State at DCLG reported in parliament in October 2017 that there has been an increase of 551 pitches between 2012 and 2017<sup>29</sup>. However, further analysis of these figures reveals that they do not represent an actual net increase and fail to take into account the number of pitches lost as a result of development. We will outline the actual numbers of new pitches created under each scheme in the section below.

#### **Traveller Pitch Fund (2011 – 2015)**

In November 2014, the Homes and Communities Agency<sup>30</sup> published figures showing that funding was allocated for the creation of 625 new pitches under the Traveller Pitch fund<sup>31</sup>. When HCA were contacted in December 2015 asking for further information, figures were released suggesting that a lower figure of 533 new Traveller pitches received funding under the Traveller Pitch Fund 2011 – 2015<sup>32</sup>. However, when FFT wrote to all the local authorities listed in the published figures, we found that the actual net increase in pitches was actually no more than 335, considerably less than the published statistics. It represented an increase of only 67 pitches per annum nationally, which is insufficient even to accommodate natural growth through household formation.

#### **Affordable Homes Programme (2015 – 2018)**

We recently carried out a similar analysis of the number of pitches created under the Affordable Homes Programme and found that the actual number of new pitches under this scheme was four, not 36 as published<sup>33</sup>. Table 2 illustrates the reason for the discrepancy in these figures.

**Table 2: Completed pitches under the Affordable Homes Programme (2015–2018)<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>No. of new pitches</b>		<b>Details</b>
	<b>Published</b>	<b>Actual</b>	

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2017-09-06.9129.h&s=Traveller#g9129.r0>

<sup>30</sup> HCA administer the grants.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traveller-pitch-funding-allocations#history>

<sup>32</sup> FOI request regarding net increase in socially rented pitches under the Traveller Pitch Fund, 18 December 2015.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2017-09-06.9129.h&s=Traveller#g9129.r0>

	<b>figures</b>	<b>increase</b>	
<b>Central Beds</b>	2	2	Additional pitches on existing site.
<b>Darlington</b>	22	2	Replacing 20 pitches on existing site and adding 2 additional pitches.
<b>Harlow</b>	12	0	Replacing 12 pitches on existing site which are derelict or unused.
<b>Total</b>	36	4	

### **Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (2016-2021)**

At the time of this report being published there has yet to be any formal bids from local authorities to the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme for funding for Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

### **Wider Policy Background**

Local authorities need to identify a five year supply of specific deliverable sites in line with the assessed need for pitches. However, many assessments of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are widely criticised because they can undercount the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in an area and changes in the planning definition<sup>34</sup> means that less people fit within this definition, yet still require somewhere to live. Research carried out by FFT in June 2016 found that only ten local authorities out of 66 in the South East of England had met their requirement in identifying a five year supply of specific deliverable sites<sup>35</sup>. This illustrates that the wider planning mechanisms for the provision of sites are also currently failing Gypsy and Traveller communities.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that the government's mechanisms for creating new affordable pitches for Gypsy and Traveller families are not working, despite well-evidenced need and demand. Despite the continuing increase in the number of Gypsy and Traveller caravans in the UK Government's biannual caravan count there has been no significant increase in socially rented pitches. The rate of increase currently does not even meet the demand arising from natural growth due to new household formation, let alone address the national shortfall. The government is proposing a review into enforcement powers for unauthorised encampments, however what is really needed is a review into how to make substantive inroads towards meeting the national shortfall of Gypsy and Traveller pitches - positive legislative and policy changes are urgently needed.

### **Recommendations**

- The government should adopt a definition of a Traveller in planning terms that incorporates all Gypsies and Travellers who need a pitch to live on (for example as proposed in the Draft London Plan<sup>36</sup>).

<sup>34</sup> The 2015 Policy Planning for Traveller Sites redefined who Gypsies and Travellers are for the purposes of planning. This means that if a Gypsy or Traveller stops travelling permanently, even for education, health or old age, they no longer meet the planning definition.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Five-Year-Supply-Research-Findings-Statement-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> P190-192 [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/new\\_london\\_plan\\_december\\_2017\\_web\\_version.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/new_london_plan_december_2017_web_version.pdf)

- The government must re-introduce targets, and a statutory duty to meet the assessed accommodation need of Gypsies and Travellers, as formerly existed under the Caravans Sites Act 1968<sup>3738</sup>
- The government must ring-fence Gypsy and Traveller pitch funding for local authorities to produce socially-rented pitches. This will require improved communication between DCLG, HCA and local authorities.
- The government must begin to accurately record and monitor figures on actual net increase of Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

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<sup>37</sup> CSA 1968 s6. The CSA was repealed under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

<sup>38</sup> The Welsh Government reintroduced the duty to identify land to meet the assessed need in 2016 (section 103 Part 3, Housing (Wales) Act 2014). This is an encouraging step but does not represent a duty to provide sites.

### C. NHS - Conditions for which prescribing should be restricted

1. Probiotics
2. Vitamins and minerals
3. Acute Sore Throat
4. Infrequent Cold Sores of the lip.
5. Conjunctivitis
6. Coughs and colds and nasal congestion
7. Cradle Cap (Seborrhoeic dermatitis – infants)
8. Haemorrhoids
9. Infant Colic
10. Mild Cystitis
11. Mild Irritant Dermatitis
12. Dandruff
13. Diarrhoea (Adults)
14. Dry Eyes/Sore (tired) Eyes
15. Earwax
16. Excessive sweating (Hyperhidrosis)
17. Head Lice
18. Indigestion and Heartburn
19. Infrequent Constipation
20. Infrequent Migraine
21. Insect bites and stings
22. Mild Acne
23. Mild Dry Skin
24. Sunburn
25. Sun Protection
26. Mild to Moderate Hay fever/Seasonal Rhinitis
27. Minor burns and scalds
28. Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/fever. (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)
29. Mouth ulcers
30. Nappy Rash
31. Oral Thrush
32. Prevention of dental caries
33. Ringworm/Athletes foot
34. Teething/Mild toothache
35. Threadworms
36. Travel Sickness
37. Warts and Verrucae

(NHS England, June 2017)

#### D. Key findings for Gypsies and Travellers, 2011 Census

- Gypsy or Irish Travellers had the highest proportion with no qualifications for any ethnic group (60 per cent) – almost three times higher than for England and Wales as a whole (23 per cent).
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller was the ethnic group with the lowest proportion of respondents who were economically active at 47 per cent, compared to 63 per cent for England and Wales as a whole.
- Over half of those who were economically active were employed (51 per cent compared to 75 per cent for the total of England and Wales) and 20 per cent were unemployed (compared to 7 per cent for the whole of England and Wales). Gypsy or Irish Traveller had the highest proportion of self-employed out of the ethnic groups at 26 per cent compared to 14 per cent for England and Wales.
- Elementary occupations (such as sales, service or construction) were the most common type of employment at 22 per cent for Gypsy or Irish Traveller (11 per cent for England and Wales as a whole).
- Just under half of Gypsy or Irish Traveller households had dependent children (45 per cent) – above the average for the whole of England and Wales (29 per cent).
- Gypsy or Irish Travellers were more than twice as likely to live in social housing than the overall population of England and Wales (41 per cent compared to 16 per cent) and less likely to own their accommodation outright (21 per cent compared to 26 per cent).
- Gypsy or Irish Travellers had the lowest proportion of any ethnic group rating their general health as 'good' or 'very good' at 70 per cent compared to 81 per cent overall of the overall population of England and Wales.
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller ethnic group was among the highest providers of unpaid care in England and Wales at 11 per cent (10 per cent for England and Wales as a whole) and provided the highest proportion of people providing 50 hours or more of unpaid care at 4 per cent (compared to 2 per cent for England and Wales as a whole) (ONS, 2011).

E. Research report: *Digital Exclusion in Gypsy and Traveller communities in the United Kingdom*

*Joe Scadding and Sarah Sweeney | September 2018*

Digital technology has been responsible for the biggest changes we have seen in the last century in health, social care, education, employment and further afield. However, whilst digital technology has been behind some of the biggest advances and changes society has made in recent years, it can also act to worsen the inequalities experienced by some groups. We interviewed 50 people from Gypsy and Traveller communities across the UK to find out the extent of digital inclusion and identify barriers for Gypsy and Traveller communities in digital participation.

### **Key Findings**

- Two in five Gypsy and Traveller participants had never used the internet, compared to one in five members of the general population.
- Over half of Gypsy and Traveller participants said that they did not feel confident using digital technology by themselves.
- Only two in five Gypsies and Travellers surveyed said that they use the internet daily, compared to four out of five of the general population.
- Only 38% of Gypsies and Travellers (33% if housed) had a household internet connection, compared to 86% of the general population.

### **Recommendations**

- NHS England should develop partnerships with the voluntary sector and industry to support digital inclusion for people with low literacy.
- Public health messages and digital health services should be designed to be accessible for people with low literacy.
- Policy makers should consider the digital exclusion faced by Gypsy and Traveller communities when carrying out Equality Impact Assessments.
- All government services which take a digital first approach should ensure that other options are available to populations experiencing digital exclusion.
- NHS England should negotiate with mobile phone providers so the NHS website can be accessed at little or no cost for people with no internet connection.

### **Introduction**

*“Digital participation is a critical social justice issue of the 21st century. Digital can be the driver for greater social and economic equality but just as surely it can be the barrier to such equality too.”*

*Douglas White, Carnegie UK<sup>39</sup>*

As health and social care services increasingly rely on and turn to digital solutions, it becomes increasingly important that we recognise the opportunities and threats presented to the diverse range of communities in the UK, especially those already experiencing inequalities. Gypsy and Traveller communities are recognised as experiencing some of the greatest inequalities across health, education, employment and in other areas too with evidence suggesting that:

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<sup>39</sup> [https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie\\_uk\\_trust/2016/09/v3-2697-CUKT-Digital-Participation-summary.pdf](https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2016/09/v3-2697-CUKT-Digital-Participation-summary.pdf)



- Only 30% of Irish Travellers live beyond 60<sup>40</sup>.
- Only 10% of Gypsy/Roma children and 21% of Irish Traveller children achieve an A\* to C in English and Maths GCSE<sup>41</sup>.
- Gypsies and Travellers are the ethnic groups least likely to be economically active (47%)<sup>42</sup>.

Until now, only anecdotal information has existed about digital exclusion in Gypsy and Traveller communities. Promising first steps have been made by NHS Digital who recently commissioned Good Things Foundation to carry out a pathfinder in Dorset on digital inclusion in maternity services which included a small group of young mothers from Piddlehinton Traveller site<sup>43</sup>. However, as health and social care services increasingly look towards digital solutions to achieve their aims, it is vitally important that a robust evidence base and nuanced understanding is developed on digital exclusion within Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Fortunately, there already exist key commitments in policy to ensure digital inclusion in health and social care. The Five Year Forward View held two key commitments to “Build the capacity of all citizens to access information” and to “Develop partnerships with the voluntary sector and industry to support digital inclusion”<sup>44</sup>, whilst Personalised Health and Care 2020 held two commitments to “Ensure that the digital inclusion opportunity is inclusive” and to “Build better insight into the barriers to digital inclusion”<sup>45</sup>.

We are concerned that because Gypsy and Traveller communities are already chronically excluded across a number of other indicators, then solutions put in place to reduce digital exclusion in the general population may not benefit Gypsy and Traveller communities and in some cases could even have a negative impact. It is important that health and social care services take into account the Marmot Review which recommended “To reduce the steepness of the social gradient in health, actions must be universal, but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage”<sup>46</sup>.

This research piece, carried out as part of our work on the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance seeks to uncover the digital exclusion experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities, to build better insight into the barriers to digital inclusion and to make recommendations on how these can be overcome.

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<sup>40</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/346574/inclusion-health-evidencepack.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/11-to-16-years-old/a-to-c-in-english-and-maths-gcse-attainment-for-children-aged-14-to-16-key-stage-4/latest>

<sup>42</sup>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/datasets/2011censusanalysiswhatdoesthe2011censustellusaboutthecharacteristicsofgypsioririshtravellersinenglandandwales>

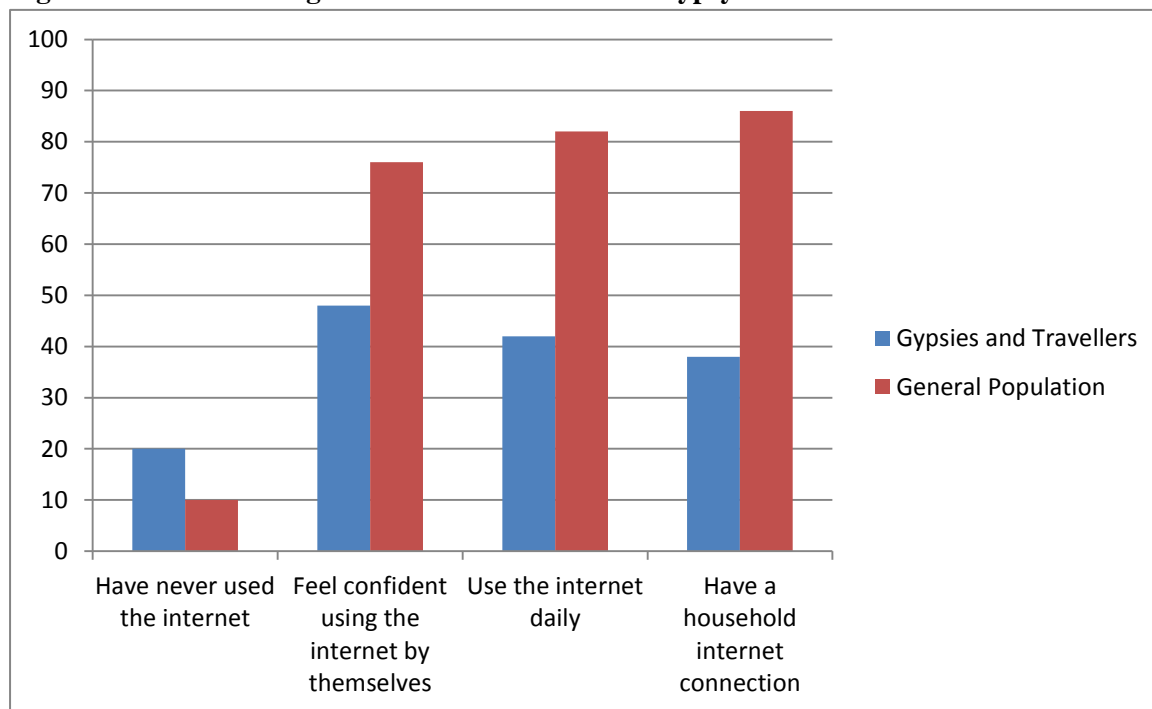
<sup>43</sup> <https://digital-health-lab.org/dorset>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/5yfv-web.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personalised-health-and-care-2020>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pdf.pdf>

**Figure 1 – Digital exclusion in Gypsy and Traveller communities**



**Internet use**

Our research found that one in five Gypsies and Travellers have never used the internet, compared to one in ten members of the general population. We also found that only two in five Gypsies and Travellers use the internet daily, whilst four in five members of the general population use the internet daily.

**Figure 2 – Internet use in Gypsy and Traveller communities**

	Have never used the internet	Use the internet daily
<b>Gypsies and Travellers</b>	20%	42%
<b>General Population</b>	10% <sup>47</sup>	82% <sup>48</sup>

It is clear from these statistics that Gypsy and Traveller communities experience significant digital exclusion, furthermore, when we analysed the data further, we found that there were key characteristics shared by those who were digitally excluded. We found that those we interviewed who had never accessed the internet were all above the age of 40 and had low or no literacy. Over half of these indicated that their literacy level was the main barrier to using the internet.

When designing digital content for health and social care, it is important to take into account the low literacy levels of many people in the UK. To provide a wider context, the National Literacy Trust estimates that 15% of adults in the UK are ‘functionally illiterate’<sup>49</sup>. Whilst it can be tempting to assume that people with low literacy will only be able to participate digitally once they have improved their literacy, there are ways in which content on health and social care can be made more accessible:

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/performance/digital-inclusion/digital-outcomes/regular-use>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> <https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/adult-literacy/>

- We often communicate with our service users who have low literacy using WhatsApp voice notes. Developing technology which allows health and social care services to send voice recordings to service users with low literacy could be a great improvement.
- We find that service users with low literacy are more likely to share videos and images on social media or to use live videos to communicate with their friends and family. Health and social care services wishing to reach wider networks with public health messages should consider using more visual media, which does not rely on literacy to engage.
- Assistive technology which has been designed for people with visual impairments such as ‘Browsealoud’ could also be used to read audio versions of websites and digital content to people with low literacy<sup>50</sup>. However, this will require some awareness raising amongst people with low literacy.

### Skills and confidence

We asked participants to rate their skills and confidence in using digital technology on a scale. These were the findings:

**Figure 3 – Digital skills and confidence in Gypsy and Traveller communities**

Skill level	Percentage of Gypsy and Traveller participants
Cannot use technology	36%
Can do simple tasks with help	16%
Can do simple tasks without help	26%
Can do complex tasks with help	8%
Can do complex tasks without help	14%

In summary, 52% of Gypsy and Traveller research participants said they did not feel confident using digital technology by themselves. In comparison, the Oxford Internet Survey found in 2013, that 74% of the general population rate their ability to use the internet as good or excellent and Go ON UK/Ipsos Mori found in 2015 that 77% of adults have basic digital skills<sup>51,52</sup>. This shows a notable gap in skills and confidence between Gypsy and Traveller communities and the general population and it is important that this is addressed.

Whilst some of those surveyed felt that they would never be able to digitally participate because of low literacy and a small handful of those surveyed said that they did not have an interest in digital participation. However, almost one fifth of Gypsies and Travellers we spoke to said that they would like to use the internet more but would need support. This is a promising statistic and suggests that there is an appetite within Gypsy and Traveller communities to be more included digitally. Whilst many great initiatives exist to support individuals to improve their digital skills, there may also be some barriers which make it more difficult for some members of Gypsy and Traveller communities to benefit from these. The issues which need to be addressed include:

- **Literacy** – services aiming to promote digital inclusion may not be accustomed to supporting people with low literacy and may not have the staff, training or resources in place to do this well.

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.texthelp.com/en-gb/products/browsealoud.aspx>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/performance/digital-inclusion/digital-outcomes/skills-and-confidence>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

- **Classroom environment** – some Gypsies and Travellers may not have spent time in formal education and therefore may not be comfortable in a classroom environment. The 2011 Census found that 60% of Gypsies and Travellers had no formal qualifications<sup>53</sup>. Some Gypsies and Travellers may find the classroom environment daunting which could disrupt learning.
- **Understanding and acceptance** – many Gypsies and Travellers have experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation which may result in a reluctance to access digital inclusion services. From a service provider perspective, digital inclusion services may feel that they lack knowledge of Gypsy and Traveller culture or their understanding of Gypsies and Travellers may rely on assumptions based on negative media coverage of Gypsies and Travellers.

For reasons outlined above, it would be useful to develop a pilot digital inclusion project with Gypsy and Traveller communities. From this pilot project, principles of good practice could be identified which could then be used to inform mainstream digital inclusion projects across the country. This would follow in the footsteps of other successful schemes in health and social care. For example, Friends Families and Travellers are an accredited Royal Society of Public Health training centre for Gypsy and Traveller communities and have tailored the training so that Gypsy and Traveller communities will find it accessible and relevant<sup>54</sup>.

### Access

Of those surveyed, only 38% of Gypsies and Travellers had a household internet connection, compared to 86% of the general population<sup>55</sup>. The most popular way to access the internet amongst interview participants was through mobile data. Over half of participants said that this was how they accessed the internet. Three out of 50 participants said that their only way to access the internet was through public wifi. It is unclear whether these respondents were aware of the security risks of connecting to public wifi.

**Figure 4 – Internet access in Gypsy and Traveller communities**

Way of connecting to the internet	Percentage of respondents
Wifi / broadband	38%
Mobile data	52%
Public wifi	12%

Initially, when we began this research, we expected to find that Gypsies in Travellers in bricks and mortar housing would be more likely to have a household internet connection than those living on sites or roadside. However, we found that amongst those living in housing, only six out of 18 people (33%) surveyed said that they had a household internet connection, less than the overall average of 38%. This suggests that it is not a structural issue with accommodation type which acts as a barrier to digital inclusion, but that other factors are at play. In order to identify key barriers to accessing the internet, we asked all interviewees if they used the internet as often as they liked and if there were any barriers stopping them. In addition to issues highlighted earlier in the paper on low literacy and lack of skills and confidence, the barriers identified were:

<sup>53</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/whatdoesthe2011censustellusaboutthecharacteristicsofgypsyoririshtravellersinenglandandwales/2014-01-21>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/royal-society-for-public-health-training-for-gypsy-and-traveller-communities/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/performance/digital-inclusion/digital-outcomes/all-access>

- **Data running out** - Of those surveyed, roughly one fifth of participants said that running out of data and not being able to afford any more was one of their biggest barriers to accessing the internet.
- **Cost** - A number of people who did not have a household internet connection said that cost was a prohibitive factor in this.
- **Signal** - A number of people who responded said that poor signal was a barrier to them accessing the internet. According to figures released as part of the Race Disparity Audit in August 2018, Gypsies and Travellers are the ethnic groups most likely to be living in rural locations with 24.7% of Gypsies and Travellers living rurally, compared to 18.5% of the general population. This suggests that Gypsies and Travellers may be disproportionately affected by challenges in ensuring high speed internet connections in rural areas.

The NHS has already made practical and positive steps to ensure that staff and patients have access to wifi in NHS settings across England. However, further steps are needed to ensure that the public have access to online health and social care information and services when outside NHS settings<sup>56</sup>. For example, in New Zealand, people can access the government's "Work and Income" website and online services for little or no cost, so even those who cannot afford wifi or to top up their mobile data can benefit from their online services<sup>57,58</sup>. If NHS England were to make similar steps, this could result in significant cost savings and decrease pressure on GP practices.

## Conclusion

It is clear that an individual's ability to engage with digital content can reap huge benefits for their health and wellbeing. Digital inclusion improves patients' access to information about their health and wellbeing, helps to combat loneliness and improves awareness of services available to patients<sup>59</sup>. Our research shows that many Gypsies and Travellers experience digital exclusion. Gypsies and Travellers are less likely to use the internet regularly, less likely to possess digital skills and significantly less likely to have a household internet connection than the majority population. It is vital that these inequalities are kept in mind when commissioning digital health and social care services and that decisive steps are taken to narrow the digital divide.

## About us

Friends Families and Travellers is a leading national charity that works on behalf of all Gypsies, Roma and Travellers regardless of ethnicity, culture or background.

Friends Families and Travellers is a member of the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance, which is a partnership between the voluntary sectors and the health and care system to provide a voice and improve the health and wellbeing for all communities.

It has been established to:

- Facilitate integrated working between the voluntary and statutory sectors
- Support a two way flow of information between communities, the VCSE sector and policy leads

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<sup>56</sup> <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/nhs-wifi>

<sup>57</sup> Thank you to Michaela Des Forges for highlighting this at a VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance working day.

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/our-services/cheap-as-data/index.html>

<sup>59</sup> <https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/our-work/digital-inclusion/digital-inclusion-in-health-and-social-care#return-on-investment>

12.09.2018

- Amplify the voice of the VCSE sector and people with lived experience to inform national policy
- Facilitate co-produced solutions to promote equality and reduce health inequalities

## **Appendix A**

### **Background of Gypsy and Traveller participants**

- 17 participants were Romany Gypsy
- 15 participants were Irish Traveller
- 1 participant was Welsh Traveller
- 8 participants were New Travellers
- 8 participants were Travellers
- 1 participant was English Traveller

## **Appendix B**

### **Technological Devices**

We asked participants which devices they owned and found that:

- 32% of those surveyed did not own any devices which could connect to the internet
- Only one person out of 50 surveyed owned a desktop computer
- Only one in five people surveyed owned a laptop
- Only one in five people surveyed owned a tablet
- 32 out of 50 respondents surveyed owned a smartphone

## **Appendix C**

### **How Gypsy and Traveller communities are using the internet**

We asked participants what they use the internet for and found that:

- 62% of respondents use the internet for social media and email
- 38% of respondents use the internet to find out information on services available to them
- 24% of respondents use the internet for entertainment
- 20% of respondents use the internet for maps
- 20% of respondents use the internet to shop
- 14% of respondents use the internet to find out the news
- 12% of respondents use the internet for work