

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Strategy

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to respond to engagement on Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Strategy. Our key role is to make sure that patients, the public, service users, and carers are at the heart of service improvement in health and social care. In line with our role, we have focused our comments on:

- Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement
- Health and Social Care

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes that the opportunity to feed into the strategy at this stage. We note that the Be Heard survey is one of several methods used to engage on this topic, and that the council recognises the need to improve dialogue with the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) communities. However, we note that the Be Heard survey for engagement could be improved in several ways. It has only been out for a brief time to allow people to respond. The questions are quite lengthy, and all the answers are mandatory, which puts people off from responding. As the council has noted, literacy levels are lower in GRT communities. Digital access is also more limited, and more thought could have been given to how the documents and survey appear on a mobile device.

Health and Social Care

Healthwatch Birmingham would like to see a bigger focus on the health and wellbeing as part of the strategy. We are pleased that Priority 2 focuses on a joined up health and wellbeing offer for GRT communities and promoting access to mainstream services, but there is a lack of detail about how this can be achieved. Details of priority 2 given in the draft cabinet report (4.26-4.29) are more focussed on anti-social behaviour than health and wellbeing.

We note that the council's public health team developed a [Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller community health profile](#) in 2023 and would like to more details on how the health inequalities highlighted in this profile are being addressed, and how these are affected by the different approaches being considered in the cabinet report. We note that the cabinet report is supplemented by the Birmingham Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment and would like to see the community health profile also considered as an appendix to the report to allow for more informed decision making.



Healthwatch Birmingham would like to see details of access to health services and a choice of health services considered when assessing existing transit sites and proposals for negotiated stopping sites. We are aware of the need for family members to stay close by when relatives are in hospital, and that they are sometimes limited by a lack of appropriate places to stay.

We are pleased to see the council aims to improve its links with the GRT communities as well as having a joined up approach across its services. We would urge for staff working with these communities to undertake cultural competency training to allow them to offer information and access to services in an appropriate way. We have previously heard from members of the GRT communities about the need for more training in the staff they have encountered in health services.

There needs to be more training for all departments and receptionists on different people and certain conditions like autism and how to deal with those people.

We have also heard positive experiences of services when people feel they have been treated well.

It would be helpful to give more detail on what a more collaborative service to GRT communities could look like, and how this can help improve the health and wellbeing of communities by tackling health inequalities. As part of the delivery plan, responsibility for health and wellbeing needs to be clearly outlined to ensure action is taken.

We look forward to seeing how this work progresses.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "sw", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sarah Walmsley

Data and Insight Officer

