

2024



Briefing

Gypsy Roma & Traveller Youth

YOUTH



Introduction

Gypsy and Traveller youth are confronted with a multitude of unique hurdles and adversities within society, which are underscored by pervasive discrimination, marginalisation, and systemic disparities. These formidable challenges hinder their ability to access fundamental services and exert a profound toll on their health, well-being, and holistic welfare. The primary objective of this report is to delve into the profound health ramifications of these obstacles, honing in specifically on the scourge of bullying, the insufficiency of accommodation provisions, the refusal of essential services, racial profiling, and the intricate interplay of these issues with cultural norms and expectations.

Bullying

At the heart of the struggles faced by Gypsy and Traveller youth lies the pervasive issue of bullying. The prevalent discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes directed towards these marginalised groups cultivate an environment where bullying is not only prevalent but often normalised, tragically left unaddressed. Within educational institutions, Gypsy and Traveller youth endure disproportionately high levels of verbal abuse, physical aggression, and social ostracisation.

Bullying inflicts deep psychological wounds on Gypsy and Traveller youth, exacerbating their existing mental health challenges and creating long-lasting emotional scars. Within educational institutions and broader society, these marginalised groups endure disproportionately high levels of verbal abuse, physical aggression, and social ostracisation, perpetuating a cycle of psychological anguish and trauma.

The relentless onslaught of harassment and victimisation breeds profound feelings of inadequacy, powerlessness, and despair. The constant barrage of derogatory remarks, taunts, and threats chips away at self-esteem and sense of self-worth, leaving feelings of marginalisation and isolation.

Physical violence and intimidation instil deep-seated fear and anxiety, hindering any ability to feel safe and secure.

The psychological toll of bullying extends beyond the immediate impact of individual incidents, permeating every aspect of Gypsy and Traveller youth's lives. The fear of further victimisation and social rejection leads to hypervigilance and avoidance behaviours, further isolating them from their peers and inhibiting their social development.

The psychological distress and trauma inflicted by bullying can manifest in a myriad of mental health disorders, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even suicidal ideation.



Refused service

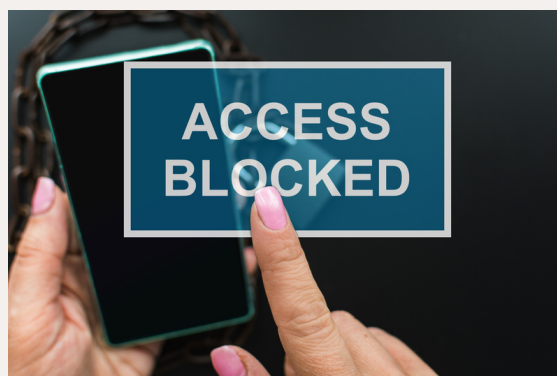
The psychological impact of being refused access to essential services for Gypsy and Traveller youth cannot be overstated. Encountering denial of access to healthcare, education, and housing due to discriminatory biases and prejudices reinforces feelings of exclusion, alienation, and worthlessness within these marginalised communities. This systemic refusal violates their fundamental rights and deeply wounds their sense of belonging and acceptance in society.

For young Gypsy and Traveller individuals, being turned away from essential services sends a clear message that they are not valued members of society. It breeds feelings of inadequacy, helplessness, and frustration, as they grapple with the injustice of being denied access to essential resources for their well-being and development. The repeated experiences of rejection and marginalisation erode their self-esteem and confidence, shaping their perception of themselves.

The impact of refusal of services extends beyond the individual level to affect the entire family unit. When families with young children are turned away from restaurants or denied access to public spaces, it not only deprives them of basic amenities but also reinforces harmful stereotypes and prejudices. Children internalise these experiences, leading to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and inferiority. They may question their cultural identity, feeling ashamed of their background and ethnicity.

The psychological toll of being refused access to essential services can have long-lasting effects on Gypsy and Traveller youth as they navigate adolescence and young adulthood. It breeds a sense of mistrust towards authority figures and institutions, making it difficult for them to seek help or support when needed. The constant threat of rejection and discrimination leads to heightened levels of anxiety, stress, and depression, impacting their mental health and overall well-being.

The systemic barriers and institutionalised discrimination encountered by Gypsy and Traveller youth perpetuate cycles of marginalisation and social exclusion. The lack of access to essential services hinders their ability to thrive academically, economically, and socially, trapping them in a cycle of poverty and deprivation. Without intervention and support, these youth continue to face significant challenges in achieving their full potential and breaking free from the cycle of marginalisation.



Digital exclusion

In the digital era, connectivity and access to online resources are crucial for the growth and development of young people. However, many youth living on sites face significant barriers to internet access due to limited infrastructure and challenges in installing WiFi boxes or internet lines in their communities. This lack of access leaves young people on sites isolated from the vast opportunities and resources available online, impacting their education, social connections, and future prospects.

Digital exclusion has profound implications for youth in an increasingly digital-dependent world. Without internet access, young people miss out on vital educational materials, online learning platforms, and opportunities for skill development. They also struggle to connect with peers, access support networks, and participate in social and cultural activities that are predominantly facilitated online. As society becomes more reliant on digital technologies for communication, information sharing, and employment opportunities, youth living on sites face heightened barriers to social mobility and economic advancement.

Addressing digital exclusion among youth on sites requires concerted efforts to improve infrastructure, expand access to affordable internet services, and implement youth-focused digital inclusion initiatives. By ensuring that all young people have access to the internet and the digital skills necessary to navigate and thrive in the digital world, we can empower them to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

Deliveries

The inability to have online purchases delivered directly can have a significant impact on the lives of youth living on sites because many delivery agencies refuse to deliver to sites. In today's digital age, online shopping has become a common way for people, especially young people, to access a wide range of goods conveniently. However, for youth living in areas where online delivery services are limited or unavailable, the inability to receive packages at their doorstep can create challenges.

Firstly, not being able to receive deliveries can affect the sense of belonging of youth. In a world where personal style and self-expression are often tied to fashion and accessories, the inability to access online shopping can limit the choices of young people. This can impact their confidence and self-esteem, especially when peers have access to a wider variety of clothing and trends.

The inconvenience of having to collect packages from a sorting office, often located far from their homes, can also have broader implications for youth and their families. This process not only requires additional time and effort but also compromises their privacy and agency resulting in a loss of autonomy and independence for young people.

Furthermore, the need to collect packages from a sorting office removes the element of surprise and excitement that comes with receiving deliveries directly at home. It deprives youth of the joy of anticipation and the feeling of receiving something special addressed to them. Overall, the inability to have online purchases delivered to their address can impact the confidence, and sense of agency of youth living in communities without adequate delivery services. It highlights the broader issue of unequal access to resources and opportunities in today's digital age, emphasising the need for initiatives to improve delivery infrastructure and ensure equal access to online shopping for all members of society.

The financial impact

The financial burden and discrimination faced by Gypsy and Traveller youth have profound psychological effects, compounding the challenges they already face due to systemic inequalities and social exclusion.

Living on designated sites often means shouldering additional financial burdens, such as disproportionately high insurance premiums. The misguided perception of increased risk leads to inflated insurance costs, placing an unfair financial strain on these already marginalised communities. For Gypsy and Traveller youth, who may already struggle with economic hardships, the added financial pressure exacerbates feelings of stress, anxiety, and insecurity. They may feel overwhelmed by the constant struggle to make ends meet, perpetuating a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness about their prospects. The refusal of delivery services and transportation to designated sites further compounds the challenges faced by Gypsy and Traveller youth. Being denied access to essential goods and services not only creates practical difficulties but also reinforces feelings of exclusion and discrimination. The message conveyed by businesses and service providers is clear: Gypsy and Traveller youth are not welcome in mainstream society. This systemic discrimination undermines their sense of belonging and worth, fostering feelings of resentment, frustration, and alienation.

The cumulative impact of financial burden and discrimination on Gypsy and Traveller youth is profound. It erodes their sense of agency and autonomy, leaving them feeling trapped in a cycle of poverty and marginalisation. The constant exposure to discrimination and exclusion takes a toll on their mental health, contributing to elevated levels of stress, depression, and low self-esteem.

The lack of access to essential resources and services limits their opportunities for social and economic mobility, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.

Financial exclusion

When attempting to access financial institutions, Gypsy and Traveller youth sometimes encounter systemic barriers and discrimination. The denial of banking services or biased treatment from financial professionals significantly impacts mental health. Such experiences evoke frustration and a sense of exclusion, leading to heightened stress and diminished self-esteem. Without access to financial resources, they grapple with increased insecurity and limited opportunities, fostering feelings of hopelessness.

This financial exclusion perpetuates cycles of poverty and dependency within Gypsy and Traveller communities. The inability to access banking services contributes to widening social inequalities and further marginalises these youths from mainstream society. As they face hurdles in securing financial stability and investment opportunities, their socio-economic empowerment is hindered, reinforcing feelings of isolation and alienation.

Addressing barriers to financial inclusion is paramount for supporting the mental well-being and socio-economic advancement of Gypsy and Traveller youth. By dismantling discriminatory practices and ensuring equitable access to financial services, opportunities for economic growth and social integration can be fostered, promoting a more inclusive and empowering environment for these marginalised communities.

Being racially profiled

Racial profiling exacerbates the mental health challenges experienced by Gypsy and Traveller youth, amplifying feelings of fear, anxiety, and trauma in their everyday lives. The constant fear of scrutiny, harassment, and violence in public spaces instils a pervasive sense of insecurity and vulnerability. Gypsy and Traveller youth are forced to navigate environments where they feel unwelcome and unsafe, perpetually on guard against potential discrimination and hostility.

The unjustified suspicion and discrimination they encounter in pubs, clubs, shops, and cinemas reinforce feelings of being judged and marginalised based on their ethnicity. These experiences breed a profound sense of alienation and disconnection from mainstream society, as Gypsy and Traveller youth grapple with the realisation that they are viewed with suspicion and distrust simply because of their cultural background. The psychological toll of constantly being subjected to such scrutiny and discrimination cannot be overstated, eroding their sense of self-worth and belonging.

The heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and trauma experienced by Gypsy and Traveller youth as a result of racial profiling further erode their mental well-being. The constant vigilance and hypervigilance required to navigate environments where they are perceived as threats or outsiders take a toll on their psychological health, leading to increased levels of psychological distress and emotional exhaustion. Moreover, the erosion of trust in societal institutions exacerbates feelings of social isolation and alienation, further compromising their mental resilience and well-being.

Racial profiling compounds the mental health challenges faced by Gypsy and Traveller youth, perpetuating a cycle of fear, anxiety, and trauma in their everyday lives. Addressing the root causes of racial discrimination and fostering inclusivity and acceptance are essential steps towards promoting the mental well-being and empowerment of Gypsy and Traveller youth, enabling them to thrive and contribute positively to society.

Youth Perspective....

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller youth regularly experience discrimination and prejudice. Much of the prejudice towards Gypsies, Roma and Travellers is normalised to an extent that these experiences happen every day for many and come in a lot of different forms. The young people on the Our Voice project shared many stories of being excluded from, refused service or followed by security in certain places, like shops and restaurants. They felt this was much more likely to happen to younger Gypsy and Traveller people than adults. Bullying in education by peers and prejudice from teachers are also common experiences and were shared widely by the young people in session. This bullying included: being targeted with derogatory slurs and verbal abuse; physical assaults; exclusion and ostracisation, and online harassment. Wider prejudice included assumptions being made about background, family and identity that were often negative and left them feeling 'different' from others.

"I used to talk English at school, talk in an English accent. It's just easier for people to understand and you didn't have to explain all the time, every day. I don't do it now, too tiring, I haven't got the time or energy for it anymore."

Our Voice Youth Toolkit

"I think Travellers do things differently. But there's other ways, other cultures that do things differently. It's not just us. Everyone has their own way of doing things. That's why I think some people are very smallminded, because they think there's only one way."

Accommodation

The intersection of financial exclusion, housing crisis, and discrimination in accessing accommodations has profound impacts on the mental health and well-being of Gypsy and Traveller youth and children. With limited access to banking services and challenges in obtaining mortgages due to discriminatory practices, many youths face uncertainty and instability regarding their housing situations. The scarcity of social housing exacerbates this dilemma, making it exceedingly difficult for Gypsy and Traveller families to secure stable and affordable accommodation. The shortage of designated sites and discrimination in the planning process pose further obstacles to obtaining a pitch or establishing a private site, leaving many young people in limbo.

These barriers have significant repercussions on the mental health of Gypsy and Traveller youth and children. Constantly grappling with housing insecurity and the uncertainty of their living arrangements takes a toll on their psychological well-being, fostering feelings of anxiety, stress, and instability. The lack of a secure and stable home environment undermines their sense of safety and belonging, exacerbating feelings of vulnerability and insecurity. Additionally, discrimination and prejudice in the planning process contribute to a pervasive sense of injustice and marginalisation, further eroding their confidence and self-esteem.

The difficulties some face when trying to secure accommodation impact other aspects of youths' lives. It disrupts their education, as frequent moves and unstable living conditions can lead to school absenteeism and academic underachievement. The lack of a permanent address also affects their access to healthcare, further exacerbating existing health disparities and social inequalities. Overall, the housing crisis and financial exclusion faced by Gypsy and Traveller youth have far-reaching impacts on their mental health, education, and overall well-being, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalisation. Addressing these systemic barriers and ensuring equitable access to housing and financial resources are essential steps towards promoting the mental health and socio-economic empowerment of Gypsy and Traveller youth and children.

Finding work

Prejudice and bullying pose significant barriers to employment for Traveller youth, perpetuating cycles of exclusion and marginalisation within the workforce. Discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes create systemic hurdles that hinder their access to job opportunities and career advancement. Traveller individuals often encounter biased hiring practices and workplace discrimination, fueled by negative stereotypes and preconceived notions held by employers. This prejudice manifests in various forms, from encountering biased attitudes during job interviews to facing outright rejection based on their ethnic identity. Such discrimination fosters feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and hopelessness, eroding their confidence and self-esteem. The fear of facing discrimination or harassment in the workplace can dissuade them from pursuing employment opportunities, further limiting their economic prospects.

The experience of being marginalised or ostracised in the workplace exacerbates feelings of isolation and alienation, eroding any sense of belonging and self-worth. Furthermore, the lack of economic opportunities and financial stability exacerbates social inequalities within Traveller communities, perpetuating cycles of poverty. Without access to stable employment, Traveller youth face limited opportunities for socio-economic advancement, hindering their ability to break free from the cycle of marginalisation and achieve their full potential. Addressing the root causes of prejudice and discrimination in the workplace is crucial for creating inclusive and equitable employment opportunities for Traveller youth, enabling them to thrive and contribute positively to society.

Resilience

There is a lot of pressure on Gypsy and Traveller youth, and a toll is taken on mental health, but the cultural norms and strong community ties within Gypsy and Traveller communities play a pivotal role in fostering resilience and strength among youth. From an early age, Gypsy and Traveller youth are immersed in a rich cultural heritage that emphasises the importance of family, community, and tradition. Close-knit family bonds serve as a cornerstone of support and solidarity, providing a sense of belonging and security in the face of adversity. Within this tight-knit familial structure, young people are imbued with a strong sense of identity and belonging, instilling a deep-rooted resilience that enables them to navigate the challenges they encounter.

The emphasis on communal living and mutual support within Gypsy and Traveller communities further reinforces resilience among youth. Despite facing systemic barriers and discrimination, these communities rally together in times of need, offering practical assistance, emotional support, and guidance to one another. The collective strength of the community serves as a source of inspiration and empowerment for youth, instilling a sense of pride and resilience in the face of adversity. Through shared experiences and collective action, Gypsy and Traveller youth learn valuable lessons in resilience, adaptability, and perseverance, equipping them with the tools to overcome obstacles and thrive in challenging environments.

The rich cultural heritage and traditions of Gypsy and Traveller communities provide a sense of continuity and connection that bolsters resilience among youth. Through storytelling, music, dance, and other cultural practices, young people are immersed in a vibrant tapestry of traditions that celebrate resilience, resourcefulness, and perseverance. These cultural practices serve as a source of strength and inspiration, reminding youth of their heritage and the resilience of their ancestors in the face of adversity. By embracing and preserving their cultural identity, Gypsy and Traveller youth draw strength and resilience from their shared history, enabling them to confront challenges with courage and determination.

The cultural norms, strong community bonds, and rich heritage of Gypsy and Traveller communities serve as powerful sources of resilience and strength for youth. Through close family ties, communal support, and cultural traditions, young people are equipped with the resilience and fortitude to navigate the challenges they encounter, overcome adversity, and thrive in the face of systemic barriers and discrimination. By harnessing the collective resilience of their communities, Gypsy and Traveller youth are empowered to confront obstacles with resilience, resourcefulness, and determination, forging a path towards a brighter and more equitable future.



Recommendations

1. **Implement Comprehensive Anti-Bullying Programs:** Educational institutions and community organisations should implement comprehensive anti-bullying programs that specifically address the unique challenges faced by Gypsy and Traveller youth. These programs should focus on promoting empathy, fostering inclusive environments, and providing support mechanisms for victims of bullying. Additionally, education and awareness campaigns aimed at challenging stereotypes and prejudices within schools and communities can help create a culture of respect and acceptance.

2. **Increase Provision of Secure Accommodation:** Governments and local authorities must prioritise the provision of secure and suitable accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller communities. This includes increasing the availability of official sites, addressing barriers to planning permission for private sites and investing in adequate infrastructure to support these communities. Providing stable housing not only addresses immediate needs but also promotes mental health and social inclusion among Gypsy and Traveller youth.

3. **Combat Discrimination in Access to Services:** Efforts should be made to combat discrimination in the provision of essential services such as healthcare, education, and housing. This can be achieved through the implementation of anti-discrimination policies, training programs for service providers, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure equitable access for all. Additionally, community outreach initiatives aimed at fostering understanding and collaboration between service providers and Gypsy and Traveller communities can help address systemic barriers to access.

4. **Address Racial Profiling and Discrimination:** Governments and law enforcement agencies should take proactive measures to address racial profiling and discrimination experienced by Gypsy and Traveller youth. Community-led initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and understanding can help mitigate tensions and foster positive relationships.

5. **Promote Intersectional Approaches to Support:** Interventions and support services for Gypsy and Traveller youth should adopt intersectional approaches that recognise and address the multiple axes of discrimination they face. This includes considering factors such as ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and age in the design and delivery of programs and services. Collaborative efforts involving multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, community organisations, and Gypsy and Traveller representatives, are essential for developing holistic and effective support mechanisms.

6. **Empowerment and Advocacy:** Empowering Gypsy and Traveller youth to advocate for their rights and interests is crucial for driving systemic change. Providing opportunities for leadership development, community organising, and civic engagement can help build resilience and agency among young people. Additionally, supporting initiatives that amplify the voices of Gypsy and Traveller youth in policy-making processes and decision-making forums can help ensure that their needs and perspectives are adequately represented and addressed.

About Us...

GATE Herts is a representative organisation for Gypsy and Traveller people across Hertfordshire.

Our aim is to improve quality of life for our communities. We work in partnership to address the issues which affect our Accommodation, Health, Education and Discrimination.

Contact us: 01707 247088

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