



The Centre for Ethnic Health Research

national centre for tackling health inequalities



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Creative Inquiry: Art-Based Approach to Understanding Maternal Experience and Expectations of Gypsy and Travellers women

Barbara Czyznikowska

Community Engagement and Inclusion Manager

Lis Naylor

Artist | Painter & Sculptor

11 June 2025



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Session objectives

- Use creative methods to promote **inclusion in research**
- Explore visual storytelling with **underserved communities**
- Share insights from **maternity inquiry**
- Reflection on art's role in bridging **cultural divides and challenging biases** within healthcare systems



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Gypsy & Traveller Maternity Experiences

Why this group?

- Historically underserved
- Faced systemic barriers and stigma



About us What we do Research

New research calls for action over lack of mental health care for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Communities

Published: 28.09.2023

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News

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller groups need more equitable mental healthcare, says report

BMJ 2023;382:doi:https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.p2260 (published 29 September 2023)
Cite this as: BMJ 2023;382:p2260

Article Related content Metrics Responses

Emma Wilkinson
Author affiliations

The NHS needs to do much more to overcome the stark inequalities facing Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities in England—particularly on poor mental health outcomes—report from the NHS Race and Health Observatory has concluded.¹

There is widespread fear and mistrust among the communities towards public services, and waiting lists and digital access can form further barriers to care, the report produced in collaboration with the University of Worcester found.¹ Despite a clear need, a lack of tailored health services, poor cultural understanding of the problems faced, and a paucity of granular data all hamper access to mainstream NHS services, it concluded.

Romany and Traveller people have a rate of ...



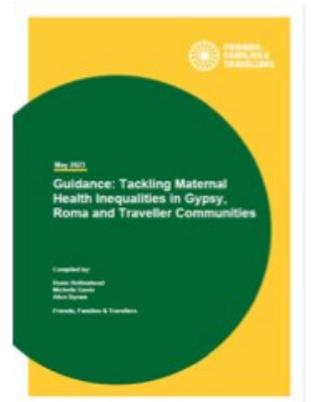
HOUSE OF LORDS Library Briefing

Inequalities Faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities QSD on 25 February 2020

On 25 February 2020, Baroness Whistler (Labour) is due to ask Her Majesty's Government "what steps they are taking to implement the recommendations of the report by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, Tackling Inequalities Faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities, published on 3 April 2019".

Summary

- The House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee published the findings of its inquiry into inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities on 3 April 2019.
- Among the committee's key findings were that these communities face the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and local services.
- The committee also found that there has been a persistent failure by national and local policymakers to tackle these inequalities in a sustained way, leading to services that are ill-equipped to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. In turn, this has led to a lack of trust in these public services. It further noted issues within these communities, such as a high level of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.
- Among the committee's recommendations were that the Cabinet Office create a specific workstream within the Race Disparity Unit for addressing Gypsy and Traveller inequalities, and that every relevant government department have a strategy for tackling these issues.



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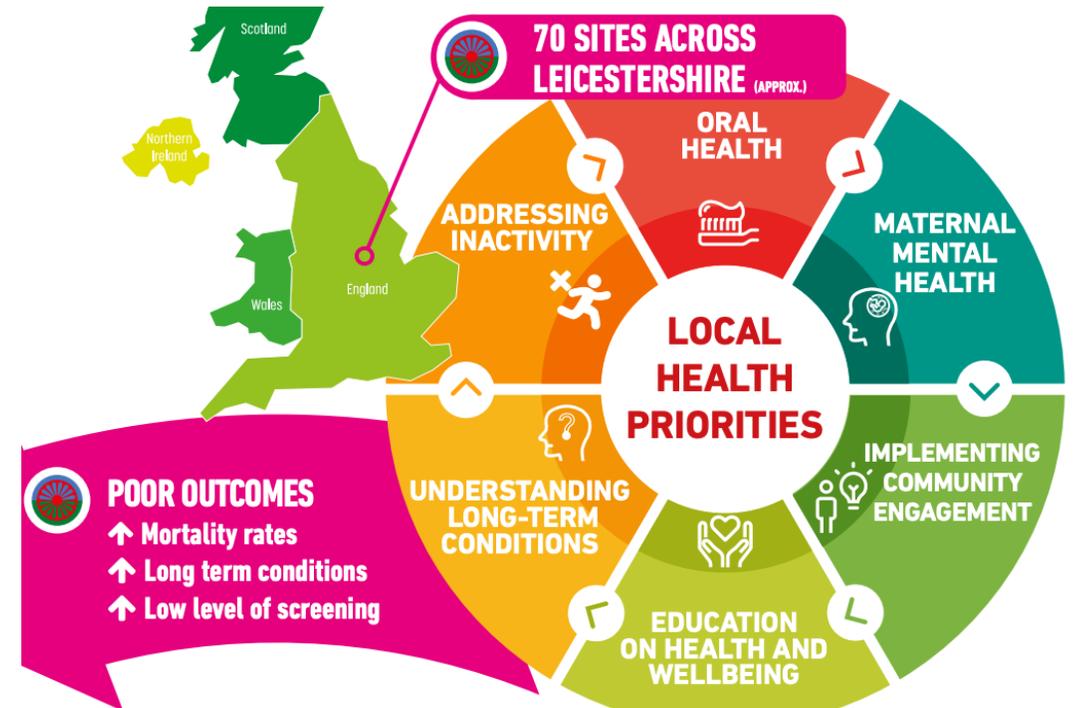
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Why engage?

- GTR people experience stark health inequalities, with **life expectancies up to 25 years shorter** than the wider population.
- The health of a Romany or Traveller person in their 60s is comparable to that of an average White British person in their 80s [Parry et al (2007)]
- Experiences of a significantly **higher prevalence** of long-term health conditions, and disabilities that limit daily activities or employment, along with poorer overall health outcomes and elevated rates of infant mortality.
- **Intersectional disparities** including unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, low literacy and education levels, gender inequality, and inadequate housing and living conditions.



Gypsy Travellers Community Maternity Experience & Perinatal Mortality Research

- A qualitative study using arts-based methodology to explore the pregnancy journey of Gypsy and Travellers women
- Exploration of experience in maternity, neonatal or postnatal care
- Impact and influence of ethnicity and culture on these experiences
- Peer-led creative workshops
- Collaborative exhibition

**Gypsy Traveller
Community Maternity
Experience & Perinatal
Mortality Research**

Project funded by the University of Leicester's Leicester Institute for Advanced Studies Centenary Community Engagement Fund.

Thank you
We would like to thank all the participants and members of the Gypsy and Travellers (GTs) community for their valuable insights and reflections.

A special thank you to Leicestershire GATE (Gypsy and Traveller Equality), a grassroots community project, for supporting participant recruitment and ongoing collaboration.

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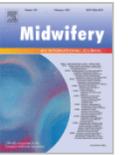
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Methodological approach

- Focus groups with GT women
- Semi-structured interviews with midwives
- Co-production workshops for artworks
- Systematic review assessing maternal, perinatal, and infant health outcomes of women from GRT communities, along with the factors influencing these outcomes



Midwifery
Volume 129, February 2024, 103910



Review Article

Perinatal health outcomes of women from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities: A systematic review

Winifred Ekezie ^{a b c}  , Ellen Hopwood ^{a d}, Barbara Czyznikowska ^b, Sarah Weidman ^e, Nicola Mackintosh ^d, Ffion Curtis ^{a b f}

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Art as the bridge ...



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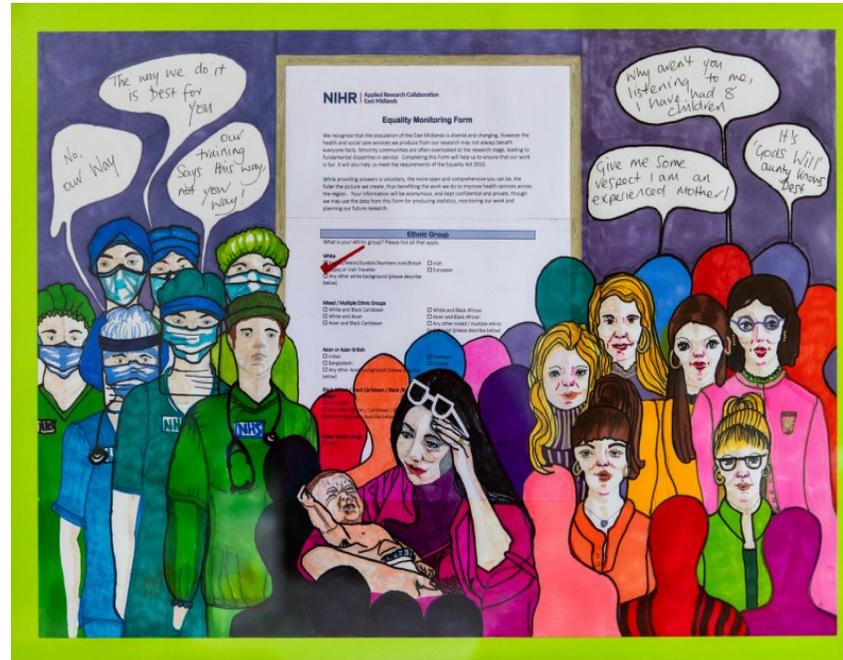


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RESPECT



Expectations vs. Reality



Congratulations



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Reflections from the project

- Collaboratively created artworks **expressing cultural identity and experiences of maternal care**
- Emotional expression and healing
- Visibility for **unheard voices**
- **Built trust** with healthcare providers and researchers
- **Challenges faced:** stigma, literacy, initial skepticism
- Art revealed **deep-seated issues** that words could not capture.
- Need for more **culturally sensitive care**.
- Employ cultural mediators or **trained advocates**.
- Created **visual narratives to bridge the gap** between lived experiences and healthcare perceptions.



Team Acknowledgement

- Dr Winifred Ekezie, Research Associate, UofL
- Miss Barbara Czyznikowska, Community Engagement and inclusion Manager, UofL
- Jackie Duffy, Project Manager, Leicestershire Gypsy and Travellers Equality (GATE)
- Dr Ffion Curtis, Research Fellow, University of Liverpool
- Dr Nicola Mackintosh, Associate Professor in Social Science Applied to Health, UofL

Artist - Lis Naylor

Contemporary Figurative Artist & Sculptor

Lis Naylor is a visual artist based in Leicester. A painter, sculptor and poet, she has won both the Richard Attenborough Centre Award and Cank Street Gallery's Summer Exhibition Award, with work exhibited at New Walk Museum and Gallery, Two Queens Gallery, Newarke House and more.



Her practice focuses on the oppression of women in marginalised groups and she has received commissions from charities such as Zinithya Trust to create work that reflects and represents these issues.

Website: www.lisnaylorart.com

Instagram: [@lisnaylorart](https://www.instagram.com/lisnaylorart)



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Thank you

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