



Joint Strategic Needs Assessments

Friends, Families and Travellers Policy Statement

Health and Social care services throughout the UK are currently undergoing significant spending cuts. Major economic constraints mean a renewed emphasis on value for money and the effective use of resources.

Despite these constraints, it remains important that the needs of the **most vulnerable remain on the government's agenda**. Gypsies and Travellers experience the worse health statistics of any minority group in the country, with a life expectancy of up to 25 years less than the national average and mothers being 20 times more likely to experience the death of a child. Outcomes measures across a range of health, education and social indicators also show that Gypsy and Traveller children and young people have some of the poorest life chances in the UK. It is reasonable to predict that without the right measures, these outcomes will worsen.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is a key document for design and delivery of services. It is amongst other things, a tool to identify groups whose needs are not adequately being met and who are experience poor health outcomes. It should encompass not only health and social needs, but also the broader determinants of health, such as access to accommodation, education, and employment.

Friends, Families and Travellers is passionate that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments include an accurate assessment of the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities. We know that well-designed services, developed through engagement with the Traveller community and based on an accurate assessment of need, have a positive impact. In order for more of such services to be commissioned, it is crucial that the Gypsy and Traveller needs are included within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.

Good Practice:

FFT recognises that engaging and ascertaining the needs of seldom-heard groups such as Gypsies and Travellers, who often have complex medical and social care needs, is a significant challenge of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.

However, we also know that it is possible to collect high-quality data on Gypsies and Travellers, and furthermore that doing so can significantly increase the breadth and quality of the JSNA.

Public bodies also have a legal obligation to include ethnic minorities in their JSNAs. According to the Equality Act, each public body has a duty to carry out their functions with due regard to ethnic minorities, and this includes Gypsies and Travellers.

A good JSNA will contain:

1. Solid foundations through accurate data

For instance, JSNAs need to look into questions such as:

- **To what extent are services recording Gypsies and Travellers' ethnicity in their data?**
- How far are JSNAs going in using engagement to produce qualitative data?
- What are the characteristics of Gypsy and Traveller communities?
- Are preventive measures being taken up by Gypsies and Travellers? If not, why not?
- If there are significant health-related statistics, such as reduced life expectancy amongst Gypsies and Travellers, what are the causes of these?

2. A detailed analysis of need, which includes the diverse health and social care needs of the population

With respect to Gypsies and Travellers, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments should answer questions such as:

- Does the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment demonstrate a specific **consideration of Travellers' needs**, especially in areas where there are large numbers of Gypsies and Travellers?
- Have existing services been assessed to measure their capacity to meet that need?
- Does the population require a different approach to local services?

3. Clear direction for service design and commissioning

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessments have an increasingly key position in the commissioning of services. Therefore, they should information on:

- What action is proposed to meet the needs of Travellers?
- Do the general recommendations include an analysis of impact on BME communities?
- Is there any research into the effectiveness of current or proposed services?
- Would supporting more Travellers to register with GPs offer more opportunities for prevention and early intervention, therefore better outcomes and less emergency hospital admissions?
- What are the projected outcomes if action is not taken?

Partnering with Intelligence Stakeholders

The role of the voluntary and community sector in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process clearly has enormous potential – especially as intermediaries for seldom heard groups, such as Gypsies and Travellers.

In order to produce comprehensive, robust and accurate Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, health services and Local Authorities alike will need to work with community organisations such as Friends, Families and Travellers. FFT has years of experience of working with families and individuals across Sussex and throughout the UK. We have a wealth of experience in community research and frontline working, with which we have built up high-quality qualitative and quantitative data to feed into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.

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