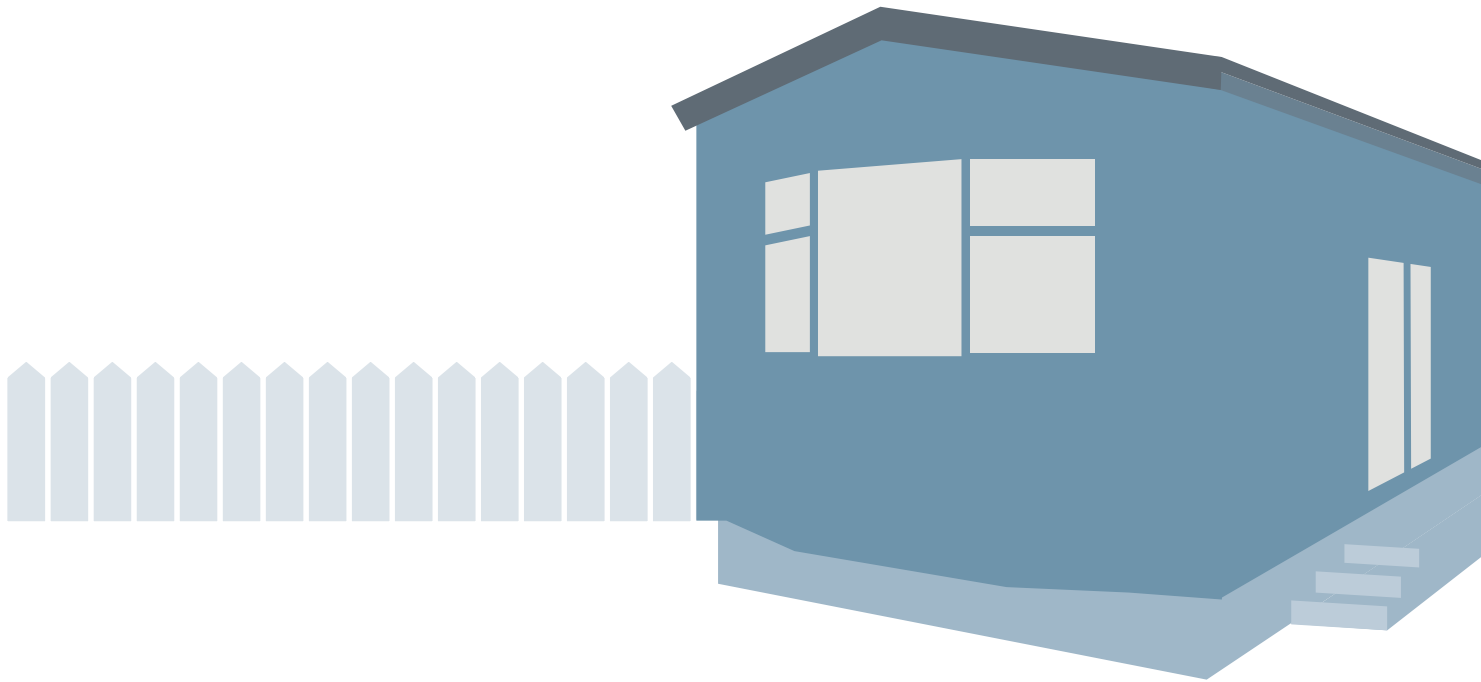




Spotlight Series

Gypsy & Traveller Communities



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Gypsy & Traveller Communities

Kent has the largest Gypsy & Traveller community in the country with an estimated 1.6% of the population living in Traveller sites across the county.

In 2017 we visited nine Gypsy & Traveller sites across Kent to proactively gather feedback from people within the Traveller communities.

We heard from 75 people about their experiences of local health & social care services.



What are the positives from people?

57% of the feedback we heard was positive

- 46% of people shared positive stories about the quality of treatment from their GP
- 23% of positive feedback was about hospitals and the quality of care and treatment
- 10% of positive feedback was about 111 service
- 8% of positive feedback was about community services and how accessible community staff were KCHFT
- 8% of positive feedback was about Dentists
- 2.5% of positive feedback was about pharmacies
- 2.5% of positive feedback was about social services



“GP gives a great service when you get an appointment, often only a few days to wait”

“I use 111 frequently, they are brilliant and always give good medical advice”

“District nurse visits me regularly”

“I registered with a new dentist and saw them the same day”

“One of the local pharmacies will deliver prescriptions to the site”

“GP receptionist is great, she helps me fill in forms”



What were the challenges facing people?

43% of the feedback we heard was negative

- 38%** of the negative feedback we heard was about not being able to get a GP appointment
- 31%** of negative feedback was about hospital waiting times in A&E and discharge from hospital
- 17%** of negative feedback was about Royal Mail who had not been delivering post to a particular site.
- 7%** is about social services and the length of time it takes to get assessments
- 3.5%** about difficulties getting dentist appointment
- 3.5%** of negative feedback about mental health services



“I can’t get an assessment for adaptations to my home to help with my mobility and washing”

“I was told I was no longer on the Dentist’s register”

“There is no improvement in mental health services”

“We have to drive a 10 mile round trip to the sorting office to pick up our post. But before we can do that we have to get an ID card as the Post office wouldn’t accept our driving licence or passport as proof of ID. It takes three months to get an ID card. We are missing appointments as we can’t get our post.”



How did we go about it?

We worked with the Traveller team at Kent County Council to understand the best approach and to plan different approaches for different sites. We worked with them to gain access to the sites and liaised with trusted community members prior to our visits.

This resulted in a warm welcome to all of the Traveller sites that we visited and enabled us to get straight down to the business of listening to their experiences of local health and social care experiences



What Next?

- We have gathered all the comments that we heard from the Traveller communities.
- We've anonymised it before sharing it with Kent County Council and all seven Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups.
- We have asked them to reassure us that they are improving services for the Gypsy & Traveller communities in Kent.
- Since then we have seen Clinical Commissioning Groups engaging better and more regularly as a result.



The Healthwatch Help Cards were born...

Following the feedback about literacy issues we partnered with the trusted Traveller organisation, Friends Families & Travellers (FFT), to develop the Healthwatch Kent Help Cards.

The cards enable people to discreetly indicate to receptionists and health professionals that they need extra help such as filling in forms as well as reading and understanding. It also means that adults should not need to take their children out of school to support their appointments.

The credit card sized cards feature the FFT logo and the NHS logo. This is designed to build trust and confidence in the cards and make them easier for people with low literacy to understand that they can be trusted and are of use to them.

NHS organisations were asked to pledge their support to the Cards.

As part of their pledge, we provided information to brief their staff especially front line reception staff to ensure any patient who presents the card is welcomed and supported in their needs.

- 23 organisations have pledged their support so far.
- To date we have distributed 7,685 cards to the Traveller and wider community.
- We have revisited all the Traveller sites to ensure they have copies of the cards and that community leaders know they are available.



Postal services

One Traveller site told us they have received no post since July 2017 from Royal Mail. The site leaders have been unable to unblock the issue on their own.

This is what we have done to help:

- We notified the local hospital as this will be affecting their appointments.
- Escalated the issue to Friends Families & Travellers (FFT) organisation who have made a formal complaint to Royal Mail stating that the lack of post is a breach of the Equality Act and is further increasing the health inequalities that this community is already facing
- As a result of our intervention a meeting is now taking place between Royal Mail Kent County Council and site representatives



Healthwatch Kent is the independent voice for local people in Kent.

We have a freephone helpline on 0808 801 0102 or email us anytime on info@healthwatchkent.co.uk

We can arrange home visits too