

Weaving Journeys



**FRIENDS,
FAMILIES &
TRAVELLERS**

Education Pack

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month

JUNE 2023

A CELEBRATION OF GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER LIVES, HISTORIES AND CULTURES



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Welcome to our Education Pack for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month 2023

This pack will help you explore Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month (GRTHM). It is designed to provide insight into the rich histories, traditions, and cultures of Irish Traveller, Romany Gypsy, Roma, New Traveller, Boater and Showmen communities, while helping raise awareness about some of the difficulties experienced throughout the years.

Designed for schools, prisons and any other sectors and organisations invested in education and learning, this pack will guide you through what you can do to raise awareness and celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month.

Whether you are surprised to learn that many Irish Traveller people speak a language known as Shelta, or come from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community yourself, this guide and our brochure can work as the perfect launching pad for everyone.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month has a long way to go before it is celebrated far and wide, but you are helping take a step closer to creating a more inclusive society for some of Britain's most marginalised communities. Thank you!

From all of us at Friends, Families and Travellers...we hope you have a brilliant Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month 2023!



Before we get started..

It's worth noting that when teaching, organising training, or learning about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, you emphasise that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are not a homogeneous group.

Although these communities have a number of similarities through a shared history of nomadism, the traditions, cultures and heritages are diverse. If you'd like to learn more about what the correct and preferred terms for different communities are, [here](#) is a great place to begin!

Why it's important to get involved



Gypsies, Roma and Travellers experience the lowest educational attainment at all Key Stages out of any ethnic groups in the UK.



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are more likely to experience restraint and isolation in schools.



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are two to three times more likely to be excluded than the national rate.



The life expectancy of Gypsies and Travellers is 10-25 years shorter than the general population.



Young Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people disproportionately make up 15% of secure training units and Young Offenders Institutions (YOIs).

6 ways your organisation or sector can celebrate GRTHM

This Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month, help create a more fair and just future for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities by taking the steps below or coming up with some of your own!

1 Speak to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller members of your local community and make a GRTHM plan together

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have rich histories, cultures and traditions to share, and will have a myriad of ideas and perspectives about how Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month can be marked and celebrated.

Although over 1 in 100 people in the UK are from Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities, many choose not to share their ethnicity in fear of discrimination, and you may not be aware that peers, colleagues or friends are Romany Gypsy, Roma, Irish Travellers or from nomadic communities. So, reach out and get planning!

2 Set up for a forum for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in your sector or organisation

By setting up a forum for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people to come together with professionals and support organisations, a more inclusive society that considers the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people can be created.

[Dorset Council's Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Forum](#), [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Police Association](#) and the [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Social Workers Association](#) are just a few examples of forums that have successfully bridged the gap between local organisations and institutions, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Why not have a go at setting up your own?

3 Include Gypsy, Roma and Traveller histories and cultures in your lessons, assemblies or training

There is most likely a child in your classroom, a colleague at work or a person you're working with in prison who is from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community.

Use Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month as a starting point for developing your own learning and understanding, and that of those around you, by collectively exploring the rich histories of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

You might find that you can incorporate information on different travelling communities into the work you already deliver! For inspiration, see our suggested [teaching resources](#), books, and [bitesize explainers](#) .

4 Review your anti-bullying and discrimination policies and procedures

Almost half of British adults openly express negative attitudes against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. That's more than for any other protected characteristic group.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are exposed to this hate from a young age, so set aside some time to review your anti-racist and anti-bullying policies and procedures in your organisation.

5 Organise a viewing of Crystal's Vardo

Pick up a copy of Crystal's Vardo from Friends, Families and Travellers this June. Crystal's Vardo is a play about a young Romany Gypsy girl who travels through time in her Grandad's vardo, unravelling the history of her ancestors. It is perfect for children and adults alike.

6 Places you'd like to visit and why

Gypsy and Traveller people often can't make the journeys they want to make, due to a serious chronic lack of safe stopping places. Like social housing, the availability of socially rented sites has never been lower – despite the high demand.

We believe everyone should have the right to live in a way that honours their histories and traditions. And often, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families need to travel for the same reasons you might need to – for work, school, to visit family or just to be with friends.

So, we ask; which places would you like to visit, and why?

Write the places you'd like to visit and the reasons why below (and don't forget to share them with us!):

**Good
activity for
groups!**

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and Criminal Justice System

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and face prejudice and discrimination at every stage.

Despite only making up an estimated 0.1-0.5% of the population in England and Wales, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people make up:

6% of
the prison
population

15% of
children in
secure
training units

8% of
children in
YOIs

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are more likely to face harsher sentences, and experience difficulties with employment and accommodation on release.

The overuse of punishment as discipline towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, means that they are at higher risk of coming into contact with the Criminal Justice System as adults.

It doesn't have to be this way. Tackling the root cause can pave the way for a kinder, fairer future.

Schools can invest in understanding and teaching about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures, and work with parents to build a trusting and non-judgemental relationship. Take a look at the [Teaching Resources page](#) on our website for more.

Rather than over policing families who have nowhere else to go, local authorities should establish temporary stopping places, allowing families to rest without fear of retribution.



Guidance on marking GRTHM

There are a wide range of thought provoking and entertaining resources to help you mark and celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month this June.

Here's a selection of some of our favourites:

Watch and share our ['Standing on the Shoulders of Giants'](#) YouTube series, where we bring together the stories of inspiring Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people who stood up and challenged the status quo.

[Sign up to be a campaigner on our website](#), and [check our Services Directory](#) to see if you have any local organisations that you can get involved in.

[Take a look at Roma Support Group's Roma Oral History website](#), which brings together stories of Roma people who have lived across central Europe.

See if you and your group can spot any familiar patterns across our resources, brochure and maps!

Print the maps, cut out the 'stickers' and glue them onto the maps with your class or group – make sure to share them with us!

Share the 'Places you'd like to visit and why?' activity online, using #GRTHM23 and #WeavingJourneys.

Essential books to have in your library

From children's books featuring Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller protagonists, to historical dives into ancestry, there are lots of wonderful books for a variety of ages that you can find here.

Meanwhile, we've created a short reading list from all communities, suitable for every interest and age:



'The Stopping Places' by Damian Le Bas, a critically acclaimed book about heritage, journeys of discovery, and old stopping places



'The Showmen's War' by Michael Smith, Stephen Smith and Kevin Scrivens, which was produced to help commemorate the contribution played by the Travelling Showmen of Great Britain in the Great War.



Written by Rosie McKinley, Gypsy Girl is the story of her childhood on the road, where she moved around England and Ireland, and roamed fields and meadows with her siblings.



'A Different Kind of Freedom: A Romani Story' by Romany author, Richard O'Neill. This story depicts the struggle between tradition and following your own passions.



'Romany Johnny' by Hilda Brazil uses the toads and frogs of Toadville to teach children not to judge others.



Award-winning picture book 'Snowy' by Berlie Doherty, about a family living in a narrowboat on the Chester canal, with Snowy the boat horse.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people through history

If you have tried to learn more about the diversity and histories of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, you wouldn't be alone in finding that there's just not much out there.



998AD

People with Roma heritage travelled from northwest India as prisoners, slaves and soldiers.

Theories suggest 60,000 Roma people were forcibly enlisted to the army of Mahmud of Ghazni and after his death, were expelled from Indian territories and driven to nomadism.¹

1200s

Roma people in the territories of modern day Romania were taken as slaves and forced to work in monasteries, mines and in fields. Slaves were the property of their owners, bought and sold in their hundreds. It was not until 1856 that the Moldovan and Wallachian Assemblies abolished slavery within their principalities.³

1100s

Ancient laws in Scotland recognise a community of people called 'tinklers' from their occupation as tinsmiths.

They are viewed differently to mainstream society, seen to have their own customs and dialect.²



1500s

Romany Gypsies first recorded in England were incorrectly thought to have travelled from Egypt.

In 1530, Henry VIII's 'Egyptians Act' expelled Romany Gypsies in England. In 1554, Queen Mary ruled that being a Gypsy was punishable by death.⁴

1. <https://kopachi.com/articles/a-new-look-at-our-romani-origins-and-diaspora-by-ronald-lee/>
2. <https://www.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-06/gt-timeline-A4-web.pdf>
3. <https://romediafoundation.wordpress.com/2014/04/18/roma-slavery-in-the-romanian-territories-a-catch-22-of-history-and-recognition/#>
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z2b36fr/revision/2>



1600s

Irish people began to split from the general population around 12 generations ago in the 1600s - 'an lucht siúil' (the walking people) became known for storytelling and sharing songs from city to city.⁵

1650

Last known hanging for the crime of being a Gypsy in Suffolk, England.⁶



1850

Romany people historically travelled with elaborately made 'bender tents'.

From 1850 onwards, Gypsy Wagons are used to travel, with bender tents used alongside.



1940s

Roma and Sinti people, sometimes called the 'forgotten victims' of the Holocaust were deported to concentration camps, subject to mass murder and horrific medical experimentation by Nazi soldiers.

Over 200,000 Roma and Sinti were murdered or died as a result of starvation or disease.⁷

1940s-1960s

General adoption of a mechanised caravan, rather than a horsedrawn wagon.⁸



1963

The Report of the Commission on Itinerancy is the first systematic attempt by the Irish government to settle Travellers in Ireland, aiming to force families off the road, into bricks and mortar accommodation.⁹

5. <https://www.nature.com/articles/srep42187>

6. <https://www.historytoday.com/reviews/gypsies-england>

7. <https://www.hmd.org.uk/learn-about-the-holocaust-and-genocides/nazi-persecution/the-porrajmos/>

8. <https://www.salford.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/info-for-parents-students-and-teachers/ethnic-minorities-and-travellers/traveller-wagon-project/history-of-wagons-and-wagon-building/>

9. <http://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/AssimilationPolicies.pdf>

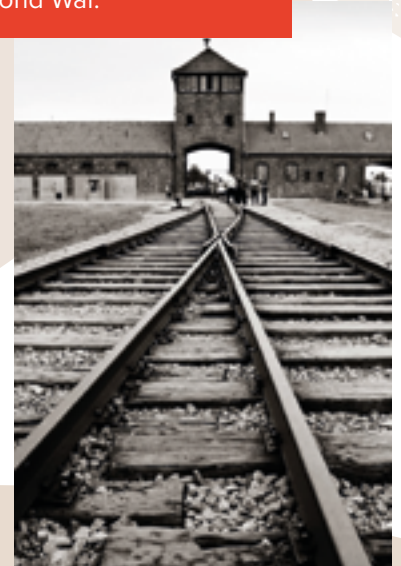
1976

Romany Gypsies were recognised in Britain as a distinct ethnic minority group under the 1976 English Race Relations Act.¹⁰



1982

Germany officially recognise the genocide of Roma and Sinti people in the Second World War.¹¹



1990s

Roma communities begin seeking asylum in England through the 1990s.

2000

Irish Travellers recognised in British law as an ethnic group, following a legal challenge in court brought by eight individuals refused service at five pubs in London.

2004/2007

Following expansions of the European Union, there is an increase in migration of Roma people to the UK from across Europe.



2008

Scottish Gypsy Travellers recognised as an indigenous ethnic minority group in Britain.¹²

2017

Irish Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic group in Ireland, and recognised as Ireland's only indigenous community.¹³

10. <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/romagypsiesitravellers/#>

11. <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/roma-civil-rights-movement/sinti-and-roma-federal-republic-germany/>

12. https://bemis.org.uk/docs/gypsy_travellers_in_contemporary_scotland.pdf

13. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/oireachtas/travellers-formally-recognised-as-an-ethnic-minority-1.2994309>



Ireland 2020

Eileen Flynn becomes the first Irish Traveller to become a senator in Ireland.



England 2020

The High Court rules that Local Authorities are no longer able to issue blanket bans on Gypsies and Travellers stopping on parcels of land, recognising that ‘the Gypsy and Traveller community have an enshrined freedom not to stay in one place but to move from one place to another’.¹⁴



June 2022

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act becomes law. The new law means nomadic Gypsy and Traveller people are at risk of having vehicles (homes) confiscated, fines and imprisonment.



October 2022

The planning definition of ‘Traveller’, which says that anyone not travelling for longer than 12 months even if due to old age or ill-health is not considered a ‘Traveller’, is declared ‘discriminatory’ by the Court of Appeal.



December 2022

The Office for National Statistics announces that the 2021 Census has for the first time ever included ‘Roma’ as an ethnic category, with the official population declared at over 100,000 people. Population increases are also seen for Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller people.

14. <https://ukhumanrightsblog.com/2020/01/27/court-of-appeal-upholds-the-right-to-roam-of-romany-and-travellers/>

Photograph of Eileen Flynn: “Creative Commons Seanad Éireann - First Sitting of the 26th Seanad - 29 June 2020” by Houses of the Oireachtas is licensed under CC by 2.0

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month competition

Our theme for this year is Weaving Journeys, where we explore the historic patterns and traditional stopping places of Romany Gypsy, Irish Traveller, Roma, New Traveller, Liveaboard Boater and Showmen communities.

To bring Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month to life, we've used traditional patterns from each of the communities.

This year, we are asking children across the UK to think about what kind of pattern would be important to them.

We're asking schools and individual students to design their own patterns.

If your school enters a group submission, you can win book vouchers to the value of £100 for first prize and £50 for second prize.

If an individual shares their own submission, they could win a £50 voucher for first prize and £25 for second prize.



Here are some questions you may want to think about:

What shapes do you want to include in your pattern?

What colours do you want to use?

Is there a symbol you want to show?

Who is your pattern for?

TEACHERS!

Please send your submission to comms@gypsy-traveller.org by 30th June.

We will announce the winners in July!



**FRIENDS,
FAMILIES &
TRAVELLERS**

Weaving Journeys GRTHM 2023 Competition

NAME

SCHOOL

Celebrating Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month on social media

This June, get talking about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month on social media. We've made it as easy as possible by including template images and text (below) you can use. We'll be sharing lots about GRTHM across June on our social channels. Follow us to keep updated!

Download social templates here

Example posts



June is Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month!

We're celebrating #WeavingJourneys because we want a society where Romany Gypsy, Irish Traveller, Roma and nomadic people are respected and appreciated.

Why not get involved? <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/grthm/>

#GRTHM23



We're celebrating #WeavingJourneys this #GRTHM23 by taking the time to learn about the rich contributions and histories of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities – why not join us?

Take part: <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/grthm/>



If you're from a Romany Gypsy, Irish Traveller, Roma or nomadic background, we want you to know that you're always welcome here.

This #GRTHM23, we're taking the time to learn about the colourful histories of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities – come along!

<https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/grthm/>

#WeavingJourneys



@GypsyTravellers



/FriendsFamiliesandTravellers



@FriendsFamiliesandTravellers

Feel free to come up with your own – don't forget to use the hashtags and tag us!

#WeavingJourneys

#GRTHM23

www.gypsy-traveller.org/grthm

#WeavingJourneys

Friends, Families and Travellers: Working towards equality

We work to end racism and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and to protect the right to pursue a nomadic way of life.

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