



## Devon Gypsy & Traveller Project 2012/2013:

### Quitting Smoking and Improving Health and Wellbeing

**Final Report October 2013**

**Funded by:**



This project was led by **Health Promotion Devon's** Inequalities Team Community Development Worker for Gypsies and Travellers (**Northern Devon Healthcare Trust**) **Penny Dane**, in conjunction with **Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council**, with input from **Health Promotion Devon** staff.

## **Introduction**

The health and wellbeing of Gypsy and Traveller communities is known to be significantly lower than other communities in England.

Despite a greater health need, there is evidence that Gypsies and Travellers access mainstream health services less than the general population. Traditionally these communities have often been deemed “hard to reach”; however, reports have shown that *“considerable anecdotal evidence exists to support the notion that many Gypsies and Travellers do not trust health professionals to provide appropriate care, or doubt their willingness to engage with community members on terms of equity”* (EHRC 2009).

There is no specific data on smoking levels in Gypsy/Traveller communities, nor on uptake of smoking cessation services. However, if the pattern persists that Gypsy/Traveller communities are not accessing health services as much as the general population then it may be assumed that they are not accessing specialist smoking cessation services either.

Anecdotal evidence in Devon, prior to this project starting, showed that there was little knowledge in Gypsy/Traveller communities about the specialist support to stop smoking that was available in the county. This evidence also showed that people were aware of the health risks of smoking, and concerned about the costs, and would welcome more information and support.

The Gypsy and Traveller communities in Devon are very diverse and geographically very scattered. Devon does not have large local authority or private sites where it is easier to target health services and health promotion activities. The challenge therefore for this project was to disseminate information as widely as possible across the county.

## **Objectives**

To develop an intervention combining training and community development work with Gypsy & Traveller communities in Devon in order to:

- 1) Increase uptake of smoking cessation services by community members.
- 2) Provide up to 6 community members with skills to support reducing the harms of smoking in their communities
- 3) Encourage community members to be health champions promoting positive alternatives to smoking which improve health & wellbeing.

## Detail

Objective	Method
<p><b>Increase uptake of smoking cessation services by community members</b></p>	<p>A one day <b>cultural awareness training</b> for 25 Health Promotion Devon staff was delivered in June 2012, working in partnership with Gypsy/Traveller trainers. This training enabled staff to gain a greater understanding of Gypsy/Traveller communities in Devon and the confidence to work appropriately with them.</p> <p>The project worked with key partner agencies and community members to disseminate information to diverse communities of Gypsies and Travellers across Devon about Stop Smoking and Health Trainer services by producing a <b>Health Information Booklet</b>. This booklet contains information about health services in Devon as well as specific smoking cessation service information. 400 copies were produced and are being given to Gypsies and Travellers by relevant partner agencies.</p> <p>A stop smoking specialist set up <b>regular clinics</b> on a small local authority site in Exeter, where health outcomes are especially poor, for 9 months. This has now been taken over by a senior health trainer who visits the site on a fortnightly basis and delivers smoking cessation and health improvement advice. Visits are now being planned to a second local authority site.</p>
<p><b>Provide up to 6 community members with skills to support reducing the harms of smoking in their communities</b></p>	<p>The project recruited 8 Romany Gypsy volunteers, from across the county, who were interested in providing <b>peer support for smoking cessation</b>.</p> <p>A tailor made course was then developed by Health Promotion Devon to train the volunteers, and partner agencies who work with Gypsies/Travellers, to provide support to people wishing to stop smoking and needing information on services available. The one day course was delivered in November 2012. On-going advice and support has been given to the volunteers and they have been supplied with culturally appropriate tool kits.</p> <p>The training event was written-up by one Romany volunteer and published in Travellers Times in March 2013.</p>
<p><b>Encourage community members to be health champions promoting positive alternatives to smoking which improve health &amp; wellbeing.</b></p>	<p><b>Computer literacy classes</b>, with an emphasis on learning to access health information through NHS websites, were held in collaboration with Devon County Council's Adult Education Service over a period of 12 months. 10 Romany women from across the county participated. All the participants successfully learnt to navigate the NHS Choices website and access information.</p> <p><b>A Health &amp; Wellbeing Day for Romany Women</b> was held in September 2013 in collaboration with Devon County Council's Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Service. 17 Romany women attended. The women were able to access various complimentary therapies on the day and they all had the opportunity to talk to a senior health trainer about smoking cessation and health improvement strategies.</p>

## Outcomes

Whilst delivered on a relatively small scale, the project has had a significant impact:

- Staff across all areas of Health Promotion Devon (HPD) have a better understanding of Gypsy and Traveller communities in Devon and their health outcomes, and are therefore in a better position to deliver appropriate services to these communities. There is a commitment from staff to continue to work with Gypsy/Traveller communities as and when opportunities arise.
- The HPD **Stop Smoking service**, through their work at the local authority site for Romany Gypsies, have raised awareness with site residents of the health implications of smoking, of the services which exist to support those wishing to quit, and of the dangers of passive smoking. This has led to quits and attempted quits, both on the site and amongst relatives of site residents living elsewhere. The Romany community in Devon is close knit and the work has had a knock on effect with other community members. There has also been behaviour change on the site where it is now very rare to see people smoking indoors and around children.
- The HPD **Health Trainer service**, through regular visits to the site and through attending the Romany Health Day, has been able to reinforce the stop smoking advice and start working with individuals on wider health improvement issues. Overall, the profile of Health Promotion Devon, and the services they offer, has been raised and we anticipate more people coming forward to receive support from this service.
- A diverse group of Romany Gypsy volunteers from across the county have the skills as **peer mentors** to support friends and family who want to quit smoking and improve their health. They have a toolkit to assist them, and continued support when needed from HPD.
- Key partners working with Gypsies and Travellers, in particular Devon County Council Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Service, are **better equipped to promote smoking cessation** and signpost community members to services.
- Devon County Council's Gypsy/Traveller Liaison service reports that, amongst the communities they visit, there is a greater awareness of the dangers of smoking, more people are giving up smoking and there is much more awareness of the dangers of smoking in the confined space of a caravan or mobile home.
- 400 Health Booklets, with culturally appropriate and relevant local health information, are being given out across Devon by professionals working with Gypsies and Travellers thus enabling community members to have a greater awareness of a wide variety of health services, and information on how to access these services.
- Through the computer literacy classes, which focussed on the NHS Choices website, there is improved access to health information for the participants and their families, and a new understanding about how to use the internet to gain more knowledge about health.

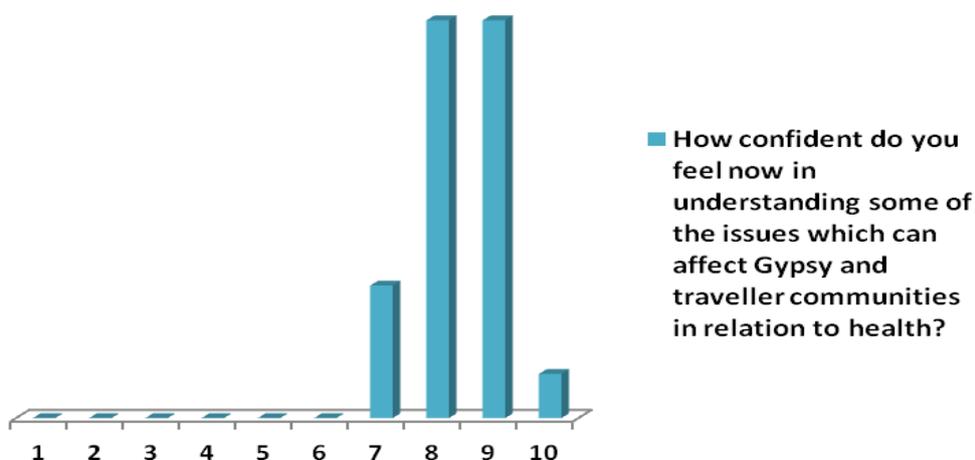
## Appendix 1

### **Feedback: Gypsy and Traveller Health Awareness Training Session 19th June 2012 X-Centre, Exeter.**

#### **Aims of training:**

- To increase understanding of different Gypsy and Traveller groups and their origins.
- To increase understanding of the prejudice experienced by Gypsies and Travellers.
- To increase awareness of the health outcomes for Gypsies and Travellers in England.
- To increase understanding the factors which influence health outcomes for Gypsies and Travellers.
- To explore ways to deliver a culturally competent service to Gypsies and Travellers in Devon.

#### **Evaluation and Feedback:**



The evaluation showed that the majority of participants feel confident in understanding some of the issues which can affect Gypsy and Traveller health. The majority of participants rated their confidence levels as 8 or 9.

#### **What has surprised you about what you have learnt?**

- Staff don't understand that plain English should be standard
- Learnt about Gypsy and travellers and their history/culture. What in are the myths and the facts.
- How many sites of Gypsy and Travellers there are around Devon.
- How difficult it can be to receive consistent care and how Gypsy and Travellers can be ignored.
- High mortality rates; the issues around Gypsy and Traveller fears about approaching the authorities.
- How I may access a service but would not have the same questions; i.e. where I live
- Trust required on both sides.
- How vulnerable they feel.
- How much discrimination there is towards Gypsies, I don't have any experience of working with this group.
- About the totally inappropriate responses from health professionals.
- The different barriers faced by Gypsy and Travellers when accessing a health service.
- That there are laws that have stopped Gypsy and Travellers from moving around by making sites illegal to live on.
- How discriminated they are and treated as such 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens.
- How high the level deaths during pregnancy and still-borns there are. The need for all services to be aware of the needs of gypsy and traveller communities.

### What changes will I make as a result of today's learning?

- Make sure I treat everyone equally and can approach the communities without fear.
- Liaise with the BME team to improve access for Gypsy/BME communities.
- To work more closely with the BME team and contacts they have to BME communities.
- I won't judge people as quickly.
- I will add an 'Establishing relationships with communities' section in the induction training.
- I will be actively looking to work with Gypsy and Travellers.
- Make the stop smoking service more effective for them, will look at training up some 'champions' with the gypsy and traveller communities.
- I will challenge Gypsy and Traveller prejudice when it arises.
- Pass on a message to communities and warn them.
- Try pass on information.
- Be more understanding and flexible with patients.
- Will work more closely with Gypsy and Travellers.
- Help develop the BME team to reduce the barriers when accessing a health service and help spread information and awareness and BME communities.
- Be less judgemental and more empathetic.
- I will be more understanding.
- Use more standard English so that more people can understand what I'm saying and have more patients.
- I will apply what I have learnt if I have the opportunity to work with one of these communities.
- Will help raise awareness of issues that can affect Gypsy and Travellers health and that ways we as HPD can help increase our services available.
- Help promote what I have learnt and use it at work.

### Comments

- Very interesting and engaging, felt there was a little denial and reluctance from our team to think about 'what else' can we do rather than what we already good at. Valued the involvement of the Gypsy and Travellers.
- Aware of issues, confident about sensitivity, fantastic training, well presented and informative. Great awareness for health professionals.
- I feel more confident on the subject; it was a really good day.
- An enjoyable and interesting day, well delivered.
- Given me understanding of Gypsy and Traveller culture. Would like a bit more movement and interaction within the group, possibly a quiz?
- Made me think.
- Raised awareness, very informative. Learnt a lot about this community, expelled a lot of myths about Gypsy and Travellers.
- Very useful day. Personally I am very interested in supporting this in the future
- Very informative session that has provided me with greater knowledge about Gypsy and Travellers. Excellent session, lots of information and great to have personal experiences as well.
- Informative, could have mixed the groups and perhaps included a little bit of fun (a quiz).
- Absolutely great! Maybe some laughter and a quiz. Mix up the groups.

## On a service level, how can HPD improve service to better meet the needs of G&T's?

- Offer training within the community – Healthy choices. Different levels of prejudice.
- Flexible services.
- Communication with GP surgeries.
- Need to inform other agencies more accurately about the service HPD offer.
- To train and educate as many people working in health services as possible about Gypsy and Traveller communities.

## Appendix 2

### Computer literacy classes for Romany Women:

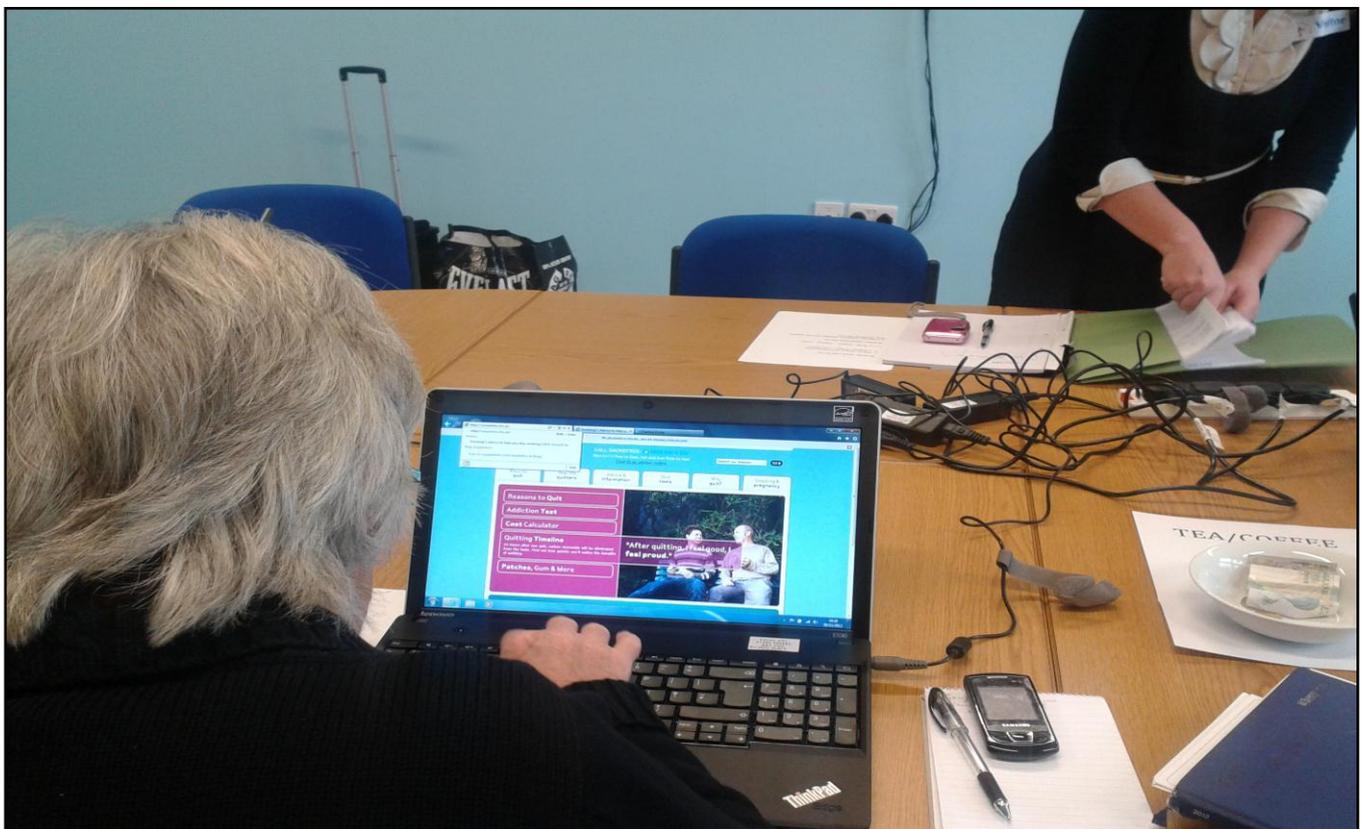




PHOTO: Yvonne Lishak

HEALTH & Wellbeing

SPECIAL REPORT

# It's never too late to give up smoking

In spite of the well-known risks, most Gypsies and Travellers still smoke, but if you want to give up you don't have to go it alone, says *Lizzie Isaacs*

WHEN I WAS invited to an NHS stop smoking course I did wonder if it would be of any use to me as I have always been a non-smoker.

I do, however, have lots of relatives and friends who are long-term smokers and, sadly, I do know lots who have suffered with cancer. So I decided I would go along and see if I could, in turn, help someone else.

We can all see the warnings on packets of cigarettes telling us that "smoking kills," but it doesn't really tell us how or why. On the course they gave us a list of about 24 ingredients, excluding tobacco, that go into cigarettes. I found it sickening to think what people are happily putting into their bodies without even knowing it.

What struck me most was that we, at the Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council, have recently made a film about the Gypsies who died in the Holocaust and how cyanide gas was used in the gas chambers: I learnt on the course that cyanide is one of the ingredients in cigarettes. The people in the gas chambers didn't have a choice but we do.

The Department of Health says that our (Gypsies and Travellers) health is worse than any other disadvantaged group in the UK so I think it is about time we started taking control of our own health to try to improve those statistics.

If you smoke you stand a much higher risk of developing cancer. We saw a true but very sad and scary film about a man who deteriorated so fast once he had developed cancer leaving a young family behind.

With the right support, even long-term smokers can give up. And the benefits far outweigh the hardship.

Just two days after stopping smoking, your body will be free of nicotine. After two to twelve weeks your circulation improves, and after three to nine months wheezing and breathing improves too. Once you have quit for a year then the risk of a heart attack is half that of a smoker.

As well as the health benefits, there are financial ones, too. If you smoke 40 a day for a year then you will spend over £5000, so think of all the money you can save just by quitting. After 10 years you will have saved over £50,000. I should think that alone would be a good incentive for some.

If you would like to give up smoking don't go it alone as it works much better if you get help from those who understand. The NHS Stop Smoking Services are there for you, to help you through the tough times or whatever triggers the need to smoke and to give you the all the support you will need to be a successful "quitter".

Sometimes as Gypsies or Travellers we think that services like these are there just

for the Gorja, but that is not true. The NHS trained staff are committed to helping us all: call them on 0800 022 4332 to speak to a specially trained advisor who can tell you about your local Stop Smoking service. Information is also available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk).

**For more information on courses like the one Lizzie attended please contact Penny Dane at Health Promotion Devon 07979 838138 or email [p.dane@nhs.net](mailto:p.dane@nhs.net)**



Lizzie Isaacs

**Health Promotion Devon, November 2013.**

- For more information on this project and the on-going work with Gypsy and Traveller communities in Devon please contact Penny Dane Community Development Worker via [p.dane@nhs.net](mailto:p.dane@nhs.net)
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