

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities in Surrey: raising awareness, celebrating culture and building belonging

We are very proud to be the home for a large and diverse Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) population which makes a rich contribution to the cultural fabric of Surrey, and our economy. However, we know that we need to do better to promote equality of opportunity and outcome.

We know that GRT children, young people, adults and communities in Surrey experience poorer health, wellbeing and educational and employment outcomes, insufficient access to appropriate accommodation, increased poverty and discrimination resulting in multiple barriers to accessing the things people need and should be able to expect. Sadly, this is also the case nationally.

To help bring about change, we have a Gypsy Roma Traveller Partnership Group in Surrey which brings together representatives from Surrey County Council, Surrey Police, health, education, and the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector. The purpose of this group is to drive cultural change and improve across the strategic partnerships in Surrey, in such a way that honours and draws upon the strengths, assets and rich heritage of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. We work across 7 themes: communication & engagement; cross-organisational workforce development; safeguarding & welfare; strategy & policy; health; accommodation; education & learning.

To find out more about the GRT Partnership Group or to attend one of its meetings, please contact public.health@surreycc.gov.uk

Speaking about the importance of cultural awareness and inclusion, Dee, a local GRT advocate, reflects, on the importance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History month:

“Gypsy, Roma & Traveller History Month happens every June and was started in Britain in 2008 as a way of raising awareness of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and their contribution to society. It was put in place to help with engagement and to help offset negative stereotyping and prejudices. Being from the Romany community, me and my family look forward to every year and have been involved with it since it started.

It's a chance to be seen and shine a light on the many positives in our community, our rich history and heritage, the achievements of our ancestors and youth. It's somewhere our past meets our present. We have much to celebrate. We share our stories and identity and feel proud of who we are. Often there are many events put on up and down the country. We share photographs, recipes, food, our traditions, music and dance.

It makes us feel valued and noticed in a positive light.”

How can I learn more and help make a difference?

- Check out the **Gypsy and Traveller Cultural Awareness eLearning** to improve your understanding of and share with colleagues via the Surrey Children's Academy (it is open to anyone working with residents in Surrey)
- Have a look at the [**Surrey Gypsy Traveller Communities Forum**](#) and consider inviting them to deliver [training](#) for your organisation
- Explore the [**Gypsy, Roma and Traveller \(GRT\) History Month**](#) and [**The Exploring Surreys Past**](#) pages
- Explore the **GRT press**, for example [Travellers' Times](#)
- **Read firsthand accounts and memoirs**, for example: '[The Mystery in Being a Gypsy](#)' or [Travellers through Time: A Gypsy History](#) both of which have been written by local authors

Helpful contacts:

[Gypsy, Roma and Traveller \(GRT\) support - Surrey Community Action](#)

[Education: Race equality and minority achievement \(REMA\) SCC](#)

[Inclusion Health Team \(supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, Showmen and Boater, Homeless and Asylum-Seeking families\)](#)

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