

NHS Leeds West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) recognises that we are responsible for commissioning services for a diverse range of communities.

We acknowledge that there are a number of vulnerable groups who are disproportionately affected by health inequalities and we need to address these.

One of these groups is the Gypsy and Traveller community. We are really pleased to be working in partnership with Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (Leeds GATE) to involve and engage with members of the community based at Cottingley Springs.

Background

There are an estimated 3,000 people of Gypsy or Irish Traveller origin living in Leeds (Leeds Racial Equality Council baseline census, 2005). Gypsies and Travellers experience poorer health outcomes than other communities (Informed by the University of Sheffield Health Needs Assessment (2004) and the 'Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Community Health Needs Assessment 2013).

Our engagement activity took place at the Cottingley Springs site. Cottingley Springs is a local authority owned and run Gypsy and Traveller site. There are 116 adults (16+yrs) and 68 children living on the Cottingley Springs site (average population 2013/14 – Leeds City Council Housing Department).



A GP told us that 'it's crucial we understand the needs of the community, respecting their needs when delivering guidance'

Key health problems for Gypsies and Travellers*



- 38% of the sample had a long-term illness, compared with 26% of comparators.
- Significantly more reported having arthritis, asthma, or chest pain/discomfort than in the comparison group.
- They were over three times more likely to have a chronic cough or bronchitis, even after smoking status had been taken into account.
- 25% reported mobility problems compared with 15% of the comparison group.
- Living in a house is associated with long term illness, poorer health state and anxiety. Those who rarely travel have the poorest health.
- Over twice are as likely to be depressed, and almost three times are as likely to suffer from anxiety, as others.
- Infant mortality higher than the national average and the comparator group in their study.

*University of Sheffield, 2004

Engaging with the community

With the support of Leeds GATE and our partners, including Leeds City Council, we have been actively listening to and working with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community based at Cottingley Springs. By working in partnership with the community we recognised one of the key areas of concern was access to primary care GP services and lack of engagement with primary care.

We used patient surveys and events to understand the views of staff and residents. Surveys were used to improve understanding of the key health needs of the Gypsy and Traveller Community from a GP perspective; and to identify what support GP practices required to meet the needs of this community.



Some residents said they did not always respond to screening letters due to fear of the unknown, or concerns that the treatment may make things worse; some residents were not aware of the national bowel screening programme. Many residents reported being registered at a GP practice some distance from the site - with the cost of public transport and the time to catch two buses stopping them making appointments.

The events included community fun days featuring a mix of activities for the whole family to participate in as well as key health and lifestyle checks and signposting to services. By organising and attending these events we found out more about the health needs, concerns and access issues encountered by the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Staff from NHS Leeds West CCG and members of the Leeds City Council's Public Health team attended two community fun events organised by Leeds GATE at Cottingley Springs, to understand more about the health needs, concerns and access issues encountered by the residents. The Public Health Team arranged for health checks to be provided at the events and the CCG and Public Health Team also held two focus groups on the site.

To ensure we get a holistic view of everyone's views we also asked GP practice staff as well as colleagues at partner agencies for their thoughts.

Recommendations

Although the engagement activity has only recently been completed, there are some clear recommendations that we need to work on jointly. This means working alongside the Gypsy and Traveller community to tackle the health inequalities experienced by the residents.

- Make it easier for people from the Gypsy and Traveller community to register with a GP of their choice
- To support the development of health and social care navigators within the community
- Provide people from the Gypsy and Traveller communities with clear information on the appointment process, including ways in which you can make an appointment and how to see your preferred GP
- Support local GP practices and pharmacies to work together to provide a convenient prescription service to residents and ensure they are aware of all the services a pharmacy can offer
- Provide residents from the Gypsy and Traveller communities with the relevant information to allow them to make informed choices before attending A&E
- Work with the community and with GATE to increase awareness of screening programmes and to support residents to access e.g arrange for catch up sessions where screening appointments had been missed

These are just some of the early recommendations however we recognise that we need to consider additional options to improve access to primary care GP services. We also need to work with partners to look at how we can help people from the Gypsy and Traveller community to access wider health and wellbeing support as well as other lifestyle support services.

