

Guidance for social prescribing professionals working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities



Agenda

- Introduction
- Aims
- Methodology
- Introduction to the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities
- GRT health inequalities and the inclusion health context
- Social determinants influencing GRT health outcomes
- Social prescribing professionals' awareness of and experience with GRT communities
- Experience, knowledge and use of social prescribing among GRT communities
- Barriers to social prescribing services
- Engaging/working with GRT communities with social prescribing to improve health outcomes in GRT communities
- Positive interventions in social prescribing to improve health outcomes in GRT communities
- Recommendations
- Questions & Answers



Introduction



Introduction

This guidance was developed especially for social prescribing link workers but can be used by other professionals in social prescribing services.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Social prescribing referral agencies such as GP practices or voluntary sector organisations;
- Social prescribing team leads;
- Social prescribing commissioners;
- Social prescribing policy leads.



Introduction

The guidance was produced through work conducted by The Roma Support Group and Friends, Families and Travellers as part of the Health & Wellbeing Alliance

- **The Health and Wellbeing Alliance (HWA)** is a partnership between voluntary sector representatives and the health and care system. It is jointly managed and funded by the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and UK Health Security Agency.
- **Roma Support Group (RSG)** is a Roma-led charity based in East London, working to improve the quality of life for Roma refugees and migrants by helping them to overcome prejudice, isolation, and vulnerability.
- **Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT)** are based in Brighton, and work to end racism and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller people and to protect the right to pursue a nomadic way of life.



Aims

The aims of this guidance are to:

- Improve social prescribing link workers' knowledge of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history, culture and health inequalities;
- Provide an overview of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller awareness, barriers and enablers in relation to social prescribing services;
- Provide suggestions and recommendations to support social prescribing services to engage more effectively with Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, including in relation to diversifying the workforce;
- Provide suggestions on how to ensure Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are included in the planning and provision of social prescribing services.



Methodology



Methodology

- The project was overseen by a national NHS social prescribing policy lead;
- All parties involved approved and helped established the methodology and tools used for the project;
- Information was taken from community members using a combination of one-to-one surveys and in-depth focus groups.

An initial draft of this guidance was circulated with:

- Other HWA members;
- Additional GRT communities' representatives;
- The projects HWA policy lead.



Methodology

Contributions were made by a variety of individuals including:

- **80** Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community members through surveys.
- **17** Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community members through focus groups.
- **55** social prescribing professionals including local, regional and national leads.

We have also undertaken a literature review to provide context on the key health issues and inequalities faced by GRT individuals.

This:

- Helped us identify useful resources;
- Supported us when making relevant recommendations in line with current national strategies and policies.



Introduction to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller health inequalities and the inclusion health context



GRT health inequalities and the inclusion health context

Social conditions contribute to health, meaning poorer individuals experience worse health outcomes.

To support the reduction of healthcare inequalities, NHS England has developed the Core20PLUS5 approach.

The **Core20PLUS5** initiative defines a target population requiring accelerated improvement.

“Health
inequalities
result from
social
inequalities”

The Marmot Review (2010)



'PLUS' population groups

'PLUS' population groups include:

- Ethnic minority communities;
- People with a learning disability;
- Autistic individuals;
- Individuals with multiple long-term health conditions;
- Inclusion Health Groups;
- Groups that share protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.



Social determinants influencing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller health outcomes



Social determinants influencing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller health

Education

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are noted to be disadvantaged groups with some of the lowest proportions of children achieving a good level of development at school, putting them at higher risk of health problems

Employment

- According to the 2021 Census, **41%** of Gypsies and Irish Travellers were employed or self-employed, compared to **70.9%** of wider England and Wales population
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals have a higher risk of poor health due to the prevalence of unemployment.
- According to the Census 2021, **28.5%** of employed Roma work in elementary occupations, while the national average is **10.5%**

Accommodation

- The lack of appropriate accommodation available for Gypsies and Travellers exacerbates inequalities in health and standards of living. This is exacerbated by a national shortage in both permanent and transit Traveller sites across England



Social prescribing professionals' awareness of and experience with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities



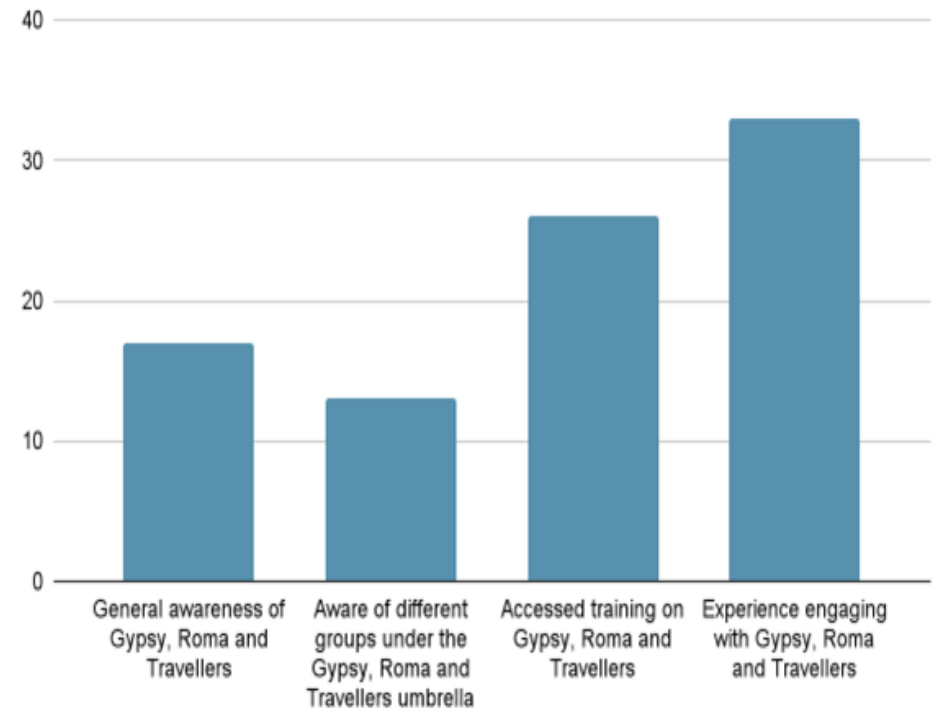
Social prescribing professionals' awareness of and experience with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

When asked about general awareness of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities:

- **39%** of professionals surveyed said they were not confident in their knowledge of GRT communities;
- **17%** said they had little knowledge of GRT communities;
- **17%** said they have some knowledge;

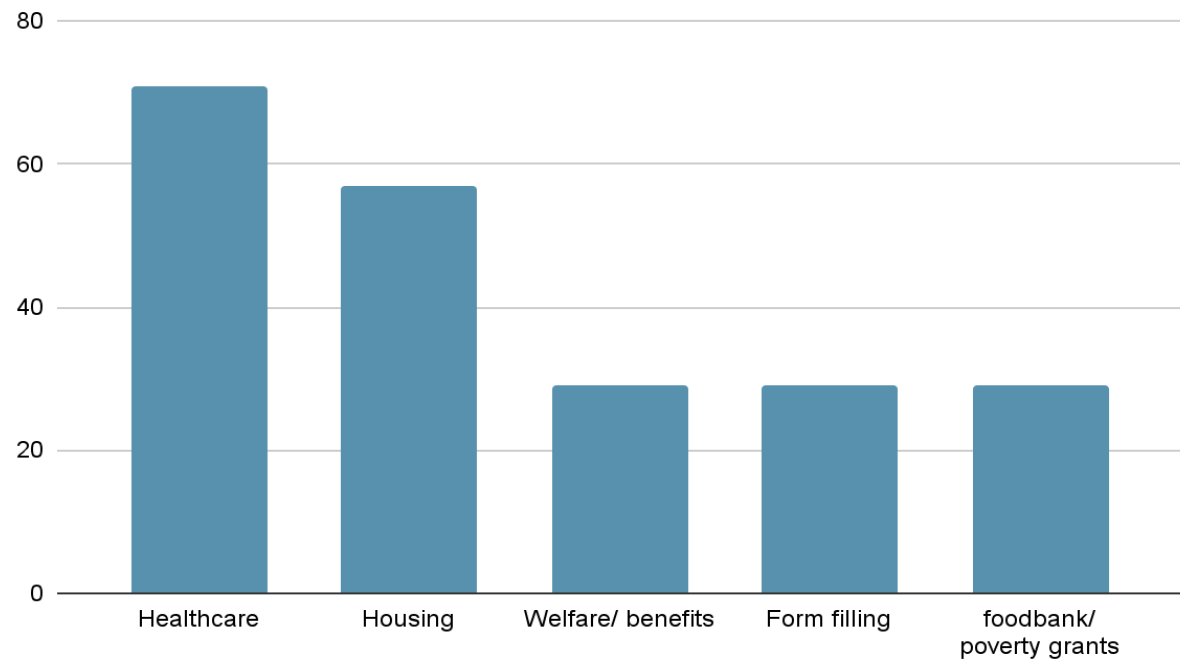
When asked about the 'GRT' umbrella:

- **48%** of social prescribing professionals said they were had no awareness of the different communities under the 'GRT' umbrella;
- **13%** said they were unsure;
- **13%** said they were aware;



Support offered to people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

- Where engagement with those from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities exists, it tends to be more around accessing healthcare, housing, welfare, food banks or third party appointments.



Experience, knowledge and use of social prescribing among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities



Experience, knowledge and use of social prescribing among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Overall, there is very low awareness and even less experience of social prescribing services among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

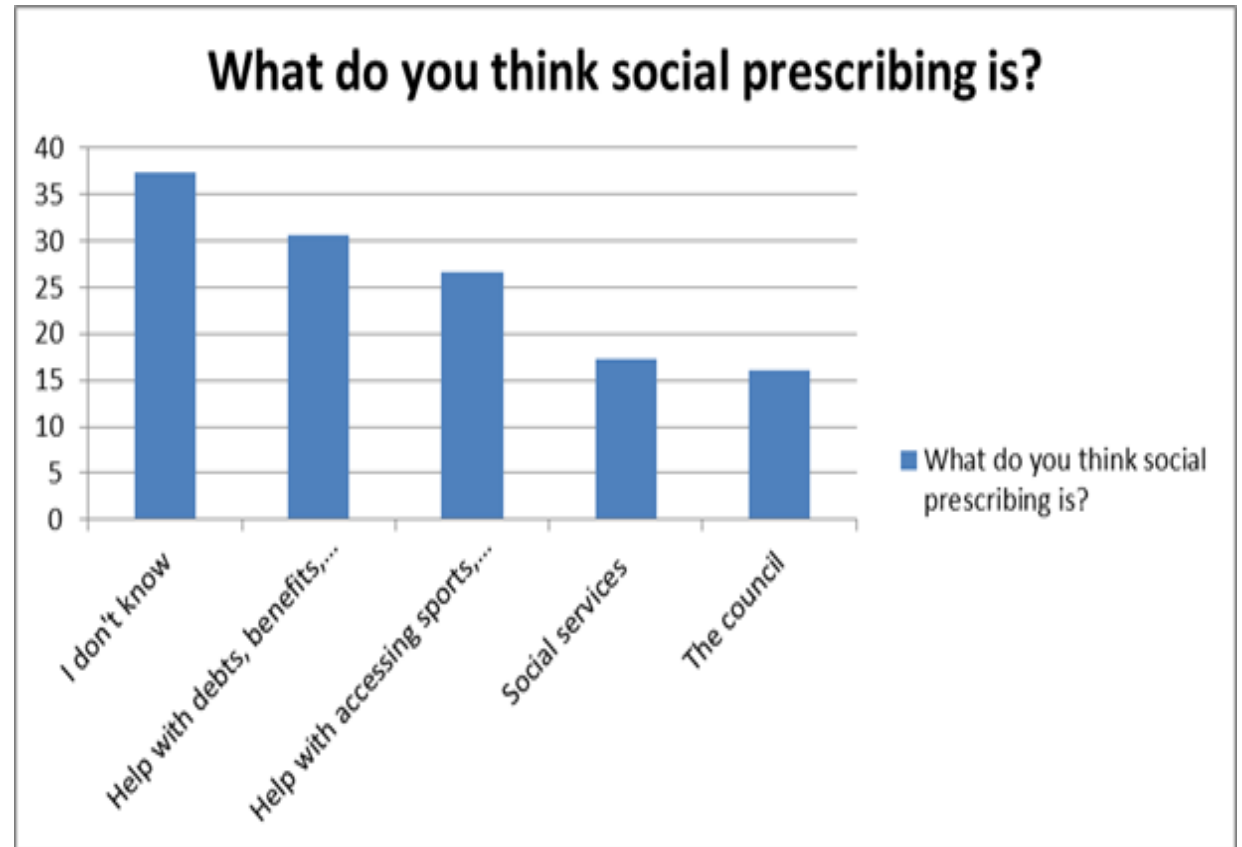
“I have heard of the term [social prescribing], but I never really understand what it is”

Gypsy, Roma Traveller community member

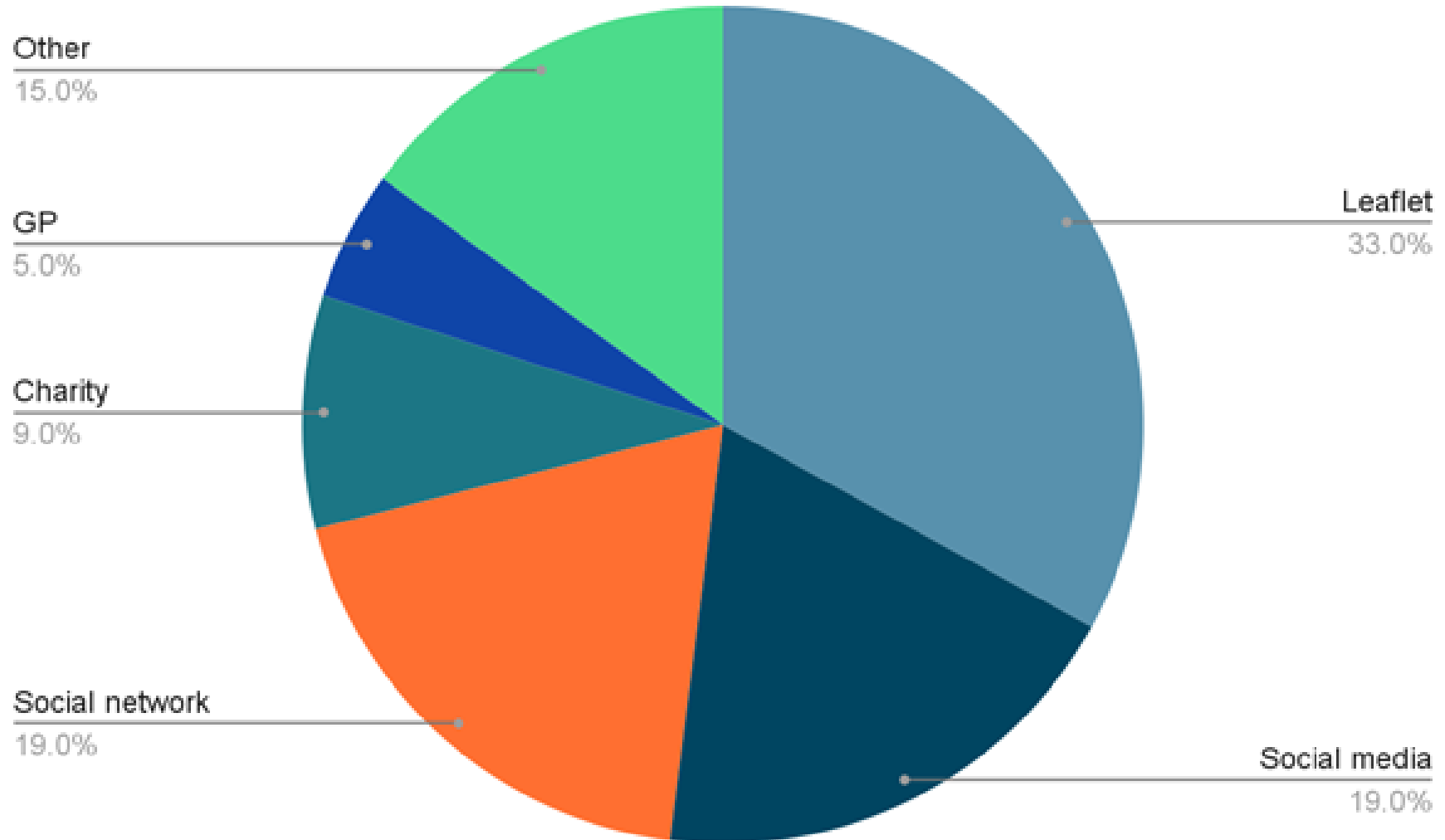


What Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals think social prescribing is

- **38%** of respondents could not make any association with the term 'social prescribing';
- **30%** believed social prescribing to be a service that helps you improve your health by helping with problems like debts, benefits, accommodation etc.;
- **27%** believed social prescribing to be a service that helps you do activities to improve your health such as sports, gardening, crafts etc.

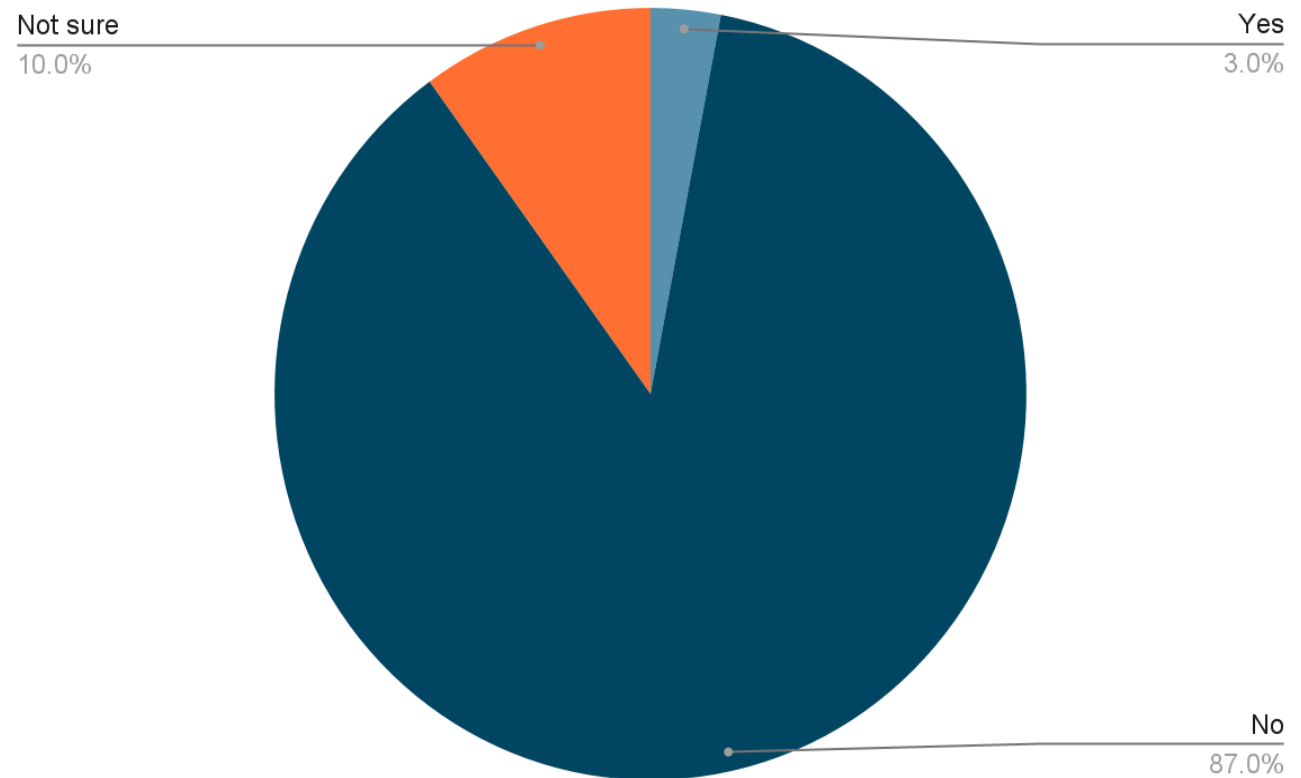


How Gypsies, Roma and Travellers find out about social prescribing



What experience do Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have in relation to social prescribing?

- Majority of people surveyed, **87%**, have never been involved in social prescribing services.
- Only **3%** reported being involved.
- Remaining **10%** were not sure if they had been involved.



Barriers to social prescribing services



What barriers did Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people encounter in accessing social prescribing?

- **Awareness and access to information**

“When people have multiple issues, people need information“

(Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community member)

- **Communication with GPs during appointments**

“There’s no time to speak about social prescribing services.”

(Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community member)

- **Language and literacy**

“In most cases, when we get sick and we have to go to the hospital or GP, we are rejected because we don’t understand what they’re saying.”

(Roma community member)

- **Interpreting services**

“When I go to the GP, I don’t have an interpreter so I can’t even say “social prescribing”. How could I access this?”

(Roma community member)

- **Limited community services available**

“We should have a link person to represent our community.”

(Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community member)

- **Digital Exclusion**



Barriers to social prescribing services from the perspective of professionals

- Several professionals identified engagement to be a major challenge.
- Discrimination was also mentioned and the fact that building trust takes time.
- When asked if they knew about cultural sensitivities around specific topics (e.g. gendered health issues, cancer, mental health), the majority of professionals (62%), said they were not sure.

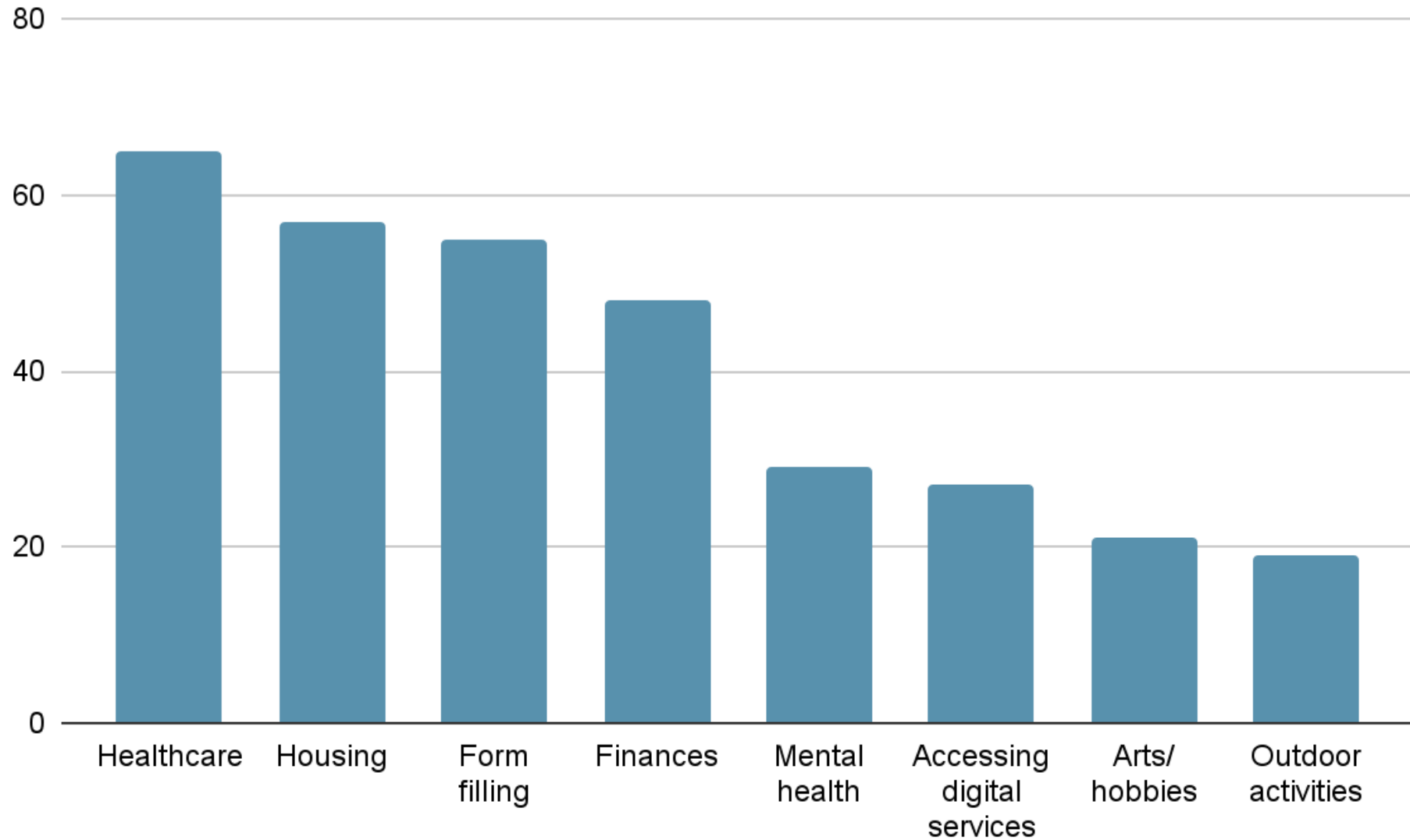
A social prescribing professional commented: *“A lack of support from Local Authority and always tensions with local communities. Also, a lack of understanding regarding the Equality Act (2010) and raising awareness was always met by the spurious narrative of negative stereotypes of Gypsies and Travellers.”*



Engaging/working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in a social prescribing context



Support needs and areas of interventions identified



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller outreach, communication and increasing awareness



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller outreach, communication and increasing awareness

Cultural background

- “GRT” is a catch-all umbrella term referring to several communities. It is important to know that these communities have different and diverse cultural practices, different approaches to lifestyle, speak different languages and have different nationalities.
- It is also very important to note that some people under each Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community may be more or less traditional. At the same time they might have a higher or lower level of education.

Accommodation

- It is generally believed that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have a travelling lifestyle and live on caravan sites. But there are very significant differences between accommodation types with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. For example it is known that 75% of Gypsy people live in bricks and mortar and the vast majority of Roma people in the UK are settled.
- It is also known that some of those living on sites or roadside do not have full access to electricity or have limited access to the internet, or no documents to confirm address.
- Some of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people still living nomadically do not have access to a registered site and are living on roadside or unauthorised sites. In some cases locations of these settings are away from public transport.
- Those most vulnerable from the Roma communities might live in overcrowded situations, may not have access to documents proving address.

Language

- There is a huge diversity of languages spoken by people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Most Gypsy and Traveller people speak English as their main language.
- Many Roma people speak Romanes as their main language. Romanes is the native language of Roma all across the world. It has over 40 dialects spoken by various groups or tribes of Roma. Roma also speak to various extent the language from their countries of origin (Romanian, Czech, Spanish, Polish, etc.)
- Some people from Romany Gypsy or Gypsy communities also speak to some extent a degree of Romanes language.
- When working with those most vulnerable Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people it is best practice to pass on messages through videos or voice notes through relevant language/dialect.
- When having to work with interpreters it is best practice to work with bi-lingual community advocates.
- It is important to use plain English, avoid professional jargon and ask Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people to confirm they got your information clearly.



Positive interventions in social prescribing to improve health outcomes in GRT communities



Positive interventions in social prescribing to improve health outcomes in GRT communities

Case study 1 - working with a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller charity organisation

- Together Co, a loneliness charity based in Brighton that “creates connections to change lives”, is commissioned by the NHS to lead a citywide social prescribing provision. To deliver the work, Together Co has established a partnership involving 5 other organisations each with expertise in supporting people from the LGBTQIA+ communities, ethnically diverse communities, people with language needs, including no English, asylum seekers, refugees and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
- By working with partners with expertise in their fields and their communities, the partnership enabled social prescribing service delivery tailored to the needs of each group. Furthermore, this also enabled the partnership to build trust with each community and deliver support in a culturally pertinent way.
- FFT is one of the partners of the Together Co partnership in Brighton delivering social prescribing services to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the Brighton area. FFT has Gypsy and/or Traveller staff working to deliver its social prescribing provision.

Case study 2 - employing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller staff

- MECOPP is a Scotland based charity supporting carers from minority ethnic groups. MECOPP coordinates a Gypsy/Traveller Health Workers Service.
- Through this service MECOPP has recruited a team of Gypsy and Traveller health workers who are from the community themselves and working directly with members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities in the area. Although the health workers at MECOPP do not have a designated social prescribing role, this function falls under their wider remit and they are connecting members of Gypsy and Traveller communities with social prescribing services where needed.



Recommendations



Recommendations

Speaking about what makes a good social prescribing link worker, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people said that social prescribing link workers should:

- Be able to understand their lifestyle (without discriminatory views).
- Be able to understand and respect their culture, so we do not have to explain ourselves every time.
- Be trained in the basics (i.e. difference between the communities under the GRT umbrella, cultural aspects around family events like funerals, weddings, etc.) so professionals don't ask "silly things", they need certain knowledge.
- Have a good overview of all the different support service options.

We have developed and are suggesting the following recommendations based on gaps identified through our engagement with social prescribing professionals.

1. Providing social prescribing services to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people

- 67% social prescribing professionals said they do not provide or are not sure if they provide services to Gypsy, Roma and Travellers.

2. Training

- 61% said they are not aware or not sure of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller umbrella.
- 74% said they did not have training.

The training should be provided by services with relevant experience and expertise working with each group to reflect local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities' makeup.

3. Equalities monitoring

- Only 25% of social prescribing professionals responding to our survey mentioned monitoring Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities in their equalities data.



Thank you



Questions & Answers



Contact

Roma Support Group

17 Old Ford Road

Bethnal Green London

E2 9PJ

- info@romasupportgroup.org
- 07949089778 (general enquiries)

Friends, Families and Travellers

Community Base

113 Queens Road

Brighton

BN1 3XG

- fft@gypsy-traveller.org
- 01273234777



Resources

- Roma Support Group publication: [Roma health guide](#)
- Roma communities: [‘7 things to know about Roma’](#)

Subscribe to **Roma Support Groups** e-Bulletin newsletter by clicking [HERE](#).

- Friends, Families and Travellers publication: [Health inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities](#)

Subscribe to **Friends, Families and Travellers** e-Bulletin newsletter by clicking [HERE](#).

