

Healthwatch Luton: Roma and Travellers

Improving health and social care experiences



A brief overview report on initial work in Roma and Traveller community

Project overview: Healthwatch Luton



Healthwatch Luton were introduced to a contact from One Voice Travellers who are an organisation who work with travellers within the region. It was brought to the attention of HWL that there are issues for travellers within Luton, when accessing health care, particularly at the hospital.

It would seem that those within the travelling community will interact with professionals within the first ten days of a baby's life, but after that are not very responsive.

Travellers have been known to travel around two to three hours for access to a professional who they are comfortable with and have a relationship with.

Around 70% of travellers within Luton are housed in permanent accommodation.

Healthwatch Luton sat on the Roma Trust for a short time, although their main focus was not on the health and social care experiences of individuals explicitly.

Healthwatch Luton contacted Humanitas, however, they are not focussing work on those living in Luton at this time. Their work is more focussed on overseas work.

What we have done

A short questionnaire was passed to our contacts to garner some information about how they felt their experiences of health and social care had been. The purpose of the questionnaire was to get a baseline of what experiences those within the Roma and Irish/English travelling communities have received in health and social care. Questions were asked about GPs, dentists, hospital, housing, alcohol/drugs and sexual health.

What we found out

A neighbouring Healthwatch (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) have carried out similar work surrounding this ethnic group. HWL have reviewed their previous reports, which showed that by making the professionals aware of the different ethnic and cultural needs, experiences would improve for the individuals.

Responses were collated from around ten individuals.

What has your experience been when you access your GP and why?

Failure to understand treatment and diagnosis, illiteracy and language barriers were a big issue when visiting the GPs. Stereotyping and lack of cultural awareness played a part in accessing care. Lack of continuity of care effected individuals also.

What has your experience been when you access your dentist and why?

Access issues due to cost of treatment, stereotyping and lack of registration.

Have you accessed the Luton and Dunstable Hospital? If yes, what for? What problems, if any, did you experience? What can be done to address these problems?

Access issues due to illiteracy and stereotyping. Communication issues and cultural awareness. Unaware of patient choices and choices not being offered.

What issues do you face, if any, with regards to housing or access to housing? What changes can be made to help with these issues?

Troubles accessing benefits and stereotyping. Issues with illiteracy and language barriers.

Would you know how to access information, if needed, regarding drug and alcohol problems in Luton?

There is not a need to access this service by anyone spoken to, however, some people stated they knew who they could go to.

How would you access information regarding sexual health/sexual health clinics, if needed, in Luton?

This is something that is not openly discussed, however cultural awareness would be a part to ensure that individuals knew where to go to access services, as those who responded said they wouldn't know where to go.

If there were changes regarding health and social care, how would you like to be informed?

Cultural awareness and illiteracy were big factors. Would be helpful to be made aware of changes in health and social care vis GP, news, in print, with a helpline, or in various other formats.

Overwhelming, individuals felt stereotyped and that access to services was hindered because of this.

What next?

Within HWL 2019 - 2020 workplan, there is not a focus on this area at this time. HWL would like to embark on programme of cultural awareness for the professionals within Luton, to ensure they understand the needs of this group.

HWL will review neighbouring Healthwatch work in this area, to see if a similar or replication of the project can be delivered in Luton.

Funding could be applied for to financially support this project area.

There is potential to restart a professional alliance or forum where knowledge about the work going on for and with the travelling community in Luton can be shared.

HWL will be reviewing this project and the workplan in Quarter 3 of 2019 - 2020.



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