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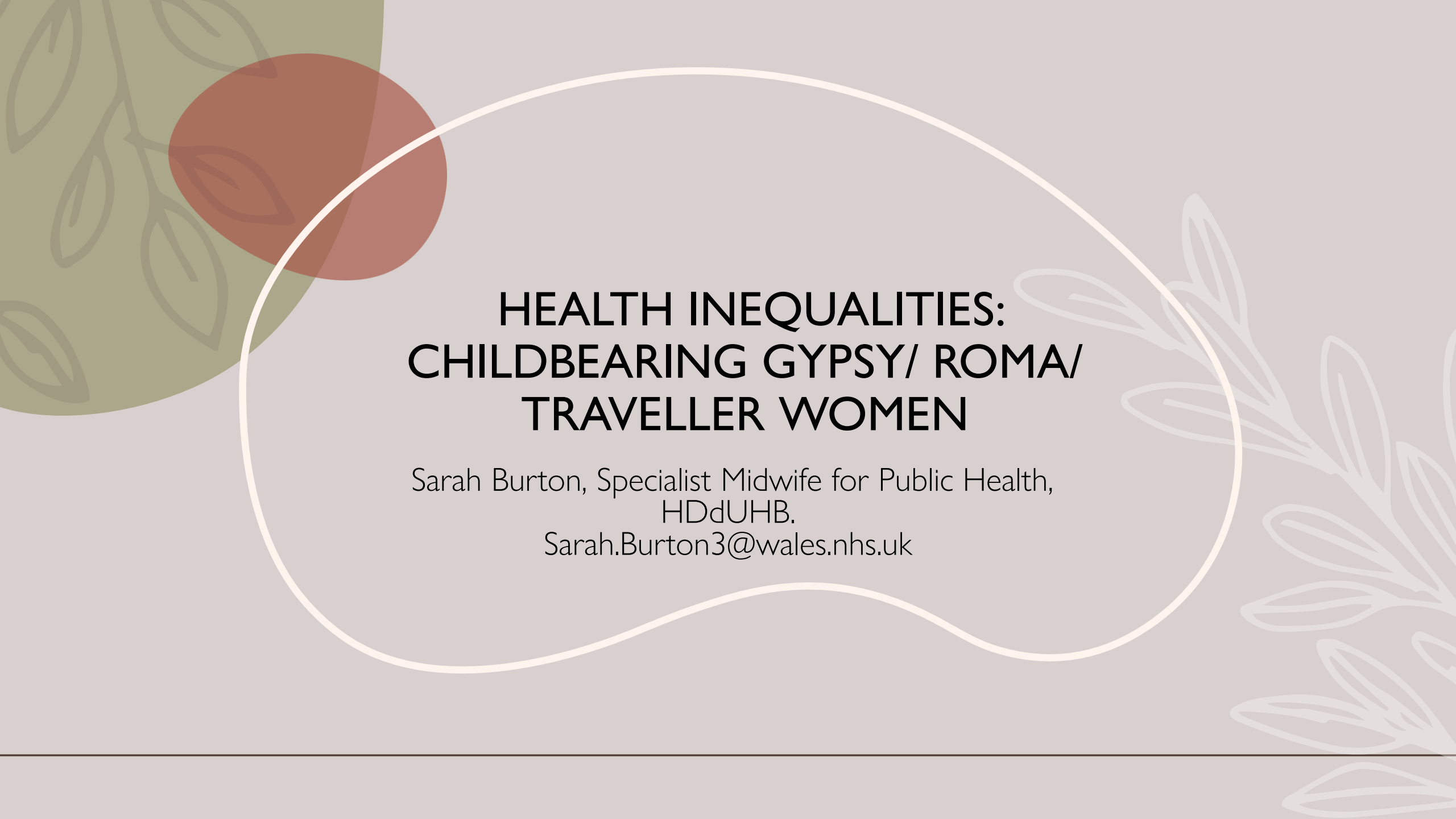
Addressing the health and wellbeing needs of Gypsy, Traveller, and Roma Communities

Webinar

28th November 2024

Webinar
Addressing the health and wellbeing needs of Gypsy, Traveller, and Roma Communities
Agenda – Thursday 28th November, 13.00 – 14.30

Time	Item	Who
13.00	Welcome, introduction & housekeeping	Victoria Tice, Senior Public Health Practitioner, Public Health Wales
13.10	Health Inequalities: Childbearing Gypsy/ Roma/ Traveller women	Sarah Burton, Specialist Midwife for Public Health, HDUHB
13.30	Community Development Outreach Team	Sandra Mitchell, Community Development Outreach Team Manager, HDUHB
13.50	Telling our own stories: alcohol use in Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, and Boaters	Professor Louise Condon, Swansea University Louise
14.10	Question & Answer session	Victoria Tice, Senior Public Health Practitioner, Public Health Wales
14.25	Final remarks and close	Victoria Tice, Senior Public Health Practitioner, Public Health Wales



HEALTH INEQUALITIES: CHILDBEARING GYPSY/ ROMA/ TRAVELLER WOMEN

Sarah Burton, Specialist Midwife for Public Health,
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The umbrella term 'Gypsies, Roma and Travellers' includes many different and distinct groups. For example, Irish Travellers, Scottish Gypsy/Travellers and Romani people who are recognised ethnic groups.



In addition, this can include New Travellers, Showpeople and Boaters who are often included under this umbrella term because they practice nomadism.



Introduction to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

	ROMANY GYPSIES	IRISH TRAVELLERS	ROMA PEOPLE	TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE	NEW TRAVELLERS	LIVEBOARD BOATERS
ETHNICITY	Historically originated in Northern India, Romany Gypsies have been in the UK for many generations.	Irish Travellers originated in Ireland as a distinct and separate ethnic group from the general Irish population recorded since the 12th century.	Historically originated in Northern India and settled in Europe (including Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Poland) before migrating to the UK more recently.	Anyone who travels to hold shows, circuses and fairs can be a Showperson. Many families have led this way of life for generations and many have Romany heritage.	'New Traveller' can describe people from any background who chooses to lead a nomadic way of life or their descendents.	Anyone who lives on a boat, from all walks of life and backgrounds.
ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND	Before the 16th Century - fulfilling a need for nomadic seasonal agricultural labour and selling.	Recorded from the 18th Century but probably earlier. Horse trading and then post war construction work.	Small numbers since 1945, with a number of Roma seeking asylum in the 1990s and early 2000s, then a growth in population following EU expansion in 2004 and 2007.	According to the National Fairground Archive the first recorded charter was granted to King's Lynn in 1204.	The New Traveller movement finds its roots in the free festivals of the 1960s, but people of all backgrounds have practiced nomadism throughout history.	People have been living and working on boats since canals were built in England in the 18th Century.
LANGUAGE	Romany Gypsies speak English and many Romany Gypsies also speak a Romani dialect to varying levels of fluency.	Irish Travellers speak English and some speak Gaelic/Irish. Many Irish Travellers also speak Gaelic derived Gammon or Cant.	The majority of Roma speak their European origin country's language(s). Many Roma also speak a Romani dialect, as well as English to varying levels of fluency.	Showpeople primarily speak English.	New Travellers primarily speak English.	Liveaboard Boaters primarily speak English.
ACCOMMODATION TYPE	Around ¾ live in housing and ¼ on Traveller sites in caravans or chalets. A small proportion live roadside or in public spaces.	Around ¾ live in housing and ¼ on Traveller sites in caravans or chalets. Of these, a small proportion live roadside or in public spaces.	The vast majority of Roma people live in housing, although there are disproportionate levels of homelessness and overcrowding.	Most Showpeople live on yards in the winter months and travel during the summer months.	New Travellers lead a nomadic way of life – in vans, mobile homes, caravans and a small proportion are horse drawn.	Boaters live on narrowboats, barges or river cruisers, whether on a home mooring, a winter mooring or continuously cruising on a canal, or in a marina.



October 2022

Briefing: Health inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

Friends, Families & Travellers

Key inequalities:

- Romany and Traveller people face life expectancies between ten and 25 years shorter than the general population.
- Romany and Traveller people experience significantly higher prevalence of long-term illness, health problems or disabilities, which limit daily activities or work.
 - The health of a Romany or Traveller person in their 60s is comparable to an average White British person in their 80s.
 - An All-Ireland study found that suicide prevalence is six times higher for Irish Traveller women than women in the general population, and seven times higher for Traveller men.
 - 60% of Roma Support Group's migrant Roma beneficiaries are reported to have poor physical health, with 43% of Roma beneficiaries of the above reported to suffer from poor mental health.

[Briefing Health-inequalities-experienced-by-Gypsies-and-Travellers-in-England.pdf](#)



Ekezie, W et al (2024) Perinatal health outcomes of women from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities: A systematic review, *Midwifery*, vol 129, February. doi: 10.1016/j.midw.2023.103910

GRT communities are known for having higher birth rates compared to non-GRT communities.

Perinatal health outcomes of women from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities: A systematic review *Midwifery*. Volume 129, February 2024, 103910. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2023.103910>

GRT women have a fundamental and distinct roles within their community. They are also one of the most excluded communities in the UK and experience many barriers to health care. Compared to women from non-ethnic minority groups GRT women are more likely to have poorer outcomes regarding pregnancy and birth. They are more likely to experience pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes, miscarriage, stillbirth, neonatal death, premature birth, have a baby with low birthweight, and higher rates of maternal death. They also face barriers in accessing perinatal services.



GTR women are also 20 times more likely to experience the death of a child. The unauthorised encampments where GRT women frequently live may be hazardous, for example, encampments next to canals risk waterborne contamination, rubbish tips may have rat infestations and waste ground can have an increased chance of fly-tipping.

There is often a lack of amenities such as clean water and cleaning and toilet facilities, as well as a higher risk of injury and illness in children compared to any other group.

Perinatal health outcomes of women from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities: A systematic review Midwifery Volume 129, February 2024, 103910. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2023.103910>

A lot of Gypsy and Traveller families live in bricks and mortar housing permanently and/or are on permanent sites. In fact, the 2011 Census indicated that around $\frac{3}{4}$ of Gypsies and Travellers live in bricks and mortar accommodation whilst around $\frac{1}{4}$ live in a caravan or other temporary structure.

If a Romany Gypsy or Irish Traveller person no longer travels, this doesn't mean they are no longer a Gypsy or a Traveller, as this is a description of their ethnicity rather than just their accommodation type.

[The Experience of Pregnancy in the British Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities | AIMS](#)

Traditions

There are certain traditions or culture surrounding the female body, menstruation and childbirth for Gypsy/ Traveller/ Roma communities.

Wuzho and Marime are part of Gypsy Roma culture. They refer to a notion of ritual impurity: both culturally and bodily pollution. All things are classified as either wuzho (pure) or marime (impure/defiled) The lower body, especially the genitals, is marime. Menstruation and childbirth are seen as polluted.

Discussions and information about menstruation, pregnancy and birth, and the menopause requires privacy and sensitivity.

Entrenched cultural prejudices not only have negative impacts on the women from GRT communities' carrying out their daily activities: they also impact their access to health care. <http://www.nyu.edu/pages/hess/docs/rom1.html>

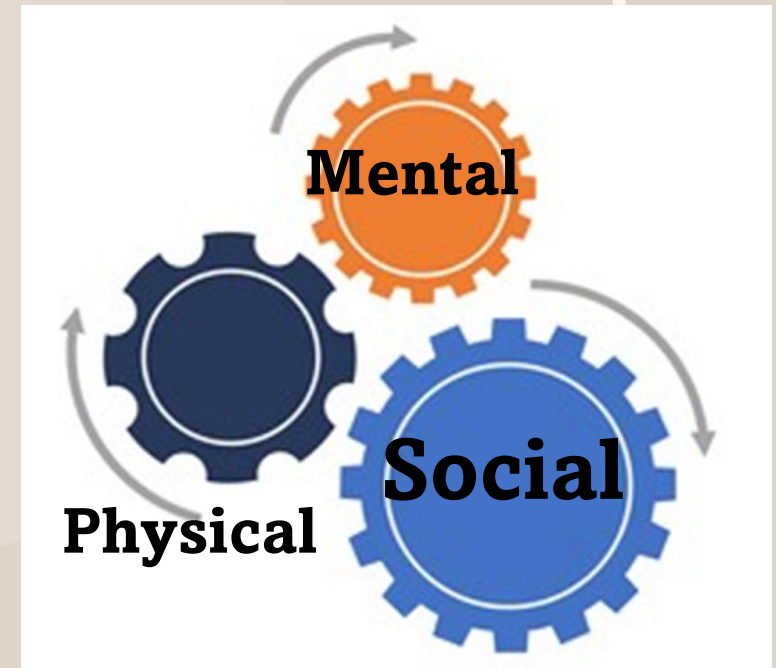


Racism can cause stress

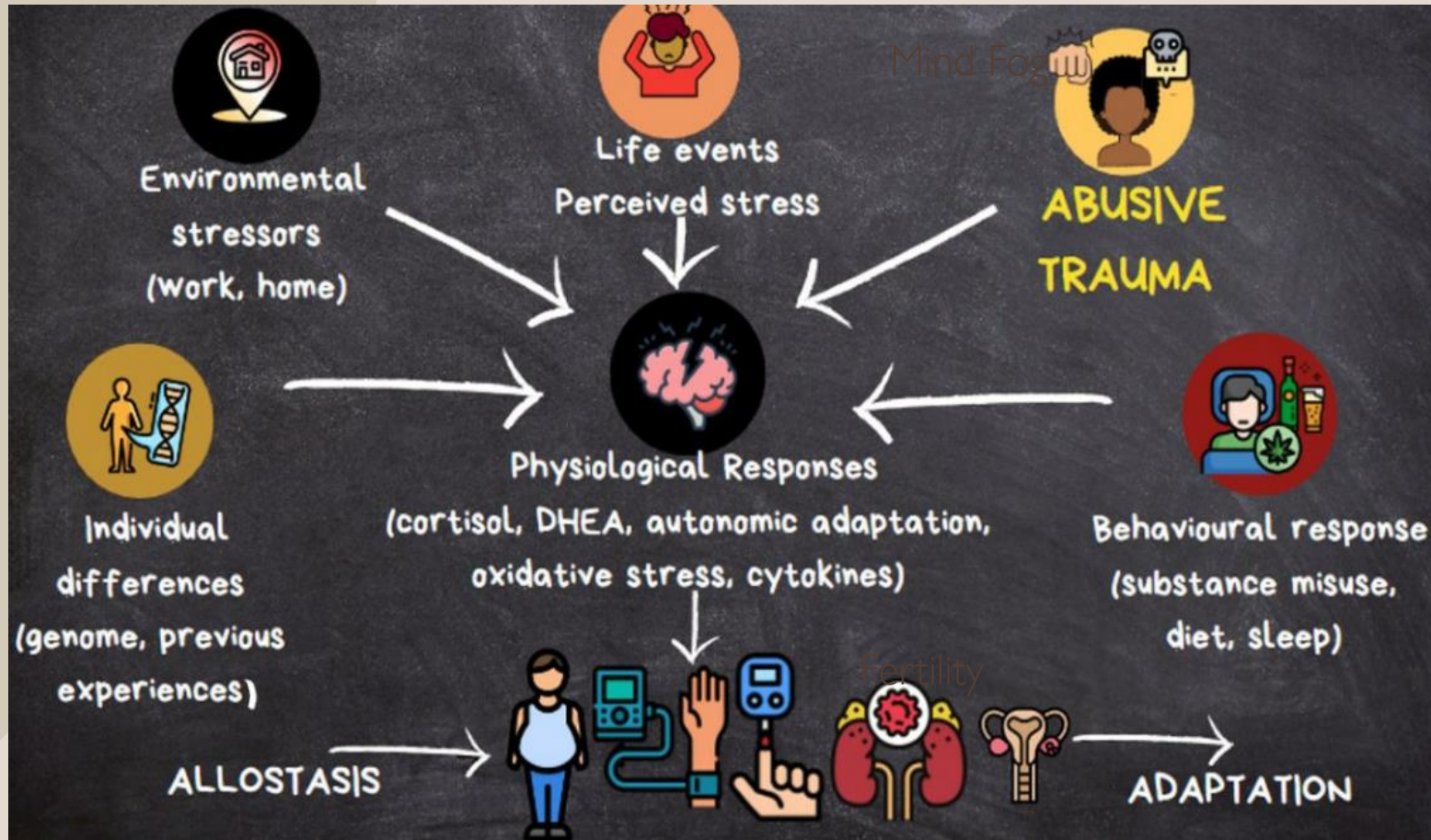
All kinds of racism can contribute to stress. This might be events such as sudden, unexpected abuse from another person or society. But it can also be a more long-term impact of encountering regular microaggressions.

Or from the ongoing effects of systemic racism in life.

Chronic stress can impact health



ALLOSTATIC LOAD



Sleep Problems

Cardiac Disease

VTE

IBS

Pre-eclampsia

Depression

Stroke

Increased inflammation

Chronic pain

Mood disorders

Anxiety

Diabetes

Atherosclerosis

Hypertension

GDM

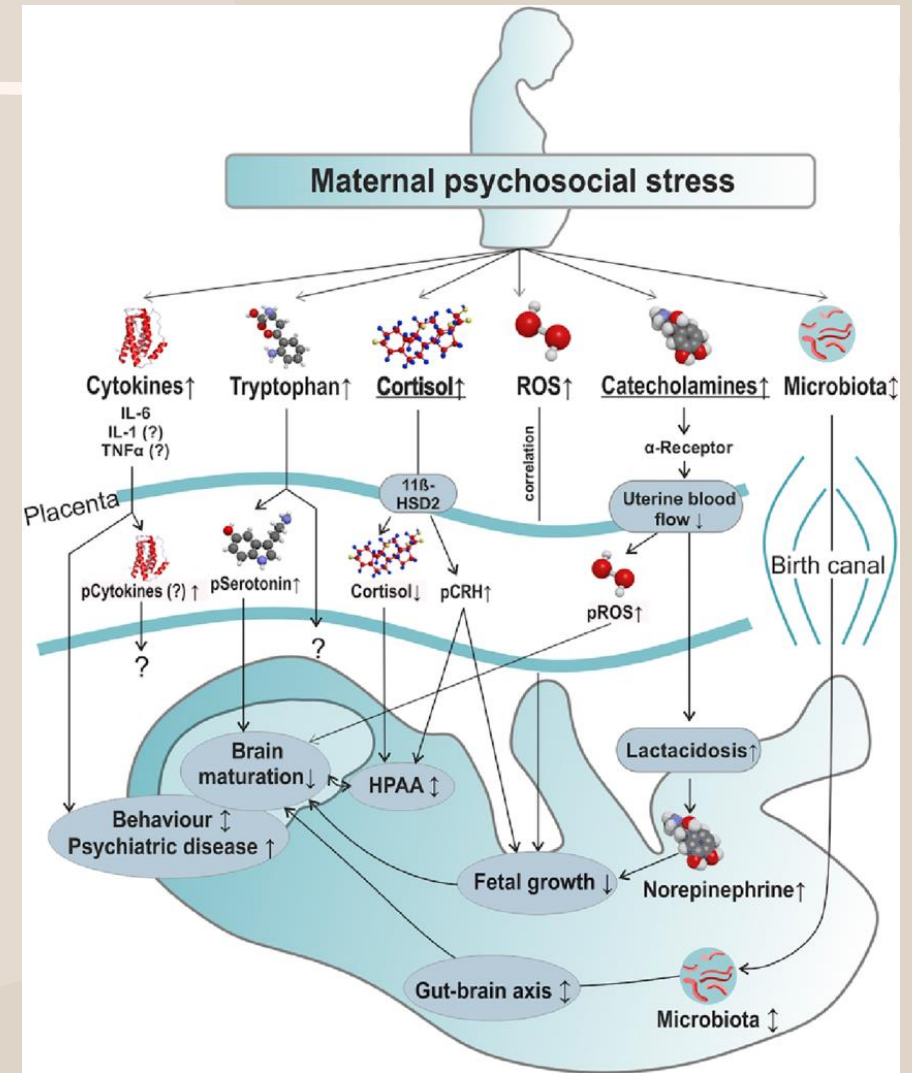
Weight gain and Obesity

memory and concentration issues

No other period in a child's life matches the speed of brain development than the first nine months in the womb

When a woman is exposed to intense or prolonged stress during pregnancy, excessive levels of cortisol can disrupt development of the unborn child's brain. These changes in fetal brain circuitry can lead to hypersensitivity to stress later in life.

High levels of maternal stress during pregnancy can predispose a developing fetus to psychiatric and cardiovascular illnesses decades later.





Several women in the Gypsy and Traveller focus group discussion reported mothers and other relatives who had experienced a stillbirths, and traumatic births attributed the outcomes to the hospital staff failing to listen to the concerns of labouring women and their families.

Local case study

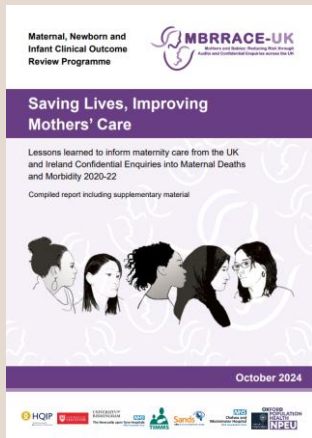
<https://www.maternityaction.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/MothersVoices2018-FINAL.pdf>

[Birth Trauma Inquiry Report for Publication_May13_2024.pdf](#)

Black women face higher risks for certain pregnancy-related complications, including preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, and postpartum haemorrhage. Despite these elevated risks, many Black women report receiving insufficient information about their specific vulnerabilities and the necessary precautions or monitoring.

Black women often face significant barriers to receiving proper informed consent during labour. These barriers can lead to feelings of being unheard, disregarded, and disrespected, contributing to negative birth experiences and trauma.

Two in five women said they had procedures performed on them in labour without their consent.



Maternal, Newborn and Infant Clinical Outcome Review Programme

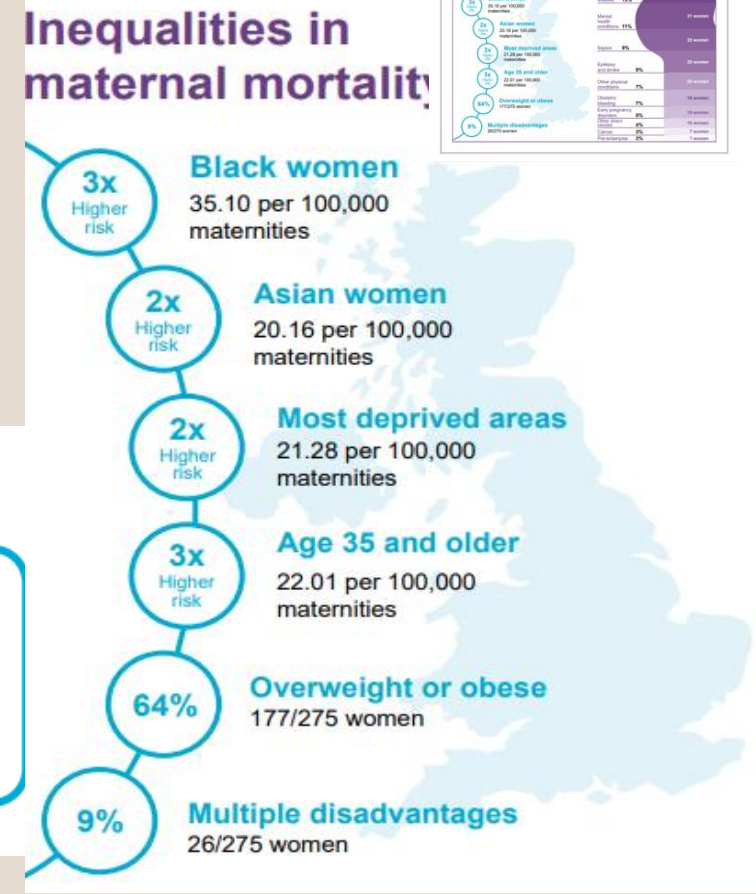
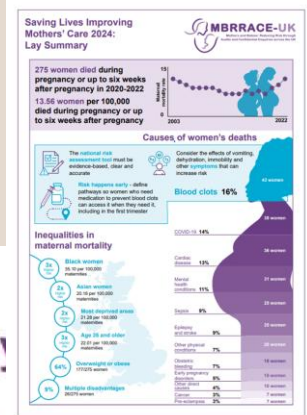


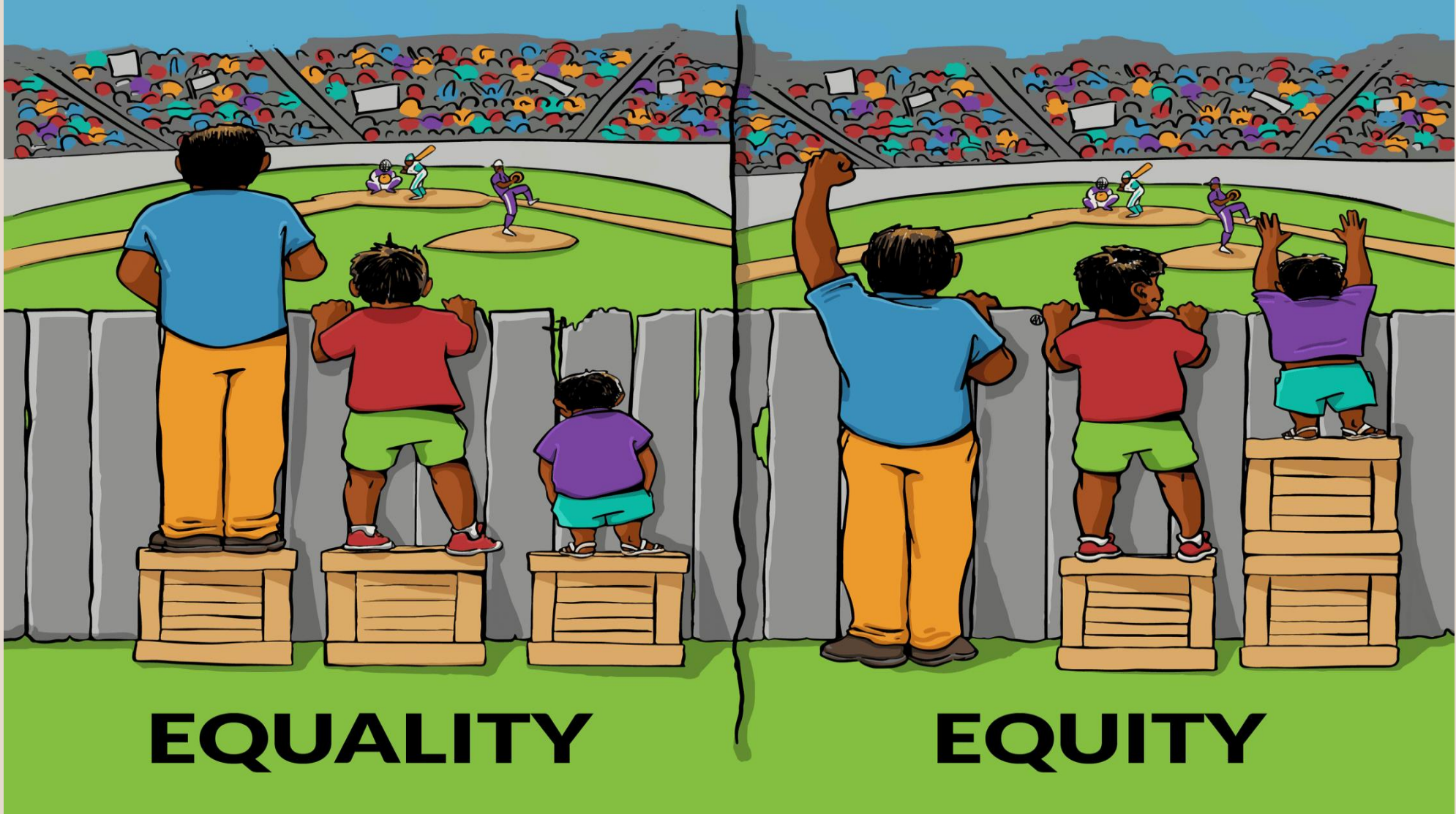
Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care

Lessons learned to inform maternity care from the UK and Ireland Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths and Morbidity 2020-22

Clinical messages

Maternity care should aim to produce equity in outcome rather than equality in care. Different women have different needs that should be taken into account when providing individualised care. Considerations such as aligning appointments to reduce time away from work can help improve experiences and outcomes.







Improving outcomes, what can we do?

- Meaningful communication (active listening).
- Information giving in a way that is suitable for the individual and empowers women and birthing people to be able make informed choices and have a say in their care
- Referrals to specialised services when needed.
- Continuity of Carer

Community Development Outreach team

Tîm Allgymorth Datblygu Cymunedol

فريق التوعية بالتنمية المجتمعية

Zespół ds. Rozwoju Społeczności

Echipa de informare pentru dezvoltare
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Gypsy, Roma and Traveller engagement.

<https://youtu.be/Cq0GTH0WZGQ>



Gypsies and Travellers in Hywel Dda

- 0.5% Pembrokeshire
- 0.2% Carmarthenshire
- 0.1% Ceredigion





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What are we doing?

- Engaging with Gypsy and Travellers
- Keep community up to date with emerging health messages
- Immunisation campaigns
- Arts in Health project
- Engagement events



**“Wellbeing and Cost of Living
Event’
for Pembrokeshire Gypsies and
Travellers a success”**

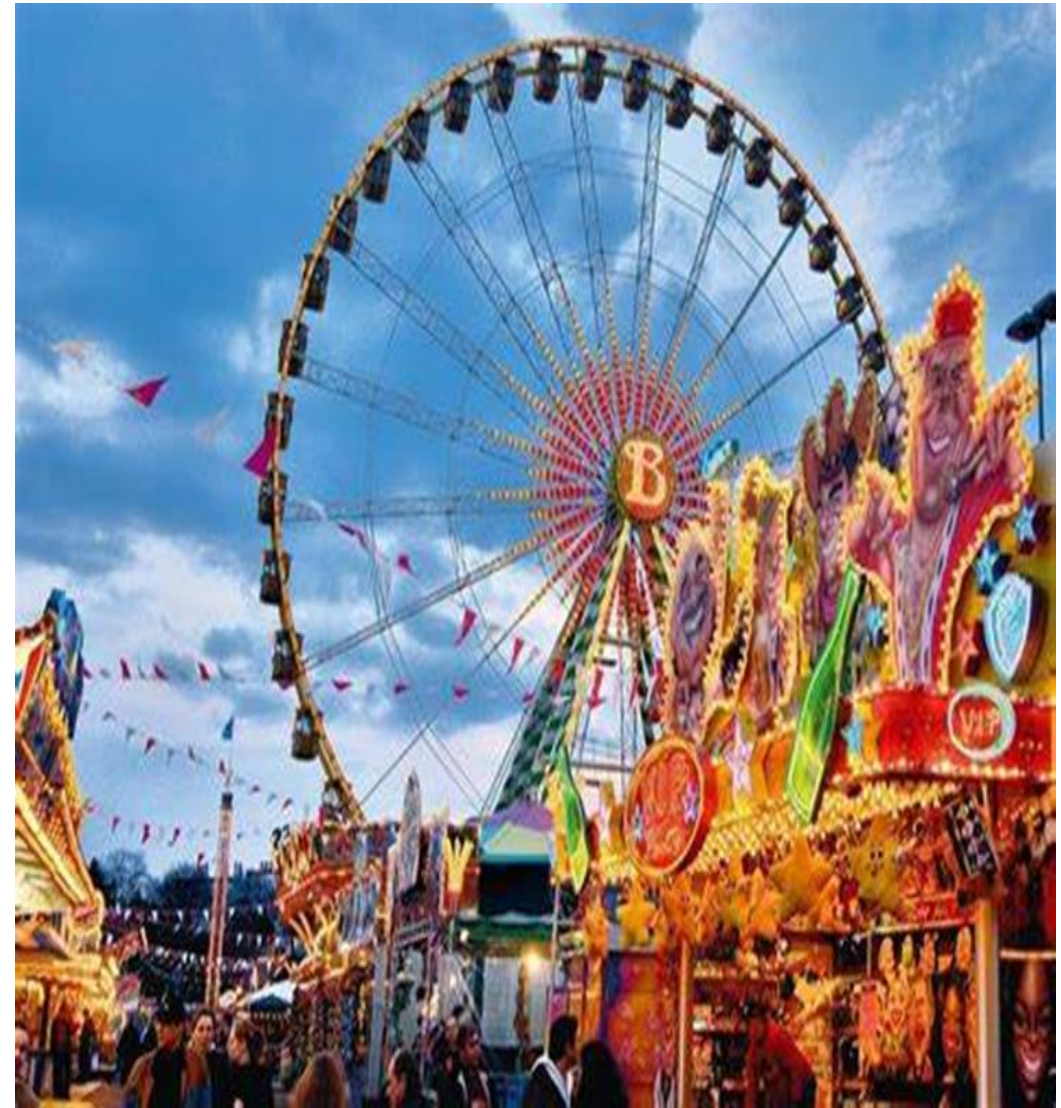


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Engaging with communities

- Visiting Gypsy and Traveller families (Roadside)
 - Residential site visits
- Engaging with Showperson communities and visiting fairs
- Developing relationships with New Travellers





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Successful engagement

- Building on existing relationships
- Listening to the community
- Joint working with the Local Authority Leads, Traveller Education Service and Third Sector partners
- Reaching out to the community – we go to them
- Thinking of innovative ways of sharing health messages
- Regular, sustainable, consistent engagement



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Case study

- **Overview of situation:** Jo is from the Gypsy community and lives in a caravan with limited space for cooking and storing food. She also lives on a piece of land that had no facilities. She was feeling “run down', 'fat' and unhealthy” and was relying on expensive take aways. She was worried about spiralling costs of daily fast food as well as seeing an effect on her health.
- **Outcome following receipt of support:** CDOT had a conversation with Jo about how she could make cheaper more nutritious meals at home using fresh ingredients, but she was concerned about her lack of facilities and space. CDOT made a referral to a partner agency, that gave her a slow cooker and recipe cards. She is also able to access the community fridge which has fresh food available. Jo has been able to cook healthy slow cooked meals which has saved her money and saves on space. This has not only benefited her but her whole family.
- **Likely outcome without support provided:** Jo would have continued to struggle paying for takeaways and making unhealthy choices which were affecting her health and wellbeing.

Engagement

- Pembrokeshire Winter wellbeing event – 60 attendees
- Carmarthenshire wellbeing event
- Mocktail Event with Swansea University
- Cancer screening focus group
- Eastern European Roma engagement event
- Giving the communities a voice – public consultations



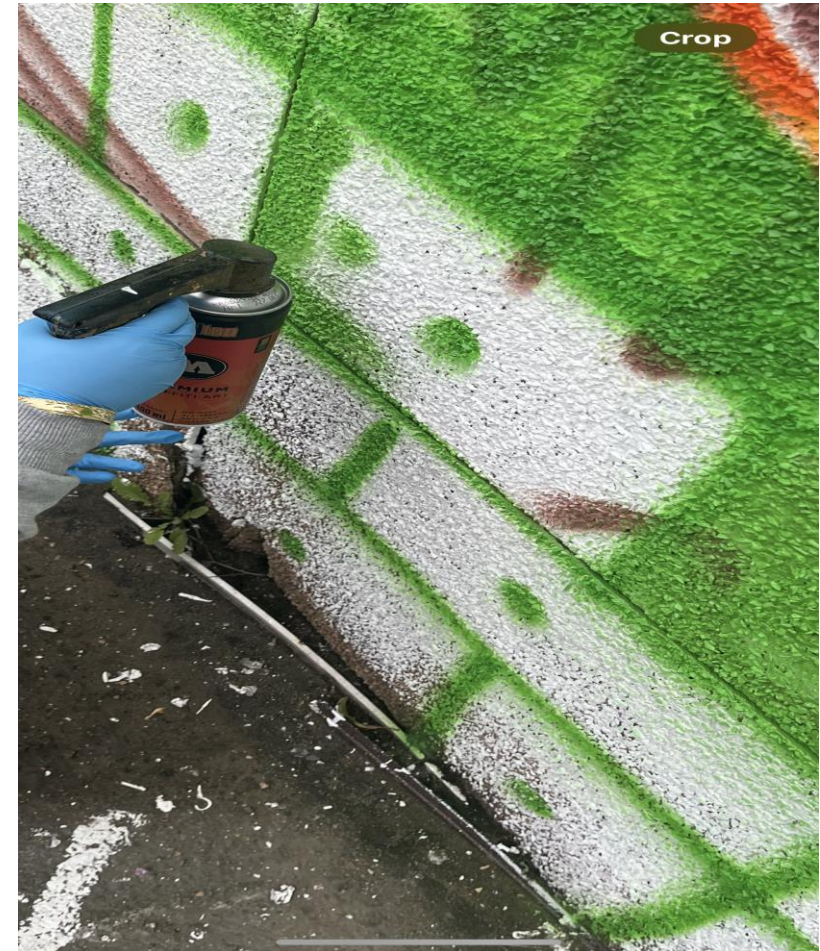
Immunisation campaigns

- Mass Vaccination Covid/ Flu for community members
- Immunisation catch up

Vaccination Given	Vaccinations Received
Td/IPV BOOSTERIX - In pregnancy	1
QIVc flu - In pregnancy	1
Shingles	1
Pneumococcal (pneumovax) - 65yr +	1
QIVr - Flu vaccine for 65yr +	1
Td / IPV Revaxis	18
MenACWY Meningococcal A,C,W,Y groups	17
HPV Human papillomavirus	11
Nasal flu	18
MMR, Measles, Mumps and Rubella	1

Arts in Health Carmarthenshire

- Funded by Art Council for Wales
- Youth Health team
- Smoking cessation
- Public health midwives
- Celebration and health event



Arts in Health Pembrokeshire

- Funded by Arts Council for Wales
- Smoking cessation
- Ten of us
- Unpaid carers
- Improvement in wellbeing





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feedback

"I didnt know that vaping could make my heart palpitate as I didnt know that it is a stimulant. I will look at cutting down in the evenings"

"One lady said I need to give up but didnt know how to as I have to have surgery in the next few months. now i know i can get help and support with giving up. Thank you"

"I think we need to explain how important that people have their smear tests but I worry that some people dont get it done from our community."



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Awareness raising

- Training sessions for Health Board colleagues
- Travellers Times in Health Board libraries
- Lunch and learn training sessions
- Roma flag flown at hospital sites





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Future plans

- Eastern European Roma
- Showman's Guild
- Increased engagement with families in “bricks and mortar”



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Prifysgol
Hywel Dda



Telling our own stories: alcohol use in Roma, Gypsies, Travellers and Boaters



Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

Professor Louise Condon
Dr Menna Price
Suzannah Hargreaves
Dr Filiz Celik

Denise Barry
Jolana Curejova
Leeanne Morgan
Sam Worrall



Roma, Gypsies and Travellers



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Swansea University

‘Roma’ often includes English, Welsh and Scottish Gypsies, Irish Travellers, as well as Roma people from a variety of European counties – shared history of nomadism, values

Irish Travellers and Gypsies were specifically included as an ethnic group in the 2011 Census (in one category)

Roma people are no longer officially described as Gypsies in continental Europe as the word has become associated with racial abuse but they are included in this ethnic group

Poorer health status and higher risk of mortality than other socio-economically matched comparison groups (Van Cleemput & Parry 2001, Parry et al 2007)

Highest levels of discrimination in UK (EHRC 2018)



Boaters

- Often grouped with GRT - shared nomadism, but a distinct group
- Boaters are among the most nomadic of New Travellers (NB waterways regulations)
- Many adopt lifestyle, some others second generation
- Very little is known about this community



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Identity



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'How do I know that I am Roma? Well, my mother, my father, all of us are Roma...I speak Romani since my childhood; I grew up among the Roma.' Roma, F

'A Gypsy. And I'm Welsh...so it's your heritage. So, it's about family and it's just things gets passed down through the times and then that becomes what you do.' Gypsy, F

'I started to recognise kind of different ethnic groups when I was probably around seven or eight maybe. People talk about Gypsies, Travellers and stuff, I didn't really know what it was about but then at the same time I knew that me and my family were all different to the people I went to school with...I kind of knew there was a difference between me, my family, my community and everyone else.' Irish Traveller, M

- *'So, I first moved on to the canal a little over five years ago. I first felt a member of the community immediately, because that's what it's like round here.'* Boater, F



Why explore alcohol use in RGT&Bs?

Little is known about alcohol use in RGT&B communities in the UK (NB lack of data)

Disadvantaged populations have higher rates of alcohol related death and hospitalisation.

BME people- lower alcohol use but more risk of harm if experiences of multiple exclusion, reduced access to services, gendered beliefs about alcohol use (Gleeson et al 2019).

“When providing support services, local authorities often fail to differentiate between Traveller groups with different needs, meaning that services are ill-equipped to meet their health and social needs.” (Women and Equalities Committee 2019)



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What is the TaSTe project about?

Aims

A participatory project to explore and raise awareness of alcohol use and harm among Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Boater communities

Objectives

- To explore cultural norms of alcohol use
- To identify similarities and differences in drinking cultures between both ethnic and nomadic GRT&B communities
- To explore perceptions of alcohol harm within both ethnic and nomadic communities
- To co-create digital stories for use as a resource to raise awareness about alcohol use and harm



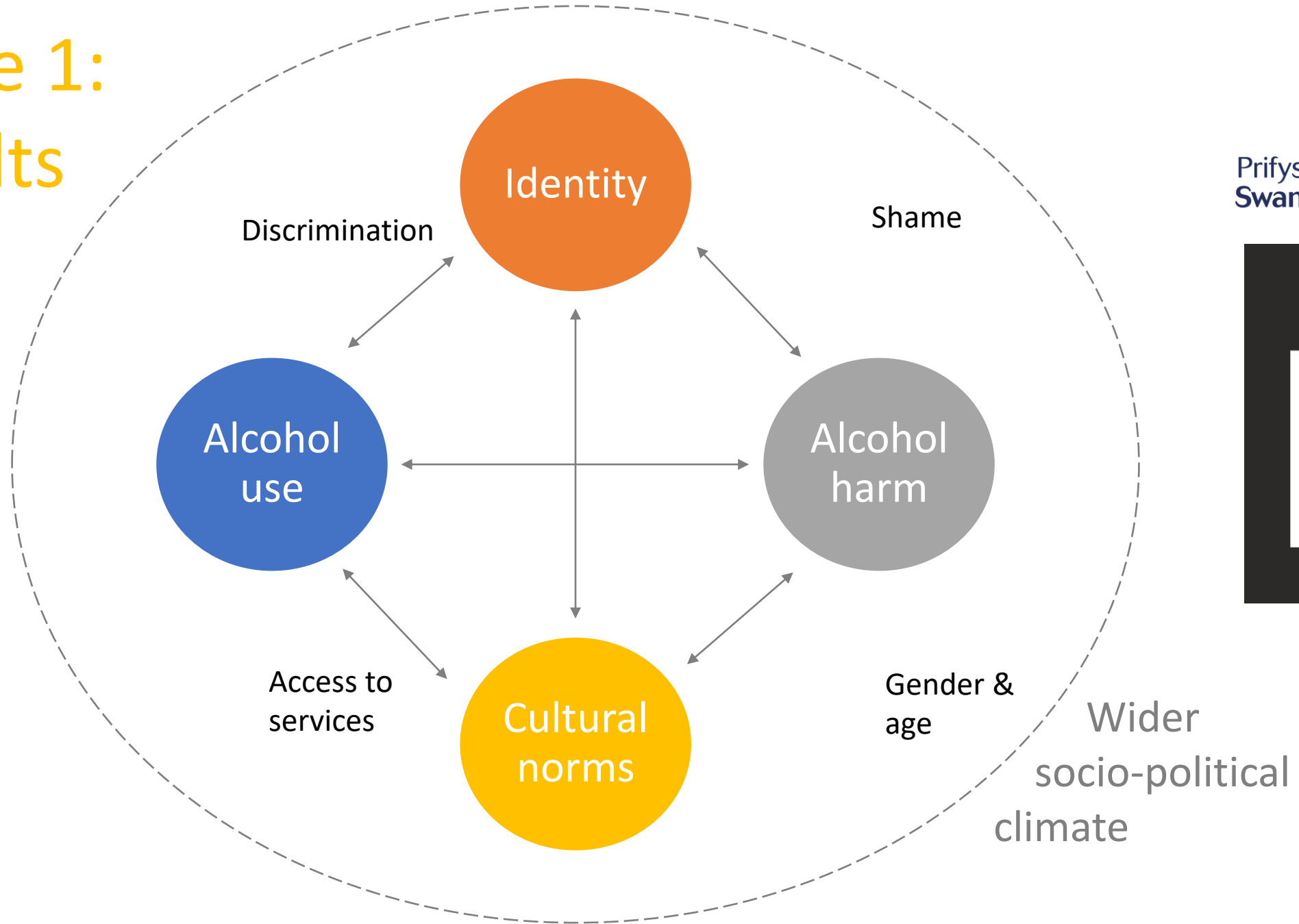
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Cultural/ethnic group	Age group (years)			Gender		Total
	16-24	25-49	50+	Female	Male	
Irish Traveller	1	2	1	2	2	4
Gypsy	-	4	3	6	1	7
Roma	1	3	3	5	2	7
Boater	2	4	2	4	4	8
Total	4 (15%)	13 (50%)	9 (35%)	17 (65%)	9 (35%)	26

Phase 1: Results



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Alcohol use is a part of group identity



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- Special occasions

'It is a Romani tradition; it is the most typical thing among the Roma, that they drink, celebrate, dance.' Roma1, Female, 50+

'If you're on holiday you could drink for a week...you wouldn't be looked at any different if you were to drink every night until it was over...whereas if you've done it where there was no occasion or anything going on, obviously you're automatically an alcoholic and nobody wants you in their company.' Traveller1, Female, 16-24

- Part of everyday life

'People turn up on the towpath and somebody's got an instrument and then it brings other people along and people are dancing, they're laughing and joking and drinking and it's just part of the life, you know the community we have.' Boater 4, Male 50+

'You found more jobs in a pub what you did in the labour exchange, plus you know who's getting married, who's dying.' Gypsy 4, Male, 50+

Moderate drinking



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- Alcohol integral to social lives BUT all wished to drink moderately
- Perceptions of moderation differed (ethnicity/culture/age)
- Unease/distaste for drunkenness
- Little understanding of the impact of regular heavy drinking
- No one mentioned units drunk per week
- Views that alcohol too cheap, shift from beer to wine, controls on marketing to young people (Gypsies)
- Awareness of the risks of alcohol dependency in all groups (NB particular concern about dependent children)

Diversity



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- Boaters and Roma considered young people drank less- not so Gypsies and Travellers
- Despite taboos about women's drinking, more social drinking among Gypsy and Traveller women
- Irish Travellers heavy drinking for prolonged periods (e.g. holidays, funerals)
- Boaters, NB injury

Discrimination



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- A couple of months ago I was in London with my Mum and Dad, and there was an Irish café ...we asked for a table, and the guy told us to get out, that they don't serve Travellers. Yes, I swear to God. And me, my three children and my Mum, my Dad and my two brothers had to walk out. **Traveller 1, Female, 16-24**
- Sometimes you're not let into pubs, yeah sometimes they call the police and...it's depressing you're not let in, and all your friends are in there. **Traveller 3, Male, 25-49**
- Do you know how it is in Slovakia? In Slovakia they would not let in the Romani boys. So outside in the park...in England here is good...life is good, nobody pulls away from you, because you are Roma. **Roma 3 Male, 25-49**

Access to services



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- All focused on the GP
- No one knew about self-referral to services
- Family often not helpful
- Gypsies, Roma and Travellers = shame
 - NB manly men who can manage their drinking/well behaved women
- Boaters = difficulties in registration/lack of address/long way to services

Sharing our findings: Digital stories

- We used the findings (themes) from the interviews to devise digital stories
- A technique developed by storyteller Prue Thimbleby

We held a **workshop** where we imagined the person (Gypsy, Roma, Traveller or Boater):

Peer researcher told the story in a naturalistic fashion (nothing written down)

Editing

Animation added later (Elly Morgan)



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Thank you



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