

# Improving Health Access for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities in Wakefield

November 2025

## INTRODUCTION

Health inequalities disproportionately affect Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the UK.

In response, Wakefield health and care organisations launched a Health Drop-In initiative, aiming to reduce barriers to care through culturally sensitive, community-based engagement.

## KEY ACTIVITIES

- **Vaccination Clinics:** On-site childhood immunisations have improved uptake.
- **Diabetic Eye Screening:** Information sessions address low attendance rates.
- **Digital Workshops:** Residents learn to use the NHS App, with features like talk-back and proxy access.
- **One-to-One Support:** Informal chats uncover hidden health concerns and build confidence.

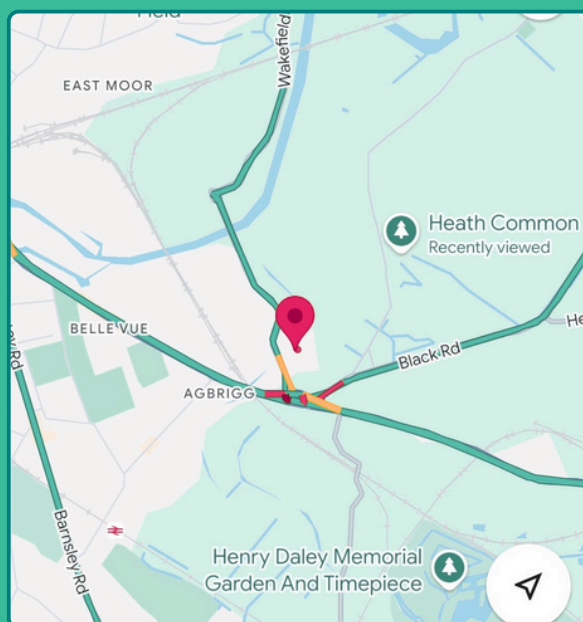
## KEY PARTNERS



## BACKGROUND

Wakefield's council-run traveller site is home to over 100 residents. Residents often face challenges that impact upon their wellbeing such as low literacy rates and mistrust of healthcare systems. These, in turn, impact on health outcomes, with the community as a whole often having poorer health outcomes and reduced life expectancy compared to the rest of the population.

The 2023 Wakefield Council Health Needs Assessment highlighted the need for tailored interventions and a Health Drop-In was created to provide consistent, on-site support and build trust through informal, person-centred care.



## PROJECT APPROACH

The Health Drop-In offers weekly sessions in the community building, supported by a visible health team presence around the site. This more relaxed setup encourages spontaneous conversations and builds trust. Key aims include:

- Reducing healthcare barriers through cultural understanding
- Increasing access to vaccinations, screenings, and chronic disease support
- Enhancing digital literacy for NHS services
- Collaborating with partners like LeedsGATE and Wakefield Council

## OUTCOMES

There has been a noticeable increase in attendance at the weekly sessions, as well as greater confidence among residents in discussing their health needs. Having the nursing team on site encourages both formal and informal conversations, uncovering hidden or previously unspoken health concerns.

Improved relationships have led to enhanced uptake of services, such as vaccinations and screenings, and more open engagement with healthcare professionals.

## LESSONS LEARNT



Cultural awareness and sensitivity is essential. Having an interest in the communities' heritage, traditions and beliefs is vital in understanding health needs.



Informal, casual conversations are key and provide a starting point to deeper health conversations.



A physical presence on site makes the health team more approachable.



Literacy levels amongst this community must be considered when sharing written information. Giving information in an easier to read format, in simple language and avoiding jargon is key. QR codes are a useful way to offer information in an accessible, flexible format.



Offering a verbal explanation alongside written information gives the resident the required information without causing embarrassment.



Giving time and consistency to this community, has grown engagement.

## CHILDHOOD VACCINATIONS IN FOCUS

### Collaboration with the Wakefield Childhood Vaccination team

The team offer their service on site, so the vaccinations can be given quickly, without the parent making an appointment with their GP.

Gypsy and Traveller children in the UK have significantly lower rates of childhood vaccination compared to the general population. Data shows that childhood vaccination uptake in Wakefield is low.

This may be because of cultural beliefs, communication issues, misconceptions etc.

Taking a personalised approach means:

- speaking individually to parents
- finding out the barriers to uptake and addressing some of the misconceptions around vaccinations
- making the information shared, easy to understand.
- giving basic information about outstanding vaccinations and emphasising the protection a child will develop by having a particular vaccination.

Crucially, this is done over several weeks, prior to the vaccinations themselves, giving parents time to consider the information shared.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

To replicate Wakefield's success:

- Maintain a consistent, visible presence in the community
- Build respectful, professional relationships grounded in cultural understanding
- Use creative communication formats - easy-read materials, visuals, and digital aids
- Partner with community organisations for holistic support

***Wakefield's Health Drop-In demonstrates how targeted, compassionate outreach can reduce health inequalities. By listening, adapting, and collaborating, healthcare services become more inclusive and effective for gypsy, Roma and traveller communities***

For more information contact:

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## CORE20PLUS5: REDUCING HEALTHCARE INEQUALITIES

The Wakefield Health Drop-In initiative is a practical embodiment of NHS England's Core20PLUS5 approach to tackling health inequalities.

By focusing on the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, identified as a priority group within the "PLUS" category, the project directly addresses barriers to care through culturally sensitive, community-based engagement. It also supports the programme's five clinical priorities, particularly in improving vaccination uptake, chronic disease management, and mental health support, demonstrating how localised, person-centred interventions can drive meaningful change in underserved populations.

### ROLE OF CORE20PLUS AMBASSADORS

Core20PLUS5 Ambassadors are NHS staff and partners who champion efforts to reduce healthcare inequalities across England.

Ambassadors have been through an application process and self-directed development programme before they graduate.

- Champion Health Equity
- Support Improvement Projects
- Provide Expertise
- Develop Skills and Knowledge
- Engage Communities

**Cherie Miller**, Health and Wellbeing Coach Trinity Health Group PCN, and **Katie Day** and **Craig Benn** from the PCN Digital Team are recent graduates of the programme.

**Congratulations to you all on your achievements!**

## More about the CORE20PLUS5

### Purpose:

- a national NHS England framework designed to reduce healthcare inequalities across England by targeting specific population groups and clinical priorities.

### CORE20:

- Refers to the most deprived 20% of the population, identified using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). These communities often face the greatest barriers to accessing healthcare.

### PLUS:

- Locally identified groups who experience poorer health outcomes such as:
  - Ethnic minority communities
  - People with learning disabilities or autism
  - Individuals with multiple long-term conditions
  - Inclusion health groups (e.g. homeless people, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, sex workers, vulnerable migrants, people in contact with the justice system)

### The '5' Clinical Priorities

Areas where accelerated improvement is needed:

- Maternity
- Severe Mental Illness (SMI)
- Chronic Respiratory Disease
- Early Cancer Diagnosis
- Cardiovascular Disease (Hypertension & Lipids)

