



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Chief Medical Officer
Professor Chris Whitty KCB FMedSci*

14 June 2022

Dear Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top,

Thank you for your letter regarding Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities. Dr de Gruchy and I completely agree that the poor health outcomes and reduced life expectancy experienced by these groups is a long-standing, significant issue and one which needs to be addressed.

In response to your first question, please be assured that we recognise the importance of improving outcomes for GRT communities within the wider Levelling Up agenda. OHID considers these communities alongside other ethnic minority groups when assessing health inequalities.

Regarding your second question on the need to disaggregate statistics around GRT health outcomes, we agree this would be useful. The importance of this was highlighted when analysing the COVID-19 vaccine uptake data; we were able to see the poor uptake rate within GRT groups. I have written to Sir Ian Diamond, the UK's National Statistician, to raise the importance of disaggregating data on this group. Sir Ian has confirmed that that ONS are actively working to address this.

Your third and fourth questions have been answered by the relevant OHID policy team – please see their responses attached. I hope you find these helpful.

Finally, it is worth noting that many of the challenges experienced by GRT communities fall outside the remit of DHSC. For example, access to GPs comes under NHSEI (I have copied this letter to the National Medical Director for NHSEI for information) and housing comes under DLUHC (noting you also sent your letter to the Secretary of State).

Thank you again for raising this important topic.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Chris Whitty KCB FMedSci
Chief Medical Officer for England.**

3. What role will the new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities play in addressing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people's inequalities of health outcomes?

OHID works to improve the nation's health so that everyone can expect to live more of life in good health, focusing on those groups and areas where health inequalities have greatest effect. We have committed to publishing a Health Disparities White Paper (HDWP) later this year, which will set out how OHID will take further action to address issues faced by inclusion health groups, including the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

We are currently working with the Roma Support Group (part of the Health and Wellbeing Alliance) and NHS England to develop health guidance for healthcare workers who support Roma communities. The guidance is being produced with representatives from the Roma community and will be made available on the Migrant Health Guide later this year.

4. What emphasis should the Government and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities put on designing preventative services to improve health outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people?

The creation of OHID put health promotion, prevention, and the reduction of disparities in health outcomes at the heart of DHSC. The HDWP will set out action to reduce the gap in health outcomes between different places and communities across the country, so that people's backgrounds do not dictate their prospects for a healthy life ahead of them.

A decent home can promote good health and protect people from illness or harm and, conversely, multiple physical and mental health issues are associated with the quality of our housing. The Government has been working to improve outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, but we recognise that we need to go further. That is why the Government has launched £10 million of capital funding for 2022/23 on 20 March 2022, to support local authorities in building new and refurbished transit and permanent traveller sites; and provide temporary stopping places and facilities for travellers.