

PRESS RELEASE

Gypsy, Traveller and Roma HEALTH & WELLBEING DAY

Over 100 attendants gathered at Stopsley Baptist Church for Luton Traveller Interagency Forum's first Gypsy, Traveller and Roma Health & Wellbeing Day, on Friday 9th July 2010. The Forum was established in 2009 to raise the profile of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, increase access to services and ensure greater involvement in decision making. As these communities have significantly poorer health status and significantly more self-reported symptoms of ill-health than other UK-residents, the Health & Wellbeing Day was considered an important step forward to better health, whilst encouraging the communities to take a more active role in the Forum.

Council Leader Hazel Simmons opened the event, followed by a series of short presentations and demonstrations relating to first aid, child and fire safety. Running alongside the presentations, were free health checks and haircuts and access to a wide variety of information stalls from Benefits Advice to Healthy Eating. The highlights of the day were lively displays of Roma dancing and a chip pan fire being extinguished.

Council Leader Hazel Simmons said: I was very pleased to be asked to open this very important event. There is growing concern about the health needs of Gypsies and Travellers that is currently not being addressed properly. Events like this provide the opportunity for Travellers to learn what services are currently available and for service providers to discuss their health needs with them and also how best to provide services to address their needs. Well done to all involved in the event.

For more information on Luton Traveller Interagency Forum, please contact Noelette Hanley at Luton Irish Forum on 01582 720 447/ 07934 442 861 or by email to noelette@lutonirishforum.org.

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Notes

1. Gypsy Travellers have significantly poorer health status and significantly more self-reported symptoms of ill-health than other UK-resident, English speaking ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged white UK residents. Using standardised measures (EQ5D, HADS anxiety and depression) as indicators of health, Gypsy Travellers have poorer health than that of their age sex matched comparators. Self reported chest pain, respiratory problems, and arthritis were also more prevalent in the Traveller group. For Gypsy Travellers, living in a house is associated with long term illness, poorer health state and anxiety. Those who rarely travel have the poorest health. (Parry et al, 2004)
2. Luton Traveller Interagency Forum includes the Equality and Diversity Team, Luton Borough Council's Travellers Liaison Officer, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator and Planning Officer, Luton Police Community safety Officer, Reverend Martin Burrell, Luton Irish Forum and Irish Traveller Movement in Britain.
3. Other agencies represented were as follows: Adult Community Learning, Barnfield College, Victim Support, Age Concern, Advocacy Alliance, Children's Link, CAN, MIND, ASC, Air Alert, Luton & District Amnesty, Beds & Luton Fire Service, Safe at Home, Play Rangers, British Red Cross and HMP Woodhill. Luton Borough Council was very well represented by its Carers, Supporting People, Personalisation,

Homeless, Dental Health Promotion, Community Food, Community Cohesion and Safe at Home Teams.

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