

Culturally Competent Care Services – Key Considerations for Engagement with Gypsy and Traveller Carers



- Recognise that many women do not see themselves as carers. Caring for older family members is viewed as a normal part of life and family responsibility (“the circle of life”), rather than a distinct role or burden.
- Respect family hierarchy and decision-making structures. Elders often hold authority. Engagement is more successful when approached via trusted younger family members first.
- Trust is personal and earned. Be genuine, patient, and transparent about your role and intentions. build trust slowly and consistently
- Acknowledge historical trauma and mistrust of services. Past experiences with social care (especially child removal) shape current fears.
- Respect strong expectations of privacy. Among Gypsy and Traveller communities, asking for help may be seen as exposing private family matters and bringing shame on the wider family.
- Explain clearly why information is being asked for.
- Ask rather than assume. Simple, honest questions are often better received than “professional curiosity.”
- Involve family members appropriately. Multiple relatives present is often a sign of respect and support, not interference.
- Be culturally aware and non-judgemental. Engage with community organisations and partners to seek advice and guidance on cultural nuances and culturally appropriate practices.
- Understand traditions around gender roles, caring expectations, and community life without stereotyping.
- Focus on practical, acceptable support
- Challenge internal biases and assumptions
- Be open-minded about living conditions, family dynamics, and what “good care” looks like.

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DON'T:

- Don't assume carers want or will accept formal support services. Especially personal care or care homes, which may be viewed as shameful or a last resort.
- Don't go straight to older family members without guidance. This can be seen as intrusive. Bypassing family channels risks immediate disengagement.
- Don't ask about personal or family matters unnecessarily. Casual questioning can be interpreted as surveillance or judgement.
- Don't dismiss fears of social care involvement and previous, including previous experiences that may have been negative.
- Don't use jargon and complicated language
- Avoid framing communities as "hard to reach" or "non-compliant."
- Don't treat the community as homogenous
- Don't apply rigid, 'by-the-book' approaches. Flexibility and relational engagement are often more effective than strict procedural adherence.
- Don't question family presence without explanation. If limits are needed (e.g. in hospital settings), explain respectfully and ask, don't order.
- Don't assume lack of engagement equals lack of need
- Many carers experience significant strain but cope silently due to cultural expectations.