Abstract

Social work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and families has received scant attention, for a variety of reasons, including long-term historical and societal factors. Consequently, the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in the care system have largely been overlooked. In this complex area of social work, how can practitioners work effectively and constructively with these communities? How can we better understand Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures and traditions, and develop culturally competent practice to inform work with these groups? How can we improve the outcomes for looked after children from these families, and help foster carers and adopters to provide the best placements for them? This guide explores: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, their ethnicities, cultures and traditions; The legal context and implications for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in care; The social policy context, including issues surrounding accommodation, education, health and criminal justice; Culturally competent and antidiscriminatory casework, including the practicalities of engaging with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children’s experiences of the care system; How to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children to have positive views of themselves and to be proud of their identity and heritage; Placement issues, including the assessment and support of family, friends, foster carers and adopters.
Consequently, the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in the care system have largely been overlooked. In this complex area of social work, how can practitioners work effectively and constructively with these communities? How can we better understand Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures and traditions, and develop culturally competent practice to inform work with these groups? How can we improve the outcomes for looked after children from these families, and help foster carers and adopters to provide the best placements for them?

Parker-Jenkins, M, Hewitt, D, Brownhill, S & Sanders, T 2007, ‘Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in the U.K’, in Aiming high, SAGE Publications Ltd, London, pp. 55-77, viewed 4 November 2018, doi: 10.4135/9781446214213.n5. Parker-Jenkins, Marie, et al. “Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children in the U.K.” Aiming High. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007. I think all travelling children should go to school, they will learn a lot more than staying in one place and not getting out. They need to get an education because the world is changing. The term Gypsy, Roma and Traveller is a collective term used to describe a wide variety of cultural and ethnic groups. There are many ways in which ethnicity may be established: these include language, nomadic way of life, and crucially, self-identification. Defining a person as a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller is a matter of self-ascription and does not exclude those who are living in houses. Ethnic identity is not lost when members of the communities settle, but it continues and adapts to the new circumstances. This article provides schools with a brief background to the history and culture of each group.