Dear Colleague

GYPSY/TRAVELLER

PATIENT RECORD OF PERSONAL HEALTH

Purpose

1. I enclose a copy of a Patient Record of Personal Health for Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland, which has been developed by the National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health (NRCEMH) in close consultation with the Gypsy/Traveller community and health professionals. The information carried within the handheld record should improve the continuity of care for Gypsy/Travellers and thus help in addressing their serious health inequalities.

2. The NRCEMH are distributing copies of the Patient Record of Personal Health to each NHS Board area for onward distribution to appropriate health professionals and primary care settings.

Action

3. Chief Executives of NHS Boards should ensure that arrangements are put in place to ensure that the Gypsy/Traveller Patient Record of Personal Health is deployed effectively and efficiently and that the guidance in the Annex of this letter is widely disseminated and adopted across their organisation.

Yours sincerely

PAM WHITTLE
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

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DIRECTOR OF NURSING
AND PATIENT FOCUS AND
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
GYPSY/TRAVELLER: PATIENT RECORD OF PERSONAL HEALTH

1. The Patient Record of Personal Health (PRPH) has been developed to assist Gypsy/Travellers access health care, particularly when they are travelling. The PRPH has been produced in the form of an A5 booklet contained within a yellow plastic envelope. The information carried within the handheld record is designed to improve the continuity of care for Gypsy/Travellers.

2. However, the handheld record will only improve the health of Gypsy/Travellers if it is widely adopted within the gypsy/traveller community and readily accepted by the NHS. This guidance is intended to promote the use of the PRPH.

3. It will be important to review the effectiveness of the PRPH after a reasonable period of usage and the views of Gypsy/Travellers and NHS staff on this should be canvassed in early 2007. Local progress in implementing this guidance should therefore be evaluated with the full involvement of representatives of your local Gypsy/Traveller community by 31 December 2006 for submission to the address below. The National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health (NRCEMH) are developing a template for this evaluation which will be issued shortly.

Health needs of Gypsy/Travellers

4. The most recent research conducted in the United Kingdom on the health status of Gypsy/Travellers is a 2004 study by Sheffield University for the Department of Health. This comprehensive study of ‘The Health Status of Gypsies and Travellers in England’¹ showed that Gypsy/Travellers suffer significant health inequalities, even when compared with other socially deprived or excluded groups or other minority ethnic groups. The most marked inequality is in terms of self-reported anxiety, respiratory problems including asthma and bronchitis, and chest pain. The excess prevalence of miscarriages, stillbirths, neonatal deaths and premature death of older offspring is also conspicuous. The National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health (NRCEMH) is currently undertaking a health needs assessment of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland which will help guide our future work.

Policy Background

5. In December 2001, the Scottish Executive Health Department published the Fair for All report, a stocktake of the services NHS Boards throughout Scotland were providing for black and minority ethnic communities. This report provided the cornerstone for a programme of work that encourages the NHS to consider sensitively the specific health, cultural and religious needs of minority groups, including Gypsy/Travellers.


¹ www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/sections/ir/library/publications.html
7. The NRCEMH and representatives of the Gypsy/Traveller community carried out a community consultation process which led to the development of the PRPH.

Guidance on implementation of the PRPH

8. The Patient Record of Personal Health is intended to improve the continuity of care for Gypsy/Travellers. It is anticipated that most Scottish Gypsy/Travellers will carry the PRPH, especially when they are away from their home base, travelling for social, business or other reasons.

9. Gypsy/Traveller children should also have a ‘Personal Child Health Record’ (the Red Book). This may be kept in the zipped pocket of the PRPH’s plastic envelope: as there are sometimes gaps in school attendance by Gypsy/Traveller children, the PRPH may become the most used record after the age of 5.

10. The patient should complete the personal information inside the front cover, perhaps with assistance from health workers, local authority or voluntary sector outreach workers. Health professionals should note the specific instructions inside the front cover of the PRPH.

11. The PRPH highlights the need to agree a preferred method of communication with each individual –the PRPH’s first page allows the ‘Preferred Method of Communication’ to be recorded. The choice of ‘oral’ or ‘text’ communication should guide the health professional being consulted by the patient on his/her general approach to explaining and recording procedures, treatment or medication.

12. Information on ‘Allergies or other critical Health Information, Blood Group, Summary of General Health and Medication’ should normally be completed by the GP with whom the patient is registered. However, health professionals should use the opportunity of each consultation to consider whether an update of the information is necessary.

13. Pages 4-7 of the PRPH provide space for GP Practices to record the registration of the patient: this is vital information if the patient moves from the area before treatment is completed and registers with a GP Practice elsewhere in Scotland.

14. Pages 10-11 are included to encourage Gypsy/Travellers to take up opportunities for Personal Health screening, such as Well Man or Woman Clinics, and thus become more proactive about their health. Health practitioners should be aware that some Gypsy/Travellers may have cultural, gender specific reservations about some health screening and sensitivity is recommended.

15. Pages 12-16 are available for recording notes of consultations. The patient should always be consulted on what is written here and their wishes respected. Consultation with Gypsy/Travellers on the issue of confidentiality during the development of the PRPH suggested that there was a wide variety of views on what should be recorded. However, to ensure continuity of care, it is vital that the practice address and telephone number be recorded, particularly when treatment is ongoing.
16. Pages 17-20 enable dentists and other health professionals to make specific notes on consultations: **the patient should always be consulted on what is written here and their wishes respected.**

Support for Gypsy/Travellers and Professionals

17. The implementation of the PRPH will be supported by communications and training directed at Gypsy/Traveller users and health professionals. Details of this can be obtained from the address below.

Evaluation

18. Local progress in implementing this guidance should be evaluated with the full involvement of representatives of your local Gypsy/Traveller community for submission to the address below by 31 December 2006. The NRCEMH are developing a template for this evaluation which will be issued shortly.

19. Board evaluation of the implementation of the PRPH should then be sent to:

Ms Carrie McNeil  
National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health  
NHS Health Scotland  
Clifton House  
3 Clifton Terrace  
GLASGOW  
Telephone: 0141 - 300 1044  
Carrie.McNeil@health.scot.nhs.uk

by 31 December 2006.

Further copies of the PRPH are available from the same address. **If you do not require to keep the enclosed copy of the PRPH it can be returned to the same address.**