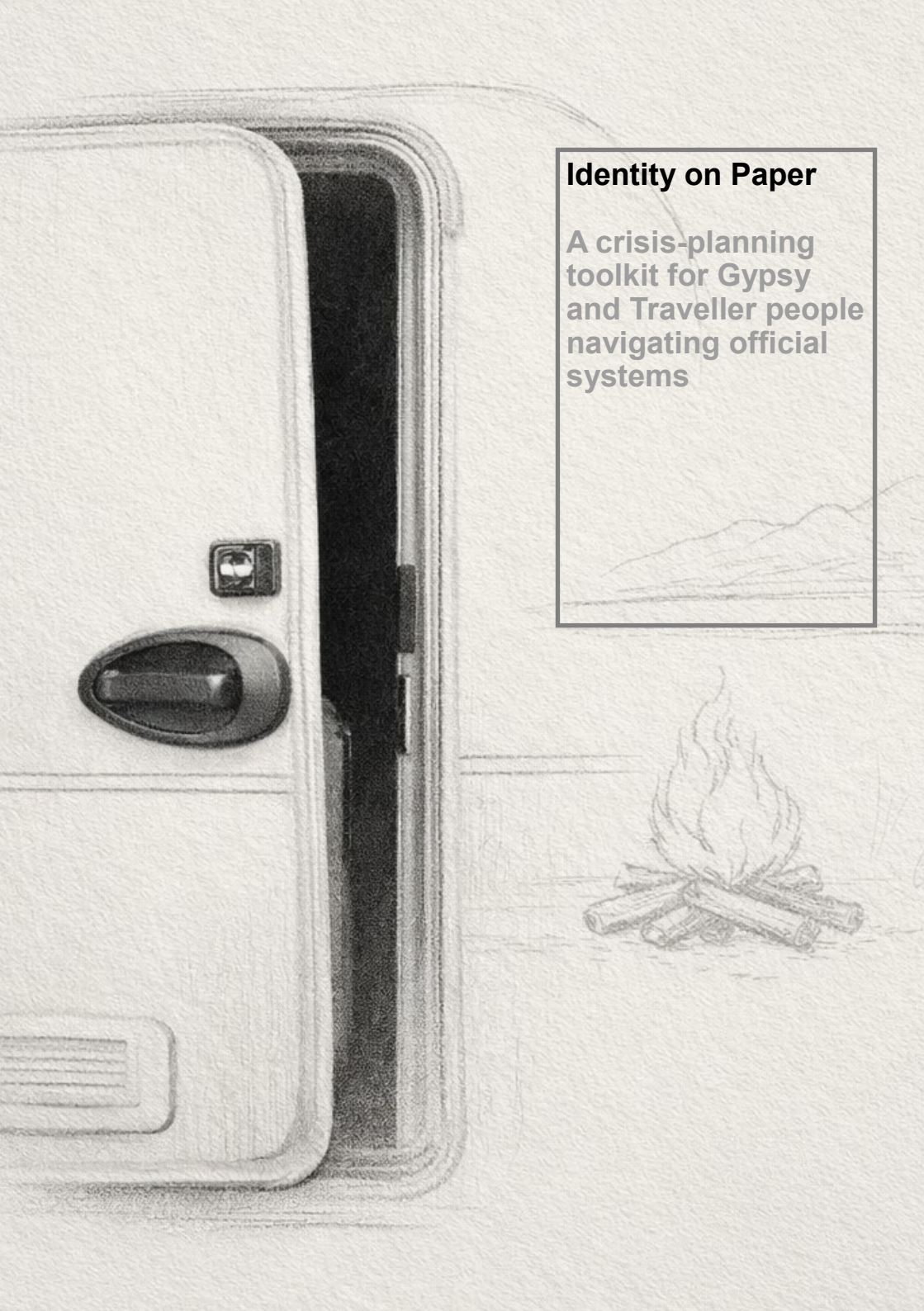




Identity on Paper

**A crisis-planning
toolkit for Gypsy
and Traveller people
navigating official
systems**



Your Box Was Not Built for Me

I am not Other.

I am not Refused to say.

I am not your administrative shrug or your missing tick.

It is not my fault that six hundred years of colonially inflicted trauma and state-sponsored violence do not fit inside your drop-down menu.

It is not my fault that your system was built to recognise only what it already understands, and nothing that unsettles it.

I am sorry my intergenerational trauma is not neatly tied up inside a Declined to say.

Sorry it spills out across generations, across sites, across policies that pretend neutrality while quietly doing harm.

Sorry it doesn't pause while you decide which box is least inconvenient.

You call this data.

I call it erasure.

My need to see the fields and the trees, to move, to breathe outside your walls, comes with a cost you never have to pay.

Higher suicide rates.

Poorer health outcomes.

Mistrust learned early and reinforced often.

And still you ask me to squeeze myself into White British like that will make me safer, like that will make the system kinder, like that will not follow me into misdiagnosis, missed patterns, late referrals, untreated pain.

Your box cannot contain me.

Your box was not built for me.

I am sorry if your eyes ache from rolling when you see my answer.

Sorry if your wrist hurts from scrolling past options that were never meant to include me anyway.

Sorry my existence interrupts your workflow.

But I am Romani. Romanichal.

And I will not be flattened into a category that erases my risk, my history, my children, my dead.

When you mislabel me, you do not just offend me.

You delay diagnosis.

You miss rare conditions.

You misunderstand my mental health.

You underestimate my suicide risk.

PROUD
GYPSY
TRAVELLER



You write care plans that do not fit my life and then wonder why I disengage.

When you erase me, you make the crisis worse.

So I have learned to plan for harm, not safety.

I have learned to pause before forms, to read every question like a threat assessment.

I have learned to write myself into margins, free-text boxes, comment fields, anywhere your system leaves a crack.

I have learned scripts, because survival requires rehearsal.

I have learned when to assert my identity loudly and when to keep it folded in my pocket until I am safer.

I have learned to ask where my name appears on the record, and to document refusals like evidence, because it is.

This is crisis planning.

Not fire exits and evacuation routes, but how to stay alive inside paperwork that was never designed for us.

Do not tell me this is just administration.

Do not tell me it doesn't affect care.

Do not tell me the data isn't there when you are the one refusing to record it.

I am not asking for special treatment.

I am asking to be named correctly.

I am Romani.

I am not Other.

I am not a refusal.

I am not your inconvenience.

And I will not disappear just because your boxes cannot hold me.

This poem is the entry point to the toolkit that follows. It names the harm that happens before any service is delivered - on forms, in databases, and through mislabelling that carries real health and mental health consequences. The crisis-planning tools that follow translate this reality into practical strategies: how to assert identity safely, how to correct records, how to reduce harm when systems fail to recognise identity, and how to plan for care in environments where misidentification can mean late diagnosis, missed risk, or disengagement. Read together, the poem explains why the toolkit is necessary, and the toolkit shows how people survive anyway.

Identity on Paper

A crisis-planning toolkit for Gypsy and Traveller people navigating official systems

This toolkit focuses on three distinct ethnic groups:

- Romani Gypsy (including Romanichal)
- Irish Traveller
- Scottish Gypsy/Traveller

These identities have different histories, cultures and experiences and should not be treated as interchangeable. Recording systems vary between services and nations. Where an exact category is not available, ask for your self-defined identity to be recorded as accurately as the system allows and, where possible, in free text.

1) Why identity erasure can become a health and safety issue

When a person's ethnicity is repeatedly mislabelled, collapsed into a broad category or left unrecorded, the immediate harm may feel administrative. Over time, however, poor recording makes inequalities harder to see, weakens accountability and can add to mistrust or disengagement.

In practice, people described:

- being recorded as "Other" when that was not how they identified
- different Gypsy and Traveller identities being collapsed together
- having to correct the same information repeatedly
- feeling unseen or mistrustful after repeated errors

Gypsy and Traveller communities experience serious health inequalities, and NHS England has identified poor-quality ethnicity recording as one barrier to understanding and addressing unequal access, experience and outcomes.

Accurate identity recording can help services:

- see who is being underserved
- identify unequal access, experience and outcomes
- understand patterns across services and over time
- design and evaluate more responsive services
- reduce repeated misidentification in a person's record

Ethnicity is context, not a diagnosis. Clinical and mental-health risk must always be assessed person by person; accurate recording should support care, not stereotype it.

Romani

leave



The problem with official forms

Most official forms:

- Do not list Gypsy or Traveller identities at all
- Offer only one combined option
- Treat ethnicity as optional or irrelevant
- Fail to separate the three recognised ethnic groups

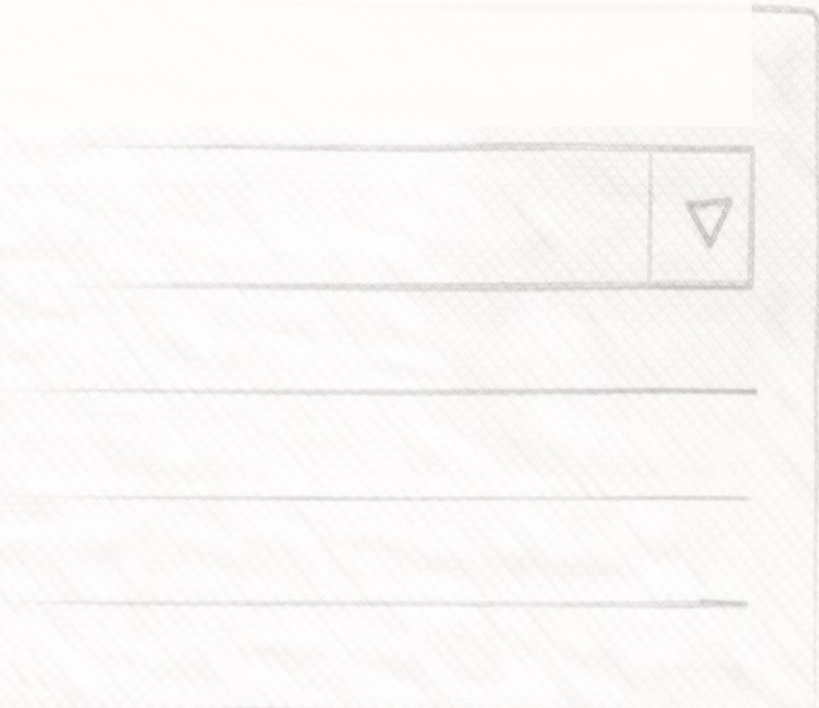
This erasure hides inequality and allows systems to claim they “don’t have the data,” while harm continues unchecked.

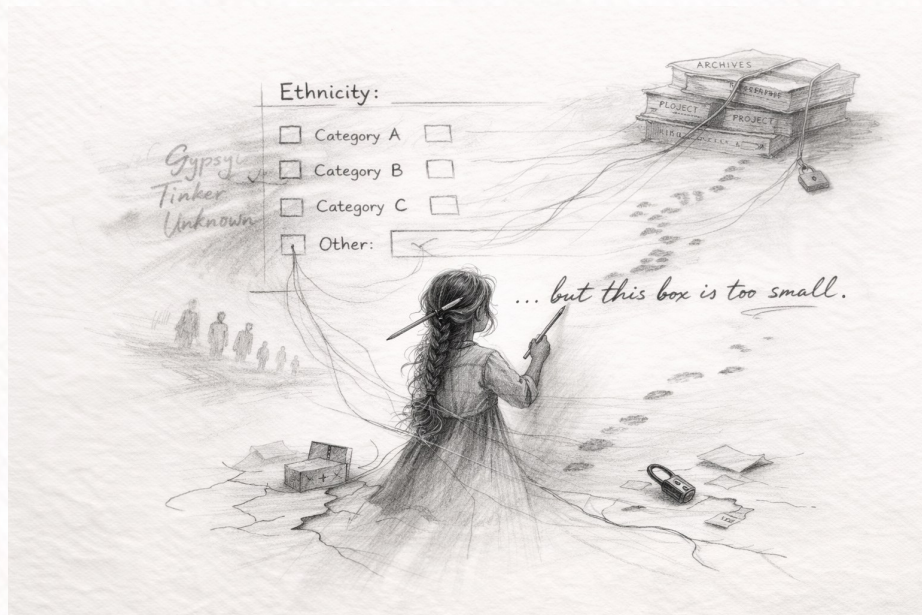
Disaggregation matters.

Romani Gypsy, Irish Traveller, and Scottish Gypsy/Traveller communities have different:

- Health patterns
- Migration histories
- Relationships with services
- Experiences of discrimination

Lumping us together makes accurate care and accountability impossible.

A faint, stylized illustration of a document or form. It features a header section at the top, followed by several horizontal lines for text entry. On the right side of the header, there is a small square button with a downward-pointing triangle icon. The entire illustration is rendered in a light, sketchy style.



	▼

Names, history and irony

The word Gypsy has long been linked to a mistaken belief that Romani people came from Egypt. For many English Romani Gypsies, Romani and Romanichal are important identity terms.

There is a difficult irony in official recording: sometimes a person accepts an imperfect label because it is the closest option available. Being partially recognised can feel preferable to disappearing into “Other”, “Unknown” or “Not stated”.

The aim of this toolkit is not to force one label onto everyone. It is to make self-identification visible and to reduce avoidable erasure.

~~Egyptian~~

~~Gypsy?~~

Romani

Irish Travellers and Scottish Gypsy/Travellers have their own distinct ethnic identities, histories, and cultures, which are also frequently misunderstood or erased.

This toolkit exists to move beyond that — toward being named correctly, as who we say we are.

~~Egyptian~~

~~Gypsy?~~

Romani

Identity statements - adapt these to your own identity

Romani Gypsy / Romanichal

I am a Romani Gypsy (Romanichal). Please record my ethnicity as accurately as your system allows and do not replace it with "Other" or "Unknown" without checking with me.

Irish Traveller

I am an Irish Traveller. Please record my ethnicity accurately and do not assume it is interchangeable with other Gypsy or Traveller identities.

Scottish Gypsy/Traveller

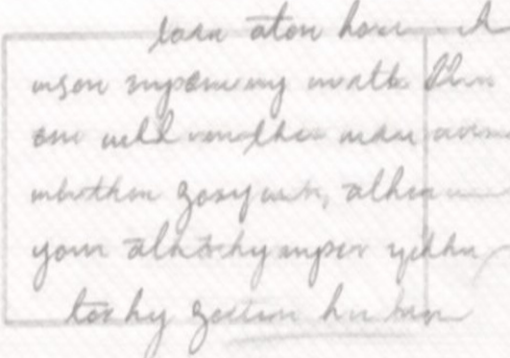
I am a Scottish Gypsy/Traveller. Please record my ethnicity accurately and do not replace it with a different identity.

If the system only has a combined category

Please tell me which category you are using and add my exact self-defined ethnicity in free text if the system allows.

Health-specific statement

Accurate recording matters because it helps services understand inequalities and my experience of care. Please still assess my needs as an individual.



Handwritten text in a box, likely a signature or note. The text is written in cursive and appears to be a mix of English and possibly a different language or dialect. The text is: "I am a Romani Gypsy (Romanichal). Please record my ethnicity accurately and do not replace it with 'Other' or 'Unknown' without checking with me."

Crisis planning in health and mental-health settings

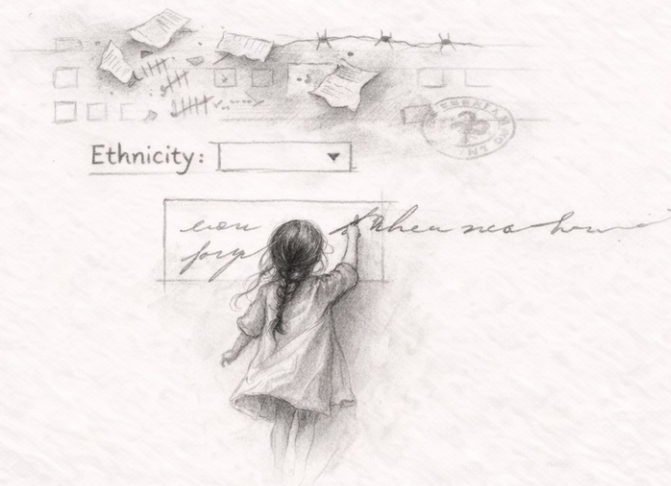
Misidentification in health care can mean:

- symptoms being dismissed
- family health patterns being missed
- cultural stress and discrimination not being recognised
- mental health risk being underestimated

What to do in the moment

- Ask staff to record your ethnicity in writing
- Use free-text boxes to state it clearly
- Ask where it appears on your record

"Please show me where my ethnicity has been recorded on my notes."



Scripts for correcting staff and systems

When the form does not list you

"My ethnicity is not listed. Please use the closest appropriate option and record my exact self-defined ethnicity in free text if possible."

When identities are lumped together

"Romani Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Scottish Gypsy/Traveller are not interchangeable. Please record the identity I have given you."

When staff say it does not matter

"Accurate ethnicity data helps services understand inequalities and my experience of care. Please record it as accurately as your system allows."

If Roma is not your identity

"I do not identify as Roma. Please correct my record to reflect the ethnicity I have given you and tell me where that correction will appear."

When the system cannot hold your exact identity

"Please tell me which code is being used and add my own wording in a note or free-text field if that is available."

Please correct.



Please correct.

Correcting records (plain language)

I am requesting that my record is corrected to reflect my self-identified ethnicity: Romani Gypsy / Irish Traveller / Scottish Gypsy/Traveller. Please remove any incorrect or combined categories and confirm where this has been updated.

If refused:

Please confirm in writing why this correction is being refused.

help



Coun

Safety note: choosing when to assert identity

Some people delay asserting identity due to fear of discrimination. That is not failure - it is survival.

Ask yourself:

- Will asserting my identity here improve my care?
- Do I need an advocate with me?
- Can I document it now and correct it later?





Where this can matter

GP / hospital

“Please record my self-defined ethnicity accurately. If the exact option is not available, tell me what code is being used and add my own wording if possible.”

Mental-health services

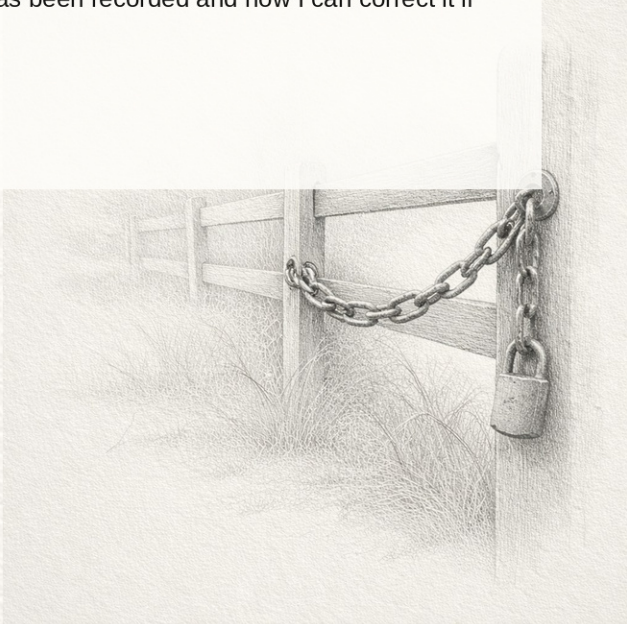
“My ethnicity and experiences of discrimination may be relevant context for trust and engagement. Please record them accurately, but assess my needs as an individual.”

School or children’s services

“Please record our family’s ethnicity as we describe it and do not substitute a different Gypsy or Traveller identity.”

Local authority / housing

“Please tell me how my ethnicity has been recorded and how I can correct it if the record is wrong.”



Closing statement

Romani Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Scottish Gypsy/Travellers should not have to disappear into “Other” simply because a form or database is not designed around their identity.

Accurate recording will not solve health inequality on its own. But without good data, services can miss patterns, hide unequal outcomes and repeatedly ask people to correct the same basic information.

We are distinct.

We should be visible.

Record us properly.



Crisis-planning table: identity and service risk

Setting	Possible harm	Why accurate recording helps	What to ask	Keep
GP / A&E	Repeated misidentification; unequal experiences hidden	Supports continuity and monitoring of inequalities	"Record my self-defined ethnicity accurately"	Date; staff name
Mental health	Discrimination or trust issues may be missed	Adds context without replacing individual assessment	"Please record my identity and relevant experiences"	Care plan / notes
Maternity	Barriers and unequal experiences may be invisible in data	Helps services monitor access and outcomes	"Please add my self-defined ethnicity to my notes"	Notes
Long-term care	Errors repeated across appointments or services	Improves continuity and data quality	"Please correct the record and confirm where"	Confirmation
End-of-life care	Identity or family wishes may be misunderstood	Supports respectful conversation; never assume wishes from ethnicity	"Please record my identity and my own care wishes separately"	Care plan

This table describes possible service risks, not automatic clinical consequences. Ethnicity should inform understanding of inequality and lived experience, never substitute for individual assessment.



About this resource

Produced through a small funded community research project by Proud Gypsy Traveller CIC in partnership with Story Of The Changing. It is a lived-experience resource about how inaccurate identity recording can affect visibility, trust and accountability.

It is not legal or clinical advice. Recording systems vary between services and across the UK. The aim is to help people ask how their ethnicity has been recorded, correct errors where possible, and make self-defined identity visible without treating ethnicity as a diagnosis.

Evidence note:

NHS England's 2025 Ethnicity Recording Improvement Plan identifies poor-quality ethnicity data as a barrier to understanding and addressing health inequalities.

