Access to health services for asylum seekers or refugee families.

Summary of the project and what we found out.

Why did we do this project?

- We are a group of parent carers, researchers, charity and NHS staff working together.
- This project aimed to find out what can make it difficult or what can help families from Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller heritage in North-West England to access health services for children who have an additional need or disability.
- We designed the study with the help of young people, parents and a community worker.

What did we do?

- Young people aged 16-18 years with additional needs shared their views in a group discussion at a local network meeting.
- Parent carers shared their views in interviews in their homes or at a local community centre.

Who did we hear from?

Young People
- 4 young people aged 16-18 years shared their views.
- All the young people were attending school or colleges.
- The young people had a range of additional needs.

Parent Carers
- 10 parents (1 father and 9 mothers) from 9 families shared their views
- The families were from Pakistan, Kurdistan, Spain, Kuwait, Bolivia, Israel or did not state their country of origin

What did we find out?

What were young peoples' experiences of accessing health care?

Young people told us;

- Appointments were difficult to access. They could wait for a long time to get an appointment.
- That language is a barrier to calling for an appointment and communicating their needs.
- Getting around hospitals was difficult due to a lack of signs and they could "get lost.."
- They often wanted another person with them to help them understand what was happening and what was being said in appointments.
- Being able to access letters on line or take letters to family and friends for translation was easier than appointments
- Health professionals were often rushed and this led to them feeling that professionals
  - did not care
  - didn't have time to listen or explain
- That if they asked too many questions, it sometimes felt as if staff were 'angry' at them.

> " Ringing the Dr is difficult, you are afraid you cannot get your needs through, particularly as English is not first language. "
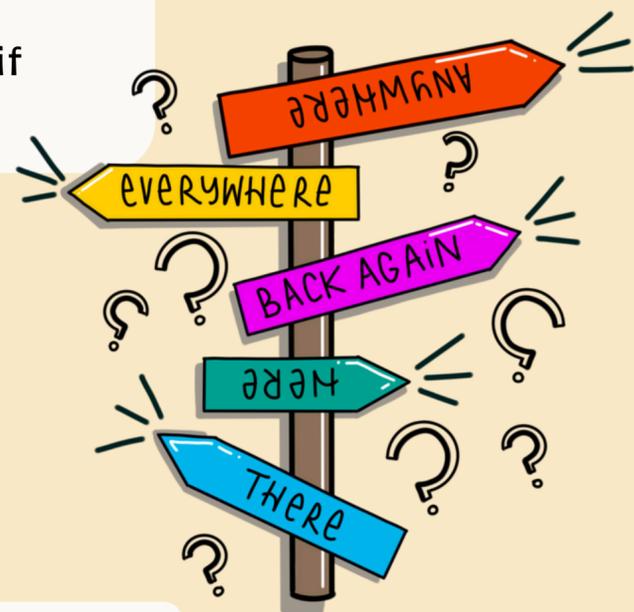
What were parent carers experiences of accessing health care?

Parent carers told us they;

- Struggled with health environments and trying to navigate complex services.
- Struggled with accessing services such as a dentists or GPs due to their refugee status.
- Described feeling rushed and not being heard in appointments.
- Experienced issues with language barriers due to poor access to interpreters and lack of translated leaflets.
- Felt that their child's diagnosis of neurodivergence was used to overshadow other concerns.

> " Because he's not registered with a dentist, whenever he has any dental issues, we need to call A&E, "

What was the impact of these experiences?

- Some families tried to access health services such as dentists privately.
- Some families attended the emergency department when their child was unwell as they were unsure what other services were available.
- Parent carers and young people felt excluded from struggled to access information about their health and appointments

What would help access to health services?

- Early diagnosis and interventions to help young peoples' confidence.
- Better health care professional training in neurodivergence, disability, and reasonable adjustments.
- Increased access to interpreters

What next?

We worked with 2 parents from this community to establish priorities for health services. They highlighted the following as important;

- Improved access to entitlements and funding and support for children with a disability to attend appointments
- Health professionals and services to improve communication with children, young people and families through access to interpreters and accessible health information and letters.
- Support to navigate healthcare systems and understand what is available and where.