

Unit 4: Lifestyle and Health

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Unit Objectives

- to familiarise healthcare staff with ways in which Roma lifestyle may impact on health
- To learn about the Roma's eating habits and general perceptions towards food
- To learn about the roles and impact of the older members of the community
- To learn about mental health issues that may be identified when working with the Roma

Introduction

'Health inequalities experienced by Roma people living in Europe presents a persisting challenge for health care programs. Research studies on Roma health conditions reveal that:

1

Roma people suffer from poorer health and unhealthier living conditions compared to majority populations,

2

better data are needed to explain the Roma health gap and design better interventions to reduce this gap, and

3

the poor health of Roma is closely linked to (but not entirely explained by) the social determinants of health.'

Research on Roma Health and Access to Healthcare: State of the Art and Future Challenges
October 5, 2011

<http://www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/roma>

Click on the following video clips to listen to each discussion. Please note that these are personal impressions and will not be applicable to every family or section of the Roma community. Look out for the recommendations at the end of each video.

Can you tell me about Roma food and how your eating habits have changed since your arrival in the UK?



How is mental health understood and what affects this understanding? Is there a level of stigma attached to it?



What roles do older people play in the Roma community and what are the implications of this for services?



Unit 4: Summary

1

Food plays a key social role in families from preparation to serving and eating. Some Roma foods are available in the UK.

2

Meat is a central part of the diet, although limited budgets may mean that families only eat meat once a week. Some research has shown an increase in fast food consumption on arrival in the UK.

3

Perceptions of mental health are heavily influenced by experiences in the recent past, for example in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania, where Roma children could only be educated in 'special schools'.

4

Awareness raising is fundamental to support people to understand mental health and the support available in the UK. In talking about mental health, be aware that many words or concepts have no direct translation or equivalent.

5

Older people may be more likely to view services with mistrust due to their broader experience of harsh treatment at the hands of authorities.

6

As their role in the community is to guide and advise, it is essential that older people are engaged and included in conversations about the role of services.