

Social Work Online Team Training (SWOTT) toolkit - Facilitator Notes

Strengthening social work practice with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

FACILITATOR NOTES: DARINA

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR IS:

- To encourage the social workers to share their thoughts about the case study.
- To facilitate discussion to identify the opportunities and challenges of this scenario.



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS TO ASK THE GROUP:

Question: What do we know about automatic prejudice, and how might pathologising and culturally relativist reactions determine the way that the assessment is carried out?

Answer: A pathologising approach might assume that the poor condition of the housing is 'normal' for Irish Traveller people. A culturally relativist approach might assume that social workers are not needed because the family prefer to 'look after their own'. To find the middle ground it is important to understand that arranging an urgent authorisation for Daria's hospital admission may be proportionate under these circumstances. There may be the need to test for a medical cause for the deterioration can be established. The impact of a deprivation of liberty on Darina and her family also needs to be fully understood so that automatic prejudice can be mitigated. Actions might include how to communicate complex legal safeguards and procedures in a clear and empathic way to secure Darina's human rights.

Pay attention to how Darina will be conveyed to hospital? Would an ambulance be arranged and if so, under what legal framework would she be transported? Could the family support which might be less restrictive therefore reducing restriction and highlighting the importance on working together with her family.

Should the Mental Health Act be considered with advice from an approved mental health professional (AMHP) who may also be a Best Interests Assessor? It's important for the BIA to understand Daria's experiences of antigypsyism as well as what's most important to Daria.

Cultural practices, including receiving personal care from women only, need to be communicated to the hospital and implemented. Can a close female relative accompany Darina? Is additional family support needed to ensure this can happen?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...



University of
Sheffield

Question: How would the Human Rights Act 1998, particularly Article 8, inform and support your assessment?

Answer: Article 8 protects the right to respect for private life, family life, home and correspondence (letters, telephone calls and emails, for example). It should be viewed by BIA's as a dynamic tool in advocating for resources to ensure compliance with the legislation. The right to 'private life and family life' means the right to live your family life privately, without government interference. While this is not an absolute right, any state interference must be proportionate in pursuit of legitimate aims, so practitioners must keep reflecting on these requirements.

As ethnic Irish Traveller, Darina and her family might fear state interference in their private and family life as a result of their experiences of discrimination and racism by the state, both in their country of origin and in the UK. Supporting the family in a way that is congruent with Article 8 rights, and ensuring you inform Darina and her family of their rights, will reduce the risk of arbitrary and disproportionate interference in their private and family life.

The concept of private life also covers Darina's right to develop her identity and to forge friendships and other relationships. This includes a right to participate in essential economic, social, cultural and leisure activities. In some circumstances, public authorities may need to help Darina to enjoy her right to a private life, including her ability to participate in society. Colleagues will need to be aware of these rights and obligations and think creatively about how Darina is made aware of them and how they can support Darina in realising these fundamental human rights. It will be important to learn about what Darina enjoys doing. Did she enjoy chatting with other Irish Traveller women, or did she like singing or dancing? Is there a local Irish Traveller women's group that Darina could explore joining? Doing this may provide additional meaning and purpose and a way of expressing her identity and culture for Darina.

Question: Drawing on what you learned from this course, what actions might you take to connect with the family?

Answer: The responses here will reflect individual learning styles, but we might expect to see some recognition of 'antigypsyism' and automatic prejudice. We might also expect to see an understanding that Irish Traveller people are not Gypsies or Roma and that cultural humility and sensitive engagement with an appreciative inquiry will be required in order to understand Darina's unique perspective.

Question: What information about Darina/family being Irish Traveller will be helpful before you meet the family?

Before meeting Darina and her family, gathering relevant information about their Irish Traveller heritage can be very helpful in creating a respectful and culturally sensitive environment. Here's what could be particularly useful to know:

- General Background on Irish Traveller Communities: Understand their language, history and heritage
- Understanding the traditional focus on family, including strong ties to extended family and respect for elders, can help colleagues interact with the family in a culturally sensitive way.
- In some Irish Traveller communities, traditional gender roles are very important, with women often being caretakers and men being seen as protectors and providers. Respect for these roles in your interaction can foster trust.
- Irish Traveller families might be hesitant to share personal information, particularly about their ethnicity, due to past discrimination. Be mindful of sensitive topics and avoid direct questions that could be seen as invasive.
- Irish Traveller communities live all across Europe, but their experiences vary greatly depending on the country. For example, throughout history, Irish Traveller communities have faced significant social exclusion and discrimination.
- Determine if the family members are proficient in speaking and reading English, as this could affect their access to services, education, and their ability to express their needs effectively.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

- Irish Traveller communities often face social stigma, discrimination, and exclusion in housing, education, and employment. Understanding whether the family has encountered these issues can guide how colleagues approach offering support.
- Many Irish Traveller families experience lower levels of formal education and economic hardship. Having awareness of this context can inform your expectations and approach when discussing topics like education, health or financial assistance.
- Some Irish Traveller communities have distinct health beliefs and may rely on traditional healers or prefer natural remedies. Understanding their approach to health and wellness can be important if colleagues are discussing health-related issues.

By considering this information before meeting Darina's family, staff can begin to build rapport, demonstrate cultural respect, and avoid misunderstandings.

Question: Is the locked door a sign of a protective family or something to be concerned about?

Answer: A locked door could indicate either a protective family or something to be concerned about, depending on the context.

- **Protective Family:** It might simply be a sign of the family's desire to ensure safety, particularly if they've experienced discrimination or feel vulnerable in their environment. Many families, especially from marginalised groups, may take extra precautions to protect themselves from perceived external threats.
- **Potential Concern:** If the locked door is accompanied by signs of isolation, secrecy, or reluctance to engage with outsiders, it could raise concerns about safety, neglect, or hidden issues within the household.
- **Conversation:** Ask Darina and the family to consider whether a locked door in the home constitutes a deprivation of liberty. Dilemmas are common in all assessments so try to make the most of opportunities to ask questions rather than make value judgements about other people's lives and decisions. Understanding the family's circumstances and building trust is crucial to interpreting the situation accurately.

Question: What oppression might she have experienced, and how might Darina understand your involvement in her life?

Answer: Darina, as an Irish Traveller woman, may have experienced several forms of oppression, including:

- **Discrimination and Marginalisation:** Irish Traveller people often face social exclusion in housing, education, and employment. Darina may have encountered prejudice in daily interactions, unequal access to services, or negative stereotypes.
- **Economic Hardship:** Many Irish Traveller families live in poverty due to limited job opportunities, further exacerbated by discrimination and lack of formal education.
- **Educational Barriers:** Irish Traveller children often face segregation in schools, lower expectations from educators, and systemic challenges that hinder their educational progress.
- **Health Disparities:** Due to exclusion from healthcare systems or mistrust of institutions, Irish Traveller families may face health issues and lack proper medical care.

Darina might view social care involvement with suspicion or caution due to historical mistreatment by authorities and outsiders. She may worry about being judged, controlled, or misunderstood. To ease this, it's important to approach her with empathy, respect for her culture, and a clear explanation of your role as a supporter or service provider aiming to help, not intrude. Building trust will be key.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

Question: How might you approach Darina and her family regarding the locked door and what should you consider during this conversation?

Answer: When approaching Darina and her family about the locked door, it's important to be respectful and non-judgmental. Frame the conversation with curiosity and concern for their well-being, rather than suspicion. Colleagues could ask open-ended questions like: "I noticed the door is locked. Is there something you'd like to share about why you keep it that way?"

This approach might allow the family to explain in their own words. It is also important to consider the following points:

- Sensitivity: Be aware of the family's possible need for privacy or protection, especially if they've faced discrimination.
- Trust: Ensure the family feels safe discussing the issue with you.
- Non-intrusiveness: Avoid coming across as accusatory or invasive, to maintain trust and avoid defensiveness.

Question: Which legal frameworks, duties, and powers should you be aware of?

Answer: When working with Darina and her family, colleagues should be aware of several legal frameworks, duties, and powers that govern our actions, particularly around the Mental Health Act, the Care Act, the Mental Capacity Act, the Equalities Act, the Human Rights Act, and DoLs Regulations.

How might you explain the Assessment to Darina and her family?

When explaining legal frameworks to Darina and her family, it's important to use simple, clear language and avoid legal jargon, while ensuring they feel respected and informed. Here's how colleagues might approach it:

- Introduction: "I want to talk to you about something called an 'Assessment.' This is a process we use when we want to make sure that decisions made for Darina are truly in her best interest."
- Purpose: "The main goal is to ensure that any decisions made about Darina's life, health, or well-being consider what is best for her. We want to understand her needs, feelings, and wishes."
- Who is Involved: "This assessment may involve talking to different people, such as doctors or family members, to gather information. It's important to hear from everyone who knows her well."
- What Happens During the Assessment: "We will look at all aspects of Darina's life, including her health, emotional well-being, and relationships. We'll ask questions to understand her experiences and what makes her feel happy and safe."
- Your Role: "Your input is really important. We want to hear your thoughts, feelings, and any concerns you have about Darina. Your perspective as her family will help us make the best decisions."
- Honesty: "We want to understand what matters most to Darina. We want to help Darina be happy, safe and offer support to help her be cared for and for your family supported. If this care involves compromising her liberty in any way it is our role to make sure this is necessary and not disproportionate or harmful."
- Outcome: "After gathering all this information, we'll discuss and agree on the best way to support Darina. The aim is to ensure she has everything she needs to be safe and that decisions are only being made in her best interests."
- Reassurance: "This process is not about judging you or your family. It's about working together to support Darina. We are here to help, and we want to make sure you feel comfortable and involved every step of the way. If there is anything you are concerned about you can speak or complain to..."

Throughout the assessment, encourage Darina and her family to ask questions or express any concerns they may have. Reassuring them that the assessment is a collaborative process can help build trust and reduce any anxiety they might feel about it.

