



# The Centre for Ethnic Health Research

national centre for tackling health inequalities



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# Creative Inquiry: Art-Based Approach to Understanding Maternal Experience and Expectations of Gypsy and Travellers women

**Barbara Czyznikowska**

Community Engagement and Inclusion Manager

**Lis Naylor**

Artist | Painter & Sculptor

11 June 2025



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# Session objectives

- Use creative methods to promote **inclusion in research**
- Explore visual storytelling with **underserved communities**
- Share insights from **maternity inquiry**
- Reflection on art's role in bridging **cultural divides and challenging biases** within healthcare systems

# Gypsy & Traveller Maternity Experiences

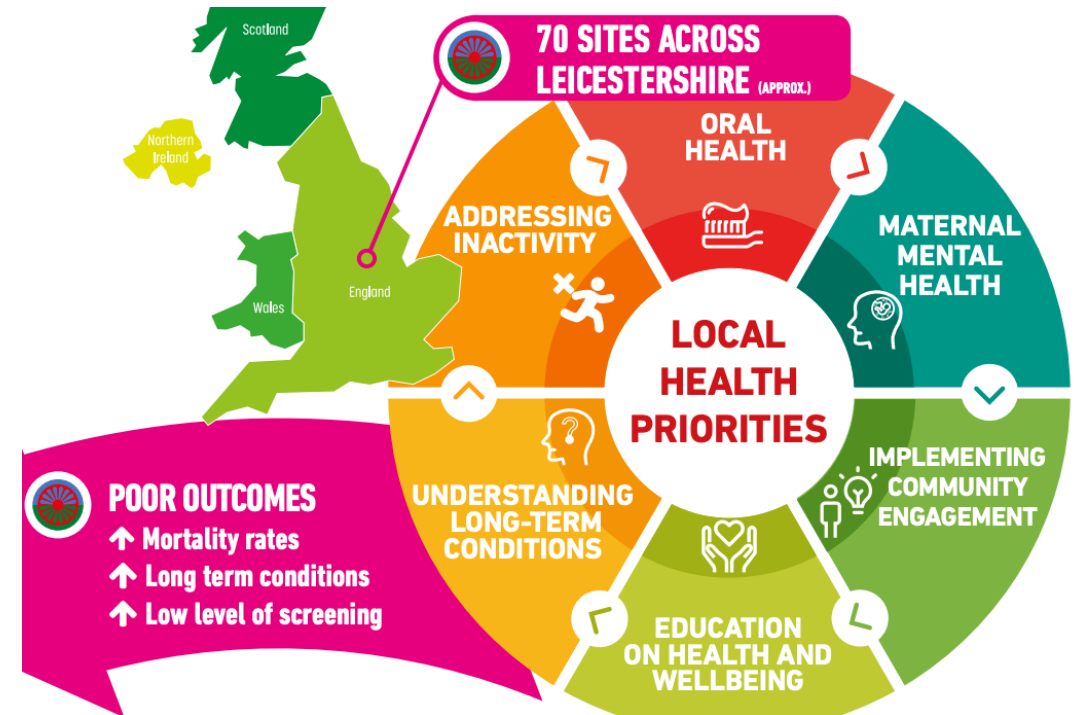
## Why this group?

- Historically underserved
- Faced systemic barriers and stigma



# Why engage?

- GTR people experience stark health inequalities, with **life expectancies up to 25 years shorter** than the wider population.
- The health of a Romany or Traveller person in their 60s is comparable to that of an average White British person in their 80s [Parry et al (2007) ]
- Experiences of a significantly **higher prevalence** of long-term health conditions, and disabilities that limit daily activities or employment, along with poorer overall health outcomes and elevated rates of infant mortality.
- **Intersectional disparities** including unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, low literacy and education levels, gender inequality, and inadequate housing and living conditions.



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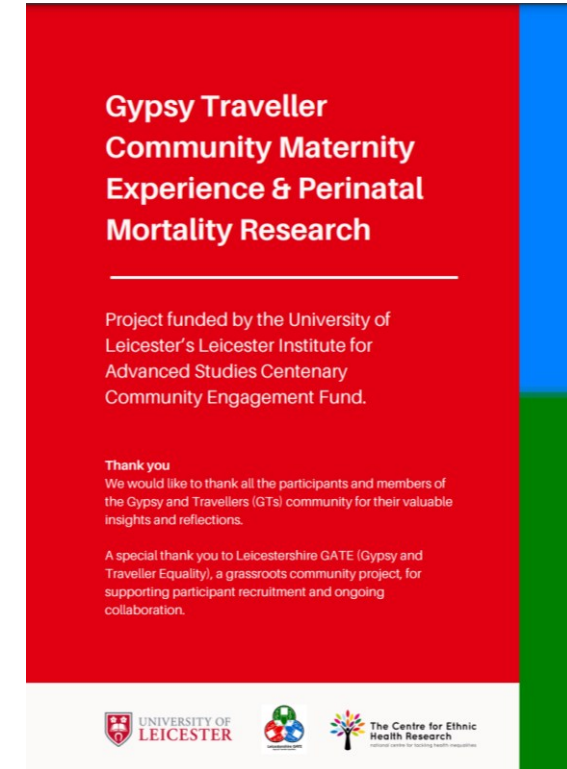
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# Gypsy Travellers Community Maternity Experience & Perinatal Mortality Research

- A qualitative study using arts-based methodology to explore the pregnancy journey of Gypsy and Travellers women
- Exploration of experience in maternity, neonatal or postnatal care
- Impact and influence of ethnicity and culture on these experiences
- Peer-led creative workshops
- Collaborative exhibition



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# Methodological approach

- Focus groups with GT women
- Semi-structured interviews with midwives
- Co-production workshops for artworks
- Systematic review assessing maternal, perinatal, and infant health outcomes of women from GRT communities, along with the factors influencing these outcomes





Midwifery  
Volume 129, February 2024, 103910



Review Article

## Perinatal health outcomes of women from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities: A systematic review

Winifred Ekezie <sup>a b c</sup>  , Ellen Hopwood <sup>a d</sup>, Barbara Czyznikowska <sup>b</sup>, Sarah Weidman <sup>e</sup>, Nicola Mackintosh <sup>d</sup>, Ffion Curtis <sup>a b f</sup>


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# Art as the bridge ....



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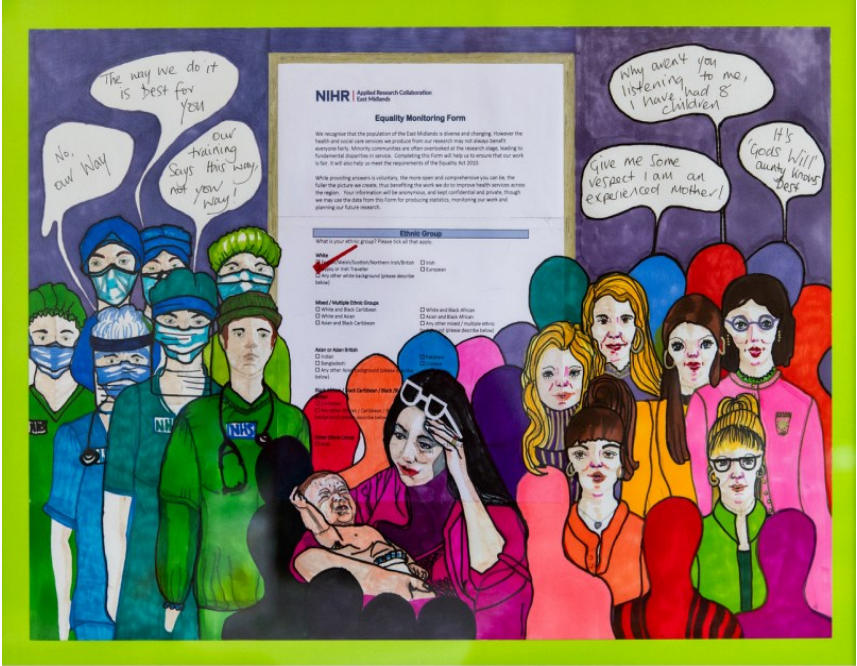
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RESPECT



Expectations vs. Reality

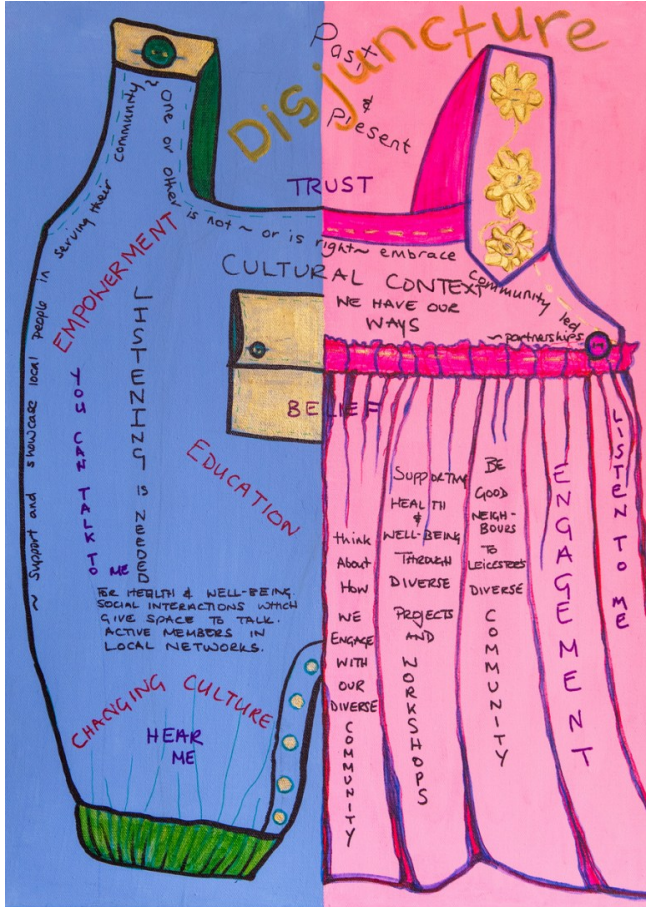


Congratulations

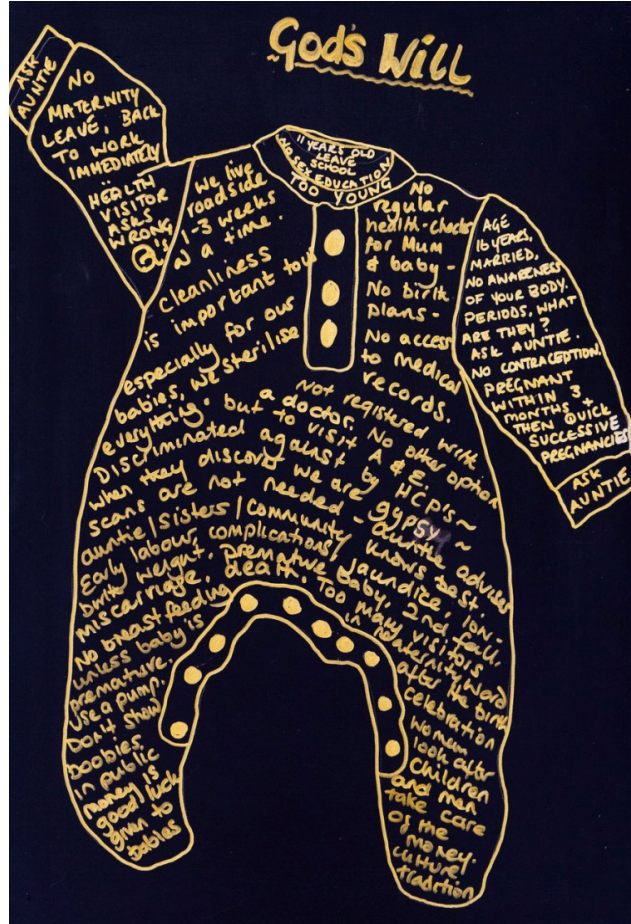




## Disjuncture



## Gods Will



## Tree of Life



# Reflections from the project

- Collaboratively created artworks **expressing cultural identity and experiences of maternal care**
- Emotional expression and healing
- Visibility for **unheard voices**
- **Built trust** with healthcare providers and researchers
- **Challenges faced:** stigma, literacy, initial skepticism
- Art revealed **deep-seated issues** that words could not capture.
- Need for more **culturally sensitive care**.
- Employ cultural mediators or **trained advocates**.
- Created **visual narratives to bridge the gap** between lived experiences and healthcare perceptions.

## Team Acknowledgement

- Dr Winifred Ekezie, Research Associate, UofL
- Miss Barbara Czyznikowska, Community Engagement and inclusion Manager, UofL
- Jackie Duffy, Project Manager, Leicestershire Gypsy and Travellers Equality (GATE)
- Dr Ffion Curtis, Research Fellow, University of Liverpool
- Dr Nicola Mackintosh, Associate Professor in Social Science Applied to Health, UofL

### Artist - Lis Naylor

#### Contemporary Figurative Artist & Sculptor

Lis Naylor is a visual artist based in Leicester. A painter, sculptor and poet, she has won both the Richard Attenborough Centre Award and Cank Street Gallery's Summer Exhibition Award, with work exhibited at New Walk Museum and Gallery, Two Queens Gallery, Newarke House and more.

Her practice focuses on the oppression of women in marginalised groups and she has received commissions from charities such as Zinithya Trust to create work that reflects and represents these issues.

**Website:** [www.lisnaylorart.com](http://www.lisnaylorart.com)

**Instagram:** @lisnaylorart



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# Thank you

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