

CASE STUDY 1

names and details have been changed

Sally Ann

Sally Ann is a young Irish Traveller woman married to a non-Traveller. Her husband regularly punched and verbally abused her. The abuse was picked up by the maternity services when she went in labour following an attack by her husband. The baby was taken into care by Social Services after a subsequent attack on Sally Ann by her husband. Her friends and relatives did not see this as a good enough reason to take a child away.

Issue: Gypsy Travellers have low awareness of Domestic Violence and the impact on children.

Sally Ann was afraid of going to a Refuge and did not know how to go about it. She thought she would be "locked away". She thought if she asked for help the gorja (non – Gypsy) world it would be seen as weakness by Social Services. A local Traveller support group helped her to find a place at a Refuge.

Issue: The idea of going to a Refuge may be doubly difficult for Gypsy & Traveller women who may never have lived in bricks and mortar (a house or flat) or spent time with anyone outside her community.

Sally Ann moved into a Refuge, but the following day was told to leave. She was told it was nothing personal, but

there was another Traveller woman in the Refuge and they would not take two Traveller women at a time. No justification was offered for this policy.

Issue: Some Refuges refuse to take more than one Gypsy Traveller woman at a time. This discriminatory practice restricts access to Domestic Violence services for Gypsy Travellers.

A few days later Sally Ann moved to another Refuge which was more welcoming. She was criticised by the Refuge workers because she was bought to the Refuge by two female friends.

Issue: Many Gypsy Traveller women are unlikely to have gone anywhere on their own, always having been accompanied by her husband or female relatives or friends.

Sally found it difficult to understand the number of appointments she was given at the Refuge. She had little concept of ordered time as until then, her life had just happened one day after another. Eventually her support worker gave her a diary and she now keeps appointments.

Issue: Gypsy Traveller Communities are often very isolated from mainstream life and may not be accustomed to the idea of timekeeping. Literacy and numeracy can be low, particularly amongst families who have not had access to regular schooling.