

Consultations with young people from the Traveller community on skin cancer prevention behaviours

Background

The HSE National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) in conjunction with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and the National Participation Office undertook a consultation with young people from the Traveller community on skin cancer prevention behaviours.

Why

We know it is very important to protect skin from the sun and not use sunbeds as these can increase the risk of skin cancer. We want to learn how to support young people from the Traveller community to protect their skin and reduce risk of skin cancer later in life. Consultations were held with young people from the Traveller community as research with Irish Travellers has found significantly different views in relation to the use of sunbeds.¹

Aim

The aim was to inform the development of initiatives to engage children and young people from the Traveller community in skin cancer prevention behaviours.

How

We held face to face consultations with young people from the Traveller community aged 12 – 18 years old from across the Republic of Ireland via in-person sessions between October – November 2021.

What we learned

Who is the best person to get health information from?

- Parents (for younger age group)
- Health professionals



What is the best way to get information to young people?

- Word of mouth
- Facebook (mixed views, not trusted by all)
- Social media (but only through reliable sources e.g., by a Government body)
- Radio (for older age groups)
- Personal stories on social media



Reasons for using sunbeds

(Never use sunbeds. Exposure to sunbeds increases the risk of developing skin cancer.)

- To tan or colour
- To be attractive to opposite sex
- For positive self-image
- For self-confidence or self-esteem
- To feel happy
- Good for mental health
- Preparation for sun tanning or sun holiday



Reasons for not using sunbeds

- Skin damage (moles/burning/heat rash/skin peels/dries out skin)
- Ageing effects
- Health risks (skin cancer)
- Cost
- Not allowed

1. Berlin, J., Smith, D., & Newton, P. (2018). "It's because it's cancer, not because you're a Traveller"-exploring lay understanding of cancer in English Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities. *European Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 34, 49-54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ejon.2018.02.010>

For more information on being SunSmart visit www.hse.ie/sunsmart

Here are some of the things NCCP are doing in response to your feedback:

You said:

“ Parents and health professionals are best people to get information from ”

SunSmart radio campaign directed at adults.
Skin protection e-learning module developed for health and social care professionals.

We did:

“ Best way to get information to young people is radio and personal stories ”

SunSmart radio campaign 2022.
Personal patient stories recorded and promoted on social media and press.

“ Provide reasons for not using sunbeds ”

Awareness of risk of sunbed use shared on social media platforms and press for 2022 SunSmart campaign.

Education project planned with Pavee Point to raise awareness of the dangers of using sunbeds and reasons why young people should not use them.

Report shared with organisations who work closely with the Traveller community to help inform future initiatives with young people.

We plan to use insights and key learnings from this consultation with young people from the Traveller community to inform key interventions in the NCCP and Healthy Ireland Skin Cancer Prevention Plan 2023+.