



Johnny

## Dear Friends,

I would like to tell you about the awful thing that happened to my brother Johnny.

My name is Nellie Delaney and I am now 15 years old. I live with my Mother and my two sisters, and my younger brother Patrick.

We are an Irish Traveller family and we live in the City of Liverpool in England.

It's really good being from a Traveller family because we get to travel all over England and we get to see interesting places and meet lots of different people.

Best of all though, is always being together as a family and growing up with cousins, uncles and aunts and grandparents always nearby. Whenever there is a family birthday or celebration, we are all there to enjoy it together. It's also good being a Traveller child because we have lots of fun and laughter.

My older brother Johnny was my favourite brother; he was always making us laugh. When we were little we always had lots of pillow fights. He taught us how to play Blind Man's Bluff and other games, and it was really funny when he taught my little brother Paddy how to Break Dance, we laughed so much that day! He also taught my little sister Eileen how to read.

Another time, our cousin Ann-Marie was staying with us and she decided to make us all some toast. But as fast as she made the toast, the pile kept on getting smaller and smaller....she couldn't understand why? Then she saw that Johnny was feeding the toast to us from the window! We all had breadcrumbs and warm butter around our mouths. That was the best toast ever, and it was good seeing Johnny's smile.

In school I have lots of friends too, but sometimes when we are travelling we meet people who are nasty to us.

Most people we meet are okay with us and are good mannered to us. We help to make their homes and communities nice by tidying up their trees and improving their houses and driveways, and selling them pretty flowers at the market.

But some people we meet are not nice at all and are prejudiced against us. They say nasty things to us and say they don't like Travellers. I don't know why.

I would like to tell you the very sad story about what happened to my 15 year old brother Johnny in 2003.

It was my Aunt Margaret's 50th birthday and she had arranged to have a special birthday party for everyone to attend. My brother Johnny went over to Ellesmere Port to invite two of his friends over to join the family party. It was a hot summer's day. So on the way home they went into a shop to buy some potato crisps and lemonade.

But there were some nasty boys inside the shop and they started to threaten Johnny and his friends and call them horrible names.

When the boys left the shop, Johnny asked the shopkeeper if he could look to see if it was safe for them to go outside. "Yes, the man said, "it looks like they have gone now".

When they got outside, Johnny and his friends decided to take the short cut home across the park. But the eight boys appeared from nowhere, and started to chase Johnny and his friends across the field.

Johnny's friend got caught, so Johnny went back to help him.

He managed to get him free, but Johnny got caught.

The nasty boys then started kicking Johnny in the head and chest until finally Johnny died.

A man was passing by walking his dog; he shouted at the boys "Why did you do that"? One of the nasty boys shouted back to him "He deserved it , he was only a \*\*\*\*\* Gypsy".

It really hurt all our family to lose Johnny this way. My mother and father were very upset and would cry all the time. Two years later my father, Patrick, died too. Mummy said that he died of a broken heart.

My little brother Paddy is now aged 7 but he doesn't seem to understand. He thinks his Dad and brother have gone away travelling and will soon be back.



This was the awful thing I wanted to tell you about. So please, when you are thinking about all the people who have suffered from other people's hatred and prejudice....please remember our Johnny.

Finally, my special message to you is

Keep yourself safe

Say no to bullying and name-calling

Think of what happened to our Johnny

Your friend

**Nellie Delaney**

age 15

## Issues to discuss and things to do

On a sheet of paper draw two columns. In one identify all the positive things Nellie writes about Traveller life, in the other the negative. How could the actions and attitudes of non-travelling people make either list longer or shorter?

What are the best memories Nellie has about her brother? What are the best memories you will take to the future about your own family? When someone dies people who loved them often say that the dead person "lives on" through their memories. What do you think they mean?

Using the evidence found in the letter what do you think led to Johnny's death? Do you think the boys intended to kill him? Give reasons for your answer.

On Holocaust Memorial Day we think about all the people who died in the Holocaust and in more recent genocides because of the prejudice and hatred of others. What makes Nellie believe that Johnny died because of prejudice and hate?

**Imagine** you run a youth club in a city, town or village in the UK. You have been given a grant to run a series of events for young people. You decide to spend the money to encourage young people to treat others fairly and to put an end to behaviour based on prejudice and discrimination. What events would you run and how would they help you achieve your aim?

