

LOCAL ISSUES

For Information:

This paper summarises the key issues/developments/initiatives relating to the Roma community in local areas, as submitted by organisations in those areas, to enable Forum members to get a fuller picture of what is happening across the UK.

Big Issue in the North

In the wake of Britain's exit for the European Union, rights of foreign nationals are still yet to be determined due to the delay in Brexit negotiations, leaving vulnerable adults in our care with increasing anxieties about their family's future and stability. We have seen immigration enforcement specifically targeting Roma vendors on city centre pitches - more prominently in the Leeds area - leaving clients concerned, confused and sometimes disengaged with our service for fear of official reprisals.

As the majority of our clients are Roma, who predominantly speak Romanian and Romani, we are researching funding opportunities for a translation service and legal support during what must be a tumultuous time for an already needlessly ostracised community.

On a positive note, we have recently launched a cookery club for Roma women, which has developed into a skills exchange with British born vendors. Feedback has shown that it is achieving its objectives in boosting self-esteem of the women who access it, as they get to spend a little time away from the strain of household life to take a few moments for themselves.

*Anna Manetta-Stark, Fundraising & Communications
Big Issue North Trust*

Bradford MDC

St Edmund's Nursery School and Children's Centre, Bradford, has been awarded Centre of Good Practice for the work with communities new to England. They support a number of schools in Bradford on raising attendance, social integration and communication.

The centre's approaches derive from an awareness of the extent to which Roma communities face discrimination in their countries of origin, which was made evident following a visit by key staff members to Slovakia and Czech Republic. The experience helped staff better understand the fears and concerns of the families they come into contact with – helps develop approaches that address barriers to integration. Key to these approaches was bridging the language barrier. This barrier has been addressed by employing people who speak the relevant languages and come from the same cultural backgrounds as well as investing time and money to develop staff awareness.

Including in St Edmund's approaches are:

- Home visits to invite families into the school, tours around the school;
- Families made welcome to stay for classroom sessions;
- Strategies to support children new to English, shared with parents, which includes staff who speak their home language. This includes Makaton signs, which proved to be a very helpful tool of communication for those pupils with English as an additional language (EAL); and
- Onsite advice and support related to employment e.g. completing job applications and, compiling CV's.

*Godwin Enyori, Business Improvement Officer
Bradford MDC*

Derby City Council

This year our priorities are:

- The Bridge group working with Roma children of primary age who are waiting for school places (including support with school uniforms and travel).
- The Early Years Centre:
 - Family language learning English course;
 - Talking Tots – A stay and play session to encourage speech and language development;
 - Boys R Us - A series of workshops that look at the way boys play and learn; and
 - PEEP – For ages 0-3 years covering all areas of development.
- Tackling rogue landlords in the private sector who are renting substandard properties which are unhealthy and dangerous, ensuring that there are more proactive and robust inspections, and informing the Roma community of their tenancy rights.
- Providing more education on accessing GP services, health screening and the use of accident and emergency.
- Working with schools around exclusion of Roma children.
- Supporting Derby County Community Trust to provide football and music sessions for Roma.

*Gary Robinson - Cohesion and Integration Officer
Derby City Council*

Derby – Roma Community Care

The Roma Community Care (RCC) drop in continues during the week from 9am -1pm. The centre is located in the heart of the community where the majority of Roma live. We are seeing between 30-40 clients a day on a range of topics such as employment, housing, education and benefits advice. We have one full time staff member and two part time. Funding is at risk and unless two possible funds come to fruition in the next couple of months RCC may be forced to close after November, 2017.

Alongside the drop in client support, we also do outreach and support clients with house visits or attending meetings with them. For example, we recently worked with Roma family where both parents weren't working, they were not receiving any benefits and there were 12 children. Social services in Derby had become involved and there were suggestions

that some children may be removed. We supported the family with home visits, benefits applications and understanding the social services procedures. We also ran an informal Roma awareness session for some of the foster families where some of the Roma children were placed.

Two of our Roma colleagues recently gained a City&Guilds training qualification. This was provided for free by Derby City Safeguarding Board and in return we will deliver presentations on Roma in the Boards training session on safeguarding and BME communities.

We continue running our twice weekly youth club where the majority of young people attending are Roma. 12 young people should be receiving accreditation from Arts Award for their participation in a creative heritage project. The youth group also organised a community event in July. We get on average about 40 young people a night. Our main goal at youth club is to support the young people to be the future community leaders and change makers.

We have a funded youth project until April, 2018. This project is striving to keep Roma students (especially those felt at high risk of exclusion) in school thus contributing to breaking a vicious cycle of poverty, marginalization and possibly crime (it is funded by the Police Crime Commissioner). The project works across four key areas:

- through youth club;
- mentoring direct support to individual young people at risk of exclusion;
- engaging parents and improving their relations with schools; and
- Roma awareness training with schools and associated professionals.

The two main schools where our Roma young people attend are academies and in special measures. The receptivity of the schools is a main barrier in itself! We would like to organize a national conference themed on Roma and education relating to lessons learnt so far through this initiative and any others that might be taking place.

We organised a Roma girls Advocacy and Leadership training/residential which went very well. The end result was that the girls presented on topics which they wanted to tackle, such as racism, bullying and equal access to education. They put forward project ideas for a campaign to tackle racism, a support group in school for victims of bullying and an after school homework club. Migrants Organise came with a lady called Romana and helped the girls with public speaking and presentation skills. We had a few other speakers pop in to chat to the girls about self-esteem, personal safety and working in business. There's a general sense that if we can access the resources we should definitely endeavour to run something similar again.

*Ruth Richardson, Centre Director
Multi-Faith Centre, University of Derby*

Doncaster MBC

Doncaster's has one of the largest populations of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the country, with estimates between 4,000 and 6,000 people. The Virtual School for GRT was established in June 2016 with the primary aim of tracking the educational progress of over 530 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children including attainment, attendance

and exclusion as if they were on one school roll. The school is 'virtual' in the sense that students do not actually attend as most already go to school here in Doncaster. In many cases there are no issues, however, as you will know, GRT children as a group do not perform as well educationally as their peers.

The aims of the Virtual School for GRT children are to proactively disseminate good practice by supporting schools and parents to encourage our children to have high aspirations during their school career and in progression to further and higher education. The Virtual School for GRT children will put in place or streamline appropriate systems and structures to aid achievement of these children. The Virtual School will also work closely with schools where pupils are not making appropriate progress.

The Virtual School for GRTs children has a team of committed professionals with a wide breadth of expertise. It is now their role to help improve outcomes and narrow the gap between GRT children and all children working in partnership with schools. Our initial priorities include:

- Collating accurate data on GRT children so their educational progress can be tracked and monitored. This data will be used to inform early and effective interventions where appropriate and will be put in place in partnership with the school;
- Establishing strong relationships with senior leaders and staff in schools as well as parents;
- Supporting cohesive working across the Local Authority and with all agencies involved;
- Improving transition at every stage, especially at secondary level; and
- Building on the success the authority has already had in recording the size of these ethnic groups. Working closely with schools and the communities to ascribe their ethnicity accurately.

*Malcolm Wilson, Education Advisory Manager, GRT/EAL Virtual School
Doncaster MBC*

East of England SMP - Parallel Lives Roma Project

From the beginning of October 2017, the East of England Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) will be working in partnership with Fenland District Council to deliver a unique project, seeking to integrate the East of England's Roma community. Fenland has received funding for the 'Parallel Lives' project from the Department of Communities and Local Government's Controlling Migration Fund.

This two-year project will seek to ease pressures on local services, tackle chronic discrimination against Roma people, and help to establish a more cohesive and mutually respectful environment.

The SMP hosted a regional Roma conference in 2013, attended by frontline staff working with Roma families, which provided useful insights into the geographical location and needs of these groups. Building on the conference outcomes, the SMP Parallel Lives Team will carry out a new data and local intelligence gathering exercise on Roma communities in the East of England, looking at education, employment, healthcare, poverty and discrimination in particular. They will also explore pressures on local services and resident communities, before going on to help develop solutions to the issues in phase two.

Although the proposed solutions will depend on the outcome of the data and intelligence gathering phase, the project team anticipate identifying Roma community champions to work in those parts of the region with the highest concentrations of Roma people – Fenland, Great Yarmouth, Ipswich, Luton, Peterborough and Southend.

Roma cultural competence training will also be developed and rolled out, and workshops held to bring Roma people together with frontline services.

*Rachel Heathcock, Project Worker - Active Citizens Together
East of England Local Government Association*

Equality

Roundtable discussion was held on 13 September with NGOs working with people and communities that are, and would be, adversely affected by the present and potential future applications to the Home Office to stay in the UK. The Co-Chair of the NRN participated. The documentation required for an application is a barrier to Roma applying for Permanent Residence (and probably the future 'settled EU national' status). The discussion was very insightful and the participants asked if the event could be repeated. A note on the discussion will be available on the Migrants' Rights Network's website in due course.

The (illegal) practice of police giving personal contact details of victims of crime to Immigration Enforcement, where the police officer suspects the person may not be fully using their EU freedom of movement rights, received a response from a senior Home Office official that this was probably being done under Operation Nexus (to deport serious foreign criminals). Immigration Enforcement often have offices within police stations. However the EU Victim's Directive came into force in the UK in 2015 and this completely bans the passing of crime victim's details - *"Art 1 Member States shall ensure that victims are recognised and treated in a respectful, sensitive, tailored, professional and non-discriminatory manner, in all contacts with victim support or restorative justice services or a competent authority, operating within the context of criminal proceedings. The rights set out in this Directive shall apply to victims in a non-discriminatory manner, including with respect to their residence status."* Government officials and senior police have, so far, not responded to our requests over the last three months to meet to discuss this. The issue has a disproportionate impact on Roma in UK, as they are one of the main groups being 'deported'.

Alan Anstead MCIPR, Founder & Chief Executive
Equality

Glasgow - Friends of Romano Lav

Friends of Romano Lav is going through some structural changes. The board, staffing and program of activities are forming into a new shape currently. We are trying to distribute our time and resources between educational, cultural, training and advising work with Roma communities in the Govanhill area. Our work with local schools will continue, particularly with Annette Street Primary school where the majority of pupils come from Roma background. We will run a photography, music and recycling workshops for groups of children predominantly from Roma backgrounds. There is an idea to run Roma history

and culture workshops too but we are looking for skilled mentors and a suitable framework of how it could be put into place.

We are currently developing a media and social media training for Roma young people with Media Coop and other local organisations. The training aims to teach young people how to use a camera, take pictures and record videos on a presentable level which eventually may lead to community journalism outcome. We have involved a local community journalism group who run an online portal *Govanhill Voice* which reports on local cultural events, businesses, interviews local artists or activists and so on. We would like to get more coverage from Roma residents, preferably with Roma participants elaborating and coordinating the whole process of reporting about local Roma communities.

FoRL continuously supports local Roma artists groups like Romane Cierhenia and E Karika Djal. The groups have recently participated at local events like Shindig festival and Govanhill Carnival. E Karika Djal currently works in their studio recording which consists predominantly of Roma traditional music although the group has non-Roma members as well. We would like to involve the groups in school and community education when they become more established.

It has come to our attention that deportations of Roma, predominantly from Romanian background has been peaking over last month or so. At the moment we are trying to gather more information about individual cases and ways we could support the affected group. Brexit negotiations have barely started but effects of new terms and conditions for EU migrants are already having a negative impact on Roma communities. In partnership with local housing association and law centre, we will organise legal advice and information sharing sessions where Roma residents could access relevant information about changing rules and regulations. There is clearly a lack of services for Roma communities in the area which, with tensions rising, essentially creates confusion, frustration and often panic among Roma people when dealing with authorities regarding legal issues. We are trying to identify experienced legal representatives just now who can lead the sessions in near future.

We will be organising a Christmas event and indeed International Roma Day celebrations in the spring next year. Alongside that we are trying to raise the participation of Roma artists and creative groups at other community and cultural events in Govanhill and beyond.

*Miroslav Cuba, Project Development Worker
Friends of Romano Lav*

Glasgow – Govanhill Housing Association

South West Govanhill is a tiny pocket in the Southside area of Glasgow which has for many years been an area popular with migrants to Scotland. Over the last ten years the area has become mainly populated by Slovakian and more recently Romanian Roma. The area is made up of large tenement flats, each with its own back court set around a large open back court. Owner Occupation has decreased in the area and now the majority of the flats are rented out by private landlords. The tenement buildings have gradually deteriorated due to poor maintenance and management which led to years of campaigning by the Housing Association and local residents for the Scottish Government to regenerate

the area. It is First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's constituency, which has led to increased political and media interest and regular articles have appeared in the Glasgow press often describing the area as a 'slum'.

Govanhill Housing Association have been working, for the last two years, on a pilot project funded by the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council to buy tenement flats in a four block area. We are refurbishing the flats and some of the communal areas in order for them to be let as social housing. The pilot project was deemed a success and earlier this year it was announced that the project would receive a further £34 million funding over the next four years to buy around 500 flats in total and provide some much needed maintenance to the communal areas of the closes.

The problems in the area are extremely complex and often interlinked. There are a lot of issues with refuse and fly tipping, some of the highest statistics for reported infestations of rats, mice, cockroaches and bed bugs in the UK, as well as very high crime rates. Many families are living in extreme poverty, in very poor, overcrowded housing conditions and our team work closely in partnership with other agencies to tackle these issues. Glasgow City Council Development and Regeneration Department, Police Scotland, Social Services, Environmental Health and Land & Environmental Services all have dedicated teams working in the South West Govanhill area.

In 2015 the area was designated an Enhanced Enforcement Area by the Scottish Government (new legislation as part of the Scotland Housing Act 2014). This was the first and is still the only area in Scotland designated an EEA and gives Glasgow City Council extra powers to tackle rogue landlords operating in the area. As a result of this, 22 landlords operating in the area have had their registration revoked (it is a legal requirement in Scotland that all landlords must be registered), which has sent out a strong message that poor practice will not be tolerated.

Govanhill Community Development Trust (which is a subsidiary of Govanhill Housing) provide a lot of support to the Roma residents in the area through ESOL classes, a very successful ESOL café, Community Development Officers that speak Romanian and Slovakian and community shop front that acts as a community hub right in the centre of the regeneration.

So far we have purchased over a hundred flats and now have a number of very happy Roma Slovakian and Roma Romanian families living in safe, economical, stable, well managed, refurbished flats with Scottish Secure Tenancies. We are currently in our first phase of major repairs but, as more and more flats are completed, we hope to see this number rise.

*Katy Bridgestock, Housing Officer
Govanhill Housing Association*

Leeds – CATCH Project

The CATCH project provides young people between the ages of 7 and 19 from a Roma background with opportunities to immerse themselves into the wider community. They are encouraged to take part in various activities, both recreational and educational, which help them develop and also offers the opportunity of gaining the experience of voluntary work within the organisation and advice regarding opportunities elsewhere. Additional

assistance is given to the parents of attendees and other adults, most notably in helping with issues relating to wellbeing and welfare. This is especially important when language becomes a barrier and assists families in accessing all relevant local services including schools, particularly with admissions, housing advice and any other pertinent matter than affects the family.

*Anna Lysakowska, Youth Worker
CATCH Project*

Leicester – Babington Academy

At Babington Academy in Leicester, the examination results of our Roma pupils continue to improve. For three years in a row, Roma pupils have left with 5+ A*- C GCSE's (including English and Maths). One former pupil who left with the Ebacc in 2015 now has three A levels at grade A in Physics, Electronics and Psychology. He came to Babington at the age of 11 never having spoken English. He had been told by his Slovak school that he needed to attend a school for the mildly mentally retarded.

For the first time in seven years one family has requested to deascribe as Roma because of Brexit.

Three former Babington Roma pupils are being filmed in a longitudinal study by the Czech equivalent of BBC 1. They will be filmed through opening their A level results into higher education. The aim is to challenge why Roma can learn in a new language and achieve better than in the country of origin.

Babington has been asked by the Council of Europe to participate in a project to improve outcomes for Roma pupils across Europe. We have to spread our practice to a school in five different countries, the UK, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. The UK partner school is in Sheffield.

One member of Babington staff has been invited to moderate a session at the EU ET2020 working party on including disadvantaged children across the EU. The next meeting is in Bratislava on 26th and 27th September and focuses on Roma.

*Mark Penfold
Babington Academy*

Luton Roma Trust

Luton Roma Trust continues to serve the Roma community of our town who are mostly Romanian citizens. We now have over 700 names on our database, though we believe there are at least 2,000 Roma in Luton.

In addition to our daily holistic interventions on behalf of our clients, we are being approached by a number of local schools and setting up projects to help their Roma students - this is being taken forward by our Roma Education Champion, Paul Sayers. Meanwhile, in partnership with World Beaters, our music project with the Roma children continues to flourish with a new pre-school children's track starting up this term.

Here is Martin Burrell helping clients in Luton, and our Roma children receiving their end of term certificates for attending our music project.



Together with the Churches Network for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, we drew 140 to “This is our Story - This is our Song!” delivered by Roma from five nations. The event is being repeated in Cranbrook, Kent on Saturday 4 November.”

Sadly, Assen Slavchev was not able to take up the post of Senior Roma Community Champion with Luton Roma Trust. The funding is all in place and we will now be advertising again - possibly with a different job description and possibly offering the post as two part-time posts, ideally for a man and a woman. I am very keen to hear from anyone who might be interested in applying to Luton Roma Trust. The successful applicant(s) needs to speak either Romani, Romanian, or both, and will need to be living in or very near Luton. The full details will be available soon.

Full information is available on our new website: www.lutonromatrust.org.uk

*Martin Burrell
Luton Roma Trust*

Manchester – Roma Voices

Roma Voices of Manchester have weekly consultation events to provide advice, and offer support, to the Romanian community regarding the new laws.

*Ramona Constantin, Regional Migrant Organiser
Migrants Organise*

Migration Yorkshire – Connecting Opportunities

Connecting Opportunities, a new project led by Migration Yorkshire, works with new migrants to develop their skills and opportunities to find work and be part of the local community. Ten organisations that specialise in working with migrants are offering tailored support, cultural orientation, English language classes and other training across West Yorkshire (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield) and parts of North Yorkshire (Craven, Harrogate, Selby and York).

The project aims to engage with the most vulnerable migrants, who are unemployed or economically inactive, and Roma are one of the groups we hope this service will benefit.

Connecting Opportunities is funded by the Big Lottery and the European Social Fund as part of the Building Better Opportunities programme.

Key features of the service:

- It's a service tailored to each individual, not 'one size fits all'.
- The service is being offered by ten dedicated, specialist agencies with good knowledge of the specific issues faced by migrants.
- You access the same service, wherever you live in Leeds City Region.
- We ensure the perspectives and contributions of women are included.
- We're offering English language classes for up to 12 months.
- There is specialist mental health support available.
- Local mentors and befrienders help participants become familiar with their local community.
- Employers are supported to offer work placements.

For more information, visit: www.connectingopportunities.org.uk

*Ewa Jamroz, Policy, Data and Development Officer
Migration Yorkshire*

North Lincolnshire Council

The current situation with the Roma community in North Lincolnshire includes the following:

- A substantial increase in the Roma population is occurring. Evidence from a local employer indicates 450 new arrivals have been recruited since early 2017. This number is expected to increase as the business is expanding and recruiting in Romania. In addition, we have not engaged with other employers or, in any significant way, the wider Romanian, Roma community.
- There are concerns of potential exploitation such as trafficking, HMO's, safeguarding and financial. A multi-agency task force is working closely with the employer and their employment agency to investigate the matter.
- There are concerns regarding impact on local services. These concerns relate to the lack of contact with the Roma community. For example, there are no records GP registrations, school admissions, council tax registrations, etc. However, this might be due to a lack of appropriate monitoring.
- We are in the early stages of working with local employers and services to support integration by sharing information about the community, such as understanding the Roma culture, population data, language and interpretation support. We are also offering advice and information to the Roma community relating to UK culture and laws, providing service access information - in particular housing, employment, healthcare, education (including ESOL) etc.

*Vincent Mancini, Stronger Communities Officer
North Lincolnshire Council*

Peterborough – COMPAS

Here is an update on behalf of COMPAS:

- Saturday School - For the third year COMPAS is organising a Czech and Slovak Saturday School and English lessons.
- ROMOS - There are currently ten young Roma people going through the programme, learning about media, public speaking, politics and other topics. Some of the participants started a new job since taking part in the project and one started his own business.
- Political activism - A group of young people is getting together with the aim of becoming politically active.
- COMPAS is continuously trying to get a community venue, however the Council is not supporting this idea sufficiently. COMPAS wants to create initiative to get young people off the streets, to provide advice on Brexit and to cater for people in isolation.
- Petr Torak (co-founder of COMPAS) is soon leaving the police service and is going to become an independent consultant, specialising in the fields of improving relationship with police, combating hate crime, engaging with vulnerable victims of human trafficking, motivational speeches for children, political activism and leadership. More details about his services can be found on www.petrtorak.com.

Petr Torak MBE
COMPAS

Sheffield City Council

- Sheffield City Council continue to work with partners to listen to and support Roma residents in Page Hall, Grimsthorpe, Darnall and Tinsley as part of our overall community development work.
- Grimsthorpe Family Centre are trying to develop youth provision in the area for Roma young people, following on from a fun day in the Centre on 2nd September.
- Sheffield City Council are mentoring Sheffield Roma Network to be part of the new Independent Advisory Group in the city for South Yorkshire Police.
- We are developing our response to the findings of the Eurocities Roma mapping published in August and have been discussing options for ROMACT training with the Council of Europe.
- Fir Vale School has organised a visit by members of the Slovakian consulate on 28th/29th September. The aim is to help Slovaks who have official paperwork queries instead of them having to travel to London but they will attend the regular coffee morning at the school and take part in a debate.

For further information on any of these projects please contact Colin Havard on 07775 407063 or email colin.havard@sheffield.gov.uk

Sheffield – Roma Futures

- We are liaising with the bank to better understand how to get the transfer from Migrant Organise for the project we plan to carry out.
- We are in touch with the schools where we want to run the Roma logo project.

- Conversations have taken place with potential board members regarding the next steps and the updated Constitution.
- We are planning to work closely with Drom Kotar Mestipen Roma Women's Organisation in Spain regarding the 2nd Roma Women's Congress.

Rosamaria Kostic Cisneros and Terezia Rostas
Roma Futures