

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.

Bradford - Hope for Justice

POMOC means "help" in Polish, Slovak and Czech. This is a multi-agency outreach pilot project created as a response to the needs of local CEE communities in the Great Horton Ward area. The joint partnership between Bradford Council, Hope for Justice, St John's Church and the Great Horton Village Hall provides bilingual advocacy and signposting for all Central and Eastern European communities through drop-in sessions in the community centre.

This pilot aimed at reaching out to the diverse local community in order to help them access local services by overcoming the language barriers. Polish, Romanian and Slovak speaking advisers will help the local CEE community with a variety of inquiries concerning medical forms, housing, jobs and signposting. From January 2018 the project will be open up to all communities in the Great Horton ward area under new name "Welcome to Great Horton", however it will continue providing language support for CEE communities.

Since the start of the project on 15th of September the project was accessed by 150 people where 95% were of Roma origin, we are now working on widening the service and have secured funding to start ESOL classes in the Great Horton Village Hall community centre from January 2018, more information coming soon.

Drop-in sessions:

Fridays 10:30 am - 1.30 pm

15th and 22nd September: Great Horton Road, Village Hall, 69 Beldon Road, BD7 3PE

*Aleksandra Czech, Community Outreach Worker
West Yorkshire Hub*

Clifton Learning Partnership

Key issues that are of concern to our residents/community are: housing, poverty, litter, noise in the street, drugs, education, CSE, neglect and what it means, and fear of Brexit outcomes.

Developments:

- We have employed two new Roma workers recently and another of our Roma employees has just started an access course at Sheffield University – we are very

proud of her!

- We have more support around housing and tenancy issues because we are working with a partner organization to deliver rights and responsibilities work (partly funded through DCLG), we have more youth activity, especially Roma youth Voice and Influence work in conjunction with the Rotherham Children, Young People and Families Consortium Different but Equal Board – this has been very positive and is beginning to grow.
- We have a Roma Family support worker who can deliver Triple P training in Roma and this has been well received and has led to more work about other current issues such as CSE.
- Work with the local Children's Centre is leading to a greater take up of pre-school places.
- We have a fabulous new volunteer (ex-solicitor) who is helping us to support people through benefit appeals.

If it wasn't for the uncertainty of Brexit we would be feeling more confident that the Roma community are settled and here to stay. There is more confidence and trust in our organization from both the community and partners.

*Helen Littlewood, Director
Clifton Learning Partnership*

COMPAS, Peterborough

On the 1st December 2017 COMPAS became a charitable incorporated organisation. COMPAS will now work on a new executive structure to deliver bespoke services to Roma and other migrant communities in Peterborough.

As from January 2018 COMPAS is planning to start a number of new projects, including workshops for young people, musical classes in cooperation with BEAT THIS CIC and BREXIT-specific workshops and training, as well as ROMOS project.

ROMOS is a new and exciting project that aims to increase representation and visibility of Roma people in public sphere. It is a mentoring programme that will create opportunities for ambitious people to acquire relevant and valuable skills.

The programme will cover improving communication and presentation skills, raising self-confidence, leadership skills and networking. This will be mainly achieved by:

- Organising debates on political, sociological and economic issues, during which the candidates will be encouraged to research a particular topic and then present in front of audience.
- Influential researchers, politicians and academics will be invited to these debates and will give their feedback on candidates' performance.
- Participation on conferences, lectures and training that will give the candidates an opportunity to network with others.
- Visiting thematic places and venues, such as the Parliament, Crown Court, Town Hall, etc.
- Consultation with Governmental agencies to discuss self-employment opportunities.
- Media training conducted by experienced experts

More information can be found on our website: <http://www.compas.org.uk/>

*Petr Torak, MBE, Chief Executive
COMPAS*

Doncaster - The Youth Association

Contrary to some beliefs, many of Hexthorpe's Roma young people have high aspirations. They largely express desires for career jobs with good salaries and ambitions for social mobility. There seems to be limited awareness of how to realize these aspirations and young people have been turning to our youth workers for advice and help. This led to an increased push towards CV/employment programmes and some young people have approached youth workers to ask about how to get into university. This has led us to plan university visits for groups over the winter.

Accredited training was modified this year to extend a greater degree of focus towards employment. This has involved CV building courses and job search help. The results have been positive: 48 young people reported improved access to education and employment, four new jobs were secured and 24 interviews were gained. Those who took part also passed on the skills they had learned to families and friends, several of whom also went on to gain employment. The knock-on effect of the programme on the wider community has therefore been a positive outcome.

One group, aged 16-21, attended our team-building days at a residential and expressed career-development aspirations. They started our employment programme and youth workers wrote employment references for them. Four members of the group gained employment and two of them helped family members do the same using the skills that they had learned on the programme.

Detached youth work sessions have engaged 168 young people in 2017. Of these, 25 have taken part in street-based workshops on anti-social behaviour and attitudes to education. 29 young people have helped to plan/develop activity programmes, helping improve practical life skills. Activities have included teamwork challenge days, food/nutrition and circus skills workshops.

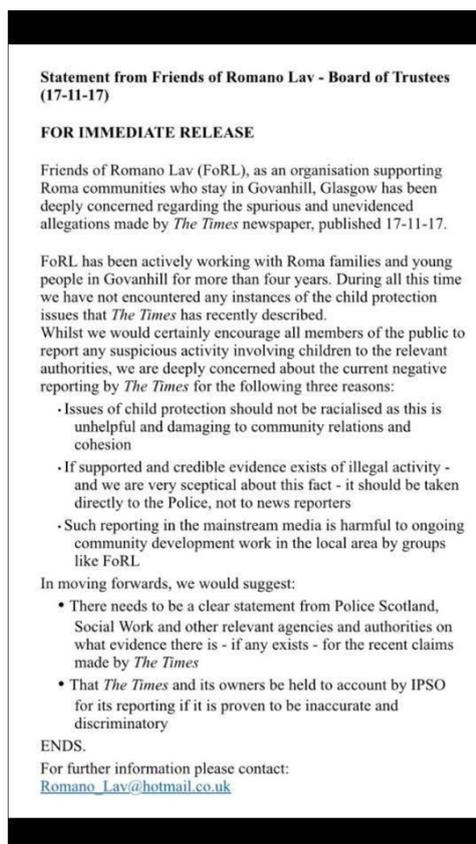
One hard-to-reach group were engaging in ASB and struggling to remain in education. They took part in an intensive 6-month programme, involving both educational and leisure activities. As part of this, the team delivered workshops on the importance of education and invited representatives from Northern Racing College to the sessions. This sparked a lot of interest in the community and one young man has made plans to visit the college with his family and is excited about his possible new future.

*Dmitry Fedotov, Enterprise & Communities Manager
The Youth Association*

Glasgow- Friends of Romano Lav

Friends of Romano Lav (FoRL) are experiencing extremely busy time currently following a media frenzy about Roma children abuse and Romanian Roma deportations in Glasgow.

FoRL has put out a statement on social media to counteract the un-evidenced claims of Roma children abuse in Govanhill area:



FoRL are also trying to react to recent deportations of Romanian Roma individuals from Govanhill. It seems like a complex issue, however, the procedures of immigration officials undertaken towards Roma communities at the moment are rather questionable. Their organisation is trying to set up community events where we can disseminate essential rights and entitlements information among the Roma individuals. Some sources are claiming that up to 250 Roma individuals have been deported from Glasgow during the last couple of months under highly questionable circumstances. FoRL are also trying to collect evidence/sources of data of the happenings so that we can publish them in wider media.

In addition to that, recently, a media workshop was started with young Roma people in Govanhill area in partnership with organizations *Media Coop* and *Community Renewal*. Over a period of three months, they will learn how to use a camera for taking pictures and making videos as well as how to write a short story about them. FoRL have also linked up with a community journalist group called *Govanhill Voice* who may be able to involve young Roma in community reporting. It would be a great way of counteracting the ever-present negative narrative from mainstream and local media platforms with Roma community-originated pictures, videos and short articles about the life of Roma people in Govanhill area: <https://govanhillvoice.wordpress.com/author/govanhillvoice/>

FoRL continue to run photography and music workshops in Annette Street Primary school in Govanhill which has the highest representation of Roma pupils in Scotland. There is a scope to work with more primary and secondary schools in the area however that strongly depends on resources available.

Lastly, on Wednesday the 6th FoRL held a St Nicolas celebration with gift giving to Roma children, fresh food, and Roma music and dance performances of artists originally from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Scotland. It was a very busy event with demand bigger than the capacity of premises and resources. It has come to light that more of community events are needed in Govanhill.

*Miroslav Cuba, Project Coordinator
Friends of Romano Lav*

Kent - Red Zebra

A Kent charity, Red Zebra, has been given three years funding from the BLF to run a project called Roma in the lead. The project is the outcome of development work undertaken by Kent Roma Interest Group, a sub-committee of the Kent Strategic Migration Partnership.

The project will seek to engage and represent Roma people by employing three Roma Development Officers from the Roma community. The Roma Development Officers will seek to represent the community as well as individual need, and address how they can improve trust and access services, thus building stronger more resilient communities. The Roma Development Officers will work across the five Kent and Medway districts with the most Roma present. These are Dover, Sheppey, Thanet, Medway, and Gravesham. We are currently advertising for the roles and hope to appoint the workers in January.

*Juliette Wales
Red Zebra*

Leeds - GRT Outreach & Inclusion Team

The GRT Outreach and Inclusion team is a team within Leeds City Council and sits within the Youth Offer. The team provides direct work, support and guidance to Gypsy Roma and Traveller (GRT) families in order to ensure their children are ready for learning and to raise standards of educational attainment of children and young people living within these communities

Core Activities with our Roma children; young people and their families include;

School Admissions - The Inclusion team work closely with the School Admissions, Attendance and Children Missing Education teams to ensure no GRT children falls through the net from an educational point of view. Because these families frequently travel and/or are new to Leeds they often miss the usual deadlines for applying for school places. The applications process can be challenging and complex and this is even more difficult for families who either have low literacy skills or limited English. Therefore supporting families through this process is a vital part of the Inclusion team's role. On average the team will support around 30-50 applications each quarter, acting as advocates on behalf of the families and ensuring the families are aware of their responsibilities for responding to offers and taking up places.

Support into school - For our Roma families newly arriving in Leeds from Eastern Europe there is often a lengthy gap between applying for a school place and receiving an offer.

This can be a very stressful and worrying time for the family. Also many Roma children did not access school in their home country so the prospect of starting school is extremely daunting. To respond to these issues the Inclusion team have established a project called "Fresh Start". The purpose of the group is for new EU migrant children, aged 9-16 years learn about the British school system - expectations around behaviour, uniform etc., using fun, informal activities to help them begin to learn English and to improve their confidence. Once a family has been offered a school place a member of the team will then support them to ensure they are in a position to experience a positive start to their school life.

Support in school - The team receive a significant amount of requests for support from educational settings. The type of support varies widely and includes both individual and group work;

- Facilitating inductions for new pupils
- Home visits with school staff or attendance to meet the families
- Behavioural support- in and out of the classroom
- Contributing to and/or leading Early Help plans
- Encouraging and supporting parents to come into school for example: parents evenings
- Group work programmes
- Breakfast or lunchtime drop-ins so GRT children who were finding it difficult to settle into school life had somewhere to go and meet with someone they knew and felt comfortable with.

An example of a recent group work programme was a project at Swallow Hill. Concerns had been identified that a group of Czech and Slovak girls may be at risk of CSE and would benefit from some work to help them gain a greater understanding and awareness of the potential risks. To respond to this the team delivered one session a week in school for a whole term to cover a variety of different topics such as staying safe online and in the community, signs of grooming; CSE and general risk taking behaviours including alcohol awareness. The overall aim was to increase their ability to keep themselves safe, to raise their aspirations and look towards their future.

Information, Support & Guidance Sessions - Outreach workers have been facilitating an ISG drop-in, called the "Welcome Group" in the Inner East area of Leeds for a number of years. Due to the high volume of queries relating to school issues and admissions the Inclusion Team now support this session every Tuesday 09:00—12:00 at the Reginald Centre.

*Georgina Bright, Youth Offer Improvement Officer
GRT Outreach & Inclusion Team*

Liverpool - Granby Toxteth Development

Some activities organised in the last months:

Enterprise and Business Advice Workshops

We have 25 Roma who participate in these workshops and they come with great ideas to start a business. They receive advice and consultation about their ideas. After the session

they feel confident with all the information that they receive and they are prepared in the future to have their own business.

Everyman Theatre - Scene Change: Positive Images, Parallels in History:

On 23rd September our group of Roma and Non-Roma Young people had the opportunity to perform at the Everyman Theatre. It was a day full of excitement for us and the group. The young people learnt to work professionally and to make a play with a positive impact in our community.

Family Fun Day October 2017

We had a great day at St Bede's church with lots to offer. Lots of activities including making fruit smoothies, badge making, recycling games, seeded pots, free clothes and so much more. We attracted about 100 people to this event.

Community Clothes Rail - summer 2017

Over the past couple of months we have been piloting a community clothes rail. The idea is to find new homes for preloved clothes where they are most needed, to encourage people to recycle and keep all the items free. We have been surprised with the success of these events.

We have piloted our Community Clothes Rail through our family fun days and also a number of specific events with harder to reach communities. On Thursday 17 August 2017 we had a busy day at Cullen Street with our Clothes Rail event. We helped over sixteen families that day. We weighed in over 160 kilos of clothes that we diverted from landfill. Over the coming months we hope to hold at least two Clothes Rail events in the L1578 area each month.

As the clothes Rail is a big success we hosted one in St Bede's church on Thursday 30th August and again it was a great success this time focus was uniforms and all in all we had over 17 families in.

Health and Wellbeing Day at Cullen Street

Over fifteen partners from Mersey Care came together on 11 August at Cullen Street. The event went really well, plenty of people attended and joined in all the various activities from making dream catchers, having their blood pressure taken, healthy food advice, energy tips and giveaways, home and personal safety advice. For partners it was a great opportunity to network and catch up.

Playtime in Cullen Street

In August we start the children games in Cullen Street. A lot of the Roma children don't know what kind of games are traditionally from Romania. It was nice to share with them our Romanian games and to see that they are open for new things. Roma children enjoyed the afternoons, the games and they were anxious to meet again all the month with new games.

Don't Discriminate L8

On the 7 July we had the pleasure of seeing a performance in Tiber Square organised by the young Roma from the area. This was possible thanks to our partner, the Everyman Theatre.

The message from the play was clear with a strong impact in the community. Discrimination is not allowed in the street or schools. The play was performed at the end of

the day with many people staying behind to watch. The activity was a beautiful collaboration that opens up new horizons.



Liverpool - Liverpool Roma Employability Network

Earlier this year we set up a Liverpool Roma Employability Network (LREN) - bringing together all the individuals and services in Liverpool that promote greater employability of Roma. Our final Roma Breakfast of 2017 meets next week and we will open with a sharing a moment to focus on what the group has achieved so far.

Since our first Roma breakfast this year the Liverpool Roma Network has achieved much, and six months on has built a strong network that will influence employability and inclusion work in Liverpool for many years to come. Some of the group's achievements are:

- Setting up of a Liverpool Roma network that now shares practice and knowledge among services in relation to Roma residents
- Enabled mixing and interaction between communities and individuals that had hitherto not met; as such it has identified overlap and repetition of service provision as well as gaps in provision and initiated conversations about how to fill the gaps
- Mapping of services across Liverpool that support Roma access to employment
- Empowered Roma to become champions within and for their communities
- Joined in with the National Roma Network (NRN) and put Liverpool on the 'Roma map' in the UK, thus joining in national conversations and forums about and for Roma
- Raised the level of multicultural awareness across Liverpool
- Raised the priority given to employment interventions that can support Roma into employment that is both sustainable and higher level than traditional Roma entry points to the labour market.

Helen Collins
Liverpool John Moores University

Luton Roma Trust

Luton Roma Trust continues to increase its capacity to meet the needs of the local Roma community. We are just appointing two new Romanian Roma part-time Project Workers

who will start in Luton in January. We still have a vacancy for a part-time Project Manager. So please spread the word!

We now have over 800 clients who have registered with Luton Roma Trust and meet them in a cafe in the centre of town. So an urgent need is to now find a premises of our own. Meanwhile our Music Project with the Roma children continues to flourish with a new track for mother and their pre-school children. Our Roma Education Champion is making inroads into our local schools and has begun mentoring some of the students.

*Martin Burrell
Luton Roma Trust*

Margaret Greenfields - Summary of Research Activities

This note relates to interlinked pilot projects. Fieldwork for both of which were completed some months ago but which have been greatly and unavoidably delayed in publication as a result of researcher ill-health/extended leave and work-pressures on all parties. It is anticipated that the final reports will be produced and the reports published in January 2018. Both projects were co-designed and initiated with Roma civil society agencies.

Roma migrants to the UK and access to welfare benefits. A pilot project undertaken in London and Derby- Egle Dagilyte (Anglia Ruskin University) and Margaret Greenfields (Bucks New University) in conjunction with Derby Community Care/ Phil Henry and Roma Support Group.

This small scale pilot study consisted of three focus groups in London and Derby to explore the experiences of Roma migrants in relation to of accessing welfare benefits pre and post the welfare benefits regulation changes and 'tightening up' of rules which occurred in 2014. Interviews were undertaken with Roma families who had either sought to access benefits (three focus groups), or who might require access to benefits as well as (group discussions) with support staff who offered their perceptions of particularly problematic rules which disproportionately impact on Roma claimants. An on-line survey of welfare benefits/legal advice agencies experience of delivering advice services to Roma clients only yielded very few responses.

Within the focus groups, we collected data from Roma participants on knowledge of welfare benefit entitlement pre and post migration, employment access strategies, experience of claiming welfare benefits (including Housing Benefit), complexities pertaining to relevant documentation, success rate in claims, appeals processes, and linguistic barriers pre and post the 2014 welfare benefit changes. The group interview with support workers focused on their knowledge of employment patterns and welfare claim experiences of client groups.

Major themes which emerged from the research included: the lack of an accessible, precise list of documents required to support evidence required to meet the Habitual Residence Test; imposition of an impersonal, one-size-fits-all application of the Right to Reside Test; long, artificially-created delays in assessing welfare benefits applications; rejection of welfare benefits applications without administrators providing clear reasons for such decisions, which could in some cases lead to commencement of administrative removal of claimants from the UK; high burden of proof on the jobseekers to show 'compelling evidence' of meeting the genuine prospect of work test; the impact of the

reduction in translation service at Jobcentre Plus offices; and insufficient, often contradictory, risk and impact assessments of the 2013-2014 welfare reform measures by the UK Government that indicate populist policy-making.

It was of particularly deep concern that findings from the focus group indicated that some families were near destitute as a result of delays in obtaining access to welfare benefits to which they were entitled; leading to decisions in some cases to return 'home' or to contact with social work departments (see below) in relation to the wellbeing of children – not uncommonly because of the circumstances of poverty/destitution which led to overcrowding in houses; parents struggling to provide food or becoming homeless. In particular, claiming or seeking to claim welfare benefits in some cases acted as trigger to 'administrative removals' (or pressures to return to their country of origin) by state authorities when it was claimed that individuals and families were not exercising their 'treaty rights' to reside in the UK as they were unemployed and therefore not 'working' or able to fulfil the legal requirements to demonstrate that they could remain living in Britain.

Roma Families in contact with social work and youth offending teams - Margaret Greenfields, Phil Henry, Jenni Berlin. Roma Support Group, Derby Community Care and MigRom UK partners.

This project which involved fieldwork in 2015-16 has been significantly delayed in publication although background updating of the field/literature/statistics continues. The intent of the pilot study was to explore the experiences of Roma individuals/families who have had contact with social workers (for a variety of reasons but predominantly in relation to child protection/safeguarding concerns) and also youth offending teams. In particular information was sought in relation to how respondents came into contact with the service; whether the contact was helpful/challenging, how the service could be improved (for example in relation to cultural competence).

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Summary of key themes: SW interventions predominantly triggered by concerns over 'neglect' of child typically associated with poverty/lack of knowledge of the health/welfare system. Stress of poverty/poor housing and lack of understanding of social work intervention can become part of an increasingly downward spiral experienced by participants. Pre-migration circumstances and poor housing repeatedly stressed by respondents. When social work interventions occurred, participants often spoke about 'lack of support' from social workers in relation to underlying stressors – poor accommodation, welfare benefits issues, housing etc. in contrast to 'wrap-around support' experiences in countries of origin. Roma families typically experienced a lack of Trust in system and actively seeking help from social care system very rare and typically associated with support from NGOs for example in cases where a family were caring for a disabled child etc. There was a wide-spread lack of comprehension of processes 'system illiteracy'/poor professional communication strategies. Significant problems were found to exist in relation to translation services (dialects of Romanes etc). There is a clear need for

more culturally appropriate support and in this the role of Roma NGOs/civil society were emphasised. Youth Offending Teams were perceived of as having a more holistic approach to working with young Roma and respondents were not so critical of their engagement and practice. Social workers/YOT professionals who participated in interviews/survey also emphasised the need for additional training and support, indicating that predominantly they were lacking in access to adequate resources/information, often had limited resources available and were concerned to 'do the right thing' but that mutual incomprehension between families and professionals could lead to clashes of values. The strict requirements of child protection roles etc. required that protocols are followed and families could (often as a result of fear/lack of understanding) often not cooperate. Again the role of specialist NGOs and Romanes speaking advocates from the community were emphasised in helping to 'bridge the gap'.

Parallel Lives Roma Project – East of England

The East of England Strategic Migration Partnership has received funding from the Controlling Migration Fund to deliver a region-wide project: 'Parallel Lives', in partnership with Fenland District Council. This two-year project started on 1st October 2017, and is seeking to help support the integration of the East of England's Roma community.

The two project officers (contact details below) are currently meeting with a variety of community groups, charities and statutory agencies throughout the East of England to discuss their work with Roma communities, the needs of Roma people, and the support available to help with integration and access to mainstream services.

There are several well-established forms of support for Roma people across the region, such as the COMPAS Community Group, Peterborough, the Luton Roma Trust, the Ipswich Roma Inclusion Support Group (IRIS) and the Polish and Roma Advice Service in Southend.

A number of educational resources have also been produced in the region such as the Romany Theatre Company's 'Atching Tan', an all-ages teaching pack, and Central Bedfordshire Council's e-learning module and workshop package on Gypsy, Roma, Traveller culture.

We are hosting a regional Roma networking event in Cambridge on Tuesday 27th March 2018 to highlight key pieces of work and effective approaches.

If you would like more details about the Parallel Lives project please contact us:

Sue Hay - sue.hay@eelga.gov.uk 07920-257-964

Rachel Heathcock - rachel.heathcock@eelga.gov.uk 01284 758311

Redbridge Equalities and Community Council

There is a growing Roma community in the London Borough of Redbridge, mainly from Romania. There has been considerable hostility towards them from settled more established communities in South Ilford. Some of this hostility was fostered and driven by local councillors (now ex-councillor) who organised a petition against newcomers 'from Eastern Europe' in South Ilford.

Over the years Redbridge Equalities & Community have taken various initiatives to address this:

- Myth busting leaflets
- Dos and Don'ts of neighbourly behaviour circulated in the area in English and Romanian
- Establishing a community network bringing together Roma people and people of good will (sometimes not so good will!) together to discuss points of conflict and points of common interest
- Project to get an open space Jubilee Gardens, into a proper community space. It had been neglected and then became a focus for the Roma community, but others claimed to be intimidated – so a united campaign for a community controlled space
- Briefing papers directed at opinion formers in response to media blitzes about Roma and Romanian migration into Britain
- Cultural events. Roots in Common music festival. Another event with speaker from the Indian Romani Institute addressing especially people from the Indian sub-continent about Roma routes.
- Outreach advice surgeries at Roma children's project and at the Roma congregation in local church.
- Assisting Roma Support Group in their work to engage with police on reporting hate crime.

The role of local schools and Sue Mutter the GRT Advisory Teacher for most that time, was crucial to this work – building on the links they had forged with Roma parents.

*David Landau and Cecelia Rufus
Redbridge Equalities and Community Council*

Roma Community Care

Roma Community Care Activities over the Last few months:

- Roma Awareness Training for Derby City Council Safeguarding Board
- Roma Awareness Training for 2 Local schools in Derby
- Continuing support and advocacy with Roma Clients
- Michal Trip to Brussels for Roma Event
- Running 2 Youth Clubs per week
- Supporting Parents with CSE issues
- Held Safeguarding Forum
- Train the Trainer Training
- Mentoring Young People

Areas of Developments

- Outreach work to speak to young people about gangs
- Derby City Council Funding for Roma Apprentice and up skilling Roma Community

Current Issues in the Community

- Schools
- Gangs
- Drugs

- Safeguarding – CSE
- Hate Crime

*Ruth Richardson, Director
Roma Community Care*

The Romani Cultural and Arts Company

Stories of Health and Wellness: Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Communities in Wales

The project is a partnership between the Romani Cultural and Arts Company and the NHS Centre for Equality and Human Rights, Public Health Wales. A team of trained Community Champions from the communities (Romani and Travellers) carried out over 100 interviews with young parents and older carers about their experiences of accessing health and wellness provision in Wales. Further details of the project can be found at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.wales.nhs.uk/news/43626>

*Isaac Blake, Director
The Romani Cultural and Arts Company*

Rotherham- Roma Khamoro

Roma Khamoro offers a Drop-in sessions at three different locations within the community- The Unity Centre, Wellgate Centre and Ferham Children's Centre. At these sessions members of the (mainly) Roma community feel confident/happy to bring their issues relating to bills, council issues, benefits, work applications etc. Home visiting service is also available for those unable to reach the drop-ins. Generally there has been an increase in the need for the service due to new arrivals from different town/cities/counties.

*Michal Bily
Doncaster Council*

Roma Support Group, Roma Early Childhood Education Programme

The Roma Support Group (RSG) has been given a grant by the Roma Early Learning Programme, of the Open Society Foundation (OSF), to implement the Roma Early Childhood Education Programme (RECEP). We are now in the second phase of RECEP working with Roma families with children under the age of five and local L.B. Newham Children's Centres.

We have weekly 'Stay and Play' sessions lead by Roma and non Roma staff and weekly Advice and Advocacy for Roma families delivered by the Roma Early Years Advice Worker and families are assisted with their housing needs, employability, welfare as well helping them to access education and health services. The RECEP sessions are held alongside the Children's Centres mainstream 'Stay and Play' provision and children and parents join in a variety of play and craft activities and can move freely between rooms as well as join together for soft play and singing sessions.

The project has also delivered a Roma Parent Support Programme for parents and carers based on 'Parenting with Confidence' modules adapted to suit Roma in the UK context, which enabled them to gain greater awareness of their child's development as well as giving them more confidence as users of the Early Years education system. The recent training sessions have focused on 'fun with language' followed by parents and children doing an activity together such as making playdough or planting bulbs'. The project has also included leading Roma awareness training for professionals.

The project Roma workers, Roma Early Education Champions have attended training in Early Years Education and Child protection and worked alongside Early years professionals. They have also coordinated focus groups for parents and co-delivered training sessions for parents and professionals with increased confidence and professional capacity.

Most recently we started home visiting our Roma families as part of developing family engagement, knowledge and confidence in their child's early learning. We are currently developing some Toy library resources that can be used on these visits as well as at the 'Stay and Play' sessions.

The Roma Early Childhood Education Programme aims to tackle the multiple disadvantages faced by Roma refugee and migrant children in London by:

- Enhancing social inclusion of Roma children 0-5 years old;
- Developing partnerships with Roma parents as their first educators of their children during the early years and empower them to participate in the UK education system thereby preparing their children for entry to mainstream education in the UK;
- Developing Roma professional capacity in the field of Early Childhood Education

The project has made a real difference for Roma children who have attended the Centre regularly. They are interacting with other children and staff members and have become more confident and self-assured.

'At the beginning I wanted my daughter to be more independent. She is talking in English now and it is good to see my daughter playing, talking and learning like this, she loves coming here.' (Roma parent)

RSG RECEP project colleagues are: Sue Mutter and Tania Gessi joint RECEP Coordinators, Roma Champions Daniel Brzezinski, Ewelina Pawlowska and Janos Horvath with Roma Volunteer Liliana Popa.

Sheffield City Council

- The new Sheffield Independent Advisory Group for South Yorkshire Police now includes a Roma representative, Peter Pecha.
- Fir Vale School hosted a very successful 2 day visit from Slovakian consulate that saw over 300 people receiving support with official paperwork
- Fir Vale Community Hub has started the Accommodating Difference project providing tenancy advice to local tenants in partnership with Sheffield Roma Network.

- A consortium of Chilypep, MESH, Who is Your Neighbour and Parkwood Academy have started the RUBIC project: Respect & Understanding – Building Inclusive Communities. This is a new project to improve community cohesion, working with asylum seekers, refugees and other new arrivals as well as more settled communities in their own neighbourhoods.
- Sheffield City Council continue to develop their neighbourhood delivery with partners, joining up Council services with the new neighbourhood policing teams, housing support, residents groups and community groups etc in the neighbourhoods where the largest number of new arrivals live.
- Sheffield was successful in gaining £835,000 from the Government's Controlling Migration Fund for a new project in areas changed by rapid inward migration in NE and E Sheffield called the Sheffield Community Investment Deal. This includes new uniformed street wardens, community workers working with the community on new activities and new projects to improve the area long term, a more organised welcome for the newly arrived and co-ordination of services and work.

*Angela Greenwood
Sheffield City Council*

Sheffield Roma Network

FCH and the Sheffield Roma network are working with lead organisations across the country such as the racial justice network, Tottenham rights and many more to help support victims of hate crime with the aim to build communities of solidarity. The current theme is re-imagining Brexit Britain reflections on the past present and future currently we are focussing on South Yorkshire.

A two day course led by the Sheffield Roma Network for organisations working in the Sheffield areas with the Roma Community. Course will include:

- True life stories of experience of settling in Sheffield
- Current issues faced by the community
- How agencies can understand the needs
- Culture and a basic Roma language course

The Brexit debate is bringing key players and legal reps together locally to answer questions for local residents around Brexit and the impact and decisions that will impact on the lives of the Roma in Sheffield.

The last year has seen a slow but gradual integration of the Roma community within the Firvale/Page Hall area. Positive trends noted by the Sheffield Roma Network and Firvale Community Hub (FCH - formerly PACA) include:

- Access to mainstream services is improving with the confidence of Roma people to assert themselves.
- Informal community leadership is developing, with members of the Roma community talking to their neighbours about, and addressing, neighbourhood issues.

- These factors are, in turn, leading to increased integration in public life, although this will be a slow process and significant areas of segregation remain.

The Sheffield Roma Network (SRN) have had a significant impact in this regard. However, community tensions continue at the domestic level of relations between neighbours. The SRN have, with FCH's assistance, been successful in obtaining small scale TDS funding for a project to provide tenancy information and neighbour mediation through dialogue. This is reducing the numbers of conflicts which result in one party or another leading the area and helping to build a settled community. FCH continues to offer legal advice and advocacy to the Roma community across Sheffield.

A funding application to provide first language advice to promote safety within Roma households is in the final process of approval.