

# Rights, Equalities and Future Roma Voices

## National Roma Network Conference

14 December 2017  
London



**Migration Yorkshire**  
*Strategic leadership, local support*

# Welcome and a brief history of the National Roma Network

David Brown

*Chair of National Roma Network*



**Migration Yorkshire**  
*Strategic leadership, local support*

# A funder's perspective

Juliana Bell

*Metropolitan Migration Foundation*



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# Keynote speaker:

Kate Green MP

*Chair - APPG on Gypsy Roma Travellers  
and APPG on Migration*



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# Key policy issues affecting migrant Roma in the UK

Ewa Jamroz, *Migration Yorkshire*

Olga Fuseini, *University of Sheffield*

Prof Phil Brown, *University of Salford*



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# Introduction

NRN Forum meetings bring people together to:

- ① discuss matters relating to the migrant Roma community from different angles
- ① enable members of Roma community to provide their perspectives and feedback
- ① link professionals/Roma working on same issues
- ① identify main challenges and share practice and information



# NRN Forum meetings

At each meeting we asked participants to:

- ① identify key local and national challenges related to specific policy issue
- ② discuss existing practices to address these challenges and how they could be improved
- ③ consider ways of improving understanding of Roma issues amongst policy makers



# NRN Forum meetings

NRN meetings explored the following subjects:

- ④ Roma participation and leadership – September 2015 (Birmingham)
- ④ Education – April 2016 (Salford)
- ④ Police and criminal justice – July 2016 (Peterborough)
- ④ Employment – October 2016 (Leeds)
- ④ Brexit – June 2016 (Sheffield)
- ④ Housing - September 2017 (Sheffield)



# Education – key challenges

- 🌀 Support needed for Roma parents to understand UK education system
- 🌀 Welfare reforms affecting funding for schools (links with Free School Meals)
- 🌀 Racism experienced in schools and high level of exclusions of Roma children
- 🌀 Low awareness of Roma culture among teachers and other educational staff
- 🌀 Low take up of free nursery places



# Education – examples of current practice

- Roma members of staff who are the trusted links between schools and members of Roma community
- Provision for children waiting for school places involving whole families
- Roma culture trainings for professionals
- Joint engagement projects – school/children's centre with support orgs
- mediation between families and school



# Police and criminal justice – key challenges

- ① General distrust of police among Roma
- ① Increase in hate crime post-EU referendum
- ① Reluctance to report crime – fear of police links to immigration enforcement/removals
- ① Over-representation of Roma in prisons and youth offending institutions
- ① Lack of comprehensive responses to issues affecting Roma community e.g. child sexual exploitation/trafficking



# Police and criminal justice – examples of current practice

- Roma recruited as police officers and special constables
- Roma culture trainings for police
- Child sexual exploitation awareness resources created by, or in consultation with, Roma young people
- Awareness sessions for Roma communities organised jointly with police and support orgs
- Hate crime third party reporting centres with language facilities



# Employment – key challenges

- ④ Insecure, low-paid jobs and lack of progression
- ④ Exploitation by employers and employment agencies – and no redress mechanisms
- ④ Market restrictions pushing Roma towards self-employment e.g. Big Issue
- ④ Difficulties in accessing ESOL while maintaining employment
- ④ Apparent lack of, or small number of, role models within the Roma community in secure employment



# Employment – examples of current practice

- ④ Informal English sessions linked with practical skills – cooking, sewing
- ④ Family based language interventions
- ④ Paid youth placement schemes with lower entry points
- ④ Local Roma employability projects – CV workshops and IT classes



# Brexit – key challenges

- ④ Brexit is all encompassing and almost every other issue is now framed in this context
- ④ Confusion and misinformation affects Roma communities and those who work with them
- ④ Fear, anxiety and uncertainty about future among Roma communities and increased feeling of being unwelcome
- ④ Some services reported disengagement
- ④ Experience of hate crime in neighbourhoods as well as in schools



# Brexit – examples of current practice

- ④ Joined up effort immediately after the vote – information produced by one NRN member and translated with the help of others
- ④ Information sessions for community members
- ④ Limited assistance in completing residency applications – due to OISC limits
- ④ Very limited help with challenging administrative removals



# Housing – key challenges

- ④ Housing conditions of variable quality, many in low end of the private sector
- ④ Large families and insufficient income = overcrowding
- ④ Difficulties in accessing Housing Benefit
- ④ Discrimination in rental market due to being ‘high risk’
- ④ High mobility due to difficulties in securing long term accommodation



# Housing – examples of current practice

- ④ Rental rights and responsibilities awareness sessions
- ④ Assistance with securing accommodation
- ④ Mediation between individuals/families and landlords
- ④ Assistance with challenging evictions and benefits decisions
- ④ Neighbourhood actions – recycling, street cleaning



# Interlinking issues

- ④ Anecdotal vs. evidence
- ④ Poverty and lack of English create vulnerability i.e. to CSE, exploitation, trafficking, involvement of social services, administrative removals
- ④ Difficulty in challenging bad practice (re employment, benefits, schools, social services) and accessing redress mechanisms
- ④ Issues interlink – lack of stable housing and income affects engagement with other services such as health, education, police



# Interlinking issues

- Roma often supported under narrow 'headings' so only partial, often immediate, needs are addressed or through short 'crisis' interventions with no long term support offered
- Few Romani interpreters so non-Roma Slovak, Czech, Polish interpreters used
- Brexit – confusion and uncertainty about future; difficulty to assess the impact



# A way forward

1. Evidence, evidence, evidence
2. Systematic, joined-up and long-term commitment to improve the situation, followed by appropriate funding
3. Complex needs of Roma means more holistic, partnership based approach needed
4. Developing capacity of Roma community members to become professionals involved in planning and decision-making



# A way forward

5. Linking the issues with existing government's commitments – i.e. prevention of vulnerability leading to exploitation and modern slavery, and tackling “burning injustice”
6. Providing meaningful support to Roma individuals and grassroots Roma organisations wanting to help their communities
7. Ensuring that Roma perspectives are present in Brexit discussions



# Lunch and Networking

*Enjoy! Please be back by 1:30pm*



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# Panel Discussion

## Roma Rights and Equalities



# Roma Rights and Equalities

## Panellists:

- Denisa Gannon, *Coventry Law Centre*
- Arthur Ivatts, *Independent Consultant*
- Fizza Qureshi, *Migrants' Rights Network*
- Andy Shallice, *Roma Support Group*



# Panel Discussion

## Future Roma Voices in the UK



# Future Roma Voices in the UK

## Panellists:

- Mihai Calin Bica, *Roma Support Group (London)*
- Michal Bily, *Roma Khamoro (Rotherham)*
- Olga Fuseini, *Clifton Learning Partnership*
- Petr Torak, *MBE (Peterborough)*



# Closing remarks

David Brown

*Chair of National Roma Network*



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