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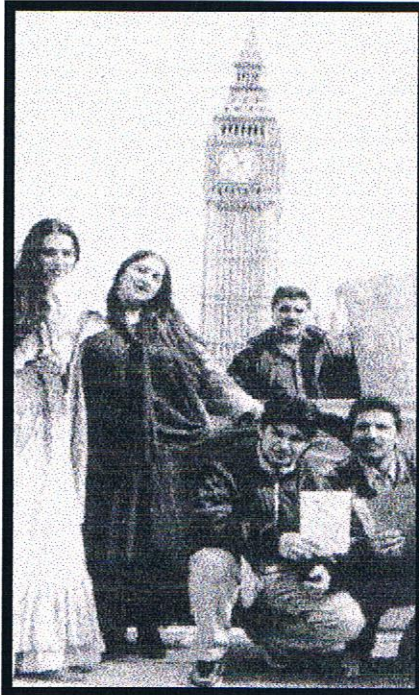
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ANNUAL



REPORT



2ND OCTOBER 2000 – 3RD OCTOBER 2001

## INTRODUCTION

This year has been a difficult but a rewarding one. We have seen the Roma Support Group blossom and build on the foundations of its early success in 1999 to further its aims and objectives in 2000/2001.

In December 2000 we organised and presided over the 1st Festival of Romany Culture, which was a huge success. We have co-operated in some new and exiting developments, such as: workshops for musicians and dancers, an album release for our cultural project 'Romani Rad'. We helped with the organising of two Conferences in London presenting workshops on the Roma refugees plight in the contemporary world.

At the start of the year in Autumn 2000 we were running two main centres; White City in Hammersmith and Fulham

and the Froud Centre in Manor Park, Newham. By the finish of the year in September 2001, we are operating from four centres, three in Newham and the existing one in White City. Part of our success since our beginning has been to attract volunteers to our project without whose help the RSG would have struggled to get its feet off the ground. Unfortunately we had to bid farewell to Michal Pietras SJ who helped us begin and expand our project. We wish him well for the future.

## ORGANISATION

The Roma Support Group's work is organised and planned by the Management Committee and supervised by the bilingual Co-ordinator of the project who has academic qualifications and 15 years experience of advocacy work and human rights activity in this country, Poland and Japan. The Co-ordinator is responsible to the Committee. There are 7 members of the Committee who meet on a regular basis every 3 months. They are made up of 3 Roma people and 4 British members. The members of the committee set out the current work/action plan of the RSG and the agenda for the following year. During every AGM, we open a window of opportunity for other committed and experienced individuals to join our committee.

There are 4 volunteers who run English and art classes, advocacy and interpretation work at the centres and beyond, and help with social activities and recreation.

### Our Staff Members:

#### Paid Staff

- Part-time Project Co-ordinator whose responsibilities are: Caseworker, bilingual advocate, development worker and P.R.
- Part-time Fund-raiser, music and dance project promoter, publication officer and information worker.

#### Volunteers

- English Language Tutor
- Art Project Tutor
- Publication/exhibition organiser
- Bilingual advocate and interpreter.

## ROMA SUPPORT GROUP, OUR HISTORY

The idea of the group was initiated by the people who drafted and adopted the constitution of the Romany Support Group in October 1998. Until the 12th of January 1999, the organisation had functioned on the basis of a network of Roma people conveying support for one another in the different boroughs of London, from Erith in the far south east to Hammersmith, Camden in the centre and out again to Haringey in the north. The general acceptance and approval of this work was passed on the 3rd October 1998 through a congress meeting of about 70 people in the Holy Cross Church in Kings Cross.

The needs of Roma people and the difficulties that they encounter in achieving those needs is the principle reason why the Roma Support Group was formed. It was found that without linguistic/advocacy skills, many members of the Roma community might still be denied access to health services, education and housing, welfare advice. One of the main objectives of the group is to provide a service for the Roma people and to reduce the isolation they feel when faced with their cultural and linguistic problems which creates acute difficulties when faced with a system they do not understand and one which is also not

particularly tolerant of their situation and sympathetic to their needs. Better advice and better information will help the Roma people in their quest for better access to local services, housing, health, education etc.

Hence from the 12th of January 1999, we were accommodated by the Communal Welfare Centre at St. Stephen's Church, Royal Oak on a weekly basis. While we were more than pleased to have these premises, Royal Oak remained a place which was difficult and expensive to reach for the majority of our users. It was decided after success with initial funding applications to move to areas where the Roma people lived in their greatest numbers: Hammersmith and Fulham; Newham, the North



London areas of South Tottenham and Hackney. In May 2000 we acquired funding of the Community Chest in Hammersmith and Fulham for the rent and telephone line for our premises at the White City Community Centre where we meet once a week. At the same time we were able to acquire premises at the Froud Centre in Manor Park, Newham on a once a week basis.

**ROMA SUPPORT GROUP'S MISSION STATEMENT**

We aim to improve the quality of life for Roma refugees and asylum-seekers through the introduction of language training, linguistic and advocacy support as well as organising activities and cultural enhancement. It is also our objective to make the public aware of the discrimination and persecution that the Roma people are facing in Europe through newsletters, advertising, exhibitions, cultural and infor-

mative events, etc. We intend to carry on the support of the Romany people for as long as they need our help in overcoming prejudice, isolation, low individual and social esteem and their vulnerability.

We work with Roma refugees arriving from different Eastern European countries ie., Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and former Soviet Republics.

**THE WORK WE DID , 2000 – 2001**

**Froud Centre Manor Park, Newham** where we have helped support over 60 extended Roma families. Here we provide on Tuesdays, an advocacy/interpretation service, linking people with different services and facilities, education, health, welfare, and language support. Twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays we run English classes for adults under the heading "Empower yourself through English", which since May 2001 are supported by Newham College of Further Education.

**White City Community Centre, Hammersmith and Fulham** where we have helped to support up to 40 extended families. We meet at White City on Wednesdays where we run drop-in centre for our clients. Except for advocacy and advice, the venue is used by our users as a community meeting place. This way we try and foster a community spirit by providing Romany people with the chance to socialise and to practice their traditional cultural activities through the medium of music and dance. It has become a workshop for 10 musicians and 16 dancers, mainly children and teenagers who have contributed to the success of their project, called 'Romani Rad' (Romany Night). Since September this project has been transferred to The Trinity Centre in East Ham.

**St. Ignatius Church, South Tottenham**, where we have helped between 20 to 30 families providing advocacy and interpretation services, as well as English classes.

## THE FESTIVAL OF ROMANY CULTURE, CONWAY HALL, 2000

This was a truly momentous occasion, and a very successful day. The event was organised for the benefit of the Roma community, to bring them together, to raise their social and individual self-esteem. Another aim was to build a bridge between the Roma and the host society and to enhance the understanding of Romany culture. What we have achieved was the cultural mobilisation of the large Roma community in London. There were approximately 300 Roma asylum-seekers and refugees including children from many countries: Poland, Russia, Czech Republic, Slovakia etc. There were also approx. 200 non-Roma guests. Roma people were involved in every

preparation for the event, by providing and food; teaching of music and dance; making their own costumes and preparing the hall. The event itself was a showcase for talented Romany people. There was over five hours of live Romany music and dance on the main stage. There was a photographic exhibition, a children's art exhibition, a selection of Romany films portraying customs and ways of life. There was Romany cuisine and impromptu performances from all those that were quite clearly enjoying the event. We hope to hold another one soon, possibly in the Spring of 2002

## ROMANI RAD

Romani rad is a group of young Roma dancers and musicians from Poland. The group was formed in the spring of 1999 on the basis that they wanted to show and share their culture with audiences in the London region. Since tentative first beginnings, these young performers have grown in stature and have now become regular players in many different events and festivals throughout London. The exotic and colourful costumes are all designed and hand made by Roma women. Theirs is the tradition expressed by costumes, music and dance, the skills of which are handed down to them throughout the generations. Music is part of their life, it is not just an entertainment. It is a means of communication and part of their ritual of life, from wed



These young performers have grown in stature and have now become regular players in many different events.

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dings to funerals they are educated through when the smallest fingers that can wrap themselves around a keyboard or are strong enough to pull the strings. The musicians, (including violin, guitars, accordians double bass, male and female singers) are all highly skilled artists who have recently completed a CD (Asylum), co-operating with a top Hungarian Romany band Besh

O'Drom, to mix and fuse traditional and contemporary styles. They present a wide range of Gypsy songs and dances from different parts of Europe while maintaining the originality and uniqueness of style. Their music and dancing has enough energy and power to light the streets and stages of Britain with a feast of colour, flair and originality.

And that is exactly what they have been doing in 2000/2001. The list of credits include:

- COCKPIT THEATRE, PADDINGTON.**
- LEAP FESTIVAL, PADDINGTON ARTS CENTRE.**
- FESTIVAL OF ROMANY CULTURE DAY, CONWAY HALL, HOLBORN.**
- HOLOCAUST DAY, DOVER.**
- CELEBRATING SANCTUARY CONCERT, BIRMINGHAM IN THE WEST MIDLANDS.**
- CONCERT: THE IRISH CENTRE, HAMMERSMITH.**
- CONCERT: ERITH YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTRE.**
- CONCERT: RIVERSIDE STUDIOS (3), HAMMERSMITH.**
- CONCERT: GRAND UNION CHAPEL, Highbury Corner.**
- CONCERT: LITTLE ILFORD SCHOOL, Manor Park.**
- CONCERT: AMSTERDAM HOUSE, DOVER.**
- CONCERT: REDBRIDGE SHOW 2001, ILFORD.**
- CONCERT: LYRIC THEATRE, HAMMERSMITH.**
- CONCERT: RESPECT FESTIVAL, FINSBURY PARK.**
- CONCERT: FOREST GATE FESTIVAL.**
- CONCERT: ERITH OPEN AIR FESTIVAL**

<b>PUBLICITY, CONFERENCE &amp; WORKSHOP</b>
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| <b>November 2000</b> | The Co-ordinator of the project wrote and published an article on the plight of the Polish Roma in the Christian magazine 'The Month'.                                      |
| <b>December 2000</b> | The organisation greatly contributed to an article about the Roma in 'The Geographical' magazine, issue Dec 2000.   |
| <b>January 2001</b>  | Active participation in a workshop in Dover called 'The Friendship Project', a music and art project based in Kent co-funded by the Princes' Trust and Kent County Council. |

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**March 2001** Recording a CD ('Asylum'), thanks to Richard Robinson. The idea is to make Romany music more accessible to young people through the infusion of Garage music and other contemporary styles.

**April 2001** Active participation in Ustiben (Roma Nation Day) which was organised by the Gypsy Council.

**June 2001** During Refugee Week, we were instrumental in helping to organise two conferences along with the Children Society on the plight of Romany asylum-seekers and refugees from Poland. The conferences were held at East London University and Arcola Theatre in Hackney. They highlighted the problems faced by the Roma both here and in Poland and helped to publicise and campaign for a better future within their host society.

**May, June 2001** Workshops organised with Ignoma Productions in primary schools in Kilburn, promoting the cultural diversity of refugees and asylum-seekers.

**November 2001** There has been a fabulous new development by Richard Robinson, a very new Web site devoted to the Roma ([www.romaedu.org.uk](http://www.romaedu.org.uk)) There are contributions from some members of the RSG as well as a huge wealth of information about Roma.

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## CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

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Here is a list of other charitable and voluntary public organisations with which we have co-operated with during 2000 - 2001.

- Ignoma Production
- The Children Society in Newham
- The Trinity Centre - Unaccompanied Refugee Youth Project.
- Community Involvement Unit, Aston Mansfield Charities
- Old Oak Community Project
- Westminster Arts Council
- Erith Youth and Family Centre
- Grand Union Chapel
- Refugee Forum in Hammersmith and Fulham
- Gypsy Council
- Refugee Council
- White City Opportunity Centre

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<b>FINANCIAL REPORT</b>
<b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE</b>

**INCOME**

	General Funds	Restricted Funds	Total
Grants Received	£ 7,802.50	24,000.00	31,802.50
Donations	£ 260.00		260.00
Others	£ 6,108.90		6,108.90
Bank Interest Received	£ 303.49		303.49
	£14,474.89	24,000.00	£ 38,474.89

**EXPENDITURE**

Salary Costs		17,203.13	17,203.13
Income Tax & N.I.		6,747.97	6,747.97
Payroll fees	£ 48.00		48.00
Bank charges	£ 8.00		8.00
Rent & Hire of Hall	£ 3,232.81		3,232.81
Printing and Stationary	£ 949.66		949.66
Coach Hire	£ 1,070.00		1,070.00
Telephone	£ 541.16		541.16
General Expenses	£ 708.48		708.48
Volunteer Expenses	£ 4,345.71		4,345.71
Events & Activities	£ 2,776.98		2,776.98
Capital Expenses	£ 1,905.80		1,905.80
Courses & Education	£ 711.95		711.95
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£16,298.55</b>	<b>23,951.10</b>	<b>40,249.65</b>

Net Income/ Outgoing Resources	(£1,823.66)	48.90	(1,774.76)
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**Assets**

Bank Balance at 30th September	£ 4,599.37	20,442.57	25,041.94
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**Statement of Assets & Liabilities as at 30th September 2001**



**AIMS AND FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES  
FOR THE COMING YEAR**

We have recently been awarded a grant from The Association of London Government for our development over the next three years. This includes provision of wages for two part-time employees (we welcome Elin Strand and Simon Poffley) and some funds for rent, advertising and accountancy bills.

The need and demand for our services across London creates a situation that the RSG network expands faster than its financial resources. At present we have insufficient funding for our projects, so we need to stabilise our future by trying to attain more substantial core funding over the next few months. If we are successful, this will enable us to strengthen our work in a number of different centres as well as plan future strategies.

Despite our financial difficulties, we have initiated some exciting developments.

- We will be expanding our English classes on Tuesdays in the Froud Centre by creating an English class for women.
- A creche will be available for the use of mothers who wish to partake in English classes or who need to use our services.

- We will be opening the Harold Road Centre in Upton Park for appointments with clients from the beginning of 2002.
- We have obtained funds from the London Arts to contribute to the production of a themed event which will start in Spring 2002, culminating in performances for the summer season.
- We have kicked off with a football project and we are hoping for a lively response from all those potential David Beckhams out there. We want to establish football training and football matches for all those between the ages of 8 - 14 at the Youth Community and Training (Church Army), Hartley Centre, 267 Barking Rd, East Ham.
- Our dream of a Roma newsletter has materialised at last and we hope you find it interesting and thought provoking. We hope to publish one every three months, so we will be looking for contributions to the next publication.

**we would like to thank our sponsors whose support means that we are able to carry on our work:  
Hammersmith and Fulham Community Chest;  
Newham Community Chest; Awards for All; Comic Relief; Jesuit Social Fund; Newham College of Further Education and private donations.**

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**ROMA SUPPORT GROUP**

**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Sylwia Ingmire	Secretary	Julia Goral
Roza Kotowicz	Chair	Moya Hamilton
Bernard Walsh	Treasurer	Father Clive Lee
Anna Krawczyk		

**STAFF**

Sylwia Ingmire	Co-ordinator (part-time)
Andy Ingmire	Fundraiser(part-time)

**VOLUNTEERS**

Dominique Alderweireldt	Sophie Fieldsend
Elin Strand	Chiara Contrino
Simon Poffley	Val Kovalenko
Pauline Rowe	Katarzyna Kaszyca
Dana Mock	

I/my organisation would like to help Roma Support Group

Please accept my/our donation of: £1000 £500 £250 £50 £25 £10 £———other

Cheque p.o. Box 23610 London E7 OXB

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Organisation  
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Please contact us to discuss other forms of support.

Please complete the details on this form, detach and post to Roma Support Group.

Thank you for your support.