

In this February 2015 edition of the newsletter, we highlight the recent Ofsted report on schools responses to the education of Roma children. This is a major report which this government committed to undertaking in 2012 and which explicitly highlights the experience of Roma children and young people in some English schools. The newsletter also includes news of a number of forthcoming events, and two initiatives to support and develop the Roma voices in different parts of the country. Finally, in connection with Holocaust Memorial Day, the newsletter includes current news coverage and resources connected with the rarely featured Roma experience of the European Holocaust.



February 2015 newsletter

Welcome from Roma Support Group

Welcome to the seventh edition of the newsletter. We want to bring you information, reflections, arguments and discussion about the issues that face Roma communities in the UK. The Roma Support Group has developed over the last fifteen years into a major service agency working for and with Roma communities, mainly in London. We run advice and advocacy sessions; education support programmes (including homework support) for children and families; a Roma Support and Engagement Programme (including tailored staff training and development); and an arts and culture programme. Recently, RSG has been able to develop its work on developing Roma advocacy and mediation, community engagement and development, and also in policy development and information provision. This e-bulletin is one manifestation of these recent developments.

Contact us via:

andy@romasupportgroup.org.uk

Overcoming barriers: ensuring that Roma children are fully engaged and achieving in education (Ofsted research report, December 2014)

Sir Michael Wilshaw, the head of Ofsted, was recently on LBC Radio and was asked about the impact of immigration on educational provision. He said,

Schools need the resources to deal with that. When they're faced with an influx of children from other countries, they need the resources and capacity to deal with it, and if those resources aren't there that's a big issue for government. That's the first thing and we'll be producing reports on this fairly soon¹.

Apart from his use of the word “influx”, it was reassuring to hear him say that this is about ‘resources and capacity’. The arguments about migration recently have tended to be about how high the fence needs to be, and how many poor people can we manage to dissuade from coming, or starve into leaving, the UK. And the Ofsted report released just before Christmas, *Overcoming Barriers*², is an important contribution along the lines that Wilshaw promised.

The report explores some of the barriers that schools and local authorities are attempting to overcome. These include:

- Responding to Roma children’s arrival and settlement
- Building their trust in the school, and promoting their and their families engagement with the school
- Improving behaviours
- Helping children achieve
- Dealing with the consequences of the recent loss of experienced and specialist staff
- The role of specialist teachers in schools
- The funding – ‘resources and capacity’ – to properly support Roma children

¹ <https://news.tes.co.uk/b/ofsted-watch/2014/10/30/ofsted-to-report-on-how-schools-cope-with-immigration.aspx>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ensuring-roma-children-achieve-in-education>

- The importance of self-ascription; “are these children Roma....?”

Ofsted reported that the schools they visited (in Derby, Sheffield and Manchester) were all “strongly committed” to making sure Roma children settled and succeeded. They were “welcoming of new pupils...and integrated them as quickly as possible”. Where Roma children had been in school for some time, and with few interruptions, Ofsted said “good progress was made”. And significantly in terms of recent comments by senior politicians, Ofsted concluded that “school leaders reported that there had been no adverse effect on the achievement of other pupils already settled in their schools”.

The report concludes with a number of recommendations for schools, local authorities and the Department for Education. These include,

- Revive or maintain specialist support in local authorities to support and work with Roma children, and prize expertise
- Ask that the Department for Education better resource schools which experience a high number of new admissions into the school throughout the year
- Ask the Department for Education to more accurately and supportively record the ethnicity of children
- Encourage schools to have Roma achievement led by a senior teacher
- Expect that schools will have trained and experienced teachers working on English language acquisition for pupils who need it

No discussion of Roma children in UK schools can take place without acknowledging the context from which many children and families have so recently left in Central & Eastern Europe (CEE). A recent Amnesty report³ from last November illustrates the racism, hatred and exclusion facing Roma children and their parents in Czech Republic, seven years since the ECHR charged the Czech government⁴ with the need to change their practices of placing Roma children in so-called ‘practical schools’. Alongside work and

³ <http://livewire.amnesty.org/2014/11/13/racism-segregation-and-rejection-the-reality-for-romani-children-in-the-czech-republic/>

⁴ <http://www.errc.org/article/czech-republic-must-put-an-end-to-unlawful-segregation-of-romani-children/4330>

security, the most frequent statement made by Roma parents about coming to the UK is that they know their children have a real chance of securing a better future as British schools are open, and have experience and expertise of working with all children.

Ofsted does not refer to this context at all – which informs particularly many Roma parents’ views of schools and education. It does refer to the absence or partial educational experience that Roma children might have had; “many Roma pupils were coming to school without any previous experience of early years provision or the equivalent of Key Stage 1” (#25). Schools have to secure and build a trust with Roma parents that rarely existed in their countries of origin.

The report tends to gloss over the problem of newly arrived children being allocated schools places. In many towns and cities, Roma families settle initially in private rented housing which tend to be areas of high existing social need, with public services under pressure from austerity and local poverty. It is not uncommon for families to have children allocated to different primary schools. But for staff in schools, the associated issues of general poverty, threats to what little household income exists and consequential overcrowding all demand expertise in collaboration with other services and especially with Roma community structures and support agencies. This perspective is not explored by Ofsted (apart from references to “mobility”) despite the inevitable consequences for children, parents and schools.

There are two factors that can determine the inclusion of children within a school. One is that for the child, their communities, their histories and customs and abilities are recognised and reflected both in the school itself, and in the curriculum. This is strength of today’s avowedly multicultural UK educational system – can we say the same for Roma children today?

Unfortunately, Ofsted didn’t explore curriculum issues. Secondly, how safe are Roma children at school; and how effective are schools in allaying prejudice and antagonism directed at some groups of children? The section of the report on “behaviour” focuses solely on the attitudes and actions of Roma children; many of whom are not new to hostility. But is it accurate to consider how *the police* can influence behaviour (see #34 – 35)? Isn’t this the bread and butter of classroom teaching and school policies for all children? And the

suggestion that schools “reported a low rate of racism” is welcoming, but begs further examination in the light of what many older Roma students report. How do we know? The Ofsted report includes a number of case studies that are referred to in the body of the report. Case study 5 just appears without any link to the rest of the report. It’s the testimony of ‘Stefan’; he describes his experience at secondary school:

... Stefan’s secondary school experience was ‘totally different’. Other than lateness, there were no behavioural problems. He was a prefect, got reward stickers and acted as a mediator. It was educationally, however, much more challenging. Teachers were supportive but he faced problems from other students. ‘There was name-calling, racism, bullying. Five White British guys set upon me in the gangway. It was reported; a meeting was set up and the police were involved. The school could have done more. There were no exclusions; no punishments. It happened to other Roma pupils as well. I didn’t do as well as I could have done at secondary but I got enough grades to go to college.’

We hope that the existing recommendations of the Ofsted report will be implemented by local authorities, schools and the DfE. It is a useful start. It could be complimented by a more detailed exploration of both issues around curriculum development, and the account of Roma students’ themselves about schools in the UK – especially in contrast to their previous school experiences. Equality UK, Lucie Fremlova and Heather Ureche developed this approach four years ago with their highly relevant report *From Segregation to Inclusion: Roma pupils in the UK*⁵. Now is the time to build on this.

Training & events

Roma Support Group training

Why this training? Why now?

⁵ http://equality.uk.com/Education_files/From%20segregation%20to%20integration_1.pdf

A wide range of practitioners are dealing with an increasing number of safeguarding cases which involve East European Roma families. The often complex family cases involve: homelessness, child poverty, neglect, children out of education, substance misuse etc.

This training can make a real difference to your engagement with Roma families. Better understanding promotes confidence and better decisions. This is further augmented by having relevant case studies and practical engagement tools to hand.

Who should attend?

Children's services including adoption and fostering teams, Adult social services, Family intervention and support services, Sure Start/Children's Centres, Schools, Education welfare services, Social housing, Community health services including safeguarding leads, Mental health services, Community police , Youth services including Youth Offending Services, Probation, voluntary organisations, etc.

Feedback from a previous participant:

“The trainers had a really good insight into the practical issues that Roma communities face in accessing services and solutions to effective partnership working, a must for any public organisation who wishes to reach out to under-served communities.”

Equality and Diversity Manager, Southend Hospital

Where and when?

Amnesty International UK The Human Rights Action Centre 17-25 New Inn Yard
London EC2A 3EA

Tuesday, 17th February 2015 – This is a full day's training course.

How do I book?

Fill in our [booking form \(Word document\)](#) and email it to us.

If you have a question please contact Dada on 020 7511 6508 or Gaba on 020 7511 8245 or email rsep@romasupportgroup.org.uk

A Romale, a Chavale: who cares? Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and the care system

Roma Matrix, with Salford University and University of York

Free seminar. Spaces are limited, but pre-booking essential. To confirm, email v.j.morris@salford.ac.uk as soon as possible before 13 February.

Media City UK; Friday 13 February; 10am – 4.30pm

For many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, underlying issues of poverty and social exclusion punctuate the experience of living in the care system. Although much research shows that all young adults leaving the public care system face significantly more difficulties and are at greater risk of social exclusion when making the transition to adulthood than their contemporaries in the wider population, young Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are often further disadvantaged due to their particular ethnicity and the endemic and entrenched discrimination that they continue to face as adults.

Although the move towards the improvement of the public care systems across Europe serves to guarantee the protection of the child and family without discrimination, the over-representation of these children, means that there remains much more to do across the EU including the UK. There remains an apparent lack of coherent national policies and strategies across Member States which help address the needs of Roma when in the care system and an almost complete absence of support when children from Roma communities leave care.

This seminar aims to bring together speakers and participants who will present the policy context both across the EU and the UK, those with experience of delivering frontline support, and, importantly, those with first-hand experience of being in care. We hope to inspire dialogue, reflections and strategies for how Roma in and out of care can be supported in the future.

Speakers include:

- Natalie Stables (Salford City Council and Chair of NATT+)
- Dr Daniel Allen (University of Salford)

- Prof Philip Brown (University of Salford)
- Michal Ďord' (Vteřina poté, Czech Republic)
- Josie O'Driscoll (Traveller Movement)
- Shay Clipson (Romany Gypsy & Traveller Consultancy)
- Michael Ridge (Social Worker, LB Haringey)
- Gaba Smolinska-Poffley (Roma Support Group)

For more information, [click here](#).

Safeguarding Roma children: is it a cultural problem?

University of Manchester Romani project and European Academic Network on Romani Studies: bridging the gap between academia and policy makers

Hulme Hall, Seminar Room, Oxford Place, Victoria Park, Manchester M14 5RR
February 25, 2015; 1-5pm

The European Commission recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the member states calls for particular attention towards the most vulnerable among the Roma, namely children and women. At the same time, a report on early marriage by the European Roma and Travellers' Forum warns against the risk of stigmatizing the Roma community at large by attributing such issues to Romani culture. Indeed, in the media Roma parents are often represented as prone to neglect their children and even exploit and abuse them, and Roma culture in general as exploitative of young people. On the other side, both academic research and advocacy groups highlighted how Roma families in various countries are concerned with what they see as frequent and often unmotivated actions by local authorities to remove Roma children from their families. In the UK, following recent grooming scandals, 'safeguarding' has become a key element of local policies and is often discussed in relation to Roma communities. The meeting will offer an opportunity for policy makers and other actors in the field to familiarise themselves with academic research currently investigating the topic of Roma-targeted interventions in a range of European countries.

Speakers to include:

- Dr Margaret Greenfields (Buckingham New University, UK)

- Dr Ulderico Daniele (Università Roma Tre, Italy)
- Dr Iulia Hasdeu (Université de Genève, Switzerland)
- Clémentine Trolong-Bailly (European Roma and Travellers' Forum)
- Dada Felija (Roma Support Group)

For further information and to book a place contact Viktor Leggio:
daniele.leggio@manchester.ac.uk or 0161 275 5999

NATT+

National Association of Teachers of Travellers +Other professionals is holding their annual conference on Friday 13 March at Aston University (Birmingham). The theme of the conference is Gypsy Roma Traveller children – educational safeguarding 360°. There are a variety of speakers, including Mark Sims, the Ofsted inspector who led the team which produced the recent Ofsted report *Overcoming Barriers*.

For more information, and booking details, go to the NATT+ website here.

ACERT

The Advisory Council for the Education of Romanies and Travellers is hosting an seminar on Tuesday 21 April from 11am – 4pm in Wadham College, Oxford University for Gypsy Roma Traveller staff and students in higher and further education.

Who should come?

All students, academic and non-academic staff of Gypsy/Roma/Traveller heritage are welcome. There are no fees but places must be booked. All the speakers and workshop leaders will be staff or students of Traveller, Roma or Gypsy heritage. We have (moral) support from NUS, UNISON and UCU, who are invited to send representatives, along with national Gypsy, Roma and Traveller organisations.

The Keynote Speaker will be Professor Colin Clark of the University of the West of Scotland. Other speakers/workshop leaders will include Dr Brian Belton and

Ms Rosie Toohey; there will be a presentation from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Police Association and we would still welcome those who might contribute to the workshops on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller experiences in Higher Education and in Further education.

The objective is to see if there is scope for an organisation/network which could offer solidarity, mentoring and support to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals who often find themselves isolated, and subject to ignorant prejudice, in any role in FHE as elsewhere in society. Come and hear from other people who've been there themselves. Share your experiences, and work out what the next steps should be.

Resources: Wadham College has generously provided the room, and there will be coffee and refreshments provided by ACERT. Bearing in mind the limited resources of students, ACERT has also set up a limited bursary fund to pay approved travel expenses to enable students to attend. (Travel must be by the cheapest method on public transport – any train tickets bought in advance, not on the day. If you can get there by coach, wonderful! The ACERT fund is limited, and when it's gone, it's gone, so, first come, first served. Payments will be made after the expenditure has been made, on production of receipts.

ACERT will also try to book budget accommodation, but will only subsidise this for those who cannot get to Oxford and back in one day.

To book your place e-mail ASAP to the secretary of the ACERT FHE Project sub-committee, Thomas Acton: thosacton@yahoo.co.uk

<http://acert.org.uk/events/gypsies-roma-and-travellers-in-higher-and-further-education-seminar/>

Job opportunities

Roma Voice Project

As part of an exciting new project which aims to support the inclusion of Central and Eastern European Roma populations within the UK through a rights based approach to gathering evidence and developing advocacy and leadership. We are seeking to recruit to the following posts:

- one Community Co-ordinator (based in Salford, Greater Manchester)
- six Community Inclusion Advocates (2 based in each of the following areas; Salford, Leeds and London Borough of Newham)

This is a partnership project led by the University of Salford alongside BHA for Equality, the Roma Support Group and Migration Yorkshire. Working with these organisations the Community Co-coordinator and Community Inclusion Advocates will:

- Support the infrastructure which will allow a culture of Roma leadership to develop.
- Help understand the experience of Roma who are living across the UK through a participatory action research methodology.
- Create the bridge between Roma populations and statutory and community organisations from which rights based inclusion initiatives can be implemented.

You must apply for this role by completing our application form available from <http://www.thebha.org.uk/workingwithus> where you will also find the person specification and job description (attached to this email). The application form can be downloaded from the website or you can request it by emailing us at recruitment@thebha.org.uk If you have difficulty accessing an application form please contact Gertrude Wafula (BHA for Equality) on 0161 874 2177 who will also be able to help with any informal enquiries about these posts.

All application forms must be completed and returned by Friday 13 February 2015 12 noon (via email or post) to:

BHA for Equality
609 Stretford Road
Old Trafford
Manchester M16 0QA.

Interviews will be held in late February/early March 2015.

Luton Roma Trust

Luton Roma Community Champion

The Trust is looking to recruit a Roma Community Champion from May 2015 for three years. The pay is £15,000 per annum with a 25 hour working week. This is an exciting opportunity to support the integration of the growing Roma community in Luton. Luton Roma Trust has been working with this community for over three years. The post holder will work for the Trust and in partnership with others in the Roma Inter Agency Team (RIAT).

The successful applicant will need:

- A commitment to the Roma community and its successful integration in the UK.
- An understanding of how to access education, housing, employment, medical services and social welfare.
- Be able to communicate in Romani, English and hopefully also Romanian.
- Be able to plan their work and be part of a team.

Job description

- Help the Roma community of Luton to integrate into the wider life of the UK.
- Help to identify issues of poor integration of the Roma in the UK and promote a healthy and sustainable model of behaviour both personally and through the community
- Help the Roma families to access education, housing, employment, medical services, and social welfare.
- Act as mediator-translator between the Roma and the statutory agencies.

- Work within the Luton Roma Inter Agency Team [RIAT] to develop a collaborative approach to helping the Roma families to resolve the issues that face them.
- Undertake the training to deliver the 'Strengthening Families-Strengthening Communities' project and to roll out this programme once a year at the Building Blocks Children's Centre in Bury Park, Luton.
- Play an active role in developing best practice and to work in partnership with the Roma Support Group [London] and similar agencies in Europe.
- Support other work of Luton Roma Trust as the trustees feel fit.

The post holder will be expected to have:

- A personal concern for the Roma people, an understanding of their culture, and the dedication to see them reach fulfilment.
- An awareness that influencing community transformation is aided by personal presence within the community over a sustained period of time.
- Fluent Romani and English language skills. Ideally also have Romanian. Able to read and write English at a level sufficient for dealing with correspondence from the statutory bodies.
- A good team ethic and an outgoing personality. Able to work in partnership with others, whatever their background and role in the wider community.
- Expressed a committed to staying with this project for three years [May 2015-May 2018].
- Line Management structure
- Weekly line management meetings with Martin Burrell (project leader)
- Monthly team meetings with RIAT.
- Termly appraisal of work in hand.
- Meetings with the Trustees of Luton Roma Trust. At least three a year.

More details from Martin Burrell on 01582 454081 or email

martin@christchurch-bushmead.org.uk

Resources

Holocaust Memorial Day and Porajmos; the Roma experience

Last month, Tuesday 27 January marked the annual Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), with the theme *Keep the Memory Alive*. As we know, the range of those killed by the Nazis and their collaborators throughout Europe included the mentally ill, people with disabilities, lesbians and gay men, communists and socialists, religious minorities, and Slavs, the Roma and the Jews. There is no interest hierarchy of suffering; the industrial slaughter of European Jewish communities was unrivalled. It is timely to record now both the 'official recognition' of the Roma experience in Europe (termed Porajmos), and the news coverage this year of the non-Jewish and particularly Roma people by the Nazis.

On the HMD website, find the Roma experience of Ceija Stojka, from an Austrian Roma family of horse dealers, who became a painter and artist.

<http://hmd.org.uk/resources/stories/hmd-2015-ceija-stojka-chaya-stoyka>

And also the story of the Bock family, a Sinti family living in both Germany and Czechoslovakia in the 1930s – whose story of persecution and seeking refuge continues until this century, and some of whom are now living in Manchester.

<http://hmd.org.uk/resources/stories/gypsy-roma-and-sinti-history-bock-family>

We also provide copies of articles from such varied sources as the Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/01/26/non-jewish-holocaust-victims_n_6500948.html the Jewish News Service <http://www.jns.org/latest-articles/2015/1/20/at-international-holocaust-remembrance-day-roma-remain-underreported-victims#.VMo0A9KsWGU> and Al-Jazeera <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/27/forgotten-roma-in-auschwitz-massacres.html>

which have all drawn attention to the relative absence of coverage to Roma victims of the Holocaust.

Finally, we want to draw attention to two archives. One is a Estonian-Finnish film called *Ihmiset Unohtavat – Jumala Ei (People Forget – God remembers)*

which was made in 2006 and features interviews with a Roma woman, Lilli Siiman, and a Roma man (identity not provided “out of fear”...) about their experiences of the Holocaust and Nazi occupation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iH1G3e-yvs>

Secondly, the on-line archive of the Robert Dawson gallery (based in Derbyshire) but accessible here, which includes an extensive photographic archive of Roma and the Holocaust.

<http://www.robertdawsongallery.co.uk/gypsy-holocaust-3---horrors.html>

And finally,

Metropolitan Migration Foundation.

The Foundation recently called for applications for tackling poverty and improving the integration of recent Roma migrants to the UK.

<http://www.metropolitan.org.uk/images/Roma-Funding-Initiative.pdf>

The Foundation says that the programme proved very popular and has agreed to approve funding for the following projects:

- Migration Yorkshire for a National Roma Network
- Salford University and partners for a multi-regional mediation project
- Pakistani Advice and Community Association for a leadership project in Sheffield
- Multi-Faith Centre for Roma Community Care project in Derby
- Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum for a community leadership project in London
- Luton Roma Trust for a local ‘community champions’ projects
- The Roma Project in Coventry for a community capacity building project
- Roma Support Group for a Housing Advocacy Project in London

Whilst the programme is now closed, the Foundation will be working closely with the above projects over the next few years to promote shared learning and a more co-ordinated approach.