

In this April 2015 edition of the newsletter, we highlight:

- Our own assessment of the failure of this government's policy re Roma integration
- Recent reports and examples of good practice re schools and Roma pupils and communities
- Recent publications of good practice in Europe and the UK from Roma Matrix
- More coverage of further attacks on EU migrants benefit entitlements; and tools designed to support EU migrants exercise their (diminishing) rights
- Events supporting Roma rights – including the London event for national Roma day; poetry evening; and training events on homelessness
- And employment opportunities (ok, opportunity)



[April 2015 newsletter](#)

[Welcome from Roma Support Group](#)

Welcome to the eighth 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.

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Briefing paper

The UK government's commitments to Roma (and Gypsy and Traveller) communities; where are we in 2015?

UK National Roma Integration Strategy – progress for Roma?

In the two years since the European Commission invited member states to submit National Roma Integration Strategies, how far has the UK Government come in successfully integrating UK migrant Roma?

It would appear that the Roma community is more marginalised than ever. With the publication of the Ministerial Working Group on Gypsies and Travellers commitments progress on 30 October 2014 we examine just how far we have come...

Background

On 20th Oct 2010 the Council of Europe issued the *Strasbourg Declaration on Roma*. The declaration was made in recognition that

‘Roma in many parts of Europe continue to be socially and economically marginalised, which undermines the respect of their human rights, impedes their full participation in society and effective exercise of civic responsibilities, and propagates prejudice’.

Significantly, The Council of Europe stated that ‘participation of our fellow Europeans of Roma origin’ was ‘a precondition for success’ in finding solutions to these inequalities. In May 2011 the European Commission¹ followed suit by adopting an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.² Member

¹ It should be noted that the Council of Europe is an independent body consisting of 47 member states but is not controlled by the European Union. The European Commission acts as the executive body of the European Union and represents the interests of the European Union as a whole.

² An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 – Council conclusions. Available at <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2010658%202011%20INIT>

States were asked to present the Commission with either specific strategies for Roma inclusion or (due to the UK government's lobbying) existing mainstream social inclusion policies which could be adapted to supporting Roma inclusion. While the responsibility for inclusion of marginalised people rests ultimately with Member States, each Member State was required to establish a National contact Point. The DCLG currently fulfils this role on behalf of the UK.

As the UK Government had already created a Ministerial working group on tackling inequalities faced by Gypsies and Travellers, the decision was taken to use the Ministerial Working Group's existing work to produce the UK's submission. As a result two documents formed the basis of the UK government policy;

(1) Council Conclusions on an EU Framework Strategy for Roma Integration up to 2020: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (August 2011)³ and

(2) Progress report by the ministerial working group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers⁴ (April 2012).⁵ The Progress report of April 2012 set out the current situation of Gypsy and Traveller communities as the Government itself perceived it, along with 28 commitments from across government departments to tackle these inequalities.

Despite this wealth of reports constituting the UK government's NRIS there was one gaping hole - the failure to include Roma.

The Council Conclusions on an EU Framework Strategy for Roma makes continual reference to Gypsies and Travellers to the clear and deliberate exclusion of Roma.⁶ The Council Conclusions states that 'The focus of the Ministerial Working Group was on ethnic Gypsies and Travellers...Some issues affecting Roma in this country overlap with those impacting Gypsies and Travellers'. It goes on to cite the Department for Education as the only

³ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_uk_strategy_en.pdf

⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6287/2124046.pdf

⁵ In conjunction with *Creating the Conditions for Integration* which sets out the Government's overall approach to an integrated society.

⁶ Only the section on Northern Ireland makes any specific reference to migrant Roma families which is perhaps not surprising given the well documented racist attacks on Roma households in this region; see for example <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/21/race-northern-ireland-romanian-gypsies>

department having an overlap with issues affecting Roma. This approach met with criticism from the start with two prominent authors commenting that this ‘seems to be wholly contrary to both the spirit and the letters of the Framework and to defy logic’.⁷

This illogical result is only to be expected given the failure to consult directly with Gypsies and Travellers including organisations working specifically with migrant Roma⁸. Moreover, the government has chosen to focus on a policy of fixing “the Roma problem” within CEE countries so that Roma families do not feel compelled to migrate to the UK. For example, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office reported in 2014 that “As well as running projects, British Embassies...have also engaged in regular dialogue with Roma communities and local and central government in order to combat discrimination and marginalisation”⁹ and lists numerous examples of work across CEE countries. “In November, for the fourth time in a row, the Embassy organised an in-house collection (clothes, books, toys, non-perishable food items) for the impoverished Roma community of the town of Versend in the south of Hungary”.¹⁰

Reported Progress in 2014

On the 4th April 2014 the European Commission hosted a European Roma Summit in Brussels which considered the progress made on Roma inclusion within the European Union to date. The focus of the summit was how to implement Roma inclusion at local level including how EU funding could reach local and regional authorities to support their work towards Roma integration.

The Commission’s assessment of the UK noted that many of the steps taken have been within the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland with little impact in England. Furthermore, no specific funding has been allocated exclusively for Roma integration and instead has gone towards

⁷ The UK Government’s response to the EU framework on national Roma integration strategies, Marc Willers & Owen Greenhall. Available at <https://gclaw.wordpress.com/2014/02/06/whats-wrong-with-the-uk-governments-response-to-the-eu-call-for-states-to-adopt-a-framework-on-national-roma-integration-strategies/>

⁸ This is despite the European Commission stating that each NRIS should “be designed, implemented and monitored in close cooperation and continuous dialogue with Roma civil society, regional and local authorities” at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173>

⁹ Human Rights & Democracy; 2014 FCO report, p66

¹⁰ Human Rights & Democracy: 2014 FCO report

existing mainstream measures for disadvantaged people. The Commission considers that the UK's priorities towards Roma integration should now be to monitor the impact of these mainstream measures specifically on Roma and to reinforce dialogue between Gypsies and Travellers and local and regional authorities.¹¹

On 30th October 2014 the Ministerial Working Group published its own report on progress made on the 28 commitments. The continuing exclusion of 'Roma' from the document suggests little progress has been made towards Roma specific inclusion. This is even more disappointing given the views of the European Commission in April 2014 and the growing body of evidence from local authorities, academics and community groups on the inequalities experienced by Roma in the UK and the growing examples of good practice initiated across the country to tackle this.

Taking a small sample of the 28 commitments and the reported 'progress so far' we can assess the current degree of Roma specific integration:

Department for Education

The Department for Education's own data shows that 'In 2011 just 25% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils achieved national expectations in English and mathematics at the end of their primary education, compared with 74% of all pupils. At the end of secondary education, just 12% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils achieved five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, compared with 58.2% of all pupils'.¹² As a result, the DfE committed to 'collect and publish brief case studies from the highest performing schools for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, to find out from them what lies behind their success' (commitment 6). The progress report from October 2014 states that DfE has published case studies including those from its pilot Virtual Head Teacher programme (commitment 2). However, on closer inspection, these case studies make few references to schools which have worked with Roma pupils. The schools identified were in Cambridgeshire,

¹¹ Report on the implementation of the EU framework for National Roma integration strategies, European Commission, April 2014.

¹² Progress report by the ministerial working group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, DCLG, April 2012

Kent and Gloucestershire; only the school in Kent (at Canterbury) has any record of supporting migrant Roma children.

In December 2014 Ofsted led the way with a focus on the needs of Roma pupils in its report *Overcoming barriers: ensuring that Roma children are fully engaged and achieving in education*.¹³ The reports states that the schools they visited (in Derby, Sheffield and Manchester) were all “strongly committed” to making sure Roma children settled and succeeded. Where Roma children had been in school for some time, and with few interruptions, “good progress was made”. 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”. Ofsted concluded with a number of recommendations such as the role of specialist teachers, lack of funding to deal with ‘in year’ admissions and promoting family engagement in school life. It remains to be seen how DfE will consider the recommendations of the report and what guidance and support it will provide schools based on this evidence. Particularly critical will be the DfE’s consideration of the financing needs of schools experiencing a growth in the number of Roma children admitted ‘in year’.¹⁴

Department of Health

Unlike the DfE, the Department of Health made no specific reference to inequalities experienced by Roma within its section of the 28 commitments. The result is that systemic health inequalities experienced by Roma, for example low rates of immunisation, late access to pre-natal care, high rates of Hepatitis C and lack of awareness of issues such as substance misuse and mental health to name a few, continue to go unrecognised. The vast majority of health professionals remain unaware of cultural sensitivities of gender and age in a health context as well as being unaware that Roma dialects do not always have the necessary vocabulary around certain health issues, with pregnancy and maternity being one example.

¹³ *Overcoming barriers: ensuring that Roma children are fully engaged and achieving in education*. Ofsted, December 2014 (Ref: 140195)

¹⁴ Two further case studies were published by Ofsted in relation to Babington Community College and Parkside Community Primary School on 27th March 2015 and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/raising-aspirations-and-retaining-roma-pupils-at-key-stage-2> and [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/raising-aspirations-and-retaining-roma-pupils-at-key-stage-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/raising-aspirations-and-retaining-roma-pupils-at-key-stage-2)

The DoH made a commitment to ‘work with the National Inclusion Health Board, the NHS, local government and others to identify what more must be done to include the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the commissioning of health services’ (commitment 7). The progress report of October 2014 states that ‘Gypsy and Traveller organisations presented to the National Inclusion Health board on two occasions’ and ‘The Royal College of General Practitioners was commissioned to produce a guide for clinical commissioning groups and GPs on commissioning for social excluded groups’. This guide was published in September 2013 and has categorised Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities alongside the homeless and sex workers. There is simply no mention of Roma specific needs and what little it does contain on Gypsies and Travellers is mainly tokenistic and of little practical value. This contrasts very starkly with the growing wealth of knowledge at a local level, among both grass roots voluntary organisations and with local health practitioners – not just GPs and consultants¹⁵.

Department for Work and Pensions

The Department for Work and Pensions agreed to ensure Gypsy and Traveller representation on their Ethnic Minority Advisory Group (commitment 26). The progress report notes that ‘The Ethnic Minority Advisory Group has recently been reviewed and re-launched as the Ethnic Minority Employment Stakeholder Group. The new membership includes the Irish Traveller Movement, whose remit on the group is to represent the wider Gypsy and Traveller perspective’. While it is heartening to see that Gypsy and Traveller employment needs have at least been given a platform. It is regrettable that the position of migrant Roma in the labour market has not been included. This is particularly disturbing given the impact of welfare benefits restrictions affecting EU migrant workers, which are having a profound impact on some Roma families.

¹⁵ <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+health+needs+of+the+Slovak+Roma+community+in+Sheffield.-a0194699205>
<http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/drbshr-hcft-serv-roma-comnty.pdf>
<http://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/?page=romaandhealth-bestpractice>
<http://romasupportgroup.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Roma-Mental-Health-Advocacy-Project-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

The legacy of segregated schooling and discrimination has resulted in many Roma being forced into low paid and exploitative work conditions on short term agency contracts which leave them trapped in a cycle of poverty. Rather than supporting Roma adults to access vocational training, as well as linked ESOL and literacy programmes and assist with their search for stable well paid employment, new restrictions on access to Housing Benefit for EU migrants means that current conditions for Roma families in the UK are only likely to deteriorate in the foreseeable future.

Home Office

The Home Office agreed that the Association of Chief Police Officers will issue a refreshed Hate Crime Manual which will include specific guidance for police officers on working effectively with Gypsy and Traveller communities (commitment 17). While there is no specific reference to Gypsy, Traveller or Roma communities in the report itself, the accompanying guidance does contain a specific section. Regrettably it contains only one paragraph in relation to Roma which states merely that ‘Their isolation in many modern countries has led to significant violence, including coordinated attacks by other residents. As with any other community tensions, this can escalate to targeted crime and unrest unless it is understood and dealt with at an early stage. Hostility towards the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities is long-standing and widespread. Many were killed in Europe during the Holocaust of the 20th Century’.¹⁶ There is no further acknowledgement of the impact of hate crime on Roma or relevant legislation.

Ministry of Justice

Finally, the MOJ stated that ‘The National Offender Management Service will monitor the population of Gypsies and Travellers in prison and under probation supervision, to ensure access to activities is appropriate and meets the needs of Gypsies and Travellers through their rehabilitation’ (commitment 19). The Progress report states that the prison case management system now collects data in accordance with the 2011 census code of ‘Gypsy Traveller

¹⁶ http://report-it.org.uk/strategy_and_guidance

Roma'.¹⁷ Given the low levels of ascription of Roma based on fear of prejudice it is unlikely that many Roma prisoners will self identify. Indeed we know that it is often Gypsies and Travellers who are able to identify their fellow inmates as Roma and try to support them in finding Roma specific community organisations who speak their language. Due to a lack of funding for projects working specifically with Roma prisoners, many remain isolated both culturally and linguistically. With an absence of research into the reasons behind the overrepresentation of Roma as well as Gypsies and Travellers in the prison population¹⁸ and an absence of equality training for prison staff on Roma culture, the mere existence of an ethnic monitoring category provides little incentive to use it.

Absence of any commitment

While the absence of reference to Roma specific needs in the areas of education, health, justice and employment remains frustrating, we should also note other areas the report fails to mention at all, namely:

Housing needs of the Roma community – Roma families continue to be confined to the worst quality private rented housing stock, at the mercy of rogue landlords, and living in overcrowded conditions due to high rents and low incomes. The UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing report to the UN Human Rights Council (December 2013) states¹⁹: “The Special Rapporteur has also been made aware of the difficulties migrant workers, including those who are citizens of the European Union, face in gaining access to and securing adequate housing. According to recent discussions on a new bill not yet in force, all private landlords will be required to check the immigration status of their tenants, “to prevent those with no right to live in the UK from

¹⁷ It should also be noted that in relation to the 3 further commitments of the MOJ the progress reported is simply stated as ‘internal’ or ‘n/a’ which gives us no opportunity to critique what progress may or may not have been made.

¹⁸ See the Youth Justice Board and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) annual report 'Children in Custody 2013-14' published December 2014 available at <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspections/children-in-custody-2013-14/#.VRICMtlF-So>

¹⁹ http://direitoamoradia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/A_HRC_25_54_Add.2_ENG.pdf

accessing private rented housing”. Landlords providing rented accommodation to undocumented migrants will incur civil penalties and will be required to review immigration status and provide reports thereon.

According to the European Roma Rights Centre, on 19 July, about 80 Romanian Roma families were evicted from locations in Hendon and London. Some of those evicted accepted the offer of a flight back home; others refused and returned to their sites some days after. Allegedly, some belongings were confiscated and some Roma were even arrested. The Centre questions the proportionality and lawfulness of such action under European Union laws and regulations, as the persons who were evicted are citizens of a European Union State.”

- Continued lack of consultation with the Roma community – Currently there is a reliance on small grass roots initiatives with a lack of resources to maintain a dialogue with central or local government and maintain the voice of these communities. The result is that they are increasingly being used by government as a convenient tool rather than a source of meaningful consultation. These organisations are faced with the difficult decision of maintaining any connection to decision makers in the hope that the communities will finally be acknowledged, while not being part of a government box ticking exercise.
- Continued lack of Government funded research on the specific needs of the Roma community in the UK and resourcing of projects which aim to tackle these. The Salford University report *Migrant Roma in the United Kingdom – population size and experiences of local authorities*²⁰ has been criticised by the government for its limited data pool based on a 37% return on surveys from local authorities. However, we are yet to see any leadership from central Government departments such as the DCLG as to what is expected of local authorities in order to fill this data gap. This is all despite the European Commission requesting that

²⁰ Migrant Roma in the United Kingdom – population size and experiences of local authorities, Philip Brown, Lisa Scullion and Phil Martin, University of Salford, October 2013.

Member States have not only a clear policy commitment but also dedicate sufficient national resources to achieve concrete results for Roma.²¹

Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems that little progress has been made in relation to migrant Roma – or the wider needs of Gypsy & Traveller communities - under the 28 commitments. The decision of the UK government to lobby against a specific National Roma Integration Strategy and replace it with mainstream, ‘adapted’ social inclusion measures has resulted in three persistent failings:

1. The lack of structured and serious consultation with the Roma communities has denied the opportunity to assess how the UK can support the specific issues faced by migrant Roma and develop provision to meet these needs.
2. By not being able to evidence these needs there is reduced potential for accessing EU structural funds which might have supported this work. Reliance on small grass roots charities and a small number of pioneering local authorities to do this independently is not sufficient.
3. In the meantime, the terms of the public debate have been determined by others, sometimes in a derogatory and inflammatory manner; the former Home Secretary David Blunkett’s comments of November 2013 being just one example.²²

This is particularly surprising when on 2 April 2014, in a debate in the House of Lords to commemorate national Roma Day, Baroness Warsi, then Faith and Communities Minister, stressed that government was “working hard” with its European partners to improve the lives of Roma at home and abroad, including by improving access to education.²³ So, has the Government’s policy towards Roma changed since Baroness Warsi’s subsequent resignation?

²¹ An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 – Council conclusions. Available at <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2010658%202011%20INIT>

²² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/10442352/Roma-migrants-could-cause-riots-in-cities-warns-Blunkett.html>

²³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26855826>

This may yet become clear following the publication of the next European Commission report on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies. Alternatively, it might take the organisation and articulation of voices from across the Roma communities to prove how inadequate the present UK government's response to the European challenge has been.

Publications - schools and Roma communities

Ofsted GRT case studies

Readers of this newsletter might recall that last year, Ofsted posted some 'good practice guides' of schools that were taking exemplary actions and impacts for Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children. It seems that the criteria for selecting schools was that they would have to have been judged by Ofsted recently as 'good' or 'outstanding'; this of course might preclude some schools with excellent practice from being considered – in some cases, because the range of pupils in a school affected the base line scores of a school.

In the wake of the limited but well received Ofsted report *Overcoming barriers* published just before Christmas 2014 (and reviewed here in our last newsletter), we wanted to highlight the two schools in the country that Ofsted have selected for their good practice case studies:

Parkside primary (Kent)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/raising-aspirations-and-retaining-roma-pupils-at-key-stage-2>

Babington Community College (Leicester)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/raising-aspirations-and-retaining-roma-pupils-at-key-stage-4>

Many readers might be aware of Babington College's work to support Roma pupils and their families. We also provide a link to a guide the school have

produced themselves, *How Babington College engages with the Roma community*;

[http://www.babington.leicester.sch.uk/user_uploads/files/General%20Documents/Good%20practice%20in%20working%20with%20the%20Roma%20Community\(1\).pdf](http://www.babington.leicester.sch.uk/user_uploads/files/General%20Documents/Good%20practice%20in%20working%20with%20the%20Roma%20Community(1).pdf)

Also, we think that for many people involved in education particularly, this new publication of February 2015 by the British Council/EAL Nexus on *Improving education outcomes for pupils from the new Roma communities* by Mark Penfold (Babington College) will be a useful asset.

<https://eal.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/document-files/Improving%20education%20outcomes%20for%20Roma%20pupils.pdf>

Resources

Roma Matrix

Roma Matrix is a major European funded initiative aimed at securing Roma inclusion through a variety of cross-national projects. It has been co-ordinated by Migration Yorkshire from the UK for two years from April 2013 until now. See this link for more information. <https://romamatrix.eu/about-us>

Roma Matrix held a concluding workshop in Leeds last month, to present the outcomes and impacts of the projects they had instigated and supported, and to attempt to maintain the momentum that they have helped to develop in particular areas.

Two sets of papers are worthy of being highlighted. First, researchers from Salford University and York University have produced a summary report entitled *Rights, responsibilities, redress; research on policy and practices for Roma inclusion in ten Member States*. This is based on 112 interviews in ten EU states, with people who are involved with national governments, regional and local staff, Roma community members and activists and other NGOs; 39 people were Roma with 63 describing themselves as non-Roma (10 unassigned). The interviews and the summary report focus on four critical areas of social life and policy:

- Reporting and redress for anti-Gypsyism actions, discrimination and prejudice
- Employment opportunities for Roma women and men
- Relations between non-Roma and Roma communities
- Roma children in care

The summary paper is available here:

<https://romamatrix.eu/rights-responsibilities-and-redress-research-policy-and-practices-roma-inclusion-ten-member-states>

The final report will be available later this month at

<https://romamatrix.eu/research>

Secondly, Roma Matrix have supported a number of ‘action research’, good practice projects. Each project has now been written up in a common format – the background and context; the key issues identified; emerging practice; good practice; and finally a handful of lessons for policy and future practice. Each project has led to a short, well produced booklet of about 20 pages – with plenty of examples, photos and clearly presented

- Mediation
- Employment
- Law enforcement
- Reporting and care
- Positive images and anti racism
- Mentoring in local authorities
- Women community health educators
- Children leaving care
- Integration of Roma and non-Roma parents and children in education

All the nine reports are available here:

https://romamatrix.eu/downloads?tid_1%5B%5D=31&sort_bef_combine=field_publication_date_value+DESC

Roma rights

Aire Centre ran a workshop on *EU migrants rights, Roma rights and recent changes*, as a capacity building session for practitioners on 15 January 2015 in Bradford). The slides for the presentations are available to view here:

http://www.airecentre.org/data/files/EEA_migrants_rights_Roma_rights_and_recent_changes_15Jan15_Bradford.pdf

The workshop was in two parts; first, an overview of how free movement of workers operates within the EU (slides 5 – 16). And secondly, a review and explanation of the recent changes in benefits law in the UK which affect EU migrant workers (slides 18 – 48). The second section includes a very clear description of the changes to job seekers allowance JSA, ‘retained worker’ status, housing benefit (HB), and child benefit (CB) and child tax credits (CTC). The slides conclude with explanations of ways in which EU migrants can still be eligible for social assistance under EU and UK law – through acquiring permanent residence; as a family member; as a primary carer of a school-age child.

Well worth looking at.

See also details (below) of the forthcoming Aire Centre workshop on homelessness and EU migrants on 23 April.

Universal credit and SSAC

No entitlement to Universal Credit for EEA jobseekers

The government continues to maintain the pressure on EU migrants who come to the UK to work, but might need to exercise their rights to support themselves and their families. From June, no one who is defined as a ‘jobseeker’ (mainly, but not exclusively, recently arrived migrants) will be eligible to claim Universal Credit (UC). UC is gradually, and slowly, being introduced and will replace job seekers allowance (JSA), housing benefit (HB), employment and support allowance (ESA), income support (IS) and working tax credit (WTC) and child tax credit (CTC).

Ian Duncan Smith, secretary of state for Work and Pensions said in the House of Commons, 25 November 2014:

“On migrants, we have already made it clear that universal credit is a different type of benefit, so people who come here and are out of work will not be able to claim it as a benefit”

On 9 March 2015, *Universal Credit amendment regulations* were laid before Parliament. These regulations provide that an EEA national whose only right to reside is as an EEA jobseeker, or a family member of a jobseeker, cannot satisfy the Habitual Residence Test and so will not be entitled to Universal Credit. These regulations come into force on 10 June 2015.

For more detail, see *Measures to limit migrants’ access to benefits*, standard note SN06889; House of Commons library 15 March 2015, (p25 -28):

<http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN06889/measures-to-limit-migrants-access-to-benefits>

The Social Security Advisory Committee correspondence with Ian Duncan Smith highlights obvious concerns, such as;

- whether this is legal under EU law
- the possible impact on migrants and their dependants who have lived and worked (“contributed”) to the UK for some time
- “...that there will be a significant number of families that could suffer hardship...”
- The SSAC says sharply “...for them, in practical terms, ‘home’ is here”
- That the DWP should undertake more research on the impact that all these benefit changes are having on EU migrants and their dependents
- That such research should be used to provide ‘exemptions or easements’ for particularly vulnerable groups (e.g. like women facing domestic violence)
- The impact on local authorities who have statutory responsibilities for dependent children and vulnerable adults
- The need for clear guidance for DWP staff offering advice to migrants, as well as determining claims. “For example, it will be important for some in this situation, seeking to establish a permanent right of residence, to be able to show that they are jobseekers in circumstances where they are denied Universal Credit because of these new rules”.

Ian Duncan Smith re-states the government's position – people should not migrate until they have a job, or if they do arrive without work, they are able to support themselves fully until they find work. Such an approach does not recognise the particular nature of the local labour markets where many migrants' will find their initial work.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-entitlement-of-eea-nationals>

Housing rights; new source of advice for migrants on rights in the private rented sector

A new source of on-line advice is now available, both for migrants and advisors and others working with/for migrants rights. See this link which describes the reasons why the Chartered Institute of Housing considers it a valuable asset:

[http://www.cih.org/news-article/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/news-article/data/New source of advice for migrants on rights in the private rented sector](http://www.cih.org/news-article/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/news-article/data/New+source+of+advice+for+migrants+on+rights+in+the+private+rented+sector)

And for the new website itself, click here:

<http://www.housing-rights.info/index.php>

Events & training

10 April

Roma Nation Day

St John's Church, Waterloo, London

1pm Friday 10 April - St John's Church, 73 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8TY

The purpose of this year's Roma Nation Day event is to press for the adoption by the UK of an effective National Strategy that will help overcome the long borne marginalization and discrimination suffered by an estimated 500,000 Roma migrants and Travellers.

To this end the meeting will discuss the formation of a joint delegation drawn from the leading activists and several organisations which, immediately after the upcoming General Election, will seek consultations at the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Department for Education.

The event will include the Annual General Meeting European Roma Network (ERN).

INVITATION

You are invited to attend the open meeting of ERN, being held in association with the Gypsy Council, 8 April Initiative and Traveller Movement in celebration of "8 April" Roma Nation Day. This will be an opportunity for members and supporters to review the past year and future aims and activities.

AGENDA and order of business:

- 1) Welcome messages from Ladislav Balaz, chair of ERN; Valdemar Kalinin, chair of the Gypsy Council; Toma Mladenov, vice-chair of the Gypsy Council and 8 April Initiative; and Matt Brindley, Traveller Movement.
- 2) Election of chairperson to conduct the business of the AGM
- 3) Reports from current officers:
 - a) Chairman Ladislav Balaz
 - b) Secretary Michael Daduc
 - c) Treasurer Dr Phil Henry
- 4) Campaign for Roma National Strategy
- 5) Voting in May Elections, Matt Brindley, Traveller Movement
- 6) Voter base for Roma Nation Mandate, Grattan Puxon
- 7) Election of ERN Officers and Committee for 2015-2016
- 8) Any other business

For more information: dale.farm@btinternet.com

13 April

An evening of Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Music & Poetry

Exiled Writers Ink

7:30pm. Tickets: £5 or £3 EWI members & asylum seekers

Poetry Café, 22 Betterton Street, London, WC2H 9BX

Explore poetry, stories and plays from Romani and Traveller authors who will discuss their works and how they represent elements of their cultures and histories.

Featuring an open-mic and performances by:

- [Damian Le Bas](#) - British Romani [poet](#), writer and journalist. After studying Theology at St John's College Oxford, Damian has published academic essays and his poetry has featured in numerous literary magazines. Since 2011 he has edited Travellers' Times, a long-running magazine and website for Britain's Romani and Traveller people.
- Janna Eliot - Russian Armenian Romani poet, writer and translator. Author of Romani story collection '[Spokes](#)' and author of children's book '[Settela's Last Road](#)'.
- Valdemar Kalinin - Belarusian Romani poet, writer and translator. He has written more than 36 books including a collection of poems called 'romani dreams' (2005), works and articles about Roma. In 2001 he completed the translation of the whole Bible in the Romany language (Baltic Romanes).
- [Dan Allum](#) - writer for theatre, radio and television. In 2014 his first screenplay won a Creative England film programme, he was part of BBC TV Writers Academy, and was lead consultant on the acclaimed E4 TV drama series GLUE (written by BAFTA Award Winner, Jack Thorne).
- & South Eastern Romani music from the fantastic [Le Gazhikane Muzikante](#) whose new album will be on sale!

For more information, <http://www.exiledwriters.co.uk/work.shtml>

21 April

ACERT

The Advisory Council for the Education of Romanies and Travellers is hosting a 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

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

23 April

Workshop: Unwelcome: Homeless EU Migrants, the Law, Rights and Challenges

Aire Centre

9.30 Registration: £15 or £10 students/unwaged

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

The AIRE Centre will bring together lawyers, academics and voluntary organisations at a conference to share experiences and brainstorm ideas on the topic of homeless EU migrants in London.

To book a place, please [register](#) online.

The event will focus on the legality of removing homeless EU nationals to their home countries and creating innovative European law-based solutions to counteract the impact of recent legal changes on vulnerable individuals.

Speakers will include:

- Nuala Mole and Matthew Moriarty (The AIRE Centre)
- Richard Drabble, QC (Landmark Chambers)
- Bojana Asanovic (Lamb Building)
- Rita Chadha (Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London)
- Laura Greason (Roma Support Group)
- Jed Meers (University of York)

For more information, <http://www.airecentre.org/news.php/185/registration-now-open-unwelcome-homeless-eu-migrants-the-law-rights-and-challenges>

Booking is essential: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/unwelcome-homeless-eu-migrants-the-law-rights-and-challenges-tickets-16232589111>

Job opportunities

Community development worker - Roma Voice Project, Sheffield

PACA is seeking a part-time Community Development Worker to deliver an innovative and exciting new project as part of a small team, capacity building key individuals from the Roma community across North East Sheffield – enfranchising them, furthering their involvement in society, and supporting them to represent their community.

Your role will be to provide practical experience of community work, to build confidence and leadership, and to assist the leaders in identifying avenues for gaining a greater level of representation complementing this; extensive training with external providers will be available to all those involved in the leadership programme.

This is an opportunity for an exceptional individual to become part of a ground-breaking project of national significance, using new methodology to instil leadership in a marginalised community of identity who are universally underrepresented. It may become necessary to change the methodology of the project during its operation, for this reason applicants will need to demonstrate a strong sense of vision and adaptability.

Hours: 14 hours per week

Annual salary: £10,192

Location: PACA Centre, 127 Page Hall Road, Sheffield S4 8GU

To obtain an application pack for this role please email jobs@pacacentre.org.uk or phone 0114 261 9130

Deadline for completed applications: Thursday 9 April 2015