

June 2017

Introduction

This issue of the newsletter features:

- A description of awareness training that Roma Support Group staff have been delivering with local GP practices in East London
- The closing of an exemplary project aimed at supporting Roma patients, and primary care staff, in Sheffield
- A report of the last *Roma Refugee & Migrant Forum* meeting in East London in January; and the agenda for the forthcoming Forum meeting on Friday 2 June
- We provide a guide to the manifestos of the political parties standing in the 2017 General Election
- RSG's submission to the parliamentary *Women & Equalities Select Committee* about UK government policy towards Roma (and Gypsy and Traveller communities and populations); and how the inquiry is now closed due to the General Election; and how you can view other submissions that have been made
- The Council of Europe's *Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, opinion on the UK – especially the position of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma in the UK
- The publication of *Roma Voices* (written in part by staff and Roma champions from RSG), based on testimony of 159 Roma women and men throughout England and Scotland about their experience of migration and settlement, their use of public services and how they think lives and opportunities could be improved
- A very recent and important study, *Advisors, Welfare and Brexit*, which has been drafted for the University of York and was considered at a recent conference; a subject that is highly relevant to many Roma families
- Police action in Slovakia in a Roma settlement
- London Gypsies & Travellers campaign: We are so many things, so why pick on one?



For more information about Roma Support Group, go to our website here and look at the [‘projects’ pages](#).

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Improving professionals’ awareness of Roma health: Training sessions and recommendations for future action

Background: Barriers to accessing health services

Roma communities across Europe face disproportionate barriers to accessing health services and generally poorer health outcomes than any other minority ethnic or economically disadvantaged group.¹ Viewed in the context of centuries of discrimination against the Roma, it becomes clear that this poorer health status is associated not only with limited access to services, but also with wider social determinants of health.² Poorer housing conditions, limited access to education, poor past experience of health service use, mistrust of health professionals and many other factors can be linked to lower life

¹ Parry, G., Van Cleemput, P., Peters, J., Moore, J., Walters, S., Thomas, K., & Cooper, C. (2004). The health status of Gypsies and Travellers in England. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.

² Janevic, T., Jankovic, J., & Bradley, E. (2012). Socioeconomic position, gender, and inequalities in self-rated health between Roma and non-Roma in Serbia. *International Journal of Public Health*, 57(1), 49-55.

Ringold, D. (2000). Roma and the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

expectancies, higher infant mortality rates and higher rates of chronic disease and disability in the Roma population.³

Often in the case of Roma migrant communities in the UK, barriers arise not from inability to make contact with health services, but rather from difficulties in effectively communicating their needs to health professionals. The responsibility for providing language support and cultural mediation falls to health services, yet in a climate of increased funding cuts to interpreting and health advocacy programmes, many Roma patients find that they must attend appointments without a reliable means of communicating with health professionals.

To gain a better understanding of this issue, the Roma Support Group conducted a survey of service users in 2014, asking them about their impressions of health service provision and barriers to access. 80% of respondents reported difficulties in requesting language support services through their GP practices. Consultation meetings between Roma community members, Mind in Tower Hamlets and Newham and Newham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) took place in late 2015 to further explore these issues and to provide health service decision makers with insights into areas for service development. Once again, language barriers emerged as a central concern, with cultural taboos related to health communication adding an additional dimension to this issue.

Awareness session delivery and outcomes

In the absence of a health needs assessment for Roma communities in Newham, there is currently no official framework for ensuring that Roma patients are afforded the necessary levels of language support and cultural mediation in accessing health services. Recognising this issue, the Newham CCG partnered with the RSG in an effort to increase health care practitioners' awareness of the challenges Roma patients face in seeking out care. The CCG was instrumental in assisting with an application to Health Education England's Locality Funding Investment Plan, which resulted in funding to deliver 11 short

³ Cook, B., Wayne, G. F., Valentine, A., Lessios, A., & Yeh, E. (2013). Revisiting the evidence on health and health care disparities among the Roma: a systematic review 2003-2012. *International Journal of Public Health*, 58(6), 885-911.

awareness sessions to health services in Newham and a full-day training for health and social care professionals. Over the eight-month run of the programme, training sessions were delivered to GP practices, GP cluster group meetings and a range of community mental health teams.

The sessions included discussions of Roma origins, history, traditions and cultural taboos, drawing connections between these factors and health-related behaviours in the Roma community. Participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences of working with Roma patients, and training facilitators shared practical methods for overcoming barriers to communication and establishment of patient-practitioner trust. This led to substantial gains in participants' knowledge. Prior to the sessions, 78% of participants reported low awareness of the Roma community, with 67% reporting that they had no awareness. Following the sessions, however, 89% reported moderate to high awareness of the community. Participants' confidence in applying their knowledge of Roma culture in their work also increased, with 56% reporting no confidence at the beginning of the session and 89% reporting moderate to high confidence at the end.

Recommendations

By providing health professionals with an introduction to the cultural beliefs associated with Roma health communication, as well as information about the language support needs of Roma patients, this training programme has helped to develop a foundation for overcoming the cultural, historical and practical barriers to health service access. This knowledge base constitutes a key area for ensuring the cultural competence of Newham health service providers, yet a common theme emerging from the training sessions was health professionals' limited awareness of Roma patients registered with their practices, or – in some cases – total lack of awareness of the Roma ethnicity.

While this highlights a significant need for increased dissemination of information about Roma culture, time and funding restrictions create practical barriers to delivering training to all Newham GP practices and specialist services. Addressing health services' considerable training and information needs should be achieved first through a health needs assessment for the Roma community in Newham, followed by the development of an overarching

strategy for meeting these needs. By taking a borough-wide approach to improving Roma health, and by furthermore partnering with local Roma community groups, a concerted action plan for combatting communication barriers between health professionals and Roma patients could achieve substantial improvements in Roma health experiences.

Sarah Zawacki
Roma Support Group

Slovak Roma Health Project in Sheffield

Stakeholder Update – May 2017

Key Message:

To follow on from our update at the end of last year, we would like to inform you that we do not currently have funds to maintain or development our Slovak Roma Health Project beyond the end of June 2017. After over two years of embedding a holistic, targeted approach to improving the health and wellbeing of the Roma community in Sheffield, we are again faced with having to wind down the project. We have been approached by a number of wide-ranging organisations, exploring exciting opportunities for partnership-working and links to our project. Unfortunately, this has not resulted in any longer-term investment and therefore does not resolve our urgent need to cover core delivery costs.

Achievements:

Our greatest achievement has been the recruitment, support and training of a team of Slovak Roma workers that enabled us to test a community development approach to improving health and wellbeing and increasing access to services. Trust, consistency, professionalism, peer support and signposting have improved the interaction between community and statutory services, giving us valuable learning about how best to meet the needs of new arrivals and provide an evidence-base for best practice. We've captured over 3,500 points of contact with the community, across five GP sites with 300+ clinics taking place and received over 200 Health Trainer referrals. In addition to this, we've run smaller-scale pilots including: children's engagement

activities, family learning, community events and home visits. More recently we worked with the Parent Carer Forum and Dundee University to undertake Roma family interviews and contribute to valuable research.

What happens next?

Please get in touch if you would like to meet with us to explore partnership/funding opportunities. We plan to arrange a visit to our delivery partners before the end of June and capture any final thoughts and answer any questions you may have. Please don't hesitate to contact us in the meantime.

Delivery

Our clinics in all surgeries will cease week ending 25th June 2017. We have already placed a pause on referrals from outside Darnall and Tinsley for Roma patients in need of healthy lifestyle/condition management or signposting support. Signposting alternatives – you may find it helpful to refer Slovak Roma clients to the following provision:

- Community Support Workers: short-term signposting support for vulnerable adults not on a care package. Email: CSWReferrals@sheffield.gcsx.gov.uk. Phone: Duty Line (0114) 205 7120
- SOAR: a community regeneration charity that provides a range of services designed to improve a person's health, well-being and employability, covering the North of Sheffield.
- Website: <https://soarcommunity.org.uk>. Phone: (0114) 213 4065
- PACA: information and advocacy services in Page Hall including a variety of projects working with the Roma community. Website: <http://www.pacentre.org.uk>. Phone: (0114) 261 9130

We hope you have found this update useful.

Thank you for all your support. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our DWB Team who have mentored our Roma Workers throughout the project. A BIG thank you to Jo Anne Van Levesley who overseen delivery – Jo has put her heart and soul in to developing the workforce and relationships with stakeholders and ensured we maintain a high quality of service that continues to meet the needs of a vulnerable community.

The project would not, of course, be possible if it weren't for our dedicated team of Slovak Roma Health Link Workers: Nikola, Miro, Charis, Lucie and Bran.

Thanks as always go to our supporters and funders.

With best wishes from everyone at the Slovak Roma Health Project Team.

Lucy Melleney

Contact: (0114) 249 6315,

lucy@darnallwellbeing.org.uk

Roma Refugee and Migrant Forum - how will Brexit affect the Roma community in the UK?

Friday 2 June, 2017; 14.00 -16.00

St John's Church; Broadway; Stratford; E15 1NG

Come along to our quarterly Roma Refugee and Migrant Forum to discuss

This event with a focus on Brexit will bring together professionals from different authorities and organizations working with Roma and Roma Champions and discuss different problems affecting the Roma community.

The Roma Refugee and Migrant Forum in East London is a campaigning platform. It aims to bring together representatives from both the statutory and non-statutory sectors and the Roma community in order to increase social inclusion and encourage policy and practice that is more responsive to the needs of Roma in London.

If you would like to attend, please email Mihai Calin Bica on mihai@romasupportgroup.org.uk.

Refreshments will be provided.

Report of meeting in January 2017

The first Forum meeting in 2017 was chaired by the two RSG Campaigning and Advocacy Workers, Mihai C. Bica and Assen Slavchev. Our aim was to bring together the Roma community and different health specialists working with Roma. In the past, the community has expressed its concerns regarding the interpreting services available within the health system for the Roma community. This community feedback brought together the issues within the Roma community when dealing with interpreting services – or lack of them - within the health system; and the point of view from the health specialists' side. The Forum brought to the attention of different institutions and organizations the lack of Romanes language interpreting services, the problems this created, and how this played out for both health specialists and the Roma community.

Interest regarding this topic was registered by Redbridge Council, Newham Council, Health Watch Waltham Forest, different Migrants or Travellers Organizations, Greenwich University and a number of health specialists working with Roma community.

At the current time there is no fully trained - according to The Language Shop standards - Romanes interpreter available for the Roma community in Newham. The community expressed the need of having Romanes interpreting available. For many members of the Roma community, Romanes is both the best way they can communicate, and they can have more confidence when a Roma person is interpreting for them. Danka (a Slovak Roma), said: "Because of interpreting services I used few years ago, I have a big problem today. My health records are wrong and it is so difficult for me change that. We need to have Romanes interpreting because this would help us so much and improve our lives. We can understand better what the doctor is saying and I have more confidence the interpreter is saying what I want him to say on my behalf."

Specialists working with the Roma community must acknowledge and advocate for the Romanes interpreting availability as this service can improve both the community's health and also the quality of the services they receive.

Mihai C Bica

Roma Support Group

What do political parties say about Roma (and Gypsies and Travellers)? Not a lot.....

What do the political party manifestos say about the Roma communities? We provide below the relevant sections of the party manifestos that particularly focus on Roma, on EU migrants, and on the wider issues of Gypsies and Travellers. Clearly, a range of other economic and social policies will affect Roma communities in the UK. But this is a snap shot of what the parties have to say about Roma, and about EU migrants. Only one party explicitly mentions the Roma communities in the UK – the Labour Party.

Labour Party

<http://www.labour.org.uk/page/-/Images/manifesto-2017/Labour%20Manifesto%202017.pdf>

We will end racism and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and protect the right to lead a nomadic way of life. (p 112)

A Labour government will immediately guarantee existing rights for all EU nationals living in Britain and secure reciprocal rights for UK citizens who have chosen to make their lives in EU countries. EU nationals do not just contribute to our society: they are part of our society. And they should not be used as bargaining chips. (p24)

Freedom of movement will end when we leave the European Union. Britain's immigration system will change, but Labour will not scapegoat migrants nor blame them for economic failures. (p28)

For areas where immigration has placed a strain on public services we will reinstate the Migrant Impact Fund and boost it with a contributory element from the investments required for High Net Worth Individual Visas. Labour will restore the rights of migrant domestic workers, and end this form of modern slavery. (p28-29)

Conservative Party

<https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/manifesto2017/Manifesto2017.pdf>

We will control immigration and secure the entitlements of EU nationals in Britain and British nationals in the EU. (p36)

Leaving the European Union means, for the first time in decades, that we will be able to control immigration from the European Union too. We will therefore establish an immigration policy that allows us to reduce and control the number of people who come to Britain from the European Union, while still allowing us to attract the skilled workers our economy needs. (p55)

No mention of Roma (or Gypsies and Travellers)

SNP

Lib Dem

<http://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/themes/5909d4366ad575794c000000/attachments/original/1495020157/Manifesto-Final.pdf?1495020157>

We will press for the UK to unilaterally guarantee the rights of EU nationals in the UK, ending their ongoing uncertainty. We will call for the overhaul and simplification of the registration process and the requirements for EU nationals to obtain permanent residence and UK citizenship, as the current system is not fit for purpose. (p10)

No mention of Roma (or Gypsies and Travellers)

UKIP

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ukipdev/pages/3944/attachments/original/1495695469/UKIP_Manifesto_June2017opt.pdf?1495695469

We will place a moratorium on unskilled and low-skilled immigration for five years after we leave the EU. (p33)

All new migrants to Britain will be expected to make tax and national insurance contributions for at least five consecutive years before they become eligible to

claim UK benefits, or access non-urgent NHS services, save for any exceptions stipulated by the Migration Control Commission, or if reciprocal healthcare arrangements are in place with their country of origin. All new entrants to the UK must have and maintain comprehensive private medical insurance for the duration of their stay, as a condition of their visa. (p33)

UKIP will allow law-abiding EU citizens living in the UK before Article 50 was triggered the right to stay here indefinitely. We expect the same concession to be granted to British citizens living overseas within the EU. EU nationals who entered the UK after 29th March 2017 will not have the automatic right to remain and when we leave the EU will lose access to all benefits, including non-urgent healthcare. No benefits will be paid for any dependants living overseas when we leave the EU. (p34)

We stand by our 2015 manifesto pledges to: make the setting up of a traveller pitch without permission a criminal offence. (p41)

No mention of Roma.

Green Party

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/gp2017/greenguaranteepdf.pdf>

Protect freedom of movement, press for remaining within the single market, and safeguard vital rights for people and the environment. Immediately guarantee the rights of EU citizens to remain in the UK and urgently seek reciprocal arrangements for UK citizens in the EU. (p9)

No mention of Roma (or Gypsies and Travellers)

Plaid Cymru

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/plaid2016/pages/1399/attachments/original/1494843830/Plaid_Cymru_-_Defending_Wales_-_2017_Action_Plan.pdf?1494843830

Plaid Cymru will guarantee the rights of all Europeans currently living and working in Wales. (p11)

No mention of Roma (or Gypsies and Travellers)

Sinn Fein

<https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2017/2017WestminsterManifesto.pdf>

No mention of Roma (or Gypsies and Travellers)

Women & Equalities Select Committee

Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

“Due to the general election on 8 June 2017 the Committee has now closed this inquiry. Following the dissolution of Parliament on 3 May 2017, all Select Committees cease to exist until after the general election. If an inquiry on this subject is held in the future, the Committee may refer to the evidence already gathered as part of this inquiry.”

Our submission:

Women & Equalities Select Committee inquiry

Written evidence submitted by Roma Support Group (RSG)

This submission is based upon the experience of RSG, an NGO responding to the needs of distinct Roma communities in London, and providing a strategic overview of the needs of Roma communities throughout the UK, in collaboration with others.

Roma are an ethnic group who have lived in Europe since their migration from India a thousand years ago. Roma cultural heritage includes a rich oral tradition, an emphasis on family, and Romanës, the Roma language. This

submission is about the effectiveness of government policy in relation to migrant Roma.

The Select Committee suggests nine 'issues' for submission; paragraphs 1-9 below follow this structure.

1. 28 commitments?

1.1. The parliamentary answer by Lord Ahmad, 11 November 2014⁴, contains the latest progress report on the 28 commitments, which is mainly about issues/inequalities experienced by Gypsy & Traveller communities. Only in the education commitments is there reference to the needs/experiences of Roma.

1.2. The absence of any Ministerial meetings suggests a level of ministerial disinterest in the achievements of government policy. We are also unaware of any follow up report as promised.

1.3. We fully support the submission made by the National Roma Network (paragraphs 4-18) on the detailed lack of progress made by government.

2. Tangible improvement?

2. It is impossible to conclude that these commitments have had any tangible improvement on the inequalities facing Roma communities.

3. Led, managed and monitored across Government?

3.1. We believe there has been little leadership within government, and few signs of the progress being managed or monitored. Since May 2015 the government has given little indication that the 28 commitments will form part of its agenda. We are not aware of any dedicated funding from central government, although some staff resources might have been used e.g. the Inclusion Health reports, the 2015 Ofsted report.

3.2. There has never been any presentation at the DCLG liaison meetings of any budget for the work of, or emanating from, the liaison group. A major investment by the DCLG re Roma integration has been circa £350,000 paid to Sheffield City Council for community engagement and English language

⁴ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2014-10-29/HL2504/> (Accessed 9.1.2017)

development. This was commissioned by the previous Secretary of State following representations by two local Sheffield MPs. This was not developed via the liaison group, nor is it known which budget head has supported this work. It is due to report in the summer of 2017.

3.3. The government has opposed adoption of a National Roma Integration Strategy. The government position is that Roma integration will be secured by adapting existing “wider social inclusion policies”, summarised in an answer⁵ to this PQ (22 November 2016),

“To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the conclusions of the 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.”

3.4. The European Commission suggests that:

“For the 2014-2020 period, the United Kingdom will be allocated a total of some €11.6 billion from the ESF and ERDF funds. At least 45.9% of this amount will be spent on the ESF, with at least 20% of that going towards promoting social inclusion and combating poverty. The latter amount could also finance Roma-related measures.”⁶

Despite considerable efforts and documentation to prove that ESIF is not being made available for GRT communities in England⁷, there has been a marked reluctance by the DWP to recommend to Local Enterprise Partnerships that GRT communities be considered to be explicit beneficiaries of ESIF.

⁵ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-questions-answers/?page=1&max=20&questiontype=AllQuestions&house=commons%2clords&member=4120&keywords=EU%2craction&uin=54213> (accessed 26.1.2017)

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/united-kingdom/eu-funding/funding_en.htm (accessed 9.1.2017)

⁷ https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2lw1_Krq5gnUWJHLUQ0S0REeLU/view (accessed 9.1.2017)

3.5. The EC summarised the UK government's achievements on Roma integration in 2016⁸ as follows:

The mainstream approaches have not demonstrated sufficient impact on improving the situation of Roma. Targeted measures could be further exploited by also using the existing possibilities under the ESIF funds. Scaling up the existing initiatives implemented throughout the UK should also be explored.

4. Mechanisms to achieve the commitments?

4.1. No mechanisms exist to achieve the commitments. The progress report of October 2014 suggests that any mechanisms are within the remit of the civil service. Previous parliamentary answers have confirmed that no meetings have taken place at a ministerial level since the 28 commitments were published in 2012.

5. Adequate data?

5.1. The 2011 census included a new question on ethnicity with a tick box for people who are "Gypsy or Irish Traveller". The census report states:

For the first time, the 2011 Census ethnic group question included a dedicated tick box for the ethnic group Gypsy or Irish Traveller.....This tick box was not intended for people who identify as 'Roma', as they are a distinct group with different needs to Gypsy or Irish Travellers.⁹

5.2. This means there is no comprehensive 2011 assessment of the demographic distribution of Roma in the UK.

5.3. We note the recent changes to the school census by Department for Education, to include 'Roma', alongside the category 'Gypsy'¹⁰. This allows

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma-report-2016_en.pdf , p88-89 (accessed 26.1.2017)

⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/article/s/whatdoesthe2011censustellusaboutthecharacteristicsofgypsyoririshtravellersinenglandandwales/2014-01-21> (#2)

¹⁰ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/580078/School_census_2016_to_2017_guide_v1_5.pdf (p131); accessed 24.1.2107

documentation of the size and distribution of Roma pupils in English schools, although the 'Roma' is still not routinely used in DfE reports. The 'Roma' category is accessible in the "underlying data" tables.

5.4. When the *Sheffield Roma Health Needs Assessment* was being undertaken in 2016, a short paper on "New Roma Read Codes" was produced which states:

The following Read codes were requested as one of the outcomes of the Sheffield Slovak-Roma health needs assessment with support from the CSU. They have all now been formally adopted and will be made available to all GP systems across the country from April 2016¹¹.

It implies that within NHS primary care, there is a method of recording Roma patients by national origins and linguistic competence.

5.5. All the evidence about self-ascription as Roma is determined by the degree of trust between the Roma pupil, patient or parent, and the service requesting details of ethnicity. Where such trust is strong, self-ascription rates as Roma are high; where trust is low, self-ascription rates are low.

6. Diverse needs of different GRT communities?

6.1. Roma are distinct from Gypsies and Travellers due to:

- Their sedentary lifestyle in both CEE and in the UK; CEE countries curtailed the freedom to travel in the 1960s
- Roma are directly affected by the increasing intrusion of (EU) migration status in UK social policy e.g. residence, welfare
- Roma are mainly speakers of English as a third language, in addition to Romanes and their 'national' language. This significantly affects access to services.
- The term "Gypsy" is frequently derogatory to Roma

6.2. Common ground exists as:

- Common threads of cultural practices – an oral tradition; centrality of the family; relationship to the labour market

¹¹ Correspondence with author, 8.3.2016

- Many Gypsy and Traveller voluntary groups supported Roma in the 1990s
- Similar experiences of being treated as ‘outsiders’

7. Mechanisms for engagement and dialogue?

7.1. There are three ‘arenas’ where civil servants have/had regular meetings with ‘GRT’ agencies. One is hosted by DCLG - the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma liaison group, which meets quarterly. Agendas are arranged between the DCLG and the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups (NFGLG). The only agencies which have been invited to this liaison group which have a particular perspective/experience of (migrant) Roma are: Roma Support Group; Luton Roma Trust; and Gypsy Council.

7.2. The Department for Education has/had a GRT stakeholder group which met quarterly until March 2015. In January 2016, the minister confirmed that the group was being “reviewed in the light of Ministerial priorities”. As of January 2017, there is a proposal to create an expert panel to advise the Department, but despite a promise in November 2016 by the Minister for Schools, there has been no further information available.

7.3. There had previously been an Ethnic Minority Employment Stakeholder Group, convened by DWP. Since 2015, this Group has closed. (See #1.17 above).

8. Inequalities against Roma; impact on Roma communities; reflected in policy priorities?

8.1. With the absence of government interest in Roma integration in the UK, much of what has been achieved is the result of the commitment of an under resourced Roma led civil society and a handful of local authorities. Successful initiatives have been achieved in the following areas:

8.1.1. Education.

Successful initiatives with schools and other agencies working with children and families. These include:

- Babington College, Leicester

- Ofsted report: *“Overcoming barriers: ensuring that Roma children are fully engaged and achieving in education”*
- Sheffield children’s services – twice yearly workshops on ‘New Arrivals and Roma’
- Roma Bridging Sounds orchestra – Newham Music and RSG
- Clifton Learning Partnership (Rotherham)

8.1.2. Health.

Roma face issues in accessing culturally competent health care. While there is a distinct lack of research, Healthwatch Kent made a valuable contribution to filling this gap in their report in 2015.¹² In addition, one successful initiative was a childhood immunisation programme in LB Redbridge. The programme employed a Roma liaison worker to accompany a health visitor working with Romanian Roma families in the area. The programme aimed to deal with the issues of transiency due to the private rented sector, communication difficulties, difficulty registering with GPs and a lack of information of the health care system in the UK. In 2009 only 14% of children had their 6 week check-up and only 5% of under 5’s were up to date with their immunisations (against the national target of 95%). By 2013, 65% of children had their 6 week check-up and 75% of under-5’s had their immunisations up to date. The Slovak Roma health advocates and health trainers project in Sheffield is also valuable in ensuring best use of primary health care.¹³

8.1.3. Collaboration with CEE countries

There have been a small number of collaborative projects between UK local authorities and CEE countries. One example is a LB Redbridge project funded by the Comenius Regio Partnership. The project - Help Educate All Roma (people) Together (H.E.A.R.T) - was a partnership between schools in LB Redbridge and Brasov in Romania. The project aimed to identify good practice and train teachers to ensure high expectations of Roma pupils in the respective

¹² http://www.healthwatchkent.co.uk/sites/default/files/healthwatch_kent_report_on_access_to_services_by_eastern_european_community.pdf (accessed 24.1.2017)

¹³ <http://www.primarycaresheffield.org.uk/slovak-roma-health-project/> (accessed 26.1.2017)

schools. Visiting Braşov increased the UK partners' understanding of the Romanian education system, Roma family life and traditions and the challenges facing Roma pupils in Romania and in the UK.

We are also aware from partner organisations that organised visits to CEE countries has also shown (a) the reality of the marginalisation and destitution in some Roma settlements, and (b) the ignorance and racism of some local and regional authorities hosting such visits¹⁴.

8.2. However, there are a number of areas that require the commitment and financial contribution from central government. These areas include:

8.3. Employment (LEPs).

8.3.1. In 2014 the European Commission stated that 'The EU supports work done towards Roma integration in EU countries through its European Structural and Investment Funds'.¹⁵ The main co-sponsor of the ESIF in the UK context is the DWP and the funding is administered through 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

8.3.2. In 2014-20, €6 billion were available for UK based projects. However, there was a distinct absence of GRT initiatives within the programmes funded by LEPs for 2014-20.

8.3.3. In 2015 RSG researched the funding strategies of the 39 LEPs. Only 3 made specific reference to Roma. Furthermore, in the ***DWP ESIF Operational Programme 2014-2020 Guidance***, there was no mention of the EU Roma integration programme, or mention of the particular needs of GRT communities in accessing the formal labour market, employment rates or social exclusion. This is in contrast to the background information on the effect of inequality including gender, ethnicity (inc. Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers) and disability.

¹⁴ See for example, <https://www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/statement-regarding-incidents-on-the-occasion-of-the-international-roma-day-in-bucharest> (accessed 24.1.2017)

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/eu-funding/index_en.htm (accessed 24.1.2017)

8.3.4. Ongoing attempts to encourage DWP as the managing agency for ESF in England to stimulate greater prioritisation by LEPs of GRT beneficiaries has proved rather discouraging. The absence of input and guidance from central government to the LEPs to consider how the ESIF can be used towards Roma integration means we are likely to see little change in employment opportunities for Roma families in the UK.

8.4. Education.

8.4.1. One source of funding available to schools to assist with the integration of Roma pupils is the Pupil Premium (PP) funding. However, welfare reforms affecting EEA nationals in the UK has impacted on the number of Roma parents able to access out of work benefits, including free school meals (FSM) which triggers PP. RSG research in June 2016 looked at eligibility for FSM between 2012 and 2015. Between 2013 and 2015, the major decline in eligibility for FSMs was amongst the 'Gypsy/Roma' category at both primary and secondary school. However, between 2014 and 2015, both the 'Gypsy/Roma' and 'any other white' ethnic groups witnessed the sharpest decline in eligibility for FSMs. Current government policy sees no hope of changing this result; the 2016 consultation on the school funding formula continued to state that FSMs eligibility remains the 'primary measure of deprivation at pupil level'.¹⁶

8.4.2. There is a clear body of evidence to show that school exclusions for Roma pupils are too high.¹⁷ A 2012 report by the Children's Commissioner acknowledged that Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils are four times more likely to be excluded than the total school population.¹⁸ Recent evidence from Sheffield in relation to Slovak Roma pupils shows that 'in 2015 there were 567 school students in Sheffield schools whose cohort characteristics are described as 'white Gypsy/Roma'. Of these, in the same year, 148 of these school pupils

¹⁶ https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2lw1_Krq5gnS3pqSGRnb0xRYjQ/view (accessed 24.1.2017)

¹⁷ <http://travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Never-Giving-Up-On-Them.pdf> (accessed 24.1.2017)

¹⁸ <http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/They%20never%20give%20up%20on%20you%20summary.pdf> (accessed 24.1.2017)

had been excluded from school, over a quarter of the total school number'.¹⁹ We understand from our Roma colleagues in Derby that there is also a worrying trend in Roma school exclusions as well. We provide the national data, and by the largest authorities with Gypsy/Roma pupils, and the number of Gypsy/Roma pupils on fixed term exclusions (2013-14).²⁰ Fixed term exclusions of Gypsy/Roma affect about 14% of all Gypsy/Roma pupils in England. Whereas about 1% of all excluded pupils in England are Gypsy/Roma, in some authorities over 5% of excluded pupils are Gypsy/Roma.

GYPSEY/ROMA PUPILS ON FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS (A) AS PROPORTION OF ALL GYPSEY/ROMA PUPILS 2013-2014; (B) AS PROPORTION OF ALL PUPILS ON FIXED TERM EXCLUSION

	Headcount of Gypsy/Roma pupils (January 2014)	(A) Gypsy/Roma pupils excluded as % of all Gypsy/Roma pupils	(B) Gypsy/Roma pupils excluded as % of all excluded pupils
Kent	1736	21	3.11
Bradford	1024	6	2.40
Sheffield	1005	21	5.06
Surrey	663	14	2.31
Derby	640	15	5.91
Leeds	631	20	2.91
Rotherham	523	25	5.84
Cambridgeshire	473	13	2.53
Birmingham	397	<5	X
Newcastle	369	<5	X
Coventry	356	8	1.71
ENGLAND	18760	14	1.01

¹⁹ <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/xeno-racism-and-the-scourge-of-school-exclusion/> (accessed 24.1.2017)

²⁰ Latest data available

Source: National Statistics (2015), *Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2013 to 2014*, at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2013-to-2014> (Underlying data SFR27/2015; SFR27_2015_UD_All_Part_2)

8.5. Housing.

There is a lack of Roma specific data. From our case work at RSG we know that the situation for Roma families is one of over reliance on the private rented sector.

In particular, Roma families experience:

- Overcrowding and associated claims of anti-social behaviour
- Landlord action, and evictions at the end of assured tenancies
- High mobility, leading particularly to an impact on children's school attainment
- Unintended consequences of impact of selective licensing in neighbourhoods with Roma families (e.g. Hexthorpe; Eastwood; Peterborough; Page Hall)
- Unintended consequences of 'right to rent' nationality checks
- Reduced access to welfare benefits such as Housing Benefit for EU nationals since 2014 which has made these conditions worse.

8.6. Criminal justice.

8.6.1. We would ask the committee to consider the main recommendations which we made last year in our submission to the Lammy Review²¹.

8.6.2. Additionally, the latest HMIP-YJB report on *Children in Custody 2014-15*²² confirms that GRT young people are massively over-represented in the young offenders' population, with 12 per cent of sample GRT boys saying they were

²¹ https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2lw1_Krq5gnd21uMkc2NUx4bVk/view (accessed 24.1.2017)

²² https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/12/HMIP_CP_Children-in-custody-2014-15-FINAL-web-AW.pdf p29, (accessed 26.1.2017)

foreign nationals – strongly suggesting they are of migrant Roma origin. The latest NOMS *offenders' equality monitoring report 2015/16*²³ continues to use 'the 5 + 1 ethnic groupings', which precludes published information for prisoners declaring as GRT.

8.7. Administrative Removals and Roma.

We have seen an up scaling of various approaches to the administrative removal of EEA nationals, including Roma, from the UK. This includes a change to Home Office guidance in May 2016, "*European Economic Area administrative removal: consideration and decision version 2.0*"²⁴, which now states that 'rough sleeping is considered to be an abuse of free movement rights' and joint Home Office, local authority and Met police operations targeting casual labour hotspots in areas such as Brent.²⁵ This is the most extreme case in which central government policy is actively working to target practices against Roma in the UK rather than merely an absence of creating policy towards integration.

8.8. Brexit / Permanent residence.

The recent IPPR report "*Roma Communities and Brexit*" said,

'As a consequence of the Brexit vote, Roma migrant communities in the UK – already a vulnerable group – face further insecurity over the terms of their residency, and the end of EU funding to support their integration'.²⁶

²³

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/571961/noms-offender-equalities-technical-guide.pdf p3; (accessed 9.1.2017)

²⁴

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/521243/EA-administrative-removal-v2.pdf (accessed 24.1.2017)

²⁵ See e.g. https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2lw1_Krq5gneDhWYzhOZ1U2VXM/view (accessed 24.1.2017)

²⁶ <http://www.ippr.org/publications/roma-communities-and-brexit> (accessed 24.1.2017)

The nature of Roma migration to the UK has been markedly different to that of non-Roma EU nationals. The Roma migration has consisted of families rather than individuals, a lack of qualifications and vocational experience leading to low skilled/ low paid employment and a legacy of segregation and discrimination in countries of origin has led many Roma families to see their move to the UK as a permanent transition rather than a short term opportunity. The failure of government to provide assurances of secure status for EU nationals already residing in UK has led to growing insecurity and fear amongst Roma families. The rise of hate crime towards EU nationals and the anti-migrant rhetoric of both the recent election and EU referendum have only served to fuel this concern.

9. Particular challenges?

9.1. Roma women play an important role in the success of their family's integration in the UK.

9.2. Roma women fulfil the role of primary care giver (both to children and elderly relatives), are part time workers and are in charge of dealing with family affairs such as welfare, health and housing.

9.3. However, there is a distinct absence in generating the voice of Roma women in policy decisions. Key areas in which current government policy has left Roma women at a distinct disadvantage includes the availability of culturally competent health care (including maternal health). This leaves many Roma women facing the choice of using male relatives as interpreters and decision makers on their health or having no access to health care at all.

9.4. There is a corresponding difficulty in accessing other services including domestic violence support, including the ability to have an empowered interaction with children's services. This is especially lacking under current welfare rights of EEA nationals and the case of single mothers without a UK work history. While experiencing the need to escape abusive partners or faced with homelessness after the breakdown of a relationship, Roma women have been threatened with having to either accept coach or plane tickets back to their country of origin or being made street homeless (with the subsequent threat of having their children removed from their care).

9.5. Roma women in the UK should therefore be acknowledged for their overlapping and interdependent experience of discrimination. They encounter discrimination because they are women, because they are from an ethnic minority community and because they are migrants.

Andy Shallice
Laura Greason

Roma Support Group

27 January 2017

All submissions:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/inequalities-faced-by-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities-16-17/publications/>

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

The Council of Europe has been investigating the position of ‘national minorities’ throughout Europe for over twenty years. They explain their interest:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/fcnm-factsheet>

“Political and economic upheavals and wars in the last centuries have spurred migrations to and within Europe which have created societies that are rich in ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity. As a result, many minorities have been confronted with discrimination and even denial of citizenship. They have often been and are excluded from employment, housing, education and access to health services or justice. Many of them are under-represented in European

governments and institutions which makes it difficult for them to find political redress to violations of their rights.

Protection of national minorities has always been on the Council of Europe's agenda, but the issue acquired even more importance with the collapse of European communist regimes, extreme nationalism and conflicts in certain parts of Europe."

The Council is particularly interested in the position of Roma/Gypsies throughout the member states. We provide below the relevant sections of the 'opinion' of the Council of Europe about the UK – those that bear specifically on Roma.

Strasbourg, 27 February 2017

Fourth Opinion on the United Kingdom adopted on 25 May 2016

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806fb9ab>

All references to "Roma"

Summary

(p3) There is only limited collection of disaggregated data as the basis for targeted policy-making for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.

General overview of the present situation

(4) Responsibilities for integration have been transferred to the local level, but in certain cases local authorities do not always appear able to exercise them fully, in particular with regard to ensuring equality and access to campsites/housing of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, which is the case in England.

(5) Certain sections of the media share responsibility in spreading intolerance and racially hostile narratives fuelling hate speech. Online hate speech is on the rise, in particular towards Muslims, while vilifying comments against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are seldom firmly rejected.

Assessment of measures taken to implement the recommendations for immediate action from the third cycle

(10) Finally, with the exception of the census, there is only limited collection of disaggregated data for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma and the resulting targeted policy making.

Article 3 of the Framework Convention - Personal scope of application

(14) ...authorities refer to the broad 'conventional' definition of 'racial group' as set out in the Equality Act 2010. In the case of certain national minorities, such recognition has been accepted by the courts on the basis of national origin (Scots, Irish, Welsh) or ethnic origin (Roma, Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Sikhs, Jews).

(16) The Advisory Committee also notes that there is often a conflation between policies addressing Gypsies and Travellers, on one hand, and Roma, on the other hand. While the Committee acknowledges that this follows from the use of the notion of racial group to define minorities and from the link between Gypsies and Roma, such an approach does not always allow targeting of the specific needs of each group²⁷. The Advisory Committee clarifies that the use, in this Opinion, of the term "Gypsies and Travellers", instead of the more inclusive term "Roma", is motivated by the specificity of the presence of these autochthonous groups in the UK, but it is not the terminology the Advisory Committee generally applies.

Recommendations

(20) Authorities should also pay attention to the specificities of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma as distinct groups to reconfigure statistics and effectively

²⁷ The terms 'Gypsies' and 'Travellers' refer to indigenous communities, including Romany Gypsies and Irish and Scottish Travellers, who have been living in the UK for centuries and speak English as their first language. While travelling is part of their identity, many of them today have a fixed residence (61% in England and Wales). Under the 2011 census, in England and Wales 58 000 people declared themselves to be Gypsies or Travellers (0.1% of the population), but estimates are higher, up to 300 000 (Friends Family and Travellers at www.gypsy-traveller.org/resources/tackling-social-exclusion/national-census/). 'Roma' refers to people of Roma origin who have migrated to the UK in the past two decades mainly in consequence of EU enlargement. See the UK Government response to the European Council in "Council Conclusion on an EU Framework Strategy for Roma Integration up to 2020: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland", available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_uk_strategy_en.pdf, accessed 17 September 2016

tailor policy making to their needs and in consultation with their representatives.

Census

(22) In 2011, Gypsies and Travellers could indicate their identity for the first time in a tick-box, while Roma had only a 'write-in' option.

Measures to promote the full and effective equality of persons belonging to national minorities

Present situation

(36) Overall, persons belonging to ethnic minorities are in a better place in reducing educational gaps, but challenges remain in relation to higher levels of unemployment, low wages, underemployment, worse health status and access to care, high levels of poverty, low levels of English language knowledge and inadequate political representation. Moreover, these persons are often victims of hate crimes. Gypsies, Travellers and Roma continue to be the group suffering significantly more from discrimination in all these fields, including education, particularly in England.

Gypsies, Travellers and Roma

(43) The Advisory Committee notes that, with the exception of England, several policy documents specifically addressing the situation of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have been or are going to be adopted in the various parts of the UK and will be analysed in more detail under Article 5 and other relevant provisions. Unlike most other EU member states, the UK opted not to adopt a National Roma Integration Strategy, but a 2012 Progress Report published by the government provided for 28 commitments covering various fields, such as education, health care, housing, hate crime and access to employment. Criticism was expressed by stakeholders that the commitments were cosmetic and reductive, in particular regarding the issue of availability of caravan pitches, which remains critical across the whole country, and that an overall policy framework was still missing. In its monitoring process, the European Commission found, inter alia, that halting sites for Gypsies and Travellers and housing for Roma remained a challenge all over the UK and efforts needed to be scaled up and implemented as part of an integrated approach.

(44) Whereas Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in England are considered to be protected under the general equality framework (see above), the Scottish Government included a specific outcome in the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report (2013), and it has been working through the Gypsies and Traveller Strategy Development Group to develop an overarching strategy and action plan for Gypsies/Travellers. Such an overall strategy, to be published after the 2016 elections, is expected to cover a range of issues including education, health and employment, but not accommodation.

(45) The Advisory Committee welcomes the fact that Wales was the first to adopt in September 2011 a policy document, “Travelling to a better future: a Gypsy and Traveller framework for action and delivery plan”, which was assessed in March 2016. While progress has been achieved in a number of areas, such as housing, education, health and participation, the Executive acknowledges that challenges remain for the needs of Roma communities, in particular as regards education.

Collection of equality data

(46) The Advisory Committee welcomes the overall, broad collection of disaggregated data on national and ethnic minorities in the UK, which is regularly analysed and put to use to inform policy-making. It notes nonetheless that in England there is no obligation to collect data specifically dealing with Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, apart from the 2011 census. This may prevent the adjustment of policies addressing the situation pertinent to this minority, preventing access to services. Moreover, in England there is a lack of monitoring on the basis of ethnicity with respect to the National Health System. Scottish authorities, on the other hand, improved data gathering and facilitated access to data to develop evidence-based policy, and Wales collects data on Gypsies and Travellers.

Recommendations

(49) The authorities in England should start collecting disaggregated data on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, and should devise policies targeting the specific needs of persons belonging to those groups.

Article 6 of the Framework Convention - Tolerance and intercultural dialogue

(72) The Advisory Committee is also seriously concerned that, across the UK, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are regularly subject to hostility, hate speech, physical attacks and hideous forms of prejudice and discrimination in political discourse, in the press, online and in society at large. There is seldom a public reaction to these vilifying comments in the press. It is common opinion among national and ethnic minorities' representatives that Gypsies and Travellers are often portrayed as perpetrators and a "criminal" group rather than as victims, and they are still not monitored by the police as a minority group.

Protection against hate crime

(80) Regarding Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, heightened distrust of the police, high levels of under-reporting and the lack of evidence of crimes against these minorities, which are not monitored by the police as such, coupled with a loss of ability among the police to recognise prejudice, make their situation particularly worrisome.

Recommendations

(83) The Advisory Committee also calls on them (the authorities) to further improve training of law enforcement to detect, investigate and bring to justice all hate speech and hate-motivated offences, and to monitor more closely hate crime against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.

Article 12 of the Framework Convention - Equal access to education

(113) Pupils of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage are the lowest performing ethnic groups²⁸ The Special Education Needs programme was overhauled to target support to disadvantaged pupils through financial incentives such as the Pupil Premium and Early Years Pupil Premium, which channelled additional funding to schools to improve pupils' attainment. Although not ethnically adjusted, in line with the overall integration policy, the

²⁸ Gypsies/Roma make up 0.4% of primary schoolchildren and 0.2% of the secondary school population. Irish Travellers at primary school were 0.1% of the school population. In 2014, 29% of Gypsy/Roma pupils and 38% of Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils reached or exceeded the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics, compared to the national average of 79%

authorities assess these programmes as benefiting disproportionately pupils from Black and minority communities²⁹.

Recommendations

(115) The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to effectively monitor the measures adopted to guarantee equal access to, and enhance achievements of, pupils belonging to national and ethnic minorities, with particular attention to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma children to ensure they are not left behind.

(117) The Advisory Committee notes that, since disaggregated data are not available in Northern Ireland, it is not possible to discern which minority ethnic and/or newcomer groups are more successful. However, it was a shared opinion of its interlocutors that Traveller and Roma children were the lowest performers, with very low achievement and higher drop-out rates³⁰ Although there has been little formal research on the experience of Roma pupils, anecdotal evidence suggests exceptionally high levels of educational disadvantage, exacerbated by low levels of English language proficiency, social exclusion and poverty. Roma children benefit from double funding as both Travellers and Newcomers, but doubts were again expressed about how effectively these funds reach their objective since they are part of the overall school budget and do not specifically follow the target recipients.

Article 14 of the Framework Convention - Instruction in and of minority languages

(127) The Advisory Committee expresses concern about the fact that initiatives to provide first language education for national and ethnic minorities' children, and curricula that reflect their culture in the classroom, appear to be very limited. According to minority representatives, while there is the possibility of teaching minority languages in schools where there is enough demand, this

²⁹ In 2012-13 at the end of key stage 4, 78.8% of Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils, 65.2% of Gypsy/Roma pupils, 45% of Black Caribbean pupils, 44.4% of Pakistani pupils and 23.4% of White British pupils were eligible for the pupil premium. In 2015-16, overall 29% of children aged 4-16 come from a disadvantaged background, which is defined by the criterion of being eligible for free meals.

³⁰ See ECNI Report; also ECNI, "Key inequalities in education", draft statement, October 2015, p. 12, available at www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/EducationKeyInequalities_DraftStatement.pdf accessed 19 September 2016.

does not appear to be common practice, or it has been abolished (e.g. Polish in Northern Ireland). Similarly, bilingual assistants are not available for all minorities, and teaching of the Romani language is not available.

Article 15 of the Framework Convention - Participation in public life, decision-making processes and public administration

(131) The Advisory Committee notes that Gypsy, Traveller and Roma participation in public life is almost non-existent. Mechanisms to consult them are either no longer functioning, such as the Ministerial Working Group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, or are considered inefficient by the minority's representatives, as is the case with the Liaison group with NGOs at DCLG, which lacks participation of Roma representatives. Gypsy, Traveller and Roma presence in public service is very limited, and often also social and welfare officers do not belong to the minority. In Wales three times per year Gypsy, Traveller and Roma associations lead a forum with the Executive, the police and other stakeholders. The Travelling Ahead Project ensures young Gypsies and Travellers are better able to participate in decision making.

(132) Interlocutors of the Advisory Committee also indicated good practice examples, such as the association of officers belonging to minorities in London's Metropolitan Police or the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association.

(139) The Advisory Committee understands from its interlocutors that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma still experience exclusion from many different aspects of political, social and economic life.

(140) All across the UK, and considering they are mostly EU citizens, Roma experience a different kind of discrimination in employment, being mainly employed in low-paid and precarious work due to low qualifications and poor literacy in the English language. The Advisory Committee notes that Roma also face discrimination in housing, in particular overcrowding and a disproportionately high proportion renting in the private sector, although this is not always perceived as seriously problematic by Roma themselves, who need low housing costs as a consequence of being in low-paid and precarious jobs. Access to welfare and health services is more problematic, although positive steps have been taken (dedicated social welfare officers, entry point

for services), for example in Northern Ireland, following serious public health concerns. Nonetheless, the Advisory Committee is very concerned by reports of increasing numbers of Roma children taken into foster care in England, which would be often the consequence of destitution and poor quality housing. Social services departments claim that their interventions occur on the ground of parental neglect, thereby demonstrating the high cost and impact on these communities of the inequalities experienced. The Advisory Committee also understands from first-hand experience that Roma families opt to leave the country rather than face such a risk.

Recommendations

(142) It also reiterates its call on the authorities to step up efforts to reduce inequalities experienced by Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in social and economic life, specifically implementing measures in close co-operation with those communities' representatives to prevent discrimination in employment and housing, health inequalities and inadequate social services interventions that result in undue taking of children into foster care.

Conclusions

Further recommendations

- Collect disaggregated data on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma to help devise policies targeting the socio-economic inequalities that persons belonging to those minorities experience in England; start collecting disaggregated equality data on the situation of persons belonging to national and ethnic minorities to help adopt and implement effective minority protection and equality-promoting policies in Northern Ireland.
- Monitor effectively the measures adopted to guarantee equal access to education and to enhance the achievements of pupils belonging to national and ethnic minorities, with particular attention to Gypsies, Traveller and Roma children across the country.

The UK government response to this opinion is available [here](#).

<https://rm.coe.int/1680703a30>

What is striking is that only one quarter of the overall response concerns England – despite England having about 84% of the UK’s population. Without the comments and responses from the devolved administrations, it would be a very thread bare ‘response’. This is also reflected in the response to issues about Gypsies and Travellers that the Council:

	Intro	Education	Gypsy & Traveller	Tackling hate crime	Languages	TOTAL
England	523	346	224	982	140	2215
Scotland	1202	1182	445	592	926	4347
Wales	426	553	147	154	662	1942
NI	764		109	123		996
TOTAL	2151	2081	925	1851	1728	9500

Roma Voices

<http://www.salford.ac.uk/sustainable-housing-and-urban-studies-unit/downloads/SRV-Final-Report-Dec-2016.pdf>

Supporting Roma Voice (SRV) was a multi-agency, practice led project, which aimed to support the growth of grassroots community advocacy as part of the growth of an inclusive and engaged Roma community in the UK. The project began in early 2015 and ran for 24 months. SRV focused on four thematic areas as determined by the research team: Community Relations, Housing, Education and Employment & Social Welfare. Aside from the academic team members, the SRV research team was made up of 6 individuals of Roma heritage – 5 advocates and a Project Co-ordinator. They were based in three different regions: London, South Yorkshire and the North West of England and collectively, the team had a wide variety of experiences and backgrounds. They were supported by three main partners – the University of Salford, Roma Support Group, (based in London) and BHA for Equality (based in Manchester), with additional assistance from other locally based organisations.

Supporting Roma Voice (SRV) had three main activities. In each of the regions, advocates used participatory action research (PAR) to organise and lead focus groups with Roma residents and gather data in relation to the thematic areas of interest. This report – co-written with all members of the team - documents these findings. A total of 159 people participated in 19 focus groups, which took place in the following locations: Glasgow, Leicester, London, Oldham, Salford and Sheffield. It should be noted that the fieldwork was undertaken prior to the UK's referendum on staying in the European Union.

The second role of the project was to establish/improve working links with the key public services and policy makers operating in their local areas and gain an understanding of the types of engagement they currently had with Roma or the gaps that exist in delivery. Finally, the team continued to maintain dialogue with both communities and services to support rights based inclusion. An intrinsic part of the project's remit was the personal development of the team members themselves. A report documenting the achievements and learning from the whole SRV project will be available in the coming months.

The project was generously funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Metropolitan Migration Foundation for which we are grateful.

Advisors, Welfare and Brexit

Paul Bagshaw, Irina Bessell, Romana Masarova

March 2017

Paul Bagshaw, a long standing advice worker working with Roma and East European migrants, explained how this report had been written.

York University has asked us to produce a report on the effect of the EU referendum result on EU nationals living in this country. This will then be used

towards creating a comprehensive advice tool usable by those who advise EU nationals. Has there been any noticeable change in the attitude of local authorities, job centres, benefits and immigration decision makers, employers, landlords, schools, etc. towards Roma people in particular? How does the Roma community understand the prospective Brexit from the EU? Has this affected migration from or back to the countries of origin? Are they planning yet on how they will deal with Brexit when it starts - probably in 2019? Do they understand how they might be able to secure themselves against possible removal? Has there been a perceived increase in hate crime?

Paul, Irina and Romana spoke to a wide range of advice agencies and community groups in England and Scotland earlier this year. Their initial report is available here. If it leads to an on-line advice system for those advising and working with EU migrants and Roma, then it will be a huge benefit. We will keep you informed of any progress.

Here's a copy of the report:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2lw1_Krq5gnMXhQMGdhb1BKQkE/view

Here's the conference where it was discussed; the presentations are available as well:

<http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/2017/04/remarkable-timing-for-our-brexite-and-eu-migration-debate/>

Roma families are still leaving Slovakia, trying to find a better life..... ; policing in Zborov, Presov region this April.

<http://www.errc.org/article/police-attack-roma-community-in-slovakia-children-and-elderly-injured/4579>

And finally,

We are really pleased to publicise a campaign video from our friends at London Gypsies & Travellers.

We are so many things, so why pick on one?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT6R5zT_jzw

And the article in the press:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/16/gypsy-travellers-discrimination-stigma-poster-campaign>

Views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily suggest that they are in accordance with the trustees of the Roma Support Group