

## Christmas 2024 Newsletter



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### Introduction & Welcome

Welcome to the Roma Support Group's Christmas Newsletter!

This month's newsletter highlights the RSG's involvement in the Health and Wellbeing Alliance Programme in partnership with Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT). We share some helpful resources for health professionals and organisations who work with Roma to help tackle these health inequalities. At the RSG, we hope our work on health inequalities experienced by the Roma population in the UK allows for a re-examination by health services of how they address challenges faced by inclusion health groups. Staff members Mihai and Simina have also recently published an article on mental health inequalities faced by the Roma community, highlighting the urgent need to provide Roma with more accessible health services.

The newsletter also showcases our recent research on the outcomes of the Roma population in England and Wales, based on data from the 2021 Census. The report shows how the Roma communities in the UK still face barriers in relation to education and employment that must be addressed. The RSG have also partnered with the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Centre for Equalities and Inclusion, Migration Yorkshire, and the University of Sheffield to launch further research into the lived experiences of Roma people in England and Wales. The aim of this research is to supplement Census data with qualitative data on health, education and employment, which we hope will help inform

future policy work.

Moreover, our collaborative research with Dr Owen Parker at the University of Sheffield on EUSS showed how Roma in the UK have faced barriers in obtaining settled status. As a result of the research, we have launched our EUSS Toolkit for Roma people and professionals working with the community to help support those facing problems with the transition to settled status.

This newsletter also announces the newly launched Child Protection Working Group that was introduced in response to the [shocking incident seen in Leeds this July](#). The Working Group was launched with the aim of addressing systemic issues within children's services in particular poor engagement with and treatment of Roma families. As a group, we are collaborating with other Roma organisations, family lawyers, and social workers with the aim of creating research which would inform future policy on how child protection efforts are carried out. Our most recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) also touched on our efforts to pursue these changes. We are also hoping to center next year's Roma Rights Forum on child protection to create even greater awareness and momentum for change.

We will also share exciting news about some of our new staff members that have joined us in the last few months. Their roles range from advice, communication, and policy. We are looking forward to some of the work they will be contributing to in the next year.

This edition also spotlights a recently published picture essay by Béla Váradi, a UK-based Hungarian Roma documentary photographer. Váradi discusses Hungary's most deprived Roma population donating their plasma in order to survive. The essay exposes the extent to which Roma people in Hungary and throughout Europe are exploited in order to make ends meet given that current governments ignore their calls for help regarding welfare, housing, and better access to education. Váradi's work is spotlighted given that it acts as a testament to why the RSG continues in its effort to ensure that the Roma community receive equitable access to their social rights.

Finally we end the newsletter sharing a video of this years Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month art competition entries, and a Christmas message from the team.



This month's newsletter focuses on:

- [New mental health report published](#)
- [Roma Census report published](#)
- [ONS research on lived experience of Roma](#)
- [EUSS toolkit launch](#)
- [Child protection working group](#)
- [RSG Annual General Meeting](#)
- [New staff members and volunteers](#)
- [International News](#)
- [What to look forward to in the new year](#)
- [GRT History Month Competition](#)
- [Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!](#)
- [Ukraine donation pages](#)

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## **[New mental health report published](#)**

Through our work with the [VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance Programme](#) Roma Support Group have published an article, written by our colleagues Mihai Calin Bica and Simina Neagu: [Tackling Mental Health Inequalities for the Roma Communities in the UK](#).

Read the report to find out how Roma mental health access and equity has been ignored due to the “simplistic presumption that ‘vulnerable populations’ are only present in low and middle-income countries”. Mihai and Simina provide recommendations on how Roma mental health can be re-examined and re-centered in conversations regarding the mental health of marginalised communities.

## Health and Wellbeing Alliance resources

In collaboration with Friends, Families and Travellers, RSG have created a number of reports and videos on the following topics, which you can access here:

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community Experiences of Infant Feeding, Information and Support Services. [Summary Report](#), [Full Report](#), [Video Recording](#).
- Guidance for Social Prescribing Link Workers on Engaging with Gypsy and Traveller Communities. [Summary Report](#), [Full Report](#), [Video Recording](#).
- Enablers of Digital Inclusion in Primary Care for Roma and Traveller Communities. [Full Report](#), [Video Recording](#).

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## Roma Census report published

At the RSG, we have recently published our own analysis of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) [2021 Census](#) data. Our report focuses on the outcomes of the Roma population in England and Wales, and is the first to examine this at a local level, analysing data from 10 different geographical areas. It supplements the [bespoke analysis](#) of national outcomes for Roma published by the ONS.

The report gives information on outcomes for Roma such as education, employment and health. For example:

- In Sheffield, 67% of Roma report having no qualifications, with only 9% holding a Level 4+ qualification.
- In Bradford, 52.38% of Roma reported to be working in elementary occupations.
- In Derby, 7% of Roma reported to have “fair” health, whilst 10% reported to have

“bad or very bad” health.

Read the report [here](#), and see how outcomes for Roma differ across England and Wales.

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## ONS research on lived experience of Roma

The Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Centre for Equalities and Inclusion, in partnership with Migration Yorkshire, Roma Support Group and University of Sheffield, have launched a research project focusing on the lived experiences of Roma people in England and Wales.

This research aims to use qualitative research methods to gather meaningful insights into Roma people's experiences and needs relating to a range of areas such as health, education, employment, housing, and enablers and barriers to accessing and engaging with public services. The findings will provide evidence which could inform future policy work.

We hope the findings could also inform the interpretation of existing statistics and development of future approaches to increase the visibility and representation of Roma people in data.

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## EUSS toolkit launch

RSG's policy team, working in collaboration with Dr. Owen Parker at the University of Sheffield, has created a toolkit for Roma people and professionals working with Roma at charities and local authorities, to better support Roma communities with EU Settled Status related issues.

The toolkit is based on our long-term work with local authorities, local Roma advocates, and community organisations on the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). It draws, in particular, on recent research conducted in partnership with the University of Sheffield in 2023/2024. For more information about the toolkit click [here](#), and to directly access the toolkit click [here](#).

We have also recently published YouTube videos in Slovak, Polish and Romanian which include further information on the EU Settlement Scheme such as: late applications, joining family members, updating from pre-settled to settled status, applying for children and travelling to and from the UK. You can find the videos [here](#)!

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## Child protection working group

Following the events in Harehills, Leeds earlier this year, we have launched a working group with the aim of creating policies to improve children's services engagement with Roma families preventing a repetition of the incident.

Those who have taken interest in the working group include social workers, professionals from Roma charities, and Roma lawyers. Conversations so far have been productive and we hope to share more information with regards to our progress later next year!

In the meantime, you can view our statement in response to the incident [here](#).

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## RSG Annual General Meeting



Photo credit: Tom Richens

On Saturday 23rd November we hosted our 26th Annual General Meeting. The event saw presentations on some of our latest research concerning the digital exclusion of Roma, introductions by some of our newest advisory team members, immigration advice post-Brexit, and guidance on how to tackle housing issues led by Juliet Galea-Glennie from the Public Interest Law Centre. The evening ended with a wonderful performance with traditional Roma music from Central and Eastern Europe!

Thank you to everyone who attended, brought food, and signed up to become a member! We were incredibly happy with the turn out and the feedback. We look forward to seeing everyone next year!

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## New staff members and volunteers

This year we welcomed a number of new volunteers and staff members. We want to introduce our readers to some of our newest team members.

Marija Enver: "As an Older Roma Adviser, my goal is to support the older Roma generation in accessing their entitlements, including benefits, housing, medical care, immigration help, and pensions. I strive to ensure their needs are met with dignity and respect, improving their well-being and quality of life."

Tyanna-May Binns: "Hello! My name is Tyanna-May and I am one of the Policy and Campaigns volunteers. I officially started in September and have been helping out with a range of projects relating to education, housing, child protection and health. So far I have enjoyed the work and meeting some of you at events such as the recent AGM. I look forward to working on even more projects with the charity in the coming year and hopefully meeting some of you too!"

Andrea Toma: "Hi, my name is Andrea and I'm a new volunteer at Roma Support Group. I started three weeks ago and have been helping out on projects wherever I'm needed. I have enjoyed the work so far; it's great to feel like I'm contributing to the important work Roma Support Group does, even in a small way. I look forward to continuing to volunteer here, getting involved with other projects and attending future events."

Miruna Enache: "Hello! My name is Miruna and I am an Advice and Advocacy Worker for Romanian-speaking Roma. I help people to access services and information, representing them and speaking up on their behalf. I support them to make informed decisions about



important issues, such as housing, debt/money management, welfare benefits, immigration and also listen to people's concerns and help them explore their options and rights."

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## International News

- The European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), have stated their concerns over Roma rights "sliding right off" the EU's Enlargement agenda. In 2016, the European Commission said that more needs to be more done to better protect minority groups, especially Roma. However, since then there has been little to no mention of the Roma on the agenda. You can read the opinion piece on the ERRC [here](#). You can also find more information on the European Commission's updated Enlargement Policy [here](#).
  - Romanes is officially on GoogleTranslate! Google [stated](#) that "Romani is a language that has many dialects all throughout Europe. Our models produce text that is closest to Southern Vlax Romani, a commonly used variety online. But it also mixes in elements from others, like Northern Vlax and Balkan Romani." Some Roma organisations and Roma individuals have welcomed the change, however others have been critical. Romani influencer, [Florian](#), argues that the Romani language has traditionally been closed and exclusive to Roma people only, and it should stay that way. He argues further that "the Romani language has been kept secret as a survival mechanism", as it has historically been weaponised against the community. The decision by Google has clearly been a divisive one, and it would be interesting to know your opinion on the matter. You can express your position by completing our survey [here](#), and we will share the results with you in our next newsletter!
  - On 25 November, Béla Váradi, a UK-based Hungarian Roma documentary photographer published a picture essay in the Guardian detailing Hungary's most deprived Roma population donating their plasma in order to survive. Váradi described the process as a "necessary evil" as by partaking in the exploitative practice vulnerable communities are able to "feed their families". Váradi also mentions that one of the young Roma he interviewed claimed that "over the course of a year, he had donated plasma more than 300 times - far exceeding the limit of 45 donations a year." This oversight allows companies to take advantage of already vulnerable communities and makes us question if "the lifesaver's health is sacrificed in the process?" You can read the picture essay [here](#).
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## What to look forward to in the new year

On the 16th January 2025, the RSG along with Dr Owen Parker will be launching the EUSS Toolkit. The online event will outline some of the key issues that Roma continue to face in relation to the EUSS and will explain how the toolkit can be used by Local Authorities and community organisations to help support them. If this interests you, you can register your interest [here](#). Please also feel free to share the event amongst your networks.

On the 28th January 2025, we will be hosting our annual Roma Rights Forum! Keep an eye out for the invitation in the coming weeks, we would love to see some of you there.

On the 4th February 2025 the RSG along with the APPG for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers and the APPG on Migration will be coming together in parliament to discuss our research on the ongoing struggles for Roma with the EUSS. These discussions will be centred around our [research](#) in collaboration with The University of Sheffield. We look forward to sharing the results of the discussion with you after the event takes place.

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## GRT History Month Competition



Please enjoy this video of the fantastic entries made to RSG's 2024 GRT History Month Competition!

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**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**



The team at the Roma Support Group wish our readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## **Ukraine donation pages**

### **Human rights fund for Ukrainian Roma**

European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) are [collecting donations](#) to support their efforts to prevent the discrimination and rejection of Roma refugees in Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova.

### **Hot meals in Ukraine**

Given the difficulties that Roma are experiencing in accessing humanitarian aid, [ERGO Network](#) and [Roma Women Fund Chiricli](#) have launched a campaign: [Hot meals in Ukraine](#).

The cost of providing one hot meal is €4.

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

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

**We gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the Barrow Cadbury Trust.**

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