



Roma News Project (2020 – 21)

Evaluation Report

Roma Support Group
March 2022

Report produced by Shelley Dorrans, independent evaluator, in partnership with the Roma Support Group

1. Introduction

In April 2020, the Roma Support Group was awarded £60k of Explore & Test funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to deliver the Roma News project. Roma News is an audio-visual news programme produced by young Roma in Romanes and English and disseminated via social media¹. The Roma Support Group piloted Roma News during 2019 and wanted to further explore the project's potential to build young Roma's confidence, increase their media and campaigning skills, and enhance Roma communities' awareness of policies and practices that affect them such as the EU Settlement Scheme. A project logic model (in Appendix 1) illustrates the main activities and intended outcomes, as originally conceived by the Roma Support Group. The project took place between July 2020 and December 2021. It was overseen by a Project Manager, who worked on it part-time (1 day per week). The Project Manager secured the help of experts in documentary film-making, social media, video editing and script writing to train and support participants.

Background to the project

Roma migrants face substantial discrimination in employment, education, housing and health in the UK (European Commission, 2018²). In 2017, the Race Disparity Audit³ reported that Roma pupils have the lowest educational attainment and highest rates of school exclusion in the UK. In addition to social, educational and economic disadvantage, Roma people also face uncertainty over residency and legal status in the UK following Brexit. As Tileaga & Popoviciu (2018)⁴ report, this situation is even worse for people who experience overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage such as Roma women, children and young people. Due to language barriers, most migrants, including Roma people, face particular challenges in their access to services (Aldridge et al, 2019)⁵. Evidence shows that Roma people can be vulnerable to exploitation from others who often demand large sums of money in exchange for help in completing the documentation needed for jobs, housing or health services (Morrice, Collyer, Tip, & Brown, 2017)⁶.

Given this backdrop, the Roma Support Group wanted to develop a project that would help young Roma to develop skills that would address some of the barriers they face, including low confidence and low school attainment. The charity carried out a consultation with 35 young Roma which revealed their frustrations with negative representations of Roma in the media, and their desire to empower their communities through better access to information about the issues, policies and practices that affect their lives. This led to the idea of the Roma News project.

Evaluation of Roma News

Shelley Dorrans, independent evaluator, worked alongside the Roma Support Group to evaluate the project using a supported self-evaluation approach. This included:

- drafting a monitoring and evaluation framework (see Appendix 2)

¹ Episodes of Roma News can be found here: [Roma News - YouTube](#)

² European Commission. (2018). Roma integration in the United Kingdom.

³ Race Disparity Audit 2017. See: [Race Disparity Audit - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ Tileaga, C., & Popoviciu, S. (2018). Where next for migrant Roma communities post-Brexit? See: [Where next for migrant Roma communities post-Brexit? | openDemocracy](#)

⁵ Aldridge, J, Daragiu, L, Daragiu, M, Lumsden, K, Popoviciu, S & Tileaga, C (2019) Roma Community Perspectives on Migration to the UK

⁶ Morrice, L., Collyer, M., Tip, L., & Brown, R. (2017). English language for resettled refugees: Policy Brief. Sussex: University of Sussex

- drafting short questionnaires for the project to use to capture the impact of the project on young participants
- advising the project about questions to ask young participants in order to capture qualitative feedback about their experience of the project
- facilitating a series of learning conversations with the Project Manager (sometimes in combination with the Chief Executive of Roma Support Group) over the course of the project
- a small amount of independent research with young participants (two interviews)
- analysing the quantitative and qualitative data collected by the Roma Support Group
- production of this report, with input from Roma Support Group staff.

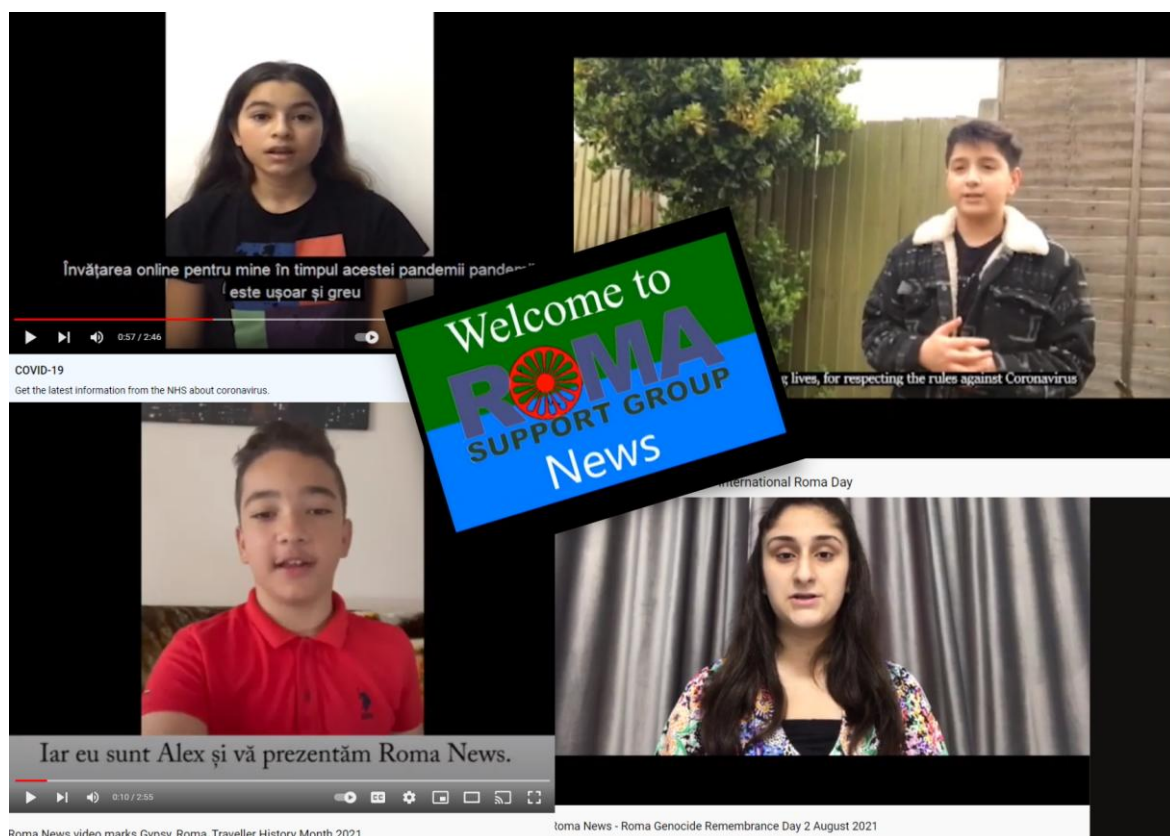
This Report

The remainder of this report is set out as follows:

Chapter 2: Project Delivery

Chapter 3: Impact and Learning

Chapter 4: Conclusions



2. Project Delivery

Original plan for Roma News

The Roma Support Group had originally planned for Roma News to be a face-to-face project (as per the pilot) delivered by a group of around 20 young Roma, aged 16-25. The group would have access to a media training course, delivered by On Road Media, as well as seven peer support sessions to further explore the themes covered during media training and to reflect on Roman News editions. The group would produce a monthly edition of Roma News, posted on Utube by the Roma Support Group and promoted via the charity's Facebook and Twitter accounts. The group would additionally have opportunities to participate in the charity's campaigning and policy work, meeting with policy and decision makers to represent the views and experiences of the Roma community.

The Covid pandemic

The covid pandemic and lockdowns over 2020 and 2021 changed this plan quite significantly as the charity moved all its operations online, dealt with a significant increase in frontline need, and had to liaise with a wide range of statutory services seeking advice about how to support Roma communities through the pandemic. Project staff were also having to deal with the impact of the pandemic on their working and personal lives.

To support staff during this difficult period, the Roma Support Group used emergency funding to increase management support to help with the technical aspects of online working as well as offering wellbeing support. In addition, the charity had a weekly 'check in' with staff, and the Chief Executive Officer had ongoing contact with staff via 'weekly updates' which not only covered work matters, but also how staff were dealing with the pressures created by Covid.

Inevitably the project had to adapt to the new context created by the pandemic. In short, there ended up being three strands to the project:

Strand 1: a small group of eight young Roma worked together, as originally planned, to produce a series of Roma News editions. As the majority of these participants were under 16, they were unable to participate in the planned training sessions with On Road Media, which set a lower age limit of 16. They did however have training and support from a range of experts in script writing, filming techniques, video editing and social media in order to produce Roma News. The group produced seven Roma News editions covering the following topics: Roma Genocide Remembrance Day; local elections & Gypsy, Roma, Travellers History Month; Easter message and Coronavirus updates; International Roma Day and a message to our parents; Roma children education during the pandemic; Roma News Project and EU Settlement Scheme updates; and a Roma News competition. The Roma Support Group posted the videos on its YouTube and Facebook accounts and promoted it via Twitter and the Roma Support Group Newsletter which has 560 subscribers.

Strand 2: an older group of Roma people, aged 16+, participated in On Road training and peer support sessions. Five participated in the training and seven participated in the peer support sessions. The group comprised Roma advocates, most of whom worked for charities that support Roma communities. The group did not work on Roma News editions; rather the training and peer support was intended to equip them with knowledge and skills that they could use in their advocacy work. The On Road Media *Engaging with the Media* training was delivered over two half days and explored framing and how to tell your story safely. The peer support sessions covered: getting to know one another and deciding priorities for peer support sessions; confidence and presence

workshop; tips on planning and structuring an article; strategic communications; and wellbeing, boundaries and self-care.

Strand 3: a group of six young Roma, all under 16, participated in a documentary film-making project. The project provided in-depth practical media experience for participants and allowed them to focus on a specific area of interest to them. An underspend due to Covid restrictions helped fund this element of work. The project comprised: an online workshop, a full-day face-to-face training session covering camera, sound, writing and editing, two further online meetings, and a face-to-face filming day. At the time of writing, the short documentary is in the editing stage.

The original intention to involve project participants in the charity's campaigning and policy work was limited due to a number of factors including the young age of the participants (many of whom were under 16) and the challenges created by Covid and online working. Nonetheless, one of the Roma News participants was able to put forward a question to the London Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Debbie Weeks Bernard, as part of the GLA Gypsy, Roma Traveller History Month, which she responded to on video⁷. The Project Manager has also shared concerns raised by Roma News participants in relation to education during two meetings with the Department for Education.

The impact of Covid on project delivery

The main challenges and opportunities that the pandemic presented for delivering Roma News are described below.

Challenges

- **Recruitment and retention of participants**

Recruiting young people to the project proved much harder than Roma Support Group staff had originally anticipated. Under normal circumstances, the project recruits participants via face-to-face contact with people visiting its office. As this option was no longer available, the project trialled a range of recruitment approaches including: reaching out to young people via other Roma charities, contacting schools with high numbers of Roma children, running a competition with prizes, and by contacting young Roma activists directly on social media. The Project Manager also used his own networks and contacts to 'spread the word'.

Roma Support Group staff suggest that their recruitment challenges potentially resulted from (i) the pandemic creating many uncertainties for Roma families, including young people who were having to learn at home (ii) poverty and lack of access to digital equipment and the internet, (iii) virtual training and meetings being less attractive to young people, and (iv) some young Roma seeking employment opportunities rather than volunteering opportunities due to pandemic-related financial pressures on their families. The project tried to recruit young people via schools with high numbers of Roma pupils. Some schools were very interested, however they wanted their pupils to participate during school hours due to safeguarding requirements. This wasn't possible due to the availability of the professionals who were supporting the project, some of whom were only available in the late afternoon or early evening.

⁷ See [Facebook Live | Facebook](#) (minute: 1:13:25 -)

In the end, the Roma Support Group took a more flexible approach to their recruitment, widening the age range beyond 16-25 year olds. They recruited some under 16s and some over 25s to participate in different elements of the project.

- **Building trust and camaraderie between participants**

It was originally intended that the project would take place in the Roma Support Group offices in London, which acts as a kind of community centre where visitors are made to feel safe and welcome, and have access to refreshments. Establishing and running the project online meant that it was harder to build the kind of trust and camaraderie between young people than might be possible in a face-to-face format. As the Project Manager commented: *“It’s hard to create the same kind of buzz [online] as in our office.”*

The Project Manager reported that it took time for young members involved in creating Roma News editions to gel online. Initially most lacked confidence to speak to the group and kept their cameras and microphones off, instead using the chat option to contribute to the group. Roma Support Group staff report that for some, this was for practical reasons to do with using a parent’s phone or being located in a noisy room with other family members or friends present. Others lacked the confidence to be present online or felt some embarrassment or reluctance to reveal an image of their home environment. Additionally, the Project Manger found it hard to get everyone to join the meetings on time, often having to send multiple reminders. Slowly however, the Project Manager found that the young participants warmed up and were more able to proactively participate in discussions. Organising a face-to-face meeting with participants when restrictions lifted really helped the group to bond and subsequent online meetings were much more productive.

The challenge of creating a feeling of trust and camaraderie was not confined to the younger participants. The feeling was echoed by one of the older participants who attended On Road training. She commented *“I hated the screen – it was like a barrier between us.”* Despite this, she was keen to point out how effective the On Road team were in helping participants to overcome this issue.

- **Increased and competing demands on the project manager’s time**

The pandemic created considerably more work for the Project Manager than usual. He led on work to liaise with, and advise, central government, local government, public health and other statutory services about how to support Roma communities during the crises. This additional pressure on the Project Manager’s time meant that he was managing the Roma News Project on top of an increased workload.

Opportunities

- **Moving online allowed people from a wider geographical base to participate**

Instead of being solely London-based, the move to online working created the opportunity for participants from the cities/towns of Liverpool, Sheffield, Bradford, Luton, Ipswich and Glasgow to also take part, all of which have a significant Roma population.

- **Young participants had to take greater responsibility for learning new skills**

Instead of using Roma Support Group’s cameras and equipment to make Roma News, the young people had to film content using their own (or a parent’s) smartphone. The project taught them how to use their phone for filming but couldn’t provide the kind of hands-on support that they would have liked to. Whilst this proved challenging for the young people, the Project Manager

reflected that it potentially had a greater impact on the young people's skills, as they had to take more responsibility for their own learning than might otherwise have been the case. He also felt that young people are more likely to use phone-based filming skills in their everyday lives (as opposed to video camera filming) as most have their own phone or access to a parent's.

The Project Manager reflected: *"The kids had to practise on their own without someone showing them how to do it. It raised the challenge for them, but had a bigger impact in terms of developing skills and carrying them forward."*



3. Impact and Learning

Impact on participants

Profile of participants

Twenty-one out of twenty-four participants completed a joining survey which asked them to provide some demographic information and describe what they wanted to get out of the project. The survey data reveal that:

- 9 participants were under 16; 7 were between 16 and 25; and 5 were older than 25
- there was an equal split between female and male participants
- all described themselves as comfortable and confident in written and spoken English
- 2 participants indicated that they had some form of disability / additional needs
- most (81%) participants had access to a smart phone and a laptop/pc
- all participants had experience of using Zoom.

Participants were asked an open question about their reasons for participating in the project. Their reasons fell into four main categories:

- wanting to learn new skills such as editing, content creation or using social media
- wanting to help members of their community
- the opportunity to meet and work with other Roma people
- the project seemed interesting and fun.

When asked if there were any particular skills, knowledge or experiences that they wanted to gain through Roma News, participants highlighted the following:

- filming and editing
- public speaking
- self-confidence
- presentation skills.

When asked about previous experience of working with social media (eg Facebook and Twitter), 15 out of 21 participants (71%) said that they had some experience. The equivalent figure for traditional media (eg tv, radio and newspapers) was 10 of 21 (47%).

Impact on participants

The project logic model (see Appendix 1) identifies the main intended outcomes for participants as (i) an increase in media and campaigning skills and (ii) an increase in confidence to engage with and influence decisions and policies that affect them.

The project used a joining survey and an exit survey as the main way of capturing experience and impact data from participants. Twenty-one participants completed the joining survey, and twelve completed the exit survey. The findings are set out in Table 2. Whilst we can't draw any firm conclusions from these data due to the relatively low number of completed exit surveys, they nonetheless show a positive, upward swing in participants' self-rated skills, knowledge and confidence in relation to social and traditional media, as well as their ability to contribute towards positive change for Roma communities. These findings are reinforced by the qualitative feedback provided by participants on their exit surveys.

Table 2: Average scores on the joining and exit questionnaires

Question	Joining survey: average score (21 respondents)	Exit survey: average score (12 respondents)
How well do you understand how social media works?	7.05	9.08
How well do you understand how traditional media works?	5.95	8.25
How confident do you feel about engaging with social media?	6.90	8.92
How confident do you feel about engaging with traditional media?	5.71	8.08
How good do you think you are at creating content such as videos for social media?	6.71	8.42
How good do you think you are at creating content for traditional media?	6.33	7.08
How confident do you feel about meeting and speaking to people in power who make decisions that affect Roma communities?	6.71	7.33
How confident do you feel in your ability to contribute to real positive change for Roma communities?	7.33	8.08

Qualitative feedback from the exit survey provides some helpful insights into participants' experiences of Roma News. When asked what they most enjoyed about participating in the project, their responses illustrated three common themes:

- Learning new skills
- Enjoyment gained from making and editing videos
- Learning about their culture and sharing this with others.

When asked to comment on what they had gained from the project, the majority of participants highlighted an increase in their self-confidence, with others also referencing new skills such as content creation and/or video editing. A couple of participants also talked about gaining greater knowledge of, and/or pride in, Roma culture. A selection of their responses is provided in the following text box:

What did you gain from the project? - A selection of responses from Roma News participants

"I am now less nervous when filming. I have gained skills for filming, like where to stand when I'm on camera."

"I met new people and I learned interesting things around filming objectives and about cameras."

"I always thought that I will never be able to do things like this, to speak, to be filmed and to do things like this. This project gave me so much confidence, I now think that I can do whatever I want in my life. I also learn so many things about our own community. And I liked learning how to film."

"I feel like I gained more confidence in expressing myself and helping others to be proud of their nationality (Roma), and also new skills such as filming and editing."

"I absolutely loved and enjoyed to role play activities where we were put in various situations and had to comment or discuss about unknown topics for us...I learned a lot from all participants and facilitators too. The way that we write or present an article in the media or to the media was really well covered in the sessions at it made me feel confident in applying them in my own work changing narratives and making use of the positive aspect of media"

The Roma Support Group Chief Executive and Roma News Project Manager reflected on the courage of the young participants in publicly identifying as Roma via their involvement in Roma News or the filmed documentary. As the Roma Support Group Chief Executive explained:

“It is an act of courage to self-ascribe as Roma, and that cannot be underestimated. All participants were courageous to announce publicly that they are Gypsies. Young Roma are always dealing with the issue of bullying at school. The fact that they actually stood up and took part in [the project]...the sheer fact that they were visible as Roma is an amazing commitment and undertaking. They were not afraid of being judged or discriminated against as Roma.”

At the end of the exit survey, participants were asked the following question: “Given your experience of Roma News, do you wish to continue awareness raising, campaigning and/or influencing work on issues of importance to Roma communities?” All participants said that would like to continue this kind of activity in the future, which is an encouraging finding. One participant wrote:

“I would like to do more for Roma people. I like to help other people and I hope I will be able to do this in the future. I don’t like the fact that I hear other children saying bad things about Roma at school and I hope to be able to challenge that more.”

When asked if there was anything that Roma Support Group could do differently or better if running a similar project in the future, some participants expressed a strong preference for face-to-face contact between participants (covid restrictions permitting) rather than an online format. One participant stressed the need for more advanced notice of meeting dates in order to protect time for them, and another participant felt that the strand of work that they were involved in could have benefited from a longer timeframe.

Case Study Vignettes: a deeper look three participants’ experiences

Participants’ names have been changed to protect their identity.

Luca

The Roma Support Group filmed a conversation with Luca who was involved in creating Roma News editions. This was for the purposes of promoting the project, however Luca’s responses were not scripted or rehearsed in advance. He was encouraged to speak honestly in response to the questions he was asked. The interview is summarised in the following text box.

An Interview with Luca

Luca, aged 11, played a key role in creating Roma News editions. Luca is based in London and heard about Roma News via his father, who was contacted by the Project Manager.

Interviewer: How has the experience of Roma News been for you?

Luca: *The experience has been inspiring for me and has given me new opportunities to learn new skills which I can use in the future.*

Interviewer: How has it been inspiring for you?

Luca: *It’s been inspiring because it can help me, like, you know, become a journalist or an editor.*

Interviewer: What do you think you’ve gained from it so far?

Luca: *I’ve gained different skills like editing, different ways to film, like headspace, or where you should place yourself on camera like at the side or the middle so it’s most effective for the viewers.*

Interviewer: What's been your favourite part?

Luca: *My favourite part has always been making the videos. It's interesting seeing the bloopers, the mistakes I made, and also learning from them.*

Interviewer: How do you feel when a video is finished and has been edited and you watch it for the first time?

Luca: *After I watch them and I think that they are good, I feel relief, and I just feel pretty happy and proud of myself.*

Interviewer: Would you recommend a friend to join and why?

Luca: *I would recommend them to join because it will help them the same way as it helped me, like finding new skills and finding new stuff that I'm good at, like filming 'cause I really enjoy it.*

Interviewer: Do you learn about this kind of thing at school?

Luca: *Some stuff we do here [at Roma News] we don't learn at school. It's loads of fun [making videos] and looking at them after, seeing your mistakes, learning from them, having some laughs at the bloopers or the fails.*

Interviewer: Could you imagine yourself being a film-maker in the future or an editor or a journalist?

Luca: *I know Roma Support Group are really trying to help our dreams come true, and I do hope I'll be a film-maker in the future. But I also want to be a footballer or start a business. I'm not sure yet.*

Elena

Elena participated in On Road Media training. She was part of a small group of participants who took part in a short, filmed feedback session with On Road and the Roma News Project Manager. She was also interviewed separately for the evaluation. Her experiences and views are described in the following text box.

Elena

Elena, from Romania, is a community worker based in the North-West of England. Elena had an existing connection with the Roma Support Group through her work, which involves advocacy and lobbying on behalf of Roma communities. When first approached about the training opportunity, Elena felt a bit reluctant to participate as she felt she already had the skills needed to communicate well about Roma issues. With hindsight however, she realised that she had gained a lot from her participation. This included: a better understanding of the world of journalism, how to communicate more strategically, and the need to draw attention to systemic barriers and challenges that impact negatively on Roma communities. She noted:

"I write blogs, and I'm now more careful in what I write. When a journalist contacts me, I know how to write an article that will be positive for my community. If someone asks me a question I don't like, I know how to react...I can explain the problems with the system that affect Roma communities, highlight how the system works against Roma." (Elena)

Elena reflected on the negative stereotyping and discrimination often faced by Roma communities and the need to put her new skills and learning into practice to promote more positive images of Roma communities. She has shared her learning with colleagues and some of the young Roma she supports, who often use social media platforms to communicate about Roma issues. She also

said that her learning is useful when it comes to working in partnership with organisations in her locality, some of whom lack an understanding of the root causes of some of the challenges faced by Roma families.

If the Roma Support Group were to offer this training to others in the future, Elena would recommend it *'for sure'*, however she thinks it would be better in a face-to-face format which would allow for greater interaction between participants. She reflected:

"You might think that you know everything, but there is space for more. [The training] is good for people who work in communities and support Roma people. We are ambassadors for the community and need to represent them well."

Leonora

Leonora participated in the documentary film-making project and was interviewed for the evaluation. Her experiences and views are set out in the following text box.

Leonora

Leonora lives in Greater London and is in year 9 at school. She heard about the Roma Support Group documentary film-making workshops through her aunt and decided to participate as she was keen to learn new filming and editing skills and wanted to create a film about Roma issues. The project enabled Leonora and the other participants to experience the whole creative process from developing the theme of the documentary through to filming and editing.

One of the main tasks for the group was determining the focus of their documentary which required them to work through some differences of opinion. In the end, the group decided to focus on education, comparing their experiences of being educated in their home country with their experiences in the UK. This would be done via a conversation whilst cooking some traditional Roma food together.

Not all of the participants were able to attend the filming session due to difficulties travelling to London and/or sickness. However, three of the group, including Leonora, took part. Each young person had responsibility for a particular aspect of the documentary, and Leonora's was filming. On the day of filming, the group met up and took some outside shots. They then created and filmed the main part of the documentary indoors.

Reflecting on her experience, Leonora praised the woman who led the project saying: *"She really explained it well and helped us to understand editing and helped us to improve things if we did things wrong. She made us very comfortable, was very talkative, like a friend."*

Leonora gained some new knowledge and skills as she had hoped, and she feels motivated to take part in similar kinds of projects in the future to raise awareness of issues of importance to Roma communities. She said:

"We did learn to edit, and to write [for the documentary], and I think this really helped us to basically learn new things. It really helped me to, maybe I will do a documentary myself [in the future] and I think this project really helped me."

The filming took place in December 2021 and at the time of writing is being edited and turned into

a documentary with English subtitles. When it is complete, the Roma Support Group will share it on its Facebook page, its website and Utube channel. When asked if there was anything that could have been done better or differently by the Roma Support Group on this project, Leonora reflected that the group would have benefitted from having a bit more time for filming, as it felt a little rushed on the day. Otherwise, she was very happy with the project and feels that documentaries and films are a good way of raising awareness of Roma communities in a positive way. She reflected:

“It would be good and nice to have more projects like this in the future.”

Impact on the wider Roma community

The Roma Support Group originally intended for Roma News to be a vehicle for increasing Roma communities’ awareness of their rights, for example in relation to the EU Settled Status Scheme (see logic model in Appendix 1). The Project Manger introduced and explored different topics with the participants, who ultimately decided what they wanted to cover in each edition.

The Roma Support Group collected some data on audience numbers for Roma News editions, set out in Table 3.

Roma News edition	Utube	Facebook
Roma Genocide Remembrance Day	63 views	Reach: 308 people; views: 95; likes 13; shares 2
Local elections and Gypsy, Roma and Travellers History Month	253 views	Reach: 843; views 204; likes:1; shares 7
Easter message and Coronavirus updates	57 views	Reach: 320; views: 149; likes: 7; shares: 1
International Roma Day and a message to our parents	357 views	Reach: 7,300; views: 2400; likes: 138; shares: 41
Roma children education during the pandemic	351 views	Reach: 1800; views: 641; likes: 13; shares: 3
Roma News Project & the EU Settlement Scheme	100 views	Reach: 982; views 331; likes: 16; shares:5
Roma News competition	85 views	Reach: 231; likes: 3 (no view data recorded as post included a link to YouTube rather than the video itself

In order to explore the impact of the videos on audiences, the Roma Support Group trialled a very short survey (hosted on Facebook) seeking their feedback, however people did not respond to it. A few people left comments on social media, which are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Social media posts concerning Roma News editions

Facebook comments	Twitter comments
<p><i>Hugs from Brazil, friends</i></p> <p><i>Happy International Roma day to you all and especially to my great kids in Toflea school. Very proud of everything you are!</i></p> <p><i>Proud to be called GYPSY!</i></p> <p><i>Well done for the initiative and good luck</i></p> <p><i>This is the new generation, the future of the Roma! Well done!</i></p>	<p><i>People are weird. I don't know where the racism comes from, I've never experienced it. All solidarity to every traveller pupil!</i></p> <p><i>We remember Roma Holocaust victims and also Roma people who experience discrimination and prejudice today</i></p>

These comments illustrate people’s support and encouragement for the project and the young people taking part, however they do not tell us much about impact. Finding a way of successfully capturing the impact of videos on audience members is an issue that will require further consideration should the project continue in the future.

Impact on statutory and non-statutory organisations

The Roma Support Group had originally intended for the project to increase organisations’ awareness about Roma communities’ experiences and aspirations (see logic model in Appendix 1). As noted earlier, there were limited opportunities for participants to get involved in the Roma Support Group’s wider campaigning and policy influencing activity. Additionally, it is unknown whether staff in statutory and non-statutory organisations watched editions of Roma News. The project has, however, raised issues of concern to young Roma with the London Deputy Major for Social Integration and in meetings with the Department of Education.

An unintended and very positive impact of the project is that it has inspired a Roma community organisation based in Glasgow, *Romano Lav*, to create a similar project called *Roma News and Views!* This transnational, multilingual news broadcasting programme is delivered and co-produced by Roma youth. A couple of their activists participated in the On Road training.

Impact on the Roma Support Group

The Roma Support Group hoped that the project would (i) enhance the charity’s communications capacity and (ii) increase its understanding of how best to engage and support young Roma in media/comms projects. It has done both.

The Project Manager reflected that the charity has learned a lot from running the project (see later section on learning) and now has a structure in place that would allow Roma News to continue, or even expand, should funding be available. He noted:

“At the beginning, we didn’t know what workshops we would have to run to make sure the participants learn what’s needed to do the videos. We’ve been able to develop a structure – we know what kind of people we need to have involved, we know what time commitment to ask of them, we know what content we need to cover, what everyone needs to do. This puts us in a good position I would say.”

The Project Manager also felt that he, personally, had gained useful experience and skills through running the project including detailed project planning and management, developing and running recruitment campaigns, and engaging with and motivating young Roma to sustain their participation in the project.

The Chief Executive of the Roma Support Group reflected on the wider impact of the project on the charity by saying:

“The project...gave our team members an incredible sense of purpose and confidence moving forwards. Seeing the successive editions of Roma News, at the time when people were dying, people losing their employment, in really critical situations, to see Roma News led and delivered by children was a balm for our mental health.”

Learning from the project

The main learning to emerge from the project is summarised below:

Main learning from the project

- **Establishing an online project requires considerably more time and creativity to be invested in recruiting young people than a face-to-face project.** The project found that the most efficient approach was to recruit via organisations and advocates that the Roma Support Group currently works with or has links to.
- **It is essential to be mindful of inequalities that young Roma may face when it comes to online working.** For example, not all young Roma will have access to a device to enable online working and/or filming; some may not wish to show their home environment on camera and need to work with their camera off; and others may be sharing their space with siblings, other family members and family friends and may wish to keep both their microphone and camera off.
- **Building a sense of trust and camaraderie amongst younger Roma online takes time and effort, particularly when working with cameras off.** The project Manager reflected that it was helpful to observe how On Road Media created a friendly and trusting environment at the beginning of their training and peer support meetings and was able to use some similar techniques with the younger Roma. What really made a difference however was the opportunity for participants to meet each other face-to-face, which helped them feel more at ease with each other and created a sense of group belonging.
- **Younger Roma were not always familiar with Roma history or key events in the Roma calendar, which formed the topics of Roma News editions.** This provided a learning opportunity for participants but also meant that it was difficult for them to have conversations about relevant topics. What proved helpful was linking Roma issues to topics that participants learn about in school such as bullying or Black History Month. This helped participants have more engaged conversations about Roma News editions.
- **Aligning the project with key events in the school calendar year is important.** As the exam season approached, participants’ engagement with the project diminished. This meant that the project couldn’t provide the more advanced video editing training to young participants that it wanted to. School summer holidays also reduced participants’ engagement with the project.

- **Having an additional staff member or volunteer involved in managing and delivering the project would have been beneficial.** This would have provided additional capacity and flexibility to the project, enabling more frequent editions of Roma News to be produced, better promotion of, and recruitment to, the project, and better communication management with participants.
- **Some expert professionals contributed to the project a voluntary basis which meant that training sessions/meetings were largely dictated by their availability (late afternoon/evening) and did not suit the schools which were interested in having their pupils participate.** In future, it would be better to pay all professionals and have more control over meeting times.



4. Conclusions

No-one could have foreseen the significant impact that Covid has had on the world. Like many charities, the Roma Support Group suddenly had to move to online working, respond to increased demand from the people and communities it serves, and liaise with partner agencies, statutory services and others to ensure that wider support was available for those who needed it. Roma Support Group staff were also dealing with the impact of the pandemic on their professional and personal lives. The fact that the Roma Support Group continued with their plan to deliver Roma News during the pandemic is testament to their strong passion and drive to support young Roma in tackling the barriers that can hold them back.

Delivering the project online created some significant challenges, not least the recruitment and retention of young people, and building trust and camaraderie between participants. This was particularly difficult with younger Roma and those who live in busy households with little privacy to participate in online discussions. It required creativity, flexibility and persistence on the part of the Project Manager to recruit enough participants for the project, to diversify project activities to match the age and interests of participants, and to keep momentum going over the 18 months.

The greatest impact of the project has been on participants. Quantitative survey data, whilst limited, illustrate improvement in participants' self-rated media skills and their ability to contribute to positive change for Roma communities, the two main impacts that the project wanted to deliver. Qualitative evidence backs this up and provides further insights into positive impacts that are difficult to measure with numbers, such as new learning about Roma history and culture and increased pride in their Roma identity. Perhaps what stands out most is the project's impact on participants' confidence. For the younger participants, this included confidence to speak in a group setting, confidence to use filming and editing equipment, and/or confidence to appear in front of a camera and identify as Roma. For the older participants, who advocate for Roma communities as part of their work, this was about confidence to represent Roma communities in a positive way when speaking to the media, to highlight the structural barriers that hold Roma back and to share their learning with colleagues.

The charity intended to use Roma News as a vehicle for informing the wider Roma community about their rights. In this area, the project probably had less impact than originally intended. The involvement of participants in the charity's wider campaigning and policy work was limited (due to online working and the young age of many participants), and only some of the Roma News videos touched on issues to do with rights and entitlements (the focus of each edition was ultimately determined by the participants' interests).

The Roma Support Group has learned a lot from the project. The Explore & Test funding has enabled Roma News to evolve from a relatively informal pilot phase, characterised by improvisation and spontaneity, to a point where it has a proven model and structure in place to keep delivering Roma News, should funding be available. Looking to the future, the Roma Support Group would like to recruit a core group of young Roma to produce regular monthly Roma News editions, with opportunities for other young Roma to join (and leave) the project as they wish. Having a larger group of young people involved in the project would increase opportunities to learn about, and specialise in, a range of different roles (script writing, filming, speaking on camera, editing etc). It would also ensure that participants do not feel obliged to self-identify as Roma on camera if they do not wish to. Additionally, the charity would like to continue professionalising Roma News by creating a stronger Roma News brand, paying all professionals involved in training and supporting the young

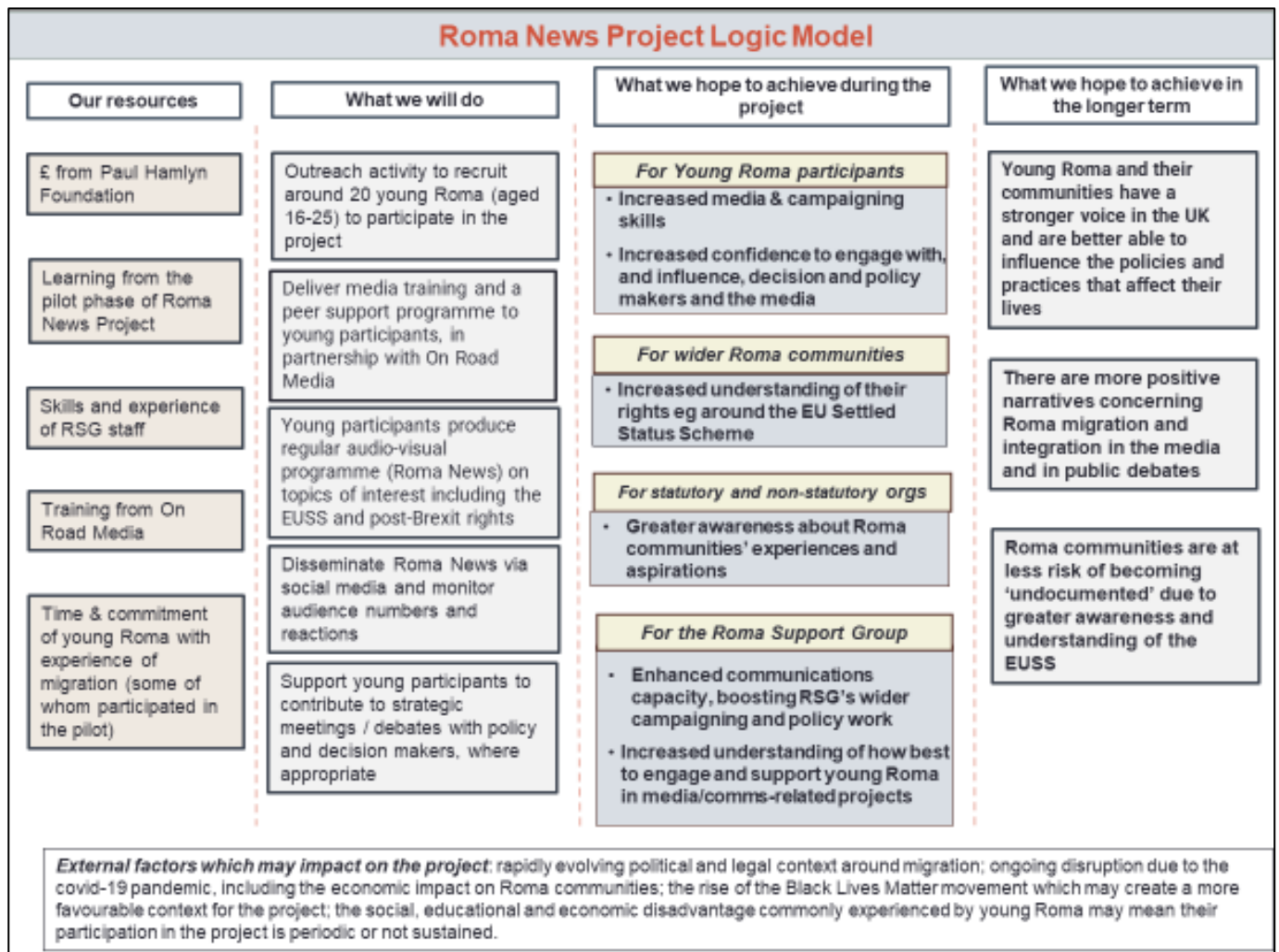
people (and therefore having more control over the timing of meetings), and improving the quality of the videos.

If continuing to deliver Roma News in future, the project may wish to consider the following:

- How to capture more robust feedback from Roma News viewers so that the project can adapt and improve Roma News editions in response to this
- How Roma News is staffed; learning from the last 18 months indicates that it would benefit from more project management resource
- How Roma News participants can be more actively engaged in the charity's campaigning and advocacy work, now that Covid restrictions are relaxing
- Setting some targets to measure the reach and impact of Roma News over time.



Appendix 1: Project Logic Model



Appendix 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Draft monitoring and evaluation framework: [monitoring data](#)

Indicator

Project activities

No. of Roma News editions produced

Description of the social media routes used to distribute Roma News, including reflections on what has worked well / less well

No. and description of any strategic meetings / debates / media interactions which young participants took part in

Audience numbers and feedback

No. of 'hits' on each edition of Roma News

No. of 'likes' on Facebook

Written and verbal feedback from community members on Facebook, Twitter etc

Draft monitoring and evaluation framework: [monitoring data](#)

Indicator

Project participants

No. of young Roma involved in the project, and description of their involvement

Demographic information on participants (age, gender, town/city/place of residence etc)

Training & peer support

No. of training sessions delivered and brief overview of what each session covered

Young people's attendance at training

Description of peer support activity

Project staff's reflections on young Roma's participation in peer support activity

Support from other organisations

List of GRT organisations and other civil society organisations which have supported the project, and brief description of support provided

Draft monitoring and evaluation framework: **intended outcomes over the course of the project**

Intended outcomes	Indicators	Methods / tools
Young Roma have increased media and campaigning skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of participants reporting that they have developed/improved these skills over the course of the project, and the scale of any positive change Qualitative reflections from project staff on participants' skills development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant questionnaire administered at a baseline, midpoint and endpoint Staff notes produced on an ongoing basis Case study vignettes
Young Roma have increased confidence to engage with, and influence, decision and policy makers and the media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of participants reporting that they have increased their confidence to engage with policy makers and the media, and the scale of any positive change No. of interactions/meetings/discussions with policy and decision makers No. of interactions / meetings / interviews with the media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant questionnaire administered at a baseline, midpoint and endpoint (as above) Staff records of, and reflections on, participants' interactions with decision and policy makers and the media Case study vignettes
Roma communities have increased understanding of their rights eg around the EU Settled Status Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of community members surveyed who report that Roma News has increased their understanding of their rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The option of hosting a short survey on Facebook to be explored
Statutory and non-statutory orgs have greater awareness of Roma communities' experiences and aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of interactions / meetings / discussions that have taken place between young Roma and statutory and non-statutory organisations (as noted above) Verbal or written feedback from these orgs Any changes made to policies and practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff records Quant and qual options for gathering feedback from these groups to be explored
RSG has enhanced comms capacity, boosting its wider campaigning and policy work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of engagement with civil servants and parliamentarians as a result of the project Extent to which young Roma's interests / concerns are reflected in discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection / discussion at project steering group meetings Minutes from project steering group meetings
RSG has increased understanding of how best to engage and support young Roma in media / comms-related projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative reflections from RSG staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above.

Draft monitoring and evaluation framework: **longer-term impacts**

Longer-term impacts	Possible indicators
Young Roma and their communities have a stronger voice in the UK and are better able to influence the policies and practices that affect their lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. and type of meetings between young Roma and senior civil servants and parliamentarians that have come about as a result of the project Any adaptations / changes to policies and practices as a result of these meetings Young participants' intentions to sustain their involvement in the project and/or related campaigning activities
There are more positive narratives concerning Roma migration and integration in the media and in public debates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive media coverage on Roma issues, that can be linked back to the Roma News project
Roma communities are at less risk of becoming 'undocumented' due to greater awareness and understanding of the EUSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See earlier comment on option of hosting short survey on Facebook