

Roma Support Group



Annual Report
2019/2020

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO OUR ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

Reading about our work in the year ending just before the pandemic, it seems that we might be looking at events from a bygone era. Every page of this report is filled with descriptions of our face-to-face (not virtual) advocacy sessions, training, school workshops, peer support group meetings, after-school activities, exhibitions, academic seminars and what difference they have made to the lives of thousands of Roma people in London and across the UK.

With Brexit looming, much of our frontline, policy and campaigning work last year was focused on ensuring that Roma migrants are able to exercise their rights to remain in the UK after living here legally for many years, integrating, raising their children and contributing to the British economy. We have supported nearly one thousand Roma people to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), informed thousands more about their EUSS rights and worked closely with Roma NGOs and civil society groups across the country to influence decision-makers at national and EU levels on issues that affect Roma migrants' rights to continue to reside in the UK after Brexit. As a result of this work, a stronger and more unified Roma voice was heard at a national level, fortified by our collaboration with civil society organisations and strengthened by our pioneering 'Roma News' initiative, which broadcasts information to Roma communities in Romanes about matters that are important to them.

While safeguarding Roma rights to EUSS and ensuring that they are not forced to return to countries, which are practically unknown to their children and where they have been systematically discriminated against and excluded, we also supported hundreds of Roma families in London to exercise their welfare and housing rights and improve their debt management and budgeting skills. We have empowered our community members with mental health advocacy and supported children and young people through education advocacy and a programme of after-school activities. All these projects combined one-to-one approach with group activities, such as training sessions, peer-advocacy groups and youth forum, to inform Roma community members about their rights in Britain and enhance their confidence to exercise them.

Simultaneously, we continued to share our expertise and models of good practice with hundreds of educators, health professionals, social workers and local authorities through our Roma Support and Engagement Project thus helping to develop local capacity to support Roma communities across Britain.

One of the highlights of the last year was finalising our 'Roma Stories' Project, which gave the Roma community an opportunity to record their oral history. We have ensured that the multifaceted legacy of this work is publicly accessible through London Metropolitan Archives, our digital learning resource for schools, an exhibition already seen by thousands of people, an academic seminar and a dedicated website, helping to raise awareness about Roma history and heritage.

The following pages of this report will shed more light on the details of our work during the past year, none of which would be possible without generous support from our funders, donors, partners, and the dedication of our trustees, staff and volunteers. Thank you for all your support, encouragement, enthusiasm, hard work and commitment. Together, we will face the challenges and opportunities of the year ahead!



OUR MISSION

We aim to empower the Roma community with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to challenge any discrimination that might prevent them from integrating into UK society and fulfilling their potential.

In parallel, we aim to raise awareness and help build an understanding of Roma culture, heritage and the challenges which Roma refugees and migrants face in the UK today.

OUR VISION

Roma communities are empowered through the realisation that their strength lies within every individual and his/her fulfilment as a member of society.



TIMELINES

History of Roma Migration in the UK AND

History of the Roma Support Group

1989 – 1990

The collapse of communism in Europe marks the beginning of a new migration westwards as racially-motivated violence against Roma increases.

VOLUNTEERS

The RSG has been able to achieve much more than its resources would allow thanks to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers.

During 2019-20, **34** volunteers helped with all our projects, e.g. Advice & Advocacy, Arts (forum theatre, visual art/ dance sessions), Aspiration, Mental Health, Oral History, Policy & Campaigning projects, as well as website, graphic design, interpreting and administration. Furthermore, the RSG has benefited from its partnership with the Action Reconciliation Service for Peace, which enables us to host volunteers from an EU country on a full-time basis for the duration of one year.

During the last year our volunteers have contributed an average of **118** hours per week, which equals the manpower of 3.4 (Full Time Equivalent) members of staff.

Thank You!!!

"Volunteering with the Roma Support Group gave me an amazing working experience. I could feel my help was important and genuinely appreciated, both by staff and clients. I had an opportunity of stepping out of my comfort zone..., practice my language skills (both my advanced English and basic Russian) as well as develop administrative skills and learn how to create an appealing multimedia presentation. I am very grateful to my supervisor and all the staff members – thank you for your patience and willingness to answer my questions."

(Marta Lewicz, Volunteer)



1998

RSG is established at a meeting attended by over 80 Roma people at the Holy Cross Church in Kings Cross.

1999

An advice service and social activities are launched at our first base at St Stephens Church in Royal Oak.

ADVICE & ADVOCACY

Our frontline **Advice and Advocacy support** enables Roma beneficiaries to overcome some of the problems, which they face every day, i.e. poverty, homelessness, housing issues, health/ education inequalities and employability problems. This support is delivered from our two centres in East and West London (Canning Town and White City) through appointments and a drop-in system.

Last year, **4186** Roma refugees and migrants benefitted from our frontline support services. Among them were some of the most vulnerable and excluded members of the Roma community, including: rough sleepers, older people, children, people with mental health issues and physical disabilities. They are mainly residents of the London Boroughs of Newham, Hammersmith & Fulham, Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, Brent, Ealing, Enfield and Waltham Forest.

ROMA FINANCIAL INCLUSION PROJECT

Roma Financial Inclusion Project aims to enhance financial inclusion of Roma people in London, enabling them to navigate post-Brexit migration/ benefit systems, exercising their welfare rights, and enhancing confidence to manage their money.

Last year, **250** beneficiaries were supported with one-to-one advice and advocacy sessions to:

- Access the welfare system and exercise their welfare rights;
- Improve their money/ debt management and budgeting skills;

1990s-2004

Roma asylum-seekers from Eastern/ Central Europe arriving in UK are met with hostile reaction of British media. Roma asylum claims are refused by the Home Office point-blank on the basis of failing to demonstrate "a well-founded fear of persecution" within the terms of the 1951 United Nations' Convention in their countries of origin.

Furthermore, **67** beneficiaries attended **4** training sessions covering entitlement to benefits, debt, budgeting, EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and benefits post-Brexit.

The Project also delivered bi-monthly peer support sessions which enabled **34** beneficiaries to explore the process of completing benefit forms/ deadlines, challenging incorrect decisions, types of debt and options for dealing with them, rights when dealing with bailiffs, personal budgets, understanding/ reducing household bills, the difference between Indefinite Leave to Remain and EUSS, impact of the EUSS on eligibility for benefits, etc.

100% of beneficiaries of our one-to-one advice & advocacy sessions, community training and peer-support work, reported being:

- More satisfied with their welfare situation following our advice;
- More confident in their money/ debt management and budgeting skills;
- More informed about their rights to EUSS and their entitlements after the Brexit.

"Thank you for your support, and everything you did for me. My situation was not good but I now hope I'm going to change everything. In future I want to help people like you helped me."

(Roma Beneficiary)

2000

An advice service starts at White City Community Centre and Froud Community Centre in Manor Park.

2001

A grant from the Association of London Government enables us to develop our Advice & Advocacy Project.

ROMA HOUSING ADVOCACY PROJECT

The Roma Housing Advocacy Project delivered in partnership with the Tower Hamlets Law Centre (THLC) aims to address Roma refugees and migrants' housing needs and homelessness issues in London. This is done through a multipronged approach of one-to-one advice and advocacy, community training sessions, and 2nd tier advice delivered by THLC to increase awareness of housing law amongst RSG staff and volunteers.

Last year, **373** beneficiaries were supported with advice and advocacy sessions related to eviction proceedings, homelessness applications, issues with housing register, disrepair and other housing matters.

Furthermore, **105** beneficiaries participated in two consultation meetings and two community training sessions to increase Roma people's awareness of their legal housing rights.



2002

Our new venue in Harold Road Centre in Upton Park is opened. An expansion of our services and the establishment of an art and sport project take place thanks to funding from Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

2003

The production of our first publication – 'Colours of Hope: A Little Book by Roma Refugee Children for Everybody'.

EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME (EUSS) ADVOCACY PROJECT

We have been a member of a pan-London partnership led by Crisis, which involves 9 expert organisations working with EU citizens across homelessness and migration sectors. The aim of this initiative is to maximise the number of vulnerable and at-risk EU citizens to make EU Settlement Scheme applications, including homeless people, those at risk of being homeless and other categories of vulnerable individuals through some of the partners' specialist projects.

Last year, we informed **2568** Roma migrants about the EUSS through workshops delivered in local community centres, Roma churches and schools with high numbers of Roma pupils. These workshops were delivered in collaboration with our colleagues from Public Interest Law Centre, Settled and New Europeans, whose legal expertise has empowered Roma community members and enhanced their knowledge about the EUSS process, its requirements and deadlines.

As a result of this project, last year, we supported **909** Roma people to apply for EUSS by offering language and technical assistance, helping to obtain documents to prove their identity and residence in the UK and effectively helped to submit **668** EUSS applications (**397** applications for pre-settled status and **271** for settled status).

The Project team has also collaborated with 'Roma News', our pioneering initiative of audio-visual news programme produced last year by young Roma to enhance their communities' awareness about EUSS, Brexit and their post-Brexit rights.

5-14 April 2004

The Home Office informs 2,614 families, most of whom are Roma asylum seekers that their subsistence support will end and they must leave their accommodations on the 30th April or be evicted as they were due to become EU nationals on the 1st May. Three 'choices' were offered: 1) destitution; 2) finding employment; 3) 'voluntary' return to their countries of origin. The 2nd choice was impossible to undertake due to lack of necessary IDs and documents.

ROMA MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT

Aims to:

- Enhance Roma community members' understanding of mental health issues;
- Improve access to mental health services for Roma beneficiaries;
- Support mental health professionals in engaging with Roma patients and enhancing their understanding of the Roma community and culture.

Last year, the project supported **164** beneficiaries in identifying their mental health needs, collaboratively devising plans of action, securing referrals to mental health services and ensuring that they are satisfied with the quality of mental health care that they are receiving.

Our casework included supporting beneficiaries, who were undergoing inpatient psychiatric treatment, family therapy, assisting young people accessing the mental health service, etc.

In addition to our one-to-one advocacy, we also organised **10** Peer Support and mental health awareness sessions attended by **34** beneficiaries. The meetings were co-delivered by different health professionals working in local health services and offered an opportunity for increasing awareness of health, coping strategies, treatments and support available. Furthermore, beneficiaries were offered a space for group discussions, sharing their struggles, anxieties and ways of managing those, which, in turn, enhanced their sense of self-empowerment and increased their confidence in making positive choices related to their mental health. Moreover, these meetings offered an opportunity for building trust between our beneficiaries and health professionals, which enhanced their confidence to engage with mental health services.

2004

From mid-April until the end of May we supported over 500 Roma families to submit individual appeals to the Asylum Support Adjudicators and numerous Local Authorities across London. The capacity of the organisation was at breaking point as we manage the crisis. On the 25th May we received a notice to vacate the premises where our advice sessions were based, but soon moved to a new office in Canning Town, which enabled us to centralise our work in East London.

As a result of the project's activities:

- **75%** of beneficiaries reported increased understanding of mental health issues/ services;
- **41%** reported increased accessibility of mental health services;
- **50%** reported their increased satisfaction with mental health services; and
- **55%** reported increased self-empowerment when interacting with health professionals.

"I was always afraid that if I talk about my problems, my children might be taken away. The project helped me to understand that this would not happen just because of my depression. This empowered me to access psychological support." (Roma Beneficiary)

The project also supported 130 mental health professionals in their work with Roma patients through our Roma Culture Awareness training, direct consultations and leaflets enhancing their understanding of Roma culture and health needs. 90% of mental health professionals directly involved in supporting our beneficiaries reported improved engagement with their Roma patients as a result of our collaboration.

"Excellent training! ... It gave me the knowledge of Roma culture and how to approach, communicate and support them. The leaflet is also very helpful as I can always go back to the information."

(Mental Health Professional)

26th April 2004

Pierce Glynn Solicitors applied for Judicial Review in the High Court appealing against the Home Office decision. On the 4th May 2004, permission is granted to challenge the Home Office, but before the final hearing, the Home Office decided to reinstate support to destitute Roma families until they find employment and readjust to the new situation.

ROMA ASPIRATION PROJECT

The Roma Aspiration Project supports Roma children and young people through a combination of one-to-one education advocacy, in-depth outreach work and a programme of after-school activities and outings. These activities shape our holistic approach to working with young Roma people aiming to enhance their self-confidence, life aspirations and improve their health and well-being.

Last year, **103** young Roma benefited from our one-to-one education advocacy and outreach work, which assisted them with school registrations/transitions, exclusion appeals, access to supplementary teaching support and education welfare provisions, employment search, Child Protection conferences and court proceedings. The project also helped young Roma to return to mainstream education and supported young people involved/affected by youth gang culture.

"I don't have to impress anyone anymore and do things that are expected from a troublemaker. I panicked in the past but now I've realised that having someone to talk to, helps a lot." (Young Roma, 15)



2004

With the accession of their countries into the European Union on 1st May 2004, Roma from new EU Accession states, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia are granted freedom of movement as their status within Western Europe changes from that of asylum-seeker to EU migrant.

The project helped young Roma to improve their school attendance and attainment; tackled bullying; and assisted beneficiaries with disabilities and health issues by establishing and coordinating multi-agency support networks. It also ensured that professionals are well informed about the aspirations and barriers Roma children and their families face.

Furthermore, the project supported young Roma to participate in our afterschool activities, such as sport, visual art and dance sessions, homework tuitions, Youth Forum, as well as outings to the Victoria and Albert Museum, Royal Court of Justice, King's College, Science Museum, and National Gallery.



"I always liked art but had no resources at home and could not practice. The project gave me the opportunity to use free art materials and develop my skills. It is becoming clear to me what I want to do in the future. I want to be an artist." (Young Roma, 15)

2005

Release of CD 'Journey' by our cultural project - Romani Rad

2006

Launch of the DVD - 'Be Roma or Die Tryin'
Participation in oral history project - 'Belonging: Voices of London's Refugees' at the Museum of London.

The project channelled beneficiaries' artistic creativity to celebrate Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month and make an art exhibition, 'Our Newham' (launched at Newham Town Hall), which boosted their confidence and pride in their Roma identity.



"We decided to record a video to tell people 'whom we are' and 'where we come from'... In this video, I say 'I am Roma and I am proud of it'."
(Young Roma, 13)

As a result of the project's activities, young Roma made significant progress by achieving the following outcomes:

- **59%** of beneficiaries increased their life aspirations and satisfaction with their educational attainment;
- **56%** enhanced their self-confidence in relation to their chosen areas of interest such as sport, music and arts;

2007

After Bulgaria and Romania join the EU on 1st January 2007, Roma from these countries can also travel freely within Member States.

2007

The First London Roma Talent Show is organised. The grand finale takes place at Stratford Circus.

- **43%** felt that their health and well-being have improved due to their participation in sporting activities and an increased level of health awareness.

"I've realised that I can shape my future. I've always thought that I can't achieve because of my background but this thinking was wrong. I am interested in business and I pay attention to my grades because I need my A levels to be very good. My plan is to study business at university - and after that - find a satisfying job."

(Young Roma, 16)



2008

Organising the first national celebration of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month in London and Leeds.

2008

Organising Young Roma Awareness Seminar, our models of good practice shared with over 100 professionals, launching of the Mentoring Project's evaluation report.

'ROMA STORIES' – ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

'Roma Stories', which ended in December 2019, worked with Roma researchers, volunteers, community members, London Metropolitan Archives, museums and academic institutions to explore, archive and share unrecorded stories of Roma refugees and migrants in London. The main themes, which the Project explored, were:

- Roma Holocaust during WWII, including individual memories of post-war experience of ethnocide and life in post-Communist Europe;
- Migration and the changing of Roma identity;
- 'A Sense of Belonging' as understood and experienced by individual Roma refugees and migrants in London.



2010

Organising 'The Big Issue for Roma: Exclusion or Engagement?' conference at the Old Town Hall, Stratford. The RSG's service users successfully challenge in court London Councils' decision to terminate their funding for frontline voluntary sector organisations in London. Romani Rad are invited to take part in the Hyde Park Evening Vigil during Pope Benedict XVI's visit to London.

The project gave the Roma community an opportunity to capture their knowledge and histories, which have been 'passed down' across generations, orally - rather than in a written form - before they are lost.

Last year, all of the **37** interviews collected were transcribed and translated into English. They were then edited, proofread, catalogued and archived and are now publicly accessible at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA).

"Projects like these are crucial as there isn't enough information about Roma heritage. I am glad we could be partners and that we could help in raising people's awareness about this important part of European history."

(Senior Archivist, LMA)

The collected interviews reflect the diversity within the Roma community and include oral recordings from Polish, Romanian, Slovakian, Hungarian, Belarussian, Swedish and former Yugoslavian Roma.

We have also worked with Southern Road and Redbridge Primary Schools in East London to produce a digital [Roma Oral History Learning Resource](#), which includes introductory information about Roma that can be used in Primary (KS2) and Secondary (KS3) schools and by teachers in higher and further education. It might also be of interest to non-school audiences to build a broader understanding about Roma people. The positive inclusion of this material in the school curriculum will help to overturn negative stereotypes and create positive relationships based on mutual respect and understanding.

"This package of work is incredibly useful and important for raising the awareness of the plight of Roma in history. The history of Roma has its place to educate the wider population ... in all sectors not just education."

(Teacher, Southern Road Primary)

2011

Launch of Roma Support & Engagement Programme, our first national project. RSG starts the campaign to 'Save Independent Advice in Newham' and one of our service users legally challenges Newham Council's decision to terminate independent advice provision in the borough.

On the basis of oral history interviews collected during the life of the project, we also created a mobile exhibition, 'Roma Stories', seen by a total of 2,439 people in 6 exhibition venues across London, as well as in Bristol. The exhibition venues included Institute of Education (University College London), Stratford Library, London Metropolitan Archives, The Vestibules, Bristol City Hall, Roma Support Group's exhibition launch event at Woodgrange Community Centre; and The Weiner Holocaust Library.

This is some of the feedback we received:

- *"What an informative exhibition – thank you. It was moving and important to be told these stories. The stories and the artwork and film together worked beautifully and were very absorbing. I am going to leave the exhibition with much to think about and will definitely learn more about this heritage and culture."*
- *"My first and proper introduction to the history of Roma people during the Holocaust. Very informative, I am leaving with a new perspective on discrimination, minorities and humanity. Thank you and well done for your work and efforts!"*

Furthermore, we hosted a 'Roma Stories' seminar led by the Raphael Samuel History Centre at Queen Mary University of London, attended by professional historians and **80** students, which presented an opportunity to discuss the findings and further understanding about Roma history and heritage.

Finally, we created the '**Roma Stories' Oral History Project** website, where visitors can view and download the Roma Oral History Learning Resource, watch the short 'Roma Stories' film documentary we have produced, and listen to interviews' extracts in English and Romanes.

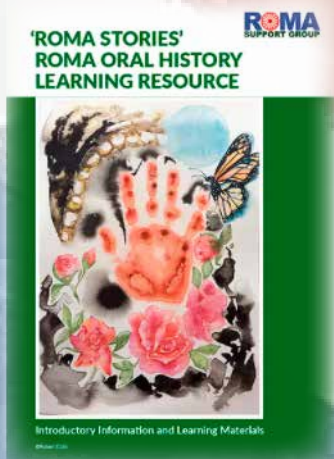
2012

Organising an exhibition 'From India to Islington: a 1,000 Year Roma Journey' in partnership with Islington Museum. Roma FC becomes an officially recognised club affiliated to Essex FA and goes on to compete in Ilford & District Football League. They also win their 1st official football tournament, organised by the City of London.

As a testament of the value that this project has created, in the words of a Roma researcher:

"Carrying out such work is extremely important. The Roma community is the biggest ethnic minority in Europe, with a population larger than many European countries. And yet our history remains unknown. For centuries our identity and history were denied by the authorities. The Roma Genocide remains largely absent from Holocaust Memorial calendars even today. Roma people have endured centuries of slavery and oppression and their history is totally absent from history books. Society is aiming for reconciliation with its past, in order to build a better future for everyone, so projects like the Roma Oral History Project can help make that possible for the Roma people. The UK has just acquired a unique selection of stories and has enriched its knowledge and history about my community. And through making such projects possible it's giving an example to the rest of Europe."

(Roma Researcher)



2013

Release of CD, 'Roma Youth Music', recorded by young Roma and their music teachers. The RSG, represented by two Roma Trustees, officially contribute during the Holocaust Memorial Day UK Commemorative Ceremony in London.

POLICY & INFORMATION

The Policy and Information Project aims to ensure that the concerns and problems (and satisfactions) of Roma community members are recognised well beyond our office in East London. Roma people enjoy many freedoms in the UK that are denied in their countries of origin - but life in Britain is not without its difficulties.



2014

Citizens of Bulgaria and Romania can work without restrictions across the EU.

2014

Launch of The Roma Bridging Sounds Orchestra (RBSO) in partnership with Newham Music. Organising "From 'Extra' to 'Ordinary'" exhibition at Romanian Cultural Centre in London.

Last year, we worked with many Roma-led NGOs and community members to ensure that their voice is represented with regards to issues which matter to them, such as:

BREXIT & EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME (EUSS):

We have been working on publicising the impact of Brexit on Roma, and the need to prevent a possibility of Windrush 2 through our effort to influence policy both within Home Office, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and also via the European Commission in London at their bi-monthly EUSS monitoring meetings, which we attended with other NGOs and embassy staff from EU members states in the UK.

We have also worked with civil society groups, (e.g. The3million) to co-shape their strategy and practice regarding EU Roma migrants. Please see section below, 'Roma & Brexit Campaigning and Policy Project', for more information.

SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS:

We have continued to raise our concerns about the Timpson Review (2019) commissioned about school exclusions following the publication of the Race Disparity Audit, which lacked any focus on the issues particularly affecting Gypsy, Roma, Travellers (GRT) and BAME pupils and families.

The follow up from the Timpson Review on school exclusions has been a part of the work of the GRT Stakeholders Group at the Department of Education (DfE) and we were also invited by the Coram-i blog to post our response to the Timpson review, which you can view [here](#). Furthermore, we attended a European event, using it as the platform to re-focus on school exclusions for GRT (and BAME and other young people) in 2020.

2016

Publishing two reports: 'Education – a Roma Perspective' and 'Rough Sleeping in the City of Westminster'. Release of the CD 'The Roma Bridging Sounds Orchestra'. The Roma Bridging Sounds Orchestra plays at the Music for Youth Proms in the Royal Albert Hall.

ROUGH SLEEPING:

We have endeavoured to raise awareness and influence strategies of Greater London Authority (GLA), Camden Council and MHCLG regarding rough sleeping EU Roma migrants, highlighting how statutory and non-statutory homelessness sectors fail to address their needs and giving our recommendations for the way forward.

DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL GYPSY ROMA TRAVELLER POLICY:

In June 2019, the Government announced that they will develop a national strategy for tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. Whilst this is a response to the criticism of the government policy by the Women's & Equalities Select Committee, it has also been a long-standing demand of the whole GRT third sector.

We participated in the first stages of the development of this policy through a Policy Sprint event organised by the Cabinet Office, which we attended along with other GRT NGOs. We have also tried to use this government policy to extend the widest possible consultation amongst Roma communities in the UK.

CONTACT WITH GOVERNMENT STAFF AND DEPARTMENTS:

The RSG attended quarterly meetings of the GRT Liaison Group at the MHCLG to raise with them any matters that affect both - Roma families, who access our services as well as Roma communities across the UK.

2017

The Home Office policy to detain and deport rough sleeping EU migrants is ruled as discriminatory and unlawful by the High Court.

2017

Publishing a report: 'Fulfilling their potential? Exclusion of Roma Pupils in the English Education System'. Publishing 'Young Roma Calendar 2018'.

At the GRT Liaison Group, we have pursued the following issues which directly and indirectly impact on Roma communities:

- The use of Controlling Migration Fund resources, which the Government claims, has “benefited” 21/22 local Roma communities;
- The continuation of the Home Office’s support to NGOs, who are supporting “vulnerable” EU nationals through the EUSS process;
- The continued marginalisation of attempts to identify the way in which the UK Government has used ESIF (Euro Structural Funds – ESF and ERDF) in England and the lack of impact on Roma (and Gypsy and Traveller people), who are typically those farthest from the formal labour market.

INVOLVEMENT WITH EUROPEAN POLICY MAKERS:

The work of Roma Civil Monitoring (a collective piece of research and advocacy by four Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) NGOs – National Federation of Gypsy Liaisons Groups; Friends, Families and Travellers; Roma Support Group and Roma Community Care) has led to the [publication](#) by the European Commission of a detailed critique of the UK position regarding Roma integration, identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policies and most important priorities to be addressed. We have contributed to this publication with our report, [‘Roma Civil Monitor, Year 3, Roma and Brexit’](#).

Last year, we also produced six newsletters, sent to **547** subscribers; published a report on [‘Romaphobia, Roma & Hate Crime’](#); engaged with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on how to encourage Roma community members to participate in the 2021 Census, which will introduce a Roma tick-box within the ethnic group questions; and met with Cabinet Members of Sheffield Council about the need for community development and partnership approaches to those neighbourhoods in the city with high levels of Roma settlement.

2018

Addressing MPs at the Parliamentary Women and Equalities Select Committee (WESC) with regards to the Race Disparity Audit and the absence of Government policy to generally recognise and support migrant Roma communities in the UK. Organising a ‘Roma and Brexit’ seminar hosted by All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Gypsy, Roma, Travellers and APPG for Migration in Parliament.

ROMA-LED ADVOCACY & CAMPAIGNING PROJECT

The Roma-led Advocacy & Campaigning Project ended in September 2019 and aimed to:

- Improve the social inclusion of Roma refugees and migrants;
- Increase the voice of Roma communities and their participation in the local/ regional decision-making processes;
- Influence policy-makers and service providers, while encouraging changes in practice so that it is more responsive to the needs of Roma migrants in London.

EMPOWERING ROMA CHAMPIONS:

The project supported Roma Champions in London, facilitating their participation in our Roma Refugee and Migrant Forum, strategic meetings with decision-makers and engagement with the media regarding Brexit, EUSS, hate crime, rough sleeping, accessibility barriers to public services (i.e. housing, health, employment and language support); and representation of Roma experience during the national Holocaust commemorations.

We have developed different ways of working with Roma Champions, including training, mentoring, one-to-one/ motivational support and leadership development approach. In some cases, these methods of engagement have overlapped, particularly when developing training packages that were tailored to be reflective of Roma historical experience, culture and Champions' needs.

2019

Organising a 'Roma Stories' Touring Exhibition to share the work of our Oral History Project exploring the experiences and stories of Roma people from Eastern and Central Europe who live in London and focusing on the key themes of: Roma persecution during the Second World War (Roma Holocaust), life in post-war communist countries, migration to the UK, Roma identity, and feelings of belonging in the UK. The exhibition was shown in several venues in London (e.g. UCL Institute of Education, Stratford Library, London Metropolitan Archives, the Wiener Library), as well as Bristol City Hall.

This diversified approach has ensured that the project has not only engaged with champions, who were already educated and trained in advocacy and campaigning but also those with a low level of formal education but with significant first-hand experience of some of the barriers and issues faced by their communities.

ROMA REFUGEE AND MIGRANT FORUM:

The Roma Refugee and Migrant Forum (RRFM) facilitated by the project in London, brought Roma Champions, community members, professionals and decision makers together to discuss matters important to Roma communities in and outside of London.

The RRMF meetings have helped its participants to share their good practice, identify gaps in local/ regional service provisions and strategies, and led to further meetings between external professionals, our staff and Roma Champions, which have explored practical ways to tackle barriers and inequalities experienced by Roma migrants in specific boroughs in London, e.g. our meetings with PILC, Connections, the Rough Sleeping Lead Manager at GLA and Head of Rough Sleeping Unit at Camden Council to discuss and help to plan a support package for rough sleeping Roma in London.



MEDIA RELATIONS:

The project has also contributed to increasing our organisational knowledge and capacity to deal with media by leading on our collaboration with M&C Saatchi as part of the HO's 'Building a Stronger Britain Together' programme, which resulted in developing our first Media & Communication Strategy.

The development of the video *Just because of who I am*, was coordinated by the project worker, in collaboration with M&S Saatchi. The video allowed Roma Champions to share their experiences of life in the UK and encouraged Roma to be proud of their identity.

It was launched on social media on the 8th April 2019, International Roma Day, reaching around **130000** people through the RSG's Facebook, YouTube and Twitter accounts.



One of the most exciting developments of the project has been the making of our pioneering *Roma News* program to deliver information to Roma communities in Romanes about matters which are important for them (e.g. Brexit, EUSS, GRT History Month, etc.) By adding English subtitles to all editions of the programme, we have ensured that non-Roma audiences could also benefit from learning about Roma communities, their needs and culture.

Our pilot editions of *Roma News* have reached **13000** people with an average of **5000** views receiving positive feedback from many people across the UK, who found it engaging, informative and empowering.

The project team has also delivered Roma Culture Workshops in primary schools in Newham and Redbridge, as well as Show Racism the Red Card events for schools in Redbridge, Barking & Dagenham, attended by educators and school children, who reported an increased level of their awareness about Roma culture as a result of our workshops.

'KETANE – TOGETHER: ROMA SHAPING FUTURES' PROJECT

The Ketane project started in December 2019 and aims to:

- Empower Roma communities with training, information resources, and specialist advice regarding the post-Brexit changes which will impact on their rights for settlement in the UK;
- Increase the self-help capacity of Roma communities through IT support and a peer advocacy programme;
- Support the voice of Roma communities through campaigning and policy work.

The project will empower Roma migrant communities through an inter-connected training, advocacy and campaigning programme to improve their capacity for self-help and self-representation in the post-Brexit Britain.



ROMA SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The Roma Support & Engagement Programme (RSEP)

aims to support statutory and voluntary agencies to respond effectively to the needs of Roma refugees and migrants across the UK.

In 2019-20, seven members of our staff and 17 Roma professionals took part in the delivery of this programme, including:

- A specialist intervention service for professionals working with Roma individuals and families;
- Training for professionals and the community;
- Specialist support for research and consultation.

Last year, we delivered:

- **25** training sessions and presentations;
- **10** commissioned interventions and consultations;
- Support for **525** professionals who work with over **2749** Roma individuals.

Over **94%** of respondents rated our training as 'excellent' or 'good'.



Some of the agencies and organisations supported by RSEP include: East of England LGA – Parallel Lives Roma Project, Sheffield Children's Services, Hackney Safeguarding Children Board, Birmingham University, Newcastle Children's Services, Birmingham University Eurochildren Research, Heriot-Watt University, etc.



"The community interpreting and cultural insights provided by the Roma advocate were very helpful for the parenting assessor and helped her to engage and understand the family better."

(Senior Fieldwork Manager, Children's Services, Sheffield)

"Thank-you for the fantastic session delivered last week. The feedback from students has been really positive and I am very grateful for the time and effort put in for the session. I look forward to having you back to share with other students in the future."

(Social Work Lecturer, Centre for Social Work, School of Health & Social Care, University of Essex)



PLANS FOR FUTURE

- Continuing to develop all our existing frontline projects;
- Developing our local and national Policy, Information and Campaigning work in order to empower Roma communities and strengthen our effectiveness and capacity to influence policy and decision makers;
- Further developing the Roma Support and Engagement Programme, which enables us to share our expertise and models of good practice with statutory and non-statutory agencies and develop our enterprising skills;
- Promoting an understanding of Roma culture and history; and
- Implementing our fundraising strategy to ensure the continuity of frontline services in the areas of advice & advocacy, education support, aspiration, as well as art/ culture, policy and campaigning projects.



GRT History Month RSG Art Competition

Winning entries:



All the GRT History Month RSG Art Competition entries can be seen on the RSG website:

<https://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history-month-2020.html>

EXTRACT FROM THE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JANUARY 2020

Extracts from the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 January 2020

	Unrestricted Funds 2020 £	Restricted Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2019 £
Income from:				
Donations	36,961	279,939	316,900	306,131
Charitable activities	35,108	-	35,108	33,041
Investments*	96	-	96	51
Other*	163	-	163	-
Total income	72,328	279,939	352,267	339,223
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	4,501	29,071	33,572	33,426
Charitable activities:				
Advice, Advocacy & Campaigning	-	192,952	192,952	125,621
Art & Cultural Development	-	17,107	17,107	16,164
Early Years Education	-	5,758	5,758	38,081
Education Support	-	21,981	21,981	27,581
Mental Health Advocacy	-	37,734	37,734	43,071
Sport Inclusion	1,380	-	1,380	3,963
Support & Engagement Project	41,283	-	41,283	39,388
Total expenditure	47,164	304,603	351,767	327,295
Net income/(expenditure)	25,164	(24,664)	500	11,928
Transfer between funds	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds	25,164	(24,664)	500	11,928
Reconciliation of funds:				
Total funds brought forward	96,188	165,189	261,377	249,449
Total funds carried forward	121,352	140,525	261,877	261,377

EXTRACT FROM THE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JANUARY 2020

Extracts from the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 January 2020

	£	Total Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2019 £
Fixed assets:			
Tangible assets		1,005	915
Current assets:			
Accounts receivable	11,304		4,645
Prepayments	1,153		1,265
Cash at bank and in hand	310,980		299,976
	<u>323,437</u>		<u>305,886</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(62,565)		(45,424)
Net current assets		<u>260,872</u>	<u>260,462</u>
Net assets		<u><u>261,877</u></u>	<u><u>261,377</u></u>
Funds of the charity:			
Restricted funds		140,525	165,189
Unrestricted funds:			
General funds	121,352		96,188
	<u>121,352</u>		<u>96,188</u>
		<u><u>261,877</u></u>	<u><u>261,377</u></u>

The full audited financial statements were prepared in accordance with section 415A of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies and FRS 102 Section 1A.

They were approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Trustees on 29 October 2020.

A full set of audited financial statements is available on request from the charity's registered office.

The accounts were audited by Vivek Kapoor, Senior Statutory Auditor, for and on behalf of Ferguson Maidment & Co.

THANKS TO

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who supported the work of the Roma Support Group during 2019-20 through grants, donations, and their valuable time.

Management Committee

Prof. Thomas Acton OBE (Patron)
Ms Roza Kotowicz (Chair)
Ms Anthea Wormington (Treasurer)
Mr Peter Norton (Secretary)
Mr Robert Czibi
Ms Sharon Elliott
Ms Dragica Felja
Ms Michaela Jarosinska
Mr Cornel Rezmives
Mr Mircea Rostas
Mr Michael Tarnoky
Mr Leon Wisniewski

Staff Members

Marta Babecka – AQS Coordinator
Marek Balaz – Ketane Project Coordinator
Marius Daniel Banceanu – EUSSAdvocate
Mihai Calin Bica – Policy & Campaigning Project Worker
Daria Ferranti – Mental Health Advocacy Project Coordinator
Edyta Gach-Karapetyan – Advice and Advocacy Casework Supervisor, Mental Health Advocate, EUSS Advocate, Financial Inclusion Advocate
Tania Gessi – Roma Oral History Project Coordinator
Janos Sandor Horvath – EUSS Project Coordinator

Szymon Głowacki – Aspiration Project Worker, Mental Health Advocate

Sylvia Ingmire – CEO

Alunica Lepadatu – EUSS Advocate, Ketane Advocate

Ewelina Pawłowska – Community Advocacy Worker, EUSS Advocate, Financial Inclusion Advocate

Chris Price – Financial Inclusion Project Coordinator

Ona Risoviene – Office maintenance

Ted Sale – AQS Coordinator, Roma Oral History Project Worker, Roma Support and Engagement Programme Worker

Andy Shallice – Policy and Information Worker

Gabriela Smolińska-Poffley – Deputy Manager and Roma Support and Engagement Programme Leader

Sessional Staff

Radek Badzo
Malgorzata Czureja
Olina Fuseini
Klarysa Glowacka
Janos Horvath
Sue Mutter
Mania Malik
Bobi Rostas
Corina Rostas
Terezia Rostas
Martina Stiepkova
Anita Wesolowska

Volunteers

Irantzu Perez Arribas
Ruth Beddow
Lynn Bird
Matthew Cary
Andrew Copeland
Robert Czibi
Aneta Dolinska
Simina Dragos
Abby Gilbert
Klarysa Glowacka
Alicja Godlewska
Katrina Hanova
Asia Hart-Eason
Naomi Hinch
Grace Hutchinson
Andy Ingmire
Marta Kowalewska
Julia Kozakova
Vera Kroschenova
Marta Lewicz
Asia Matera
Peter Morgan
Simina Neagu
Jeremy O'Callaghan
David Paul
Michelle Paul
Joanna Pienkowska
Cate Rickards
Pauline Rowe
Ted Sale
Marysia Szapszowicz
Lisa Thompson
Peter Williams

Funders

Aston-Mansfield
Barrow Cadbury Trust
BBC Children in Need
City Bridge Trust
Comic Relief
Henry Smith Charity
Home Office
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
Law Centres Network Guardian
Christmas
Appeal Fund
New Philanthropy Capital's Transition
Advice Fund
Odin Charitable Trust
Open Society Foundation
The Jack Petchey Foundation
The National Lottery Community Fund
The National Lottery Heritage Fund
Trust for London

Special Thanks to

Mr & Mrs Chris & Joyce Pountain
for their generous donations.



We would like to celebrate the lives of our colleagues and friends who passed away in 2019/20. They are sorely missed...

**'Those we love most,
Never go away,
They still walk beside us
Each Day.'**



Emil Huczko 1954 -2020

**'Your smile and kindness
will stay in our hearts
forever.'**



Andy Shallice 1952 – 2019

**'I realised this too late...
Andy was not just
colleague. He was more like
a best friend, and for me
like an uncle. May his soul
rest in peace. I will never
forget him.'**

CONTACT DETAILS

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RSEP

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Campaigning and Policy

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Roma Support Group is a Company Limited by Guarantee registered in
England and Wales No: 04645981 and a Registered Charity No: 1103782.
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