

November 2022 Newsletter



Introduction & Welcome

The cost-of-living crisis looms large for most of us in the UK, and from our advice work we know that it is severely impacting our service users. Along with other ethnic minority groups, who are reportedly 'twice as likely to be in deep poverty', many Roma have been made increasingly vulnerable to the risks of food and fuel poverty, and being scammed. This newsletter highlights how our Financial Inclusion project has been responding to the situation, and features some insights from project coordinator, Chris Price.

Another issue that profoundly impacts our service users is unequal access to healthcare and unequal health outcomes. Roma Support Group has begun work as part of the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, to improve access to mental health and maternity services for Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities, by developing guides for professionals working in those fields. We ask our readers for their input in developing these guides.

We also reach out to our readers and ask if you want to play a vital role at our organisation, by volunteering to be a new trustee?

This newsletter also gives updates on the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine, who continue to experience discrimination. We highlight some of the issues they have been facing in host countries, and the responses from civil society and international groups. Following this we provide some international updates, giving you some brief Roma news from outside the UK.

International Romani Language Day is marked on the 5th of November giving us a chance to promote the Romani language, and at the same time celebrate the diverse culture and history to which it is indelibly tied. We share some information on the day and some useful resources for you to learn more about the language.

Roma creativity is showcased in this edition, as we announce the [winners of the Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month Art Competition](#), and present three new examples of [Roma on our screens](#).



This month's newsletter focuses on:

- [Cost of living crisis](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing Alliance](#)
- [Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month Art Competition](#)
- [International Romani Language Day](#)
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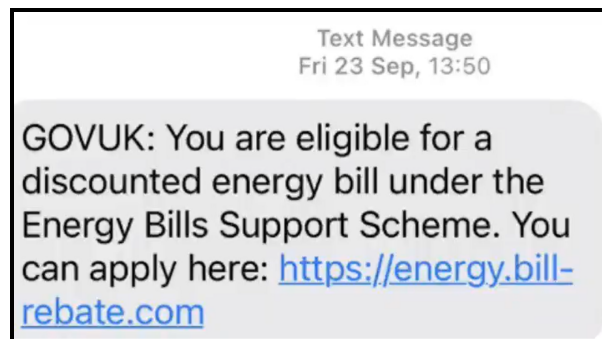
Cost of living crisis

Many of our beneficiaries are being hit hard by the cost-of-living crisis.

Chris Price, [Financial Inclusion Project](#) coordinator tells us: 'Our beneficiaries have been telling us of the impact and their concerns over the cost-of-living crisis since earlier this year. Whilst some government support has been announced, the information around this has not always been clear. This means that many beneficiaries do not feel any less worried, fear missing out on support and are at greater risk of fraudulent scams due to confusion, panic and fear.'

In response, the Financial Inclusion project has:

- Organised an information session with clients to explain the government support available
- Met with the Newham Anti-Poverty Alliance, Money Guiders Network England, and the Food, Fuel and Money Social Welfare Alliance to gather information to share with our clients
- Planned in-person pop-up clinics to provide advice on the crisis
- Produced videos for **Polish** and **Romanian** clients to warn against scam texts purporting to provide the receiver with support for their energy bills (pictured below)



The situation for our clients is expected to get worse over the winter.

As Chris says: 'It is important that we continue to reach people, both online and in-person, to inform and support people with cost-of-living related issues'.

Health and Wellbeing Alliance

Roma Support Group has been a member of the **Voluntary, Community Health and Wellbeing Alliance** (HWA), since 2021. The work we do with the HWA is led by **Friends Families and Travellers**, and our activity within the consortium enables us to feed into the Government's health related policy developments and implement new health related projects.

Our current work with the HWA is focused on developing two guides: the first on improving Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities' access to maternity services and the second on GRT mental health. Both guides are aimed at professionals working in

these areas and are supported by relevant government Policy Leads.

We are inviting anyone with experience working with Roma in maternity or mental health contexts to reach out to us. We are seeking information on the experiences Roma have in these areas as well as reflections from professionals supporting Roma. Contact can be made by emailing us at info@romasupportgroup.org.uk.

We are also seeking your input through surveys.

Those who work with Gypsy, Roma and Travellers in a mental health or maternity context, and members of GRT communities with experience using or trying to access mental health or maternity services, are kindly invited to fill in the following surveys:

[Survey for mental health professionals](#)

[Survey for professionals involved in maternity work](#)

[Survey for GRT community members on experiences related to maternity services](#)

[Survey for GRT community members on experiences related to mental health services](#)

(Each survey should only take 10 minutes to fill in and is anonymous).

Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month Art Competition



Winning entry of the 13-16 category, by Pavel.

After receiving a diverse range of strong submissions to the competition, from many talented young artists, the winners of the GRTHM competition have been published [here](#).

Featured above is the overall winner, and winner of the 13-16 category, Pavel. Other winners were Matei (0-9 category), Daniel (10-12 category), Rebeca (17+ category) Londra (Dagenham Park Secondary School category), Sara (special nomination), and Rahela (special nomination).

International Romani Language Day

On the 5th of November we celebrate International Romani Language Day.

Established in 2015, the day promotes Romani language education, and celebrates its use in public and private life.

There are many different dialects of Romani (or Romanes), and the language contains a significant number of Sanskrit words, along with words from European languages, and other languages such as Armenian and Turkish.

As **Dr Hristo Kyuchukov says**: 'The International Romani Language Day is important for the future of Roma. This is because Romani is the vehicle through which Roma show their cultural richness and identity. In addition, celebrating the International Romani Language Day each year, Roma around the world now have the possibility to celebrate the beauty of different varieties of Romani, to organize seminars, workshops and conferences dedicated to Romani, and organize different activities which definitely help Roma keep their language alive for the next centuries.'



The video above gives more information on the day and on the language.

Friends Families and Travellers have also created an extremely useful Romani language resource, showing everyday words in different dialects. The resource can be downloaded [here](#).

Updates from Ukraine

Ukrainian Roma refugees continue to face discrimination in host countries.

Ivana Kottasová in [CNN](#) describes the situation of Roma refugees in Prague, Chisinau and Bucharest as being 'uncannily similar', in their experience of 'institutional racism and segregation'. She interviews Elena Sirbu, a Roma mediator and Journalist from Moldova, who says she was 'horrified' by the discrimination she saw in a refugee centre in Chisinau, with authorities telling Roma refugees 'to go away, accusing them of not being refugees, and saying "we want normal people,"'.

The story in the Czech republic is much the same. **In Brno, 200 Roma are [reported](#) to be living 'in tents with no flooring', with nowhere to boil water.** The authorities have 'blamed them for the poor living conditions' and threatened to remove their children if they don't return to Ukraine.

A [recent survey](#) of Roma refugees 'enrolled in the [Czech] state support system' found that 30% had encountered intolerance, and 14% had experienced discrimination from authorities. 15% of those surveyed reported have no access to hot running water, while 40% had no access to a kitchen.

The survey also found that **Roma refugee children had 'fallen through the cracks of the Czech education system'** with 78% not enrolled in school, compared to 13% of children from the general population of refugees from Ukraine.

Roma and wider civil society groups are however responding to the situation, and attempting to challenge discrimination. In Brno, local Roma, Sdružení /Associated Women (a local feminist collective), and Food Not Bombs, organised a [demonstration](#) against the 'racism and discrimination' against Ukrainian Roma refugees by the city's authorities.

Olha Sribniak, writing for the [European Centre for Minority Issues](#) blog describes how discrimination faced by Ukrainian Roma refugees has engendered a 'unanimous reaction from international groups involved in protection of Roma rights'. She reports that the UN and EU are making 'efforts, gradually' to ensure Roma refugees' rights are upheld, and that strategies respond to their needs. As she says however, the current responses are **'insufficient for a qualitative change in the situation', and ultimately too slow.**

Other international news

- [Romania](#): Bill to ban school segregation to go before Parliament.

- [Bugaria/Romania](#): New Roma inclusion initiative agreed by Council of Europe and European Union.
 - [Spain](#): Pogrom forces families to flee Andalusian town.
 - [Romania](#): Roma woman assaulted by bus-driver fined.
 - [Czech Republic](#): Pig farm removed from Holocaust site.
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Roma on screen

Hurjasa



Jake Bowers, *Hurjasa*, 2022

British Romani journalist Jake Bowers has produced a beautiful short film, *Hurjasa* (meaning "We will Fly" in Romanes).

The film features over 30 Roma role models from the Balkans, who narrate the poem in Romanes.

It was produced as part of the Proud Roma, Free Europe campaign, that aims to inspire Roma pride and 'increase civil participation among Roma'.

Click the image above to watch.

Leaving to Remain



Mira Erdevički, *Leaving to Remain*, 2022

Launching on the 27th of November, Mira Erdevički's *Leaving to Remain* features three Roma from central Europe. The film charts the transformative effect that Brexit and COVID-19 has had on their lives in the UK.

It will be screened at Genesis cinema in Stepney Green (London), as part of the London Migration Film Festival, in collaboration with the Czech Centre London.

Click the image above to watch the trailer.

Tickets to the screening can be booked [here](#).

We are England



BBC, We are England, 2022

Toby G, a Polish Roma man from Plymouth, features in an episode of *We are England* produced by the BBC.

The episode shows the positive impact that Toby and his community project Street Factory, has on the confidence, mental health and cohesion of the local community.

The episode is available to watch on BBC [iPlayer](#).

Could you be our new trustee?



Roma Support Group is recruiting new trustees and a treasurer to join our Board of Trustees.

We want to hear from you if:

- You share our commitment to equality, human rights, and social inclusion for Roma in the UK.
- You have finance and accountancy, fundraising, HR, management, marketing, legal, media or community development skills and experience!

Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.

Ukraine donation pages

Human rights fund for Ukrainian Roma

European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) are [collecting donations](#) to support their efforts to

prevent the discrimination and rejection of Roma refugees in Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova.

Hot meals in Ukraine

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

The cost of providing one hot meal is €4.

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

We would be grateful if our subscribers could help us to reach more people by using the "Forward" button below to share the newsletter in your networks.



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

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