Roma in Rotherham

Mapping services and local priorities

South Yorkshire Roma project

Report 6 of 7
Acknowledgements

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Migration Yorkshire is a local authority-led regional migration partnership. We work with national government, local government, and others to ensure that Yorkshire and Humber can deal with, and benefit from, migration. We work with agencies across the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to help support the delivery of high quality services to migrants in a way that benefits everyone living in local communities.

Migration Yorkshire
Level 2, Leonardo Building, 2 Rossington Street, Leeds, LS2 8HD
Tel: 0113 3788188 E-mail: admin@migrationyorkshire.org.uk
Website: www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk Twitter: @migrationyorks
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1. The context of this report in the South Yorkshire Roma project

Aims of the project

Migrant Roma are one of the newest communities in South Yorkshire. Important work is already being done in some local areas to explore what this means and respond to the needs of whole communities where new arrivals are making their home.

Migration Yorkshire has led a short project to bring policy makers, Roma, non-Roma people and organisations together to share information and discuss what’s working and what isn’t. We also explored what still needs to be done to reduce the exclusion of Roma populations and to foster positive integration across South Yorkshire communities.

Key messages from the project

There are three messages from the whole project we would like readers to go away with:

1. Engagement and trust with Roma service users could be developed further by designing interventions that build on Roma priorities. The top priorities of Roma in this project concerned employment or their children. Future projects could consider being designed around these in a range of ways.

2. There are significant gaps in the knowledge of many staff in statutory services and among the host community about migrant Roma living in their local areas. Building up their knowledge, understanding and engagement with Roma as service users, colleagues and neighbours could improve Roma access to mainstream services and improve relationships within local communities.

3. Services need to react quickly to changes that are occurring in Roma communities. Changes include increased diversity among Roma service users, less transience, and increased precariousness in terms of work, income and reception by local communities. These could provide opportunities for engagement, such as providing support to document individuals’ residency as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

Research methods

The data for this project was collected using a variety of methods between May 2016 and January 2017: a ‘launch event’; a survey of local services; local meetings (including two in Rotherham); and, Roma-led focus groups (including one in Rotherham). Roma from Slovak, Czech, Latvian and Romanian Roma communities in South Yorkshire have been present at each of these project events. In total, over 80 services and 79 individual Roma were involved in the project. This data was supplemented by information collected during desk research, including a literature search and online information about local service provision.

Given the short-term nature of some projects, services and funding streams, the information presented here is a snapshot of activity during 2016; some of the information presented in this report may have subsequently changed.

More detail on the project methodology can be found in the mapping report for South Yorkshire as a whole (Report 3: Roma in South Yorkshire: mapping services and local priorities).
This report

*Roma in Rotherham* is one of the local reports for the project. We recommend reading it alongside the South Yorkshire reports for the project (a list of all the available reports is provided on the back page).

We begin this report by outlining some of the available reports mentioning Roma in Rotherham. We then provide an analysis of existing service provision for Roma across Rotherham. We outline some of the local priorities expressed during our meetings with Roma and local partner organisations in Rotherham during this project. Finally, we present a set of recommendations for working with Roma in Rotherham in the future, grounded in the consultation and discussions held during this project. They are not a guarantee of success, but are a suggested way forward based on a combination of Roma priorities and service experiences.

We hope that this report and the three key messages of the overall project could be discussed and considered in the future plans of local services and decision-makers, for the benefit of all local residents.
2. Existing reports of Roma in Rotherham

The Roma population

Roma migration has been reported in Rotherham since EU expansion in 2004. The earliest estimates suggested the size of the Roma population was already approximately 900 individuals in 2008. A much higher estimate of at least 3,000 Roma in Rotherham was made around the same time by a not-for-profit organisation that mapped movement of the new Roma communities in the UK. More recent estimates have been lower: there was an estimate of 2,000 individuals in 2012 and an estimate of 2,000-2,500 (but growing) in 2013 with approximately 500 new arrivals per year. By 2015 the health and social care sector had assumed a Roma population of around 4,000 individuals, making Roma the second largest ethnic minority in the area (after Pakistani).

Roma in Rotherham are known to have come mainly from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, with smaller numbers from Romania, and reportedly speaking a range of languages including Romani, Slovakian, Czech, German, Hungarian, and Polish. Roma were reported to have settled in the more deprived areas of Rotherham close to the town centre, namely Eastwood, Masbrough, Ferham, Wellgate and the Broom Valley.

Identified needs and difficulties

The Roma population was understood as having experienced significant deprivation and hostility in their countries of origin. Now in Rotherham, many were known to be living in overcrowded, sub-standard housing, struggling to use health services and experiencing poor health outcomes. Other difficulties for Roma identified have included low levels of literacy, English language and education more generally, needing support particularly with translation and employment, and experiencing racism/hostility from neighbours and

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3 European Dialogue (2009) The Movement of Roma from new EU Member States., p.82
8 Z. Saleem (2008) New European Migration; p.49
9 Again this is confirmed by a number of sources including Z. Saleem (2008) New European Migration, p.51; Rotherham JSNA; Rotherham MBC (2013) Roma community health needs.
10 Rotherham MBC (2013) Roma community health needs.
among different ethnic groups in schools.\textsuperscript{12} Despite these needs among Roma being well-known for some time, they seem to have persisted.

Safeguarding concerns have been raised in Rotherham in relation to children for some years, which have included Roma children. Issues of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and trafficking have been recorded by the statutory authorities, most infamously in the 2014 Jay report (although this was certainly not exclusively reporting on Roma communities, and offenders were known to have come from different communities\textsuperscript{13}). For example, a children’s services funding report in 2009 recommended that ‘the additional needs of Slovak/Roma children and families should be reviewed each year’.\textsuperscript{14} The Rotherham Safeguarding Board was alerted to concerns about child protection and CSE within the growing Roma community as far back as 2011, with increasing reports of perpetrators within the Roma Slovak community and growing numbers of cases of child neglect and child protection cases.\textsuperscript{15} Roma families were a priority of the CSE subgroup of the Safeguarding Board in 2012.\textsuperscript{16} These safeguarding issues were reported in the local and national media, and Roma families were very fearful of their children being taken into care.\textsuperscript{17} Such serious safeguarding problems have not been prominent in other parts of South Yorkshire.

**Service activity and engagement**

Despite these difficulties and challenges, there are also many positive reports of Roma communities in Rotherham. Roma have been described as having a strong sense of identity with a ‘rich history and culture’,\textsuperscript{18} Roma pupils improving demonstrably in attendance and attainment,\textsuperscript{19} Roma adults being hard-working and willing employees, and having a positive impact on the local economy.\textsuperscript{20}

Some of the earliest reports of Roma-led groups and activities come from Rotherham. Roma Khamoro, a local Roma dance group, began in 2007\textsuperscript{21} and performed at various local and regional events.\textsuperscript{22} The Roma Khamoro organisation effectively evolved into a forum for engaging with and supporting Rotherham’s Roma communities, supported by Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA), Rotherham CAB, and often working alongside local authority services.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{12} Equality (2011) *From segregation to inclusion: Roma Pupils in the United Kingdom, A pilot research project*, p.54 and 55


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. p.71 and p.92

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. p.92


\textsuperscript{18} Z. Saleem (2008) *New European Migration*, p.49

\textsuperscript{19} Equality (2011) *From segregation to inclusion: Roma Pupils in the United Kingdom, A pilot research project*, p.53, 55-56

\textsuperscript{20} M. Horton and J. Grayson (eds.) (2008) *Roma New Migrants*, p.39


\textsuperscript{22} GRTHM (2009) *Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month* http://grthm.natt.org.uk/mwg/ internal/de5f5233a733ds/progress?id=w-d88584ooW4RQCsMS5sxBdyYEHysE4_QCxm51vQnuek

Reports of successful engagement initiatives with Roma communities by services include consultation, events in schools, music and recruitment of Roma (as teaching assistants and a special constable in Ferham). Rotherham also took part in a number European and national programmes aiming to share good practice in Roma integration and tackling racism and discrimination (Roma Source and Roma MATRIX) and in advancing Roma rights (Equality Trust). A number of successful health, employment and education initiatives and training were undertaken and unfair practices were challenged during these projects.

A number of local projects address CSE issues, in light of the Jay report. These include awareness-raising sessions for Roma communities as part of a related needs assessment and a Slovak video made by young Roma explaining the dangers of CSE to their peers.

Some initiatives have tackled the issue of community cohesion, such as community clean up events and a selective licensing scheme introduced in Eastwood and Masbrough (town centre) in May 2015 with some reported success. However, community tensions along ethnic lines, resurfacing as a result of the EU referendum in 2016, mean that this remains a strategic priority. The Safer Rotherham Partnership (a partnership between the local authority and the police in particular) highlights community cohesion and hate crime as current priorities. ‘Building confident and cohesive communities’ is one of six priorities for 2016-17, with a performance indicator to increase hate crime reporting and a multi-agency CSE team (Evolve) at South Yorkshire police established in 2015. The Safer Rotherham Partnership has a plan for engagement specifically in Eastwood, including an ‘Early Help Plan’ for families and an ‘Early Help Targeted Youth Programme’.

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24 R. Myles (2011) Roma/Slovak (Emerging Communities) Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ow1520V_G08


32 Roma MATRIX (2014) Bringing the community together and improving the environment.

85% of the private rented sector in Eastwood is now covered by the selective licensing scheme, which is higher than other areas of the selective licensing scheme in Rotherham.

‘New Selective Licensing scheme targets rogue landlords’ Rotherham MBC news update, 15 December 2016
www.rotherham.gov.uk/news/article/666/new_selective_licensing_scheme_targets_rogue_landlords


Rotherham services working with Roma

Services reported working with Roma in Rotherham

- Roma employed: 17
- Roma-specific projects: 7

Service delivery location

- Eastwood (35%)
- Ferham (15%)
- Other areas (15%)
- All Rotherham (35%)

Service sectors

- Sector: 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1
- Private
- Statutory
- Third sector

Most common area of work

- Children and young people

Roma priorities

- Employment and family

Roma service users

- 100+ Roma seen by the busiest service each week
- Slovak + Czech: Top Roma nationalities seen by services
- 10+ years: Roma presence in Rotherham
3. Service mapping

Services

This project identified 21 services that are particularly relevant to Roma in Rotherham.

- We identified 17 services that currently work directly with, or are accessed by, Roma communities in Rotherham (one of these concluded a Roma project during the course of this research). Information about these services is illustrated in the infographic on the preceding page.
- Four further voluntary sector services do not currently engage specifically with Roma communities in Rotherham but are interested in doing so; they cover abuse support services, alternative education and a wildlife organisation.

Most of these services identified are based in Rotherham itself, although three at least work in other parts of South Yorkshire (the police, solicitors and the wildlife organisation). Services identified cover different general areas of work, although there is some focus on education and youth work. The most geographically targeted work is focused on Eastwood, with seven services delivering services there, with some work also targeted in Ferham. Again, many statutory services in particular have a remit to cover the whole of Rotherham.

At least seven Roma-specific projects were reported by services (three of these are delivered by the same service). The projects cover youth work, CSE awareness-raising activities, advice and community development.

At the time of this research project, Rotherham was the only place in South Yorkshire with a Roma-led organisation (Roma Khamoro)\(^{37}\) delivering a number of activities and representing Roma voices at various strategic meetings. Ten organisations in Rotherham reported having over 20 Roma staff or volunteers between them (13 employed staff\(^ {38}\) and a number of volunteers). This is quite a significant total compared to Barnsley and Doncaster. Roma are employed in both the statutory and third sectors. They include at least four Roma employed in the education sector, and three in a voluntary capacity as cadets in Rotherham police service.

Four services each reported seeing over 60 Roma service users each week, with one reporting over 100 Roma clients weekly. Some services engaging with young people reported initial difficulties in getting Roma and non-Roma young people together, which was resolved once the relationship with the service became more trusted.

An important observation about Roma engagement is that a number of features of projects in combination seem effective. The service survey for this project suggested a **pattern of greater long-term engagement with Roma communities among third sector organisations running Roma-targeted projects, using Roma workers and delivering in targeted locations**, despite a pattern of relatively uncertain funding.

Given the number and variety of services in Rotherham working with Roma, it is difficult to draw conclusions about which of these factors are more important, although a couple of services suggested that certain characteristics were crucial. For example, one service reported that when their Roma worker was on maternity leave, no new Roma clients

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\(^{37}\) Since then, a Roma-led organisation, Roma Futures, has been launched in Sheffield.

\(^{38}\) One member of staff works for two organisations.
approached the service during that time as a result. Another service stated that ‘because we do not have a dedicated service for the Roma community we have on average three new clients a week from the Roma community. Previously when we have had a project dedicated to the community we had lots more people accessing the service.’

Roma communities

The services able to provide data on Roma service users all confirmed the presence of Slovak and Czech Roma in Rotherham. Several also reported Romanian, Hungarian and Russian clients.

The geographical focus of service delivery in Eastwood and Ferham reflects our understanding of the geography of Roma settlement around the town centre of Rotherham. The population then does not seem quite as concentrated into a small number of streets as found in some other parts of South Yorkshire. Settlement around the town centre means geographically-fixed services are likely to be accessible to much of the Roma population although local tensions could also occur in this area.

It is possible that smaller numbers of Roma live in other parts of Rotherham but have not been recognised as doing so. For example, we do not know whether the small numbers of Roma attending services who are not Slovak or Czech live in the same areas of Rotherham or live elsewhere. One Rotherham focus group participant suggested it was relatively easy to change accommodation in the private rented sector, and with the introduction of the selective licensing scheme in Eastwood, it is possible that Roma may continue to settle further away from this Eastwood/town centre hub.
4. Local priorities

During the second local meeting for the project in Rotherham, services and Roma attendees were able to highlight the areas of our findings that they wanted to comment on, as well as being invited to state what they felt the priorities were for action. Key issues discussed are summarised below. Clearly these summaries only reflect the contributions of those who attended, and the priorities that they raised.

Participants at local meetings confirmed some of our findings around: the demand for a community centre; employment; communications; service knowledge; and, engagement.

Priorities among participants included the following:

- **Cohesion and mixing**, particularly in Eastwood. Communities seem somewhat divided between white British, Asian, and Roma residents. It was felt that more work could be done covering mediation and hate crime issues in particular, and some schools could do more work to facilitate interaction between pupils from different backgrounds. Sport seems to be the more successful platform for doing this.

- **Employment**, particularly apprenticeships and work placements to complement some employment support work already in place.

- **Addressing barriers to accessing health services**.

- **Improving data and capturing transience** among Roma communities, to build on existing local authority work in Eastwood. It was felt that Rotherham has a similar (if not larger) Roma population than Sheffield, but if this is not reflected in population estimates then there are resource implications. This is particularly important for the voluntary sector’s funding applications, since they undertake a good proportion of direct work with Roma in Rotherham. It was suggested that it may be possible to train Roma researchers to do some data-gathering, and use other data sources (used elsewhere in South Yorkshire) such as school admissions and benefits data from relevant tribunals.
5. Recommendations for future work in Rotherham

1. **Draw on the recommendations from the project overall**

The main recommendations for South Yorkshire overall in this project also apply to Rotherham:

1. Prioritise employment interventions
2. Use interventions with young people to engage with other family members
3. Aim to encourage mixing or interaction between communities
4. Aim to empower Roma communities as a project outcome
5. Use locations that are already trusted by Roma communities
6. Support (statutory) staff to gain more knowledge, understanding and confidence to work with Roma service users and to communicate with them effectively.
7. Think through any relevant conundrums that affect local services
8. Share practice knowledge among services in relation to Roma residents.
9. Tailor new work for the local context.

The next recommendations follow directly from this final bullet point (to tailor new work for the local context) and are based on our understanding of Rotherham specifically.

2. **Draw in organisations that do (or want to) work with Roma**

Some organisations are interested in Roma issues but do not have a great deal of experience of working with them in Rotherham. For example, this project identified three voluntary sector organisations (two working in social care, one in alternative education) keen to engage with Roma but do not currently do direct work with Roma clients. Similarly, some other third sector organisations have expertise in working with Roma locally, but do not have funding to do this currently. It is worth encouraging these organisations to be involved in local meetings, funding bids, practice sharing etc., and to consider siting their engagement work in places where Roma communities already engage.

It is also worth drawing in other local statutory services that we understand have significant numbers of Roma service users (but did not participate directly in this project) to share their expertise, such as some GP surgeries, schools and ESOL providers. This is an important link to make, since Rotherham’s approach to work with Roma tends to be led or funded through the third sector, and there may be missed opportunities to coordinate and share information.

3. **Dovetail new work with existing approaches and strategies**

Rotherham’s approach to Roma has focused on third sector delivery, particularly in Eastwood. This needs to be consistent with local strategies and plans. In particular, various local strategic plans specifically mention Eastwood and more broadly, community cohesion and CSE as priority areas of work in Rotherham. These include the council needs analysis in 2015, \(^{40}\) and the Safer Rotherham Partnership strategy. \(^{41}\) There may be imminent funding for

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\(^{39}\) Examples of these conundrums are discussed in Report 3 for the whole of South Yorkshire: how can we take one approach with a diverse group like Roma?; are Roma a completely unique client group?; reconciling the need for safe social spaces and for ‘mixing’, interpreters and communication in the Roma language; spokespersons for Roma; tackling ‘difficult’ issues around safeguarding and exploitation; different priorities for Roma and services.

\(^{40}\) University of Salford and Rotherham MBC (2015) Needs analysis report following the sexual exploitation of children in Rotherham: Final report October 2015
other relevant work related to migration and the impacts of migration, for example through the government’s Controlling Migration Fund. If led by statutory organisations, these initiatives need to work closely in partnership with the third sector organisations in Rotherham who are leading engagement work with Roma residents and are carefully cultivating trust with Roma communities.

However, Roma are known to live in other parts of Rotherham. It seems that Eastwood is the ‘first port of call’ for many Roma, who may later move to other areas in Rotherham. Therefore plans and services need to incorporate areas outside of Eastwood, but recognising that the needs in Eastwood for new arrivals may be more intense and immediate. Future funding applications should bear these trends in mind this existing work and ensure any new provision is also available for Roma residents both in Eastwood and beyond.

These recommendations for working with Roma in Rotherham are grounded in the discussions held during this project, providing a suggested way forward based on a combination of Roma priorities and service experiences. We hope that this report and the three key messages of the overall project will be discussed and considered in the future plans of local services and decision-makers, for the benefit of all local residents.

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The series of reports for the South Yorkshire Roma project

This report is the sixth in a series of reports for the South Yorkshire Roma project:

**South Yorkshire reports**

- Report 1: *Executive summary*
- Report 2: *Roma experiences of living and working in South Yorkshire*
- Report 3: *Roma in South Yorkshire: mapping services and local priorities*

**Local reports**

- Report 4: *Roma in Barnsley*
- Report 5: *Roma in Doncaster*
- **Report 6: Roma in Rotherham**
- Report 7: *Roma in Sheffield*

These are available to download from [www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk](http://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk)