Roma in Barnsley

Mapping services and local priorities

South Yorkshire Roma project

Report 4 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.

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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 Barnsley); and, Roma-led focus groups (including one in Barnsley). 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 Barnsley* 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 Barnsley. We then provide an analysis of existing service provision for Roma across Barnsley. We outline some of the local priorities expressed during our meetings with Roma and local partner organisations in Barnsley during this project. Finally, we present a set of recommendations for working with Roma in Barnsley 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 Barnsley

Whilst Barnsley is not well-known for having a Roma population, prior to the 2004 EU accession it had the largest number of Roma asylum seekers in the region.\(^1\) The majority were thought to be well integrated in local communities, although there was anecdotal evidence of local hostility. Local research undertaken post-accession in 2006/07 suggested small groups of Roma had settled in Barnsley from Central and Eastern Europe, alongside some from the Balkan states of Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania.\(^2\) Latvian Roma were identified as the largest group. Many were thought to be former asylum seekers who became EU citizens when their respective countries joined the EU. The research observed some differences between Roma. Latvian Roma were seen as more settled with their children attending school regularly, while Romanian Roma were described as tending to ‘disappear’ from Barnsley for periods of time and their children having less regular school attendance.\(^3\)

Latvian nationals were a growing population in Barnsley after accession, although the proportion or experiences of Roma among them has not been investigated. Research on migrant workers in Barnsley in 2005/06\(^4\) acknowledged growing numbers of Eastern Europeans, with Latvians constituting the second largest nationality of research participants, after Poles. While this research did not specifically mention Roma, it provided an insight into their possible working conditions echoed in other work.\(^5\) The research found that migrant workers were less likely to use support services compared to asylum seekers and refugees, often worked long hours, mainly through employment agencies, and often faced issues with landlords. A follow-up report in 2010 confirmed a growing Latvian population with 320 adults applying for a national insurance number (NINo) between 2002 and 2009 (again, behind only Polish arrivals).\(^6\) Other main countries of origin for new arrivals were Lithuania (110), Slovakia (60), the Czech Republic (50) and Estonia (50). More recent NINo data\(^7\) suggests a significant trend in Romanian arrivals, who immediately became the top nationality arriving in Barnsley with over 1,000 registrations each in 2014 and 2015. In contrast, Latvian arrivals were under 50 per year and Slovak arrivals were fewer than 10.

While NINo data does not identify Roma specifically, there are other indicators of an expanding Roma population in Barnsley. Local media in 2015 reported the Slovak Roma community in Barnsley was growing quickly, citing a claim that around 1,500 Slovak Roma arrived in the borough over a 12 month period, raising concerns about overcrowding among migrant workers.\(^8\) It is not clear where these estimates came from and does not concur with the data on new arrivals from Slovakia, although there could be a certain amount of re-migration among migrants once they have arrived in the UK.

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
Barnsley services working with Roma

Services reported working with Roma in Barnsley:
- 6 Roma employed
- 2 Roma-specific projects

Service delivery location:
- Central (50%)
- Darfield (33.33%)
- All Barnsley (33.33%)

Service sectors:
- Statutory
- Third sector

Most common area of work:
- General advice

Roma priorities:
- Employment and family

Roma service users:
- 50 Roma seen by the busiest service each week
- Latvian Top Roma nationality seen by services
- 10+ years Roma presence in Barnsley
3. Service mapping

Services

This project identified six services that currently work with, or are accessed by, Roma communities in Barnsley. Information about these services is illustrated in the infographic on the preceding page. Additionally, the Police do not currently engage specifically with Roma communities but are interested in doing so. Five of these services are based in Barnsley itself, with two working beyond this area.

These services are found in the statutory and third sector:

- The local authority approaches Roma issues within two wider remits: migrants (including asylum seekers and refugees) and Gypsy Roma Travellers (GRT). There are currently no Roma workers employed in local statutory services, but the local authority employs a community worker whose remit is to identify and resolve issues migrants face. This has included assisting members of the (Latvian) Roma community with housing and benefits enquiries. This service has also been involved in following up reports of sub-standard accommodation and ensuring that the vulnerable population, including minority groups, are aware of their rights. This project has been piloted in some areas of Barnsley, with a view to extending it to cover all areas with a high percentage of rented accommodation.
- Unlike other cities in the region, there are only a few third sector organisations being used by migrant Roma: a church, a library and a youth organisation. We note that there are other organisations supporting migrants in the city, but they focus on asylum seekers and refugees rather than EU migrants.

Two of the services identified undertake specific work with Roma communities (although none employ any Roma workers). These services include a new youth work project that is beginning street-based work with teenagers, as well as some Latvian Roma projects at a local church which were set up following requests from members of that community. They include a church service conducted in Latvian, an English class with a Latvian interpreter, as well as direct help with food and essentials.

Whilst the majority of services engaging with Roma communities are based in or around the town centre (with a children’s centre located further out), some services provide outreach activities visiting clients in their homes or workplaces.

Roma communities

Roma communities are reported to be fairly spread out across Barnsley, with some living around the town centre while others live as far out as the Dearne area. They are not concentrated in specific areas as is the case for other places in South Yorkshire.

Latvian is the dominant nationality of Roma service users reported by the identified services. However, they have also mentioned the presence of other nationalities, such as Slovak, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian Roma clients. Latvian Roma in the Barnsley focus group also suggested that they were aware of Slovak Roma pupils attending the same schools as their children, but they did not mix with them socially. This may indicate that Latvian Roma are more numerous, but it may also suggest that they are an easier Roma community for services to identify and engage with.
4. Local priorities

During the second local meeting for this project in Barnsley, 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.

- There was an overall sense that service providers lack confidence in knowing how best to respond to Roma communities in Barnsley. They felt that Barnsley was newer to Roma issues and that Barnsley may have missed out on funding to develop work with Roma compared with other parts of South Yorkshire. There was also a concern about their ability to respond to future changes in Roma arrival patterns and numbers. In this respect services were positive: they wanted to learn from other areas of South Yorkshire, to build on that knowledge and saw an opportunity to avoid the mistakes that others may have made.

- There was some agreement with the priorities identified in the research around young people and employment.

- Some of the barriers to service access identified in the research, such as providing service information and a single point of contact with services, exist not only for Roma communities but for other Barnsley residents too. It was acknowledged that much service information is only available online, which is not always appropriate for the more vulnerable residents in Barnsley, whether Roma or non-Roma.

- Relatedly, one priority raised in Barnsley was to develop a ‘new arrivals’ booklet which would be a starting point for all new migrants in the city, including members of Roma communities.

- There was a prolonged discussion about the best approach to communication, interpreting and translation among a number of participants, both Roma and service representatives (also discussed in Report 3 for the whole of South Yorkshire, in the ‘conundrums’ discussion, Section 2.4). It was clear that Roma participants had experienced a number of difficulties in communicating with staff in statutory services, while staff still lack knowledge and confidence to respond to Roma service users effectively. The police were keen to develop their engagement work with Roma.

- During a discussion regarding Roma representation, it was noted that Roma are not represented on Barnsley’s Race Equality Forum. This relates to discussions in the Barnsley focus group with Latvian Roma, where participants discussed how they would often self-identify by their nationality in the UK rather than their ethnicity, because they did not know what kind of response they would receive or because they had noted negative attitudes among their non-Roma friends towards Roma. This is something that could now be remedied with the links made to Roma participants in this project.
5. Recommendations for future work in Barnsley

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

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

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 Barnsley specifically.

2. **Recognise, document and work with different Roma communities in Barnsley**

Roma from a range of countries have arrived over time in Barnsley, from Roma who arrived as asylum seekers from the Balkans, the more recognised Latvian Roma and an emerging Slovak Roma population. Roma seem to be living in two main areas: central Barnsley and Dearne, although they seem more spread out than in other parts of South Yorkshire (that is, they are not occupying a few streets in a concentrated manner).

Formal monitoring mechanisms struggle to identify and record Roma service users. It was estimated at the service meeting that there may be around 300 Latvian Roma residents in Barnsley, but there have been no suggestions about the size of the Slovak Roma community or other Roma nationalities. It was clear from the focus group with Latvian Roma residents that they themselves are unable to identify different Roma communities very easily, but do differentiate on the grounds of nationality and perhaps educational background.

Collating and developing service knowledge of Roma communities across Barnsley would help to develop a more detailed understanding among services. From an equalities perspective, this could help identify particular groups that may need support to access services and to target resources effectively. Collating this information would help strategic planning to respond to different migrant communities, and would augment funding applications to work with Roma communities, particularly as some services in Barnsley feel the area has not had the same resources to respond to Roma as other places.

However, data collection needs to be conducted sensitively, since many Roma remain fearful of being identified by their ethnic group, and it could affect the progress already made to engage and integrate Roma communities into Barnsley. Improving knowledge of Roma communities does not necessarily mean collecting new data, but could involve drawing together work that has already taken place, such as the following:

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9 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.
• The council has already done some mapping of Roma within the town centre and, together with health service, tried to engage with migrant workers in Goldthorpe
• Children centres we approached have a little experience working with Roma families
• Local schools often have a good understanding of their Roma pupils particularly due to the data they collect for the school census (in Doncaster, for example, school admissions data is used to identify and engage newly-arrived Roma families). It could be a good starting point to engage with schools where Roma children are attending.

3. **Respond to the newly-identified priorities of Roma participants**

While the generic recommendations above were influenced by Roma participants’ contributions across South Yorkshire, it is also important that Barnsley responds to the priorities raised by Roma who live locally. This might include tackling issues around trusted interpreters (discussed in the local meeting) and may require consideration of alternatives in consultation with local Roma, such as training up community interpreters from within Roma communities. It is also important to continue to develop a dialogue with Roma service users from a range of Roma communities, in order to ensure that different voices are being heard.

4. **Build on existing confidence in working with other migrant groups**

Services in Barnsley talked about Roma with some hesitation. They felt that this is a newer migrant group they are less confident about working with, despite Roma being present in Barnsley for over a decade, albeit in small numbers. There are signs of a small but growing Slovak Roma population, as well as a more well-established Latvian Roma population.

Given the relatively small size of both Roma communities and Barnsley itself (compared to the rest of South Yorkshire) it makes sense for Barnsley to incorporate its approach to Roma within the context of other migrant or minority groups. Service providers here could draw on their expertise in hosting asylum seekers, given that there are some parallels between asylum seekers and Roma needs. Similarly, Barnsley could consider Roma in work regarding EU migrants in the Dearne area where there could be issues related to labour and tied housing conditions, mindful that Roma may not self-identify in this context.

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

Some organisations in Barnsley are interested in Roma issues but do not have a great deal of experience of working with them. For example, one third sector organisation worked with a Roma family that have now left the area, while the youth organisation is starting outreach work with young people. It is worth encouraging these organisations to network with, learn from or collaborate with other services that work with Roma locally, including statutory organisations that have Roma service users such as health and schools services.

Given that Barnsley service providers were keen to hear and learn from other services in Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield, it could be beneficial to facilitate practice-sharing between staff and share project evaluation within Barnsley and across South Yorkshire.

These recommendations for working with Roma in Barnsley 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.
The series of reports for the South Yorkshire Roma project

This report is the fourth 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)