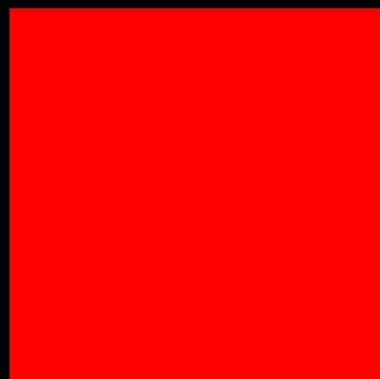
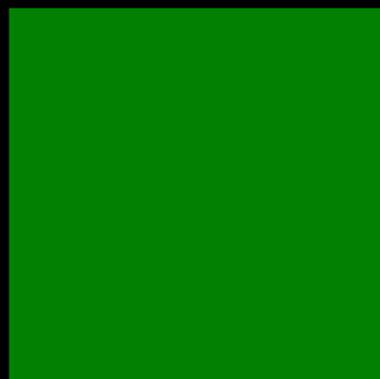
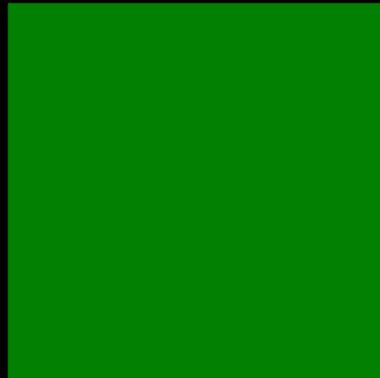
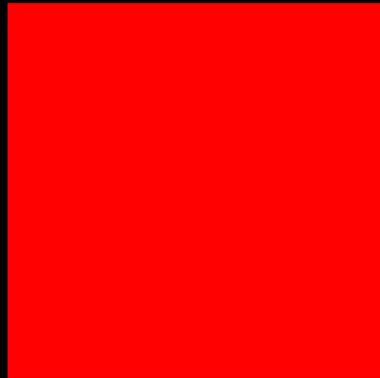


New Roma communities in England:

Strategic guide for directors and senior management



New Roma Communities in England:

The Situation of Roma from new Member States of the European Union and the Role of Local Authorities in their Settlement and Inclusion

**A Strategic Guide for Directors and Senior Managers
in Local Authorities and Others Involved in the Service Provision for these
Communities**

European Dialogue
www.europeandialogue.org

Autumn 2009

Objective of this report

This guide has been produced at the request of many officials working in local authorities working with Roma and on Roma issues, primarily for the benefit of those who employ staff to work face-to-face with new arriving communities of Roma from accession States of the European Union (commonly referred to as A2 and A8¹ countries). It is intended to assist those who are in a position to shape policies and formulate strategies, and who may wish to increase their breadth of knowledge about A2 and A8 Roma in England and the issues faced locally.

The guide has been written by European Dialogue, particularly by Project Manager Lucie Fremlova and independent consultant Heather Ureche who have been engaged in the last 16 months working with the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and with local authorities and their education departments. However, this booklet in no way reflects the official stance of the Department for Children, Schools and Families or of local authorities.

¹ A8 countries acceded to the EU in 2004 (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia), A2 (Romania and Bulgaria) in 2007

Contents

- **1. Introduction**
 1. Report methodology
 2. History of recent migration into the UK
 3. Patterns of settlement
 4. Hidden Communities

- **2. Roma Rights and Social Cohesion**
 1. Racism, tensions and isolation
 2. Rights based approach
 3. Poverty and Education
 4. Culture and Education
 5. Employment
 6. Housing
 7. Health

- **3. Institutional Responsibilities and Responses**
 1. Role of the Practitioner
 2. Meeting needs and Inter agency work
 3. Strengthening knowledge and communications
 4. Training requirements
 5. Local Authority needs

- **4. Some Models of good practice**
 1. Multi-agency groups
 2. Roma participation
 3. Advice to Roma
 4. Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month

- **5. Recommendations**

Summary

The Roma, who have moved from new EU accession countries, have established significant communities in many towns and cities in England, yet their needs and the responsibilities of local authorities are often unknown to local decision makers. This report is an introduction to these issues. It needs to be reinforced by a more substantial sharing of information, descriptions of good practice and expert support and training.

The guide covers the history of the recent movement of Roma, the patterns of settlement and often the failure to recognise the existence of many thousands of Roma in specific localities.

It continues by describing the situation of Roma today including issues of social exclusion and isolation, poverty, non-enrolment of children in schools, unacceptable housing conditions, poor health, employment constraints and aspects of racism. The picture is not however all bleak as the large majority of Roma welcome the opportunity to be in the UK to work and the opportunity for their children to be well educated.

The guide emphasises the legal rights of Roma children in particular and the consequent institutional responsibilities of local authorities. It outlines the patchy response of local authorities with some being dynamic and proactive with capable and committed staff implementing models of good practice, while the majority of authorities do not understand the scale of the need and some are in denial of the presence of several thousand Roma.

Introduction

1.1 Report methodology

During 2008 and 2009 European Dialogue, commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), conducted a nationwide mapping survey of patterns of settlement of Roma communities from new EU accession countries (A2 and A8 countries) in England.

This guide draws on the experience of that mapping survey. It is based on conversations held with both members of the A2 and A8 Roma communities, with those statutory and non-statutory service providers and other practitioners who work with Roma. The majority of these practitioners were working in the fields of health and education. However, it does not use the quantitative data gathered during the research study, which has been presented separately to the DCSF.

The guide contains a list of priorities as expressed by front-line workers, which are key for decision-makers and elected representatives.

1.2 History of recent movements of Roma to the UK

Central and Eastern Europeans, including the Roma, have been moving to Western European states, including the UK, throughout the 20th century. The most recent of these movements has been over the past two decades. Political changes associated with the 1989 collapse of the Communist regime saw the borders of the former Communist states open: in the 1990s,² the Roma came to the UK mainly as asylum seekers. As very few of them succeeded in their attempts to gain refugee status in the UK, ultimately they got deported. Since the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements, the movement of A2 and A8 citizens, including the Roma, has become much more substantial. They have been able to exercise

² 'In 1998, the Home Office (...) recorded 515 asylum applications from Czech citizens, 835 from Slovakian citizens, and 1015 from Romanian citizens. Almost all these applications were made by Romani people.' Unwanted Journey, Refugee Council. March 1999. p. 7

greater freedom of movement, in line with Directive 2004/38 on the right of citizens of the European Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the EU.³

Parallel to this, new EU anti-discrimination legislation was being transposed into the domestic legislation of the majority of new EU Member States (MS). However, to date, it has not provided efficient protection from discrimination for most A2 and A8 Roma.

The Roma have been moving to the UK to find work, equal opportunities and decent education for their children. The most common reason given by Roma adults when asked why they had felt the need to leave their homelands was to escape racism, and discrimination⁴ and to ensure that their children would be able to grow up without having to face prejudice against Roma on a daily basis.⁵

1.3 Current patterns of settlement

Having arrived in the UK, most Roma tend to settle in areas to which they have been previously as asylum seekers, or where they have contacts, and on occasion family members. The major concentrations of A2 and A8 Roma populations are now found in the North of England, the East Midlands, Kent and in north and east London. The most numerous of these national groups are the Slovak, Czech and Romanian Roma communities.

In those areas where Roma had first arrived during the 1990s as asylum seekers and had, to an extent, become established, there is a greater level of awareness of Roma by local authorities and service providers. It is also evident that service

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2004:158:0077:0123:EN:PDF>

⁴ <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3042>

⁵ Ninety per cent of Roma interviewed in Hungary in a recent EU survey said discrimination due to ethnic origin was widespread, followed by 83% in the Czech Republic and 81% in Slovakia. The report, by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, finds "high levels of discrimination and victimisation among the Roma in the seven member states surveyed." Data in Focus Report: The Roma, European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009, p. 7

provision in these areas is more successful at meeting the community's needs. However, this is not the case within all local authorities. There are a number of local authorities where the service providers are not aware of their Roma, although they have sizeable and well-established Roma communities. Consequently, there was little or no provision in place in these local authority areas.

1.4 Hidden communities

“Please note that all statistical answers are subject to significant under-reporting. The self-ascription of ethnicity as Gypsy Roma is sporadic in part due to admissions procedures but also due to individual choice.”⁶

It was recognised early on in the survey that there are possibly as many Roma undetected as those registered with schools, the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS), health services, and social services. Front-line workers in various areas of England have confirmed this.

These unidentified groups fall into two categories: firstly those who by choice have not self-ascribed as Roma; secondly, those who for a variety of reasons have little or no contact with any service, and therefore have not been recorded.

The second group presented some difficulty in terms of the initial objective of producing as accurate a picture of Roma communities in England as possible. This group is not appearing in any records. Many authorities actually claim that they are aware of substantial numbers of Roma living in their areas, over and above those appearing in official statistics. In the course of the research, some of these undetected Roma were interviewed who had never had any contact with anyone in an official role, were not registered with a GP and whose children were not attending school. The majority of the second group was from the A2 countries; a small proportion appeared to be from Slovakia (and from non-EU

⁶ A note inserted into the completed survey by one of the Local Authority respondents

MS). There are also distinct differences between national groups in terms of their ability to find work and accommodation. Roma from Poland and the Czech Republic appear to be more able to navigate the English systems, unlike A2 Roma. Romanian Roma seem to be the most disadvantaged and the most vulnerable, living in the most overcrowded conditions and the greatest poverty.

“The house has three bed rooms, and two living rooms, one used as a bed room. The three bedrooms are occupied by three other families who pay towards the rent. A total of 17 people are living in the house, albeit temporarily, and 11 are children. Of these children, 7 are under school age (3 are babies under 1 year).”

“Apart from the one family with children in school who has had contact with the Traveller Education Team, I was the only person any of the residents had contact with from outside the Roma community. I am not aware of any organisation working in the geographical area that would be able to help these families other than Citizens’ Advice Bureau. Only two people in this house are working although the others are currently looking for work or trying to arrange documents that will allow them to work. I arranged during my visit for GP registration and school placements for all those who did not have it and ante- natal care for one mother who is pregnant. This household has no contact, other than through the local Traveller Education team, with any support system. All the children in the house with one exception were born in the UK. All those of school age have, when living in the UK, attended school and all who were returned or had returned voluntarily to Romania told me that their children had not been accepted into school in Romania for a variety of reasons.”⁷

The difference in the standard of living may be attributed to the different employment restrictions, which impacts upon patterns of employment of A2 and A8 Roma. A8 nationals, including Roma, who must register with the WRS, tend to work through employment agencies. A2 Roma are practically banned from

⁷ Heather Ureche’s notes on a visit to a Romanian Roma household in north London

working in England, unless they are self-employed, highly skilled or (they) have been granted ILR.

2. Roma Rights and Social cohesion

2.1 Racism, community tensions and social isolation

The responses to the survey have shown that Roma adults are generally isolated, mixing only with other Roma. Professionals stated that they were aware of heightened community tensions in some areas; some cases of racial harassment; in three locations there were recorded incidents of anti-Roma behaviour in schools and amongst non-Roma parents coming from the same EU states.

“Initially there were issues between Roma children and their families and ethnic Polish children and families. The schools were excellent and supported all of the children and families to learn that we do not accept racial intolerance here. This has been very effective.”

“In one school an incident was noted where Roma parents/carers were subjected to anti-gypsy racist abuse by some other Eastern European parents when taking and collecting their children to and from school. This wasn’t noticed by school staff initially because of lack of knowledge of the home language. When this came to light the school intervened very promptly and decisively to end the problem.”

Cases have been also reported of British pupils being hostile towards their “East European migrant classmates”.

In many areas. it is not just animosity from others in the mainstream community but also prejudice and stereotypical expectations of some professionals that has caused difficulties.

*“Prejudice, lack of recognition of ethnicity by schools, low school expectations, high parental expectations of the education system, lack of positive relationships between schools and parents resulting in poor communication. Poor understanding of other educational systems/ experiences etc. by families and schools e.g. children do not start school till 6/7 in home countries, therefore low academic experience is **not** lack of commitment of parent or involvement of the child.”*

“Harassment occurs due to families trying to earn money in ways which are perceived by some as anti-social behaviour.”

“Schools also have a responsibility to treat a Roma application without fear and trepidation. The reputation of this group goes before them in terms of an expectation of poor attendance, poor behaviour and failure to ‘fit in’. This becomes a self fulfilling prophecy where expectations are negative from the start.”

Without the necessary support and resources, the future looks difficult for the Roma communities. Going back to their countries of origin is not an option for most of them. Children that have grown up in Western Europe do not want to return to a place where they are treated as second-class citizens, excluded from the labour market and most services. This is particularly true for the young women. Many children have grown up speaking English at school and Romani at home; many do not speak or read and write in the native languages of their parents. There tends to be a reluctant admission from many parents that although they still did not feel at home in England, their children have settled well and will not want to live elsewhere.

2.2 Rights based Approach

The United Kingdom has been at the forefront of adopting and promoting the rights of the child and the rights of minorities nationally and internationally. Legally binding standards have been agreed that all stakeholders, in particular local and central government, must uphold. Whatever their status in a country all people are born equal in dignity and rights.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that has been legally ratified throughout Europe demands that education should be in the best interests of the child, i.e. it must be child centred. Direct or indirect discrimination is strictly prohibited while recognising that positive measures are sometimes demanded to redress past discrimination and to ensure that there can be full and effective equality and participation in social, economic and cultural life.

The education rights that are legally binding include recognising:

- The principle of free and compulsory primary education;
- Equal access for minorities to education;
- Equal opportunities within the education system.

2.3 Poverty and Education

“It is estimated on the basis of knowledge of families and countries of origin that there are approximately six hundred and fifty children/young people from Roma families currently on roll in schools. The main issue is the high levels of poverty for some Roma families. Ways to minimise these levels of poverty are needed if children and young people are not to suffer. The high rates of mobility of some Roma families provide additional challenges to schools. Additional funding to schools, with high numbers of Roma pupils and consequently high mobility, would assist in meeting these challenges.”

Most A2 and A8 Roma cite poverty as their major concern. This manifests itself in the difficulty with which they have obtained adequate housing, and consistent and non-exploitative employment. It manifests itself also in the family's ability to cover the cost of essentials for their children in the school setting, such as school uniforms and meals, transport costs to school and work, and to pay fees to employment agencies. This has implications for the whole family and on their ability to comply with statutory obligations. For example, in cases where families face the greatest levels of poverty, the children are far less likely to attend school regularly because their immediate daily priorities lie elsewhere: in securing their day-to-day livelihoods.

“Many Roma families cannot claim free school meals (FSM) for their children even though their income levels can be far below income support levels. This not only has a potentially negative impact on the health and wellbeing of the children and young people but can also deprive a school of the extra funding allocated on the basis of levels of free school meals.”

In areas where systematic support is provided, including advice on employment, benefits, or housing issues, levels of school attendance tend to be better and a high proportion of adults are in regular employment. This is the case especially in areas where Roma TAs and other community liaison workers are employed.

2.4 Culture and Education

Local authority practitioners noted that prejudice, lack of recognition of ethnicity by schools, low school expectations, high parental expectations of the education system, and lack of positive relationships between schools and parents resulting in poor communication may lie at the heart of some issues affecting Roma education. Poor understanding of other educational systems/experiences by families and schools (e.g. children do not start school till 6/7 in home countries), may result in low academic experience, although that does not mean lack of commitment of the parent or involvement of the child.

Major challenges exist locally in informing and educating both Roma communities and other communities of each others experiences and practices. Roma have rich cultures and inter culture education may be highly beneficial.

2.5 Employment

The situation of Roma coming to England having obtained employment, or promises of employment before leaving their home countries and then finding that the work was low paid, irregular and short term, is a frequent cause of many of the problems faced by all communities. Whilst staying within the bounds of employment legislation, some agencies have been identified in the course of the research, which are taking advantage of their employees. They often charge large sums for completing paper work, arranging registration cards, and even on occasions finding accommodation. Those who had to obtain work once having arrived here are even more vulnerable. Often they work only two or three days each week and many have no wage slips, pay no National Insurance contributions or tax and are not entitled to sick pay. Cases have been reported of A2 and A8 Roma receiving below the minimum wage. The majority of working A8 Roma fail to ever reach the point where their employment record provides the protection of full benefit rights. There are numerous cases where workers have paid an agency the fees to process their WRS applications and only after months, or in some cases years, they found that their application had never been sent. Effectively this meant that a lengthy period of work had not been recorded by the authorities and would not count towards their social welfare entitlements. It also meant that they had been illegally working unknowingly. In the current climate and with Roma often living in areas of traditionally high levels of unemployment and social tension, this situation has led to cases of extreme hardship.

“The children and families are very poor. The parents try hard to find work. The children try hard to attend school.”

Even in cases where employment laws have actually been broken and serious exploitation has been taking place, workers are reluctant to risk losing their jobs by making any complaint. Those who are prepared to complain tend to be uncertain of how to do so. Because of the scarcity of advice centres, language difficulties, designated rights advisors or staff familiar with Roma issues, they find it very difficult to access effective advice. This is the situation in the majority of local authority areas.

“Greater interagency work is being promoted, particularly by the TES to encourage schools and other agencies that come in contact with families to refer children appropriately for education. Roma pupils are closely monitored and supported into and in education by the TES and many other agencies have come on board: as a result of in-service training, services are more responsive to the needs of Roma and aware of their vulnerability to social and educational exclusion.”

2.6 Housing

The mobility of A2 and A8 Roma families is another major issue mentioned by practitioners. This mobility is related to the difficulty Roma have finding consistent employment and stable accommodation in England. In the most part, A8 Roma are reliant on temporary employment through agencies; a situation that on occasions is very exploitative and leads to them only being able to rent housing from unregistered landlords. This has left many families in a very vulnerable and exposed position, liable to eviction at any moment, paying high rents, and living in sub-standard and often unsuitable houses without any legal rental contracts. Often the houses are occupied by more than one family, leading to severe overcrowding. There is anecdotal evidence of cases where family members have been so dependent on these landlords that young women were coerced into sexual relationships to prevent their families from being evicted; in other cases,

families were asked to redo and redecorate the whole house, after which the landlord evicted them.

2.7 Health

Lower standards of healthcare perceived among most Czech and some Slovak Roma, and a lack of preventative care, were cited by some as barriers to accessing healthcare in England. For these reasons, some Roma from these countries say that they prefer to travel back home to access the local healthcare systems, which they believed were of a higher standard. Roma were used to having one doctor (GP) only, unlike some GP practices in England where their GPs often kept changing. The areas of gynaecology, cancer treatment and hospital care were mentioned as the most frequent reasons for returning home for treatment. Long waiting periods for appointments in some areas, inadequate quality of services and language barriers were referred to as the most serious problems associated with healthcare provision in England.

At the same time, by far the greatest majority of the Roma respondents maintained that they were generally happy with healthcare, mainly because their treatment had not been subjected to racial discrimination. Some of them had been declined healthcare provision or forced to pay large amounts for treatment in their countries of origin, which has not happened to them in England.

3. Institutional Responses and Responsibilities

Local authorities as well as central government have the duty to prevent both direct and indirect discrimination. Furthermore, they have a legal responsibility to ensure the full and effective participation of minorities in social and economic life.

3.1 The role of the Practitioner

It has been recognised that there are some excellent and very knowledgeable practitioners in the areas of education and health working with Roma at the local level. However, a very high number of them reported that they felt that at the policy and strategic level, there was little recognition of the volume of work involved and the inadequacy of resources and capacity to meet the most pressing needs of the Roma communities.

There tends to be too great a concentration on the needs of Roma children and young people at the cost of services for adults or families. In fact, almost all the work being done to support the Roma families and communities is aimed at addressing issues around education.

This is in part explained by the fact that the only units at the level of local authorities which have a designated role to support A2 and A8 Roma families are the local Traveller Education Services or the Ethnic Minority Achievement teams.⁸ Adult services for Roma communities are hard to find, as there are virtually none, especially in the field of employment. Roma themselves would find it almost impossible to obtain any kind of advice or counselling on employment, which is central to the successful inclusion of newly arriving families, including Roma, into any new society. Employment and income are also crucial in terms of the wellbeing of the child and their performance at school.

“Unlike other new international arrivals, the Roma come as whole families. Therefore, they are a complete ‘package’, and that is also how social services should treat them. The case of Roma settling in England shows the real need for a truly holistic and multiagency approach, where the needs of the child are considered as relating to the overall wellbeing of the family. That, of course, includes the adults as well.”⁹

⁸ Different names are used by different local authorities.

⁹ Interview with a statutory practitioner

There is considerable confusion across the country as to whose role it is to work with the Roma, who holds the information and knowledge base, and who should be funded as the designated service.

3.2 Meeting needs and inter agency working

Almost all the practitioners interviewed in the course of the research are aware that needs are not being adequately met. All are working with hugely exaggerated caseloads and most are frustrated that they, as education service employees, are the only professionals with a specified remit to work with these communities. In some local authority areas, formal cross-agency cooperation has been starting: where this exists, it has clearly improved services and relieved the key education staff of some of their extra workload, allowing them to concentrate on improving educational inclusion and attainment. It has also improved services provided to adult community members.

“In responding to these needs Cara actively tracks down and obtains tenancy agreements for families in rented accommodation. This gives more security for the whole family. Health visitors will routinely find doctors to register the family with.”

“The Education Service for Travelling Children liaises with families, schools and Education Welfare to enter the children into school. There are regular meetings between the agencies concerned to transfer information and provide a more integrated service for the family concerned.”

The overall picture of the adequacy and quality of provision tends to be patchy. Whilst understanding and appreciating the importance of education to the successful settlement of Roma families in England, it is clear that in many areas, this is the only priority and no clear policy exists to service the needs of all members of the communities.

There is no clear picture of the number of Roma in many areas due to inaccuracy or, in some cases, non-existence of data on Roma. No strategies and no specified services are in place, the role of which it is to support them. It appears generally that services, other than education, are being provided on a very ad-hoc basis. Few non-statutory agencies are engaging with Roma communities.

At the national level, particularly in the area of benefits and employment, no visible effort has been made to accommodate Roma workers and their dependents. Apart from the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, the Citizen Advice Bureau and a few welfare rights organisations, there is nowhere (where) Roma can obtain advice. It is also clear that for the majority of Roma, accessing even these services is difficult as signposting is not generally available. Many Roma interviewees commented that they had experienced problems using Job Centre services, partly because of language difficulties, but mostly because they found the system too complicated, and the staff unhelpful; also they reported that advisors were not always clear about the status of A2 and A8 citizens. In contrast, the service most highly rated by the Roma participants was that offered by the local Primary Care Trusts. They all felt that GPs, health visitors and midwives treated them with respect and understanding.

At the local level, there is little evidence and little recognition of the fact that Roma communities are settled here and in most cases, the populations are still growing. There is also a feeling expressed by many practitioners that, due to a lack of understanding and knowledge at all levels and in all areas, and also possibly for political reasons, funding for Roma services and projects is most inadequate.

3.3 Strengthening knowledge and communications

Many of the professionals interviewed felt that there is an **urgent need for policy makers and elected officers to improve their knowledge of Roma**

issues. Their argument is that, until the situation and the communities are fully understood by decision makers, funding and capacity will continue to be insufficient to meet even the most urgent needs. There are serious concerns that, whilst the Roma community remains isolated and unsupported, mainstream perceptions cannot be changed; that this will exacerbate the already fragile levels of community cohesion.

3.4 Training requirements

When asked what could be done to improve the situation, a large majority of local authorities said that more training was needed across all sectors and at all levels, including training and awareness raising for elected members. They felt that, until there was a wider understanding of Roma, their culture and the problems that they face, the funding and policies needed would not be put in place. Roma respondents said in interviews that they felt that some officials were instinctively hostile towards them.

The importance of training is considered by all respondents to be paramount. At present, in the vast majority of cases, training is restricted to face-to-face workers. Not all staff receive training and many feel that the quality and type of training they have received is inadequate.

3.5 Local authority needs

The list below prioritises what local authority representatives feel is necessary to improve the existing situation and to enable them to move forward.

- Trained Roma staff, (TAs, outreach workers, home school liaison workers);
- Funding for Roma support groups, capacity building for community members (ring fenced);
- More cross agency working;

- Awareness-raising and cultural background resources and events to inform wider society;
- Advice on employment, training, housing and welfare rights;
- Improved translation and interpreting services;
- Roma specific health visitors and health education workers from the community;
- A2 nationals to have the right to work and access to other support.

4. Some models of good practice

Good practice is instrumental in sharing knowledge and disseminating information on strategies that work effectively at the local level. Examples of good practice are very resource and cost effective as what operates well in one local authority area can be replicated in other areas or at the national level, at decreased cost. Some models of good practice are referred to below:

“Professional understanding of language backgrounds and implications for teaching and learning is a problem; training has been received but this is within a wider framework of working with minority ethnic children and young people and their families. More training is needed.”

“There should be a directive to all local authorities to ensure training is received at all levels to increase awareness, reduce prejudice and improve practice.”

There are some local authority areas where some or most of these measures indicated under local authority needs were already in operation.

4.1 Multi-agency groups

“The LA has a multiagency group which looks specifically at Roma issues. All key services participate in this. One of the current tasks of the group, for example, is to make a grant submission to appoint a member of either the Slovak or Czech Roma communities to work across all agencies. Partners are keen to build skilled professional capacity from within the community. The group has also undertaken some stakeholder mapping.”

“We would like to establish a Roma project to work across education, health and other areas, which would also build the capacity of the Roma community to become more involved in these areas.”

“Consultation has taken place through workshops and door knocking and the deployment of the outreach worker from the Ethnic Minority Forum.”

4.2 Roma Participation

The process that has had the greatest impact on improving the local situation for both workers and the Roma themselves has been the employment of Roma in supporting roles. This has enabled community members to feel safe, to understand better what is expected of them, what they are entitled to and is a visible sign of community acceptance. In schools where there are Roma staff members, attendance and attainment has improved. In areas where there are Roma health support workers it has enabled PCTs to offer a wide range of services, particularly to women and their families. The employment of dedicated workers to support the community in local areas has noticeably improved community relations. All of these initiatives require funding and policy changes, but all will in the long term be cost effective and bring positive results to both the local authority and the Roma community.

“The LA has just appointed 3 Roma Peripatetic Teaching Assistants to work in primary and secondary schools (from November 2008). The LA has also funded a drop in advice service at a local community, ESOL classes, and also a Roma

environmental health worker. A public education campaign has started to promote recycling, good neighbourliness, and proper waste management. The NHS is in the process of appointing a health worker to work with the Roma community. A borough coordinating group has been set up to share information, best practice, resolve problems, run seminars and conferences, liaise with partner agencies and Government departments. This reports to Rotherham Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership). Councillors have also undertaken a review of the LA's approach and support to children of Roma origin by the LA and schools."

4.3 Advice to Roma

"The Neighbourhood Management Team have made particular efforts to engage with Roma incomers to promote understanding of local procedures such as refuse collection."

"A brief information leaflet about local services has been translated into Czech and distributed within streets at the centre of the Czech/Slovak area. The local Neighbourhood Management Group made a survey of households in summer 2008 in a small area where the Roma families are settling."

5. Recommendations to local authorities

1. There is an urgent need for each local authority to have a coherent policy on Roma inclusion.
2. Units responsible for issues on Roma children and adults should be identified within every relevant local authority.
3. Local authorities should ensure that there is good quality information available to Roma about their rights and entitlements and obligations.
4. Information and advice on Roma issues should be made available to practitioners, as well as the general public.
5. Local government departments should examine services offered to Roma and ensure that staff are well trained and informed.
6. Good quality training should be made available to all local authority staff, police, health employees and to NGOs.
7. Information and advice/training on Roma issues is recommended for all elected officers.
8. Relevant local authorities should ensure that there are adequate resources to address the needs of the Roma in healthcare, education, housing, employment advice and income maintenance.
9. A system of monitoring the performance of local private employment agencies should be established, complementing the work of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority.

10. Local safeguards should be established to empower victims of employment exploitation to identify the perpetrators and facilitate appropriate sanctions.

11. Initiatives to promote cooperation between the police, local government, civil society organisations, Roma and relevant communities should be developed.

For further advice or information or details of available training on Roma
cultural issues please contact Lucie Fremlova:

lucie@europeandialogue.org

European Dialogue (ED) is a British-based, not for profit organisation, which pilots innovative models of good practice working with local, national and international partners, experience and participation, on the implementation of national social inclusion policies at local level. ED strives to be a catalyst between local, national and international governing bodies and excluded communities and vulnerable minorities by engaging and supporting them in combating discrimination, racism and intolerance, and in promoting democracy, human rights, equality, social cohesion and safe communities, by enhancing their effective participation ED has also undertaken a Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)/ European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) study into the movement of A2 and A8 Roma to the UK in relation to the right to free movement within the EU, part of a comparative study undertaken in Spain, Italy, Finland, France and the UK. Some of European Dialogue's past work includes a year-long project to develop the capacity of the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups in England; and TRAILER, a two-year human rights development project with 5 Roma, Gypsy, Traveller partners in Britain and Europe.

www.europeandialogue.org