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# ***Roma in Sheffield***

## ***Mapping services and local priorities***

**South Yorkshire Roma project**

**Report 7 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](mailto:admin@migrationyorkshire.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk](http://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 Sheffield); and, Roma-led focus groups (including one in Sheffield). 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 Sheffield* 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 Sheffield. We then provide an analysis of existing service provision for Roma across Sheffield. We outline some of the local priorities expressed during our meetings with Roma and local partner organisations in Sheffield during this project. Finally, we present a set of recommendations for working with Roma in Sheffield 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 Sheffield

### The Roma population

Roma migration to Sheffield began prior to 2004, when a small number of Roma asylum seekers and refugees mainly from Slovakia and the Czech Republic were housed here.<sup>1</sup> After 2004 Roma migration to Sheffield increased, with Roma exercising their treaty rights as EU citizens to travel here and seek work (rather than claiming asylum). This took the form of 'chain migration', with family and friends from the same villages and towns settling in the same places in the UK.<sup>2</sup> Roma were thought to mainly come from Bystrany village in Eastern Slovakia, as well as Žehra, Pavlovce nad Uhom and Košice, although there is minimal social interaction *between* these groups in the UK due to differences in socio-cultural status.<sup>3</sup>

Roma have settled in the Burngreave, Fir Vale, Page Hall, Tinsley, Darnall and Firth Park areas of Sheffield.<sup>4</sup> Some had originally settled elsewhere in the UK including Peterborough (with family links there), and some originally lived in Tinsley, Sheffield but moved on to more diverse areas of Sheffield after experiencing local harassment.<sup>5</sup> Like in other areas, local data on Roma populations in Sheffield is inadequate. Approximate, informal estimates include:

- Approximately 1,320 people in 440 households in 2007/08, 700 of which were understood to be from Bystrany. There was thought to be a peak in arrivals in 2008.<sup>6</sup>
- At least 3,000 Roma in Sheffield in 2009 (acknowledging a local authority estimate of at least 1,000, as well as Roma themselves estimating up to 4,000 Roma).<sup>7</sup>
- 2,100 Slovak Roma in 2012 (most in Fir Vale/Page Hall, then Tinsley and Darnall).<sup>8</sup>
- 6,000 Roma and other Eastern Europeans living in one ward/Page Hall according to the Casey Review in 2016, but with no further differentiation.<sup>9</sup>

There are reports of clear gender roles in most Roma communities. Men are thought to work through agencies in manual, unskilled work such as food processing (bakeries, fast food or factories) or as labourers, while some are supervisors. Women tend to stay at home as housewives and mothers.<sup>10</sup> There is recognition in the literature, however, that Roma communities are not homogenous and cultural practices between different groups differ.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Horton and J. Grayson (eds.) (2008) *Roma New Migrants: Local Research in the U.K. and European Contexts*. A Conference Report of ROMA NEW MIGRANTS: A RESEARCH AND INFORMATION DAY, Burngreave Vestry Hall, Burngreave, Sheffield, Saturday March 8<sup>th</sup> 2008, 9.30am to 4.30pm. Ad Ed Knowledge Company LLP. pp.10 and 40 [www.redtoothcreativesolutions.com/aded/docs/Roma\\_Conference\\_Report.pdf](http://www.redtoothcreativesolutions.com/aded/docs/Roma_Conference_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.40

<sup>3</sup> Z. Znamenáčková (2008) 'Migration of Romani people from Bystrany (SK) to Sheffield (UK)' in: M. Horton and J. Grayson (eds.) (2008) *Roma New Migrants*. pp.11-15

<sup>4</sup> Sheffield City Council (2015) *Roma Community Knowledge Profile*. Sheffield Community Knowledge Profiles; Public Health England (2015) *South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw oral health needs assessment 2015* [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/463067/South\\_Yorks\\_Bassetlaw\\_oral\\_health\\_needs\\_assessment.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/463067/South_Yorks_Bassetlaw_oral_health_needs_assessment.pdf) p.82 and Migration Yorkshire (2012) *Roma Source: Yorkshire & Humber Roma Practitioner Network Bulletin: July 2012* p.3

<sup>5</sup> C. Hedderwick (2008) 'Sheffield Issues', in: M. Horton and J. Grayson (eds.) (2008) *Roma New Migrants*, pp.57-59

<sup>6</sup> M. Horton and J. Grayson (eds.) (2008) *Roma New Migrants*, p.41

<sup>7</sup> European Dialogue (2009) *The movement of Roma from new EU member states: A mapping survey of A2 and A8 Roma in England: Patterns of settlement and current situation of the new Roma communities*. p.36 and p.82 [http://equality.uk.com/Resources\\_files/movement\\_of\\_roma.pdf](http://equality.uk.com/Resources_files/movement_of_roma.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Migration Yorkshire (2012) *Roma Source: Yorkshire & Humber Roma Practitioner Network Bulletin*

<sup>9</sup> DCLG (2016) *The Casey review: a review into opportunity and integration* [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration) pp.10, 37

<sup>10</sup> Z. Znamenáčková (2008) 'Migration of Romani people from Bystrany (SK) to Sheffield (UK)', p.13; C. Hedderwick (2008) 'Sheffield Issues', p.59

<sup>11</sup> Z. Znamenáčková (2008) 'Migration of Romani people from Bystrany (SK) to Sheffield (UK)', p.13

## Service activity and engagement

Some early contact between statutory services and Roma communities occurred through educational services. In particular, the additional needs of the Slovak Roma community were recognised, who were supported via the existing ethnic minority achievement service.<sup>12</sup> A steering group drove further work, including a review that assessed a local pilot for new arrivals.<sup>13</sup> Some young Slovak Roma were trained as teaching assistants.<sup>14</sup> Sheffield was one of three local authorities visited by Ofsted in 2014 to assess their approach and good practice in ensuring migrant Roma children 'achieve in education', a visit prompted by Sheffield headteachers who had volunteered concerns about meeting this challenge.<sup>15</sup>

Health services were also one of the first to have contact with the new Roma communities.<sup>16</sup> Slovak Roma were recognised as a disadvantaged group with high socio-economic needs, overcrowding and housing vulnerability, illiteracy and high interpretation needs, and high mobility. A health champion project in 2012 seemed more successful than 'top-down' approaches.<sup>17</sup> This was followed by, for example, a Roma women champion project to encourage use of preventative services and improve information exchange with Roma communities,<sup>18</sup> and a pilot to support GP practices with large Slovak Roma populations.<sup>19</sup>

Despite these initiatives, community tensions were reported from 2008 with local youth harassing Roma families in Tinsley,<sup>20</sup> incidents in school settings,<sup>21</sup> and significant numbers of Roma pupils were excluded from school and placed in alternative educational provision.<sup>22</sup> Sheffield became the focus of national attention in 2013, Page Hall in particular, after former Home Secretary David Blunkett MP warned tensions might escalate to riots if no action was taken to improve integration.<sup>23</sup> Page Hall subsequently featured in a Channel 4 programme and in other reports.<sup>24</sup> Such a focus has meant that Sheffield perhaps benefited from funding to support the integration of its Roma population in comparison to other places,<sup>25</sup> including DCLG funding to facilitate access to education and employment, and a new scout group, for example.<sup>26</sup> Migration of Slovak Roma into the area also prompted the introduction of a selective licencing scheme in 2015.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> European Dialogue (2009) *The movement of Roma from new EU member states*. p.32

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> 'Roma Slovak teaching success' *Burngreave Messenger*, 30 May 2013

<https://archive.burngreavemessenger.org.uk/archives/2013/june-2013-issue-106/roma-slovak-teaching-success/>

<sup>15</sup> Ofsted (2014) *Overcoming barriers: ensuring that Roma children are fully engaged and achieving in education* [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/430866/Overcoming\\_barriers\\_-\\_ensuring\\_that\\_Roma\\_children\\_are\\_fully\\_engaged\\_and\\_achieving\\_in\\_education.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/430866/Overcoming_barriers_-_ensuring_that_Roma_children_are_fully_engaged_and_achieving_in_education.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> For example: G. Gill (2009) 'The health needs of the Slovak Roma community in Sheffield'. *Community Practitioner* 2009 82(3):34-7; L. Moore (2010) *A Healthcare Needs Assessment of the Slovak Roma community in Sheffield*, Sheffield University

<sup>17</sup> Roma SOURCE (2012) *Improving the health of Roma communities in the Yorkshire and Humber Region*, p7.

<sup>18</sup> Roma MATRIX (2014) *Providing an Effective Health Service for Roma Women in Yorkshire*.

<sup>19</sup> M. Morris (2016) *Roma communities and Brexit: Integrating and empowering Roma in the UK* [www.ippr.org/read/roma-communities-and-brexit#](http://www.ippr.org/read/roma-communities-and-brexit#) p.25

<sup>20</sup> C. Hedderwick (2008) 'Sheffield Issues.'

<sup>21</sup> 'Petition after pupil attacked at Sheffield school' *BBC*, 13 October 2014. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-29595578](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-29595578)

<sup>22</sup> C. Searle (2017) *Xeno-Racism and the scourge of school exclusion*. Institute of Race Relations, 12 Jan 2017 [www.irr.org.uk/news/xeno-racism-and-the-scourge-of-school-exclusion/](http://www.irr.org.uk/news/xeno-racism-and-the-scourge-of-school-exclusion/)

<sup>23</sup> 'David Blunkett riot fear over migrant Roma tensions', *BBC*, 12 Nov 2013 [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24909979](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24909979)

<sup>24</sup> IPPR (2016) *Roma communities and Brexit: Integrating and empowering Roma in the UK* [www.ippr.org/read/roma-communities-and-brexit#](http://www.ippr.org/read/roma-communities-and-brexit#); DCLG (2016) *The Casey review: a review into opportunity and integration*.

<sup>25</sup> IPPR (2016) *Roma communities and Brexit: Integrating and empowering Roma in the UK*.

<sup>26</sup> 'Blog: Sheffield United' *Scouts*, 4 December 2015. <http://scouts.org.uk/news/2015/12/blog-sheffield-united/>

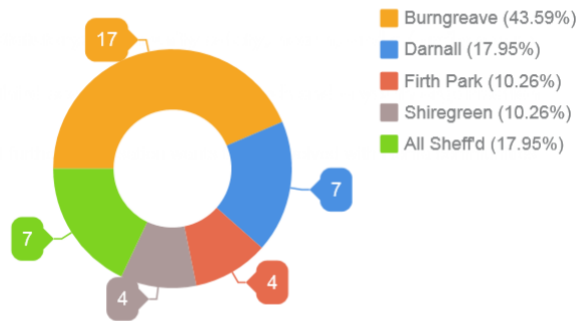
<sup>27</sup> Sheffield City Council (2014) *Page Hall selective licencing scheme* [www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/housing-services/private-sector-housing/selective-licencing.html](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/housing-services/private-sector-housing/selective-licencing.html)

# Sheffield services working with Roma

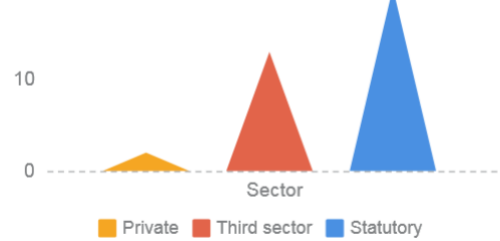
Services reported working with Roma in Sheffield



Service delivery location



Service sectors



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

Top Roma nationality seen by services

10+ years

Roma presence in Sheffield



### 3. Service mapping

#### Services

A lot of work has been undertaken with Roma communities in Sheffield. This section provides a picture of the current activity we are aware of, but it is not exhaustive.

This project identified 40 services in total that are currently particularly relevant to Roma in Sheffield. We identified 35 services that work directly with, or are accessed by, Roma communities in Sheffield. Information about these 35 services is illustrated in the infographic on the preceding page. A further five voluntary sector services do not engage specifically with Roma communities at the moment in Sheffield, but are interested in doing so.

Most of the services identified are based in Sheffield itself, although three at least work in other parts of South Yorkshire (the police, solicitors, and a wildlife organisation) or beyond (an advocacy project at University of Salford). The majority of services working with Roma are delivered in Burngreave (including Page Hall, Fir Vale, and Tinsley) and Darnall (as one might expect, given the earlier review) although a number of services operate across Sheffield as a whole.

The services identified here cover different general areas of work and show a range of both statutory and third sector services. There is a focus on work with children and young people up to age of 25 (many are schools, but also cover EAL, safeguarding and youth work), although many projects engage with parents and carers as well.

There are some examples of successful partnership working between statutory and third sector organisations, including: a baby clinic on school premises with an available hearing and speech therapist; scouts groups run through schools in partnership with third sector organisations; and, health trainers/mentors trained by third sector organisations and assisting at GP surgeries.

Around ten organisations provide Roma-specific projects, largely to improve Roma access to services in response to growing numbers. These cover a range of issues, including:

- ESOL
- health
- employment
- education, including early years (some schools and children's centres)
- community development.

Roma-specific projects tend to have short-term funding lasting between a year and 18 months, compared to projects aimed at wider range of clients. However, there are some exceptions, such as a Roma-specific employment project that is funded for five years.

At least 14 organisations in Sheffield have Roma staff or volunteers, by far the highest number in South Yorkshire. Over 40 individual Roma are working or volunteering in these organisations (at least 30 Roma are employed), with one organisation employing seven Roma staff alone. Roma staff working in statutory services are most commonly found in schools.

## Roma communities

Slovak is the most dominant nationality among Roma service users in Sheffield, followed by Czech. Only two services mentioned other nationalities: Romanian and Hungarian. This suggests less diversity in the Roma service user population than might be expected given the size of Sheffield, although perhaps some Roma may not be accessing services or may not be identifying themselves as Roma.

Services reported that new families are still arriving on a 'daily basis' and Page Hall seems to remain the area of first contact for new arrivals. The delivery locations of many services confirm the areas known to be settled by Roma communities.

There have been some attempts to develop a Roma voice through setting up a Sheffield Roma Network, events to promote active participation,<sup>28</sup> and a UK-wide 'Supporting Roma Voice' project. A further Roma-led organisation is in development in Sheffield.<sup>29</sup> However, no platform is yet seen by other services as an effective way of engaging with, or representing, the community.

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<sup>28</sup> 'Festival of debate come to Page Hall' *Burngreave Messenger*, 2 December 2016  
[www.burngreavemessenger.org/blog/2016/12/festival-of-debate-comes-to-page-hall/](http://www.burngreavemessenger.org/blog/2016/12/festival-of-debate-comes-to-page-hall/)

<sup>29</sup> According to a participant in the Roma professionals' focus group for this project.

## 4. Local priorities

Sheffield is a complex context. Some service providers seemed concerned that despite much investment and a plethora of projects and staff experience, the situation of Roma in Sheffield does not seem to have improved significantly. Sheffield has some different issues than the other parts of South Yorkshire, for various reasons including the size of the city, its diversity and history of migration, and the prominence and problematising of Roma communities in Page Hall by the national media.

Sheffield has much experience and examples of good or promising practice in relation to working with Roma and other migrants. Given the appetite of practitioners in other parts of South Yorkshire to learn from their peers, this practice expertise needs to be shared! However, at times in Sheffield we noticed a reticence to share information, a degree of tension and even suspicion between services and Roma (in both directions), between different services themselves, and between different Roma communities. Of course this was not true of every individual or project.

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

Some points expressed at the Sheffield local meetings included the following:

- **Confirmation of our research findings around priorities of employment and families**, particularly families with small children, the lack of uptake of free nursery education, children missing from education, and youth provision.
- **Confirmation of our research findings about the need for service coordination**, for a one point of contact/triage approach with services for new arrivals across and within services (not only for the benefit of Roma, but for services and communities so that there is efficient signposting, explanation of UK culture etc.), **and to better understand Roma rights and entitlements** (particularly in anticipation of Brexit)
- **Trust and engagement is a challenge** in Sheffield between Roma and services, and among services. Health services may be a first point of contact to build on. Involvement of Roma in the wider community is also important. Roma priorities voiced at this meeting included safeguarding work, since social services involvement with families can be difficult when families do not understand safeguarding approaches in the UK. Roma can be fearful of any organisation because of their fear of their children being taken into care. It was suggested that welcome information might be best delivered in person in a local location and by Roma residents.
- **Confirmation of our research findings that Sheffield's situation is complex and uncoordinated**. However, this is not necessarily a distinctively Roma issue but could be applied to other issues.
- **There are examples of partnership working in relation to Roma and a desire to do so more often**. Some library services are willing to be used as community hubs to facilitate partnership working, particularly around education and engagement.

- **There was confirmation of our research findings around intermediaries** (discussed particularly in Report 2, *Roma experiences of living and working in South Yorkshire*). Health visitors for example, have reported that the main issue they are presented with when visiting families may not be a health issue, but they are unclear to whom they should pass responsibility for dealing with these other, ongoing issues. They felt there was a need for work with families who have complex or a multiplicity of issues, and an opportunity for partnership working here.
- **The Roma voice is important. It was noted that actions that do not match Roma priorities risk being ineffective.** ESOL was given as an example of activities available to Roma that are not always accessed. Roma in this project expressed a preference for a Roma community centre. However, the service/council perspective differs. There have been difficulties in establishing an effective Sheffield Roma Network, there are risks of investing in physical buildings that could be vulnerable to short-term funding streams, and Roma could be reluctant to engage in community centres if they are run by non-Roma organisations.
- **There are some conflicting views among service staff about Roma.** During the project we witnessed some stereotyping of Roma by project participants, while others highlighted opportunities to learn from Roma (such as their attitude towards prioritising family). These views are likely to shape the experiences of Roma service users in different ways.
- **There is some confusion and debate among services as to whether they are able to build on previous work with other migrant groups,** or if Roma are a completely new and different client group.

## 5. Recommendations for future work in Sheffield

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

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

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<sup>30</sup>
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 Sheffield specifically.

### 2. Respond to the newly-identified priorities of Roma participants

While the overall research priorities listed above were led by Roma participants' contributions across South Yorkshire, it is also important that Sheffield responds to the specific priorities raised by Roma participants in this project who live in Sheffield. For example, responding to Roma requests for a Roma community centre to provide leisure activities and as a contact point with services, and to work through organisations or individuals that Roma feel that they trust. Since Sheffield has already invested in a good number of Roma workers across different agencies, there is a pool of Roma professionals whom could be engaged to discuss and communicate some of these issues.

### 3. Seek ways of sharing practice and working together better

Sheffield is known to have more experience and expertise in relation to Roma than many areas of the country, as well as work with other migrant groups (where there are parallels with Roma), which can be celebrated and shared. There is perhaps an opportunity to share this practice knowledge more widely, develop ways of working together better to address some of the tensions and different perspectives among and between some agencies and Roma communities in Sheffield, and to encourage effective partnership working across all agencies.

There is also room to further develop existing strategic plans across the city and Sheffield City Region that will reduce duplication of services and encourage a shared vision for Roma communities within Sheffield. There is also an opportunity in this context to develop shared responses to unhelpful media stories and to proactively promote positive stories.

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<sup>30</sup> 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.

Practitioner groups (with Roma representation) could be developed to improve ways of working across different sectors in Sheffield, that reflect diversity among Roma communities and include Roma who are not always easy to engage (they may require support to participate meaningfully). Other local statutory services that have Roma service users, such as local schools, could be invited to share their expertise. Some organisations are interested in Roma issues but do not have a great deal of experience of working with them in Sheffield. For example, at least five voluntary sector organisations who participated in this project work across Sheffield and are keen to engage with Roma but do not currently do direct work with Roma clients. These organisations could be invited to become involved in local meetings, funding bids, practice sharing etc., and to ensure their own work develops in a way that complements existing coverage rather than duplicate it.

These recommendations for working with Roma in Sheffield 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 seventh 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)