



Rough sleeping Roma in the City of Westminster

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Roma Support Group (RSG)

The Roma Support Group is the largest Roma-led charity organisation (Charity No: 1103782) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (Company Registration Number 4645981) in the UK. Since its founding in 1998, the organisation has assisted thousands of Roma families in accessing welfare, housing, education, health and employment, as well as empowering Roma communities through a wide range of advocacy and cultural programmes.

During the last 18 years we have built a wealth of expertise on Roma issues and have become the leading experts in this field. We have developed models of good practice regarding integration and empowerment of Roma communities which has led us to become advisers to governments, statutory and non-statutory agencies nationally and internationally. For more details about RSG expertise, please see appendix 7.5.

Please see our website for information about our services: www.romasupportgroup.org.uk

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Background

Romanian nationals have been identified as the fastest growing group of rough sleepers across Greater London and particularly within the City of Westminster. According to official data, at the end of March 2015, there were 1,388 Romanian rough sleepers. This represents 18.7% of all rough sleepers in Greater London, second only to UK nationals. The data also shows a sharp rise in the number and of percentage of Romanian rough sleepers thought to be of Roma ethnicity.

Agencies working with rough sleepers currently have less knowledge of Roma migrants compared to their other clients, including the unique challenges facing Roma migrants and how this impacts on their ability to move away from rough sleeping. In the absence of better information, there is often a perception that Roma are not sleeping rough by circumstance but by choice and that they have come to the UK for the purpose of begging. This view has been reinforced by both media coverage and political discourse in both the UK and Romania.

In order to better understand the wider cultural issues and support needs of the Roma rough sleepers, St Mungo's, with the support of Westminster Council, commissioned the Roma Support Group to conduct a research project from September 2015 until January 2016. The aim of the research was to provide a greater understanding of the 'pull' factors leading to rough-sleeping in the borough of Westminster and to provide insights that could be used to develop a strategy for reducing rough-sleeping amongst Romanian nationals of Roma ethnicity.

Main findings

A total of 64 Roma rough sleepers were interviewed over 12 street outreach visits. In addition, front line staff from homelessness services and independent consultants were interviewed.

All of the rough sleepers interviewed described their situation in Romania as one of high unemployment, poor housing conditions within predominantly Roma settlements, low levels of education and qualifications and poor access to health services all of which combined to a general lack of opportunity. 92% had left children back in Romania with either a partner or family members. Their intention in coming to the UK was to find employment and send money back home. Those with long term health complaints described having large debts for medical services and paying off these debts was one of the main reasons for coming to the UK.

90% of interviewees said London was their only experience of migration, while 10% had worked in other European countries previously but had to move on to new destinations when work became scarce.

100% of interviewees reported that they chose to stay in Westminster as it was a busy area at all times of day and night and this made them feel safe. They also felt there was a greater likelihood of finding work and had become familiar with the area.

While interviewees were coming to the UK for the purpose of employment, in the absence of the right support and advice, it had become difficult for them to move on from rough sleeping. As a result some had resorted to begging as an alternative source of income. Other interviewees explored other income generating options, including busking and selling flowers. Only 3 interviewees had managed to find casual employment, receiving approximately £30 per day for twelve hour shifts. All interviewees requested support in finding employment.

None of the interviewees had any knowledge of the UK welfare system. 87% of interviewees reported that they had had limited interaction with homelessness services and struggled to communicate with front-line staff. 86% of the homelessness professionals we interviewed had very limited experience of working with Roma and had little understanding of the culture or community.

In line with other unemployed EEA migrants, Roma rough sleepers have very restricted access to housing benefit and other welfare support. This severely limits the support and services that homelessness services in the borough can offer. In addition, the limited number of Romanian or Romanes speaking outreach workers makes communication, assessing need and signposting to services very difficult. Where practical advocacy and employment support has not yet been implemented, services at all levels coming into contact with Roma rough sleepers are simply making an offer of reconnection. It is also noted that existing sources of information and guidance for the sector on reconnection has an inadequate amount of information in relation to Romania.

Conclusions

The research highlighted a number of key issues which include but are not limited to the following:

- Current provision for homeless people in the City of Westminster aims to provide a network of support for rough sleepers with different needs. However, our research has identified that the needs of Roma rough sleepers are unique and are not currently catered for. At the same time, there is now a high degree of mistrust about existing services amongst Roma rough sleepers.
- Since January 2014, welfare reforms have impacted on entitlements of Romanian nationals to housing and welfare support. This puts homelessness sector professionals in a difficult position where they feel they have a lack of tools to support EEA national rough sleepers, including Roma.
- Currently there is no defined strategy for supporting Roma rough sleepers, either at a borough or pan-London level.
- Current commissioned services have a small number of Romanian speakers and no Roma representation which creates immediate communication barriers and has significant impact on all levels of engagement.
- Assessments are not sufficiently tailored to enable front line staff to offer adequate support services to Roma clients. This increases the risk that vulnerable individuals, such as pregnant women, trafficked individuals or people with complex medical

needs, are not receiving appropriate protection and services in the City of Westminster or in Romania.

- In the absence of any alternative offer, there is a strong emphasis on reconnection as a tool to combat rough sleeping amongst EEA nationals but currently a lack of evidence regarding impact of reconnections on Roma rough sleepers on their return to Romania and how this limits the likelihood of them returning to rough sleeping in London.

Recommendations

The research recommends a number of short, medium and long term actions which should be taken by key decision makers in order to improve engagement with homeless Roma to move them away from rough sleeping. The recommendations include:

- A firm commitment to employ and develop Roma mediators within commissioned services.
- Adopt fresh approaches to working with groups of Roma rough sleepers, including partnering with specialist Roma organisations.
- Increased understanding about Roma amongst front-line homelessness sector workers through bespoke training, an information pack and a multimedia toolkit for use in outreach work.
- Commission a pilot project for Roma rough sleepers which should be integrated within existing services in the City of Westminster to ensure that the needs of Roma are seen as comparable with those of other rough sleepers.
- Amend existing assessment forms and processes for Roma service users to place the emphasis on employment history and skills in addition to the existing consideration of housing history in the UK.
- A clearer protocol agreed between the local authority and homelessness services on the duty of care and clear processes for supporting pregnant rough sleepers and other vulnerable adults.
- Establishing links with local authorities in key areas in Romania that Roma rough sleepers are from, in order to ensure provision of services after reconnection, especially for those individuals highlighted through assessment as particularly vulnerable.
- In those cases where reconnection is the best option for an individual sleeping rough, implement a best practice protocol which ensures links with support services in the relevant region of the individual's country of origin.
- Re-design the "Routes Home" website to contain specific information on the Roma community in Romania along with the support services in the specific regions where the majority of Roma rough sleepers in London originate from.

- Establish a multi-agency, pan-London, GLA-led Homeless Roma Stakeholders Group, which can make strategic decisions applicable to the homeless Roma population within London.
- The DCLG should consider use of European Structural Investment Funding to support projects working with Roma, both to move away from rough sleeping and to prevent rough sleeping through access to employment based skills training.

1. Introduction

In April 2015, the Roma Support Group (RSG) was approached by St Mungo's regarding the growing number of rough-sleeping people in the City of Westminster, who were understood to include Romanian nationals of Roma ethnicity. At the same time, the presence of homeless Romanian Roma on the streets of Westminster had attracted considerable negative press coverage. ¹The local authority and commissioned services attempted to engage and offer alternatives to this group of homeless people but to date successful outcomes have been limited.

In order to fully understand the cultural issues and support needs of the Roma rough sleepers, St Mungo's reached out to the Roma Support Group who have a long and established history of supporting and working with Roma refugees and migrants. It was agreed that the appropriate way forward would be for the Roma Support Group to conduct a research project in order to identify reasons behind rough-sleeping amongst Romanian nationals of Roma ethnicity in Westminster and assist in developing appropriate service responses aimed at reducing rough-sleeping amongst this group of homeless people.

The research project, carried out by the Roma Support Group from September 2015 until January 2016, aimed to address the key priorities of the City of Westminster with regards to reducing rough-sleeping amongst Romanian nationals of Roma ethnicity and understanding the 'pull' factors leading to rough-sleeping in this borough. It incorporated the following elements:

- Scoping and identifying the issues by interviewing and engaging with current Roma rough sleepers in the City of Westminster;
- Interviewing service providers in the City of Westminster, including charities and faith organisations;
- Pulling together the findings in a form of a report with recommendations

¹ such as the Evening Standard frequently portraying homeless Roma as perpetrators of alleged criminal activities and dehumanising them with statements such as: 'They are disgusting': <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/clearing-roma-off-the-streets/>

2. Literature review

Romanian nationals have been identified as the fastest growing group of rough sleepers across Greater London and particularly within the City of Westminster and neighbouring boroughs. According to official data from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database, there were 1,388 Romanian rough sleepers in London during 2014/15. This represents 18.7% of all rough sleepers in the capital and is the second largest group after UK nationals.² This is a stark increase from a total of 497 in 2012/13 and 730 in 2013/14.³

CHAIN data also records the ethnicity of an individual where it is known. Of the 1,388 Romanian nationals seen sleeping rough in 2014/15, 34% were recorded in the 'Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller' ethnicity category on CHAIN. Where Romanian rough sleepers are recorded in this category, it can be assumed they are thought by outreach workers to be of Roma ethnicity. The use of the category Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller may affect the number of Roma willing to self-ascribe given that the category encompasses a number of different communities. The table below shows a sharp rise in the number and percentage of Romanian rough sleepers recorded in the 'Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller' ethnicity category.

Table 1: Romanian nationals recorded in the 'Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller' ethnicity category on CHAIN, 2014/15				
Year	London		Westminster	
	No.	%*	No.	%*
2012/13	152	2.4%	101	4.3%
2013/14	258	4.0%	126	5.9%
2014/15	471	6.4%	342	13.6%

*% of all rough sleepers in the area for whom nationality and ethnicity was known

In the last five years there has been a renewed effort to end rough sleeping in the capital through the provision of both pan-London and borough based schemes including the Mayor of London's *No Second Night Out* scheme. Integral to this aim has been a focus on both national and international reconnections; the latter aiming to deal with the increasing number of non-UK (including EEA) rough sleepers in the capital. According to Department for Communities and local Government (DCLG) data in 2012, 'Fewer than half (48%) of enumerated rough sleepers in London are now UK nationals, with CEE migrants comprising around one quarter (28%) of the visible street homeless population in the capital, and the remainder comprising 'other' migrant groups.'⁴

² CHAIN annual report: Greater London: April 2014 to March 2015, Mayor of London, June 2015 p. 19

³ Ibid.

⁴ Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in the UK: Migrants, Briefing Paper No. 2, p. 1.

Research on the situation of EEA migrants identified that rough sleeping amongst this group is 'less associated with complex needs and childhood trauma, than with restricted access to welfare benefits and other practical barriers such as poor English language skills and/or limited knowledge of local administrative and support systems'.⁵ As a result, there has been a need to create 'bespoke services tailored to the specific needs of homeless migrant groups...and that it is inappropriate to expect 'traditional' homelessness agencies – set up to deal with a fundamentally different social problem – to be able to cope with these emerging and distinctive needs'.⁶ However, what has become apparent from the increasing number of Roma rough sleepers is that the existing approaches for other EEA migrants are not currently meeting the needs of this distinct group.

Agencies working with rough sleepers currently have limited knowledge of Roma migrants, their unique challenges and how this impacts on their ability to move away from rough sleeping. In the absence of better information, there is a common perception that Roma are not sleeping rough by circumstance but by choice and that they have come to the UK for the purpose of begging. There is a perception that begging is culturally acceptable in Roma communities, can be highly lucrative and is instigated by organised crime networks. As a result, it is felt that Roma neither have need of homelessness services nor wish to engage with them.

This view has been reinforced by both media coverage and political discourse in both the UK and Romania. Examples from the UK press include the following dramatic headlines which feed into such negative perceptions:

Britain's new 'no go' areas... to warn off Roma rough sleepers: How proposed exclusion zone targets epicentre of Romanian and Bulgarian influx (mail online, 21 Dec 2013)

Business group says homeless choose to sleep rough on London's streets (3 April 2015, fitzrovia.org.uk)

Residents today called on the police and council chiefs to do more to rid their streets of Roma gypsy rough sleepers who they claim have turned parts of Marylebone into an "open sewer" (21 June 2013, Evening Standard)

Rough sleepers rounded up across London in crackdown on illegal immigrants and begging (29 August 2014, Evening Standard)

As McGarry notes 'Roma are often represented in the media as either criminals who perpetrate crime or as victims who are persecuted. Rarely do Roma occupy the middle ground: their ethnicity is mentioned so that the reader can determine whether the Roma in

⁵ Ibid. p. 9

⁶ Ibid.p. 9

question are 'good' or 'bad'.⁷ The collective result is a question mark as to whether Roma are genuinely in need and therefore worthy of services to address their multiple exclusions

To make the situation yet more complex, in the last three years, there have been a number of multi-agency operations impacting on Roma rough sleepers on the basis of begging, anti-social behaviour and rough sleeping.

- Operation Nexus⁸ which began in October 2012 aimed to improve the way in which the UK police identified foreign national perpetrators of crime through the checking of UK Border Agency (UKBA) databases in police station custody suites.⁹ However there have been concerns about the potential overreaching of the operation to those who are not high harm offenders but who may subsequently be found to not be exercising treaty rights as workers or jobseekers. The secondment of Polish and Romanian police officers to the Metropolitan Police to assist with the operation added to concerns that the operation has impacted upon EEA nationals including Roma.¹⁰
- Operation Cheforak in July 2013 was a multi-agency operation between Westminster City Council, Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE), the Romanian Embassy, Thames Reach and the local business community to 'target rough sleepers, begging and associated criminality within Roma communities'.¹¹
- Operation Encompass in January 2014 undertaken by the Metropolitan Police Service, UKBA and the London Boroughs of Camden, Croydon, Islington, Lambeth, Southwark and Westminster. It was not targeted specifically at Roma rough sleepers, but aimed to 'combat begging and rough sleeping across the six London boroughs'.¹²

These high profile operations have fuelled perceptions that Roma are choosing to rough sleep for criminal gain. During interviews for this research, Roma rough sleepers described how the presence of homeless sector workers during some of these operations had impacted on their ability to distinguish their different functions of enforcement and advice and support. This had led to reluctance to engage with services they were unsure they could trust. There is also a growing concern amongst the homelessness sector as to the way in which this impacts on their service delivery.¹³

However, this is not a situation unique to London and there are similar patterns of Roma rough sleeping across other European cities including Scandinavia.¹⁴ It is likely that this

⁷ Aidan McGarry, Romaphobia: the last acceptable form of racism, Open Democracy, 13 November 2013

⁸ <http://content.met.police.uk/News/Operation-Nexus-launches/1400012909227/1257246741786>

⁹ <http://content.met.police.uk/News/Operation-Nexus-launches/1400012909227/1257246741786>

¹⁰ <http://www.luqmanithompson.com/Operation-Nexus-Briefing-Paper.pdf>

¹¹ <http://content.met.police.uk/News/Op-Cheforak--Multi-agency-operation/1400018787840/1257246741786>

¹² <http://content.met.police.uk/News/The-MPS-and-six-London-boroughs-combat-begging-and-rough-sleeping/1400022279369/1257246745756>

¹³ Homeless charities call for caution over police crackdown on London's rough sleepers, Camden New Journal, 6th Feb 2014

¹⁴ According to Stockholm City's EU social services investigative team there are around 1500 - 2000 poor homeless EU Citizens in Stockholm. Most are Roma from Romania.

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=6044464>

increase is, in part, a result of wide scale forced evictions of Roma settlements in Romania as well as Hungary, Italy and France to name a few. (See appendix 7.3)

A 2015 study on the situation of Romanian Roma rough sleepers in Scandinavia conducted by the Fafo Research Foundation concluded that 'The movement of migrants who travel to other countries within the EU in order to beg, collect bottles, trade and do other types of informal street work...is an issue that has featured on the political agendas of most European countries over the past decade. While the EU framework encourages the free movement of labour, there is little regulation in place to address the free movement of poverty.'¹⁵

Furthermore, 'Various claims relating to crime, to human trafficking and exploitation, and to the consequences of migration for children and for communities in the sending countries are routinely made in policy documents and in the public debate with regard to the migrants and the nature of their mobility. However, public debate on the issue has so far been informed by anecdotal evidence and popular myths more than research-based empirical knowledge'.¹⁶ (See appendix 7.4)

To date there has been little research into the causes of rough sleeping for Roma migrants in London. This research aims to begin that process.

¹⁵ Anne Britt Djuve, Jon Horgen Friberg, Guri Tyldum & Huafeng Zhang, *When poverty meets affluence: Migrants from Romania on the streets of the Scandinavian capitals*, Fafo Research Foundation, November 2015, p. 7

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.8

3. Research methods

The main aims of this research are to:

- Identify the main issues faced by the Romanian nationals of Roma ethnicity who rough-sleep in the City of Westminster;
- Understand the 'pull' factors leading to their rough-sleeping in the City of Westminster;
- Scope the current service provision available for homeless Romanian nationals of Roma ethnicity; and
- Present recommendations with regards to service response for this group of homeless people in the City of Westminster.

In order to achieve these aims, RSG's staff members carried out the fieldwork over a period of five months since September 2015 until January 2016, conducting 12 outreach visits to the streets of Westminster. A total of 64 Roma rough-sleepers were interviewed, consisting of 32 males and 32 females aged between 18 and 55.

We also interviewed 15 staff members from seven organisations working with homeless people in Westminster and Camden to understand their services and to what extent they had worked with Roma rough sleepers to date. We also consulted one independent consultant (on education and integration) and two academics (of Romany studies and social policy).

Furthermore, we consulted relevant research studies on homelessness in the UK as well as a number of recent reports documenting the Roma situation in Europe to provide a background literature review and enable triangulation and comparison of findings with materials from other countries and localities.

The research questions (below) asked of the interviewees set out to illustrate the background motivation of migrant Roma and to explore their routes into homelessness and street economic practice in London as well as their expectations and circumstances in their country of origin.

The Research Questions:

- (i) What is your situation in your country of origin (including employment and accommodation) before coming to the UK?
- (ii) Why have you come to London? Are you intending to move on elsewhere or return to the last settled base?
- (iii) Why are you rough-sleeping in Westminster?
- (iv) How are you surviving while rough-sleeping?
- (v) What is your knowledge of the welfare system (including housing assistance) in the UK?
- (vi) What are your aspirations for finding work and accommodation in the UK?
- (vii) What support do you need to achieve this?
- (viii) What support has been offered to you since you arrived?
- (ix) Was your intention to come directly to the UK or have you travelled through other European countries first? If so, what were your experiences of the system in those other countries?
- (x) What has been your perception since arriving in the UK of police and homeless services within Westminster including St Mungo's?

4. Research Limitations

At the outset of this research project we have identified a number of risk factors (limitations), which could affect its results, including:

- a. time limitation;
- b. trust-based relationship with interviewees;
- c. data quality

What follows is a short outline of what was done to mitigate these risks.

Time limitation: The time limitations that we faced were two-fold, not only that we had a short time (12 fieldwork visits in 5 months) to carry out our fieldwork but also we could only approach the interviewees late at night when they were about to bed down thus enabling us to identify them as 'rough-sleepers'.

In collaboration with our partner (St Mungo's) we decided that the limited time designated for this project will influence the scope of the research restricting it to 50 qualitative interviews. Although this target number was set low in comparison with the number of homeless migrant Roma in the area, we ensured that our interviews included people of different gender and age groups to achieve as full representation of the homeless Roma group as possible.

During the fieldwork, we were mindful about the late hour and wish for privacy. We, therefore, engaged only with those who explicitly expressed their wish to talk to us. The reason why we interviewed 64 individuals stems from the willingness of homeless Roma to be engaged in this exercise.

Trust-based relationship with participants: The main reason why the Roma Support Group was invited to carry out this research was because of the limited success to date of other homelessness sector organisations to engage with rough-sleeping migrant Roma in the Westminster area. We, therefore, understood that establishing trust with prospective interviewees would be the key to successful data collection.

Although the RSG is well known amongst Roma communities in London and the UK as a community-led organisation, we were aware that our lack of experience of working with homeless Roma migrants in central London may impede on building our trust with prospective interviewees particularly given the very short time for the delivery of this project.

The way we have mitigated this risk was by engaging four Roma colleagues, two of whom had personal experience of begging and rough-sleeping. They acted as interpreters and consultants prior, during and after the fieldwork research. Their contribution was pivotal to building trust and explaining the aims of the research to the interviewees thus ensuring their meaningful engagement. This approach has been very effective and on some occasions, groups of 5 -10 people simultaneously wanted to share with us their life stories and concerns.

Furthermore, during our fieldwork, we were accompanied by colleagues from partner organisations, who introduced us to rough-sleeping Roma individuals.

Data Quality: ‘The quality of all surveys depends on the willingness of the respondents to tell the truth – and on respondents actually knowing the truth...It is normally not advisable to pose questions to which respondents are unlikely to know the answer, nor to pose questions which it is suspected that respondents will find uncomfortable to respond, or even refuse to answer’.¹⁷ In order to ensure that the research questions are comprehensible to the interviewees, we piloted them first and encouraged interpreters to invest time in explaining the meaning of some of the questions. The interviewees were also told that they do not need to answer questions if they do not wish to do so or which made them feel uncomfortable.

We were also aware of the possibility of coming across ‘strategic answering’, or ‘beggars’ narrative’, in other words ‘exaggerated stories of suffering...to evoke sympathy’.¹⁸ Therefore, we established the context for the interviews based on our respect for the dignity of the participants, (e.g. sitting at the same level as the participants, keeping eye contact), and affinity deriving from our common life experience.

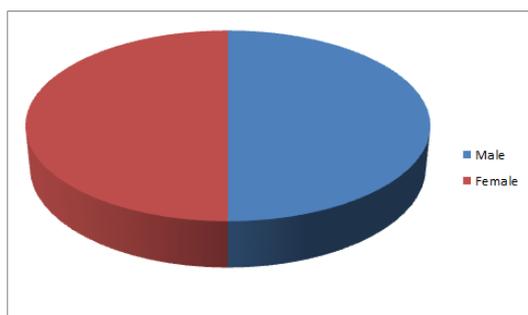
¹⁷ Anne Britt Djuve, Jon Horgen Friberg, Guri Tyldum & Huafeng Zhang, When poverty meets affluence: Migrants from Romania on the streets of the Scandinavian capitals, Fafo Research Foundation, November 2015, p. 144

¹⁸ Ibid. p 149

5. Research Findings

5.1. Interviewees profile (country of origin, age, health status, housing/employment status, vulnerability)

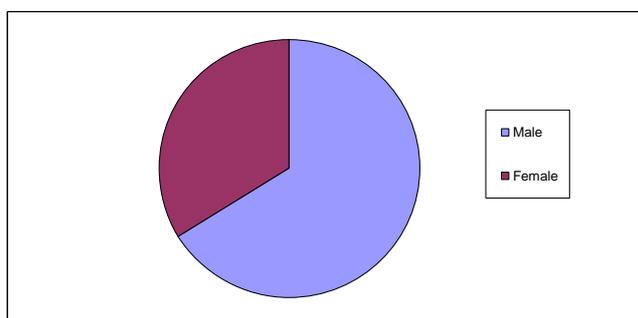
- 64 Roma rough sleepers were interviewed in total
- 32 were male and 32 were female



Although efforts were made to ensure both men and women were involved in the research, it was a coincidence that an equal number were interviewed. However, the data from CHAIN does suggest a much higher proportion of Roma rough sleepers are female compared to the total rough sleeping population in Westminster as shown by the charts below.

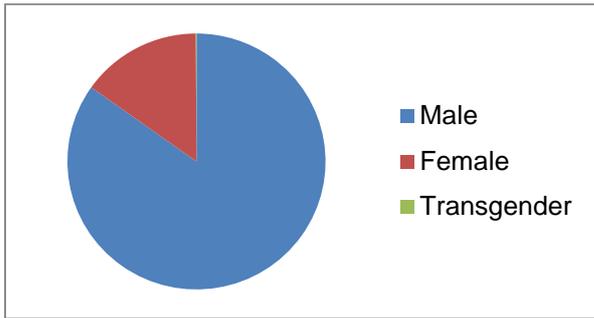
Table 2: Gender breakdown of people seen rough sleeping in 2014-15, with Romanian nationality and Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller ethnicity - Westminster

	Female		Male		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Westminster	116	33.9	226	66.1	342	100

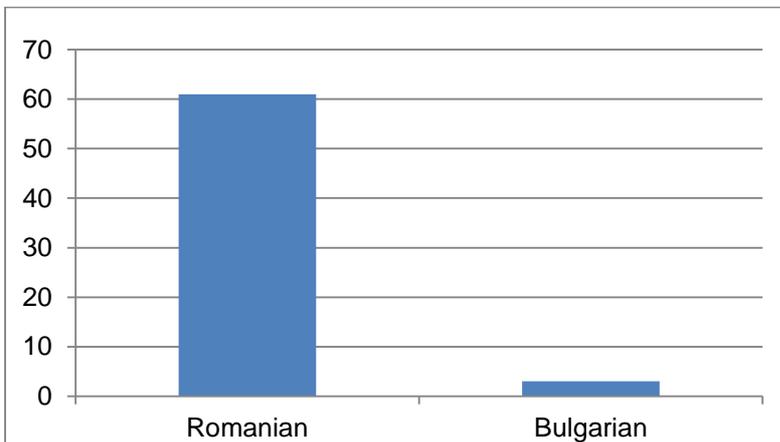


There is therefore a greater proportion of Roma rough sleepers who are female in comparison to the total rough sleeping population.

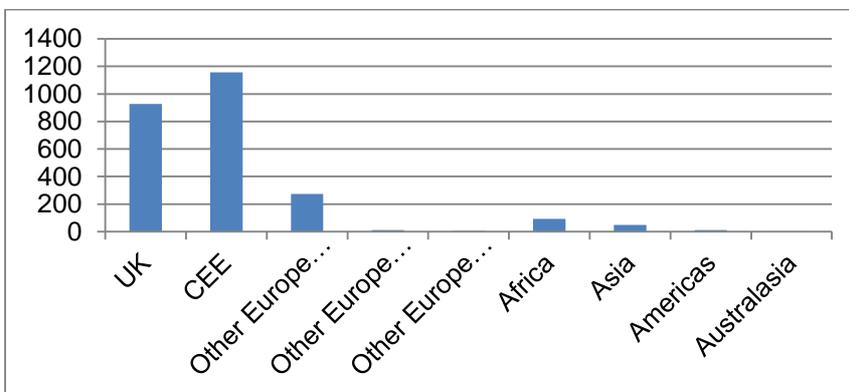
Gender breakdown of all people seen rough sleeping in 2014/15 - Westminster



- 61 interviewees were from Romania and 3 were from Bulgaria, but a number of professionals we interviewed reported a growing number of Bulgarian Roma currently accessing their services. Whilst it was not possible to identify at this stage the reason for this apparent increase in Bulgarian migration, identification of key drivers and experiences in Romania may assist in service planning to meet the needs of recent and forthcoming Bulgarian migrant groups.

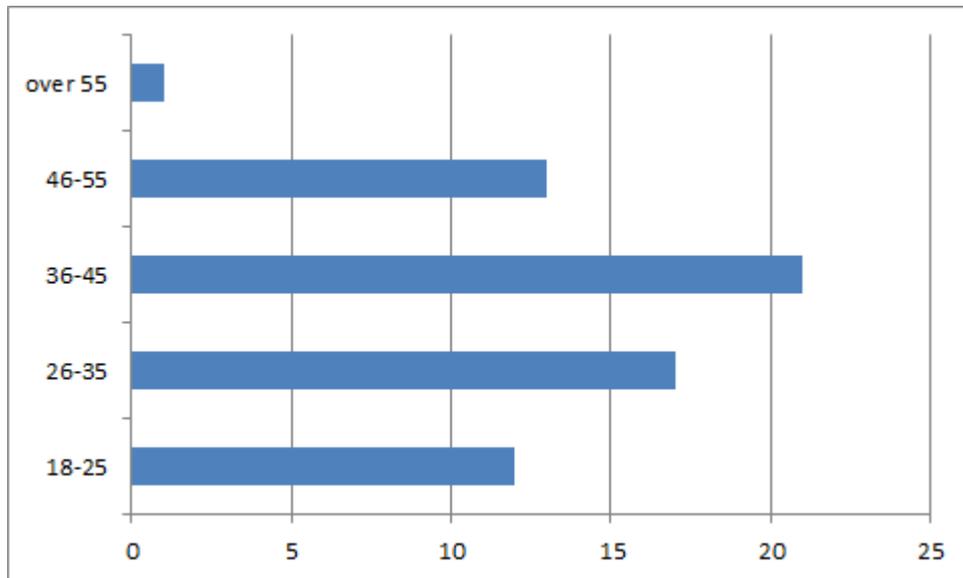


The nationality breakdown recorded on CHAIN for the total rough sleeping population in Westminster in 2014-15 was as follows:

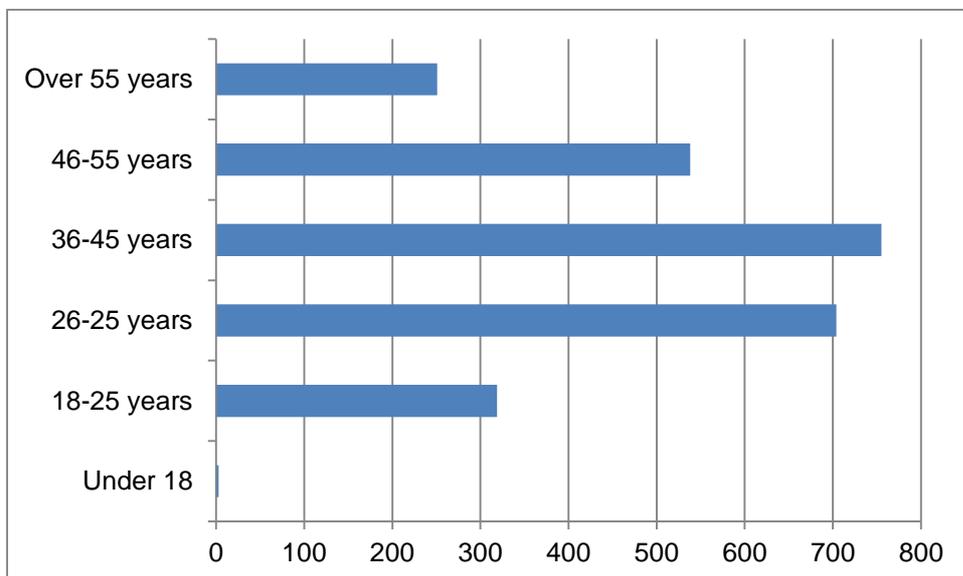


- Age ranges broke down into the following approximate categories:

- 12 interviewees = approx. 18-25 years old
- 17 interviewees = approx. 26-35 years old
- 21 interviewees = approx. 36-45 years old
- 13 interviewees = approx. 46 - 55 years old
- 1 interviewee = approx. over 55 years old



The age breakdown recorded on CHAIN for the total rough sleeping population in Westminster in 2014-15 was as follows:



- The majority of interviewees are from the Moldovan region of Romania.¹⁹ This includes Roma settlements within Iasi and Botocani. We also interviewed a number of people from settlements in Craiova. Bulgarian interviewees were predominantly from Roma settlements on the outskirts of Pleven.
- 7 interviewees reported that they had long term health conditions including diabetes and depression and reported that their main reason for coming to London was to find work to pay back large medical debts they had accrued in Romania. They were particularly concerned as to how they could access a doctor and renew their prescriptions while in London.

By comparison, the 2014/15 annual CHAIN report for Westminster shows that of 1,687 people sleeping rough in the borough and who had their needs assessed - 34% had a support need related to alcohol, 27% had a support need related to drugs and 44% had a mental health support need.

- Of the 18 interviewees who stated they had worked at some point in Romania, the majority were male. However, there were some women who had worked in restaurants and one woman who had cleaned a local school. Three interviewees worked at some point in the UK. This included one man who had previously worked on the renovation of a house in North London a couple of years ago and had been hoping to find similar work. 100% of respondents stated that they came to the UK in order to work and this remains their intention. The high percentage of interviewees that did not work in Romania reflects the research available on the high level of unemployment amongst the Roma population in Romania. See appendix 7.2, chapter on Employment.

5.2. General responses to the 10 interview questions (analysis of answers)

(i) What is your situation in your country of origin (including employment and accommodation) before coming to the UK?

All of those interviewed described their situation in Romania as one of high unemployment, poor housing conditions within predominantly Roma settlements, low levels of education and qualifications and poor access to health services all of which combined to a general lack of opportunity. One interviewee illustrated the poverty within their area when he said: *“if you buy a pair of shoes for yourself or your child, you will not be able to eat”*.

Interviewees came from a mixture of town and rural areas but reported living in settlement like conditions which they considered to be not much better than their current condition as rough sleepers. One female interviewee explained: *“Look, if we had it good there, do you think we would be sitting on the street homeless?”*

¹⁹ The economy of Nord-Est region is mainly agricultural, especially towards the north, even though there are a number of industrial cities, especially Iași, Suceava and Bacău. The regional GDP per capita is the lowest in Romania, at about two-thirds of the national average. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nord-Est_\(development_region\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nord-Est_(development_region))

Some of those interviewed had been previously employed but this had been unstable and was not enough to support their families. 92% have left children back in Romania with either a partner or other relatives. Their intention is to find employment and send money back home. Some interviewees reported that if they could find stable employment in the UK they would consider moving their families to join them. Those with long term health complaints described having large debts for medical services back in Romania where private health insurance is required and that one of the main reasons for coming to the UK was to enable them to pay off these debts.²⁰ A small number of interviewees also reported having children with disabilities and the need to provide for them proved an additional migration driver.

(ii) Why have you come to London? Are you intending to move on elsewhere or return to the last settled base?

100% of interviewees had arrived in London by coach direct from Romania. Many of the interviewees had been told by relatives or other people in their towns and villages that London would be a good place to seek work. However, their experience on arrival has been different. During one outreach we interviewed a married couple who had arrived the day before and were noticeably shocked by the conditions they found. They had arrived with several suitcases of belongings and with clothing unsuitable for sleeping in the street. The wife showed us several bags of medication for her diabetes and medication for her husband's depression and they were anxious to know what they would do when their medication ran out.

Another woman we interviewed explained how her husband had worked in Romania as a taxi driver. However, they believed they would be able to secure better jobs and a better income by coming to London and that he had given up his job to do so. In the first couple of weeks they attempted to find work but without being able to speak English this had proven difficult. They were given a card for an employment agency by a Romanian speaking woman they had met but when they tried to call the office they could not speak to the English speakers in the office. They were currently trying to save enough money to return to Romania.

While for 90% of interviewees London was their only experience of migration to find employment, 10% had worked in other European countries previously. This had been predominantly in Greece, Spain and Italy as agricultural labourers or occasionally in construction. As the recession had impacted on the availability of work in these countries they had moved onto the next, eventually coming to London.

Of all interviewees, 87% were travelling repeatedly between the UK and Romania. This is supported by CHAIN²¹ data. From our interviews, we were able to establish that while interviewees were coming for the purpose of employment, in the absence of being able to secure this, they had resorted to begging as an alternative source of income. Once they had

²⁰ The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States: survey results at a glance, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012, p.31

²¹ Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London.

done so, this had become an alternative economic strategy. In the absence of tailored support, it has become difficult for them to move on from rough sleeping and begging.

(iii) Why are you rough sleeping in Westminster?

Over the course of our outreach sessions it became apparent that although some Roma rough sleepers in Westminster are bedding down within large groups, many are travelling to the UK as either couples or within small family groups of 4 to 5. It is on arrival that these smaller units are forming relationships with other Roma already present in the area. 100% of interviewees reported that they chose to stay in Westminster as it was a busy area at all times of day and night and this made them feel safe. They also felt there was a greater likelihood of finding work in the area where there are restaurants and hotels to work as cleaners or as kitchen staff. In the meantime they had become familiar with the area and know where they can use shower facilities and how to get back to Romania from Victoria coach station.

When interviewees were asked whether they would move to other parts of the UK if they could secure work the answer was predominantly “yes” and “whatever will help me to provide for my family”. However, in the absence of specific job offers or knowledge of an existing Roma support network in other parts of the country those interviewed were reluctant to move elsewhere.

(iv) How are you surviving while rough sleeping?

100% of interviewees reported that their intention on arrival in London had been to find paid employment but after discovering that they are unable to secure this many have reverted to begging. Although it was outside the remit of our research to explore in-depth the scale of begging among Roma rough sleepers in Westminster, we asked some of the interviewees how they felt about this way of making a living. They told us that they felt unhappy about begging, stating that this was not a choice but a necessity. Furthermore, 87% of all interviewees were clear that with limited qualifications and limited English it had become difficult to find work on their own.

They did not know where to go for help and when it was necessary to make money to either return to Romania or fulfil their original purpose of providing for their families, begging had become their strategy. One man we interviewed has been busking with a harmonica as he felt this was a more dignified way for him to make an income. Another female interviewee reported that her husband found it too shameful to beg and that she was trying to make enough each day to feed them both. A number of interviewees also reported passers by giving them food and during outreach sessions at Marble Arch we were approached by members of the public asking what we were doing and how they could help this group of rough sleepers.

A small number of young women we interviewed were selling flowers on Edgware Road. One young woman we interviewed explained that she pays for bunches of flowers in the local shop and then sells them individually to people walking in the street. However she reported that this still causes problems with the police and on occasions police officers have broken the flowers and put them in the bin even when she showed them the receipt for her

purchases. She explained to us that *“the police say that we cannot beg, so I sell flowers. But that is also not good for them and they broke and threw my flowers in the bin many times. What can we do to be left alone to make a living?”*

(v) What is your knowledge of the welfare system (including housing assistance) in the UK?

None of the 64 individuals interviewed had any knowledge of the UK welfare system including access to welfare benefits and housing assistance. It was apparent that in the absence of first-hand experience there was a degree of myth around entitlement and a concerning number of people believed they had to pay large sums of money to people in order to access services. A common response was that they understood they were supposed to get a card in order to work in the UK but they had been told it costs a few hundred pounds to get and they did not have the money for this or know where they were supposed to go to get it. We took this to mean a National Insurance Number but in a couple of cases this could have been a reference to a CSCS card for access to construction sites.

Only 2 of the 64 interviewees had applied for a National Insurance Number and this had been with the help of a church who had allowed them to use a care of address. At the time of our interview they had already attended their interviews with Jobcentre Plus and were waiting for their numbers to arrive by post. They hoped that being able to show potential employers their National Insurance Numbers would enable them to secure work.

95% of interviewees had very low expectations in relation to finding accommodation and were very clear in their understanding that they had to first secure work. For instance, one interviewee stated: *“I don’t need help with accommodation, I just need help to find work and then I can find accommodation myself”.*

(vi) What are your aspirations for finding work and accommodation in the UK?

All of the 64 interviewees stated that they had come to London with the intention of finding work. However, only 3 of the 64 interviewed had managed to find employment. One was working in a car wash, another in an abattoir and the third stated cash in hand work whenever available. Of the two gentlemen in the car wash and abattoir, both reported that they were receiving approximately £30 a day for approximately 12 hour shifts and that the majority of this money they were returning to their families back in Romania. A fourth person explained that they had worked in London a few years ago refurbishing a house in North London but he had not been able to secure construction work since returning to London this time.

When asked what kind of work interviewees had experience of back in Romania this consisted of a range of roles including working in a restaurant, cleaning in a school, factory work, agricultural labour, construction, and driving jobs. However, a small number of interviewees had very specific skills including one lady with a Diploma in floristry and one man who could produce hand-made copper gutter constructions and metal decorations on heritage buildings.

(vii) What support do you need to achieve this?

All of the 64 interviewees requested support in finding employment. Although 11% of interviewees had medical problems or mobility issues, the 89% of people interviewed were of working age and reported no medical problems.

All interviewees acknowledged that their lack of English had proven one of the main barriers to securing employment so far. Others explained that a lack of qualifications had made it difficult. Common responses from interviewees included:

“I know how to keep out of trouble but I beg you to give me any help you can to get a job and take me away from the streets”.

There was a general consensus that support was needed to learn English but that this would need to happen alongside paid work as the immediate need to provide money for their families took precedent. Interviewees also requested support in applying for a National Insurance Number and potentially registering as self-employed when these concepts were explained to them. One interviewee asked if we could take him to the local Jobcentre despite it being nearly midnight indicating both a lack of knowledge of available support services and potentially unreasonable expectations of the facilities available in such statutory agencies.

Those with long term health conditions also asked that they be provided with support to enable them to visit a doctor indicating again a gap in knowledge and accessibility of service outreach on health care provision.

(viii) What support has been offered to you since you arrived?

All interviewees reported that they had not received support in finding employment. Two interviewees had made contact with a church that had provided a care of address for their National Insurance Number applications. 87% of interviewees reported that they had had limited interaction with homelessness services while rough sleeping but did know of day centres they could attend for a shower and a meal.

During some outreach sessions individuals were advised to attend The Passage²² for advice and support but interviewees told about this service were unsure of how to find it and what kind of support they could expect to receive. Three young male interviewees said they had been to The Passage but they had struggled to communicate with staff. In addition, interviewees reported that when interacting with homeless services, they were commonly asked to produce various documentation which had made them suspicious of these services. Due to communication barriers they did not understand which documentation and why it was required.

(ix) Was your intention to come directly to the UK or have you travelled through other European countries first? If so, what were your experiences of the system in those other countries?

²² The Passage runs London's largest voluntary sector resource centre for homeless and vulnerable people: each day we help up to 200 men and women. <http://passage.org.uk/>

90% of interviewees reported that London had been their first option for finding work. However, at least 6 interviewees had previously travelled through other European countries including Greece, Spain and Italy where they had managed to secure work mainly within either construction or agricultural labour. These individuals reported that they had been following the availability of work and as the recession had hit one country and work became scarce they had moved on eventually coming to London. They had not been able to access welfare support in these other countries but had managed to secure employment even if seasonal and temporary in nature.

(x) What has been your perception since arriving in the UK of police and homeless services within Westminster including St Mungo's?

All those interviewed had had interaction with the police since arriving in the UK. Mainly this consisted of being asked to move on from sheltered areas in front of shops and cafes in the early morning. Interviewees explained that it was commonplace to be asked to provide your ID and explain how long you had been in the UK. A small number of interviewees produced letters requiring them to attend interviews with the Home Office. More concerning, was an interview with a husband and wife where they reported that they are regularly searched by the police and have had their money confiscated. The same couple also reported occasions when they have been filmed by undisclosed persons and stated that this was without their permission.

One interviewee shared their experience of removal three years ago and stated that this had been as a result of her engaging with a Romanian interpreter who said they would be able to help her. This has left her, and her family who are also homeless in London, suspicious of outreach workers who approach them. When asked about their experience with homeless services, other interviewees commented:

"We are afraid we can be put on a coach back to Romania and we don't want to go there. I am afraid if I come to the office, they will hand me over to the Police."

"I want to be very clear about it - if you want to help us, please get somebody who can understand and represent us."

5.3. Visits to homeless projects (findings)

In addition to outreach sessions with Roma rough sleepers we were able to visit a number of homeless services operating in both Westminster and neighbouring boroughs. Seven services (commissioned, non-commissioned and faith based organisations) were interviewed for the report. The main findings are as follows:

a. Experiences of working with Roma:

86% of the services interviewed had very limited experience of working with Roma and have little understanding of this community. This vacuum has allowed a degree of myth to grow. For instance:

- *One professional described that they had resorted to searching on the internet to find out more about Roma and were led to believe that the community has involvement in criminal activities which are funding lavish homes back in Romania.*
- *There is also a concern within the sector that Roma rough sleepers are victims of trafficking and that there is an organised crime element to their presence in London. However, the services had no evidence of this and only one day centre reported a woman who was believed to be the victim of trafficking and how they had struggled to find suitable support services for her in the absence of interest from social services.*
- *Another professional we interviewed expressed the view that unless Roma change their culture they cannot be helped.*

The result of these views is a degree of caution and in some cases a refusal to work with this group of rough sleepers on the basis of: lack of eligibility for welfare support, perceived criminality, lack of previous engagement with services offered, presenting in groups and tension with existing service users. However, there was unanimous agreement amongst all the services contacted that there is a critical need for a targeted service to work specifically with this group.

b. Eligibility criteria for services:

The overwhelming finding from these interviews was that Roma rough sleepers are not meeting the eligibility criteria for existing services in operation across the borough. Front line outreach services coming into contact with rough sleepers at night attempt to signpost individuals to follow up services. However, the research made it clear that there is a low level of engagement with Roma on these sessions especially where Roma are sleeping in large groups and there have been previous reports of anti-social behaviour in the area. In addition, the limited number of Romanian speaking outreach workers does not facilitate communication and therefore signposting to services is severely limited.

In the limited number of circumstances where Roma are informed of homeless services, the majority do not meet the eligibility criteria as these services have predominantly been designed to support those with complex needs i.e. addiction, mental health and domestic abuse. In addition, hostel accommodation is not available given the restrictions on EU nationals' access to out of work benefits including Housing Benefit. A number of services have been left with the knowledge that this group of rough sleepers is increasing but without the tools to work with them. One service put it very succinctly *"this is not what [our services] were designed for and we do not know how to work with them"*.

Engagement at day centre level was also found to be limited and sporadic. For example, where Roma are accessing showers and meals, they were not found to be supported through the additional services available, including employment programmes. One day centre service described that although in theory their service is open to Roma they had limited experience of working with this population and did not have either Romanian or Romanes speaking staff. Although they do have an employment project they would need to book an interpreter in order to carry out an assessment and the fact they require an

interpreter to undertake such activities gives a good indication to their staff that the individual is unlikely to find employment in the UK.

Furthermore, given that Roma rough sleepers as EU nationals are reliant on finding employment to move away from rough sleeping in the UK, existing assessment forms have an emphasis on housing history rather than employment history and what skills an individual may have to enter the labour market. Where practical advocacy and employment support has not yet been implemented, services at all levels, coming into contact with Roma rough sleepers are simply making an offer of reconnection. Due to a lack of language skills and options for referral, services are doing this without undertaking a detailed assessment of the individual's circumstances or without sufficient information about support available back in Romania.

It is also noted that existing sources of information and guidance for the sector on reconnection has an inadequate amount of information in relation to Romania. For example, the Routes Home website lists accommodation services within Bucharest which is a significant distance from the regions to where the majority of Roma rough sleepers in Westminster will be returning to. Homeless Link do provide a comprehensive guide but it is understood that application of this and other guidance is sporadic and often dictated by time pressures.²³

Where Roma rough sleepers are slipping through the current net of commissioned services in the borough they are reliant on a small number of faith based organisations able to provide practical advocacy without eligibility restrictions. These organisations are providing support with applications for National Insurance Numbers (including vital care of addresses), CV writing and job searches including contacting employment agencies. However, with these organisations being so few in comparison with the size of the Roma rough sleeping population, they are at risk of becoming the victims of their own success and can be easily overwhelmed with limited staff (and volunteers) to meet the demand.

The case studies below have been produced in collaboration with the services and the content approved by them.

²³ The reconnection of rough sleepers within the UK: an evaluation, Sarah Johnsen & Anwen Jones, March 2015, p.vi

Case Study 1: Church Army (Marylebone Project)

The project supports single homeless women through provision of a range of services, including complex needs unit, resettlement hostel, day centre, emergency beds, employment support, health surgery and therapeutic services. In addition, the Marylebone Project has one social enterprise 'Made in Marylebone' (MiM) with the aim of empowering homeless women into independent living providing them with skills, experience and employment support. MiM consist of a Catering Programme Munch and Space which offers a meeting venue that can be used for meetings, workshops, conferences and exhibitions. The Project has established links with corporations who can either offer work and voluntary experience or come in to offer job coaching, mock interviews, communication skills training etc.

The Marylebone Centre tried to put in place support for homeless Romanian Roma women in 2012, for approximately one year. In total, they engaged approximately 80 Roma women.

At the outset of their work, the Marylebone Centre team attended a half day Roma Culture Awareness Training, delivered by the RSG and organised an awareness raising session with their service users in order to explain organisational rules and policies.

Their Roma service users predominantly used day centre facilities, such as food, showers and a clothes bank. In addition, referrals were made to ESOL and a local health clinic, the Great Chapel Medical Centre in Soho for homeless. The service struggled to engage a large number of Roma service users and eventually stopped engaging with this client group.

The main reasons the Marylebone Centre felt their attempts to support Romanian Roma women were not successful were:

- Communication barriers;
- The demand on the service could not be met by the existing capacity;
- Roma service users did not follow organisational policies and showed a lack of engagement with staff and services provided;
- The organisation was struggling to meet the needs of their regular service users who were not Roma;
- UKBA enforcement action in the Westminster area in July 2012 was attributed to a significant reduction in numbers of Roma women coming to the service.

Case Study 2: Glass Door Project (Chelsea Methodist Church)

The project works with homeless persons London-wide. They have open-access policy and virtually no eligibility criteria. In addition, they do not receive funding from the central government or local authority and are not taking part in administrative removals.

They offer a night shelter for approximately seventy people and advice & advocacy services which includes practical support in applying for National Insurance Numbers (for which they provide a care of address) and job searching which includes contacting recruitment agencies.

Glass Door have always engaged with a significant number of EEA clients, who now represent approximately 60% of their service users. The service noticed a particular increase in numbers of Roma rough sleepers from Romania during Winter 2014/1015 (predominantly from settlements around the city of Iasi) and Bulgaria in the last year.

The service described their engagement with Roma clients as positive, highlighting success in securing employment for some. They recognised a challenge in measuring long-term effects of securing employment as they lost contacts with clients who secured employment and that more work would need to be done in this field.

When asked about challenges when working with Roma rough sleepers, their main problems were in relation to limited capacity to deal with, at times, high volume of Roma service users and communication barriers. Their additional concern was the emergence of 4 pregnant women rough sleeping in Westminster and Wandsworth in the last 18 months. While the numbers are not large the service described that this is not something they would usually expect to see.

5.4 Conclusions

Based on a combination of our research and existing literature, we have listed below our main findings and conclusions. These have been broken into four categories targeted at key decision makers and stakeholders which will correspond with our recommendations in the next chapter. This is preceded, by an assessment of the Roma specific context which is vital in understanding our conclusions and recommendations.

Roma specific context:

- There are significant push factors causing Roma to come to western European countries, including the UK. Particularly important issues are related to lack of employment opportunities, poverty, inadequate housing, limited (if any) access to medical services, racism and discrimination in all aspects of Romanian society. Please see appendix 7.2. for more information about Roma in Romania.

- The overall aim of coming to London was to seek employment and many have left their families back in Romania. However, limited skills, language barriers and lack of employment support have led them to seek alternative measures of making a living, including begging.²⁴

²⁴ For more information, please see pages 13-14.

Not all Roma we came across during this research were rough sleeping in the City of Westminster. In addition, not all Roma who were found to be rough sleeping were engaged in begging.

- 10% of the interviewees had worked in other European countries, including Greece, Spain and Italy before coming to the UK to seek employment. However, as employment opportunities had become more limited in these countries, they had sought alternative destinations. For the rest, London was their first destination for seeking work.
- Three young Roma women have sought alternatives to begging by selling flowers. However, their inability to regulate this type of work led to police action further supporting the perception of criminality and antisocial behaviour.
- 10% managed to find casual employment but there are concerns as to evidence of exploitation where they are working without a contract, for long hours and below the minimum wage.
- None of the interviewees had knowledge of the UK welfare system and there was evidence of vulnerability to exploitation based on their testimonies that they have been asked to pay large sums of money in order to obtain National Insurance Numbers or employment. Furthermore, even if they understood the procedure, the absence of a care of address has made it impossible for them to obtain this independently.
- Although not many people managed to secure employment, some had transferable skills and experience. For instance, a number of people worked in the construction industry, one lady had a Diploma in floristry and one person had experience of working in a highly skilled trade on heritage buildings restoring hand-made copper guttering and metal decorations.
- There was a general consensus that support was needed in learning English. However, interviewees stated that English lessons should be provided alongside opportunities to search for employment or paid work as they have an immediate need to provide for their families abroad.
- Interviewees had a noticeable lack of trust in the authorities (which for them included homelessness services). This is most likely caused by: communication barriers, lack of Roma representation within homelessness sector, previous experiences in other countries they travelled through and administrative removals which they understood to have been performed in partnership with the voluntary sector.
- We have found that most interviewees travelled as couples or small family units and only on arrival to the UK are they forming in larger groups in order to seek safety and support within the community. Roma rough sleepers presenting in large groups in public spaces has led to a small proportion being subject to enforcement action for

anti-social behaviour and this has been highlighted as a problem by the homeless services.

Decision Maker/ Stakeholder	Conclusions
Central Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong emphasis on reconnection as a tool to combat rough sleeping amongst EEA nationals but there is little evidence of its effectiveness. For instance, most recent data for the City of Westminster shows an annual increase in numbers of rough sleepers who are Romanian nationals. Romanian nationals also represent the highest number of European reconnections in the last five years. • There seems to be a lack of evidence regarding impact of reconnections on rough sleepers on their return to Romania and the likelihood of them returning to rough sleeping in London. • Reconnection without thorough assessment poses the risk that a small number of vulnerable individuals, such as pregnant women, trafficked individuals or people with complex medical needs, cannot receive appropriate protection and services on their return to Romania. • There is no clear understanding what role the Romanian embassy can play in supporting Romanian rough sleepers in the UK.
GLA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of information sharing and multi-agency strategies on a pan-London level, involving key stakeholders such as the GLA.
City of Westminster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current provision for homeless people in the City of Westminster aims to provide a network of support for rough sleepers with different needs. However, our research has identified that the needs of Roma rough sleepers are also unique and are not currently tailored for. • There is no clear strategy for supporting Roma rough sleepers, despite the fact that they are the second largest group of rough sleepers in the City of Westminster, after UK nationals. • Current commissioned services have a small number of Romanian speakers and there are no Romanes speakers available. • Lack of a tailored assessment poses the risk that a small number of vulnerable individuals, such as pregnant women,

	<p>trafficked individuals or people with complex medical needs, cannot receive appropriate protection and services in the City of Westminster or in Romania. There may also be specific risks and vulnerabilities associated with the higher proportion of female Roma rough sleepers when compared to the total rough sleeping population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for further, more in-depth research or a comparative study or international study on Roma rough sleepers.
<p>Homelessness Sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the absence of engagement between both homelessness services and Roma rough sleepers, and in addition to media stereotyping and negative political discourse, we observed a lack of understanding about this client group and a degree of myth and misconception. • Traditionally, homelessness services are tailored for people with complex needs, i.e. individuals with substance misuse or mental health issues. However, as Roma do not fit into this profile they also do not identify with the services provided and the services do not identify with them. • There is overemphasis on “pull” factors for Roma who come from Romania, without an accompanied understanding of the “push” factors such as poverty, high unemployment, insecure housing, cost of medical care and discrimination. (See appendix 7.2) • No Roma rough sleepers interviewed met the eligibility criteria for existing services in the borough. Since January 2014, a significant number of welfare reforms have impacted on entitlements of Romanian nationals to housing and welfare provision. This includes access to out of work benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance as well as Housing Benefit. The result is that they now have less rights than both UK citizens, (who are entitled to housing benefit), or asylum seekers (who are entitled to support from the National Asylum Support Service). This puts homelessness sector professionals in a difficult position where they feel they have a lack of tools to support EEA national rough sleepers, including Roma. • A limited number of Romanian speakers and no Roma representation within the homelessness services create immediate communication barriers which have significant impact on engagement. As a consequence, Roma tend to use

	<p>homelessness services only when they need to ask for reconnection. However, shower facilities were commonly accessed by 87% of interviewees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing assessment forms have an emphasis on accommodation history as opposed to employment and skills, which loses its relevance for EEA rough sleepers who must find work in order to move on from rough sleeping, particularly in the absence of existing family networks of successfully settled migrants to the UK. In addition, in cases when assessments have been conducted, Roma are fearful about answering questions and showing their documentation which typically leads to inconclusive and inaccurate assessment outcomes.• In addition, Roma do not seem to connect the process of assessment with the likelihood of obtaining work or accommodation. The fact this has not happened to date for anyone in their network, is reinforcing Roma's (mis)perception about homelessness services.• Due to specific community dynamics, Roma rough sleepers frequently present in large groups in existing services and public spaces. This leads to tensions and in some cases enforcement action for anti-social behaviour which further discourages Roma from engaging positively with homelessness services.• There is a lack of information for the sector on services available in various regions in Romania for those who are opting for reconnection. A lack of service provision in Romania will also account for the rate of those returning to the UK.• A small number of faith based organisations are providing practical advocacy, including 'care of' addresses. However, their limited capacity cannot meet demand.
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6. Recommendations

Decision Maker/ Stakeholder	Recommendations	Short / Medium / Long Term
City of Westminster	A firm commitment to employ and develop Roma mediators within commissioned services.	Short Term
	Presentation of report findings and agreement on a dissemination plan for London and the UK	Short Term
	Commission an information pack for the homelessness sector (including the police and health service professionals) about the Roma rough sleeping community and containing a recommended pathway for support.	Medium Term
	Commission a multi-media toolkit for use by commissioned services during outreach work. This should include a film by a Romanes speaker on why the homelessness sector worker has approached the group/ individual, what homelessness services can do to assist and to raise awareness of risks of exploitation.	Short Term
	Ensure there is a clear protocol agreed between the authority and homelessness services on the duty of care and clear processes for supporting pregnant rough sleepers and other vulnerable adults such as victims of trafficking and those with complex medical needs.	Short Term
Homelessness Sector	Commission Roma culture awareness training for staff.	Short Term
	Adopt a fresh approach to working with groups of Roma rough sleepers as innovative practice rather than a cause for concern.	Short Term
	Amend existing assessment forms and processes for Roma service users to place the emphasis on employment history and skills in addition to the existing consideration of housing history in the UK.	Short Term
	Ensure existing protocols for safeguarding	Short Term

	vulnerable adults, particularly victims of trafficking, pregnant women and individuals with complex medical needs are understood and applied across the sector.	
	Establishing links with the local authorities in key areas in Romania that Roma rough sleepers are from, in order to ensure provision of services after reconnection, especially for those individuals highlighted through assessment as particularly vulnerable.	Medium Term
	In those cases where reconnection is the best option for an individual sleeping rough implement best practice protocol which ensures links with support services in the relevant region of the individual's country of origin.	Medium Term
GLA	A meeting between GLA, DCLG, homeless service providers, local authorities and Roma NGOs should be arranged in order to present the report findings, including on the effectiveness of reconnections as a tool combating rough sleeping in the City of Westminster vs. alternative methods.	Short Term
	Re-design the "Routes Home" website to contain specific information on the Roma community in Romania and create links with support services in the specific regions where the majority of Roma rough sleepers in London originate from.	Short Term
	The GLA should consider commissioning a pilot project for Roma rough sleepers. The project should seek to build partnerships with existing services for rough sleepers, including voluntary sector led services providing support independently from commissioned services. This would help ensure that the needs of Roma are seen as comparable with that of other rough sleepers and allows sharing of knowledge and expertise between Roma project workers and the sector. This pilot project should take a "hot spot" intensive approach to outreach with Roma rough sleepers on the street with a clear referral pathway. The project must ensure Roma representation amongst their	Medium Term

	<p>workforce to aid communication and engagement.</p> <p>The GLA should aim to build the following ways of working into any such pilot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ support in getting people work ready such as CV writing, job search, vocational and short courses (such as food hygiene, catering, etc. in combination with basic English classes), coaching on work retention; ➤ English language courses should be delivered in a non-formal way and alongside employment support activities; ➤ lack of formal qualification should not be seen as a barrier to employment and transferable skills, including traditional Roma crafts, should be considered when seeking employment; ➤ development of links with potential employers and recruitment agencies; ➤ creation of a social enterprise, potentially with support of corporate partners; ➤ establishing links with other organisations working with rough sleepers and promoting employment, such as Big Issue, STRIVE skills and employment project and Crisis Pre-employment programme; ➤ support with regulating self-employment and formalising current income generating activities, such as selling flowers, busking and casual labour; ➤ information on welfare and immigration rights and legislation on begging and anti-social behaviour; ➤ administrative support, including support in obtaining National Insurance Numbers, registering as self-employed, support in obtaining CSCS cards, support in applying for in-work benefits; 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ support in accessing medical services available for rough sleepers; ➤ provision for individuals who find work to access short term hostel accommodation. ➤ the need for appropriate space for Roma groups should be a key consideration when finding a venue for the new service in order to minimise disruption to existing service users. 	
	Establish a multi-agency, pan-London, GLA-led Homeless Roma Stakeholders Group, which can make strategic decisions applicable to the homeless Roma population within London.	Short Term
Central Government	The DCLG should consider use of European Structural Investment Funding to support projects working with Roma, both to move away from rough sleeping and to prevent rough sleeping through access to employment based skills training.	Long Term
	DCLG/Home Office and the Department of Health should collaboratively provide guidance for local authorities on establishing protocols for supporting vulnerable, homeless individuals, such as pregnant women, victims of trafficking or people with complex medical needs.	Short Term

7. Appendices

7.1. Roma in Europe

The core group of the ancestors of the Roma migrated from India to Anatolia approximately 1000 years ago. Their presence in Europe dates back to the end of thirteenth century.²⁵ There are different Roma groups who speak their own dialects of Romanes. Most dialects are mutually intelligible but a minority are not; and some Roma do not speak Romanes. Throughout the centuries Roma have faced a high level of discrimination and persecution. In the late 1950s in Eastern Europe the few remaining nomadic Roma were forced to abandon their traditional travelling lifestyle and were forced to settle. Since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe Roma have frequently become victims of attacks by neo-Nazi groups.

The high number of Roma coming to the western European countries can be understood as resulting from longstanding and systematic discrimination, institutionalised racism, marginalisation and social exclusion in their countries of origin. Institutionalised racism and social exclusion have been a major factor in creating low educational attainment, high unemployment rates, low life expectancy, poor health status and low political participation for Roma communities across Europe.

The Roma in the UK come from different European countries including Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia. There is very little data available which provides a reliable estimate of the number of Roma refugees and migrants living in the UK. A Mapping Survey undertaken by European Dialogue for the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2009 estimated the minimum number of Roma in the UK to be 50,000 according to official records; however, community estimates ranged from 400,000 to 1 million²⁶. The most recent report, conducted by the University of Salford, states that there are minimum 200,000 Roma living in the UK, in addition to approximately 200,000 Gypsies and Travellers.²⁷

Historical Timeline

700s – 1100s Many of the ancestors of the Roma were members of various groups across the range of castes who joined migrations out of India during the warfare and movement of peoples during first four centuries of Islam.

1100s - 1200s Romani language emerges among Indian emigrants in Anatolia and the Balkans. The only plausible historical speculation as to why their different dialects converged is that the different caste groups, from grooms to washerwomen and tent-makers, and metalworkers and musicians to fighters, were part of a military formation led by Kshatrias

²⁵ Ian Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2002

²⁶ *Mapping Survey: Patterns of settlement and current situation of New Roma communities in England*, European Dialogue, Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), August 2009, pp 81-82

²⁷ University of Salford, *Migrant Roma in the UK: Population size and experiences of local authorities and partners*, 2013, p.29

(members of the military caste) who imposed their language on the whole group, but this hypothesis is still disputed. This period may be seen as the beginning of Roma identity.

1300s -1400s Roma begin to arrive in Europe beyond the Ottoman Borders as they were being enslaved, especially in the Christian fringes of the Ottoman Empire in south-east Europe. Since the 15th century, Romani groups have migrated to all countries in Europe, and many in other continents. Some are, and have always been, settled, and lived in permanent camps or housing, while others survived the breakup of the original group in Anatolia by practising their commercial-nomadic trades by negotiating protection from other feudal rulers.

1530 The first laws expelling Roma from England are introduced under Henry VIII, and strong anti-vagrancy laws.

1554 Under Queen Mary, the English Parliament passed the first Egyptians Act which made being a Gypsy a felony (i.e. punishable by death). These acts were not formally repealed until 1780. Genocidal laws also occurred in other West European countries from the 16th century up until 1945.

1783 H.M.G. Grellmann's *Die Zigeuner* develops European scientific racism to provide a new kind of explanation for the culture and history of Roma.

1800s The development of steam power opens up trade with the Americas, and leads to mass migration from poorer countries in Europe, which includes the "second wave" of migration of, perhaps, a million East European Roma. In 1899 the setting up in Munich of a clearing house for information on actions to combat "the Gypsy Menace" leads ultimately to the foundation of Interpol, and ever strong anti-Roma measures in many countries.

1933 - 45 - Figures from the US Holocaust Memorial Research Institute put the number of Roma lives lost at between 500,000 and 1.5 million.

From 1956 – Attempts to settle the few remaining nomadic Roma by force in most Eastern European countries.

1971 - The First World Romani Congress was held near London, during which an international Romani flag, motto (*Opré Roma - Roma Arise*) and Anthem (*Gelem, Gelem*) were formally approved. It was attended by delegates who called themselves Roma, and other Romani Groups like Sinte and Romanichal Gypsies who did not, and by some Irish Travellers who rejected Romani identity but felt they suffered the same anti-Gypsy racism.

1989 - Fall of communism and the migration of Roma from Eastern Europe towards the West the "Third wave", greatly increases.

2008 - Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month, taking place in June, established in the UK.

7.2. Roma in Romania

The current situation of the Roma in Romania can only be understood in the light of a long history of slavery, persecution and discrimination resulting in a significantly higher poverty rate, poorer health, lower outcomes in education and high unemployment. A World Bank Group report states that “merely ‘being a Roma’ remains a key determinant of living in poverty...age, rural location, predominant ethnicity in settlement and number of children in household have no impact of a similar magnitude on the individual’s chances of being at risk of poverty ”.²⁸

As a European Union member state, following the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, Romania adopted its second Roma Inclusion Strategy in 2011. The Strategy includes directions for action in the fields of education, employment, health, housing and small infrastructure, culture, and prevention and fighting against discrimination, in line with the recent social inclusion policies of the European Union. Romania is also a signatory of the Roma Decade, a regional initiative to increase social inclusion of the Roma, in addition to which Romania is committed to the Roma-related policies and recommendations of other intergovernmental organizations, such as the Council of Europe. However, despite the political framework and government interventions, a large number of Romanian Roma continue to be excluded from mainstream society.

Socio-Economic data

- **Population**

According to current unofficial estimates, Roma in Romania make up approximately 9% of the population (approximately 1,700.000)²⁹, making them the largest ethnic minority in Romania. However, official data of people self-declaring as Roma was 619,007, which constitutes 3.2% of the total population.³⁰ This discrepancy between unofficial estimates and official figures is caused by the Roma’s reluctance to declare their ethnicity and linked to several historical events, most notably:

- Roma extermination by deportations, pogroms, random executions during the Second World War,
- forced assimilation practices during the communist era such as: prohibition of using the Romani language and forced settlement of nomadic Roma.

In addition, The Soros Foundation’s report *Roma Inclusion in Romania: Policies, Institutions and Examples* also points out a corrupt census process which further contributed to difficulties obtaining credible statistical data.³¹

²⁸ The World Bank Group, Diagnostics and Policy Advice for Supporting Roma Inclusion in Romania, 2014, p.6

²⁹ European Roma Rights Centre, *Romania- a report by the European Roma Rights Centre*, April 2013, p.7

³⁰ 2011 Census of the Population and Households

³¹ Soros Foundation, *Roma Inclusion in Romania: Policies, Institutions and Examples*, 2012, p. 154

Roma in Romania are not a homogenous group. They are comprised of a number of sub-groups including Sporitori, Ursari, Turkish/Muslim Roma, Vatrasi, Rudari, Hungarian-speaking Roma, Linguarari, Caldarari, etc. who have distinct cultural identities.³²

According to the census, Roma are spread across the 41 counties and the Municipality of Bucharest. The largest Roma minority lives in the Mures County, followed by Calarasi, Salaj and Bihor. Only around 1% of the population are Roma in Botosani, Constanta and the Municipality of Bucharest.³³

The overall population of Romania has been decreasing in the last decade which indicates that Romania is a country of emigration, a factor which impacts Romanian nationals of Roma ethnicity. Research shows that poverty and racism are the main factors causing Roma to leave their countries of origin with poverty being the primary factor.³⁴

- **Housing**

The housing situation of the Roma in Romania remains one of the most visible manifestations of the problems concerning their integration into wider society. The majority of the Romanian Roma live in rural areas³⁵ where housing standards are substantially lower than both in the rest of Romania and Western Europe. Many Roma settlements lack adequate infrastructure such as water, electricity, sewage system and rubbish collection which contributes to their poor health status and ability to work.³⁶ Moreover, rural Roma settlements often lack access to roads and public transport links.³⁷

Although there are less Roma living in urban areas (around 37%), more than half live in overcrowded conditions; slums, old and poorly-maintained blocks of flats (formerly workers' housing during the communist period), or social housing units with inadequate infrastructure.³⁸ As the unemployment rate amongst Roma is high, they are also at high risk of evictions due to unpaid rent.

In recent years some Roma families living in urban areas, who had occupied previously nationalised houses which were then returned to their original owners, have been exposed to forceful evictions. Some Roma families were then relocated to hazardous areas near garbage dumps, sewage treatment plants or industrial areas on the outskirts of cities. Most known examples of such evictions were in Cluj, where 56 Roma families were moved from the city centre to a polluted industrial area next to the city's rubbish dump called Pata Rat

³² Ringwold, Ornstein & Wilkens, Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the poverty cycle, World Bank, 2005, p.93

³³ 2011 Census of the Population and Households

³⁴ European Roma Rights Centre, *Romania, a report by the European Roma Rights Centre*, April 2013, p.8

³⁵ Approximately 60% according to the Racism and Xenophobia European Network (RAXEN) report and 63% according to the report, Toth & Dan, Briciu, 2011 (p.11) available at: http://www.undp.ro/libraries/projects/Economia_Sociala_si_Comunitatile_de_Romi_Provocari_si_Oportunitati.pdf

³⁶ In recent study on migrant Roma in three Scandinavian cities *When poverty meets affluence*, 2015, homeless Roma migrants reported living conditions in Romania that are far below the average, with significantly less households having access to electricity, water and sewage than non-Roma citizens living in same areas of Romania

³⁷ World Bank survey from 2005 indicated that 11% of all Roma communities in Romania lacked access roads altogether and further 55% only had access by gravel roads.

³⁸ The World Bank Group, *Diagnostics and Policy Advice for Supporting Roma Inclusion in Romania*, 2014, p. 230

and the town of Baia Mare with nearly 100 Roma families from the city centre who were moved to a former copper factory, which was not properly decontaminated after it was closed. Shortly after the move, many were hospitalised due to contamination.

Other examples include evidence of evictions to far away areas, separated from other communities, factors which have placed additional obstacles to the Roma's full participation in Romanian society. As the World Bank Group concludes: "*spatial segregation of Roma settlements is highly correlated with early school-leaving, low labour market participation rates and costly access to public services (public transport, health facilities, etc.)*"³⁹ Although the Romanian National Council for Combating Discrimination addressed several cases of discriminatory forced evictions, its sanctions have not had any lasting impact on the phenomenon of forced evictions for the Roma.⁴⁰

Although the overwhelming majority of Romanian Roma are at risk of poverty and live in substandard accommodation, a small percentage of Roma live in relatively decent accommodation and some live in newly constructed, large houses. The existence of such houses has often been the focus of media reports which largely contributed to creation of the myth of "rich beggars". However, this research, and the recent study on homeless Roma living in Scandinavian countries⁴¹, found no evidence that homeless Roma are in any way linked to ownership or residence in such properties. Instead, they reported living in severe poverty in excluded areas of Romania and that money earned from begging was largely spent on daily necessities, including food and medication.⁴²

- **Employment**

The Roma population was particularly affected by the collapse of the Ceausescu regime in 1989. Transition to a market economy caused dramatic changes in Romania's labour market with large numbers of Roma losing their employment in formerly state-owned factories, mines and agricultural farms. Since the 1990s, most Roma have relied on either casual work, traditional craft or social security benefits. Participants in the recent study on homeless migrants from Romania in three Scandinavian capitals⁴³ had a similar experience:

"Looking at the migrants who were old enough to have held a job in 1989 we find that the bulk of those who ever had formal employment actually lost their jobs in 1989- and never re-entered the formal labour market again."

In addition, in post-communist Romania, discrimination became more prevalent leaving Roma with less and less possibilities of securing any form of employment. In 2010, 45% of unemployed Roma declared that their ethnicity was one of the main reasons for not having work.⁴⁴

³⁹ Ibid. P. 231

⁴⁰ in Cluj Napoca, Miercurea Ciuc and Baia Mare

⁴¹ The Rockwool Foundation, *When poverty meets affluence: Migrants from Romania on the streets of the Scandinavian capitals*, 2015

⁴² Ibid. p. 124

⁴³ Ibid. p. 43

⁴⁴ Soros Foundation Romania, *Legal and equal on the labor market for Roma communities*, 2010, p.33

Currently, there is a disproportionate degree of long-term unemployment amongst the Roma population in Romania. Many young Roma have never had a formal job or have only had short-term employment followed by long periods of unemployment. The Soros Foundation's study, conducted in 2012, showed that for Roma aged 16 and over more than half (51.5%) did not have work and only 10% reported having regular employment over the previous two years.⁴⁵

Left with very few real possibilities to find work within Romania, many Roma travelled to other European countries. This was initially to Spain or Italy in order to work in the agricultural sector and on farms. However, the start of the economic crisis in 2006, coupled with competition from increasing numbers of migrants from North African countries, meant that Roma had to find new destinations, including the UK.

- **Health**

Health amongst the Roma population is much poorer than in the non-Roma population in Romania. According to analysis on the health status in the Roma community in seven EU member states⁴⁶ poor health status in the community is related to inadequate living conditions, low income, unbalanced diet, limited access to medical services and insufficient health education. The World Bank Group report shows that only 51% of Roma who participated in their study had health insurance, whilst the figure was 77% amongst non-Roma.⁴⁷ Almost 66% of Roma cannot afford prescribed medication, whilst for the non-Roma population this figure is 29%.⁴⁸

In addition, there is widespread evidence of bribery in medical services at all levels of medical staff. Although this practice affects both Roma and non-Roma citizens, higher unemployment rates amongst Roma and a higher percentage of households living below the poverty line often leads to denial of medical services to a large share of the Roma population. An ECRI Report on Romania also states that Roma are more likely to be affected by discrimination in health services, with cases of refused medical treatment or Roma being segregated in separate wards in hospitals.⁴⁹

The 2011 Fundacion Secretariado Gitano Health Area study found that over half of the participants suffered from disabilities or chronic disease, almost half of those interviewed had never been to a dentist, more than 50% of the participants did not receive all appropriate immunisations and one in four had received none. Other studies indicate a higher prevalence of infectious diseases amongst Roma. For instance, a 2013 ERRC survey showed that the rate of diagnosis of TB among Roma respondents was more than double that of the general population, while in the 55 to 64 age group diagnosis was four times

⁴⁵ Soros Foundation, *Roma Inclusion in Romania: Politics, Institutions and Examples*, 2012, p. 207

⁴⁶ Fundacion Secretariado Gitano Health Area, Wamsiedel, Marius; Jitaru, Cristina, *Health and the Roma Community, analysis of the situation in Europe: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain*, 2011, p. 147-152

⁴⁷ The World Bank Group, *Diagnostics and Policy Advice for Supporting Roma Inclusion in Romania*, 2014, p. 170

⁴⁸ UNDP, *Data on Roma: Romania*, 2004

⁴⁹ Fundamental Rights Agency, *Fundamental Rights: challenges and Achievements in 2011*, p.169

higher among Roma respondents.⁵⁰ As a result, life expectancy for Roma is considerably lower than for the general population in Romania, with some studies finding a gap of sixteen years between the Roma and non-Roma population.⁵¹

- **Roma children in Social Care provision**

Various factors, including high unemployment, inadequate housing, poor access to health services, aggravated by discrimination and social exclusion, contribute to the overrepresentation of Roma children in state care in Romania. Official data estimates of the Roma children in institutional care vary in different regions of Romania and range from 10% in Constanta County, 20% in Iasi County, 40% in Timis County to 80% in Brasov County.⁵² In state care, some Roma children are subjected to physical abuse, ill treatment and various forms of discrimination. Furthermore, disproportionate number of Roma children in state care are enrolled in special education which has a long-term impact on their education, employment and life chances.

Many prospective adoptive parents refuse to adopt Roma children, which leaves a great proportion of Roma children in an institutional care setting until they reach eighteen years of age. In most cases, care leavers have no support network in the outside world and face multiple disadvantages and discrimination. This in turn, has been found to result “in poverty and socio-economic exclusion and may lead to multi-generational institutionalisation”.⁵³

- **Education**

Educational outcomes for Roma children are significantly lower than for children of non-Roma ethnicity at all stages of education. They also have higher rates of permanent exclusions, school absenteeism and lower attendance. For many Roma families who live in rural settlements, poverty has a significantly impact on their children’s education as they struggle to pay for transport, clothes, books and other learning materials.

In addition to socio-economic factors, discrimination by teachers and other pupils creates a further disincentive for Roma children to remain in education: “There have been reports on Roma children being placed in the back of classrooms, of teachers ignoring Roma pupils and of bullying by other school children.” In addition, “various surveys carried out by civil society have highlighted that the number of classrooms/schools in which Roma pupils are segregated is very high”.⁵⁴

The Ministry of National Education of Romania does not collect official figures on educational achievement based on ethnicity. However, a number of recent research studies evidence a

⁵⁰ The European Roma Rights Centre, *Hidden Health Crisis: Health Inequalities and Disaggregated Data*, October 2013, p.6

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 15

⁵² European Roma Rights Centre, *Life Sentence: Romani Children in Institutional Care*, 2011, p.36

⁵³ Ibid. p.70

⁵⁴ Council of Europe, ECRI Report on Romania, 2014

significant gap in educational achievement between Roma and non-Roma pupils in Romania:

- The preschool enrolment rate of Roma children (aged 3 - 6) was 32%, compared to 77% of the general population⁵⁵
- In the age group 7-15, the compulsory education enrolment rate of Roma is 78% and that of non-Roma is nearly 95%.⁵⁶
- Only 10% of Roma complete an upper secondary level of studies, compared to 58% in non-Roma population⁵⁷
- 25% of the respondents to the EU Access initiative who were over sixteen years of age stated to be illiterate, whilst literacy rates of non-Roma in Romania are close to 100%⁵⁸

Although a variety of positive educational initiatives (such as Roma mediators programme, The Second Chance Programme, Money for High School and Special seats for Roma pupils in High and Vocational Schools Programme) have been launched in Romania in the last decade, many have been discontinued due to a lack of funding. As a result, educational outcomes for Roma children remain a significant issue.

7.3 Roma evictions in Europe

This section of the report aims to illustrate the conditions encountered and the policies applied by different European governments towards Roma migrants. Examples listed are not exhaustive but serve as an illustration of some of the most recent cases of evictions.⁵⁹ Knowledge of this experience is integral to our understanding of the perceived lack of engagement with services and governmental departments, including those in the City of Westminster.

France:

In 2010 French authorities initiated a programme of expulsion of Roma back to Romania and Bulgaria. Despite widespread condemnation and the threat of legal action from the European Commission this programme is ongoing. In January 2014 European Roma Rights Centre reported that 'French authorities forcibly evicted more than 21,537 Romani migrants in 2013, more than double the total for 2012. Law enforcement officers carried out 165 evictions affecting almost 19,380 people. There were 22 evictions due to fire, affecting 2,157 Roma'.⁶⁰

Hungary:

⁵⁵ The World Bank Group, Diagnostics and Policy Advice for Supporting Roma Inclusion in Romania, 2014, p.7

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 31

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 7

⁵⁸ Soros Foundation Romania, Roma Situation in Romania- Between Social Inclusion and Migration, 2011, p.183

⁵⁹ For more detailed information on Roma evictions throughout Europe, please see European Roma Rights Centre's website: <http://www.errc.org/>

⁶⁰ Census: Forced evictions of migrant Roma in France, 2014, European Roma Rights Centre

Forced evictions of Roma across Hungary have been commonplace with the town of Miskolc in the North East of the country being the most recent high profile case. Since 2014 there have been forced evictions of Roma predominantly housed in the 'Numbered streets' of the town to make way for the expansion of a football stadium. In July 2015, a further 450 were asked to vacate their homes. The evictions are taking place without warning and without the provision of alternative accommodation. Some families have been offered compensation if they agree to find accommodation outside of the city.⁶¹

Italy:

In Italy there have been a series of forced evictions and bulldozing of informal camps in areas of Rome and Milan.⁶² The camps have no running water or electricity and evictions take place without the required legal process or support to obtain alternative accommodation. In limited situations where alternative accommodation has been provided by city councils, it has been located in Roma-only settlements such as La Barbuta constructed in 2012 on the outskirts of Rome. In May 2015 the Civil Court of Rome ruled that the practice of moving Roma families into the settlement was a form of segregation and constituted discrimination in breach of both Italian and European law.⁶³

7.4 Fafo Research Foundation, *When poverty meets affluence: Migrants from Romania on the streets of the Scandinavian capitals*⁶⁴ - main findings

This report was written in 2015 by the Fafo Research Foundation in order to map and analyse the situation for Romanian street workers in three Scandinavian capitals: Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm. The majority of their 1269 interviewees were Romanians of Roma ethnicity. The findings of this report reflect our observations within the City of Westminster. In addition, it explores the phenomena of begging amongst Roma migrants, which was outside the remit of our report.

- Many of those interviewed had a previous experience of migration, especially through seasonal migration to work in agricultural and construction sectors in southern Europe including, Italy, Spain, France, Germany and Portugal until these labour market opportunities disappeared with the economic crisis
- Roma beggars in Northern Europe are not part of organised crime networks coordinated by ring leaders profiting from their activities. If any organisation exists in relation to transport, finding a place to sleep and sharing income, it is taking place within small family groups which are seen as a source of safety rather than a coercive or exploitative relationship.

⁶¹ New Eastern Europe, July 2015, www.neweasterneurope.eu/interviews/1669-forced-displacement-in-hungary-sets-dangerous-precedent

⁶² Amnesty International: Italy: Roma segregation camps – a blight on the City of Rome, Oct 2013, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/10/italy-roma-segregation-camps-blight-city-rome/

⁶³ European Roma Rights Centre, June 2015, www.errc.org/article/municipality-of-rome-condemned-for-la-barbuta-camp-for-the-first-time-in-europe-an-official-roma-only-settlement-ruled-discriminatory/4369

⁶⁴ The full report is available at <http://www.fafo.no/index.php/en/publications/other-fafo-publications/item/when-poverty-meets-affluence>.

- While the media and public discourse associates Roma migrants as being in the city simply to beg, the majority of those interviewed were surviving on a range of income earning strategies including casual work, collecting bottles for recycling and busking.
- While both Roma and non-Roma rough sleepers reported a similar figure for time spent seeking casual work, the Roma were found to be significantly less successful in securing it.
- Despite popular understanding of the cultural acceptability of begging amongst Roma, the vast majority of Roma interviewed rejected the statement that 'Begging for money is just as good as having a job – as long as it brings money to the family'. The study found that structural factors such as poverty, marginalisation and lack of formal education which renders them on the fringes of the casual labour market is the significant factor as opposed to traditional values and identity of the Roma so that 'either way, the analyses strongly suggests that although begging to some extent appears to be a cultural adaptation, it is an option of last resort'.⁶⁵

7.5. RSG expertise

Some of the areas of our specialism include the following expertise, which is applied in working with individual Roma beneficiaries, partner organisations, as well as our policy work and our publications:

Roma socio-cultural and historical awareness:

A/ Understanding of how Roma history and various forms of anti-Roma discrimination in their respective countries of origins have effected their integration with the mainstream society;

B/ Awareness of cultural/ linguistic traits of Roma from different Eastern European countries (Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania, former Yugoslavia and countries of the former Soviet Union) and cultural/ tribal diversities within each of these groups, which determine their social inclusion and cultural identity;

C/ Knowledge of how tribal/ clan/ family structure and dynamics effects on working with Roma families;

D/ Knowledge and awareness of cultural taboos (e.g. mental health, domestic violence, drugs, etc.), which directly impact on Roma children's academic performance, health and well-being;

E/ Knowledge of traditional Roma education methods (still practiced in most Roma families) and how they can be compatible with British mainstream education;

F/ Knowledge and awareness of leadership mechanisms in various Roma communities, as well as practical experience of implementing community engagement and empowerment mechanisms. This experience informs our model of community engagement which is now disseminated through our training, expert advice, capacity building activities and publications.

Knowledge of barriers, needs and aspirations of Roma children, elder people and their families:

⁶⁵ Anne Britt Djuve, Jon Horgen Friberg, Guri Tyldum & Huafeng Zhang, *When poverty meets affluence: Migrants from Romania on the streets of the Scandinavian capitals*, Fafo Research Foundation, November 2015, p. 137-144

G/ Understanding the main causes behind poverty and social exclusion of Roma families (including Roma Older People) in the UK and disseminating methods of addressing these issues based on our best models of practice;

H/ Knowledge and understanding of what are the main causes of high mobility of Roma families and working expertise in ensuring a safer and more stable environment (e.g. facilitating access to safe and more secure housing, employability, health services and education through mobilising and co-ordinating networks of professional support);

I/ Understanding the main health inequalities within Roma communities and working experience in addressing these issues through projects that are run and managed in close partnership with Roma community members;

J/ Knowledge and understanding of how immigration, welfare and employment issues determine Roma children's access to education, academic performance and aspirations;

K/ Knowledge and understanding of the main barriers to access and achieve in mainstream education (e.g. socio- historical conditions; poverty; psychological barriers, etc.) and disseminating/ implementing working models to tackle these issues;

L/ Trust established within the Roma community that was gained through our knowledge, expertise and cultural sensitivity of our services, which enables us to successfully engage with them;

M/ Knowledge of Roma culture, history, heritage and developing the best ways of integrating this knowledge in the mainstream school curriculum, community cohesion, mainstream British art and culture programmes, etc.

Linguistic expertise:

N/ Bi-lingual staff and volunteers reflect a linguistic map of our Roma beneficiaries, sharing in-house 11 community languages (including 5 distinctive dialects of Romanes).

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