

Country fiche: UNITED KINGDOM

Position of civil society involved in the Roma Civil Monitor

SUBSTANTIVE POLICY AREAS

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory guidance on school exclusion stresses the importance of providing additional support to address the needs of children from groups at higher risk of exclusion, including Roma children. • Higher education providers will be required to publish application data broken down by ethnicity. • Higher education providers charging higher fees will be required to agree Access and Participation Plans. The plans will set out measures to support the access and successful participation for disadvantaged and under-represented groups, including Roma. • There is no requirement in England to attend school, however, parents are required to ensure that children of compulsory school age receive an efficient full-time education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the attendance rate of Roma children in pre-school education is very low, there is no government focus on this critical issue; all the initiatives in this field are implemented in individual settings (by schools, volunteers and community groups). • Although the educational attainment of Roma children in England has improved in recent years, the attainment gap has widened. • Both temporary and permanent school exclusion of Roma students from primary and secondary education remains a serious problem, in particular in specific cities. • There is no co-ordinated response between primary schools, secondary schools and local authorities to improve transfer rates and maintain pupil engagement. • Insufficient training of staff, and employment of Roma staff at all grades in early years of education. • Insufficient school places available for children in the neighbourhoods where Roma have settled in England. |
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EMPLOYMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream public employment services are available and some recent efforts to improve access by Roma. • New plans on consultation on ethnic pay gap reporting and race monitoring as part of public procurement standards. • Race Disparity Audit and website to collect and disseminate information on discrimination in employment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no public employment services dedicated to Roma and their access has remained limited. • Roma often work informally and are low paid: need further regulation in zero-hour contracts and agency work. • There is a need to evaluate effectiveness of existing public employment programmes from the perspective of outreach and effectiveness towards Roma. • Anti-discrimination legislation in the field of employment is not enforced. |
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HEALTHCARE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a matter of policy, access to National Health Service (NHS) is universal. • Government established a working group on tackling inequalities experienced by Roma in 2012 and specific commitments to improve Roma health were adopted. • Governmental authorities in partnership with the voluntary sector and health and social care services launched an initiative HWalliance, aimed at promoting equality in health. Roma advocacy NGO is part of the alliance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is often a gap between policy and practice for Roma communities seeking to access health care. Due to a lack of permanent residence address or ID proof, many Roma do not have access to healthcare. • Despite formal existence of governmental structures aimed at improving Roma health, little measurable progress towards achieving the commitments has been recorded. • Roma are significantly more likely to have a long-term illness, health problem or disability, experience higher levels of anxiety and depression, suicidal tendencies, dependency of drugs. Members of these communities are also less likely to be vaccinated. |
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- Maternal health remains a grave problem; Gypsies and Travellers are more likely to experience miscarriage and the premature death of offspring. National Maternity Health Review (2016) mentions Gypsy and Traveller mothers' health only once and Roma are not mentioned at all.

HOUSING

- Planning policy for Gypsy and Traveller sites has been improved and obliged local boroughs or districts to identify a five-year supply of land for site provision. Some local authorities are making efforts to upgrade sites.
- Many municipalities have introduced Selective Licensing to oblige all registered residential landlords to let properties according to minimum standards, and also enforce tenancy agreements. This may improve the housing conditions of Roma in the private rental sector.
- In Scotland, a housing acquisition and improvement programme are supported by the national and local governments.
- Despite legal obligation, few local governments have provided Gypsy and Traveller sites; many sites that have been provided are on unsuitable land such as land fill, close to a railway line or on contaminated land. Families who wish to remain nomadic are finding themselves with a reducing land pool.
- Housing benefit on Traveller sites is problematic and there are differences between local authority sites and private sites. Recent changes to UK housing benefit have also affected the security of some families.
- Reductions of spending and tightening of eligibility for social housing, and reductions in control of private housing developments impact housing affordability. Recently arrived and migrant households are especially affected.
- Many Roma families are denied access to council (municipal) housing due to eligibility criteria. Additionally, waiting lists are extremely long and much available council housing (e.g. one-bedroom flats) would be inadequate for many Roma families.
- There are no funding streams in England to support neighbourhood renewal programmes, whether community- or housing-focused.

HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- Legislation to combat racial prejudice in UK is exemplary. There are numerous mechanisms to report discriminatory behaviour by police, and opportunities for structured dialogue and consultation with various police forces.
- Despite good laws in place, discrimination and racism towards Roma persists and ranges from verbal abuse to violent assault, with frequent biased media coverage and racist statements from local and national politicians.
- The lack of sites for Gypsies and Travellers means that many individuals and families are statutorily homeless. Many traditional stopping places have been blocked off, and families are increasingly forced to live on areas such as fields and car parks. Such families also lack access clean water, sewage disposal and electricity.

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- The UK Government's plan for tackling hate crime specifically mentions Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.
- There are awareness raising programmes about antigypsyism for local government, the Police, the Health Service and other agencies; however, these initiatives are not State-driven.
- Where they have been set up third party reporting centre have been successful in encouraging community members
- Antigypsyism is often left out of discussions about racism.
- A clear strategy is needed to take action against the media or individuals that incite discrimination and racism against Roma communities and individuals. The media needs to take urgent action to address the discriminatory reporting.

(who may be reluctant to report hate crime to the Police) to come forward.

- The UK also has a facility for the online reporting of hate crime.

- Any media that incites direct or indirect discrimination, hatred or violence against these communities should be condemned and legal action needs to be taken against them.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- The Department for Education collaborates with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government on a pilot programme to improve the social integration Roma communities; within this framework.

- There is no specific approach for Roma youth within the national youth strategy (i.e. criteria for apprenticeship).
- The policy of decreasing access to various social security benefits for EU nationals left Roma school children out of the free school meal programme (i.e. Pupil Premium).
- Gypsy and Traveller women living at sites face disproportionate disadvantages within the planning system for housing, as status for planning relies on looking for work and many women with care obligations cannot meet these application criteria.
- The government has announced a programme to tackle inequalities in youth unemployment highlighted by the Race Disparity Audit (published in 2017); however, it does not include any specific policy measures targeting young Roma people. Roma youth should be addressed as a specific subgroup and provided with career guidance.
- No measures have been adopted to address (explicitly) Roma LGBT+ issues.
- Intra-EU mobile Roma are in danger of being unlawfully resident after the closure of the EU Settlement Scheme in Jun 2012, as they are often not able to apply for due to digital exclusion, language barrier or lack of information.

STRUCTURAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

- All-party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (APPG) exists to provide a forum for MPs concerned about the issues of Roma. The group acts a bridge between the NGOs and the Government Ministers.
- In 2012, a ministerial working group (MWG) produced a Report on preventing and tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, making 28 commitments for the UK Government. Parliamentarians in the Women and Equalities Select Committee review the progress against the 28 commitments.
- The NRCP is placed in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government with the role of coordination and advice. The NRCP is involved in drafting of the ministry's reports. The ministry also co-organises, with the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, quarterly meetings of the liaison group.
- Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) oversees and encourages Roma inclusion. It regularly publishes research reports on discrimination faced by Roma and it holds information sessions for Roma organisations.

- The UK has still not established a National Roma Integration Strategy despite pressures from international organizations and repeated requests from Roma NGOs.
- Funding for the APPG has been extremely problematic. A more secure funding base and a permanent secretariat should be established.
- There is no systematic mainstreaming for Roma inclusion within central government.
- There were positions within the Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care which included a remit for Roma inclusion, but over the last three years, these posts/units have either withered or been amalgamated into wider areas of policy. There is no evidence of Roma inclusion in any other departments/ministries.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- Governmental structures engaged in Roma inclusion (APPG, NRCP, EHRC) cooperate with the Roma civil society.
- EHRC commissioned a national charity which works on behalf of Roma to complete a short-term project focused on access to justice.
- There have been targeted courses, for example the Roma Intercultural Mediation (ROMED) Training, which the UK government joined in 2012.
- Roma NGOs criticized the 2012 MWG Report. The MWG did not consult with the communities, it largely ignored Roma from other EU countries, and did not address key issues such as targeted funding, employment or health.
- There are examples of homeless people and Travellers having difficulties registering to vote. Little accountability exists to ensure that local authorities are compliant with their duty to register residents with no fixed abode to vote and it is likely that complex processes surrounding this may be off-putting to potential voters.

MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Specific regions (Yorkshire & Humberside, East of England, and South East regions) have been working closely with local authorities to strengthen the profile of the needs of Roma communities in their areas.
- East of England Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) have recently secured funding for a Roma rights project (Parallel Lives). In Kent, the SMP have supported funding by Big Lottery in a capacity development project led by an NGO Red Zebra.
- The National Roma Network (NRN) was developed in 2012 by Migration Yorkshire, a local authority supported network in Yorkshire & Humberside region. Since 2015, with dedicated funding, the NRN has held six national gatherings on themed subjects in Leeds, Sheffield, Peterborough, Salford and finally London (2017).
- Given that the UK Government's approach is not to take a "separate" integration policy approach but rather to deal with Roma inclusion under wider social inclusion policies, there is little evidence of Roma inclusion being mainstreamed across local authorities.
- It is unclear what policies and frameworks local authorities have as statutory duties with regards to integration and cohesion.

DATA COLLECTION

- With regard specifically to Roma, good data on the situation of migrant Roma in schools is published by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).
- Health needs assessments done by local authorities' public health departments are also good sources of data.
- There is not enough clarity with regards to the distinction between Gypsies and Travellers on one hand, and Roma, on the other hand. In the 2011 Census when the "Gypsy or Irish Traveller" ethnic group category was first introduced, there was no specific category for Roma. The three groups should be separate categories.
- There is also poor ethnicity data regarding those benefitting from funding. Consequently, there is a lack of data that would show if indeed Roma are actually directly benefitting from government funding.

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- The Big Lottery (distributors of funds raised by the National Lottery, a quasi-governmental agency) has a record of supporting Roma groups at a local and national level.
- There has also been governmental funding for pilot projects covering improving English of Roma adults and access to primary care.
- The most relevant European funding stream is the European Social Fund (ESF). The Managing Authority for the delivery of the ESF 2014-2020 programme in England sits within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
- In addition to ESF, there have been occasional small-scale pots of funding for NGOs e.g. with regard to the Hate Crime
- A major problem is the lack of central funding capacity specifically designed to address issues of Roma integration.
- Only 10.3% of the LEPs (Local Enterprise Partnerships which decide on ESF target groups) refer explicitly to Roma communities or individuals.
- The latest monitoring from Big Lottery on Roma participation in the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme shows that just over 1% of participants of the programme (out of circa 4,500 participants) are of Roma background. The Big Lottery suggested that this

Action Plan, although these have tended not to be Roma-specific.

data has not yet been verified by the Managing Authority.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

The UK Government has announced that for the first time “Roma” will be an ethnicity category in the 2021 Census (“Gypsy or Irish Traveller” was included as a category for the first time in the 2011 Census but there was no “Roma” category). Civil society organisations are hopeful that by improving the data collected by government on racial disparities in life outcomes this will drive action to address these disparities and improve outcomes for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the UK.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Government services should have a more uniform ethnicity framework for providing data regarding use of public services. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ethnicity categories should be included for all equalities monitoring by government departments and other key agencies.
- The Government should ensure that recommendations arising from the Women and Equalities Committee enquiry into the inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are fully resourced and that there are specific civil servants tasked and accountable for their timely delivery.
- The Department for Health and Social Care should put in place a plan to address issues in accessing healthcare for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
- The Government should re-introduce targets, and a statutory duty on local authorities to meet the assessed accommodation need of Gypsies and Travellers, as formerly existed under the Caravans Sites Act 1968. This should cover both permanent sites and temporary stopping places (e.g. transit sites and Negotiated Stopping sites). The funding necessary should be ring-fenced for this purpose.
- The EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) scheme will close in June 2021 and it is likely that many EU nationals (including Roma) will find themselves as outlaws and ‘without papers’ and so unlawfully living in the UK, if they haven’t registered with the government. For EU mobile Roma steps should thus be taken either to make provision for registration outside of the EU Settlement Scheme time limit, or to ensure that the entitlement to this status is not dependant on registration.