



*Improving Employment Prospects for  
Eastern European Roma*

The Roma Support Group (RSG)  
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[www.romasupportgroup.org.uk](http://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk)



## Roma Support Group

- The RSG is a registered charity established by Roma in 1998 and it is led by them today
- The origins of the organisation and its ethos are strongly based within the grassroots movement of the Roma community in London
- We have 15 years experience working with East European Roma refugees and migrants across the UK, delivering direct support to families including access to education and employment
- We also support other professionals working with the Roma communities and promote an understanding of Roma culture in the UK



## Barriers to employment

Relatively high level of unemployment amongst the RSG's service users.

### Roma community

- Low self-esteem and confidence
- Lack of aspirations
- Lack of formal education
- Lack of formal qualifications
- Lack of work experience

### Services

- Lack of awareness of Roma community within mainstream services including barriers into employment
- Rigid frameworks and criteria when assessing the skills and experiences of Roma



## European context

**Segregated education in Eastern Europe resulting in:**

- Low educational achievement
- High level of illiteracy
- Lack of understanding about value of education

**Exclusion and discrimination:**

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Discrimination at work



## Roma in the UK

### Immigration and employment restrictions

From a rights and employment perspective the distinctions between Roma who are refugees, A8 and A2 countries are significant:

- **Asylum seekers and refugees** – no employment rights, cases lasting for several years and the legacy of both factors;
- **2007 - A2** (Romania and Bulgaria) - Economic migrants; in the context of the three waves of migration they are the most disadvantaged - heavy restrictions in relation to employment.



## Recommendations

### *1. Recognising existing skills and strengths within the community*

- Linguistic skills
- Creative skills (music and performing arts)
- Building on existing skills like childcare, care for elderly
- Craft (metalwork, sewing)
- Driving



## Recommendations

### *2. Improving Roma experience of using Jobcentre and other employment-related services*

#### Methods:

- Workshops for Roma on employment related activities such as using job search engines, writing CVs and applications, interview skills
- Designing courses which would enhance the Roma community's employment prospects in a more meaningful way



## Recommendations

### *3. Involving Roma in projects which enhance their employability*

- Promoting volunteering opportunities
- Work placements and internship
- Sessional work



## Examples of Good Practice

1. Promoting positive role models in the community (employed Roma teaching assistants and community liaison workers)
2. Creating projects and activities for young people to raise their self esteem and aspirations

### RSG activities for young people:

- Mentoring and peer mentoring
- Individual tutoring and homework clubs
- Sport activities: football, karate
- Book project, learning pack, DVD project



## Young Roma Media Project “Be Roma or Die Trying”

### What was the film about?

- Young Roma identity
- Challenging representation of Roma culture in media
- Exploration of the general public’s views about Roma

### Key to its success

- Consultation with young Roma
- Accommodating initial challenges we were facing at the start (participation, group dynamics, retaining young people on the project over six months, etc.)
- Involving young Roma in all aspects including editing and final presentation at the cinema



## Outcomes of the project

- Confidence gained during the creative process
- Raised self esteem of young people
- Learning pack for secondary schools
- Further creative projects for young Roma

## Where are the project's participants today?

- One young person thinking about starting Roma organisation in Nottingham
- One participant obtained a BA qualification
- Two participants have been employed by the RSG
- One participant has been employed by an NGO in the L.B. Redbridge
- Two participants working as teaching assistants in secondary schools



## Contact details

Gabriela Smolinska-Poffley

Roma Support & Engagement Programme Leader

[gaba@romasupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:gaba@romasupportgroup.org.uk)

Website: [www.romasupportgroup.org.uk](http://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk)