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# A report into the impact of multi-agency work supporting Roma children in education

*Dr John Lever*  
*[www.jblresearch.org](http://www.jblresearch.org)*

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## Executive summary

Roma migration from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has increased significantly over the last decade as a result of EU expansion. There are now sizable Roma communities in many parts of England – including London, the Midlands and Northern England.

Roma are one of the most persecuted groups in history and they can be extremely suspicious of the intentions and actions of non-Roma. Self-help is thus a key feature of Roma culture and many Roma migrants are extremely reluctant to engage with support agencies when they arrive in England. Legislation continues to restrict the type of work nationals from A2 accession states can do and many Roma thus exist at the margins of mainstream society. This has direct implications for the education of Roma children, who are often required to help their families earn an income rather than attend school. Multi-agency partnership work is recognized as a valuable tool for overcoming these problems and supporting Roma children into school.

The research on which this report is based, set out to examine the impact of multi-agency partnership work engaging Roma migrants from CEE in more detail. It explored the challenges faced by agencies working with Roma and the impact of multi-agency work on the attendance levels and educational success of Roma children in secondary schools in England. It also assessed the potential impact of proposed changes to the school funding system on multi-agency work with Roma.

The research found that:

- Historical tensions between Roma and non-Roma migrants often reemerge when the communities have to interact in the UK
- Multi-agency work with Roma is hindered by a lack of cultural awareness amongst a range of professionals
- Strategic direction and leadership is needed if the work of disparate agencies at all levels is to be coordinated effectively at the local and district levels
- New forms of organisation and smaller operational teams must focus on leadership and ownership of partnership work
- A commitment to collaboration from agencies at all levels across all sectors is a crucial aspect of successful multi agency work with Roma
- Provision of support and training opportunities for the Roma community is fundamental for sustaining independence and increasing the attainment of aspirations by Roma pupils
- The skills and knowledge developed by specialist traveller teams and services over recent decades may be lost
- Despite cuts to funding, there is still some flexibility over how budgets can be used in innovative ways to commission services through partnership work
- Changes to the school funding system are likely to hinder future provision for Roma children, both in maintained schools and schools that opt out of local authority control

Recommendations

- Coalition Government to develop and fund partnerships between secondary schools working with high numbers of Roma/ minority pupils.
- Coalition Government to fund third sector partnerships to fill the gaps in provision left by the withdrawal of funding for traveller teams and services
- Local Authorities to commission innovative service provision through partnership work
- Local Authorities to provide guidance to support a wider understanding of Roma issues/culture across diverse professional groups
- Local Authorities to implement effective systems to monitor work with Roma minority groups
- Third sector agencies to work more closely in partnership to focus on the needs of Roma groups
- Third sector agencies to work more closely/collaboratively with local authorities, where necessary
- Cross sector collaboration to develop a database/ knowledge bank of traveller knowledge and skills

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Migration from Central and Eastern Europe

Roma migration from Central and Eastern Europe to England has increased significantly over the last two decades. The collapse of Communism in the late 1980s led a wave of Roma migration. Despite the fact that many Roma fled their home countries to escape persecution and discrimination most were not granted refugee status, and were subsequently deported. European expansion in 2004 and 2007, which allowed nationals from the new A8<sup>1</sup> and A2<sup>2</sup> accession states freedom of movement within the EU, encouraged another wave of Roma migration<sup>3</sup>. In the UK, significant Roma communities have since been established across England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, with Roma often settling in areas where they have previously lived as asylum seekers. In England there are now sizable Roma communities in many parts of the country – including London, the Midlands and Northern England<sup>4</sup>.

The Romani people are the largest ethnic minority in Europe<sup>5</sup>. They have been systematically persecuted and discriminated against since their arrival in Europe from India around 700 years ago. In World War II, Roma suffered greatly at the hands of the Nazi regime and even today are still targeted by far right political parties, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In many countries a hostile political climate and highly entrenched institutional racism make it almost impossible for Roma to access key public services, including healthcare, social services and education. Pushed to the margins of mainstream society, Roma continue to migrate west in increasing numbers.<sup>6</sup>

Roma groups have concealed their ethnic origins for centuries. The fear of discrimination means that self-ascription rates amongst Roma remain low when they arrive in Western Europe<sup>7</sup>. This makes it extremely difficult to give exact figures for the number of Roma living in England, a situation that again pushes them to the fringes of mainstream society. As a recent research report states: *“The Roma’s ‘visible’ status as EU citizens, (which tends to be perceived by the British as meaning immigrants from Eastern Europe), and their ‘invisible’ status as Roma, (coming from societies where racism and anti-Roma sentiments are deeply rooted), combine to make it very challenging for Roma in their attempts to become part of society, and for them to fully participate in public, social and economic life in the UK.”*<sup>8</sup>

This situation has not been helped by legislation and restrictive employment conditions for migrants from EU accession states.

## 1.2 UK legislation

After 2004, A8 nationals were required to register their employment under the workers registration scheme (WRS) and, after 12 months of continuous employment, they were granted access to

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1 The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

2 Bulgaria and Romania

3 DIRECTIVE 2004/38/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 29 April 2004:

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

4 *‘The Movement of Roma from new EU Member States: A mapping survey of A2 and A8 Roma in England Patterns of settlement and current situation of the new Roma communities’* (European Dialogue 2009). Available online at:

[http://equality.uk.com/Resources\\_files/movement\\_of\\_roma.pdf](http://equality.uk.com/Resources_files/movement_of_roma.pdf)

5 The term Roma has been widely used to refer to all groups that speak or have spoken the Romani language. As Hancock (2002) notes in his book *‘We are the Romani people’*, there is some debate about the appropriate use of both terms in line with changing international convention.

6 *‘From Segregation to Inclusion: Roma Pupils in the United Kingdom. A Pilot Research Project’*,

[http://equality.uk.com/Education\\_files/From%20segregation%20to%20integration\\_1.pdf](http://equality.uk.com/Education_files/From%20segregation%20to%20integration_1.pdf) (Equality 2010).

7 *‘Improving Engagement with the Roma Community’* Research Report, Roma Support Group:

<http://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk/documents/Roma%20Support%20Group%20Research%20Report.pdf>

8 *ibid*, footnote 7 above p.23

public funds and benefits. Since May 2011, A8 nationals have access to all UK benefits, including jobseekers allowance and income support, but only if they meet a strict criteria of “right to reside” that requires them to apply for a document showing they have lived in accordance with UK regulations including employment specifications. Since January 2007, nationals from A2 accession states have been allowed to enter and live in the UK, but they are restricted to self-employment and short-term agricultural work.

These restrictions mean that many Roma families continue to live in severe poverty and substandard housing, with overcrowding and ill health having a big impact on school attendance and educational achievement. While many Roma children attend primary school regularly, drop out rates increase at secondary level because their families cannot afford to pay for school uniforms and school meals, and because children are often required to help their families earn income. As a recent study noted, the successful education of Roma children “*goes hand in hand with their parents{sic} or carer’s access to employment and other services. Since A2 and A8 Roma’s access to the labour market has been restricted for a range of reasons, this has had an adverse impact on the overall situation of A2 and A8 Roma families, their children and their survival strategies.*”<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3 Multi-agency partnership work

Over recent years, local authorities and specialist support groups, through multi-agency partnership work, have attempted to solve some of the interrelated factors underpinning the situation of Roma communities. This is widely recognized as an important way of engaging Roma groups and getting their children into school. Research for the former Department for Children, Schools and Families – now the Department for Education – argued that partnerships are a ‘*vital way for schools to access and engage Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, to establish respect, build trust and ultimately change hearts and minds to value education*’. Partnerships are, it was argued, ‘*key drivers in educational engagement at the individual, parental, school and community level*’.<sup>10</sup> A multi-agency team member engaged in the research summed up the value of partnership working in this context, stating that: ‘*It is holistic: it is not just an education problem, it’s everything*’.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the recent policy emphasis on multi-agency work, which increased greatly during the New Labour period, history suggests that such practice is fraught with difficulties. These difficulties are not simply linked to opposition of collaboration: in Children’s Services, many professionals clearly value and appreciate the chance and opportunity to work in this way and the added value it can bring to service provision<sup>12</sup>; it is more that the concept of multi agency work covers a broad range of organisational forms and practices that raise as many questions as they answer.<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding the importance of this issue, this report has a particularly narrow focus on the success of multi agency work in engaging with Roma from CEE and getting their children into school. While it focuses on the limitations of partnership working in different locations to some extent, it does not offer a critique of multi agency work in itself.<sup>14</sup>

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9 ‘*The movement of Roma from new EU Member States: A mapping survey of A2 and A8 Roma in England Patterns of settlement and current situation of the new Roma communities*’ (European Dialogue 2009, p.13) [http://equality.uk.com/Resources\\_files/movement\\_of\\_roma.pdf](http://equality.uk.com/Resources_files/movement_of_roma.pdf)

10 DCSF (2009) *Improving Educational Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils What Works?, Contextual Influences and Constructive Conditions that may Influence Pupil Achievement*, Research Report No DCSF-RR170

11 *ibid*, pp.12

12 Farrell, P., Woods, K., Lewis, S., Squires, G., Rooney, S. & O’Connor, M. (2006) *A Review of the Functions and Contribution of Educational Psychologists in England and Wales in light of “Every Child Matters: Change for Children”*. Nottingham: DfES Publications

13 Audit Commission (1998) *A Fruitful Partnership: effective partnership working*, London: Audit Commission.

14 For a recent review of multi agency work see: ‘*Multi-agency working and its implications for practice: A review of the literature*’, (2007) Atkinson, M., Jones, M., and Lamont, E., <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/MAD01/MAD01.pdf>

## 1.4 Research Aims

The research on which this report is based set out to examine the role of multi-agency partnership work engaging Roma groups across England and supporting Roma children into school. The research had three specific aims:

- To explore the challenges faced by those working with Roma
- To examine how multi-agency partnership work impacts on the numbers of Roma children in secondary schools
- To assess the potential impact of proposed changes to the school funding system

## 1.5 Research design and methodology

The research adopted a case study methodology based on qualitative methods. Case study research situates a contemporary problem in social, historical, and/ or economic perspective in order to generate insights that are not always forthcoming when the net is spread more widely.<sup>15</sup> Case study research can be based on multiple or single cases.<sup>16</sup> This project adopted a case study approach to facilitate a comparative analysis of multi-agency practice across four localities in England.

The four case study sites were Bradford and Calderdale in West Yorkshire, Manchester and the London Borough of Redbridge. Manchester was chosen because of its emerging good practice in the field.<sup>17</sup> To help with the selection of the other case study localities, national statistics on 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics' provided initial insights into the number of Traveller/ Gypsy/ Roma children in secondary schools in different locations<sup>18</sup> (Local Authorities are not permitted and do not have the capacity to collect this information). However, these figures could not be taken literally, as the fear of exclusion and persecution creates high levels of non-ascription amongst Roma.<sup>19</sup> Anecdotal evidence from different localities was thus an important consideration in choosing these case study sites, as were the financial demands of travel and funding limitations.<sup>20</sup>

The research is comprised of data collected through four main methods: 1) a literature review; 2) semi-structured (face-to-face and telephone) interviews; 3) a limited amount of observation/ shadowing in secondary schools; and 4) extensive documentary research. Secondary data was also examined throughout the research process.

Contact was initially made in each case study locality through the National Association of Teachers of Travellers (NATT),<sup>21</sup> which provided detailed information on Traveller Education Services (TES) and teams. Where possible, an initial interview was conducted with a member of a TES service or team in each locality to understand the situation of Roma and pinpoint the secondary schools that Roma children were attending. This was followed up with a snowball sampling strategy to engage the agencies and organisations that TES teams/ services and schools were working with in partnership in each locality. Semi-structured interviews explored a number of issues, including the problems schools and local agencies experience when engaging Roma groups; the drivers of partnership work; different approaches to partnership work at the local level; and organisational, economic and political change.

15 Denscombe, M. (1998) *The Good Research Guide*, Open University Press

16 Yin, R. (1994) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

17 Matras, Y., Fabeni, G. B., Leggio, D.V. and Vránová, E. (2009) *The Romani Community in Gorton South, Manchester*, The Romani Project, The University of Manchester

18 DfE (2011b) *DfE Statistics, Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics*,

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001012/index.shtml>

19 Powell, R. (2011) 'Gypsy-Travellers and Welfare Professional Discourse: On Individualization and Social Integration', *Antipode* 43(2)

20 The project originally had five case studies. Cambridgeshire was omitted during the project because of funding issues and the cost of travel.

21 <http://www.natt.org.uk>

## 1.6 Research limitations

It should be noted that the research was based on a limited number of interviews with TES services/ teams, secondary schools (both maintained schools and Academies), local authority agencies, the Police, community and voluntary/ third sector<sup>22</sup> agencies in a small number of case study localities.

## 2. Culture and engagement

Roma migrants from A8 and A2 accession countries face a number of challenges when they arrive in England. Many live in the midst of destitution as a result of severe social and economic marginalisation. Poor housing, poor health and lack of employment mean that education is often low on their list of priorities. As an interviewee in Bradford noted: *“Wherever people were struggling in any other area, like housing and jobs and anything else, that always has an impact on education.”* Legislative measures and a complex set of cultural characteristics complicate the position of Roma, making engagement a challenging task.

### 2.1 Reluctance to engage

After centuries of systematic persecution and exclusion Roma can be mistrustful of anyone in authority and are often reluctant to engage support agencies on any level. As an interviewee in Calderdale stated: *“They were facing such blatant discrimination in their own countries that there was this wariness of authority and, of any organisation, I think, at first, when they first came, particularly the police.”* ‘Invisibility’ is, unsurprisingly, an important strategy for Roma at a number of levels, particularly in relations with non-Roma. In general Roma are “accustomed not to draw attention to themselves and if approached, to avoid engaging in any interaction that might prove to be harmful to their interests”.<sup>23</sup>

This situation presents local agencies and schools attempting to engage Roma with a wide range of problems, many of which they have not encountered before. A member of staff from a secondary school in Calderdale highlighted the complexities involved, stating that: *“Because of the previous experiences they’ve had [...] we’ve had to work as [...] the bridge [...] between the families and the police and some of the community workers that were there. And that was certainly something I had never experienced before.”* In Manchester, Roma presented local support agencies and service providers with a range of complex issues, as an interviewee noted: *“Services were finding they couldn’t cope, they weren’t used to working with these communities, they didn’t know how to engage them, how to make sure that they were accessing their entitlements, how to ensure the children were safe... etc.”* The implication of this situation, as we observe in the following chapters, is that agencies have to work very differently to achieve good outcomes with Roma.

### 2.2 Cultural tensions migrate west

The underlying fear and distrust of authority within Roma culture means that Roma often fail to declare their ethnicity when they arrive in England. The reasons for these low levels of self-ascription can be seen in the relations that emerge when they do declare their ethnicity, with divisions between and tensions with non-Roma migrants from CCE countries often reappearing in communities, schools and advice surgeries across England.

This type of divide quickly emerged in Bradford in the post 2004 EU accession period. During public meetings for CCE migrants organized by the Education Service for New Communities and

<sup>22</sup> The terms the voluntary/ community sector and the third sector are used interchangeably throughout this report.

<sup>23</sup> Matras, Y., Fabeni, G. B., Leggio, D.V. and Vránová, E. (2009) *The Romani Community in Gorton South, Manchester*, The Romani Project, The University of Manchester

Travellers at Bradford Metropolitan District Council (Bradford MDC), many non-Roma migrants from the Czech Republic and Slovakia quickly soon made their feelings known when they had to sit at advice tables with Roma. As an interviewee noted: *“Some of them, I’m not saying everybody, but some white non-Roma would leave if Roma approached the tables where they were sitting.”*

This situation also creates problems when non-Roma nationals from CCE are recruited to work with Roma, both in schools and for outside agencies. In Calderdale there have been tensions within Sowerby Bridge High school between Roma pupils from the Czech Republic and Slovakia and non-Roma staff from these countries; the school has also had problems with various support staff employed by Calderdale MBC to work in the school. On occasions there have been accusations by Roma pupils that these workers have racist attitudes, claims taken seriously by the school, who ‘released’ the staff concerned. These issues make engagement a difficult and challenging task in all the case study localities.

### *2.3 Established residents and new communities*

The attitudes of residents in settled communities in England also presents agencies with a range of problems in their attempts to engage Roma migrants. Roma are attracted to areas where there is cheap, private sector accommodation to rent and this often brings them into direct contact with other disadvantaged groups and established communities. Although they value *invisibility* as a means of protecting their interests, Roma men have a propensity to gather in large, highly *visible* groups on street corners and in local parks and gardens.

In 2009, as Roma started arriving in the Central East District of Manchester in greater numbers, tensions soon emerged in the local community. Established residents were extremely hostile to the incoming group and complaints about antisocial behavior increased significantly. Many of the complaints revolved around the use of public space, the lack of school places for local children, dangerous driving and the dumping of household waste and litter in the street, which many people believed were impacting house prices in the area. Soon after their arrival, large groups of Roma men started congregating in Crowcroft Park in the Central East District of the city, which established community groups and residents found very challenging. As an interviewee pointed out:

*“These large congregations were intimidating to established groups, for example the Asian community uses the park for cricket and that was being compromised by there being no room. Indeed there was a perception that the Roma community was taking over the park completely.”*

There have been similar tensions in Redbridge, Bradford and Calderdale. Redbridge in particular has had very similar problems to Manchester with large numbers of Romanian Roma congregating in local parks and gardens in the south of the borough to socialize. However, this type of behavior appears to be less of a problem with Roma from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, though there have been problems in Bradford with extended Roma families settling in the midst of Muslim communities.

In Calderdale there have also been tensions between Czech and Slovakian Roma and the established Pakistani community in the Park Ward in central Halifax. On occasions, members of the Pakistani community have been openly hostile and threatening to Roma parents taking their children to school. As a member of staff at Sowerby Bridge High School noted:

*“We were concerned with the reaction of a number of our Pakistani students to these families, partly because they had been housed in the areas that they were living, and it made me think back to the 1970s, when people used to say things like ‘they should go back to their own country, they are taking our jobs’, and we had that from the Pakistani community”.*



In 2010 tensions between Roma and Pakistanis spilled over into the School, presenting staff with previously un-encountered problems. The school was totally unprepared for the complexity of the problems that emerged as the Roma community grew and the number of pupils increased. As a member of staff noted, *“I remember sitting there thinking ‘I have had absolutely no training for this’.”*

#### 2.4 Barriers to school access

In Manchester the high number of Roma children in the Central East District of the city not attending school quickly became a concern within the established community. Concerns were raised about the implications of children playing and working in the street throughout the daylight hours during the summer months. As an interviewee from the Greater Manchester Police pointed out:

*“Because none of the children went to school, so we had this situation where all the children were playing outside, not in the houses, creating noise, and some real road traffic issues as well in that the children were running over the roads... and washing windscreens”.*

In line with the work of the Metropolitan Police in London, the large number of children in some Roma families enhanced concerns about child trafficking networks involving Roma from Țândărei in southeast Romania. Although some interviewees had knowledge of small scale local trafficking involving Roma groups in Calderdale and Bradford, the investigations initiated by the Metropolitan Police into large scale trafficking quickly came to nothing, with the children removed from their families in Redbridge and Manchester quickly returned. However, the raids made the Roma community even more suspicious of outsiders and a number of Redbridge Roma families – where the Police work was more intrusive – moved away, some north to Manchester to escape what they saw as their continuing persecution. This again increased the problems for those attempting to engage Roma.

Engaging Roma and getting their children into school is also complicated by the lack of any direct experience of formal education. While Roma children from the Czech Republic and Slovakia have some experiences of formal education, even if it is a system where high levels of institutional racism place them in schools for children with special educational needs,<sup>24</sup> many Romanian Roma children arrive in England with no experience of formal education or the English language.

In this context, where the problems of earning a family income often take priority, it can be very difficult to convince Roma parents of the merits and value of education. This situation is complicated by legislative measures; even when Roma children overcome the cultural and educational barriers they face they may be unable to work when they leave school. Getting work experience for Roma pupils can also be a difficult and challenging task, as a member of staff at Cedar Mount High School in Manchester indicated: *“Things like work experience for the year 10s, it’s really hard to get... because employers, they will not say it, but they don’t want them.”* There has, however, been more recent multi-agency work in this area between the INAT/SS Team and other agencies, including the BHA for Equality, which has started to improve contacts with the business community.

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<sup>24</sup> *From Segregation to Inclusion: Roma Pupils in the United Kingdom. A Pilot Research Project* (Equality 2010): [http://equality.uk.com/Education\\_files/From%20segregation%20to%20integration\\_1.pdf](http://equality.uk.com/Education_files/From%20segregation%20to%20integration_1.pdf)

### 3. Strategic and political leadership

Across the four case study sites there were varying levels of success in engaging the Roma community through multi-agency work, and varying degrees of strategic engagement and political leadership.

#### 3.1 Manchester

Manchester's approach to multi agency work with Roma migrants is by far the most comprehensive of the four case studies. The city has a long history of inward migration that determines its attitude to and work with minority communities.<sup>25</sup> During 1999 and 2000, increasing numbers of Roma started to appear in the asylum system in Manchester, and many have since returned as economic migrants. The vast majority of Manchester's current Roma population are from Țândărei in southeast Romania, though there are groups from other countries, including Hungary, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Poland. The first wave of new Roma migrants arrived between 2001-2003 via Germany, France, Italy and Spain; the second wave arrived after 2007, either directly from Romania or via Spain.<sup>26</sup>

It was the second wave of Roma migration from Romania that had the greatest impact on the city. As an interviewee pointed out *"almost out of the blue one part of the city had a new community that didn't generate any income... but was extremely expensive to manage"*. Addressing the problems this new community presented had the potential to be a very challenging political issue. However, from very early on there was a strong strategic response from Manchester City Council (MCC) to the problems that emerged. Despite concerns from within the established community that many of these new Roma migrants were moving into, there was a widespread acceptance amongst senior local authority figures that *"every round of immigration to the city has benefited Manchester and this shouldn't be any different."*

Such were the complexities presented by the new community; it quickly became apparent to those working on the ground with Roma that the issue required high level, strategic input if it was to be dealt with effectively. A senior manager from the Regeneration Directorate who was overseeing neighbourhood work in the area at the time explained what happened next:

*"So we... went right up to leader of the council, [who expressed] the view... that Manchester's reputation as being a city that values community cohesion is important and that is why Manchester is a successful city and why people work and invest in Manchester... so the political steer was that the prize for Manchester isn't that we want lots of A2 nationals... what we want is good community cohesion because long term we know it's good for the city."*

From 2009 onwards MCC worked strategically on a number of levels. They worked closely with Greater Manchester Police (GMP) through a multi agency partnership called Operation Agate<sup>27</sup> to address the concerns of the established communities whilst addressing the needs of the incoming community. This strategic approach had far reaching implications for multi agency work at the district and local level. For example, it was during police work to investigate claims of child trafficking amongst Romanian Roma that the GMP discovered the desire of some Romani girls to go to school with their male siblings. The nature of partnership working in the Central East District of the city at this time meant that this situation was quickly followed up by the International New Arrivals, Travellers and Supplementary Schools Team (INA/T/SS Team) – who had been working

<sup>25</sup> 'Multi-Cultural Manchester', Manchester City Council:

[http://www.manchester.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents\\_info.php?categoryID=448&documentID=506](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?categoryID=448&documentID=506)

<sup>26</sup> Matras, Y., Fabeni, G. B., Leggio, D.V. and Vránová, E. (2009) *The Romani Community in Gorton South, Manchester*, The Romani Project, The University of Manchester

<sup>27</sup> 'Operation Agate: A partnership approach towards community cohesion and integration of an emerging community in Manchester', MCC/ GMP 2009/2010

in the community for many months with BHA for Equality – which resulted in a number of Roma girls getting places in a local secondary school. The implications of this way of working are explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Manchester's strategic approach contrasts greatly with the other case study localities, where there have been varying degrees of strategic input and political leadership.

### 3.2 Calderdale

In Calderdale the impact of rapid migration from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland in the post 2004 period presented the local authority with many problems. However, it is only over the last couple of years that there has been any strategic engagement.

As migration was reaching its peak in 2005,<sup>28</sup> Calderdale Metropolitan Borough council (Calderdale MBC) set up a 'Welcoming New Communities Group', which met quarterly and was attended by a number of local agencies and community groups. However, the meetings were more operational than strategic, as a member of the group stated:

*"We just talked through everything that was happening, and tried to support each other, because at that stage we weren't really that clear how many people were coming, how long they were staying, you know, some of the schools came along, and that worked really well, I think just because it was quite informal and everybody could just get off their chest some of the things they were trying to do."*

This was problematical for schools attempting to work with Roma children, as they often felt that they had been left to address the problems that were emerging without local authority support. Sowerby Bridge High School, the school with the highest number of Roma pupils in the borough, was particularly aggrieved by the lack of support and they started to look to schools in other localities for help.

Over recent years things have started to change and there has gradually been more strategic engagement with the Roma community. In 2008 a group of agencies formed the 'Halifax Central Initiative' to address migration issues. Originally set up as an informal meeting group, the initiative soon merged with the 'Welcoming New Communities Group' at Calderdale MBC to become the Engagement and Cohesion Group, which now has sub-groups for safeguarding children and benefits and destitution.

However, despite these positive developments, the onset of public sector funding cuts and the decline of third sector input has made it difficult to maintain this new momentum. As an interviewee stated:

*"In the third sector... lots of tiny projects... there was a part time refugee and asylum seeker support worker.... a part time community capacity builder... a part time BME network, all of those things that only cost 10 or 15 grand have all gone, so our kind of community infrastructure is definitely crumbling away. If one of them goes in normal economic times... you can kind of cover for it, but at the minute, you know there are lots of little things disappearing, which at the more strategic meetings, it's very difficult to do anything about."*

As we observe in the next chapter, this means that Sowerby Bridge High School continues to work in isolation.

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28 'Safer and Stronger Communities Report on Newly Settled Communities', Report for Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council/ Primary Care Trust, September 2011

### 3.3 Bradford

Like Manchester, Bradford has a long history of inward migration, including the arrival of migrants of Romani origin. There has been much talk of Bradford MDC developing a strategy to address the issues and problems migration from CEE has brought about, but as yet no strategy document has been agreed.

The vast majority of Roma in Bradford originate from Slovakia, with smaller numbers from the Czech Republic and Poland, and latterly from Romania. Roma migrants first started arriving in Bradford as asylum seekers around 2002, but numbers increased significantly in the post-accession period from 2004 onwards. The primary operational forum for engaging these groups is the Bradford Central Eastern European working group, which has links to Bradford MDC's Central and Eastern European Strategic and Operational Groups. The group was set up early in 2006 by an officer at Bradford MDC who wanted to address the problems that were emerging as the numbers of migrants from CEE increased. Bradford's Education Service for New Communities and Travellers had a representative on the new group from the start,<sup>29</sup> as an interviewee pointed out:

*"[We]... got together... and decided we were going to form his working group and we weren't going to have any kind of management committee or anything. We wanted... a working group that looked at the issues, that shared resources and stopped each of us in different areas in Bradford Met reinventing the wheel all the time, and wasting time... so we could actually just get at it and get at the issues... in the... quickest way possible."*

The hope at this point was that the only cost to the agencies involved in this new way of working would be the time needed to attend weekly meetings.

The working group has been successful for a number of years, and it continues to define the range and scope of multi-agency work with Roma in Bradford at the local level. However, staff at third sector agencies expressed concern about the limited role of Bradford MDC's Central and Eastern European Strategic and Operational Groups in these developments. Some argued that it is difficult to prioritize the needs of one ethnic minority group over and above any other in Bradford, such is the intensity of local politics, while others suggested that it is only recently that the Strategic and Operational and Groups have started to get to grips with priority issues. Research by Bradford University's Peace Studies Department confirms these sentiments to some extent, arguing that if partnership work is to have a greater impact across the district the *"focus on connections deep into the communities of the District and upwards to decision makers [...] needs strengthening."*<sup>30</sup> All this is not to say that there has been no successful multi-agency work with Roma in Bradford. On the contrary, as we observe in Chapter 4, a strong network of voluntary and community sector agencies work closely with BMDC's Education Service for New Communities and Travellers within the Central Eastern European working group to address the issues Roma face.

### 3.4 Redbridge

A growing number of Roma in Redbridge are from the same part of Romania as Manchester's Roma community. Although several multi agency meetings have taken place over recent years about the impact of the new migrant community on community cohesion in the borough, an interviewee argued that many public sector and voluntary agencies have been conducting independent approaches to addressing the issues that have emerged. While strategic engagement with the Roma community is starting to increase, the feeling often emerges – much as it does in

<sup>29</sup> 'A8 Migration in Bradford: A Template for Action', Report compiled by the Central and Eastern European Working Group (2006)

<sup>30</sup> 'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: The 2001 Bradford Riot and Beyond', (2011) Bujra, J. and Pearce, J. Vertical Editions, pp. 211

Bradford – that it is difficult to prioritize the needs of one minority group over another. The raids initiated by the Metropolitan Police in 2010 were also significant, as they led to further negative stereotypes about the Roma community being reported in the local press. The fact Redbridge does not have an expansive TES service or team to link and coordinate the work of local agencies has also been problematic.

Despite these problems, things are starting to change: schools are focussing more on the needs of Roma pupils and inclusion by employing bilingual staff, including one school with a Roma teacher; others have developed positive support and relationships with families, as well as successful teaching and learning for pupils and staff. Schools are also working strategically in partnership with the Traveller Education professional at events such as ‘Show Racism the Red Card’ and Gypsy Roma Traveller Network meetings. Education Welfare officers have conducted home visits to get Roma families to apply for school places, as well as monitoring and promoting attendance in school. At the same time, Children’s Centres have been working closely with Roma families to encourage the take up of immunisations and attendance at mother and toddler play sessions for Roma. As in schools, positive engagement with Roma families has been most effective when bilingual staff have been employed to support families by developing trust and understanding.

More recently the local authority has set up the South Ilford Community Cohesion working group, a multi-agency initiative that aims to bring a wide range of agencies from the statutory and voluntary sectors together to discuss and develop new ways of working. An interviewee from the Local Authority stressed the importance of these developments:

*“I think it’s really positive... there is a lot of stakeholder buy-in into the working group. There are a lot of people coming now and they do attend regularly, so think the different organisations involved are all really keen to actually you know, work together and are really passionate about trying to make a bit of a difference, so I think it’s definitely a positive start.”*

Recent research confirms the need for more strategic engagement, stating that for Roma to settle in the borough ‘*specific provisions would need to be established to ensure their successful contribution*’.<sup>31</sup> However, as we observe in chapter 5, organisation and political change is making multi-agency work increasingly difficult. There is also a balance to be struck when accommodating the needs of the Roma community alongside the issues raised by the established community. This is where the South Ilford Community Cohesion working group is now starting to work more closely with services and non-governmental agencies such as RECC and RAMFEL to address community tensions and problems.

## **4. Multi-agency work at the local level**

### *4.1 Manchester*

Strategic input and political leadership in Manchester has been a significant factor in the city’s successful engagement of the Roma community. However, this success has also been based on a number of other factors, including preexisting partnership structures in the Central East District of the city where the new community settled. There were two main partnership arenas where concerns about the influx of Roma migrants were discussed from 2008 onwards. There was the regeneration forum where issues about community cohesion were examined, and there was also a Children’s Trust Partnership (also known as the District Wide Leadership Team), where issues related to child protection were raised.

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<sup>31</sup> ‘*Accession States (A10) Migrants in London Borough of Redbridge – A study report*’, (2010) Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CRONEM), Roehampton University and University of Surrey, Garapich, M.P. and Parutis, V.

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) contributed greatly to the overall multi-agency approach adopted at this time, including the commission of a survey from The University of Manchester to gain a greater cultural understanding of the city's new Roma community.<sup>32</sup> This work was extremely useful for all the agencies involved in partnership work, as it highlighted the cultural characteristics of the new migrant community in great detail. It soon became clear that the Roma's long history of exclusion and persecution had created a strong cultural aversion to integration into mainstream society, based on an inward looking philosophy of self help that prioritises family responsibilities over and above individual learning opportunities and school attendance. In order to overcome the problems these cultural characteristics presented, the International New Arrivals, Travellers and Supplementary Schools Team (INA/T/SS Team) worked closely with the Police to build relationships with the new community.

The overall aim of GMP's multi agency work with Manchester City Council (MCC) through Operation Agate at this time was to investigate claims of criminal activity whilst maintaining social cohesion. Balancing the concerns of the established community with the needs of the incoming community was a difficult task, which required strong leadership if it was to be successful, as an interviewee from GMP stated:

*"There is a balance here in terms of having to accommodate the needs of the emerging community but also having to accommodate the needs of the host community, and those are the intricacies, that balance is really important, so if it tilts either way it can increase tensions."*

The INA/T/SS Team's work was crucial at this juncture, crossing the boundary between the social cohesion agenda and emerging concerns over child safety. As we observed in the previous chapter, it was during work to investigate child trafficking claims that close collaboration between the Police and the INA/T/SS Team resulted in a number of Roma girls entering mainstream education for the first time.

The expertise of the INA/T/SS Team and of their partner, BHA for Equality, was recognised by a senior Police Officer who worked closely with them:

*"What we found was that [...] their expertise, they developed the personal relationships with the Roma community, is absolutely essential to get into the door really and start engaging with [...] community [...] So whereas a uniform is an immediate barrier, they [...] developed those sorts of relationships. In terms of getting children into school they were second to none"*

The crux of the INA/T/SS team's work with BHA for Equality was assertive outreach work with children and families in the new Roma community. Internal research conducted by INA/T/SS team highlighted a number of key messages from this approach, including the importance of understanding the past experiences, strengths and aspirations of the new community.<sup>33</sup>

One of the key issues for schools and service providers at this time was the language barrier and the availability of people with appropriate language skills to engage the new Roma pupils effectively. While in some places – including Manchester – non-Roma teachers from Romania often work successfully with Romanian Roma pupils, the use of non-Roma to work with Roma pupils can create problems in some instances, as it reinforces the sense of racial intolerance experienced by Roma in their own countries. It is also sometimes assumed that Roma culture is homogenous, yet as we have seen already, Roma come to England from all of Europe. This

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32 Matras, Y., Fabeni, G. B., Leggio, D.V. and Vránová, E. (2009) *The Romani Community in Gorton South, Manchester*, The Romani Project, The University of Manchester

33 Davies, J. and Murphy, J. (2010) *'What's working: conversations with Manchester's Romanian Roma community living in Longsight and Levenshulme'*, Manchester City Council Children's Services International New Arrivals, Travellers and Supplementary Schools Team

situation can in turn create problems in and around schools, as Roma workers and teachers often find themselves under great pressure working across diverse cultural groups.

The lack of Roma speaking workers in Manchester was raised at MCC's Operational Group for Roma issues and a decision was made to establish a new multi agency group to look for ways of developing the necessary skills from within the Roma community. The new multi-agency group involved the INA/T/SS Team, the Big Life Company, the Routes team at BHA for Equality, Manchester Adult Education Service and The University of Manchester, amongst others. As part of the process, the INA/T/SS Team consulted with over 40 members of the Romanian Roma community about their needs in terms of accessing education and finding employment. It was during this process that a group of young men with bilingual skills were identified and partnership agencies were subsequently offered training and support to develop the skills needed within schools and community groups. While the INA/T/SS Team employed two of the group as bilingual classroom assistants in a local secondary school, the Big Life Company funded placements for five more of the group.

The Big Life Company became involved in the partnership because they were getting high numbers of Roma approaching them for licences to sell the Big Issue. As a result, they started to develop a skills development programme for young people, including Roma, which was very successful. They also worked closely with the BHA for Equality, making a partnership agreement that, once Roma pupils had been through a skills development programme to become interpreters, they would sign up with the BHA for Equality as interpreters. This meant that from this point onwards Roma interpreters would be readily available for all agencies across the city.

This multi-agency work linked up well with the work of two family workers commissioned by INA/T/SS Team to conduct outreach work in schools, and three more funded through the Migration Impact Fund (MIF) to work holistically with the community to identify newly arrived Roma families. Collectively, these developments provided a means of working with the new community to gain a deeper understanding of their past experiences, strengths and aspirations. This work was highly successful and, between June 2009 and June 2010, the family workers worked with 300 Roma families – 75% of whom were Romanian.<sup>34</sup> The family workers were a central part of this process, supporting parents in applying for school places and attendance issues, and also with more practical needs such as school uniforms. The INA/T/SS Team continues to work closely with Cedar Mount High School, which most Romanian Roma children attend.

Most of the Roma pupils at Cedar Mount have never been to school before and many have no English language skills. As a member of staff pointed out:

*“We’re starting from ABC, not from any point we’ve seen in a secondary school before.... Because they haven’t been to school before, they find routines difficult - timetables, remembering PE kit - all those things we’ve instilled in our children from age four and five. So expecting them to fit in is a huge issue.”<sup>35</sup>*

Many Roma pupils begin their education in EAL induction classes overseen by two Romanian EAL teachers, the hope being that they will gradually move onto the full curriculum. At the end of 2011, the school also had nine Roma members of staff, including the bilingual assistants funded by the INA/T/SS Team.

Because of the employment restrictions placed on A2 nationals, Cedar Mount High School has faced significant problems in its attempts to employ individuals from within the school; dialogue with the Home Office about these issues is one of the many new tasks facing senior staff in the school.

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<sup>34</sup> Draft Report (2010) *'The Integration of Roma Children and Young People'*, Manchester City Council

<sup>35</sup> *'The new Mancunians'*, TES 1 April, 2011, <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6075504>

Funding is also a major issue. A large percentage of the schools funding for specialist staff currently coming from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (E-MAG) and the abolition of this funding stream and its replacement with a 'per pupil' funding system will put the school under great pressure.

The INA/T/SS Team have worked closely with Manchester's schools on a daily basis for a number of years to overcome the problems they face, and many of the educational and cultural activities that take place in the city's schools are funded through partnership work with INA/T/SS Team and other partner agencies. There are now two networks of schools sharing good practice; across Manchester there are Roma pupils in around 60 schools. However, with the INA/T/SS Team facing an uncertain future, it is not entirely clear where funding for the future provision of specialist Roma staff will come from.

Although Cedar Mount High School was initially put under pressure by the arrival of the new migrant community in a number of areas, including the school's standing in league tables for academic achievement, the success of the work they do is evidenced by the fact that many Roma pupils are now expected to leave with 5 A-C GCSE's, including English and Mathematics, and by the high attendance levels of pupils from within the new community. Given the economic marginalization of Roma families, and the realisation by pupils that they may not be able to work when they leave school, this is testimony to what has been achieved through multi agency work in Manchester. In many ways the school can be seen as an emerging centre of excellence for work with Roma pupils.

The aspirations of Roma pupils have increased significantly in line with the use of staff who speak Roma and understand the problems these pupils face. There has also been a positive impact on attitudes about education within the Roma community:

*"Attitudes also appear to be changing within the Roma community. Ambivalence towards formal education among some families has now been replaced by an expectation that their children will go to school and stay on until Year 11."*<sup>36</sup>

As we have seen, Manchester's successful multi agency approach is based on a number of significant factors. While strategic input is significant in terms of the city's ability to develop appropriate responses:

*"Something that's also important is the grass roots side of it because it's the people on the ground, the operational people, the community groups, the voluntary groups and so on, the schools, who are the ones who meet the people, who meet the families and communities and children face-to-face and have to sort of find solutions then and there, and what's really important is for those people to be able to feed up what they see as issues and what they see as solutions and to raise the understanding."*

Overall it is this combination of top down strategic input and bottom up operational intent that drives forward and holds together Manchester's highly coordinated approach.

While many of the agencies involved in Manchester's multi-agency work have different agendas, an essential element of the partnership approach was about giving the new community a consistent message. As an interviewee stated: *"If the community gets the same message, no matter where they go, its not creating confusion [...] so I think consistency in partnership work is good, in terms of the messages that are being given to the community"*.

As we have seen already, successful engagement has also been based on an approach that builds on the strengths and aspirations of the new community in order to help them to help

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*



themselves. As an interviewee involved in multi agency work at the local level stated: *“We’ve never forced anyone to do anything.”*

## 4.2 Calderdale

The fact that Calderdale has never had a full-blown TES team or service means that the links between the local authority and the school most affected by the influx of Roma migrants have not been as strong as they could have been. As a result, the slow response of Calderdale MBC to the problems created by the rapid growth of the Roma population in the mid to late 2000s forced Sowerby Bridge High School to develop innovative ways of working with the new community in isolation.

When tensions between the Pakistani community and incoming Romani families from Slovakia and the Czech Republic came to a head in the summer of 2010 the school decided to introduce outreach work in the community, which initially involved accompanying Roma children to and from school. The school eventually made agreements with Roma families that if they got their children into school, the school would reciprocate by making sure the children were safe in school. The Head Teacher also promised that the school would continue to work in the community to build bridges with the Police and get other agencies involved with the Roma community.

The school now has a Safer Schools Partnership Police Officer who works alongside the school in the community. This has been a positive development that has won the trust of pupils and helped the school to build partnerships with community and neighbourhood agencies. As the Safer Schools officer stated:

*“They [the Roma pupils] see the other side of the police force, you are not just that bad guy... if they have got any issues, you can... get other agencies involved, you can liaise with families, you can try and build bridges, and the idea is to stop the kids being criminalized.”*

The school also has an EAL coordinator, who has become a central figure in the school’s work with the Roma community. The coordinator started as a teaching assistant and the new role has developed spontaneously in an ad hoc manner.

As in other case study localities, the major issue facing Calderdale MBC and Sowerby Bridge High School over the last 5-6 years has been finding people with appropriate language skills. Sowerby Bridge High School was particularly in need, as Roma parents were coming into the school with all kinds of new problems and demands. For some time the Council held the view that it wasn’t worth the school employing Roma speakers, and the school initially used pupils to translate for parents; this was unsatisfactory, not least because it made the school dependent on the views of pupils over staff. After briefly employing a number of Czech and Slovakian workers in community engagement roles, which was again unsatisfactory because of the cultural tensions that resurfaced, the school started to employ their own sixth form Roma students, who now provide in-class support and induction for new pupils whilst liaising with the wider community. The school has about 120 Roma pupils across all year groups and this approach has been hugely successful, helping to develop good relations within the school and within the community.

As in Manchester, working with Roma pupils has been extremely challenging, as a member of staff at the school pointed out: *“These kids are not used to routines... so remembering your cookery ingredients every Tuesday is a huge thing, which we take for granted. You know, remembering your PE kit, it’s a big thing. Sitting down in ‘your’ chair is a big thing.”* Yet as in Manchester, Roma pupils have responded well to people who attempt to work with their strengths.

The arrival and growth of the new Roma community has been a steep learning curve for Calderdale MBC, as an interviewee stated:

*“There were some real learning points for people... because we recruit somebody on the basis of their language skills, and have got to trust their approach and quality, if you like, same as our own, and people come with baggage don't they.... Roma are not always well looked upon in their home countries.”*

Calderdale MBC has worked hard over recent years to develop new ways of working. However, the early tensions with Sowerby Bridge High School continue to hinder joint working, though both Calderdale MBC and the school work with the same local agencies on many occasions. To some extent, as we observe in the next chapter, Sowerby Bridge High School has become a multi agency hub because of these problems. Much like Cedar Mount in Manchester, it is also emerging as a centre of excellence for work with Roma pupils.

### 4.3 Bradford

Bradford has a thriving community and voluntary sector,<sup>37</sup> with many agencies working collaboratively in the Central Eastern European Working Group. From 2005 onwards, the working group held themed meetings on various issues, including: education, benefits, housing and employment. These meetings quickly became a central feature of the group's weekly activities.<sup>38</sup> This multi agency group continues to be the central forum for initiating work with Bradford's diverse Roma groups. The agencies that meet in the group collaborate on a highly focused set of issues, engaging communities through outreach activities, advice and information services as well as provision of cultural events.

Bradford MBC's Education Service for New Communities and Travellers provides a range of services that overlap with the work of the group. Over recent years, they have: rolled out citywide English pedagogy, prepared DVDs on the education system in different languages and developed a range of curriculum materials, including basic words and phrases in Slovakian Roma. However, it is their coordination work with partner agencies at the local level that is their most significant contribution.

One partnership is with the LACO Project in BD3. Set up in 2007 with funding from the local Primary Care Trust and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, LACO works with Mortimer House Children's Centre and St Clements Church to provide outreach work that encourages the take up of the services they provide, including welfare and benefits advice. LACO's work with Mortimer House Children's Centre has been particularly successful in helping migrant children obtain nursery and school places, often through the school appeals process in tandem with Education Bradford. LACO faced initial problems with the language barrier with CEE Migrants and the New Communities and Travellers Service relocated an interpreter to the Children's Centre to overcome this problem; the team also recommended a Slovakian Roma who became and still is a prominent member of staff at LACO. LACO currently have three Eastern European outreach workers who encourage migrants from CEE to engage with the services they provide at the Thornbury Centre.

The Roma worker employed by the LACO Project also works part time in an advocacy role at a local Academy with a range of Roma pupils. His role at the school is to provide outreach work in the local community and help Roma students when they have problems in school. This has been a successful way of engaging the Roma community and making families aware of their responsibilities (e.g. getting their children into school) and opportunities (e.g. the availability of free school meals for A8 pupils). However, despite the good work carried out by this individual, he is one of a very small number of Roma working in this capacity across Bradford. This is frustrating for

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<sup>37</sup> *'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: The 2001 Bradford Riot and Beyond'*, (2011) Bujra, J. and Pearce, J. Vertical Editions

<sup>38</sup> *'A8 Migration in Bradford: A Template for Action'*, Report compiled by the Central and Eastern European Working Group (2006)

the individual concerned, who sees the potential for the work he does in the high number of similar positions evident in neighbouring Leeds. A member of staff from the school in question recognized the value of employing more Roma in this type of role, but claimed that finding and employing such people from within the community has been a difficult task. It is clear that this type of individual is turned to for advice and help by a wide range of agencies as and when the need arises, thus greatly increasing the pressure they face and their ability to bring about change.

Another set of partnership arrangements exist around the Girlington Advice Centre in BD8. Based in a local community centre that rents out office space for cultural activities, the centre provides a number of services for minority groups. The Centre is funded by Bradford City Council, which provides funding for advice centres across the city for minority groups, and the Big Lottery Company. This helps the centre to employ an advice worker and a part time debt worker, who are supported by numerous volunteers. Most of the advice work carried out at the centre is welfare related, though help in other areas, including immigration advice for mostly Pakistani migrants, is also available. Much like the LACO Project, the services provided are increasingly accessed by different Roma groups, and the centre now has two Roma workers who work with local schools on an informal basis as interpreters. Much like the LACO Project, Girlington Advice Centre also works on the appeals process with Roma families.

Over recent decades, the strong correlation between deprivation and educational achievement has been a big issue in Bradford.<sup>39</sup> A number of respondents talked anonymously about the implications of this situation for new migrant groups attempting to access school places, the argument being that schools are often reluctant to take in children with no English language skills because it undermines their ability to improve their academic standing. From 2001 until 2011, Education Bradford was outsourced to Serco<sup>40</sup> and it is perhaps not surprising – given the lack of central authority control over the allocation of school places – that the LACO project and the Girlington Advice Centre has spent a lot of time working on the appeals process with migrant families whose children have been refused ‘preferred’ school places during this period. Bradford MBC’s Education Service for New Communities and Travellers and the Education Welfare Service help Roma families to appeal. There is also a weekly education ‘drop in’ service for CEE migrants, which is staffed by Slovakian and Polish speaking Migrant Worker Liaison Officers.

As in other localities, finding staff with appropriate language skills to work with migrants groups – including Roma – is a significant problem in Bradford, as concluded at a conference held by the Community Development Mental Health Organisation – Sharing Voices.<sup>41</sup> Some schools employ non-Roma from the same CEE countries as Roma in order to fill the gaps in provision this situation creates, but as in other places this often recreates the problems Roma experience in their home countries. There are clearly Roma in the city with the appropriate skills and knowledge to fill this gap, but as of yet, they remain unidentified.

#### 4.4 Redbridge

Although there were local authority and third sector Roma initiatives in place in Redbridge before the Metropolitan Police raids in 2010, in the immediate aftermath of the raids, work to improve community cohesion increased significantly. Redbridge Equalities and Community Council (RECC) and The Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London (RAMFEL) held a number of community events to enable local residents to speak with each other and with the Local Authority in a non-confrontational way. RAMFEL also engaged a Romanian Roma to work with the Roma community, while RECC organised cultural events for Roma and started an initiative to highlight the dos and don’ts of acceptable behaviour for residents in the Loxford ward area.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, footnote 37 above, p.205

<sup>40</sup> School Matters, summer 2011, ‘A new era for education in the district’ <http://www.bradford.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A97D9DED-06D1-493E-9F0F-3CC054F9F076/0/W25552CommpridePulloutSchoolMatters.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Conference on ‘Migration and Substance Use’: *Sharing Voices*, 29th February 2012, [www.sharingvoices.net](http://www.sharingvoices.net)

Over the last year a number of local authority directorates and agencies have continued this process of engagement. Redbridge Council's Youth Services has started some innovative work at Loxford Youth Centre, while Redbridge Council has recently set up the South Ilford Community Cohesion working group. Redbridge's sole Educational Traveller professional has been heavily involved in these strands of work, drawing attention to the opportunities they offer. Manchester's INAT/SS Team visited Redbridge early in 2011 and this also appears to have had a positive impact on developing new ways of working.

When the Ilformation Project – a successful youth information project in Ilford town centre that was attracting a small number of young Roma people – announced that it was closing early in 2011, workers from the project worked with Redbridge Youth Service's Detached Team to find alternative provision, which led to the emergence of a new Monday night Roma session at Loxford Youth Centre.<sup>42</sup> Roma provision has since been expanded into the mainstream service, with staff receiving awareness training from the Roma Support Group.

The success of this work so far, as with similar outreach work in Manchester, is to some extent based on the attitude of those doing the work. As a senior manager at the Youth Service stated: *"I think a lot of the reason it's gone like this, is because [...] the people involved in it had the will to make it happen."* It has taken time for the Youth Service to win the trust of Roma youth and develop effective forms of practice. As in Manchester and Calderdale, it has gradually become clear that successful engagement with the Roma community isn't simply about providing a service and expecting them to turn up; it is about understanding the specific problems all Roma face.

Things are continuing to move forward in Redbridge and the Youth Service has a number of positive developments in the pipeline. Young Roma people have become volunteers within the library service and plans are in place to set up job skills events and a homework club for Roma Youth supported by the borough's Traveller professional. The Youth Centre is located next to Loxford School and it is hoped that greater links can be forged here too. The Youth Service is also attempting to make links with the small number of Roma that work in Redbridge schools. Currently however, much as in Bradford, there are only a small number of Roma working in the borough. Unlike Bradford however, this does not appear to be a significant problem, as schools and agencies can turn to specialist support agencies such as the Redbridge Interpreting and Translating Service or the Roma Support Group as and when the need arises. Even so, the small number of bilingual Learning Support Assistants and Roma teachers working in the borough find themselves very much in demand, much as they do in the other case study localities.

The South Ilford Community Cohesion Working Group (SICCWG) is also starting to have an impact on work with Roma in Redbridge. Set up by the Local Authority in the summer of 2011, it brings agencies from the statutory and voluntary sectors together on a regular basis to discuss and develop new ways of engaging the Roma community whilst addressing the concerns of established communities. Although the press are again making a big issue out of small number of Roma caught up in a squatting problem, Redbridge's Traveller Education specialist is working hard to make links across the Local Authority to maintain a positive focus. The working group has engaged the Roma community on a number of levels. With Traveller Education and RECC, they were successful in getting the Roma community involved in the Redbridge Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2012, which drew attention to the need to make Redbridge a safe and happy place to live for people of all faiths and ethnicities. Another new project being encouraged in the working group is attempting to build bridges between Ilford's Asian and Roma communities.

Funded through the Home Office's innovation fund, the 'Streets Ahead' project run by the League of British Muslims in partnership with a Roma youth worker, aims to engage Roma in and around

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<sup>42</sup> *The Loxford and Ilford E-Newsletter*, February/ March 2012, Issue 1

the Loxford Ward; the wider aim is to build bridges between the two communities and reduce antisocial behaviour.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the positive developments that are emerging, the interface between the statutory and voluntary sectors remains one of the most challenging areas of work, and some interviewees expressed that the organisational and political structure of Redbridge – and perhaps London in general – is not as conducive to multi agency work as it once was. As in Bradford, it also appears that it is difficult to prioritize the needs of one minority group over and above any other through collaborative work across sectors:

*“I think if you live in areas that are particularly multicultural and local authorities are struggling to meet the needs of everybody, sometimes they don’t like a certain organisations that put their head above the parapet, maybe, and make too much noise about things they’re unhappy about on behalf of their client.”*

Even when collaborative ways of working do emerge, they are often not recognised as such by those involved. On occasions when discussing this issue, responses were elicited along the lines of, “well yes, I suppose it is multi-agency work if you think about it like that.” As we observe in the next chapter, to some extent this is a consequence of changing organisational and political structures.

## **5. Organisational and political change**

One of the aims of the research on which this report is based was to examine the implications of proposed changes to the school funding system. This proved to be a difficult task, not least because the Coalition Government’s future policy on school funding remains unclear and schools are generally unaware of the extent of the cuts they face, or their likely impact.

Since taking office, the Coalition Government has consulted on reform of the funding system for schools, ostensibly to simplify the funding system. The consultation document<sup>44</sup> outlines the underlying principles for a new funding system, and proposals for allocating the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and individual grants. Around £4.5 billion is currently allocated to schools through specific grants, including around £200 million for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). EMAG has been an important way of improving the achievement of Black and Minority Ethnic groups and supporting pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL).

For a number of years EMAG has been distributed through a needs-based formula, which uses the numbers of pupils whose first language is not English with the number of minority ethnic pupils who are underachieving at national level to calculate the applicable grant: there is also a weighting for free school meals. The minimum grant awarded to local authorities is £35,000, which was ring fenced to enable a whole school approach and equality of outcomes. Local authorities could retain up to 15% of their grant, or £150,000, whichever was the greater, to help them to deliver central services and direct pupil support; schools also had to have mechanisms to measure the impact of EMAG on pupil attainment.

Under the Coalition’s proposals this method of funding is to end. The first stage consultation, which ended in April 2011, put forward proposals to mainstream EMAG within the DSG for EAL and underachieving groups. While many respondents supported the need for mainstreaming in order to simplify the funding system, concerns were expressed about proposals to mainstream

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43 ‘Project launched to break down ‘barriers’ between Ilford’s Asian and Roma communities’, Ilford Recorder: [http://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/news/project\\_launched\\_to\\_break\\_down\\_barriers\\_between\\_ilford\\_s\\_asian\\_and\\_roma\\_communities\\_1\\_1233299#sharinganchor](http://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/news/project_launched_to_break_down_barriers_between_ilford_s_asian_and_roma_communities_1_1233299#sharinganchor)

44 DfE (2011) *A consultation on school funding reform: Rationale and principles*, Department for Education

individual grants, particularly EMAG. In practice, mainstreaming EMAG means that there will be less ring-fenced funding within local authorities for ethnic minority pupils, school staff and specialist support services beyond 2012. The second stage of the consultation, which ended in October 2011, focussed on per pupil funding.<sup>45</sup> Mainstreaming a number of grants into the DSG was again considered, though the fate on other grants, including EMAG, remained uncertain.

Although the full impact of these changes is unclear, NALDIC recently conducted a survey to assess their impact on the educational provision of bilingual and minority ethnic pupils. Almost 70% of local authority respondents indicated that services were being reduced or scrapped altogether and that the mainstreaming of EMAG would signal the end of funded services. The overriding justification was that grant funding had come to an end and that service provision in this area was no longer viewed as a core function.<sup>46</sup>

Schools within the case study localities will be directly affected by any reductions or changes in funding. Cedar Mount High School in Manchester currently uses EMAG funding to fund their wide ranging EAL provision, with short-term support coming via the INAT/SS Team and a range of voluntary sector partners. Any changes will have a significant impact on the schools ability to maintain its current level of service provision for Roma pupils, whilst potentially hindering future provision for pupils from all minority groups. However, as well as creating problems for maintained schools, particularly those acting as centres of excellence with Roma pupils, the new per pupil funding regime is likely to have a similar impact on Academies and schools that opt out of local authority control. As research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies notes:<sup>47</sup>

*“[G]overnment... plans to roll forward current per-pupil funding in academies... if continued indefinitely... would create a financial incentive for academies to admit fewer disadvantaged pupils over time and would provide fewer extra resources to academies that became more deprived over time.”*

An interviewee from the Roma Support Group (RSG) in London was clearly concerned about these issues, arguing that fears about the future of educational provision for Roma children in England are well founded. As we observe below, the Academies Act 2010 is also impacting funding and partnership work in other areas.

### *5.1 Schools as independent business units and multi agency hubs*

As schools break away from local authorities they often take on the structure of independent business units. Many secondary schools, including Academies, now employ a wide range of additional staff to provide non-teaching services, including special educational needs coordinators, community cohesion workers, inclusion workers and attendance officers in house, and it sometimes appears that these schools take on the structure of multi agency hubs. This is very much the case with Sowerby Bridge High School in Calderdale, where the slow response of the local authority to rapid Roma migration meant that the school has been forced to develop innovative ways of working with the new community without local authority support. Almost by default, the school has become a multi agency hub, building relationships within the school and in the local community to address the problems it faces. Dyson et al<sup>48</sup> argue that pushing schools towards this kind of organisational structure has been the intention of policy from the New Labour period onwards.

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45 DfE (2011a) *Consultation on school funding 2011-12 Introducing a pupil premium*, Department for Education

46 NALDIC (2011) *National Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant Survey, A Summary of Findings*, National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum

47 *School funding reform: an empirical analysis of options for a national funding formula*, (2011) Institute of Fiscal Studies, IFS Briefing Note BN123, Chowdry, H. and Sibieta, L. pp.15 <http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn123.pdf>

48 *'Swing, Swing Together': Multi Agency Work in the New Children Services*, (2009) Dyson, A., Farrell, P., Kerr, K., and Mearns, N. in *Radical Reforms: Perspectives on an Era of Educational Change*, Chapman, C (Ed).

Academies across the case study localities operate on an independent basis and it sometimes appears that they too take on the role of multi agency hubs, providing advice and support through a range of internal specialist services and staff. This was evident at an Academy in Bradford (which wished to remain anonymous). While the school engages with and makes use of the limited number of Roma language specialists that are available in the city, it appears that the school's internal focus often narrows the level of understanding about the complexities of and provision for the specific needs of Roma pupils.

The move away from an emphasis on local authority-led partnership working under the Coalition Government is perhaps more evident in Redbridge than it is in Northern England, where change is more contested. Although it is not always recognised as such, organisations such as the Roma Support Group (RSG) can nevertheless be seen as multi-agency business hubs. However, as was noted earlier, the work carried out by these organizations is rarely seen as multi agency work, such is the level of political and organizational change.

## 5.2 Knowledge and national traveller networks

In all four case study localities concern was expressed about the impact of funding cuts to TES services and teams and the impact on partnership working. In Calderdale funding for the local authority's sole traveller professional was lost because it was linked directly to Calderdale's School Improvement Team. As the Academies Act 2010 came into force and the number of academies in the borough increased (from one in December 2010 to 16 in 2012) the level of school improvement intervention provided has been reduced significantly.<sup>49</sup>

An investigation in 2011 by the Traveller's Times found that, since 2007, 12 out of the 32 Traveller Education Services (TES) in London Boroughs have been withdrawn, with numbers of front-line staff also being reduced by 50% during the same period.<sup>50</sup> The INAT/SS Team in Manchester and Bradford's Education Service for New Communities and Travellers all face similar cuts, to a lesser or greater extent. The future of education support for London's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities was discussed again at a Parliamentary meeting in the House of Commons in early 2012. Organised by the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain and the Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers to discuss the implications of funding cuts and future support for the groups involved, the meeting found that TES services in London are again experiencing a disproportionately high level of cuts;<sup>51</sup> in Redbridge, significantly, funding for the borough's sole traveller professional has been extended for another year.

As in other policy areas, a great deal of emphasis is being put on the ability of the community/voluntary sector to fill the gap in provision when cuts are made. While the sector has an important role to play, numerous third sector organisations at the meeting expressed serious concerns about the sector's capacity to fill the void left by the withdrawal of TES services. However, this is not as straightforward as it appears, as community infrastructure supported by the third sector is suffering greatly in the current fiscal climate. Concerns were also expressed about the future of the knowledge and expertise generated by TES services and teams over recent decades. Participants at the meeting agreed that new partnerships were the key to ensuring service provision for traveller groups and maintaining the level of expertise. This is absolutely necessary, as the future of TES services and teams will have a big impact on the future provision of services for all such groups across England.

49 'Implementation of a self-improving school system', (2012) Report of the Director, Children and Young People's Service, Calderdale MBC 2 April 2012

50 'London Traveller education service cut to ribbons', Traveller's Times, 25/11/2011, <http://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/list.aspx?c=00619ef1-21e2-40aa-8d5e-f7c38586d32f&n=0a5a6332-c5cb-42bb-a31a-133ac186adbc&archive=&year=&month=&index=19>

51 'The future of education support for London's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities', Report from the Parliamentary meeting 29th, February 2012 <http://irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Report-on-the-future-of-education-support-for-London%E2%80%99s-Gypsy-Roma-and-Traveller-communities-April-2012.pdf>

TES services and teams liaise closely with each other to coordinate services on many issues. The links between Redbridge and Manchester were significant in the aftermath of the raids by the Metropolitan Police in 2010, with Manchester's INAT/SS Team working closely with colleagues in Redbridge to track families and safeguard the children that suddenly disappeared from Redbridge schools. An interviewee from the INAT/SS Team in Manchester stressed the importance of these links and ways of working:

*“Yes, so we have those links and it's really important in terms of safeguarding. Because what we find is, there are some families that don't engage with us and don't send their children to school - it's a small minority now, the vast majority do – but some of those that are more difficult, if we start putting pressure on them then they'll be up and off. So it's very important to have those links with different authorities, and certainly some families have gone back and forth between us and other areas on several occasions.”*

Many of the Traveller specialists interviewed had also forged strong links at the international level, often through reciprocal visits and international conferences. The importance of maintaining these links and the knowledge generated cannot be overstated.

### 5.3 New ways of working

Across the case studies many agencies are developing innovative and new ways of working with Romani groups. In expectation of the impact of ongoing funding cuts and austerity measures, interviewees also talked about the new ways of working that may emerge within their own organisations.

The current climate is making operational work with minority groups difficult, as an interviewee from Calderdale MBC stated:

*“It's difficult... people need to be much more holistic and be prepared to be doing things that are not in their job role, so if you're going to get the trust of the Roma community one of my staff... our key member of staff in this, really will deal with anything, you know anything that people have got an issue with, it could just be that they can't read a letter right through to they are being taken to court and they don't understand what's what... and I think that is the key to it.”*

The need for this type of operational flexibility was again emphasised by a interviewee from the Regeneration Directorate in Manchester, who highlighted the need for specialist, flexible roles within organisations:

*“I think the essential thing is that you have somebody who is charged with, even if it's not part of their job they have to lead it and be responsible for it. Somebody has to own it, and I am not sure which service that might sit in and they have to have the lead or the sponsorship within the organisation so that people will support them and turn up to meetings and do things.”*

The same point was made by a respondent in Calderdale, who stressed the need for flexibility, but was cautious about the extent to which this was achievable amongst some occupational groups:

*“In the council we are talking about everybody being much more generic, you know, that is easier said than done isn't it? When people are already at full caseloads in terms of their own responsibilities, so, yeah in some teams that is already being looked at and developed a bit like the neighbourhood team, you know, we don't hold caseloads... But if you're a probation officer or if you're a midwife or, I don't know... an education welfare officer or a teacher, it's much more difficult to do that and when you start passing people around I think that's when they lose something.”*

Whilst the need for new ways of working was widely recognised across the case study localities



a respondent in Manchester suggested that while it is difficult to recruit new staff in the current climate, there is still some flexibility to the ways in which budgets can be used to commission services in innovative ways to further partnership working:

*“I mean we’re in the position where it’s actually very difficult to recruit new staff at the moment, as with all local authorities, but where there’s [sic] budgets available we can commission. So it’s about being much more flexible in how you find people and utilise people... and get the best out of people. So that’s been very good... I suppose... getting... an optimum mix of suitable individuals and agencies and organisations around the table.”*

This, it appears, is the crux of good partnership working at the local authority level in the current climate. However more changes are in the pipeline and the Coalition Government is planning to bring in payment by results in a number of policy areas from 2013, including Children’s Services, which will in turn, it was argued, bring more change to the operational structure of agencies and organisations. The aim, ostensibly, is to give local authorities more flexibility, but it remains to be seen what impact these changes will have on outcomes for Roma and other minority groups.<sup>52</sup>

## **6. Conclusions**

The research on which this report is based set out to examine the role of multi-agency partnership work engaging Roma groups across England and supporting Roma children into school. The research had three specific aims:

- To explore the challenges faced by those working with Roma
- To examine how multi agency partnership work impacts on the numbers of Roma children in secondary schools
- To assess the potential impact of proposed changes to the school funding system

Chapter 2 presented a brief account of some of the challenges and problems faced by local agencies and schools attempting to engage Roma groups. After centuries of persecution and exclusion Roma are extremely suspicious of outsiders, and they are often reluctant to work with local agencies when they arrive in the UK. Cultural tensions that follow Roma west from their countries of origin in CEE do not help matters and established community groups often find their cultural characteristics difficult to understand. It is clear that a greater understanding of the cultural characteristics of Roma groups and the specific problems they face are absolutely necessary if agencies are to foster greater engagement.

Chapter 3 presented an overview of local authority attempts to address these issues through multi agency partnership work directed by strategic and political leadership. Manchester has the most comprehensive strategic partnership approach of the four case studies, which has resulted in good levels of coordinated work at the district and local levels with schools and agencies in the public, community/ voluntary – and latterly – private sectors. Calderdale has developed some strategic intent over recent years, but there has been a lack of understanding with the school most affected by Roma migration, which remains problematic. The picture in Bradford and Redbridge is more complex politically, but in both localities there are effective local authority working groups where Roma issues are discussed.

Chapter 4 outlined the impact of changing political and organisational structures on partnership work with Roma groups. Manchester’s strategic approach has been helped by good partnership structures at the local and district level and by commitment from agencies working in the public and community/ voluntary sectors, all of which has helped to increase the number of Roma children in school. In other places, however, the picture is more mixed. There has been some success in Calderdale, but the school with the highest number of Roma pupils in the borough

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52 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmeduc/768/76804.htm>

continues to work independently of the local authority to develop new ways of working with and engaging Roma groups. It is only over the last couple of years that the local authority has developed any strategic intent, but this has coincided with funding cuts and austerity measures that have made new ways of working difficult to pursue. Bradford has high levels of commitment to partnership working from the community/ voluntary sector, but it appears that political complexity to some extent hinders better outcomes for Roma groups. In Redbridge the situation is improving, but changing organisational and political structures are starting to have an impact on the recognition, understanding and value of multi agency work. In all four case studies, traveller teams and services are at the forefront of all that is good about multi partnership work with Roma groups, but they too face an uncertain future.

Chapter 5 assessed the impact of proposed changes to the school funding system on multi-agency partnership work with Roma. Schools are generally unaware of the extent of the cuts they face and their likely impact and secondary material was consulted to alleviate the problems this created in order to derive some insight. Significantly, as well as creating problems for maintained schools, it appears that the Coalition governments proposed per pupil funding regime is likely to create problems for academies and schools that opt out of local authority control. The likelihood is that this will hinder future provision for pupils from minority groups, including Roma, by reducing financial support and incentives to include them; in the short term this will disproportionately impact schools operating as centres of excellence with Roma children. The move away from local authority led multi agency work is a significant factor in these developments, compelling schools to work independently as multi agency hubs.

In all four case study localities concern was expressed about the impact of funding cuts to traveller teams and services and its impact on partnership work. As in other policy areas, the community/ voluntary sector is seen as a means of filling the gaps in provision that are emerging, but there are also concerns about the sector's capacity to fill this void. However, an understanding of the role and commitment of the community and voluntary/ third sector in this area is absolutely critical; even when organisational change and local politics make partnership working more difficult, the commitment of professionals, officers and agencies in the sector is significant.

Perhaps the most worrying concern to emerge as the Coalition Government's cuts bite is the potential loss of the knowledge and skills generated by traveller teams and support services over recent decades; the national and international links they have fostered have become a significant means of tracking and safeguarding Roma children. In each locality, operational work with minority groups is becoming more difficult and many interviewees talked about the emergence of new ways of working. The need for operational flexibility was widely emphasised, but there was also concern about the extent to which this was possible amongst some occupational groups. However, whilst it is difficult to recruit new members of staff in the current climate, an interviewee in Manchester pointed out that there is still a level of flexibility over how budgets can be used to commission services in innovative ways, which to some extent underpins good multi agency work in the current climate.

Strategic direction and leadership is also absolutely necessary if multi agency work is to bring about positive change. In a rapidly changing economic and political climate, where new forms of organisation and smaller operational teams are emerging, it is still paramount that someone takes leadership or ownership of partnership work to coordinate effectively. Very often, work with Roma groups is hindered by a lack of understanding, and by decisions that do little to bring diverse groups together effectively. As we observed, the central element of successful partnership work with Roma was the support, training and trust offered to Roma to provide support in and for their own communities; only when this occurred were the aspirations of Roma pupils in schools met. Indeed, as we observed in all four case studies, it is only through the commitment of those involved in work with Roma at the local level that successful multi agency work emerges. No long-term impact can be achieved without the commitment of those working to encourage and support Roma to help themselves.

### *Recommendations*

- Coalition Government to develop and fund partnerships between secondary schools working with high numbers of Roma/ minority pupils.
- Coalition Government to fund third sector partnerships to fill the gaps in provision left by the withdrawal of funding for traveller teams and services
- Coalition Government to review employment restrictions on Roma children leaving school with qualifications
- Local Authorities to commission innovative service provision through partnership work
- Local authorities to provide guidance to support a wider understanding of Roma issues/culture across diverse professional groups
- Local authorities to implement effective systems to monitor work with Roma minority groups
- Third sector agencies to work more closely in partnership to focus on the needs of Roma groups, where necessary
- Third sector agencies to work more closely/collaboratively with local authorities, where necessary
- Cross sector collaboration to develop a database/ knowledge bank of traveller knowledge and skills

### **Appendix:** *Participating agency/ organisations (the number of interviews at each agency/ organisation is shown in brackets)*

#### *Calderdale*

- Calderdale MBC Neighbourhood Team (1)
- Calderdale MBC Children's Services (1)
- Jubilee Children's Centre (1)
- Sowerby Bridge High School (3)
- West Yorkshire Police (1)

#### *Bradford*

- Anonymous Schools x 2 (2)
- Asylum and Immigration Team (1)
- Bradford Metropolitan District Council Education Service for New Communities and Travellers (2)
- Girlington Advice Centre (2)
- Hope Housing (1)
- Sharing Voices Bradford (1)
- The LACO Eastern European Migrant Project (1)

#### *Manchester*

- Big Life Company (1)
- BHA for Equality (1)
- Cedar Mount High School (2)
- Greater Manchester Police (1)
- Manchester City Council Children's Services (1)
- Manchester City Council International New Arrivals, Travellers & Supplementary Schools Team (1)
- Manchester City Council Regeneration Directorate (2)

#### *Redbridge*

- Mayfield School (2)
- RAMFEL (Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London) (1)
- Redbridge Borough Council South Ilford Community Cohesion Working Group
- Redbridge Borough Council Services to Young People (1)
- Redbridge Borough Council Traveller Education, School Improvement Team (2)
- (RECC) Redbridge Equalities and Community Council (1)
- Roma Support Group (2)

**BHA** *for equality  
in health  
and social care*

BHA,  
Democracy House  
609 Stretford Road  
Old Trafford  
Manchester  
M16 0QA

Telephone: 0845 450 4247  
Fax: 0845 450 3247  
Email: [info@theBHA.org.uk](mailto:info@theBHA.org.uk)  
Website: [www.theBHA.org.uk](http://www.theBHA.org.uk)

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