

'Roma Communities in London' Feasibility Study
Funded by Awards for All



**NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED**

FINAL REPORT

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1. Introduction

Roma London Limited (Roma London) is a company limited by guarantee, which was registered in England in April 2015. The Directors of the company are Roma Community leaders, who all have long history of working tirelessly for the benefits of the Roma people across the world. They have settled in London and have registered the company to take the Roma movement a step further, from being a lobbying body to an active organisation taking practical steps to support the Roma communities across the capital and worldwide, in the long run.

In May 2017 Awards for All approved a grant to enable Roma London to carry out a feasibility study entitled 'Roma Communities in London'.

The work started in early June and was completed in November. This report details the work that took place and the findings. It also makes clear recommendations and identifies the next steps how this information will be used.



2. Chair's address

I am delighted to present the Final report of this important project. This project is important not only for the Roma Communities in the capital, but also for organisations and agencies from the public, private and community sectors as they are the main drive to achieve integration of this community into the local social scene.

First of all, I would like to express our gratitude to Awards to All for funding this project. Without their support this work could not have been done. This funding enabled us to gather hard data, which will help us lobby central government, local authorities and other organisations to seriously consider how to provide effective support to the Roma communities across the capital.

The results of the feasibility study are not surprising, at least for me. The Roma people have been subject to discrimination, prejudice and neglect for many, many years. We are a people without our own state, and we are scattered across the globe. This makes our work very difficult and challenging. However, here in the UK we have started to pull our efforts together under the umbrella of Roma London. We have great ambitions and aspirations for our communities across the capital and this feasibility study is only the first step. But, we are grateful to the support from the Big Lottery Fund to help us make this first step.

During the feasibility study we were encouraged to confirm that our people are not content with their current situation. We discovered a great desire from everyone taking part to improve their lives and ensure that the next generation has better chances and proper support to prosper. This is admirable and encouraging.

One final thought – Roma London will do everything possible to represent the Roma communities across London and the UK, and we will use the findings and recommendations from the feasibility study to secure financial and not-financial support to do this work.

Toma Mladenov
Director and Chair of the Board

3. Executive summary

The Feasibility study was carried out over a six-months period and involved more than 300 people in the surveys and discussions. Taking into account the families represented, the total number of people involved was around 900. The study was funded by a grant from Awards for All, for which Roma London is grateful.

The findings revealed a picture of a large Roma community spread across the capital with concentrations in the northeast and south of London. The questions asked aimed to find out the location of the members of the community, their family situation, housing and their employability status and readiness, covering items such as command of English (oral and written), employment prerequisites (CV, email). The survey also gave the opportunity to express their views for their priorities and aspirations for the future.

The Roma community is a closely knit network of family units who support each other and keep in touch all the time. The families are predominantly large with children. There is a high level of homelessness among the members of the community and very few own their own home. The main barriers experienced on regular basis are low level of English language competence, stigma, prejudice and direct and indirect discrimination and lack of support from the statutory agencies.

The Roma community in London has high aspirations and hopes for the future. Brexit is considered as a threat to the community with many sharing the view that they might be deported. There is a clear need for providing regular updates on the progress of this process.

The Roma community has strong leadership and this group of community leaders are a substantial asset to provide the link to the wider Roma community. Statutory agencies should make efforts to engage effectively and listen to the Roma Leadership.

The Roma people in the capital do not have any different aspirations to those of anybody else. They would like to see well-paid employment, affordable housing, good education and opportunities to socialise on regular basis. There is a will to engage and this should be taken advantage of by the statutory agencies. Funding for support must be made available for work led by representatives of the community, rather than from the outside. This is a fundamental principle, which should be adhered to.

The feasibility study has its limitations as it covered a limited number of people. However, it provides valuable information for the current status of this community. It is just the first step for a proper engagement with the Roma community in London. There is a lot of work to be done and Roma London is well placed to lead this process.

4. The project

4.1 Project outline

The main aim of the project was to design and carry out a feasibility study in order to gather information about the Roma communities across London. Roma London, a company limited by guarantee was set up to support the Roma communities across the capital, but there is no reliable information about the numbers of people or families who live in London. At the same time, the project analysed the needs of the Roma community, so support can be provided to enable them to integrate into the local communities.

The funding application to Awards for All defined the focus of the project as follows:

'We will use a variety of engagement methods to gather the information. We will do desk research to find all the available information from the Census and any other local sources, such as the Croydon Observatory (www.croydonobservatory.org) and other data held by local authorities.

The desk research will be followed by outreach activities, including walking the streets of hot spots, where Roma people are known to congregate, informal conversations with families and Community Leaders and a series of events to find out what barriers exist and collect opinions of what and how it can be changed.

Once the feasibility study is completed, we will circulate the final report to all local authorities in London and follow this up with a series of meetings to support them design appropriate ways of engaging with the Roma community and deliver appropriate support to tackle issues in the areas of education and skills, employment, housing and health.

Our company will also seek external funding to deliver some of these services to the Roma community and provide directly to them training and employment opportunities.'

The funding from Awards for All was made available at the end of April 2017, but activities started after 10 May when the official announcement was made by the Bug Lottery. All key workers were appointed by the end of May and work started early in June. The work involved an initial draft of the feasibility study survey form, the meetings record form and the time sheets for the workers to record the time spent on the project.

Engagement with the Roma people started in mid-June and was completed by the end of September. The analysis of the data was carried out during October and this final report was written in November.

Reporting to Awards for All and the project close activities will be done in December 2017.

4.2 Methodology

The methodology for delivering the feasibility study included the following:

- Design of survey – this was carried out by the project coordinator and the project team
- Desk research – carried out by the project coordinator
- Outreach work to fill in survey – carried out by the two outreach workers and a team of volunteers. The outreach workers interpreted for those whose command of English was not sufficient enough to fill in the survey on their own
- Meetings to discuss findings and current issues and barriers faced by the Roma communities – these were held monthly and covered different topics such as employment, education, housing, equal opportunities, etc.
- Informal discussions with people – many one-to-one meetings were held at different locations and places where Roma people socialise and meet. The information was recorded by the project team members.
- Analysis of the findings
- Drawing out relevant recommendations based on the gathered information
- Agreeing the next steps
- Writing the final report
- Approving the final report by the Board.



4.3 Findings

The survey form consisted of the following 17 questions:

Q1: Do you identify yourself as a member of the Roman community?

Q2: What is the postcode of your current place of residence?

Q3: Do you live with your family?

Q4: If yes, how many people are there in your family household?

Q5: How many of them are under the age of 18?

Q6: What is the highest level of your education?

Q7: What is the level of your spoken English language proficiency?

Q8: What is the level of your written English language proficiency?

Q9: Which of the following apply to you?

Q10: What is your housing situation?

Q11: Do you have a CV

Q12: Do you have an email address?

Q13: Do you have a disability

Q14: Can you tell us the top three things that you think will improve your situation?

Q15: What is the best way to contact you?

Q16: What are your aspirations for the future?

Q17: Anything else that you would like to say?

The participants were given options to choose from in each question with an option to give an opinion where appropriate. 158 forms were filled in, but the people participating were over 500 hundred. In many cases families were involved and each family contributed to one survey form. The following table summarise the data gathered via the survey.

Q	Yes	No	NS	Op1	Op2	Op3	Op4	Op5	Op6
1	157		1						
2	Post code - various								
3	149	9							
4			11	18	104	24			
5				43	22	0			
6			0	70	71	14	3		
7				73	53	15	12	1	4
8				103	36	6	8	3	2
9				48	22	46	42		
10			7	2	80	68			
11	11	144	1						
12	9	144	5						
13	4	151	2						
14	Qualitative data								
15			6	3	2	127			
16	Qualitative data								
17	Qualitative data								

* NS – Not specified

4.4 Data analysis

The survey questions were drafted to ask for information to establish the following:

- Individual and family situation
- Place of residence
- Level of command of English – oral and written
- Employment status and employability readiness and
- Priorities and barriers.

More than 300 people took part in the survey and 158 survey forms were filled in. However, if we take into account the family members indicated further in the survey, the total figure of people referred to in the survey comes to around 900.

Q1: Do you identify yourself as a member of the Roman community?

The survey showed that all participant, but one identified themselves as being a part of the Roma community. This is not surprising as this was the targeted community. In some case people that were approached to participate stated that they are not Roma, but were friends or business associates. Their views were captured through conversations rather than through filling in a survey form. This is reflected in the qualitative data which was recorded.

Q2: What is the postcode of your current place of residence?

This data was intended to show where the highest concentration of Roma people is and what the spread across the capital is. The data shows that 105 of the participants live in North London, predominantly in the areas with 'N' and 'E' post codes. This point towards the northeast London boroughs. 37 participants live in South London, all of them in Croydon or Lambeth post codes. 11 participants did not specify their areas of residence.

Q3: Do you live with your family?

149 participants indicated that they live with their families, while only 9 responded as not living with their families. This shows that most Roma people, taking part have strong family ethos and the family unit is an important part of their lives. This suggests that any support to be offered should be family-friendly and targeting families, rather individuals.

Q4: If yes, how many people are there in your family household?

Most of the surveyed people live in large families – 104 people live in a family of between 4 and 7 people, while 24 people live in a family with more than 8 members. 18 people live in a comparatively smaller family with up to 3 family members.

Q5: How many of them are under the age of 18?

43 people stated that there are up to 3 family members under the age of 18. 22 of the participants have between 4 or 7 young people in the family. This is an important fact to be taken into account for future support as the presence of young children in the family could play a decisive role when other family members are targeted for support.

Q6: What is the highest level of your education?

70 people indicated that they did not have any formal education, while 71 said that they have only primary school education. 14 completed secondary school, while only 3 went to university. This should be taken into account when future support projects are designed, as there is the need to address educational levels and competences before any employability support is provided.

Q6: What is the level of your spoken English language proficiency?

73 people said that they did not have any spoken English at all. 68 participants have basic knowledge, 13 people can communicate effectively, while only 4 have full proficiency. This shows the need for ESOL provision across the board.

Q8: What is the level of your written English language proficiency?

The findings are similar to those from the previous question. 139 people stated that they had none or very basic written English. 17 people said they could communicate at different levels, while only 2 indicated that they had full written proficiency.

Q9: Which of the following apply to you?

48 people said that they had a job. The survey did not establish what kind of employment that was – whether it was part-time or full time, as this was not the purpose of the project. 110 people were unemployed and 46 of them were not receiving any benefits. From further discussions it became apparent that they relied on other family members to earn money for the household. This particular group of people will need special attention if the intention is to support people to become independent and economically active. 42 people were actively seeking employment, but it was not clear how they were going about this as the following questions establishing readiness for employment painted a different picture.

Q10: What is your housing situation?

This question shows a disturbing reality. 68 people said that they were homeless. 80 people were living in rented accommodation and only 2 owned their homes. These statistics show the profound neglect that our society has shown for this community. Combined with the housing crisis in the capital, it is unlikely that this situation will change without the intervention of local authorities and other statutory bodies to support the Roma community.

Q11: Do you have a CV

Q12: Do you have an email address?

These questions were asked to establish if this group of people have the basic prerequisites for successful transition into employment. 144 people said that they had neither of these. This indicated that those who are in employment most likely are in low paid, manual jobs to which people are recruited informally or they work in the grey economy. As part of any support to Roma people this needs to be addressed early in the engagement process.

Q13: Do you have a disability

Only 4 people said that they had a disability. It is unclear if this is the true picture as disability is viewed by this community as a negative characteristic and often people do not wish to disclose such information.

Q14: Can you tell us the top three things that you think will improve your situation?

The responses to this questions inevitably varied, but there were very similar responses from most people taking part. Here is a summary of what people said:

Priority 1: Home/Education/Job (Employment) or own business/car/Good health/Integration/More working positions for gypsies/To be British citizen/My disability/To learn English/More paid work/No racism/Benefits/Farm/Money/Highest health care.

Priority 2: No discrimination/Racism/More positive feelings/Education/Education for my children/Any job/food/More places for Roma meetings/My husband to work better job.

Priority 3: Gypsy Club/theatre/Better rents for all/Job/Health care/Good own business/To have a boy in the family/Job/Respect to the Roma/To have more money/Integration/My children to have better education.

Other comments: Equal rights/Children's education/Improve English/Help with bank account and benefits/Calmness/Time/Better work/Own business/Car.

Q16: What are your aspirations for the future?

Priority 1: Home/'Normal' life/Job/Education /Own business

Priority 2: Independence/Roma organisation/Education for children/Better English

Priority 3: Wealth/Support/Good job for children

Other comments: Music/Bring family from abroad/Roma governance/ To have good people in the world/To stay here with my family after the Brexit/A world without violence against the Roma community/Roma club/Happy and rich/To find good job and house for my family/Finding ways to go better from this situation which we are in now/Good education, self-house and business/No more gypsy beggars/To have more Roma friends, to meet them and do business/One world without discrimination/To help the homeless/Job, money, love/Health insurance/To have good self-business/To speak English/To have the same rights like the other people and not to feel that I am different/To have a country for the Roma people/Educated and working Roma.

Q17: Anything else that you would like to say?

Priority 1: Roma organisation/Roma theatre or museum/Roma school

Priority 2: Support from Government and other organisations/No racism

Priority 3: Roma Church and Roma organisation in Croydon/Own business

Other comments: Learn English/Very expensive to live in UK/Football and sport/God bless everyone/We all together with Roma organisation can help this country/Help for better Roma's world/No to racism/To have help from Roma organisation/Stop racism/Together for better Gypsy's life/Roma organisation to help Roma people and to stop Roma racism/Roma leaders to help Roma people/To have some space where to meet other Roma people/Government helps Roma organisation/I need help/To have respect/To have where to meet other Roma people/To have Roma organisation/More clubs for Gypsy meetings/Justice for the Gypsies/To have a Roma club where to go/People be better and

more generous/To have Roma organisation and club to help me/Stop killing the Gypsy with discrimination/Government to help/To be united/Education for Roma children/More organisations to help the Roma people.

Q18: What is the best way to contact you?

137 people indicated that they would prefer not to be contacted, which shows the mistrust that this group of people has towards authority, formal structures and statutory regulations. Though the survey was conducted by a community organisation, it was not perceived as a safe option to enable further contact.

4.5 Data interpretation

The survey showed as some fundamental truths about the Roma community across the capital. This community comprises of very close-knit units based on family links and relations. The families are usually large, have young children and depend on family members to provide and look after the family as a whole. The majority of the people from this community have low-level of formal education, their command of English is limited, there are high levels of homelessness and unemployment, and people do not have the basic prerequisites for effective job-search and employment.

The community is spread across London, with some concentration in the northeast and most southern boroughs. However, people keep in touch with each other via informal channels and usually meet on regular basis in their homes, rather having a dedicated place where they can socialise and exchange ideas and information.

The community has not been properly organised or represented for quite some time. There were informal clubs at local level, without proper governance in place. This was changed when Roma London Limited was registered in 2016 and the organisation started systematic work to organise the community and lobby on their behalf.

It is evident that members of the Roma community have high aspirations and expectations for the future. The uncertainties caused by Brexit has resulted in raising the fear of what might happen once the process is completed. The fear of deportation is real and the topic is the subject of almost every conversation or gathering.

The stigma and prejudice about the Roma community is felt very strongly by its members. The bad publicity and negative articles in the media has made it very difficult for Roma people to feel that they are valued and have the same chances as everyone else in our society.

So far support to this group of people from central government and local authorities has been non-existent or tokenistic. None of the participants in the survey or the people who participated in the discussions was aware of any help with basic rights, such as housing, language or employments tailor-made for their community. Whenever they asked for any help they were dealt with in a bureaucratic, prescriptive way without any empathy.

There is a strong sense of pride and belonging to this community. People expressed their beliefs that with good Leadership, strong governance and accountability a lot can be done to change the current situation and provide appropriate level of support to those who need it. One very strong message throughout the consultation was that people did not want to be patronised and 'done things to'. They wanted to have grass root support provided by members of their own community, rather by outsiders.

Financial support was inevitably discussed and it appears that there is no known source of funding to deliver services to this community. Some local authorities acknowledge the fact that they have Roma people in their area, but no focused attempts have been made to engage with them.

5. Recommendations

Following the findings of the survey Roma London is making the following recommendations to the relevant organisations and authorities.

5.1 Short- term

Recommendation 1: Set-up a London-wide taskforce, led by Roma London and including representatives from London Councils and the GLA to design a programme of support for Roma people to be funded and delivered from April 2018 across the capital.

Recommendation 2: Create a post and appoint a central Government Roma Liaison officer to provide the support and coordinate the work with the Roma community across London.

Recommendation 3: Made available funding to design and deliver a promotional campaign to tackle the stigma associated with the Roma community.

5.2 Long-term

Recommendation 1: Identify and secure suitable premises for a Roma Community Centre, including a training facility

Recommendation 2: Organise an international round table in London to discuss local Roma integration and international cooperation

Recommendation 3: Identify and made available long-tern funding to support the Roma community in London and the rest of the country.

6. Next steps

This Final Report is the first step of the process to design and deliver appropriate support to the Roma community in London. We are grateful to Awards for All for the funding which made this work possible. We will continue this area of work with the following steps:

- Send the report to all local authorities in London
- Seek meetings with relevant officers to discuss the way forward
- Continue the engagement with Roma people
- Continue to seek funding to deliver support to Roma people
- Lobby Central Government to acknowledge and support the Roma community
- Prepare a long-term plan for this work.

