

Engaging with the Roma community on the EU Settlement Scheme

Toolkit for local authorities and community organisations

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Background

There are significant barriers to Roma people accessing and managing status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), which have only increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be challenging to get 100% of the Roma community in the UK engaged, and through the application process by the deadline. Government, local authorities and community organisations must work together to ensure that Roma people have a safe passage from EU rights to a new status under the UK immigration system, and are supported to access their rights.

Groups at particular risk of not securing their immigration status include: Roma children; Children in care and care leavers; Rough sleepers; and pre-settled status holders (over 60% of Roma applicants according to our research¹).

About Roma Support Group

The Roma Support Group (RSG) is a Roma-led registered charity working with Eastern European Roma refugees and migrants. Since 1998, the RSG has worked with thousands of Roma families across the UK.

Roma Support Group has developed the following recommendations on good practice in collaboration with local authorities and community organisations in Bradford, Brent, Cardiff, Leeds, Newport, Peterborough and Sheffield. We also thank organisations in the Roma EUSS Network for their input.

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Providing effective support

Good support for the Roma community on the EU settlement scheme involves actions for both local authorities and delivery organisations:

- Effective outreach to the Roma community to ensure everyone makes an application
- Addressing barriers to access caused by the Covid-19 pandemic
- Supporting people with low digital/language skills to manage their status
- Signposting to reliable advice on complex cases
- Supporting holders of pre-settled status to reapply
- Providing correct information about rights during the “grace period” until 30 June 2021.

¹ [Brexit, EU Settlement Scheme and the Roma communities in the UK, Roma Support Group \(2020\)](#)

Good practice for local authorities

Effective outreach to the Roma community will involve one or more of these approaches:

Working with community organisations or local churches

Many Roma people don't believe the EU settlement scheme is relevant to them and don't know they have to apply to secure their status in the UK. Home Office campaigns are not reaching them. At the same time, only 3 in 100 Roma applicants will have the confidence, and language and IT skills required to submit the EUSS application without support. It is key to work wherever possible in community languages and with Roma supporting organisations, or it will be much harder to reach the Roma community.

In the short time available, it will be best to go through trusted channels and work with organisations that already have a relationship with them, ideally working with Roma advocates to link between the service and their community. Otherwise, work with Roma-supporting organisations that have advice workers with suitable language skills or that currently provide Roma with holistic support in education, healthcare, housing or employment. Another effective approach is through Pentecostal churches or Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Halls which have many Roma members.

Providing information in community languages

Most Roma in the UK come from Poland, Romania, Slovakia or Czech Republic, and also speak the community language, Romanes. If possible, make promotional material available in community languages – (mainly Romanes, and Eastern European languages: Polish, Slovak, Romanian, Czech, Bulgarian and others). There are pointers to community language resources about the EUSS below.

Case study 1: Referrals from local authorities

Across Wales, EUSS providers have run a number of workshop webinar sessions for councils with TGP Cymru providing support for the Roma community. These have been attended by frontline workers and local authority departments with the aim to raise awareness of the EUSS and to make direct referral pathways into EUSS service providers. Information is given on the EUSS: what it means, deadlines, who must apply, the application process and accessing status. Contact details of all services are provided in order for frontline workers to make direct referrals for application/post-application support.

Outreach through schools to Roma children and their parents

According to RSG research, up to 25% of Roma children are not applying for settled status and are at risk of missing the deadline². Many Roma parents are not aware that their children need to make EUSS applications - either because the child is born in the UK and they assume the child is British, the child has no valid ID, or they are unaware that children also have to apply under the EUSS scheme.

²Brexit, EU Settlement Scheme and the Roma communities in the UK

Although children with EU citizenship are less likely to have registered for EUSS than adults, Roma children often have better language skills than their parents, interpreting and advocating for them. Outreach to Roma children through schools is therefore an effective way of informing communities and ensuring that both children and their parents apply for settled status.

This process should involve support for families to establish whether their children qualify for British citizenship. Schools can also instruct families on how to manage their digital status. It will be a good idea to check if schools have staff who speak Roma or other Eastern European languages, depending on the origin of the local Roma community.

Support for children in care and care leavers

Due to the long-term consequences of becoming undocumented on educational and work prospects, it is important that every effort is made to identify all eligible children with EU citizenship who are in care or care leavers, and support them to achieve settled status. Further guidance on this is below.

Case study 2: outreach through schools

In Cardiff and Newport, EUSS providers (TGP Cymru, working with the Roma community and other providers), the Community Cohesion departments and the Minority Ethnic Education Services worked with schools to set up EUSS information and application sessions. People could receive information on the EUSS and receive support in making applications in their home language (mainly Czech, Romanian and Slovak within the Roma community). The sessions stopped due to Covid, but the links exist, and all are ready to start as soon as schools can allow people in.

Case studies 3 and 4: working with community organisations

Case study 3: Bradford City Council collaborates with 14 different charity organisations providing [EUSS support in Bradford](#). Their services are available in 27 languages. Five of these organisations specifically provide support in Romanes, the Roma language.

Case study 4: Liverpool City Council worked with community organisation Granby Toxteth Development Trust to provide a [drop-in session](#) with an immigration adviser for the Roma community two days a week.

Correct information about rights during the “grace period”

Although we are hearing of employers and landlords already asking for proof of settled status from EU citizens, a passport or national ID card from an EU/EEA country or Switzerland (and evidence of a family relationship to an EU citizen for non-EEA family members) is sufficient proof of the right to live and work in the UK until 30 June 2021. Employers, landlords, banks and public bodies have a duty not to discriminate against EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and cannot require citizens to show their status under the EU Settlement Scheme until after the EUSS scheme deadline.

Further resources

General EUSS guidance and standards

Basic information on the [EUSS application process](#) from the charity iMix

[OISC code of standards](#) regulating advice on the EUSS

Roma children and children in care

[Child-friendly information on the EU settlement scheme](#) developed by Liverpool University

[Guidance for EU citizen children](#) on Brexit by the Greater London Authority

EEA and Swiss children and their [rights to British citizenship](#)

[Comic strip](#) for children about citizenship

[Template letter](#) from schools for proof of residence by Freemovement blog

Statutory [obligations](#) for local authorities on children in care and adult safeguarding:

Coram Centre on [EU children in care](#)

Further guidance on Home Office support for [looked after children and care leavers](#)

Further information about [employment rights](#) during the grace period

Material in community languages

Romanes language resources:

- RSG videos in Romanes:
 - [Why do I need to apply?](#) and [Who needs to apply?](#)
 - [How long it will take?](#) and [Where can I get help?](#)
 - [What effect will Brexit have for me?](#)
- Luton Roma Trust step by step [guide](#) in Romanes to the EUSS application process
- More videos in Romanes are [here](#).

Romanian language resources:

- [Using the EUSS document checking app](#)
- [How to apply for EU settled status](#) by RSG and PILC
- [ILR dependants](#) by RSG and PILC

Polish language resources:

- [Applying for EUSS](#) by RSG and PILC
- [Brexit and the EUSS](#) by SettledQA and RSG

- [Difference between settled and pre-settled status](#)
- [ILR dependants](#) by RSG and PILC

More community language resources:

RSG has [videos](#) in Romanian, Slovak, Polish and Romanes about the EU Settlement Scheme.

[Leaflets](#) by Seraphus Solicitors for the European Commission on EU citizens, seniors and non-EU citizens, available in community languages

Migrant Centre NI [guide](#) to accessing, updating and proving status in 8 languages

[Home Office materials](#) in European languages

[FAQs](#) in more European languages by outreach charity Settled

Organisations with experience in EUSS outreach to the Roma community

Roma Support Group's [Ketane Project](#)

[Settled](#)

[New Europeans](#)

[TGP Cymru Travelling Ahead](#) project in Wales

Further links to regional and local community organisations are below.

Good practice for community organisations

Barriers to EUSS for the Roma community

Be aware that there are significant barriers to Roma accessing and managing status under the EU Settlement Scheme, some exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Digital exclusion and language barriers: only 3% of Roma applicants have the confidence and skills to submit the EUSS application without support
- Lack of valid ID or proof of five years' residence due to informal work /unstable housing
- Roma often rely on a national ID card rather than a passport, and are reluctant to send this non-biometric document to the Home Office.
- Roma women in particular, often accept pre-settled status where they actually qualify for settled status if they are asked to provide additional information.

Barriers increased due to Covid-19

Some barriers are caused or made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Face to face support is unavailable – telephone and online services are harder to access
- ID documents are harder to access with reduced hours and staff at embassies (see below)
- Some may break their continuity of residence in the UK or be unable to return to their country of origin to renew passports due to travel restrictions during lockdown.

Effective support by community organisations

Supporting people with insufficient digital skills to manage their status

The EUSS status is digital-only, and EU citizens will be the only group of foreign residents who have no physical proof of status and have to rely on the Home Office “right to work” systems. Because Roma people find digital-only status very difficult to understand and access, it is important that advisers and support services who work with the Roma community are instructed how to use it.

During the EUSS application process:

- 70% of Roma applicants are not able to provide their own, valid email address: advisers might have to help create one.
- 80% of Roma applicants will not have a handset that works with the EUSS app: you may need to provide one for the initial application process.

Managing digital ID:

- Ensure applicants have control of their own login themselves, instead of relying on a third party.
- Where that isn't possible, accept a family member's contact details if there are no signs that they have a controlling influence over the applicant.
- Ensure applicants are informed of the need to keep their digital immigration status updated if they change their email address or passport.

Signposting to reliable advice on complex cases

Complex cases among the Roma community will include people who don't have valid ID or proof of residence like rough sleepers, or children of ILR holders who don't have their own proof of status.

Lack of valid ID/ proof of residence:

A common problem among the Roma community is lack of valid ID to make an application via the EUSS app. The Home Office EUSS resolution centre manages the process for making a paper application in

those cases, but most Roma applicants will need support to make a request to the Home Office and complete the paperwork.

- No valid ID: Don't wait for the passport or national ID card to submit an application, as they may not be received in time to apply by the deadline. Get alternative evidence of identity/nationality and request a paper application from the Home Office EU Settlement Scheme Resolution Centre on 0300 123 7379. Even if there is no evidence in existence, the Home Office is required to assist the applicant through the process.
- Insufficient proof of residence: If the applicant has been in the UK for more than five years, do not advise them to accept pre-settled status – instead support them to get alternative evidence and submit a paper application.

Socially distanced advice giving

Sheffield Council found during the Covid-19 pandemic that a mix of in-person and phone/online support can work well, e.g. providing an initial socially distanced advice session followed by a phone call.

Case study 5: service delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic

Sheffield community health organisation Darnall Well Being has continued to deliver services throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with a dedicated EUSS phone line used by 59 new clients (July-Sept 2020). Four workers with language skills relevant to the community continued working from home, making new applications remotely and liaising with the Home Office Resolution Centre.

Workers followed up with clients who had more complex needs, helping them to finish their applications or referring to partnership agencies for immigration advice. By the end of September 2020, 32 families were on a waiting list for an appointment once that becomes possible. The centre also integrated health messages and guidance on staying safe during the pandemic.

Dependants of ILR holders

We are aware of around 2700 families (currently EU citizens, mostly Roma former asylum seekers from Poland, Romania and Slovakia) who were granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) before their countries of origin joined the EU.

Roma dependants or adult children of ILR holders have leave to remain in the UK, but do not have proof of status in their own name – instead using their parents' letter from the Home Office as proof. Some are unwilling to apply for settled status as they already have leave to remain, but proof issued in their own name isn't currently available and many services such as the Universal Credit scheme do not accept their parents' original letter as proof.

If they are not mentioned in their parents' letter, children may not have been granted a status, and you will need to request records from the Home Office. It will be key to give information and support on the best choice between obtaining proof of ILR status, applying for settled status or registering as a British citizen.

Supporting pre-settled status holders to reapply

EU citizens or family members with pre-settled status will have to reapply within five years or lose their status altogether. Despite this, research that RSG took part in shows 73% of EU citizens (and 70% of Roma) with pre-settled status aren't aware of when and how to reapply.³ The Government is committed to sending reminders to pre-settled status holders six months before their status expires, but this may not be enough - timing is crucial.

Make sure you:

- Advise applicants to upload as much evidence as possible when they initially apply for pre-settled status, so they can refer to it when returning to apply for settled status.
- Provide clear signposting in advance on the reapplication process for holders of pre-settled status.
- Give people a range of dates for when they must plan for reapplying.
- Ensure the applicant has a personal email address so they receive the reminders directly and don't rely on a third party.
- Ensure they are aware they must keep their digital status updated if they change email addresses.
- Ensure the applicant knows that absence from the UK will affect their ability to get settled status.
- Send a reminder where possible, ideally by letter, several months before the pre-settled status holder is due to reapply.

Rights to support and social services for (pre-) settled status holders

Settled status holders automatically satisfy the "right to reside" part of the habitual residence test for the purposes of universal credit and other benefits. The UK Government does not accept pre-settled status as automatically passing the right to reside test, although a recent court case has confirmed that EU nationals with pre-settled status cannot be treated differently to UK citizens on access to means tested benefits⁴. EU citizens with pre-settled status can try to demonstrate an alternative 'right to reside' by reference to EU free movement rights - for example, showing they are a worker or are self-employed.

³[Digital Status: Handle with care, New Europeans \(2020\)](#)

⁴[Court of Appeal finds that EU nationals legally resident in UK were unlawfully excluded from claiming universal credit, Child Poverty Action Group \(18th December 2020\)](#)

Case study 6: Holistic support for the Roma community

POMOC (Help) is a drop-in set up at a local community hub by a Polish citizen in Leeds. Since lockdown started in March, POMOC has worked virtually and extended the number of sessions to two per week specifically for the Roma community. The drop-ins have been promoted widely, and referrals are usually made from schools, social workers and food banks. POMOC partners with St Vincent's to support referrals and joint resolution of cases, and refers to Kirklees Citizens Advice and Law Centre on complex cases. From April to November a total of 90 families (around 300 people, mostly Roma from Romania) have been supported to register to the EUSS scheme and access other support. Trusted relationships built over the years with Roma community leaders enabled referrals, language support and signposting to other organisations for a holistic service.

Further resources

Complex cases and barriers to EUSS status

Documents accepted as [evidence](#) of residence

Children of ILR holders

This RSG video explains the options in [Romanian](#) and in [Polish](#)

The barriers [digital-only status](#) presents to Roma people

Organisations giving pro bono advice on complex EUSS cases

[Here for Good](#) do casework and provide free [training resources](#) on the EU Settlement Scheme

Seraphus Solicitors hold [advice surgeries](#) to help vulnerable people make applications - organisations needing specialist EUSS legal support can book sessions.

[AIRE Centre](#) also give specialist advice to EU citizens and family members.

[PILC](#) and [Praxis](#) provide specialised immigration support for homeless or marginalised people

In Wales, [Newfields Law](#) are funded to provide complex casework

Other organisations giving advice free of charge are local [law centres](#), and [Citizens Advice Bureau](#)

Migrant Law Partnership have a 24 hour helpline on 0207 112 8163.

The European Commission provides a [national search tool](#) for local free of charge advice providers.

For links to regional and local community organisations providing specialised support to the Roma community, please see the "Local organisations" grid below.

Pre-settled status holders

Your [rights](#) as a (pre-) settled status holder

Satisfying the right to reside requirement for [pre-settled status holders](#)

After-care [guide](#) for holders of pre-settled status

[Reapplication process](#) for pre-settled status holders

Pre-settled status and [absences](#) from the UK

Explainers of the difference between settled and pre-settled status: [the3million](#) and [GLA](#)

Covid-19 and the EU settlement scheme

Government [guidance](#) for EUSS applicants who have been affected by Covid-19 restrictions

Roma Support Group survey findings on Roma and the EUSS

The statistics below provide some context on how Roma communities experience the EUSS:

- By September 2020, over 59% of RSG's Roma clients were granted the less secure pre-settled status⁵, compared to the 42% national average⁶;
- 15% - 25% of Roma children are not making applications⁷;
- 10% - 15% of Roma, including children, do not have valid ID documents and are therefore not making EUSS applications⁸;
- The majority of rough sleeping Roma are not making applications;
- 72% of Roma will need help to access their digital EUSS status.

Most Roma will need support to complete the EUSS application:

- 20% of European Roma self-declared as illiterate in 2014, compared to 1% of the wider EU population⁹;
- Only 20% of the Roma families that RSG works with have access to smartphone/tablet/laptop and email address;
- 44% of the Roma people benefiting from RSG's EUSS support needed information on EUSS in a language other than English 89% of foreign-born nationals speak good or very good English¹⁰;
- Only 3% of Roma can complete an online application completely independently¹¹.

⁵ [RSG 2019-20 annual report](#)

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics>

⁷ [Brexit, EU Settlement Scheme and the Roma communities in the UK](#) (Data collected by March 2020)

⁸ [Brexit, EU Settlement Scheme and the Roma communities in the UK](#) (Data collected by March 2020)

⁹ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-roma-survey-dif-education-1_en.pdf

¹⁰ UK 2011 census: <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/english-language-use-and-proficiency-of-migrants-in-the-uk/>

¹¹ [PB2 testing: the experience of Roma Support Group assisted applicants](#)

Local organisations supporting the Roma community

This is not an exhaustive list. The European Commission provides a [national search tool](#) for more local free of charge advice providers.

Local authority/county council	Organisation
Bradford	St Edmunds Bradford Communityworks Kaskosan Migrant Info Hub links to other EUSS support
Cardiff	TGP Cymru Newfields Law for complex casework
Derby	Roma Community Care
Enfield (London borough)	Roma Support Group
Glasgow	Community Renewal Romano Lav – campaign organisation for the Roma community
Ipswich	Ipswich Community Media
Kent County Council	Red Zebra Community Solutions
Liverpool	Granby Toxteth Development Trust
Luton	Luton Roma Trust

Nottingham	Nottingham Law Centre Idea Rom Association
Peterborough	Compass
Redbridge (London borough)	Roma Support Group Citizens Advice Redbridge
Rotherham	Clifton Learning Partnership Migrant Info Hub links to other EUSS support
Sheffield	Citizens Advice Sheffield Darnall Well Being Firvale Community Hub Sheffield Roma Network
Surrey County Council	Surrey Gypsy Traveller forum
Wakefield	The Youth Association Migrant Info Hub links to other EUSS support
West Sussex county council	Friends Families Travellers

Template EU Settlement Scheme application form

Date:

Applicant details

Applicant's name		
Date of birth		
National Insurance Number		
Passport/ID Card No		
Email address		
Telephone number		
Application submitted for (tick the relevant box)	Settled status	
	Pre-settled status	
Application reference number:		

Security questions:

Set 1

- What was the name of the first school you went to?
- In what city or town did your wedding take place?
- What was the first job you ever had?
- What is the name of the city or town you were born in?
- What was the name of your favourite teacher in school?

Set 2

- In what city or town did your mother and father meet?
- What was the street name of the first house or flat you lived in?
- When you were young, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- What is the name of your partner?
- What was the name of your first pet?

Set 3

- What is your favourite film?
- What is your partner's mother's name?
- What city or town was your father born in?
- What make was your first car?
- What is your eldest sibling's middle name?

Adviser:

Applicant or Parent:

I/We give my/our consent above that the adviser may keep a record of this form which will be stored securely; to enable us to assist you on an ongoing basis. We will keep the data for a maximum of two years after you have ceased contact with us; unless you ask us to destroy it earlier. *I/we understand that at any time I/we can withdraw consent for my/our information to be held by the adviser. I/we have the right of access to personal information held about me/us and my children and can request this by making an application in writing to management.*