

Roma in Manchester: A fact sheet

January 2014

- Roma migrants from eastern Europe began arriving in Greater Manchester in the late 1990s, with a second wave arriving in 2001-2003.
- There are established Roma communities from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic; Roma from Romania have been settling in Manchester mainly since 2007.
- No reliable statistics exist, but practitioner and agency estimates tend to agree that around 3,000 Roma reside in the city.
- There is a notable presence of Roma in Gorton, Levenshulme, Rusholme, Cheetham Hill, Crumpsall, and Moston; but also in Oldham, Bolton, and Salford.
- Roma are not Travellers; they do not live in caravans. But there are historical connections between European Roma and groups of British Romani Gypsies, and some common aspects of language and culture.
- The Roma speak their own language – Romani –, which is related to the languages of India (Urdu, Punjabi, etc); there is no connection between Romani and Romanian and the similarity in names is coincidental. All Roma are multilingual and language skills are encouraged in the community.
- Illiteracy rates are high among the Roma of eastern Europe; many Roma parents in Manchester are unable to provide literacy support to their children at home.
- The proportion of Roma among migrants from eastern Europe is not noticeably higher than their proportion in the population of the respective countries of origin; Roma immigrate for a variety of reasons, among them to escape racial discrimination and social exclusion.
- Roma society is organised in extended families; when Roma emigrate, groups of 10-15 nuclear families often settle together in close proximity to one another. For this reason, some Roma groups are more conspicuous than other immigrants.
- Roma tend to have large families; the arrival of family clusters who take up residence close to one another often means that many Roma children seek admission to the same local school.
- Research and engagement with the Roma community in Manchester have established that there are currently no noticeable issues of school attendance, rubbish disposal, unemployment or criminality, and that allegations to the contrary are based largely on

misguided perception and prejudice; this has been flagged in Manchester City Council's Roma Strategy Document 2011-2014.

- Roma work in a variety of sectors, though most prefer to be self-employed, and those from Romania have until January 2014 been restricted to self-employment. Most Roma receive child benefits and some are entitled to housing benefits and tax credit; unemployment benefits are not common among the Roma in Manchester.
- There is a strong presence of Pentecostal churches among some Roma groups, especially those from Romania; the church tends not to get involved in public affairs and does not usually engage in mediation between Roma and local authorities.
- Roma communities from different origin countries do not usually maintain close ties with one another, though religious work, third sector agency engagement, and school events such as visit days for Roma at the University of Manchester occasionally bring together young Roma of different backgrounds.
- The Romani Project at the University of Manchester has been carrying out research and community engagement with Roma since 1999; in 2009 it was commissioned by Manchester City Council to draft an Engagement Strategy, which is described in the council's Roma Strategy Document 2011-2014.
- The Engagement Strategy centred around the training of young Roma as 'Role Models'; the concept has since been embraced by the community and has transformed motivations and aspirations, with many striving for college education and some even going on to higher education.
- A first group of Roma mediators were trained in 2009-2010 by a joint initiative of the University of Manchester's Romani Project and the Big Life Group, and subsequently employed by projects run by the Big Life Group, Sure Start, BHA, or by the council's education department; as a result, most schools are now aware of the presence of Roma children and local agencies are aware of Roma clients.
- A variety of other organisations and centres have also been offering support to Roma in Manchester, including RAPAR, MRSN, Europia, and Inspire.

For relevant documents see:

<http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/report-policy-briefs.html>

MigRom:

'The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, effects, and future engagement strategies'.

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