



MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL REPORT ON THE MIGROM PROJECT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ITS ALIGNMENT TO MANCHESTER CITY PRIORITIES

Manchester City Council Equality Team

04 October 2016

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



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Report of: Manchester City Council Equality Team

Date: 04 October 2016

1. Roma Engagement in Manchester

1.1 Manchester City Council's active engagement with Roma families was established in 2007, with the Council's International New Arrivals, Travellers and Supplementary Schools Team (INA/T/SS) working with the Roma community through schools enrolment. In spring 2009, in order to address reported issues of community cohesion and service provision in Gorton South, the Council set up a Gorton South Roma Strategy Group to improve coordination and engagement with the community.

1.2 In August 2009, the Council commissioned the Romani Project at the University of Manchester to carry out research in the Romani community of Gorton South. The project was asked to assess the aspirations of community members, their level of skills, their concerns and potential channels of engagement, and to make recommendations for an engagement strategy. The outcomes of this research were presented to Council officers in October 2009 and indicated that:

- The community of Romanian Roma in the area consisted of around 300-400 individuals, the majority of them children, who originated mainly from Tandarei in south-eastern Romania
- Most were related through family ties, and many adhered to the Pentecostal faith (it should be noted that the community has since grown to include unrelated families of Romanian Roma from other cities in Romania and of other faiths, whilst there was also a move of a significant number of Romanian Roma families based in the area away from Manchester in 2012)
- Families expressed a keen interest for their children to attend school but described obstacles such as a shortage of school places and inaccessibility of the registration process
- Families also expressed an interest in finding employment, although regulations at the time did not allow them to do so and restricted them to self-employment (these restrictions were removed in January 2014 and there has since been a significant increase in employment in the community)

1.3 Based on these findings, the University of Manchester made the following recommendations to the Council:

- To create two temporary positions for Roma outreach workers to support interaction with local services

- To support capacity building by training young people from the community, to create role models
- To draw on this capacity to engage Romani classroom assistants to support Roma pupils in local schools
- To raise awareness of the Roma community among local services and schools, through a series of training activities
- To strengthen provisions for school places and ensure equal access to education

1.4 The Council responded to these recommendations with the development of the Roma Strategy 2011 – 14. Informed by the work of the Gorton South Roma Strategy Group, the city-wide strategy recognised the important role of community management, education and employment as key contributors towards successful and sustained integration. As a result, it delivered Council-led and partnership activities including:

- Supporting Roma families through the INA/T/SS Team to enrol their children into school, overcoming barriers where possible to ensure that more Manchester primary schools take Roma children; consequently, Roma families are now resident in every SRF area in the city except for Wythenshawe, and Roma children are engaged in education
- Engaging teenage Roma girls to assess circumstances relating to school attendance, marriage and family responsibilities; the MigRom Project advises that marriage is sanctioned in Romani communities through approval of the extended families and not necessarily through formal registration with state institutions and engagement on the topic should be considered in this context; it further notes that this practice is not unique to Romani communities
- Engaging Roma under 5's in Sure Start activities to expand on the school enrolment work
- Supporting Greater Manchester Police's investigation into suspected human trafficking / sexual exploitation within the Roma community; the police investigation (Operation Epee), established that there was no child trafficking or sexual exploitation taking place
- Working with The Big Life Company Outreach Project, the Black Health Agency (BHA) for Equality, the University of Manchester, the INA/T/SS Team and Manchester Adult Education Service on the Big Life Company Outreach Project based at Longsight Sure Start, which focused on the skills development of Roma residents; the project supported seven young people from the Roma community to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and access work experience placements in local schools, following which all participants went on to work on a self-employed basis
- Working with the Manchester Citizen's Advice Bureau, the BHA for Equality and Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN) to manage the Migration Impact Fund (a £500,000 award funded via Government Office North West), to deliver advice and information services to ease the pressure on existing advice services within the city up to December 2011
- Coordinating a Roma Strategy group, which informed the activities of the strategy and assessed progress; a report on the Roma Strategy, compiled as part of the EU-funded MigRom project in March 2013, is available for

review at:

<http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/Commentary%20on%20MCC%20document.pdf>

- 1.5 The Roma Strategy 2011 – 14 was broadly successful in providing short-term targeted support to Roma communities to enable them to become integrated, enabled and independent. As with all minority communities in the city, there remains targeted work and additional support that can be delivered. However, the Roma Strategy has helped to move Manchester’s Roma people closer to a position where this support can be delivered by the community for the community (with appropriate support from public and voluntary sectors) rather than being a public service led undertaking.

2. MigRom Project 2013 – 17

- 2.1 The Council has remained involved in Roma engagement through its role of partner on the MigRom Project Steering Group. Alongside the project’s research component, a budget of around 250,000 Euros is allocated by the consortium specifically for outreach work within the community of Romanian Roma migrants in Manchester. This has enabled the project to engage two members of the local Roma community as outreach workers on a full-time basis. The outreach work is managed by the University of Manchester in partnership with the Council’s Regeneration Team and Equality Team and other stakeholders through the joint Steering Group.
- 2.2 The MigRom project has produced a range of research reports and guidance notes outlining the prevailing trends and issues in Manchester’s Roma communities. These documents have proven to be a valuable resource to the Council in the development of its Roma-related activity and continue to be shared with Council officers to inform future planning.
- 2.3 Part of the MigRom Project’s schedule of deliverables is the Roma Consultation Forum. The project application submitted to the European Commission in 2012, which forms the basis of the project contract signed by the partners, contains the following description of the Consultation Forum:

“The study will be combined with a pilot engagement scheme led by a local authority – Manchester City Council. The scheme draws on Manchester’s engagement strategy with the community of Roma migrants over the past few years. The project will expand this strategy by introducing further measures for capacity-building within the community, provisions for advice and support services and the creation of a consultation forum that will allow Roma migrants to take part in planning and decision-making processes affecting their community. ... The [project’s] outreach workers will support Council officials in setting up and running a regular consultation forum within the local Roma community which will act as a clearing house for issues with local services, authorities and non-Roma residents.”

- 2.4 This deliverable was designed specifically in order to establish links between Manchester City Council and Roma community leaders. In June 2013 it was agreed that this objective would proceed initially by identifying individuals with an interest in acting as informal spokespersons for the community, and through gradually building their capacity. This process, which has included training events, film screenings and meetings with representatives of international Romani culture initiatives and with Elected Members and council officers, resulted in a consolidated Roma Consultation Forum.
- 2.5 The Roma Consultation Forum requested a meeting with Council officers and Elected Members to discuss alleged misrepresentation of Roma people and culture in the Council's 2014 report 'The State of the City – Communities of Interest'. At the meeting on 2 December 2014, the suggestion was presented by Council officers that members of the Forum could engage with the Council-facilitated Youth Council and / or House of Manchester initiatives. This suggestion offered a reciprocal arrangement, whereby Roma representatives could engage with the Council, and in turn would be supported to promote Roma voice. Although this suggestion was initially well received by the Roma Consultation Forum, none of its members subsequently opted to promote Roma voice through these channels.
- 2.6 Instead, in May 2015, the MigRom Project announced the establishment of a Roma Community Group, Roma Voices of Manchester (RVoM). The development of this initiative was supported through the MigRom Steering Group with input from the Council, the University of Manchester and other member organisations, in partnership with the Big Life Group and with additional support from the European Roma and Travellers Forum. The group has gone on to be the channel to deliver the Consultation Forum. It has maintained a consistent dialogue with the Council as well as initiating dialogue with other key public and voluntary sector stakeholders to raise the group's profile and strengthen its position in the community and in the city.
- 2.7 These dialogues have been mutually beneficial; RVoM has received guidance and support from the Council to develop its work planning and funding options, including signposting to small grant opportunities. The group has been instrumental in improving the representation of Roma people in the Council's updated 2016 Communities of Interest report, providing information about its activities and aims and raising awareness of some of the highest priorities for Roma people in Manchester from their own perspective. RVoM has kept the Council's Equality Team regularly updated on its activities and developments and as such, has helped the team to build its knowledge of Roma communities and priorities in Manchester.

3. MigRom Project Alignment to the Council's Strategic Approach

Council Services

- 3.1 The Council is committed to promoting independence and ensuring that emerging communities are able to access mainstream services, rather than developing reliance on targeted provision. The effectiveness of the short term, high intervention model outlined above, which promotes and enables independence in the longer term, has previously been evidenced through work with, for example, the City's Somali and Sudanese communities. The INAT/ASS Team was disestablished in June 2014, ceasing a significant proportion of the targeted Roma intervention work above. However, the Council does retain a degree of designated focus on Roma engagement; examples of this can be found in the Council's report to the Communities Scrutiny Committee in June 2015:
http://www.manchester.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2399/disestablished_committee_communities_scrutiny_committee
- 3.2 The premise of MigRom's support in the development and capacity building of the RVoM group mirrors this strategic approach. The project seeks to enable the RVoM group to promote the integration and independence of Roma communities by providing community advocacy and support, thereby reducing people's reliance on public services that are being delivered through diminishing budgets. The MigRom Project team has been very clear that its various investments (financial, resource and personnel) in the RVoM group's formation and capacity building will expire at the end of the project in March 2017, and that the group will need to be able to operate independently of the project at that stage. Assuming that the group is able to do this, RVoM will continue its dialogue with the Council and other stakeholders, and will remain a valuable avenue for engagement with the Roma community in Manchester.

Equality Objectives 2016 – 20

- 3.3 The Council prepares and publishes its strategic equality objectives, in line with its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, at least every four years. The equality objectives set out the high level priorities for the Council and the city as a whole, and are underpinned by more specific, measurable activities that will enable progress towards achievement. The work of the MigRom project and the RVoM group are very relevant to all of the objectives, and will support the achievement of them as set out below.

Equality Objective 1 – Knowing Manchester Better

“We will work together with Manchester's citizens and our partners in the public and voluntary sectors to increase the quality of the information, knowledge and understanding we have about Manchester's diverse communities and the value that we gain from this. This will allow us to work with each other to support 'community cohesion' – people from different backgrounds getting on well together in the local area and treating each other with respect and consideration – and make sure we develop policies, and provide and commission services that meet everyone's needs.”

3.4 The MigRom project and RVoM have supported progress on this objective with work including:

- Developing a range of broad data sets on the Roma population of Manchester; this includes quantitative and qualitative data sets outlining the size and distribution of the Roma population as well as the particular issues, trends and opportunities that affect the community
- Developing targeted data on specific Roma groups, such as Roma pupils in Manchester schools, which have increased the Council's awareness of notable issues and trends that affect the children's educational experience and attainment
- Producing fact sheets to clarify the cultural and social misconceptions about Roma people, which have been useful tools for Council officers working directly with communities and commissioning officers when developing service specifications
- Organising and facilitating conferences and workshops to raise awareness of key stakeholders locally, nationally and internationally of Manchester's Roma population and the lessons that can be learned from the 'Manchester model'
- Supported the accuracy and integrity of the Council's reporting of Roma issues by providing case studies and supplementary texts to aid Council officers
- Organised and facilitated a range of regular and ad hoc meetings with Council officers to discuss key Roma issues and build officers' understanding of the community

Equality Objective 2: Improving Life Chances

"We want everyone living in Manchester to have a good quality of life and equal chances. We know that for some groups in Manchester this is not the case. We will work with our partners to take a positive approach to removing inequalities."

3.5 The MigRom project and RVoM have supported progress on this objective with work including:

- Establishing the Roma-led RVoM group to provide support directly to Manchester's Roma communities on a responsive basis
- RVoM has developed a work programme that is directly aligned to the Council's strategic objectives and its 10 year plan to promote independence, increase health and wellbeing and provide opportunities to engage and be involved

Equality Objective 3: Celebrating Our Diversity

"Manchester's great strength is its diversity; we've achieved a lot for our different communities. We will maintain and build on with what we've achieved so far, going even further to celebrate Manchester's diversity, telling people how this makes the city better for everyone."

3.6 The MigRom project and RVoM have supported progress on this objective with work including:

- Using the MigRom Project's international connections to promote the project's work, the successes and lessons learned in Manchester and to raise awareness of the 'Manchester model' across Europe
- Organising and facilitating conferences and workshops to celebrate Roma integration and promote the 'Manchester model'
- Holding the RVoM launch event, which promoted the group and its aims to residents, Elected Members, members of the Police and Crime Commissioner' Office and other public and voluntary sector colleagues
- RVoM group organising clean up and picnic events to demonstrate Roma people's commitment to their local area and to promote Roma culture and tradition
- Arranging press releases, newspaper, television and radio coverage via the MigRom Project to promote the project's work and that of the RVoM group
- Delivering an ongoing social media campaign to promote RVoM to a wide audience

Our Manchester Strategy 2015 – 2025

3.7 The Our Manchester Strategy 2015 – 2025 presents how Manchester will deliver a city where people will want more than ever to live, work, play and do business in 2025. The strategy has numerous aims which will support the attainment of this goal, some of which are relevant to the MigRom / RVoM achievements to date and/or their future plans. These include:

- engender a strong sense of citizenship and pride in the city
- create new jobs accessible to Manchester residents, reducing the number of people who are out of work
- improve school results so that they are significantly better than the UK average
- collectively improve our health and wellbeing and be more active as adults and children
- be a cleaner, litter free city

3.8 One of the strategy's pillars is the aim to be a progressive and equitable city. This means making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of Manchester's communities and providing the same opportunities, life chances and potential for residents to lead safe, healthy, happy and fulfilled lives, no matter where they are born or live. The work that MigRom and RVoM have achieved to date and continue to work on will be critical to ensuring that Roma residents are included in this aim.

3.9 The strategy recognises the importance and value of the voluntary sector in providing ideas, knowledge and flexible approaches to problem solving in shaping the city and supporting communities. The strategy acknowledges the deep connection many voluntary sector organisations have with the people who use their services and the communities within which they operate, and

wants to see this expand so that deeper, stronger relationships can develop between business, the voluntary and community sector and public services. The establishment of the RVoM group will ensure that Roma residents continue to have a voice and that their needs are represented throughout these strategic developments for the voluntary sector.

3.10 As the city finds new and increasingly meaningful ways to work with its voluntary organisations and community groups, RVoM will be able to provide a crucial gateway in for one of the city's more newly arrived cohorts. The group can be particularly effective in this respect, as its work programme is closely aligned to the priorities of being a progressive and equitable city. RVoM has identified amongst its priorities:

- Improving health and wellbeing, especially the health of Roma women
- Promoting independence for Roma communities
- Delivering employment support for Roma, especially Roma young people
- Working with schools to improve outcomes for Roma children and young people

3.11 These priorities are closely aligned to the Our Manchester stated priorities to:

- Radically improve health outcomes, integrating health and social care and supporting people to make healthier choices and so that people have the right care at the right place at the right time.
- Reform services for children and families, increasing the numbers of children arriving at school ready to learn and increase their life chances, supporting their future independence
- Continue to work with the voluntary and community sector to find new ways of reaching those communities who remain untouched by Manchester's success and creating resilient and vibrant communities of people
- Aim to be the UK's youth capital
- Support people to find work, stay in work and progress at work so that all residents can take advantage of the opportunities of economic growth and are able to provide for their children

4. Conclusion

4.1 Manchester City Council's involvement in the MigRom Steering Group has been extremely valuable in supporting the organisation's strategic aims for advancing equality in Manchester. The opportunity to learn from the academic research component of the project has helped to build the Council's awareness and understanding of a community in the city that it previously did not have extensive experience of working with. Importantly, the development of the Roma Voices of Manchester group has enabled Council officers to have more direct contact with advocates who are of the community and for the community, and build a relationship with the group that will continue beyond the expiry of the MigRom project.

- 4.2 The Council is grateful for the opportunity to be part of this venture and thanks the project team for its openness, its willingness to share information and ideas and most importantly, for facilitating such a fine example of partnership working towards a common and very valuable goal. The rate at which Manchester's Roma communities have become integrated is gratifying and very notable, which is in no small part due to the efforts of the MigRom Project team and the RVoM group. Although there remain numerous challenges in improving Roma residents' outcomes, as there are for many Manchester communities, the Council looks forward to building on the successes of its MigRom experience and working with RVoM in the future.