

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: [Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities](#), HC 360

Wednesday 24 October 2018

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 24 October 2018.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Mrs Maria Miller (Chair); Tonia Antoniazzi; Sarah Champion; Angela Crawley; Philip Davies; Vicky Ford; Jess Phillips; Mr Gavin Shuker.

Questions 555–616

Witnesses

I: Dave Brown, Director, Migration Yorkshire; Michal Daniel, Roma Community Care; Ruth Richardson, Roma Community Care; Colin Havard, Community Development Co-ordinator, Sheffield City Council; Councillor Jim Steinke, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dave Brown, Michal Daniel, Ruth Richardson, Colin Havard and Councillor Jim Steinke.

Jess Phillips: Hello. Welcome to the Women and Equalities Select Committee. I am not the Chair of this Committee. We are expecting her to join us during proceedings. We will kick off our inquiry this morning into tackling inequalities faced by the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. I would like to welcome our witnesses and everyone watching online and in the public gallery. This is the fifth oral evidence session of our inquiry into tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. So far in this inquiry, we have covered topics including health, education and hate crime, but the majority of evidence we have heard relates to Gypsy and Traveller communities. Today we are focusing particularly on issues facing Roma communities.

Thank you all very much for coming. Sorry if you have had nightmares on the trains and things this morning. Could you introduce yourselves?

Dave Brown: I am Dave Brown, the head of Migration Yorkshire.

Michal Daniel: Michal Daniel, working for Roma Community Care based in Derby.

Ruth Richardson: Ruth Richardson, Multi-Faith Centre, but we support Roma Community Care in Derby.

Councillor Steinke: Jim Steinke. I am the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety, Sheffield City Council.

Colin Havard: I am Colin Havard. I am the community development co-ordinator from Sheffield City Council.

Jess Phillips: I cannot blame it on the Victorians this time because they did not build this bit of the building; let us blame it on people in the 1990s. If I could ask people to speak up because the acoustics are terrible in the room, that would be great.

Q555 **Tonia Antoniazzi:** Roma groups have said that they have felt under-represented in Government policy making as the focus is often on Gypsy and Traveller issues, when Roma issues need their own consideration. Does this match your experience?

Dave Brown: There are different levels. We run the National Roma Network, and have done for a number of years, which we set up. It has local authorities, other organisations and Roma groups. We initially struggled to engage Roma individuals within this, and we had to make quite a push to do so. It is worth saying this is something that is a locally led initiative. There is not that much that is Government or Government Department-led on Roma itself for people to engage with. In terms of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

where these things do exist, like the working group on Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, it has had very limited input from Roma individuals and communities.

Michal Daniel: Yes, in the Roma communities based in Derby that I came across due to my job position at Roma Community Care, most of them feel that way—unsupported and not included in Government policy and legislation. I work in Derby. We have drop-in sessions, Monday to Friday. We have 40-plus clients. Usually it is Roma people who attend services. Most of them feel that way: they are not included in the Government policies. Most of them just say, “We were not included in the country of origin so why should we be included in the Government policy in the UK?”

Ruth Richardson: Certainly building on what Michal said, there is an interplay with other things that we might talk about today, around poor education, the employment that many Roma often work in and how all of those things might play a role in affecting how or if people feel that they could contribute at policy and Government level. From our experience in Derby, there is absolutely no representation at local level at all, other than what we try to do at Roma Community Care. We are one of the only Roma-led advocacy organisations in the country. Most of our Roma staff who work for us are far too busy helping Roma people in crisis situations to often be able to try to go beyond that and possibly more proactively influence strategy, legislation and what-not.

We have been working as part of an EU project because Roma, as a definition in the EU, includes Gypsies and Travellers.

We are working with Friends, Families and Travellers and Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group, but we have a support group ourselves and we have been assessing the impact of policy on local Roma communities and we are also feeding back where and if there are any possibilities for Roma to feed into. Certainly one of the most positive examples in recent years has been the National Roma Network Forum, which sadly we do not have any more. That was a great forum for bringing Roma activists together. Grassroots activists were core to it, to realise that, “Wow, the problems that we have locally are actually much bigger than that”. They would feel bolstered and empowered by that to go back to their local communities.

I do not think there is any representation. As you hear more maybe about education, employment and all of those kinds of factors—aspiration, confidence—you can start to see how it is not a quick fix. You do not just create a place at the table and people take it up. There are complex reasons why they do not.

Councillor Steinke: At Sheffield City Council, we are struggling to ensure that a Roma voice is heard, but that is alongside other community voices as well. One thing I am currently looking at it is about ways in which our neighbourhood management model needs changing to pick up those voices, in terms of listening but also engaging them in policy



formulation and implementation. I am not going to pretend it has been easy. However, we are making steps. The important thing, to add to the previous speakers in terms of hearing those Roma voices, is to ensure that women in the Roma community and younger people are particularly heard, because sometimes it is easy to fall back alongside the established community voices within any community; that is not just Roma. At the same time, it is about listening to urban communities, looking at them being integrated more within our policy frameworks but also making sure within that community we listen to the specific voices of women and, I would stress, younger people as well.

Colin Havard: We have, as Jim said, struggled with the Roma voice. There are two elements to it. One is that we have not necessarily wanted to listen. On the other hand, trust within the Roma community for someone who decides to stand up and be a spokesperson can be hard. Some people who have stood up to be spokespeople have found their community has mistrusted their reasons for doing so. Therefore, they have ended up walking away from that position. That is going to take some time, because we are trying to undo a couple of hundred years' worth of persecution here in the space of a few years. It is not going to be that simple.

Our approach has been to use the Controlling Migration Fund money to run an 18-month programme, using the Council of Europe process, called ROMACT, which is about marginalised communities working in co-production with what they call the municipality. In our case, we are taking the 18 months just to write a community action plan—not to do it but just to get to that point—because if we wrote the plan now, as we could, it would not have a Roma voice in it. Therefore, the actions would not be shared by them, in which case we would be doing it to them, in which case there is kind of no point, really. I might as well go home. Even in that 18 months, whether we get there or not, or whether it is actually going to take three years—I suspect it probably will not take the whole of 18 months—we will not have done it all. It is not obvious; otherwise, you would not have had quite so many white, middle-aged men on this panel.

Jess Phillips: To be fair, in here this is not unusual.

Colin Havard: I should not be sitting here. That is not the aim of my game. There is a challenge in it, but it is a systemic challenge in the sense that it is not just what the state does to welcome that voice but how we support those communities to have that voice.

Ruth Richardson: Can I add something I thought while Colin was speaking? A really practical example is if we try to use the mechanisms that we already have in place to try to encourage these voices, we have the Youth Council and we run a youth club and were there until 8.30 last night with 60-plus kids. We tried to take some of those kids to the Youth Council to use the mechanisms that already exist to give them voice. Because English is not their first language and some of the language



HOUSE OF COMMONS

being used was quite complex, we sat with them. Kudos to the Council: they allowed me to go in with them, which they do not normally do; the kids need to be independent and confident, which in itself is a barrier. They did allow me to go with them but while I was explaining to them some of the language, we were shouted at for speaking. Most of the kids we work with as well have had negative experiences in school, so when places like that mimic the environments of school and they get shouted at, it is that whole thing.

Later, when she realised English was not their first language and I was helping with the translation, she apologised, but they went back to youth club and told everybody, and we have since never managed to get a young person to attend that. That is a youth-specific example but I find that is quite common in adult scenarios as well. It is almost a philosophical debate but one of the things that we battle is that perspective of, "We have systems, we have ways of working and they have to fit our systems". If we really want to engage our Roma communities then maybe sometimes we need to adjust our systems and look at how our systems are not inclusive of them.

Q556 Tonia Antoniazzi: Ruth, how easy is it for public services to know how many Roma people are in their pool of potential users?

Ruth Richardson: This is really complex. Again, apologies for being quite Derby-specific, but we always tell people we think there is between 2,500 and 4,000, possibly more, Roma in Derby, but no one particularly knows. We also have the Controlling Migration Fund for a project and the council was trying to employ someone who will specifically try to work out how many Roma we have.

People might know more than me but I have heard that schools have changed the way they collect data and that they used to collect data on Roma for Ofsted. They have now dropped that and they are just going to use nationality. Some of the schools in Derby have told me they are still going to collect data on ethnicity on Roma because internally that is going to be useful for them, but there is no push for them to have to do that. They are just choosing to do that because they think that is going to help them internally. In the past, a lot of our data on how many Roma there are was extrapolated from schools' data. When that is no longer collected, that is going to cause a real issue for us.

We have done a lot of work with the Office for National Statistics, running focus groups and meetings with Roma to try to petition to get a box for Roma on the next census but that is only half the battle, getting the box. It is then having to do a whole load of work awareness-raising and encouraging our Roma communities to fill the census out in the first place and then to tick that box. At the last census nationally, you had to tick a box under "Other ethnicity", and then "Other", and then you had to write "Roma" in. It is maybe unsurprising that 672 Roma were recorded for the whole country. The racial disparity audit showed this as well. Even within Government Departments, they all collect their data in completely



HOUSE OF COMMONS

different ways, never mind between the Government Departments. When Michal and I go and deliver Roma awareness training, often when we have to fill out a form, it is always "Other". I often get laughed at, but I cannot begin to imagine what constantly having to tick the "Other" box tells you about how you are considered in policy making, evaluations and feedback, if you are "Other".

It is incredibly tricky for us to know. Like we have already alluded to, we get 40-plus Roma walking in every day to ask us for support and advice. Some of those are the same clients time and again. At youth club, we get 60-plus and they are predominantly Roma. When I worked for the local authority and it was generic youth provision, if we got 25 kids, that was impressive. We are seeing a high level of access locally but we do not have a lot of actual fixed data.

Dave Brown: Another major challenge is that many Roma do not want to be identified publicly by the state or do not want identification. They just want to get on with their lives. There is a very good historical but also current reason that goes across the rest of Europe and the misuse of data in the past and at present in a number of other countries. People are rightly sceptical of giving away that information. We have had that where we had the race disparity audit; the people running that have come to the National Roma Network and there have been very lively debates from some Roma individuals saying that this is a really terrible idea and really dangerous for their communities to be doing so. We are getting somewhere, and slowly some of that understanding about how the UK deals with data and equality issues is filtering through and beginning to change. There seems to be a difference. There are some things along the way that occasionally drop us back.

In policy terms, I will not comment on what those are specifically, but services do want this data, they use this data and they need the data to improve the situation of Roma. If we do not know about the problem, we cannot solve it. People are collecting it, and they collect it locally, whether formally or informally to enable them to do so. That is a positive thing for improving where we are.

Nationally, there is a broader issue about how much we know, how much the Government know and how much the Government want to know about the number of Roma who have been there over a number of years. We may come on to talk about strategies and things like that, but it was felt that we did not need to do what the rest of the EU was doing; it was the EU's issue, Roma, because the numbers are very low. That was a very clear answer given by the Government as to why we did not need to do very much on Roma. As a result, we did not prepare sufficiently nationally and the work had to be done in different ways.

We supported a study done by the University of Salford, which has come the closest to estimating the number of Roma, as far as the vast majority of people are concerned. That has helped to move the public debate on.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

It is worth saying as well that that was challenged by a very small minority of people who said, "We should not be talking about numbers". This is not just Roma; it is also some academics who said, "If we talk about numbers or problems, Roma will get it in the neck. We dare not open this debate". We very firmly believe that is not the right approach.

Q557 **Tonia Antoniazzi:** How do you get people to give data if they are scared?

Dave Brown: It is a very difficult and long process. It is all about trust and how people perceive the broader society in which they live, from a national level and the messages given to Roma and other minority communities. It is also on a really local level. They need to be able to trust the services and people around them, and that it is going to be used correctly.

Michal Daniel: That is the huge issue—building trust—because it depends on the experience in the country of origin. They expect the services to be the same. What they tend to do is to trust people, their own models from their own community usually, and when somebody from public services knocks on their door, they totally disengage and if you say something about social work or different public services, they will disengage totally as well. It is all part of building trust and confidence in people and services.

Councillor Steinke: From a local authority point of view, there is a difficulty in accumulating data when you look on the back of other things. For example, there is a discrepancy in Sheffield between the percentage of Roma—although agreement on the total numbers—in certain areas. It is often not clear where people may be living and that dispersal. That is often the problem with relying so much on benefit data and school entry data for that.

It is often on the back of, say, housing programmes, like the selective licensing that we had in part of Sheffield, which came up with a higher number of Roma within that area than was originally anticipated, in some cases because of hidden households and in some cases because we had not recognised the sheer level of over-occupation. This is really difficult in terms of planning services; we have the total numbers, without having that idea of how much they might be concentrated in a particular area. We are moving on to another area of selective licensing in the private rented sector at the moment. That will clearly not be the same number as has previously come up, but I suspect there will be some surprises there in terms of that, and often people are living in very poor conditions that we will not have identified previously.

Q558 **Sarah Champion:** Ruth said there seems to be a trend of lumping together Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. My experience is that Roma are a very distinct community. Is that something you see happening more, and would you agree it is not that helpful?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dave Brown: I do not think it is that helpful. As a much broader term, it is not unhelpful, but as soon as you get anywhere close to dealing with things, they are very separate, both at a policy and practical level. There is not a great deal of mixing between those communities. Culturally, there are a lot of differences, as much as there are similarities. It is similar, in that there is a lot of disadvantage and inequality. Originally, people did not know quite where to put Roma when they came to the UK, if you were a local authority or another service. It tended to be the case, if someone came about who was Roma, that people either put them into the migrant category or the Gypsy/Traveller category. That is very much how we started off. There were different approaches in different places. There has been much more understanding over time that there needs to be a different approach that brings together a lot of the learning from both of those. The particular factor is the experiences outside the country, rather than inside the country.

Chair: Can I apologise for my lateness? It is the wonders of the transport system.

Colin Havard: The question about how you get people to trust you to give data is that you use it well. One of the dangers of using the "Roma" tag is people then ascribe a whole load of meanings to it that are not necessarily relevant to the purpose. If I am worrying about education policy, what is it that matters if you are Roma? Does it matter more that you are Roma or that you are Slovak or Czech? We need to be careful we are not using a catch-all phrase and putting a whole load of other meanings on that phrase.

One piece of work we had in Sheffield that really worked was a health needs assessment about three years ago. The woman who did it was very painstaking in her methodology, to the point it got quite boring to some of us. At the end of it, she did a presentation to 40 Roma people, which was again quite methodical. She then spoke five sentences of Romani at the end. The whole group started cheering and clapping. They felt their data had been well used because of the process that she went through with it. It subsequently did not have a load of impact on the way we chose to deliver our health services. Nonetheless, it is the process that was important, which made them feel trusted and that they were giving their data to be well used.

We are all guessing a little bit. We are guessing because people do not tell us when they arrive. That is true if somebody moves to us from Middlesbrough, Rotherham or wherever. We do not know until they become a statistic. Then we are going, "There are six Romanians there. I wonder where they are living". We do have a challenge that is not just about Roma; it is about how we know when people are not through some state-sponsored scheme and they move to a city. That data sharing needs to get better between agencies, but appropriately better, so that the recipient benefits from having that data shared, not the system. At



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the moment, the system benefits from data sharing more than the recipient does.

Q559 Angela Crawley: We have spoken briefly about the lack of reliable data. Specifically to Dave, how well has the UK implemented the aims set out in the EU Roma integration strategy framework for the national Roma integration strategy?

Dave Brown: The UK went into this enthusiastically, mainly to improve the situation of Roma across the UK, as much as effectively a foreign policy objective for something within the UK. I referred earlier to how it was viewed. At the time, the Minister said that what they did not want was to impose unhelpful targets or accept burdensome reporting obligations on those like the UK with relatively few Roma citizens. That was in 2011. We were aware actually in local areas that there were quite a lot of Roma citizens. If you included Gypsies and Travellers as well then that is a much more substantial number, which was covered by the framework.

Either way, we did not adequately understand the situation, nor did we intend to. At that time, strategies were not incredibly popular. It was a time of localism and it was also around the time of the integration strategy, which was about creating conditions for integration. It was very different from the current integration strategy, which is a lot more detailed for the country. The Government put forward a number of measures but it pretty much excluded Roma even within some of the things that it did over that period of time. Where the UK has done well and where it is helping Europe is through the work on equality more generally. From work we have done across Europe, we have managed a couple of large Roma projects across Europe and there is a clear difference in terms of the frameworks that we work within in this country. Roma benefit from that already, without additional measures.

Q560 Angela Crawley: Specifically on that, are there any parts of the EU framework that are not relevant in the UK context?

Dave Brown: All of the issues are still relevant and there still are inequalities and issues that need to be dealt with. There should be a clearer national plan, strategy or whatever it would be called. We took an integrated set of policy measures. That is not entirely clear. We rely on general equality and general cohesion where we could get a bit more specific because, as we have seen, things develop and things happen. We can lead it or we can respond to it. We should have been leading on this issue and there is still an opportunity to do so.

Q561 Angela Crawley: Unlike other EU countries, the UK has opted to embed its integration strategy in the existing legal frameworks and social inclusion programmes. What, if anything, do you think is missing from UK policy making for Roma communities because of this?

Dave Brown: That is quite a lot, issue by issue. What is most important is that areas are helped locally to deal with this and there is a framework



HOUSE OF COMMONS

that enables that local context to happen. Roma communities are not one single homogenous group. It is interactions with each other, with other communities. There are issues around concentrations that sometimes lead to some of the issues we are talking about. All policies from local to national would lead to that.

Q562 Angela Crawley: In that case, do you think there are any areas in which the UK has been more successful in implementing the strategy than other EU countries?

Dave Brown: It is around the general work on equality. One of the missing areas is that under the wider EU strategy there has been an attempt to spend money and have an approach based on this: you have an approach where you focus on areas that have a significant number of Roma also because they are more deprived communities more generally and then there is a whole neighbourhood approach to improving Roma inclusion. There are large amounts of money within European structural funds, which was attempted to be set aside for doing so. The UK chose not to use that, chose not to ring-fence money and chose not to go about it in that way. That was a missed opportunity.

Q563 Chair: The question is about where we have been more successful. I am not clear where we have been successful.

Dave Brown: Sorry, I strayed on to the less successful. The more successful has been in the general implementation of equality legislation that we are doing, rather than anything specific. I do not think we have done much specifically Government-led. Some of the local approaches that we will probably of are what has defined the good practice in the UK, but not at national level.

Q564 Sarah Champion: I am talking from personal experience, because in my constituency of Rotherham we have a large Roma population. One of the biggest issues is around housing. I find the community is in really inappropriate, private rented housing and the level of service they get is appalling, to be quite honest. I wondered if this was symptomatic of where the Roma community find themselves, or if this was a phenomenon that we just have in Rotherham. I wonder if I could start with Jim, in my neighbouring constituency.

Councillor Steinke: It is. If I can pick up on the previous answer from Dave, it is important that that national strategy linking in with local strategies does not cluster people together in the way that you were referring to earlier. There is often that assumption that there is a homogeneous group of Roma. In housing terms, that is even more important. In Sheffield, we have a similar issue in terms of a clustering of Roma living in quite a restricted geographic area, which means the percentage of Roma living there in terms of the total population is significant. The quality of housing there is probably comparable to your own constituency.



It brings a whole series of tensions, not just because of people living in those conditions but because of who the landlords are. In Sheffield, a lot of the landlords are from the Pakistani community, so there are tensions between Roma and Pakistani. Also, it is becoming increasingly evident that the Pakistani non-landlords resent the Pakistani landlords who are housing them. This is where we need to tread very carefully, in terms of those tensions.

How we address the housing issues is very difficult with the lack of any significant funding streams compared with what we had before in the Housing Market Renewal funding stream. There is nothing comparable to that now. Any changes we make to the housing stock will be incremental. What is important to look at is rehousing policy and ways in which people wish to move on in terms of access to social housing. We need to enable people to do that as much as possible. Again, restrictions on the amount of social housing are inhibiting us at the moment.

Q565 Sarah Champion: Could you speak a little about the selective licensing scheme? Again, in Rotherham we have something similar. How have you implemented that? Why have you implemented that? What are the differences you are finding?

Councillor Steinke: It is very much an inheritance in terms of selective licensing in the main area where it has been in Sheffield at the moment. There are various accounts of how successful that has been. One of the problems with selective licensing is that a scheme that is designed to improve quality of housing has often had lumped on to it that it is going to sort out anti-social behaviour and litter problems. It is really important we focus on it. The new selective licensing scheme that is about to go live next week is very much focused on housing, housing, housing. What has happened previously is that people have then pointed to selective licensing saying that it has not worked because there is what is perceived as real anti-social behaviour. There are also issues about litter and fly-tipping around that have not been addressed.

Some people have been rubbishing the selective licensing scheme, unnecessarily and inappropriately. In some cases, that has been echoed by landlords who would not necessarily support selective licensing. It is interesting that with the new scheme we are doing, despite the initial resentment, there has been a lot of buy-in from landlords who have seen the inevitable—that it is happening—and are now co-operating.

In terms of the historical situation, there has been a significant improvement in the quality of housing. Hopefully, it has reduced some of the significant overcrowding that was present before. Colin may be able to say more about this, but it has meant that it has enabled some Roma to move on to other areas. This is to be welcomed but in terms of proper integration, with the Roma community settled throughout Sheffield, you realise the access to cheap housing that we have had in that particular area has encouraged that up to now.



Q566 **Sarah Champion:** Could I ask the rest of the panel whether it is symptomatic that Roma are driven into really unsuitable housing?

Michal Daniel: They usually do not have a choice. They usually stay where they are most comfortable, with relatives, friends and with close work. Usually they take on anything that is available, even if it is in a really poor state. They do not even care. They just want to settle and live their life.

In terms of landlords and how they treat the tenants, mostly they do not know they cannot be evicted within 24 hours. That is what we tend to find out has happened. Recently, some tenants with four dependent children had been evicted the next day. They ended up in homeless shelters. It happens regularly. I do not think the landlords know they need to give a four-week eviction notice so they can move out of the property.

Q567 **Sarah Champion:** The flip of that is whether the Roma realise they have any rights or realise what the routes are through which they can challenge their evictions?

Michal Daniel: They think they have no chance of fighting against that decision. They have no other choice but to pack their bags and just leave. That is what they are used to. If someone threatens or does something similar, they tend to leave and not cause any trouble.

Ruth Richardson: Often if their housing is substandard, even if they have broken windows, broken prepayment metres, no cooker or anything like that, and we offer them the opportunity to flag it with housing standards, often they do not want to because they do not want to cause any problems. I ask Michal about contracts. I ask, "Do they sign contracts?" and often they do, but do they know the content of that contract and how that could protect them as much as the landlord? No, they do not.

Anecdotally, through the evidence we get from the clients coming to us, all of our clients are in private rented accommodation, and we estimate about 40% of all of the cases that come to us are housing-related. I would say 30% of the housing stock in Normanton, which is a particular ward in Derby where most Roma live, is of a good standard. That is about 70% that is substandard. We do not have a scheme to try to pull landlords into line. We had the equalities foundation come to speak to us a few years ago and they asked about housing. They mentioned the secure deposit scheme. When it was translated for our clients, they practically fell off their chairs laughing. They said, "It is not even that we do not know about it. I do not even know that our landlords know about it. It is certainly not something they have spoken to us about".

Q568 **Chair:** What is the council doing to make landlords aware of the secure deposit scheme? Have you not written to the council to make them aware of that? The secure deposit scheme is something we as MPs are



very aware of.

Ruth Richardson: Especially in the project we are part of at the moment, as part of the Controlling Migration Fund, they have recruited two new officers to the housing standards team at the city council and they are fully aware of the issues. I get the impression they are trying to do what they can. Their narrative is often that their hands are tied. If the landlords are proactively engaging with the advice services that the council provide around what they should and should not be doing, they do not feel there is an awful lot they can do. They also say that in terms of their capacity, gathering evidence against landlords, to persuade landlords to fall in line, is particularly hard for them. That is the narrative that we often get when we speak to them about it.

Chair: It is part of a much bigger issue in your area.

Ruth Richardson: Even in terms of fire safety, we showed them fire alarms and we said, "When you move into the property, the landlord should show you around the property and at each fire alarm, they should set it off to show you that it is working, and after that point it is your responsibility to replace the batteries and maintain it". Again, they laughed at us. Some of the children actually said they had been wondering what that was; they did not even know what a fire alarm was. Fire safety and fire services will often come to us and ask us to help them. Safeguarding will say, "We have been into a property and it does not look good. Can fire services go in to check it?" They will contact us and say, "Can you come because we need an interpreter? We do not have any funding to pay you to do it".

Q569 **Chair:** How much, Ruth, is this a problem with all private rentals in your area versus particular discrimination against people who are Roma?

Ruth Richardson: Certainly, it is a problem for everybody.

Chair: I do not recognise those problems in my area.

Ruth Richardson: There is an issue in terms of language barriers, and in terms of Roma not feeling that they can assert themselves and that they have rights, because they have come from countries where probably the housing is even worse, there is almost a sense of being grateful for what they have; they have running water.

Q570 **Chair:** My question is: are they being directed at the property because they are Roma or because that is the only property available in your area?

Ruth Richardson: The poor standard and cheap rented accommodation in the area where Roma want to live is a factor.

Chair: So it disproportionately affects them.

Ruth Richardson: To build on Jim's point—and it was something we were not sure whether or not we wanted to flag, because we understand



HOUSE OF COMMONS

it is so sensitive—most of the landlords in the area where most of the Roma live are Pakistani heritage landlords.

Q571 **Chair:** You think there is discrimination coming in that way.

Ruth Richardson: The landlords see Roma as a really easy target to get really high rents for really awful properties because they do not know any better. It is cash money so they are going to do it. What it is doing is spilling out into wider community tensions, because then Roma are starting to feel like they are being exploited and taken advantage of by a particular racial group. That is fostering further issues and tensions.

Q572 **Chair:** That is really helpful. You think there is discrimination because this particular group of Roma people are seen to be more vulnerable.

Ruth Richardson: Absolutely.

Q573 **Chair:** You are saying there might even be interracial discrimination going on there as well. Please feel free to talk here. We talk about everything. It is really important, and we have Sarah.

Dave Brown: The same local issues are playing out everywhere. There is something that is not just about a specific local housing situation, or just the way it happens; there is something inherent about the exclusion of the Roma community that is leading to this. It is around those measures. There is also exploitation linked to employment as well, in terms of how an employer is in control. There is also, in terms of difficult issues, exploitation within the Roma community at times. That is from all different angles, and their ability to do something about it is hampered.

This is one of the keys to unlocking the issues, because it has that specific issue about the tensions between communities who are potentially doing the exploiting, but also for the wider communities. We are seeing some of those local issues about neighbours not being particularly happy. Not many neighbours would be happy with lots of houses next door to them with 20 people in a two-bedroom house and everything that goes with that. It is completely natural not to be happy about that, but Roma do not want to live in those situations. They do not want to live in poor-standard, overcrowded housing, but often the perception ends up being a case that they are doing that and they are the cause of that problem.

Q574 **Chair:** There are also laws against it. You cannot have 20 people in a house. Why are you not getting the local authority to take action in those cases?

Dave Brown: People do, but these things keep happening and keep happening again because of the exclusion and the position people are in, at the bottom of the pile in terms of exclusion.

Q575 **Chair:** Local authorities have to be held to account as well.

Dave Brown: They can sort out a single house, but then that can move to somewhere else. They are doing so and these things are slowly being



HOUSE OF COMMONS

changed, but it is slow because the issues move, people move and landlords move. You can set up selective licensing. That is a good system, but it does not solve everything and landlords find other areas to go into. There really needs to be a strong push across the UK to deal with it, but you have to unlock all the areas of exclusion, which goes back to all the other issues we have been talking about today, to be able to even tackle housing. It is quite circular as well.

Q576 Sarah Champion: Michal, could I ask you a specific question, which is a subjective question? Do you think the reason for the exploitation in housing and in labour is because there is an awareness that Roma are very vulnerable and are very unlikely to complain?

Michal Daniel: Yes, I think that is the case. I do have some personal experience, which I would like to share, on housing and employment. I had a family of five dependent children, with no gas, no heating, no cooker; they just plain beds in the middle of the flat and sleeping on the floors. When we asked the landlord to do something, they just put the phone down. When we told him that we had called the local housing standards to tell them what is happening, he said, "I do not care. They will just send me a letter or a fine. I can pay it and that is it".

These issues continue. There needs to be more to it than just a fine. It seems they have a lot of money to pay all the fines. Something more needs to be done, as it does in employment. People are taking advantage of women especially—young women—saying that they want money from them to keep their job in the factory, or even sexual exploitation happens. They refuse to pass it on to local authorities or police because they are too afraid because they need desperately the jobs to pay all the bills, rent and food arrears. It is a constant cycle, which happens either way we go.

Q577 Jess Phillips: We have talked about the housing. Could you touch a little bit on what challenges Roma people have when trying to secure employment?

Michal Daniel: In Derby, where I have experience, most of the Roma people are on zero-hours contracts with recruitment agencies, which means they can have a job one day and the next day they do not have a job. They call at peak times or busy times, which happens usually with factories like the chicken factory and the flour factory; they are the main factories that most—probably 85%—of Roma work in.

Q578 Jess Phillips: I understand the pernicious nature of zero-hours contracts and the use of them becoming more common in a broader sense. What do you think stops Roma people seeking more secure employment?

Michal Daniel: They do not feel they can have a better job than sitting in the office or doing something else, or being a teaching assistant. They do not have the feeling they can gain that job or get towards the education to gain that job.



Q579 **Jess Phillips:** Why do you think that is?

Michal Daniel: They are so desperate to get money to pay for rent, food and utility bills that they have no other chance but to go to the factory, which is the easiest option for them. Mostly relatives and friends work there already.

Jess Phillips: Yes, it is what you can see.

Colin Havard: Michal is right. What we see on the one hand is a self-imposed level of expectation—a ceiling, of what is possible for them—based on their experiences, in our case in Slovakia, mostly. The double edge of that is that their language skills and their formal education are going to be fairly negligible.

Q580 **Jess Phillips:** Because of their original country, their source country.

Colin Havard: Yes. They think, “We will come out of this in five years’ time when we have a host of people who have been through the education system, but right now it is all about how I get money quickly”. That means you go to the zero-hours contract place. You then get stuck in that place because it is quite hard to get out of it, because you cannot also be doing GCSEs at the same time as working zero-hour contracts and bringing up your family. It just does not work. There is an element where we need to take our time to encourage people out of that.

Using our CMF money, we were trying to recruit people into becoming community development workers. We recognised that people would not just apply for the jobs because that is working for the council, which is the state, so that is going to be harder. We employed them through the voluntary sector and then we ran pre-employment training courses, which basically said, “If you come on this course for two weeks and learn how to write a CV, do interviews and all that, we will give you a guaranteed interview”. We still could not persuade a Roma person to even go through the process, let alone apply for a job at the end of it. When we talked to the people we knew, it was, “That is not a job for us”. We were trying to find a route out of that self-imposed nature and we could not do it. We see teaching assistants as well. I know a few teaching assistants and I asked them all when they are going to become a teacher. None of them see that as a valid thing to do. They just have not got to that point yet.

Q581 **Jess Phillips:** There must be Roma people with good jobs.

Colin Havard: Yes, but they will not necessarily call themselves Roma.

Ruth Richardson: This is the point as well about it not being homogeneous. We will often get this in schools where a school will say, for example—this is not a person—“Rebecca Corcova can come to school on time and her attendance is good. Therefore, she is the standard that we judge all Roma against”. It is just not a useful narrative. You have to understand the complexity of it



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Jess Phillips: I understand what it is like to be lumped in with everybody else.

Ruth Richardson: With that, we had exactly the same scenario. You are probably more optimistic than I am, in that I do not see our young people getting minimal GCSEs. I do not see them getting picked up and encouraged into education, employment or training. Post 16, they are falling to a grey economy.

Jess Phillips: We are going to come on to talk about education in a minute.

Dave Brown: In terms of where Roma are getting to, it really is remarkably different from where others are. You said about good jobs. There are probably across the country some working in community-type jobs and some are teaching assistants. Higher than that, there are not many. We probably are all aware of the same handful of individuals who have got a job as the first policeman or the first solicitor—and I think still the only one.

Jess Phillips: You can name it on one hand. It is like when women in power always get thrown at me. I say, "When you can name all the men in power, I will take that".

Dave Brown: In terms of local role models in the UK, there are not many. If you look internationally you might be able to find a big-name person but there is a limit, as we have said, to some of those expectations. It is very real, but the danger of all of this is that we are not able to transfer that. We need to have intergenerational aspirations in the UK as well, where we want to break the difference between what happened previously and now in the UK, so that things can change.

Q582 **Jess Phillips:** Starting with Jim, because you are a local government head, what do you think central Government and local authorities can do to support Roma people into sustainable work, although Colin seems to have tried his damndest at one particular scheme that seems limited in its success?

Councillor Steinke: We are going to go on, I appreciate, to talk about education but it seems to me it is to keep getting access to education and keeping children there, young people there, and particularly, as I have said earlier, keeping young women longer in education.

There is a particular issue about the length of time expectations. This is relatively recent. Professionally, I have worked a lot around migration, and it is about recognising that it is a process—a long process. The expectation that we sometimes put on Roma communities is that someone has to succeed immediately. I am optimistic. I look back at previous migration.

Jess Phillips: Absolutely. They were working in chicken factories exclusively and now they are—



Councillor Steinke: So much of this country is built on that migration. That will be the same. I am not saying we need to be patient. We should be impatient about progress, but we need to be realistic about that.

It is also about enabling people who may have left formal education at 16 to re-enter it. Some of the work that further education colleges should be doing in terms of encouraging more mature students to come back and, again, particularly younger women to come back, is really important. It is about removing all the other barriers that get to that: dealing with poor housing or a job getting in the way of your career and further education.

Q583 **Jess Phillips:** Excuse my ignorance, but are Roma women more likely to have more children? Are there high birth rates in the Roma community? Lots of children would be a barrier to work for women, would it not?

Michal Daniel: Usually they have probably more than two children. In some cases, they will probably just have one child or two, maximum.

Jess Phillips: Obviously. I do not mean the homogeneous fertility of Roma women.

Michal Daniel: Also it depends because, for example, in Slovakia if women are pregnant it is really expensive to pay the doctors for an abortion. They find they have no income to pay for it, so they tend to keep the child, so they could end up with seven or eight children, easily, throughout the years.

Ruth Richardson: We try to do things locally. Sometimes we have tried to do stuff around family planning but it is very, very sensitive and again it comes back to really having to have the skillsets within Roma themselves to have those sensitive conversations. It is really difficult to talk to young women around contraception. That can be the case, but it is particularly so in Roma.

Dave Brown: It tends to be younger as well, than the UK average.

Colin Havard: In terms of the question about what can you do to change the perceptions, some of it is about changing the narrative and starting to tell some more positive stories, not seeing Roma as a problem but as a culture to be celebrated. The flipside of me would suggest that if you can get an *EastEnders* character to be Roma that would probably change everyone's view, depending on whether that character was a positive or a negative one. It is about some of that. It is about how society treats them but also how they treat themselves within society. They need to see that. The role models are important. The problem at the moment is there are too few of them and we are putting too much pressure on those who are there. We need to broaden that out somehow. We need to start changing that narrative.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ruth Richardson: We had a really important example around employment issues in Derby, and I wondered if I might share it, because it also leads to a possible solution. We were finding regularly that the main employer of agency work in Derby regularly was not paying people or was mispaying them. The only way they can try to tackle that is phone a phone line. They cannot go into an office and speak to a person about it. They were always coming into Roma Community Care, asking for support because they had not been paid and now they were getting in debt, or they had been mispaid.

Through that, we also found out that they were not getting picked. A rumour had gone out amongst the community that if you turn up at certain times during the day, if people have not turned up for their shifts, the agency workers would come out of the gates and pick people to be able to replace the people on the shifts. People had started gathering outside the gates at certain times, hopeful that they might get picked for work. Many of our Roma have been gainfully employed in agency work for eight years or so. All of a sudden, because the people picking were from Russian or Polish backgrounds, they were picking other Russian or Polish people to do those shifts, not Roma people. Suddenly we had a situation where we had Roma people who used to get agency work who were no longer getting it.

We were able to work with Unite in the community. Purely coincidentally they had heard me speaking about it and came to see if they could offer any help. Through that, they got the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority involved, which actually was a completely foreign concept to us. We had never even heard about it and when we found out about it we thought, "That is wonderful. They could really help us deal with a lot of issues". They spoke immediately to the head of HR for the Midlands for that company, and he came and spoke with Roma Community Care.

We still have a lot of issues in regard to this agency and non-payments and employment rights, but we now know about the authority and the work they can do. One of the solutions we thought was of was that they should be doing audits and maybe they should be employing Roma people to do such audits, because the Roma are so scared about putting any complaints in, talking about sexual harassment or talking about poor standards that they probably would not tell a non-Roma person, but if you send a Roma person in to do that kind of an audit, survey or something like that, you will find out about those poor practices.

Q584 **Chair:** Sorry, Ruth; I did not quite catch which company you are talking about.

Ruth Richardson: Staffline.

Q585 **Chair:** What is that?

Michal Daniel: It is one of the biggest employers in the UK.

Jess Phillips: It is an agency employer.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q586 **Chair:** Picking to do what? I did not quite follow that.

Ruth Richardson: Staffline is an agency. It works on behalf of lots of factories. A particular factory in Derby is 2 Sisters.

Q587 **Chair:** What does 2 Sisters produce?

Michal Daniel: Meat products.

Ruth Richardson: Meat products—chicken, that kind of thing. It works on behalf of lots of different factories. It is based in Nottingham, but it has recruitment and activities at the factory in Derby. This is why, if there are any issues, you cannot speak to someone. It will employ you directly in Derby, it will pick you, but if you have any problems or you have not been paid, the only way to challenge any issue is to pick up the phone and call the department in Nottingham, which is an instant barrier for any resolutions.

Chair: Thank you for explaining that. That is very helpful.

Q588 **Mr Shuker:** Moving on to the experiences of Roma young people in education, are there any particular challenges that are presented to local authorities and schools by Roma young people, and how well are those local authorities and schools responding to making sure that every Roma child gets a decent education?

Michal Daniel: They are not picking up the fact that most young people aged 16-plus are not in education. They are meant to be referred to some kind of training, school or college somehow, so that they get them engaged and they stay in school. As far as I am concerned, in Derby, it is not the case.

Ruth Richardson: There are some issues as well with academies. I do feel for our local authority sometimes, because they feel as though they are maybe a little powerless. We only have one secondary school now left in Derby that is not an academy, and most academies that Roma go to are in special measures. Again, it is not an adversarial thing and it is not about attacking groups—we know everyone is under a lot of pressure—but we know that disproportionately high numbers of Roma young people are being excluded.

We know that statistically, but anecdotally we also know that a lot of our Roma are experiencing daily bullying and racism and being told that they are not welcome. That is not always from other pupils. When we do our Roma awareness training, even in classes where there are Roma pupils, the teachers and students know nothing about Roma; it is not being talked about and it is not being celebrated. We have had awful examples of hate incidents and hate crimes perpetrated against Roma and not being picked up on. I think Derby is better than some, but nationally, once kids go into pupil referral units and are excluded, they have a 1% chance of getting a GCSE. When we exclude our young people from school, we are basically setting them down a certain path. We worked



HOUSE OF COMMONS

with youth offending, and youth offending told us that all of our Roma young people who come into youth offending were excluded from school. If you could just keep them in school, you would probably prevent a cycle of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Q589 Mr Shuker: Ruth, are you saying that academies are more likely to exclude or expel Roma students than local authority schools, in your experience?

Ruth Richardson: Possibly they were academised because they were having problems and that made them good cases for pushing to be academies. Because they have become academies and they no longer fall within the local authority, when we have passionately argued for the young people who were crying because they did not want to go to school because they were having such a horrific time there, we have not been able to get a footprint into those academies. The local authority said to us, "We will only be able to help you if we can find serious cases of safeguarding issues or where hate incidents have occurred. We then might be able to force the academies to enter into a conversation with us about what is going on internally".

Councillor Steinke: Picking up on the role of the local authority in terms of academies, obviously it is far more difficult for the local authority to exercise control around that once the school has gone to academy status. What I want to say in particular on that is that it is not inevitable. In Sheffield, if you look at the rate of exclusions, there is a considerable variation, often between quite similar schools, in the rate of exclusions at different academies. Something we are trying to do is to look at those schools that are now demonstrating a high level of exclusions, to see what lies behind that when a similar school has a significantly lower level. It may well be that, in some cases—and it has been raised; I certainly do not support the argument—for some schools there have been too few exclusions, but I would argue that in some schools there are too many. As Ruth said, it is often disproportionate in terms of Roma pupils, although there are other groups that are disproportionately reflected as well.

Q590 Mr Shuker: Why do you think it is disproportionately populated by Roma?

Councillor Steinke: It is for a number of reasons. As Ruth said, it is partly lack of understanding by some of the school staff; that is not just teaching but other school staff. There has been some conflict and lack of understanding from other pupils in terms of Roma culture.

If you look historically at previous migrations, there have been disproportionate levels of previous migrant populations in school exclusion, so this is, in a sense, a pattern that we are going through, which I would hope would come down. There is evidence that once Roma kids are successfully settled in schools, examination successes follow and certainly some of the schools that have the highest migration population



HOUSE OF COMMONS

in Sheffield, including Roma, are starting to be some of the more successful achieving schools in terms of results.

Colin Havard: We also have to look at the Roma's attitudes towards education themselves. If your parents never went to school, then the message you get from the school and the message you get at home are different. As a kid, you get stuck between the two in deciding which one you are going to deal with. We have to pay some attention to what happens outside the school as well as what is happening inside the school.

We also need to go down to the pre-school level, because what we find is that the Roma population are not using nursery places. There are empty nursery places in the areas where they congregate, because they are not used to going, first, because you do not go to school until seven in Slovakia, and, secondly, because a mother's role is to bring up the child, so why would they give them away? The readiness for school at five is not there. We know from Sure Start experiences over the years that the pre-school thing is really important, so if you are not ready for school it may not play out until you are in secondary, but it will come out.

To some extent, we cannot just look at secondary exclusion as a problem on its own. That is a problem that has taken 13 years to create or whatever age the child is. There is a sense, for me, that we have to support schools in what they are trying to do, rather than always telling them off for it, and understand that it is a tricky job. The logic that we are using is our logic. It is not the logic that you grew up with in Bystrany in Slovakia. We need to be able to support parents more in how they can engage, and there is very little resource put into that part of the equation. The resource is in the school. We are asking the school to perform this act of magic and to undo the theories and morals of their whole family, and that is sometimes disingenuous.

Ruth Richardson: May I add just a few things that are really relevant? We have, with no funding, approached schools and said, "We are not here to challenge you and say that, in any way, you are at fault. We just want to work with you for the betterment of our communities", but often it has been perceived as a challenge and, therefore, not accepted and we cannot make them.

We flagged the Roma disproportionate exclusions, which was picked up by Roma Support Group, which led to the national report. That clearly showed that this is a very clear issue for Roma specifically. The way that they have responded is that they are no longer externally excluding Roma and have set up their own internal exclusion units. It does not show up on the statistics any more, so they can say, "We are not excluding Roma as much as we were before", but we know that they are internally excluded, so often our Roma pupils are only going to school for three hours a day within the school.

Q591 **Chair:** Colin, do you have disproportionate levels of Roma children



HOUSE OF COMMONS

excluded?

Colin Havard: We do, but ours are getting better. The response of our schools towards that report and the situation has been to try to address the issue better. It is still a case that if a child decides to go and punch another child, I have to behave towards them as I would any other child, and the behaviour does sometimes lead to them needing to be excluded. There is some element of that that is also about whether it is better, because there is a rumour in our community that if you go to the special school, it is smaller classes, it is a bit more relaxed, you might not have to go there nine to five and this is no bad thing. The expectation is, "I am not going to get pieces of paper at the end of this anyway, so I might as well go to the easy place".

Q592 **Chair:** Despite having a relatively developed support system in Sheffield, you still have disproportionate levels of exclusions.

Colin Havard: Yes.

Q593 **Chair:** What we are looking for is not just to identify the problems; we also want to identify the solutions. Despite having really good solutions in place, you are still struggling with this problem.

Colin Havard: Yes, although it is getting better. We are moving in the right direction. Our CMF project deliberately chose to look at how we take school messages and replicate them in the community outside. We went to the schools and said, "What is your key message to these children? How can we do your outreach work for you, because you are not resourced for it? Let us leave you alone, as an educational specialist, but what do we do outside?" It is the same for the GPs. We have exactly the same problem in health, because you have a whole load of private sector providers all trying to give out a message, but they are all doing it slightly differently because they run themselves slightly differently. Outside in the community, you might have kids going to three different schools, each of which is telling you a different thing. One might have a school uniform; one might not. One might give five-year-olds homework; one might not. You expect the parent to understand that and that is a big issue, especially if that parent has not been through a similar system themselves.

Q594 **Chair:** I am sorry to interrupt again. You said something a little while ago, Colin, and I just need to pick up on it, which is "different moral values". You need to explain that, because that is quite a loaded thing to say.

Colin Havard: It is a loaded thing to say. For me, for example, do I think that standing outside and chatting to my mates on a street corner at 11 o'clock at night is an okay thing to do or not? I see it as a social act, but I know people, colleagues and friends of mine, who would see it as an antisocial act. There is no right or wrong in that.

Q595 **Chair:** But you were implying that there were different morals in this



HOUSE OF COMMONS

community, and I wanted you to explain that.

Colin Havard: There is a different approach to whether school is valuable and to whether behaviour and behaving within the system is expected of you or not. I was brought up with the idea that my elders were my betters and I shut up as soon as they walked in the room. That is not the case for all people now. What I am saying is that our Roma community has its own set of morals that are based on its own history, but we are trying to shoehorn them into a set of morals that we have decided.

Chair: I am not sure I would call those morals, but I understand the point you are making.

Colin Havard: Fair enough; it may well be the wrong term.

Dave Brown: You are probably aware of the statistics around Europe, but only 42% of Roma children in Europe finish primary school even, so the challenge is immense when they come here, and some of that percentage are in separate Roma schools. I have been to some of them, where they are in separate buildings, separate schools, or just a completely rundown, awful school that is almost uninhabitable. The challenges are so much broader. Like with everything, all these bits are connected. Colin is absolutely right about having to deal with outside the school as well as inside the school.

There are also challenges for the school itself, like the concentrations of Roma in an area leading to concentrations in school, which amplifies the challenge that people have. In some areas, there are quite intense concentrations. In some places, they have tried to avoid that by drawing boundaries and that still has not helped, because of the decisions that Roma and non-Roma make about what schools they attend. There are also issues related to funding. The pupil premium, which is supposed to help people in these situations, has not always been useful and been able to be applicable to Roma individuals, so sometimes the schools are not getting the help that they need because of certain policy changes that tend to exclude Roma from being eligible or identifying in the right way to collect that extra funding to support the school.

Ruth Richardson: Some of our schools have started running their parents' evenings in the communities where Roma live, rather than expecting parents to come in, and they go from seeing zero Roma parents attending parents' evenings to 75% attending. There are examples like that that are good. The other thing is that schools really need to cotton on to this idea of having Roma faces in their staff, because it massively benefits the students to know that there are Roma role models in the system.

Colin Havard: We have an example of a school where they had to have the right Roma person. They had a Roma person who was from the wrong village and none of the kids were listening. They then had a



HOUSE OF COMMONS

different Roma person who was from the right village and, all of a sudden, the kids are starting to listen to what he is saying, because he has the status in their community. I go back to the point that you cannot just label somebody Roma and that is the solution. You have to understand why it is that person.

Ruth Richardson: What we battle with all the time is that so many of the services, because they do not understand anything about Roma, never mind the fact it is not a homogeneous community, will just be like, "Well, this person speaks Slovakian, so we will employ that Slovakian person and tick that box; we have done that", without understanding that they really need to be an ethnically Roma person and then go on that journey and maybe find out more about it. We are not even at that stage. Too many of the services are like, "Oh, this person is a Czech speaker; wonderful; that is it". We really need to push the case that there has to be ethnically Roma representation.

Q596 **Mr Shuker:** You are all very well informed on this issue and you live it all the time. The ministerial working group was established in the 2010-2015 Parliament and produced a report in 2012, but it almost exclusively focused on Gypsy and Traveller communities. Have any of those commitments improved the lives of Roma people?

Colin Havard: I had to go and read it; that is how much impact I thought it had. The 28 recommendations all seemed a bit anodyne to me or a bit bland. I could not draw a direct line between what was written in there and what I see day to day. That is not to say it is not, but I could not see it.

Q597 **Mr Shuker:** There are plenty of Government reports collecting dust around Whitehall; I do not dispute that. I just wondered about this particular one.

Colin Havard: I could not see it myself.

Councillor Steinke: It is similar from me. There were significant improvements around Gypsies and Travellers from that report, but not in terms of Roma. That is one of the problems about clustering Roma together with Gypsies and Travellers. We need to move beyond that.

Ruth Richardson: From the voluntary sector, it is of no influence at all, but that is something that could change. It links to the lack of a Roma integration strategy as well. From our stance, in terms of trying to get resources and support from the local authority, it would be a benefit if there was a clear message from national Government saying, "This is something that you need to do".

Dave Brown: My view is that it has made no difference and no impact, and I think that was an intentional decision within that and also within the strategy.

Q598 **Mr Shuker:** That leads on to why that would be the case. Do you think



HOUSE OF COMMONS

there is something about the Roma community as opposed to the Gypsy and Traveller parts of that triumvirate that means that voices to influence Government are not raised in the same way or do not have the same kind of access or, from a public policy perspective, Roma is more hidden, perhaps, than Gypsy and Traveller communities?

Dave Brown: There is a mix of it partly being hidden and, coming back to what I said, people did not know and also did not want to know. It was in the "too difficult" box as well. At that moment in time, and even possibly now, people did not want to talk too much about Roma because it is seen as a very difficult, divisive issue. There has been lots of stuff in the media over the years that links to age-old prejudices, but also stuff happening around the world. We have seen, in recent years, pictures of Roma have been shorthand for scary EU migration, even where it has not been explicit. It was easier for people to decide not to tackle the issue, not to be explicit about it and to hope it worked itself out. Our experience, both in the UK and all across Europe, is that does not happen.

Q599 **Mr Shuker:** Just to make really explicit what you made pretty explicit there, you feel that perhaps politicians have not wanted to lay out steps to tackle discrimination against Roma communities because there is a mind space of the media and so on that Roma communities are involved in crime, maybe.

Dave Brown: They are seen as a threat somehow. Also it is a challenging issue and there are challenging issues in relation to how communities interact as a result of all of this. I think it is in the "too difficult" box.

Councillor Steinke: I would echo that. It is not just national politicians; local politicians have taken a long time to wake up to this. It is that issue about tensions between different communities. It is not just about tensions between Roma and more indigenous, white communities, but it is between other migrant communities as well. We have to get beyond that "too difficult" box, yes.

Q600 **Chair:** We are moving on to our final few questions. Obviously, we are quite obsessed in this place with leaving the EU at the moment, as you might have noticed. As we leave the EU, how easy or difficult do you think it will be for Roma who would like to remain in the UK to do so compared to non-Roma EU citizens? Do you perceive that there is a difference?

Michal Daniel: Yes, definitely there is.

Q601 **Chair:** Why?

Michal Daniel: They have the intention that they will leave anyway whatever happens, if there will be any residency-type obligations. They do not feel that that is something accessible for the Roma, so they are trying to find a way, like a back-up, if they could build a house or buy a



HOUSE OF COMMONS

house in their country of origin, just in case. Even myself, I have started to do a second job as a care assistant, because I do not know what is going to happen.

Q602 **Chair:** Why do you think you will be treated differently from other EU citizens? There is nothing in the rules that would suggest that would be the case, but your perception is that it would be.

Michal Daniel: It is a perception. There is the feeling that no one knows what is going to happen, nothing is on the internet, so I probably should have, just in case, a back-up plan, so that if I have to leave the UK I will have somewhere to go. That is the intention other people might have as well.

Ruth Richardson: It is for exactly the reason that was just mentioned about the way Roma are depicted in the media and the narratives even from local situations: that they are not wanted and they do not have a platform and they are not included. There is an ongoing feeling that we will not be welcome and that maybe a lot of these policies and opinions around Brexit are targeted at us, even if they are not necessarily spelling it out for us. This is about making us leave.

Q603 **Chair:** Can I ask Ruth a follow-up to that? You are not worried about the practicalities of proving residency.

Ruth Richardson: Absolutely. I am really worried about that as well. We were involved in the APPG around Roma and Brexit, and found out what people do know about the settled status application. We were pretty much told that there were no thoughts at the time from central Government that we would have any support systems or resources available to help this go more smoothly: "If you have any issues about it, go back to your local authorities and your local MPs and your local councillors and speak to them and see if they will support it".

Q604 **Chair:** At the moment, there are quite clear rules in place. People now know exactly the sort of data they have to collect. Do you think that might be more difficult for Roma people?

Ruth Richardson: Yes, absolutely. First, a lot of our Roma are possibly in denial and sticking their head in the sand about it and hoping that, because they do not feel there is parity, they will not have to do anything on it. As we said earlier, many of our Roma do not have the internet at home; they do not have a computer. Some of them do not have carpets or beds. All the applications have to be done online. If many of our Roma have an English barrier and these applications are said to be quite based on legalese and might need support from a solicitor, who would need to be paid for, what are the chances that they are going to be able to fill it out? We said earlier that we have 40-plus clients coming about a range of topics; when settled status kicks in they are going to come to us for that support and we have one laptop and one computer and three members of staff.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: Okay, so there are practical issues around Brexit.

Ruth Richardson: Yes.

Dave Brown: From having discussions with the teams who are doing it in the Home Office, I think it is being designed to include everyone and they are looking at vulnerable groups, so the intention is correct. The difficulty will be these very practical issues, exactly in terms of what we have heard about doing it, but being able to prove these things is going to be extremely hard. There will then be the political reality that if there are issues, are we going to say, "We have delivered this for EU citizens. We now are going to decide who should or should not be here"? Will people stick their neck out for Roma if they are the ones who have fallen out at the end? The perception is probably not. We have also seen in recent years there is certainly a feeling amongst Roma and organisations working with Roma, although I would say no hard evidence, that they have been targeted for removal from the country for not exercising EU treaty rights. There are some real fears and a cultural, ingrained view that, "We can pack up and leave. We might have to pack up and leave".

Q605 **Chair:** Is there somewhere we could look for data on the removals issue?

Dave Brown: Not by ethnicity. There is some data that links more to nationality and there has been a report by the Roma Support Group that does deal with that.

Councillor Steinke: It is important to see it in the context of the referendum as well, in that a lot of the arguments used at the time were not necessarily directed to EU migration as such, but it was very specifically about Roma migration. Certainly the voices I hear from communities I represent, whether they are Brexiteers or Remainers is not necessarily relevant, but Roma migration has been seen as a specific issue as opposed to the rest of the EU. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Roma communities feel threatened by this.

Q606 **Chair:** There is the emotional threat, but also the practical issues, which is important.

Colin Havard: It all comes back to the trust issue. Why would we expect Roma to trust a Government?

Chair: Trust a system that is getting them to do things that might—

Colin Havard: Yes, and it is going to take a lot to overcome that. Just because I smile nicely does not mean I am a good guy. There is a huge hurdle in that and the problems will be worse practically, because not only do you have to give evidence but you have to then do it digitally. Therefore, they are going to have to own a scanner. We have 6,000 people in Sheffield and very few of them have the access required.

Q607 **Chair:** Moving on to some funding of local initiatives, in what ways are specific funding schemes aimed at Roma helpful in addressing some of the problems we have talked about today, in terms of inclusion and



HOUSE OF COMMONS

integration?

Dave Brown: It depends what it is. Some things very specific are useful. A broader approach that deals with Roma and others, and a neighbourhood and the way it is changing, is also useful. It depends on the situation, but, in most cases, funding recognising that will help. There used to be a Migration Impacts Fund.

Q608 **Chair:** Are there examples currently where there is funding that is helping?

Dave Brown: Yes. In terms of the context, there was a Migration Impacts Fund that was there between 2009 and 2010; that was stopped. That was thought, in many areas, to be a mistake and there has been quite a lot of lobbying since on bringing that back in. There was a lot of work done even at that stage, early on, with Roma, and it helped. It was helping communities work. It was not explicit Roma funding; it was about change and about impact and migration. Now we see the Controlling Migration Fund, which is very similar. It has a different name and it is made to look very different. That helps, but the flexibility to have a national large Roma migration fund of the same amount probably would not be helpful, but to encourage that to be used for those communities would be helpful.

Colin Havard: We see more Roma-specific funds coming through the EU, to be honest. We are part of a EURO CITIES project using AMIF funding; I cannot remember what that stands for. That is for Roma-specific work, where we can share our experiences with other cities. We do not do enough of that within the UK, because there are good examples around the country. There are also examples where people are struggling and could do with a bit of help. For me, we need to start doing more of this in terms of sharing our experiences more.

Q609 **Chair:** Particularly with the Controlling Migration Fund, what impact has that had, because it has been in place since 2016?

Colin Havard: For us, it allows us to do something that austerity cannot impinge on, from my perspective, in the sense that we have some ring-fenced money and any pressures on our council budgets do not come into it. It has allowed us to write a very specific neighbourhood approach. We have not chosen a Roma approach; we have chosen a neighbourhood approach, because we do not want the Roma to be the problem.

Q610 **Chair:** Does anybody else have any particular thoughts on the Controlling Migration Fund and how that has worked or not?

Councillor Steinke: It has made an enormous difference. It needs to be fully assessed, but the general point is about the need to move away from short-term funding to longer-term, not open-ended funding, for what is a longer-term integration problem. It is that short-termism of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

funding, of whatever source, and you spend so much time preparing for it, bidding for it and then exiting from it.

Q611 **Chair:** You see the Controlling Migration Fund as being ring-fenced and something you can use in your community in a flexible way.

Councillor Steinke: Yes, but it is too short.

Q612 **Chair:** Is it only allocated on a year-by-year basis?

Colin Havard: No, it was a two-year programme.

Q613 **Chair:** We need to analyse how that works.

Colin Havard: Yes.

Chair: Ruth, do you want to say anything at this stage?

Ruth Richardson: Just that we would not be here if we did not have Controlling Migration Fund money. It entirely pays for Roma Community Care at the moment. I guess that is because, as a city, they acknowledge that many of the other advice organisations that had existed but did not specifically support Roma have reduced their services or closed. With Roma Community Care having the language and being embedded where Roma live, we are the frontline service. We looked to close because we lost funding and it was only because of the Controlling Migration Fund, which the local authority secured, that we could stay open.

Q614 **Chair:** How much would an organisation like yours receive from that fund?

Ruth Richardson: We get about £32,000 a year.

Dave Brown: The fund is done well. It is a national fund, but the decisions are made locally in terms of priorities, and then there is the balance about how much is about Roma and how much is other migration, and how much you are focusing on the host community. That is done well.

There is a big issue. Clearly the funding does matter; it would be nice to think that it does not. There are other things you can do. When the Migration Impacts Fund finished, it is not a pure coincidence that, in that six-year period, that is when there were issues more in local areas around Roma. It is a much broader issue; it is not just that, but that was definitely one of the factors.

In Yorkshire, there were successful initiatives that had to stop, and skills and experience of individuals were lost. The reason we ended up managing two very large European projects was the local authorities and voluntary sector in our region needed funding to deal with it. The only place we could get funding during that time was from the EU. The only way we could do that was by managing a project with 20 organisations in 10 countries. Lots of benefits came from that. We should not have had



to go to the EU to do that, but the UK was not providing that funding to deal with migration within the UK.

Ruth Richardson: As we move towards the end, I absolutely have to say, from the voluntary sector—maybe it is our specific opinion—we need specific funding for Roma. We need designated money for Roma. We have not seen the Roma communities advance in, say, the last 10 years that you might have thought other communities would have. That is because of the complex nature of Roma and where they are coming from, and because we are being asked to just generically make the case for Roma within a broader sweep of equality, and often we are not selected and we do not make the cut.

Q615 **Chair:** You would challenge Colin, who was saying that he would use that money for a more general neighbourhood scheme.

Ruth Richardson: That might be the local authority's perspective and I am not necessarily saying that is the wrong perspective. From the voluntary sector on the ground, supporting communities in need and working with Roma Community Care, we have done some spectacular work, but we have sailed very close to having to shut down and losing our staff, probably back to factory work. One of the reasons is that we are applying for pots of money that are not specified for that community, they are for all communities and we are not getting picked. That might be for systemic reasons and barriers, or it might be because of Brexit, but it is a real challenge for us to try to get the resources that are really needed for specifically Roma. If they were ring-fenced for Roma, it would certainly make it a lot easier.

Colin Havard: I do agree. It needs to be Roma-specific, but within a neighbourhood approach. You do not need to separate them out, because we are trying to integrate Roma and if you say, "Right, we will keep them over here and treat them separately", that is not a helpful approach.

Q616 **Chair:** Have a neighbourhood approach but, within that, there can be something specific.

Colin Havard: Yes, because the CMF does not specifically say, "You have to do the Roma thing"; it also has housing, homelessness and all sorts of other things.

Chair: I guess not all communities will have that particular challenge. I am so sorry. We are already over time and I am conscious that Members have to go off to other things and we are stretched thin today. If there are other things, please do drop us a line.

Thank you so much for your time today. We are incredibly grateful. Can I apologise again for the lateness and I will make sure that I read the first half hour? I can assure you that is the first time that has ever happened, thanks to the trains. I know it takes a lot of time to prepare for these sorts of things and it can feel a bit intimidating, but I have to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

say you did not show any of that at all. Thank you very much and thank you for your frankness and your contributions today.