



# **Law for Life**

## **Multimedia Toolkit for Roma Parents**

### **Project Evaluation Report**

**July 2020**

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## CONTACTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Multimedia Toolkit for Roma Parents project was developed and delivered by Law for Life, an education and information charity that aims to increase access to justice by providing everyone with an awareness of their legal rights together with the confidence and skills to assert them.

The project was developed in response to concerns about the number of Roma families subject to child protection investigations and the number of Roma children being taken into care by local authorities in England. The project aimed to improve access to justice for Roma parents going through child protection proceedings.

Law for Life worked collaboratively with a range of agencies to co-produce resources to help Roma families better understand how to protect their children from harm; to help Roma non-government organisations (NGOs) better understand the child protection system in England; and to help child protection professionals better understand how to engage effectively with Roma parents. The resources – a multimedia toolkit and training for Roma advocates – were very well received and are now being used by Roma communities, NGOs and statutory agencies.

There is evidence that all of the project's intended outcomes were achieved, particularly the outcomes to:

- Improve legal capability and understanding about the child protection process amongst Roma community members.
- Empower Roma parents through increased knowledge about their rights and responsibilities and improved skills and confidence needed to assert their rights.

In delivering these outcomes the multimedia toolkit project has made a significant contribution to building capacity within Roma communities to engage more knowledgeably and confidently in child protection investigations. There are indications that this has helped some Roma families to keep their children in cases where they may otherwise have been removed into local authority care.

This project has highlighted the scale of need for Roma families. As at March 2019, the most recent date for which figures have been published, 1,820 Gypsy/Roma children in England were identified as 'in need' and 440 Gypsy/Roma children were being looked after by local authorities.<sup>1</sup> The number of Roma families who received any support to engage with these child protection investigations is not known but is likely to be very low. The case studies from this project demonstrate the discrimination and disadvantage which Roma parents can experience in child protection investigations, including through:

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<sup>1</sup> A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services, or the child is disabled.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>

- Local authorities providing inadequate interpreting services leading on to
- Social workers making misleading assumptions about Roma parents' intellectual capabilities.
- Roma parents' lack of knowledge about what is expected of them, both in terms of parental responsibilities and in engaging with child protection investigations.

Improved collaboration between the decision makers and Roma NGOs would help to identify procedural issues and areas that need improvement.

The project demonstrates that further support is needed for all those involved in Roma child protection cases. The following actions are recommended:

Children's Services departments, social workers and legal professionals should undertake the following:

1. Cultural competency training to gain better understanding of Roma culture and behaviour. Training on working with Gypsy/Roma families should be a compulsory element of continuing professional development for all social workers.
2. Training to develop a wider understanding that Roma parents are discriminated against within the system, as social workers are currently working with Roma families in ways that they cannot understand.
3. Routine consultation with NGOs with knowledge of Roma culture in all cases involving Roma families.

Roma support agencies require funding to provide the following:

4. More champions to help Roma families in child protection cases to understand what is required of them and to help safeguarding professionals avoid making assumptions about Roma culture.
5. More preventative work to increase understanding within Roma communities of UK expectations of parental responsibilities before families come under Children's Services investigation.

Law for Life should secure additional funding to carry out the following:

6. Roll out the child protection legal capability training to all NGOs working with Roma communities anywhere in England.
7. Adapt the multimedia toolkit to reflect the legal framework in other parts of the UK and disseminate to agencies in those areas.

8. Undertake a targeted campaign to engage safeguarding professions with the multimedia toolkit.
9. Further develop tools for measuring legal capability, to produce a validated measurement tool which can be confidently used to evaluate all legal capability interventions.

## **ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 This report**

This report presents findings from evaluation of the Multimedia Toolkit for Roma Parents project. The evaluation was conducted by Law for Life working with an independent evaluation advisor, Liz Mackie, who designed the evaluation methods and authored this report.

### **1.2 The project**

The Multimedia Toolkit for Roma Parents project was developed and delivered by Law for Life, an education and information charity that aims to increase access to justice by providing everyone with an awareness of their legal rights together with the confidence and skills to assert them.

The project was developed in response to concerns about the number of Roma families subject to child protection investigations and the number of Roma children being taken into care by local authorities in England. The project aimed to improve access to justice for Roma parents going through child protection proceedings.

The project was funded by the Tudor Trust and took place over a one year period, from November 2017 to December 2018. The main evaluation activities took place 12 to 18 months after the project was completed and this evaluation report was produced in July 2020.

Law for Life worked with three Roma charities to develop and deliver this project:

- Roma Support Group – a London-based charity supporting Roma communities throughout the UK.
- Clifton Learning Partnership - a charity working for community cohesion in Rotherham whose Family Support Workers help Roma and other families in Rotherham.
- Roma Community Care – an advocacy group providing a voice for Derby’s Roma community.

The project delivered the following activities:

- i. Consultation with key stakeholders about Roma families’ knowledge and experiences of Children’s Services departments, and to identify the resources needed to increase Roma community knowledge of child protection and to increase social workers’ awareness of Roma culture. Key stakeholders were Roma families, Roma NGOs, social work academics, Gypsy/Roma/Traveller experts, local authority Children’s Services departments, and legal professionals. Four consultation workshops took place; three with Roma families and Roma NGOs, and one with social work and legal professionals.

- ii. Development of a multimedia toolkit explaining the legal framework of child protection in England. The toolkit consists of an information guide and a film, narrated in the Roma language, illustrating key elements of the legal framework and the skills needed to fully comply with child protection requirements. These resources were widely distributed to Roma NGOs, other charities, and to local authority Children's Services departments.
- iii. Development of a one day legal capability training session which aimed to:
  - Help Roma champions and non- Roma advocates working with Roma families involved with Children's Services to gain a better understanding of the child protection process in England.
  - Support Roma champions to disseminate relevant information to Roma families so that they feel more informed and empowered to navigate this process.

Three legal capability training sessions were delivered, in London, Derby and Rotherham. These were attended by workers from the three Roma charities, other family support workers, and child protection professionals.

### **1.3 Project outcomes**

The project aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Improved legal capability and understanding about the child protection process amongst Roma community members.
2. Empowerment of Roma parents through increased knowledge about their rights and responsibilities and improved skills and confidence needed to assert their rights.
3. Improved engagement between Roma parents and public services, including Children's Services.
4. Increased cultural competence amongst social workers and legal professionals.
5. Reduced number of child protection cases and other positive outcomes such as prevention of family breakdown.

### **1.4 Evaluation**

This was a small scale project with a very limited budget for evaluation. To maximise the evaluation activity, Law for Life worked with an independent evaluation specialist (Liz Mackie from Shared Enterprise) to design an evaluation plan and data collection tools. Evaluation data collection was undertaken by Law for Life and the Roma champions. The evaluation data was collated and analysed by Liz Mackie, who authored this report.

The methods used to collect data to evaluate each project outcome are shown in Table i and explained in more detail below.

Table i: Summary of project outcomes, activities and evaluation methods

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Key project activities</b>	<b>Evaluation method</b>
1. Improved legal capability and understanding about the child protection process amongst Roma community members	Training for Roma champions and other child protection professionals + Multimedia toolkit	Training evaluation forms + Multimedia toolkit feedback
2. Empowerment of Roma parents through increased knowledge about their rights and responsibilities and improved skills and confidence needed to assert their rights	Multimedia toolkit + families supported by Roma champions	Legal capability questionnaire + Roma champion case notes
3. Improved engagement between Roma parents and public services, including Children's Services	Consultation events + multimedia toolkit + Roma champion engagement with public services	Roma champion case notes + Stakeholder interviews
4. Increased cultural competence amongst social workers and legal professional	Consultation events + multimedia toolkit + Roma champion engagement with public services	Stakeholder interviews
5. Reduced number of child projection cases and other positive outcomes such as prevention of family breakdown.	All project activities	Secondary data analysis + Roma champion case notes

### Training evaluation forms

Participants in the three legal capability training sessions were asked to complete evaluation forms; 31 participants completed evaluation forms.

### Roma champion case notes

Roma champions supporting Roma families through child protection investigations wrote up notes of some of these cases. These gave information about the child protection issues, support provided by the Roma champion and case outcomes. 15 case notes were completed.

### Legal capability questionnaire

This questionnaire was adapted from the legal capability measurement questionnaire which Law for Life has used in evaluations of previous initiatives to increase legal capability. The questionnaire measures individual legal capability through a series of questions where respondents rank their confidence, skills or knowledge on a scale from 0 to 10.

For this project, a set of legal capability control scores was established by asking Roma families known to the NGOs but not under Children's Services investigation to complete the questionnaire. This provided a control group against which to compare the legal capability of Roma families who were supported through child protection



proceedings by Roma champions. 45 Roma families completed the control questionnaire and 15 Roma families completed the intervention group questionnaire.

There are clearly a number of challenges to measuring empowerment, particularly for people going through a traumatic experience such as child protection proceedings. The evaluation method used here attempted to collect quantifiable data of empowerment but problems with this include:

- There is no standardised tool for measuring legal capability (Law for Life has been working on this for some time and this remains work in progress);
- The control and intervention group were not closely matched. Both comprise Roma parents but there may be significant differences between the two groups (e.g. it is now known how many in the control group had any previous involvement in child protection proceedings);
- The number in the intervention group is very small; there were some cases where the Roma champions felt it inappropriate to ask parents in a state of acute distress to complete a questionnaire.

### Stakeholder interviews

A baseline interview was carried out with a senior Children's Services director at Derby City Council. A follow up interview with Derby City Council Children's Services was conducted at the end of the project.

Evaluation interviews at the end of the project were conducted with a further eight organisations; six Roma NGOs one legal services company and one academic expert. The list of evaluation interviewees is in Annex One.

### Secondary data analysis

The government publishes national statistics on the number of children in need and the number in local authority care ('looked after children') with ethnic breakdowns which include Gypsy/Roma as a category.<sup>2</sup> Separate data for Roma children are not available but experts suggest that a large majority of children in the Gypsy/Roma category are Roma of eastern European origin, rather than of UK Gypsy heritage.<sup>3</sup> These statistics were reviewed to consider the overall trend for Roma families coming under child protection investigation.

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<sup>2</sup> A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services, or the child is disabled  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/843046/Characteristics\\_of\\_children\\_in\\_need\\_2018\\_to\\_2019\\_main\\_text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843046/Characteristics_of_children_in_need_2018_to_2019_main_text.pdf)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>

<sup>3</sup> The Traveller Movement (2017) *The care system and Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: an investigation*  
[https://travellermovement.org.uk/phocadownload/TTM%20The%20care%20system%20and%20Gypsies%20Roma%20and%20Travellers\\_web.pdf](https://travellermovement.org.uk/phocadownload/TTM%20The%20care%20system%20and%20Gypsies%20Roma%20and%20Travellers_web.pdf)

## TWO: EVALUATION FINDINGS

### 2.1 OUTCOME ONE: Improved legal capability and understanding about the child protection process amongst Roma community members

This outcome was achieved by the project.

The main delivery activities for this outcome were (1) the legal capability training developed and delivered by Law for Life, and (2) the multimedia toolkit.

Thirty eight people participated in the legal capability training sessions which took place in London, Derby and Rotherham in October 2018. Evaluation forms were completed by 31 participants. Results from the evaluation forms, shown in Table ii, indicate that all participants considered their knowledge and understanding of the child protection process were increased by the training.

Table ii: Legal capability training: evaluation feedback

	London	Derby	Rotherham	TOTAL
Number of participants	11	14	13	<b>38</b>
Number of evaluation forms completed	10	9	12	<b>31</b>
Number of Gypsy/Roma participants	5	3	3	<b>11</b>
<i>Did this course help you to understand basic elements of the child protection process?</i> % answering yes	100	100	100	<b>100%</b>
<i>Did this course help you understand why Children's Services get involved with a family?</i> % answering yes	100	100	100	<b>100%</b>
<i>Can you name four types of harm?</i> % answering correctly	90	90	100	<b>93%</b>
<i>Can you name at least two organisations that can offer advice and support when dealing with child protection?</i> % naming two organisations	80	44	77	<b>67%</b>

*As I do not have much experience working with Children's Services, I have to say, honestly, everything was very useful. I understood properly what child protection means. (Training participant, London)*

*This course would be great for other professionals, e.g. Early Help and Social Care staff. (Training participant, Rotherham)*

Five hundred printed copies of the multimedia toolkit guide were distributed to around 300 organisations, including local authorities, Roma/Gypsy/Traveller NGOs and law firms. A digital version of the guide is on the Advicenow website, where it has received over 3,700 views to date and the film is on Youtube (1073 views to date) and on Facebook (1,600 views to date). Feedback from agencies using the multimedia toolkit has been overwhelmingly positive, and indicates that the toolkit has helped to increase legal capability within those agencies. :

*It has given us a higher profile and credibility in our interactions with Social Care. [Roma NGO]*

*It has given us confidence to have conversations with other organisations [Roma NGO]*

*It has provided a structure and factual, verified information to share with families.[Roma NGO]*

*[the resources have] enabled our staff members to navigate the system better and support Roma families in a better way [Roma NGO].*

*It is helpful in court as well that we can show that [we] helped families learn more about child protection process and in what way. [Roma NGO]*

More feedback on the multimedia toolkit is in Annex Two.

## **2.2 OUTCOME TWO: Empowerment of Roma parents through increased knowledge about their rights and responsibilities and improved skills and confidence needed to assert their rights**

This outcome was achieved by the project.

The main activities to empower Roma parents were (1) creating and distributing the multimedia toolkit, which included a filmed guide to child protection rights and responsibilities narrated in the Roma language, and (2) building the legal capability of Roma champions supporting Roma families through child protection proceedings.

Because of the challenges for evaluating this outcome the results presented and discussed in this section are tentative. They provide a broad indication and not a robust statistical measure of empowerment.

The legal capability questionnaire to evaluate Roma parent knowledge, skills and confidence about their rights and responsibilities was completed by 40 Roma parents in the control group and 15 in the intervention group.

The results of the legal capability questionnaire, shown in Table iii, indicate strong differences between the control and intervention groups of Roma parents. Notably, the intervention group parents had greater understanding of how the child protection system works and were more confident that they knew how to get expert help and could deal with Children's Services involvement in the future. These results indicate

that there was greater legal capability among the intervention group. It is not certain that this can be attributed to the increased legal capability of the Roma champions, as it could be the outcome of Roma parents' involvement in child protection proceedings, although focus group discussions with Roma families held early in the project suggest that this is not the case, as those who had been through child protection investigations still had no knowledge of how the process worked. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Roma families were empowered as a result of the increased knowledge about the child protection system disseminated through this project.

It is worth noting that parents' understanding of their rights in relation to child protection was lower for the intervention group than the control group. This is not an unexpected finding for a legal capability intervention, where individuals often over-estimate their legal capability prior to learning more about the complexity of the legal issues. It seems likely that parents who are going through child protection investigations may recognise that they know less about their rights than parents who are assessing this without any direct knowledge of either the process or their rights.

Table iii Legal capability questionnaire results

	CONTROL (n=40)		INTERVENTION (n=15)	
	MEAN	MODE	MEAN	MODE
How well do you understand how the child protection system works in England	2.9	0	5.3	6
How well do you understand the <b>responsibilities</b> of parents to protect their children from harm	6.4	10	6.6	6
How well do you understand the <b>rights</b> of parents in relation to child protection	4.1	5	3.7	3
How confident are you that you know when and where to get expert help to deal with a child protection issue	3.3	0	5.0	6
How confident are you that you could deal with Children's Services getting involved with your family in the future	2.8	0	4.8	6
How well could you help another family to deal with a child protection issue	3.8	3	4.3	3

Scale = 0 to 10 where 0=no knowledge or understanding and 10 = excellent knowledge or understanding

In addition to the legal capability questionnaire, qualitative data from the project stakeholder interviews confirms that Roma parents were empowered and became more confident as a result of both the increased legal capability of the Roma champions and through the multimedia toolkit, particularly the film.

*[Roma] parents have benefited from increased knowledge of Roma Support Group staff regarding child protection: how to engage with safeguarding professionals, the process, etc. Film has also been an important tool in making families understand child protection. They watch it very carefully, they are very receptive because it's incredible for them to see Roma explain child protection issues to them. They listen really intently. It helps them to hear something that*

*they probably heard from other professionals but it confirms information and they trust it more. [Roma NGO]*

*I have used the film with families as a way of explaining what professionals are looking for and the best way to engage with professionals who have safeguarding duties. In one case, a family, after watching the film changed the way they dealt with social workers. I think this is possibly because the film is simple, and it came from a point of view that the families were not necessarily to blame. It also helped that throughout the film, certain things were repeated thereby reinforcing important messages. Having a conversation with the family after watching the film, opened their eyes to what was going wrong [Roma NGO]*

### **2.3 OUTCOME THREE: Improved engagement between Roma parents and public services, including Children's Services**

There is evidence that this outcome was achieved, although it has not been possible to evaluate how widespread the improved engagement between Roma parents and public services has been.

Roma NGOs report that their involvement in this project, either as collaborative partners or as participants in the legal capability training or as users of the multimedia toolkit, has improved their engagement with public services. For example:

*We struggle sometimes to be taken seriously in a world of Roma advocacy and campaigning and working with Law for Life helped us find the right way of influencing how things are done with Roma.... This project helped for some local authority staff to bring some value in our relationship and take us more seriously. [Roma NGO]*

The increased legal capacity of Roma champions developed through the legal capability training and having the multimedia toolkit as a resource, helped them to improve the engagement of Roma parents with child protection investigations. For example:

*Once the family has understood what the issue was they have changed their way of parenting and the social services are no longer involved. [Roma champion case note]*

However, while in all of the case notes Roma champions reported that the engagement of Roma parents had improved, there was not always improved engagement from Children's Services or other public agencies. This is illustrated in the comments and case study below, which refer to two different cases:

*I feel that Children's Services are not working as they should be with the Roma parents. In my opinion, Children's Services did not respect Roma culture at all... there were problems with communication, engagement with parents, contact was not conducted properly (too many people were involved in sessions). We as an organisation also struggled in communication with Children's Services, it*

*often felt that the decisions have been made regardless of our work. I also feel that we were involved too late. Court process was also difficult for parents. They spent a lot of time waiting and just informing them of the outcome. Communication was bad in this as well. I would not do support for Children's Services in this context again. I lost trust in social workers. [Roma champion case note]*

#### CASE STUDY ONE

Bulgarian Roma family of 2 adults and 5 children

Five meetings with Roma champion

At the stage of our initial meeting with the parents all the children had been placed in foster care and a final hearing was scheduled for early the following year. The Roma champion discussed the parents' understanding of the situation and the concerns raised by Children's Services about mum's mental health.

Following this session we produced a cultural assessment report. The report included information on mum's cultural background and how it affected her parenting, understanding UK requirements, concerns, changes she has to make, and barriers to making changes. It also included recommendations for professionals on how to engage with mum more effectively and support her in a more culturally appropriate way.

This was followed by further engagement with the family and Children's Services. The Roma champion ensured that there was good communication and cultural understanding. She helped the social worker and parents to understand cultural differences, and ensured that the parents understood the concerns and expectations of Children's Services. She encouraged the family to be open and forthcoming with information and asking for explanations and help when needed.

The social worker and her manager commented on how the parents' engagement and understanding improved and that they were making positive progress. We were informed that Children's Services planned to place the children back with their parents. We were then asked to carry out a few more support sessions with the parents but Children's Services kept moving the dates for these sessions and in the end they didn't take place.

We eventually received an email informing us that the final hearing had taken place and the children would not be returned to their parents' care. We asked for an explanation but none was given.

#### **2.4 OUTCOME FOUR: Increased cultural competence amongst social workers and legal professionals**

This outcome was achieved, although it has not been possible to evaluate how widespread the increase in cultural competence has been.

Project stakeholders consider that the multimedia toolkit provides the resources needed to increase the cultural competence of social workers and legal professionals

to work effectively with Roma families. An example of this is Derby City Council. At the outset of the project, the Head of Children's Services for Derby City Council identified that a lack of social worker knowledge about Roma culture could potentially be leading to misleading stereotyping. The final evaluation interview with Derby Children's Services (a different post holder to the initial interview), reported that the multimedia toolkit had helped the Department to 'think differently' and 'become more aware'.

Roma NGOs have also reported an increase in the cultural competence of child protection specialists resulting from this project.

*I have used the guide and the film with social workers and with education welfare officers and other professionals at schools who are involved in safeguarding. The resources have been received well as people are usually pleased to have something to help them in their work with Roma families. Especially the video as it's bilingual. [Roma NGO]*

While this project has produced the resources to increase cultural competence, stakeholders believe there is considerably more work to do in making all local authorities Children's Services departments and legal professionals aware of and using the multimedia toolkit.

*It would also be good to run a programme of targeted awareness raising with a lead champion from Roma community about the toolkit and how to use it and to give professionals confidence to use it. [Roma NGO]*

*We have many phone calls from safeguarding professionals who are struggling to engage with Roma parents. They often believe that this is only due to linguistic barriers. So, they also need more skills to understand more about Roma. Targeted campaign to use the toolkit for them would be beneficial. [Roma NGO]*

## **2.5 OUTCOME FIVE: Reduced number of child protection cases and other positive outcomes such as prevention of family breakdown.**

It has not been possible to evaluate any reduction in the number of child protection cases with any degree of confidence. The scale of the challenge to reduce child protection cases is beyond the scope of both the project and the resources available to evaluate the project.

There is clear evidence that Roma champion support for families in child protection cases has achieved positive outcomes, although difficult to evaluate how far this can be attributed to increased legal capability of the champions resulting from this project.

There has been a large increase in the total number of looked after children in England, reported in January 2020 to have risen by 28% in the last decade.<sup>4</sup> National

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jan/09/councils-under-huge-pressure-as-number-of-children-in-care-soars-england>

statistics for children in need and looked after children in England indicate that the number of Gypsy/Roma children in both categories has increased over the project period. Table iv shows that while the proportion of Gypsy/Roma children in schools in England remained constant from 2017 to 2019, the proportion of Gypsy/Roma children in need and in local authority care increased. This needs further investigation but suggests that the proportion of Gypsy/Roma families coming under child protection investigation is growing, possibly disproportionately for the size of the Gypsy/Roma child population.

Table iv: Gypsy/Roma children in need and looked after children in England

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Children in need in England<sup>1</sup></b>			
All children	389,040	404,710	399,510
Gypsy/Roma children	1,540	1,820	1,820
Gypsy/Roma as % of all children in need	0.43	0.41	0.47
<b>Looked after children in England<sup>2</sup></b>			
All children	72,610	75,370	78,150
Gypsy/Roma children	330	380	440
Gypsy/Roma as % of all looked after children	0.45	0.50	0.56
<b>Children in school in England<sup>3</sup></b>			
All children	7,088,784	8,132,327	8,263,960
Gypsy/ Roma children	27,731	26,655	27,731
Gypsy/Roma as % of all children in school	0.34	0.33	0.34

<sup>1</sup> Children in need as at 31 March

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need-2018-to-2019>

<sup>2</sup> Children looked after in England including adoption, as at 31 March

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>

<sup>3</sup> Children in state funded primary, secondary, special schools, pupil referral units and other local authority provision in England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2019>

It is clear that the project has directly contributed to positive outcomes for Roma families in child protection proceedings, including in preventing family breakdown. Although it is not possible to compare the outcomes from the Roma champion support for Roma families against what would have happened if Roma champion support was not available, or if Roma champions had not increased their legal capability through this project, the positive outcomes from this work are clear.

Table v summarises the 13 cases reported by the Roma champions where outcomes were recorded. Almost half of these cases had positive outcomes within the project period. In several other cases the child protection process is on-going and the final outcome is not yet known. Only one case had a negative outcome where the children



were permanently removed from their parents, although it is possible that this outcome may arise in at least one other case.

Table v: Roma champion cases and outcomes

<b>Family Nationality</b>	<b>Family members</b>	<b>Roma Champion first contact with family</b>	<b>Meetings with family</b>	<b>Outcome (by early 2020)</b>
Slovakian Roma	2 adults + 4 children	After first formal contact from Children's Services	20+	Children remain with family. Children's Services case closed.
Slovakian Roma	2 adults + 4 children	During Children's Services investigation	10	Children remain with family. Children's Services case closed.
Slovakian Roma	2 adults + 1 child	After first formal contact from Children's Services	10	Children remain with family. Children's Services case closed.
Czech Roma	2 adults + 5 children	During Children's Services investigation	20+	Children remain with family. Children's Services case closed.
Slovakian Roma	1 adult + 4 children	During Children's Services investigation	20+	Children remain with family. Children's Services case closed.
Czech Roma	2 adults + 6 children	After first formal contact from Children's Services	10	Children remain with family. Children's Services case closed.
Romanian Roma	1 adult + 4 children	During Children's Services investigation	6	Children returned to their mother. Children's Services still involved.
Romanian Roma	2 adults + 2 children	After first formal contact from Children's Services	1	Children's Services still involved
Czech Roma	2 adults + 7 children	After first formal contact from Children's Services	3	One child placed in adoption. Parents currently in court proceedings regarding remaining children
Slovakian Roma	2 adults + 3 children	During care proceedings	1	Children in foster care, court proceedings continuing
Slovakian Roma	2 adults + 5 children	During Children's Services investigation	20+	Awaiting final decision on this case. Roma Champion believes the children will be removed.
Slovakian Roma	1 adult + 1 child	During care proceedings	1	Mother and baby both placed in foster care
Bulgarian Roma	2 adults + 5 children	During care proceedings	5	Children removed from parent care

A series of case studies below illustrate the critical role that Roma champions play in child protection cases. In these cases studies the Roma champions provided at least three and sometimes all of the following support services:

- Interpreting, sometimes in cases where local authorities have failed to provide a suitable interpreter, as in case study one.
- Culture assessments to help social workers understand the culture norms of Roma families and to interpret the behaviour of the families with this enhanced understanding.

- Legal explanations to help the families understand the legal process and what was expected of them within this.
- Support to identify and refer families to specialist services, e.g. for drug addiction as in case study two.
- Practical support to help families respond to the expectations of social workers, e.g. help with shopping and cleaning, as in case study three
- Extensive support over an extended period of time – in most of these case studies the Roma champion visited the family more than 20 times.

## CASE STUDY TWO

Slovakian Roma family of 2 adults and 4 children

More than 20 meetings with Roma champion

The family did not understand why Children's Services became involved with them. They had no knowledge on how the system works in the UK as in Slovakia it is very different.

The main issue for the family was that the interpreters used by Children's Services were speaking in formal Slovak and the family speak mainly Romanes. Children's Services suspected that the mother had learning difficulties as she did not understand the interpreters well. The mother did not have any learning difficulties. I met with the social worker dealing with the case and explained that the mother did not understand the interpreters therefore didn't fully understand what was required from her.

I have been interpreting for the family, sorted out their housing benefit, going to doctors with the mother as she has health issues and explaining everything that was asked of her from Children's Services in a way that she understands clearly. I explained that the property needs to be kept well and clean, the children should not go out till late evening, and the need to prepare healthier meals for the family.

Once the family understood what the issues were they changed their way of parenting and Children's Services are no longer involved.

### CASE STUDY THREE

Czech Roma family of 2 adults and 5 children

More than 20 meetings with Roma champion

I was asked by Children's Services to help with this family. I already knew the family and was familiar with their difficulties. Initially, social services thought the father had mental health problems, but I explained that he had a drug addiction which triggered many psychological issues such as paranoia, aggressive behaviour, and domestic violence.

When I became involved, the mother was pregnant. I explained to the family that they would likely lose their children if father did not change his behaviour. With his agreement I made a referral to a substance misuse clinic and accompanied him to this appointment to help with interpreting. I went with him to many subsequent appointments. Father's condition improved significantly but he had to be on anti-psychotic medication for a while. I also referred him for cognitive behaviour therapy and psychotherapy.

I spoke to the social worker many times; there was very strong concern about the children's welfare.

The case was closed due to the family's positive improvement.

### CASE STUDY FOUR

Slovakian Roma family of 2 adults and 4 children

Around 10 meetings with Roma champion

The family was quite surprised to be involved with Children's Services. They did not understand why Children's Services got involved as they did not understand the system at all. Nor did they understand exactly what Children's Services needed from them or wanted them to do. The family needed to understand the rules around child protection and they also needed help with communication.

I read the social workers' report to the family and they were completely surprised about the issues identified: unhealthy diet, behaviour of children in school, housing conditions, father had alcohol problems and went to collect children from school whilst intoxicated and the school reported this. The family did not understand that all of these were problems.

I helped the family understand what they needed to do to keep their children. I was present during social workers' visits, helping mother prepare for these visits. I made food shopping lists for her and helped her understand the importance of healthy diet. This was difficult but we managed. I also tried to find support for the father. I went with him to the assessment at an alcohol clinic. He engaged with the services.

The family tried their best to keep their children; they engaged well with the service and after around one year Children's Services closed the case.

## **THREE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **3.1 Conclusions**

The multimedia toolkit project has been highly successful. There is evidence that all of the project's intended outcomes have been achieved, particularly the outcomes to:

- Improve legal capability and understanding about the child protection process amongst Roma community members.
- Empower Roma parents through increased knowledge about their rights and responsibilities and improved skills and confidence needed to assert their rights.

In delivering these outcomes the multimedia toolkit project has made a significant contribution to building capacity within Roma communities to engage more knowledgeably and confidently in child protection investigations. There are indications that this has helped some Roma families to keep their children in cases where they may otherwise have been removed into local authority care.

This project has highlighted the scale of need for Roma families. As at March 2019, the most recent date for which figures have been published, 1,820 Gypsy/Roma children in England were identified as 'in need' and 440 Gypsy/Roma children were being looked after by local authorities.<sup>5</sup> The number of Roma families who received any support to engage with any of these child protection investigations is not known but is likely to be very low. The case studies from this project demonstrate the discrimination and disadvantage which Roma parents can experience in child protection investigations, including through:

- Local authorities failing to provide suitable interpreting services leading on to
- Social workers making misleading assumptions about Roma parents' intellectual capabilities.
- Roma parents' lack of knowledge about what is expected of them, both in terms of parental responsibilities and in engaging with child protection investigations.

Improved collaboration between the decision makers and Roma NGOs would help to identify procedural issues and areas that need improvement.

### **3.2 Recommendations**

It is clear that substantial further interventions and support are needed to prevent Roma families' from coming under investigation and to support those who do to engage with the process. Areas for further interventions and support are listed below.

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<sup>5</sup> A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services, or the child is disabled.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>

Children's Services departments, social workers and legal professionals should undertake the following:

1. Cultural competency training to gain better understanding of Roma culture and behaviour. Training on working with Gypsy/Roma families should be a compulsory element of continuing professional development for all social workers.
2. Training to develop a wider understanding that Roma parents are discriminated against within the system, as social workers are currently working with Roma families in ways that they cannot understand.
3. Routine consultation with NGOs with knowledge of Roma culture in all cases involving Roma families

Roma support agencies require funding to provide the following:

4. More champions to help Roma families in child protection cases to understand what is required of them and to help safeguarding professionals avoid making assumptions about Roma culture.
5. More preventative work to increase understanding within Roma communities of UK expectations of parental responsibilities before families come under Children's Services investigation.

Law for Life should secure additional funding to carry out the following:

6. Roll out the child protection legal capability training to all NGOs working with Roma communities anywhere in England.
7. Adapt the multimedia toolkit to reflect the legal framework in other parts of the UK and disseminate to agencies in those areas.
8. Undertake a targeted campaign to engage safeguarding professions with the multimedia toolkit.
9. Further develop the tools for measuring legal capability, to produce a validated measurement tool which can be confidently used to evaluate all legal capability interventions.

## ANNEX ONE: STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

<b>Baseline interviews December 2017/March 2018</b>		
Hazel Lymbery,	Director Early Help Children's Safeguarding	Derby City Council
Her Honour Judge Jessica Pemberton		Sheffield Family Hearing Centre
<b>Final interviews May-July 2020</b>		
Gabriela Smolinska- Poffley	Director	Roma Support Group
Helen Littlewood	Director	Clifton Learning Partnership
Ruth Richardson	Trustee	Roma Community Care
Paul Sayers	Education Champion	Luton Roma Trust
Adam Weiss	Managing Director	European Roma Rights Centre
Trudy Aspinwall	Team Manager	Travelling Ahead: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Advice & Advocacy Service Cardiff
Donna Brooks	Head of Service, Early Help (retired in June 2019)	Derby City Council
Marek Potocki	Multi Agency Team Manager- New Arrivals Team, Early Help	Derby City Council
Helen Alder	Solicitor & Director	A&N Care Solicitors
Margaret Greenfields	Professor of Social Policy & Community Engagement, Director: Institute for Diversity Research, Inclusivity, Communities and Society (IDRICS), Faculty of Society & Health	Buckinghamshire New University

## ANNEX TWO: FEEDBACK ABOUT THE MULTI MEDIA TOOLKIT

### Feedback about the guide

“This guide is invaluable for those working with Roma families. Equally, it will be of use to anyone who wants to understand more about safeguarding procedures. It is beautifully written and presented and is easy to understand. It carefully walks you through all the jargon and procedures. The addition of case studies really help to highlight issues.” (Helen Littlewood, CLP)

“We have certainly been using it [Survival guide on child protection for Roma parents] a lot - we have been having stressful interactions with Social Care!” (CLP)

“Very Informative and clear.”

“This is such a well written and comprehensive guide through all aspects of child safeguarding. It would be of immense use in the housing sector when working with vulnerable families.” - Cardiff City Housing Association

“I have sent this to lots of groups and people have thanked me saying they feel it will be useful. That is really good news and well done for pulling this together.” - Head of Coram’s Children’s Legal Advice Centre

“[@Lfl\\_Advicenow](#) have created this useful survival guide to child protection for **Roma** parents.” Lisa Smith, Traveller Times

“A very thorough survival guide for **Roma** parents who have been contacted by social services and are worried about what will happen next “ Traveller Movement

New advice guide from [@Lfl\\_Advicenow](#) on child protection for **Roma** Parents (but which is helpful for everyone) (LIPPS)

[@Lfl\\_Advicenow](#) For the first time, a guide for **Roma** parents on child protection is available online. Please share! (John Ellerman Foundation)

Really useful guide to child protection for **Roma** parents by [@Lfl\\_Advicenow](#) with [@RomaSupport](#) and others. (Deighton Pierce Glynn)

This new guide from [@Lfl\\_Advicenow](#) on child protection for **Roma** parents is worth looking at if you are supporting any parent involved in the child protection system, not just those from the **Roma** community (The Tudor Trust)

It's very useful and informative guide for families who are new to this process (training participant in Rotherham)

The information guide is:

- Presented very well, with a clear structure and headings and is beautifully illustrated.
- Addresses all the key areas and processes that families may be involved in.
- Very accessible and a great resource not only for Roma and Traveller communities but anyone involved with children’s services

- Sets out very clearly how English laws apply to families living in England and how they may be different from laws abroad.
- Offers reassurance, helpful practical advice and clear legal information clearly and concisely. It is very helpful in spelling out key advice i.e. 'It is ok to ask for help, it shows you are a responsible parent' and that professionals who are worried about a child may 'worry more if you avoid them'.
- Provides helpful definitions of terms such as referral, threshold, evidence etc. and explains professionals' roles simply and accurately.
- Effective explanation of risk and harm including a very well explained summary of what domestic violence is and how it harms children. Sets out in an easy to understand way examples of practices that might be commonly used in other countries which are not legal here and that children's services would have a duty to intervene if they are used. Also gives a helpful explanation of why a partner or family member might be asked to leave the family home in order to keep a child safe.
- Provides relevant links to additional information or websites which expand on some matters e.g. link to information on a child's development from birth to 5, information on children being left home alone etc.
- Provides tailored advice for Roma families from abroad about involving embassies, where needed.
- Sets out clearly how parents can ask social workers to work with them without discriminating against them. Acknowledges why parents may be frightened to give information to social workers but suggests ideas about how to do this and how to ensure information is properly translated and interpreted.
- Promotes cooperation and openness in working with child protection processes.
- Explains parents' rights and responsibilities and how and when to get advocacy or legal advice.

The guide would definitely help parents understand why social workers might become involved and how to work with them to get the right help and support and overcome concerns. I think it would definitely increase their confidence in understanding the processes better. [Family Rights Group]

### **Feedback about the film**

"This is a brilliant and thoughtful advice film that anybody can benefit from - and showcases to the Roma community that there are Roma professionals who can offer wise advice."  
Professor Emeritus Thomas Acton

"The film about safeguarding was a really useful resource." Health Visitor Facilitator, Healthy Communities Programme Kent, Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust

Abstract from the evaluation report about Roma Early Childhood Education Programme:  
"The film was very effective in communicating the meaning of "Child Protection" and "Child



abuse” and helping parents to discuss and deepen their understanding of these concepts and of other allied to these concepts such as: ‘neglect’, ‘abuse’, ‘emotional abuse’ and ‘physical abuse’.... The film also illustrates the great success of the RSG work given the extent of the involvement of Roma people from the range of communities involved in the programme in the film and the high status jobs they were in including: solicitor, actor, Roma Champion, Regional Manager of a chain of restaurants and Production Manager of a factory.” Jack Peffers and Dr Les Bash of the International Centre for Intercultural Studies of UCL Institute of Education

Abstract from the evaluation report about Roma Early Childhood Education Programme which showed the film: “The purpose of the session was to explore the meanings of “Child Protection” and “child abuse” in the UK and to show how and why it was so defined. A very well thought through film was shown featuring exclusively Roma people who have worked in the RSG or have been involved in its programmes and who offered in the Romany language a clear and very helpful guidance of the behaviour expected in the UK in the treatment of children. Jack Peffers and Dr Les Bash of the International Centre for Intercultural Studies of UCL Institute of Education

“I have just watched this [film]. It’s great. Thank you for asking us to be involved with it.” Care solicitors

I’m so pleased with the film, thanks. Stuart did send me the link earlier today and I have circulated it. I’m sure it will be so useful across many of the teams here. Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding Services Derby City Council

The short film is really useful, it gives clear visual, spoken and written information to families about what you can and cannot do (and why) as a parent raising children in England and how police and/or children’s services can get involved if children are not being cared for safely and if their health and wellbeing is not being properly taken care of. I think that parents would really benefit from the honest advice and information presented by the speakers in parents’ first languages. [Family Rights Group]

## **Requests for multimedia toolkit translations**

Between September 2018 and January 2020, Law for Life received requests from eight public or voluntary sector agencies to translate the toolkit into other languages, including Slovakian, Polish, Romanian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Czech.