

Quarterly Progress Report

Bulgarian/Roma (Eastern European communities) integration project in Edmonton, North London

January 2022

**Grant Funded community engagement programme by Edmonton Community Partnership (ECP),
funded by:**

- **The Home Office**
- **North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (NCL CCG)**
- **The London Community Response Fund**
- **The National Lottery Community Fund**
- **Public Health Enfield Council**
- **Enfield Council's Brexit Grant**
- **Enfield Council's 'Neighbourhood Fund' grant**



Prepared for
Edmonton Community Partnership

by
Nishan Dzvingozyan

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Project name: Community Engagement Programme of Edmonton Community Partnership

Scope of the programme: Bulgarian/Roma (GRT) communities in Enfield and the wider EU communities

Period Covered: 12 October 2020 to January 2022

Name and organisation of the project's coordinator: Nishan Dzvingozyan

Project Lead/Consultant

Edmonton Community Partnership

Tel: +44 7758118609

E-mail: nishanecp@gmail.com

Project website address: <http://www.edmontoncommunitypartnership.org/home/>

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“On International Roma Day we celebrate Roma culture. We also recognise the human rights abuses experienced by Roma communities today and through history, in particular the Nazi genocide of Europe’s Roma and Sinti populations” – Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan

“Community engagement is about ensuring that those most impacted by social challenges have a say in designing and implementing solutions...”

Schmitz, P. (2017), *Community Engagement Toolkit*

Government agencies, corporations and organisations have often experienced difficulty when trying to connect with the people who are most impacted by their projects. It is necessary to leave the office, get from behind the computer, and interact with people face-to-face. There is an art and process to engage with your community – a group of people with shared commonality.

This report illustrates how Edmonton Community Partnership, and its partners interact and engage with the communities they support in an authentic and intentional manner.

Nine key operating principles and On-The-Ground Strategies of the community engagement programme of Edmonton Community Partnership

Nine key operating principles:

- *Clarity of purpose*
- *Knowing your community*
- *Inclusivity*
- *Equity and fairness*
- *Effective communication*
- *Accountability*
- *Knowledge growth and capacity building*

- *Evidence-based planning and decision-making*
- *Monitoring and evaluation*

On-The-Ground Strategies:

Our strategies are grouped into four broad categories:

- *Preparation*
- *Initial contact and outreach*
- *Knowledge sharing and relationship building*
- *Shared leadership and decision-making*

ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE. TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH.

- Helen Keller

1. Executive Summary

Who do we support?

This report highlights the goals and objectives of the Edmonton Community Partnership Bulgarian Project, period covered, project implementation, administration, accomplishments, and challenges.

The project is supporting Bulgarian/Roma and the wider Eastern European communities in Edmonton.

Who is delivering the project?

The project is unique as it has been delivered within and beyond a network of 18 schools (approx. 8,000 families reach) and a very diverse group of organisations.

Approximate number of potential service users?

The number of potential service users in Enfield (only from the Bulgarian community) is up to 20,000 residents and the wider EU communities – up to 70,000. The estimate is based on the number of applications from Enfield made to the EU Settlement Scheme. See below.

The additional funding provided by the NCL CCG, and Public Health Enfield Council was to raise awareness of the Covid-19 vaccination among these communities, to facilitate easier access to services provided by the NHS and encourage GP registration, which is at a very low level within Enfield.

Recent funding provided by The National Lottery Community Fund is to establish (from 2022) an ongoing hub to support Eastern European communities across Edmonton for a minimum of three years.

What is our goal?

- Build trust
- Reducing social and health inequalities

- Support in the process of obtaining the new Settled Status
- Raising awareness of the Covid-19 vaccination
- Encouraging GP registration
- Facilitating easier access to services provided by Enfield Council, the NHS and other public bodies in the UK
- Providing reliable and accurate information and support on different subjects related to these communities
- Signposting to other organisations
- Support the member schools of ECP
- Providing mental health support
- Help the Bulgarian GRT community to navigate the benefit system
- Reducing antisocial behaviour and providing support to the sex workers in Enfield
- Providing training on numerous subjects including Employment Rights and Tenancy Rights
- Reducing poverty
- Signposting rough sleepers to partner organisations
- Empowering these communities

What does the report highlight?

This report highlights the impact of the European Union Settlement Scheme on the Bulgarian/Roma community in Edmonton, including barriers and recommendations. The report also includes findings and emerging challenges and barriers to this community which are not directly related to scope of the programme financially supported by the Home Office but have had a significant impact on this community in recent months. The information in this report has been collated and interpreted by Edmonton Community Partnership – a partnership of 18 schools in Edmonton and partner organisations – between 12 October 2021 and January 2022. This information is based on extensive outreach with the support of the schools and partner organisations.

2. Background information

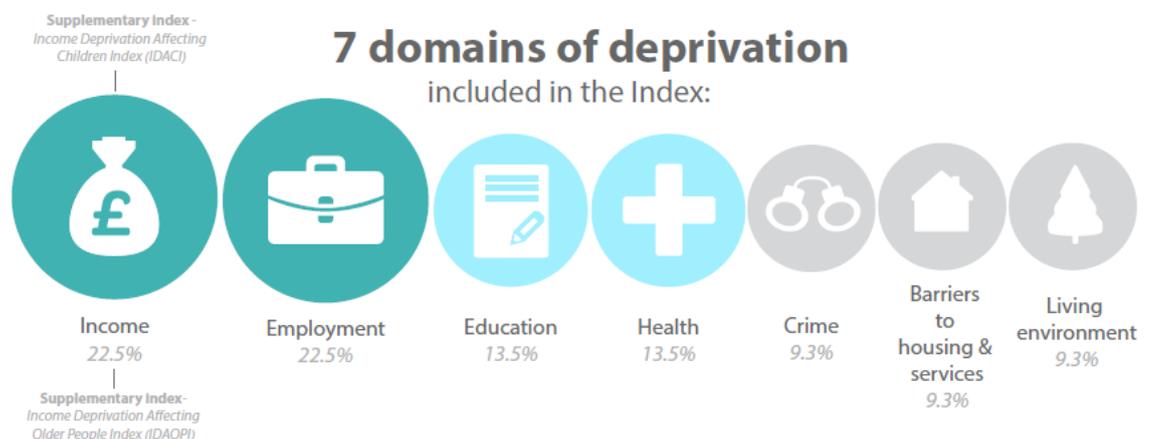
The project is taking place in Edmonton Green and the wider Edmonton (Enfield). Edmonton Green Ward is situated in the south-east of London Borough of Enfield, bordered by Lower Edmonton Ward to the north, Haselbury Ward to the west, Upper Edmonton ward to the south, and by the London Borough of Waltham Forest to the east. It is covered by postal districts N9 and N18.



This is the area where the schools with the highest proportion of parents from a Bulgarian GRT background are.

Overall deprivation in Edmonton Green – (9 very bad, ILIVEHERE RATING 9/10)

Indices of Deprivation statistics are broken down into domains of deprivation or more simply, categories.



In Edmonton Green out of all monitored and measured categories Barriers to Housing and Services are rated with the worst rating – (10 extremely bad, ILIVEHERE RATING 9/10)

Deprivation Statistics Comparison for Edmonton Green, Enfield (ilivehere.co.uk)

Analysis carried out by the Local Government Association indicated that, within Enfield, Edmonton Green is the most deprived of the 21 wards in the Borough. The same analysis estimates that it is within the 10% most deprived wards in England.

Edmonton Green (enfield.gov.uk)

In this section of the progress report, we are highlighting the most challenging and new emerging issues these communities are facing, and also providing recommendations on how to move forward.

3. Background

Enfield and Edmonton are home to one of the largest Bulgarian and Bulgarian/Roma communities in London. As EU citizens, Bulgarian/Roma residents are among the groups most acutely affected by the EUSS.

This report intends to bring forward information on how the EUSS has been applied to the Bulgarian/Roma community in Enfield and Edmonton. It also presents information on specific issues outside the scope of the programme of concern which have emerged in the last months for the Bulgarian/Roma community and provides recommendations for moving forward.

4. Aim of the community engagement programme

Social inclusion is at the centre of our project's approach. The target groups are socially excluded due to many barriers.

Our Bulgarian/Roma community is vulnerable in many ways, massively exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis: mostly living in poverty (Edmonton is in the top 10% of most deprived areas in the UK), they have a very low educational background, lack of IT skills, often no access to Wi-Fi, and severe language barriers.

They have also, in many cases, not engaged in UK culture and as such do not know how to access what they need, resulting in being isolated.

Edmonton Community Partnership (ECP) delivers the programme with organisations who have workers and volunteers with a range of languages and focus most of our advertising in Bulgarian (via hard copy material, Bulgarian radio stations and Bulgarian social media).

5. Project support

Since our last progress report, we have been delivering drop-in sessions on different subjects with the support of the schools in Edmonton, coffee mornings, webinars, conversational English classes, setting up Facebook pages in Bulgarian, and engaging with new partners including Doctors of the World, the Independent Monitoring Authority (IMA) and London Councils.

Edmonton Community Partnership was invited to deliver a presentation at a meeting organised by London Councils and the GLA. We discussed the challenges faced by the GRT and the Eastern European communities in London and made some recommendations on how to facilitate access to services provided by the local authorities in London and engage more effectively with hard-to-reach groups.

We have been actively engaging with Public Health Enfield and commissioned by them to increase Covid-19 vaccination take-up (which is at alarmingly low levels among these communities).

6. Project scope

The project scope has not changed. We are determined in our effort to engage with hard-to-reach and vulnerable members of the Eastern European/EU/GRT communities in Enfield, and notably the Bulgarian/Roma and the wider GRT communities

7. Methodology

This report focuses on desk research produced by the project and a focus group representing some of the partners involved in the project.

8. Partner organisations

IF YOU WANT TO GO QUICKLY, GO ALONE. IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER.

- African Proverb

So far, we have worked with the following schools and partner organisations:

- Starks Field Primary School
- Hounsfeld Primary School
- Edmonton Academy Trust – Edmonton County School
- Brettenham Primary School
- Cuckoo Hall Academy
- Fleecefield School
- Churchfield Primary School
- Meridian Angel Primary School
- West Lea School
- Alma Primary School
- Wilbury Primary School
- Oakthorpe Primary School
- Raynham Primary School
- St John and St James Church of England Primary School
- Eldon Primary School
- The Bulgarian Embassy in London
- Settled
- ECYPS
- Novini London

- Metropolitan Police: APS Monica Malecka, PS Ian Davey, PC Neil Rogers – Edmonton Police Station
- Healthwatch Enfield
- Office for National Statistics
- Community Barnet
- Institute for Public Policy Research
- North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (NCL CCG)
- Public Health Enfield Council
- The Modern Slavery team of Enfield Council
- Haringey Council: Andrew Christina, Elvan Asutay, Communities and Inequalities, Haringey Council
- GRT Board of Enfield Council
- Joanne McCartney MLA – Deputy Mayor of London
- Kate Osamor MP
- Feryal Clark MP
- Ilhan Kyuchyuk – Member of the European Parliament
- The Work Rights Centre
- Medicus Health Partners
- University of Nottingham, The Rights Lab, School of Sociology and Social Policy
- St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Edmonton
- St Peter’s Church in Edmonton
- Social Sphere, Edmonton
- New Europeans
- CAB Enfield
- Enfield Dispatch
- Doctors of the World
- The Independent Monitoring Authority
- The GLA: Dr. Elisabeth Pop, Social Integration Team, Farah Elahi, Community Engagement Team,
- London Councils: Eleanor Ferguson, Principal Policy and Project Officer, Eva Barnsley, Principal Policy and Project Officer, Health and Social Services
- The Bulgarian Centre for Social Integration and Culture
- DJMC Academy
- Barnet and Southgate College

Interviews with Eastern European Parents/Carers from Starks Field Primary School

❖ *These interviews were conducted at the end of the summer term 2021. Nishan Dzhingozyan was in attendance for some of the interviews with Bulgarian families*

What is your ethnicity?	Bulgarian Turkish – 55% Bulgarian – 11% Polish Gypsy – 16%
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	<p>Greek (parents from Albania) – 6%</p> <p>Romanian – 6%</p> <p>Turkmenistan – 6%</p>
When did you enter the UK?	<p>25 years ago - 6%</p> <p>2013 – 13%</p> <p>2015 – 19%</p> <p>2016 – 31%</p> <p>2017 – 6%</p> <p>2018 – 6%</p> <p>2019 – 6%</p> <p>2020 – 13%</p>
What is your highest level of education?	<p>Age 7 – 4%</p> <p>Age 9 – 8%</p> <p>Age 11 – 8%</p> <p>Age 12 – 4%</p> <p>Age 13 – 16%</p> <p>Age 14 – 13%</p> <p>Age 15 – 4%</p> <p>Age 16 – 4%</p> <p>Age 17 – 8%</p> <p>Age 19 – 4%</p> <p>College – 14%</p> <p>University – 13%</p>
Comments about education:	<p><i>I left school at 11; I read a bit and write very basic Bulgarian.</i></p> <p><i>I left school at 12 and can't read or write.</i></p> <p><i>I went to university but didn't do my final teacher training exams. The only work I have had has been in shops in Greece.</i></p> <p><i>I went to school up until Year 2. I had a bit of schooling in different countries as I'm from a Gypsy family. I schooled myself so that I can read English, but I can't write.</i></p>
Do you work?	<p>No – 11%</p> <p>Labourer – 39%</p> <p>Cleaner – 22%</p> <p>Delivery driver – 11%</p> <p>Fish and chip shop – 11%</p> <p>Waitress – 6%</p>
What are your aspirations for your children?	<p><i>I want them to stay here and for them to be well educated. (Four respondents)</i></p> <p><i>To be well educated.</i></p> <p><i>To be well educated and to be able to read and write.</i></p>

	<p><i>I want better for the children. I want them to finish their studies and go to college/university.</i></p> <p><i>We moved to the UK because of them.</i></p> <p><i>To be well educated and fluent in English.</i></p> <p><i>I have big plans for the children – lawyers, etc.</i></p> <p><i>I plan to stay here – my child doesn't speak Bulgarian.</i></p> <p><i>My child is doing well, and we hope that will continue and that she will adapt to this environment.</i></p> <p><i>For them to study – I don't know what.</i></p> <p><i>To make something different of their lives, not like me.</i></p> <p><i>A better life – what the children want to do. I don't tell them what to do. My older daughter is 17 and not married (I got married at 15), so it's not the same expectations as with me.</i></p> <p><i>The best for them – higher education – finds work they appreciate.</i></p> <p><i>Do the jobs they want to do. Have lots of different dreams. There is no expectation any more in my culture that girls won't work.</i></p>
What is your view of education in the UK?	<p>OK – 6%</p> <p>Good/happy – 49%</p> <p>Very good/very happy – 33%</p> <p>Better than in Bulgaria – 12%</p>
Is there anything that we could do to support you with your own development?	<p>English classes – 9%</p> <p>IT classes – 49%</p> <p>Settled status assistance – 33%</p> <p>Other (TA/accountancy course) – 9%</p>
Other specific questions asked:	<p>What is your view of education at Starks Field?</p> <p>Is there any more information that you would like to share with us?</p>

9. Challenges, barriers and emerging issues

Potential challenges in the Engagement Process

DON'T BUILD LINKS. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.

- *Rand Fishkin*

- **Importance of the demographic factors**

This is a key factor in planning how to successfully engage a community. It is important to meet people “where they are” and to embrace the community in all its complexity. Thus, the engagement process must take diversity into account – diversity, as reflected in different group identities, lived experiences, and historical relationships, as well as in varying concerns and priorities and even different ways of communicating.

Future plans: In order to continue engaging successfully with our target group, we intend to deliver our activities mainly in Edmonton where these communities are.

- **Facilitating diverse participation**

We need to ensure that the team coordinating the engagement initiative has visible representation of the community’s diversity. We need to bring on board residents who live in the community, know it well, and reflect the diverse groups in that community.

Future plans: We plan to identify local residents and parents from our schools, from these communities, offer them training and work with them towards a better engagement with our target group

- **Community outreach process**

Methods should be tailored to the interests and communication styles of the people to be reached. People will come out to a meeting, for example, if the subject matter is important to them.

Future plans: We intend to continue conducting surveys, 1 to 1 interviews, drop-in sessions and coffee mornings as this is the best way to identify any emerging issues and to find out what the needs of these communities are.

- **Engaging youth**

Engaging youth requires its own distinct approach. Even so, we should be careful not to treat youth as a monolithic group – youth are as diverse as the rest of the community and engagement strategies should be designed with this reality in mind.

Future plans: Identifying volunteers from this age group should be one of our priorities. Setting up a working group with them will attract others

- **Communication**

The importance of providing solid, easily accessible information throughout the course of the community engagement initiative. Information about project goals, plans, timelines, and expected results should be readily available and widely distributed.

Future plans: We set up a Facebook page in Bulgarian and have marketing materials in Bulgarian. Using social media and any other forms of advertising on Bulgarian news agencies,

radio stations, and through the marketing channels of the different stakeholders will be our priority in 2022.

- **Building leadership capacity**

The need to build leadership capacity in the community through education, training, mentorship, and opportunities to acquire “on-the-ground” experience.

Future plans: Identifying community leaders from this background, offering them training and working with them towards our goal will be one of our priorities this year.

- **Strengthening community voices**

Counterbalance to institutional weight at the community stakeholders’ table

Future plans: This is directly linked to building leadership capacity. Once identified and trained the community leaders should get actively involved in the delivering of the community engagement programme.

- **Power sharing**

The community engagement process should actively encourage shared leadership and inclusion. Service providers should take the lead in ensuring that resident voices are heard.

Future plans: Encouraging the stakeholders to have members of these communities on their boards, to ensure their voices are heard, is something we will be insisting on. This is also related to the lack of representation at all levels – from political representation to representation in the local institutions, organisations and volunteer groups.

- **Modelling desirable behaviours**

Leaders of an engagement initiative should try to model behaviours that help to make everyone at the community table feel valued, respected, and committed to the collective effort.

Future plans: This is related to the understanding of all stakeholders that we are delivering a long-term community engagement programme, and not only providing some additional services. We encourage the stakeholders to engage proactively with these communities and involve them in the decision making.

- **Removing barriers to participation**

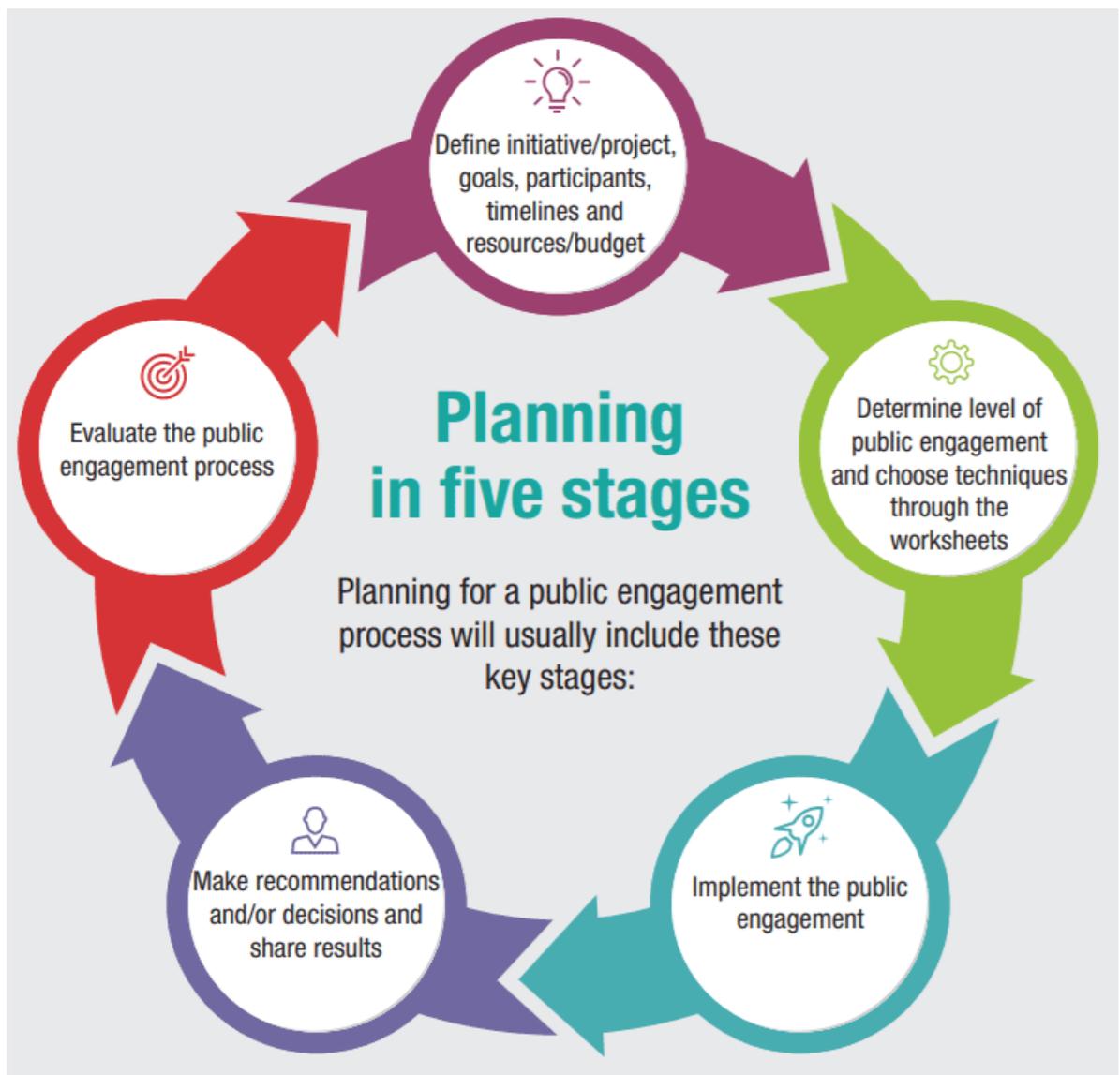
In addition to ensuring that stakeholders’ discussion and planning tables are reflective of the community’s diversity, project leaders should ensure that chosen communication channels are in sync with those preferred by the community, so that people will be able to make their voices heard.

Future plans: We will continue with the engagement and identifying the preferred and most appropriate communications channels to work with these communities. Covid-19 has had a massive impact on our engagement. We need to be aware that this might again be the case in 2022.

- **Communication and social media**

The objective is to find gateways to connect with people and develop a credible relationship with them. In the end, what really matters is whether the chosen communication strategy is effective at connecting with the people one needs to reach.

Future plans: We will continue our engagement on social media and any other media outlets in Bulgarian and exploring other avenues – monthly newsletters with the Bulgarian Embassy and any other organisations working actively with this community.



Approaching the problem

Facilitators of community engagement programmes need to work consistently to create a working environment in which equity and inclusivity are established norms. They will need to develop appropriate anti-racism strategies to counteract and remove racism's influence within the engagement process. A few examples of such strategies would include:

- Acknowledging the community’s experience with racism and its impact on community participation and on the development of trusting relationships
- Identifying and removing potential barriers to community participation
- Establishing clear “ground rules” for community participation
- Accessing who is at the community table and who is not – why – then taking action to close the gap
- Providing “safe” space where people can feel secure
- Giving equal recognition to the contributions and expertise brought to the table by participants of all racial backgrounds/communities

EU Settlement Scheme

Total number of applications

According to the data provided by the UK Government the total number of applications as of 30 November 2021 was 6,340, 200. Source: EU Settlement Scheme statistics - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)



❖ **Figure 1**

Figure 1 - EU Settlement Scheme: cumulative number of applications received, and applications concluded at the end of each month since the start of the scheme

Applications received

As seen in Figure 1, as of 30 September 2021, 6.2 million (6,223,350) applications had been received

Source: Table EUSS_MON

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-september-2021>

Applications to the EU Settlement Scheme by nationality (Top 10 countries)

Country of nationality	Total
Romania	1,333,980
Poland	1,124,930
Italy	560,720
Portugal	427,470
Spain	364,170
Bulgaria	330,720
Lithuania	278,290
France	236,710
Germany	167,920
Hungary	158,830

❖ **Figure 2**

As Seen in Figure 2, 5 of the top 10 countries are from Eastern Europe. These communities are also the largest communities in Enfield.

Applications to the EU Settlement Scheme by local authorities

Top five London local authorities

Newham 146,910

Brent	134, 860
Ealing	109,940
Haringey	99,940
Barnet	92,940

❖ **Figure 3**

- Enfield is in the top 10 London local authorities by applications received between 28 August 2018 to 31 March 2021, taking ninth place with 72,260 applications submitted to the EUSS.
- 20,160 of these applications are from residents from a Bulgarian background, many of them from a GRT background. We don't know the exact number of applications from Bulgarians from a GRT background in Enfield as the data from the Home Office only includes applications by nationality.
- Source: EUSS Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics March 2021 EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics, March 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Challenges and emerging issues

- **Relatively high number of residents from EU/Bulgarian/GRT background who have not applied**

Our outreach activities and engagement with our target group demonstrate that most of them (95%) have applied and received Pre-Settled Status. However, when asked about family members who have not applied yet, the answers demonstrate months after the end of the period when EU citizens were be able to apply for the new immigration status, a relatively high numbers of Enfield residents from a Bulgarian background have not applied yet or are unaware of the process at all.

Case study:

B is a local resident from a Bulgarian GRT background. When approached at a drop-in session at one of the Bulgarian cafes in Edmonton and asked about his immigration status, he confirmed that he moved to the UK a couple of months ago and is not aware of the EUSS.

Recommendations:

- Continued support by ECP and other stakeholders.
- Delivering information sessions in Bulgarian and signposting late applicants to Settled.

- All stakeholders – identifying funding for Bulgarian speaking community engagement officers.
- **EUSS - Children at risk**

Many parents who have secured the new immigration status are unaware of the fact that their children should be linked to their application.

Case study

C and her two children live with the grandparents in a double room in Edmonton. C has very limited language skills and is not working. When approached at a drop-in session at Churchfield Primary School and asked about her immigration status she wasn't sure whether she had got it or not. The application was made by her former landlord who is not answering her phone calls. C wasn't aware that her children must be linked to her application. C didn't have any documentation to prove her immigration status and wasn't able to access the system of the Home Office as her former landlord provided his personal email address and mobile number which are used to access the system. C wasn't in receipt of any financial help from the state.

Recommendations:

- Continued support by ECP and other stakeholders.
- Delivering information sessions in Bulgarian and signposting late applicants to Settled.
- Making the schools aware of the need for the children to be linked to the parents.
- All stakeholders – identifying funding for community engagement officers.



❖ ***Banner in Bulgarian advertising our EUSS campaign***

● **Lack of understanding on how to digitally access the new immigration status**

Another major challenge we identified in our outreach was the total lack of understanding on how to use the new status, how to prove their status after Brexit and how to update their details on the Home Office system – inability to do so will lead to serious consequences for a very large number of local residents from European/Bulgarian/Roma background and the possibility of not being able to access services provided by different agencies, including the NHS and schools.

Case study:

A and P are a couple from a Bulgarian GRT background living in Edmonton. When asked at a drop-in session delivered at Eldon Primary School both were unaware of the process of proving their new immigration status and did not know how to maintain it.

Recommendations:

- Continued support by ECP and other stakeholders.
- Delivering training sessions on how to maintain the new immigration status.
- All stakeholders – identifying funding for officers delivering the training.

<https://fb.watch/a20EZu7J7f/>

❖ ***Live-streamed event on the EUSS in Bulgarian delivered by Settled and Edmonton Community Partnership***

● **Lack of understanding about the different types of immigration status**

Another issue which appeared from the beginning of our engagement was the lack of understanding about the difference between Pre-Settled Status and Settled Status, and the rights and responsibilities connected to being a holder of either.

N is a single mum living in Edmonton. Her language skills are very limited. When asked at a drop-in session at Starks Field Primary School if she was aware of the difference between Pre-Settled and Settled Status and the rights and responsibilities coming with the possession of it, she confirmed that she wasn't aware that there are different types of immigration status for the EU citizens living in the UK after Brexit. N relies heavily on her "accountant" to deal with her immigration issues.

Recommendations:

- Continued support by ECP and other stakeholders.

- Delivering training sessions on the different type of immigration status and rights and responsibilities connected to being a holder.
- All stakeholders – identifying funding for officers delivering the training with the support of the 18 schools members of the ECP.
- **Lack of language and IT skills**

These skills deficits are among the main barriers for a large number of our target group. The application is digital, and the lack of IT and language skills, lack of access to the internet and IT equipment, and a lack of basic information about the process are forcing many of them to seek the services of unauthorized/unlicensed organisations or individuals who charge them what may appear to be exorbitant fees.


Settled
ПОТОК НА ЖИВО НА БЪЛГАРСКИ ЕЗИК
Директно излъчване от Facebook

**Петък, 29 януари,
14.00 часа британско време**

на български език
Директно
излъчване от
Facebook







▶ www.facebook.com/WeAreSettled

Email:
advice@settled.org.uk





wearesettled
Registered charity no. 1184580
OISC organisation no. N201900057

❖ ***EUSS session in Bulgarian organised by our partner organisation Settled***

Recommendations:

- Continued support by ECP and other stakeholders.
- Delivering (and sign posting to) ESOL classes and IT training.
- All stakeholders – identifying funding for training.
- **Using the services of unauthorised organisations, accountants and individuals who are not registered immigration advisers**

Among this community, it is common practice to seek help from casual contacts, friends and neighbours, and unauthorised organisations or individuals who have not received any training and/or are not authorised by the Home Office to deliver this service or are not registered immigration advisers. Most of them are not aware of the email address or telephone number used by the person(s) who helped and charged them for their service. Many have changed their ID card or passport after applying for the new status. Not knowing the email address, telephone number and/or the unique number of your ID card or passport doesn't allow you to access your profile on the Home Office system, update your details (they will need to do it every time a change in their personal circumstances occurs) and most importantly to prove their immigration status after Brexit.

Case study:

B is a father of two daughters. The family lives in Edmonton. Very limited language skills. B is not employed at present. The family has not been receiving any financial support from the state in the last 4 months. B confirmed that his "accountant" is dealing with basically anything related to the interaction with any public bodies and institutions in the UK. B was not aware that these "accountants" cannot provide immigration advice.

Recommendation:

Delivering information campaign with stakeholders and highlighting the importance of relying on registered and qualified advisers.



❖ *Drop-in session on EUSS delivered by Settled, Edmonton Community Partnership and Houndsfield Primary Schools*

Access to services provided by the NHS and GP registration

According to a January 2020 report by the Enfield Poverty and Inequality Commission, the number of Enfield residents that may not be registered with a GP is 15,644. According to the same report, 20,000 is the estimated number of people with unmet mental health needs in Enfield.

<http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Enfield-Poverty-InequalityCommission-Report.pdf> (Ref.27)

The UK's primary care services are open to everyone in the country. This principle is enshrined in law as well as in the contracts which govern GP services. NHS England guidelines, in interpreting GP services' duties in relation to equalities and non-discrimination, protect the right to GP registration for those who are not able to provide proof of address or identification.

However, many GP practices are failing to implement these principles and, as a result, vulnerable patients are facing worrying obstacles and unnecessary delays to primary care access.

In 2018, almost one fifth of 2,189 registration attempts made by Doctors of the World across 990 GP practices were refused. In almost two thirds of cases, patients were refused because they could not produce the required paperwork (ID or proof of address).

[Registration Refused cover 3 \(doctorsoftheworld.org.uk\)](https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/registration-refused-cover-3)

Our outreach demonstrated that between 15-20 % of our target group belong to this community. Access to mental health services, and more generally health services including sexual health, is a massive challenge for the Bulgarian/Roma community. Our outreach demonstrates that mental health emerged as a barrier people face in navigating other problems associated with poverty.

Case study

Coffee morning with the Bulgarian parents. Some of them are reporting that they have paid up to £100 per person to get registered with a GP. When asked about the fact that the NHS is a free service and they don't need to pay to get registered, they replied that language barrier, lack of information about the procedure and unawareness of which service is free and which is not is forcing them to rely on "middlemen" to access the service.

Recommendations:

- Delivering outreach sessions with the support of Medicus Health Partners, Public Health Enfield Council and Doctors of the World in Bulgarian at different locations in Edmonton.
- Intensive information campaign to build greater understanding, raise awareness and address concerns.
- All stakeholders – identifying funding for Bulgarian-speaking community engagement officers as “Health Champions”.



- ❖ *Drop-in session in Bulgarian delivered by Settled, Medicus Health Partners, the Works Rights Centre, Edmonton Community Partnership and the Ark*

Covid-19 Vaccination

The Covid-19 pandemic forced many in our target community to go back to Bulgaria. Our outreach demonstrates that there are many families who are separated due to financial hardship. Some members of the family are in Bulgaria, others in the UK. Usually, the ones abroad are not aware of the new Settled Status and are struggling to provide the requested documentation.

Another big challenge and barrier we identified is the lack of trust related to any information about vaccination against Covid-19. According to Public Health only around 700 residents from a Bulgarian background are vaccinated and the Bulgarian and the GRT communities are among the communities with the lowest uptake of the Covid-19 vaccination.

The monthly age-standardised mortality rates (ASMRs) for deaths involving COVID-19 have been consistently lower for people who had received a second dose at least 21 days ago, compared with unvaccinated people. This is the case for all age groups.

Source: Office for National Statistics: [Deaths involving COVID-19 by vaccination status, England - Office for National Statistics](#)

Case study

A is from a Bulgarian GRT background and lives with her daughter and her husband in Edmonton. The family is not vaccinated against Covid-19 and rejects any opportunities to get vaccinated. When asked at a drop-in session delivered at Eldon Primary School for the reasons rejecting vaccination, they said that they don't trust the doctors.

Risk of exposure to the virus depends on the circumstances in which people live and work. The impacts on people's health and lives will significantly depend on their circumstances prior to the start of the pandemic. Ethnicity, occupation and social deprivation are relevant factors for the groups selected for this report. These groups have long been exposed to systemic barriers to the conditions necessary for good health and wellbeing.

Excluded groups often face routine exclusion from healthcare due to barriers to GP registration, fear of and experienced discrimination and, in some cases, limited entitlement to health services. The GRT community in Enfield belongs to this vulnerable group. At a time when we all need to need to follow public health advice and access NHS services appropriately, a large group of the population in Enfield was not integrated into the health system.

The pandemic has created additional barriers reducing these communities access to the services provided by the NHS.

Case study

18 parents from a Bulgarian GRT background attended a coffee morning at Houndsfield Primary School. 17 of them were not vaccinated against Covid-19. Most of them were not registered with a GP. A few weeks later after intensive information campaign with the support of the school and Public Health Enfield Council we organised a Covid-19 vaccination session. Only a few parents attended the session.

Edmonton Community Partnership received a grant from Public Health to increase Covid-19 vaccination uptake in Edmonton in the under-40 age group among the Eastern European communities.

We are using the schools' infrastructure to communicate with Eastern European parents, to coordinate vaccine pop-up clinics, to engage 1-to-1 with our target group, and generally to raise awareness of the Covid-19 vaccination and services provide by the NHS.

Another way of engaging with our target group was to create a dual language video for social media to promote uptake of the vaccine.

<https://fb.watch/a4ycksYQOO/>

❖ ***Video in Bulgarian promoting a joint session with Enfield Council, Houndsfield Primary School and Edmonton Community Partnership***

Another major barrier for our target group is the lack of IT skills, language barrier and lack of access to IT equipment. Lack of access to the internet affects accessing health care services especially during the pandemic.

Another major concern for the spread of Covid-19 among the Bulgarian GRT community in Edmonton is the fact that they live in multiple-occupancy dwellings. This is the most common scenario, and it has been confirmed by many members of the community when asked about their living conditions. This finding was also confirmed by the Cardiff based Romani Cultural and Arts Company (RCAC) who said that these communities have been “disproportionately affected” by the Covid-19 pandemic.

[Coronavirus: Gypsy, Roma and Travellers 'disproportionately' affected - BBC News](#)

In July-August 2020, a qualitative investigation done by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), involving three focus groups and 47 semi-structured interviews, was conducted through virtual platforms and telephone calls with 70 individuals from different ethnic and vulnerable groups. One of the groups was the Gypsy, Roma and Travellers community. They were recruited through existing Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) networks. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants. Feelings towards hospital attendance for COVID-19 vaccine trials and research were explored. Responses were recorded, transcribed and analysed using a thematic approach.

The research demonstrates that the main barriers faced by the GRT community in terms of vaccination against Covid-19 were:

- Fatalistic ideology and limited interest in vaccines
- Nomadic, communal and restricted living conditions
- Social distancing and self-isolation not feasible

[The views of ethnic minority and vulnerable communities towards participation in COVID-19 vaccine trials \(nih.gov\)](#)

Recommendations:

- Delivering outreach sessions with the support of different stakeholders on Covid-19 vaccination.
- Intensive information campaign in Bulgarian delivered with the support of the schools, Bulgarian newspapers and media outlets in London, Enfield Council and community champions from this community.
- All stakeholders – identifying funding for Bulgarian speaking Covid-19 community engagement officers.

- Enable access to services provided by the NHS, for people who otherwise experience exclusion.
- Conducting welfare checks and deliver outreach sessions supporting rough sleepers
- Identifying evolving and emerging health needs of vulnerable groups
- Designing marketing materials on Covid-19 in languages of other vulnerable groups, e.g. Romanian and Somalian.



❖ **Banner in Bulgarian encouraging the Bulgarian community to get vaccinated. We produced with Public Health Enfield Council banners, posters, billboards and leaflets which were distributed among the schools and partner organisations.**

As part of our communication campaign reaching out to the Bulgarian community in Enfield, we organised a series of webinars in Bulgarian. One of them was chaired by the Leader of Enfield Council, Cllr Nesil Caliskan.

[Enfield Council to host online coronavirus vaccination webinar for London's Bulgarian community · Enfield Council](#)

Suspension of benefits from DWP

Hundreds of residents from a Bulgarian GRT background have had their benefits suspended without a valid explanation from DWP. This unexpected situation has created a very difficult situation for the most vulnerable members of this community.

Edmonton Community Partnership has been delivering extensive outreach in Edmonton at places where the Bulgarian GRT community gather in order to engage with the community,

identify their needs and signpost them to relevant organisations. Our outreach includes calling the DWP on behalf of the parents from our schools and local residents from this community, and referrals to Enfield Council and other partner organisations.

We also provided emergency Christmas support to 20 families who were in desperate need of financial support due to their benefits being suspended.

The outreach will continue during 2022 and we hope to be able to establish a proper referral system.

Recommendations:

- Identifying emergency funding to support the most vulnerable members of this community.
- Setting up a referral system to signpost them to Enfield Council and other stakeholders.
- All stakeholders – identifying funding for Bulgarian speaking (housing and benefit) community engagement officers.



❖ ***Drop-in session in Bulgarian on Employment rights delivered by Houndsfield Primary School, Edmonton Community Partnership and the Work Rights Centre***

Support for residents at risk of homelessness or with no income

Nishan Dzhingozyan

December 2021

1. Introduction
2. Summary of Key findings
3. Recommendations
4. Methodology

Introduction

Enfield and Edmonton are home to one of the largest Bulgarian/Roma (GRT) communities in London. In 2017, the Eastern European communities, and notably the Bulgarian, Romanian, and Roma communities, were recognised as hard-to-reach and underrepresented groups by the office of the Mayor of London. The reasons for this decision are complex and are related to the interaction between local authorities in London and those communities.

The main objectives of the survey are to identify the challenges and barriers faced by these communities, especially the Bulgarian GRT community as a result of suspension of their benefits.

In a one-to-one mini-survey for Edmonton Community Partnership, Nishan Dzhingozyan explored the target group's knowledge, awareness and attitudes towards accessing any support networks for residents who are at risk of homelessness or who have no income.

The survey was conducted among 10 adults from Bulgarian/Roma (GRT) background in Edmonton, from 20 December to 22 December 2021.

Summary of key findings

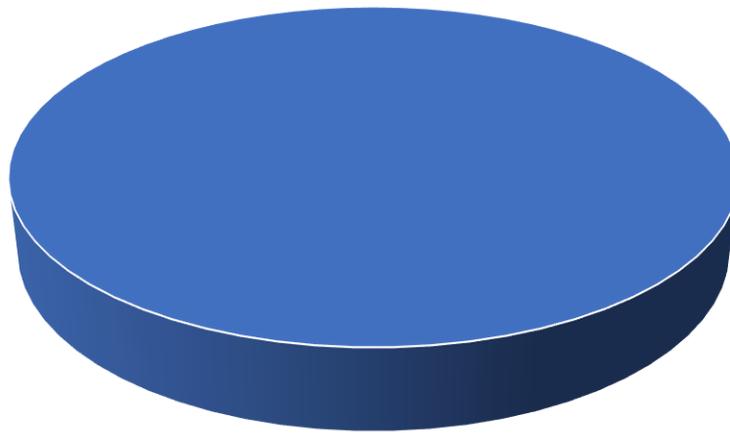
The survey, conducted by Edmonton Community Partnership from 20 December 2021 to 22 December 2021, asked 10 representatives of the Bulgarian/Roma (GRT) communities in Edmonton several questions on their understanding of the existing support network for residents at risk of homelessness or who have no income.

The result of the survey will be communicated to Enfield Council and partner organisations to make them aware of the findings of the survey and to help them in their engagement with this community, to facilitate better access to services.

- 1. The Bulgarian Roma (GRT) community in Edmonton is not aware of any organisations or support network providing help, assistance and guidance to people at risk of homelessness or with no income**

All interviewees indicate that they are not aware of any organisations helping people at risk of homelessness or with no income

Are you aware of any organisations providing assistance to people at risk of homelessness?

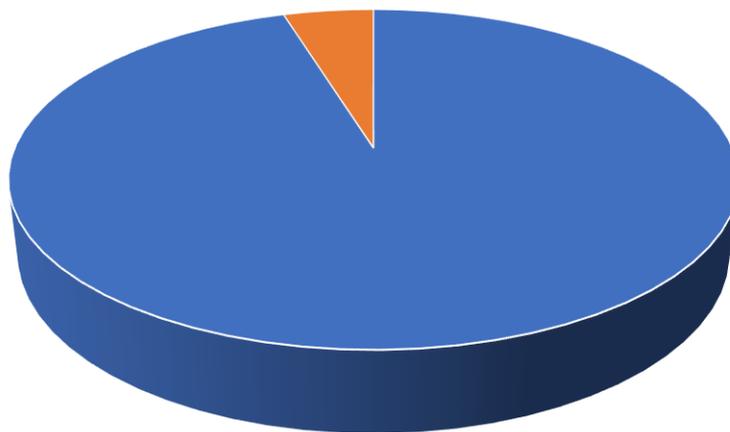


■ 1st Qtr ■ 2nd Qtr ■ 3rd Qtr ■ 4th Qtr

2. The interviewees possess little understanding of the structure and the way the local authorities in the UK operate

Most interviewees indicate that they don't know that they need to contact the local authority

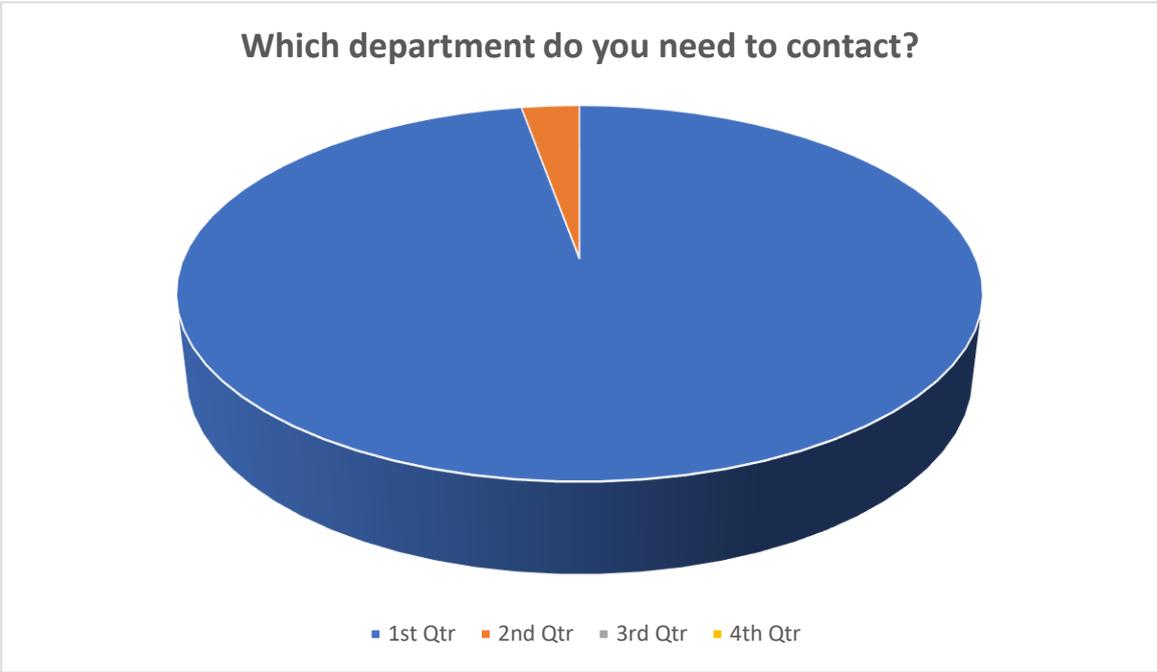
Are you aware that you might need to contact the local authority if you are at risk of homelessness?



■ 1st Qtr ■ 2nd Qtr ■ 3rd Qtr ■ 4th Qtr

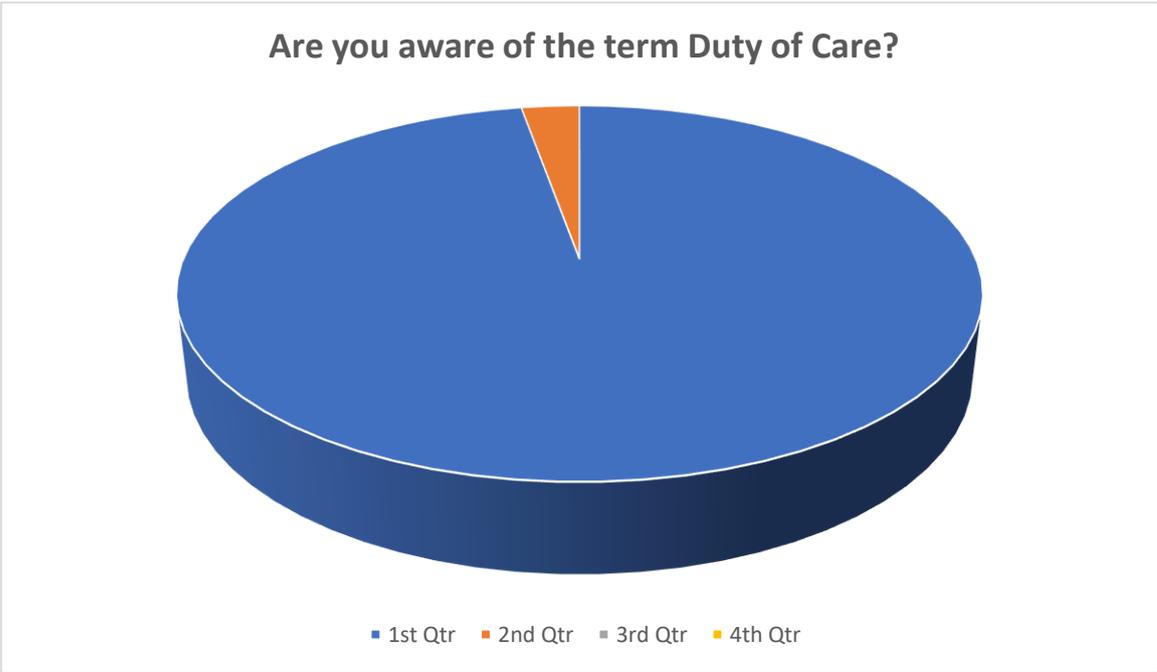
3. The interviewees possess little understanding of the structure and the way the local authorities in the UK operate

Most interviewees indicate that they don't know which department they need to contact if they are at risk of homelessness



4. The interviewees possess little understanding of the safeguarding and child protection issues

Most interviewees indicate that they don't know that the local authorities and schools in the UK have a duty of care to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of a child or young person.



Recommendations

- Intensive information campaign to build greater understanding and raise awareness of the services provided by Enfield Council

The survey indicates that most of the interviewees from this community are not aware of the services provided by the local authority and how to access it. An intensive information campaign is needed to build greater understanding and raise awareness among this community.

- Setting up a referral system to signpost vulnerable residents and parents from the schools' members of Edmonton Community Partnership to Enfield Council

Methodology

For the purposes of this survey, we approached adults aged 18 and older in Edmonton from a Bulgarian/Roma (GRT) background. The sample was selected in two stages. In the first stage, the sampling frame was a list of randomly selected parents from a few of the schools in Edmonton. The second stage of sampling was randomly selected residents from a Bulgarian/Roma (GRT) background in Edmonton.

The survey consists of 10 completed one-to-one interviews. All sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error, that is, the result may differ from those which would be obtained if the entire population under study were interviewed.

The questionnaires used in this study were designed by Edmonton Community Partnership.

Composition of the survey interviewees

- Male – 20%
- Female – 80%

- 18-29 – 10%
- 30-44 – 60%
- 45-59 – 20%
- 60+ – 10%

- Full-time employed – 30%
- Part-time employed – 20%
- Out of work – 50%

Case study

A and his wife B have a very limited knowledge of English and no IT skills. Both applied to the EUSS with the help of a neighbour and received a refusal from the Home Office. Both are not aware of the reason for being refused to get Pre-Settled or Settled Status. As a result of this their benefits were suspended. The family has a new-born baby, and the mother is not able to work. The family has not been able to pay their rent for months and are struggling even

with food. The landlord is threatening the family and asked the mom for sexual intercourse with him if they want to stay at home. Both parents possess little awareness of services provided by Enfield Council and are not able to provide the requested documents to rent a flat on the private market.

Tenancy rights/access to housing

After the suspension of benefits from DWP, another issue has emerged. Many members of this community are at risk of homelessness due to their inability to cover the rent.

Case study:

G is a father to two children – five and ten years old. The government has suspended their benefits and he is struggling to get any jobs due to his limited language skills and lack of qualifications. They family received a letter from the estate agent stating that they need to pay immediately £6,000 to cover the rent in the last months. They also received a letter from the estate agents confirming that they will be seeking possession of the property and that the landlord will take the family to court.

Recommendations:

- Delivering training on tenancy rights in Bulgarian with the support of the network of schools and other stakeholders.
- Setting up a referral system to signpost them to Enfield Council.
- All stakeholders – identifying funding for Bulgarian speaking community engagement/housing officers.



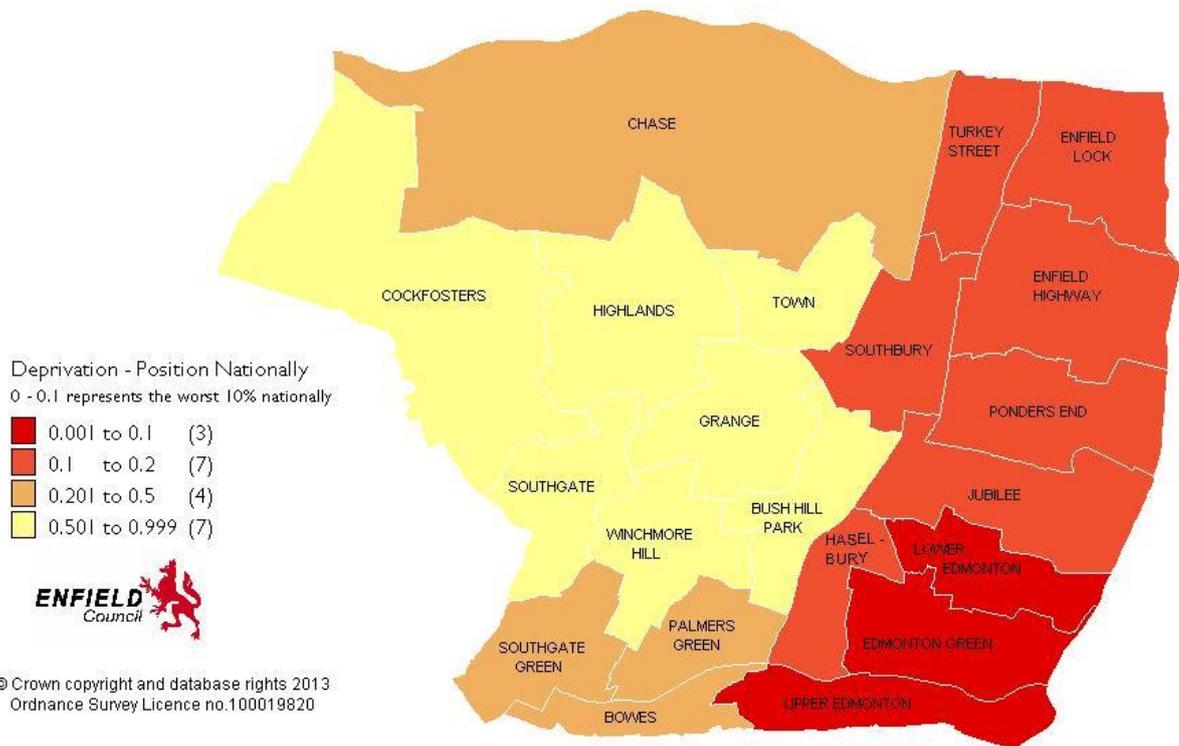
❖ *Drop-in session delivered by Enfield Council, ECP, Houndsfield Primary School and the WRC*

Poverty

According to the Enfield Poverty and Inequality Commission report in January 2020, one in three children in Enfield live in poverty.

<http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Enfield-Poverty-Inequality-Commission-Report.pdf> (Source: Enfield Borough Profile 2019)

Our outreach demonstrated that between 20-25% of our target group belong to this community.



Our outreach indicates that most of the members of this community live in poverty. According to Enfield Children & Young Persons Services (ECYPS), only in the week commencing 23 November, 70% of the people attending the food bank they run were from Bulgarian/Roma background.

Recommendations:

- The stakeholders should take an early intervention approach to preventing children being at risk of poverty and homelessness.
- The stakeholders should act together and in coordination to signpost families in need to food banks and ensure all families and children have access to healthy food.
- A whole-community approach should be taken to reduce poverty and children being at risk.
- The stakeholders should work together to make sure the children are “school-ready” and secure basic necessities for school.

Unmet mental health needs

When asked the parents from a Bulgarian GRT background at a drop-in session delivered at Eldon Primary School what kind of support they most urgently need, the most common answer was mental health support.

The Covid-19 pandemic, the lack of income, insecurity and housing issues were named as the main issues experienced by them.

Recommendations:

- Providing mental health support
- Delivering sessions on stress management
- Organising stress-reducing initiatives
- The Eastern European Hub should provide mental health support in the most common ethnic languages



❖ *Setting up a drop-in session at the Ark with the support of the Work Rights Centre, Settled, ECP and Medicus Health Partners*

Modern Day Slavery

Many families from a Bulgarian GRT background are reporting that that are “employed” by local businesses with no contract, PPE, training and paid annual leave. When asked to report to the Police, they are reluctant to report the issues in fear that this might lead to an investigation and their income being stopped. In the most common scenario, they work well below the national minimum wage.

Case study:

H is a Bulgarian citizen from a GRT background living in Edmonton. When asked at a drop-in session at Houndsfield Primary School whether he is employed or not, he confirmed that he is

employed by a Turkish company in Edmonton and is earing £4 per hour. H wasn't sure whether he has an employment contract or not. H does shifts including nights shifts. The shifts are 12 hours.

Recommendations:

- Setting up a referral system
- Delivering training in Bulgarian on employment rights
- Setting up a working group with the Modern-Day Slavery team of Enfield Council, ECP and other stakeholders
- Designing marketing materials in Bulgarian
- The stakeholders should tackle poor employment trough an active procurement strategy

Mounting debt

As a direct result of the suspension of their benefits, a large number of families from this community are reporting mounting debt in excess of thousands of pounds for uncovered rent. This issue is affecting the majority of this community and it has been reported at every drop-in session in Edmonton.

Recommendations:

- The stakeholders should free the poorest and most vulnerable members of this community from the burden of problem debts by extending access to benefits advice and support around debt.
- The stakeholders should ensure people have the offer of financial literacy education.
- Designing marketing materials in Bulgarian
- Delivering drop-in sessions on budget management

Date	Description	Rent Due	Rent Received	Outstanding Balance
27/08/2021	August Rent	£1,200.00	£1,200.00	£0.00
25/09/2021	September Rent	£1,200.00	£1,200.00	£0.00
	October Rent	£1,200.00	£0.00	£1,200.00
	November Rent	£1,200.00	£0.00	£2,400.00
	December Rent	£1,200.00	£0.00	£3,600.00
	Total	£6,000.00	£2,400.00	

Local labour market suited to the needs of this community

When asked about the reason for not being employed, most of the members of this community are reporting a few common issues: lacking or low educational background, language skills and lack of information about local vacancies, as well as difficulties re-entering the labour market after periods of unemployment.

Case study:

B and D live in Edmonton. Both are unemployed. When asked at a drop-in session how and where they are looking for job, both replied that they don't know how to do it online as their English is limited and they don't have access to IT equipment. Neither of them was aware of any local job vacancies.

Recommendations:

- Working in partnership with local educational providers to deliver suitable employment training
- Working in partnership with job centres to identify suitable job opportunities
- Increasing volunteer opportunities for the GRT community to gain the requested skills and confidence.
- Delivering training on self-confidence (a major issue among this community)

Lack of representation on a political level

More than 70,000 residents submitted their applications to the EUSS. Lack of representation on a political level is a big challenge not only for the GRT community, but also for the wider Eastern European and European residents and taxpayers.

The lack of representatives on a political level familiar with the challenges and barriers experienced by these communities is slowing down the process of integration and full participation in the political, economic and cultural life of the Borough.

Recommendations:

- Providing guidance, support, encouragement and training to members of these communities considering political career.
- Identifying community leaders
- Promoting "being proactive" policy
- Raising the issue of lack of representation on a political level and in the local administration of this large group of residents



- ❖ *In June 2021 an organisation supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities in London launched a campaign to amplify their voices in the capital*

Source: [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in London demand City Hall voice \(swlondoner.co.uk\)](https://swlondoner.co.uk)

Reducing social isolation and exclusion

Social inclusion is a major challenge for the GRT and some of the Eastern European communities due to the multiple barriers and challenges experienced by these communities.

Recommendations:

- Stakeholders should support and initiate cultural events celebrating the GRT and the Eastern European culture and traditions. The Eastern European Fair in Enfield organised three years ago attracted more than 5,000 local residents.
- Working in a partnership with the volunteer sector to initiate workshops and other activities reducing social isolation and promoting social cohesion and neighbourliness.

The benefits regulations do not allow for pre-settled status to count as a qualifying right to reside

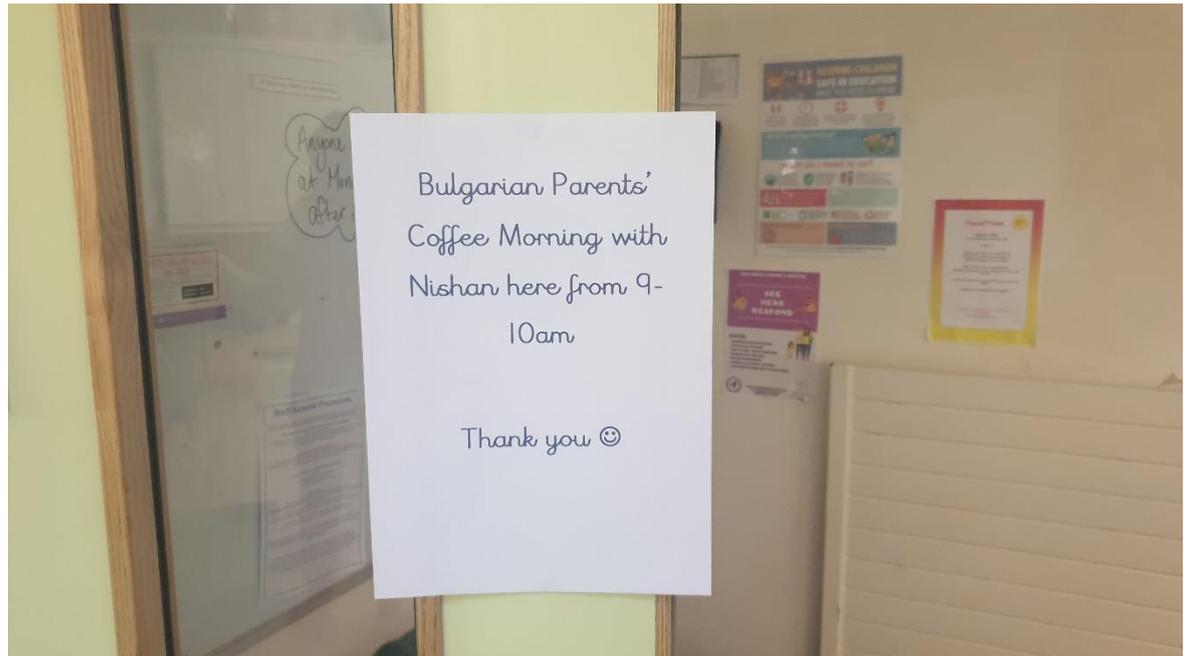
This means that a person with pre-settled status who is not exercising a right to reside, or who only has an initial right of residence or the right to reside as a jobseeker, will be ineligible for benefits.

They will need to demonstrate that they have established a right to reside, even if they already have Pre-Settled Status.

[Pre-Settled Status and Access to State Benefits - Richmond Chambers \(immigrationbarrister.co.uk\)](http://immigrationbarrister.co.uk)

10. Completed tasks

- Milestone of engaging with 4,000 vulnerable residents and parents from Bulgarian/Roma background
- Identifying and setting up a local support network of schools and partner organisations
- Starting a marketing campaign on social media in Bulgarian with the support of different stakeholders
- Purchasing IT equipment (18 laptops) and starting to deliver training sessions in Bulgarian using the infrastructure of the schools
- Identifying volunteers and distributing marketing materials in Edmonton
- Identifying any emerging issues and challenges faced by this community
- Delivering webinars in Bulgarian with the support of Enfield Council, Public Health, the NHS and other partner organisations including the schools in Edmonton, Medicus and Healthwatch Enfield
- Delivering a presentation at a meeting organised by the GLA and Enfield Councils
- Started delivering drop-in sessions with the support of local food banks and churches
- Securing grants from Enfield Council, NCL CCG, the Big Lottery Fund, and Public Health
- Identifying a small group of volunteers from these communities
- Training programme on how to prove your new immigration status
- Raising awareness of the multiple challenges and barriers faced by these communities
- Mapping exercise of existing organisations representing or supporting this community
- Organising coffee mornings
- Drop-in sessions on employment rights



❖ *Coffee morning delivered at Churchfield Primary School*

11. Tasks planned in 2022

- Shared understanding by the stakeholders that we are delivering a large-scale community engagement programme, supporting groups officially identified as hard-to-reach and underrepresented, and not only providing different services to these communities
- Continuing raising awareness of the challenges experienced by this very large group of local residents
- Identifying new partner organisations and working in partnership with them
- Continuing with an extensive outreach programme
- Continuing the marketing campaign
- Continuing with drop-in sessions, ESOL classes and coffee mornings
- Continuing with the webinars in partnership with the other stakeholders
- Hiring Bulgarian and Romanian speaking officers
- Mapping exercise of existing organisations representing or supporting this community
- Delivering training on subjects related to the GRT and the wider Eastern European communities
- Ensuring full publicity in accessible and visible forms for these communities
- Developing partnership working with members of these communities – workshops, joint events, etc.
- Use of Digital Storytelling. Anyone with a computer and camera can create a digital story, which can be shared with others online.
- Organising a round-table discussion on the challenges and barriers experienced by these communities with different stakeholders and representatives of our target group.

- Engaging with groups we haven't been working so far – the Romanian GRT community in Edmonton
- Identifying local community champions and training them to act as a “bridge” between these communities and the stakeholders
- Setting up the Eastern European Hub
- Collating data on the GRT and Eastern European communities in Enfield
- Identifying “success stories” and role models and giving them publicity and platforms to encourage the community to fully participate in the life of the Borough
- Setting up a fully functioning referral system to signpost service users to relevant departments of Enfield Council and other public bodies
- Working actively with partner organisations to encourage GP registration and vaccination against Covid-19
- Organising an event to celebrate the GRT and Eastern European culture and heritage
- Promoting the Bulgarian Facebook page among the stakeholders
- Engaging with the sex workers in Edmonton and signposting them to relevant organisations
- Producing a full yearly report for the programme
- Identifying additional funding to enhance the scope of the programme and engage with other hard-to-reach groups – the Somalian community, etc.
- Recruiting two bilingual staff members to work in the schools

12. Lessons learned since the beginning of the programme

- The implementation of the new immigration status and its consequences have already had a massive impact on these communities, and it will likely deepen the social, economic and health inequalities these communities are experiencing.
- In order successfully to engage with this very large group of local residents, a joint approach of all stakeholders is needed.
- Lack of awareness and understanding of the issues experienced by these communities has been a challenge. Raising awareness of these issues is critical to gain the necessary support from all stakeholders and other public bodies and institutions in the UK.
- The basis of any community engagement programmes is extensive outreach. Hiring officers who speak Bulgarian and other ethnic languages is crucial for the success of the programme.
- Digital engagement including Zoom presentations and email distribution of marketing materials is not suitable for this community due to the low level of IT skills
- Only a very limited number of people from this community can complete an EUSS application independently
- Limited access to information and support
- Many Bulgaria/Roma in Edmonton have applied for Pre-Settled Status even though they are eligible for Settled Status
- Relatively large number of them do not possess valid identity document
- Relatively large number (10-20 %) of Bulgarian/Roma children are not making applications and their applications are not linked to the parents
- The majority of rough sleeping Bulgarian/Roma have not applied to EUSS

- Many people who might be eligible for EUSS, but have not applied, believe the system is only for those who are currently employed and that those who do not work or receive benefits will be refused
- The engagement process must be conducted in Bulgarian due to the low English language skills of the Bulgarian/Roma community
- Widespread misunderstanding of the new Settled Status and the rights and responsibilities attached to the new immigration status
- Common practice among this community is the use of unauthorised and unregistered individuals to help them with applications for Settled Status
- Many families are reluctant to approach any authorities and access services provided by them due to multiple barriers
- Inability for many of them to provide documents requested by the Home Office
- Severe impact of Covid-19 on the income of many families from this community
- Lack of understanding of the system in the UK. Many of them are not aware of the services available to them
- Large numbers of them are not registered with a GP. In the light of Covid-19 this is a very worrying factor
- Unwillingness to access the services provided by the NHS, mainly due to low language skills. Many of them travel to Bulgaria to get an appointment with a doctor.
- Lack of understanding and/or struggling with tenancy rights and housing issues
- Lack of easily accessible information materials in their language with basic information, guidance and support on subjects related to them
- Lack of any support network except the schools
- Lack of trust
- Those who work in environments dominated by their native language do not have any exposure to English-speaking environments, as they socialise in clustered communities and lack the opportunity to develop their English language skills through interaction with native speakers
- Widespread misunderstanding of the Covid-19 vaccination programme and its aim
- Widespread disbelief in information about Covid-19
- Lack of information and understanding of basic medical principles
- Poor understanding of the structure and services provided by the NHS
- Lack of information and understanding about services provided by walk-in centres
- Strong influence of church leaders on this community

Unexpected outcomes

- Securing some additional funding to enhance the scope of the programme and tackle the multiple challenges and barriers experienced by this community
- Partnership and engagement with London Councils and the GLA and discussing setting up a cross-council working group supporting these communities
- Active partnership with Public Health and NCL CCG
- Active partnership with ONS

13. Recommendations

- Need for further support for the Bulgarian/Roma community in Enfield. We recommend that all stakeholders continue making efforts to support the Bulgarian/Roma community in Enfield and the wider EU communities
- Identifying new partner organisations and enhancing the scope of the programme, engaging with other hard-to-reach groups
- Setting up a Board of Stakeholders and meeting monthly
- Identifying new funding streams
- Promoting the Bulgarian Facebook page and other activities on social media
- Setting up a “hot-line” in Bulgarian
- Digital Status. This community is experiencing enormous difficulties in accessing their digital status and proving and updating their details on the Home Office System. The training delivered by ECP and Settled should continue throughout 2022 and engage with all schools in Enfield. At some of the schools there are up to 124 families from Bulgarian/Roma background. A series of training sessions is needed in the Bulgarian language to equip them with the knowledge of how to deal with the digital status. Serious financial resources should be allocated to meet the needs of the training sessions
- Targeted advertising. We recommend all stakeholders take the necessary steps to advise schools and employers about the EUSS scheme and support them to provide the most accurate information to the Bulgarian/Roma community in their native language
- ESOL classes with Bulgarian support to be delivered with the support of partner organisations; ideally, they would include modules on employment rights, CV writing and interview skills
- Training sessions on the differences between Pre-Settled and Settled status and how this is going to affect those on Pre-Settled status after Brexit to be delivered to the local residents and parents from Bulgarian/Roma background and also to the Parents’ Support officers
- Encouraging and advising this community not to rely on unregistered advisers and facilitating access to agencies who can provide services legitimately and free of charge
- Facilitating easier access to services provided by Enfield Council and other agencies by providing information about services available to them. One of the reasons for not accessing service is that they are not aware of the services available to them
- Encouraging GP registration
- Encouraging Covid-19 vaccination
- Setting up a service with health service providers to facilitate access to the NHS and help them get registered with a GP
- Setting up a service with organisations providing information, guidance, and support on tenancy rights
- Working closely with the Metropolitan Police, the THT, Healthwatch Enfield and other agencies to tackle the issue of sex workers in Edmonton
- Working closely with the member organisations of the Eastern Europe Forum and introducing them to the Bulgarian/Roma and the wider EU communities in Edmonton
- Setting up a referral system to signpost vulnerable members of these communities to Enfield Council and other public bodies
- Offering training to the school staff on specific cultural barriers faced by this community

- Organising another Eastern European Festival in Enfield following the very successful one organised in 2019. Organising cultural events is a very good way of engaging with hard-to reach groups
- Working closely with the GRT Board of Enfield Council
- Working closely with NCL CCG
- Collating data on the GRT communities in Enfield
- Mapping exercise of existing Eastern European organisations and business in Enfield
- Setting up an Eastern European Hub in Enfield
- Working in close partnership with the Bulgarian Embassy in London and the Bulgarian Foreign Office
- Organising a round-table discussion on the challenges experienced by these communities with representatives of different stakeholders
- Identifying community leaders and volunteers from this community
- Training community champions

14. Conclusion

This report shows that there is much that can be done locally to improve the wellbeing of these communities, facilitate access to services provided by Enfield Council, the NHS and other public bodies and partner organisations, and reduce social and health inequalities.

Edmonton Community Partnership and the stakeholders appreciate that this work is extremely challenging with competing demands and reduced resources, but it is essential.

Failure to act will carry a much larger cost for these communities, the schools in Edmonton, Enfield Council and the other organisations involved in this project.

Edmonton Community Partnership recommends that the stakeholders develop an action plan in response to the recommendation in this report. An important part of that will be setting measurable targets which can be publicly reviewed.

The most affected section of this community are women and vulnerable families. Very often they have gaps in their employment history, many have no history of employment altogether and thus struggle to provide any evidence proving their existence in the UK. Culturally, Bulgarian/Roma mothers prefer to look after their children themselves. It is common for women from this community to stay at home beyond their maternity period. This affects greatly their EUSS residence records, and consequently access to the benefit system.

Another major barrier for them is obtaining new ID documents, especially in the light of Covid 19 when the Bulgarian Embassy was closed. The difficulties obtaining new documents ranged from administrative issues, a lack of wherewithal to pay for a new document or ability to travel to Bulgaria to obtain them. Many EU Embassies in London, including the Bulgarian Embassy, have a long waiting list for obtaining new documents due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Embassies were not open. Due to Brexit, a huge number of EU citizens decided to renew their ID cards or passports. The majority of those placed on a waiting list are having issues with their ID documents. Not being able to provide a valid ID document then leads to inability to complete the EUSS application process.

Widespread misinformation and misunderstanding of the way the health services in the UK operate are causing great challenges for this community. Information and drop-in sessions are needed to help them navigate the system.

There are hundreds of families from this community in Edmonton who are not registered with a GP. This is creating a bubble of residents who do not rely on the services provided by the NHS and are not accessing any information, support or guidance provided by the NHS.

Designing and delivering a long-term community engagement programme to facilitate access to services provided by the NHS and reduce social and health inequalities is needed.

The lack of Bulgarian-speaking employees in most of the public institutions and GP surgeries in Enfield is also another barrier for this community. Hiring someone who can communicate in their mother tongue with members of this community will significantly improve the communication.

Lack of representation on any level for this community and the GRT communities is a challenge we need to tackle.

Delivering a long-term community engagement programme supporting this community will benefit the schools, the local authority, the NHS and other public bodies in the UK. If successfully delivered, the programme could be used as a template for engaging with other priority groups: for example, the Somalian and Afro-Caribbean communities. Our outreach demonstrates that many members of the Somalian communities in Enfield are holders of European passports, mainly Italian and Dutch, and are experiencing similar challenges as our target group.

Finally, delivering a long-term community engagement programme will equip these communities with the knowledge and confidence to navigate the system and participate more actively in the socio-economic, political and cultural life of the borough.

It is important to say that this work is not the sole responsibility of Edmonton Community Partnership. The recommendations in this report are for Enfield as a whole and for communities identified as hard-to-reach and underrepresented by the Office of the Mayor of London.

Many of the recommendations in this report require the leadership of public sector partners, the voluntary sector, and volunteers from these communities.

For the success of the programme, everyone involved in the delivery of the programme must play their part.

Edmonton Community Partnership