



2025

ANNUAL REPORT



We support Romanian and Roma communities with free services, advice, advocacy, inclusion and human rights.

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A BRIEF MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-CHAIRS

On behalf of the Board, we are pleased to welcome you to the Annual Report of Union Romani Voice. This year's report reflects not only the growth and impact of the organisation, but also a period of strong, values-led leadership and a clear strategic direction rooted in social justice, human rights, and community empowerment.

Over the past year, Union Romani Voice has continued to respond to increasing and complex needs within Roma and Romanian communities in Ipswich, Suffolk, and across the UK. Demand for frontline support, advocacy, and safeguarding interventions has grown significantly. In this context, the organisation has remained focused on delivering practical support while also addressing the systemic causes of inequality and exclusion.

The Board of Trustees has worked closely with our Chief Executive Officer, Simona Lazăr, whose leadership, lived experience, and deep commitment to human rights continue to shape the organisation's vision and direction. Under her leadership, Union Romani Voice has strengthened its rights-based approach, expanded its advocacy at national and European levels, and ensured that Roma voices remain central to decision-making processes that affect their lives.

This year, the organisation has balanced immediate community needs with long-term strategic objectives, including strengthening civic participation, empowering young people and women, and promoting dignity, equality, and democratic participation.

Union Romani Voice has continued to operate as a trusted bridge between communities and institutions, ensuring that lived experience informs policy, safeguarding, and accountability.

We are particularly proud of the organisation's continued alignment with human rights standards, democracy, and the rule of law, values that underpin its work locally, nationally, and increasingly at European level. The Board recognises the importance of this direction and remains committed to supporting leadership that places respect, transparency, and accountability at the heart of the organisation.

Throughout the year, Union Romani Voice has demonstrated strong governance, integrity, and resilience, despite operating in a challenging environment. The trust placed in the organisation by the communities it serves is a testament to the dedication of its staff, volunteers, and leadership.

As Co-Chairs, and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, we would like to thank our Chief Executive Officer, the staff team, volunteers, partners, and most importantly the community members whose voices, courage, and trust continue to guide our work. Together, we look ahead with a shared commitment to a fairer, more inclusive society grounded in dignity, justice, and human rights.



VASILE MACOVEI | **NICOLAE LAZĂR**
CO-CHAIR CO-CHAIR



OUR TEAM



Leadership

Simona Lazăr – Founder & Chief Executive Officer

Board of Trustees

Our Board provides governance, financial oversight and strategic direction.

- Vasile Macovei – Chair of Trustees
- Ciprian Avram – Treasurer
- Niculina Pompas – Trustee

Operational Team

Delivering frontline services and community programmes.

- Nicolae Facalet – Head of Operations
- Adrian Stănescu – Community Support Coordinator
- Marta Lazar – Education & Youth Engagement Lead

Policy, Advocacy & Rights

Ensuring Roma voices influence policy and decision-making.

- Florentina Parvu – Policy & Advocacy Officer
- Simona Lazăr – Legal & Access to Justice Lead

Community Ambassadors

Supporting community engagement and trusted outreach.

- Iubirea L – Youth Ambassador
- Nicoleta – Family Mentor

Volunteers & Partners

Supported by volunteers, interns and partners across public services, education, health, legal advice and the voluntary sector.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Dear reader,

I am proud to present the Annual Report of Union Romani Voice, reflecting a year of sustained action in support of social justice, human rights, dignity, and the empowerment of Roma communities. Our work is guided by the conviction that equality, democracy, and the rule of law must apply to all, and that Roma communities must be supported to actively participate in shaping the decisions that affect their lives.

Union Romani Voice is a Roma-led organisation working towards inclusion, empowerment, and long-term systemic change. We recognise Roma people as rights-holders and active participants in democratic society, and we focus on dismantling structural barriers while strengthening community leadership, civic participation, and self-advocacy.

During the reporting period, we delivered free frontline support across Ipswich, Suffolk, and at a national level, assisting thousands of individuals and families experiencing poverty, discrimination, safeguarding risks, insecure housing, and exclusion from public services. Our work includes immigration and settlement support, housing and homelessness prevention, child protection, access to healthcare and mental health services, welfare benefits, education, employment, and crisis intervention. All services are delivered with cultural competence, respect, and an understanding of lived experience.

Human rights and social justice are core operational priorities for Union Romani Voice. We actively address discrimination, anti-Gypsyism, hate crime, and institutional failures affecting Roma communities, while engaging with local and national authorities, diplomatic missions, and European institutions to promote accountability and uphold international human rights standards.

We place strong emphasis on empowering young people, children, and Roma women by promoting leadership, civic participation, and educational engagement. In parallel, we actively promote Roma cultural identity and community pride through advocacy, public events, and education, challenging stereotypes and strengthening social cohesion.

Despite limited resources, Union Romani Voice maintains strong governance, transparency, and accountability, supported by the commitment of our staff and volunteers and the trust of the communities we serve.

As Chief Executive Officer, I reaffirm my commitment to advancing social justice, human rights, and democratic participation for Roma communities. Union Romani Voice will continue to stand for dignity, equality, democracy, and the rule of law, ensuring that Roma voices are heard, valued, and empowered—now and in the future.



Thank you to everyone who supports and believes in this work.

SIMONA LAZĂR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

THIS YEAR



During the reporting period, Union Romani Voice supported 884 individuals from Roma and Romanian communities across the UK who were facing vulnerability, discrimination, and social exclusion. Through frontline services, advocacy, and safeguarding, the organisation enabled access to safe housing, welfare benefits, education, healthcare, and legal protection, helping beneficiaries overcome structural barriers.

A major achievement was the coordinated emergency response to anti-Roma violence and community displacement in Ballymena, Northern Ireland. Union Romani Voice provided urgent advocacy, engaged national and international institutions, and raised public awareness, contributing to improved protection and greater institutional accountability.

Beyond casework, the organisation promoted equality, challenged discrimination, and strengthened relationships between Roma communities and public authorities. By amplifying lived experience and Roma-led leadership, it helped dismantle stereotypes and advance social cohesion.

OUR IMPACT

- Marian Suru

I highly recommend this organisation. They supported me free of charge in recovering my residency status. Congratulations to Mrs. Simona for her professionalism and dedication.

- Valerică Tocila

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me obtain my share code. May God bless you for the incredible support you provide to our community.

- Rebeca Valuca

Excellent work. This is a truly outstanding charity that genuinely supports our community when we need it most. They recently helped me recover my taxes, and the week before, they assisted me with my **EUSS application**. I wholeheartedly recommend them. The staff are exceptional, highly professional, and handle everything efficiently. **May God bless this organisation.** ❤️

- Mariana Ciobotaru

Thank you very much for helping me with my Settled Status application. May God grant you good health for the support you provide.



SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

IN NUMBERS IMPACT

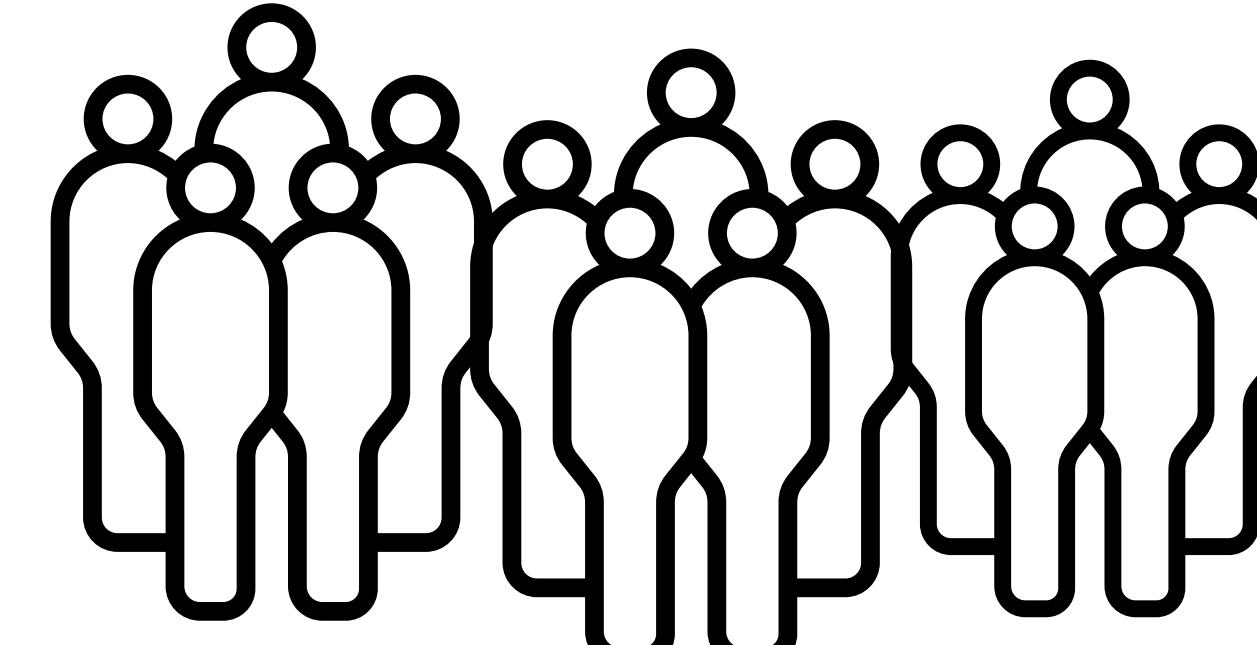
PEOPLE SUPPORTED

884

- FINAL RESULTS

500

- INITIAL TARGET



15-20

PEOPLE
SUPPORTED
DAILY

EMERGENCY AID

300

PEOPLE REFERRED
TO FOOD BANKS



SERVICES

EU SETTLEMENT 390



150 WELFARE
BENEFITS

COUNCIL TAX 100



60

HOUSING
SUPPORT

90

UTILITY
BILLS

CRISIS RESPONSE

300+ DISPLACED IN
BALLYMENA

SUPPORTED
DIRECTLY 50+





SPOTLIGHT

HEALTH AND WELLBEING Open Event 21 March 2025

Improving access, trust and wellbeing outcomes



Union Romani Voice supports Roma and Romanian communities to access healthcare services and wellbeing support, addressing barriers such as language difficulties, lack of information, discrimination and fear of engaging with public institutions.

Through culturally informed frontline support, the organisation assists individuals and families to navigate the health system and access the care they are entitled to.

Key Areas of Support

- Support with GP and NHS registration and access
- Guidance on accessing primary and specialist healthcare services
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing support
- Referrals to appropriate specialist and community services

Community Wellbeing and Prevention

Union Romani Voice also delivers health and wellbeing activities and events, including community-based wellbeing sessions, awareness initiatives and emotional support, helping individuals build confidence, resilience and trust in services.

This approach supports both immediate health needs and longer-term wellbeing, reducing isolation and improving engagement with healthcare providers.

Many Roma individuals experience poor health outcomes due to delayed access to care and systemic barriers. By providing trusted, Roma-led support, Union Romani Voice helps ensure that health needs are identified early and addressed in a respectful and inclusive manner.



SUPPORTING NEEDS

Roma and Romanian communities supported by Union Romani Voice often face poverty, discrimination, language barriers and limited access to public services. Many individuals seek support at moments of crisis, when timely and culturally informed intervention is essential.

Union Romani Voice responds through frontline, preventative and crisis-based support, ensuring individuals and families are not left without help.

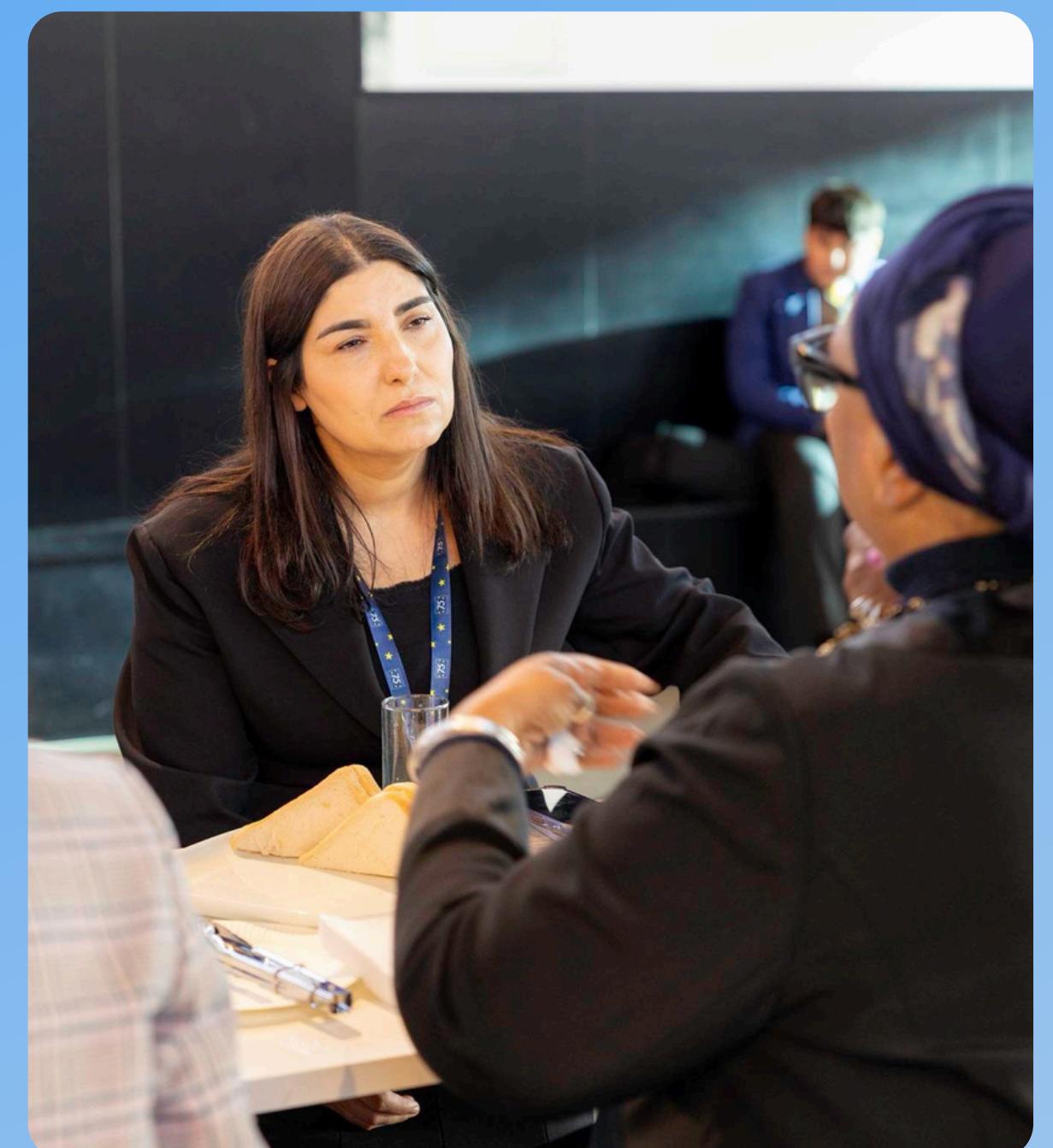
Immediate Hardship and Basic Needs

- 300 individuals referred to food banks and furniture support services
- Support provided to families at risk of homelessness
- Advocacy for individuals facing utility arrears and enforcement action

These interventions helped stabilise living conditions and prevent further crisis.

Safeguarding and Family Support

- 15 child protection cases supported across the UK
- Early, culturally informed advocacy ensured families understood legal processes
- In Ipswich, no children were removed in cases where Union Romani Voice intervened in time



Legal, Immigration and Status Support

- 390 individuals supported with EU Settlement Scheme applications
- 50 immigration and deportation cases assisted
- Ongoing liaison with authorities to prevent loss of legal status

Crisis Response: Ballymena

- 300+ Roma individuals displaced
- 50+ individuals supported directly
- Emergency relief, institutional advocacy and media engagement delivered

Why This Support Matters

Beneficiaries consistently highlight the importance of:

- Free and accessible support
- Cultural understanding and trust
- Non-judgemental advocacy



CHALLENGING LAWS AND POLICIES

Union Romani Voice works to challenge discrimination and inequality not only at community level, but also within policies, institutions and decision-making systems that affect Roma and Romanian communities across the UK.

By combining frontline evidence with Roma-led advocacy, the organisation ensures that lived experience informs public debate, policy development and institutional accountability.



Policy Advocacy and Institutional Engagement

- Engagement with local authorities, police, NHS and government departments
- Contributions to national policy discussions on safeguarding, education, housing and equality
- Participation as a Research Peer with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), ensuring Roma voices are represented in national data and methodology

National and International Advocacy

- Formal engagement with:
 - UK Parliament
 - Home Office
 - Department for Education
 - Council of Europe
 - EU Delegation to the UK
- Contribution to the development of the Council of Europe Strategy on Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2026-2030)

Challenging Discrimination and Hate

During the anti-Roma violence in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, Union Romani Voice led coordinated advocacy to challenge institutional silence and demand protection:

- Formal submissions to the Council of Europe, ECRI and the Commissioner for Human Rights
- Media engagement to challenge harmful narratives and collective blame
- Advocacy for safeguarding, accountability and protection of displaced families

Media and Public Voice

Union Romani Voice actively uses media to influence public understanding and policy response, with coverage including:

- BBC
- The Telegraph
- Yahoo News
- Romea.cz

This visibility ensured Roma voices were heard during moments of crisis and policy debate.





CULTURES AND HISTORIES

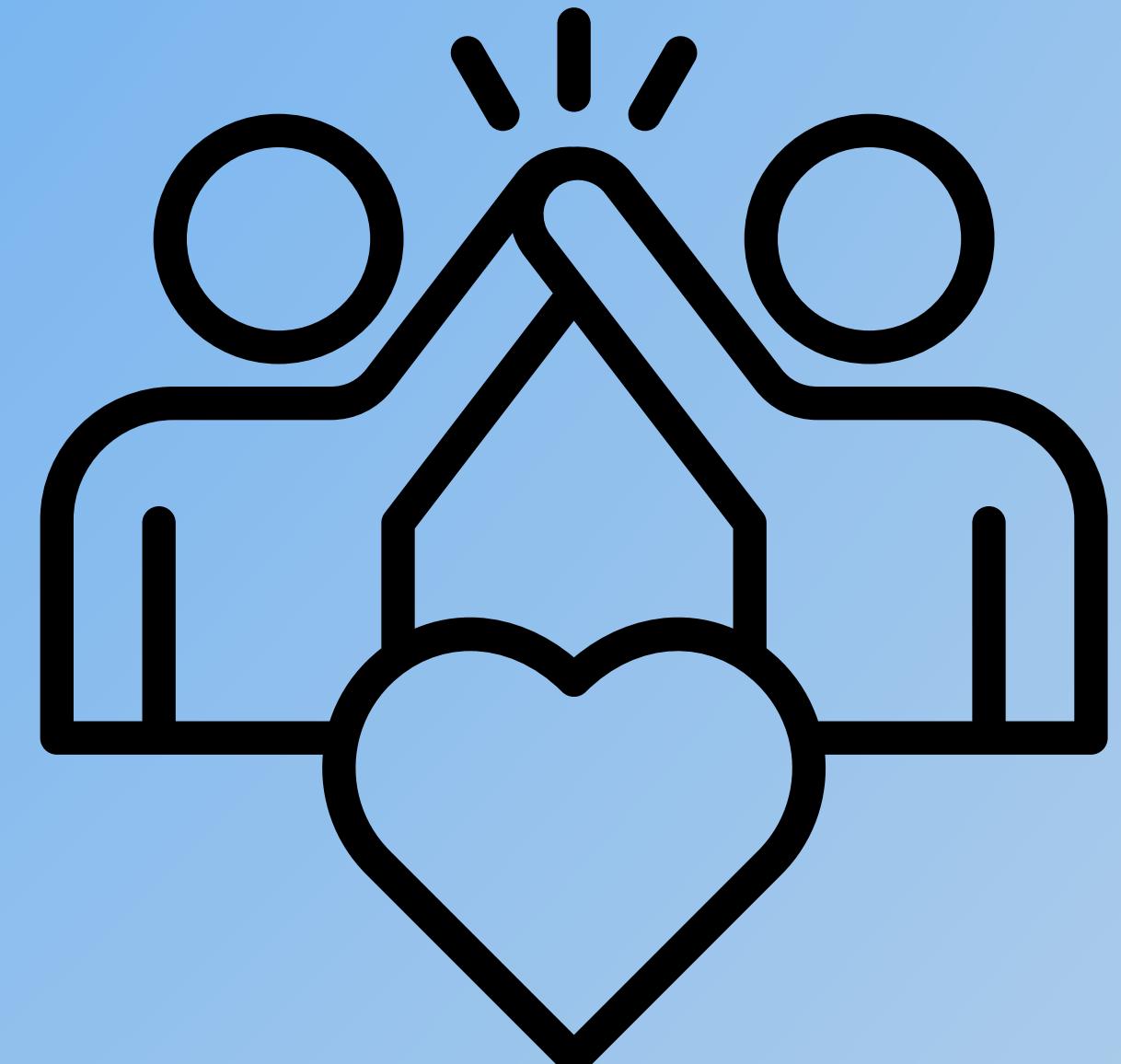


Union Romani Voice places Roma culture, history and lived experience at the centre of its work, recognising that cultural visibility and understanding are essential to achieving equality and social inclusion.

Through community-led cultural and educational activities, the organisation works to challenge stereotypes, counter misinformation and promote a more accurate and respectful understanding of Roma communities within wider society. These initiatives provide spaces for Roma voices to be heard, valued and represented on their own terms.

Cultural work also plays a vital role in strengthening community pride, intergenerational connection and a sense of belonging, particularly for young people who often face exclusion and marginalisation. By celebrating heritage and storytelling, Union Romani Voice supports confidence, resilience and positive identity formation.

Beyond community settings, the organisation engages with public institutions, schools, media and policymakers to ensure that Roma histories and contemporary experiences are recognised and included in public discourse. This work contributes to improved cultural competence, reduced prejudice and stronger relationships between Roma communities and wider society.



PROJECTS

Union Romani Voice delivers a comprehensive portfolio of community-led, rights-based projects designed to support Roma and Romanian communities to access services, build confidence, and participate fully in UK society.

Our projects combine frontline support, community empowerment, and systemic advocacy, grounded in lived experience, safeguarding, and human rights standards.

Roma Support – Free Community Services (Core Project)

*The Roma Support Project is
the foundation of our work.*

We provide FREE, confidential Information, Advice, Guidance and Advocacy through drop-in sessions, five days per week, in a safe and culturally informed environment.

Drop-in sessions (5 days per week)

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

Language is a critical barrier to inclusion.

Our ESOL programme supports adults and young people to:

- develop practical English skills
- build confidence in everyday communication
- engage with services, schools and employers
- reduce isolation and dependency

Women's Wellbeing – Pilates & Empowerment Project

The Women's Pilates & Wellbeing Project supports Roma and Romanian women to improve physical health, mental wellbeing and confidence.

The project promotes dignity, prevention and empowerment.

[**CLICK HERE TO VIEW MORE OF OUR PROJECTS**](#)



REPORTS

We produce and contribute to reports, briefings and written submissions based on our frontline casework, lived experience and community evidence. Our reporting work helps inform partners, funders and decision-makers about the realities faced by Roma and Romanian communities across the UK.

Our reports focus on access to services, safeguarding, discrimination and systemic barriers, ensuring that Roma voices are accurately represented in research, policy discussions and institutional decision-making.

Research and Data Contribution

We contributed to national research and data initiatives, including participation as a Research Peer with the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Through this role, we supported the inclusion of Roma perspectives in data collection methodologies and policy-relevant analysis.

Institutional Submissions and Briefings

We prepared written submissions, evidence and briefing materials for national and international institutions, human rights bodies and policy forums. These contributions were informed directly by our frontline experience and the issues raised by the communities we support.

Purpose and Impact

By producing and contributing to reports, we strengthen evidence-based advocacy, support informed decision-making and contribute to the development of more inclusive and effective policies affecting Roma communities.

We manage our financial resources responsibly to ensure the effective delivery of frontline services, advocacy and safeguarding support for Roma and Romanian communities across the UK.

For the financial period **5 April 2024 – 5 April 2025**, our total income amounted to **£183,163**, derived entirely from grant funding. This included **£132,200** in unrestricted funding and **£50,963** in restricted funding, enabling us to respond both to core operational needs and specific project requirements.

Expenditure and Use of Funds

During the reporting period, our total expenditure was £165,763, all of which related directly to charitable activities and service delivery. Key areas of expenditure included:

- Staffing costs (**£122,327**) – covering the CEO and four staff members, including frontline workers, a safety officer and a Roma advocate
- Premises (**£24,000**) – rent for three offices and delivery of ESOL classes
- Events and activities (**£17,436**) – community engagement, outreach and project-related activities
- Office and operational costs (**£7,000**)
- Travel expenses (**£5,000**)

We did not incur any expenditure on fundraising or trading activities during the year.

Financial Position and Reserves

At the end of the financial period, we recorded a surplus of **£17,400**, which is held as unrestricted reserves. These reserves provide a modest but important financial buffer to support operational continuity and organisational stability.

As at 5 April 2025, we held:

- Current assets: **£17,400**
- Net assets / funds: **£17,400**
- No fixed assets or liabilities

Governance and Financial Oversight

We prepare our accounts on a receipts and payments basis, in line with the Charities Act 2011 and FRS 102 (Charities SORP). The trustees have confirmed that the charity is a going concern and has adequate resources to continue operating for the foreseeable future.

All income and expenditure are overseen by the trustees to ensure transparency, accountability and alignment with our charitable objectives.

Beyond the Numbers

While volunteer contributions are not financially quantified in our accounts, volunteer support plays a vital role in extending our reach and impact. Our financial resources are complemented by strong partnerships, in-kind collaboration and the commitment of Roma-led staff and volunteers delivering services at community level.



Raising visibility and public accountability

We actively engage with national and international media to raise awareness of issues affecting Roma communities, challenge harmful narratives and promote informed public debate.

During the reporting period, our work and advocacy received significant media coverage, particularly in response to incidents of anti-Roma violence, safeguarding concerns and community displacement. Media engagement played a key role in amplifying Roma voices, increasing public understanding and prompting institutional attention.

Media Coverage Highlights

Our work was featured by a range of respected media outlets, including:

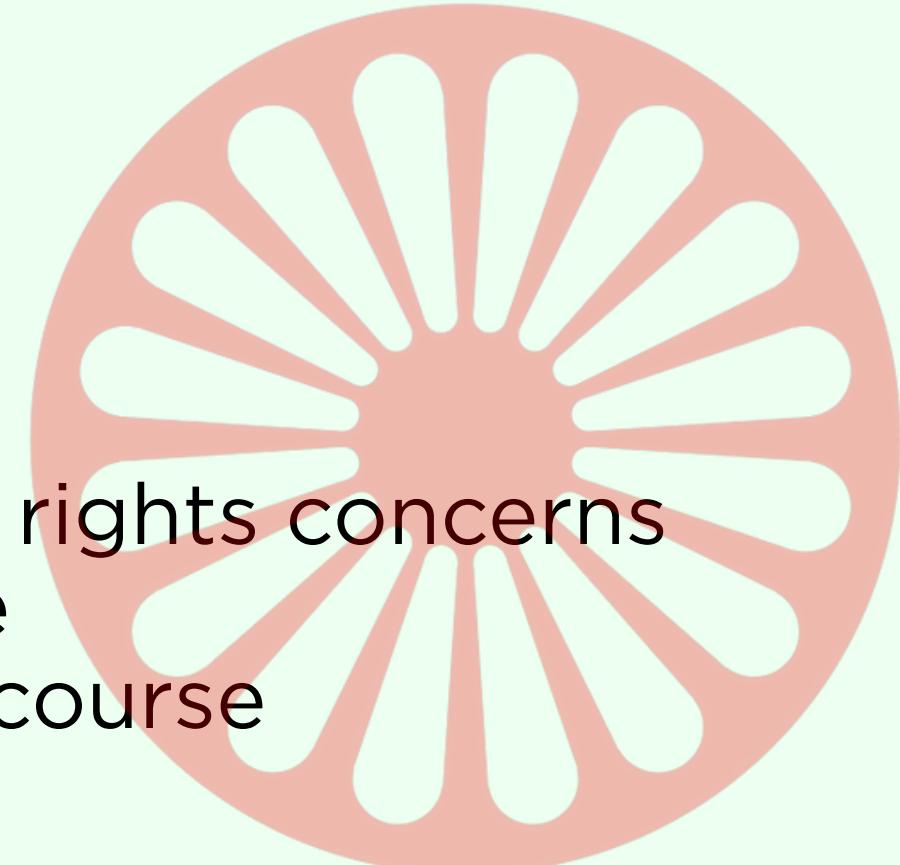
- BBC – live radio interviews and news coverage addressing safeguarding and anti-Roma violence
- The Telegraph – in-depth interview highlighting displacement and fear experienced by Roma families
- Yahoo News – reporting on the aftermath and impact of the Ballymena unrest
- Newsletter.co.uk – coverage of political and institutional responses following violence
- Romea.cz – publication of our official statements challenging collective blame and discrimination

This coverage ensured that Roma perspectives were represented accurately and responsibly during moments of heightened public attention.

Why Media Engagement Matters

By engaging with the media, we:

- challenge misinformation and stereotypes
- draw attention to safeguarding and human rights concerns
- support accountability and policy response
- ensure Roma voices are heard in public discourse



WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS



Local and Regional Partners

We collaborate closely with local authorities, public services and community institutions, including:

- Ipswich Borough Council
- Suffolk Police
- NHS teams
- Local schools and education providers, including Westbourne Academy, Northgate High School, Copleston High School and Chantry Academy

These partnerships support safeguarding, education access, community safety and improved service engagement.

Funders and Foundations

Our work is supported by trusted funding partners, including:

- National Lottery Community Fund
- Suffolk Community Foundation
- Lloyds Bank Foundation

Their support enables the delivery of free frontline services, advocacy and long-term community projects.

National and International Partners

We engage with a range of national and international bodies, including:

- UK Home Office
- UK Parliament
- Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- Council of Europe
- EU Delegation to the UK

We also collaborate with Roma-led organisations and human rights networks to amplify Roma voices and strengthen collective advocacy.

We maintain constructive relationships with:

- The Embassy of Romania in London
- Romanian Consulates in Manchester and Edinburgh

These partnerships support civic engagement, inclusion and cross-border cooperation.

OUR FAVOURITE MOMENT

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS OF THE YEAR WAS SECURING **CONTINUED FUNDING** TO DELIVER OUR SERVICES FOR A FURTHER **THREE YEARS**.

THIS COMMITMENT RECOGNISED THE **IMPACT, CREDIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS** OF OUR WORK AND ENSURED STABILITY FOR OUR STAFF, SERVICES AND THE COMMUNITIES WE SUPPORT.

RECEIVING THIS SUPPORT ALLOWED US TO PLAN WITH CONFIDENCE, STRENGTHEN OUR PROGRAMMES AND CONTINUE PROVIDING **FREE, TRUSTED AND ROMA-LED SERVICES** TO THOSE WHO RELY ON US MOST.





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