



Working with Roma families and children living in or at risk of entering into care

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Roma Support Group

- The RSG is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. With 17 years experience working with the Roma communities across the UK, delivering direct support to families, influencing and capacity building activities, promoting an understanding of Roma culture in the UK.
- The RSG was established by Roma and it is led by them today.
- Our Client group: East European Roma refugees and migrants.



Safeguarding and the welfare of children and young people is a crucial element in our work:

- **Frontline services:** Advice and Advocacy Project and Education Support Project
 - Working with Roma families in safeguarding and child protection context (most child protection/children in need cases involve children with disabilities and teenage pregnancies)
 - Information and support for foster carers and adoptive families
- **Second tier support:** Roma Support & Engagement Programme
 - Working alongside children services
 - Training for social workers
 - Information and support for foster carers and adoptive families



Main safeguarding issues - RSG casework experience and feedback from professionals:

- **Neglect** – provision of food, clothing and shelter; access to appropriate medical care and treatment
- **Parenting skills** – lack of understanding of UK requirements, parenting mentoring
- **Medical neglect** – lack of understanding of UK health system, lack of health awareness including healthy diet, delays in accessing health services due to cultural taboos e.g. mental health, substance misuse
- **Challenges in education** - children not in education, poor educational attainment, attendance issues and behaviour problems, children with SEN

Other safeguarding issues:

- **Early marriages, elopement** - average age for getting married is increasing in the UK; no institution of “girlfriend/boyfriend”
- **Trafficking and exploitation** – Operation Golf and its findings, Operation Lakeland



Culture and tradition in safeguarding context:

Family

- Close family ties and traditional values
- Position of children, childcare responsibilities, parenting skills

Engagement

- Relationship with Children Services and other public services –distrust and fear
- Communication with Children Services (cultural and linguistic issues, understanding UK norms)
- Role of advocates



Main challenges social workers face when working with Roma

- Communication problems
- Family and community composition
- Limited resources within the statutory sector to address issues such as interpreting and outreach work
- New statutory guidance on court orders and pre-proceedings (time constraints and how this affects casework with Roma families)
- Roma's distrust of statutory officials in countries of origin and UK
- Roma's lack of knowledge about the UK services, procedures, laws and norms
- Poverty and inequalities in access to welfare provision and entitlements



Cultural Competences

- Definition which highlights the aims of cultural competence seems most relevant for this context:

*“... The ability to maximise sensitivity and minimise insensitivity in the service of culturally diverse communities. This requires **knowledge, values and skills**... the workers need not be as is often assumed highly knowledgeable about the cultures of the people they work with, but must approach culturally different people with openness and respect- a willingness to learn.”*

Cultural Competence in the caring professions, O'Hagan, 2001



How the Roma Support Group can help

- Specific training for professionals
- Technical advice and support on individual cases, crisis intervention
- We also have a range of resources such as DVDs, books and CDs
- There maybe a fee attached to accessing our services and resources!
- Website: www.romasupportgroup.org.uk

Thank you