

Invitation to tender: evaluating new approaches to working with Roma people experiencing rough sleeping in Westminster and beyond

1 Introduction

The Westminster Homelessness Partnership (WHP) is a group of organisations working together to end rough sleeping in Westminster. We seek new ways to work together to help more people, more effectively, more sustainably. Working in partnership with a shared goal means we can explore our responses to really challenging issues, and take shared risks. For more information please visit www.whpartnership.org.uk

The Roma Rough Sleeping Team is a pilot project funded by MHCLG and the GLA and delivered by St Mungo's, to better understand and meet the needs of people from a Roma background sleeping rough in London. The pilot project consists of a coordinator and a Roma mediator and focusses on three boroughs in Greater London – Westminster, Camden and Wandsworth. In addition, the project hosts a monthly operational stakeholder group within which local commissioners, street outreach teams and specialist organisations can share good practice and discuss areas of development.

This invitation to tender sets out information about new approaches to working with the Roma community in Westminster and beyond and invites organisations or individuals to provide a proposal for a project that:

- Describes the situation of Roma people experiencing rough sleeping in London; including the migration patterns and routes in to destitution in London, and ways in which we can understand different groups within the overall population
- Capturing the learning and outcomes from the work that has been done by the Roma Rough Sleeping Team's service
- Develops policy and practice recommendations relating to reducing destitution and rough sleeping amongst Roma people who have been homeless in Westminster and beyond.

2 Background – why we need to improve our response to the Roma community

There are strong reasons to improve the collective response to the issue of Roma people rough sleeping in London. Roma people experiencing rough sleeping has been an issue for many years. The WHP and Roma Rough Sleeping team recognise that:

- People are living in conditions which puts their health and safety at serious risk and limit their opportunities to rebuild their lives away from the streets.

- The issue is long standing and a change of approach and innovation is required.
- The rights and status of Roma people sleeping rough often not known; some are likely to have been trafficked and exploited and some are 'vulnerable'¹ potentially impacting on their rights.¹
- The potential and skills of people in the Roma community are not recognised or utilised.
- The European Commission, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (UK) and many others have highlighted the issue of systematic discrimination against Roma people, an active approach to challenging this is required.
- Arrangements for Brexit affect this group. While some have been supported to apply for status under the EU Settlement Scheme, there are many who will need immigration advice in the coming months. Particularly in the context of the end of the grace period and the new immigration rules linking rough sleeping and perceived ASB to immigration enforcement action, building links with the community is necessary to ensure they can access their rights and entitlements in the UK as well as abroad.

There are a wide range of reasons that services are often ill equipped to work with this group effectively for many reasons including:

- Policy: people in this group usually have no or limited recourse to public funds and services are limited in what they can offer under normal contracting, funding and organisational arrangements.
- Legal: while some may hold status under the EU Settlement Scheme, others may not have had the opportunity to apply yet or may be ineligible for the scheme. Some, though we do not know how many or what proportion, are exploited by organised criminal networks who exert power and control over individuals in ways that may meet the definition of modern slavery.
- Cultural and political: Roma people are stigmatised and often seen as homogenous group associated with crime and begging; investing in services to assist this group is challenging for public organisations especially in the context of the hostile environment policy and negative reporting about Roma people in the media.
- Practical and cultural: there is a lack of Roma specific expertise within homelessness services which is needed to foster communication and trust.
- International: Roma people live in extreme poverty in Romania and Bulgaria and other Western European countries, there are be persistent drivers for people to come to the UK even where the prospect of paid 'legitimate' work is low for some people. Related to this, there is an (untested) fear that providing services will increase the flow of people in this situation to London. This factor will be impacted by changes to immigration policy post-Brexit, which will further reduce the options available to new arrivals who are not eligible to apply for status under the EU Settlement Scheme. At the same time, the situation in Romania and Bulgaria and other Western European countries makes it more difficult to develop good quality reconnection plans that offer a sustainable route out of rough sleeping for people from a Roma background.

¹ Under the Care Act 2014 Local authorities have a duty to adults requiring care and support due to disability, illness or mental health condition, under the Modern Slavery act specified public authorities are required to notify the Home Office about any potential victims of modern slavery they encounter in England and Wales.

3 Background - the new approach

St Mungo's have previously undertaken research with the Roma support group in Westminster culminating in a published research report.² While this provided useful insights there had not been a programme of work to take recommendations forward, so in 2020 St Mungo's established a new Roma Mediators project. The project reports to funders and also to the WHP as the project is of particular relevance to the strategic work of the partnership on taking a data driven approach ensuring a sophisticated approach to working with foreign nationals, ensuring that people receive the best possible service offers they can. The WHP are leading on the commissioning of the evaluation.

The current Roma Rough Sleeping team consists of two members of staff who are themselves Roma, with support from St Mungo's Director of Westminster, Rough Sleeper and Migrant services and the Head of Migrant and Advice Service.

The overall aims of the Roma project are to:

- Gain a better understanding of the issues facing Roma people experiencing rough sleeping in London: evidence to inform action where we currently have very little
- Work in a more inclusive way and improving fair access to services and outcomes for this group
- Reduce Roma rough sleeping in London.

It may be that a specialist accommodation project stems from the project but this is a medium-term aim depending on learning from the initial 12 months of the project.

Work done so far includes:

- The new Roma mediators are working to build trust and develop a far deeper understanding of peoples' circumstances and how best to support people out of homelessness.
- During Covid-19 and Severe Weather Emergency Provision St Mungo's provided emergency accommodation to household groups – this emergency provision to larger groups is highly unusual in rough sleeping responses.
- The Director and Head of Migrant and Advice services at St Mungo's have set up an operational stakeholder group, which includes a range of local commissioners, street outreach teams, faith-based and specialist organizations. This has created a monthly forum for stakeholders in Westminster and beyond to share experiences and emerging good practice. Roma people.
- St Mungo's have delivered training/ awareness raising about working with Roma people for people working in various services, including a range of stakeholders in Westminster, as part of the project.

3 The research

² Felja D, Greason L, (2016) Rough sleeping Roma in the City of Westminster (2016)

The overall aim of the research is to capture and share learning from the Roma Rough Sleeping team project, and influence the future approach to working with this group in London and beyond. Because the project represents a new, innovative way of working with Roma people, we need to ensure learning is captured and used by as many people as possible, including service regional and national policy makers, and national and international services delivery organisations.

The aims of the evaluation:

- To create clear report for publication explaining the context of the Roma project, what has been achieved (both processes and outcomes), the challenges and opportunities experienced in the work, and the learning from the project.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations for policy, commissioning, funding and practice which help the partners involved make the case for change where appropriate.
- To enable shared learning from the project as widely as possible, including with our European Partners in the European Campaign to End Street Homelessness.
- To (with others) help to ensure that the project is linked in with the wider international picture of Roma destitution.

The objectives for the evaluation are:

- Undertake initial desk research on Roma destitution and rough sleeping which sets the project in context and draws from learning from other areas. This will include figures from CHAIN (which can be requested by the WHP directly).
- Undertake to set out the current policy and legal context for the project in a clear and accessible way in reports.
- To undertake qualitative research with the Mediators and other stakeholders. This will include commissioners, policy makers and thought leaders.
- To capture feedback from Roma people who are involved with the project, and ideally those who are not, ensuring that the experiences of those impacted are central to learning from the project. This might be through direct fieldwork or it might be by working with the team to gather qualitative feedback.
- To analyse monitoring data being collected by the team synthesise this for the evaluation report.

Potential researchers should note the scope of the project. Roma rough sleeping is mainly concentrated in Westminster and other central London boroughs but is a complex international issue. The project and the evaluator may propose including

- regional partners (GLA) and London Councils
- other local authorities where there is a concentration of Roma people who are rough sleeping (primarily Camden and Wandsworth at this stage though there may be others)
- international partners.

4 Evaluator requirements

The successful person or team will have a good understanding of rough sleeping and of issues surrounding migrants' experiences of rough sleeping in particular. They will also have excellent qualitative and quantitative research skills and be able to demonstrate high quality research outputs and a collaborative approach to working with practitioners. Partnership proposals are welcome.

Please note that we would also welcome applications from those who have particular experience in the field of Roma experiences even without significant experience in the field of homelessness in London.

We appreciate that it may be challenging to undertake direct research with Roma people in a relatively short research project - so creative ways of undertaking this or gathering feedback indirectly and the justification of the approach should be considered.

5 Research budget and timetable

The research budget is up to £17,500 inclusive of VAT. The timetable for commissioning and delivery milestones is below.

Milestone	Date
Tender posted online and circulated to networks	16 th August
Deadline for submissions	6 th September
Interviews	w/c 13 th September (TBC)
Work commences	20 th September
Interim report	6 th December
Final report	7 th February
Presentation of findings	1 st March (TBC)

6 Proposal requirements

Proposals should include:

- Methods statement
- Relevant organisation and/ or team expertise
- Bios and roles for the project team including a clear breakdown of time spent on this project by each team member
- Track record and recent relevant projects (including links to relevant outputs available online or a maximum of two reports attached to an email)
- Budget and timetable (including the days allocated to different members of the team/ to areas of work)
- Summary of ethical considerations and risks/mitigation
- Two relevant referees.

Please provide no more than 12 sides in Font 11. CVs may be appended. Please state your insurance cover for research work if appropriate.

Tenders should be emailed to becky@accendo-consult.co.uk and jenny.travassos@passage.org.uk by 5pm on 6th September 2021. Any questions can also be addressed to Jenny and Becky.