



IMPACT REPORT

STEPS TO EMPOWERMENT

A project funded by The Big Lottery Fund



REPORT PREPARED BY DR. AMALIA G SABIESCU

Abstract

The project *Steps to Empowerment and Improving Access to Mainstream Services* (2018-2021) has been funded by The Big Lottery Fund to enable the Coventry-based charity The Roma Project to support capacity and capability building and sustain processes of social inclusion for the local Roma community. This report describes the results of an evaluation and impact assessment study which collected evidence by means of a community survey, internal documentation and interviews with charity staff and local service providers. The analysis considered how the project's aims and targeted outputs and outcomes measured up against its achievements, giving careful consideration to the bearing of contextual challenges associated with the effects of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic on the local socio-economic and political environment. On this basis, it offers a detailed assessment of the project's effectiveness, efficiency and contribution to long-term impacts on the Coventry Roma community, as well as remaining challenges and recommendations.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
1 Executive Summary	4
2 Background and context	10
2.1 <i>The Roma community in Coventry</i>	10
2.2 <i>The project Steps to empowerment and improving access to mainstream services</i>	12
3 Methodology	14
Objectives	14
Approach	14
The project logframe	15
Data sources and primary data collection	15
4 Key findings	17
4.1 Project relevance	17
4.2 Project effectiveness	20
4.2.1 Progress towards capacity & capability building outputs Objective 1	20
4.2.2 Progress towards building capacity & capability outcomes	26
4.2.3 Progress towards social inclusion outputs	32
4.2.4 Progress towards social inclusion outcomes	37
4.3 Project efficiency	41
4.4 Impacts on the beneficiary community	42
4.4.1 Impacts - Capacity and capability building	43
4.4.2 Social inclusion impacts	45
4.5 Project sustainability	48
5 Conclusion and recommendations	50
5.1 Key achievements and remaining challenges	50
5.2 Recommendations	52
Annex 1. Project logical frame	54
Annex 2. Key answers from community survey	56
Socio-demographic data	56
Community answers - The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale	57
Community answers – Confidence in interactions with authorities	58
Community answers – Measures of social inclusion	61

1 | Executive Summary

The evaluation study

This report has been produced in the frame of an evaluation study for the project *Steps to Empowerment and Improving Access to Mainstream Services*, awarded by The Big Lottery Fund to The Roma Project (TRP) for the period June 4th, 2018 – June 7th, 2021¹. The project was designed to reach out to the following objectives:

- 1 Support capability and capacity building in the Roma community, contributing to increased well-being and autonomous lifestyles.
- 2 Support the social inclusion of the Roma community with a focus on
 - building knowledge of, capacity to navigate and take up of mainstream services
 - improving communication and relations among Roma and non-Roma
 - celebrating and promoting the value of the Roma cultural heritage
 - promoting the values and norms of the host society among the Roma community.

The project enabled TRP to employ a project manager, two advice caseworkers and an admin. Their work was supported by a Board of Trustees composed of seven members, many of them from the Roma community; and a number of volunteers (varying around two-three at any one time) helping TRP staff with casework, translation and community contacts.

The evaluation study has been carried out during the period October 2021 – April 2022, informed by primary data collection by means of interviews with The Roma Project staff and members of Board of trustees; representatives of the public sector and statutory service providers in Coventry; and members of the Roma community in Coventry; and a community survey which generated 50 responses. In addition, documentation regarding project activities and progress has been consulted as part of the process, including data on community meetings and consultations, board meeting minutes, and previous years project reports. An important source of information came from AdvicePro, the case management software used by The Roma Project to keep track of its casework.

Key findings

How relevant are the project and its approach to the issues and needs addressed?

The project objectives have been found to be relevant for the issues experienced by the Roma community throughout the past years, which fall in two categories:

- 1 Lack of capacity and capability regarding life in the UK, access to statutory services, education and jobs, which also affected their living standards

¹ While the project Steps to empowerment has been initially designed within the timeframe June 2018 to June 2021, this evaluation covers the period corresponding to the actual funding of the project, which kick-started in September 2018, for 3 years.

- 2 Facing social and economic exclusion, often due to Roma missing vital information about the services they have right to access, the means of accessing them and their rights and obligations as citizens.

TRP provided a relevant and essential service to the community, as indicated by the high take up of services specifically focused on areas where the Roma lack legal capabilities and knowledge of the local socio-economic system. Moreover, the targeted response to the range of issues raised by Brexit and Covid-19 indicate that TRP has already incorporated a way of work that is sensitive to immediate community needs, adapting its offer to meet them as they evolve.

With respect to the approach and activities, the evaluation concludes that the project:

- Excelled at helping Roma people through reliable information and advice, assisting them to tackle problems they could not solve on their own, on a variety of help areas from EUSS applications to benefit claims and housing;
- Performed moderately with respect to building capabilities and enabling Roma to help themselves. TRP planned events specifically directed at building capacity and capability among the Roma, however the two years marked by the Covid-19 pandemic meant that most of the sessions planned could not be delivered as scheduled, with the bulk of the staff time dedicated to casework for advice and problem-solving.

To what extent have the project targets (outputs and outcomes) been reached?

Obj 1. Building capacity and capability

- TRP provides an essential service to the Roma community, unanimously rated as highly satisfactory by community survey respondents
- 5,033 advice and support sessions have been delivered (by phone and online during the pandemic), with peak need areas in benefit claims (2,310 cases), EUSS and related immigration support (829) and housing (310 cases);
- **The need for TRP services** is particularly high among Roma who started settling recently in Coventry, and decreases in time as community members learn how to navigate the local system; but goes up again in periods of crisis, such as those experienced in relation to Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Lack of valid information about resident rights after **Brexit** and ensuing confusion were felt particularly strongly in the Roma community in Coventry. TRP helped with information provision, clarifications, and supporting over 800 Roma to complete their applications in the EU Settlement Scheme.
 - TRP has acted as adviser, support and mediator between the Roma and healthcare and social care providers in the city during the **Covid-19 pandemic**, via multiple platforms including a dedicated support phone line.
- Roma's levels of autonomy and confidence increased in the past 3 years, and many started interacting directly with a series of service providers and institutions where they had required support from The Roma Project in the past (77.5% of the Roma surveyed feel more confident in interacting with authorities now, compared to three years ago)
- **Dependency on TRP** continues for a segment of the community, due in particular to:
 - Lack of digital literacy coupled with lack of legal capabilities

- Low levels of English language competences especially for new comers, over 50s and housewives (despite significant progress in other community groups)
- Lack of confidence in their own capacity to “do things right” in a system that they still do not fully understand
- Based on the application of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale², there is a **remarkably positive mindset and level of well-being among the Roma**, especially related to successful problem-solving, thinking clearly, and being able to make their own minds about things.

Remaining challenges: TRP has already started shifting the optic from a firefighting approach to tackle building capacity and autonomy among the Roma. However, the restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic meant that very few capability-building sessions could be delivered during the project duration; and community needs around Brexit required an additional high investment by TRP to help with the EUSS and related. To expand on this approach, TRP needs to have resources above those required to serve the community’s most immediate needs.

Obj. 2. Fostering social inclusion

- TRP improved and expanded the services to Roma and Romanian communities, achieved by long-term and new collaborations and partnerships with local service providers, third sector organisation and the Romanian embassy/consulate
- Their service made a key contribution to building Roma’s awareness of their rights and responsibilities as UK residents, particularly after Brexit; and boosting Roma’s feelings of being socially included (80% of respondents in the community survey said they feel much better or a bit better integrated in Coventry compared to three years ago)
- TRP played a big role in increasing awareness and understanding of Roma issues among service providers and third sector organisations
- There is a high level of satisfaction with TRP information, support and mediation services among service providers whose work is essential for the Roma community, such as Early Help and Child Protection.
- TRP organised a small number of social and cultural events (number limited due to Covid-19), some of which involved several local organisations and got coverage from local press (e.g., exhibition *Generations* in collaboration with Belgrade Theatre)

Remaining challenges: Discrimination and prejudice against the Roma still exist, even if not at the level of a few years ago. Where they do remain, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping are tied to lack of knowledge of Roma culture and history.

The generational paradox: adult and elderly generations who value Roma culture are more inward-looking and less interested in intercultural dialogue and social interaction outside community; at the opposite end, young Roma are well connected to the life and society of Coventry, but interest in their own culture and tradition is dwindling.

² The scale was employed for one-off data collection; no baseline data was available to be able to infer the degree of change in levels of well-being experienced by the Roma.

How efficient are the project approach and the means by which outputs and outcomes have been achieved?

The efficiency of the project is assessed by looking at project achievements against the planning of activity and management of resources. Contextual conditions that affected the unfolding of project activities are also taken into account.

The Roma Project attended to 5,033 cases throughout the 3 years, via multiple means of interaction, including advice sessions by appointments and drop ins (face to face or by phone), via social media and the website. Apart from this, the charity was involved in a series of socio-cultural projects delivered through partnerships with other local and national organisations; as well as hosting or facilitating meetings and exchanges between the Roma community and service providers. These outputs were achieved by a small team of two case workers for community frontline interactions, supported for day to day tasks by a varying number of volunteers (about one to three at any one time) and administratively and managerially by a project manager and a part-time administrator. These achievements indicate that TRP has used resources efficiently, employing strategies that include:

- A *Community needs first* approach, by which community members were assisted to solve their issues while being encouraged as well to learn to solve similar issues on their own in the future.
- Investing in **staff training** to improve the quality of the services offered. Staff have been offered training in AdvicePro Case Management Software, and the case workers were also registered for a Level 4 NVQ Diploma in Advice and Guidance.
- From Year 3, moving advice sessions closer to the community, by offering advice from Broad Street Hall, situated in Foleshill, where a big part of the Roma community is located. They also extended their availability for advice from 5 to 6 days per week.

However, there is space for improvement, especially with respect to building capability among the Roma over the long term. To this end, this study recommends that priorities for community capacity and capability building are set, as much as possible ensuring that enough human and financial resources are freed from the casework, to attend to these.

How does the project contribute to long-term and wider impacts on the beneficiary community?

- The Roma community made **notable progress in accessing education and employment**, with Roma children in schools and nurturing qualified professional aspirations; and many Roma holding full-time jobs, more diverse than they previously used to hold (many of them were handling scrap metal collection especially when first settling in Coventry).
- But there are **limits**: New generations of Roma children are likely to pursue more skilled occupations, but currently the jobs held continue to be in unskilled professions such as deposit operators, delivery drivers and the like.
- The Roma enjoy **greater autonomy in conducting their day to day activities and accessing statutory services**. However, dependency on TRP persists among some segments. To move past this dependency, it is important to continue to cultivate these three sets of

skills, in a targeted way to community segments in need: knowledge of the local system; digital literacy; and English language competences.

- A key driver of social inclusion for the Roma is **education, which is the main vehicle for endorsement of local values and norms**. In this sense, the endorsement of local values flows backwards generationally, from Roma children and young people to their parents.
- However, instances of Roma's socio-cultural participation outside one's community are still rare, and oftentimes driven by individuals who have an agenda of care for their community and the city.
- The Roma do not meet as much discrimination as they did in the past from local people and institutions, however relations with local people tend to remain distant and do not move towards significant intercultural dialogue.
- While Roma young people are the best integrated from their community, in this process they tend to become more and more distanced from their culture, as they embrace values and lifestyles that are no longer Roma culture-centric.

How sustainable are the project outcomes and impacts?

TRP has worked on several lines to ensure that the services offered to the community will bring enduring benefits:

- TRP has involved young Roma in assisting their own community, as TRP employees, volunteers or members of the Board of Trustees.
- It has attracted people whose efforts to assist Roma people and promote Romani culture go beyond the scope of the funded project, for example through its Board of Trustees.
- In August 2021, it has secured funding from The Big Lottery Fund to continue its activities for other two years.
- TRP staff have been offered training in using AdvicePro Case management software, as well as Level 4 NVQ in Advice and Guidance.

The above contribute to strengthen the premises for longer-term, sustainable assistance to the Roma community. The intervention line where there is still a wide gap to be calmed regards building the capacity of the Roma community to "help themselves" and reduce dependency on The Roma Project.

Synthesis of recommendations

Recommendations for building capacity and capability among the Roma

- Operate a gradual but firm **shift in positioning TRP services**, from problem-solving to a community hub for building capabilities among the Roma, to enable them to help themselves; as well as *[analogous for social inclusion goals]* a hub for furthering social inclusion and celebrating Roma culture.
- Consider **the creation of a Community Forum**, with the role of collecting community needs, issues, concerns and aspirations on an on-going basis, and feeding them to TRP for shaping its strategic community service approach.

- The **suggested approach to decrease reliance on TRP** is to tackle casework in combination with capacity and capability building, continuing to endorse a needs-based approach; dedicating a small, flexible but firm percentage of staff time to strategic development activities related to capacity-building.
- Continue to **invest in professional development for TRP staff**, to increase the quality of services offered.
- **Build a component of strategic development** in the future activity line of TRP. It is particularly important for this component to be built in with attention to bridging the gap between planning and implementation.

Recommendations for furthering Roma social inclusion

- Continue to **organise events and initiatives** for social gathering, intercultural interaction and celebrating Romani culture. To expand on their impact, we recommend:
 - leveraging the spirit of initiative of Board members for organising these events (building on the legacy of already successful projects driven by Board members such as the exhibition *Generations*)
 - involving young Roma, to (re)connect them with their culture and encourage a sense of pride in their roots.
- **Involve the community** in different stages of planning and developing social inclusion and cultural celebration initiatives [see Recommendation on Community Forum at Obj. 1]
- Conduct more research **to understand the sort of support that young Roma need** from a charity like TRP, related for instance to seeking professional experience, making career choices or finding placement opportunities.

2 | Background and context

2.1 The Roma community in Coventry

Ethnicity

The Roma are a stateless minority whose members are spread around the world, counting from small groups to large communities in the order of tens of thousands in some European countries. Despite the designation that might be thought to imply a homogeneous group, the Roma are in reality a highly heterogeneous population, with variety in customs and the dialects they speak. Moreover, Roma tend to speak the language and at least partially embrace the customs and norms of the countries and cultures where they are living.

In the UK, the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) designation conceals even further complexity, as the Irish Travellers are different from the Roma, included in the same group on virtue of their similar nomadic lifestyle. Coventry has had a GRT population for centuries, and the group composition has been changing through the years, with people moving out and large waves of migration bringing in more Roma. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the democratisation of Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, large numbers of Roma started to settle in Coventry, coming from Eastern Europe countries such as Romania, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The Roma Project works with the Roma community in Coventry made largely of Eastern Europe immigrants, and particularly Roma migrants from Romania. Population statistics are imprecise, as many Roma do not identify themselves as such in official census. The Roma Project estimates them to be in the order of 10-12,000, upwards from an estimated 6-7,000 people in late 2017 - early 2018. The charity is working in particular with the Roma who migrated from Romania. Despite the apparent closeness in terms, the Roma minority and the Romanians are different populations with distinct origins. The etymology of the two terms is also different. The Roma are thought to originate from India, which has been first proved scholastically by linguists, who demonstrated the Sanskrit provenance of the Romanes language. While the Romanian population derives its name from Ancient Rome, who annexed from 106 AD the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea at that point inhabited by the Dacians.

Socio-economic status and access to education

In Coventry, the UK and elsewhere in Europe, studies on the Roma confirm that the population tends to experience issues ranging from poverty to lack of access to healthcare, education, housing and employment, at rates significantly higher than other social groups³. This is accompanied very often by discrimination and marginalisation, which in some areas may become systemic. In Coventry, there has been substantial improvement in living conditions, compared with the first migration waves in the early 2000s. Nonetheless, issues continue to be experienced: while employment rates are higher, they continue to have low-wage and unqualified jobs, many

³ House of Commons, Women and Equalities Committee (2019) Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. March 2019. Available at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html>

of them as pickers, deposit operators, and delivery drivers. With respect to social inclusion, the Roma tend to experience less discrimination in Coventry than in the rest of the UK or Europe, due to the multicultural composition of the city, and the efforts of The Roma Project. They continue to be, however, a community that keeps to themselves, very private and difficult to access from the outside. Oftentimes, discrimination and prejudice are down to socially accepted stereotypes about being Roma/Gypsy, not based on the experience of actually meeting and interacting with the Roma.

There have been as well changes with respect to the Roma's attitudes towards and access to education. Traditionally, the Roma community abided by community norms that did not place a high value on education, especially for women, and expected children and young people to follow in the footsteps of their parents. Especially since 2010, the Roma have started to see differently the role of education in the future of their children. As emphasised in an impact assessment report for The Roma Project⁴, Roma children and young people in Coventry are encouraged to study and many of them aspire towards higher education and/or qualified jobs. They are in many cases agents of change also for their parents, making a life for themselves as they navigate between their community values and the multicultural life and population of Coventry.

The role of women in the Roma community is also deserving attention. Traditionally, Roma women have been expected to tend for the house and rear kids, and the prospect of continuing education beyond primary school was almost absent. Now, Roma girls are encouraged by many Roma families to pursue education just as boys are. Discussions with service providers for this study revealed that the number of teenage pregnancies decreased, oftentimes because young girls would now continue their education rather than get married and have kids.

Key issues and the need for support

While the living conditions of the Roma in Coventry have been improving year after year, they continue to face many challenges as they attempt to adapt to the UK socio-economic system, and fully integrate in the city. Most issues are experienced by the Roma who first arrive in Coventry from Eastern Europe, with little to no knowledge of the local system and even English language. This affects their access to education, employment, healthcare and housing, and the extent to which they abide local laws, pay taxes, and contribute to local social and cultural life.

From 2018 to 2021 (the years for which this evaluation study has been conducted), the Roma have moreover been affected by issues related to Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. The Roma already settled in Coventry qualified for settled or pre-settled status, however many were confused about their rights after Brexit, and the forms they needed to fill out to confirm their resident status. For Roma who were still arriving in the UK, there was confusion with respect to the cut-off date for Europeans coming in, and many Roma continued to arrive also after the UK had formally left the European Union.

The Covid-19 pandemic further affected the Roma, in particular from Spring 2020 when the first national lockdowns came into effect, until late 2021. Just like other UK residents, the Roma were

⁴ Sabiescu, A. (2018) *Steps to empowerment. Impact report*. March 2018. Unpublished report, available upon request.

affected by isolation, illness in their families, losing jobs or capacity to work, and seeing their family income proportionately affected. Moreover, as it will be discussed further in this report, there was a widely spread disbelief in the virus itself, the necessity of the lockdowns and the usefulness of vaccination, which meant that many Roma were more likely to be infected and spread the virus than other UK-based communities.

2.2 The project *Steps to empowerment and improving access to mainstream services*

The Roma Project has been functioning as a voluntary organisation since 2010, initially founded in order to tackle the exploitation and facilitate the social inclusion of the Roma community in Coventry. It offered services related to life in the UK, intermediation with local authorities and help with various aspects related to day to day life for the Roma, most of whom were starting to make a life in Coventry after migrating from Eastern Europe, Romania in particular. The organisation gained charity status in 2019, which contributed significantly to streamlining its operations, improving its organisational structure and the efficiency of its operations and the services offered to the community. While The Roma Project thrives through the generous contribution of volunteers and the dedication of its former Chairman (now Project Manager), it has been and continues to depend on external funding to be able to function at a capacity required to offer necessary services to the Roma community.

Thus, the project *Steps to empowerment and improving access to mainstream services* has been developed and attracted funding from the Big Lottery Fund (2018-21), to achieve the following objectives:

- 1 Support capability and capacity building in the Roma community, contributing to increased well-being and autonomous lifestyles.
- 2 Support the social inclusion of the Roma community with a focus on
 - building knowledge of, capacity to navigate and take up of mainstream services
 - improving communication and relations among Roma and non-Roma
 - celebrating and promoting the value of the Roma cultural heritage
 - promoting the values and norms of the host society among the Roma community.

The project enabled TRP to employ a project manager, two advice caseworkers and an admin. Their work was supported by a Board of Trustees composed of seven members, many of them from the Roma community; and a number of volunteers (varying around two-three at any one time) helping TRP staff with casework, translation and community contacts.

The main services offered by TRP during the project funding years consisted of advice and support services for the Roma, by appointment or drop-ins (before Covid-19 pandemic) and by phone (during lockdowns and reduced social contact period 2020-21). In addition, TRP offered services of support, information and mediation with the Roma community for local service providers, including social work, education, and early help and children protection services.

The work of TRP involved regular contact and collaboration with a number of institutions for joint work in the areas of education, social care, community safety and law enforcement. These include Coventry City Council, Children and Social Care Services, education services, West Midlands and Coventry City Police. Coventry Law Centre and Coventry Independent Advice Service are as well long-term collaborators for TRP, offering expertise for legal advice services.

During the project years, TRP co-organised or supported the organisation of training and information events for statutory service providers; and social and cultural events for the community. These will be assessed further in the report, in conjunction with their role in achieving the two key project objectives stated above – capacity and capability building; and social inclusion for the Roma community.

3 | Methodology

Objectives

The evaluation study has been designed to meet the following objectives:

Obj. 1 - Accountability and performance measurement: Assess TRP performance against its initially set targets and goals, throughout the project course

Obj. 2 – Assessment of TRP contribution to outcomes and impacts on target population: Assess attainment of measurable outcomes and impacts that can be attributed to TRP interventions and actions in the Coventry-based Roma community

Obj. 3 - Assessment of effectiveness and efficiency: Identify project measures and interventions that yielded best results and should thus be prioritised in defining future strategic directions for TRP activities.

Approach

A Results-Based Management (RBM) framework (Fig. 1) has been used as an overarching framework within which an impact evaluation study has been conducted by linking the funded project and its design to results and impacts on the target population. This approach has thus enabled a joint assessment of:

- performance, appropriately linking between inputs and resources invested on the one hand and outputs and outcomes on the other;
- impacts on target population (the Coventry-based Roma) specifically linked to programme design and activities; and
- the value of the project by gauging the contribution specifically made by the project to the said impacts on the community; and indicating which resources have been most effectively and efficiently invested to reach the objectives.

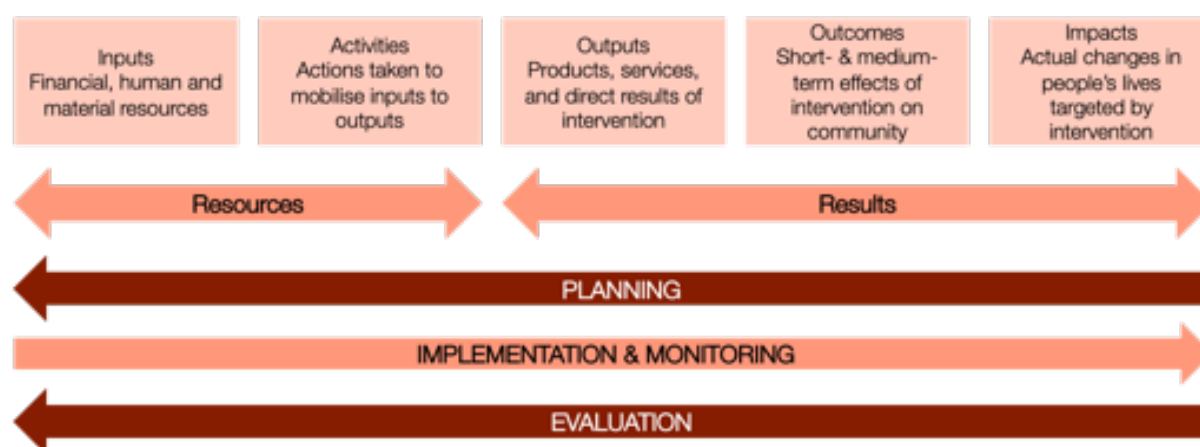


Figure 1. RBM results chain framework used in planning, monitoring and evaluation

The project logframe

The evaluation design is centred on the theory of change, designed around the programme logical frame (or logframe). The logframe establishes the causal links among inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts and enables the logical definition of evaluation indicators and associated means of verification.

The project logframe has been designed for this study in a way that does not change the information provided in the project proposal, but rather meant to provide a broader and more comprehensive container for assessment. The logframe was designed using the objectives and outcomes listed in the project initial proposal as a basis, and comprehensively and systematically expanding these in dialogue with Roma Project staff. The logframe was thereafter used as a comprehensive framework within which the evaluation study has been conducted.

As can be seen in *Annex 1*, the logframe defined relationships between the project inputs (resources) and activities on the one hand, and the targeted outputs, outcomes and impacts on the other. The logframe design also dictated the way this report is organised among the five areas of analysis, as follows:

- the relationship between Project objectives and the Problem statement, or issues experienced by the Roma community, which suggests the extent to which the project was useful and relevant for the community [report section on project *Relevance*]
- the relationship between targeted and achieved outputs and outcomes, respectively [section on project *Effectiveness*]
- the relationship between inputs and activities on the one hand, and outputs and outcomes on the other [section on project *Efficiency*]
- the contribution of outcomes to long-term impacts on the beneficiary community [section on *Impacts*]
- the cyclic relationship between outcomes, impacts and the initial project objectives and responding to community issues and problems, with a view to long-term sustainability [section *Sustainability*].

Data sources and primary data collection

Based on the logframe definition and the five dimensions of analysis,

The study was guided by a detailed research design that interpreted the main components of the project logframe as described above. Data sources included:

- Primary data collection, which generated data from three categories of respondents: The Roma Project staff and members of Board of trustees; representatives of the public sector and statutory service providers in Coventry; and members of the Roma community in Coventry.
- Documentation regarding project activities and progress has been consulted as part of the process, including data on community meetings and consultations, board meeting minutes,

and previous years project reports. An important source of information came from AdvicePro, the case management software used by The Roma Project to keep track of its casework.

Primary data was collected by means of interviews and a survey distributed as follows:

The Roma Project staff and Board of Trustees: Interviews with The Roma Project staff (n=2) and members of the Board (n=2) have been conducted to understand the aims, activities and results of The Roma Project during the funding years; map the activities of the Board and the progress done towards reaching out to the targets set in the project.

Statutory service providers were sampled in relation to the service areas essential for the Roma community and included: Early Help and Child Protection services; Coventry Law Centre; and Broad Street Hall in Foleshill. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews that solicited information about the Roma community in Coventry and respondents' views about the activities, outputs and outcomes attributed to The Roma Project interventions and services.

The Roma community: A community survey was distributed which had 50 responses. The survey included fields on socio-demographics (see socio-demographic patterns in Annex 2), life in Coventry, confidence and well-being, social inclusion; use of TRP services and satisfaction; and life after Brexit and under the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, two interviews were carried out with Roma young women - a beneficiary category of particular importance for the project.

4 | Key findings

The main results of the evaluation study are introduced in this section, discussed across five dimensions:

- 1 **Relevance:** the extent to which the project design and the activities are appropriate to the issues and needs addressed.
- 2 **Effectiveness:** the extent to which project targets (outputs and outcomes) have been reached.
- 3 **Efficiency:** the means of achieving outputs and outcomes (how?), efficient management and use of resources and planned activities, and the degree of engagement of the beneficiary community.
- 4 **Impacts on beneficiary community:** project contribution to long-term and wider impacts on the beneficiary community.
- 5 **Sustainability:** degree of sustainability of project outcomes and impacts and measures taken towards sustainability.

4.1 Project relevance

How relevant are project activities for the beneficiary community?

Evolving needs of the Roma community

The members of the Roma community that are most in need of TRP services are the newly arrived, coming from Eastern Europe and lacking knowledge of the local system, language and customs. Their needs at this stage are ample, from finding a house to securing employment, completing tax returns, registering for healthcare services or registering children to school. From the 50 survey respondents, 22 had come to Coventry in 2019 or afterwards; many of them stated that they asked TRP for support several times per month, weekly and sometimes even more often, for a variety of issues regarding their lives in a new city and country.

In time, reliance on TRP decreases. Many Roma become autonomous and only ask TRP for help on issues that they still cannot handle on their own, for instance submitting benefits claims, which requires good knowledge of the laws and entitlements of a UK resident, as well as good English language skills and digital literacy. It is this bundle of skills, or rather its absence, which makes some Roma continuously dependent on TRP, even after 5 years or more, for completing forms and claims such as benefits and tax returns.

During the funded project duration (2018-21), the issues experienced by the Roma have been exacerbated by changes in the local socio-economic and political environment, especially caused by Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic (see field *Contextual factors* in Annex 1). Confusion about Brexit continued to affect the Roma, and there was an influx of new families arriving before January 1st 2021, the end of the transition period. The newly arrived as well as the ones already

settled were equally confused about their rights and the forms they had to complete for securing UK residence. Moreover, in 2021 people continued to come to the UK not knowing they could not live and work in the UK without a visa.

A similar confusion surrounded the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected people in many ways. First, the Roma were reportedly very prone to disinformation, and stories about the political “making” of the virus were widely spread in the community. Second, this meant they were not taking adequate protective measures, thus being at high risk of infection. Transmission was also higher among the Roma extended families that lived under the same roof. Third, this affected them financially, many Roma lost their job or worked in reduced capacity, which affected the family income.

There are however also positive developments to be considered among the contextual factors that affect the needs of the Roma community. For instance changes in attitudes towards education and the role of women in the family and with respect to education and work. This is due to a great extent to Roma children growing up and being educated in the UK, often acting as mediators among the socio-cultural reality of their family and that of Coventry.

Relevance of project objectives

As detailed in the logframe (see field *Problem statement* in *Annex 1*), the project designed its two key objectives around two clusters of issues experienced by the Roma community:

- 1 Lack of capacity and capability regarding life in the UK, access to statutory services, education and jobs, which also affected their living standards
- 2 Facing social and economic exclusion, often due to Roma missing vital information about the services they have right to access, the means of accessing them and their rights and obligations as citizens.

Thus, the project was designed to: 1) Build capacity and capability among the Roma; and 2) Support social inclusion. The two objectives have been found to be relevant for the issues experienced by the Roma community throughout the past years, as indicated by the high take up of The Roma Project services specifically focused on areas where the Roma lack legal capabilities and knowledge of the local socio-economic system (such as filling out forms for tax return and benefit claims). This is corroborated by AdvicePro data, where the top 3 issues solved by casework were: information and help with filling forms for benefits; EUSS applications and related immigration issues; and housing.

The community survey confirms as well that there was a high reliance on TRP for Brexit issues: 74.5% of respondents confirmed that TRP helped them understand their rights after Brexit, assisted them to fill out documents and forms and/or their (pre-)settled status applications. In addition, many people relied on TRP for help during the Covid pandemic – survey data indicates that as many as 52% asked TRP for help on Covid-related issues at least once. And 28% respondents contacted TRP for help five times or more during the pandemic.

Relevance of project approach and activities

To assess the relevance of the project approach and activities, it is useful to look at Roma community needs through a double-sided lens:

- 1 in relation to issues and matters that require quick response or fixing; and
- 2 in connection to the Roma's capacity to tackle these issues on their own.

In other words, the Roma need support for solving issues in their day to day life and access to services, especially when they first settle in the UK, or during the first years. But they also need to build capacity and capability to be able to respond to these problems on their own.

The approach of TRP has been designed to answer to Roma needs in these two ways, with a focus on the first needs area: Firstly, TRP has offered advice and support for the variety of issues met by the Roma, ranging from healthcare to benefit claims. The casework amounts to the bulk of TRP resource investment, for a total 5,033 cases throughout the 3 project years. Apart from the casework, TRP attempted to contribute as well to building competences among the Roma. They did so firstly by taking an approach to casework by which clients were provided with advice and asked to solve the issue on their own, rather than doing it for them. As TRP staff interviewed revealed, this was not always possible, as some of the actions (such as filling a tax return or benefit claim) required a set of skills not possessed by Roma, especially when they first came. Building these skills takes time, and oftentimes case workers could not assist them directly in the skills building process, especially where it required lengthy, systematic support (such as computer us skills).

Second, TRP organised events specifically directed at building capacity and capability among the Roma. While training and information sessions are potentially some of the most efficient means for building capability, staff consulted for this report remarked that the number of training and information activities that could be delivered was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Restrictions on meeting meant that many initially planned sessions could not be delivered, and individual advice and support by phone became the norm. Still, some sessions could be organised. For example, TRP delivered a training session on Brexit for the Roma/Romanian Community, in partnership with the Law Centre Immigration Team. The aspects of the training session involved how they can apply for residence, what documents they need, how much time they have in order to apply, but also what will happen after the Brexit.

Furthermore, it is important to see the needs of the Roma community in a dynamic evolution, and look not only at how TRP met these needs by fulfilling the plans outlined in the project bid; but rather at how TRP managed to adapt proactively to newly arisen needs. The targeted response to the range of issues raised by Brexit and Covid-19 indicate that TRP has already incorporated a way of work that is sensitive to immediate community needs, adapting its offer to meet them as they evolve.

Project relevance | Key take aways:

The Roma Project has designed the Lottery-funded project in response to Roma community needs, in particular:

- 1 Lack of capacity and capability regarding life in the UK, access to statutory services, education and jobs, which also affected their living standards
- 2 Facing social and economic exclusion, often due to Roma missing vital information about the services they have right to access, the means of accessing them and their rights and obligations as citizens.

The study concludes that these needs are genuine, and TRP provided an essential service to the community, both Roma settled for many years and newly arrived in Coventry. Moreover, TRP continued to adapt its offer dynamically to meet community needs in real time, as issues related to Brexit and Covid-19 appeared and had to be attended to.

With respect to the approach and activities, the evaluation concludes that the project:

- Excelled at helping Roma people through reliable information and advice, assisting them to tackle problems they could not solve on their own, on a variety of help areas from EUSS applications to benefit claims and housing;
- Performed moderately with respect to building capabilities and enabling Roma to help themselves. TRP planned events specifically directed at building capacity and capability among the Roma, however the two years of pandemic meant that most of the sessions planned could not be delivered as scheduled, with the bulk of the staff time dedicated to casework for advice and problem-solving.

4.2 Project effectiveness

To what extent have the targeted project outputs and outcomes been achieved?

This section assesses the degree to which the project has met the outputs and attained to the outcomes it has initially targeted, for each of the two project objectives, dealing with 1) capacity and capability building; and 2) social inclusion respectively.

4.2.1 Progress towards capacity & capability building outputs | Objective 1

The initially targeted outputs for *Objective 1. Building capacity and capability in the Roma community* are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Initially targeted outputs for *Objective 1. Building capacity and capability*

Advice sessions by appointment and drop-ins delivered face to face and by phone

Advocacy, support and capacity building services offered covering various areas (legal support, education, jobs, housing, etc.)

Dedicated advice and support sessions for EUSS/Brexit-related via multiple means (phone, f2f, social media, web)

Dedicated advice and support sessions for issues related to Covid-19 pandemic via multiple means (phone, f2f, social media, web)

The progress towards targeted outputs has been assessed by looking at the activities delivered and their outputs, based on interviews with TRP staff and the Board of Trustees and yearly reports; and at the satisfaction with services seen through the eyes of the Roma community and local service providers.

Table 2. Key outputs achieved towards Objective 1. Building capacity and capability

- Advice sessions delivered 4days/week by appointment + 1 day drop-in, from CLC offices (Year 1 & 2); 6 days/week from Year 3, from Broad Street Hall [by phone during lockdown periods due to Covid-19 pandemic]
- 5,033 cases have been attended to during the 3 project years
- Key areas where support was sought (overall for the 3 project years): benefit claims (2,310 cases); EUSS and related immigration support (in excess of 829⁵); housing (310 cases); debt (236 cases); and employment (115 cases)
- Covid support cases: while not logged on AdvicePro, Covid-related information was provided to all clients asking TRP for help during the time of the pandemic. Additionally some clients referred to the TRP specific matters related to Covid-19, from information on protection and vaccination to job seeking during the pandemic.
- Capability building sessions for the community delivered: a training session on Brexit in partnership with the Law Centre Immigration Team for the Roma/Romanian Community.

The bulk of TRP activities is made of casework consisting of advice sessions and dedicated supported delivered on a case by case basis to the Roma and covering a very wide variety of areas. During project Years 1 & 2, advice sessions have been delivered 4days/week by appointment (from the offices of Coventry Law Centre) and 1 day drop-in (based at Foleshill Community Centre). In Year 3 TRP rented Broad Street Hall in Foleshill, closer to where a large percentage of the Roma community is based. In there they delivered services 6 days/week.

Services have been delivered face to face and by phone before the Covid-19 pandemic and an active presence on social media was maintained as well. The pandemic meant that for a long period of time (in particular April to September 2020), services could only be delivered by phone, email and via social media. The online and social media presence were intensified during this

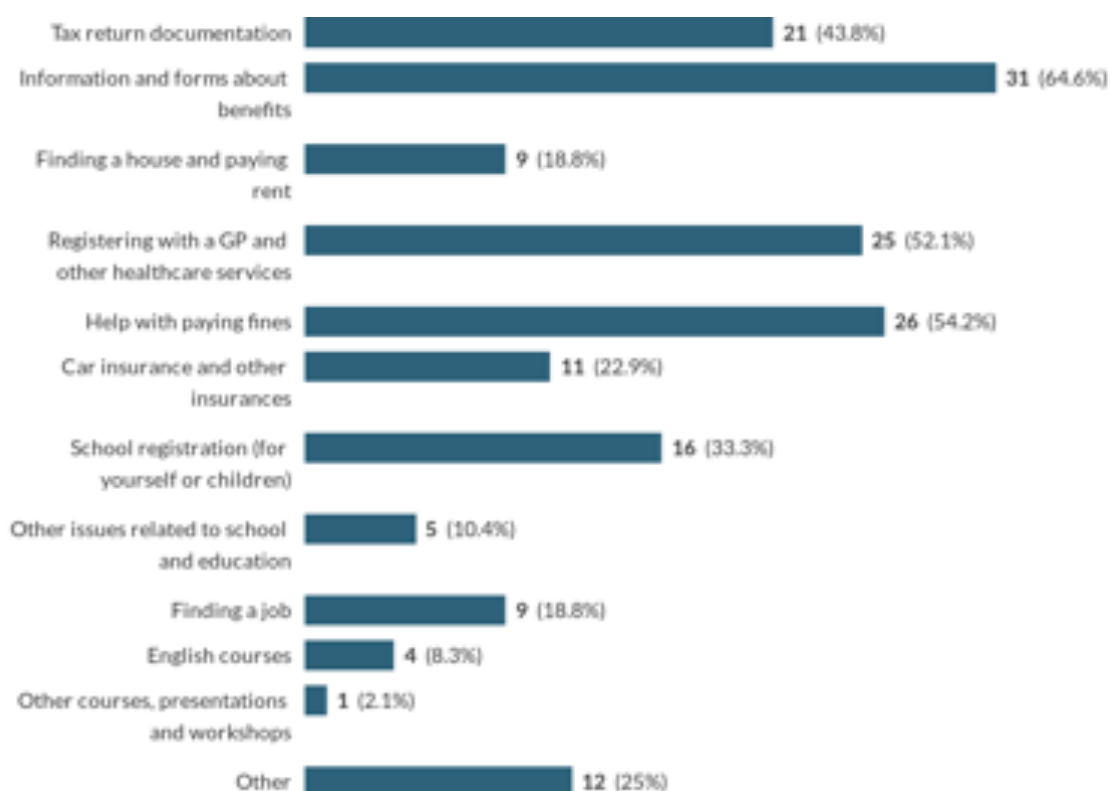
⁵ AdvicePro tracked 829 cases in which TRP offered support for immigration matters, including Brexit-related and EUSS applications. However, discussions with TRP staff revealed that the number of EUSS applications is actually higher, and given the amount of requests for help received by TRP within a short period of time, not all of these could be logged onto AdvicePro. Thus, the real number of EUSS applications supported by the TRP is actually in excess of 1,000 support cases.

period. When it was possible, TRP went back to a combination of face to face advice sessions with protective measures for Covid-19, and phone or social media support.

What sort of services do the local Roma most need from TRP?

According to the survey, the top five areas where the Roma ask TRP for help are:

- Getting information and filling forms about benefits (64%)
- Help with paying fines (54%)
- Registering with a GP and other healthcare services (52%)
- Tax return documentation and forms (44%)
- School registration for respondents and their children



Community survey: *Please mark all the types of services you have used from The Roma Project until now.* (multi-answer question)

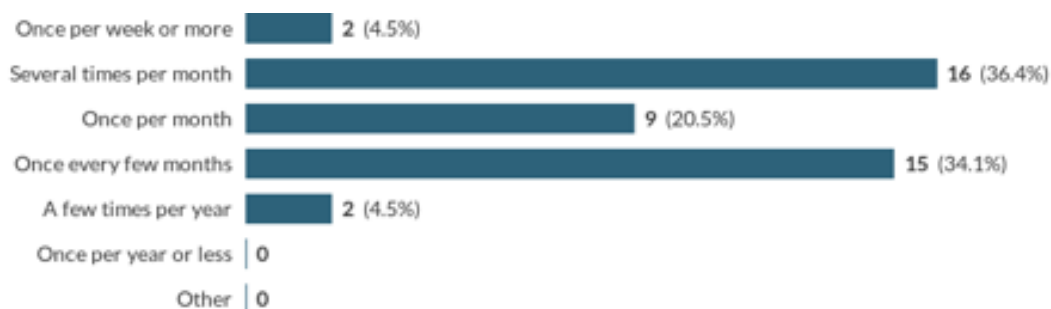
AdvicePro data indicates that **benefits are the number one reason for soliciting TRP help** (2,310 cases over the 3 project years); followed by EUSS and related immigration support (in excess of 829); housing (310 cases); debt (236 cases); employment (115 cases); and family-related issues (93 cases).

How often do the Roma ask for TRP services?

Most Roma get in touch with TRP immediately when arriving in Coventry, as incoming Roma usually have friends or family already in and TRP is very well known by the community. At the beginning, the range of services accessed from TRP is incredibly wide, as the people are not familiar with the local system and norms, and many speak little or no English. In time, community

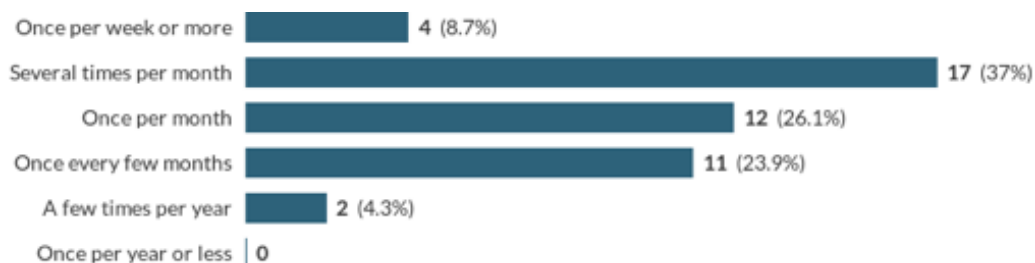
members familiarise themselves with the local system, brush up on their language skills and tend to rely less often on The Roma Project.

41% of survey respondents use Roma Project services several times per month or more. For Roma just arriving, in the first years of settlement, this figure is higher, up to weekly or several times per week. Survey results need to be read in conjunction with the fact that 25/50 survey respondents (50%) arrived in Coventry in 2018 or afterwards, thus many of them are still adjusting to local realities.



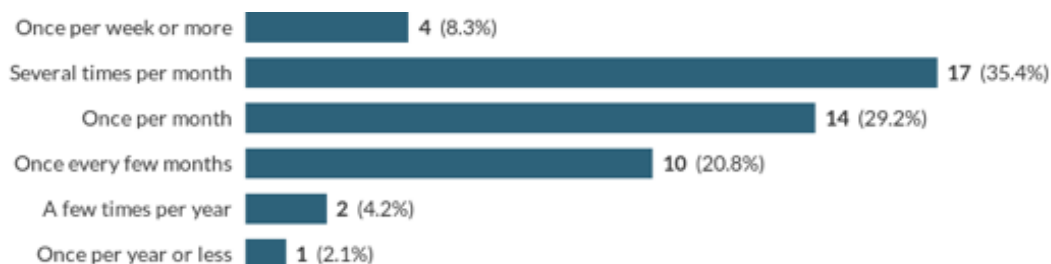
Community survey: *How often do you use The Roma Project services, on average?* (44 registered responses)

The survey also asked what type of services are most needed. **Advice seeking is the most sought after type of service**, with 37% Roma asking advice several times per month, and an additional 9% several times per week throughout 2021.



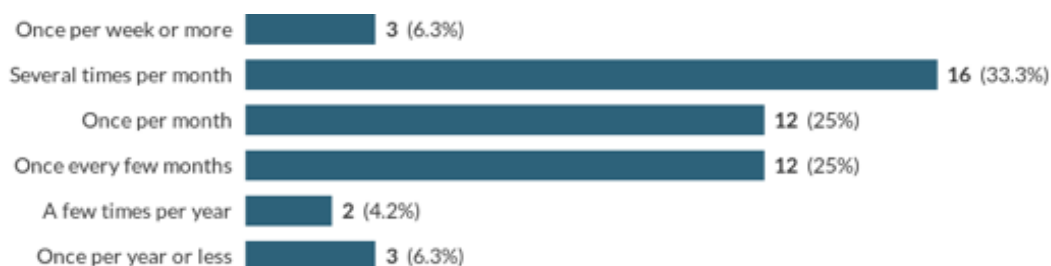
Community survey: *How often have you interacted with The Roma Project during the last year (2021) for the following issues? You got advice on an issue*

Next comes problem-solving, with 35% asking TRP to solve a problem for them several times per month, and an additional 8% every week or several times per week, throughout 2021.



Community survey: How often have you interacted with The Roma Project during the last year (2021) for the following issues? You solved a problem through The Roma Project

Roma also rely on TRP for mediation with local institutions, with 39% of Roma surveyed asking TRP for help several times per month or more throughout 2021.



Community survey: How often have you interacted with The Roma Project during the last year (2021) for the following issues? You got help to interact with local institutions

TRP services for Brexit-related issues

Lack of valid information about resident rights after Brexit and ensuing confusion were felt particularly strongly in the Roma community in Coventry. TRP helped with information provision, clarifications, and supporting over 829 Roma to complete their applications in the EU Settlement Scheme.



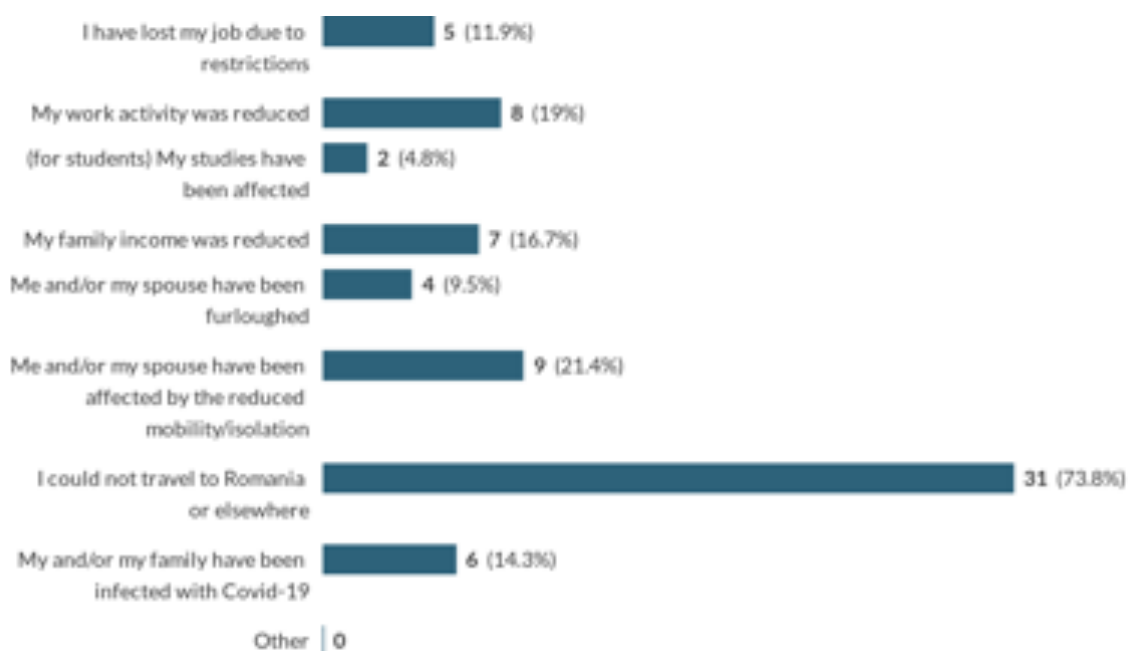
Community survey: How did The Roma Project help you with your UK residence after Brexit?

TRP services related to Covid-19 issues

As detailed above in the Background section, there was and still is a high level of disinformation with respect to Covid-19, in the Roma community. This includes conspiracy theories about the virus being invented for population control, and the purported risks of having a vaccine to protect against the virus. Spread of disinformation impacted heavily on the Roma's uptake of the vaccine, which remains low. Moreover, many Roma would not admit the gravity of the illness even when

faced with visibly life-threatening Covid-19 forms in their families, which in some cases led to serious health-related consequences.

According to the survey, for most Roma (74%) the most difficult impact of the pandemic had to do with the lockdown and the limits to travelling, which meant they could not visit family and friends in their home country, as they had been doing in previous years. Other negative impacts of the pandemic are associated with effects of prolonged lockdown and isolation and reduced work activity (19%) and income (17%).



Community survey: *How did the Covid-19 pandemic affect your life in Coventry?*

TRP has acted as adviser, support and mediator between the Roma and healthcare and social care providers in the city during the pandemic. A caseworker took the responsibility to act as Covid-19 advisor, and an information campaign on social media was launched, specifically for Covid-19 related information and support. A phone line was available for immediate advice and support for the Roma. TRP also organised Covid walkabouts, going about to listen in, understand Covid-related problems and sharing information with people on the streets in neighbourhoods with high Roma density.

More than a quarter (28%) of survey respondents asked TRP for help five times or more during the pandemic, strictly for pandemic-related issues. An additional 24% used TRP services a few times to get advice and support related to Covid-19.



Community survey: *How often have you asked The Roma Project for help, advice or information regarding Covid-19 related issues?*

How satisfied are the Roma with TRP services?

The Coventry-based Roma who have been consulted for this evaluation study unanimously expressed their satisfaction and most often gratitude for Roma Project services. For most Roma first arriving in the UK, TRP offers an essential form of support, helping them navigate a social, economic and cultural environment that they are unfamiliar with. 98% of survey respondents declare they are very happy with Roma Project services.



Community survey: In general, how happy are you with The Roma Project services?

4.2.2 Progress towards building capacity & capability outcomes

Table 3 lists the targeted outcomes for the first project objective. These are discussed further in relation to how the project contributed to:

- Increased confidence and capability for autonomous lives among the Roma
- Enabling Roma to become more autonomous and less reliant on TRP services
- Increasing life satisfaction and well-being among the Roma

Table 3. Initially targeted outcomes for Objective 2. Supporting social inclusion of the Roma

More Roma taking responsibility for their own lives – confident and capable to cope with everyday problems

Reduction in the number of Roma requiring specialist services as a result of this project

Increase in life satisfaction and mental well-being for the Roma

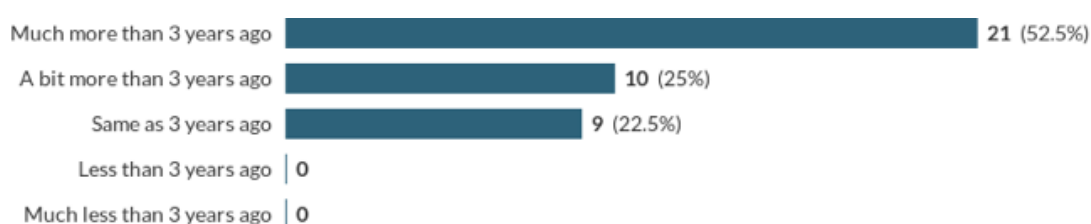
Increased confidence and capability for autonomous lives among the Roma

The survey measured how confident the Roma feel while interacting with statutory service providers. Answers reveal that **over 70% of respondents feel quite confident or very confident to interact with the following institutions** (see full answers in Annex 2):

- School (for respondents or their children) (85%)

- Police (85%)
- City hall and social services (93%)
- GPs and healthcare (92%)
- Law and legal services (71%)
- Paying and getting information about taxes (91%)
- The employer (81%)

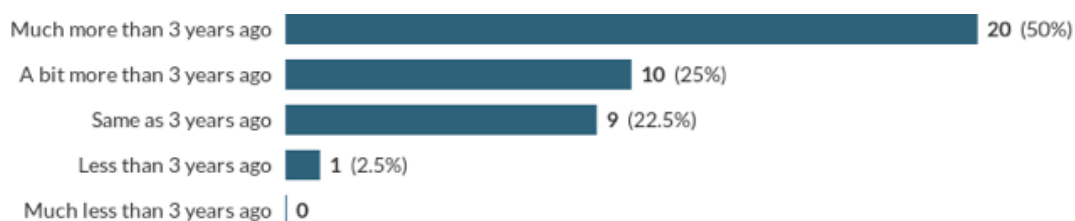
77.5% of the Roma surveyed feel *more* confident in interacting with authorities now, compared to 3 years ago. 52.5% consider they feel much more confident when they interact with local authorities and service providers, and an additional 25% feel a bit more confident.



Community survey: *Please mark the statement that best describes your current experience, as compared with 3 years ago (2018) or before. I feel more confident when I interact with local authorities and service providers.* (40 registered responses)

75% of the Roma surveyed consider they can make themselves understood much more or a bit more than 3 years before. 75% think they are much more or a bit more confident to access institutions they did not dare to access before [see full answers in Annex 2].

The same pattern is seen in confidence levels for their day to day life. **75% of the Roma feel a bit or much more confident in their day to day life conduct in Coventry.**



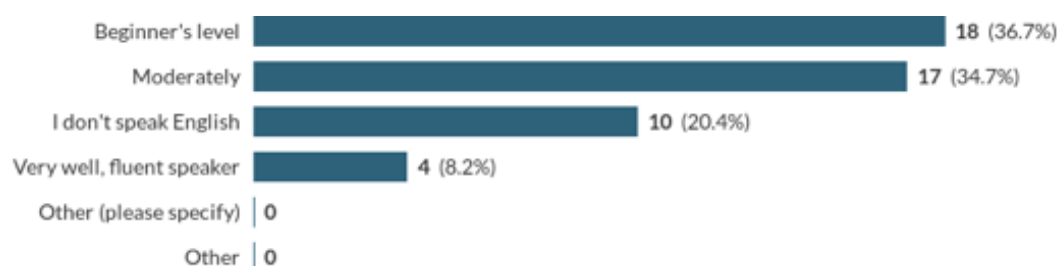
Community survey: *Please mark the statement that best describes your current experience, as compared with 3 years ago (2018) or before. I feel more confident in my day to day life.* (40 registered responses)

Through qualitative data, we looked at the factors of influence for the reasonably high confidence levels among the Roma suggested by the community survey and the high self-perceived capabilities. The key competences required to live an independent life in Coventry include a combination of skills (English language and digital literacy in particular) and knowledge (in particular knowledge of the local laws, regulations, and the system especially the welfare, healthcare and education system). Among trustees of the Board and service providers, there is

agreement that local Roma have indeed made progress in building these competences. A member of the TRP Board of Trustees remarked:

The improvement in English language skills and the understanding of the UK law and welfare, tax and local authority rules have all been significant in helping the Roma Community support themselves.

However, the community still encounters issues and competence gaps. In particular, and despite good progress for many age groups, **English language competence** has been found to be still an issue among the Roma surveyed. 20% spoke no English, and 36% spoke only basic English. English levels were found to be low in particular among newly arrived Roma (in 2019 and after), among elderly people or among housewives. Evidence from interviews suggests that elderly Roma often rely on their children to get by, and because their interactions stay firmly within Roma community boundaries, they do not see the need to learn English. Employment is a reliable indicator also for the willingness to learn English, even for Roma who came to the UK into adulthood.



Community survey: How well do you speak English?

Progress towards autonomy from Roma Project services

The pattern revealed by the survey and interviews in both the community and with service providers suggests that **TRP services are essential when the Roma first arrive in Coventry**. While being helped by TRP on matters ranging from access to healthcare to paying taxes, most Roma also learn how to deal with these matters on their own. For example, a member of the TRP Board of Trustees remarked:

The work being dealt with by the Project is now less based on issues caused by the communities lack of understanding of how to live within the UK, ie, less minor breaches of the law for traffic offences such as no tax or insurance which was previously based on a lack of knowledge rather than a criminal intent. (Interview, community worker)

This is corroborated by the survey, which suggests that **the Roma have made progress in interacting directly with a series of service providers and institutions** where they had required support from The Roma Project in the past. For example: many Roma ask TRP to facilitate access to register with GPs since first coming to Coventry; in January 2022 when the survey was administered, 92% of respondents said they interacted confidently with GPs with no additional support.

Similarly, filling forms for taxes, self-employment and the like is one of the areas for which the Roma tend to rely heavily on TRP when they first arrive in Coventry. 72.5% of the Roma surveyed consider they are much better or a bit better able to fill out and submit legal forms and documents. A survey respondent remarked:

I no longer ask Roma Project for help for any letter I get. I can tell whether this is something important or not.



Community survey: *Please mark the statement that best describes your current experience, as compared with 3 years ago (2018) or before. I manage to fill out and submit legal forms and documents (such as self-employment, taxes etc).* (40 registered responses)

The claims above are corroborated as well by a decrease in the number of cases logged through AdvicePro. The number of cases attended to (5,033) is comparable to the ones logged for the 3-year Metropolitan project (5,482 cases), however since the former include ‘crisis cases’ (related to Brexit and Covid-19), then we are dealing with an actual decrease in the number of cases processed throughout the 3 project years.

At the same time, there are still **people who continue to depend on TRP** and cannot make a definite move towards independent, autonomous life. For instance, two survey respondents mentioned “For taxes, I always ask Roma Project for help.” Also, when asked to name 3 activities for which the support of The Roma Project was important in the past, but which you can now manage on your own, just 16 out of the 50 respondents mentioned some areas they can handle independently. These include:

- Banking and paying utilities and Council Tax
- Finding a job or a rented accommodation
- School registrations and interactions

We have asked survey respondents to mark the areas where people consider TRP essential and they cannot attend to on their own. The answers offer a very mixed view of needs including reliance on TRP, with most mentioned areas being: claiming benefits, especially Universal Credit, whose application procedure is considered daunting for many; tax return; EUSS registration. There are still reasonably high numbers of Roma relying on TRP for what can be considered more minor operations, such as paying fines and utilities.

The study findings suggest that **the main factors affecting continued dependency on The Roma Project**, where this is present, include:

- Lack of digital literacy coupled with lack of legal capabilities and the perceived difficulty of forms to fill for taxes, benefits and the like

- Low levels of English language competences
- Lack of confidence in their own capacity to “do things right” in a system that they still do not fully understand

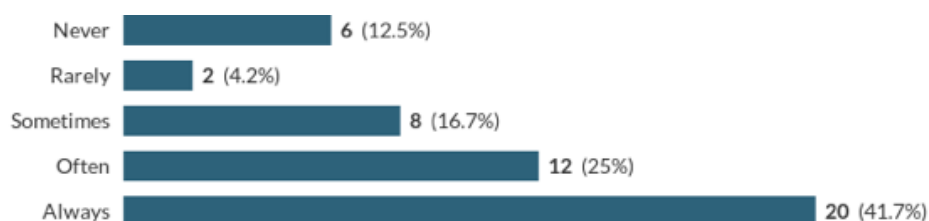
Increase in life satisfaction and mental well-being for the Roma

Close to **98% of survey respondents** are quite happy or very happy with their life in Coventry.



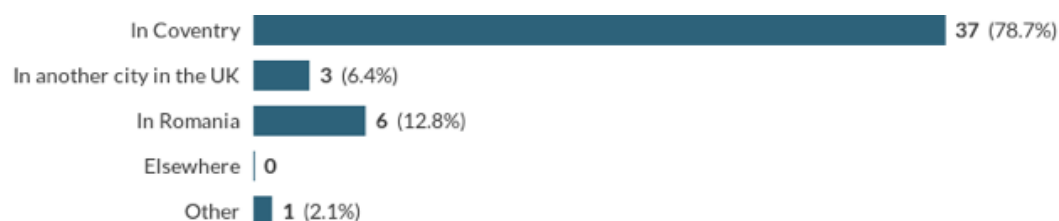
Open ended survey answers about what they were most happy with in their Coventry-based life revealed a pattern of appreciating in particular: employment and pay (most mentioned), education for themselves and/or for their children, the fairness of the social system, the healthcare system, life conditions, the city parks and green areas and the overall society in Coventry. Tolerance and lack of discrimination against the Roma or Romanians was in particular appreciated by some.

Almost 67% of survey respondents declare they feel at home in Coventry. Though there is a 16% of the Roma surveyed who rarely or never feel at home in Coventry. The tendency is for the Roma who have been in Coventry for at least 5 years (arrived before 2017) to feel at home.



Survey statement: I feel at home in Coventry.

Coventry is also the city where almost 79% of respondents see themselves in the future. Likewise, the majority of these have been settled in Coventry for 5 years or more.



Survey question: Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

To measure well-being, the survey employed the **Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale**, the 7-items short version (See Annex 2 for full results). A baseline was not available for the cohort

of Roma surveyed, thus the study measured the state of well-being at the moment of administering the survey rather than an increase. Respondents have been asked to mark how they had been feeling about each statement throughout the last 2 weeks.

The results portray a remarkably positive mindset and level of well-being among the Roma, with generally over 70% declaring that during the past 2 weeks they had been often or always:

- Feeling optimistic about the future (75%)
- Feeling useful (78%)
- Feeling relaxed (76%)
- Dealing with problems well (91%)
- Thinking clearly (89%)
- Feeling close to other people (89%)
- Been able to make their own minds about things (98%)

Progress towards capacity building outcomes | Key take aways:

- The levels of confidence and self-perceived capability to deal with matters of daily life and access to mainstream services are reasonably high among the Roma, and these go up the more they have been settled in Coventry
- Roma's levels of well-being among the people surveyed are high, with the items scoring highest with respect to independent decision-making, problem-solving, thinking clearly and feeling close to other people.
- The number of Roma who rely on TRP for solving daily matters decreases proportionately with the time spent in Coventry; however, some dependency on TRP continues to exist even for long-term residents
- The capability areas that need to be cultivated to decrease reliance on TRP include:
 - English language classes especially for people over 50 and unemployed; women not in employment; and the Roma arrived in Coventry after 2019; and
 - digital literacy classes, particularly for people over 50.

Remaining challenges

TRP has already started shifting the optic from a firefighting approach to tackle building capacity and autonomy among the Roma. However, the restrictions associated with Covid-19 meant that very few capability-building sessions could be delivered during the project duration; and community needs around Brexit required an additional high investment by TRP to help with the EUSS and related. To expand on this approach, TRP needs to have resources above those required to serve the community's most immediate needs.

4.2.3 Progress towards social inclusion outputs

The initially targeted outputs for Objective 2. Fostering social inclusion in the Roma community are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Initially targeted outputs for Objective 2. Fostering social inclusion

Organised/delivered meetings, workshops and informative sessions for service providers

Service providers trained/informed on Roma culture and issues

Delivered mediation and interpretation services for statutory service providers interacting with the Roma community

Cases of conflict mediated

Social gathering and cultural events organised

Table 5 lists the key activities delivered by TRP for supporting Roma inclusion.

Table 5. Delivered activities and outputs | Objective 2. Fostering social inclusion

Information and advice, community mediation and interpretation for service providers

- Roma community consultations for the NHS (Y1; Y2); informative sessions for social workers at the Early Help and Child Protection Dpt. (Y3)
- Cases of conflict mediated involving Roma families and children, for the Early Help and Child Protection Dpt.
- On-going collaborations with Coventry City Council, Coventry City Council's Directorate, education services, Children and Social Care Services, West Midlands and Coventry City Police

Institutional collaborations and partnerships to offer joint services for Roma & Romanian people

- Continued: Coventry Law Centre and Coventry Independent Advice Service;
- New collaborations: New Start 4U CIC (joint help, support, information for Eastern Europe migrants); Romanian Consulate in Manchester

Social and cultural events organised

- Romanian Embassy visit to the Roma community (09/2019)
- Assistance with diaspora participation in Romanian presidential (11/19) and parliamentary elections (12/20)
- Collaboration with Belgrade Theatre and Coventry University for the exhibition *Generations*
- Book project on Roma children and climate awareness – Roma: Recycle-Reuse-Reimagine (Y2,3)

Information, advice and community mediation for service providers

One of the most significant activity lines for TRP regards the **support it offers to service providers** on several matters related to the Roma community. In general, this support takes the form of information and advice, or direct mediation between the providers and the Roma community, including translation and interpretation services. The key providers supported in this way include Coventry City Council, Coventry City Council's Directorate, education services, Children and Social Care Services, West Midlands and Coventry City Police.

These events are some of the most efficient means for lowering access barriers and building mutual trust between the Roma community and local service providers. For example, one of the members of the TRP Board describes an encounter between the Roma and West Midlands Police:

A Romanian speaking officer was able to directly present what it is like to be a police officer and to show that Police officers can be trusted and in fact, it is more than possible for the community to gain employment as a Police officer or within WMP. Years ago there was a real fear of the police whereas now they were fully engaged and clearly enjoying hearing direct from a Romanian speaking (although not Roma) officer. This was backed up with Covid vaccine staff also being present and having the opportunity to reinforce the positive messaging around getting vaccinated to the community. (Board of trustees member, interview)

TRP continued to offer information, advice and community mediation services for the Early Help and Child Protection Dpt. TRP helped social workers with direct community and/or conflict mediation services (see **Highlight story 1**). This is an on-going collaboration, and TRP was invited to present the work of the charity to social workers several times. A representative stated:

We did have The Roma Project in our team meeting recently. So that was really, really helpful. [...] Because I've always, I've always known about The Roma Project. But we're trying to raise awareness across the city and the other teams. (Interview, Early Help and Child Protection Dpt.)

Highlight story 1 | Conflict mediation for social workers

The Roma Project collaborated with the Early Help and Child Protection Department. For many years, one of the most sensitive areas where it offered support regards cases of conflict in the Roma community. A representative said:

[The Roma are] a very tightly knit community, who tend to stick together a lot. So that's it's a real benefit for us to work with the Roma project. So whenever we get any referrals in regarding Romanians, or gypsy Roma, we always link in with the Roma project.

Two cases of conflict mediation are recounted (slightly edited for conciseness):

Story case 1.

[In this case] we had a mother that was stabbed. And dad went on the run. He took children at school, he cleared the bank account, but it was intercepted before he could get anywhere. We had an armed guard at the hospital just in case of any repercussions. And we had a lot, a lot of family members gather at the hospital, and community, about 20. So the Roma project was really, really helpful in explaining to the community .. [to

wait patiently for an update]. At times, sometimes we struggle with Romanian interpreters, .. [and] the Roma project is quite helpful, sometimes at sourcing interpreters for us, or we have to outsource it as well.

Story case 2.

We recently had was a baby with a fractured skull. And there were three or four different versions of events from parents. And that sort of came in late on a Friday, so I messaged [the TRP project manager], and said, you know, can you support these parents over the weekend, because we've only got a skeleton crew on at weekends, just, you know, emotional support, just explaining to them the processes of child protection, which he did, and was absolutely brilliant. That was sort of out of hours, but they will go over and beyond, to help the families, to support them.

During the first and second project year, TRP organised two community consultation meetings for the NHS, in which The Roma Project clients attended and provided support and assistance on how to improve the UK medical system.

Institutional collaborations and partnerships

Beyond work with service providers, TRP started or continued to collaborate with several third sector and public organisations to deliver better services to the Roma community. They continued the long-term collaboration with Coventry Law Centre and Coventry Independent Advice Service to improve the quality of their legal advice services. In 2019, they started collaborating with New Start 4 U CIC, a Career Development and Learning Centre, established in 2014 to help European Migrants who have settled down in the UK with all aspects of everyday life. The Roma Project supports New Start 4 U CIC during its events as open day and advises their clients. Clients' New Start 4 U CIC, who need more specific advices connected with law, tax etc., are sent directly from New Start 4 U CIC to The Roma Project.

The Romanian Consulate in Manchester invited TRP to its offices in Manchester at the beginning of 2019 to discuss about the new consular services they offer in Manchester and how they can refer people to TRP, starting a new solid collaboration to improve the outreach and quality of services for Roma and Romanian communities.

Social and cultural events involving the Roma community

As one representative from the Coventry Law Centre remarked, *"the approach of regularly celebrating the community and providing hospitality when bringing people together I think is a very positive one for reinforcing the confidence of individuals within it and the community as a whole."* Still, event organisation was challenging during the lockdown period, and many had to be postponed. Some of the events organised by TRP despite the challenges celebrated Romani culture, provided occasions for social gathering and cultural exchange and tried to cultivate a civic spirit among the Roma. Examples are given below, and a highlight story described in Highlight y.

Mediation with home country and culture: TRP has continued to facilitate events and activities that connect the local Roma (as well as the Romanian) community with people and realities from their home country. In September 2019 TRP organised a visit from the Romanian Embassy

officials together with the Romanian Minister of the Romanians Living Abroad, aiming to strengthen and enhance their partnership and to help them provide more support to the Roma community by offering assistance with travel documents and passports. As one of the Board members mentioned, *“the links with the Embassy have been immensely useful in messaging and interaction with the community.”* This collaboration was also used (and strengthened) by the TRP when it offered assistance for the participation of Coventry-based diaspora in the Romanian presidential (11/2019) and parliamentary (12/2020) elections.

Celebrating Roma culture: Events were planned that encouraged the community to celebrate, or showcased Roma culture to other communities in Coventry. Some of these events had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The 10-year anniversary of The Roma Project was postponed to 11/2021, and featured among the guests Romanian Embassy officials, along with Coventry Mayor and Council officials, the West Midland Police officers, and TRP partners.

The contributions that TRP and its Board made to the Coventry City of Culture events led to better awareness of the Roma and their culture. A number of recent articles in Coventry Telegraph provided further visibility to these initiatives.

Highlight story 2 | Exhibition *Generations*

The Roma Project collaborated with Belgrade Theatre and Coventry University (Centre for Dance Research) to organise the exhibition *Generations*, which offered one rare glimpse into the Roma community through an artistic lens. The collaboration was initiated by Dr. Rosemary Cisneros, a researcher, dance artist and activist, and also member of the TRP Board of Trustees. Dr. Cisneros had been previously involved in organising another celebratory photography exhibition for the Roma community, titled *Family matters* and exhibited at The Herbert in 2015.

The exhibition *Generations* was launched online in April 2021, based on a Roma Family Photo Shooting Exhibition conducted in February 2020. Its physical launch had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The exhibition aimed to create awareness of the Roma community, and put the basis for more dialogue among the Roma and other Coventry-based groups. Rosa Cisneros of the Roma Project and a research artist at C-DaRE said: *“This is the first time a major cultural heritage organisation like the Belgrade Theatre has opened its doors to the Roma community in Coventry. We are so excited to collaborate and to co-create meaningful work that offers a counter-narrative to common misconceptions.”*

Learn more: Belgrade Theatre website <https://www.belgrade.co.uk/stories/generations-online/>

Coventry Telegraph <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/rare-snapshot-life-inside-coventrys-18365605>

Civic and environmental engagement

The charity and its Board of Trustees were involved in initiatives for cultivating a spirit of civic engagement and an increase in environmental awareness among the Roma. One such project is *Urban Village: The Roma's Allotment Project*, run between March and July 2020 (see Highlight Story 3).

Highlight story 3 | Urban Village: The Roma's Allotment Project

The *Urban Village* project aimed to bring together Roma and non-Roma to collaborate in the creation of a short film, photographs and a digital scrapbook exhibition as platforms for the Roma to give voice to their experiences and represent their identity. The project was run between March and July 2020 in partnership between The Roma Project, the University of Warwick's Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies (CCMPS) and Coventry University's Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE).

The outcomes of *Urban Village* included an online exhibition staged in collaboration with the Belgrade Theatre, which included the screening of the movie produced in the project and a panel discussion with the participation of [Roma Project](#) Manager Bernie Flatley, Coventry University ([C-DaRE](#)) researcher Rosa Cisneros, Warwick University ([CCMPS](#)) researcher Dr Heidi Ashton, Maria Polodeanu of [Reel Master Production](#), and Belgrade Theatre Co-Artistic Director for City of Culture 2021, Balisha Karra. ([read more about the exhibition on the Belgrade Theatre website](#)).

Learn more

See the [project description on the TRP website](#)

View the [co-created digital scrapbooks](#).

View Roma artist [Laura Tranca's exhibition](#).

Some initiatives have been driven by very active members of TRP and its Board. One of these is the book project *Roma: Recycle-Reuse-Reimagine*, which aimed to spread awareness about the Roma and their culture; while engaging different Roma generations (children in particular) with issues of climate awareness and environmental care. The case is described in **Highlight story 3**.

Highlight story 4 | Roma: Recycle, Reuse, Reimagine (RRRR)

The RRRR project had a twofold goal: to build knowledge and sensitivity about environmental protection and climate justice among the Roma while also spreading awareness about the Roma and their culture among the non-Roma. This was done by bringing Roma and non-Roma together in three workshops to discuss issues related to climate change and the environment, and brainstorm ideas for crafting a children's book. The book was shared with local service providers and schools, to help cultivate knowledge of and sensitivity towards the Roma.

The project was a Common Ground commission by Season for Change, a nationwide programme employing arts and cultural events to inspire climate action, supported as well by Arts Council England and Paul Hamlyn Foundation. It was run by TRP's Dr Rosemary Cisneros (member of the TRP Board of Trustees) in collaboration of Julie's Bicycle and Artsadmin, as well as other local stakeholders and community connectors. The project engaged fifty Roma community members as well as local schools and organisations. It produced six films and three children's books translated into several languages, including Romanian and Slovak Romanes.

[Learn more about the project](#)

4.2.4 Progress towards social inclusion outcomes

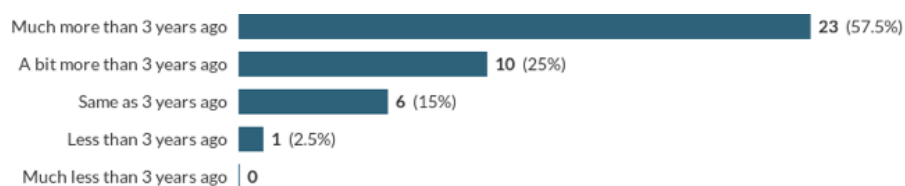
Targeted social inclusion outcomes included:

- More Roma feeling socially included and able to access mainstream services as a result of the project
- Increased knowledge and understanding of Roma-specific matters among local authorities and service providers

These have been assessed in relation to the way Roma community members themselves feel integrated in the city and aware of their rights and responsibilities as UK residents; but also with respect to how the local service providers look at Roma and approach interactions with the community.

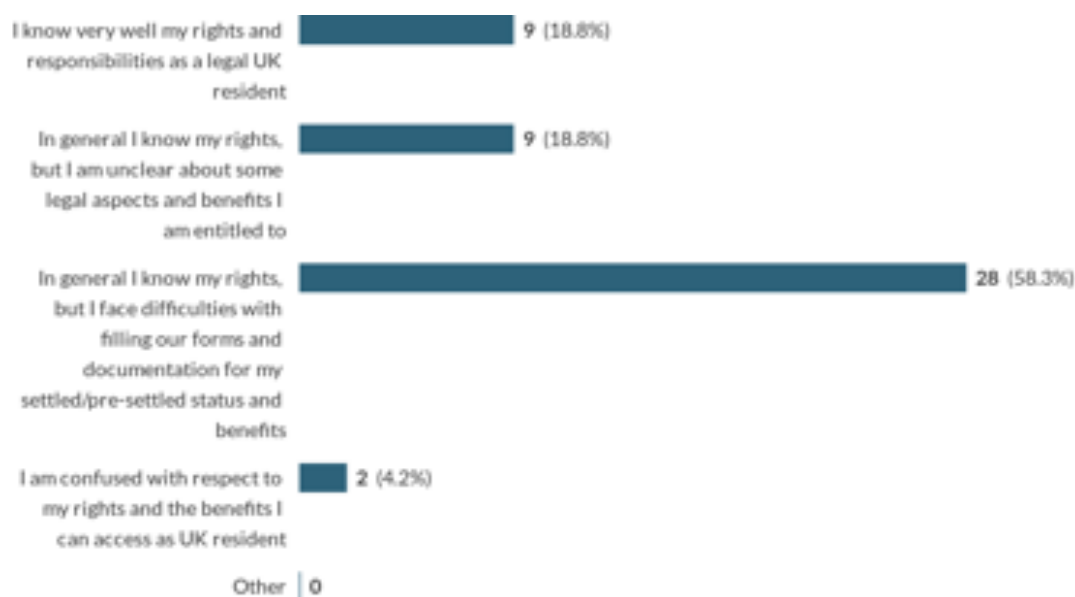
How aware are the Roma of their rights and responsibilities as UK residents?

The survey looked at the progress done by the Roma with respect to understanding their rights and responsibilities as UK residents. **82.5% of survey respondents consider they know better their rights as residents of Coventry than 3 years before** (out of which 57.5% think they know their rights *much* better).



Community survey: *Please mark the statement that best describes your current experience, as compared with 3 years ago (2018) or before. I know better my rights as a resident of Coventry.*
(40 registered responses)

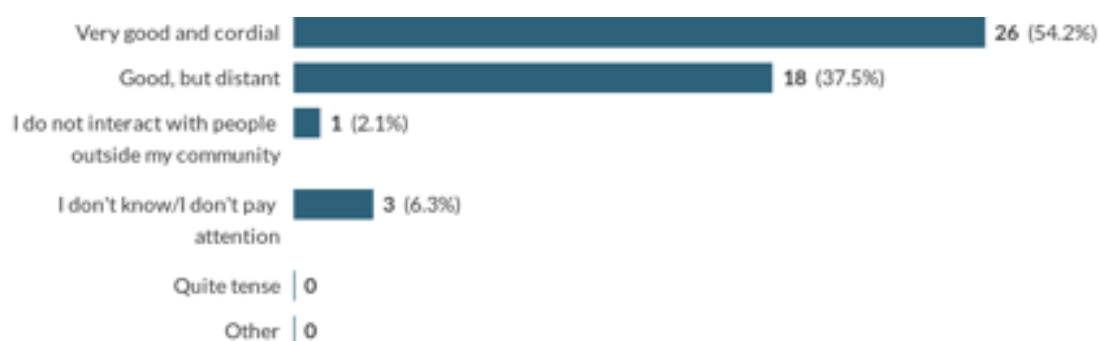
Brexit has caused much confusion among the Roma with respect to their rights and what they needed to do to continue to reside lawfully in the country. Survey results suggest that at the beginning of 2022 over half of the Roma surveyed (58%) were aware of their rights after Brexit, but they still faced difficulties with filling out forms for the EUSS scheme, benefits and the like.



Community survey: *How informed are you with respect to your rights and responsibilities as a legal UK resident, after Brexit?*

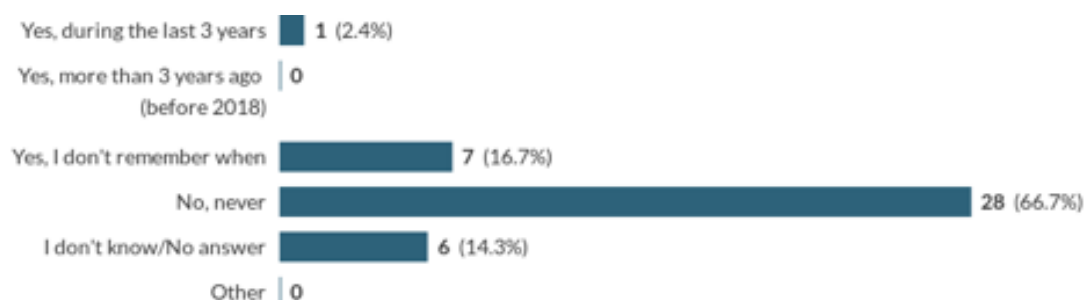
How socially included do Roma feel?

More than half of survey respondents appreciate relations with non-Roma to be very good and cordial; and 37% see them as good, but distant. It is interesting to note that just 2% declare they do not interact with people outside their community. This is important, considering that Roma are a community notoriously closed to the outside.



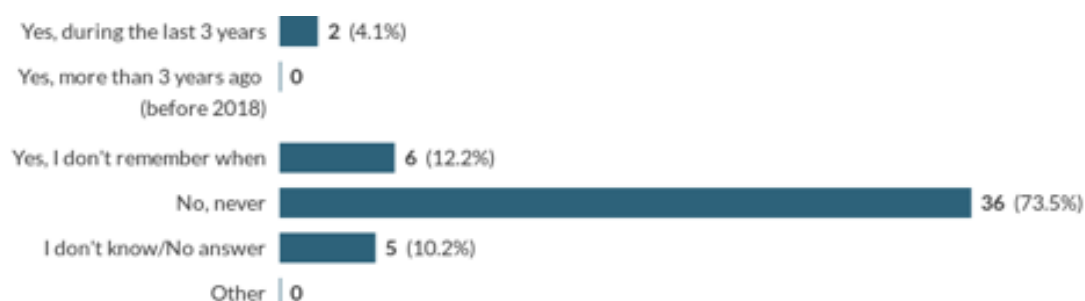
Community survey: *How would you describe the relationships with people in Coventry other than Roma or Romanian?* (48 registered responses)

Instances of discrimination are relatively rare, if we look at the survey. **Close to 67% report to have never met with discrimination in Coventry.** Still almost 1 in 5 respondents (19%) did face discrimination from Coventry people.



Community survey: *Have you ever felt discriminated by people in Coventry?* (42 registered responses)

This mirrors perceived discrimination from institutions, with **73.5 % of survey respondents saying they never felt discriminated by local institutions**, and 16% saying they have been discriminated either in the last 3 years, or at a time they cannot precisely remember.

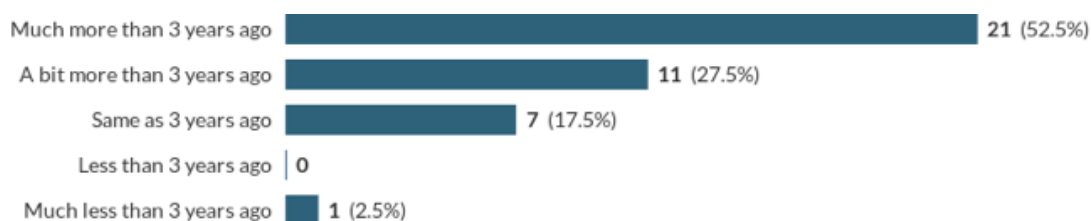


Community survey: *Have you ever felt discriminated in dealing with institutions and authorities in Coventry?* (49 registered responses)

How socially included do Roma feel compared with the time before 2018?

We have assessed as well the progress towards social inclusion throughout the last 3 years. This was important to gauge in relation to the impact of the Lottery-funded project, but also because both Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected interaction and relationships among people in the recent years.

80% of survey respondents said they feel much better or a bit better integrated in Coventry than 3 years before.

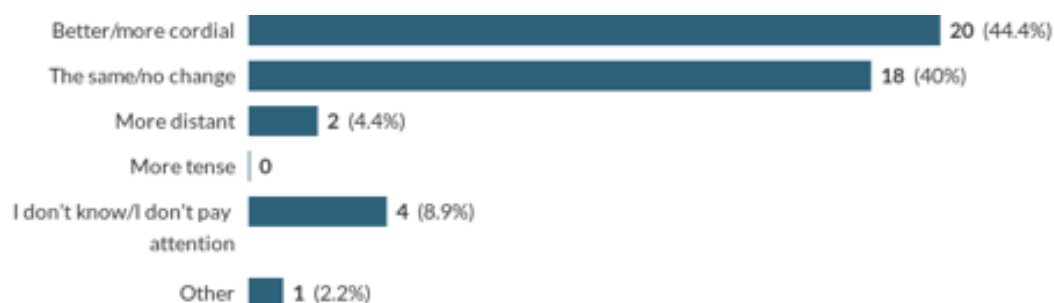


Community survey: *Please mark the statement that best describes your current experience, as compared with 3 years ago (2018) or before. I feel better integrated in Coventry.* (40 registered responses)

As already mentioned above, there is an encouraging pattern of Roma improving their confident approach and interaction with authorities and service providers compared with 3 years before:

- 77.5% of the Roma surveyed feel much more or a bit more confident when they interact with local authorities and service providers
- 75% can make themselves much better or a bit better understood when they interact with local authorities and service providers
- 75% manage much more or a bit more confidently relationships with institutions and organisations that I did not dare to access before

For 44%, relationships with non-Roma became better throughout the past 3 years. And only for 2 respondents relationships became more distant, something which may potentially be attributed to Brexit.



Community survey: *Compared with 3 years ago (before 2018) you would say that your relationship with people in Coventry are:...* (45 registered responses)

Increased awareness and understanding of Roma issues among service providers and third sector organisations

One of the targeted outcomes of the project was to increase knowledge and understanding of Roma-specific matters among local authorities and service providers. During the three project years, the TRP regarded collaboration with service providers as one of its top priority lines. As described in the Outputs section above, TRP has continued collaborations that have been on-going for years, with Coventry City Council, Coventry City Council's Directorate, education services, Children and Social Care Services, West Midlands and Coventry City Police. The evaluation captured the views of interviewees from West Midlands Police and Children and Social Care Services. In addition, it collected views on TRP contributions to raised awareness of Roma issues from Coventry Law Centre and Broad Street Hall community meeting hall.

The interviews confirm that the service of TRP has been valuable in mediating contact with the Roma and increasing awareness of Roma culture and community-specific issues among service providers. These results come from collaborations and partnerships built along many years of joint work to serve the Roma community. For example, a representative from the Early Help and Child Protection Department said:

I work in the West area's team, we have quite a large patch out of the four areas. So we don't get that many referrals in but when we do, they're pretty high level, and they're

quite complex. So I asked [TRP project manager] to come because there's five teams within this office. So I wanted to raise awareness that, you know, if you do need help and support that they are there for us. And the families, obviously.

The evaluation is limited in that the views of a broader range of service providers, including education providers, could not be included.

Progress towards social inclusion outcomes | Key take aways:

Social inclusion outcomes among the Roma community and with respect to cultural awareness among local service providers and third sector

- Local Roma are more aware of their rights and responsibilities as UK residents compared with 3 years before
- TRP contributed to tackling confusion and disinformation around Brexit, helping the Roma to become more aware of their rights and the practical steps they needed to take to continue to reside lawfully in the country, such as the completion of EUSS forms
- Instances of personal and institutional discrimination are in the minority, with 67% of people surveyed reporting to have never met with discrimination in Coventry and 73.5% having never faced institutional discrimination
- The community survey suggests that the majority of Roma feel better included in Coventry compared to 3 years before (80% of survey respondents said they feel much better or a bit better integrated in Coventry compared to 3 years before)
- The charity mediated contact and contributed to increasing awareness about the Roma and practical strategies for adequate socio-cultural interactions among the local service providers and third sector organisations.

4.3 Project efficiency

How efficient are the project approach and the means by which outputs and outcomes have been achieved?

The efficiency of the project is assessed by looking at project achievements set against the planning of activity and management of resources. Contextual conditions that affected the unfolding of project activities are also taken into account. As detailed in *Section 4.2. Project effectiveness*, The Roma Project reached out to its targeted outputs and outcomes related to the two driving objectives. They attained to set targets with respect to problem-solving and covering Roma needs (Obj. 1) and social inclusion seen through Roma's integration in the city and more confident access to mainstream services (Obj. 2); and had mixed results with respect to community capability building (Obj. 1), where there are still gaps.

Discussions with TRP staff and the Board revealed that the TRP strategic line by which priorities were set was dictated by a *Community needs first* approach; by which community members were assisted to solve their issues while being encouraged as well to learn to solve similar issues on their own in the future. A staff interviewed remarked:

"We tell clients how to solve an issue not solve the issue for them."

These results have been achieved with a rather scarce set of human resources – two case workers for community frontline interactions, supported for day to day tasks by a varying number

of volunteers (about 1 to 3 at any one time); and administratively and managerially by a project manager and a part-time administrator. As detailed in the list of outputs for each of the two objectives (see Tables 2 & 5), this small team attended to 5,033 cases throughout the 3 years, via multiple means of interaction, including advice sessions by appointments and drop ins (face to face or by phone), via social media and via the website. One of the two case workers became a dedicated Covid-19 adviser during the pandemic, and provided essential support for the community, whose members had to deal with a lot of misinformation about the pandemic, as detailed in the Background and context and Project relevance sections. The case workers' time was also to a great extent invested into assisting people with their EUSS applications (over 800).

Another decision that TRP took to increase its efficiency was to move its advice sessions closer to the community, by offering advice from Broad Street Hall, situated in Foleshill, where a big part of the Roma community is located (and especially Roma people in need of support). They also extended their availability for advice from 5 to 6 days per week.

Moreover, TRP invested in **staff training** to improve the quality of the services offered. Staff have been offered training in AdvicePro Case Management Software, and the case workers were also registered for a Level 4 NVQ Diploma in Advice and Guidance.

In conclusion, **project resources have been invested efficiently to provide just the kind of support to the Roma community that the project initially set out to** and which Roma people themselves needed; the number of people supported (often multiple times per week/month) and the high number of cases are indicative of the efficient coverage of needs with quite limited resources. This is arguably the right approach to take as TRP first has a mission to attend to Roma community needs, which have been expanded during the last 3 years due to contextual factors, especially Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, there is space for improvement, especially with respect to building capability among the Roma over the long term. To this end, **this study recommends that priorities for community capacity and capability building are set**, as much as possible ensuring that enough human and financial resources are freed from the casework, to attend to these.

4.4 Impacts on the beneficiary community

How are the activities, outputs and outcomes linked to longer-term and wider impacts on the beneficiary community?

This section assesses how the charity contributed to attaining to the impacts associated with the first objective (Capacity and capability building in Roma community) and second objective (Social inclusion of Roma community). This will involve looking beyond project-related outcomes, to the overall progress that the Roma community has done towards either building capacity for autonomous lives and social inclusion, over many years, and what role TRP played in facilitating these attainments.

4.4.1 Impacts - Capacity and capability building

The long-term strategic impact on the Roma community that TRP seeks to contribute to relates to **improved quality of life and empowerment of Roma community**, demonstrated by

- improved socio-economic standing, pursuit of education, revenue-making activities and employment in lawful ways;
- autonomous and confident conduct of day to day activities and access to statutory services;
- increase in mental well-being.

These are all measures of change that take years and decades to be achieved, and the Big Lottery funded project needs to be seen in this optic, as a contributor to this long-term change, but one that sought to make a difference at times of unprecedented challenge for the Roma and the Coventry people. Affected by the confusion caused around Brexit and the strict measures of isolation associated with containing the Covid-19 pandemic, it is indeed difficult to see 2018-2021 as three years of growth. Rather, the conditions would dictate that these be seen as years of coping, so it is necessary to consider to what extent we can see signs of strong community *resilience* manifesting among the Roma.

For each impact area, the study corroborated among the outcomes associated with Objective 1. Capacity-building in the Roma community, and interpreted them to shed light on the impacts that the TRP has made *overall* on the Roma during its service to the community. The interpretation spans two areas:

- measures of capacity and capability building related to access to education, employment and how these are reflected in better life standards;
- autonomous lifestyles and confident access to local services.

Improved access to education and employment

There is agreement among respondents that one of the areas where there is notable progress done by the Roma community is **education**. The interest in education manifested by the Roma in Coventry is not typical for this group, where mainstream education is underappreciated compared to ancestral traditions. Access to education is important for Roma children and young people, many of whom go on to prepare for skilled jobs – for most the first in their family to hold them. according to accounts, Roma girls in Coventry are encouraged by their families to continue studying more than in other Roma communities.

A social work representative mentioned:

I think we have more inclusion than we had in the past, definitely, there's been an improvement in that. You know, they are a very tight knit community who do all tend to support each other, we find that things have changed for the better. Parents are now encouraging the children to go to education. They know that they need an education, we're not seeing so many teenage pregnancies. Because, you know, that was quite the norm, some years back, that the teenagers would be pregnant quite early on, because that was the norm to sort of be married and pregnant at an early age, we're not seeing

so much of that anymore. That's seems to have been eradicated. I mean, most of them, you know, willing to work they want to work.

There was also progress with English language competences, as a Board member confirms:

The next generation children I have met speak excellent English and appear to be achieving great grades at school.

Access to employment has been greatly improved, and many Roma hold full-time jobs, more diverse than they previously used to hold (many of them were handling scrap metal collection especially when first settling in Coventry). The diversity and skill level of the jobs accessed stay however underdeveloped, and more could be done to enhance access to skilled jobs for the Roma. New generations of Roma children are likely to pursue more skilled occupations, but currently the jobs held continue to be as deposit operators, delivery drivers and the like.

I notice the parents no longer seem to be involved in collecting scrap metal and the majority seem to be holding down often two jobs, these are more mainstream employment opportunities and therefore are mixing more with the whole demographics of Coventry. This work however does appear to still be in the low skilled areas. (Member, Board of trustees)

There are however limits to these attainments. With respect to economic conditions, just two survey respondents own their house, and the rest live in rented accommodation. English language competences continue to be underdeveloped for some Roma, especially people who do not work and are above 50.

Autonomous lifestyles and confident access to statutory services

As reported above, **the Roma enjoy greater autonomy** in conducting they day to day activities and accessing statutory services. This results in particular from a better knowledge of the local system and rules, and is reflected in greater confidence levels, as indicated by interviews with Roma, service provider accounts and the Roma community survey. As a Board member remarked:

In every social event for the project I have attended the turnout of the Roma Community has been fantastic and there is now a confidence to approach me and speak to me rather than the timid and insular approach I had previously witnessed .., like they feel more confident in their selves and their right to be here.

One aspect of autonomy that we looked at regards **the degree of (in)dependence on TRP**, and in here data painted a mixed picture. On the one hand, TRP made a major and valuable contribution to supporting Roma to become autonomous, by helping them understand the local system, getting help and support when needed, and mediating with local authorities and service providers until Roma became able to do that for themselves. **The degree of autonomy in this respect tends to be directly proportional with time spent living in Coventry:** the more the Roma live in the city, the better able they are to live their lives independently and confidently.

At the same time, there continues to be a segment of the Roma community who are still dependent on TRP for a series of services, beyond the first years of accommodation. For instance, a local community worker mentioned:

Because the amount of people they see, there are a lot of people that are dependent on them still, and they haven't got that self-independence. But there are lots of the community that have come in and they've had to help and they've gone on to help themselves.

This dependency may cover different fields, but there are a few key ones, including benefit claims, self-employment and tax return. These are all activities that require reasonable knowledge of the local legal, welfare and tax system as applied to one's personal case; as well as digital literacy. Some people continue to rely on TRP simply because they can't handle the technology. Others are still lacking sufficient language skills. As advised above, **to move past TRP dependency, it is important to continue to cultivate these three sets of skills: knowledge of the local system; digital literacy and English language skills.** This is not a matter of offering these competence boosting services large-scale in the Roma community, but rather identifying the segments that need it, and offering them in a very targeted way.

4.4.2 Social inclusion impacts

The strategic impact related to Objective 2 has been analysed in relation to advances towards social inclusion made by the Roma community as well as the non-Roma and local service providers, with a focus on respecting Roma culture and traditions, spanning:

- civic engagement and endorsement of local values by Roma people;
- respectful attitudes and perceptions towards Roma among non-Roma and service providers;
- peaceful relations and on-going dialogue between Roma and non-Roma.

The analysis looked at these three points as a ladder going from:

1. an internalisation of local values by Roma people and exercise of civic spirit;
2. being met on the other side by respectful attitudes from both local people and service providers; and
3. leading to genuine intercultural dialogue.

While a comprehensive exploration of progress towards these targets would have required a larger scale study beyond the scope of this evaluation, the present study can offer a glimpse to the sort of progress that the Roma community has achieved during the past decade, with a focus on the past 3 years; and the role of TRP in this. It does so by corroborating among the evidence regarding achievement of outcomes for the second objective, which is detailed below.

The local providers consulted for the evaluation in general assessed positively the steps towards social inclusion done by Roma people in the city. While the number of providers interviewed was quite low, we asked respondents to make a general assessment going beyond their work remit, and we triangulated with data from TRP staff and Board interviews, and project yearly reports, for a rounded assessment.

The Roma, local values and steps towards civic engagement

One of the most interesting findings of an earlier impact assessment report produced for The Roma Project⁶ is the extent to which the Roma's levels of social inclusion are related to the degree of accepting the local value system. As argued in there, Roma interviewed at that point remarked how they have embraced local values regarding trustworthiness and hard work more than they would have done in Romania, simply because in the UK there was no way around it. In Romania, by contrast, there are well paved roads of going around and above the law, for people who have the right connections and cunningness to do so. This environment encouraged the sort of shrewd behaviour that the Roma interviewed realised it was not encouraged and not tolerated in the UK.

A social work representative mentioned:

I think we have more inclusion than we had in the past, definitely, there's been an improvement in that. You know, they are a very tight knit community who do all tend to support each other, we find that things have changed for the better. Parents are now encouraging the children to go to education. They know that they need an education, we're not seeing so many teenage pregnancies. Because, you know, that was quite the norm, some years back, that the teenagers would be pregnant quite early on, because that was the norm to sort of be married and pregnant at an early age, we're not seeing so much of that anymore. That's seems to have been eradicated. I mean, most of them, you know, are willing to work, they want to work.

The main vehicle for endorsement of local values is education. In this sense, the endorsement of local values flows backwards generationally, from Roma children to their parents. What was confirmed by the present study and the 2018 one is the degree to which the Roma are more and more willing to keep their children in school, oftentimes beyond compulsory education. Many families encourage their boys as well as girls to pursue education, which is a long distance travelled from the reluctance to educate Roma girls beyond primary school.

We looked at civic engagement in terms of social and cultural participation in the city and beyond the Roma community, but also encompassing awareness of and protection of the environment. Findings suggest that instances of socio-cultural participation outside one's community are still rare, and oftentimes driven by individuals who have an agenda of care for their community and the city. These are the people who, for instance, volunteer with The Roma Project and offer services of translation and mediation, or assist Roma or Romanian new-comers to get settled. Some valuable initiatives come from members of TRP's Board of Trustees. For example, one of the Board members, Ms Cisneros, has spearheaded a number of projects that involved other members of the Roma community, from the exhibition *Generations* to the children book project *Roma:Recycle-Reuse-Reimagine*. These are positive role models for the community, inspiring new generations of Roma; and their actions contribute as well to improving the visibility and the image of the Roma community in the city.

⁶ Sabiescu, A. (2018) *Steps to empowerment. Impact report*. March 2018. Unpublished report, available upon request.

There are however other signs that the Roma are now more open and less inwards driven than they used to be when they first arrived. They started getting settled in the wider city, beyond the neighbourhood of Foleshill where the Roma would typically reside in big groups, as a member of the TRP Board of Trustees tells us:

Many of them are integrated. Most used to live in Foleshill and now they started moving in other neighbourhoods, which is a clear sign they started to better integrate in the city.
(Member, TRP Board of Trustees, interview)

Local perceptions and attitudes towards the Roma

One of the outcomes that most respondents agreed upon is that the Roma do not meet as much discrimination as they did in the past. The term ‘Gypsy’ continues to carry negative connotations, however real-life positive interactions have, in time, managed to overcome stereotyping, at least to some extent. A Community Hub manager remarked:

Other than the word Gypsy, which has negative connotations to them, people understand that the Roma are actually quite interesting and colourful and exciting. And you know what I mean? And oh, I'd like to find out about them, because they look quite fascinating. So I think there's, it's beginning to ... people are quite interested now to learn about them. Because you know, they've learned about Asians, and they've learned about the Muslims, and now it's a new community to learn about. So I think it's a lot better than it was. And I think it's going the other way, in a more positive way. (Manager of local community hub, interview)

As argued above under the Social inclusion outcomes section, discrimination and prejudice still exist. However they are not at the level of a few years ago. And where they do remain, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping are tied to lack of knowledge of Roma culture and history, and still limited social interaction with many of the community members. As the same community hub manager remarked:

[People in Coventry think] Roma is Romanian. And you have to explain to them that actually, no, Roma is a culture in itself. Romania is a country.

Steps towards intercultural dialogue

One of the most puzzling aspects revealed by this evaluation study is the peculiar role played by Roma culture in what could be an intercultural dialogue in a rich multicultural city like Coventry. The Roma generations that still embody and cherish Roma and Romanian culture are still very much inward-looking and spend most of their time inside their community. On the other hand, Roma children and young people, educated in local schools, interacting on a daily basis with other cultures, are much more open, in constant dialogue with peers from the other local communities. However, **the greater this openness towards the city and its multicultural ethos, the greater as well the distance young Roma take from the Roma culture and even language.** Findings suggest that many Roma young people are not keen to plead and advance ‘the Roma cause’ or Roma culture as such. Their lives in a multicultural society made them embrace values and principles that are no longer cultural-centric. They are themselves multicultural. A striking example is the reluctance of many young people to sit on a Youth Board for The Roma Project.

They do not see the relevance of supporting Roma culture for the lives they are living and the future aims they cherish. It is not that they reject it, rather the reports we had is that they do not see it as relevant.

Thus, on the one hand there have been advances with events and initiatives for celebrating Roma culture, which contributed immensely to giving visibility and showcasing Roma culture throughout the city. In their most successful form, these are joint initiatives involving Roma and non-Roma. The exhibition *Generations* co-organised with The Belgrade Theatre and the book project *Reuse-Recycle-Reimagine*, both driven by Ms Cisneros (TRP Board member) are notable examples in this sense. On the other hand, Roma young people tend to become more and more distanced from their culture, as they embrace values and lifestyles that are no longer culture-centric.

4.5 Project sustainability

How will the benefits brought by the project be sustained beyond the end of the funding?

We have assessed the sustainability of the project by looking at two interconnected areas:

- 1 the extent to which TRP invested project resources to ensure that future support for the Roma community will continue to be available as needed; and
- 2 the capacity of the Roma community to build on the benefits they derived from this project to “help themselves”.

TRP has worked on several lines to ensure that the services offered to the community will bring enduring benefits, with the following highlights:

- TRP has involved young Roma in assisting their own community, as TRP employees, volunteers or members of the Board of Trustees. This is an essential step for entrusting agency back to the community and creating role models to inspire and motivate young Roma.
- It has attracted people whose efforts to assist Roma people and promote Romani culture go beyond the scope of the funded project, for example through its Board of Trustees. Notable examples here are the projects *Generations* and *Roma: Recycle-Reuse-Reimagine*, driven by Ms. Cisneros, member of the Board and a Roma herself. Individual initiative of this kind not only maximises benefits on the community at present, but also builds more sustainable and wider bases for supporting and promoting Romani community and culture in the longer term.
- In August 2021, it has secured funding from The Big Lottery Fund to continue to support the Roma community for other two years.
- TRP staff have been offered training in using AdvicePro Case management software, as well as Level 4 NVQ in Advice and Guidance.

The above contribute to strengthen the premises for longer-term, sustainable assistance to the Roma community. The intervention line where there is still a wide gap to be calmed regards **building the capacity of the Roma community to “help themselves”**. TRP has contributed to this by involving community members in its initiatives, and through the proactive approach to its

casework. However, corroborating data suggests that when the number of cases to be solved becomes high (as was the case during overlapping Brexit + Covid-19 pressures on the Roma), there is the tendency to go back to a firefighting approach, which encourages continued dependency on TRP among the Roma. This happens not only among new comers (as may be expected) but also for people settled in Coventry for several years. The latter tend to rely on TRP either for more complex activities such as submitting benefit claims; or, TRP becomes the go-to organisation at times of confusion and crisis, as was the case with Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Among the factors that can be controlled by TRP, the key high-level recommendations that we make for ensuring a more sustainable approach are:

- **Reposition and subtly change perceptions about The Roma Project** from the problem-solver to a community hub with an agenda for supporting socio-cultural inclusion, cultural promotion and intercultural dialogue.
- **Build a component of strategic development** in the future activity line of TRP. It is particularly important for this component to be built in with attention to bridging the gap between planning and implementation.

These aims can be achieved by different, mutually enforcing means and we suggest the following:

- Consider embedding strategic development activities in the role of the project manager, or as a short-term part-time new role, or outsourced for a limited period of time;
- Create/revise the charity strategic plan with more attention to creating walkable paths between planning and implementation of strategic development activities and periodic monitoring of progress;
- Dedicate a small, flexible but firm percentage of staff time to strategic development activities related to capacity-building, social inclusion and cultural promotion. This should be planned in such a way that this line of activity is maintained even during intensive periods of casework;
- Consider the creation of a Community Forum, with the role of collecting community needs, issues, concerns and aspirations on an on-going basis, and feeding them to TRP for shaping its strategic community service approach.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

The project was conducted during a period of crisis with overlapping concerns caused by the unfolding of Brexit and the isolation and lockdowns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. For The Roma Project, this meant an increase in the number of cases it had to deal with, on top of the usual requests; and the difficulty of organising events or its regular activities in face to face settings, for almost 2 years. Despite these constraints, TRP managed to attend to a number of cases comparable to what it would have solved in regular times (5,033 cases total). And to organise some events, online and when possible face to face, to advance its agenda of capacity building, social inclusion and cultural promotion for the Roma community. This section highlights the key achievements and remaining challenges associated with the two project objectives; and on this basis it provides recommendations.

5.1 Key achievements and remaining challenges

Objective 1. Capacity and capability building among the Roma

Key achievements

- High community satisfaction for Roma Project services, associated with 5,033 cases of advice and support logged in AdvicePro
- Provision of essential support around Brexit issues, spanning advice, reliable information and support with over 800 EUSS applications
- Provision of essential support and reliable information to tackle confusion, disinformation and need of assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic, via multiple platforms (dedicated support officer, phone line and active online and social media presence)
- More autonomy and decreasing community reliance on TRP for a growing number of Roma, confirmed by a decrease in the number of cases logged in AdvicePro which include 'crisis assistance' for Brexit and Covid-19, compared to a 3-year Metropolitan project (2015-17). Moreover, the community survey and providers interviews suggest that the Roma have made progress in interacting directly with a series of service providers and institutions where they had required support from The Roma Project in the past (e.g., GPs, education services, paying utilities, fines and taxes, job seeking etc.)
- Increased confidence and capability for independent lives among the Roma, due to a great extent to unconditional, trustworthy support from TRP, and confirmed by:
 - Self-reported confidence levels in interacting with service providers, in community survey (e.g., over 70% of respondents feel quite confident or very confident to interact with institutions such as City Hall, GPs, Police, School HMRC etc.)
 - Self-reported instances of increased confidence in interacting with authorities during the past 3 years, in community survey (e.g., 77.5% of the Roma surveyed feel more confident in interacting with authorities now, compared to 3 years ago)
- Based on self-reported measures, there has been an increase in life satisfaction and mental well-being among the Roma. Roma's levels of well-being among the people

surveyed are high, with the items scoring highest with respect to independent decision-making, problem-solving, thinking clearly and feeling close to other people.

Remaining challenges

- There is still a good number of people who continue to depend on TRP and cannot make a definite move towards independent, autonomous life. Key areas that require attention are: financial capability, welfare benefits and housing⁷
- The main factors affecting continued dependency on TRP include:
 - Lack of digital literacy coupled with lack of legal capabilities and the perceived difficulty of forms to fill for taxes, benefits and the like
 - Low levels of English language competences
 - Lack of confidence in their own capacity to “do things right” in a system that they still do not fully understand.

Objective 2. Social inclusion of the Roma community

Key achievements

- Improvement and expansion of services to Roma and Romanian communities, achieved by long-term and new collaborations and partnerships with local service providers, third sector organisation and the Romanian embassy/consulate
- High level of satisfaction with TRP information, support and mediation services among service providers whose work is essential for the Roma community, such as Early Help and Child Protection
- Institutional collaborations and partnerships to offer joint services for Roma & Romanian people (e.g., New Start 4U CIC)
- Organisation of a small number of social and cultural events (limited due to Covid-19), some of which involved several local organisations and got coverage from local press (e.g., exhibition Generations in collaboration with Belgrade Theatre)
- Key contribution to building Roma’s awareness of their rights and responsibilities as UK residents, particularly after Brexit
- Key contribution to boosting Roma’s feelings of being socially included (80% of respondents in the community survey said they feel much better or a bit better integrated in Coventry than 3 years before)
- Successfully contributing to increased awareness and understanding of Roma issues among service providers and third sector organisations.

Remaining challenges

- Discrimination and prejudice against the Roma still exist, even if not at the level of a few years ago. Where they do remain, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping are tied to lack of knowledge of Roma culture and history

⁷ These areas mirror the ones identified as needing support in the evaluation study for the Metropolitan-funded project (Sabiescu 2018).

- The generational paradox: adult and elderly generations who value Roma culture are more inward-looking and less interested in intercultural dialogue and social interaction outside community; young Roma are connected to the life and society of Coventry, but interest in their culture and tradition is dwindling.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendations for building capacity and capability among the Roma

- Operate a gradual but firm **shift in positioning TRP services**, from problem-solving to a community hub for building capabilities among the Roma, to enable them to help themselves; as well as furthering social inclusion and celebrating Roma culture *[analogous for social inclusion goals]*
- The **suggested approach to decrease reliance on TRP** is to tackle casework in combination with capacity and capability building, continuing to endorse a needs-based approach:
 - **Continue to deliver advice and support services for the Roma**, particularly in neighbourhoods with a high density of Roma, such as Foleshill. These remain essential for many Roma, and contribute not only to over-reliance, but also to confidence-building, as the Roma gain confidence from knowing there is someone they can always rely on, even if they do not ask for this help directly at all times.
 - **Complement with capability building sessions**, favouring these key areas:
 - English language classes especially for people over 50 and unemployed; women not in employment; and the Roma arrived in Coventry after 2019;
 - Practical knowledge of the English legal, social and welfare system (Life in the UK sessions)
 - Digital literacy classes, particularly for people over 50
 - Applied skills in filling out forms, records keeping etc.
- Continue to **invest in professional development for TRP staff**, to increase the quality of services offered. **Strategic planning and strategic project management skills** are worth being included in job roles, to encourage a shift from casework to more strategic, capability-building lines of activity and intervention.
- Build a component of strategic development in the future activity line of TRP. It is particularly important for this component to be built in with attention to bridging the gap between planning and implementation. Potential routes:
 - Consider embedding strategic development activities in the role of the project manager, as a short-term part-time new role, or outsourced for a limited period of time;
 - Create/revise the charity strategic plan with more attention to creating walkable paths between planning and implementation of strategic development activities and periods monitoring of progress;
 - Dedicate a small, flexible but firm percentage of staff time to strategic development activities related to capacity-building, social inclusion and cultural

promotion. This should be planned in such a way that this line of activity is maintained even during intensive periods of casework;

- [For Obj. 1 & Obj. 2] Consider the creation of a Community Forum, with the role of collecting community needs, issues, concerns and aspirations on an on-going basis, and feeding them to TRP for shaping its strategic community service approach.

Recommendations for fostering Roma social inclusion

- Continue to organise events and initiatives for social gathering, intercultural interaction and celebrating Romani culture. To expand on their impact, we recommend:
 - leveraging the spirit of initiative of Board members for organising these events (building on the legacy of already successful projects driven by Board members such as the exhibition *Generations*)
 - involving young Roma, to (re)connect them with their culture and encourage a sense of pride in their roots.
- Involve the community in different stages of planning and developing social inclusion and cultural celebration initiatives [see Recommendation on Community Forum at Obj. 1]
- Conduct more research to understand the sort of support that young Roma need from a charity like TRP, related for instance to seeking professional experience, making career choices or finding placement opportunities.

Annex 1. Project logical frame

PROJECT OBJECTIVES The main goals that have guided the project, and against which the project has been evaluated	
1. Support capability and capacity building in the Roma community, contributing to increased well-being and autonomous lifestyles.	2. Support social inclusion of the Roma community, with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building knowledge of, capacity to navigate and take up of mainstream services • improving communication and relations among Roma and non-Roma • celebrating and promoting the value of the Roma cultural heritage • promoting the values and norms of the host society among the Roma community.
Problem statement Key issues that the project attempted to respond to, and which confirm the relevance of the project	
<p>[For objectives 1, 2] Lack of legal capabilities and knowledge regarding statutory services (health care, education, etc) and citizenship rights and obligations by the Roma community</p> <p>Poor understanding of systems and services in the UK</p> <p>Poor understanding and confusion regarding rights after Brexit and bureaucratic steps for residence claims</p> <p>Roma's poor living standards (especially – housing, health, education)</p> <p>High demand for TRP services</p> <p>Poor understanding regarding rights to benefits and difficulty in accessing them exacerbated by lack of digital literacy</p> <p>Debts issues (delays paying bills)</p>	
<p>Roma people miss vital information about the services they have right to access and the means of accessing them and about their rights and obligations as citizens, which may affect their ability to comply with the law.</p> <p>Low access to/ use of mainstream services</p> <p>Local people and institutional discrimination and marginalisation still present</p> <p>Local authorities, statutory services and the third sector experience difficulties in dealing with and engaging the Roma in Coventry</p>	
Contextual factors Key factors that need to be considered to understand why the project was needed, and whether it was successful and where/why it did not achieve as it was set to	
Community-related:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Large numbers of new families arriving before the Brexit cut-off date ▪ Roma generational change – education more valuable; Roma children educated in the UK bridge between cultures; change of attitude towards women, education, work and family 	
Local socio-economic and political context:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uncertainties, confusion and lack of understanding and fact-checked information around Brexit ▪ The Covid-19 pandemic, restrictions and all the misinformation around it ▪ Confusion around transition to Universal credit ▪ (positive) Coventry diversity, higher tolerance of ethnic diversity ▪ already strong The Roma Project institutional networks, and relations with Roma community 	
Inputs	

Human resources: Project manager; Community outreach and caseworkers x 2; Administrator x 0.5; volunteers
 Finances for equipment, rent, logistics [Desks, rent, overheads: Coventry Law Centre for Year 1 & 2; From Year 3 – Broad Street Meeting Hall; PC equipment; Monitoring and documentation software – AdvicePro]; Travel and consumables

Activities

Offer on-going support and advocacy for Roma families (variety of areas and issues), by appointment and drop-in sessions	Develop and deliver meetings, workshops and informative sessions for service providers
Deliver community events for discussion and information gathering	Mediate/act as interpreters for local service providers on casework
	Mediate conflicts involving Roma (intra- or inter-group)
	Deliver events and activities for celebration of Romani culture

Targeted outputs

Advice sessions by appointment and drop-ins delivered face to face and by phone	Organised/delivered meetings, workshops and informative sessions for service providers
Advocacy, support and capacity building services offered covering various areas (legal support, education, jobs, housing, etc.)	Service providers trained/informed on Roma culture and issues
Dedicated advice and support sessions for EUSS/Brexit-related via multiple means (phone, f2f, social media, web)	Delivered mediation and interpretation services for statutory service providers interacting with the Roma community
Dedicated advice and support sessions for issues related to Covid-19 pandemic via multiple means (phone, f2f, social media, web)	Cases of conflict mediated
	Social gathering and cultural events organised

Targeted outcomes

More Roma taking responsibility for their own lives – confident to cope with everyday problems	More Roma feeling socially included and able to access mainstream services as a result of the project
Reduction in the number of Roma requiring specialist services as a result of this project	Increased knowledge and understanding of Roma-specific matters among local authorities and service providers [NEW]
Increase in mental well-being for the Roma	

Targeted impacts

Improved quality of life and empowerment of Roma community, demonstrated by	Social inclusion of Roma community in respect of its culture and traditions, spanning:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved socio-economic standing, pursuit of education, revenue-making activities and employment in lawful ways; autonomous conduct of their day to day activities and capable, confident access to statutory services; increase in mental well-being. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> civic engagement and endorsement of local values by Roma people; respectful attitudes and perceptions towards Roma among non-Roma and service providers; peaceful relations and on-going dialogue between Roma and non-Roma;

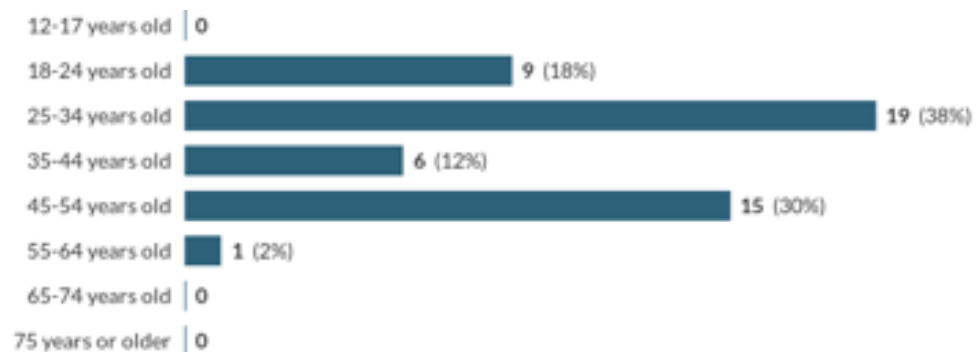
Annex 2. Key answers from community survey

Socio-demographic data

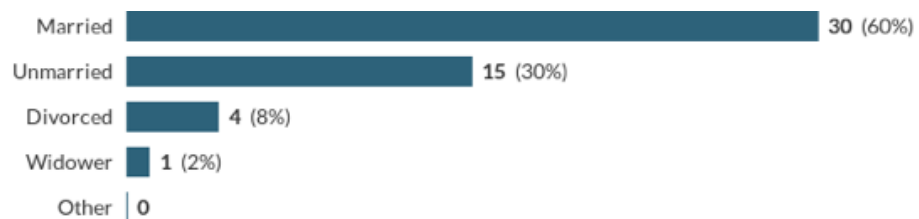
Gender



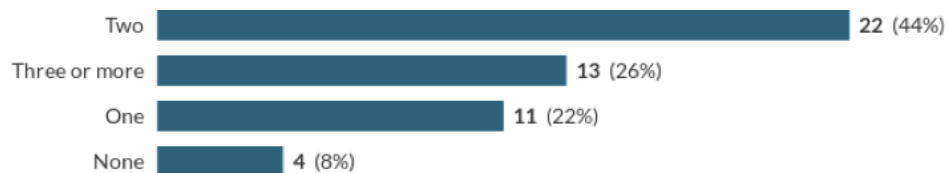
Age



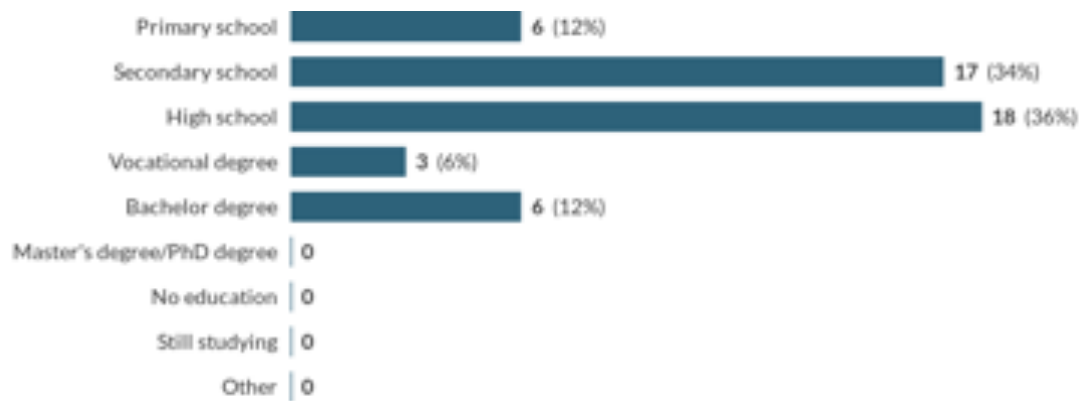
Civil status



Number of children



Education



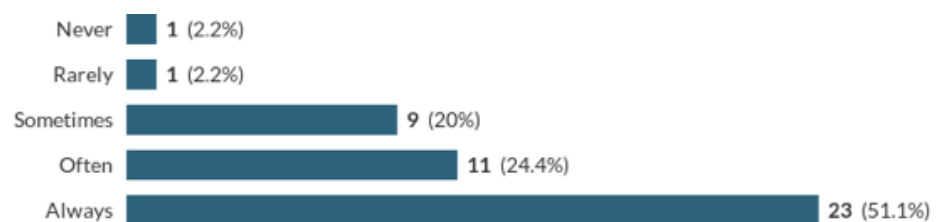
Employment



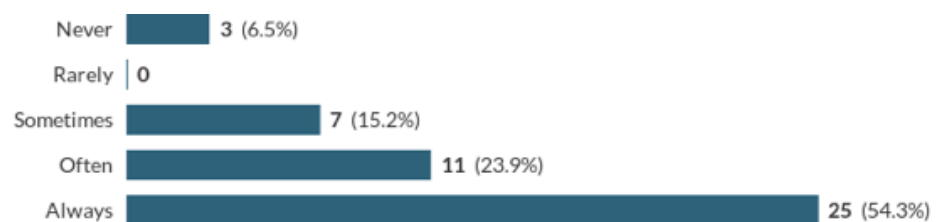
Community answers - The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale

Question: *Please mark the statement that best describes how you've been feeling throughout the past 3 weeks.*

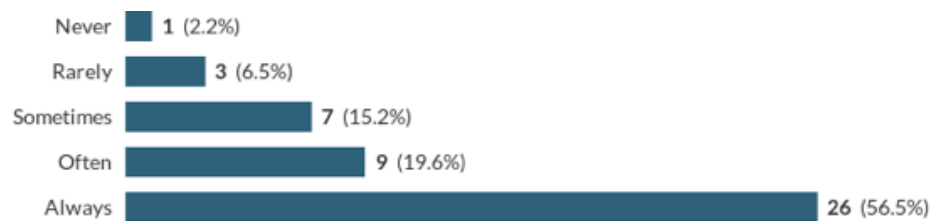
I've been feeling optimistic about the future



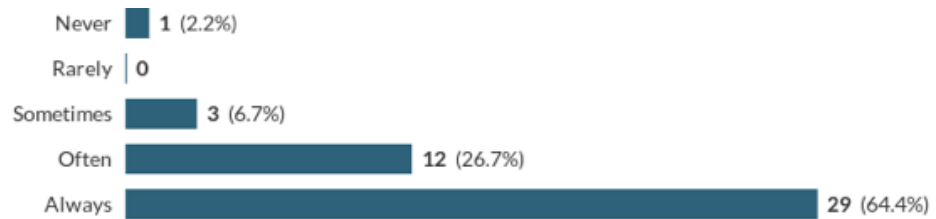
I've been feeling useful



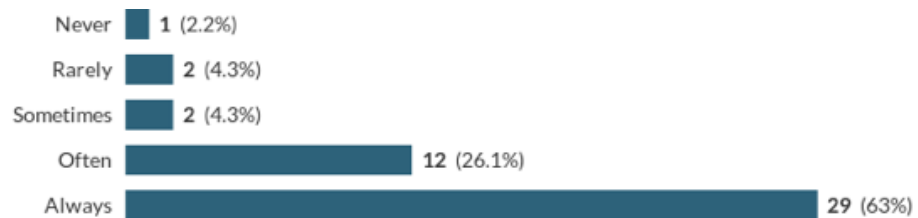
I've been feeling relaxed



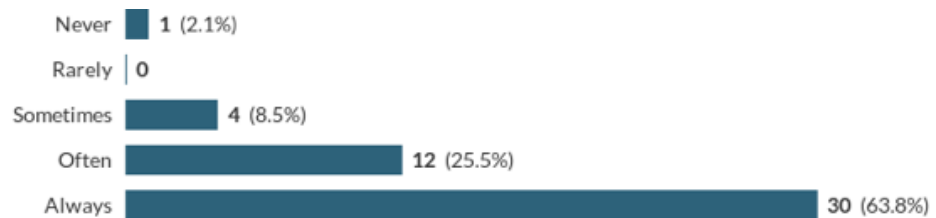
I've been dealing with problems well



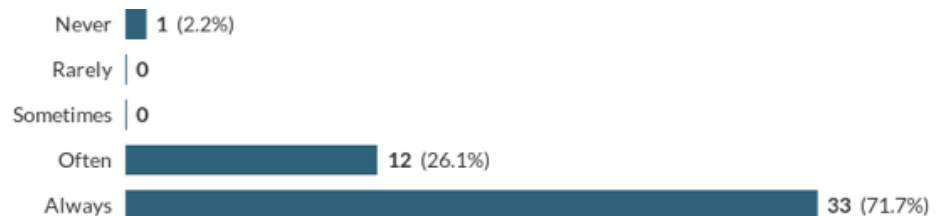
I've been thinking clearly



I've been feeling close to other people



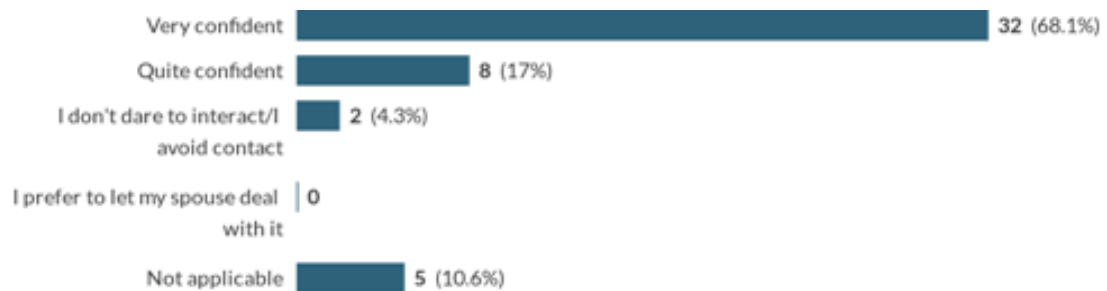
I've been able to make my own mind about things



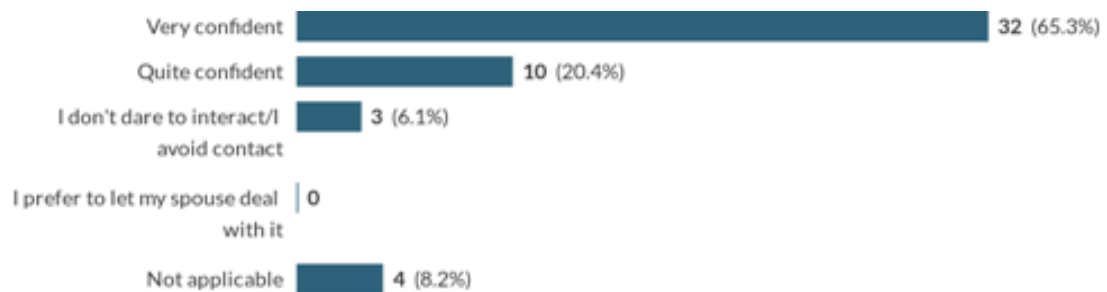
Community answers – Confidence in interactions with authorities

Question: *How confident do you feel when you interact with the following organisations?*

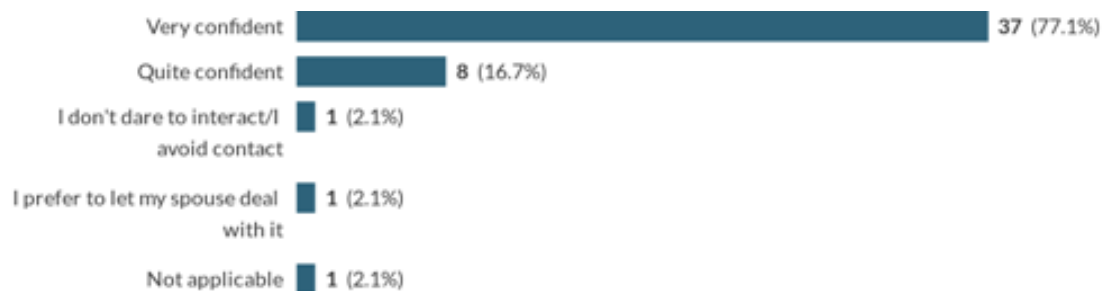
School (for yourself or your children)



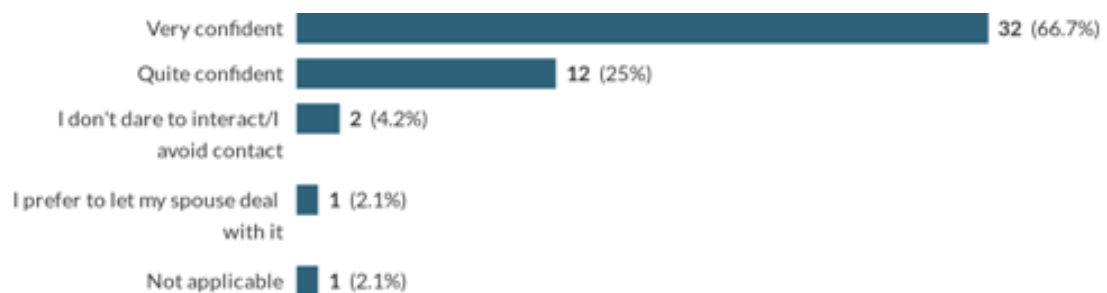
Police



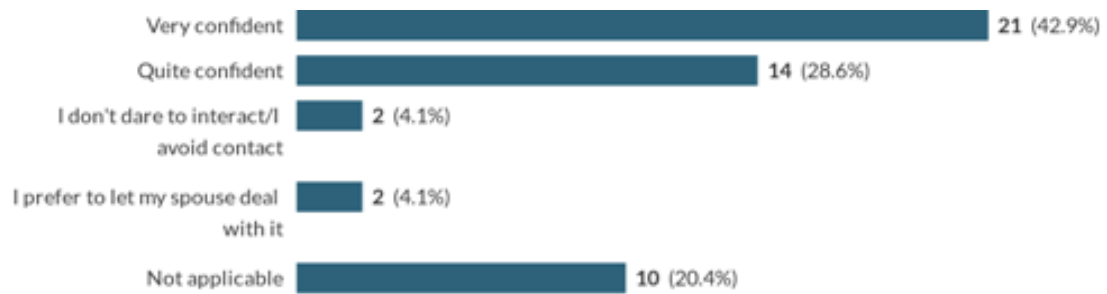
City hall and social services



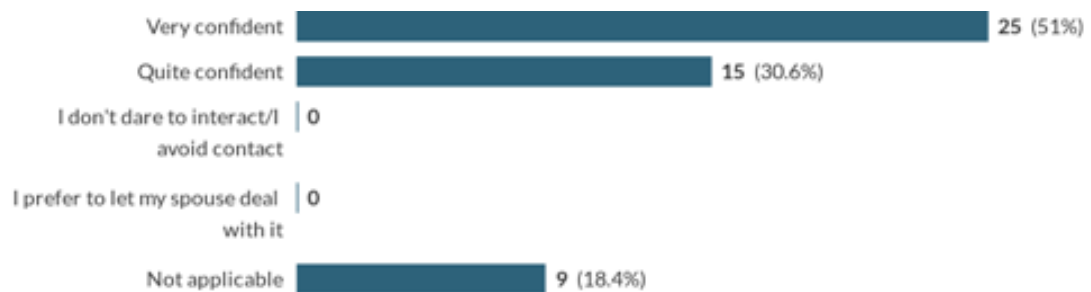
GPs and healthcare



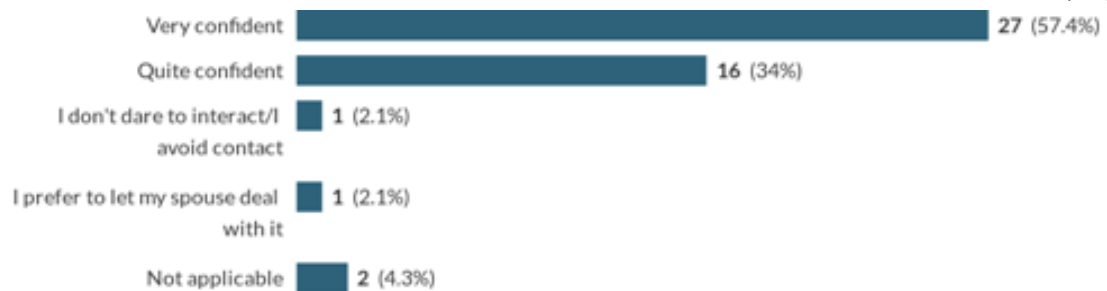
Law and legal services



Paying and getting information about taxes



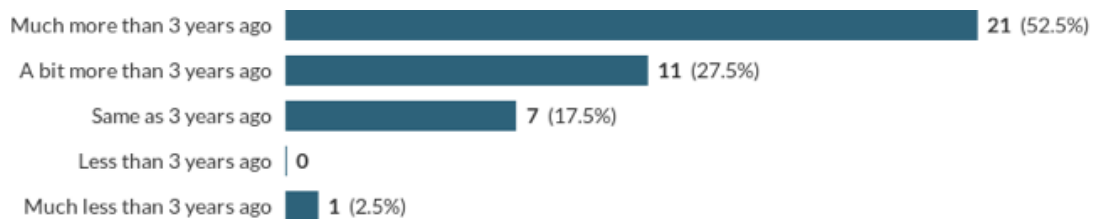
Your employer



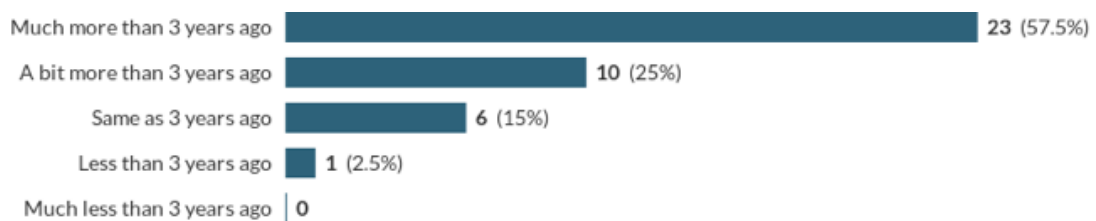
Community answers – Measures of social inclusion

Question: *Please mark the statement that best describes your current experience, as compared with 3 years ago (2018) or before.*

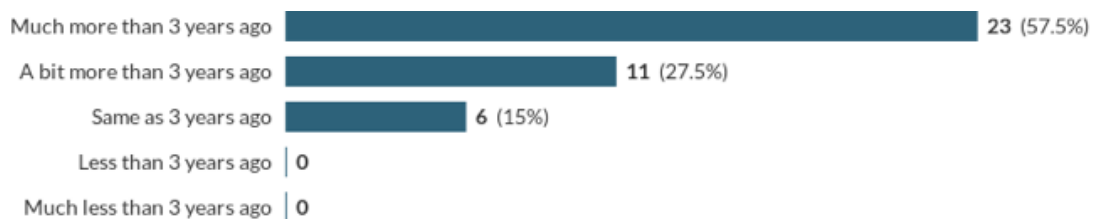
I feel better integrated in Coventry.



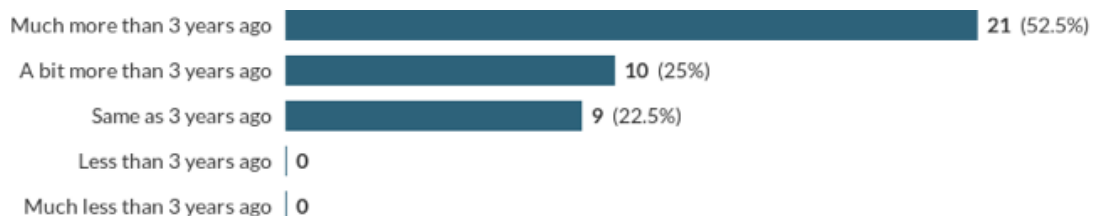
I know better my rights as a resident of Coventry



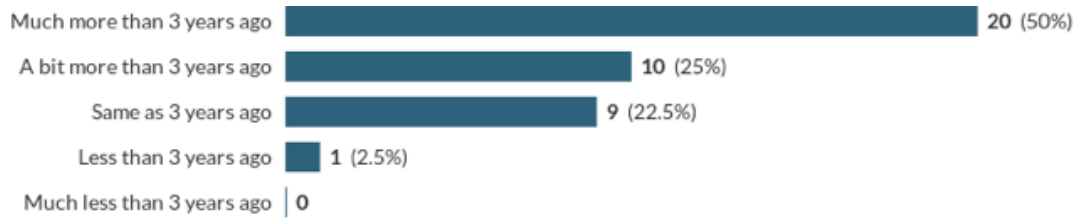
I know better the benefits to which I am entitled



I feel more confident when I interact with local authorities and service providers



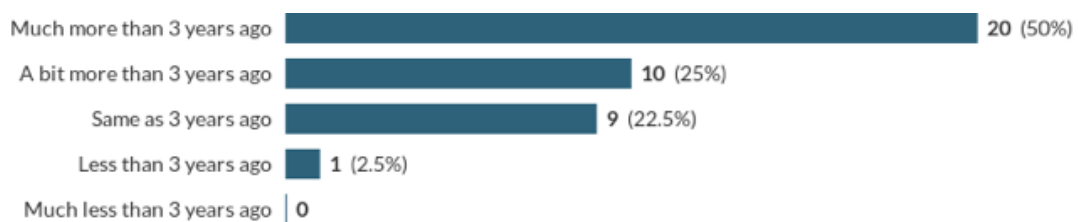
I feel more confident in my day to day life



I know how to make myself understood when I interact with local authorities and service providers



I manage confidently relationships with institutions and organisations that I did not dare to access before



I manage to fill out and submit legal forms and documents (such as self-employment, taxes etc)

