Roma Participation in Community Development Interventions: Support to access employment in Govanhill, Glasgow

This report is a summarised version of the thesis presented to the Open University for an MSc in Development Management

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Summary

This research has investigated the role of participation of Roma people in community development interventions in Govanhill, with a particular focus on access to the labour market. With growing numbers of Roma people living in Govanhill, Glasgow over the last ten years this has been an area of ongoing concern for policy makers, community organisations and groups of Roma people.

Policy guidance from the EU focuses on specific Roma participation, and at UK and Scottish Government levels relates to a shift in power downwards to communities. Scottish Government (2010) guidance highlights the importance of providing additional support to minority groups to ensure they are able to participate in community development. However, evidence from this study suggests at community level there is still an overriding feeling that not enough is being done to consult Roma people on their specific needs. Multiple development problems that are faced by Roma people were highlighted throughout this study, including access to the labour market, discrimination and negative perceptions, and the impact of tough economic times. Several projects have been developed to provide Roma specific support yet there were few examples of Roma people being actively encouraged to participate in the formation of development interventions. A move to incorporate local Roma knowledge to inform decisions and play a role in influencing power differentials is needed to support the sustainability of interventions and for long term empowerment of Roma people in Govanhill. Positive interventions have been made to support Roma people to access the labour market or skills training, however, only one of the three projects outlined below involved a genuine process of participation. Participation should be seen as the norm not as the exception.

As seen in section 3 participation and public action are identified as mechanisms to improve poverty reduction measures and reduce social exclusion. Where participatory approaches have been used within the wider community in Govanhill positive results have been identified and importantly results that are unlikely to have come about without the participatory process (Egan and Harkins, 2012). The participatory process leads Roma people from being passive beneficiaries to active change makers in their community. This process needs to be nurtured to allow Roma people to contribute to public action for development in Govanhill. There is the further issue of Romanian Roma. Recognition has been given to the growing number of Romanian Roma and the increased destitution that they face without access to employment or social welfare. As services move to incorporate support to the Romanian Roma the opportunity exists to develop participatory approaches from the

outset, this will require clear understanding of the processes of participatory approaches and clear dedication to use these in an iterative way.

Section 1 Introduction

Govanhill, Glasgow, is an area that has historically received migrants, from Irish people in the 19th century to Asian, predominantly Pakistani, communities in the 1970s to Central and East Europeans (CEE) and in particular Roma people in the 2000s. 29% of the population is black or minority ethnic (BME), with this number having increased by 20% since 2000. This increase has created challenges for service providers (EkosConsultants, 2011) with access to services and employment being key issues for newly arrived migrants (European Dialogue, 2009). The swell in numbers has coincided with the accession of eight CEE countries to the European Union (EU) in 2004, known as the Accession 8 (A8). Among these newcomers have been members of the Roma community migrating to seek opportunities for employment and improved living conditions (FRA, 2009). Prior to 2004 some Roma sought asylum in the UK, fleeing from persecution and segregation, for example in Slovakia (where the majority of Govanhill Roma come from) this was manifested in the form of segregated housing and discrimination within the school system with an over representation of Roma children in the special school system[1] (Ringold et al, 2005). When addressing issues relating to Roma people in Europe words such as marginalisation, discrimination, exclusion and segregation are at the forefront (www.errc.org). It is argued that Roma are the most socially excluded group in Europe (FRA, 2009) and for this reason understanding more about their experience in Glasgow can give an insight into how Scottish policy works in practice for recent migrants from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The Roma community is a diverse group of individuals from countries across Europe, originating from India around the 15th century, moving and settling in different areas in Europe (Ringold et al, 2005). In Govanhill most of the Roma are Czech and Slovak, although there are increasing numbers of Romanian Roma (coinciding with the forthcoming accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU) now moving to the area. The majority of this report focuses on Czech and Slovak Roma as they have a longer history in Govanhill and now have greater freedom to access the labour market. However, the situation of Romanian Roma will be briefly touched upon, as they have less access to the labour market and social welfare support. It is crucial to understand that Roma people are not a homogenous group. As Roma have sought both refuge and economic opportunities in Scotland they have been framed within the construct of 'otherness' something that immigration policy since the 1990s has reinforced in the public conscious (Poole, 2010, p.255). Coupled with the historic framing of Roma as a disparate, nomadic group who were separate and excluded from the societies they lived in, these issues could have an impact on how development interventions are taken forward (European Dialogue, 2009) and will be explored further in section 3.

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[1] The special school system is a parallel education system aimed at students with mental or physical difficulties in learning. Expected output is significantly lower than mainstream schools which impacts on quality of education (Ringold et al, 2005). In the Czech Republic a Roma child is fifteen times more likely to end up in a special school.

2011 saw the end of restrictions on those coming from A8 countries[2]. Theoretically this should make access to employment easier with the end to the workers registration scheme, access to Job Centre Plus services and benefits, and access to social housing. Little research has been carried out to look at the impact of this change for service provision to the Roma community in Govanhill. Information that currently exists focuses on direct service availability but there has been little in the way of research on wider issues such as levels of engagement, participation and empowerment (Poole and Adamson, 2007). This project is a stepping stone in this process. By focusing on participation and public action it seeks, on a small scale, to investigate some of the issues that exist for Roma people. This investigation will make recommendations, based on the findings, of what the next steps in this process could be.

Section 2.1 Policy Context

As stated above the Roma are often described in terms of the challenges they face on a day to day basis. Prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion are a reality for all too many Roma people (European Commission, 2011). The impact these realities have on levels of development is played out through education levels, housing conditions and access to employment. The World Bank has undertaken analysis of the situation in CEE and certain indicators demonstrate poverty levels, for example in the Czech Republic and Slovakia infant mortality rate is double that of non-Roma and Roma life expectancy is ten years less than the majority populations. Unemployment in some Roma settlements in Slovakia can be 80% or higher and in Romania and Bulgaria 80% of Roma live on less than $4.30 per day (the relative poverty rate) (Ringold et al, 2005).

The EU recognises that Roma people are the largest ethnic minority in Europe and require a specific policy focus for their inclusion (Guglielmo and Walters, 2005). 2005-2015 has been dedicated the Decade of Roma Inclusion and frameworks have been put in place to encourage member states to improve socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma people (BEMIS, 2011). More recently the European Commission set out a framework for integration strategies up to 2020 (European Commission, 2011). This framework seeks to address national, regional, and local needs of Roma people through dialogue with, and participation of, the Roma (ibid). This investigation seeks to find out what levels of participation take place in the local context of Govanhill and what barriers exist to participation.

UK policy discourse seems to work against migrants. UK immigration policy since the 1990s has had an anglocentric approach to limiting migration and focusing on highly skilled migrants through a points based system (Scottish Government, 2010) producing the social construct of 'otherness' which creates a barrier to integration (Poole and Adamson, 2007). "The Roma are either seen as Eastern European, Asian or migrants. None of these is an advantage when seeking work in the UK" (FRA, 2009, p.46). The media has built on this perception creating an atmosphere of 'moral panic' at a perceived risk posed by increasing numbers of Roma in the UK (Clark et al, 2007, p.18). This means in addition to the challenges facing Roma people in terms of seeking employment, education, and housing they are also perceived in certain

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[2] A8 countries are Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia. Romania and Bulgaria are known as A2 countries and remain in the process of moving towards full accession to the EU for this reason restrictions on access to work will remain until December 2013

constructs which may impact on how they are viewed by members of the community in which they live and by professionals they come in contact with (Long, 2004).

The Scottish Government signals its belief in participation and public action through its Community Empowerment Action Plan. Community empowerment is considered a key plank in delivering a "new dawn" of social policies with community empowerment "unlocking potential" (Scottish Government, 2009b). A challenge is to include everyone living in a community. Local Authorities have taken steps to implement this policy with Community Planning Partnerships bringing together public sector, third sector and community organisations (Bynner, 2010). But how does this play out for relatively new members of the community? What does this mean for the Roma who have traditionally been disempowered and discriminated against, whose barriers to engagement are likely to be higher due to English language skills, negative stereotypes and lack of awareness of rights (Poole and Adamson, 2007)? "Given that in Slovakia the Roma have been systematically marginalised and actively excluded from local and national services, it will take a considerable amount of time and effort to change their cultural expectation of continued exclusion" (ibid, p.11). It is important to establish at a local level how this sort of policy rhetoric is planned out in practice for a specific ethnic minority community.

2.2 Perceptions and Development Management

As mentioned above certain constructs are created through the impact of policy and media discourse. It is likely these constructs go on to impact perceptions of groups of people and provide a framework in which action takes place (Long, 2004). Figure 1 shows potential constructs that influence people's thinking about the Roma community.
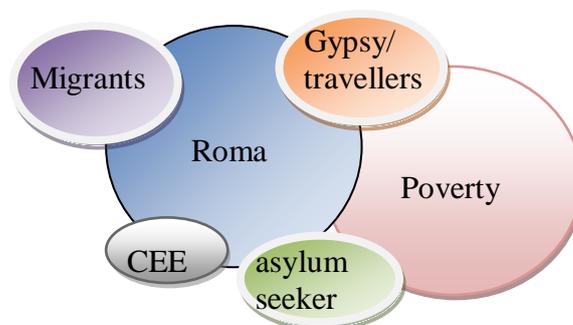

Figure 1 Influence circles of perceptions of Roma people in Scotland
(Developed through literature review Bemis, 2011; European Dialogue, 2009; Ormston et al, 2010; Poole and Adamson, 2007; Scottish Government, 2009a; Scottish Government, 2010; Wilson, 2007)

As immigrants there are other terms of reference that are bound up in how people view the Roma, these are as migrants, asylum seekers and as people from CEE. Scottish Government policy to promote migration and a wider understanding of the need for migration due to the aging population seeks to create a slightly more positive outlook on migration in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2009a). However, this policy seeks a very specific form of economic migration and exists within the limitations of devolved powers (ibid). At a local level attitudes may not feel positive to individuals. In particular concern exists around employment, a recent Scottish

Attitudes Survey (Ormston et al, 2010) showed an increase in concern that people coming from Eastern Europe may take jobs from other people in Scotland – an increase from 32% of respondents in 2006 to 37% in 2010. The same survey highlighted that gypsy/travellers were one of the most discriminated against minorities in Scotland (ibid). While Scottish gypsy/travellers are a distinctly different group the fact that policy language often refers to Roma and gypsy/travellers as a combined or related grouping may influence perceptions of the Roma community to be bound up in perceptions of gyspy/travellers. What this draws to mind is a nomadic group rather than a settled population (European Dialogue, 2009). For development interventions this perception could influence levels of investment and/or provide reason not to invest as there is an expectation that the community will move on. It is important to note that the Roma themselves feel the use of the term gypsy creates increased hostility towards them and prefer not to be associated with it (European Dialogue, 2009, p.9). Finally, the term asylum seeker is much misunderstood and misused according to submissions to the Scottish Governments Equal Opportunities inquiry (Scottish Government, 2010). There is a strong sense that to the general public there is little to distinguish asylum seekers and economic migrants.

Figure 1 places poverty as one of the main influencing circles. This is bound up in the terms that are often used to describe Roma communities. It has been argued that this leads the Roma be seen as "needy subjects" (Timmer, 2010), descriptions of their situation are always bound up in poverty narratives, leading to the construction of a population in need (ibid). However, poverty reduction is a key reason many organisations work with the Roma community and are able to seek funding for this work. The visibility of poverty of Roma people in inner city Glasgow confirms this image and is reinforced by some being seen begging or selling the Big Issue.

Development practitioners do not stand in isolation from these frames of thinking. Their interventions are bound up in value laden and politically charged nature of their work (Caddell, 2007). Public action is a political process that seeks to challenge existing power structures (Mackintosh, 1992) it is also a process where tension exists, this tension can relate to changing the way issues are framed and communicated (Caddell, 2007). As Escobar (quoted in Long, 2004, p.27) states inscribed discourse and practices make "it difficult for people to define their own interests in their own terms, in many cases actually disabling them from doing so." Recognising this is important when analysing the context in which participation occurs.

2.3 Roma community in Govanhill and Participation

It is estimated that around three thousand Roma people live in Govanhill out of an estimated population of around fifteen thousand (GIN, 2008). Much of the research that currently exists focuses on access to services and physical environment. Areas of concern are housing, access to healthcare, education and access to the labour market (European Dialogue, 2009).

'Participation' is currently viewed as a buzzword within development (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). It is seen as important as, if done well, it sets the path to sustainable futures (Engberg-Pederson and Webster, 2002). Kothari (2001) highlights that interventions based on local knowledge and experience are more likely to be relevant. Participation challenges the status quo of power relations and seeks to give voice to

those who are often unheard (Chambers, 1997). Recent experience of participatory budgeting in Govanhill has demonstrated that choices made through this process were perceived to be significantly different from the choices of the local authority, in particular by focusing on people rather than places and infrastructure (Egan and Harkins, 2012). However, the question was asked by one participant in this process "where are the Roma people?" (ibid). In the wider process of community engagement in Govanhill it is recognised that Roma people are not involved in mainstream activities (Bynner, 2010; CPP, 2011).

Section 3

What are the main development problems being faced by the Roma in Govanhill, in particular what difficulties do they face in accessing the formal labour market?

Respondents in the research process answered questions on what they perceived to be development problems impacting Roma people in Govanhill. Figure 2 presents the identified problems as a multiple cause diagram to demonstrate the numerous, over-lapping issues that come into play.

It is evident from figure 2 that respondents identified a wide range of possible causes for the development problems encountered by Roma people that do not split easily into categorisation. Although, during the discussions, emphasis was given to problems of access to the labour market, it was found this could not be isolated from problems relating to accommodation, education, and skills for the workplace. Specifically concerns were raised about more extreme levels of poverty being faced by Romanian Roma and the fact that they are unable to access benefits and the only employment open to them is self-employment. Emphasis was placed on how lack of English skills and low educational attainment was a barrier to entering the employment market. In particular that in the current economic situation Roma
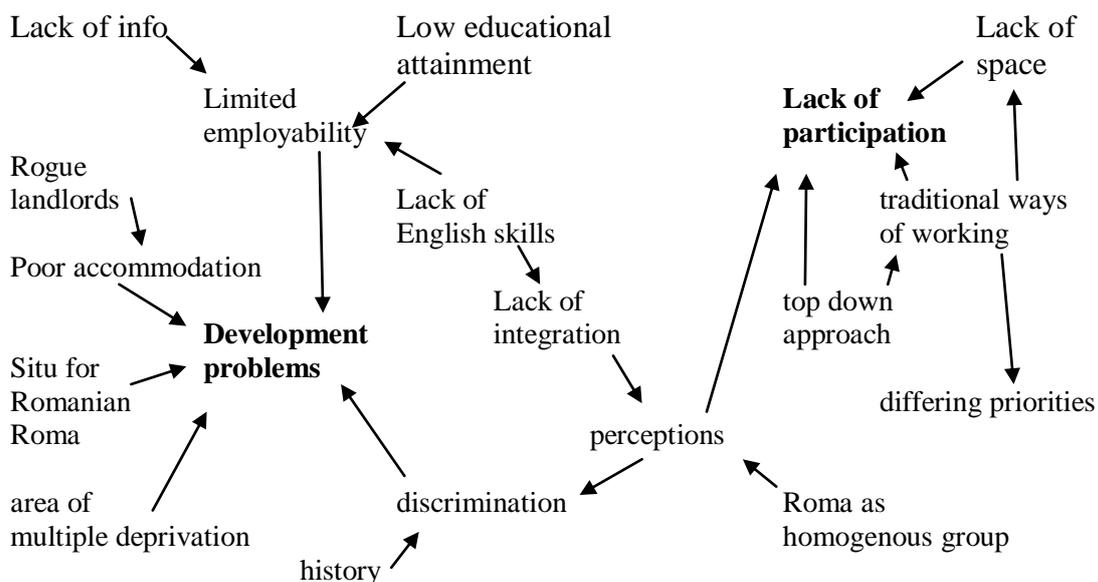
Lack of info

Limited
employability

Low educational
attainment

Lack of
space

**Lack of
participation**

Rogue
landlords

Poor accommodation

Lack of
English skills

traditional ways
of working

Situ for
Romanian
Roma

**Development
problems**

Lack of
integration

top down
approach

differing priorities

area of
multiple deprivation

discrimination

perceptions

Roma as
homogenous group

history

individuals are competing for jobs (for example in Hotel cleaning services) against local job seekers. Detail was given by one agency to explain that most of their clients who had been employed while in Scotland worked in Chicken or Potato Factories which were dominated by Slovak workers and so remained a Slovak speaking environment. The difficulty with this form of employment is that it is unreliable and temporary. When individuals did take up factory opportunities their benefits ceased, work often only lasts a couple of weeks and the process to restart benefits takes between four to six weeks.

During the struggle to find work people were faced with the burden of dealing with unscrupulous landlords and living in overcrowded conditions. For example an agency highlighted the case of one client who was given one day's notice by his landlord that he would have to move to a new flat. The client was distressed by the situation as a home visit from the benefits agency was due the following day. This view was confirmed by national organisations who stated that tenants lack the ability to fight back. If complaints are made about living conditions people find themselves being thrown out of their accommodation. As Johnson highlights "poverty does not have a single face, easily recognised and labelled" (2002, p.127). In Govanhill this means developing interventions for Roma people who are facing multiple development problems.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of development interventions implemented to improve employment prospects of Roma people in Govanhill?

Roma specific development interventions, such as access to health services and education, began in Govanhill seven years ago to meet immediate needs of individuals. Table 2 outlines the most recent development interventions that have been taken to support access to the labour market and skills development.

Service/Intervention	Reason for development	Process of development
P.5 Employment support for Roma GRA/Crossroads/Govanhill Law Centre	Demand on services to provide employability support	Service provision lead funded by Glasgow City Council through EU Vulnerability fund
The Backcourts Initiative	Sanitation and environment problems. Employability element built in due to high unemployment in the area – 60 individuals to be involved in this of which 20 will be Roma	Lead by Govanhill Housing Association. Consultation conducted. Funding from the Scottish Government
The Clean Green Team	To bridge skills development areas before moving into the Backcourts Initiative	Lead by Romano Lav* Participants choose programme and applied for funding.

	programme	Funding from GCDT and Oxfam

Table 2 Outline of employability service provisions
*Romano Lav is a Roma constituted group established to build the voice of the Roma community in Govanhill, it has been in existence for 8 months

A strength of the GRA P.5 Employability Service was the built in translation support. It was felt this reduced delay in providing support to clients, meaning that employability staff could be clear with clients. The popularity of the service was felt to be an indicator of success. 15 appointments were available for new clients each week. GRA was booked up several weeks in advance – availability of the service was spread through word of mouth. FGD participants discussed the strength of the GRA in providing support to build CVs and in completing weekly job searches required by the job centre to access benefits.

When looking more specifically at participation the GCDT recognised that this could have been improved in terms of the Backcourts Initiative. It was stated that the way meetings were arranged lead to primarily white middle class owner occupiers or long-term renters responding to the consultation. Attempts were made through streetwork engagement methods to speak to Roma people, however, they felt that this was too little too late.

The Clean Green Team (CGT) was praised by a number of the participants in this research one statement demonstrates the general feeling that "CGT is a good example, the best thing that has happened so far". Those who participated in this project will progress on to the Backcourt Initiative training programme for 10-12 weeks of intensive skills development (results from the first Backcourts cohort demonstrated positive employment transitions for participants – the first cohort did not include any Roma people). However there was concern about the message the CGT project sent out as a focus of the project was clearing waste. It might reinforce beliefs in the Govanhill community that Roma people were causing the waste, a source of local tension. Romano Lav challenged this by saying that the project had been developed as it was similar to schemes run for those on benefits in Slovakia. This demonstrates the challenges that exist in the participation process, having handed power over to the group the decision had to respect the outcome.

How do institutional barriers affect the implementation of interventions to access the labour market at local level?

The Govanhill respondents identified continuing barriers to both development and participation in the development process. For example the impact of planners' perceptions of a travelling community led to the belief that the Roma people would simply move on:

"we were caught out by the Roma, we thought they would just be moving into the area for a short time not that they would put down roots"

The local Job Centre Plus (JCP) was pinpointed as a concern for Roma individuals. One reported "they are bullying us" and another female participant stated "they treat

us badly and we can't protect ourselves because we can't speak English." These views were further verified in some recently conducted legal research which states:

"Roma communities in Govanhill are being routinely failed by statutory services, who are routinely breaking their own guidelines and providing an unacceptably low level of service to Roma clients" (Govanhill Law Centre, p.34)

FGD members not only felt they were treated differently from other races in Scotland but also explained that they felt this impacted on service delivery. No JCP staff were involved in this research.

It is difficult to attribute the impact of negative perceptions to lack of participation but it is worth asking the question, do negative perceptions impact on participatory practices (or lack thereof) and if so how? Johnson (2002, p.134) warns development managers that they can be "part of the problem and not always part of the solution". Evidence outlined above suggests perceptions by staff in some statutory services about who Roma people are and their background could have a negative result on service delivery. In this value laden process (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2005) it is important for practitioners to recognise this and be clear on how they are going to limit the impact of negative perceptions, rather than shy away from the issue or pretend it is not happening. As one respondent stated "it is the workers role to challenge these perceptions"

While the services outlined above cater for Czech and Slovak Roma, who are now able to access the labour market freely, concerns were raised about lack of services for Romanian Roma, who still face employment restrictions. Perceptions of Roma as a homogenous group were recognised as a growing barrier to service development. Concern was raised that if action was not taken to provide support services then services for Romanian Roma would be left playing the catch up game.

What barriers exist to Roma participation in policy development and decision making processes?

Most respondents felt lack of participation in development interventions was the norm. One FGD member summed up the situation by stating, organisations are "working for the Roma, not with the Roma."

It was noted in section 2 that difficulties exist in terms of participation of Roma people due to their history of exclusion and discrimination (Poole and Adamson, 2007) and that, however well planned, interventions without participation would be limited in terms of poverty reduction (Engberg-Pederson and Webster, 2002). Considerations such as language skills, both Roma English skills and accessible translation support for Romanian Roma, created barriers for Roma participation in mainstream forums. Cllr Alderslowe piloted residents' groups as a mechanism for engaging constituents but he noted that only one Roma family had ever attended. With limited resources to translate materials and not knowing which language was behind each door it was difficult to communicate the message about meetings. The family that did attend benefited from their daughter translating for them. In other sectors an example of the need for parents to participate in their children's education,

however, it was felt that Roma people often do not value education because of their previous experiences.

Different priorities of organisations and people have undermined previous attempts at promoting participation amongst the Roma community in Govanhill. The impact of attempts and failures led to demotivated staff and participants, wasted resources, and had set back the participation process due to a view of "we tried it but it didn't work…" "they [the Roma] were expecting a.b.c and they got e.f.g."

Traditional ways of working were seen to be barriers to Roma people participating in development interventions in Govanhill. Public meetings or councillor surgeries were not used by Roma people and councillors interviewed recognised that these lacked approachability. Alternative ways to engage people, such as 'walk abouts' or local residents meetings were being considered. Top down approaches to funding were recognised as institutional barriers. Some respondents described a gap between funders and Roma people. Several respondents stated that the effects of this approach was disempowering as the opportunity to participate is less available.

What are the Roma community's expectations of participation?

It was recognised that the Roma community historically have been less politically engaged and active than other migrant groups coming to Scotland. The FGD participants stated they would like to be involved, one participant said "it would be good if we communicated with each other, for both sides." Others recognised that with Roma people being listened to resources would not be wasted on unused services and potentially better services could be created. Better communication between service providers and Roma people and an appeal to work with the Roma instead of on their behalf was made by FGD particpants.

Section 4 Recommendations

These recommendations have been developed as part of the semi structured interviews and focus group discussion that feed into this research and through the analysis of current literature and findings of other recent research undertaken in the area. The recommendations have been split into three separate subsets:

Recommendations for Local and National Government

- Need to recognise the variety and growing amount of local research that details how the community empowerment agenda is working in practice.
- Need for investigation of statutory services that have been identified as potentially failing to meet equal opportunities guidelines.
- Need to operate in a way that engenders participation in the decision making process.

Recommendations for Community Organisations

- Need to recognise that Roma people in Govanhill have views on how interventions can be developed but that the most appropriate mechanism for discussing these views may not yet have been found.
- Need to conduct a mixture of focus group discussions and interviews with Roma people to map out community assets and identify existing gaps and areas for further development allowing Roma participants to prioritise areas for development interventions. This can then be used as a framework to assess existing services and to feed into the planning process going forward. This does not have to be a resource intensive process, one organisation or coordinating body should take responsibility for developing the tools that can be used to facilitate this process. The benefit of undertaking a process like this would be to create a solid reference point of Roma views on development interventions that could over time be developed and built upon.

Recommendations for Roma people living in Govanhill

- Need to embrace the opportunities for community engagement that Scottish policy allows and fight for right to have your voice heard in issues affecting your life. Support will need to be provided to increase awareness and accessibility among the Roma people of their right to have their voice heard and the value that can be placed in involvement in influencing decisions.

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