

LUTON ROMA TRUST

Strategic Development Plan - December 2015

Luton Roma Trust is a non-profit making organization, which follows the principles of the Christian Gospel and works holistically to enhance the lives of the Roma community of Luton, meeting them in their deepest needs, and supporting their emancipation and social integration within the wider life of our town.

Luton Roma Trust was established by the Anglican Diocese of St Albans in 2015.

Luton Roma Trust perceives its role as an active and responsible agent of change on behalf of the most marginalized and impoverished community of Europe.

Why was Luton Roma Trust formed?

- Because we believe that it is right to welcome and assist every foreign person who exercises their legal right to live and work in our country.
- In response to ever growing number of Central and Eastern European Roma families who have migrated to our town in recent times. We estimate that the Roma community in Luton is at least 1,500.
- To meet the Roma migrants in their extreme vulnerability and assist them in understanding the way of life in the UK.
- To help the new Roma migrant families understand their rights under International, EU and UK law.
- To help the new migrant families to access social welfare, education, housing, health services and employment.
- To help the new migrant families to learn English and raise their standard of literacy.
- To address the fact that there are still no policies in place to help the newly arrived Roma families from Central and Eastern Europe to integrate into the life and community of Luton.
- To address the fact that local and national bodies have systematically failed to heed to EU directives to introduce concrete measures to insure the integration of the Roma families into the life of the UK.
- To offer a counter narrative to the negative racist stereotyping of the Roma in the media and to challenge the prejudices of many in the wider community of the UK.
- To stand with the Roma families in the face of rising fascist extremism across Europe.

Luton Roma Trust provides front line services...

- to ensure the Roma children have easy access to schooling and to raise the educational level of the Roma community;
- to raise the economic status of the Roma, ensuring that they have full access to earned incomes and employment;
- to facilitate full access to welfare services, health care and accommodation;
- to work in partnership with the statutory bodies to ensure the development of practices and policies which address the real needs of the Roma communities of Luton;

In parallel to our front line services, we work actively...

- to *both* honour *and* promote Roma heritage, culture, traditions and language;
- to overcome the discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices against Gypsy, Roma Traveller communities;
- to stimulate genuine dialogue and mutual respect within the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma communities and with the wider community of Luton;
- to ensure that the Roma develop their own voice in society and play a full part in public life;
- to mobilize the internal potential of the Roma community and identify partners who will work creatively with Luton Roma Trust to help the Roma realize their full potential as citizens;
- to lobby at both local and national level for the adoption of policies which make it possible for the Roma to flourish in the UK

A. The development and implementation of policies for Roma integration

Specific Objective 1.

The enhancement of the education and the latent skills of the Roma

- Working in partnership with our pre-schools and schools to enhance the education of all our Roma children;
- Helping our Roma families to give the highest priority to school attendance and understand the place of education in the development of the child and the community;
- Working in partnership with schools to increasing the attainment of Roma pupils at all Key Stages and at GCSC;
- Encouragement and support of Roma students to continue their education into vocational courses, colleges and Universities;
- Engaging Roma parents in educational activities and particularly English;
- Working in partnership with schools to ensure that teachers are made fully aware of Roma history, culture and language;
- Ensuring that schools are aware of specific safe-guarding issues that Roma children face.

Specific Objective 2.

Best practice for access to training, businesses and employment:

- Creation of the necessary conditions for the development of Roma businesses;
- Provision of training for the Roma for setting up a small family business;
- Stimulation of entrepreneurship among Roma communities;
- Provision of services to running businesses;
- Support of further development of Roma businesses.
- Providing opportunities for accessing professional occupations for young Roma;
- Creation of conditions for early professional orientation of students
- Creation of conditions for access to professional jobs for young Roma adults.

Specific Objective 3.

Ensuring equal access to welfare services:

- Provision of special consultations and mediation with key agencies and statutory bodies;
- Equal access for the Roma to health services;
- Equal access for the Roma to housing and all other services.

Specific Objective 4.

Preservation of the culture, traditions and language of the Roma communities.

- Organizing of language courses for Roma people who wish to keep/learn their language.
- Organizing an archive and database of Roma culture.
- Facilitating Roma cultural events.

B. Full Roma participation whenever policies are made that effect their lives
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Specific Objective 1.

Raising awareness within our national institutions of how policy-making affects the Roma communities in our midst. Encouraging the policy-makers to include actively the Roma in all their plans.

Specific Objective 2.

Encouraging the development of strategic partnerships and coalitions between Roma communities and statutory bodies and local agencies;

Specific Objective 3.

Challenging local policy-makers to fully take into account the issues facing disadvantaged communities such as the Roma;

Specific Objective 4.

The intentional creation of civic groups, whose principle role is to facilitate full Roma integration into the wider community.

Specific Objective 5.

Increasing the capacity of Luton Roma Trust.

C. Christian Roma Community Centre

We recognise the need for a dedicated place, which the Roma community could recognise as their home and where Luton Roma Trust could implement most of its activities included in the strategic plan. The building would also be used for worship and the celebration of Roma Culture.

To achieve this long term vision we recognise that there will be many interim stages. A rented / shared premises might be a necessary first stage. Such premises may have only small meeting rooms available for the drop-in work, and may not have a large flexible space suitable for teaching, worship etc.

The vision for a Roma Community Church Centre will be carefully planned before resourcing is sought and before the vision is shared more widely.

Consideration will be given to the hopes of the Roma people themselves. We believe the centre will be there to serve all the Roma people of Luton. We are also aware of the unmet needs of our own UK Romany & Traveller communities. The centre could also be made available to them.