

# Roma Rough Sleeping Team: Supporting access to the DWP

## Why might additional support be needed?

Individuals from the Roma community may be less familiar with systems and processes in the UK and may also be unclear about their rights and entitlements or the role of specific institutions such as the 'Department for Work and Pensions' or 'Job Centre Plus'.

**Our role is to support individuals to navigate these services where needed, so they can end their homelessness.**

## Things to look out for

- Many Roma people rough sleeping in London are Romanian Roma but over half speak Romany rather than Romanian and may struggle to understand Romanian translators which are often available over language line. They may also struggle to read or write so it is important to explain information verbally.
- It is important to support the individual to set up an email and have a phone number. Additional help may also be required to improve their digital literacy so they can effectively use this technology to engage with the DWP
- It is best practice to support the person to attend their first appointments and help them become familiar with the route to that in the future they can attend on their own
- Some of the terminology that we are familiar with is likely to be confusing to people who haven't heard it before. Try to explain the process in simple language and avoid acronyms like 'UC' and explain what it meant by a 'journal'.
- You should support the work coach to understand the specific support needs and cultural needs of the individual and ask how they are able to adjust their service to meet these needs. If you or the individual you are supporting feel their needs aren't meet then they should be supported to highlight this and if necessary make a complaint.
- Individuals may need more support when completing their Universal Credit journal. This should always be in the person's own words but translation should be provided so they do not need to rely on google translate which can lead to misunderstandings

## Racism and Discrimination

When supporting Roma individuals its critical to recognise their direct experience of racism as well as the impact of being part of a community that has been discriminated against for many generations.

Our role as homelessness professionals is always to **recognise** and **challenge** such behaviour in a way that **respects the wishes** of the individual who is affected.