

## **Good /Promising Practice Examples from Ireland (Cairde)**

The following examples highlight good and promising practices from Ireland that are relevant to the “Roma Influencers Network” project and the achievement of its objectives. These examples have been selected for their relevance to national and comparative Roma Influencers reports and their emphasis on Roma participation, cultural sensitivity, gender equality, community participation, sustainability, networking + multi-sectoral co-operation and innovation.

Two of the four examples have been drawn from Cairde’s existing body of work, reflecting the long-standing relationships, trust and communication channels that Cairde has established with Roma and service providers over many years.

### **Good Practice Example 1**

**Name of the Initiative:** *The DROM Ireland: Roma Peer Support for Health, Education & Equity Programme*

**Country/Location:** Ireland

**Promoting organisation:** Cairde

**Implementation:** Ongoing

The DROM Ireland Programme, funded by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE), supports Roma women through education, training, and structured accompaniment, enabling a shift from primarily being service users to becoming Roma Peer Support Workers. Grounded in the women’s lived experiences, the programme uses these insights to inform its design and to highlight the barriers faced by migrant and minority ethnic communities in Ireland. Rooted in the Romani word *drom* (“road” or “journey”), it models culturally sensitive, community-led development and recognises that addressing racism, discrimination, and gender inequality is essential to achieving justice, equity, and full participation in society. Key components of DROM include:

#### **Education & Training**

Many of the participants have not had the opportunity to attend formal education in the past. As part of DROM, they attend weekly English, literacy, and IT classes and work towards QQI-accredited qualifications. Classes take place in Cairde on a weekly basis and build communication skills as well as confidence. Field visits to places of learning such as University College Dublin are incorporated into the programme, broadening aspirations and making further education feel more within reach for the participants and their families. DROM’s training and education component impacts positively on both the personal and professional development of participants, building their skills, confidence and visibility and empowering them in their work in the community and as advocates for change.

#### **Health & Mental Health**

As part of DROM, participants develop knowledge in key health areas, including maternal

health, and contribute to health and mental health promotion through outreach work in the community. As part of this component they are also supported to participate in health service initiatives e.g. providing formal feedback on a National Screening Service.

This health literacy and public engagement equips the women to become informed and trusted community messengers — a vital asset for influencing attitudes around early marriage and motherhood.

### **Equality & Civic Participation**

Through DROM, information sessions strengthen participants' understanding of civil legal aid and equality law, among other topics, and Roma Peer Support Workers gain the skills to guide community members and engage with policy processes. This civic empowerment plays a crucial role in building community capacity to challenge harmful norms, advocate for rights, and participate confidently in public decision-making.

Overall, DROM is a holistic adult learning programme model that builds Roma women's knowledge, confidence, and leadership, supporting them to build bridges between their community and services, challenge discrimination and encourage new pathways for Roma women and girls. As an evolving, journey-based programme, it is leading to the emergence of Roma Peer Support Workers who support women in navigating key decisions and circumstances, including early marriage and motherhood.

### **Good Practice Example 2**

**Name of the initiative: The National Roma Infoline**

**Country/Location: Ireland**

**Promoting organisation: Cairde**

**Implementation period: Ongoing since 2020**

Established in 2020 and funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE), Cairde's Infoline offers practical support for Roma callers and service providers through Romani, Romanian, and English. Since its establishment it has handled over 12,000 calls. In 2025, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights recognised the Infoline as a positive development in addressing Roma health needs — affirming its role as a trusted, culturally competent bridge between Roma communities and public services.

Although not specifically designed to address early marriage or motherhood, the Infoline supports callers with a wide range of needs, from medical cards to emergency accommodation, thereby facilitating access to essential services. The Infoline provides consistent access to reliable information and safe referral pathways, helping Roma, including young Roma women, to connect with services earlier, more safely, and with greater confidence.

### **Good Practice Example 3**

**Name of the initiative: Study on Understanding a Minority Group's (Roma) Experiences of Access and Quality in Maternity Service**

**Country/Location: Ireland**

**Promoting organisations: UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems in partnership with Cairde and the HSE**

**Implementation period: 2024**

In 2024, the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research, Education and Innovation Health Systems (IRIS) at the UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems entered into partnership with Cairde to carry out a study on Roma women's experiences with maternity services. The study also involved colleagues from the Health Services Executive (HSE) and was part of a broader QS Signals Project to improve maternity and neonatal care.

Based on the principle of co-design, Roma women from Cairde's network assisted with the design of research workshops, advised on cultural and literacy considerations, and acted as translators and participants. Online workshops were chosen to facilitate women participants who had young children at home. A key component of the study was information sessions for the Roma participants delivered by the HSE, ensuring a measure of reciprocity in the research process. After each workshop, researchers, HSE staff, and Cairde (including Roma community members) reflected together and co-interpreted findings.

The majority of those who participated in the study were aged 21–39 and had their first pregnancy between 14 and 19, so the findings are very relevant to early motherhood and how it shapes Roma women's interactions with healthcare services. The findings pointed to high birth rates and early pregnancies among Roma, barriers to care, and the urgent need for culturally sensitive services and stronger collaboration between healthcare providers and Roma organisations.

Centering the principles of co-design, reciprocity and community interpretation of findings, this study is an example of inter-sectoral co-operation and good practice in minority-centered research. The example also shows the need for research bodies to secure dedicated funding to ensure that Roma and Roma-supporting organisations are participating meaningfully in research that concerns them.

For more information see:

[Understanding a Minority Group's \(Roma\) Experiences of Access and Quality in Maternity Services](#)

[Co-Designing an Engagement Strategy to Include the Voices of a Minority Group in Assessing the Quality of Maternity and Neonatal Care](#)

#### **Good Practice Example 4**

**Name of the Initiative: The Rotunda Hospital's Teenage Pregnancy Service**

**Country/ Location: Ireland**

**Promoting organisation: The Rotunda Maternity Hospital**

**Implementation period: Ongoing since 2005**

Serving an area of Dublin where many Roma families live, the Rotunda Hospital is a significant service for the Roma community. The hospital's Teenage Pregnancy Service is an example of the maternity service endeavouring to respond to the needs of young Roma mothers in particular.

While a 2025 evaluation of the Teenage Pregnancy Service (2005–2022) found that teenage pregnancy rates in the hospital declined from 3.3% (2005) to 1.8% (2022), the proportion of Roma teenage mothers attending rose from 11.5% in 2015 to 43.5% in 2022.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, 2024 data from the hospital showed that 47% of patients were non-Irish, with Romanian being the most common language. 35% of the patients were Roma or Romanian and often noted to be in vulnerable circumstances, in need of translation services and facing significant barriers in accessing basic healthcare.<sup>2</sup>

While the Teenage Pregnancy Service offers individualised antenatal classes and dedicated medical social work support, the annual report notes that important gaps in the service remain — notably the lack of antenatal education in languages other than English. This gap directly affects young Roma mothers in particular and underscores the need for culturally competent care when it comes to addressing early motherhood among Roma girls and young women.

Overall, the Rotunda's Teenage Pregnancy Service demonstrates an approach to tracking demographic shifts and adapting care to ensure especially vulnerable young mothers are supported. There is a need for more resourcing however - for culturally appropriate antenatal education, translation services, and targeted outreach, all of which are needed to address the impacts of early marriage and early motherhood among Roma girls and young women.

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<sup>1</sup> [Evaluation of the Dedicated Teenage Pregnancy Service in a Tertiary Obstetric Unit in the Republic of Ireland from 2005 to 2022 - Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology](#)

<sup>2</sup> [2024 The Rotunda Annual Report, pp 69-73](#)