Aims. To assess smear uptake rates of a new migrant population in Sheffield.

Background. Women from BME backgrounds are less likely to attend for regular smears. Recent new waves of immigration from Eastern Europe are presenting new difficulties in engaging with women eligible to have smears. Many of these countries have no established screening programme. The Roma constitute one of the largest minorities in Europe (estimate 5 -10 million) and have historically been marginalized and subsequently large parts of the population have low educational status and high levels of unemployment and deprivation. Roma life expectancy is 10 years lower than other EU citizens.

There are an estimated 197,705 Roma in the UK.

Methods. Audit data for smear uptake was obtained from 4 sentinel Practices covering the areas of highest Roma population density. This was compared using smear rates from Sheffield CCG and the individual practices.

Results. Across the four sentinel Practices the smear rates for the Roma Slovak are below (53%-40%) the practice averages (73%-66%) in all four cases and the CCG average (73.5% of patients). In one case the uptake is below the lower end of the QOF targets (45%).

Conclusion. GP experience suggests amongst the Roma Slovak population there are increased cervical cancer risk factors: high rates of smoking, obesity, early age of first sexual intercourse, multiparity and possibly multiple partners. Furthermore, migrant Roma women may have missed out on the HPV vaccination programme, both in the UK and in Slovakia. Previous studies have suggested that women from BME backgrounds are less likely to attend for smears. Further studies are required to elicit the reasons why, in this group of women, the uptake is low and to establish acceptable interventions to improve uptake, not only in this group of vulnerable women, but in other hard to reach groups.

References.