
OFFALY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

CONSULTATION REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

In 2012, Offaly Traveller Movement decided to develop a Strategic Plan. As part of the process of developing the plan, a significant process of consultation was carried out with members of the Traveller community and with other stakeholders. The results of this process are outlined below. They provided the framework that underpinned the strategic planning process.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the consultation included the following:

SURVEY WITH THE TRAVELLER COMMUNITY

- Thirty-one detailed interviews with members of the Traveller community were carried out. These interviews reflected consultation with a total of 84 people as a significant number of the interviews were carried out with a number of people contributing.
- Respondents were randomly selected from the OTM database of Travellers in Offaly. Random selection minimises bias in relation to selection and therefore adds to the ability to draw conclusions based on the results.
- The random selection process was stratified for location so that the location of selected respondents reflected proportionately the entire Traveller population in Offaly.
- There was a particular focus on Traveller specific accommodation. Site visits were carried out by the Researcher, the OTM Director and the OTM Accommodation Worker and interviews were carried out with residents of the sites.

FOCUS GROUP

Building on the preliminary results of the survey, a Focus Group was held to which members of the Traveller community in County Offaly and others were invited. The Focus Group commenced with a presentation of the preliminary results of the survey and discussions were held to verify the findings and to build on them.

STAKEHOLDER'S SURVEY

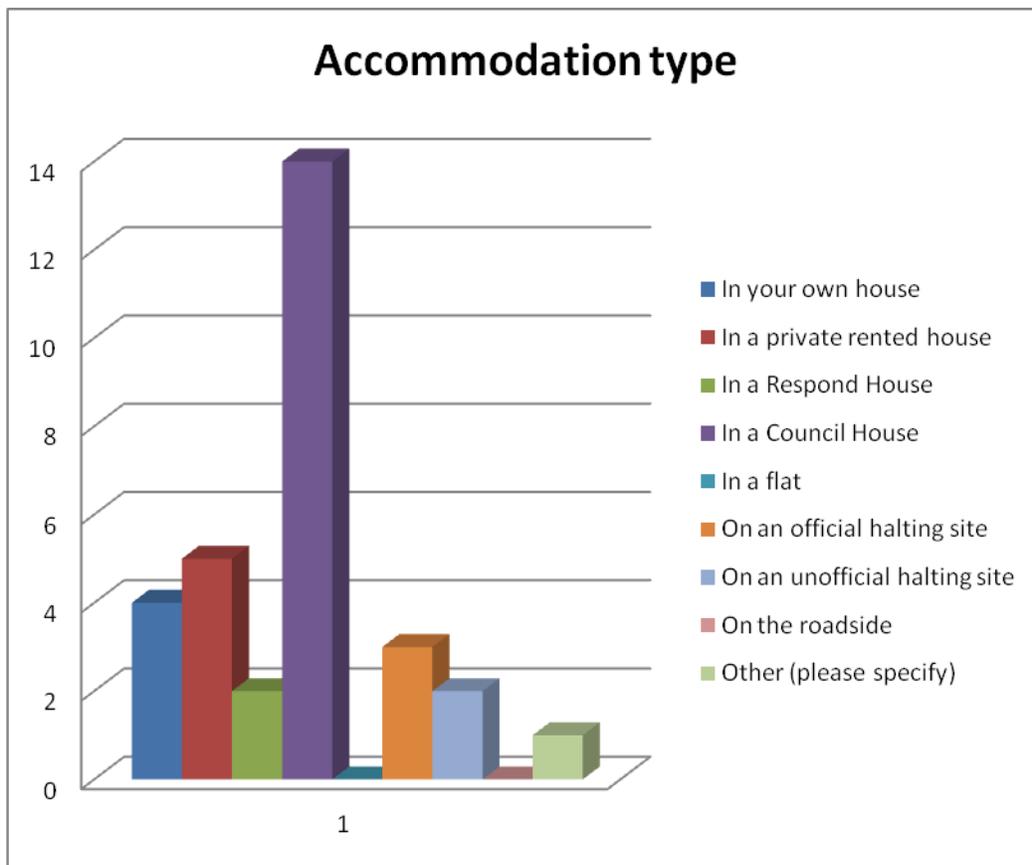
In addition to the above, a survey was carried out with a range of stakeholders identified by OTM. A total of seven responses were received to the survey.

SURVEY WITH THE TRAVELLER COMMUNITY

This section outlines the main results of the survey with the Traveller community. Where appropriate, it also uses information from the Focus Group.

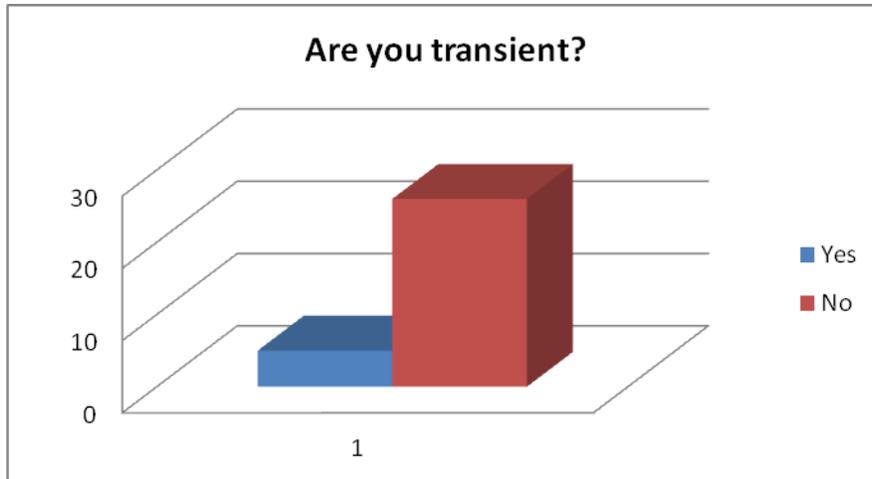
LOCATION & TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION

The majority of respondents live in Tullamore, followed by Birr, Banagher and Clara.



Almost half of the respondents lived in a Council house, with a number living in private rented accommodation and a smaller number owning their own homes. Almost 17% of respondents lived on official or unofficial halting sites.

TRAVELLING/TRANSIENT



Though the vast majority of respondents stated that they did not travel, a total of five respondents stated that they still travelled, mostly during the summer months.

The majority of people that gave an explanation for their answer stated that they did not like to travel. However, a number stated that it was due to the treatment they received at the hands of the Gardaí (presumably when they tried to make camp) and others and the lack of facilities for those in need for transient accommodation. A number of the older respondents stated that used to travel but felt that they were now too old.

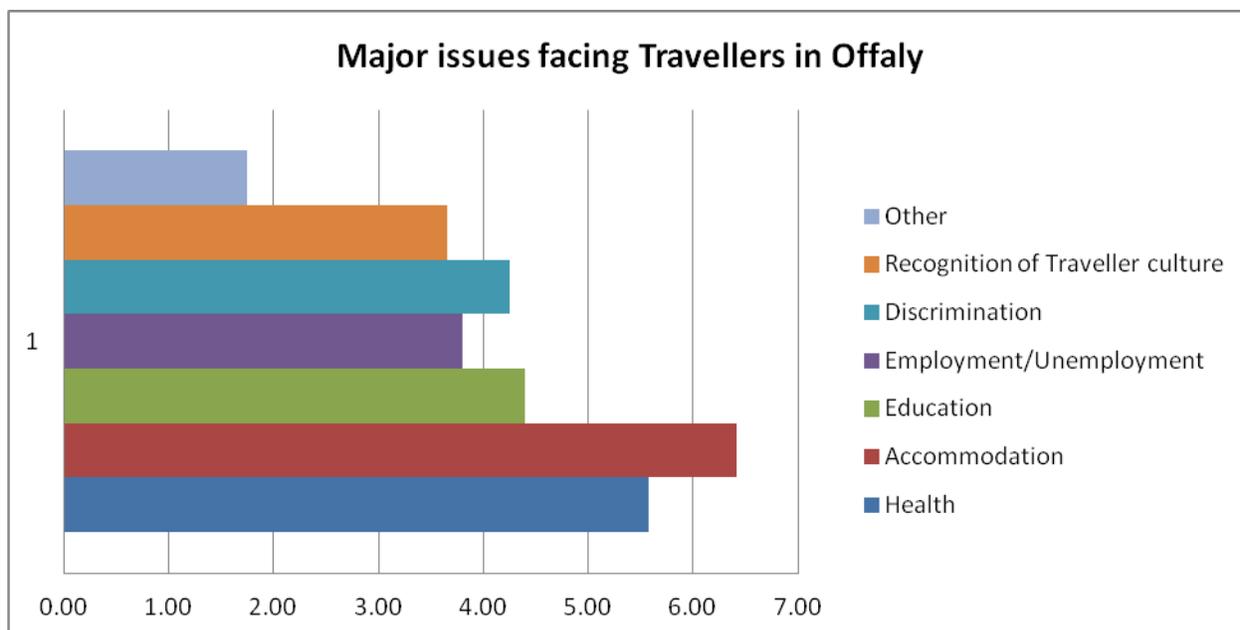
Travel still - but difficult - nowhere to go

25 years on the road - life is too hard - suffered too much trying to raise kids...but my husband would be gone in two minutes and my son would also go.

I would travel more if there was a transient site in each county, the Trespass law put a stop to Travellers moving from place to place

MAJOR ISSUES FACING TRAVELLERS IN OFFALY

Respondents were asked to rate in order of importance the issues facing Travellers in Offaly.



Accommodation is the issue of most importance, followed by health and discrimination. 'Other' issues that were mentioned were the question of Traveller ethnicity and inter-Traveller feuding. Respondents were asked to elaborate on their answer under a number of headings:

HEALTH

The concerns expressed in relation to health were quite widespread. In general, there was an acknowledgement that the health of Traveller women has improved. The work of the peer-led Primary Health Care Programme, and in particular the work of the Community Health Workers, was acknowledged as key to this improvement. There was also a consensus that women are more likely to talk about their health and attend doctors. However, there was general consensus that a lot more work remains to be done.

In contrast, there was consensus that the health of Traveller men has actually deteriorated. Traveller men's reluctance to seek help and support with health issues was a common theme. 'Stigma' was a word that was often used in relation to men's health and the fact that a Traveller man is unlikely to speak of his health issues with a woman was also often repeated.

I think Travellers were a lot healthier years ago. They travelled more and had more freedom. I think it is the way that Travellers are living now that there is so much suicide going on now. Drugs has a lot to do with it as well

Health - PHC women doing a lot but its only now that health is beginning to improve - but more to be done.

Not enough information for men. There should be a Traveller man talking to Traveller men about health. There is stigma, a Traveller man is too ashamed to ask for help and Traveller men don't cry.

Mental health was a particular area of concern. Many respondents mentioned the widespread nature of depression and mental ill health and the reluctance amongst many, particularly men, to seek help. Respondents spoke of many spending their days sleeping. They also spoke of the prevalence of drug and alcohol misuse and the increasing frequency of suicide amongst Travellers, again particularly amongst young Traveller men.

Suicide is very high in the Traveller community. Men suffers more mental health issues than women because women will talk about health issues

Respondents spoke frequently of the links between physical and mental ill health and the affects of inappropriate or substandard accommodation, often further compounded by experiences of discrimination and the oppression experienced as a result of the imposition of a way of life that does not suit Travellers.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation was the issue that was the subject of the majority of discussion during the interviews, and there was consensus that this is *the* major issue in Offaly.

There is still a lot of Travellers living in very poor (third world conditions) on unofficial sites around the country ... their basic human rights are being denied -no toilet facilities, no running water

Respondents spoke of the poor facilities for Travellers in Offaly, particularly those that wanted to live on sites or other forms of Traveller specific accommodation. Some respondents spoke of their experiences of living on unofficial sites, many for a significant number of years, without access to basic facilities such as running water, toilets, electricity or refuse collection. Respondents spoke of the lack of Traveller specific accommodation in Offaly, and the fact that many Travellers are 'forced' to accept a house when they would prefer to live in Traveller specific accommodation.

There is nothing for Travellers that don't want to live in houses. Some are forced to live in houses because they don't have anywhere else to go. I think that Offaly Council is the worst Council around

For some of those living in local authority or private rented accommodation they spoke of the discrimination that they experienced from neighbours. There was a consensus that big estates do not suit the Traveller way of life and that Travellers need small Traveller specific sites and housing schemes.

If you live on the side of the road and you don't have running water, toilets... you will take a house because you have nothing else

The lack of accommodation for young people, and in particular young married couples was a particular cause of concern. Some respondents mentioned this as a cause of stress and distress for many young couples who cannot afford rents but do not want to live with their families.

Interactions with Offaly County Council were reported as often being negative, with many believing the Council to be uncooperative, ignoring Travellers and the Traveller representative organisation (OTM).

EDUCATION

Older Travellers spoke of their experience in school, stating that they went only to receive Communion and Confirmation so that their experience of education was very restricted. Those in the middle age groups spoke in generally negative terms of their experiences in school.

It's a very odd Traveller now that don't have their children in school and they go on to secondary school but there is not much help for Traveller kids in school

However there was agreement that the education system has improved, and there was a general agreement that education is crucial for Travellers and that Traveller children are now generally staying in school longer than previously.

Homework clubs. Secondary school kids need exam support especially if the father and mother can't read. Needs to be Traveller only 'cos Travellers still won't go in with settled – part of the reason why kids are dropping out early

Primary school was generally thought to be a positive experience for Traveller children. However, the transition from primary to secondary is thought to be very difficult for children, without any support for them to make that transition successfully.

Notwithstanding the fact that many children are now staying in school longer, there is still thought to be a large proportion of children still leaving school early. A number of reasons were given for this:

- There is a lack of support for homework and if parents have low levels of literacy, they are not in a position to support the children with homework;
- Peer pressure;
- The incentive of the Youthreach allowance;
- Believe it to be a waste of time as they will never use the skills – this was linked to the high unemployment rates and the fact that girls often marry at a young age.

Lack of homework support for children was frequently mentioned and in that context many mentioned the loss of the OTM After Schools Project, saying that it has left a significant gap in support. The proportion of children leaving school with low levels of literacy is still thought to be a significant problem.

ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education was spoken of in the context of the Traveller Training Centres only and a significant number of those interviewed had experiences of 'working' in the centres. The prospect of the Traveller Training Centre programme closing this year was frequently mentioned with trepidation as many do not know what if anything will replace it and whether there will be any opportunities open to Traveller adults to return to education. The Training Centre programmes were seen to be very useful in teaching adults' literacy and other skills and as a place for the women to earn additional income. It was clear that the Training Centre will be missed.

All the Training Centres are closing now. I remember a few years back Traveller women used to look forward to going to work they used to call it. Now they don't have anywhere to go. A lot of women learned how to read and write a good bit in the centres. They were good I think

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment and the lack of employment opportunities for Travellers were stark. Many respondents were hard pressed to be able to give examples of Travellers that were working. Respondents made links between poor levels of education and unemployment and also between discrimination and unemployment, with many stating that though unemployment is a major issue for many at the moment, it is significantly worse in the Traveller community.

The prospects of employment were treated with disillusion, with many stating that in order to get a job a Traveller would have to hide their identity as a Traveller and that this would be impossible to do in a small town where everybody would know you anyway.

Traveller enterprise and occupations in what are commonly associated with the Traveller economy, such as recycling and dealing in scrap, are seen to be over-regulated, making them very difficult to engage in.

Emigration is becoming a growing issue for Travellers, with numbers now emigrating to Holland, Spain, Germany and the US.

DISCRIMINATION

The issue of discrimination was the subject of many interesting discussions. Some reported not having experienced discrimination as they were 'well known'. However, as many in the Focus Group pointed out, this in itself is indicative of discrimination and the majority described discrimination as being prevalent and widespread. Discrimination is thought to be getting worse with respondents reporting experiencing discrimination in pubs, hotels, shops and in employment.

Getting venues for weddings and other family occasions is a huge issue and many report experiences where they were exploited and over charged to secure a venue;

The sense of powerlessness and helplessness in the face of discrimination was widespread, with the majority stating that they felt they had to put up with discrimination and they did not have the power to challenge it. Fear of making the situation worse was the major underlying reason for not challenging discrimination.

If a Traveller applies for a job, the employer still looks at the name and address and the application is binned... the term 'Knacker' is still used widely and is one of the more offensive words a Traveller could be called

This will never go away. It's everywhere and it happens every day. It is just like the norm now. I don't think it will ever change - if anything it is getting worse.

OTHER

A number of other comments were made that referred to:

- The importance of the Traveller way of life and culture;
- Feuding
- the need for advocacy and working for Travellers
- The value of the Primary Health Care Programme to Travellers
- The importance of the PHCP model for use in other areas

Traveller way of life is changing - it is not dying out. 'You are what you are' Settled people and society need to be more aware of Traveller culture

PRIORITY AREAS OF WORK

Respondents were asked to identify what they believed the priority areas of work for OTM should be over the next three years. Their priorities fell into a number of categories:

ACCOMMODATION

- More Traveller appropriate accommodation;

EDUCATION

- Re-establish the Afterschools programme;
- Support the transition from primary to secondary school;
- Stop the closure or establish an alternative to the Traveller Training Centres

More done for Traveller youth. Money funds should be invested in young people now, not when they are in jail - it costs thousands to keep a person in jail

YOUNG PEOPLE

- Establish clubs so that they have something to do and will not get into trouble or begin to misuse drugs and alcohol;
- Training and employment opportunities for young men and women

DISCRIMINATION

- To challenge the discrimination that many are experiencing

HEALTH

- Maintain the programme and extend it to work with men

PARTICULAR GROUPS

Respondents were asked to identify any issues affecting particular groups.

CHILDREN (UP TO 12 YEARS)

- Lack of activities and things to do;
- Discrimination and ethnically motivated bullying;
- Lack of support for school work – as parents are unable to help them with their homework;
- Facilities and conditions they are expected to live in, particularly if living on the unofficial sites;
- Leaving school early.

They need:

- Homework support and after schools;
- Support to transition to secondary school;
- Organised activities;
- Support integrating/joining mainstream activities;
- Summer camps that are affordable to parents on very low incomes.

TEENAGERS (BETWEEN 13 AND 18)

- Lack of activities and clubs for this age group;
- Boredom that can lead to substance misuse and/or getting involved in crime;
- Bullying;
- Lack of alternatives to mainstream education with the imminent closure of the Traveller Training Centre;
- Absence of support for those doing exams, particularly for those whose parents have poor literacy skills and are unable to help them with homework;

There is nothing out there for this age group. They just hang around, get bored and get into trouble with the law and this is the start of a vicious circle

They need:

- Clubs and activities;
- Education about drugs and the dangers of drug use;
- Support to remain in school, particularly support with homework;
- Summer projects that are affordable to parents on very low incomes.

YOUNG ADULTS (BETWEEN 19 AND 25)

- Nothing for this age group to do – no employment prospects, no courses or FÁS places;
- A large proportion still getting married at a very young age;

They need:

- Training that is work related;
- Clubs and activities;

There should be something for this age group because old people are vulnerable and lonely. They need a place to go to meet new people and where they will have someone to talk to.

OLDER PEOPLE

- They are thought to be few in number but were referred to as the 'forgotten generation';
- Older people were thought to be often vulnerable and lonely;
- There are few supports for them and no opportunities for them to meet socially;
- Issue of poor literacy skills linked to confusion about medication raised.

They need:

- Specific groups that will allow them to interact and mingle with their own age groups;
- More frequent visits from the Community Health Workers;

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- They are thought to be few in number by most, though some believed that there were a sizeable number;
- Travellers with disabilities find it difficult to link in with services;
- Many believed that there were few or no services for Travellers with disabilities;

WOMEN

- They are thought to be carrying the burden of family and family issues;
- The Traveller Training Centre was seen as providing the opportunity for women to:
 - access second chance education;
 - earn additional income;
 - get out of the house and interact with others;

They need:

- An alternative to the Training Centres;
- Support to identify employment opportunities;
- Opportunities to meet and socialise.

A lot of women work in them Training Centres. My daughter did but they said they were all closing down now, Sure there will be nothing for women then

MEN

- men are thought to be suffering from significant levels of physical and mental ill health;
- They are thought to be far less likely to recognise health difficulties and to attend health services;
- The men specific projects, such as the Horse Project, is seen to be very beneficial but for those men without horses there is nothing;
- The effects of rules and regulations governing scrap, recycling and travelling are thought to be having a detrimental effect on men;
- The lack of employment and training opportunities is also having a negative effect on men.

More men's groups are required. Horse projects and men could then link into TTM and other workers in the organisation

They need:

- More opportunities to engage – in projects such as the Horse Project but also alternatives for those without horses;
- Training and support to identify employment and self-employment opportunities;
- Support with rules and regulations governing what is traditionally seen as the Traveller economy.

OTHER

- Just to help people who live alone and old people who need help
- Directory of services would be of great help - a list of services/people that can be contacted
- No I don't think so but hopefully the new OTM will be more involved and on the ground to get the trust back up and working

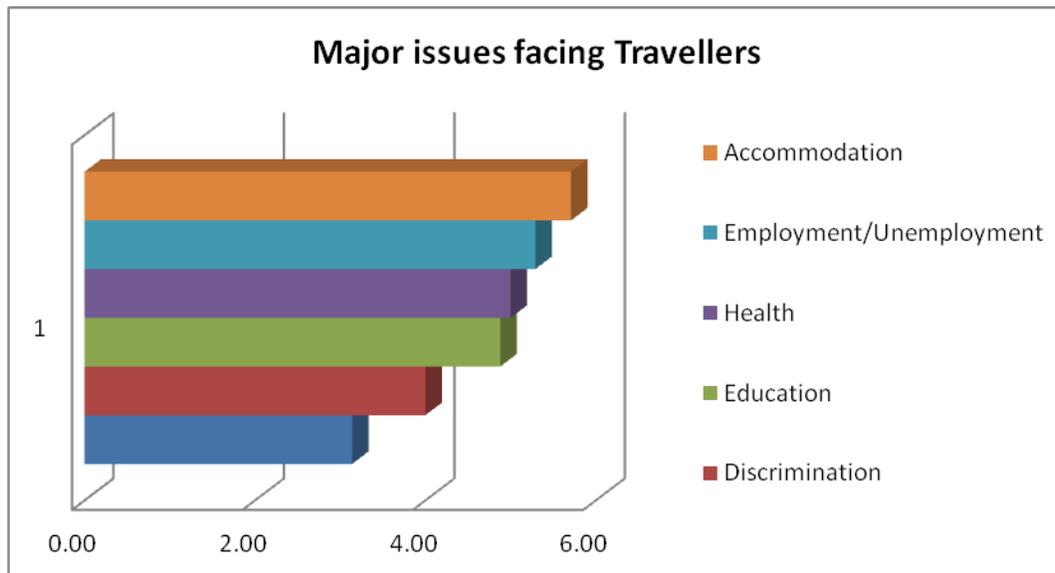
STAKEHOLDERS' SURVEY

This section outlines the main results from the Stakeholders' Survey. As mentioned above a total of seven responses were received as follows:

Organisation	Percentage	Number
HSE	25%	2
Offaly County Council	50%	4
Offaly Childcare Committee	13%	1
Offaly Local Development Company	13%	1
Total	100%	8

MAJOR ISSUES FACING TRAVELLERS

Respondents were asked to state what they believed to be the major issues facing Travellers in Offaly and to indicate their degree of importance.



The responses indicated that accommodation is regarded as the biggest issue facing the Traveller community in Offaly, followed by employment/unemployment, health, education and discrimination. Feuding, community/inter-family conflict was also mentioned by a number of respondents. One respondent mentioned conflict between Travellers and agencies as an issue and one mentioned the reduction in funding, presumably to OTM as an issue.

SPECIFIC AREAS

Respondents were then asked to comment on specific areas. The following is a summary of responses.

HEALTH

- The fact that health outcomes for members of the Traveller community are significantly below the norm was identified by a number of respondents.
- Respondents clearly identified the inter-linkages between health and other issues, stating for example that health is affected by accommodation, education, unemployment and inter-community conflict, and discrimination.
- Respondents also clearly identified the fact that if health is poor it negatively impacts on life experiences and community cohesion.
- Health is affected by all the other issues including accommodation, education (in terms of health awareness & promotion), mental health in terms of feuding and underemployment and discrimination
- The issue of mental health is considered to be significant. Respondents linked mental health issues to lifestyle, high rates of unemployment and other issues such as poor accommodation.
- Addiction and the increasingly availability and prevalence of drugs are considered to be an increasingly significant issue.
- The physical and mental health of Traveller men was highlighted as an issue. Respondents cited research stating that inter-community conflict is a significant source of stress for many Traveller men.

ACCOMMODATION

- Respondents stated that the nature and diversity of accommodation choices is changing, with some Travellers opting for non-specific Traveller accommodation, including private rented accommodation.
- The issue of unofficial halting sites was mentioned as a particular issue of concern.
- Respondents cited the fact that in November 2011, there were 23 families recorded as living on the roadside or on unauthorised sites in Co. Offaly for the purposes of the Annual Count of Traveller families.
- They further cited the fact that the current economic climate means that there is a lack of funding for investment in Traveller specific accommodation. In that context, respondents suggested that Travellers should not have an expectation that the Local Authority can supply the type and extent of accommodation required and that the responsibility for accommodation should be shared between the local authority and the individuals/families.
- Further to this point, it was suggested that Travellers should be willing to accept accommodation even if it is not their first choice, particularly in cases where current accommodation may be negatively impacting on health.
- There was a general suggestion for increased and improved accommodation in the short-term.

EDUCATION

- Respondents acknowledged that there have been significant improvements in relation to Travellers accessing and remaining the education system over the past ten years. They cited the commitment of parents and the importance of the Visiting Teacher Service in this and noted that this service was withdrawn in 2011. The work of the OTM Education Worker was also highlighted.
- Despite this, the poor education outcomes in comparison to their settled counterparts for Travellers were cited. The fact that only 13% of Traveller students stay on to Leaving Cert level compared to settled counterparts of 86.1% in County Offaly and rate of 84.5% nationally (2009/2010) was cited.
- In relation to pre-school education, respondents mentioned that Travellers are less likely than settled people to send their children to pre-school. They were clear about the importance of children attending pre-school services, particularly in light of the fact that the majority of children now attend pre-school so if Traveller children do not they will be starting school at a disadvantage.
- The transition from primary to secondary school was cited as a particular difficulty for many Traveller children.
- Retaining Traveller children in school (especially Traveller boys) particularly after Junior Cert
- The closure of the Traveller Training Centres is seen to be a significant issue for Travellers in Offaly.
- The approach of Youthreach was criticised for incentivising young Travellers to leave mainstream education in favour of Youthreach courses for which they receive a payment.
- For some of the respondents, education, from pre-school to third level, is the priority issue.

ADULT EDUCATION

- The fact that the levels of adult literacy amongst Travellers in Offaly are low was cited as an issue.
- With the loss of the Traveller Training Centres, integration into mainstream adult education provision without supports is considered to be problematic. The fact that there is no strategy in place or even in development to explore how the services might be replaced is considered to be particularly worrying.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

- Respondents pointed to the extremely high rates of unemployment amongst Travellers in Offaly – 75% unemployed in 2006 and considered to be higher now.
- Employment is considered to contribute to good relations between the Traveller and settled communities.
- Respondents made the link between unemployment and education, discrimination and consequent hopelessness and despondency.
- The absence of a liaison between Traveller Training Centres and potential employers was cited as a huge gap.
- Lack of information and support to take first steps towards employment were cited as issues.
- Lack of jobs that are flexible that might entice Travellers from a dependence on welfare was also mentioned as an issue.

DISCRIMINATION

- The level of discrimination experienced by Traveller and the fact that it pervades all aspects of life was acknowledged. It was stated that discrimination goes largely unchallenged and there is increasing acceptance for negative stereotyping and discrimination.
- In the context of discrimination, a number of respondents stated that the issue of inter-community conflict needs to be addressed as this facilitates negative stereotyping and leads to discrimination.

This affects all areas of Travellers lives and is perhaps the most powerful single issue that has not been resolved in any real way.

OTHER

- Inter-community conflict was again cited as a major issue. Respondents pointed to the fact that it can be difficult to accommodate families who are in conflict and the cost of repairs to damage to property, security costs etc. can be a drain on local authority resources. They also pointed to the fact that it is detrimental to health and well being and is a significant source of negativity from the settled community. The increasing levels of violence were also mentioned.

PARTICULAR GROUPS

Respondents were asked to identify any issues affecting particular groups.

TRAVELLER CHILDREN

- The effects of poor accommodation on children were cited. It is believed that children living on unauthorised sites are more at risk of accidents. Some respondents believe that it is unfair of Traveller adults to make choices that prioritise culture and persist to hold out for culturally appropriate accommodation for children when it involves them living in substandard accommodation such as on unauthorised sites.
- It is believed that children who live in secure accommodation are more likely to attend school etc.
- For some, education for young children is the priority issue. They point to the fact that educational disadvantage is still widespread and children who do not go to school regularly are missing out and this may continue the cycle of disadvantage.
- The importance of very young children attending pre-school was mentioned so that children are starting school on an equal footing with their settled counterparts.
- The importance of After Schools programmes that can support children's educational, personal and social development were mentioned by a number of respondents.
- Supports for parents, particularly young parents were mentioned as a priority.
- Health issues facing young children were also mentioned as a concern.

TEENAGE TRAVELLERS

- Issues facing teenage Travellers include:
 - The availability of drugs and increasing substance misuse;
 - Young age that Travellers tend to marry at and early parenthood;
 - Unemployment;

- Feuding and increased levels of violence;
- Remaining in the education system to Leaving Cert level.

YOUNG TRAVELLER ADULTS

- Issues facing young Traveller adults include:
 - Unemployment;
 - Feuding and increased levels of violence;
 - Mental ill health linked to poor experiences of education, discrimination, etc.
 - Suicide, particularly for young Traveller men.

TRAVELLER OLDER PEOPLE

- Issues facing Traveller older people include:
 - Older people are a forgotten minority that need to be prioritised for supports;
 - Poor health and pre-mature mortality;
 - Breakdown of traditional social and family structures and decreased levels of respect for older people by the younger generation.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

- Issues facing Travellers with disabilities include:
 - They are facing multiple inequalities and there can sometimes be a reluctance to recognise disabilities within the Traveller community;
 - They too are a forgotten minority and access to Traveller specific initiatives is poor for Travellers with disabilities.

TRAVELLERS WOMEN

- Issues facing Travellers women include:
 - The fact that it is often Traveller women who are the 'change agents' was highlighted;
 - Inter-community conflict can affect Traveller women;
 - Prescription drug dependence, particularly anti-depressants, was mentioned;
 - Some cultural practices that are particularly patriarchal can affect women's lives and well being;
 - Stress related to low incomes and discrimination.

TRAVELLERS MEN

- Issues facing Travellers men include:
 - The changing role of men within Traveller culture;
 - Unemployment and lack of occupation;
 - Inter-community conflict, feuding and increasing levels of violence;
 - Poor education and literacy levels;
 - Poor physical and mental health and a reluctance to engage with health and other services.

OTHER

- Neighbours can be affected when there is open inter-community conflict and violence and when there are illegal campsites.

PRIORITY AREAS OF WORK

- Suggestions for priority areas of work included:
 - Supporting employment and enterprise initiatives particularly among young adults;
 - Education at all levels;
 - Adult education - if integration is the goal, initial feeder, pre-development programmes will be required in local communities first to build confidence and support continued progression towards mainstream education provision;
 - Discrimination;
 - Accommodation issues;
 - Inter-community conflict, feuding and violence, and support for mediation;
 - Continuing and improved collaboration with statutory and other agencies;
 - Continue with focus on health and improve health outcomes;
 - Particular focus on Traveller men.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH OTM ON ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED?

- Suggestions for improving partnership working with OTM on issues highlighted included:
 - Recognition of the sometimes inherent tension between advocates for Traveller rights and agencies that have to balance competing interested for funding and other issues;
 - Regular informal meetings;
 - Further development of partnership working between OTM and the agencies, particularly on specific areas of work such as education, enterprise/employment and supporting families to send their children to pre-school.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

It was important for OTM to engage with the Traveller community and to ensure they were the primary group consulted for the Strategic Plan, and many welcomed and were pleased to be involved. It is also important that the views of other stakeholders were gathered. It is important now that the issues identified by the community and stakeholders be taken into account during the strategic planning process.

However, it is also important to take account of the fact that cuts to organisations in the community sector over the past number of years have been significant and OTM, like the majority of community organisations, is operating under a reduced level of resources. In addition, the implementation of the Local and Community Development Programme determines that the work of OTM may be more programme-driven than work under previous programmes and this may reduce the capacity of OTM to respond appropriately in some instances.

In terms of issues and priorities, it is clear from the consultation process that accommodation is the largest single issue currently affecting Travellers in Offaly. The impacts of poor and inappropriate accommodation are linked to poor health, oppression and poor mental health. Addressing the issue of accommodation will take a whole organisational approach by OTM. As well as direct work with those in need of support in this area, OTM should also focus its influence on the local authority and the Traveller Interagency Group to ensure that accommodation is the top priority for all organisations and agencies working with Travellers in Offaly.

Education is another major issue for Travellers. It is clear that children and teenagers in the education system are in need of support with homework and with the transition to secondary school. Adult education and the provision of opportunities for Traveller adults to access adult education, particularly given the closure of the Traveller Training Centre Programme, is very important for Offaly.

Traveller health is an area that has been given some attention over the past decade, and it is clear that Travellers are beginning to see the benefits of peer-led programmes such as the Primary Health Care Programme. However much work needs to be done, particularly in the area of mental health and Traveller men's health.

Discrimination is thought to be widespread and deteriorating. It is currently not being tracked or measured. Participation in the national logging system being co-ordinated by the Irish Network against Racism would be one step towards assessing the extent of discrimination in Offaly. Address incidents of discrimination needs careful consideration and a strategic approach.

The issue of inter-community conflict and feuding was significantly mentioned, particularly by stakeholders and this needs to be addressed by OTM.

A particular focus on Traveller men needs to be included in the Strategic Plan.

Assessing the impact of the work is becoming ever increasingly more important and it is crucial that OTM establish mechanisms to assess the impact of the interventions and supports that they are implementing.