



Offaly Traveller Movement

In Their Own Words:
Traveller Youth Needs Analysis 2014



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of
Children and Youth Affairs

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Traveller Youth Needs Analysis
Offaly Traveller Movement
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Offaly Traveller Movement Publication 2015
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Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Offaly Traveller Movement for the opportunity to work on this very important project. Thanks also to the OTM staff, particularly Emma Gilchreest the OTM Managing Director, and the Management Committee for their input and support. Huge thanks to the parents of the children and young people that took part in the research and welcomed us into their homes and communities. An even bigger thanks and much admiration to the children and young people themselves who shared their energy and experiences with us. As always there is one person that facilitated the work to happen - sincere thanks to Elizabeth Doyle without whom this piece of work would not have been possible.

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Executive Summary

This piece of research was commissioned by Offaly Traveller Movement to explore the needs of Traveller young people in the county. Seeking to ensure that the voices of young Travellers were to the forefront, emphasis was placed on speaking to young Traveller boys, girls, young women and young men. The research seeks to contextualise the results of the consultation process in a review of literature and policy relating to young people and the issues that emerged. The findings from the research clearly indicate that significant intervention is required.

It was clear that the young people identify as members of the Traveller community and Traveller culture is very important to them.- However, supports are required for the young people to enable them to express this culture in ways that are appropriate to their generation.

Education is crucial to life chances and opportunities. Though there were differences between children in primary school who had a slightly more positive attitude to school and older children and young people who had a negative attitude to school and education, there was a common experience of difficulties in coping with the education system. Many are still leaving education with significant literacy and numeracy difficulties.

In relation to accommodation, many of the young people are reflecting the concern and stress associated with inappropriate accommodation and this is impacting on many aspects of their lives.

In relation to employment and unemployment, the majority of young people out of education were NEET (not in employment, education or training) and the majority of all the young people we spoke to had no confidence that they would ever enter employment.

The issues that have emerged from this research suggest the need for interventions that go beyond the capacity of one organisation, Offaly Traveller Movement, to deliver. It requires an inter-agency approach that includes:

- Investment – in breaking the cycle of disadvantage being faced by young Travellers in Offaly;
- Flexibility – in the way that services are targeted at and delivered to young Travellers;
- Prioritisation – of services and organisational budgets;
- Responsiveness – services need to respond to need.

There is no doubt but this is required if the cycle of disadvantage is to be broken for the Traveller children and young people in Offaly.

Section 1: Introduction

Established in 1990, Offaly Traveller Movement (registered trading name of Tullamore Travellers Movement LTD) was established in response to the needs of the Traveller community in Tullamore. The organisation has since become the Offaly Traveller Movement, expanding the work for Traveller rights and social justice throughout the county. OTM is a Traveller led, not for profit community development organisation offering services responding to health, accommodation, youth, education and human rights. The vision of OTM is full equality and social justice for Travellers in County Offaly.

In 2012 OTM carried out a consultation process with members of the Traveller community and agencies alike in County Offaly. On the basis of the consultation, the organisation developed a strategic plan. Amongst the needs identified for young Travellers in Offaly were:

CHILDREN (UP TO 12 YEARS)

- The proportion of children still leaving school early;
- Lack of support for homework;
- Lack of activities and things to do;
- Discrimination and ethnically motivated bullying;
- Facilities and conditions they are expected to live in, particularly if living on the unofficial sites;

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

Traveller Parent

Young adults (between 19 and 25)

- Nothing for this age group to do – no employment prospects, no courses or FÁS places;

Building on this community consultation and strategic plan Offaly Traveller Movement, with the support of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, decided to undertake a follow-up piece of research that sought to put the voices of young Travellers in Offaly to the forefront. Using the voices of young Travellers, the objectives of the project were to:

- Identify the priority needs of Traveller Youth in County Offaly;
- Produce a Needs Analysis document that will inform and guide the work of OTM youth work for an agreed period of time (between three and five years).

Methodology & Approach

The approach to the project sought to ensure that the voices of the Traveller children and young people were central to the needs analysis. A number of focus groups were carried out that were categorized geographically and accounting for gender and age. This approach sought to reflect the goal in *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: the national policy framework for children and young people 2014 to 2020* that states the importance of listening to and involving young people.

The following were held:

- Four focus groups in Birr
- Three focus groups in Tullamore;
- One focus group in Banagher;
- One focus group in Clara;
- A focus group with OTM staff;
- A focus group with the OTM Board of Management.

In all 93 Traveller children, young people and parents participated.

Youth workers accompanied the researcher throughout and parental permission was sought for all participating children and young people under the age of 18. This included permission to reproduce photos taken. The permission of the child/young person was also sought.

A variety of measures, often in combination, were used to engage the children and young people, including art, small group and plenary discussions. Teenagers and young adults were engaged using methods that appealed to them. These included nail art for young women and a focus group that centred on the young person's engagement with horses.

A number of group interviews were also held with parents of children and young people including on a number of the sites in Tullamore and Birr, in Banagher and in the OTM offices in Tullamore.

The basic question asked was, 'what is it like to be a Traveller child or young person in Offaly'. The responses set the scene for the remainder of the discussion and issues identified were the subject of discussion. We were aware of a number of issues that Traveller children and young people experience as a result of a wider consultation process undertaken in 2012 and these issues were raised where relevant.

This report presents the findings of this work. It is divided into five sections. Section 2 sets out the level of disadvantage faced by the Traveller community in Ireland. It also explores some of the key issues for the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage, focusing on educational and socio-economic disadvantage, and the consequences when disadvantage is not addressed. Section 3 presents some of the key areas of policy relating to children and young people, as well as an outline of Offaly Traveller Movement's work with children and young people. Section 4 presents the key findings from the consultation with Traveller children, young people and parents in Offaly. Section 5 summarises the findings of the research and presents a number of recommendations for action.

Section 2 Context

Disadvantage in the Traveller Community

According to Census 2011, there are 29,495 members of the Irish Traveller community in Ireland, though *Our Geels: The All Ireland Traveller Health Study* (2010) estimates that this number is actually higher at 36,224. The Traveller community in Ireland experiences significant levels of economic, social and cultural disadvantage. For example, key findings from the *Our Geels* study indicate that:

- Life expectancy is significantly lower for Traveller women (11.5 years less) and Traveller men (15.1 years less) than their settled counterparts.
- Traveller women have three times the mortality rate of the general population.
- Suicide among Travellers is 6 times the rate of general population and accounts for approximately 11% of all Traveller deaths.
- The infant mortality rate for Travellers is 3.6 times the rate of the general population.
- 38.5% of 30-44 year olds and 25.8% of 45-64 year olds had primary education only.
- More than 90% of 14 year olds are currently in school or training centres.
- 28.8% had difficulty in reading.
- 50% of Travellers had difficulty reading the instruction for medication.

Both Travellers and health service providers interviewed acknowledged that social determinants were the main cause of the poor health status of Travellers, this includes accommodation, education, employment, poverty, discrimination, lifestyle and access and utilisation of services.

An analysis of some of the information from Census 2011 indicates significant levels of education and socio-economic disadvantage.

	Total		Low education		Higher Education	
	N		N	%	N	%
Overall population	2,863,619		456,896	16.0	875,114	30.6
Travellers	11,455		7,908	69.0	115	1.0

Census 2011

- 69% of Travellers over the age of 15 whose full-time education has ceased have no formal education or primary education only compared to 16% of the overall population.
- 1% of the Traveller population have higher education compared to 30% of the overall population.

	Labour Force Participation Rate	Unemployment rate	Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability
	%	%	%
Overall population	61.9	19.03	4.4
Travellers	57.3	84.34	9.5

Census 2011

- Travellers have a slightly lower rate of labour force participation than the overall population.
- The unemployment rate for Travellers is 4.5 that of the overall population and the proportion of people unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability is twice the rate amongst Travellers than the overall population.

Specifically in relation to children, the report for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *State of the Nation's Children* highlights a number of key issues for Traveller children:

- Traveller children are more likely to report being bullied at school (HBSC Survey, 2010).
- Cigarette smoking is significantly higher among Traveller children (HBSC Survey, 2010).
- Approximately 7 out of every 10 Traveller children (67.3%) lived in families where the mother had either no formal education or primary education only,
- When compared to other children, Traveller children were less likely to report being happy with their lives at present.
- When compared to other children, Traveller children were less likely to report eating breakfast on 5 or more days per week.
- When compared to other children, Traveller children were more likely to report drinking soft drinks that contain sugar at least once a day.
- When compared to other children, Traveller children were less likely to report feeling safe in the area where they live

Intergenerational disadvantage

The transmission of advantage and disadvantage from one generation to the next, particularly in relation to occupation and education, is well established. Extensive research has shown that inequality affects children from an early age, with lasting personal and societal consequences. The literature notes that the well-being of parents and the factors resulting in their children being locked in a cycle of deprivation are complex. Pre-birth and post-natal familial and environmental factors can negatively affect a child's intellectual, social and emotional development. 'Parental-level' risk factors such as unemployment, low income, job stress, marital conflict and broader disruption in the family, as well as environmental factors such as poor housing conditions, experience of violence or discrimination affect the outcomes for a child.

A child does not experience disadvantage on her/his own, but in the family context. Children are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion than the overall population and these children are less likely than their better-off peers to do well in school, enjoy good health and realise their full potential later in life.

“For the individual, educational attainment has a broad-ranging impact on many aspects of life, from personal development to civic engagement and economic well-being. For society, education is an invaluable resource in seeking to address and alleviate the causes of social exclusion, promote good citizenship, enrich culture and underpin economic development.”

OECD *Overcoming School Failure: Policies that Work*. National Report Ireland 2011

The importance of the role played by education in society is widely accepted. Educational qualifications, or the lack of them, determine to a large extent the life chances of people. In their report to the OECD, the Department of Education and Skills acknowledge that under-achievement in school can have profound consequences for children and adults in later life, not only in terms of economic uncertainty, but also in terms of wellbeing, health, self-esteem and participation in family and community life.

In the ESRI report, *No Way Back? The Dynamics of Early School Leaving*, the authors acknowledge that education is a key determinant of adult life chances across Western societies and is especially so in Ireland. Young people with higher levels of educational qualifications are more likely to access high quality employment and receive higher pay levels in the immediate period after leaving school, and these advantages persist into adult life. The report states that while the majority of Irish young people now stay on in education until the Leaving Certificate stage, a significant minority still leave school before the end of senior cycle, with a smaller but persistent proportion leaving during the junior cycle or even earlier.

Educational disadvantage is defined in the Education Act (1988) as *“the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools.”* Boldt and Devine define educational disadvantage as a *“limited ability to derive equal benefit from schooling compared to one’s peers”*. They go on to say that *“educational disadvantage must take into account the individual deriving less benefit from the education system, and of the diminished life chances of the individual who has left formal education without recognised qualifications”* (1998 p.10).

Byrne and Smith (ESRI 2010) define early school leaving in terms of age or stage at leaving school and state that empirical research has shown that the Leaving Certificate is the minimum threshold for the successful attainment of a range of adult outcomes. They state international research has consistently indicated the existence of social class inequalities in educational attainment. In the Irish context too, the likelihood of early school leaving is significantly structured by parental social class background. They look at the effects of early school leaving and state that early leavers in Ireland are found to experience disadvantages in relation to access to further education/training, employment chances, employment quality and broader social outcomes (p. 16). Other research has highlighted that more highly educated adults have broader social advantages, including improved health status (Smyth and McCoy, 2009).

The most notable manifestations of educational disadvantage are poor levels of participation and achievement in the formal education system, including early school leaving, (Combat Poverty Agency, 2003) and there is a substantial volume of research that indicates that individuals from

poorer socio-economic backgrounds and communities are more likely to underachieve in the education system than their peers from higher income backgrounds (see the evidence presented in the Barnardos policy document, *Written Out Written Off: Failure to invest in education 2009* as well as evidence from the Combat Poverty Agency, and Eivers *et al* 2000). Other research highlights the fact that lower percentages of students from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to have high attendance levels and the overall percentage attendance increases and the percentage of students absent for 20 days or more decreases as the level of disadvantage decreases (Weir, 2004. pp. 14-15).

The economic consequences of underachieving in the education system are well established and significant. Early school leavers have poorer employment opportunities, higher rates of unemployment, lower earning potential and an increased likelihood of living in poverty (Eivers *et al*, 2000, p. 4).

The research carried out by Smyth and Selina show that early school leaving has striking consequences for adult outcomes and leads to substantial costs for society. Key findings include:

- Early leavers were 3 to 4 times more likely to be unemployed than those with higher qualifications, even before the current recession.
- Early leavers in employment hold less skilled jobs and earn lower wages.
- Young women who leave school early are more likely to become lone parents.
- Early leavers have poorer health levels and are more reliant on the medical card to address their health needs.
- Early school leaving reinforces existing social and economic inequality since early leavers mainly come from working-class backgrounds.
- Early leaving means substantial costs for society, leading to higher expenditure on welfare, health and prisons as well as lower tax revenue.

Unemployment and joblessness are key indicators of poverty and disadvantage. As outlined above, there is a significantly higher rate of unemployment amongst Travellers than for the overall population. The reasons for this are complex and inter-linked, with poor education levels and discrimination key elements.

It is acknowledged that the young people have been hit particularly hard by the recession. The European Commission has stated that youth unemployment has a profound impact on individuals as well as on society and the economy. Unless current trends are reversed quickly, today's levels of youth unemployment risk damaging the longer-term employment prospects for young people, with serious implications for future growth and social cohesion (p. 2).

There is particular concern for the numbers of young people that are NEET (not in employment, education or training). A Eurofound report highlights the adverse consequences for the individu-

al, society and the economy of NEET. It states that spending time as NEET may lead to a wide range of social disadvantages, such as disaffection, insecure and poor future employment, youth offending, and mental and physical health problems. Young people concerned may disengage and participate in risky behaviour. For these reasons, being NEET is not only a waste of young people's talents, it also constitutes a challenge to society and the economy (p. 53). Long term disengagement from labour market and education is seen to have serious consequences for trust and participation in democratic institutions and civic engagement.

As a result of these monetary and non-monetary barriers to participation in society and a daily confrontation with structures and institutions, young people who are NEET are more likely to accumulate traumatic experiences, which may turn into a general disaffection with and resentment against society as a whole and the governments that represent it (p. 82).

The Eurofound report states that some young people are at greater risk of being NEET than others, including those with low levels of education and disadvantaged family backgrounds. It suggests policy measures have to be diversified – paying attention to vulnerable groups that are more likely to cumulate multiple disadvantage.

The issue of 'scarring' is very important here. Research has increasingly pointed to the long-term consequences of being unemployed at young ages. Not only is it a negative experience in itself, it also raises the probability of being unemployed in later years and is also associated with lower wages later in life. Spells of youth unemployment have harmful impacts on a number of outcomes - unemployment, happiness, health and job satisfaction – many years later.

Estrangement from the labour market is also an issue. This refers to young people 'giving up' and not even trying to find a job after experiencing a series of setbacks. Research by the National Youth Council of Ireland highlighted the fact that job seeking is very hard work, which can involve frequent experience of personal failure and rejection. It suggests that while unemployment, as a concept, may invoke images of idle passivity, job seeking tends to be a very onerous and demanding process which can involve a series of activities that require intense and demanding emotional effort (p. 32).

The NYCI research also pointed to the broader societal consequences of youth unemployment. It highlighted the negative feelings such as low self-esteem and low morale, feelings of hopelessness, despair and lack of choice, and in some cases admissions of instances of depression and stress associated with unemployment. Financial shortage was also highlighted frequently and in many cases was thought to contribute to the young jobseekers sense of isolation and their experience of frustration and hardship (p. 22). The absence of any form of certainty as to what their future may look like has caused many young jobseekers to postpone, indefinitely, very significant planned 'milestone events' such as marriage, parenthood, or the purchase of a house or car.

Although there are no reliable sources of data for the proportions of Traveller young people unemployed or NEET, there is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest that substantial numbers are in these categories. Traveller young people are facing the effects of the recession that are being felt by all young people but their experience is being compounded by traditional experiences of poor education and discrimination.

Tackling Intergenerational Disadvantage

Investment in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is seen as a key mechanism in breaking the cycle of disadvantage amongst children. In their recent publication on the Social Investment Package, the European Commission suggests that member states (including Ireland) should implement the recommendation on *Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage* by using the next round of Structural Funds to make early childhood education and care more visible and available. The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) argue that quality care and education in early childhood should be a policy priority in the recession as it is 'a good long-term investment for the state and a sound basis for the move towards a knowledge-based economy'. Start Strong argues that high quality early care and education matters because it works:

For Children

First and foremost, quality care and education in the early years helps children to flourish and make the most of their lives. There is a large body of evidence that demonstrates the long-term beneficial effect of quality care and education for young children's development.

For the Economy

A strong economy depends on people's skills, creativity, motivation and knowledge. Investment in young children has high economic and social returns, because its impact on people's skills and dispositions lasts a lifetime.

For Society

Quality care and education for young children helps make society fairer through reducing social and economic disadvantage and strengthening equality. In the short-term, public investment in services and supports for young children creates jobs and supports parents' participation in the labour market, boosting incomes and economic growth. In the longer term, it enhances economic productivity, increases financial returns to the Exchequer, and delivers wide social benefits including a better educated society and a lower level of crime.

Early intervention and prevention are essential for developing more effective and efficient policies, as public expenditure addressing the consequences of child poverty and social exclusion tends to be greater than the expenditure required for intervening at an early age. Prevention is most effectively achieved through integrated strategies that combine support to parents to access the labour market with adequate income support and access to services that are essential to children's outcomes, such as quality (pre-school) education, health, housing and social services, as well as the opportunities to participate and exercise their rights, which help children live up to their potential and contribute to their resilience. Breaking the cycle of disadvantage therefore requires an emphasis on early intervention and addressing the familial and environmental risk factors that contribute to disadvantage.

Efforts to address disadvantage, poverty and social exclusion amongst people of working age (age between 15 and 64) have focused on increasing access to the labour market through labour market activation (LMA) measures. To date these have focused on those who are unemployed and registered on the live register. The policy focus has begun to shift from an emphasis on the live register to one that focuses on low work intensity and joblessness.

The most recent review of Ireland's National Reform Programme by the European Council stated that Ireland has one of the highest proportions of people living in households with low work intensity in the EU. It points to the risk of poverty and social exclusion for these households. In extending LMA opportunities to those who are jobless, the ESRI emphasise the importance of ensuring social supports such as childcare are provided, maintaining income supports in jobless households and the gradual withdrawal of income supports to newly employed people.

The Traveller community experience some of the highest levels of disadvantage in the country. This has long been acknowledged and mechanisms to address this were put in place such as resource teachers for Travellers, visiting teachers, special initiatives for Travellers, etc. However, these initiatives have recently been subject to significant cuts and/or total withdrawal. In his analysis of cuts to services for Travellers, Brian Harvey (2013) highlighted the disproportionate cuts to services and supports for the Traveller community, stating,

“One can think of no other section of the community which has suffered such a high level of withdrawal of funding and human resources, compounded by the failure of the state to spend even the limited resources that it has made available. The reductions in accommodation and education are especially impactful, granted the continued hardship faced by many Travellers on sites and in poor quality private rented accommodation.”

Harvey 2013



Section 3 Policy context

Children & Young People

Launched in 2014, *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures 2014 – 2020* is the new national policy framework for children & young people. It established five high level goals for children and over 160 commitments that focus on:

- early interventions and quality services to promote best outcomes for children, particularly in the vitally-important early years;
- working better together to protect young people who are marginalised, at-risk or who demonstrate challenging or high-risk behaviour;
- setting a target of lifting 70,000 children out of poverty by 2020;
- improving childhood health & wellbeing in line with goals of 'Healthy Ireland';
- enhancing job opportunities for young people – building on the 'Action Plan for Jobs' and Youth Guarantee;
- delivering better supports for families and parenting.



The five national outcomes are:

- Active and healthy - physical and mental wellbeing;
- Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development;
- Safe and protected from harm;
- Economic security and opportunity;
- Connected, respected and contributing to their world.



THE OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

VISION

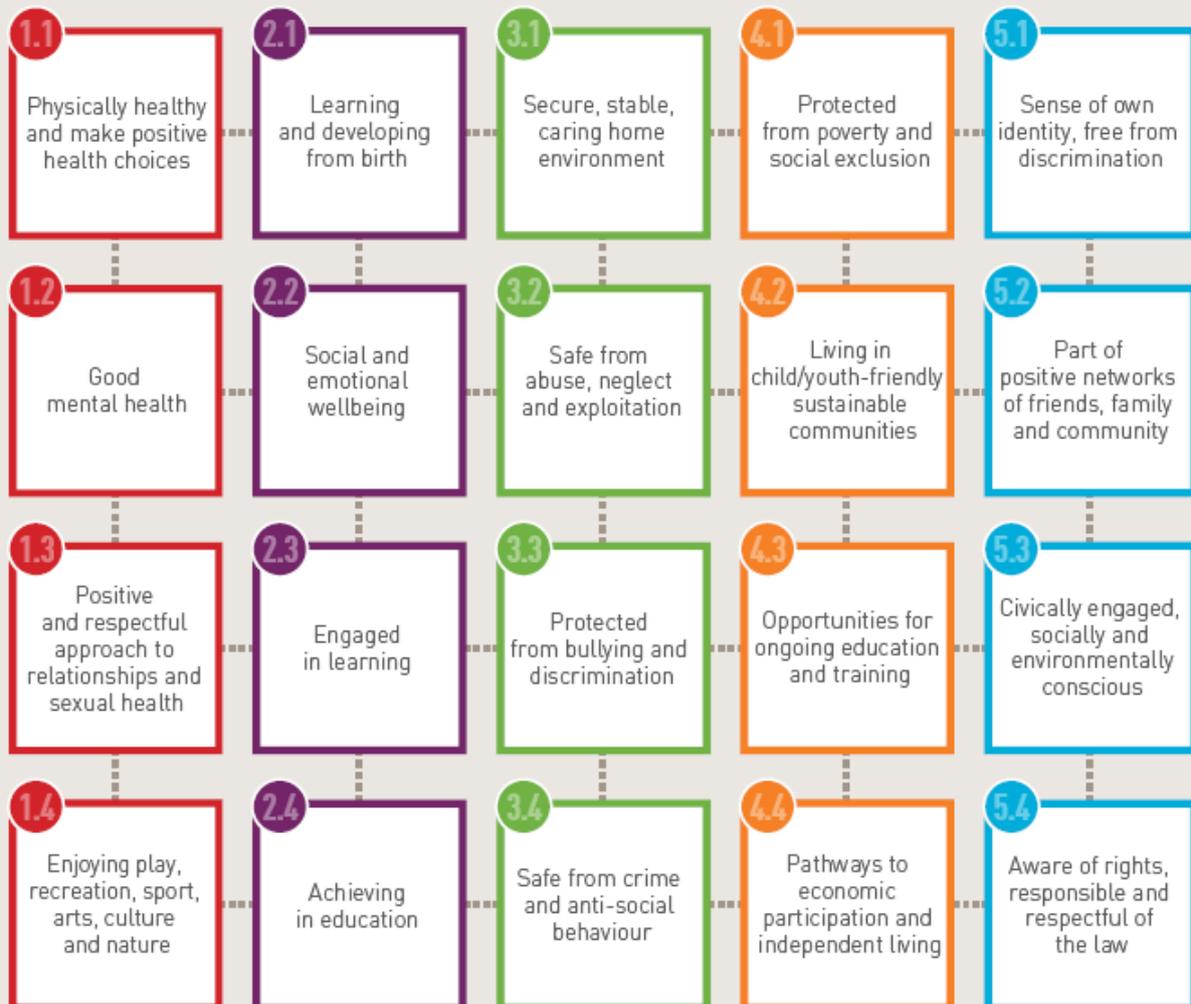
Our vision is to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

NATIONAL OUTCOMES



AIMS:

Children and young people are or have ...



Children and Young People have a voice and influence in all decisions affecting them

Literacy & Numeracy

In 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills published *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011- 2020*. Ambitious targets have been set under the Strategy to be achieved by 2020. Nationally, the aims include:

- At primary level; increasing the number of children performing at Level 3 or above (the highest levels) in the national assessments of reading and mathematics by 5 percentage points
- Reducing the percentage performing at or below the lowest level (Level 1) by 5 percentage points
- At post-primary level; increasing the number of 15-year old students performing at Level 4 or above (the highest levels) in the OECD's PISA test of literacy and mathematics by at least 5 percentage points
- Halve the numbers performing at Level 1 (the lowest level) in PISA test of literacy and mathematics
- Improve early childhood education and public attitudes to reading and mathematics.

In a follow-up circular to schools, the Minister requested the co-operation of school management and teachers in the implementation of five key areas of the Strategy:

- (a) Improved professional development for teachers
- (b) Increasing the time available for teaching literacy and numeracy
- (c) Improving arrangements for assessment of children's literacy and numeracy achievement
- (d) Better arrangement for reporting children's progress
- (e) Co-operating with the administration of national and international assessment studies

Labour Market Activation & the Youth Guarantee

Labour Market Activation refers to the process whereby people who are unemployed are provided with support to seek education, training or employment. If they fail to engage with the process they are at risk of sanction by the Department of Social Protection. This is an active policy, with people in receipt of Jobseekers Benefit or Allowance now regularly required to engage with the DSP.

In response to concerns at the number of young people who were unemployed and/or NEET, the European Commission announced the Youth Employment Package, a series of measures to help Member States tackle unacceptable levels of youth unemployment and social exclusion by giving young people offers of jobs, education and training in December 2012.

The Youth Guarantee will be implemented in Ireland from 2014. According to the Irish Implementation Plan, it will be formulated as follows:

a) Young people under the age of 18 years, who have left the school system without completing secondary education, and who have failed to find employment, will be provided with a quality 'second-chance' educational /training pathway outside the school system such as Youthreach or be supported in re-entering the school system.

b) Young people aged 18-24 years who become unemployed (whether on loss of a job or while seeking a first employment) and register with the benefits/employment service, and who subsequently remain unemployed for four months, will be provided with assistance to secure work or alternatively with a quality offer of training, education or work experience.

Young people will receive a sanction if they do not engage with the youth guarantee.



Youth Work

Youth Work is defined as ‘a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training and provided primarily by voluntary youth work services’. It is above all an educational and developmental process, based on young people’s active and voluntary participation and commitment. It is often defined as ‘non-formal education’. Youth work is for all young people, with particular focus on those aged 10 to 25 from all aspects of Irish life, urban, rural, all nationalities and social classes.

Youth work is predicated on the voluntary participation of young people. Flexibility of approach and emphasis on the interpersonal enables it to offer an educational process complementary to that provided through formal education. In addition, Youth work often acts as the point of contact and referral in the interface with other youth- related issues spanning the realms of care, health, and welfare.

Youth work is primarily the responsibility of the Department for Children & Youth Affairs but many other initiatives and programmes are funded by the Department of Justice Equality & Defence, the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Skills.

The overall aim of the Youth Affairs Unit (YAU) of the Department for Children & Youth Affairs is to support and promote non-formal education and developmental opportunities for young people through which they can enhance their personal and social skills and competencies. Particular regard is had to the youth work needs of young people between the ages of 10 and 21, and to those who are socially or economically disadvantaged.

Specifically the YAU work aims:

- To develop youth policies and strategies that enable and enhance young people’s personal and social development
- To support the youth sector in providing effective youth work and associated opportunities for young people and to consolidate and enhance existing provision of youth services and initiatives
- To monitor and assess the youth work structures, supports and services so as to ensure both quality of service and value for money
- To support the alignment of youth policies and services with other Departmental policies and services and the broader policy and services field to help ensure an integrated and coordinated approach to the needs of young people
- To liaise with EU/Council of Europe on youth policy and the implementation of EU programmes for youth.

The above aims seek to provide greater definition and direction to the youth work and youth services. Youth work can be described as being educational and elective, structured and systematic. Youth work operates in various settings spanning the non-formal education through to informal education yet alongside formal education and engages young people from ten to twenty-four years of age, representing a significant period in both development and duration. It is also predicated on the voluntary participation of young people. In addition, youth work can act as a support to young people, who may be both engaged and external to the formal education system, and as a point of contact and referral to other youth related services.

Youth Work in Ireland

Youth work in Ireland is delivered directly through national and regional voluntary and church-based organisations and implemented by local youth clubs, groups and initiatives. Funding for the support of this work is made available on an annual basis through the Youth Service Grant Scheme. The continued funding of voluntary youth organisations through the Scheme is intended to ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organisations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people.

There are a number of recognised national youth work bodies, including the National Youth Council of Ireland, an umbrella of national youth organisations and affiliates. Youthwork Ireland is a national coordination body for a number of regional and local youth services. Foróige is a national voluntary youth organisation engaged in youth education and out-of-school education. Foróige takes a strong focus on active citizenship and promotes this concept through its clubs and projects. There are a number of church based organisations including the Catholic Youth Council and the Church of Ireland Youth Department. In general these bodies support regional services, while the National Youth Council of Ireland also plays a research and policy shaping role.

In addition, a scheme of grants is made available in respect of special out-of-school projects for disadvantaged young people. Priority is given to projects in the spheres of special youth work initiatives, young homeless people, young substance abusers and young Travellers. Grants are allocated to organisations and groups for specific projects which seek to address the needs of young people who are disadvantaged, due to a combination of factors. This Scheme is operated by the Vocational Education Committees on behalf of the Youth Affairs Unit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The HSE also funds a number of Neighbourhood Youth Projects in areas of disadvantage and youth-focused projects identified by Local Drugs Task Forces. Garda Youth Diversion Projects are community-based, multi-agency crime prevention initiatives which seek to divert young people from becoming involved (or further involved) in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour by providing suitable activities to facilitate personal development and promote civic responsibility. The Garda Youth Diversion Projects are funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and administered through Garda Community Relations Section. There are about 100 of these projects nationwide.

Youth Work in Offaly Traveller Movement

The aim of the Offaly Traveller Movement Youth Project is to support Traveller young people to reach their full potential and to empower young Travellers to take an equal role in Irish society. OTM youth team currently engage with 167 young Travellers in Offaly through their many programmes and activities. The yearly work plans are drawn up from the OTM strategic plan 2012-2015 which was put in place following a detailed consultation with the Traveller community and agencies in Offaly. OTM are implementing the National Quality Standards Framework in order to ensure their youth work is adhering to national best practice. This has involved a lengthy process lead by the youth officer in Laois Offaly ETB (Education Training Board). The Laois Offaly ETB (then the VEC) Annual Report 2012 (page 39) stated the following in relation to the youth work in Offaly Traveller Movement:

“In Step 5 the Youth Officer has completed Observations on Practice in both the Junior Horse Family project and the Reach a Teacher Programme.....The quality of the youth work experienced has been a revelation.”

The OTM Youth work programmes are available to young Travellers in Offaly, predominantly Tullamore & Birr. The service is currently provided to different age groups, 10-14 years; 12-16 years; 16-21 years – to boys, girls and mixed groups. Some of the core objectives of the activities are as follows:

- To engage in a process with young Travellers which empowers and builds the capacity of young Travellers to actively participate in community decision making
- To provide a social and leisure outlet for young Travellers
- To raise awareness and develop understanding of the issues affecting young Travellers lives and from this understanding to foster collective action in addressing these issues

In recent years the core outputs have included:

- Youth Drop in Club
- Cultural Events: Facilitating young Travellers in Offaly to take part in the organising and rolling out of celebrations of Traveller culture at the St Patrick’s Day Parade and Traveller Pride Week in Offaly
- Sports programmes; soccer tournaments, swimming lessons, walking programmes etc.
- Junior Horse Family project
- Workshops on physical and mental health which include: personal well-being, nail art, mediation, healthy eating, minding your mental health etc
- Youth led and organised social outings/trips to Croke Park, Holy Well, Lough Derg
- Cinema trips
- Seasonal Events: Christmas disco, Easter egg hunts, Halloween events, summer projects
- Educational trips to local college (AIT), Museums in Dublin, local parks etc
- Traveller Specific School Transfer Programme (in partnership with Offaly Local Development Company)
- Reach a Teacher Programme; an on line grinds programme to support Traveller students in secondary school (in partnership with Offaly Local Development Company)

- Regular outreach to young people and their families in their homes
- Regular consultation with Traveller youth in relation to programmes run etc.

The outcomes and benefits of OTM youth work to the Traveller youth in Offaly are many and include:

- Encouragement and support to transition from Primary to Secondary School
- Traveller youth supported and encourage to stay in school
- Traveller youth supported to achieve in exams
- Social outlets available for Traveller youth in Offaly which results in: confidence building, peer support, leadership skills, awareness raising, information sharing, alleviation of boredom
- Improved mental health and wellbeing and improved access to information around mental health and wellbeing
- Life skills
- Self esteem
- Team building
- Increased interaction between family members, developing communication and relationships
- Pride in identity and Traveller culture among the youth

Offaly Traveller Movement receives funding through SPY (Special Projects for Youth) from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. With this funding they employ 2 part time youth workers. The organisation has seen dramatic cuts to its SPY funding over the last three years (6.5% cut in 2012, 10% cut in 2013 and a further 3.75% cut in 2014). The funding cuts to the service have been detrimental, firstly to the young Travellers in Offaly but also to the organisation who is struggling to operate a youth service on the current levels of income. As part of the restructuring of the organisation in 2012, the organisation changed its name and remit from Tullamore Travellers Movement to Offaly Traveller Movement. This was to reflect the work that was already being carried out by most sectors within the organisation (Youth work service included) within the county but also to encourage Travellers outside of Tullamore to engage with the organisation. These changes have resulted in a significant increase in the number of Traveller families that OTM are working with. OTM estimate the population of Travellers in Offaly at 1,360. This means that there are over twice as many Travellers living in Offaly than the national average. The restructuring of the organisation has also increased the level of interagency work carried out within the county in relation to all sectors of work, including youth work. While the youth work team mainly concentrate on the Tullamore and Birr areas, OTM believe there is significant need to increase the work further into the more rural and marginalised youth population in Banagher, Clara, Ferbane and Edenderry. However, unfortunately, the confine of the continuously decreasing and restricted budgets makes this an unrealistic target and the sustainability of the current service very difficult.

Section 4: The Consultation

According to Census 2011, there are 1,025 members of the Traveller community in County Offaly. There are 331 Travellers aged between 10 and 24 years accounting for 32% of the overall Traveller population.

Age	Male	Female	All ages	% of overall population (1,025)
10 - 14 years	55	67	122	12%
15 - 19 years	70	50	120	12%
20 - 24 years	40	49	89	9%
Total 10-24 years	165	166	331	32%

Source: Census 2011 with analysis by Researcher

As indicated above, the consultation emphasised the engagement and participation of young people up to the age of 25 years. Parents were also engaged in the process. The results of the consultation process are outlined below.

Identity & Culture

Culture was defined by the Task Force on the Travelling Community as a “package of customs, traditions, symbols, values, phrases and other form of communication by which we can belong to a community. The belonging is in understanding the meaning of these cultural forms and in sharing values and identity. Culture is the way we learn to think, behave and do things” (1995, p. 71). The Task Force went on to single out some of the ‘visible manifestations’ of Traveller culture: “Visible manifestations of Traveller culture include nomadism, the importance of the extended family, the Traveller language and the organisation of the Traveller economy” (p. 72).

There was a unanimous approach to the discussions about Traveller identity. All the children and young people spoke of the importance of their Traveller identity to them. For boys and young men, the sense of identity and Traveller culture was very associated with horses and travelling. For girls and young women, the sense of identity was just as strong but less easy to verbalise. They tended to associate Traveller identity and culture with close family ties.

Though none of the children or young people spoke any words, there was an awareness that a Traveller language exists and young people particularly felt this was very important.

Travelling and their nomadic culture is also very important to a large number of the children and young people. Many of those we spoke to still travel, particularly during the summer, and many stated they loved the freedom of travelling around the country and meeting new people. All were aware of the restrictions now on travelling compared to times gone by when they was more freedom.

Travellers stick to Travellers

Young Travellers in discussion

It's the way you talk, act, dress our accent is different

Young Traveller man

There was a shared sense of the values and social norms by which the children and young people live. They were all very clear about, for example, the restrictions on young girls and the difference between the freedoms afforded to boys and young men compared to the girls and young women.

Boys are legends. Girls are nuns

Teenage girl

The children also spoke about the expectations of them. Girls and young women, in particular, spoke about the fact that they were expected to spend a number of hours a day cleaning and/or looking after younger siblings or relatives. Boys and young men are not expected to do any cleaning or child minding. While a number of the girls stated that this was unfair, the majority were resigned. None of the boys felt this was unfair – this is just the way it is.



Many of the young people and even the children spoke about the importance of marriage. All stated that it was their intention to marry within the Traveller community. Young people as young as 13 or 14 spoke of already being on the look out for a partner. All the girls and young women spoke of marriage as being an incredibly important moment in their lives. Wedding dresses featured in many of the drawings that the young girls did, as did the traditions surrounding the young man requesting permission from the father

of the young woman.

Many young people and parents spoke about the importance attached to honour, particularly a young woman's honour, so that if a couple 'ran away' together they would have to get married and if they didn't, it would bring shame to her family and have significant consequences for her and future marriage prospects. This was accepted by the young people and reinforced by parents as being part of Traveller culture.

Restrictions are also placed on young people forming relationships before they marry. For some this extends to things like school plays and girls are not allowed to participate in these type of activities.

There was a general view that things are changing and whilst differences remain between what girls and boys are allowed to do, things are slightly improving for girls and young women.

*[In relation to school plays]
...girls wouldn't be allowed
to do love scenes so wouldn't even do it*

**Traveller parents with
agreement from
young girls**

Education

There was a large, though not unanimous, negative consensus in relation to school and education.

Though some Traveller children now avail of pre-school, the majority of very young children do not. A number of parents believe that this is outing children at a disadvantage. Others believed that Traveller pre-school children are better off at home.

Children still in primary school tended to say that they disliked school, some intensively. This was the case for almost all the children in all the areas that were visited. They referred to school as 'boring'. More importantly, they reported difficulties with school work and home work from the earliest ages. Again this was not unanimous, with a number of children stating that they do not have problems with work in school or in completing their homework.

However, the majority of children and the majority of parents stated that many children are struggling in school. There were reports of children as young as in junior infants being advised by their school to repeat the year as they are not equipped to move on. There were many reports of older children in an age-appropriate class but doing class work two or even three years below that which their peers are doing.

The majority of the children and young people who were passed primary school age stated that they liked primary school and the majority contrasted this with their experience of post-primary school. With a few exceptions, all those currently in post-primary school planned to leave as soon as they were legally allowed. The majority had the support of their parents to do this. A minority stated that they intended to go on to Youthreach to complete their studies but the majority did not have any plans for after they leave school.

Very few of the Traveller young people reported going on to Leaving Cert. For the few that did sit their Leaving Cert, they did so with Youthreach as opposed to mainstream school. In addition, very few of the younger children reported any ambition to go on to sit their Leaving Cert and children from very young ages indicated that it was their intention to leave school as soon as they could.

I'd like for them to get Junior Cert and Leaving Cert, get them to stay in school but they don't want to stay 'cos they find it very difficult to do the work and there is no support. They are struggling and there is nobody there to help

Traveller parent



*School is boring,
stupid, retarded*

**Traveller child in
primary school**

Many Traveller young people, even those that had done their Junior Cert, reported significant literacy difficulties. For those that had left school earlier than Junior Cert, the difficulties were greater. Some young people in their early 20s stated that they had difficulty with very basic literacy such as writing their own name. When those that reported literacy difficulties and had sat their Junior Cert were probed, it emerged that the majority of them had been assigned a scribe to help them in their exams. None of the younger children appeared to share the difficulties with literacy to this level.

A number of Traveller parents stated that they would have difficulty with their daughters and third level, further education or training that would require them to be away from home overnight. Their view was that it is culturally inappropriate for unmarried young women to stay away and there was significant concern about the stigma and gossip that this would initiate. There was a discussion on the irrational nature of this concern and the restrictions it placed on young women pursuing educational opportunities. Though parents acknowledged this, they were adamant that this was Traveller cultural practice. No restrictions were placed on young men.

There was a generally held perception that the education system does not 'suit' Travellers, with a number of parents and young people both in and out of the education system stating that the academic nature of the education system does not suit Travellers, who prefer more hands-on work.

*Travellers can't keep up in
the classroom*

**Consensus amongst Travel-
ler children in primary
school**

Critical points for the children and young people in relation to education were homework and the lack of homework support, the transition from primary to post-primary school and the transition from the junior cycle to the senior cycle in post-primary school.

*The children are not
able for homework*

Traveller parent

Homework is a critical issue from the youngest age. A large majority of older children and parents pointed to the difficulties associated with homework. Many Traveller parents stated that they themselves are unable to read or write and have no ability to support their children with homework. The young people pointed to this being a critical issue for them. In the absence of homework support, Traveller children and young people fall further and further behind their peers and this has a significant influence on their decision to leave school. A number of teachers are providing informal support to some Traveller children. While Traveller parents welcome this, they are concerned at the informal nature and worry that it may not continue.

*School – there's
nothing good
about school ex-
cept sports*

**Traveller child in
primary school**

The transition from primary to post-primary school is also a critical issue. Many young Travellers reported finding this to be very difficult and struggle with the new routine and the range of subjects. Many feel that they begin to fall further behind their class peers and this can result in decisions to leave school as soon as they are legally allowed.

For those that complete Junior Cert, the transition to senior cycle in school can also be a difficult time for them. Parents report that it becomes increasingly more difficult to keep them in school at this time. Early in the senior cycle is when a significant number of young people drop out of school. Some transfer to Youthreach and complete their studies there.

Others drop out and become what is referred to as NEET, not in education, employment or training. These are the young people that there is most concern about at a European and Irish policy level.

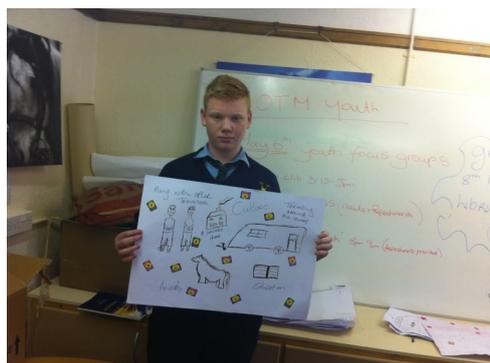
None of the Traveller lads will go on to secondary school.

Traveller parent

Accommodation

The issue of Traveller accommodation in Offaly is a highly contentious one with ongoing disputes between Offaly County Council and Travellers resident on unofficial halting sites. The nature of this accommodation is thought to be impacting on the lives of children and young people in a number of ways.

Fear of being evicted and not knowing when they might be moved and the general lack of permanency being faced by many families is thought to be causing significant amounts of stress to Traveller families, including children and young people. Poor living environments, such as having to do without water, electricity, bathroom and cooking facilities, are considerable.



Young people and parents spoke of having nowhere to do their homework and never knowing if there would be light sufficient to get it done, particularly in the wintertime.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the prospect of living in a house was not the preference of the majority of the Traveller children and young people, most of whom stated their preference for Traveller specific accommodation. They spoke of the importance of closeness to family and never feeling lonely when they were next to family and others in the Traveller community.

There is clearly a difficulty with accommodation, particularly at the family formation stage for young married people wishing to set up their own homes. Generally, their only choice is to attempt to get private rented accommodation with the support of rent supplement, however, rent supplement is proving increasingly difficult to get. In addition, many spoke of the difficulties in getting private rented accommodation, generally believed to be as result of discrimination against the Traveller community. In addition, young people spoke of the difficulties of being able to meet bills in houses, considered to be higher than those on sites.

It [living in temporary or unofficial accommodation] has a fierce effect on the kids – they don't know if they will be here long-term.

Traveller parent

Training activities

There is nothing for us to do in Birr.

Traveller young person

Many of the young people that are NEET (not in education, employment or training) have expressed the desire for training activities. These centre on practical skills such as dressmaking and beauty courses for the young women and training associated with horses or mechanics for the young men.

Employment & Unemployment

The majority of the young people who had left full-time education that we spoke to were NEET, not in employment, education or training. Many have internalised negative ideas about work and only very few had aspirations to ever enter paid employment. The vast majority stated that they could never imagine themselves as employed. The case was similar for children. Only a very small number of children stated that they could see themselves in employment in the future.

It's difficult to get a job for a Traveller

Young Traveller man

For many of the girls and young women, their future plans revolved around getting married. When probed, a small number stated that they would like to work in the beauty industry but none had actively identified personal goals or were pursuing any opportunities in this area.

We'd like something in social enterprise like they have in Galway.

Young Traveller man

A number of young men stated that they would like to work as a mechanic or with horses but that opportunities in these areas were few.

The lack of education that many experience, coupled with the perception that they would never be offered a job anyway simply because they are Travellers, were two of the main reasons given for why young people were not actively trying to get work. Young people were very aware of how discrimination impacts on their community and future prospects, and for many young Travellers the concept of 'paid employment' is outside of their lived experience as there are few Traveller role models with professional careers and very little exposure and access to practical work opportunities.

The majority of young people and parents were aware of the Department of Social Protection model of labour market activation which is focusing on people who are not actively seeking work or in education or training. There is a realisation that the option of depending on social welfare is no longer a possibility.

Interest was expressed in the development of social enterprises. The social enterprise model is seen to facilitate Traveller culture and norms with regard to work more than mainstream employment. The example of the Traveller social enterprise project in Galway was given as a model.

Discrimination

Though there was a general perception that there had been an improvement in levels of discrimination in schools, there was consensus that children and young people still face discrimination in many aspects of their lives.

The majority of children, young people and parents stated that while there is less overt discrimination towards Traveller children, they would still tend to be blamed for any trouble in school.

Young people reported ongoing difficulties with getting a hotel for a wedding reception and a significant issue with getting private rented accommodation once the landlord identified them as Travellers.

Sometimes we get blamed for no reason in school. Some settled people don't like Travellers

Young Traveller boy

We still have trouble getting a hotel for a wedding – we have to hide it [Traveller identity]. Sometimes we have to go miles for a hotel

Young Traveller women

Youth Work & Activities

The importance of youth work and youth activities for Traveller children and young people was confirmed by this consultation process. All of those that engaged in the process were adamant that an increased level of youth activities and indicatives are essential for children and young people of all ages. These can be broadly broken into:

- Educational support activities
- Training activities
- Social activities
- Once-off special activities



Educational Support Activities

The most significant requirement is for afterschool support for homework and 'grinds' like support to ensure that children and young people are supported to remain in school. Though few of the young children saw the benefit of this, the majority of older children and young people, including those that have already left school, and parents believe them to be essential to breaking the cycle of educational disadvantage. There were a number of references to the homework clubs that used to operate under the auspices of Offaly Traveller Movement (then Tullamore Traveller Movement) and there was unanimity in the belief that the loss of these clubs has been detrimental to the education of the children and young people in Offaly.

Travellers are perfect in primary school but feel embarrassed and ashamed going into secondary school 'cos we're so far behind. We're not able to keep up

Traveller young people in discussion

Literacy training was also identified by a number of young people and by parents. A number of young people realise that their opportunities for work etc are severely constrained by literacy difficulties and a number have expressed the desire to develop their literacy.

Social Activities

Social activities are also thought to be essential. Many (though not all) Traveller children and young people are reluctant or are not allowed to participate in general youth work services, clubs and activities. The cost of private activities are outside the financial reach of most Traveller families. Boredom and lack of activities are major concerns for children, young people and their parents, with many reporting that they do nothing. The demand for social activities cannot be overstated. Suggestions included:

Boys	Girls	Young Women	Young Men
Boxing	Soccer	Fitness	Gym
Horses	Dancing	Beauty	Soccer
Handball	Art	Driving lessons	Driving lessons
Swimming	Swimming	Swimming	
Computers	Computers		

Once-off activities

Paintball	Cinema
Go-kart racing	Visits to parks such as Tayto Park, Waterparks and Lough Key

Section 5

Discussion, Conclusion & Recommendations

Offaly Traveller Movement undertook this research to inform its work with young people between the ages of 10 and 25 years. It was designed to be a qualitative project that sought to put the voices of young people to the centre of planning for youth work in Offaly Traveller Movement. The research has highlighted a number of issues in relation to disadvantage for young people in general and specific disadvantage experienced by Traveller young people. It sets out the potential consequences that are sources of significant concern at national and international levels of this disadvantage and strongly suggests that the general experience faced by all young people are being compounded for young Travellers because of their ethnic status and socio-economic background.

In relation to identity and culture, the children and young people that participated in the consultation were very clear about their identity and indicated that it was very important to them. However, they were often less clear about culture and expressions of their identity. It would be useful to initiate an identity and culture project with the children and young people using creative arts to support them to identify what Traveller identity is and how it can be expressed in the modern day.

In relation to education, the majority of the children and young people, and their parents, who are still in school reported problems with coping in school and with homework. A substantial number stated that while they were in an age appropriate class, they were doing work of a class two years below. A significant number of the young people that have finished education reported leaving school without a Leaving Certificate and the majority reported literacy and numeracy difficulties. The issue of scribes being assigned to students needs to be clarified. While this is a welcome and useful resource, it is also masking what is a serious crisis among the Traveller youth in Offaly. Parents report placing restrictions on young women attending further education if it required them to be away from the family home overnight.

This is clearly a challenging situation and one that needs to be addressed in a number of ways:

At preschool level:

- A concerted effort to engage with parents of very young children to relay to them the benefits of preschool education;
- A focus on play to support early socialisation. This could take the form of Parent & Toddler Groups and playgroups;
- Engagement with Lifestart to ensure that Traveller parents are engaging with the programme.

At primary school level:

- Ongoing work with parents of primary school children to relay to them the benefits of education;
- Support for homework – this needs to be sustained and available to all Traveller children in the context of the level of educational disadvantage experienced by Traveller adults/parents;
- Support for transition from primary to secondary school;
- In-school literacy & numeracy programmes (in the context of the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy);
- Support for anti-bullying programmes.

At post-primary level:

- Ongoing work with parents of post primary school children to relay to them the benefits of education;
- Support for homework – this needs to be sustained and available to all Traveller children in the context of the level of educational disadvantage experienced by Traveller adults/parents;
- Support for transition from junior cycle to senior cycle;
- In-school literacy & numeracy programmes (in the context of the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy);
- Support for anti-bullying programmes;
- Support to remain in mainstream education until Leaving Certificate level;
- Clarification in relation to the use of scribes for exams.

Further education

- Work with parents to highlight the impact of the restrictions being imposed by some parents on their daughters;
- Work with parents and young people to highlight the advantages of further education and training;
- Encourage third level institutions such as Athlone IT, NUI Maynooth and others to do outreach work to encourage young Travellers to attend.

General

Though qualitative in nature, there were significantly common experiences in relation to education to warrant further quantitative work. An audit of levels of education should be carried out with all Traveller young people. This would include:

- Assessing whether any of the children/young people are currently falling behind their peers;
- Assessing the literacy levels of all children/young people;
- Assessing the highest level of education achieved by those that have left school.

Supports and services in this area need to be regarded as interventions to prevent or reduce the level of intergenerational educational disadvantage.

In relation to accommodation, many of those that participated in the study were concerned at the lack of suitable, culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers in Offaly and how that is impacting on the children, young people and young adults. Children and young people often do not have suitable study space and are often stressed at the vulnerability of their living arrangements. Young adults often struggle to find any accommodation at all at the family formation stage, leading to overcrowding and stressful situations.

In relation to unemployment, none of the young people who had left full-time education were in employment and the majority were NEET (not in education, employment or training). Most striking was the number of young people (including children) who had no confidence that they would ever be employed. This is problematic for all the reasons that are set out in the Section 2 including increased risk of poverty, disaffection and disengagement. As above, this is clearly a challenging situation and one that needs to be addressed in a number of ways:

- Focus on maintaining children and young people in mainstream education for as long as possible and ideally to Leaving Certificate level;
- In the context of the Youth Guarantee, provide pre-supports to young people to build self-esteem and confidence, as well as basic literacy and number skills, to enable them to engage with opportunities arising from the Youth Guarantee.
- Work with employers to break down stigma and prejudice.

Youth work and activities are viewed in a very positive light. However, they are currently poorly resourced in Offaly Traveller Movement and the demand for them across the county is clearly far greater than the capacity or resources of OTM to respond. In the context of designing interventions to break the cycle of disadvantage, additional resources will need to be sourced and targeted at young people.

Clearly, the level of disadvantage being faced by young Travellers required concerted and sustained intervention that is beyond the current capacity of Offaly Traveller Movement to provide. Though qualitative in nature, there were sufficient common experiences in relation to educational disadvantage and unemployment to suggest collective action is required. It requires an inter-agency approach that includes:

- Investment – in breaking the cycle of disadvantage being faced by young Travellers in Offaly;
- Flexibility – in the way that services are targeted at and delivered to young Travellers;
- Prioritisation – of services and organisational budgets;
- Responsiveness – services need to respond to need.

There is no doubt but this is required if the cycle of disadvantage is to be broken for the Traveller children and young people in Offaly.

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