



OTM Report on Youth Needs Analysis launch

Offaly Traveller Movement, held the official launch of "*In Their Own Words*". Youth Needs Analysis on Thursday the 8th October 2015 at Bury Quay, Tullamore. There were 44 people in attendance who were presented with key findings from the research, before participating in facilitated group discussions thereafter.

In 2014, research was commissioned by Offaly Traveller Movement to examine the needs of young Travellers throughout Offaly. This was carried out by independent researcher Ann Irwin, in collaboration with OTM youth workers and peer researcher Elizabeth Doyle.

The event was opened by Chairperson of Offaly Traveller Movement, Maureen Ward who welcomed all in attendance. The researcher Ann Irwin gave a detailed presentation of the work carried out, and the findings from the research. The peer researcher Elizabeth Doyle provided insight into the importance of allowing the voices of young Travellers to be heard, and spoke of her experiences both as a youth worker with OTM and as member of the Traveller community.

This research is particularly significant within the context of Traveller youth in Offaly and such data remains largely undocumented nationally. Organisations, schools and relevant stakeholders were invited to attend this event and were provided with copies of the research. We hope that the informative nature of the youth needs analysis will go some way towards allowing a more culturally appropriate response, and will inform the future work of educators and those working with young Travellers in Offaly.



Pictured Above: From left to right

Peer Researcher: Elizabeth Doyle

OTM Managing Director: Emma Gilchreest

Researcher: Anne Irwin

OTM Chairperson: Maureen Ward



In Their Own Words

Key Areas

The research provided young Travellers in Offaly with a voice, and identified specific areas where they experience significant disadvantage. Intervention is evidently required on a variety of levels, and while the research will now inform the work of OTM youth department, it is beyond the current capacity of OTM to fully respond, thus, a multi-agency approach should be forthcoming. **Some key areas identified included:**

Education: Education was identified as primary area of disadvantage, at all levels. Traveller children are not engaging in early education, experience difficulty within the education system, struggle with the transition between primary and secondary school and do not aspire to participate in third level education.

Discrimination: High levels of discrimination remain prevalent, and impacts on the confidence, capacity and development of young Travellers.

Employment: The young people were predominantly identified as not in education, training or employment (NEET). Education and Training levels were low and career related ambitions were largely not on the agenda.

Youth Work: The imperative nature of youth work was highlighted. Young people confirmed that this was an important source of support and should include social activities and educational support

Accommodation: Young people experienced substantial levels of stress in relation to uncertainty around accommodation issues and were negatively impacted by living conditions and lack of adequate resources.

Organisations and Schools who were in attendance on the day included:

Offaly Local Development Company

Barnardos

H.S.E

Le Cheile

Foroige

Jigsaw

Midland Regional Youth Services

Laois Offaly Education Training Board

St Vincent de Paul

Midland Traveller Conflict Mediation Initiative

Offaly Domestic Violence Support Service

Tullamore Parish

Scoil Eoin Phoil Arden View, Tullamore

St Brendan's Boys National School, Birr

Mercy Primary School. Birr



What people felt were the most important things to come out of the Youth Needs Analysis

Communication between schools and parents

The impact of funding cuts on Travellers

The lack of culturally appropriate resources

Issues around the appropriate use of scribes in state exams, sometimes without parental knowledge

The impact of non-attendance on educational outcomes for Travellers

The need for homework support

The need for early intervention in education

The lack of value on education and the need to inspire young Travellers

Services with an overall lack of understanding around Traveller issues



Group discussion on improving educational outcomes

Group Discussions

Improving educational outcomes in Preschool/Primary/ Secondary and Third level education. Discussions included:

Preschool: The promotion of preschool education is key. Addressing the fears that parents may have leaving their child in a preschool setting. Outreach workers could promote preschools to Travellers within the local area. Preschools should be welcoming and gain an awareness of Traveller culture and identity. Cultural awareness training needed for staff. The need for Traveller culture to be represented and illustrated in books used with children in preschool.

Primary School: Emphasis should be placed on attendance in primary school. Attitudes need to be challenged early on how socially acceptable it is for Traveller children to leave school early. Homework support is imperative and needs to be targeted and Traveller specific. No assumptions should be made regarding the need for a child to receive resources in school, they may not need these. Strong links should be formed and maintained between the parents and the school. Educational subgroup could be set up between schools and OTM, and provide schools with cultural awareness training.

Secondary School: More preparatory work in relation to the transition from primary to secondary school. Supports in secondary school that are specific to Traveller young people. Limited education, such as exemptions, scribes or less subjects, should not be used as primary coping mechanisms for difficulties and used only where appropriate. Understanding of Traveller culture and differences in culture. Work needs to be done around making Traveller children feel like they belong before secondary school.

Third Level: Challenging attitudes and expectations: Discussing third level education as a possibility from an early age. Conversations at home and parental value placed on education. Projects in school on cultural diversity and educationally inspiring Travellers. Sharing information on the positive outcomes. E.g. Jobs

Attendee discussion and feedback from the various schools/ organisations is central to working together to respond to the needs of Traveller Youth in Offaly

“ Non attendance is killing education, its so sad that young Travellers don't have a vision for the future”

“Not much has changed for Travellers in the previous decades, the situation is stagnant”



Group discussion on improving educational outcomes

Group Discussions

Measures that organisations can take to challenge discrimination against Travellers

- ◆ Emphasising difference, without discrimination. Talking about cultural distinction and difference, both in the classroom and in the community.
- ◆ Developing peer systems among similar age groups,
- ◆ Socialising events and talking about Traveller life and media campaigns defying expectations.
- ◆ Lobby, encourage and support the continuing call for Travellers to be recognised as an ethnic minority in Ireland.

Supporting young Travellers in Training and Employment

- ◆ Courses need to be relevant. E.g.; Horse Project. Facilitators of courses to deliver training on cultural awareness and cultural diversity.
- ◆ Department of Social Protection need to allocate appropriate training places instead of courses that often do not motivate young Travellers.
- ◆ Social Enterprise. Co-op using traditional skills E.g. Wicklow Traveller Group-Knitting.
- ◆ Timing of running courses should be flexible. E.g. Winter. Designated person for Travellers within the agency. interagency/Steering Group to be set up
- ◆ Financial incentive.

The role of youth work in tackling issues affecting young Travellers in Offaly

- ◆ Securing funding, more youth workers are inevitably needed. Acquiring suitable spaces, central to organisations.
- ◆ A mobile youth café could be brought onto halting sites.
- ◆ More structured activities and those geared towards youth development. Better engagement of young people into projects.
- ◆ Acknowledging and understanding roles and responsibilities regarding Traveller young people. E.g.: Different priorities than settled youth, gender roles, and restrictions placed on girls, Traveller youth may have extra responsibilities.
- ◆ Value of school should be also priorities in youth work, talking about the benefits.
- ◆ Youth work to be included in action groups/focus groups in relation to discrimination. Encourage the participation of Travellers in youth.

OTM Youth Department

OTM Youth programme engages with young Travellers providing them with a social educational support and provides a platform for youth development. OTM Youth work is constantly being developed and includes the following:

- ◆ Weekly youth drop in clubs
- ◆ Homework support to children in Primary Education
- ◆ Soccer tournament programme for boys
- ◆ Schools Transfer programme with Offaly LDC
- ◆ Support to young Travellers in organising Cultural Trips
- ◆ Established links with Birr Youth Café and St. Mary's Youth Centre, Tullamore
- ◆ Organising seasonal events such as Halloween parties, Christmas Discos, Traveller youth Easter & Summer camps, swimming and cinema

Contact Us

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