



OFFALY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Offaly Traveller Movement

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Offaly Traveller Movement is a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG)
Company Registration Number: 234193
Registered Charity Number: 20204733

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Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Board of OTM, I am delighted to present what we feel is an impressive record of our activities and achievements during 2021. The work of the OTM during this period proves the essential role of the OTM in providing community led support and advocacy to members of the Traveller community in Offaly. As the Annual Report illustrates, over the past year, the OTM has not only provided vital support to many individuals and families, but also continued to address many of the major challenges facing Travellers in Offaly today, from discrimination and mental health to housing and education. The demand for OTM services speaks to the level of unmet need in the Traveller community. Indeed, in many instances, the issues presented were ones that were merely exacerbated, and not created, by the pandemic.

Over the past year in OTM, we have continued to see the devastating impact of the pandemic on the lives of individuals and families throughout Offaly. Despite the pandemic significantly affecting how services were delivered, the provision of support to the Traveller community in Offaly remained as important as ever. While the staff at the OTM have taken on a huge additional volume of work, they have also done this while working remotely and under the personal strain of the pandemic. They have delivered all of this additional community and policy work on top of, not instead of, existing programmes of work. This has involved great sacrifices from our amazing team for which I am deeply grateful.

The ability to respond effectively is built on solid organisational foundations. Over the past number of years, the OTM has invested in strong governance structures and built important connections with the Traveller and wider community in Offaly. As an organisation, we have also concentrated on strengthening relations with decision makers and institutions, both within Offaly and further afield, as a respected and trustworthy advocate for the radical reform required to make Ireland a more just and equal society for all. This year, that work bore fruit when needed most in the enormous volume of work and the impressive list of impacts that our team has delivered for the Traveller community in Offaly during this most challenging period.

None of this work would be possible without the enormous commitment and support of OTM staff, volunteers, partners, and funders. OTM's staff, led by Sandra McDonagh, have shown immense dedication and leadership during 2021, ensuring that OTM has been able to adapt and respond effectively to current challenges, while continuing to press for progress on OTM's longstanding priorities. Across all aspects of our work, our amazing network of volunteers and community led organisations worked with us to adopt new and alternative services in response to the pandemic. And, of course, our funders – from philanthropic organisations, Government Departments and

statutory bodies and members of the community – who have provided essential support to the OTM. On behalf of the Board of Directors of OTM, I extend our sincere gratitude to all who have made OTM’s work possible over the last year.

Lilly Ward, *Offaly Traveller Movement Chairperson.*



On 25TH November 2021, our Managing Director, Sandra McDonagh, attended the 8th International Roma Women’s Conference to discuss the Protection of the Human Rights and Dignity of Roma and Traveller women in Times of Crisis, at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

Directors Forward

It will likely be many years before we can understand the full significance of all that happened in 2021. The pandemic continued to upturn every aspect of our lives and present unique, complex, and urgent challenges for the Traveller community in Offaly. The OTM has been at the forefront of meeting these challenges. Indeed, at a time when there is increasing hostility toward Travellers nomadic culture and traditions, we can be proud that OTM has not only remained fearlessly loyal and true to its values, but steadfast its mission of supporting and advocating for members of the Traveller community in Offaly.

As this report outlines, 2021 saw the OTM achieve significant impact across a wide range of issues. In a landscape that was dominated by the pandemic, the OTM continued to provide a wide range of services and supports to members of the Traveller community in Offaly.

The OTM continue to have a key role in supporting the community and calling out violations when they occur. As the pandemic has demonstrated, we are a proactive and nimble organisation able to evolve and respond to issues as they emerge. For example, throughout the year, we were able to swiftly engage with strategic partners to provide culturally specific and appropriate guidance surrounding Covid 19, health, hygiene and packs, in addition to Traveller specific vaccination clinics.

However, - while responding to the immediate needs of the community is essential work – we are not a merely reactive organisation. At the core we are about affecting and driving change. Our board, staff, and community are not fulfilling any statutory mandate – we have come together because we share a vision of how Ireland can become a more equal and just society for all, including members of the Traveller community. That means we see our role as taking the initiative – identifying the needs of the community, bringing forward fresh ideas for law reform, and building alliances and coalitions that can leverage social change. This includes bringing the focus of public attention to violations of Travellers rights and State and local authorities’ dereliction of their duties for too long.

It has been a challenging year for the OTM, and the wider Traveller community in Offaly, but we are proud of the part we have played in speaking truth to power and demanding greater respect and equality for Travellers, and we are emboldened that this role will continue to be relevant and necessary for some time to come.

Sandra McDonagh, *Managing Director*

OUR

PEOPLE

OFFALY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

Executive Board 2021

The OTM Board of Directors is the key management structure of OTM and is a partnership between Travellers and settled people. Effective communication between the staff and the Board is needed for this co-operation. To function effectively the Board requires up-to date work-plans and reports from all OTM staff to be presented by the Managing Director. New members are elected by the membership present at the Annual General Meeting. Officers are elected at first meeting thereafter.

The Board has 3 key strands to its work which are focused on three key areas:

1. Implementation of Boards responsibilities within strategic plan
2. Overview and monitoring of implementation of staff responsibilities within strategic plan
3. Management of OTM organisation through the appointed Managing Director

Their role of the Board of Directors is to:

- to implement policies;
- to ensure that the subgroups are running effectively;
- to monitor staff progress;
- to ensure that staff are supported and productive;
- to support the strategic policy development of OTM;
- to ensure core principles and ethos are core to the work;

In 2021, Phyllida Clarke, Liam Roger, and John McDonagh stepped down from the OTM's board. OTM extends our deepest appreciation to all three for their advice and guidance over the years. We also welcomed two new board members; Ann Sheeran and John Joyce.

Board of Directors of OTM 2021

NAME	POSITION
Lilly Ward	Chairperson, Trustee
Mary Rose Kerrigan	Trustee
William McDonagh	Secretary, Trustee
Thomas McDonagh	Trustee
Susan Fay	Trustee
Christopher McDonagh	Treasurer, Trustee
Ann Sheeran	Trustee
John Joyce	Trustee

Staff Profiles

EXECUTIVE

Sandra McDonagh - Managing Director

Sandra McDonagh is the Managing Director of Offaly Traveller Movement, and a proud Traveller woman. She joined Offaly Traveller Movement in 2013 as a Mental Health Social Worker leading the first ever Traveller specific mental health service in Ireland Travelling to Wellbeing. She took up the position as managing Director of Offaly Traveller Movement in 2019 and continues to work parttime as a social worker supporting the team. Sandra has a Bachelor of Social Science from Maynooth University, a Masters in Social Work from Trinity College Dublin and a Professional Certificate in Acute Mental Health Interventions from University College Dublin. She is currently the only Traveller in Ireland with a Masters in Social Work from Trinity College. Her life experience has emboldened her to stand up for human rights, social justice and equality for Travellers.

Sandra's published work includes; co-author of 'Family Based Interventions: Advancing Recovery for the Traveller Community in Ireland' in the Irish Social Worker Journal and co-author of 'A community-health partnership response to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Travellers and Roma in Ireland' published in the Global Health Promotion Journal. She also co-authored 'A Guide to Developing a Local Co-ordinated Crisis Response Plan for the Traveller Community'.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Leona McDonagh – Health Manager

Leona McDonagh took up her post as Health Manager with the OTM in June 2021. She has an Honours Degree from NUI Maynooth in Social Science (BSocSci). The Bachelor of Social Science degree studies how human societies are organised, the social forces, institutions and ideologies that shape society, and the factors that influence the wellbeing of individuals, families, communities, and countries.

Leona has widespread experience in elderly care and the healthcare system within Ireland as she worked in this department for 10 years before joining OTM.

As a member of the Traveller community herself, she has lived experience of the difficulties faced by the community.

Carolyn Byrne – Interim Health Manager

Prior to the appointment of Leona McDonagh as Health Manager in June 2021, the position was covered by

Carolyn Byrne. Carolyn was first introduced to OTM as a student on placement from Maynooth University, where she studied a B.Sc in youth and community work. Carolyn has also worked in Laois Traveller Action Group and Portarlinton Garda Diversion Project. She has volunteered in many organisations throughout her life with a particular focus on marginalised young people.

Nuala Hogan – Public Health Nurse for Travellers Laois & Offaly

Nuala has been the HSE designated Public Health Nurse for Travellers in Laois and Offaly for over a decade now. She is well liked and respected across the two counties and has helped and supported numerous Traveller families through difficult health crises. She works closely with the Community Health Workers across the two counties to ensure the health promotion and information disseminated is accurate and up to date. She also works closely with the OTM mental health team etc and is a valued member of the OTM family.

Brigid McInerney – Community Health Worker

Brigid joined OTM in 1999 as part of the first Primary Health Care group that were trained by Fas. Brigid has undertaken vast training during her years in OTM included health promotion training. She is a member of the Traveller community, and she specialises in support to older Travellers in their homes.

Caroline McDonagh - Community Health Worker

Caroline is the newest member of the Primary Health Care team, she joined OTM in 2020. Caroline is doing ongoing training with Primary Health Care programme. She works with families in the community and was a Covid responder during the pandemic. Caroline is a member of the Traveller community.

Celine McInerney - Community Health Worker

Celine joined the OTM in 2007 as a peer youth worker. She was appointed as a Community Health Worker on the Primary Health Care team in 2013. Her academic achievements include a QQI 5 Certificate in Community & Health Services and a QQI 5 Family Support Worker. Celine enjoys walking and is a member of the Traveller community.

Geraldine Ward - Community Health Worker

Geraldine joined OTM in 2007 as an after-school assistant on the After Schools Project. Geraldine has a Diploma in youth and community work. Geraldine currently works with Primary Health Care programme, since 2013. She is instrumental in supporting the various groups that are established as well as organising annual international pilgrimages for the Traveller community. Geraldine herself, is a member of the Traveller community.

Mary McInerney - Community Health Worker

Mary joined OTM in 1999 as part of the first Primary Health Care group that were trained by Fas. Mary has

undertaken vast training during her years in OTM included health promotion training. She is a member of the Traveller community. Mary has delivered training on cultural awareness throughout the county, including to and she specialises in support to older Travellers in their homes.

Sarah McDonagh - Community Health Worker

Sarah joined OTM in 1999 as part of the first Primary Health Care group that were trained by Fas. Sarah has undertaken vast training during her years in OTM included health promotion training. She is a member of the Traveller community.

John McDonagh - Community Health Worker

John started in OTM in 2021 as the first ever Mens Community Health Worker. Prior to this John was an active volunteer and member on the OTM Board of Directors. John coordinates the very successful and popular Offaly Traveller Mens Shed project and support many events held by OTM. John is a proud member of the Traveller community.

Martin Houlihan – Mens Health Worker

Martin worked as the TUS Supervisor in Offaly Local Development Company before joining the OTM team. Prior to this he worked in the building trade. Martin completed a FETAC Level 5 in Community Development in 2014 and a FETAC Level 4 in IT in 2010. He is the Chairperson of Cloghan Boxing club and has volunteered for his local clubs in both football and hurling. A keen sports man, he holds county medals for both running and hurling.

Leslie Jones – Horse Project Coordinator

Leslie joined OTM in 2011 and has been instrumental in engaging with Traveller men, the most marginalise cohort in Irish society, through the medium of the Horse. Lesley is the founder and facilitator of the Offaly Traveller men's Horse Project, with 60 Traveller men continuously engaging across Offaly. In 2021, she facilitated the Crazy Mares club, due to ongoing demand from the Traveller women! And she also set up the Junior Crazy Mares project. Lesley is an equine therapist, an enthusiastic horse woman and riding instructor with a background in education. Lesley has been developing and delivering equine and animal assisted programmes, in many areas of Ireland, with much success since 2005 and owns her own Care Farm in County Wicklow. Lesley's community-based work to date, includes horse project facilitation in various locations in Ireland, working with a number of different groups focusing mainly on the areas of youth diversion and outreach, early Suicide Intervention, education and awareness, parent and child relationship development, and various integration projects with ethnic communities in Ireland, in particular with Travellers. Lesley also has significant experience of working with adults and children with intellectual and physical disability.

Sorcha Lewis – Community Development Worker

Sorcha joined OTM in May 2012. Her work includes Traveller women’s health and accommodation issues and she works at local level as well as influencing national policy. She has a B.A in Applied Social Studies in Social Care from A.I.T. and a Diploma in Community Development Practice from NUI Galway. She also holds a Cert in Housing Studies and Cert in Local Government Studies from the Institute of Public Administration. Sorcha is the staff representative on Offaly Traveller Movement Board of Directors and also sits as Traveller Representative on Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services BOM. Sorcha also participates as an active member of the Irish Traveller Movement Accommodation Working Group. In addition to her important role in OTM, Sorcha has been a support care worker for the past 17 years in Cheshire Ireland.

MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Karen Boylan – Mental Health Coordinator

Karen Boylan joined the OTM in 2019. She holds a B.A. in Applied Social Studies and Social Care and holds certificates in Community Development and Social Studies. Prior to joining the OTM, Karen worked in the area of mental health for seven years, as the Regional Development Officer with Shine. It was during this time that she established and supported a Traveller Women’s Support Group in Tullamore. Karen has a passion for peer and group support and brings with her vast experience in peer facilitator training and experience in providing support and supervision to peers. She is firmly committed to the furthering of human rights and social justice through her work and has experience representing all those affected by mental ill health at local, regional and national level.

Pinkie McInerney – Mental Health Support Worker

Travelling to Wellbeing Peer Mental Health Support Worker, Pinky McInerney joined the Travelling to Wellbeing team in August 2020. Pinky has been a Community Development Worker in OTM for 20+ years. She has vast experience, both lived and professionally, of supporting her community in relation to mental health. Pinkie has undertaken many training courses during her career, most recently, in 2021, the Mincears Mental Health Course, delivered by the national Traveller Counselling Service.

YOUTH DEPARTMENT

Saranne Lovett – Youth Team Leader

Having joined the OTM as a youth worker in April 2015, Saranne now oversees the work of the OTM Youth Project. She has vast experience working with young people, particularly those from a marginalised background. Her keen interest in building youth capacity through creative mechanisms has led her to

coordinate a number of youth related creative projects for young members of the Traveller community in Offaly. She holds a B.A. (Hons) in Applied Social Studies in Social Care and a Diploma in Community Development. She is deeply committed to issues around equality and social justice and is currently undertaking a Masters in Social Work with Maynooth University.

Elizabeth Doyle – Peer Youth Worker

Elizabeth first joined the OTM as an after-school's assistant in 2007. She progressed on to becoming a peer youth worker. Elizabeth holds a FETAC Level 5 in Community Development and is a member of the Traveller Community.

LOCAL TRAINING INITIATIVE

Aoife Masterson – LTI Coordinator

Aoife Masterson was appointed as LTI Coordinator in October 2021. She has a B.A. in English and History from NUI, Galway and an LL.B. in Irish law from Griffith College Dublin. She also holds an LL.M. in International Justice from Maynooth University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Alternative Conflict and Dispute Resolution Studies from Trinity College Dublin. A qualified mediator, she also holds a certificate in family mediation and advocacy.

Ian McDonagh – LTI Assistant Support Worker

Ian is currently the Assistant Support Worker for the Local Training Initiative in OTM. His role involves recruiting and supporting the learners to achieve their major awards. He is currently studying to receive a QQI 6 Train the Trainer.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Patrick Daly – Finance Manager

Patrick is a seasoned finance professional with twenty-five years' experience. He was appointed as OTM's Finance Manager in March 2020. He holds a B.E in Electronic Engineering and a postgraduate diploma in Systems Analysis from NUI, Galway. Initially working as an engineer, he developed an interest in Financial Engineering and worked for eight years in Financial Risk Management for various investment banks operating in the City of London.

Since the mid-2000s, he has worked as Finance Manager for various London-based SMEs and has gained extensive knowledge of implementation of effective financial set-ups for growing businesses. Since returning to Ireland in 2016, he has had roles in the Private Sector (collaborating with a local accountant) and in the Public Sector with the Department of Education payroll.

Pascal Delaney – Office Administrator

Pascal Delaney joined the OTM in September 2018. He holds a Diploma in Management Finance from Athlone Institute of Technology. Pascal brings a wealth of experience in finance and accounts to the OTM.

ADMINISTRATION

Bridget McInerney – Administrator

Bridget joined OTM as office administrator in April 2010. Bridget holds a degree in Office Administration and has been involved in many community development areas of the organisation also, including; being a member on the Midlands Traveller Health Unit and member of the Midlands Traveller Women's Network. Bridget is also a qualified carer and works as a home carer throughout Offaly.

Siobhán Hennigan - Receptionist

Siobhán Hennigan joined the OTM in July 2021 on a CE Scheme. She holds a FETAC Level 4 in Office Skills and oversees the day to day running of reception.

We also said goodbye to Finance Manager, Karen Gilfoyle; Accommodation Worker, Sarah O'Brien; Local Training Initiative Co Ordinator, Sharon Mellisop; Local Training Initiative Assistant Co Ordinator, Pauric Brasil and Carolyn Byrne; Community Health Worker, Patrick McDonagh; and Secretary, Chantelle Ward.

A fond farewell and very best wishes to all.

Throughout 2021, a number of students undertook placements with OTM. They included Aislinn Daly and Sarah Lee Connolly, Maynooth University; Kiara Murphy, University College Dublin; Aoife Hughes, Damian Olszewski, and Lauren Gath, Technological University of the Shannon and Michael Plunkett, Killina Secondary School.

We would like to thank them all for their time and wish them the very best in their future studies.



Many candle lit vigils and a mass was held on 13th Sept 2021 to pray for the full recovery of our beautiful friend and colleague Lily Kavanagh.

Lily is pictured here during the course of her work with OTM, with Minister of State, Regina Doherty

OUR WORK

OFFALY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

Education & Training Department

Local Training Initiative (LTI)

The OTM, in conjunction with the LOETB, were delighted to begin the very first Traveller specific LTI in the region in February 2021. An LTI is a certified training course for people aged 18 to 35, who are not in employment, education or training. An LTI is delivered from a community setting. This culturally appropriate Traveller specific training course aims to address the significant barriers Travellers face when accessing education, training and employment. 'Skills for Life' QQI Level 3 general learning award will enable Travellers to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to seek employment or further education. The LTI coordinators; Sharon Mellsop and Pauric Brazil, together with the support of the OTM team, encouraged learners to develop their existing skills and learn new skills in an environment that was tailored to meet their individual needs. LOETB funding allowed OTM to secure a new premises with large training room and computer room. The Hazel hub training centre is a safe space and a welcoming environment for Traveller learners to develop valuable employment related skills and knowledge while contributing to their community. In 2021, 11 learners began the training course with 8 of them completing it. The course had both academic and hands-on, practical modules which included; application of numbers, painting and decorating, health and fitness, personal and interpersonal skills, woodwork, career preparation and Internet skills. The nature of the course ensures that Travellers get to engage in activities which are of interest and relevance to them, in an enjoyable environment for our learners to attend. During the course the woodwork module was delivered from the Community Training Centre (CTC) in Kilcruddin, thus encouraging progression onto further education and the QQI level 4 & 5 courses that are delivered from there. The OTM LTI also included additional workshops, talks, activities, and trips and overall was a wonderful success. We wish all our learners the very best in their futures and look forward to new learners engaging with this local training initiative.

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Programme & Community Education

Our strengthening relationship with the LOETB in 2021 also saw the commencement of adult literacy and numeracy programme where both group and one to one provision was delivered. In addition to this several Community Education courses took place across the year, including Christmas flower decorating, miniature wagon making etc.



Health Department

Primary Healthcare Programme

2021 was an unusual working year for the CHWs. The CHWs participated many different trainings throughout the year via zoom and in person. These included Child Safeguarding statement Policies and Procedure training, Mindfulness and time management training which was completed by Ballycommon Training Centre.

Following from many public announcements by NEPHET, all PHCP staff were directed to work from home for some of the year. This was a significant change for the CHWs who are used to regularly visiting local families and carrying out health promotion work in Traveller homes. Work continued over the phone for most of the year with outreach and work from the office only taken place in accordance with shifting and evolving HSE and Government guidelines.

The community health workers continued to contact Traveller families by phone and social media and to deliver culturally appropriate information across a wide selection of topics such as cancer screening, antenatal care, mental health, dental care, child safety, healthy eating, healthy heart, asthma and diabetes.

While COVID 19 quickly became an organisational priority in 2021 the CHWs also delivered health promotion information and supported Travellers with wider health concerns, as normal. During this year the CHWs delivered 6,014 health promotion initiatives from July to December.

From 2021, the HSE and Government issued a substantial volume of new health messages and directives. This led to an increased volume of work and a new duty of care for the CHWs who worked to ensure Traveller families had access to up-to-date advice and information. The CHWs delivered information on social distancing, hand washing, signs & symptoms, cocooning, attendance at funerals, swabbing, as well as information on a wide range of local, regional and national support services. The CHWs also delivered COVID 19 health messages on how to download the COVID 19 tracker, messages on restrictions on travel to and from the UK, self-isolating/cocooning/staying at home, watching elders and those with long term health conditions, taking medications and having enough medication, keeping all clinic and GP appointments during COVID19, presenting to A&E if required and the framework for living with COVID-19. We had a number of pop-up vaccination clinic for the 1st dose, 2nd dose and booster vaccine with Jimmy Todd and Dr. Hamilton throughout the second half of the year.

At the beginning of the pandemic the CHWS delivered Hygiene Packs to over 300 Traveller families in Co. Offaly. The Packs contained Hand gel, toilet roll, tissues, bleach and other cleaning materials. Throughout the first half of the year, they were involved in identifying suspected COVID 19 cases and in on-going work and reporting on COVID-19. The CHWs were

continuously liaising with Traveller families to support them and to establish what their situation was in relation to COVID 19. CHWs linked with Travellers on a daily basis to collect data on the number of Travellers referred for testing, test results, length waiting for results and number of people in the family isolating. This information was then fed back to the HSE. When restrictions lifted, the CHW also continued a normal programme of work. We held many classes for all ages in the community. These included flower arrangements, Wreath Making, coffee mornings with the Traveller fostering and Talking buddies as guest speakers, Tin smith training in the men's shed. We had our yearly trip to knock. Our Crazy Mares had a Sponsored walk for the friends of the hospital charity.

Community Development Programme

The strategic priority of the Community Development Health Programme for 2021 was to achieve culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers in County Offaly.

Offaly Traveller Movement employ just one accommodation worker Sorcha Lewis on a part time basis to cover the whole of the county. The Covid 19 pandemic that started in March 2020, continued in to 2021 to impose restrictions on work practices, however OTM management and Board of Management supported staff to work both from work and home. Staff were able to overcome communication challenges by using zoom to keep in contact with local and national agencies and their own staff. Although outreach was not prohibited at the start of the year, much of the engagement with the



OTM health manager Leona McDonagh with Community Health Worker Geraldine Ward, during Traveller Pride Event, Sept 2021

community continued by phone.

OTM worked in partnership with relevant services to identify and support those in need of services and alternative accommodation. The COVID 19 pandemic continued to compound the Traveller Accommodation crisis that existed prior to it.

OTM participated on monthly zoom meetings with the Irish Traveller Movement Accommodation Working Group. The AWG was an extremely helpful and supportive forum for local Traveller group representatives to be kept informed of updates locally, regionally and nationally. It provided a conduit for OTM's voice to be heard nationally. For ITM to bring to the attention of housing officials in government what was happening on the ground for the Travellers in Offaly and for OTM to help mitigate and reduce

the impact of COVID 19 on the Traveller Community.

As part of the accommodation workers role, she supported families and individuals living on unofficial camps to ensure that the additional facilities of running water and sanitation were maintained that had been provided the previous year.

In April 2021 the blanket ban on evictions, introduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic, was lifted. The eviction ban was introduced only for periods when people's movement was restricted to within 5km of their homes as part of Covid-19 rules. This restriction was lifted to allow county-wide travel on Monday, April 12th and a 10-day grace period on evictions expired on Friday, April 23rd. As a result of the lifting of the ban, there was an increase in referrals to OTM at this period on those seeking advice on notices of termination.

During this time there was also an increase in the number of families to the county, living on the side of the road.

During the year we also received many external referrals from a range of agencies such as Tusla, Barnardo's and Approved Housing Bodies. Throughout these unprecedented times the accommodation department continued to link in with many families and individuals.

Many Traveller families in Offaly were unable to exit homelessness. This was due to the over reliance on the private rental sector to provide social housing. Most Travellers were entitled to HAP, however they often faced discrimination from landlords and were therefore unable to

find a property to rent, which meant they are excluded from the housing sector, as well high rents and the lack of affordable accommodation.

Currently there are no emergency accommodation units available in Offaly and thus those who find themselves homeless, have to present as homeless at Offaly County Council offices. If they are fortunate, they may receive vouchers to use for B&B's, hotels etc. But this is neither secure or sustainable.

The accommodation worker also sits on the Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services Board of Management as Traveller Representative. Through her work as accommodation worker, she from time-to-time encounter victims of domestic abuse. At present there is emergency accommodation or refuge for victim of domestic abuse and their children. And many have to be supported to find refuge outside the county or remain in their how when the abuse takes place.

There are still many families living on the side of the road without services when the annual Traveller count was carried out in 2021.

OTM and Offaly County Council collaborated on compiling the Annual Traveller Count/Estimate with OCC social Worker. This was a substantial piece of work. The results of Traveller Annual Count were taken on 3rd December 2021.

Men's Health Programme

The Men's Health Workers main focus for 2021 was to increase the number of Traveller men engaging with OTM Men's Health Project. He engaged with Traveller men and initiated dialogue to raise awareness around mental health and suicide, physical wellbeing and issues that affect their health. The work focused on highlighting and challenging the key inequalities in Traveller Men's Health. He continued to progress the goals of the Healthy Ireland Strategy (2013-2025) in line with the needs of Travellers living in Offaly. This includes health promotion, education and preventative measures, mental health and wellbeing, supports relating to the social determinants of health and supports relating to promoting Traveller Culture and tackling discrimination. As we were still within restrictions due to covid most of the work for the first quarter of 2021 was done through phone calls, Zoom calls, or WhatsApp.

Ongoing health information was delivered via outreach work in early 2021 and continued work by regular phone contact during lockdown. For Men's Health Awareness Week a short video was developed on the importance of Traveller men linking in with mainstream health services and community supports which was posted to OTMs Facebook page.

8 Traveller men took part in a Minceirs Tairean Focus Group, in April 2021. This focused on Traveller men's mental health and the prevalence of suicide in the community and it continued for 6 weeks. This gave the men something to keep them occupied and reach

out to help their mental wellbeing. As the suicide rate is 7 times higher in the Traveller community, this was a prodigious technique to keep the local men interested.

During the pandemic the Traveller men's worker took part in different training to develop new skills that would benefit the role, including engaging with the national men's health network to gain a better understanding of mental wellbeing and how to imply different techniques to the job role and to help engage men into different groups settings and events organised.

In July 2021 the men's shed was back up and running, as it was closed due to covid restrictions. With the shed now open this gave the Traveller men a safe space to come together meet up have a chat and learn new skills. The activities available for the men are as follows; having a cuppa and a chat in a relaxed and safe environment, playing cards or board games, darts, pool, or making things such as dog boxes, bird boxes, flower boxes, and much more. This was great as it also helped to combat the boredom, isolation and mental wellbeing of the Traveller men that got involved. The men also got to do a days training on Tin smithing with an instructor from the Traveller community to learn a skill that was part of their heritage. The men also made items to showcase at our Traveller pride event which was held in Charleville Castle on September 25th. We got to put on display everything the men made and we were able to speak and promote the men's shed to other Traveller men and to invite them to come along and join our men's shed.

During the pandemic the Traveller men's worker helped to pack and deliver sanitising safety packs to Traveller families within Offaly. These packs consisted of all essential items and PPE needed to help protect them from covid 19. A test centre was also set up in the official halting site at Kilcruttin with the HSE. The men's worker promoted this to the Traveller men and was part of this testing day to help get the most vulnerable in for testing. There was a large number of people tested on the day and also hygiene packs were given to those on site also.

In August 2021, with the help and support of Offaly sports partnership, Youth Ireland, FAI, Community Gardai, and the Traveller Mediation Services, a soccer programme was established for the Traveller men in the Aura leisure centre on Tuesday nights at 7pm. This was originally for a 6 week period we started

with 8 men and over the few weeks the numbers progressed to 40 men actively taking part. In addition to this, with consultation with the the Traveller men, we continued playing the soccer every Tuesday nights at 7 pm for the foreseeable future as it has been a huge success among the men taking part, there are so many health benefits for the men as it helps getting physical activity and helps combat so many mental health issues.

In October 2021 a sea fishing trip to Sligo was organised for 8 Traveller men. This trip was planned as part of a survey with the Traveller Men. We went on the trip on Wednesday the 27th of October. The Day consisted of a bus to and from our location a chartered boat for 3 hours of sea fishing. We went to a Gastro pub venue for some food and returned back home. The men really enjoyed the day with lots of laughter, and the Traveller men asked if we could make this an annual Activity/ Event each year.



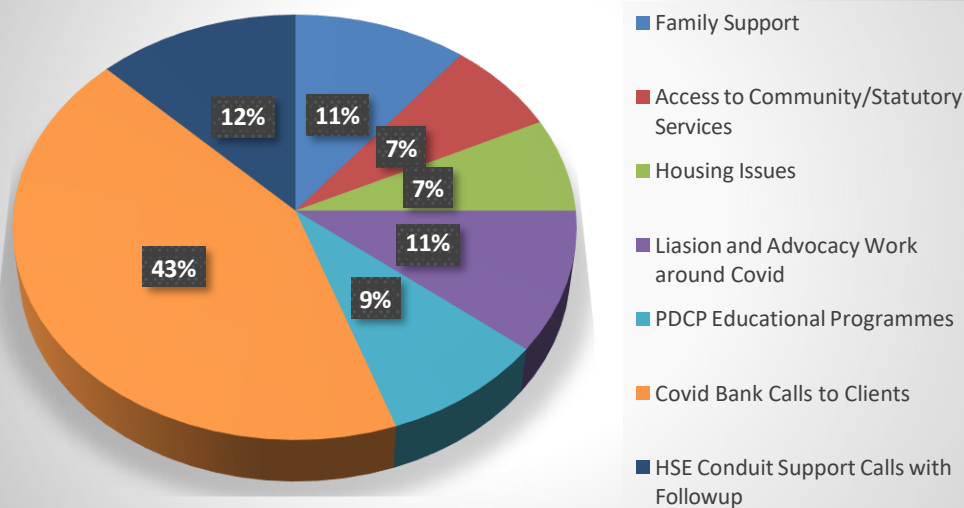
*OTM Traveller Men's
soccer team in action!*

HSE Public Health Nurse

The public health nursing (PHN) role in partnership with Offaly Traveller Movement (OTM) has many diverse components to it. A large part of the role is working as joint Health Co-Coordinator in the Primary Health Care Programme (PHCP) alongside the 7 Peer Community Health Workers (CHWs). The PHN develops and rolls out Traveller specific health education programmes for the CHWs outreach. Nuala also receives clinical and social referrals from all members of the OTM health team and other allied health care professionals within the HSE. She provides family support, health promotion and guidance for clients. 2021 was a challenging year and saw a continued increase in the demand for the nursing service to Travellers due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This pandemic brings new challenges to our health care system and creates a lot more challenges within our work as we cannot meet clients face to face. Health issues facing Travellers differ to those of the settled community and this means they are more vulnerable during this pandemic. Inevitably, it presented some unique challenges to the vital outreach work and support services provided to the Traveller community in Co. Offaly. Weekly team meetings were convened over teleconferences and Zoom calls to discuss issues and challenges. We had blended working measures within the work place. It allowed the team to work safely from both office and home in 2021. Varying topics were covered by the PHN such as educational updates on Covid-19, vaccines, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, swabbing to the CHWs and promotion of the National Traveller Health Unit Covid-19 Helpline. The PHN also provided updates to the CHWs on “Flattening the Curve”, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, flu vaccine for at risk clients and pregnant women. Along with the PHN, the CHWs made bite size video clips, targeting Travellers, on Covid 19 messages and posted them on OTM Facebook page. We delivered all this new and up to date information to clients in a Traveller specific way throughout the pandemic mainly by telephone outreach calls and by delivering the flyers through client’s

letter boxes. This indicates a positive result of our service delivery despite the crisis. However, unfortunately, the impact of Covid on the health service meant that Nuala was redeployed back into HSE public health nursing management services due to massive nurse shortages. She worked through the major Covid-19 issues and the Cyber Attack for a large part of 2021.

Public Health Nursing Interventions



Mental Health Department

Travelling to Wellbeing

Travelling to Wellbeing (T2WB) continues to offer a dedicated culturally appropriate, clinical, therapeutic, recovery focused mental health service for Travellers in Offaly. This service is provided by way of individual and group support, family support, crisis intervention, mental health recovery programs, advocacy and referral pathways to other services to Travellers throughout the County. Travelling to Wellbeing continues to work in partnership and co-production with a range of services, promoting and developing mental health training and local community mental health initiatives, while utilising the departments in OTM, Men's Health, Accommodation, Community Development and Primary Healthcare to address the needs of Travellers who engage with the service.

This year has again been challenging with the impact of Covid 19 restrictions continuing to affect our way of working. However, despite these challenges, the Travelling to Wellbeing team continued to provide an efficient, effective mental health service to our community.

2021 again saw an increase in Travellers engaging with the Travelling to Wellbeing Service. Unfortunately, our weekly peer support groups in Birr, Tullamore and Banagher could not happen during Covid restrictions, however, the Team remained busy behind the

scenes coming up with interesting ideas for activities when restrictions were lifted.

This year saw the exciting new educational initiative being brought to the Midlands region. The delivery of a Level 7 Community Development Diploma in Practice (with a focus on community well-being) for a group of 20 to 28 Travellers (men and women), over the age of 21, living in the Midlands (Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath).

The programme proposal is to be certified by NUI Galway, and delivered by NUI Galway and Community Action Network.

The Travelling to Wellbeing team were delighted to be invited to be part of the Steering Group for this programme. We have supported nine Travellers in Offaly to apply, interview and successfully be accepted on to the programme. The programme will commence in January 2022.

The Travelling to Wellbeing team continued to work in partnership with a range of local and national organisations. As part of our work with the National Traveller Mental Health Network we celebrated National Traveller Mental Health Day on the 8th October 2021 by attending an event in Knock. We were delighted to support 32 Travellers from Offaly to attend this occasion.

We also organised an event to mark World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10th 2021. Guest speakers included, National Traveller Counselling Service, HSE Traveller Health Unit, HSE Traveller Mental Health Service Coordinator CH03 and Frank Kavanagh, a Traveller man from Offaly.

We invited people to bring photos and mementoes of those they have lost to suicide and we lit a candle of remembrance at 8pm (worldwide time of lighting candle on this day).

The Team continued to upskill during 2021. We have moved to a secure online recording system in 2021 and the Team completed training in relation to the new system.

Our Peer Mental Health Support Worker, Pinky McInerney graduated from the six-month training programme to support her role in working with her community. The 'Minceir Mental Health Course- Mental Health in the Traveller Community' course seeks to empower members of the Traveller community to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to advocate on behalf of the community with regard to mental health issues. It seeks to introduce participants to current policy, legislation and guidelines on mental health, and support participants to develop an understanding of the lived experience of Travellers who experience mental health issues, as well as interventions based on recovery models of mental health. The course also addressed international perspectives and engaged with indigenous community and minority groups abroad for learning and exchange. Well done, Pinky.

We have also been delighted to pilot our own mental health programme this year with OTM workers. Working in partnership with local Travellers and the Travelling to Wellbeing Mental Health Team, with the support of Big Picture Consultancy, we have designed and developed and new mental health programme for Travellers; namely Minceirs Tairien. The purpose of the Traveller specific mental health process is to equip Travellers with the innate tools to manage their mental health and, subsequently, build their sense of self and self- esteem. The practice will evolve through interaction with the participants. The programme will be evidence informed and underpinned by the principles of social justice, community development, adult education and mental health recovery. It was piloted with OTM workers as part of our wellbeing in the workplace initiative.

In 2021 our Mental Health Social Worker supported two social work students on placement from University College Dublin and Maynooth University during a particularly challenging year. Our social worker practice teacher continues to strive to ensure that students not only meet academic standards but also demonstrate appropriate knowledge, skills, and values for professional practice during their time at OTM.

We are immensely proud of our Mental Health Coordinator, Karen Boylan, who graduated this year with First Class Honours in the Bachelor of Arts Applied Social Studies in Social Care Degree from The Technological University of the Shannon (TUS).

Offaly Travellers continue to be represented by Travelling to Wellbeing at the Irish Association of Social Workers, Women's Mental Health Network, National Traveller Mental Health Network, National Travellers Women's Forum, the National Traveller Counselling Service, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and the NUIG Midlands Steering Group.

Post from the OTM Facebook page to highlight the trip to Knock for the Second Annual National Traveller Mental Health Day



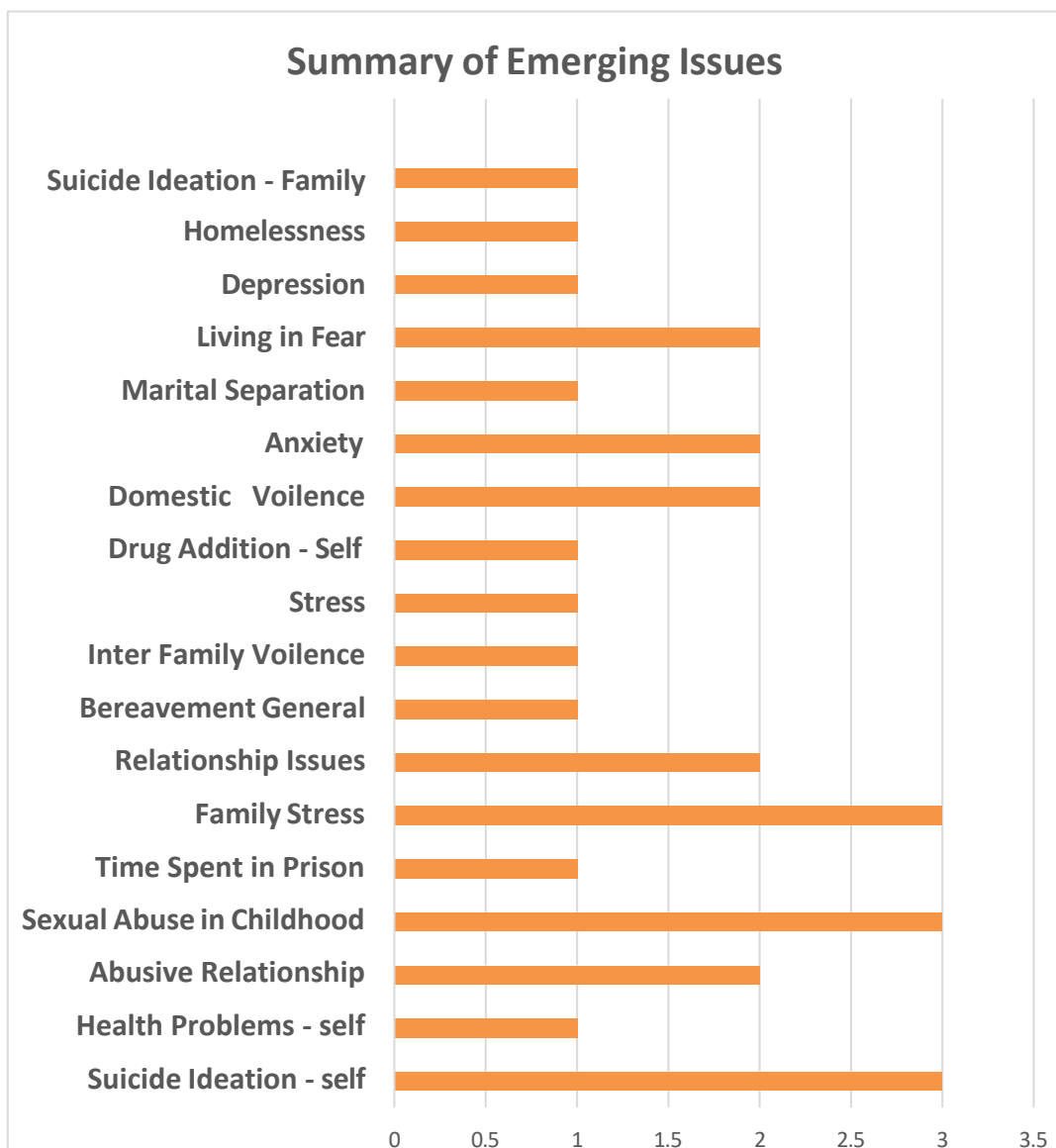
Offaly Traveller Counselling Service

2021 has been a very busy year for the Offaly Traveller Movement Counselling service. As we work with the most marginalised and disadvantaged community in the county, we ensure that our services and programmes are culturally appropriate, innovative and creative and fully engaged with by the local Traveller community. When a Traveller presents to our service it is not just with one issue, it's a multitude of complex issues that have escalated over many years due to a lack of engagement with other services. The issues that people present with include: Depression, Anxiety, Homelessness, Suicidal Ideation,

Domestic Violence, Living in Fear, Relationship Breakdown, Family Issues and Bereavement to name a few. Offaly Traveller Movement, with limited funding from TUSLA, continue to offer a culturally inclusive counselling service to individuals, families and children who are in crisis and require an immediate response to ensure that they are supported without delay and can continue to engage in order to improve their mental health and wellbeing. Working in partnership with the National Traveller Counselling Service we ensure that our counselling service in Offaly is culturally appropriate and in accordance to best practice. Our counsellor has an understanding of Traveller

lifestyle, culture, norms and traditions. This ensures that service users' culture is taken into account, respected and understood. It is now recognised internationally that it is crucial to take culture into account when providing a counselling service to members of a minority or other ethnic group, as the norms, values and traditions of that group will not be the same as the majority community and their experience will be very different.

Not to acknowledge this difference could reinforce the discrimination, inequality and lack of respect which the members of that group have experienced in wider society. The counselling service was available to all members of the Traveller community in two locations in the county on a bi-weekly basis, however, due to the impact of COVID 19 in 2021, the service was delivered remotely online or by phone to Travellers throughout the county.



Youth Department

Offaly Traveller Movement youth project offers informal, social, and educational support for young Travellers and a platform for youth development.

OTM youth project operates under the UBU Scheme of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The objectives of the activities are to respond to the needs of young Travellers in Offaly through the provision of culturally appropriate social outlet, and a safe space, for those from the ages of 10 and over.

Providing youth with a social and recreational outlet, OTM youth programmes engage young Travellers and empower them to actively participate in their community. Our work encompasses raising awareness and developing an understanding of the issues affecting young Travellers and increasing young people's self-esteem and confidence.

OTM Youth working in full compliance with the UBU, Your Place, Your Space National Framework, in accordance with the UBU Targeted youth service requirement. The scheme informs our work with Traveller young people under three specific development outcome areas which include: 1. Communication, 2. Confidence and Agency, and 3. Resilience and Determination.

In 2021 a total of 578 youth interventions were recorded with young people in Tullamore and Birr and drop-in clubs resumed in the Hazel

Hub. Some activities included art and crafts, music, capacity building games, one to ones, well-being, team building, orienteering, recreational and seasonal events, as well as providing advice, advocacy, educational support and liaising with schools and relevant agencies.

We continued to see similar challenges from Covid which slowly improved over time and with the periodic easing of public health restrictions. We maintained links with relevant youth services, schools, and educational institutions and provided one to one support and advice to young people. We continued to work with the education Welfare service, in Tusla, as a result of challenges retaining Traveller young people in school and addressing the issues around education that seem to have exacerbated for young Travellers since the start of the pandemic. Additionally, we worked collaboratively with various agencies and engaged with initiatives such as Jigsaw, Offaly Youth Arts council and College Connect.

Summer 2021 saw a welcome return of recreational trips after last year's absence and OTM Youth engaged in a full day of orienteering and team building activities at Lilliput Adventure Centre. A trip to Tayto Park was also enjoyed by young people in early August. It was a significantly beneficial platform for social interaction for young people, having been unable to come together and participate in activities as a result of covid restrictions.

Seasonal activities in 2021 also provided opportunities for peer support and social development.

A Halloween disco in October for young Travellers was well attended and enjoyed as was a Christmas event with a visit from Santa included. Both events took place in th4e Hazel hub.



Lots of fun activities for the young people at the Traveller Pride Event in Charleville Castle, Sept 21

In the run-up to Christmas, members of OTM Youth also participated in ice skating activities at Blanchardstown ice rink in Dublin. Members of the youth project in Birr were also included in this trip which finished up the year nicely.

Promotion of Traveller Pride & Ethnicity

Traveller Pride Event

September 25th 2021 saw a return to our much loved Traveller Pride event at Charleville Castle. It was a wonderful and needed gathering of the community to showcase Traveller culture and enjoy time together. There was lots for kids to do with face painting, concert, live animal farm and equally for the adults with a BBQ, traditional games, recreation of a camp etc. The OTM staff team worked hard to ensure that all the visitors had a great experience.

Traveller Mental Health Day

For Traveller mental health day, on 7th October 2021, OTM partnered with LOETB and their Inclusion Week to host an event in solidarity with Travellers mental health and suicide. The event saw the planting of a Hazel tree at the Mountmellick Further Education and Training Centre. LOETB are the first ETB to plant a Hazel tree to mark this event. The ceremony included speeches from Sandra McDonagh, OTM Managing Director and Joe Cunningham, LOETB CEO. Also, Traveller poetry read by members of the Laois Traveller primary healthcare programme and beautiful singing by Analisha Ward. The plaque which accompanies the Hazel tree was designed and made by 3 Traveller students who attend Mountmellick FET centre and the catering for the event was done by the hospitality students there. The event was very well attended by local Travellers and by LOETB staff and students. Sandra, in her speech, remembered all the Traveller lives lost to suicide and there was a message outlining the need for urgent government support for Traveller mental health and for hope for the future. Sandra also explained the significance of the Hazel tree, whose branches were used to make the wattles for the tents Travellers slept in years ago, and today the Hazel tree symbolises Traveller history, culture and resilience.



OUR

SUPPORT

OFFALY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

Thanks to Funders

The resources to support the OTM's work come from a number of sources, including grants received for specific projects, support from a variety of charitable trusts and organisations, government departments and state bodies, and gifts and donations from individual supporters.

The OTM is deeply grateful to all our funders who have shown their commitment of greater respect and equality for members of the Traveller community in Offaly. This funding enables us to provide vital services and support within the community and to effect and drive change.

The OTM is committed to building a movement for progressive action for greater equality and respect for members of the Traveller community in Offaly and our supporters have never been more important to us. In 2021, we are very proud to have welcomed more supporters than ever before. The growing OTM family not only generously supported our work through donations and grants, but also made OTM a stronger voice championing greater equality and respect for Travellers in Offaly by participating in research and events, signing petitions and protesting alongside us.

To our supporters – you are the heart of the OTM, and we are so grateful to campaign alongside you, particularly during such a difficult year.



OUR

FINANCES

OFFALY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

Financial Report 2021

TULLAMORE TRAVELLER MOVEMENT, TRADING AS OFFALY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

(FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021)

	2021 €	2020 €
Income	641,909	520,280
Expenditure		
NTP	101,060	98,220
Youth DCEDIY/LOETB	49,822	47,359
Health Service Executive	225,381	215,349
Health Service Executive - Men's Shed	7,426	9,279
Health Service Executive - Health Networks	720	759
Health Service Executive - TTM THU	6,542	1,411
T2WB	68,729	83,392
TUSLA	3,119	7,770
Traveller Pride Week	2,504	2,000
Lotto Grant	3,300	-
General Expenses	17,449	28,399
HSE Mediation	2,214	-
HSE - Covid Emergency Response Team	4,464	-
HSE - Lotto Grant	4,900	-
Community Foundation - OTM Goes Digital	5,000	-
HSE CYPSC	-	2,000
Covid 19 National Traveller Helpline	516	993
Offaly County Council Grant Expenditure	750	1,751
LTI	110,948	5,732
OCC - Community emergency Relief	959	1,000
The Community Foundation	-	4,998
The Community Foundation - Beging Together Fund	-	2,850
LOETB	-	1,745
Youth Arts	-	1,795

HSE - Back to Work Funding	-	21,42
HSE - Covid 19 Hygiene Packs	775	4,995
LOETB - Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage	4,995	-
UCD Social Worker	295	-
Horse Project Activities	1,827	-
NTP Surplus Funding	2,000	-
	<u>625,695</u>	<u>544,260</u>
Surplus/Deficit of Income over Expenditure	<u>16,214</u>	<u>(23,980)</u>

TULLAMORE TRAVELLER MOVEMENT, TRADING AS OFFALY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

INCOME BREAKDOWN

(FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021)

	2021
	€
NTP	100,125
Youth DCEDIY/LOETB	49,823
Health Service Executive	227,485
HSE Mental Health-T2WB	68,729
HSE - THU	6,542
HSE - Mediation	2,214
HSE - Covid Emergency Response Team	4,464
HSE - Men's Shed	3,926
HSE - Men's Shed Rent	3,500
HSE - Lotto Grant	4,900
TUSLA	3,119
Tusla - Cultural Awareness	350
Traveller Pride Week	2,500
National Traveller Helpline	516
General Income	26,354
Lotto Grants	3,300
Miscellaneous Grants	9,384
Offaly County Council Grants	750
Offaly Local Community Development Committee	975
LOETB - MAEDF 2021 Grant to Organisation	4,995
LTI	110,958
Community Foundation - OTM Goes Digital	5,000
NTP - Surplus Funding	2,000
Total	<u>641,909</u>

