



Annual Report 2024

Offaly Traveller Movement

*"We carry our culture in our bones,
Not in the permission of others"*

-Dee Cooper



Offaly Traveller Movement, CLG.,
T/A Tullamore Travellers Movement,
Harbour St., Tullamore, Co. Offaly, R35 Y470
T: 057 93 52438 / 057 93 22786
www.otm.ie

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Message from the Chair

As Chairperson of the Offaly Traveller Movement, I am honoured to present this message as part of our 2024 Annual Report. This year, like many before it, has highlighted the strength, resilience, and determination of the Traveller community and the ongoing importance of OTM's role in supporting that journey.

Our work continues to be guided by the belief that change must be community-led and culturally grounded. Across all areas of our organisation — from health and education to youth development, housing advocacy, and social work — we are seeing the long-term impact of sustained, culturally appropriate services that respond directly to Traveller needs.

The wide range of programmes offered by OTM reflect the complexity of challenges that the Traveller community faces — but also the creativity and capacity within that same community to find solutions, build leadership, and support one another. Whether it is through outreach, advocacy, group-based work, or one-to-one supports, every part of OTM's work aims to strengthen Traveller voices and advance equality.

In 2024, OTM continued to grow and evolve while holding fast to its core values. The organisation has taken important steps toward regional collaboration, service expansion, and long-term sustainability — all of which would not be possible without the commitment of our staff team, the direction of our CEO, and the trust of the community.

I also want to acknowledge the vital role of our Board of Directors, who continue to provide strong governance, reflect the diversity of the community we serve, and ensure that we remain accountable, transparent, and responsive.

To all who have contributed to OTM's work this year — thank you. Together, we are building a more inclusive future, where Traveller identity is recognised, rights are respected, and opportunities are accessible to all.

Mary Rose Kerrigan

Chairperson

Offaly Traveller Movement

CEO Forward

As Chief Executive Officer of the Offaly Traveller Movement, I am proud to present our 2024 Annual Report — a record of a year defined by resilience, innovation, and meaningful progress in advancing Traveller rights, wellbeing, and inclusion.

This past year, our organisation continued to deliver an ambitious and expanding range of culturally appropriate services in health, education, youth, mental health, accommodation, community development and advocacy. As we reflect on 2024, we do so with deep gratitude to the Traveller community, who remain at the centre of all we do, and with growing confidence in our ability to adapt and lead during changing times.

A key feature of this year has been our focus on collaborative growth and regional impact. Preparations are now well underway to host the Longford Primary Health Care team in 2025, allowing us to extend our reach and support Traveller communities in neighbouring counties through shared learning, infrastructure, and values-driven leadership.

We also saw our community development work deepen through the growth of the Traveller Men's Shed, and Women's Shed, and the continuation of the Horse Project — each initiative rooted in culture, identity, and belonging. Our strengthened connection with St. Michael's Athletic Club has broadened opportunities for Traveller men to take part in athletics and community-based sport, reinforcing the importance of health, inclusion, and visibility.

Across our Youth Services, we have delivered targeted supports through both UBU and TYESI programmes, creating safe, developmental spaces for young Travellers. Our Pre-Apprenticeship Programme, now recognised nationally, continues to support learners who face complex barriers, providing them with a culturally appropriate and encouraging path into education and training.

Our Mental Health and Social Work service has delivered therapeutic supports that respond directly to the experiences and needs of the Traveller community. Alongside this, our Education and Accommodation teams have worked to challenge the systemic inequalities many families face in accessing schooling and secure housing.

Internally, we are building a more sustainable and accountable organisation. Our Finance Team has ensured strong financial stewardship, compliance, and transparency — allowing us to remain focused on our mission while meeting the standards expected of us by both the community and funders.

This year also saw us acquire a new premises at Columcille/Harbour Street, creating the potential for an

expanded community space that reflects the full scale of our ambition. We are actively exploring funding opportunities to develop this space into a modern, inclusive hub for Traveller-led services.

Looking ahead, we remain rooted in our values — justice, equity, community voice, and collective action. Travellers continue to face significant structural challenges, but there is strength in unity and power in community-led solutions. We are proud of what has been achieved, and we are committed to sustaining that progress into 2025 and beyond.

To the staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, funders, and — most importantly — the Traveller individuals and families we work with: thank you for your continued trust and belief in our work. This is your movement, and its future is being shaped by your leadership.

Sandra McDonagh

Chief Executive Officer

Offaly Traveller Movement



“Our Traveller Community is an integral part of our society for over a millennium, with their own distinct identity – a people within our people...It is a historic day for our Travellers and a proud day for Ireland”

Taoiseach Enda Kenny

1st March 2017 – Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic group



OTM – A Human Rights Organisation

Offaly Traveller Movement (OTM) evolved from a grassroots mobilisation advocating for the needs of the Traveller community in Tullamore, which started back in 1991. In 1995, the organisation was registered with the Companies Registration Office (when it was previously known as Tullamore Traveller Movement Ltd). It was established by Travellers and members of the settled community with the aim of achieving equality and recognition for Travellers as a uniquely marginalised minority ethnic group. Ever since, OTM has continuously worked to achieve equality and social justice for Travellers both nationally and locally in county Offaly in partnership with the wider community. In 2024 OTM expanded it's work into Laois and Longford.

Today, Offaly Traveller Movement is a Traveller led community development organisation working to achieve full equality for the Traveller community throughout County Offaly and beyond. With a team, in 2024, of 28 staff made up of Travellers and non-Travellers we offer programmes and services in health promotion, mental health, accommodation, youth, and education to advance the health and welfare of Travellers and to encourage active participation in society. We provide opportunities for Travellers to develop their skills and knowledge and working in partnership to build the community's and service providers capacity to meet the needs of and improve outcomes for Travellers. We support Travellers to reach their full potential and develop initiatives to tackle poverty, social exclusion, disadvantage, and discrimination. OTM also contributes to the development of local and national policy for positive outcomes in the lives of Travellers.

Our Vision

Offaly Traveller Movement believes in a vision where all Travellers are respected, involved and equal members of Irish society and empowered to be their best selves to build a strong, inclusive community.



2024 Board of Directors

OTM's governance structure is governed by its constitution, aligned with the Companies Act 2014. The board, comprising of experienced local Travellers and professionals from diverse sectors, oversees strategic direction and governance matters. Led by Managing Director, Sandra McDonagh, the Senior Management Team collaborates closely with the board to execute strategic initiatives.

The Offaly Traveller Movement held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on the 18th of June 2024 at the Hazel Hub, Tullamore. The meeting was chaired by Vice Chairperson Mary Rose Kerrigan, with apologies from Chairperson Thomas McDonagh. A quorum was confirmed, and a wide range of attendees were present, including Board members, staff, volunteers, and community representatives.

The minutes of the 2023 AGM were read and approved. The 2023 audited financial accounts were presented by Damien Phelan (Auditor) and accepted by the Board. It was agreed that Damien Phelan would remain as auditor for the coming year.

Staff presented a comprehensive overview of Offaly Traveller Movement's activities during 2023, highlighting key developments across health, mental health, community development, men's and women's initiatives, education and training, accommodation advocacy, and youth engagement.

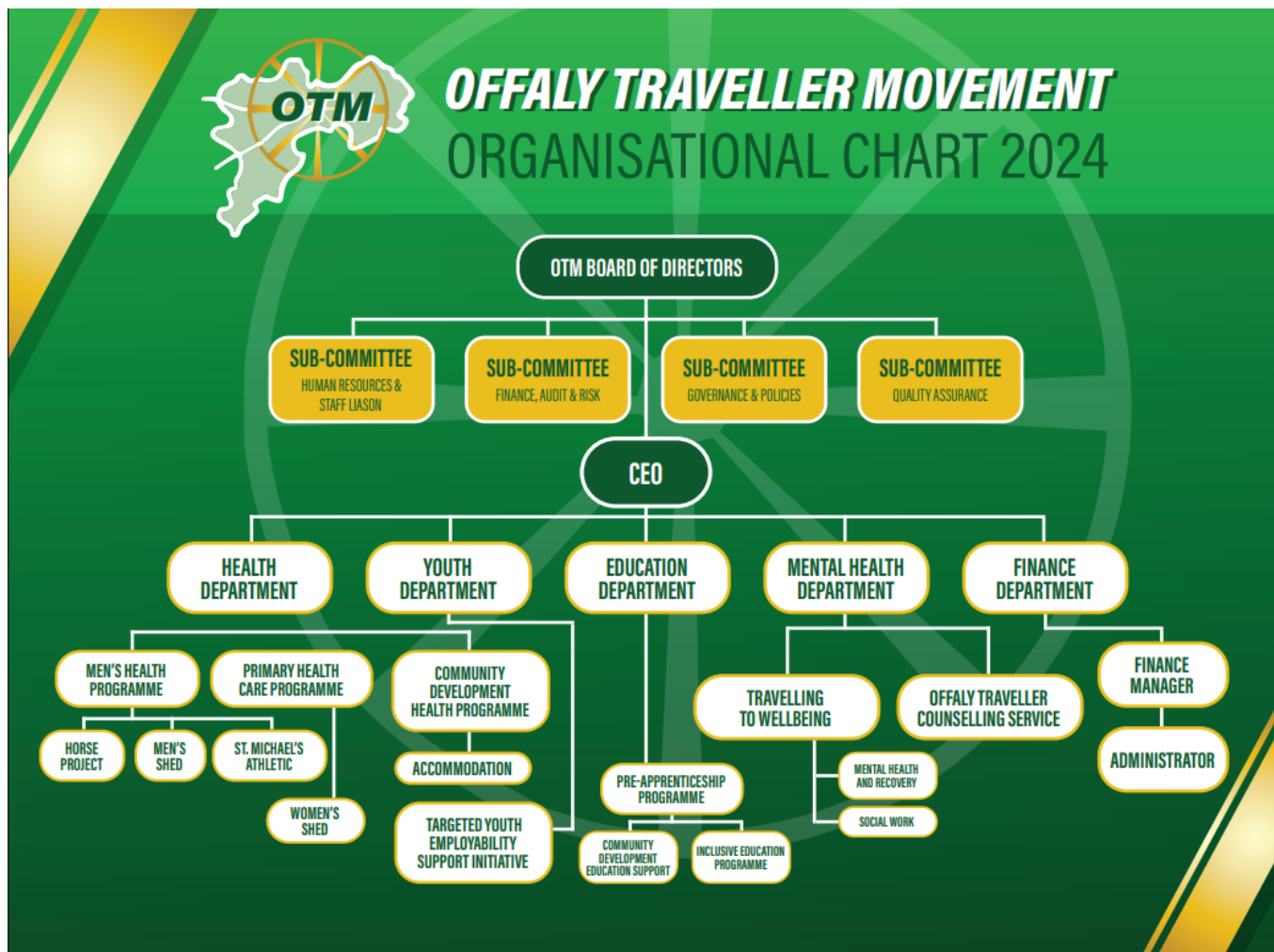
As part of the Board of Management rotation, Deirdre Arnold and Martina McDonagh stepped down and were re-elected. Elizabeth Doyle was welcomed as a new Board member.

The AGM concluded with expressions of thanks from the Vice Chairperson and the Managing Director, acknowledging the ongoing commitment of staff, the Board, and the community.

A full copy of the AGM minutes is available upon request.

Members of the OTM Board of Directors 2024

NAME	POSITION
Lilly Ward	Trustee
Mary Rose Kerrigan	Chairperson, Trustee
Christopher McDonagh	Treasurer, Trustee
Deirdre Arnold	Vice-chairperson, Trustee
Ann Sheeran	Trustee
John Joyce	Secretary, Trustee
Julianne Doorley	Trustee
Lilly Ward	Trustee



Staff Profiles

EXECUTIVE

Sandra McDonagh – Chief Executive Officer

Sandra McDonagh is the CEO 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 published 'Family Based Interventions: Advancing Recovery for the Traveller Community in Ireland' in the Irish Social Worker Journal and is 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 journal of 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 (BSocSc). 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.



Congratulations to our Leona McDonagh on completing her Mediation Training. Huge congrats to all the graduates, Jan 24.

Celine McInerney – Community Health Worker

Celine is a member of the Traveller community and 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 worked as the LTI Assistant Coordinator for most of 2023 (& Interim Coordinator in 2022). Celine also achieved a Level 5 in Intercultural studies and was successful in gaining a Level 7 in Community Development and Practise with NUIG Galway. Celine returned to the Primary Health Care team in December and

we wish her every success with her post.

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.

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.

Thomas McDonagh - Community Health Worker & Men's Shed Facilitator

A founding member of Offaly Traveller Movement in 1996, Thomas has dedicated over 21 years to the organisation, working across Accommodation, Youth, Primary Health Care, and Men's Shed programmes. He has served as Acting OTM Coordinator, Chairperson, and Board member, and represented the community for many years on the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. A University College Cork graduate in Community Development (2003) and a qualified mediator, Thomas brings a wealth of experience, leadership, and commitment to his role.

Leslie Jones – Horse Project Coordinator

Leslie joined OTM in 2011 and has been instrumental in engaging with Traveller men, the most marginalised 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 18 years in Cheshire Ireland.

MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT – TRAVELLING TO WELLBEING

Karen Boylan – Mental Health Coordinator

Karen Boylan joined the OTM in April 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 that have enhanced her knowledge and progressed her career. The latest Training course was Mincears Mental Health course, which was an online course delivered nationwide to Travellers in professional roles, the course drew from international best practices of mental health initiatives to indigenous people.

Aislinn Daly – Mental Health Social Worker

Aislinn Daly joined Offaly Traveller Movement in June 2022 as the new social worker working as part of the Travelling to Wellbeing programme. Aislinn has a BA Social Care Practice degree from Athlone Institute of Technology and a MA in Social Work from University of Ireland Maynooth. Aislinn has previous experience in Child Protection, Community Development/Family Support, Youth Advocacy and Domestic Violence. She is passionate about her work; advocating for human rights and promoting social justice and equality.

Gearoid O’Byrne – Social Worker

Gearoid O’Byrne is a highly motivated social worker with a Master’s degree in Social Work from Trinity College Dublin and a Master’s in Forensic Psychology. His extensive experience includes mental health, forensic settings, police training and investigations in the UK, and social care with individuals on the autism spectrum.

He brings strong research and assessment skills, with practical experience liaising with psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, GPs, and other professionals, alongside his social work career. His broad background and calm, empathetic approach make him a valued team member focused on positive client outcomes.

Paul McCann – Psychotherapist and Counsellor

Paul McCann, a psychotherapist and counsellor, joined OTM in 2023. With a career in the mental health sector spanning from 2008, Paul brings extensive experience in trauma and youth counselling. He has worked with diverse ethnic and minority groups, advocating for inclusion, diversity, and equality in service development and provision. An active board member of several community groups, Paul is dedicated to lifelong learning and ongoing professional development.

William McDonagh Peer Mental Health Worker



William McDonagh brings both professional expertise and lived experience to his role as Mental Health Support Worker. He holds a double major degree in Social Science and has developed strong experience in mental health and social care, working closely with individuals through key working and group facilitation. His work focuses on supporting people with complex needs, updating and implementing behaviour and personal support plans, and ensuring best practice in line with relevant policies and protocols.

William began his journey with Offaly Traveller Movement in 2019 as a CE scheme receptionist and has since progressed both academically and professionally, building strong networks across the sector. As a member of the Traveller community, he brings valuable cultural insight and a deep personal commitment to addressing the mental health crisis within the Traveller community. His lived experience, combined with his academic background and frontline experience, makes him a passionate and informed

advocate for change.

YOUTH DEPARTMENT

Monica Daly – Youth Team Lead

Monica Daly is a committed and passionate Youth Team Lead, dedicated to empowering young Travellers across County Offaly. She brings extensive hands-on experience working with disadvantaged young people and their families, gained through her role with YAP Ireland, where she supports individuals in identifying their strengths and developing effective coping strategies.

With several years as a Special Needs Assistant in primary schools, Monica has a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by children with special educational needs. She is skilled in creating inclusive, nurturing environments that encourage growth and learning for all children.

Monica's commitment to community development is evident in her active involvement in initiatives such as the establishment of Tullamore Educate Together National School and ongoing volunteer work at local cultural hubs including Charleville Castle and Esker Arts Centre. She is known for her ability to build trusting relationships, maintain confidentiality, and advocate effectively on behalf of young people and their families.

Her approach combines empathy, creativity, and strong organisational skills, which enable her to lead youth programmes that foster social inclusion, promote wellbeing, and provide meaningful opportunities for young Travellers to thrive.

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.

Mary Ward – Peer Youth Worker

Mary Ward is a passionate and skilled Peer Youth Worker at OTM since November 2021. With a background in mediation and a QQI Level 5 in Art & Design, Mary brings a creative and empathetic approach to her work. Previously, she excelled as an Afterschool Assistant and Mediator, demonstrating her dedication to supporting young people. Mary's interests in music, drama, arts, and crafts enrich her interactions and programs. Recently completing a Level 7 Diploma in Community Development with NUIG, Mary is committed to empowering communities and fostering positive change.

Annalisha Ward – Peer Youth Worker

Annalisha Ward is a young Traveller and passionate Peer Youth Worker who brings enthusiasm, creativity, and a genuine connection to the Traveller community. With experience in roles that involved organisation, communication, and working with children, Annalisha has developed strong skills in time management, teamwork, and critical thinking.

A recent Leaving Certificate graduate from Sacred Heart Secondary School, she is actively involved in school activities including choir, soccer, and rugby. Annalisha's friendly and outgoing nature, combined with her patience and dedication, make her a positive role model and an effective peer supporter. She is committed to learning and growing in her role to support young Travellers in their personal development.

Marie McDonagh – TYESI Youth Worker

Marie McDonagh is a dedicated and motivated Youth Worker with extensive experience supporting Traveller families and young people. She has a strong background in community engagement, youth programme delivery, and family support, with a focus on culturally appropriate services for the Traveller community.

Her roles have included co-delivering Parent Plus programmes, building relationships between Traveller families and mainstream services, and supporting women and children in vulnerable situations. Marie has also been actively involved in voluntary youth work, designing and implementing youth initiatives that foster positive connections with young Travellers and their families.

Her previous experience in customer service and care work has developed her excellent communication, organisational, and supervisory skills. Marie holds qualifications in childcare and children's welfare, including a Fetac Level 5 in Childcare and Children's First training, and is committed to ongoing professional development.

LOCAL TRAINING INITIATIVE

Lorna Middleton – LTI Coordinator

Lorna was appointed LTI Coordinator in March 2023. A qualified Secondary school teacher with an Honours Degree in Education and Business and a Master's Degree in Leadership and Pastoral Care. Adding a Level 6 Certificate in Technology Enhanced Learning in 2021 to keep up to date with new teaching trends. Lorna has previously worked on other Local Training Initiatives in Mountrath, Mountmellick and Portlaoise. She brings with her a wealth of experience of running LTI's.

Jackie Foy – LTI Assistant Coordinator

Jackie Foy joined OTM in December 2023 as the LTI Assistant Coordinator. Jackie has over 10 years' experience as a training and course facilitator in many areas including Beauty Therapy. Her role within OTM is facilitating learning in areas such as Personal Care and Presentation, Health and Fitness and also Nutrition and Healthy Options. Jackie holds a Level 6 Train the Trainer qualification.

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. Ian was a past student on our Level 3 Employment Skills course and recently obtained a Level 4 in Computers this year.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION 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.

Bridget McInerney – Office Administrator

Bridget McInerney has been a dedicated member of the Offaly Traveller Movement since 2010, specialising in administrative support and general office duties. She has contributed significantly to the Traveller Health Network and has served on the Board of Directors. Bridget holds a Degree in Public Management and recently completed a Diploma at NUIG focused on community development. Passionate about improving the lives of Travellers, she aims to continue gaining experience and working closely with her community.

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.

John Joe McDonagh – Reception

JohnJoe McDonagh joined Offaly Traveller Movement in March 2024 through a CE Scheme. He works as Receptionist and provides valuable support to the Finance Manager. With a keen interest in finance, JohnJoe has completed OTM's first LTI programme and is planning to return to part-time education to develop his skills further and advance within the finance department.

In 2024, We also said goodbye to some staff who had a hugely positive impact on us all. These include; Elizabeth Rattigan, Elizabeth Doyle, Geraldine Ward, Ellen McDermott, John McDonagh, Saranne Lovett & Siobhan Hennigan

A fond farewell and very best wishes to all.



Student Placements in 2024

In 2024, Offaly Traveller Movement (OTM) continued its strong commitment to supporting the next generation of social care, mental health, and community development professionals through our student placement programme. We hosted four students on placement throughout the year from a range of academic institutions and disciplines. These included:

- Technological University of the Shannon (TUS), Athlone – Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies in Social Care
- Moate Business College – Applied Social Studies
- Maynooth University – Masters in Social Work
- PCI College – BSc (Hons) in Counselling & Psychotherapy

Each student brought a unique perspective and energy to their placement, contributing meaningfully to the work of OTM while gaining valuable real-world experience in culturally inclusive, community-based practice. Placements were supervised by experienced staff and tailored to align with the learning goals of each student, offering exposure to areas such as mental health supports, community development, youth work, and advocacy with the Traveller community.

At OTM, we view student placements as a two-way learning process. While students develop their professional skills, we benefit from their fresh ideas, enthusiasm, and insights. We pride ourselves on offering placements that are grounded in practice, responsive to community needs, and shaped by a rights-based and anti-racist approach.

We welcome students from a wide variety of third-level institutions and disciplines across Ireland, and we are committed to providing high-quality learning environments that prepare future professionals to work in inclusive, community-led settings. Our placement programme also plays a key role in increasing awareness and understanding of the Traveller community among emerging practitioners.

We look forward to continuing this important work in 2025 and beyond.

Our Work 2024

Offaly Traveller Movement

OTM - Number of Interventions with Travellers in 2024



1,791
Social Work



8,900
Primary Health Care
Programme for Travellers



3,291
Youth work



564
Mens Shed



700+
OTM's Public Events



227
Travelling to Wellbeing
Counselling Service



1,405
Mens Health & Soccer



460
Accommodation



411
Horse Project



745
Education Programmes



555
Women's Shed

Health Department

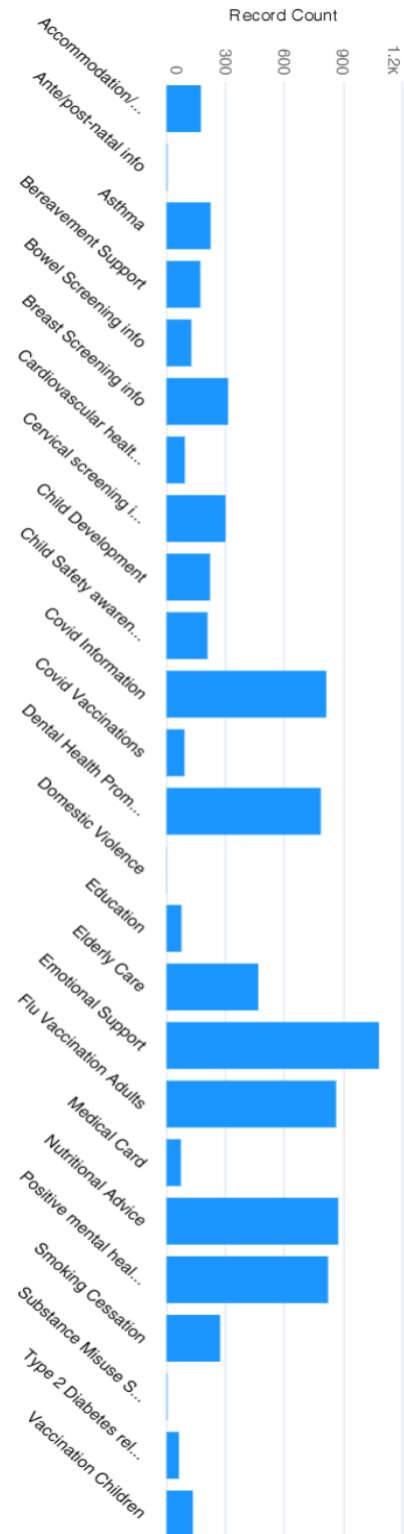
Primary Health Care Programme (PHCP)

2024 was a dynamic and eventful year for the Primary Health Care Programme (PHCP), full of outreach work, events, training, development projects and national engagement with the Traveller community across the Midlands. The PHCP team, which includes 7 part-time Community Health Workers (CHWs), continued their commitment to delivering culturally appropriate and relevant health information to Traveller families, with outreach spanning to Tullamore, Birr, Banagher and further afield.

A wide range of health topics were shared with the community, including healthy eating, mental health, physical fitness, cervical screening, drug and alcohol awareness, fostering services and intercultural education. The team also engaged with academic institutions and national Traveller organisations to ensure that the information being provided was accurate and tailored to the needs of the Traveller community.

The CHWs worked closely with the Health Manager throughout the year to design and deliver health promotion activities and support programmes. Some of these include the following:

- Early in the year, planning was undertaken for a **12-week programme for the Women's Sheds in Tullamore and Birr, while a new Women's Shed was established in Banagher**, meeting weekly on Fridays. Activities across the three sheds included St. Brigid's Cross making, rosary bead making, health and beauty sessions, flower arranging, personal development courses, Easter and Christmas decoration making and healthy eating and fitness programmes.
- In collaboration with **TUSLA**, the sheds also hosted **fostering information sessions**.
- A particularly meaningful addition in 2024 was the Personal **Doll Making project**, where women created dolls that represented family members, each with a unique story. These dolls were later featured in **public exhibitions in Tullamore Library and TUS Athlone** and were



ultimately donated to the National Museum of Ireland. Further information in section below.

- Physical health was a strong focus in 2024. The PHCP facilitated multiple health initiatives including an 8-week healthy eating programme and an intensive **12-week gym programme run in collaboration with Get Fit Gym**. The CHWs also coordinated a “Get Fit” campaign which offered bi-weekly classes in various formats such as boxercise, CrossFit and step workouts.
- **Baby massage** sessions were delivered in Banagher for new mothers and their babies, reinforcing the PHCP’s commitment to early years development and maternal support.
- **Food poverty** remained a significant concern. Throughout the year, Tullamore Social Services (CLG) donated food which the PHCP team packed into parcels and delivered to 42 of the most vulnerable Traveller families on three occasions. This support was deeply appreciated in the community.

The PHCP team attended and participated in a wide range of national and regional events, including the NTWF Annual Day in Cork, the Kildare Traveller Project AGM, the National Traveller Pride events in Athy and Smithfield, and the 30-year celebration of the Primary Health Care Programme in Croke Park. They also attended the launch of the “*Handback the Shame*” report in UCD and the Traveller Mediation Service’s “*Traveller Together Against Conflict*” event in Dublin Castle.



OTM CHWs attend the launch of National Traveller MABs 'Working Entitlements Guide for CHWs'. The purpose of the guide is to support the decision making of Travellers returning to work, taking on additional hours etc. 14th may 2024

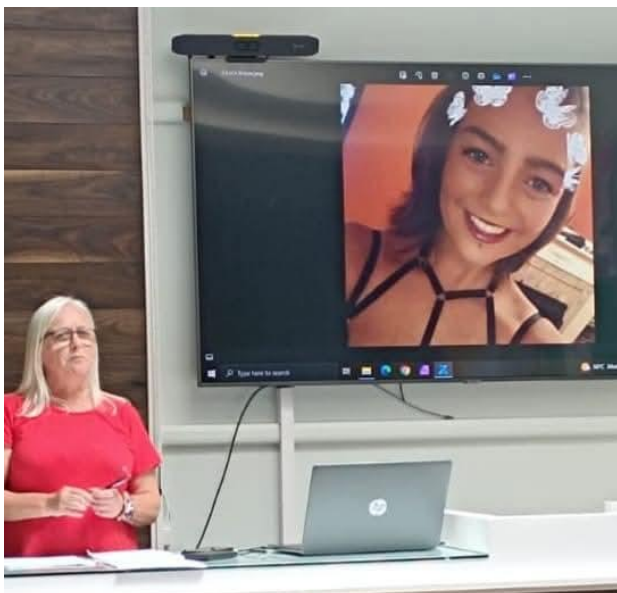
Education was another priority area. The team was actively involved in intercultural training both as participants and facilitators. The Health Manager delivered cultural awareness sessions in the Sacred Heart School in Tullamore and at the LOETB Inclusion Week, alongside delivering awareness training to local service providers. Meetings were also held with Education Liaison Officers to address barriers faced by young Travellers in accessing education. The PHCP continued its collaboration with Rethink Ireland on the afterschool initiative and explored new funding opportunities through equality in education programmes.

In terms of advocacy and consultation, the PHCP contributed to the Pavee Point led Traveller accommodation surveys and attended strategy and planning meetings related to Traveller education, health, and inclusion. Notably, the team engaged in a consultation on heritage with the National Traveller Women's Forum and contributed to planning workshops that aimed to highlight the cultural importance of community traditions.

Social and spiritual supports remained integral to the programme. The annual pilgrimage to Lourdes was once again a highlight of the year for many Traveller families. The team participated in Traveller Pride week with events at the Hazel Hub, which featured bread making, flower arranging, and a youth exhibition in Esker Arts Centre.

A significant interagency effort was also visible throughout 2024. The PHCP worked closely with a wide array of organisations including ODVSS, LOETB, Pavee Point, NTWF, Talking Buddies, Traveller Counselling Services, Sacred Heart School, Tullamore Youth Project, Tullamore Social Services, Arden View Community Resource Centre, Offaly County Council, the Fire Safety Officer, and others. This collaboration helped provide a holistic and coordinated response to the needs of the Traveller community.

Training was a continuous part of the PHCP team's development, with the team undertaking GDPR training, drug and alcohol taskforce sessions, family conflict training, and further developing their intercultural awareness through Level 6 LOETB programmes. They also attended national meetings such as the National Traveller Partnership gathering and CH08 THU regional health meetings. To conclude the year, the Health Manager and CHWs participated in the Minceirs Whiden 20th Anniversary celebration, attended political education and voter engagement sessions and took part in the NTWF's trip to Leinster House along with women from the sheds. The programme officially closed for the year at the start of December with outreach continuing until the Christmas break.



Jackie Fox, mother of Nicole (Coco) speaks to the staff of OTM about Coco's law & her campaign to bring about change to the Irish law in relation to online bullying & harassment. May'24



Oct'24 – OTM & team from Mater Misericordiae University Hospital Dublin & St Vincent's University Hospital Dublin, at seminar on 'signs & symptoms of 5 gynaecological cancers & what can you do to reduce your risk', Court Hotel, Tullamore

Threading Needles, Telling Stories Dolls Project

In 2024, the Threading Needles, Telling Stories Dolls Project was brought to life through the generous support of *Creative Ireland and Offaly County Council's Creative Communities Grant scheme*. Led by visual artist and dollmaker Teresa Doyle, this inspiring textile project became a powerful creative journey for the women of the Hazel Hub Chatters & Matters Group.

The project offered the women a unique opportunity to engage deeply with textile arts while exploring and sharing their own stories. Each participant chose the inspiration for their doll, deciding whom or what their creation would represent. Over the course of the project, fourteen distinctive dolls were lovingly crafted, each embedded with personal history and meaning. While most participants were familiar with sewing, the project introduced everyone to new stitching techniques and the reasons behind the variety of stitches used in textile art. The creative process extended beyond sewing — it involved gathering meaningful personal items such as jewellery, earrings,



holy medals, and fabric swatches that held significant emotional connection. As the dolls evolved, so did the women's confidence and storytelling abilities.

An important aspect of the project was the thoughtful reflection on the stories connected to each doll. These stories were carefully recorded with the assistance of a third-level student on placement, who typed and printed the narratives, making the process more accessible and empowering for the participants.

The project culminated during Traveller Pride Week in May 2024, when the dolls and their stories were exhibited at the group's centre. The event was met with admiration and pride — participants were delighted by the quality and impact of their work, while visitors, young and old alike, were captivated by the rich heritage and lived experiences shared through the dolls.

Following this, the exhibition was proudly showcased at Tullamore Library throughout August during National Heritage Week, providing a wider platform for the stories and creativity of the Hazel Hub

Chatters & Matters Group.

Though the formal delivery of Threading Needles, Telling Stories has concluded, the dolls have taken on a new life as educational tools and tangible links to the women's histories. They represent something



precious to be shared, celebrated, and passed down to future generations — a foundation for continued storytelling and cultural connection.

As an added highlight, the Chatters & Matters Group were invited to visit The Technological University of The Shannon during Connect & Engage Week 2024, further enriching their creative and learning experience.

This project has been a truly transformative journey, fostering creativity, confidence, and community among the women involved, and creating a lasting legacy of stories told through the art of dollmaking.

Mens Health Programme

In 2024, the Offaly Traveller Movement's Men's Community Development Programme continued to make remarkable progress in promoting mental health, fostering social integration, and enhancing economic opportunities for Traveller men. Our holistic approach, combining sport, cultural engagement, skills development, and wellbeing workshops, has empowered individuals and strengthened community connections across Offaly.

Community Engagement and Integration

Through a diverse range of team-building activities and our vibrant soccer programme, we have created vital platforms that bring together Traveller and settled communities. These inclusive events have played a crucial role in breaking down stereotypes, encouraging dialogue, and building mutual respect. By facilitating these connections, the programme has actively contributed to fostering social cohesion and reducing instances of marginalisation and discrimination.

Conflict Awareness Workshop

In 2024, we hosted an impactful Conflict Awareness Workshop designed to explore the root causes of conflict and its profound effects on mental health and community relationships. Attended by young Traveller men from different families, this workshop provided a safe, respectful environment for open discussion. Participants developed valuable conflict resolution skills, improved communication

techniques, and a deeper understanding of emotional wellbeing. The workshop has laid the groundwork for healthier interactions within families and the wider community, promoting peace and harmony.

Wagon Restoration Project

The Wagon Project stood out as a flagship cultural initiative, engaging young Travellers in the restoration of a traditional barrel-top wagon over a dedicated three-month period. Meeting weekly, participants connected with their rich cultural heritage while learning practical craftsmanship skills such as woodworking, painting, and restoration techniques. The project fostered pride in identity, teamwork, and a sense of accomplishment. Beyond skill development, this initiative has served as a powerful tool to engage young men positively, keeping them connected to their roots while encouraging personal growth.

Mental Health Workshop

A specially tailored Mental Health Workshop was delivered to a group of 12 men from the soccer programme by the Offaly Traveller Movement's Mental Health Coordinator. This session focused on raising awareness around mental wellbeing, equipping participants with practical coping strategies, self-care techniques, and information on accessing local support services. The workshop's success was reflected in the participants' increased openness to discussing mental health and their willingness to seek help, marking an important step toward breaking down stigma within the community.

Mens Soccer Team – St Michaels Athletic



St Michael's Athletic Soccer Team

Our soccer team, St. Michael's Athletic, celebrated a major achievement in 2024 by winning the **Combined Counties Football League Division 3 Plate**. This victory symbolises not only athletic excellence but also the resilience, dedication, and team spirit cultivated through our community programmes. The success of the team has been a source of immense pride, inspiring young men and reinforcing the positive impact of structured, supportive sports activities in building confidence and community identity.

Through regular training sessions and competitive matches, St. Michaels Athletic promotes a strong sense of identity, teamwork, and community leadership. It has empowered the young Traveller men involved, allowing them build lasting friendships, gain confidence, and take on positive roles within their community. Coaches Frank Kavanagh and John Rattigan play a key role in supporting players both on and off the pitch—emphasising communication, resilience, teamwork, and responsibility.

A standout moment of the year was the **charity memorial match** against Coolraine FC, held in honour of the late **Pat Gorman**, a much-loved community member who passed away earlier in the year. This heartfelt event raised over **€10,000**, with **€8,500 donated to Dóchas – Offaly Cancer Support Group** and **€1,542 contributed to the Friends of the Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore** through the newly established **Pa Gorman Memorial Cup**.

These achievements reflect not just success in sport, but a deep commitment to community, culture, and connection—hallmarks of what St. Michaels Athletic stands for.



Mental Health Department

Travelling to Wellbeing

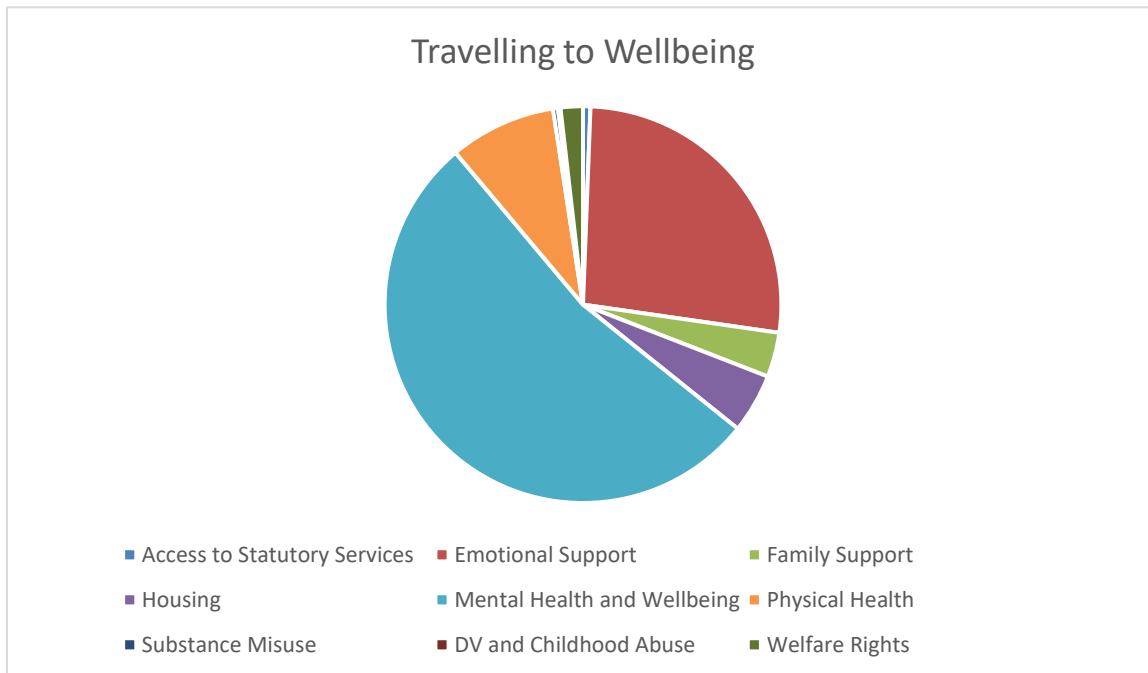
The OTM Travelling to Wellbeing (T2WB) Mental Health Service is a comprehensive recovery focused service aimed at addressing the mental health crisis faced by Traveller communities in the Midlands region. This service offers culturally sensitive and accessible support tailored to the unique needs of Travellers, acknowledging the challenges stemming from systemic discrimination, social exclusion, economic disparities, and cultural marginalisation. Our service provides a holistic, culturally competent approach, encompassing social work, counselling, peer support, mental health and recovery education workshops, programmes and events to address the interconnectedness of mental health with cultural identity and social context.

In 2024 we are delighted to be able to now provide elements of this service to Laois and Longford, following on from a successful application to the Toyshow Appeal Fund. We are pleased to welcome Social Worker Gearoid O Byrne, and Mental Health Support Worker, William McDonagh to the team. From September 2024, Gearoid and William provided our service in Longford and Laois. This was a new service to the Travellers in Longford, a pilot programme had been previously rolled out in Laois. In the short space of time since September, Travellers in Laois and Longford have already started engaging with the service, valuing the informal, confidential and respectful nature of peer-led support. This peer support role offers Travellers a unique space to talk openly with someone who shares cultural understanding and lived experience. Supports provided include:

- One-to-one, family and group support
- Listening and offering emotional and practical support
- Post-crisis follow-up and ongoing connection
- Supporting individuals to create personal recovery plans
- Signposting and linking with other services
- Encouraging self-care, confidence, and mental health awareness
- Promoting community understanding of peer support and Traveller wellbeing



The T2WB Mental Health Coordinator, Karen Boylan and Support Worker for Offaly, Pinkie McInerney, have continued to provide a high level of one-to-one support, group support, family support and emotional support to our Traveller community in Offaly throughout the year.



In 2024 the team actively engaged the Traveller community through a series of impactful events designed to promote suicide prevention and cultivate positive mental health. These initiatives included a powerful drama production that explored themes of suicide and its impact, fostering open dialogue about mental health challenges and the stark reality of suicide within the Traveller community.



Almost 200 people attended the production of Magpies on the Pylon by Michael Collins to mark Traveller Ethnicity Day 2024.

Organised by the T2WB team and hosted by The Esker Centre Tullamore, this production not only captivated the heart, but ignited essential conversation within the community.

This event gave us an opportunity to engage in dialogue, foster understanding and support each other in our collective journey towards healing and hope





Additionally, a photography exhibition 'The Big Picture' showcased the strength and beauty of the human spirit, emphasising the importance of connection and hope. There was a well-attended launch of the Big Picture Exhibition, and the exhibition was displayed in Esker Arts Centre during the months of June and July 2024.

In partnership with the National Action Group for LGBT+ Traveller and Roma Rights, Mental Health Coordinator organised, and the T2WB Team attended **'The Spoken Word'** event.

This event is the next stage of the largest research ever in Ireland on the lived experiences of LGBTI+ Traveller & Roma- *Unveiling Inequality- Experiences of LGBTI+ Travellers and Roma*. The peer research was published in November 2022 and throughout 2023 the Action Group has been designing and beginning the rollout of Spoken Word events to disseminate and share the voices of some of the research participants. It was well attended with over 30 attendees.

Other Work

Mental Health Support Worker provided emotional support to those attending the OTM Women's Shed weekly.

Mental Health Coordinator organised for the HSE National Traveller Mental Health Working Group to hold their forum meeting in OTM. Mental Health Coordinator and Mental Health Support Worker Laois/Longford presented on OTM and Travelling to Wellbeing on the day.

The T2WB Team attended an information session with Jackie Fox, Coco's law, organised by OTM to gain a better understanding of Coco's Law and its relevance to social media. Mental Health Support Worker Offaly continues to be a member of The National Traveller Mental Health Network.

Mental Health Coordinator was nominated and elected to represent OTM on the Offaly PPN Community, Culture and Emergency Service Strategic Committee in 2024.

Mental Health Coordinator attended the Launch of the 'Traveller Road to Hope & Change' in Carlow. The Traveller Road to Hope & Change campaign, a month-long initiative dedicated to promoting suicide prevention and mental health within the Traveller community.



National Traveller Mental Health Day Oct 8th. The Team organised and attended this event in Knock to mark National Traveller Mental Health Day. 18 members of the community were supported to attend.

Our Mental Health Coordinator, Karen, organised and hosted a regional meeting for representatives of local and national Traveller organisations to see the video produced from research in relation to the effects of **inter-family conflict** and to discuss how best to use it within the community and what sort of supports organisations will need to host viewing and discussion meetings in their local areas.



Karen organised and facilitated a session with whole Offaly Traveller Movement team to discuss 'mental health in the workplace'. This session was organised to mark **World Mental Health Day 2024**.



Supporting the Green Ribbon Campaign and Traveller Road to Hope and Change within the community

Continuous Professional Development

We are pleased to report that T2WB Mental Health Coordinator successfully completed a Professional Certificate Level 8 in Mental Health Recovery, accredited by the Atlantic Technological University. This specialised expertise will significantly enhance our recovery orientated

mental health service, enabling us to provide more effective and informed to those that we serve.

Other trainings that the team have completed are

- Children's First Refresher
- Communicating Effectively through Open Disclosure
- Public Participation Network Training
- Salesforce Training
- First Response Training

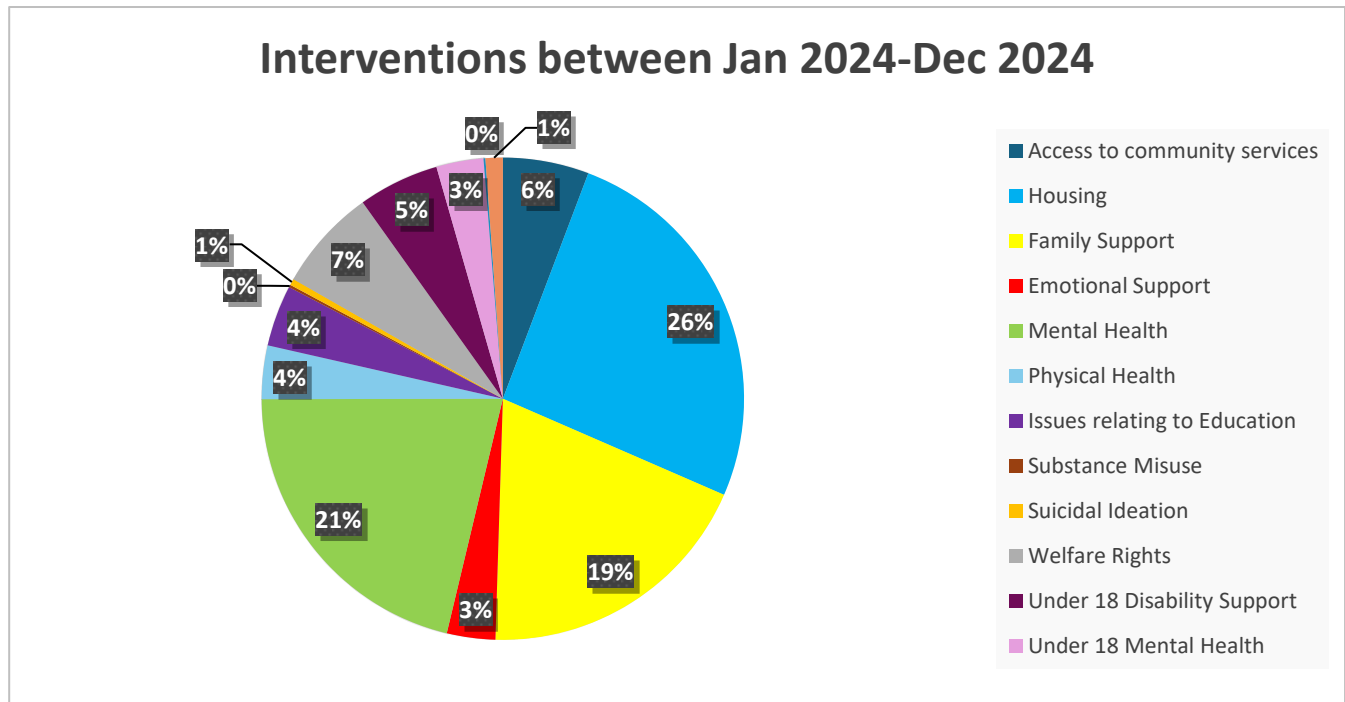
Social Work

The Travelling to Wellbeing Social Worker, Aislinn Daly, continues to receive referrals from individuals, families and a number of different agencies including CAMHS, TUSLA, Offaly County Council, Children's Disability Network Teams, HSE Mental Health Services etc. Aislinn has been working with families on a one-to-one basis, through outreach, phone calls etc. The level of contact has varied from a once off meetings, providing information and possible referral to other services to more intense regular

daily/weekly contact over longer periods of time and group support. Aislinn has also worked very closely with the all-staff members in OTM to provide families a more holistic approach to issues presented. In 2024, the funding for the service in Laois was no longer continued, however the social worker continued



to support some families with complex issues. 2024 was a very busy year where 2341 interventions with families in the Offaly area were recorded and 450 interventions with families in Laois. A breakdown of the issues involved in these interventions is in the graph below:



Collaborative working:

OTM values the importance of working collaboratively with other agencies in order to take a holistic approach when working with families so that a range of needs can be addressed more effectively. Working with other agencies can allow the OTM social worker to build relationships and access more resources and expertise to enhance the quality of care and support provided.

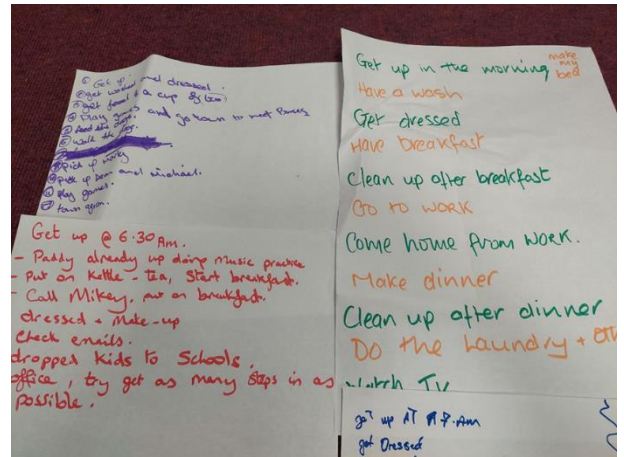
Throughout the year, Aislinn has liaised with the following services through joint working, in person meeting or online; TUSLA PPFS Team, Meitheal, Educational Welfare Officer, home school liaison workers, Children's Disability Network Team, CAMHS, Safe Project, Fusion/ Youth Work Ireland, Merchant Quay, ODVSS, Adult Mental Health, HSE Adult Disability services etc. Aislinn also sits on the Offaly Child and Family Support Network meetings and the CYPsy PPFS sub-group meetings in order build relationships with community services and input the needs of Travellers at a local and regional level.

We also participated and attended the following forums: Workshop with Gynaecologist from UCD & Trinity in relation to Gynae Cancer, the Traveller Roma Strategy Education Day, Travellers Together Transforming Conflict. Aislinn continues to work with Tusla and has chaired and attended a number of Meitheal meetings throughout 2024.

Programmes in 2024

Creating Connections:

As a follow up programme from 2023 project, OTM, Laois Traveller Action Group and Tusla Group secured Dormant Accounts Funding to implement Tusla's national work programme at regional and local levels. Tusla's National work group, which includes Traveller organisation representatives, facilitates coordination and reporting of Tusla's actions under the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. With this funding we were able to continue to work in collaboration to enhance awareness, access, and participation in Tusla services for the Traveller community.



Session on Routines and Boundaries

An eight-week program was delivered to strengthen family relationships and improve engagement with services. Some of the key activities explored were Service awareness/information sharing, routines and boundaries, family communications, social media awareness, mindfulness and wellbeing, cooking together and family bonding trip. The feedback from this project was very positive and young people actively engaged in the program, often reminding their parents about sessions and attending consistently. The project led to an enhanced understanding and trust between Traveller families and service providers. The project demonstrated the value of culturally responsive, trust-based engagement, reinforcing the need for continued family-focused initiatives. In 2025 we aim to have our programme evaluated in order to measure outcomes and learnings for initiatives going forward.



Parents and young people cooking together

The Launch of the Disability Awareness animation video:



In 2023, OTM applied for funding through Tusla Parental Participation funding to implement a targeted project to provide support and empower parents as they navigate through the stages in supporting their child or young person with a disability. The aim of this was to support Traveller parents with the most appropriate information, and to build their understanding around the steps they can take when accessing supports for their children and young people, in a culturally sensitive way. In 2024 we worked on our last objective which was for members of the group to create a culturally appropriate animative video. This will be used by Travellers or services as a culturally appropriate resource for Traveller families who require a point of contact for their children with additional needs. The Launch for this video coincided with International Day for Disabilities and was attended by members of the community, the HSE and other local organisations.

Girls Mental Health and Wellbeing group:

OTM in participation with a group of young Traveller girls secured funding through Child and Youth Participation funding to develop a girls mental wellbeing programme. This project was identified through our work as we have experienced an increase of young girls accessing our services for support. The Lundy model was used in this process and the young people were given the space to have their voice heard about their needs and activities that they may enjoy. A number of topics were discussed such as; Mental Health and Wellbeing, Identity and Gender roles within the Traveller Community, Fostering Independence skills- Education, career, finance support, taking a look at beauty-a health focus, forming healthy relationships, managing conflict and communication skills and creating a toolkit for selfcare.

Through these sessions a plan was put in place we aim to continue to roll out this programme with a group of young Traveller girls from 13-15 years old in 2025.

Sensory Play Group:



In 2024 OTM secured funding through the All Ireland Funding stream develop sensory play group for parents and children with additional needs facilitated by a play therapist. This group was identified through feedback sessions with a number of parents who were highlighting the needs of their children in their local area. In December 2024 there were 3 Sensory Play Sessions, and it is hoped that this would continue into 2025.

Training and upskilling

OTM understands that in order to provide a higher quality of care and support to clients it is important to engage in continuous learning. Professional development is important to our social worker as it allows her

to enhance her knowledge and skills in the area where issues are ever evolving and complex. Up skilling allows our social workers to maintain competence, uphold ethical standards, meet the diverse needs of her clients and deliver quality care and support. The social worker engaged in the following trainings/conferences/ workshops in 2024:

- DRIVE-Drug Regulated Intimidation & Violence Engagement
- DSGBV-Session on Initiative Image Abuse & Coco Law
- ODVSS International Women's Day
- Workshop with Gynaecologist from UCD & Trinity in relation to Gynae Cancer
- Attended the Traveller Roma Strategy Education Day
- Attended Traveller Pride Event in OTM
- Attended Spoken Words Pride Event-The Spoken Word shares the voices of people with the lived experiences of LGBTI+ Traveller & Roma
- Attended 'The Bigger Picture' exhibition opens at Esker Arts Centre Tullamore. The focus was to develop a series of photographs to challenge stereotypes, and to showcase the pictures to the wider community.
- Travellers Together Transforming Conflict
- Attended the Trauma Informed Care 2-day workshop
- GDPR online through ITM and in person in OTM
- Access to social housing and emergency accommodation for children and families through Community Law and Mediation
- Jigsaw's National Compliment Day campaign Compliments and Coffee
- Trauma ripples through time - Alcohol Action Ireland's annual week of activities to raise awareness of the issues around parental problem alcohol use
- Breaking the Domino Effect- This live webinar, chaired by Caroline Jordan (Tusla), discussed how early intervention strategies for children can have lasting impacts. Featuring Dr Hannah Todman (Stockport Family Workforce Development Manager), Dr Annemarie Millar (Queen's University Belfast), Fiona Kearney (Familibase) and Hilary Henriques MBE (Nacoa UK).
- Enclude Salesforce Webinar Training to upskills in Salesforce and support other staff members
- Voices for Change – Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services: Offaly Domestic Violence Support Service are hosting a Voices for Change: Domestic Abuse Awareness Seminar

Offaly Traveller Counselling Service

TRAVELLING TO WELLBEING

OFFALY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

Counselling Service

*LOTS ON YOUR MIND?
ALL FEELINGS ARE WORTH
TALKING ABOUT -
WE ARE HERE TO LISTEN.*

**For Further information
Contact:**
Phone: 086 1921525
087 9866805
Email: counselling@otm.ie
mentalhealth@otm.ie

ABOUT OTM COUNSELLING
The OTM Counselling Service is an established free and confidential service, which is available to all Traveller children and adults in Offaly. This service is provided by our accredited therapist.

Key features of the Travelling to Wellbeing Counselling Service include:

- **Culturally Competent Counselling:**
Our counsellor is trained to understand and respect the cultural differences of the Traveller community, ensuring that the counselling service is culturally sensitive, competent and inclusive.
- **Accessible Services:**
We strive to make counselling support easily accessible for all Travellers in the community. Our counselling service is available both in-person and on the phone providing flexibility for clients.
- **Partnership Working:**
We value collaborative partnerships with other service providers. Our aim is to work in tandem with mainstream services and supports to ensure comprehensive care for individuals seeking mental health support.

Types of Therapy Provided

- One to One
- Family and Group Talk Therapy
- Integrative Body Psychotherapy
- Art and Play Therapy
- Jungian Sand Therapy

2024 has been a busy year for the counselling service and T2WB. It has been a year of change with the Counselling Service moving to seeing people in person on-site, in the community, by phone and on zoom with the emphasis and theme being 'Meeting you where you are'. 524 interventions took place for the counselling service in 2024. The focus on building engagement, attendance and consistency was put in place in Q4 and saw attendance rates increase and no shows/Cancellations fall dramatically. Building engagement and trust has been important and so the focus of the work has been to continue meeting with all groups, workers and clients in as much as possible to talk, explore, get to know each other and foster awareness, familiarity and trust with a view to developing the program further and increase a willingness to engage. Building awareness around Mental health, how to mind it, recognise concerns and put strategies in place to help cope with a view to building skills and fostering independence in the process. Regular meeting with Public Health Care, LTI Group and Women's Sheds were a regular feature up to Q4 when a focus on one-to-one work was encouraged by management. This year in conjunction with T2WB and Aislinn in Social Work, we held a number of Sensory Play Groups for Children and their Parents, in Q4, and this will continue in 2025. This is an area we are keen to build on.

Building trust is a key component to any work we do. Building trust in a community and individuals is the

foundation, and all the more important in our Traveller Community where trust has been challenged. Trauma has been present across generations and discrimination and marginalisation has been made a part of Traveller identity. We meet in a safe space when clients present in difficulty and vulnerability, everyone has the right to be met, seen, heard and valued for all they bring with them.

We work with a range of presenting issues: anxiety, stress, family discord, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, separation, divorce, coercive control, violence, addiction, education, bullying, living in fear, family functioning, bereavement, suicide, self-harm, housing and homelessness, self-confidence, identity, sexuality, diversity and difference and many more. When people seek access to support, they are met with care, consistency and availability, gentleness in a space that is confidential, containing and safe. School issues have been high this year with issues around attendance, refusal, and disengagement. Best practice is always the aim in all that we do in supporting Traveller Mental Health and we partner with the National Traveller Counselling Service and work tirelessly to ensure we are providing a culturally appropriate and specific support service to all those wishing to avail of it.

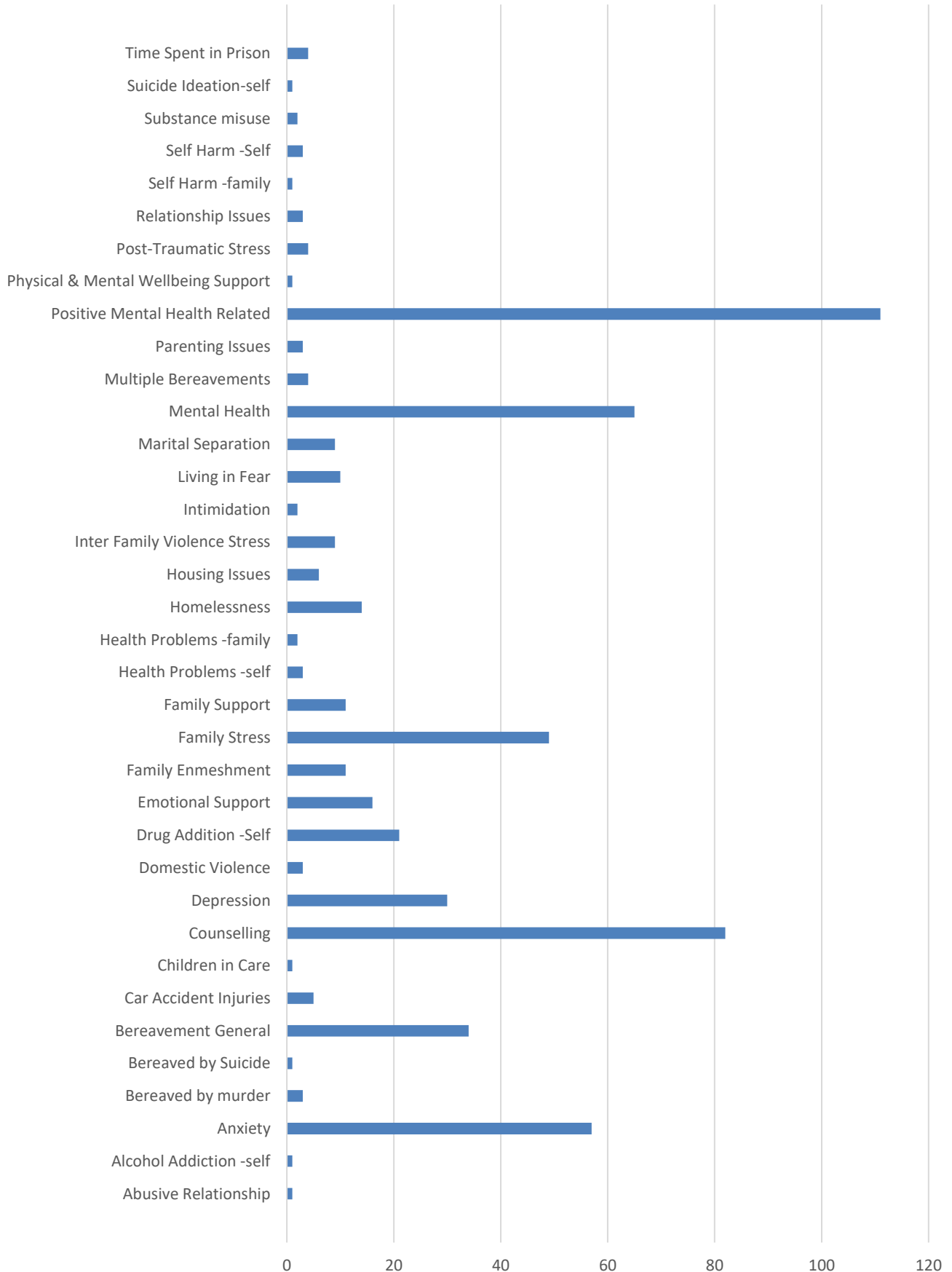
The counselling service is open to all members of the Travelling Community from our base in Tullamore. In 2024 we recognised the growing need for child, adolescent and family services and so we aimed to build a service provision to meet those needs in 2024 and beyond. We opened a new Counselling Room separate to OTM HQ which added play, sand and creative therapies for our young people and by extension involve parents and families in the process as we aim to provide a 360 degree wrap around service of support and care. In 2025 our focus will be on continuing to build the services we offer to the community to improve awareness, to explore and to meet the needs of a diverse and amazing community.

A snapshot of figures showing sessions for 2024:

Attended	CA	DNA	Sensory	Youth	Meitheal	LTI	PHW	Total
127	32	54	3	2	1	12	13	244

A snapshot of the range of interventions for 2024:

524 Interventions



Youth Department



UBU: Your Place, Your Space

In 2024, the Offaly Traveller Movement (OTM) Youth Department continued to provide young Travellers with a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally grounded space to grow, connect, and thrive. Funded under the UBU – Your Place, Your Space scheme through the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the project supports Traveller youth aged 10 and over through meaningful, youth-led engagement.

Our work this year focused on empowerment, wellbeing, creativity, and connection, with programmes designed to build confidence, self-esteem, and leadership. Whether through drop-in spaces, creative workshops, community events or one-to-one support, OTM Youth created opportunities for young people to speak up, take part, and feel a strong sense of identity and belonging.

A Safe and Supportive Space

We provided a mix of structured programmes and flexible drop-in supports across Tullamore and Birr,

ensuring young Travellers could access a culturally appropriate youth service where their voices matter. The project also maintained a strong focus on building trusted relationships and offering emotional and practical support — giving young people a place to talk, seek help, and be themselves.

Programme Highlights by Quarter

Quarter 1: January–March

- One-to-one support (4 sessions, 9 young people)
- Friday Drop-In Club (12 sessions, 12 participants)
- Birr Outreach Programme (4 sessions, 16 participants)
- Monthly Support Calls (3 sessions, 28 participants)
- Saturday Youth Café (12 sessions, 15 participants)
- Fusion Programme (12 sessions, 7 participants)
- After-School Homework Club (22 sessions, 6 participants)
- St. Patrick’s Day Window Display & Baking (3 sessions, 12 participants)

Quarter 2: April–June

- One-to-one support (3 sessions, 14 young people)
- Friday Drop-In Club (11 sessions, 12 participants)
- Birr Outreach Programme (3 sessions, 9 participants)
- Monthly Support Calls (3 sessions, 24 participants)
- Saturday Youth Café (10 sessions, 12 participants)
- Fusion Programme (6 sessions, 4 participants)
- Homework Club (16 sessions, 3 participants)
- Easter Baking Activity (1 session, 8 participants)
- Traveller Pride Week – 10 sessions, 79 young people engaged in celebration, identity, and advocacy

Quarter 3: July–September

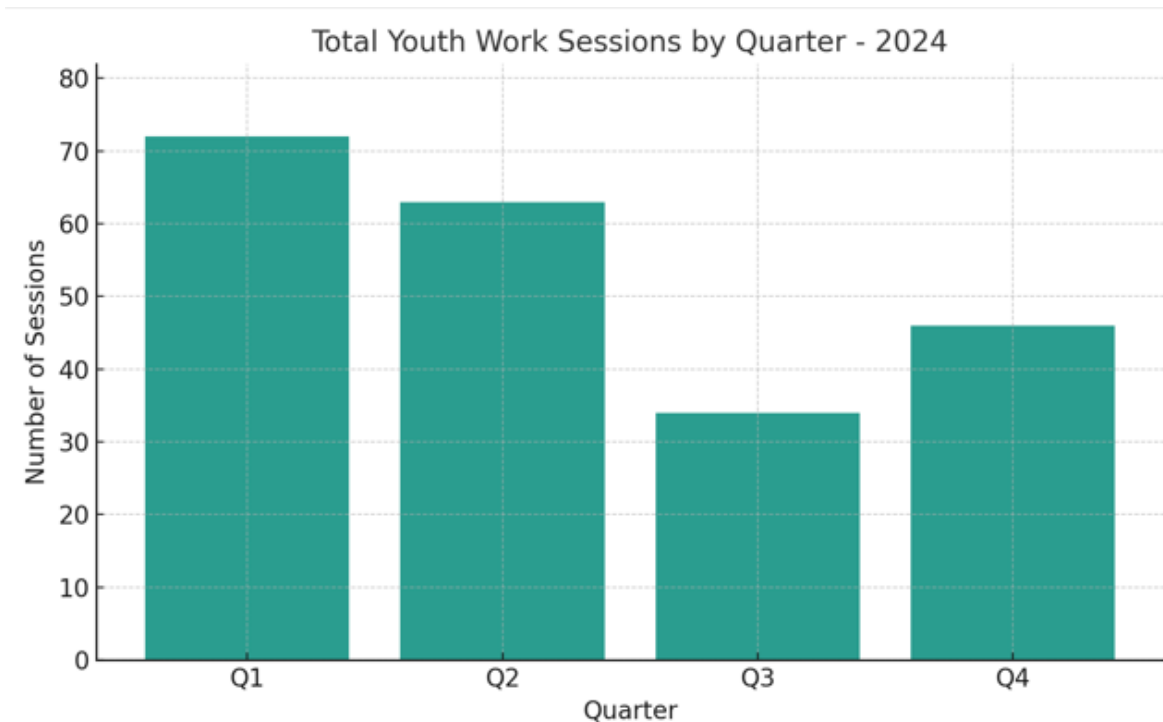
- Friday Drop-In Club (5 sessions, 5 participants)
- Saturday Club (3 sessions, 5 participants)
- Summer Camp (10 sessions, 19 participants) – packed with games, outdoor fun, team-building, and arts
- One-to-one support (10 sessions, 3 participants)
- After-School Education Programme (6 sessions, 2 participants)

Quarter 4: October–December

- Saturday Drop-In Club (8 sessions, 5 participants)
- Ukulele Club (10 sessions, 10 participants)
- Birr Drop-In Programme (7 sessions, 25 participants)

- Arts & Crafts Thursdays (7 sessions, 20 participants)
- Cycling in Lough Boora (1 session, 15 participants)
- Paint Pouring Workshops (4 sessions across Tullamore & Birr, 48 participants)
- Drumming Workshops (2 sessions, 32 participants)
- Halloween Parties (2 sessions, 52 participants)
- Dublin Zoo – Birr & Tullamore Trips (2 sessions, 59 participants)
- Christmas Parties with Santa (2 sessions, 54 participants)
- Ice Skating in Mullingar (1 session, 24 participants)





Outcomes and Impact

In 2024, the OTM Youth Department made a meaningful difference in the lives of young Travellers across Offaly. Through consistent engagement, creative programming, and culturally respectful practice, we achieved the following outcomes:

- Delivered **215 direct youth work sessions** across the year, providing regular, structured opportunities for young people to engage, learn, and grow.
- **Over 120 unique young Travellers** actively participated in youth programmes, with many attending multiple sessions across the year.
- **Increased participation and retention**, particularly among younger adolescents aged 10–14, showing strong demand for culturally appropriate services in both Tullamore and Birr.
- **Empowerment and voice:** Young people were encouraged to express themselves creatively and socially, contributing to a greater sense of identity, confidence, and pride in their culture.
- **Mental health and emotional wellbeing supports** were offered consistently, with young people accessing one-to-one support and drop-in spaces where they felt heard, safe, and supported.
- **Strengthened peer connections** – through group sessions, day trips, and team activities, many young people built positive friendships and support networks.
- **Academic support and educational engagement** – Homework Clubs and education-focused programmes provided a safe and encouraging space to support school retention and learning.
- **Creativity and self-expression flourished**, with strong engagement in arts-based programmes like paint pouring, drumming, and music. These activities were especially impactful in fostering self-esteem and personal pride.

-
- **Celebration of Traveller culture** – participation in events like Traveller Pride Week, Halloween parties, and Christmas celebrations helped foster a strong sense of community and belonging.
 - **Increased collaboration with local schools, community services, and health teams**, contributing to better referral pathways and shared outcomes for young Travellers.

These outcomes reflect the strength of relationship-based youth work and the power of consistent, culturally grounded programming to make a lasting difference in the lives of Traveller youth. The OTM Youth Team are incredibly proud of what the young people have achieved this year — from learning to play an instrument, exploring identity through art, to simply showing up and taking part. Each connection made is a step forward for Traveller youth voices, confidence, and wellbeing.

Targeted Youth Employability Support Initiative (TYESI)

In September 2024, Offaly Traveller Movement welcomed the appointment of Marie McDonagh as the dedicated TYESI Youth Worker. This new initiative marked a significant expansion of services aimed at supporting young Travellers aged 15 to 24 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The TYESI programme addresses systemic barriers and high levels of marginalisation experienced by young Travellers, aiming to empower them through personalised supports, skill-building, and positive engagement.

Programme Overview

The TYESI initiative operates in both Tullamore and Birr and focuses on working with Traveller youth, who face unique challenges stemming from both historical and contemporary exclusion. Through TYESI, OTM provides safe, inclusive, and culturally sensitive spaces where these young people can explore their potential, gain confidence, and take steps toward meaningful progression.

Core Objectives & Activities

At the heart of the TYESI programme is a strong commitment to supporting young Travellers on their journey towards education, employment, and personal development. The initiative works by engaging participants in ways that are meaningful, respectful, and responsive to their needs. At OTM, young people are supported in developing both personally and socially, helping them prepare for the next steps in their lives—whether that's returning to education, entering training, finding employment, or building confidence in themselves.

We create safe, welcoming, and peer-led spaces where young Travellers feel respected and empowered to take ownership of their growth. These spaces are non-judgemental and culturally appropriate, allowing participants to express themselves and explore new opportunities.

The programme places a strong emphasis on using evidence-based practices that are tailored to the unique experiences of the Traveller community. These supports are reviewed regularly to ensure they are making a real difference. A variety of methods are used to connect with young people, including group work, one-to-one sessions, mentoring, coaching, and targeted outreach. This flexibility ensures we can meet young people where they're at—both literally and figuratively.

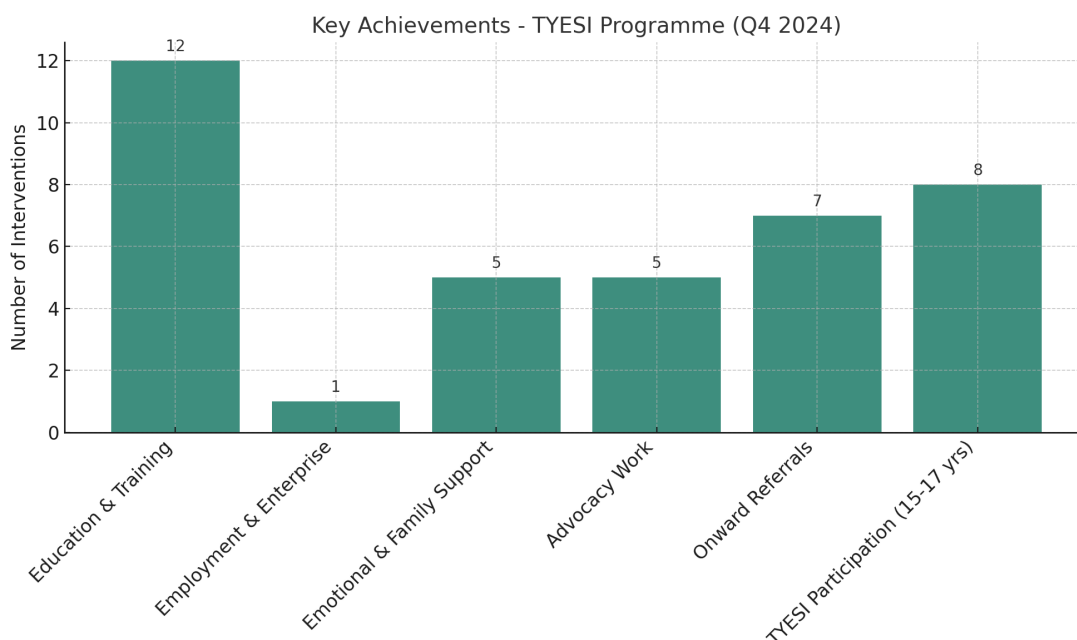
Importantly, young people are encouraged to be active partners in shaping the programme. Their voices matter, and they are involved in the development, delivery, and evaluation of supports, ensuring the programme remains grounded in their lived experiences.

Collaboration is a core part of the programme's success. Our TYESI worker actively collaborates with other professionals within Offaly Traveller Movement, as well as with external stakeholders, to ensure every young person can access the right supports at the right time.

Key Achievements in 2024

In the first months of implementation, the TYESI programme has already seen strong engagement with young Travellers across Offaly. Between October and December 2024, the programme recorded 54 individual interventions. These included supports in education and training, employment and enterprise, emotional and family support, advocacy work, and onward referrals to relevant community or statutory services. These engagements demonstrate the growing trust and relevance of the programme among its target group.

In particular, young men aged 15–17 showed high levels of participation, with 8 directly engaged under the TYESI strand in this quarter. This reflects a promising start in reaching young people often excluded from mainstream services.



Professional Development and Training

To ensure high-quality, informed service delivery, Marie engaged in several professional development opportunities during 2024. These included:

- Trauma-Informed Training (TYESI)
- Parenting Plus – Healthy Families Programme
- Tusla Baby Massage Training
- HSE Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, the TYESI programme will continue to evolve and respond to the emerging needs of young Travellers. Plans for 2025 include the development of new community partnerships, deeper integration with employment services and education providers, and more structured peer-to-peer supports. Offaly Traveller Movement remains committed to addressing the inequalities faced by young Travellers and to offering them the opportunities, confidence, and encouragement they need to thrive.

Education & Training



Lorna Middleton attends Journeying Together – Thomas McCarthy & his ensemble showcase Irish Traveller songs & stories – Culture night – Birr Theatre & Arts Centre

OTM were delighted to establish as new role in 2024, **Education Community Development Worker (ECDW)**, funded through the Department of Justice via the National Traveller Programme (NTP). The successful candidate for the role was Lorna Middleton. This key position focuses on improving educational participation, retention, and progression for Traveller children and young people in Offaly.

Lorna works in close collaboration with Traveller families, local schools, and relevant service providers to address the educational needs of the community. A core element of her role is to promote culturally responsive education and support inclusive learning environments that recognise and value Traveller identity.

Over the course of the year, Lorna has begun conducting needs assessments to gain a deeper understanding of the educational experiences of Traveller learners. Informed by this work, a number of education-focused programmes are being developed, including initiatives that require additional funding. One such programme is the **Transitions Project**, which adopts a whole-family approach to ensure no child

is left behind in education. The project aims to support children from Early Years through to Secondary and beyond by providing families with practical support—such as assistance with registration forms, using school communication platforms like Compass, and understanding the importance of attending school meetings.

ALL (Adult Literacy for Life) Laois/Offaly Coalition

In 2024, Lorna was appointed as OTM’s representative on the ALL (Adult Literacy for Life) Laois-Offaly Regional Coalition. The coalition works to advance literacy-friendly practices across the region, including the development of accessible services and advocacy for plain English in public documents and forms. A particular focus has been placed on identifying literacy barriers and supporting hard-to-reach groups.

As part of this work, OTM co-hosted an Interculturalism Morning in partnership with Laois Traveller Action Group (LTAG). The event was well attended by local services and included a presentation from OTM’s Health Manager, Leona, highlighting the important work of both LTAG and OTM. Following the event, requests for intercultural training were received from other local organisations.

Lorna also trained as a Literacy Champion, completing a QQI Level 6 Certificate in Literacy and Society with Carlow College, further enhancing her contribution to the committee and the coalition’s broader literacy efforts.

Professional Development and Sector Engagement

To remain informed and responsive to changes in education policy and practice, our team regularly engages in sector-wide learning. This year, Lorna attended key national events, including:

- AONTAS Learners' Voices Across Ireland Report Launch 2024
- Launch of ESRI Report: “Understanding Attitudes Towards Travellers and Roma” (December 2024)

These events offered critical insight into learner experiences and societal attitudes, strengthening our work in education advocacy and programme development.

Programme Highlights

Traveller and Roma Education Forum

OTM continues to have representation on this national forum and its Early Years subcommittee, contributing to broader policy discussions on inclusive education for Traveller and Roma children.

Home School Liaison Collaboration

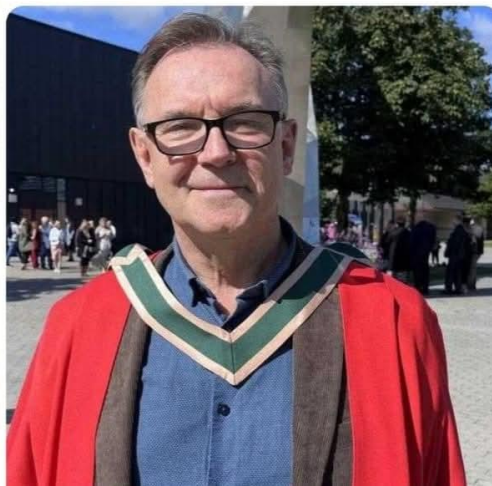
In 2024, we hosted a meeting with all local HSCLs at our OTM offices. Our Education Worker presented on the Inclusive Education Project, strengthening ties and improving referral pathways for families needing

support.

Yellow Flag Programme

We are working with local schools and HSCLs to introduce the Yellow Flag Programme to Offaly. This initiative supports schools to embed interculturalism, equality, and diversity into all aspects of school life, with the goal of achieving formal recognition through the Yellow Flag Award.

Lorna also had an important and essential role in the delivery of the Inclusive Education Project and Pre-Apprenticeship Programme in 2024. Lorna delivered core modules to the learners on the pre-apprenticeship programme and supported the young learners as they work toward practical qualifications and consider future training or employment options. Both these programmes are outlined below.



OTM send heartfelt Congratulations to our friend and colleague Dr Thomas McCann, who in 2024, became the first Traveller man to be awarded a PhD.

Local Training Initiative (LTI)

In 2024, Offaly Traveller Movement proudly delivered the QQI Level 3 General Learning Qualification through its Local Training Initiative (LTI), specifically designed for young Travellers aged 18 to 35 who are not currently engaged in education or employment.

A major highlight this year was rebranding and further developing this LTI into a Traveller specific Pre-Apprenticeship Programme. This was launched as Ireland's first Traveller-specific Pre-Apprenticeship Programme in July 2024. This groundbreaking initiative provides a vital pathway for those who left formal education early without achieving a Junior Certificate-level qualification. The programme combines essential taster sessions across a variety of craft and trade apprenticeships — including woodwork — with core practical training in Safe Pass and Manual Handling. All participants work towards gaining their QQI Level 3 General Learning Qualification alongside these skills.

The launch was warmly supported by key stakeholders including LOETB, SOLAS, ITM, and Offaly County Council, whose representatives attended the event. The programme was officially inaugurated by Andrew Brownlee, CEO of SOLAS, marking a historic milestone for Traveller education and training in Ireland.

Since the launch, the Pre-Apprenticeship Programme has attracted significant interest from young Travellers eager to access practical training and new opportunities. Our dedicated team—Training Coordinator Jackie Foy, Assistant Coordinator Ian McDonagh, and Education Community Development Worker Lorna Middleton, have worked tirelessly to provide a supportive, culturally aware learning environment. They have addressed barriers and concerns unique to the Traveller community, ensuring that participants feel empowered and supported on their educational journey.

Outcomes

Increased Engagement: The programme successfully engaged over 17 young Travellers during its inaugural year, many of whom faced previous barriers to education.

Skill Development: Participants acquired practical skills in trades and crafts, complemented by essential health and safety certifications, boosting their employability and confidence.

Educational Progression: A significant proportion of learners are actively pursuing apprenticeships, further education, or employment, demonstrating the programme's role as a meaningful stepping stone.

Community Connections: Strengthened partnerships with local employers, training bodies, and community services have fostered a more inclusive and supportive ecosystem for Traveller learners.

Looking Ahead

Building on the success of the 2024 launch, Offaly Traveller Movement aims to:

- Expand outreach to engage more young Travellers across the region.
- Deepen collaboration with apprenticeship providers and employers to secure practical placements.
- Develop enhanced mentoring and career guidance to support learner retention and progression.
- Pursue additional funding to broaden programme offerings and introduce specialized trade modules.
- Continue advocacy for Traveller education and equitable access to training and employment opportunities.

Offaly Traveller Movement remains committed to empowering Traveller youth by creating education and training pathways that honour their culture while opening doors to brighter futures.



Sandra McDonagh, CEO Offaly Traveller Movement and Andrew Brownlee, CEO Solas, officially launch the new Traveller Specific Pre Apprenticeship Programme



Sandra McDonagh, Lorna Middleton and LOETB Staff at the official launch, July 2024

Key Activities in 2024

Mountlucas Construction Training Centre, here the LTI group met with the trainers and tutors. They were given a tour of the campus and information on all of the training offered on site, such as Utilities

Traineeship and Scaffolding Apprenticeship. The learners also got to experience the machine simulators.



Throughout 2024 our learners took part in arts and crafts workshops with Francis Kawala. In these workshops our learners gained skills in glass cutting and making decorative glass pieces, as well as needle felting and many others. The group really enjoyed working with Francis over the 15-week programme, learning and developing new skills.



The LTI staff and students attended the Heritage Centre in Tullamore to take part in the Traveller Heritage Strategy. This was an opportunity for the learners to get involved in the development and preservation of Traveller culture and heritage.



LTI Staff Ian McDonagh, Jackie Foy and Lorna Middleton with the National Learning Network Centre Manager, Tullamore

Some of our LTI group took part in a 6-week Lash Extensions course which was run in conjunction with Fusion. This course proved to be a great success among our learners, and this sparked an interest in many of them. Their lash trainer Loyola really made this workshop very enjoyable.



Science Week took place between 10th – 17th November. The LTI group were very kindly asked to visit the Clean Room Operations in the LOETB, Axis Business Park. Here they were given a presentation from Sarah Delaney, the Clean Rooms Operations Coordinator. Sarah also gave them a tour of the clean room and demonstrated some science experiments.



The LTI group also took part in a woodwork workshop over 10 weeks with tutor Jack Byrne. Jack focused on setting up the new machinery in the men's shed. He also focused on all aspects of health and safety with the group. The group began by learning to use the lathe for cutting and shaping wood. This gave the group an initial insight into the trade of carpentry and woodwork.



As part of the Health and Fitness, and the Nutrition and Healthy Options modules completed by the group, they took part in some healthy activities over the course of the programme. The group were involved in 6-week Yoga classes. They also prepared a presentation which was presented over the week

of Eating Disorders Awareness Week. The group prepared information leaflets, PowerPoint presentation and some healthy snacks which were shared among OTM staff.



The approach of the LTI continues to be learner focused at all times. We strive to create a learning environment that offers learners the support and guidance needed to achieve their Level 3 QQI General Learning Qualification. The programme aims to prepare learners to further progress into education, training and employment.

A special thank you to LOETB and Solas for their invaluable support in the transition of this programme.

Driver Programme: Bus/Rigid/Artic

The OTM Driver Programme continued in 2024 with 10 Traveller men successfully completing their driver theory tests for bus or truck licenses. With the theory tests complete and having their provisional licences, they have started their driving lessons with Hynes Driving School. This programme is supported by LOETB and we wish them all success as they prepare for their driving tests.

Inclusive Education Project



This academic year has been a positive and meaningful one for the Inclusive Education Project, with a strong focus on academic progress, cultural pride, parental involvement and student wellbeing. The project continues to support young Traveller students in their education journey, encouraging school attendance beyond the age of sixteen and offering a safe, inclusive environment in which they can thrive.

Academic Support

Two Junior Certificate students worked steadily throughout the year in preparation for both their Mock and State exams. They used Study clx as a key revision resource and took part in online Maths grinds to support their understanding of core topics. In Home Economics, they prepared for their practical component, completing a successful practice run of their Chicken Curry and rice dish ahead of the official exam.

Two additional students, currently in First and Second Year, received targeted after-school support through the Offaly Dyslexic Group. This support focused on literacy and built essential skills in reading, writing and spelling, providing an important foundation for their ongoing learning.

The Inclusive Hub

All students involved in the project attended the Inclusive Hub twice weekly after school. These sessions provided time and space for homework, along with focused literacy development using the Ellii platform. Ellii's grammar and functional English materials are designed to engage learners and make the process of improving language skills more accessible and enjoyable. This has had a clear impact on students' confidence and progress throughout the year.

Parental Involvement and Cultural Celebration

Earlier in the year, a Parental Support Meeting was held to involve families more directly in the educational journey. It provided a space for discussion, shared goals, and highlighted the importance of parental engagement in helping students stay in school and succeed.

A number of students and parents also took part in the production of a short film focused on the Inclusive Education Project. This film featured personal stories from families and students involved in the programme, sharing their experiences and highlighting the positive impact of the project. The film is part of an ongoing effort to promote and sustain engagement among young Traveller students and their families, encouraging them to remain in education beyond the age of sixteen.

Traveller culture was also celebrated and better understood through Traveller Cultural Awareness Training, which was delivered at a local secondary school. This session helped promote inclusion, challenge stereotypes, and support a more welcoming environment for all students.

Creative and Personal Development Activities

The students participated in hands-on workshops over the year, including an Easter Craft workshop and a Jewellery Making workshop, both of which encouraged creativity and social interaction.

Some students also participated in after-school soccer sessions at their school, which supported their physical health and enjoyment of team sports. Two students participated in OTM's Make-Up Course and the six-week Girls' Wellness Course, which focused on self-care, confidence, and emotional well-being.

Christmas Trip

This year, students travelled to Mullingar Skates, where they enjoyed an afternoon of ice-skating. It was a

well-earned celebration of all they had achieved throughout the year so far.

The 2024/2025 academic year has been a valuable one, marked by steady academic progress, growing self-confidence, and strong collaboration among students, parents, and the wider school community. The Inclusive Education Project continues to demonstrate the difference that targeted, culturally aware support can make in the lives of young Traveller students.

Horse Project

The Horse Project in 2024 continued to bring together a wide range of groups through their shared horse culture and passion for learning in the great outdoors. This year built on previous successes and introduced new initiatives to engage even more members of the community. Some of the 2024 highlights include:

- **Equine Support:** The Horse Project hosted meetings throughout the year to support horse owners, providing guidance around horse passports, land issues, and general equine care.
- **One-to-One Support:** Continued one-to-one support was provided for elderly horse owners who were unable to attend group meetings, as well as for individuals experiencing mental health challenges. This ensured that those in need were not left behind and could still access support and connection.
- **The Kilcruttin Site Group:** This remained a key focus in 2024, supporting the development of a committee representing residents living on the Kilcruttin site. In partnership with Offaly Traveller Movement (OTM) and Offaly County Council, the initiative aimed to build strong relationships, foster trust, and create a healthier living environment for current and future generations of Travellers. Meetings addressed practical local issues and received strong engagement from residents. This led to the establishment of a spin-off 'Tidy Towns' committee. Meetings were held both in OTM offices and in the caretaker's hut on site.
- **Crazy Mares Youth Group:** A new and exciting addition in 2024 was the formation of the "Crazy Mares" youth group. This initiative engaged young children with horses in a safe and fun environment. The group introduced children to horse care, riding basics, and the emotional benefits of bonding with animals, helping to build confidence, responsibility, and a sense of community from a young age.

Accommodation

Offaly Traveller Movement remains committed to ensuring all Traveller families in Offaly have access to safe, standard accommodation that fulfills essential health and safety requirements, as well as culturally appropriate housing that supports the community's traditions and way of life. Through advocacy, direct support, and partnership, OTM continues to work toward reducing homelessness, alleviating overcrowding, and promoting sustainable, dignified housing solutions for the Traveller community.

In 2024, Offaly Traveller Movement's Community Development Accommodation Worker, Sorcha Lewis, continued her essential role, funded part-time (15 hours weekly) by the HSE-THU. Sorcha's work centers on supporting Traveller families to access both standard accommodation that meets basic health and safety regulations, and culturally appropriate accommodation which respects and preserves the distinct identity, traditions, and lifestyle of the Traveller community.

Throughout 2024, Sorcha delivered a total of 364 individual interventions addressing a wide range of accommodation-related issues. These interventions illustrate the considerable demand for support and the complex challenges Traveller families face in securing appropriate housing. A breakdown of these interventions is on the chart below:

Standard Accommodation

Standard accommodation refers to housing that meets established legal and health criteria, including adequate space, sanitation, safety measures, and accessibility. It ensures that Traveller families live in safe, secure, and healthy environments that reduce risks of illness, injury, or hardship. Sorcha works closely with local authorities and service providers to identify and address issues such as repairs, overcrowding, and tenancy rights to help ensure all Traveller homes comply with these standards.

Culturally Appropriate Accommodation

Culturally appropriate accommodation goes beyond basic standards to acknowledge the unique needs of Traveller families. This includes:

- Halting sites and group housing that enable family and community cohesion;
- Space for traditional Traveller lifestyle practices such as outdoor activities, horse keeping, and gatherings;
- Housing design that reflects Traveller cultural preferences and social structures;
- Flexible tenancy arrangements that respect the mobile lifestyle of some community members;

Sorcha advocates for housing solutions that respect Traveller culture, aiming to bridge the gap between meeting legislative housing standards and preserving cultural identity.

Key Accommodation Challenges in 2024

Despite progress, the Traveller community in Offaly continues to face:

- Overcrowding: Larger family units require additional space to live comfortably and safely.
- Risk of Homelessness: Some families remain at risk due to lack of access to secure and appropriate accommodation.
- Delayed Housing Developments: Planned group housing projects in Tullamore and Birr have been postponed, impacting the availability of culturally appropriate homes.
- Maintenance and Repairs: Many existing Traveller homes and halting sites require ongoing repairs to meet safety standards.
- Access to Private Rental: Barriers exist for Travellers in accessing and sustaining private rental tenancies due to discrimination or lack of support.

Key Accommodation Initiatives – 2024

Kilcruttin Halting Site Consultations

In 2024, Offaly Traveller Movement facilitated consultations between Offaly County Council and the residents of Kilcruttin Halting Site regarding redevelopment plans. Tenants' input included requests for additional bedrooms, widening of bay boundaries to reduce overcrowding, and enhanced communal safety measures such as fencing around the playground. These consultations were vital to ensuring that redevelopment plans incorporate both standard improvements and Traveller cultural considerations.

Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) Submission 2024

OTM's submission to the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029 highlighted ongoing challenges and urgent needs for:

- Increased investment in standard quality housing;
- Development of additional culturally appropriate accommodation options, including halting sites and group housing;
- Timely delivery and accountability for promised housing projects;
- Focus on preventing homelessness and addressing overcrowding in Traveller families;

The submission stresses that housing solutions must not only meet regulatory standards but also be tailored to the distinct cultural lifestyle of the Traveller community to promote wellbeing, inclusion, and dignity.

Fire Safety and Wellbeing Programme

Supported by Offaly County Council, this programme worked to improve fire safety in Traveller accommodation by:

- Inspecting and upgrading smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and fire blankets;
- Providing education around fire safety tailored to Traveller households;
- Installing new fire extinguishers in strategic, accessible locations on halting sites;

The programme represents an important partnership to enhance safety while respecting community living arrangements.

Partnerships and Collaboration

A cornerstone of Sorcha's work is fostering strong partnerships between Travellers, local authorities, housing providers, and health and social services. These collaborations aim to ensure Traveller voices are heard in decision-making, and that housing services are responsive, inclusive, and culturally competent.

Promotion of Traveller Culture & Ethnicity

Traveller Pride Events 2024

In 2024, the Offaly Traveller Movement proudly hosted the **Traveller Pride Event: Unveiling Traveller Heritage**, a vibrant community-led celebration dedicated to showcasing and honouring the rich cultural heritage of the Traveller community. This event was thoughtfully designed to provide an immersive and educational experience that promotes understanding, appreciation, and respect for Traveller traditions among both Travellers and the wider public.

Central to the event was a traditional camp display, which offered attendees an authentic glimpse into the historical living conditions and lifestyle of the Traveller people. This engaging exhibit allowed visitors to connect with the cultural significance of Traveller life, emphasising the resilience and adaptability that have defined the community through generations. Complementing this was the opportunity to experience the intricate art of flower making, a cherished and skilful craft that highlights the creativity and cultural expression within the community. Attendees were invited to participate, gaining hands-on appreciation of this beautiful tradition.

The event also proudly showcased the vibrant colours and detailed craftsmanship of traditional Traveller dress. These garments not only reflect the community's deep cultural pride but also serve as a powerful symbol of identity and continuity. Adding to the sensory experience was the aroma and taste of freshly prepared traditional griddle bread, offering a warm and welcoming insight into Traveller hospitality and everyday life.

A highlight of the celebration was a compelling photo exhibition launched at the Esker Arts Centre in Tullamore on May 29th, which ran through early July. This exhibition captured the essence of Traveller life, portraying the beauty, strength, and resilience of a community whose voices are often unheard or misunderstood. Through these images, visitors were invited to engage with the stories and lived

experiences of Travellers, fostering empathy and greater awareness.

The event was remarkable not only for its cultural offerings but also for its role in promoting social inclusion. It brought together over 100 people, including members of the Traveller community and non-Travellers alike, creating a shared space of learning and celebration. This inclusivity encouraged meaningful dialogue and connection, breaking down barriers and dispelling stereotypes. By providing a platform for Traveller images and voices, the event amplified their stories and contributions to Irish life. Through these efforts, the Traveller Pride Event significantly contributed to building bridges between communities, deepening mutual respect, and celebrating cultural diversity. It reinforced the importance of acknowledging and honouring the unique heritage of Travellers as an integral part of our collective identity. More than just a celebration, it was a powerful step towards promoting a more inclusive and respectful society, where cultural differences are embraced and understood.



OTM's Mary McInerney & Pascal Delaney at the Photo Exhibition Launch, May 24

Thanks to our Funders

The resources to support 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.

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.

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 2024, we are very proud to have welcomed more funders 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.

To our funders – your continued support is much appreciated.



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



Offaly County Council
Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí



Financial Report 2024

Report Summary

The Finance & Administration Department of Offaly Traveller Movement (OTM) oversees the financial management and administrative functions vital to the organisation's operations and sustainability. In line with the company's commitment to transparency and compliance, the department meticulously adheres to relevant legal frameworks and accounting standards.

Financial Statements Overview

The financial statements of OTM for the year ending December 31, 2024, have undergone a thorough audit conducted by our newly appointed auditors, Phelan & Co., who also audited the 2023 financial statements. Their report confirms that the financial statements present a true and fair reflection of the organisation's financial health and have been prepared in accordance with FRS 102, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland, and Irish law. In addition, OTM have adopted the Charities SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice), a set of accounting rules that provides guidance on how charities in the UK and the Republic of Ireland should prepare their financial statements. It aims to ensure consistency, transparency, and comparability in charity reporting, helping stakeholders understand how charities are using their funds to achieve their charitable objectives.

Auditor

Damian Phelan FCA
Phelan & Co. Chartered Accountants Limited
Statutory Audit Firm
63 Mount Merrion Avenue
Blackrock
Co Dublin A94 Y6W3

Bankers

Permanent TSB
O'Connor Square
Tullamore
Co. Offaly

Solicitors

Joanne McGowan

Approved by the board on 3 July 2015

Christopher McDonagh
Director

Julius Jayroe
Director