



The Tharrie Times

Issue 24, Summer 2018

Welcome

Welcome to Issue 24 of *The Tharrie Times*, the bi-annual newsletter of National Traveller MABS. 2018 is a very busy year as you can see from the articles contained in this issue. National Traveller MABS are aware that the re-structuring has taken place for many of the MABS services around the country and will be totally completed by September 2018. We are looking forward to focusing on the work that lies ahead. After internal changes with new staff joining us in 2017, we are operating with a full cohort of staff.

One year on from the Irish state's formal recognition of Travellers as a distinct indigenous ethnic group there was a large celebration held in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. National Traveller MABS were involved in helping to organise the day. We were delighted to be joined by the CEO of Citizens Information Board Angela Black.

Also covered in this edition are updates on: work in Community Education, National Traveller MABS assisted Dublin 10 & 20 MABS with their excellent work on Fuel Poverty, and an update on Ethnic monitoring, which we would like to plan for and see rolled out within MABS. We have also been working at dispersing the findings that came through from the survey carried out by Behaviour and Attitudes. There is a report on the social inclusion forum which we recently attended. MABS plays a vital role in making this happen for our clients, through financial support and advice. National Traveller MABS carried out research into costs of caravans/mobile homes which we hope will shape Traveller accommodation policy in the future.

Finally, it was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of our colleague Paddy Lavery, who had recently retired from Kildare MABS. National Traveller MABS has worked closely with Paddy on issues of community education and other work, and found his positive approach an inspiration, as with Paddy the service was built around the person. He is sadly missed but we think the greatest legacy to his work is for us to maintain that ethos as we move into the new regional structures. National Traveller MABS looks forward to working with you to ensure that we continue to serve communities in times of financial crisis.

Please visit our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/NTMABS/> or follow us on twitter at @ntmabs.



Left to right: Dermot Sreenan, Ita Madden (Cavan PHC), Nancy Power, Adrian O'Connor (CIB) and Angela Black (CIB), Hughie Friel (Donegal Travellers Project)

Traveller Ethnicity Recognition, One Year On – Celebrations in Royal Hospital Kilmainham, March 15th 2018

March 1st 2018 marked the first year anniversary of the State's historic recognition of Traveller Ethnicity. You might recall that on March 1st this year, most of the country was buried under snow. The first-year anniversary was postponed until March 15th. The original announcement in March 2017 happened without much notice being given to National Traveller organisations to plan for the event.

One year on, a day of celebration took place in Royal Hospital Kilmainham. It was bursting at the seams with music, drama, art, crafts, history, language, and all manner of Traveller cultural heritage. On display were patchwork quilts, beady pockets, flower crafts, traditional cures, and Traveller literature. An array of historic materials presented included a collection of tin craft and photos from the National Museum of Ireland, and archival material of Traveller songs, music and stories from the National Folklore Collection at the National Sound Archives.

The event was opened with a retrospective look at the Traveller Pride Awards, chaired by Brenda O'Donoghue. Brenda interviewed past winners of the Pride Awards such as Selina O'Leary who went onto sing in Carnegie Hall in New York. Selina entertained the crowd by singing beautifully in the Chapel in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Brenda also interviewed another past winner of a Traveller Pride award, young Ian McDonagh, who was a finalist in the young scientist exhibition. Ian had an exhibition of his work in the Great Hall, which helped people trace their family trees around the country. This work is part of his research with Merlin College Galway. Hughie Friel from Donegal Travellers Project spoke eloquently about how important state recognition of Traveller ethnicity is for Travellers. He also spoke of the need to keep focused on delivering real improvements for

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Travellers on the ground, through the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion strategy, and bringing about positive outcomes for people.

President Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina Coyne attended the celebration – much to the delight and excitement of the celebration-goers. President Higgins took time to visit all the stalls at the event and speak to people at the stalls. He later said to the Irish Times: “Looking at the young people you are struck by how the ethnicity recognition has encouraged a confidence, that there is really nothing that Travellers can’t do if the obstacles are removed... I have to say, as President of Ireland, one of the things that runs through my mind regularly is all the misunderstandings that were unnecessary, the failures to actually deliver proper facilities for Travellers when the money was made available by the State.”¹

A long wall in the Main Hall of the Royal Hospital featured two breath-taking photography exhibitions; one was a visual history of Labre Park, and the other was more contemporary, titled ‘Ireland’s Minority, Is Anyone Listening?’ There is a tradition amongst Travellers of generating their own enterprises, and in the Great Hall were displays from companies like Shuttle Knit (Wicklow) and First Class Insulation (Galway). Meath Travellers presented their Living History Project which opened a door into the past, with its barrel-top wagon and traditional camp-fire. Traditional tinsmithing skills were demonstrated by Tom McDonnell.

Actor-writer Michael Collins performed his play ‘It’s a Cultural

Thing’, and Rosaleen McDonagh’s play ‘Running out of Road’ was performed by Thomas Collins, Sorcha Fox and Michael Harding. To top all of that off, the event was closed with a concert in the evening, which included Paddy Keenan, Thomas McCarthy, Selina O’Leary and Frances Black.

Travellers’ rich culture was very much in evidence on the day. One year on from the significant step of the Irish State finally recognising Travellers as a distinct indigenous group, this was a great day and a proud opportunity to celebrate for both Travellers and settled people that fought so hard for the last thirty years for ethnic recognition. But there is still a great deal of work that lies ahead of us, and we need to work with relevant Government departments and with services, to push to achieve positive outcomes for Travellers. Inclusion will come about when we create genuine realistic opportunities for Travellers in Ireland, and where Travellers can feel proud of their identity, and ethnicity will not stop you reaching the greatest heights.

You can see photo from the day on pages 10 and 11 of this newsletter.

¹President calls for electricity and running water for all Traveller sites, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/president-calls-for-electricity-and-running-water-for-all-traveller-sites-1.3428713>

Poverty Dynamics; how Ireland fared in protecting the most vulnerable during the recession years

A recent report produced by the Economic and Social Research Institute on behalf of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection compared the performance of different social welfare systems across Europe and their effectiveness in protecting vulnerable groups during the recession. The report, which was presented in January 2018, found that lone parents and adults of working age with a disability stand out as having higher poverty risks than other groups. It also found that Ireland and the UK’s ‘liberal’ social welfare systems saw a widening of the gap between these high risk groups and other risk groups. The key findings of the report are set out below:

- Lone parents and working-age adults with disabilities stand out as having higher poverty risks.
- Across eleven countries and three periods, 43% of lone parents and 28% of working-age adults with a disability experienced material deprivation in at least one of two consecutive years compared to 13% for other adults aged 30 to 65.
- These two vulnerable groups were also more likely to stay in poverty for at least two years.
- The social risk gap is the difference in poverty rate between the two vulnerable groups (lone parents and those with a disability)

and other working-age adults. The social risk gap in material deprivation tended to be larger in liberal countries like Ireland and the UK than elsewhere. For instance, the persistent deprivation gap for lone parents was 26 percentage points in Ireland and 23 percentage points in the UK compared to an average of 16 percentage points in the other countries.

- There was an increase in material deprivation between 2005 and 2014 for all social risk groups except older adults, where the rate remained relatively stable.
- Where the gap between the vulnerable and advantaged groups increased, there was no overall evidence of polarisation in material deprivation; however the countries differed in this respect. In the two liberal countries, the UK and Ireland, there was evidence of polarisation in material deprivation, particularly for persistent deprivation. In Ireland for instance, the gap in persistent deprivation between lone parents and the reference group of other adults aged 30 to 65 increased by 12 percentage points between 2005 and 2014.

For more information go to:
<https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Poverty-Dynamics-of-Social-Risk-Groups-in-the-EU-.aspx>

Promoting sustainable money management within the community with Dublin North East MABS and Northside Travellers

On April 17th 2018 staff members from TravAct Northside Traveller Support Group were presented with certificates for their successful completion of a Money Management community education course facilitated Susan Grimes, Money Advisor, at Dublin North East MABS. TravAct provides support, development, advocacy, and information services to the Traveller Community in North Dublin.

In total, 11 staff members were recognised for completing the training which utilises two Traveller-specific money-management resources: *A Way of Life* and *Overcoming Illegal Debt*. The course covers budgeting, saving and borrowing, dealing with debt, and in particular tackling legal and illegal moneylending. The knowledge developed and information gathered during the course can now be applied to TravAct's work with the local Traveller community, and the service can refer people to Dublin North East MABS.

Speaking about the MABS course, Brigid Nevin of TravAct said that the course was "very good and very helpful, and gave us an insight

into illegal money lending in the community." Susan Grimes, of Dublin North East MABS, who facilitated the course said, "*The course was a pleasure to facilitate as the group were enthusiastic and interested in the course topics covered.*" Sian Crowley, National Traveller MABS' National Education Worker said, "*As two organisations that provide information and support services in the Dublin North East community, it was a natural fit for MABS to join forces with TravAct on this course, working together towards promoting money management and building the links between MABS and the Traveller community.*"

Community Education is an essential component in the services offered by MABS. It broadens awareness of the benefits of engaging with the Money Advice and Budgeting Services. If your service is interested in facilitating community education with a local Traveller group, contact Sian Crowley, National Education Worker, at sian_crowley@mabs.ie



Back row left to right:

David McDonagh, Susan Grimes MABS, Mary Tyrell, Kathleen McDonnell, Lisa O Leary, Mary Collins, Sian Crowley (National Education Worker, National Traveller MABS)

Front row left to right:

Marian McKenna, Brigid Nevin (Primary Health Care Coordinator, TravAct), Margaret McDonagh



Behaviour and Attitudes Traveller Community National Survey – Regional Workshops

Background

According to the second ever Traveller Community National Survey launched last year, 12% of Travellers have used a moneylender, while only 10% of Travellers have used a Money Advice and Budgeting Service. The study looks at life today, how Travellers are portrayed in the media, health, mental health, Traveller culture, Travellers and the settled community, employment and training, financial services and supports and education. It was funded by The Community Foundation of Ireland and carried out by Behaviour & Attitudes Market Research. A Steering Committee of National Traveller representative

organisations was formed to oversee the research, which includes National Traveller MABS. This is the second National Traveller Survey undertaken in Ireland – the first was conducted in 2000, and was commissioned by the Citizen Traveller Campaign.

The findings which were launched nationally in October 2017, found that:

- 4 out of 10 Travellers felt that living conditions for the community have declined in the last 5-10 years
- 26% of Travellers feel that life has improved for the community over the last 5-10 years, compared to 61% in 2000
- 62% of people said accommodation conditions had gotten worse
- 72% said mental health issues had gotten worse
- 50% said unemployment had gotten worse.
- 82% of Travellers have been affected in some way by suicide



Photo credit: Travellers' Voice

Members of the St. Catherine's Community Services Centre, Carlow at the Launch of the National Traveller Survey, Leinster findings in the Tullamore Court Hotel April 18th 2018.

L to R: Kathleen Kerrigan, Primary Healthcare Worker; Valerie Byrne, Manager, St. Catherine's Community Services Centre.

Regional workshops

In April 2018 National Traveller MABS participated in a process to disseminate the findings of the survey regionally around Ireland. National Traveller MABS attended meetings in Munster (Cork), Leinster (Offaly), and Connaught (Mayo). At each workshop Jacinta Brack, who coordinated the research with Damien Peelo, presented findings specific to each region.

Munster

In Cork, Brigid Carmody from Cork Traveller Women's Network drew attention to the extremely poor conditions on unofficial sites, and also spoke about Traveller children being released early from school regularly. Senator Colette Kelleher attended the Cork event and asked the community how she could take these issues further in the Oireachtas.

Key findings in Munster:

- 53% of Travellers surveyed in Munster were concerned about mental health issues, compared with 45% nationally
- 48% of Travellers in Munster had been affected by suicide in their immediate family, compared with 62% nationally
- 55% of Travellers in Munster said accommodation conditions had gotten worse, compared to 62% nationally

Leinster

In Offaly, Sarah McDonagh from Offaly Traveller Movement spoke about the high levels of mental health issues within the community and the levels of discrimination Travellers face every day. Maria Joyce from National Traveller Women's Forum spoke about the fact that the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy includes health and mental health, however the action plan to implement it has no timeline for measuring progress.

Key findings in Leinster:

- 51% of Travellers in Leinster were concerned about accommodation, compared to 46% nationally
- 80% of Travellers in Leinster said they had experienced discrimination in the previous year
- 68% of Travellers in Leinster said they were not working
- 78% of Travellers in Leinster said they had concerns for their health based on diet and lifestyle.

Connaught

In Castlebar, Keith Maughan from Involve in Ballina, highlighted the fact that only 2 out of 10 Traveller assess their general health as being excellent, and 3 out of 10 assess it as being poor or very poor. Keith welcomed the findings of both the survey and the 2016 Census that record progress in Traveller education towards higher levels of retention. Sian Crowley of National Traveller MABS drew attention to public opinion on Travellers in Ireland, stating that only 42% of Irish people believed Accommodation for Travellers should be a priority item for local authorities now versus 55% in 2001.

This event was attended by Mayo MABS and Galway North MABS.

Key findings in Connaught:

- 4 in 10 Travellers in Connaught had gained employment from training schemes, compared to 2 in 10 nationally
- 61% of Travellers in Connaught said they had experienced discrimination in the previous year
- 79% of Travellers in Connaught said that the community adapts their behaviour in order to fit in

What has happened since?

Since the findings have been launched, The Community Foundation of Ireland (CFI) asked the Steering Committee to identify priority themes for community initiatives to be funded by

the CFI over the next five years. Through a facilitated process, the Steering Committee identified three key themes: Anti-racism, Supporting Traveller Leadership, and Traveller Employment and Enterprise. The CFI will open the national call for funding applications under these themes soon.



Photo credit: Travellers' Voice

Members of the Offaly Traveller Movement at the Launch of the National Traveller Survey, Leinster findings in the Tullamore Court Hotel April 18th 2018.

B L to R: Brigid McInerney, Community Health Worker (CHW); Mary McInerney CHW; Mags Lovett Health Manager; Emma Gilchreest, Offaly Traveller Movement Managing Director; Sarah McDonagh CHW

F L to R: Lilly Kavanagh CHW; Sandra McDonagh Mental Health Social Worker; Nuala Hogan Public Health Nurse.



Ethnic Equality Monitoring

What is Ethnic Equality Monitoring (EEM) and why does National Traveller MABS want it to be introduced into MABS services?

Ethnic Equality Monitoring is a tool for looking at how services interact with certain groups with a view to ensuring equal access to services for all. In general there is an absence of data to support evidence-based policy making for excluded groups such as Travellers and Roma. Ethnic equality monitoring therefore is about the collection, monitoring and evaluation of disaggregated data that informs specific responses to combat racism and discrimination. Many services such as health services, the prison service and education services have already or are beginning to introduce EEM as a way to ensure they understand how they are interacting with excluded groups. This means they can put in place measures to improve their service and have targeted responses to not only improve the experience of service users but ensure better outcomes.

Pavee Points explains how Ethnic Equality Monitoring improves services for marginalised people;

... 'The availability of accurate and timely data will contribute to increased awareness of inequality and the identification of appropriate target policies and interventions to eliminate identified disparities'.

How does it work?

The process includes data collection, data monitoring, data evaluation and actions to improve service delivery. In order for data to be compared across services (by this we mean generally, health education, etc.) there is a need for a universal question. To date government services have been using the 'census question' on ethnicity, which will allow comparison across data sets.

For MABS services this would involve asking all clients who attend the service the ethnicity question that appears on the census. It is understandable that staff might have reservations about asking this question. To begin with they might worry about people being suspicious as to the reason for the question, or

they might feel they don't know enough about what will happen with the data and how it will be used. This is why there will be a need for training.

The need for training

We know from other services who have introduced EEM that training has assisted staff in understanding the benefits of EEM.

Training develops people's understanding of the processes involved and builds skills to comfortably ask the question and respond to concerns expressed by clients. Training is an integral part of the Ethnic Equality Monitoring framework.

Who would do the monitoring and evaluation as part of the EEM Process?

The monitoring in the case of MABS would be undertaken by CIB and the kinds of areas being monitored might include numbers of clients from particular ethnicities attending services and the kinds of issues presenting to those services.

For more information on Ethnic Equality Monitoring go to http://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Counting-Us-In-A4_WEB.pdf



Launch of 'Left Behind in the Cold?' by Dublin 10&20 MABS



A report commissioned by Dublin 10&20 MABS was launched by Minister of State at the Department of Health, Catherine Byrne T.D. in February this year. The report titled 'Left Behind in the Cold?' was a follow-up piece to research undertaken in 2013. It looked at fuel poverty experienced by clients of Dublin 10&20 MABS. The report found that there had been very little improvement in fuel poverty experienced amongst clients of Dublin 10&20 MABS despite economic recovery. Key findings included:

- 72% of households surveyed were in fuel poverty, down from 79% in 2013
- 56% reported to have gone without heating in the previous 12 months through lack of money (this figure is four times the national average)
- There is a clear trend among clients away from more traditional utility suppliers and towards those who operate pre-payment facilities
- Financial inclusion remains high among clients, particularly among those in the fuel poverty cohort; only one in ten clients were using 'electronic' payment facilities

In relation to Travellers the report found:

- Although the sample size was small there appear to be specific issues of fuel poverty relating to Travellers

- These issues relate to insulation, arrears, disconnections, affordability, self-disconnection, higher cost, and income poverty risk

The report also found that the average age of mobile homes/ caravans lived in by Travellers who took part in the study was 15 years. No mobile was described as insulated and just over half of the mobiles had double glazing.

The report found that electricity costs amongst the group were consistently higher than average at €40 per week. With regard to heating these costs were considerably higher than the average client at €55 per week. All Traveller clients included in the research were in fuel poverty on the 10% measure with the average median percentage of household disposable income taken up by fuel costs amounting to 21%.

National Traveller MABS is continuing to work on the issue of fuel poverty amongst Travellers and will be undertaking further research in the area of fuel poverty, with a view to informing policy in the area.

To read the full report go to:

https://www.mabs.ie/downloads/reports_submissions/Left_Behind_in_the_Cold_Dublin_10_and_20_MABS_Report.pdf



Study on the Cost of Mobile Home and Trailer Accommodation

National Traveller MABS recently undertook a small scale study into the cost of trailer and mobile home accommodation to inform our work in the area of affordable accommodation for Travellers. The aim of the study was to identify the typical cost of installing a mobile home or trailer for use as a permanent residence for a Traveller family.

Currently 12% of Travellers live in mobile homes/trailers. For Travellers who choose to live in this form of accommodation for the most part they have to buy their own mobile home/trailer (in a very limited number of cases the council may rent a family a mobile home or trailer). There is a National Caravan Loan Scheme in operation but currently it is only operating in 8 out of 31 councils. The amounts on offer vary between €6,350 and €12,000 and are often difficult to access. This scheme has recently been reviewed and we are awaiting action on foot of the final report of the review process.

With regard to standard of accommodation offered by trailers and mobile homes, the ERSI's 'Social Portrait of Travellers' 2017 found that people living in trailers and mobiles live in overcrowded conditions (84%) that their accommodation was more likely to lack central heating, access to piped water and to sewage facilities.

Travellers who live on official halting sites pay rent for the bay in which their mobile home/trailer is located. Therefore the total accommodation cost for families is the rental cost for the bay and the loan repayment for the mobile home. In the small number of cases whereby the family is renting a mobile from the local authority the family pays one rent to cover both the bay and the mobile. Each local authority has their own method of calculation of rent. We also know that mobile homes/trailers are more expensive to heat as many lack proper insulation. A 2018 report into fuel poverty by Dublin 10&20 MABS (Left Behind in the Cold?) found higher rates of fuel poverty amongst their Traveller clients who lived in mobile homes. These families are spending 21% of disposable income on energy costs.

National Traveller MABS findings:

National Traveller MABS found that 25% of stock in the study was available for sale for under €10,000 and 17% of stock was priced at between €10,001 and €15,000. It is this group of mobile homes/trailers that would generally be accessible under the current caravan loan scheme. This stock was generally in poorer condition. In the case of stock available for under €10,000, the

age of the mobiles was between 12 and 15 years old and 79% had either no double glazing or no central heating.

Of the stock priced at between €10,001 and €15,000, 30% had either no double glazing or central heating. The age was between 12 and 15 years old and 77% were two-bed.

- We found a variety of used and new mobiles on offer ranging from under €10,000 to upwards of €100,000.
- For used mobiles the price was dependant on the age, size and very importantly the condition of the mobile.
- The prices for used mobiles ranged from under €10,000 up to in excess of €49,000.
- For new mobiles the price was dependant on the specification of the mobile. Again the size was important, but also too was the specification; whether it had a tiled roof, double glazing or gas central heating as well as a range of other features.
- A key factor was whether or not the mobile was manufactured to residential standard (suitable for living in all year round not just for holiday periods).
- New non-residential standard mobile homes could be purchased for upwards of €30,000. Residential standard mobile homes started at upwards of €60,000.

We concluded that the findings of this study have raised issues about the inadequacy of the current loan amount available under the existing 'Caravan Loan Scheme'. National Traveller MABS recommends increasing the loan amount. This raises issues in terms of affordability for Travellers on social welfare / low income and also issues of over indebtedness.

National Traveller MABS recommends the following:

- That Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government looks to develop guidelines for standards in mobile homes and trailers and uses UK manufacturing standards as a guide. This should be informed by a desire to ensure people have access to good quality accommodation and to eliminate fuel poverty for people living in this form of accommodation
- That the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government introduces a National Caravan Rental Scheme available to Travellers who are in need of social housing



- That the loan amount for caravan loans be increased to between €15,000 and €40,000
- That for families availing of the loan, affordability is factored into the process of the loan approval and that this process is supported by MABS services in terms of budgeting –for those unsuccessful loan applicants a rental scheme should be an option and repayments are processed through the Household Budget scheme for those on social welfare

National Traveller MABS is hosting a seminar in June for Traveller Organisations to discuss moving the recommendations of this report forward.

The complete study is available on our website at www.ntmabs.org

Department of Employment Affairs Social Protection's Annual Social Inclusion Forum Aviva Stadium Social Inclusion in a changing environment

The Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) was established by Government as part of the structures to monitor and evaluate Ireland's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAP inclusion) and took place on the 10th of May 2018. The Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection has the responsibility to convene the Forum and is assisted in this work by the Community Work Ireland (CWI) and the European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland (EAPN Ireland). This year the meeting had over 150 representatives from community and voluntary sector organisations as well as people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. The meeting provides a forum for engagement between officials from Government Departments and sectoral representatives.

This event is part of the institutional framework put in place by the Government to support the development of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, which was updated for the period 2015-2017. The Forum aims to ensure that people who are directly affected by poverty and social exclusion and those who work with them have a voice in the development of the policies that directly affect them, and in the ways that the policies are implemented.

This year the forum considered the changes that are influencing the development of policy, such as the Public Sector Duty; Equality Proofing and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The forum was preceded by regional meetings of groups experiencing poverty who inputted into the forum meeting on the day. Issues raised by groups included;

- Groups and individuals, including those who are working in low paid sectors do not have enough income to live with dignity, with many living on incomes below the poverty line. Social Welfare payments and other benefits continue to force people below the poverty line.

- Housing and homelessness is the greatest issue facing the country- the consultations highlighted the range of housing issues impacting on people including access to affordable accommodation, the issue of overcrowding, housing of people experiencing domestic violence, housing tenure, lack of Traveller accommodation and increases in the number of Travellers living at the side of the road with no access to services and the need to build social housing
- Rural disadvantage, rural isolation, rural transport and the need to rural proof plans
- The issue of childcare and early childhood development, including lack of access, the difficulty for community childcare providers in operation of childcare services and the nature of low paid childcare
- The need for supports for Travellers and Roma children in the education system and the need for more supports and resources for children with special needs
- The need to plan for older people into the future given people are living longer and there will be less money available to pay for pensions
- The lack of jobs in some areas particularly rural areas was highlighted – and the need for a change of attitude to and in how people who are unemployed are treated, including the attitude of some department staff.
- The need to end direct provision, to fund organisations that provide services to migrants, to support integration, work to eliminate discrimination and provide opportunities for migrants
- The need to resource community work in local communities to support groups experiencing poverty and marginalisation to develop a voice

For more information go to www.socialinclusion.ie

Irish Traveller Ethnicity Celebration, Royal Hospital Kilmainham, March 15th 2018







Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty - ensuring Equality and Human Rights in the provision of Public Services for Travellers and other marginalised groups

There are a range of factors that contribute to the financial exclusion of Travellers. These include though are not limited to: access to education, access to employment, access to culturally appropriate affordable accommodation, and exclusion from mainstream financial services. There is an unemployment rate of 85% in the Traveller community, and the situation regarding accommodation is at crisis levels, with issues such as discrimination ensuring Travellers are last on the list when trying to access private rented accommodation.

Traveller organisations report levels of homelessness as being at an all-time high. These issues are inherently linked to a failure to realise fundamental human rights for marginalised groups in particular. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the U.N. Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights are particularly relevant when trying to understand the situation of Travellers in Ireland and the failure to ensure realisation of rights. The group of rights known as economic, social and cultural rights which include the right to work, the right to housing and the right to an adequate standard of living are all relevant when looking at how we realise the rights of Travellers.

The Irish mechanism for ensuring realisation of the rights of Irish citizens is The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. The commission was established by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 and is most commonly known as IHREC. The

commission has a statutory remit to protect human rights and promote equality in the Irish State. IHREC's role is to review the adequacy of law, policy and practice in the state and make recommendations to government to strengthen uphold and protect human rights and equality.

The 2014 act sets out the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty which lays down the duty of public bodies in terms of the elimination of discrimination, the protection of human rights and the promotion of equality. This duty is to both employees and the people who use the services of public bodies. Public bodies are expected to identify equality and human rights issues relevant to their function, identify the policies and practices they have or plan to have in place to address these issues and report on their progress in a way that is accessible to the public.

The public sector duty will be a useful mechanism to improve outcomes for marginalised groups like Travellers. It has the potential to improve services across education, employment and the provision of housing all of which impact on the financial exclusion of Travellers. The key will be in the implementation process and the willingness of public bodies to really engage with the duty. For more information go to <https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/>

