



The Tharie Times

Issue 30, Spring 2022

Welcome



Nancy Power

Welcome to the spring edition of The Tharie Times. We know that the past two years have been very difficult for people and we hope that 2022 brings better news for us all.

It was with heavy hearts that we said goodbye to Ronnie Fay. Ronnie was a tireless advocate for the Traveller and Roma communities and

a true champion of social justice. May she rest in peace. Ní bheith a leithéid ann arís.

As we emerge from the pandemic we continue to be busy trying to ensure that we support people and keep them informed in relation to all the changes that are taking place. We are regularly updating our Facebook and Twitter pages as well as our website.

As the New Year rings changes for us all, we say goodbye to our joint Co-Ordinator Dermot Sreenan who has left us for pastures new. Dermot worked with National Traveller MABS for 14 years and will be missed. We wish Dermot all the best in his new role with MABS support.

We continue to work on our pilot project addressing energy poverty on halting sites and recognise that the issue has deteriorated further over the past few months as we have seen gas and electricity price increases as well as additional carbon taxes. We have also begun to work on a community engagement pilot with Dublin South MABS and look forward to helping to build links between MABS and the Traveller community.

We hope to continue working with you all as we emerge from this pandemic. We know there continues to be plenty to be done and we will continue to work to try to improve conditions for Travellers in Ireland. We hope that 2022 will be better for us all.

Ronnie Fay

It was with deep regret that all of us here at National Traveller MABS learned of the death of Ronnie Fay. Ronnie was a great advocate for human rights and social justice and a passionate and powerful advocate for the Traveller community for over forty years. We

extend our sympathies to her husband Philip, her children Jonathan, Veronica and Patrick, her wider family and friends and all her colleagues at Pavee Point.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dilis.



Pilot Project Addressing Energy Poverty on Halting Sites

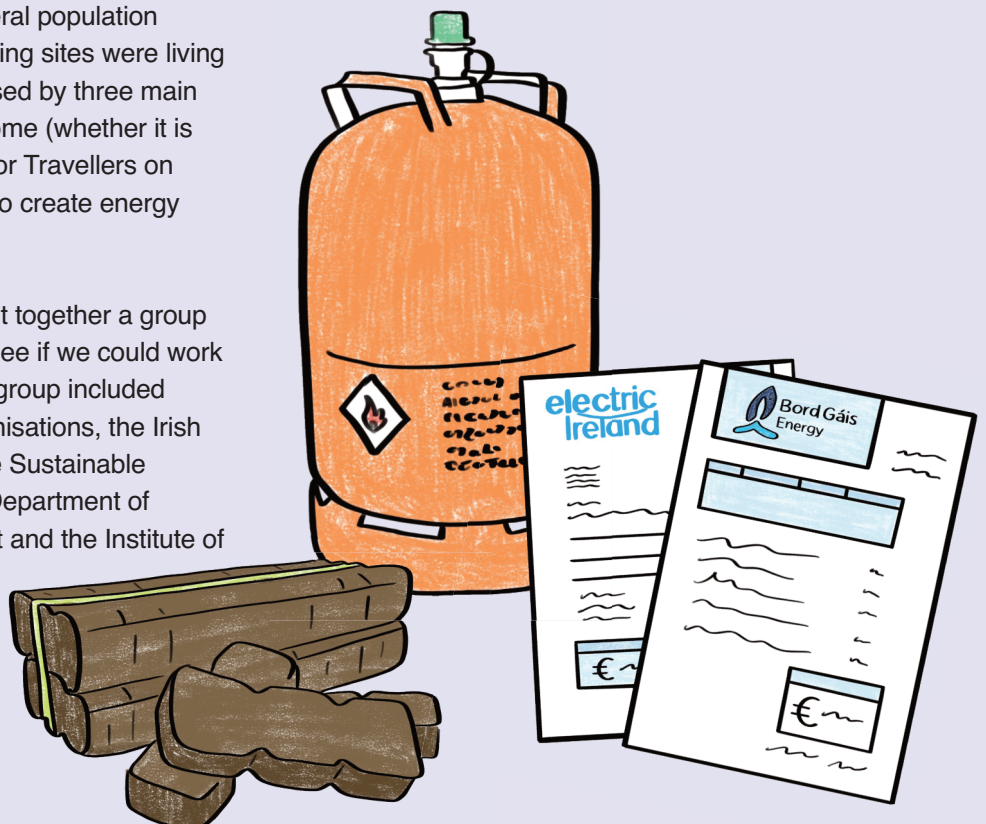
For many families the cost of energy is a big part of their weekly spending. In fact, over recent months this has become an even bigger problem as we have seen gas and electricity price increases as well as additional carbon taxes. National Traveller MABS is aware that many families find it hard to meet the cost of energy and have to borrow from family members, go into debt or go without. Some families self-disconnect during the winter months. For families living on halting sites this is an even bigger problem as trailers and mobiles are very expensive to heat because of their poor insulation. Quite often there are other issues on sites including not being able to get accurate meter readings and problems with the way gas and electricity are supplied. For families who are sharing a bay, some are not able to get the winter fuel payment or fuel allowance.

Back in 2018, National Traveller MABS worked with other local Traveller organisations and MABS services to look at this issue. We did a study that found families living in halting sites spend an average of €108 per week on energy. In the general population this figure is €39 per week. The study found that families on halting sites spend just over a quarter of their income on energy, while the general population spend about 4%. 75% of families on halting sites were living in energy poverty. Energy poverty is caused by three main issues, low income, the quality of your home (whether it is well insulated) and the price of energy. For Travellers on halting sites all of these issues combine to create energy poverty.

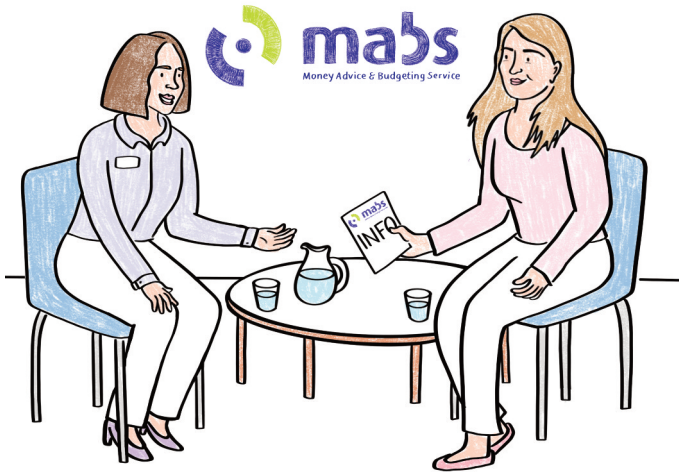
In 2021, National Traveller MABS brought together a group of people from a number of agencies to see if we could work together to solve this problem. This new group included representatives from local Traveller organisations, the Irish Traveller Movement, local authorities, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), The Department of Housing Planning and Local Government and the Institute of Technology Sligo. This group agreed to develop a pilot project on one or more halting sites. This project is trying to understand the problems and carry out actions to address them. We will

evaluate and write up what we learn as a model of good practice. This model will look at the day units, the trailers/mobiles and also how energy is supplied on the site. In case of the day unit/house we will look at insulating and retrofitting. In terms of the supply of energy we will explore new technologies including solar panels heat pumps and wind turbines. With the trailer or mobile homes, we will look at how better quality homes might be provided to families at affordable prices. Currently there is one pilot site identified and discussion is underway with one local authority to run a pilot on the site. SEAI or the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland will part fund the pilot project/s. Once agreement from the local authority (as they have to apply for funding) is in place, engagement with families will begin.

The aim of this project is to develop models of good practice that can be shared with other local authorities and inform how Traveller Accommodation on halting sites is delivered. We will work for this good practice to become government policy and incorporated into the design and delivery of Traveller Accommodation. The aim is to eradicate energy poverty for Traveller families living on halting sites.



Dublin South Community Engagement Pilot



National Traveller MABS is part of the MABS network. One of our key aims is to resource and support MABS/CIS to develop policies and practice to make their services more accessible to and appropriate for Travellers. Achieving equality in service provision is an ongoing task for all MABS staff.

Staff of Dublin South Region MABS met with staff of National Traveller MABS in early 2021 to discuss how we might work together to improve access to services for Travellers in the region. They agreed to pilot a Community Engagement programme in the Dublin South Region. The main aims of the pilot are:

- To increase engagement of the Traveller community in MABS in the Dublin south region.
- To increase cultural competency of staff of Dublin South Region MABS in relation to Traveller culture.
- To develop and strengthen relationships between MABS and local Traveller organisations in the Dublin South Region

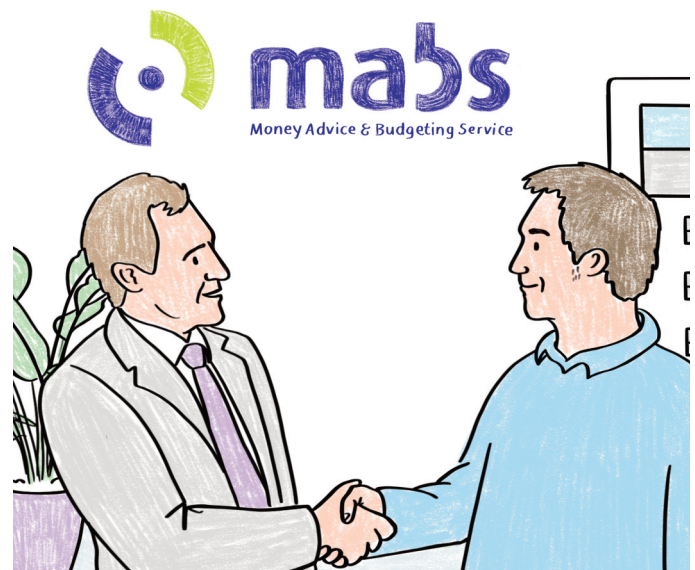
All eight services in the Dublin South region agreed to take part. Each service assigned a designated point of contact who would coordinate with their staff. The group met a number of times and agreed on the objectives of the pilot and a project plan. Services have committed to undertake Traveller cultural awareness training, information sessions about the financial issues affecting the Traveller community

as well as relationship building with their local Traveller organisation.

A toolkit for MABS staff engaging in the pilot is available on the CIB Learning System which contains factsheets about the Traveller Community, Traveller accommodation plans for South Dublin, National Traveller MABS publications, information about Traveller specific support services, information about Traveller culture and History, information about plain English and community education resources.

As part of the pilot a booklet for MABS staff detailing Traveller specific support services was developed. This is available as part of the toolkit and will be circulated to all MABS staff.

Due to the lack of an ethnic identifier in the MABS system we lack quantitative data on the number of Travellers accessing the services in South Dublin. To combat this we have developed a baseline questionnaire to evaluate where MABS services were before the pilot and this will be re-run at the end of the pilot to measure any changes. The pilot will be fully evaluated at its conclusion and we hope to replicate it in other MABS regions.

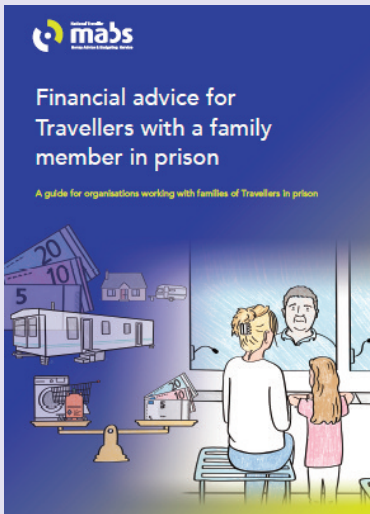




Extra Bank Holiday 2022

This year we will have an extra bank holiday on the 18th March. This is will be held in recognition of the efforts of the general public, volunteers and all workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in remembrance of people who lost their lives due to the pandemic and in remembrance of people who lost their lives due to COVID-19.

It will create a four-day weekend because it falls the day after the bank holiday for St Patrick's Day, Thursday 17 March.



Financial Advice for Travellers with a Family Member in Prison, A guide for organisations working with families of Travellers in prison 2022

National Traveller MABS is a member of the Travellers in Prison Initiative and worked with TPI members to develop a resource for organisations working with families of Travellers in prison. The resource is a guide to assist families in accessing their welfare and tax entitlements. It also describes the budgeting and debt advice supports available from MABS offices. The guide has been updated to reflect the changes introduced in Budget 2022 and is available on www.ntmabs.org or by email info@ntmabs.org

The Exchange House Ireland National Educational Achievement Awards

We were delighted to be able to attend in person the Exchange House Ireland National Educational Achievement Awards in November to offer our congratulations to the award winners and their families. The awards were presented to recipients by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris.

The Exchange House Ireland National Educational Achievement Award is a celebration of the success of the recipients providing a chance to congratulate people on a job well done. The Award highlights role models for other Travellers who may be considering formal education and is proactive in promoting the value of formal education.

