

**Traveller Rights Are
Human Right**

Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project
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Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project Submission

Our vision is of a society where justice, equality of opportunity and diversity are cherished and secured for all the population, and within which the Traveller community can flourish as an equal and respected partner actively contributing to the wellbeing of the whole community.

Our mission in building this kind of society is to support Travellers and state agencies to address the legacy of racism experienced by Travellers through achieving equality of outcomes for Travellers in key social and economic areas, and through taking actions to reverse a decline in the equality of aspects of the Traveller culture and way of life.

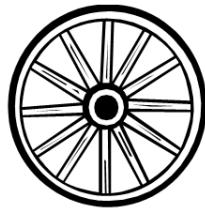
Suicide

The recent all Ireland Traveller Health study noted that the issue of suicide among the Traveller community is more acute than among the settled community, particularly among Traveller men. The *Our Geels –The All Ireland Traveller Health Study*^[1], estimated that in 2008 the rate of suicide among the Traveller population was six times the rate for the national population and accounted for 11% of all Traveller deaths. The Walker study^[2] (which examined the years 2000-2006) had estimated that rates were more than three times that of the national population (peaking in 2005 at five times) with young Traveller men very acutely at risk. Therefore, the rate is rising, and this remains to be a significant and frightening issue within the community.

Travellers are experiencing significant mental health issues, which are impacted on by a range of contexts, issues and experiences. These include exclusion, racism, accommodation addiction, education, employment and socio-economic as well as direct issues relating to mental health such as understanding of mental health issues in general, lack of access to services, lack of culturally appropriate services and stigma. All of this makes it a very complex issue for organisations and services to address.

¹ All Ireland Traveller Heath Study (AITHS 2010) All Ireland Traveller Health Study: Summary of Findings. Dublin: School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Population Science, UCD.

² Mary Rose Walker 2008, Suicide Among the Irish Traveller Community – 2000-2006



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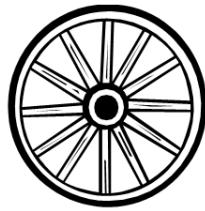
Specific Issues re Travellers and Mental Health

- There is a low uptake of mainstream mental health services by the Traveller Community due to the lack of cultural awareness in service providers. Travellers who have a bad first time experience leave feeling discriminated against and isolated and then relate their experiences to other Travellers. There is also a lack of culturally appropriate services and an underfunding of the ones that are there.
- Figures have been quoted suggesting that up 10% of residents of the Central Mental Hospital are Travellers, more than ten times the proportion of the settled/sedentary population³
- Within the Traveller Community there is a significant sense of shame and stigma in relation to Mental health.

This was also clearly highlighted in the AITHS10, which reported that:

- 64.4% of Travellers experienced discrimination in accessing health services
- 53% of Travellers “worried about experiencing unfair treatment” from health providers
- 43% of Travellers did not have complete trust in health service providers
- 12% of Travellers felt they received worse treatment than others from the mental health services
- Over 40% of Travellers had a concern that they were not always treated with respect and dignity
- Over 50% of Travellers had concerns of the quality of care they received when they engaged with services

³ <http://travellingcounselling.ie/the-traveller-community/traveller-mental-health/>



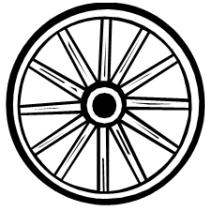
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World Health Organisation (WHO) Social Determinants of Mental Health

- Mental health and many common mental disorders are shaped to a great extent by the social, economic, and physical environments in which people live.
- Social inequalities are associated with increased risk of many common mental disorders
- Taking action to improve the conditions of daily life from birth, during early childhood, at school age, during family building and working ages, and at older ages provides opportunities both to improve population mental health and to reduce the risk of those mental disorders that are associated with social inequalities.
- Effective actions are required to reduce risk of mental disorders throughout the life course, at the community level and at the country level. It includes environmental, structural, and local interventions. Such actions to prevent mental disorders are likely to promote mental health in the population.
- Risk and protective factors act at several different levels, including the individual, the family, the community, the structural, and the population levels. A social determinants of health approach requires action across multiple sectors and levels.⁴

⁴ Social Determinants of Mental Health (2014) World Health Organisation



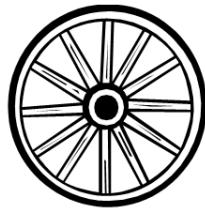
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The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) 2017-2021

There are a number of recommendations in NTRIS in relation to mental health and suicide, some of the key ones are:

- 87. The Health Service Executive will support and further develop culturally appropriate services to respond to the mental health needs of Travellers and Roma in consultation with Traveller and Roma organisations.
- 88. The Health Service Executive will develop targeted interventions and educational materials to support good mental health, suicide prevention and promote self-esteem and self-acceptance for young Travellers
- 89. The Health Service Executive (National Office for Suicide Prevention) will develop communication campaigns to reduce stigmatising attitudes to mental health and suicidal behaviour at population level and within priority populations, including the Traveller and Roma communities.
- 93. The department of Justice and Equality will review the Traveller Counselling Service with a view to supporting its continuation.



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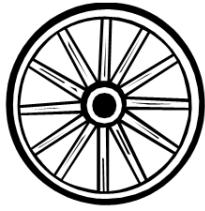
Vision for Change 2006

Key recommendations in relations to Travellers in Vision for Change acknowledge that there is a need to respond to the mental health needs of minority groups: -

- 4.8.1 Responding to the Mental Health Needs of Minority Groups: There is a small but significant number of people in Ireland who have additional needs when they develop a mental health problem. For example, Travellers, gay and lesbian individuals, deaf individuals, and people from other countries and cultures, require specific knowledge and understanding on the part of those delivering mental health services, in terms of their culture and other characteristics. The employment of professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures in mental health services is a positive step that should be taken to respond to the needs of the diverse population in Ireland.

Recommendation 4.8: Mental health services should be provided in a culturally sensitive manner. Training should be made available for mental health professionals in this regard, and mental health services should be resourced to provide services to other ethnic groups, including provision for interpreters.⁵

⁵ A Vision for Change



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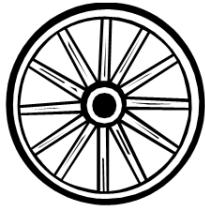
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Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care: House of the Oireachtas, October 2018

This committee was established by the Dáil in 2017 to develop a long term vision for mental health care services and the direction of mental health policy. The report recommends that more resources should be targeted at areas of highest need, to include a priority focus on the Traveller community. The following recommendations relate specifically to Travellers

- Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the Department of Health carry out a study to identify the causative factors, to include a priority focus on the Traveller Community, and how they can be addressed. This should be repeated over time and revalidated which will assist in identifying trends.
- Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that more resources and funding should be targeted at the areas of highest need with particular attention to the Traveller Community and towards addressing suicide.
- Recommendation 4: The Committee recommends as Slaintecare is implemented that the recommended increase to 10% for mental health services be ring fenced and prioritised, with a portion of the budget ring fenced for a National Traveller Mental Health Strategy.⁶

⁶ Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care



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Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project Recommendations

1. The development of a National Traveller Mental Health Strategy with key actions, expected outcomes, areas of responsibility and time frame.
2. Research at a national level needs to be undertaken in order to identify the full impact mental health issues are having on the Traveller Community as well as identifying gaps and barriers to accessing services
3. Cultural Competency training should be mandatory for service providers in order to ensure an understanding of Traveller Culture and increase uptake of use in mainstream services.
4. Mainstream services need to work in partnership with local Traveller Organisations to identify gaps and barriers for Travellers using their services and also to identify and develop initiatives to improve access.
5. Culturally appropriate counselling services need to be funded at a local area. These are vital services and as noted in the finding of the survey are seen as very valuable by Travellers that access them.
6. The HSE should fund the employment of Traveller mental health workers within Traveller organisations.
7. The Irish state should recognise Traveller Culture and History in the education system, which will encourage and support the development of self-esteem.
8. The Irish state needs to acknowledge the impact of the assimilationist and absorption policies and the need to initiate a programme of reparations.