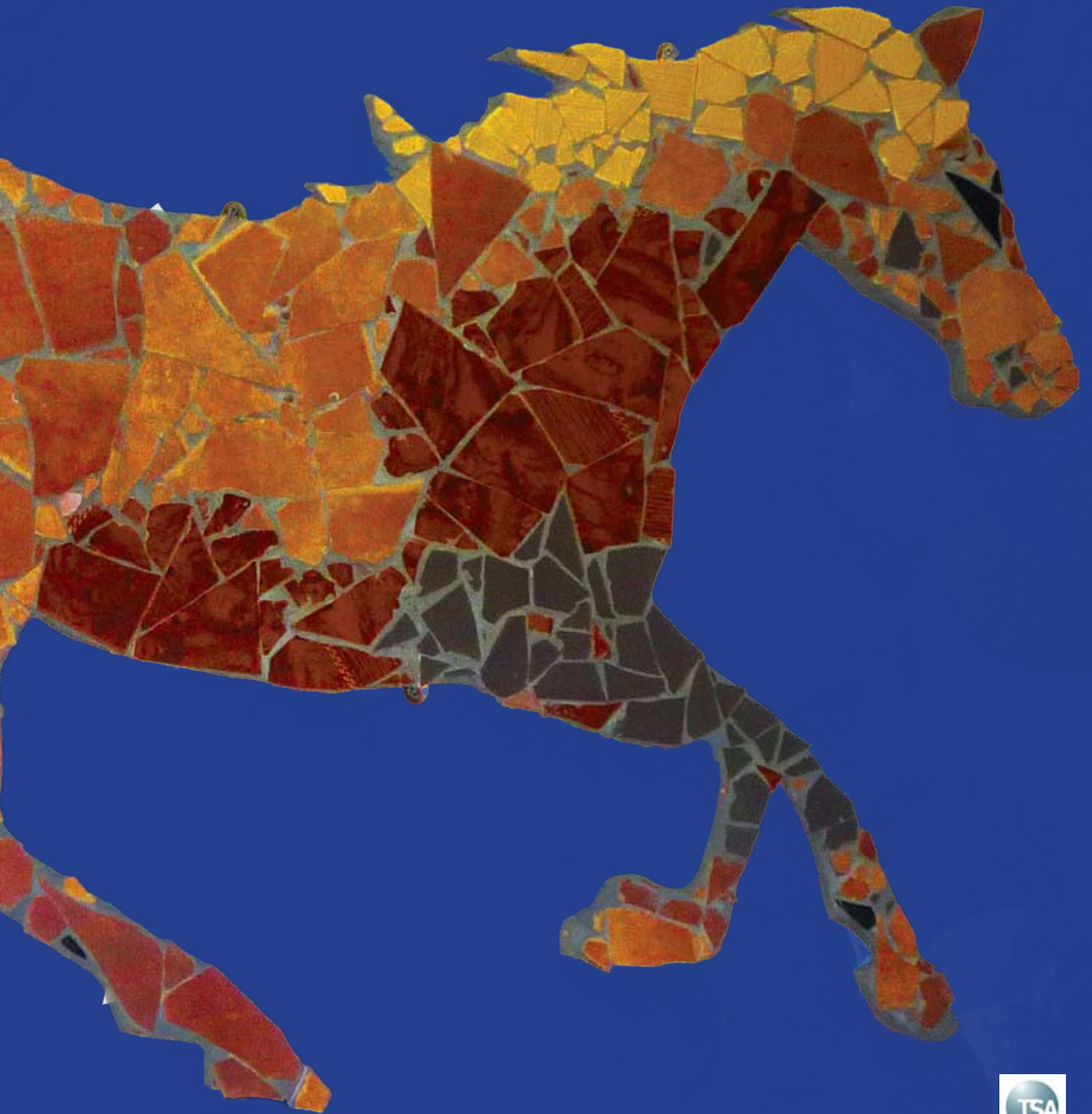


Young Travellers in Cork and their experiences of services



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I.0 Introduction

This research has been commissioned by the Youth and Childcare Subcommittee of the County Cork Inter-Agency Traveller group. The County Cork Traveller Interagency group has the specific purpose of focussing on the delivery of integrated services for Travellers and to improve the co-operation between all agencies involved in delivering those services.

I.1 Background to research

In 2006, the Inter-Agency group undertook an overview of the supports and services to the Traveller community in Cork provided by the agencies represented on the inter-agency Group.

This research aims to examine the same situation from the perspective of young members of the Traveller community. The intention is that it will identify tasks and areas of work for the interagency group to fulfil its purpose. The rationale is that in order to maximise investments in time, money and training currently available, account must be taken of the needs/experiences of Traveller children as they or their parents identify them, as well as what assists them to participate in and avail of services and the barriers that they encounter.

The research was funded by the HSE South Traveller Health Unit (THU), which is a partnership structure between the HSE South and Traveller organisations in Cork and Kerry. It has responsibility for the monitoring of health services to the Traveller community and the implementation of the National Traveller health strategy in the region. It supports the Southern Traveller health Network (STHN) which is a network of Traveller-led organisation in the region.

There are five Traveller-led, community development organisations in Cork City and County that, as one part of their remit, advocate for the equitable access to services for Travellers. These groups are part of both the Interagency Group and THU and through the STHN are represented on a Research Committee which oversaw this study. The full membership of the Research Committee was:

- Visiting Teacher Service, Dept. of Education and Skills¹

¹ Changes to the provision of supports to Travellers in education from September 2011 has meant that specific supports such as the visiting teacher service, resource teachers and 1.5 allocation hours are no longer be available. The general allocation model of supports, on an individual needs basis, now applies.

- Cork County Childcare Committee
- East Cork Advocacy Project
- Community Work Section, HSE
- Traveller Health Unit, HSE

The Research Committee reports to the Youth and Childcare subcommittee of the inter-agency group.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the research

The aims of the research are as follows:

- To carry out a participative action research project to map the experiences of Traveller children in accessing services available to them
- To identify their experience of available services and explore examples of successful participation in services e.g. existing community childcare facilities, as well as the possible barriers to participation.
- Recommendations from the project will form the foundation for planning for Traveller children and young adults from their perspective.

The objectives of the research are to:

- Identify the service needs of children and young people
- Identify the extent to which these needs are being met through accessing existing services
- Identify gaps and issues presenting for service delivery to young Travellers
- Explore the potential impacts on Travellers of these gaps and issues
- Identify a series of practical recommendations to the Traveller Inter-agency Group to address the research outcomes.

The research sought to identify the service needs of young Travellers from their own personal perspectives, rather than those of service providers or other organisations.

The geographic size of County Cork militates against a study covering the whole county and therefore the Research Committee selected distinct geographic areas representative of the different settlement types and areas of the county. In addition, it was agreed that transient and roadside families be included in the research irrespective of their location.

1.3 Methodology

Research stages

The research design was developed to maximise the participation of Travellers in the design and the delivery of the research process.

The first stage involved engaging with local Traveller organisations and community activists from the Traveller community in Cork. These organisations were Travellers of North Cork, West Cork Traveller Centre and East Cork Advocacy Group. Traveller organisations acted as research oversight and advisory groups: they supported the design of the research process, identified key themes and advised the research team on how best to engage with young Travellers.

The next stage of the research involved direct consultations with children and young Travellers, as well as their parents. This combined a mix of one-to-one interviews and group discussions with young Travellers. Engagement with Travellers was facilitated by the aforementioned Traveller organisations.

The consultations focused on the objectives of the research, including the experiences and needs of Travellers in relation to services; young Travellers' preferences for service provision; barriers to accessing services; impacts of accessing or not accessing services on children and family members; and how to improve access to services for Travellers. Consultations took place with young Travellers and their parents in the following towns:

- Garryvoe/ Ladysbridge
- Middleton
- Youghal
- Charleville
- Bandon
- Clonakilty
- Bantry
- Skibbereen

Documentary research

Some desk research was undertaken including a review of data and statistics on Travellers in Cork, needs analyses, project evaluations, policy submissions, as well as national studies pertaining to issues affecting young Travellers.

Consultations

As discussed above, the primary research method was qualitative, and consultations comprising semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were undertaken with young people and their parents.

34 young people and nine parents from 12 families or extended families were interviewed.

The majority of young people interviewed were female, and the most prevalent group was living in standard housing. The North Cork area accounts for the largest group of interviewees (41 per cent), East Cork accounts for one third, and West Cork accounted for 26 percent of interviewees.

The 12-18 years age group was the most prevalent age of young Travellers interviewed, followed by the younger age group of 5-11 years.

Interviews also took place with nine parents of young Travellers in Bantry and Clonakilty in West Cork.

Supplementary research

In the course of the research, it emerged that some young Travellers in Cork had recently participated in research undertaken by the 'That's My Goal' youth project.² Some of the transcripts from this research were made available to this research project, and provided valuable additional data. Where this research is cited, it is clearly identified as being part of this separate research project.

² The 'That's My Goal' Youth Project, West Cork is one a number of projects supported nationally by the Traveller Interagency Fund, and the Department of Justice and Equality. The project is based in West Cork and covers Macroom, Bandon & Clonakilty, it began in October 2009. The project was established to work with young Travellers in identifying personal and groups' goals. The target group includes young Travellers aged between ten and twenty five and their families.

Format of report

Section two provides a short profile of Travellers in Ireland.

Section three profiles those who were interviewed as part of this research.

Section four describes the experiences of Travellers in County Cork with regard to services that they have accessed.

Section five includes a discussion of the themes and overarching issues arising in the research.

Section six concludes from the research findings and outlines a number of practical recommendations for consideration by the inter-agency group.

2.0 Profile of Travellers

In spite of a range of policy measures and legislation aimed at improving the situation of many Travellers, the community remains one of the most marginalised and excluded groups in Ireland. In this section, an overview of the profile of Travellers in Ireland and in county Cork is outlined.

2.1 Travellers population statistics

The All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS) (2010) enumerated 9,056 Traveller families in the Republic of Ireland (with a further 1,562 based in Northern Ireland). The study estimates (on the basis of an average family size of 4 persons per household), the total Traveller population in the Republic of Ireland to be 36,224 (with a further 3,905 Travellers living in Northern Ireland).³ These figures are significantly higher than previous statistics (for example, the 2006 census figures reported the Traveller population in the Republic of Ireland as 22,435).

Moreover, the AITHS also undertook a census of Travellers living in Cork city and county as part of the mapping stage of this research, and according to this census, there were 1,101 Traveller families living in Cork city and county.⁴

This is significantly higher than statistics published by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Its figures (2011) indicate that there are 761 Traveller families living in the city and the county.

Notwithstanding the differences in available statistics, it is accepted that outside Dublin, Cork city and county have the third highest concentration of Traveller families (after Galway city and county).

Travellers' status in Irish law is as a 'social group,' although the United Nations Human Rights Committee has called for the Irish Government to recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority group. The recommendation followed the UN Human Rights Committee observations on the Irish Government's third periodic report under the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. In March 2011, the EU's Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern at the state's 'persistent refusal' to recognise Travellers as

³ All Ireland Traveller Health Study - Our Geels (2010): *Summary of Findings*. These figures are based on the census of Travellers undertaken as part of the AITHS in 2008.

⁴ Source: HSE Traveller Health Unit, Cork

an ethnic minority despite earlier recommendations, and pointed out that Travellers have satisfied the internationally recognised criteria for such a group.

2.2 Accommodation

In 2008 the NTACC annual report⁵ estimated that 38 percent of Travellers were living in standard housing; 18 percent in private rented accommodation, 5 percent in private housing, 4 percent in shared housing, 6 percent in housing of their own resources, 8 percent in group housing, 1 percent in social housing, 13 percent in halting sites, and 7 percent on unauthorised sites.

The same report outlines the status of housing and accommodation for Travellers in County Cork:

Status of housing and accommodation of Traveller families in Co Cork 2010									
	Standard LA housing	LA Group housing	Private rented with LA support	Housing Assoc with LA support	Halting site - official	Unauth. halting site	Own resource	Private rented sector (est.)	Shared
Cork (County)	135	16	16	1	17	23	17	88	50
% of total	37%	4%	4%	< 1%	5%	6%	5%	24%	14%

185 Traveller families are housed with the assistance of the local authority (51 percent of all families identified in the count).

This data reports that there is a slightly higher proportion of Travellers living on unauthorised sites in County Cork (compared with the national figure of 4.6 percent). The figure of 23 families living on unauthorised sites is an increase on 2009, when there were 21 families living on such sites.

According to Cork County Council, between 2005 and 2008, 70 units of accommodation out of a target 165 units were delivered under its Traveller Accommodation Programme. Included in these targets were 21 bays in permanent sites (12 of which were delivered) and 12 bays in transient sites (none of which were delivered). The most cited reason for targets not being reached was a lack of accommodation available in housing applicants' area of preference.

For the current period of the Traveller Accommodation Programme (2009-2013), a total of 122 units of accommodation is planned, and this includes 6 transient sites (in North Cork) and 7 permanent sites throughout the county.⁶

⁵ National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (2008): Annual Report. Dublin: Dept of Environment Heritage and Local Government

⁶ Cork County Council: *Traveller Accommodation Programme (2009-2013)*

2.3 General profile of young Travellers in Ireland

Travellers’ population profile indicates a high birth rate and a young population. As Travellers get older, the proportion of total population becomes smaller because of high mortality rates at a younger age.

Data gathered as part of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS) on the age distribution of Travellers is outlined in the table below, and is compared with the age distribution of the general population (as established in census 2006).

Age distribution of Traveller and general populations		
Age group	General population 2006	Travellers 2008
0-14 yrs	7%	16%
5-14 yrs	14%	26%
15-24 yrs	14%	21%
25-39 yrs	22%	31%
40-64 yrs	30%	13%
65+ yrs	13%	3%

The young age profile will continue to have significant implications for policy measures affecting younger Travellers, such as health, training, education, youth and community policies.

Infant mortality

Infant mortality is generally considered a good indicator of a population’s level of health and development. The infant mortality rate is defined as the number of deaths under the age of 1 year in babies who were born alive per 1,000 live births. According to the AITHS (2010), there were 12 Traveller infant deaths reported in the Republic of Ireland for 2008 and the total estimated births in that period was 849 births. This gives a Traveller infant mortality rate of 14.1 per 1,000 live births, compared with a general infant mortality rate of 3.9 per 1,000 live births. Moreover, the gap between the Traveller infant mortality rate and that of the general population is larger now than it was in the last Traveller health study (undertaken in 1987).

Education attainment

A young age profile of a group might be expected to indicate a higher education attainment, given improvements in access to and provision of education in the past few decades. However, this is not the case with the Traveller community, and census 2006 reports that 77 percent of all Travellers aged 15+ years who responded to the question on education attainment, obtained primary only/ no formal education as their highest educational

attainment: this compares to 18.9 percent of the national population in the same category. Only 4.1 percent of the Traveller population over the age of 15 years, who responded to the question, have attained upper secondary education; the corresponding figure for the national population is 29.5 percent.

More up to date figures indicate the marginalisation of Travellers in the Irish education system where - in spite of Government commitments to intercultural education - in 2009, just 103 Travellers completed the Leaving Certificate⁷ out of 57,455 students who completed the Leaving certificate in that year.

According to the focus groups with Travellers undertaken as part of the AITHS, [a lack of] education was viewed as a major barrier to improved lifestyle and health. The negative effects were reported to start in early childhood and continue throughout the lives of Travellers.⁸

Unemployment

In terms of employment and labour market participation, the 2006 Census highlighted the extent of unemployment within the Traveller community: it reported that 74.9 percent of Travellers in the labour force were unemployed. The corresponding figure amongst the national population at the time was 8.5 percent.

According to this data, unemployment was highest within the 15-24 year age group, which reported an unemployment rate of 80.8 percent and 80.1 percent for men and women respectively.

Discrimination in the labour market is a key concern, and Traveller men consulted as part of the AITHS reported that 'in addition to being discriminated against in the formal economy, they are also excluded from the informal economy such as labouring or gardening.'⁹

Mental health

Mental health and suicidal behaviour remain amongst the most important public health issues in Ireland. Figures for the occurrence of suicide from the CSO for suicides in Ireland in 2009 reported a figure of 527 cases in that year, which was an alarming increase of 24 percent on the previous year's figure of 424. The overwhelming majority of cases are male (in 2009, males accounted for 80 percent of all cases).

⁷ Department of Education and Skills.

⁸ AITHS (2010): *Summary of Findings*, p.122.

⁹ AITHS (2010): *Summary of Findings*, p.121.

Suicide is predominately associated with younger age groups, and the age distribution of Travellers itself implies that they are a higher risk group for suicidal behaviour than the general population. According to data reported by the AIHHS, there were 12 suicides recorded by the General Register Office in 2008, amongst Travellers. The study concludes that there were 6.6 times the number of male suicides amongst Travellers compared with the general population. The female suicide rate was also higher but the difference was not statistically significant.

Research¹⁰ undertaken on suicide amongst Travellers between 2000 and 2006 indicates that this is a long-term trend, and one that is becoming more prevalent in the Traveller community. This research found that:

- Between 2000 and 2006 the rate of suicide among Irish Travellers at 3.7:10,000 was over three times that of the total population, peaking in 2005 when it was over five times the national rate. The actual number of deaths by suicide among Travellers in this period was 74.
- Suicide is predominantly a male issue. For the total population, male suicide is four times as common as female suicide. For Travellers the male suicide rate is 91 percent, over nine times as common as female suicide.
- 52 percent of those who died by suicide had never married, with a further 15 percent being separated or widowed.
- Over 65 percent of Traveller suicides occurred among those aged under 30. (National figures over the same period showed almost 34 percent of all suicides since 2000 occurred among the under 30's).
- The age group most at risk for Travellers is 25-29, which accounts for 26 percent of Traveller suicides.

According to this research:

With recent changes in society, Travellers have had to learn to cope with increased hostility, difficulty with identity, loss of culture and traditions and lack of purpose in life. Given the existing vulnerabilities of Travellers today, factors such as alcohol or substance abuse, economic insecurity, violence, depression assume an additional risk level. It may therefore not be so surprising that an immediate crisis,

¹⁰ Walker, M. R. (2008): *Suicide among the Irish Traveller community, 2000–2006*. Wicklow: Wicklow County Council

such as death or marital conflict, can act as a trigger factor for suicide.¹¹

According to Pavee Point, Travellers could be described as a high-risk or vulnerable group in so far as they fare poorly on every indicator used to measure socio-economic status, health, accommodation, education and employment.¹²

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Submission by Pavee Point to the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention (2005).
<http://www.paveepoint.ie/submissions/06-SuicideOffice.pdf>

3.0 Profile of young people consulted

This research was concerned with the experiences and needs of young Travellers: for young children, under the age of five years, researchers consulted with parents to establish their needs. For older age groups, the research consulted directly with the young people.

34 young people from 12 families or extended families were interviewed. In addition, nine parents of young children were consulted.

The table below outlines a general profile of the young people interviewed.

In summary, the majority of young people interviewed were female (65 percent), and the most prevalent group was living in standard housing. However, some of these young people had prior experience of living in trailers or non-standard housing and discussed these experiences.

The 12-18 years age group is the most prevalent accounting for 62 percent of all those interviewed, followed by the younger age group of 5-11 years (accounting for 26 percent).

This research sought to interview young people in a number of specific areas in North, East and West Cork. The rationale for this was based partly on the numbers of families in these areas as well as a lack of prior research on the needs of families in these areas.

The table below indicates the general areas where interviewees were from.

		Number	% of those interviewed
Gender	Male	12	35%
	Female	22	65%
Housing	House	18	53%
	Group Housing	3	9%
	Unofficial/trailer	3	9%
Area	North Cork	14	41%
	West	9	26%
	East	11	33%
Age	5-11 yrs	9	26%
	12-18 yrs	21	62%
	18-20 yrs	4	12%

The interviews that took place with parents of younger children were undertaken in West Cork only (Clonakilty and Bantry), due to the availability of parents.

In addition to those interviewed for this research, transcripts of interviews with young Travellers in West Cork, undertaken as part of a study undertaken by the 'That's My Goal' project were made available to this research in order to complement the research findings and to ensure that the voices of a wider group of Travellers were included.

The profile of these young Travellers are outlined below:

Table 3.2 Profile of additional interviews of young people		
		Number
Gender	Male	14
	Female	5
Age	5-11 yrs	4
	12-18 yrs	7
	18+ yrs	8

However, no individual quotations were taken from the 'That's My Goal' research, and distinction is clearly made between That's My Goal research findings and primary research undertaken in this current research.

4.0 Young Travellers' experiences of services

In this section, we report young Travellers' experiences of a range of services. Not surprisingly, given the age group of those consulted, school, education and leisure activities and services are at the forefront of their experience. Other services may be accessed or required on an intermittent basis. In other cases, parents may act as an intermediary for certain services, for example, accommodation or health services. While this research is primarily concerned with the experiences of young Travellers themselves, the views of parents are also accessed in some cases, to gain a broader insight.

Moreover, there are issues of a sensitive nature that may not come to light in a research project of this type. For example, issues to do with drug use and sexuality did not emerge. Some discussion took place about depression or 'feeling down' amongst young people, but for younger children aged under 11 years, this was an issue that was not pursued.

4.1 Pre-school services

Interviews were undertaken with parents to establish their experiences of pre-school services. Parents in Clonakilty and Bantry were available to participate in this aspect of the research.

The free pre-school year (Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme) has a relatively good take up in West Cork, according to WCTC, and so children are availing of this and are therefore starting school at five years of age. According to parents living in West Cork who were consulted, there are Montessori schools in Clonakilty, which is availed of most within the community, whether Travellers or not. This was favoured by parents, because of the opportunity it affords to Travellers and settled children to mix and learn together. Parents did not favour Traveller specific service provision.

However, in Bantry parents reported a waiting list for accessing pre-school childcare for three year olds.

In the view of West Cork Travellers Centre, Clonakilty generally would have a higher participation rate amongst Travellers of pre-school provision compared with some other areas in West Cork. Travellers tend also to be well integrated with the settled community in Clonakilty and relations are quite good. In the view of the Traveller support organisation, fewer families would avail of pre-school childcare in other areas, which could reflect discrimination and perceptions of discrimination that might arise in their communities.

Parents in West Cork made the point that there is a need for state assistance towards the costs of childcare below three years of age. The only opportunity for subsidised childcare is where a Traveller family is in contact with social workers. Otherwise, the cost of a childcare place for parents consulted is €17 per child, per morning. There is no community crèche in Clonakilty and parents felt that it would be very positive if one was established. However, because Clonakilty is a prosperous town, it was felt that people can afford to pay a private provider, therefore there may not be demand for such a facility.

Some of the young Travellers in the research across Cork made the point that childcare responsibilities are often met by family members, including older children and siblings, rather than other services. One young woman made the point that integrated service provision may not be the preferred one for Travellers, and that some may only participate in Traveller-specific services. However, this view was not universal.¹³

West Cork Travellers' Centre identified a lack of access to more mother/ parent and toddler groups as a barrier for Travellers. Parent and toddler groups can enable Traveller children to interact with other children in a supportive environment (with a parent present). They are also an important support for parents. This type of support could be delivered either in an integrated setting or Traveller-specific one. One of the other benefits of parent and toddler groups was that Travellers continue to drop in to the service even when the child starts pre-school, and hence the relationship is maintained. This means that there is continuity of contact, and it makes it easier for children to continue accessing services, such as after-schools' services.

One of the young women interviewed was interested in studying childcare and the employment of Travellers in childcare settings could ensure greater diversity in childcare settings in the county. This may support continued uptake in childcare services.

4.2 Health services

While children and young Travellers have a poorer health status than their settled counterparts, the greatest engagement of children with health services is often shortly after birth. Parents in West Cork consulted rated highly the services provided by GPs and nurses to their children. They did not wish to use a Traveller-specific public health nurse and favoured integrated service provision. All of these parents lived in standard housing.

¹³ The provision of Traveller-specific services and Travellers accessing mainstream services is discussed further in section 5 (Discussion).

One of the health issues identified in the consultations by the WCTC was some confusion over vaccination, particularly in areas where families are transient and living in unofficial accommodation. The point was also made that where literacy levels are poor, people may not get sufficient information from pamphlets and they can be quite detached from services. In these instances, there may be uncertainty about children getting vaccinated.

4.3 Schools and the education system

All of the young people interviewed participated in education or training, although the majority of those interviewed¹⁴ were either at primary (30 percent) or second level school (57 percent). A small number of Travellers participated in further education and Youthreach (13 percent).

Young Travellers' experiences of school seemed to vary according to the area in which they lived, and a wide range of experiences, from positive to negative were reported.

Negative experiences

Some of the negative experiences that young people experienced in school included discrimination from teachers and school authorities, and bullying from peers. Young Travellers who were interviewed spoke of their personal experiences which included name calling, threats, and physical assaults. Many of those who recounted their experience of being bullied believed that it was related to their Traveller identity, because of the nature of the name-calling, for example being called 'knacker' or 'tinker'. One young Traveller woman spoke of having had her head banged against a blackboard and her head pushed down the toilet while in school.

In some cases, even where they did not experience direct bullying or intimidation, being a Traveller often meant that they were excluded. One woman from North Cork spoke about this experience:

When I was in secondary or primary school, I never got invited to parties like the other girls
Young woman, 19 years

For those young people who were bullied by classmates, many felt that in most instances, schools neither took appropriate action nor believed Travellers. One Traveller made the point that she had persistently raised the issue of being

¹⁴ Some of those interviewed in a group setting did not disclose their current education status.

bullied but her concern was only acknowledged after her parents made a formal complaint to the school principal.

This perception of not being believed, or taken seriously also affected their attitude towards school and education in general. As a result, many young Travellers felt alienated from the school system as a whole.

While some of the young Travellers had experienced bullying and/or discrimination from their peers, some also felt that discrimination from teachers and school authorities was more commonplace. Some of the negative views experienced from teachers in the classroom included:

- Not being listened to and/or complaints being ignored
- Teachers reinforcing stereotypes about Travellers and Traveller culture in the classroom.

Some young Travellers believed that students received much of their views about Travellers from adults, including their parents and teachers.

The teachers have that attitude, students pick it up from them.
Girl, 14 years

In primary school, you get your opinion from your parents, and this will affect how you think, and how your children will think.
Boy, 15 years

In some cases, negative attitudes towards Travellers were not challenged or confronted by school authorities, and this was seen as a failure of responsibility.

How can students ever learn when the teachers are not educating them.
Young woman, 18 years

The young people believed it to be important for positive representations of Traveller culture to play a greater part in the school curriculum. One young woman in North Cork recalled how materials and modules relating to Traveller culture had been skipped in the classroom:

I left school in third year and there was a book in which there was a page about Travellers' rights and discrimination - and she did everything else and all other pages except this one. I'll never forget it, it was page 81 or something, and she skipped it.
Young woman, 19 years

Education and Traveller identity

It is important to point out that a number of young Travellers interviewed either did not disclose, or actively hid their identity as Travellers to their classmates, and this was particularly the case with young people in East Cork. Others made the point that they did not draw attention to their Traveller identity in school, as they did not want to emphasise being different to their peers. Travellers in Charleville were more assertive in their identity as a Traveller.

One of the reasons that young people hid their identity was fear of being discriminated against or bullied.

There was one time, and one fella said 'look at that knacker'. I said nothing...I didn't want them to find out in case I would be bullied.

Boy, 15 years

Most did not feel comfortable being identified or singled out as Travellers in the classroom. Some young people felt stigmatised if it was known that they were accessing specific resources or supports available to Travellers. In these circumstances, young people emphasised the importance of teachers being aware of these sensitivities. Students spoke about being singled out by teachers in front of their peers which led to a sense of isolation. In one example, a teacher indicated, in front of the class, to one young girl, that as a Traveller, she would be entitled to additional funding towards the cost of exams. This young girl had not disclosed her identity as a Traveller to others in her class and was embarrassed and upset by the incident. This point was also echoed by parents, some of whom made the point that some schools do not think about young Travellers' feelings as they are taken out of their class to receive tuition from the resource teacher, whether they need it or not. They believed that this could contribute to young Travellers being taunted (or labelled) as being 'slow', and parents believed that this could lead to them leaving school early. Other parents drew attention to segregated educational supports for Travellers as giving rise to this labelling and stated that this segregation should end.

Some parents in West Cork that were consulted did not enrol their children in primary schools in their local town, having had bad school experiences themselves in the same school. Instead, they enrolled their children in schools outside of the town where they are not identified as Travellers, as they felt that the teachers were more supportive. While they agreed that the attitudes of teachers had changed, and that younger teachers were more supportive, it was felt by these parents that it was still preferable for teachers not to know that children are Travellers.

Impacts of negative experiences

As a result of the range of experiences, some Travellers said that they felt alienated from school that their future aspirations towards education were affected. Unsurprisingly for many Travellers, the prospect of discrimination and racism acted as a deterrent to continued participation in education.

There is nothing for us to go to school for.

Girl, 14 years

Amongst those who had a negative experience of school, one simple recommendation made was that 'teachers should listen to Travellers more.' There was also a general view that training in Traveller culture for teachers as part of teacher training or on an ongoing basis (in-service training) should be mandatory as it could go some way to alleviating this problem.

The teachers should know something about Traveller culture before they start in school [because] there will be at least some students who are Travellers.

Girl, 14 years

Moreover, there was a view by those who had positive and negative experiences of school that greater discussion about Traveller culture (as well as other cultures and ethnic identities in Ireland) should form a stronger part of the curriculum, for example, through Civic Social and Personal Education (CSPE) and other programmes.

Positive experiences

There were also many positive experiences of school and the supports offered there. Many Travellers at primary level in particular were happy with their school experience and did not report discrimination. They spoke about their enjoyment of doing projects about Travellers and Traveller culture in school, and reported that they did not feel that they were treated differently because they were Travellers. This was generally the case for children from West and East Cork. In the case of Bantry, parents spoke of how the school environment had changed substantially, compared with their own experiences some years previously.

In the last 15 years, there have been huge changes.

Parent, Bantry

Some Travellers who were attending second level school made specific mention of the different types of supports that they received in school that

supported their positive school experience. These included support from the visiting teacher service¹⁵ as well as the schools completion worker.

In addition, where teachers showed discretion around issues of identity, particularly when discussing additional supports for Travellers in school, this was highly valued.

Additional supports were accessed and valued by Travellers in all parts of county Cork where young people were interviewed, including homework clubs and after-school services. One-to-one support in overcoming difficulties with homework was also highly valued.

I think the teachers do a good job...the teachers are sound.

Boy, 14 years

Young people's experience in school can influence confidence and self esteem, as well as their future education opportunities and aspirations. This is true for the Travellers interviewed in this research. Those with positive education experiences had higher expectations as regards future career opportunities than those with negative ones.

In the research undertaken by the 'That's my goal' project, two students commented on how the Schools Completion Officer supported them when in difficulty or in trouble, and they placed a high value on these supports. The Visiting Teacher Service was mentioned by parents as providing additional support and as a confidence-building measure for parents, which was important for parents in supporting their children in their education, particularly at second level.

In the same study, one-to-one support around school work (for example, those provided by youth services) were particularly important according to parents who also made the point that they often may not have the time nor the educational attainment to support their children in completing homework, particularly as they progress through the school system.

¹⁵ Changes to the provision of supports to Travellers in education from September 2011 has meant that specific supports such as the visiting teacher service, resource teachers and 1.5 allocation hours are no longer be available. The general allocation model of supports, on an individual needs basis, now applies.

Education beyond second level and future aspirations

A large proportion of those over 14 years of age were either planning to leave school at 16 years of age or had already left. The primary reason given was that they felt that they did not have an incentive to stay longer. Negative school experiences motivated some to leave, while others felt that there was little point in staying in school when they would experience discrimination in the labour market. The role that domestic responsibilities and the transition to adulthood played in drawing young people away from continued education was also raised. Education retention is discussed in this section.

Boys and young men

It was suggested by some interviewees that Traveller boys and young men who remain in education after junior certificate can be stigmatised. The view was expressed by young Traveller women that some Traveller boys felt the need to be seen to start work, and that by remaining in school, they could be ridiculed, and in some cases, they felt that there could be a shame associated with staying in education beyond this age.

However, this view was not universal, and half of the young men interviewed between the ages of 14-18 years expressed a desire to complete third level education and their career and education aspirations were high.

Nonetheless, this point was made by some Traveller women that most Traveller boys will leave school even earlier than Traveller girls.

I never knew a Traveller boy to stay in school 'til 6th year or even 3rd year.

Girl, 14 years

The importance of role models

One Traveller woman made the point that more role models would help overcome what she felt was the stigma and shame of staying in school:

Someone always has to take the first step...they feel ashamed about not going out to work.

Young woman, 19 years

This same woman believed that her own experience had changed the views of others. When she started attending college, at first people asked her whether she was ashamed. However, she became a role model herself, and commented on people's changing attitudes towards education. She reported other Travellers following her example of continued study.

Girls and young women

For some girls, while they believed that they would probably leave school before completing their Leaving Certificate, they were ambivalent about this. These girls had hopes and aspirations for further education and employment, but they felt them to be unrealistic:

It's one of my dreams to be a hairdresser...I don't want to be at home sitting around. That is my plan but I don't think it'll work out...'cos you need a good education and get exams...it's too long.

Girl, 14 years

I've often said that I'd love to stay on in school until sixth year but I'd say I'll leave.

Girl, 14 years

For these girls, their school experience had been positive and their teachers supportive in their education. When asked as to why they would not complete their second level education, one of the main reasons given was domestic and family responsibilities and the weight of expectation.

The point was made that the education process would take too long, and that completing second level education and training, for example to become a hairdresser, would require up to four extra years of education after junior cert. Coupled with a short career span and the pressures of family life and marriage, this is a high cost, and for some, was 'too long'. These kinds of pressures are ones experienced and articulated by settled women in the workforce for many years, but not so often by ones as young as 14 years of age. For these girls, remaining in education could lead to isolation amongst their peers.

I'd love to stay on 'til 6th year and get a job but I don't think I will.

Why? When you are 16, you are classed as a woman and if you are still at school, you would be laughed at.

Girl, 14 years

However, this was not the experience or the views of all girls interviewed: other girls in the junior cycle of second level living in East Cork aspired to third level education and had clear career plans.

Youthreach

For young Travellers who left school early, Youthreach was the most common option if they remained in formal education, and a number of those interviewed attended Youthreach in Bandon and Mallow. Travellers who reported negative experiences in school generally had better ones in Youthreach. Their fellow

students were more supportive and they did not experience the same discrimination or bullying of their earlier school years. Travellers in Youthreach were generally older than the rest of those interviewed, and tended to be much more confident about their identity.

In addition to this, Youthreach was viewed as a less restrictive environment compared with school. However, for some who attended Youthreach, this was often just “for something to do” rather than for any clear career or education goals. Even for those at second level school who were not attending Youthreach, this association was noted:

Most Travellers leave school at 16 years. Why? Because they don't be bothered as they think that 'oh, we're not going to be anything'. Some go to Youthreach when they reach a certain age (after third year), but this is just for something to do.

Girl, 14 years

While this trajectory is clearly limited, many Travellers did not see any attractive alternative: some of the girls and most of the young women interviewed spoke of 'sitting at home all day and doing nothing'. In some cases, Travellers as young as 12 and 13 years feel this way about their future.

Adult education

Some parents consulted were also young women and some made the point that there are limited opportunities for them to engage in training and education. In the case of Bantry, for example, its small size and geographic isolation meant that it was not always possible to recruit seven people for accredited training courses, and as this was the minimum number of people required for a course to be funded, it restricted their training and education opportunities. Parents made the point that because it is an isolated town, it is not always possible to link up with neighbouring towns to establish Traveller specific courses.

4.4 Employment and work

As stated earlier in this report, most of the young Travellers interviewed were at primary or second level education, and so had limited experience of the labour market.

Some of the young people had clear aspirations about their future careers. Primary school children (aged between 9-11 years) mentioned occupations such as vet, garda, doctor, hairdresser, and young people aged between 14-19 years specified garda, beautician, P.E. teacher, mechanic, accountant, psychiatrist, and chef as careers that they were interested in.

However, for some Travellers as young as 12 years, they felt that there were no career opportunities for them, and that their future work prospects were minimal. For these Travellers, the link between educational attainment and career prospects is tenuous. The most prominent reason given was an expectation of discrimination.

Why get an education if you can't get a job...I have all kinds of courses and I can't get a job

Young woman, 19 years

...that is why Travellers don't finish school... 'cos you are not going to get a job anyway, whereas settled people who finish school get [on] very good.

Girl, 14 years

And some of those interviewed did not envisage themselves in the workforce when they left school or full-time education, because of family expectations and gender roles:

Everyone has their dream but they don't come true because you end up getting married.

Young woman, 19 years

...and Traveller girls just think about what their wedding is going to be like, from when they are aged 9 or 10.

Girl, 12 years

Some of the parents who were consulted felt that the absence of role models in the workplace made it hard to motivate younger Travellers to remain in education and to pursue a career. In particular the point was made that Travellers do not see other Travellers in the workplace or in the professions.

For some young men over the age of 17 years who had taken part in the 'That's my goal' research, discrimination in relation to work was a key concern in Macroom, in West Cork. Some believed that their surname would identify them as Travellers and would prevent them from gaining employment. For these young men, this was the most serious form of discrimination they experienced. Some young men believed that where feuds were an issue in a town, they were victimised as a result of the actions of a few.

Others who had completed Youthreach were unemployed, and focused their activities on playing sport or looking after their horses.

In response to this issue as well as a general lack of employment opportunities, the 'That's my goal' project in West Cork has been investigating social enterprise¹⁶ development as a mechanism for supporting Travellers in overcoming labour market discrimination.

4.5 The experiences around accommodation

Types of accommodation

The majority of Travellers interviewed were living in standard accommodation, either in local authority housing estates, voluntary housing association houses, or in the countryside.

While a small number of those consulted lived in trailer or Traveller-specific accommodation (e.g., group housing), almost one third had - at one stage in their life - lived in mobile accommodation, mostly on unofficial sites. The experiences and preferences of young Travellers around accommodation were therefore very different.

Some of the Travellers interviewed had lived in many different areas, some for very short periods of time. Some anticipated living in their current accommodation for the foreseeable future, while others did not know where they would be living in a couple of months time, as their housing situation was not resolved, and their families were awaiting long-term accommodation from the local authority.

The most pressing issues around accommodation related to the following:

- The quality of accommodation, arising from living in mobile accommodation in un-serviced and unofficial sites
- The difficulty in finding long-term private accommodation while waiting for local authority housing
- Being constantly moved on by authorities under trespass legislation

¹⁶ Social enterprises can be defined as not-for profit businesses with social objectives as part of the businesses' mission and activities. Social enterprises are part of the social economy, which can be defined as that part of the economy, not part of the public or private sector, which engages in economic activities to achieve social benefits, and which usually comprises democratic, independent organisations.

Living on unofficial sites

The day to day experiences of living in mobile accommodation on unofficial sites were described by the young people:

When you lived in a caravan, you could only knock on the generator at certain times of the day and you could only watch TV when it got dark after 6 o'clock because the generator is really expensive so we couldn't keep it on all day.

Boy, 14 years

There was no site that we could stay in...we had no electricity, the only thing we had was the generator, and if we wanted to charge the phone, play games, we couldn't do that...it was winter time, it was very hard...the wind was so hard as well, you would be afraid.

Girl, 14 years

In addition to this, young people spoke about not having any running water or washing facilities.

It was very bad...we had no washing facilities we had to go to the swimming pool to wash and we couldn't wash our clothes

Girl, 14 years

If you wanted privacy, you would have to walk away...to use the bathroom we would have to look for a shopping centre.

Girl, 14 years

This has a significant impact on school attendance.

...when we were in [long-term accommodation] we never missed a day of school. When we were in campers we wouldn't always go to school...we wouldn't have anywhere to get changed or wash in the morning or to do any homework.

Girl, 14 years

The experiences of one family led to their moving from town to town across Cork county and city whilst waiting for accommodation from the local authority over the past three years. The reasons for moving from location to location were related to lack of private sector accommodation on a secure basis, and having been moved from unofficial sites and the side of the road by Gardaí. For young people living in these circumstances, the experience of being moved on was very frightening, characterised by shouting from the Gardaí,

with one girl recounting the experience as “very aggressive...[with Gardaí shouting] get out of there and get a house.” The experience was made all the worse by the fact that the raids would often take place late into the night, when the children sleeping, when “it would be dark, no electricity, you would have no generator.”

The impacts of insecure accommodation

It is not surprising that living in insecure accommodation had a significant impact on young Travellers and access to services, such as school, as outlined above. The impact of the trespass legislation meant that the constant threat of being moved on took a significant toll on young Travellers:

There was always a fear of being moved on...will I be moved on tonight? You couldn't relax and just sit down in a chair. You are always panicking.

Girl, 14 years

For these young people, this uncertainty and fear was perhaps the most significant issue. It meant that they often could not leave the mobile home, visit the town or friends, access services, or carry out normal leisure activities. Whenever they had occasion to leave, they had to hurry back as soon as possible. The quote below is from a girl reflecting on her experiences which started when she was 11 years of age.

You are not sure if this time next week you might be in a caravan and somewhere else...sometimes I think I would love to be away from all of this, and sometimes you just have to deal with it.

Girl, 14 years

Other impacts of living in such uncertain conditions included difficulties in establishing friendships and social ties with other young people. Loss of friendships can also happen when there is uncertainty about where the family will be from day to day:

You lose out on things, some friends can think you don't want them no more if you go away and can't ring them or contact them.

Girl, 14 years

Constant moving and at very short notice also meant that family connections were regularly broken which impacted on social supports and networks.

Today we could be living near our aunts and cousins and then we could be nearly 100 mile away if we had to move...sometimes you have someone to talk to and sometimes you would have no one to talk to

Girl, 14 years

In addition to this, unofficial sites are often located in remote areas, and were vulnerable to the threat of anti-social behaviour. Young people gave examples that affected them or their extended families. These included youths' late night weekend drinking, broken glass, joy riding, and being robbed. Such experiences were exacerbated by the vulnerability of living in mobile accommodation exposed at the side of the road, where, for example, "one kick of the door would break it down".

Moving to a new area presented challenges, and one boy spoke of the need to constantly establish relationships with young people in a new area:

It's hard when you move to a new place - It's all 'oh he's a Traveller' then after a while they get to know you

Boy 14 years

He felt that it was easier for him as he was outgoing and confident, but for others it might not be so easy:

It'd be really hard if you don't have the confidence to come out and say your name...it'd be really really hard, starting in school, for other Travellers

Boy, 14 years

Housing and accommodation preferences

In spite of the difficulties experienced in living on the side of the road, the tradition of nomadism was still very important for some young Travellers. The preference for living in a caravan, where 'you can just get up and go when you feel like it' was expressed. In one instance, the reason for moving to standard

accommodation was one young person's asthma, rather than a preference for standard housing.¹⁷

However, some of the young Travellers who lived in mobile and standard accommodation spoke about how standard housing was easier to live in than mobile accommodation. They spoke of the space, privacy, warmth, availability of electricity and washing facilities.

As to whether these provisions could also be found in good quality mobile accommodation, or the availability of serviced sites, some young Travellers made the point that good quality halting sites could also deliver these benefits:

A site is just the same as a house, because [if] you have a chalet and a bathroom, shower, it is no bother.

Boy, 14 years

One young woman was planning to live in a halting site in Cork city, as she was planning her wedding to a young man who lived there. This presented a difficulty for her, as she had been used to living in a house for most of her life.

I don't want to move onto a site at all...even when I am in a camper van, it's too stuffy when you are used to a big house.

Young woman, 19 years

Some who lived in standard housing but who had previously lived in mobile accommodation missed their connection to nomadism and that aspect of their culture. The point was made on a small number of occasions that living in standard accommodation sometimes made you feel that you are half a Traveller and half a settled person, and this can sometimes mean that you feel somewhat removed from both communities.

Sometimes my cousins say 'oh you're not a real Traveller'

Boy, 16 years

Private sector accommodation

As of November 2009, there were 104 Traveller families in private rented accommodation across County Cork. For some Travellers consulted in this research, accessing long-term private rented accommodation was a particular

¹⁷ In the *All Ireland Traveller Health Study* (2010), for those children who had a health problem, the most frequently reported condition was asthma, which accounted for 71.9% of reports of chronic conditions in childhood in ROI.

difficulty: one Traveller family had particular difficulty in securing private sector accommodation on a long-term basis. One parent in Bantry described her experiences when responding to adverts for private rented accommodation:

The minute you mention your name, the flat is gone.
Parent, Bantry

Travelling during the summer

Some of the Travellers interviewed and who live in standard or group housing occasionally travelled during the summer time. However, they also reported significant difficulties in doing so, arising from the lack of transient sites. Traveller families had also experienced discrimination from caravan parks, and resorted to parking camper vans in car parks.

You try to do the right thing and go to a caravan park and then you get discriminated when you do that.
Young woman, 19 years

In the view of the same young woman, Travellers used camper vans because they believed that this enabled them to use car parks.¹⁸

You don't really see people going to the side of the road...people use camper vans because you are allowed to pull into a car park and do that [park there]
Young woman, 19 years

4.6 An Garda Síochána

While the majority of children and young people interviewed did not come into contact with An Garda Síochána, a small minority of them did.

Some children and young people had contact with them as a result of accommodation issues, specifically in relation to eviction and trespass legislation.¹⁹ For these young people, being moved on by Gardaí from an unofficial site was a frightening experience.

¹⁸ Camper vans are not permitted by most local authorities to use car parks. However, this is normally a bylaw provision rather than subject to trespass legislation.

¹⁹ Section 24 of The amendment to the Public Order Act, 1994 put through in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2001, criminalises trespass on public and private land. Therefore, the Gardaí, on foot of a complaint, can move on Travellers who are waiting for accommodation within local authority areas.

Sometimes you would be in bed and the guards would come and move you on. You'd have to move on quickly...very aggressive, and they would say 'get out of here, get a house'. You could be in bed and it could be one [o'clock] in the morning. You just get used to it.

Girl, 14 years

One of the particularly frightening aspects of this experience for this girl was the scale of the operation and the number of Gardaí involved - in one case, ten Gardaí came to move the family on.

Parents in Bantry recounted both positive and negative experiences of the Gardaí. In one instance, one mother reported what she felt to be abusive behaviour of an individual garda to the local Superintendent, and was satisfied with how the complaint was addressed.

One young person made a recommendation that a garda be assigned to specifically link with Travellers.²⁰ Two young people interviewed expressed an interest in a career in An Garda Síochána when they left school.

In the 'That's My Goal' research, parents and young people in two different towns in West Cork spoke of negative experiences that they had with the local Gardaí.

In one of the interviews undertaken as part of the 'That's my Goal' research, an alleged assault on a young Traveller boy was allegedly not pursued by the Gardaí and was not brought to court, to his parent's dissatisfaction, as they believed that the case was not pursued because the family were Travellers.

In the same research project young men from Macroom believed that they were discriminated against and harassed by the Gardaí on a frequent basis. The young men claimed to have been hit, referred to as 'knackers' and regularly stopped by the Gardaí. Some young men believed that community as a whole was victimised as a result of the actions of a few, particularly where feuding was an issue in a town.

4.7 Free time and leisure activities

When we talk about leisure activities, we are referring to any activity which is undertaken outside of school, on a voluntary basis and in the free time of the young person. Leisure activities are important for children and young people as they offer both health and social benefits, through physical exercise, as well as personal and social development, etc.

²⁰ This service is in place in parts of Cork.

The preferred leisure and free time activities for Travellers interviewed in this research of course depends on their age groups.

Preferences across the age groups and genders

For children at primary school, leisure activities that they engaged in included sporting activity (including GAA sports and swimming), looking after horses, after-schools and youth projects, and visiting the cinema. The most prevalent activities were youth projects and activities organised by their own families (for example, looking after horses) and playing with their friends. For young girls, many had previously been involved in sporting activity, but in general, by the time a young girl reached the age of 11 years, their involvement in sporting activities appeared to diminish. For girls in this age group, leisure activity mainly involved meeting with friends, playing x-box and watching TV, or going to discos for 10-12 year olds in the local town.

As mentioned in section 4.5, access to leisure and social activities were restricted by location, particularly for those living in unofficial accommodation. One young girl lived on the side of the road, beside a grass verge where there was no footpath, and this restricted her ability to socialise with her friends.

For those in their mid teens, leisure activity is limited and when asked what they did for fun in their spare time, many responded that they did 'nothing', or 'we sit and chat'. This was particularly true of girls and young women, and it arose as an issue in all parts of Cork. Amongst this age group, sporting activity was rarely a significant leisure activity for girls as it was for boys (discussed below). Free time was largely spent with their friends, but for some young people, their social networks were limited to their families, so there were few opportunities for mixing with other young people. Activities such as the cinema were particularly popular, but sometimes not feasible in a small town where there may be none available.

For others, the lack of a space to meet up with other Travellers was noted:

If Travellers could get together and meet up about once a week, to socialise

Girl, 13 years

One young woman described in frank and clear terms what her town in West Cork offered her in terms of leisure time and social activity:

Nowhere to go, nothing to do, and no one to talk to, nowhere to meet up

Young woman, 19 years

For young Travellers who are aged above 18 years, their spare time and leisure interests are different to Travellers who are younger in age. For this age group, typical leisure activities such as restaurants, nightclubs and pubs are rarely accessed, primarily for reasons of discrimination, or fear of discrimination.

we haven't been to the disco...we are not allowed in...we haven't been causing fights...but when we go to the door we are turned away because of our names.....we are not allowed into the one pub or club in the town.

Young woman, 19 Years

For many of these young people, their only option is to travel to other towns where they are not known.

For many Travellers, there is an expectation of discrimination from an early age: their own experiences of discrimination as well as those of their family members act as a deterrent to going out with friends.

Well I don't go out anyway... I would be nervous of people turning you away...there is nothing you can do.

Young woman, 20 years

The point was made that discrimination is getting worse, and for most, they access leisure activities, such as cinemas, in Cork city or other towns where they are likely to be more anonymous. Parents in West Cork spoke about having experienced discrimination in private leisure and sporting facilities. In one instance, the local leisure centre told one parent that it was not accepting new members. Following this claim, a member of the settled community had their membership application accepted. Another parent had their membership fee returned to them in the post and their membership cancelled by the same facility. When challenged, the leisure centre claimed that as it was a private facility, it had the right to accept or refuse membership.

Gender differences for older age groups

While the majority of those interviewed were girls and young women, both genders reported that access to leisure facilities is harder for girls, for reasons of discrimination as well as cultural expectations within the Traveller community.

In some cases, it was not acceptable for young women to be socialising with boys and young men of their own age group, particularly those from the settled community. According to some young women and men, values within the community could mean that some parents feel it important to be stricter with young women.

However, this was not always the experience of young women, and some had boyfriends from the settled community, and they felt that this was not an issue.

Barriers to accessing leisure activities

In addition to discrimination outlined above, access to leisure activities (including meeting friends) can be compromised by geographic location, access to transport and type of accommodation.

For some, living in unofficial accommodation on the side of the road severely restricted access to leisure activities, because of a constant fear of being moved on and the need to be close to home at all times.

Many of the younger Travellers engaged in youth projects, but for a small minority of young people in North Cork, it was not usual or preferable to go to youth projects where settled people also attended. In other parts, Traveller-specific youth projects were highly rated and attended - these are discussed in a later section.

4.8 Sporting activity

While sporting activity is a leisure activity, it is discussed separately primarily because of the prominence that it had in the lives of many of the young people consulted, particularly boys, across many towns and areas. Sporting activity mainly consisted of hurling or Gaelic football, but also included soccer and boxing.

Some of the younger girls played or had previously played Camogie, but by the time they were in their mid teens, they had usually stopped playing, as they felt that 'they had grown out of it'.

However, for the boys interviewed in the research, particularly those from Clonakilty and also those from Charleville, sport was one arena where they were first and foremost identified as a member of a team, rather than as a Traveller, whereas in other areas of life, being identified as a Traveller was often associated with discrimination. Sporting activity was seen as a good way of making friends.

I like living in [town], its class, especially the GAA. Everyone is into the GAA and its good. When I lived in [other county], not everyone played GAA so it was hard to make friends.

Boy, 14 years

For many of the boys interviewed, sporting activities comprised the most prevalent leisure activity, and one for which they expressed great passion and commitment.

The lack of discrimination in this activity also allowed Travellers to develop confidence in their identity.

These boys were also very skilled and accomplished in their sporting pursuits, and some had played in Croke Park, which was a source of great pride for them as well as for their families. For some boys who experienced difficulties in school, the sporting arena gave them confidence and pride, and this too had an impact on their school experiences.

Some young people in Charleville noted their preference for a boxing club in the town – the nearest one was in Mallow.

In the research undertaken by the 'That's my goal' project, some young Travellers reported no discrimination in sporting teams in their localities, which were across different parts of Cork. They reported the sporting domain to be one where they integrated well with the settled community. One parent mentioned the positive relationship that she had with the club, which enabled her to discuss any problems her son was having with the sports coach.

Young men in the 'That's My Goal' research also participated in sporting activities as part of their involvement in the project. For this group, sport was a significant part of their life, even though they were not part of a club structure.

4.9 After-schools and youth activities

Travellers who were interviewed participated in youth activities in North and West Cork, as well as in homework and after-school clubs in East Cork (for example, the homework club in the Carrigtwohill Resource Centre). Most of the projects were Traveller-specific projects, and they included the 'That's my Goal' project in Clonakilty, and a youth club in Charleville for boys and girls led by a parent of some of the young people, as well as the Foróige Youth Project in Charleville.

Where young people in East Cork were not involved in youth activities, they either planned to join local youth clubs when they were slightly older; were not interested in youth activities that took place in their local youth clubs; or lived outside of the town where the youth clubs were located.²¹

Where young people attended youth clubs and projects, they were highly rated by young people. However, some young Travellers made the point that there can be a preference for Traveller specific activities, and one young woman

²¹ Young people did not refer to the Connect Youth Project in the consultations (the Connect project was set up to overcome obstacles to accessing youth services for young Travellers living in East Cork). The reasons may have been to do with the fact that the project had ended two years previous to the research taking place.

made the comment that “now they are trying to integrate [youth activities] more with settled people and some Travellers won’t go to that.”

For younger children, parents of small children in Bantry rated highly the PAKT project (Parents and Kids Together) that they attended. However, this was only available one day per week, and they reported there to be a need for additional after-schools projects in their town.²²

Youth projects played an important role in enabling Travellers to engage in social activities, which may otherwise not be available for Travellers.

Some of the young people accessing the ‘That’s my Goal’ youth project described some of the activities that they participated in, and these included painting, arts and crafts, one-to-one support, close support around completing homework, leadership programmes, sporting activities and training in DJ skills.

For some of the parents who participated in the ‘That’s My Goal’ research, the value of the youth project lay in the project worker’s ability to talk to young people about their problems, which was an important support. This was particularly important for young men, as it was believed that they had few alternatives for this kind of support.

The youth worker spent considerable time building relationships with young people and their parents, through outreach. Both parents and young people felt that this worked well.

The young people who had accessed the services pointed to several factors of youth work they believed were successful, and should be replicated:

- Outreach - calling to the houses of Travellers and chatting to them and their parents
- A youth worker who is of a similar age to young people and who has a good relationship with them
- A youth worker with a good knowledge and understanding of Traveller culture
- A space where young people can socialise, try different activities, and can build a relationship with the youth worker
- Activities which are developed over time based on the interests of the young people - engaging with the young people on their terms

Many of the young people in the ‘That’s My Goal’ research spoke about how the youth project had introduced them to new activities and had helped to motivate

²²P AKT (Parents and Kids Together) is a family focused project organised by Bantry YMCA. PAKT runs an afterschool club for children between 6 and 12 years old in the Bantry area.

them to try new activities.

One group of young men in their late teens and early twenties were exploring barriers to employment through the youth project, and as a result were looking to pursue social enterprise as a means of overcoming the barriers to employment experienced by Travellers.

4.10 Mental health support needs

The research asked the young people about where they would go to for support to discuss personal problems and concerns, when they felt down or depressed. At the request of parents, this question was not asked of very young people.

In the main, young Travellers of all ages did not have many people with whom to discuss problems or concerns. Options included talking to family members, sisters (in the case of girls and young women), cousins, and others in the extended family. In general, friends would rarely be confided in, in case confidentiality would be breached. This was fairly consistent across the age groups, but particularly so for those aged 15 years and older. In fact, the most frequent response amongst young women (aged over 15 years) was to 'keep it to myself' and not to talk to family members about all problems.

I couldn't talk to family members about my problems. You just don't do that.

Young woman, 19 years

Many of the young people attending youth projects felt confident speaking about discussing problems with youth workers.

The research also asked what kind of responses would be suitable for young Travellers when they felt 'down'. There was a view amongst some young Travellers that talking to someone like a counsellor or a professional was not a viable option.

Travellers wouldn't go and talk to someone like a counsellor...they are not open like that. Not like settled people

You would never see Travellers crying...they need to appear strong
Girl, 13 years

One response to this comment was:

That is why there are so many suicides in the Traveller community
Young woman, 19 years

However, this view was not held by all. Some young people made the point that they would like to talk to someone outside of their family, and one girl in East Cork made the point that her friend spoke to a student counsellor, and she was confident that she would speak to the same person if the need arose. Others did not have such a support available to them but clearly favoured one:

Sometimes I would just like to talk to a person and go into a room
and talk
Girl, 14 years

If there was someone the same age who would understand more
about your problem...not an adult
Girl, 14 years

As regards what should be done to address the needs of younger Travellers, it was felt that more could be done to provide information on what services are available and how they can be accessed.

Let the younger ones know - tell them that there are some places
where they can go and people to talk to - too late for the older ones
Young woman, 19 years

In the research undertaken by 'That's my Goal' project, some of the young men and parents spoke about how the youth worker could be a source of support around issues and problems. The young men regarded him as a peer who had spent time building a relationship with the young men and their families. As a result, he was trusted and was spoken about as someone in whom they could confide.

4.11 Summary of points and issues arising in the research

The main issues affecting young people that arose in this research can be summarised as follows:

- Discrimination against Travellers and young people across many areas of life was widely reported
- Bullying in school was a major problem for a minority of Travellers
- Perceptions that service providers, particularly schools, did not all have an appreciation of Traveller culture was reported. Many young Travellers felt isolated in their school experience and felt that they were not being heard
- Lack of spaces and facilities to engage with other young people
- Experience of youth projects has been positive in developing confidence and self-esteem
- Transport and geographic isolation was reported as a barrier for young people accessing services
- A lack of halting sites led to a reliance for some on unofficial sites. Trespass legislation and fears of being moved on had a significant impact on some young people, including their education, opportunities to engage in social activities and their general wellbeing.
- Sporting activities were key for boys and young men, but not so much for girls and young women
- There were very few recreation and leisure activities for young people, particularly for young girls
- Expectations of discrimination in the workplace and lack of employment opportunities had a strong influence on continued education and training
- Transition to adulthood within the Traveller community could inhibit career aspirations for some girls and young women, but not for all. Young men interviewed as part of this research, particularly in West Cork, had high education and career aspirations.

5.0 Discussion

In this section, some of the key themes arising in this research are discussed. Many of these themes influence how and whether young Travellers access services. These themes will therefore be important in designing and delivering services.

However, it is very important to remember that Travellers are not a homogenous group, nor are the areas in which they live. The needs expressed by the young people varied according to their gender, age, living circumstances (and accommodation needs), and personal preferences. Their experiences also sometimes varied depending on the town or area of Cork in which they lived, and so there were geographical differences that arose in the research.

In spite of these differences, many Travellers were treated as a homogenous group by services that they encountered, or in the attitudes of individuals delivering them.

The themes identified in this section therefore had different impacts and influences on the young people consulted.

5.1 Location and geographic differences

Travellers were interviewed across a total of eight towns and areas in North, East and West Cork.²³

The research was interested in establishing how experiences varied across geographic areas and across different towns. It is hard to make definite conclusions about differences across geographic areas, as the profile of those interviewed was quite varied, with people of different ages having lived in different accommodation types and in towns of different sizes. Also, it is important to make the point again that Travellers are not a homogenous group.

Nonetheless there were some notable points arising in each of the three areas which are discussed below.

²³ In presenting and discussing the individual experiences of Travellers, the individual towns have not been disclosed in all cases, where naming an area or town might identify the participants in the research and compromise anonymity.

West Cork

Travellers in Clonakilty, Bandon, Bantry and Skibbereen were interviewed as part of this research.

While racism and discrimination was identified as an issue in West Cork, it did not appear to be as prevalent in everyday life here as it did in other parts of Cork. Moreover, those from towns such as Clonakilty and Bandon appeared to have fewer experiences of racism and discrimination than those from other West Cork towns. Many of the young people interviewed and their parents commented on positive experiences in school and in leisure activities, particularly GAA sports. For the boys involved in sporting activity, this was one activity where they experienced no discrimination from peers or from club. Young Travellers were more confident of their identity and had a strong pride in their culture and traditions in these areas. Many of the young people engaged in projects that reflected their culture and identity within projects like 'That's My Goal' but also in school, particularly primary school. While some parents had reservations about the education system and how Travellers were disadvantaged once their identity was known, there tended to be a more positive view about how the education system displayed an understanding of Traveller culture in West Cork compared with other areas.

Variations occurred across parts of West Cork. For example, it was reported that there were good relations between Travellers and the settled community in towns such as Clonakilty. However, in Skibbereen, it was said that the existence of feuding within the community caused difficulties, and even though they tried to dissociate themselves from it, young Travellers experienced discrimination arising from it.

Some of the young people interviewed from West Cork reported a confidence about being a Traveller and their identity, and also spoke about how their settled friends displayed an interest in Traveller culture and traditions. Expectations around discrimination in the workplace were not as prevalent as in other areas, and those interviewed spoke with confidence about their education and career aspirations, particularly those from Clonakilty and Bandon.

East Cork

Again, just as Travellers are not a homogenous group, East Cork is not a homogenous single area, and Travellers were interviewed across a number of different towns (Middletown, Garryvoe/ Ladysbridge, Youghal) in East Cork. Nonetheless, if there were any issues distinguishing East Cork from other parts of Cork, it would appear to be the issue of identity. It was more prevalent amongst young people interviewed in East Cork to actively hide their identity as Travellers, and less of an opportunity to engage in cultural activity specific to Travellers. Many of the young people did not disclose their Traveller identity

to their peers in school and it was also the case that close friends of some young people did not know that they were Travellers.

Some Travellers did not want to be 'singled out' in schools and where Traveller identity was disclosed by a school teacher in one instance, it caused embarrassment and upset to the young people as it was associated with being stigmatised.

It would appear that access to youth clubs and activities for young people was less prevalent in East Cork. This could relate to the fact that girls were primarily interviewed in East Cork - in other areas, much of the youth and leisure activities were sporting related and had higher participation rates amongst boys. The experiences of the Connect youth project did not arise in the consultations – this may have been related to the fact that the project had ended over two years prior to this research process.

North Cork

Travellers were interviewed in Charleville, North Cork, and it seems that the experience of discrimination was most prevalent in this town, compared with the experience of Travellers living in other towns. Travellers reported racism and discrimination across all activities in daily life, and their experience of school was less positive than other parts of Cork: they perceived a less supportive school environment and felt that Traveller culture was not adequately reflected within school activities. For some, this was identified as the primary driver for having left early, or future intentions to leave school early.

The issue of identity was discussed in North Cork in a different way to East Cork. Young people in North Cork tended to be more confident in their Traveller identity, and were proud and protective of this. This of course may have been a defensive response to the levels of discrimination in everyday life.

Some young people were reluctant to engage in mainstream culture as it was felt that integration could undermine Traveller culture. Racism and discrimination in their home town resulted in a feeling of alienation from mainstream and settled culture. However, some of the young women in North Cork were also keen to address gender limitations that they experienced as young Traveller women.

Boys in North Cork similar to West cork reported a strong interest and engagement in sporting activity, and made the point that this was an area of activity in which they could engage in a non-discriminatory way.

5.2 Discrimination and racism

Some settled people look down on Travellers like they're dirt
Girl, 13 years

Notwithstanding geographic differences identified in the research, discrimination and racism is an everyday reality for many Travellers across all age groups and in all areas. Children as young as nine years of age were conscious of being treated differently on account of being a Traveller:

It always happens.
Girl, 9 years

The reality and fear of discrimination permeated almost every aspect of many young Travellers' lives, as well as those of their parents and extended families. Straightforward activities like shopping often involved being followed around in shops by security men:

If you go into a shop, you will be watched and they will walk around with you
Girl, 12 years

Parents in Bantry reported discrimination when visiting the local playground with their children:

When you go to the playground, some of the other parents will leave.
Parent, Bantry

Young children were also aware of how discrimination might play out as they get older - for example, in relation to employment or accommodation. One young girl spoke about her sister's difficulty in getting a flat, on account of her surname which identified her as a Traveller.

As mentioned in earlier parts of this report, some young Travellers made the point that they mostly experienced discrimination from older people and figures of authority rather than from their own age groups:

Young people don't know, it is the old people who tell them...the younger people wouldn't really discriminate; it's the older people and the parents who tell them.
Girl, 13 years

Thus the discrimination and racism of older groups were passed on to younger people, and there was little reporting of changed attitudes towards Travellers.

Continued discrimination was also facilitated by how Traveller culture was portrayed in the media:

They are always talking about Travellers being robbers....Why can't they show the good things in books and the TV programmes?

Young man, 16 years

...They always show the bad stuff...feuds, machetes, you never hear the good stuff, some Traveller won a youth award, sporting awards, boxing, there is a lot of good Traveller stuff that never gets publicised.

Young man, 16 years

One young boy who was aged 14 years, spoke about how the Nally case was reported in the press, even though it was over four years since the case was before the courts, and he would have been a relatively young boy at the time of its reporting.

While young Travellers were aware of anti-discrimination and equality legislation, it was not viewed as a powerful tool to combat discrimination. Many of the Travellers accepted discrimination as something that they were powerless to overcome.

Sure, what can you do about it?...you get used to it.

Girl, 12 years

As experiences of discrimination and racism are so widespread for Travellers, it is perhaps not surprising that they also reported it within state services that they received, including some schools, and amongst some Gardaí. Moreover, many Travellers did not anticipate an end to the experience. One of the young people described how this experience:

...They think that because they have seen TV and dirt around Travellers that we are this lower class society and then you are trying to come up and trying to mix and you are trying your best and go on to third level education, they still put you down. They are complaining that you are not doing it and when you do it they are pushing you back...it's one step forward and two steps back.

Young woman, 19 years

5.3 Identity

Being a Traveller was closely associated with discrimination and racism, and so identity arose as a particular theme in this research.

For many of the young people, managing their identity was a practical way to cope with discrimination. In East Cork, for some of the young people and their parents, this sometimes meant hiding their identity in order to avoid discrimination. This may have been linked to an absence of a social network of other Travellers, and isolation within the community in which they lived. In some instances, young people's close friends (who were settled) did not know that they were Travellers. However, in other areas, Travellers spoke about the interest that their settled friends had in Traveller culture and they regularly discussed and informed their friends about Traveller culture.

Some parents in West Cork sometimes felt that in order to improve their children's educational opportunities, it was best that the primary school that they attended did not know that they were Travellers.

Some Travellers stated that on occasion, they wished that they were a settled person, because the settled life was perceived to be 'calmer'. This was particularly the case for young people who had lived in unofficial accommodation and had negative experiences of being moved on by the authorities and the Gardaí. This had engendered fear amongst these young people.

Sometimes you feel that you are stuck between two things and you can't get out...sometimes I feel that I want to be a settled person and sometimes I want to be a Traveller....settled life is calmer than Traveller life...Travellers are always on the go...settled people take their time

Girl, 14 years

However, the majority of those interviewed were proud of Traveller culture, their language and maintained traditions such as working with horses and animals.

In North Cork, young people were perhaps most confident about their Traveller identity, and some of the young people interviewed were very conscious of protecting their culture and identity. For some, this could mean limiting the extent to which they mixed with settled people.

You get the Travellers who want to be like [settled people]...I don't mix too much as I don't want to lose my traditions and culture.

Young woman, 19 years

In some cases, some young people in North Cork made the point that some Travellers may withdraw from certain services, including those targeted at young people, if they are not Traveller-specific. This arose particularly in North Cork.

...it was just for Travellers but now they are trying to integrate more with settled people and some Travellers won't go to that.

Young woman, 19 years

Travellers living close to extended families were less likely to have settled friends than those living further away from extended families. For some, it was expected not to socialise with settled people:

If my brother seen me with settled people they would go mad and they would think that I would be up to mischief.

Young woman, 19 years

In some cases, mixing with settled people was seen as having the potential to compromise or undermine Traveller identity, as well as risking exposure to racism and discrimination. For some young women, this also presented a dilemma as they were also cautious of challenging family expectations around gender roles and career progression. In some instances, this was reinforced by an expectation of discrimination in the workplace, and so they were constrained by discrimination as well as by expectations around gender. However, these same young women had to reconcile these constraints with their own personal objectives around career, as they observed their settled counterparts making these choices.

For these young women this was a challenge but one that some felt could be overcome by role models within the Traveller community - in the case of one young woman, she noted a change in perception when she continued with her education, and felt that it encouraged others to follow suit.

Some of the parents who participated in the 'That's My Goal' research in West Cork felt strongly about passing on Traveller culture and language, and they felt that awareness and pride in their culture would enable their children to address and challenge negative and erroneous portrayals of it.

The role of identity and the importance of culture to Travellers points to the urgency for Traveller culture to be more visible within mainstream services that Travellers engage with. This would also serve to challenge stereotypical representations of Travellers. Many of those interviewed felt that services had little understanding or awareness of Traveller culture and identity. They also reported that their culture was regularly undermined or portrayed negatively, and as some of the comments demonstrate, this could have the effect of alienating them from services delivered on an integrated basis. Where cultural

sensitivity was demonstrated, for example, in schools, these resulted in a more positive experience than when not.

There are examples of projects which have delivered services to children and young people using methods and materials that are culturally appropriate, and if services were designed in such a way that they reflected Traveller culture as well as mainstream culture, it may enable greater take up by Travellers. The broader issue of integrated and specific interventions is outlined below.

It is important that Traveller culture is reflected in the services that Travellers engage with, in order to promote inclusion, as well as to challenge stereotypical perceptions of Travellers. According to Murray (2002), the marginalisation of Traveller children can be compounded when they start school and are 'faced with a highly formal institution, where every aspect of... physical and psychological demeanour is alien to his/her culture.'²⁴

5.4 Gender

Gender issues underpinned many of the themes arising from this research, including ones relating to identity as discussed above. Gender roles and identity for some Travellers and expectations around these were often an additional burden and pressure they faced as they made the transition to adulthood. Roles and expectations tended to play out in the areas of education, employment and forming relationships with young people from the settled community.

There was a view amongst some that it was not always acceptable for Traveller girls and young women to mix with settled boys, and in some cases, it could generate 'scandal'.

It is stricter for Traveller girls...just a different culture completely.

Girl, 14 years

You wouldn't kiss a boy at a disco, you would be scandalised...if you were out at one of clock in the morning, you would be in trouble

Young woman, 19 Years

For some girls on the threshold of womanhood, particularly those in north Cork, there was a sense that their gender could, in some ways, define their

²⁴ Murray, C. (2002): 'The Traveller Child, A Holistic Perspective', in *Diversity in Early Childhood – A Collection of Essays*. Dublin: The National Children's Resource Centre

identity. As they became older, their roles around family responsibilities took precedence over work and careers.

Others spoke about what these future roles would be:

We think that we have a bad life now, cooking and cleaning and minding babies and that when we get married it'll be better - but it'll get worse... it'll be better for the first twelve months then it'll be the same.

Girl, 15 years

However, it is important to state that this was not the whole story. Many young Travellers formed close relationships with young people from the settled community. The importance of role models was noted by some young people, and one young woman spoke about how her own experience had influenced the attitudes of others as regards staying in education. Some parents felt that young people needed to experience a more inclusive school environment and to see Travellers in the professions in order to have confidence in their ability to progress through education into the workplace.

Young Traveller women in North Cork were interested in exploring issues around gender and stated that a space to socialise and discuss issues with other Travellers would be welcomed.

Most boys had ambitions for completing second level and progressing to third level education, particularly the boys interviewed in different towns in West Cork. However it was observed by girls and young women that gender roles around work could mean that many boys felt that it was not appropriate for them to continue in education, and that there might be a stigma associated with staying in school after the junior cert. This arose in discussions in North Cork and also the point was made as a general observation with some young Travellers who had lived throughout Cork city and county.

Where role, identity and gender issues arose for young people, they were often underlined by experiences of discrimination and a lack of role models. This often had a destructive affect on young people's ambitions and personal, educational or career goals.

5.5 Mainstream and Traveller-specific initiatives

The provision of Traveller-specific initiatives can be controversial within the Traveller community generally, although often this can depend on the type of initiative that is delivered, and whether it is Traveller-led. One of the issues arising in the research is the different perspectives on how services should be delivered. There is a clear preference for some Traveller-specific interventions, and this is often linked to cultural and identity issues, as indicated in the

previous section. In this section, examples of both types of interventions that arose in the research are outlined.

Participation in mainstream sports activities

Sport is one example of an integrated activity which was highly valued by some of the young Travellers. In particular, GAA played a very important role in the lives of some young people particularly those consulted who lived in West Cork, and it was one activity where young people's Traveller identity did not assume a central role. Travellers who participated in sporting activities did not experience discrimination in their clubs.

As this is one of the positive supports available to Travellers, it is important that sporting activity amongst Travellers is promoted and encouraged, and that clubs are conscious of their role in this regard.

However, sporting activity is more frequently undertaken by boys and young men than it is for Traveller girls and young women.

Participation in Traveller-specific activities

One of the Traveller-specific services that young people engaged with were youth projects, and Travellers were presently or had previously engaged with youth projects in North, East and West Cork.

Arising from the difficulties identified by Travellers and the barriers that they face, youth work could be an effective means of addressing these barriers in the following ways:

- Providing a mechanism for one to one support, through skilled youth workers
- Providing support around retention in education and assistance with homework
- Providing a place to socialise and undertake activities
- Testing models of peer support and providing role models

As certain Traveller-specific education supports are being discontinued (for example, visiting teacher service and additional resource hours) it is likely that youth projects and other activities like homework clubs will be even more crucial in the future as they support young people in education.

In addition, youth work practice can make links between personal concerns and public and social issues. Many Travellers feel powerless to affect change and overcome discrimination in school, in society and in the labour market.

This approach is particularly key for young Travellers who feel alienated from and powerless in almost all the structures that they engage with on a day to day basis.

The question arises as to how Traveller-specific youth work should be a continued. Some of the Traveller-specific projects are funded on a once-off basis, and do not have mainstream projects. Other Traveller-specific projects have come to an end and have not been continued. It is important that youth projects for Travellers are not only maintained but extended.

5.6 Practice of state agencies

In all the young people's experiences of education and other services, it did appear that schools' and other authorities' cultural awareness and sensitivities around identity were key. For example, the discretion of teachers when discussing with Travellers the additional supports available for them was highly valued.

The additional supports secured by Travellers from the visiting teacher service and the schools completion officers were also regarded as important supports to individual students and to families. Circular 20/88 from the Department of Education and Science acknowledged 'that few initiatives in the area of Travellers education have been as successful as the appointment of Visiting Teachers. Visiting Teachers liaise between families, schools, boards of management, the Department of Education and Skills, and statutory and voluntary agencies.'²⁵

The loss of the service of the visiting teacher for students as well as additional resource hours will have a significant impact on Travellers, and while these are issues that are determined at national level, their impact will be felt at local level amongst parents and students.

However, Traveller-specific provision of services was not favoured, as it was believed to contribute to stigmatisation, particularly within the schools system. Parents' experience of pre-school childcare whereby Travellers and settled children were educated together was positive. These parents also made the point that Traveller children should not get preferential treatment, instead all educational supports should be given across the board to students who require it irrespective of their ethnicity.

Finally, the variation of experience as regards schools' approach to Travellers suggests that individual differences of teachers may be a key factor in the experience of Travellers, rather than consistent school policies and practice. This points to the importance of anti-racism and cultural awareness training and programmes within teacher training programmes and schools.

²⁵ *Survey of Traveller Education Provision* – Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science 2005

Finally, comments on health services were primarily made by parents of young children. In all areas, there was satisfaction with GP and public health nurse services. Travellers did not report barriers in accessing health services, and also reported that the quality of health services that they and their children received were very good.

5.7 Future aspirations

It is clear that from this research, Travellers have aspirations towards continued education and career progression, but these are often tempered by beliefs that these aspirations are unrealistic. The main reasons for this are negative experiences in the education system, discrimination in the labour market, lack of role models and in some instances, expectations around roles within the Traveller community.

Recent research undertaken in NUIG²⁶ on education for Travellers made the point that while the 15-19 years period is 'critical for settled teenagers in laying the foundations for their progression into the workforce or further education, it is also the critical period for progression in Traveller culture.' Many young Travellers in this research, in particular women, associated this progression with marriage and domestic responsibility.

It is unfortunate that by the time career guidance takes place in school, many Travellers may already have left second level education. This may mean that they never get opportunities or supports available to their settled counterparts.

This also points to the importance of providing adult education services for Travellers. The anticipated closure of the Traveller training centres should not lead to a vacuum in educational provision for Travellers. The opportunity should not be missed to influence the development of a new model for Traveller education and progression or initiatives to ensure increased participation by Travellers in mainstream provision e.g. Youthreach, FETAC courses, etc.

²⁶ Campbell, M. And Hourigan, N. (2010): *The TEACH Report: Traveller Education & Adults: Crisis challenge and change*. Galway: NUIG

As regards the labour market, there is an appetite for self-employment and for social enterprise development, which was articulated by men taking part in the 'That's My Goal' research. Social enterprise can be a mechanism for Travellers to continue activities related to the Traveller economy, as well as to overcome discrimination. It can also be a powerful means of providing role models for Travellers. Traveller organisations in other parts of the country²⁷ have already developed successful models where this has been achieved.

²⁷ For example Galway Traveller Movement

Conclusions and Recommendations



6.0 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This research was concerned with the issues facing young Travellers and was drawn from their own perspectives and experiences. Just as Travellers are not a homogenous group, neither are young Travellers nor the geographical areas in which they live. However, there were some experiences that young Travellers reported that should inform how services are designed and delivered.

Travellers do not all experience the same discrimination in all areas and there are examples of good practice in services in different parts of Cork. Parents are of the view that education services have improved in recent years, and they value pre-school services available to their children. Travellers value supports and interventions such as youth projects, and additional supports that help with school work. Sports clubs for some boys and young men is one activity where they can develop confidence in their ability in the absence of discrimination. This also allows them to develop confidence and pride in their identity.

There were some variations in experiences of Travellers in different parts of Cork, and some of the common themes arising in the different parts were:

- The area where discrimination appears to be least prevalent was West Cork, particularly in the towns of Clonakilty and Bandon. However, this is not to say that discrimination was not part of the everyday experience of Travellers. Positive experiences of school were referred to by young people in West Cork more than in other parts of Cork.
- Greater confidence in disclosing Traveller identity arose amongst the young people in Charleville town where the research was focused and this was probably the area where discrimination was felt to most prevalent. North Cork probably was the area where Travellers had a strong social network with other Travellers, and extended family members.
- Some of the young Travellers in East Cork felt that they needed to hide their identities in school and amongst friends.

The over-riding point is that discrimination and racism remains a major issue for many young Travellers, which impacts on their daily life from a young age. Discrimination arises with individuals but also with many of the services that Traveller engage with, and in this research, young people reported discrimination with schools, leisure centres, shops, the Gardaí, and they also expected continued discrimination in the workplace as they finish their education. Travellers who have lived in uncertain or unofficial accommodation

experience stress and fear at very young ages, and the responses by some state agencies to this issue often exacerbates this situation.

The portrayal of Travellers in Ireland is predominately negative, and young Travellers in the main do not feel that their culture or traditions are reflected or acknowledged in most of the services and activities that they engage in – for some, this led to alienation and eventual withdrawal from these services and activities. Similar to some young people in the settled community, many young women felt that there were limitations placed on them arising from culture and expectations around gender roles as a Traveller. These young women welcomed an opportunity to further explore these issues.

It is also important to note that there were also issues that did not arise in the consultations, but which may be issues of relevance to young people now, or in the future. These include issues to do with sexuality and relationships, health, depression as well as issues to do with drug use.

Research has indicated that drug use within the Traveller community is on the increase, and it has been closely identified with risk factors such as high unemployment levels, low educational attainment, poor accommodation, discrimination and racism.²⁸ According to research completed in 2009:

Traditional resiliency factors are dissipating in strength due to increased Traveller housing within marginalized areas experiencing drug activity and increased levels of young Travellers encountering youth drug use within school settings, by way of their attempts 'to fit in' and integrate with their 'settled peers'²⁹

Moreover, the issue of suicide is a significant one within the Traveller community and had recently impacted on one particular community in Cork, where two men had died in a short period of time.

It is therefore important to recognise that some issues are sensitive and may not arise in consultations with young Travellers, and that the inter-agency group continue to engage with Travellers on these other issues on an ongoing basis.

²⁸ NACD (2006): *An overview of the nature and extent of illicit drug use amongst the Traveller community: an exploratory study*. Dublin: National Advisory Committee on Drugs

²⁹ Van Hout, M.C. (2009): 'Irish travellers and drug use – An exploratory study', *Ethnicity and Inequalities in Health and Social Care*, 2(1), 42–49

6.2 Recommendations

These recommendations are made in light of limited financial resources, as well as emerging policy at national level. They aim to provide practical means by which young Travellers' experience of, access to, services can be enhanced.

The recommendations are developed on the basis of the opportunities presented by an inter-agency approach: these include capacity to learn from experiences throughout the county and to replicate good practices. In addition, the inter-agency approach provides an opportunity for collaboration in areas of common interest, and support around overcoming obstacles.

However, actions undertaken at a local level will also be subject to measures and decisions made at national level, which will ultimately impact on young Travellers.

Overarching recommendation

1. While discrimination and racism remains a key issue for Travellers, this research has identified areas and services where Travellers report positive experiences and a lack of discrimination: these include experiences within schools, sporting activities (including the GAA) and within An Garda Síochána.

All agencies and services have a specific remit towards Travellers, and therefore there is an obligation that such good practices should be examined and replicated across the county. It is therefore recommended that all agencies undertake an exercise whereby they identify best practice approaches and initiatives within their own services, document these, and seek to have these approaches replicated across the county.

By definition, best practice approaches will be underpinned by a respect for diversity and for Traveller culture. For those agencies that cannot identify good practices, cultural awareness and anti-racism training should be made available and prioritised, and the inter-agency group should monitor the uptake or prevalence of this training.

With regard to schools, intercultural programmes and measures developed at national level (for example, the Irish Traveller Movement's *Yellow Flag* programme³⁰) and comprehensive anti-bias approaches could be explored

³⁰ The Irish Traveller Movement's Yellow Flag Programme provides a practical series of 8 steps that brings issues of inter-culturalism, equality and diversity into the whole-school programme and allows schools to apply them to the day to day running of the school. It works with students, staff, management, parents and wider community groups so that issues of diversity and equality are not merely seen as "school subjects" but can be understood and taken outside the school setting into everyone's personal lives. In parallel with the Green Schools, the Yellow Flag Diversity in Schools is both a practical programme and an award scheme, therefore; on completing these steps, and being assessed externally, the school is awarded its

for their relevance in schools and other service providers such as childcare services in county Cork.³¹

Lead Agencies: All members of the County Cork Inter-agency group.

Supports for young Travellers

The difficulties that Travellers face are substantial. The daily reality of discrimination, and identity issues can be a significant burden for Travellers. Many stated that they do not have someone to talk to about their concerns or problems. The issues that they face would indicate risk factors to mental health for their age group.³² They favour someone of their own age group and background to discuss issues with. Furthermore, due to limited education and labour force opportunities, there is often a lack of role models for young Travellers.

2. The inter-agency group should explore models for peer-to-peer and mentor support for young people around issues affecting young people, including discrimination, education,³³ mental health and wellbeing. The participation rate of Travellers in existing mentoring projects could be examined as part of this. This could be undertaken in collaboration with youth projects.
Lead agencies: Youth and community projects, Traveller organisations, and the HSE.

3. Traveller organisations, in collaboration with youth projects and schools, should explore how role models can be one method of supporting young people to remain in education. Models used elsewhere to support retention in education amongst ethnic groups could be explored for their application to County Cork, and the inter-agency group should support or lobby for resources to support this work.

Lead agency: Traveller organisations

"Yellow Flag" in recognition of its work in promoting diversity & inclusion.

http://www.itmtrav.ie/keyissues/yellow_flag/

³¹ The underlying intent of anti-bias education is to foster the development of children and adults to build caring, just, diverse communities and societies for all. It can be applied effectively to all areas of potential discrimination such as gender, disability, sexual orientation, age marital status, family status, religion, 'race' and membership of the Traveller community. An anti-bias approach acknowledges that children aged 3+ should be encouraged to explore and experience a range of different cultural practices, events, and symbols and to appreciate and respect difference and cultural diversity, and that children aged 5+ should be encouraged to understand the negative effects of stereotypes and prejudices and be able to identify them in their own attitudes.

³² Consultations undertaken in 2008 by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs with young people on mental health and issues that impact on it identified eight themes that 'hurt' mental health: self-image, school pressures and exam system, family, bullying, death, peer pressure, relationships with boyfriends and girlfriends and isolation.

³³ For example, mentor support in education could be delivered at the point of transition between primary and second level.

4. Opportunities to develop a space for Travellers to discuss and explore issues of common concern, including such issues as mental health, drugs and sexuality, etc., should be investigated. Some older girls and young women would welcome a space to consider issues such as gender and identity. For young men, the model of the 'men's shed'³⁴ could be explored to see if there is relevance in the model for men in county Cork.
Lead agency: Traveller organisations

Mainstream services

5. The inter-agency group should work with education providers, schools and Traveller organisations to explore how impacts and gaps arising from the discontinuation of certain supports for Travellers (for example, the Visiting Teacher Service) could be met by existing supports (for example, the Schools Completion Programme, or Home School Liaison Officers).
Lead agency: Department of Education
6. The extent to which the primary school curriculum reflects Traveller culture and identity should be examined. Consideration should be given to exploring ways in which the inter-agency group, Traveller organisations and other allies could support an effective reflection of Traveller culture and identity in the primary school curriculum. The importance of reflecting cultural identity at the earliest stage was emphasised.
Lead agency: Department of Education
7. An Garda Síochána should work closely with Traveller organisations to engage with Travellers, through youth activities, homework clubs, etc. The Community Garda service could provide clarity on procedures around members of the public engaging with An Garda Síochána in relation to certain issues, e.g., reporting complaints and follow up procedures.
Lead agency: An Garda Síochána with Traveller organisations.
8. Most youth services and organisations have a focus on disadvantage (and Travellers as a specific target group). It is therefore key that Travellers are named as a specific target group of youth services. In this respect, youth services should prioritise outreach work to Travellers, and continue to develop specific Traveller youth projects. However, youth projects should

³⁴ Men's sheds organisations are typically located in shed or workshop-type spaces in community settings that provide opportunities for regular hands-on activity by groups deliberately and mainly comprising men. They have proliferated across parts of southern Australia and New Zealand with higher proportions of men not in work participating. They are often used as a basis for combating isolation and supporting health and wellbeing amongst men. An Irish men's shed forum has recently been established: <http://www.menssheds.ie/>

also target Travellers within a mainstream setting, to allow choices for Travellers as to what types of youth work projects they wish to participate in. In particular, a need for activities for young men and young women aged 16 years and over was identified.

Lead agency: Youth organisations

9. Sporting organisations should be encouraged to continue engagement with Travellers and to document the good practice identified in this research for further dissemination (as identified in recommendation no.1). In particular, opportunities for girls aged 13 years and over to engage in sporting activity should be stressed as there is little participation amongst girls in this age group. Collaboration between the County Sports Partnership, schools, sporting organisations, community projects and parents could be initiated to develop a strategy to achieve this.

Lead agency: County Cork Sports Partnership

Labour market and economy

Young Travellers are keenly aware of labour market discrimination, which they feel will impede their work opportunities. The following measures are recommended as mechanisms to overcome these barriers, and should be undertaken as part of the core remit of local development agencies.

10. The inter-agency group should initiate contact with employers around positive action measures for Travellers in preparation for an upturn in the economy.
Lead: The five LCDP companies in the County with Traveller organisations.
11. The inter-agency group should support the development of social enterprise strategies in county Cork with Traveller organisations. The 'Traveller Enterprise Development Unit' model developed by the Galway Traveller Movement in developing social enterprise could be explored for its replication.
Lead: The Enterprise and Training Subgroup in collaboration with Traveller organisations in Cork and the Department of Social Protection.
12. The inter-agency group should engage with local development and enterprise agencies in pursuing measures to support self-employment for Travellers to overcome discrimination.
Lead: The five LCDP companies in the County with Traveller organisations.

Implementation

13. Most of the recommended actions above come within the remit of many agencies and member organisations of the inter-agency group. It is recommended that they be included in the next inter-agency workplan in 2012. As regards their implementation, each should be delegated to their relevant lead agencies and inter-agency subgroup, which would report on their progress at each inter-agency meeting. Where any of the issues come within a national remit, they should be referred to the national inter-agency group for implementation.

Recommendations requiring additional resources

14. The opportunities for career guidance starting from the beginning of second level school should be explored. As many Travellers have left school by the time that career guidance is put in place, they will lose the opportunity to avail of career guidance support.
Lead agency: Department of Education
15. Similarly, schools programmes around mental health that start at transition or fifth year should be started sooner to enable as many Travellers as possible to participate in such supports.
Lead agency: Department of Education
16. The inter-agency group should lobby for resources to be made available for recommendations 14 and 15, above.

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Cork County Childcare Committee



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláin
Health Service Executive



West Cork Traveller
Centre



East Cork Traveller
Advocacy Project

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