



The Tharrie Times

Issue 26, Summer 2019

Welcome

Welcome to Issue 26 of **The Tharrie Times**, the bi-annual newsletter of National Traveller MABS.

We know that you are as busy as ever. We hope this newsletter will give you an idea of our current work, and inform you of other initiatives which might be of interest to you.

Ensuring that MABS is an accessible and useful service for Travellers is a constant theme in our work. In this newsletter, we give an overview of some of the resources we are developing to support this. This includes a booklet for service-providers working with families of Travellers who are in prison. We have also developed a new flyer in collaboration with Primary Health Projects in West Limerick and Clondalkin. In June we will launch a research report about the extent of energy poverty experienced by Travellers living in caravans and mobile homes. The research was undertaken by Dr Stuart Stamp, our National Support and Development Worker Michelle Kearns, Ballyfermot MABS and a number of Traveller organisations.

We are in the process of advertising for a new position in National Traveller MABS. The post is for a Project Worker who will continue to work on developing policy for culturally-appropriate affordable accommodation. The ideal candidate would have a human rights approach and be aware of the issues faced by Travellers.

This newsletter also includes information about initiatives run by our colleagues including: St. Catherine's Primary Health Care Project's Cultural Awareness Training in Carlow; ENAR Ireland's Anti-Racist election protocol which has been supported by various political parties; the launch of the Community Platform's values manifesto ahead of the local and European elections; and representation to the meeting of the Joint Committee of Education and Skills by national Traveller organisations.

National Traveller MABS continues to make the links and build relationships between local Travellers groups and their services. If we can be a help or support to your service, please contact us.

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



Dermot Sreenan



Nancy Power

Making Services More Accessible to Travellers

National Traveller MABS is supporting local MABS offices to become more accessible to Traveller clients. We are aware that many Travellers do not understand what services are provided by their local MABS. We are also aware that some MABS offices would like to have a better understanding of Travellers' issues so that they can support them with their financial problems. In order to help services become more accessible to Travellers we are working on a number of projects that are explained below.

Plain English in our Communications

We have begun a process to ensure that our communications are accessible to everyone. As part of this process, we have become a member of NALA (the National Adult Literacy Agency), and our staff have completed plain English training. We are working towards ensuring all our communications; leaflets, fliers, our website and newsletters are written in plain English.

Booklet for Families of Travellers in Prison

National Traveller MABS is a member of the steering group of the Travellers in Prison initiative. This initiative aims to change policy and practice to better support Travellers in prison. The steering group identified the need to support families of Travellers in prison with their finances. The committee asked National Traveller MABS to lead out on developing a resource for organisations working directly with Travellers whose family members are in prison. These organisations include local Traveller organisations, MABS offices, health and other social services. As part of this work National Traveller MABS has recently developed a flier for families and a resource document for organisations. These documents, which are written in plain English will be available from June 2019.

continued inside >

continued from page 1

Factsheets for Services

National Traveller MABS has developed a number of factsheets for MABS offices to help them understand how Travellers experience financial exclusion. The factsheets will be available on our website from June 2019, and will also be distributed to all local services. There are factsheets on:

- Accommodation
- Community Education
- Debt and Dying
- Energy Poverty amongst Travellers living in mobile homes
- Issues of Personal Finance in the Travelling Community

MABS Flyer

We have been working with a focus group made up of Traveller Primary Health Care Workers who have undertaken money management community education with MABS. This focus group has developed a promotional flyer for MABS which will be distributed to all Traveller organisations this year and will also be available to all MABS services to use. The focus group has also overseen the development of Traveller-specific images which National Traveller MABS will use in our materials in the future.

For more information go to our website <https://www.ntmabs.org>

Community, Decency, and Participation – important values for politics today

Values are powerful tools in creating social change. They are at the heart of every action, practice and decision of an organisation. On May 2nd the Community Platform launched two manifestos ahead of the local and European elections. The manifestos called on local and European candidates to put people first and uphold the values of **Community**, **Decency**, and **Participation** in their political work.

The manifestos are tools to promote a positive and inclusive value system in politics – to celebrate what we collectively stand for, not what we stand against. They can be used as conversation-starters with local and European candidates. At the launch, MEP Marian Harkin said that politicians need to be challenged on how to turn words into action, and that real participation is a real challenge for most politicians.

Electing people who will deliver on these values on the 24th May will help achieve the type of inclusive society we all want to live in at a local level or as part of a wider European Union.

To download the manifestoes and other campaign material visit <http://communityplatform.ie/>

Follow the hashtag #MyValuesMyVote on Twitter



Left to right: Dr Mary Murphy, Maynooth University, Paul Ginnell, European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland, Marian Harkin MEP, and Damian Walsh, Community Platform, at the launch of the Community Platform's Values Manifestos

Cultural Awareness Training with Carlow Community Traveller Health Workers



Participants and facilitators at the Cultural Awareness Training Workshop run by Traveller Primary Health Care staff in St. Catherine's Community Services Centre in Carlow, 9th April 2019

In April our education worker Sian attended a Cultural Awareness Training Workshop run by Traveller Primary Health Care workers in St. Catherine's Community Services Centre in Carlow. The training was very well facilitated by the staff Winnie Cassidy, Michelle Maddock Doran, Kathleen Kerrigan, and Edel Keogh. It explored themes including stereotyping, myths and prejudices, and how our opinions can be influenced by the media. We discussed some facts about life for Travellers in Ireland. For example, the infant mortality rate amongst Travellers is 3.6 times higher than the general population, while the life expectancy for Traveller men is approximately 15 years below the average for the general male population. The facilitators explained how many Travellers live in poor, overcrowded conditions and are exposed to a variety of health and safety risks. They also described to participants what it is like to live with discrimination every day – to be refused from restaurants, bars, and shops just for being a Traveller.

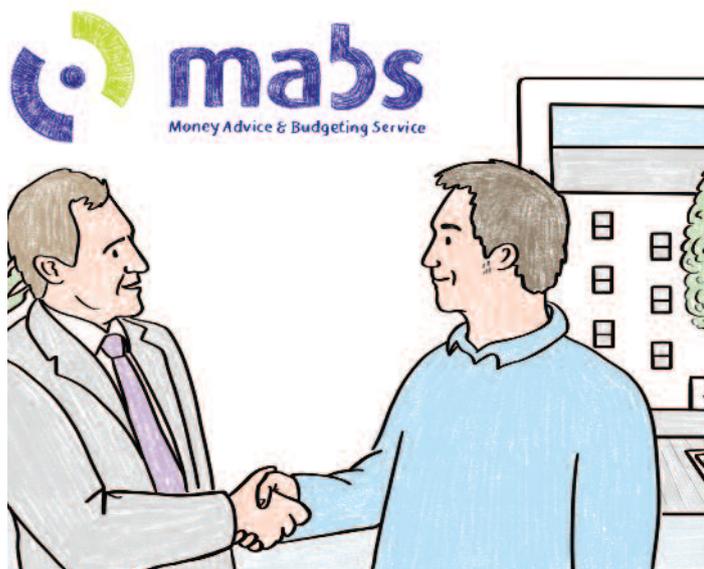
The event was well-attended by staff from a variety of organisations including the local MABS service, community

police, mid-wives, HSE, language therapists and a person working with asylum seekers. It was great to see organisations working towards developing trust and understanding. We had a discussion about what kinds of barriers Travellers experience when trying to access services and explored ways of overcoming these. A recurrent theme was the importance of building trust between a service and the community.

We were delighted to see Matt Mulvey, coordinator of Carlow MABS in attendance. Matt will be facilitating a money management community education course with St. Catherine's later this year. He will be using *A Way of Life* and *Overcoming Illegal Debt*, two resources which have been developed specifically for working with Travellers. If you would like to find out more about these resources or are interested in facilitating this course with a local Traveller organisation, please get in touch with Sian in National Traveller MABS at sian_crowley@mabs.ie

Developing culturally appropriate images for our materials

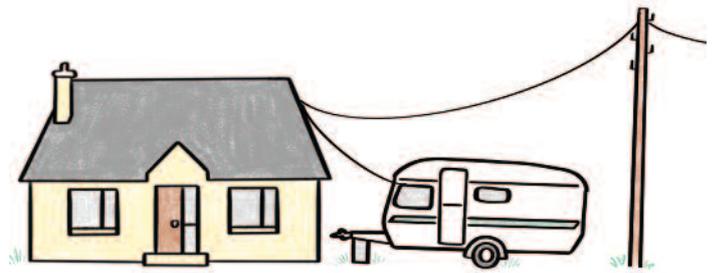
Through our community education work we have found that some Travellers do not know that services – including MABS – are for them. Two common reasons for this are Travellers do not see themselves represented in promotional materials, and language can exclude or confuse people. Since 2018, National Traveller MABS have been trying to make our materials and publications easier to understand.



We hope that using clear language and images will make our materials accessible to a larger audience. To achieve this, we have been working with a Traveller focus group and Cork-based artist Hazel Hurley to develop suitable images.

The design process

The focus group is made up of workers from Primary Health Care Projects in Clondalkin, Dublin and Newcastle West, Limerick. Both organisations participated in money management community education programmes with MABS in 2018. The group discussed the types of financial issues Travellers experience, and explored how National Traveller MABS could use images to communicate these issues. They described what the images should look like to Hazel, who



drew up sketches. It was a time-consuming process, and the group put a lot of energy into it.

We have now developed a library of almost fifty images. We also have developed a check-list of what images should look, in case we need to develop more images in future. National Traveller MABS are delighted that we can now use these images in our newsletters, reports, flyers, education resources, and other promotional materials. We are grateful to the focus group for the time they took out from their own work and effort they put into the process.

New flyer

The focus group also worked together to develop a leaflet promoting MABS, which will use the new images. It is an easy-to-read guide to MABS which will explain how to make contact with your local service. The flyer will be distributed to MABS offices and Traveller organisations around the country.



Traveller Pride launches

National Traveller MABS are excited to announce two upcoming launches for our new MABS flyer, which we have developed with workers from Primary Health Care Projects in Newcastle West, Limerick and Clondalkin, Dublin. The events will take place in Limerick and Clondalkin as part of Traveller Pride. The dates for the launch events are:

Limerick City Hall, June 6th: This launch will take place as part of a public event for Traveller Pride Week in Limerick in City Hall, involving West Limerick Primary Health Care Project, Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, Mincéirs Whiden, National Traveller MABS, and other Traveller organisations to be announced.

Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, June 13th: This launch will be part of Clondalkin Travellers' Pride event, which will focus on mental health. Look out for more information on both of these events or contact Sian at sian_crowley@mabs.ie



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Lúimnigh
Limerick City & County Council #TPW2019

**Traveller Pride Week:
Making connections
across Limerick**

Home Exhibition, #TPW2016, Limerick City Hall

**Public event celebrating achievements
from working together**

Conversations with people from Minceir Whiden, Limerick City Traveller Health Advocacy Programme, Kilmallock Travellers Group and West Limerick Primary Health Care Project for Travellers with Clondalkin Primary Health Care Project

**Where: Istabraq Hall, Limerick City and County Council
Corporate Headquarters, Merchant's Quay, Limerick**

Day: Thursday 6th June 2019
Time: 11.15am-1pm

Information: Call 061 557372 or go to Limerick.ie

West Limerick Resources BALLYFERMOT Limerick Social Centre Traveller Health Unit mabs C.T.D.G.

Clondalkin Travellers Development Group launches research into mental health and Travellers living in Clondalkin, Lucan, Newcastle and Palmerstown

Clondalkin Travellers Development Group recently completed research into the status of Travellers' mental health and the barriers to Travellers' access to mental health services and other services. The report research was launched in March and found that:

- 77% of Travellers included in the study had experienced depression
- 87% of men and 79% of women said they know someone who had attempted suicide
- 67% of Travellers in the study answered yes to the question has anyone related to you died by suicide
- 86% said they knew someone who would benefit from counselling or suicide prevention services
- 72% of women and 65% of men would consider contacting a voluntary group if they needed help or support

From a MABS perspective it was interesting to note that **81% of women and 58% of men included in the study had heard of MABS**. National Traveller MABS has worked with both Clondalkin MABS and Ballyfermot MABS to build relationships with Travellers in the Clondalkin area. Clondalkin MABS has proactively engaged with the Clondalkin Traveller Development Group and has delivered a number of budgeting community education programmes. Ballyfermot MABS has also proactively engaged with Ballyfermot Traveller Action Group to promote their services and has a long history of developing good working relationships with Travellers in their catchment area. This report highlights the effectiveness of spending time building good relationships with the local Traveller community.



Traveller Pride 2019

CELEBRATING OUR RESILIENCE

Traveller Pride May 30th – JUNE 13th 2019

**For further information on events,
and concert tickets, check us out on [f](#)**

Concert in the **Project Arts Centre** on Thursday May 30th, 6.30pm - 9pm



Keep an eye out for events happening in your community during Traveller Pride 2019.

Main political parties sign up to Anti-Racism Electoral Protocol



ENAR Ireland launched their Anti-Racism Election Protocol 2019 on March 21st – the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The protocol was launched by Senator Colette Kelleher in Leinster House. Political parties and independent candidates are being asked to sign up to a pledge, ahead of the local elections on May 24th.

When political parties sign up to the protocol they pledge to:

- reject racism and all forms of discrimination and hate speech
- condemn campaign materials that incite hatred on the grounds of race
- debate political issues in a responsible and respectful way
- avoid stereotyping, prejudice and confusion
- reflect diversity in campaign materials

ENAR write that “The Anti-Racism Election Protocol has played an important role since 2001 in ensuring that

elections have been conducted in such a way that they do not incite hatred or prejudice on the grounds of ‘race’, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin, religious belief and membership of the Traveller Community.”

The following parties have endorsed the protocol: Aontú, Éirígí, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Green Party, Independents for Change, Labour Party, People Before Profit, Solidarity, Social Democrats, Sinn Féin, The Workers’ Party,

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) Ireland is still inviting political representatives to demonstrate and renew their commitment to anti-racism by signing this updated declaration as an indication of their support and endorsement of the Protocol.



Our work with Young Travellers

Short Film

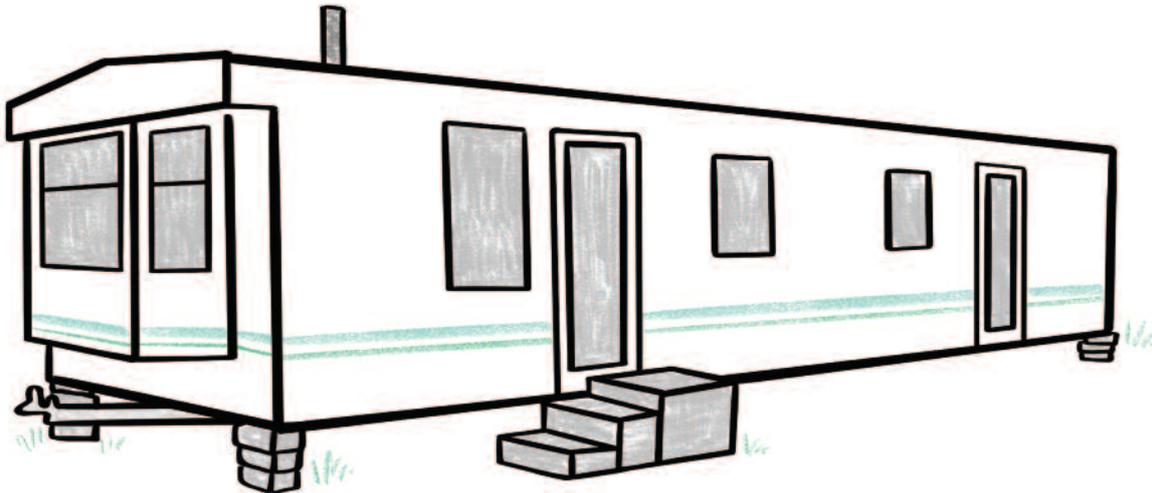
National Traveller MABS have produced a short film which aims to raise money management awareness amongst young Travellers. The film aims to raise awareness with young Travellers about things to do to manage their money in a better way. The film highlights the importance of saving, the need to plan ahead for life events and in general to start a conversation about personal finances. It is intended for use within a community education setting.

Developing accessible materials for young Travellers

This year we are beginning a process of developing tailor made programmes for young Travellers. We will work with young people to identify what they need to do to develop their own financial skills. We will then design and pilot a community education programme based on this work. Our hope is to produce a dedicated programme that can be shared with MABS offices as part of their community education work. We will keep you updated on this work.

Accommodating Ethnicity – A Report into Energy Poverty amongst Travellers Living in Mobile Homes and Trailers

National Traveller MABS has recently completed a study into energy poverty amongst Travellers living in mobile homes and trailers. The study, by Dr Stuart Stamp, was conducted in late 2018 and supported by eleven local Traveller organisations. These organisations assisted and supported throughout the research process. Ballyfermot MABS was also a member of the steering group overseeing the research.



The report's key findings:

Rates of energy poverty

- 77% of Travellers living in mobile homes experience energy poverty
- Travellers living in mobile homes or trailers are nine times more likely to go without heat than the population
- Travellers living in mobile homes are fourteen times more likely to be unable to keep their household warm than the population
- Travellers living in mobile homes spend on average between 26.1% (median) and 28% (mean) of their income on energy this is around five to six times higher than the corresponding figure of 4.6% of the population
- The average weekly amount spent on energy by this group is €108 compared with €38.56 spent by the population

Condition of mobiles/trailers

- 77% of Traveller households (living in mobile homes or trailers) surveyed said their homes were in need of repair
- 84.6% of Travellers living in mobile homes experience condensation
- 80% of Travellers living in mobile homes experience damp
- 69% Travellers said their mobile was not insulated and a further 17% did not know if their home was insulated or not

Poverty and Financial Exclusion

The report found high levels of poverty and financial exclusion amongst Travellers living in mobile homes and Trailers. 94% of the respondents in the survey said that their

social welfare payment was their main source of income, while 83% were living below the poverty line. As we know banking and payment exclusion limits choice and incurs higher costs. Study respondents used mainly cash to pay for energy costs and were also locked out of credit options to finance better quality accommodation.

Health and Safety

The report also found high levels of health issues among the people taking part in the study as well as numerous issues with fire safety.

Report recommendations

The report recommends:

Income

- The winter Fuel Allowance payment should be increased for Traveller households living in mobile homes or trailers.
- Fuel allowance coverage should be extended to families who are officially sharing a bay (and thereby liable for rent), and to those in other circumstances who are provided with washing/electricity facilities by the local authority.

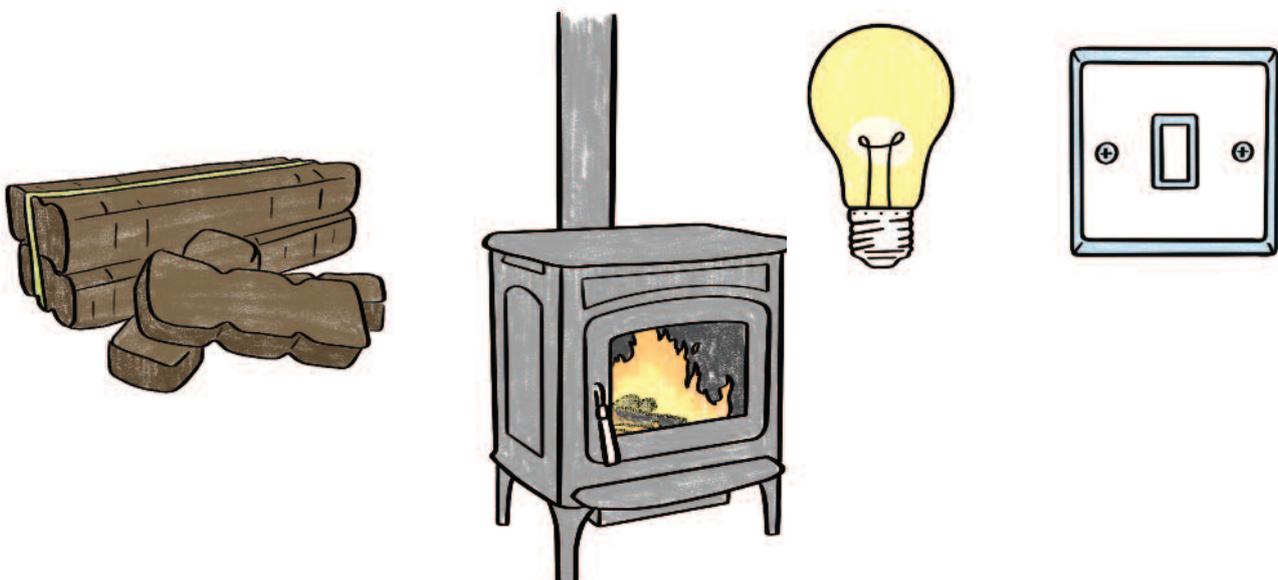
- That eligibility for winter Fuel Payments be further extended to include those who although are technically resident on unofficial sites, are nonetheless provided with (official) services such as communal washing facilities and electricity supply.
- Representation should be made to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection regarding entitlement to an Exceptional Supplement for Travellers experiencing energy poverty and health related consequences in particular.
- Increase access to Exceptional Needs Payments (ENP) to provide periodic assistance with fuel costs when needed

Costs

- Increased access to Exceptional Needs Payments, to provide periodic assistance with fuel costs when needed

Energy Efficiency

- A state-financed rental or 'rent-to-buy' caravan/"resting chalet" scheme should be explored with Travellers as a means of making residential-standard mobile accommodation accessible.





National Traveller Organisations make representations to the meeting of the Joint Committee of Education and Skills

In March 2019, representatives from National Traveller organisations attended a meeting of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills. The Irish Traveller Movement, the National Traveller Women’s Forum and Pavee Point were amongst those who addressed the meeting. Organisations were keen to give the committee key facts on Travellers in education as well as recommendations to improve educational participation and attainment for Travellers.

The Irish Traveller Movement made the following points:

- There is an absence of positive visibility of Traveller culture in the curricula and in the whole school environment.
- Bullying and racism is experienced by Traveller learners from their settled peers and also from educators.
- Discriminatory practises are still evident. For example, enrolment processes which exclude Traveller children and growing numbers of Traveller children being placed on shortened/reduced time tables inappropriately, which significantly impacts on their educational opportunities and outcomes.
- There are generally low expectations of Traveller learners.
- The rate of transfer from primary to second level is less than 100%.
- Many Traveller children complete eight years of primary school with poor attainment levels compared to their settled peers. Some Traveller children leave primary school unable to read.
- Only 13% of Travellers complete secondary education in comparison with 92% of the general population.
- Less than 1% of Travellers are in third level education, with only 167 adult Travellers with a third level qualification.

Recommendations by the National Traveller Women’s Forum included:

- Obligatory anti-racism and intercultural training is required for all teachers as part of pre-service and in-service teacher training along with visibility of Traveller culture in the curricula.
- Appropriate desegregated data collection needs to be prioritised within the education system. The analysis

from this data collection is needed to ensure targets and actions are having an impact for Traveller women and girls in education and to put in place the necessary appropriate targeted initiatives.

- We need adequate resources to ensure increased retention and attainment levels. This is to make available more practical supports available including: school uniforms, books and lunches where necessary; and also subsidised school/community-based supports for homework and afterschool clubs.

Pavee Point recommended:

- All education personnel, including policy makers, need to be visibly informed by interculturalism and anti-racism, including an explicit focus on Travellers.
- The amendment to the Education Act currently going through the Dáil which proposes that Traveller culture and history will be reflected in the school curriculum will require concrete programmes and materials for schools, on Travellers’ history and culture.
- Now that we’re post-recession we’d like to see the restoration of support services for Travellers attending schools - services that were savagely cut by 85% during austerity. Direct and targeted resources are needed to promote Traveller inclusion in mainstream education. One size does not fit all.
- Another important action in NTRIS is to promote affirmative action to support Travellers to become teachers. This is essential in promoting positive role models as well as influencing the culture and ethos of schools.
- Direct engagement with Traveller organisations as equal and key partners in engagement with the education system at all levels is essential.



Ian Mc Donagh, student from Galway addressed the committee:

My name is Ian McDonagh. I am 17 years old and I attend Merlin College, Doughiska. It is my honour to be here today to speak about my views of the education system as a young Traveller in leaving cert I would like to take this opportunity to say that Merlin College is a great school, with a fantastic atmosphere where there is a genuine respect between students and teachers. I have a lot of encouragement and help from my teachers and also from my Scholar's Den Homework Club where I attend on a daily basis. In January 2016, I became the first Traveller to ever take part and to win an award at the BT Young Scientists Exhibition, winning 2nd prize in 2016 in the Biological & Ecological Category. My project looked at "Does the lunar cycle play a role in equine birth patterns?" In January 2017, I won an award at the BT Young Scientists Exhibition, winning the Jack Restan award this is a special award in the BT Young Scientists. My project looked at the "Cures and Folklore of the Irish Traveller Community". Over the last number of years I have been campaigning more speed ramps and play facilities in my local area in Galway city. This really did give me great interest into the world of politics and I am hoping in the coming years that I will be a member of this government and be able to give the people the voice that they need. I am proud to be a Traveller and I hope that being recognised as an ethnic minority will enable other young and old Travellers to feel proud of their identity. I am hoping after being recognised as ethnic minority that our Traveller culture, language and history will be taught in schools and will bring about

positive changes for the future. The yellow flag has been a great part of our school not just for the Travelling Community but for all communities. As you may be all aware of these census

- *13% of Traveller children complete second – level education compared to 92% in the general population.*
- *Of those Travellers who drop out of second level education, 55% have left by the age of 15*
- *The number of Traveller children who progress to third level education represents just 1% of the Traveller community.*
- *The majority of Travellers 70% have only primary or lower levels of education. My own hopes and dreams for the future is to join An Garda Siochana. Well, as a young Traveller I feel they paint a very bad picture with Travellers being or less on the margin of society. I think that the future for young Travellers is totally dependent on their increased participation in education and the workforce and that this must be seen as a priority. For me education is very important as it builds self-confidence and awareness and an ability to participate actively in our society. Low levels of education lead to poor self-esteem, poor job opportunities, and poor health and can also lead to depression. In Conclusion I think that parents need to encourage their children to gain at least a Leaving Cert and that School Principals and the Department of Education should take active measures together with Traveller parents to increase Traveller participation at both 2nd and 3rd level.*

Project Worker – Affordable Accommodation

National Traveller MABS has consistently found that accommodation is expensive for many Travellers. Through our work in financial inclusion, we have supported people towards securing loans for caravans and mobile homes in order to address accommodation needs. We have continued this work by undertaking two pieces of research into the costs of mobile homes, and energy poverty in mobile homes.

We are now looking to recruit a project worker for one year to develop a policy framework in relation to advancing

affordable, cultural appropriate accommodation for Travellers. This framework will have a particular focus on caravans / mobile homes for long-term living. We are looking for a candidate with research and policy development experience. The issue of affordable accommodation needs a policy solution, and we believe that National Traveller MABS can contribute towards this. Recruitment will commence in June for this post.

National Traveller Mental Health Network Launch



The issue of mental health amongst the Irish Traveller community is a major one. According to the 2017 Community Foundation for Ireland / Behaviour and Attitudes survey of Irish Travellers, over 90% of Travellers agree that mental health problems are common in the community.

The National Traveller Mental Network is a collective of Travellers and Traveller organisations country-wide was established in 2018. It held a very successful launch in NUI Galway on the 15th of March 2019. The launch was extremely well attended with Travellers and Traveller groups as well as service providers from across the country. The Network's strategic plan was launched at the event. The day saw a wonderful display of culture and art provided by Galway Traveller Movement. There were presentations from Travellers and Traveller youths from across the country

about their own experience of mental health. The event received excellent coverage from RTE.

The aim of the National Traveller Mental Health Network is to develop a collective space that is community-led, where local, regional and national Traveller mental health issues are highlighted, discussed and addressed. It is a space where solutions are explored with a view to being included in culturally appropriate policy on Traveller mental health.

The objectives of the network include:

- To develop a collective space where the voices of Travellers throughout the country are heard
- To ensure that the network is community-led
- To ensure that the social determinants of mental health are highlighted and included
- To explore ways and means to address this
- To lobby and advocate on behalf of Traveller mental health
- To develop and input into policy
- To share information and best practice
- To gain recognition as the National Traveller Mental Health Network and to be consulted as such by policy makers

For more information about the network and its strategic plan please contact Suzie McCarthy on 0851253211
Email n.travmhnetwork@gmail.com

Information resource for organisations working with families of Travellers in prison

National Traveller MABS is a member of the Travellers in Prison Initiative and has worked with TPI members to develop a resource for organisations working with families of Travellers in prison. The resource is a guide to assist families in accessing their welfare and tax entitlements. It also describes the budgeting and debt advice supports available

from MABS offices. The appendix to the guide gives contact details for all MABS and Citizens Information Services across the country. The guide will be launched in autumn 2019 and is available on the website of National Traveller MABS: <https://www.ntmabs.org/>