



National Traveller MABS (Money Advice & Budgeting Service)

Local Area Development

*Evaluation Report
October 2006 – November 2007*

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Summary of report

This report is an evaluation of the ten local area meetings facilitated between October 2006 and November 2007 (*See appendices for a list of areas and participants*)

The main objectives of the report are:

- To highlight common issues affecting Travellers in Ireland
- To outline how all services can work together to promote MABS to Travellers
- To make recommendations on how the project can be developed in 2008

Background of project

In 2006, National Traveller MABS mapped Traveller population and accommodation in Ireland on a national basis. Our aim was to develop a detailed booklet for each MABS service. In September 2006, we distributed the completed booklets to all MABS services and published a book which compiled all local statistics. This was launched by the then Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Seamus Brennan, during Traveller Focus week.

Following on from this, 10 meetings were facilitated around the country to discuss local financial issues affecting Travellers. It is anticipated that in the coming year, the remainder of MABS offices and Traveller organisations will be visited. However, it is timely now that after a year in operation we review the project.

Organisation of meetings

National Traveller MABS initially made contact with the local MABS office to discuss the project and a suitable date. Contact was then made with all local Traveller groups – Support groups, Community Development Projects, Primary Health Care programmes, Training Centres and any other unspecified Traveller group in the area.

All meetings were held locally and were easily accessible to all participants ie Longford region was held in Longford town and so on. The majority of the meetings had participation from both service providers and service users. This allowed the discussion to have a broad perspective.

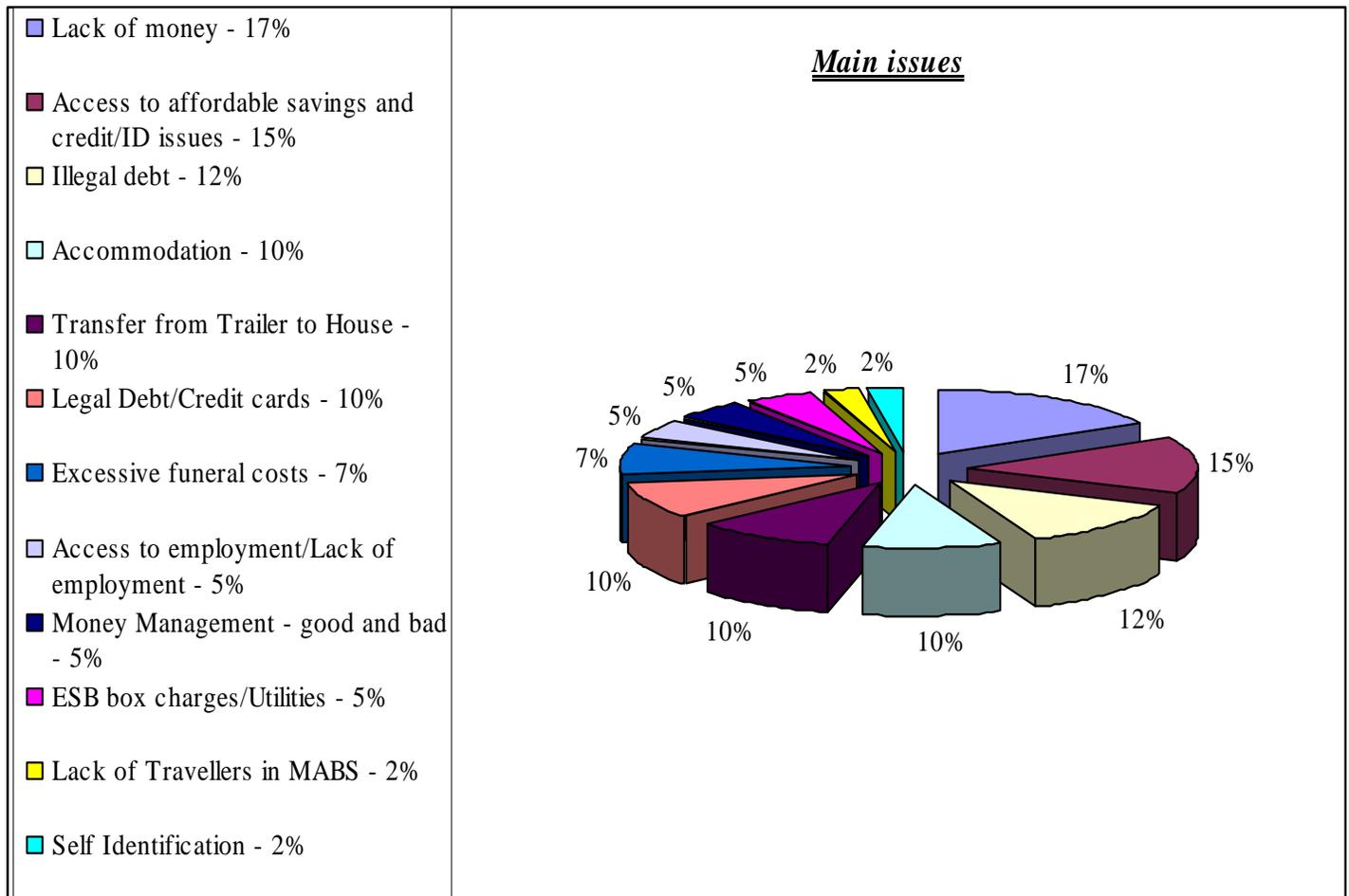
Meetings were facilitated by staff from National Traveller MABS and a report was written up for each area which contained all issues discussed and all suggestions made of how MABS and the Traveller organisations could work together locally.

Issues

After introductions, an open discussion was held. The main issues highlighted were

- lack of money
- access to affordable savings and credit
- illegal debt.

Out of the ten areas visited, 7 groups discussed at length the issues highlighted below. The remaining 3 groups had a poor showing issues were not discussed in as much detail. It was agreed at all 10 meetings that there *is* a need for the MABS service within the Traveller Community.



Way forward/promoting MABS

Following this, participants discussed how both the MABS services and Traveller organisations can best work together to promote the use of MABS among Travellers and addressing financial issues affecting the community.

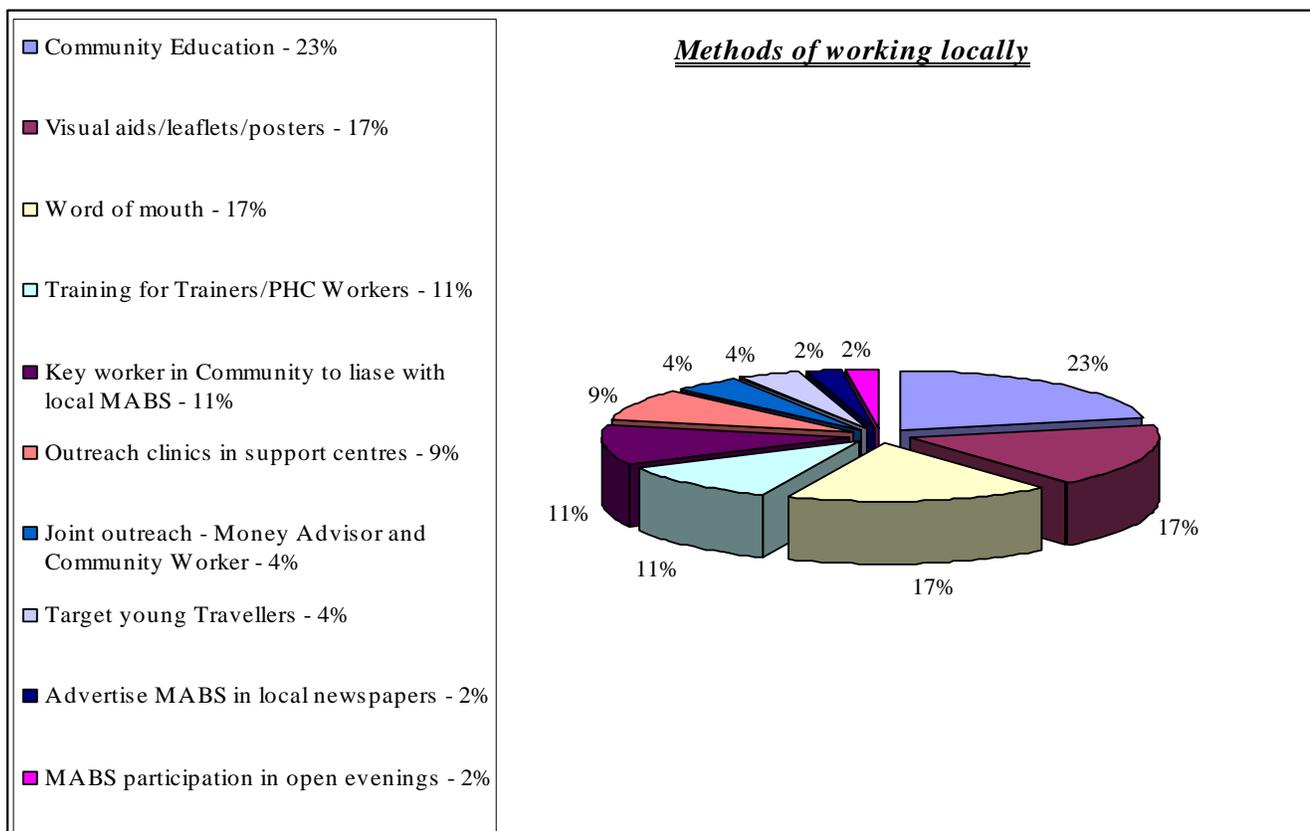
The results identified community education as the most popular method of developing the above. (Community education meaning that the participants decide what is delivered and each module is tailor made to their needs)

However, participants from MABS agreed while community education is crucial and very important, the lack of resources and staff had in the past have held them back in making contact with their local training centres.

In addition to community education, the points below ranked high on the list of methods identified :

- The use of visual aids eg leaflets, posters
- Word of mouth and continually linking in clients
- Training for Trainers

Other methods discussed are evident in the chart below.



Summary

The local area meetings worked well when National Traveller MABS was contacted by the local MABS service. Keeping meetings local worked very well, each region had different issues to discuss and it was important that both MABS participants and Traveller participants had time to discuss the issues and debate possible solutions. Larger groups didn't necessarily have more input - input depended very much on the willingness to participate.

Where participants were instructed to attend by their supervisor, input tended to be less forthcoming. It was also difficult to get confirmation of intended participants. This led to low attendance at a number of the meetings.

Evaluation of meetings took place (when appropriate) on the day. Follow up reviews were also undertaken at 3 and 6 months following each meeting. Feedback can be seen in appendices 2 and 3.

Recommendations for 2008

- More detailed preparation within local areas should take place
 - National Traveller MABS should initially meet MABS services and local Traveller organisations separately
 - Following detailed discussions of the needs, a facilitated joint group can decide on the ways forward
- MABS key worker should be appointed in local Traveller organisations to maintain links with local MABS service
- Review questionnaires should continue to be distributed at 3 & 6 month intervals post local area meetings
- National Traveller MABS will ensure continuous contact with local MABS and Traveller organisations
- A Development Worker should be employed by National Traveller MABS to plan strategically for sustainable area development.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Participating Services

Area and services visited (in alphabetical order)

Clondalkin	Clondalkin MABS, Clondalkin Traveller Development Group, Clondalkin Traveller Primary Health Care, St Olivers Training Centre
Donegal	Donegal MABS – North, South, West, Donegal Travellers Project Mountain Top
Kildare	Kildare MABS, Kildare Traveller Action, Kildare Traveller Action Women’s Group
Leitrim	Leitrim MABS, Leitrim Traveller Development Group
Longford	Longford MABS, Longford Traveller Movement, St Mels Training Centre
Mayo	Mayo MABS – North and South, Mayo Traveller Support Group, St Catherine’s Training Centres – Ballyhaunis, Ballinrobe, Ballina and Castlebar
Roscommon	Roscommon MABS, READ Centre
Sligo	Primary Health Care
Tallaght	Tallaght MABS, Tallaght Traveller CDP, Tallaght Traveller Primary Health Care, St Basils Training Centre
Wicklow	Arklow MABS, Bray Traveller Development Group, Wicklow Traveller Support Group/Ceart, St Kieran’s Training Centre, Wicklow Primary Health Care

Appendix 2. Summary of Evaluations

Out of the ten areas visited, only five groups completed evaluation forms at their local sessions.

Positive feedback included :

- Very useful
- Good networking opportunity
- Looked at practical ways of working with Travellers
- Raised awareness of Traveller issues in their area
- Discussions on specific issues such as funeral costs

Negative feedback included :

- Sessions too short
- More Traveller participation needed
- Facilitation could be more strategic

The overall feedback from the evaluation sheets was that the local area meetings were an excellent source of networking, of gathering information on MABS and local services and generally informing people of the issues faced by Travellers in their area.

Appendix 3. Follow up review

Following each local area meeting, 3 month questionnaires were sent to all participants to monitor if any links had been established following the meetings.

6 month questionnaires were sent to participants who were not responsive to the initial questionnaire.

Finally, after one year, a questionnaire was and will be sent to all participants to observe if links have been maintained and to see if any further meetings need to be facilitated by National Traveller MABS.

7 out of 10 services have been contacted using 3 month and 6 month questionnaires. Out of these 7, 5 MABS services have engaged in community education with their local Traveller Training Centre.

Several services also agreed that more networking meetings (facilitated by NTMABS) should be held throughout the year as, not only does it raise the profile of MABS, it maintains links between all the local services.

Two services felt very strongly about having more Traveller participation at the meetings.

6 of the Traveller organisations contacted (all in different areas) have been regularly encouraging clients to attend their local MABS service. There have been no records kept by the Traveller organisations as to the take up of MABS by Travellers. MABS service has also not noticed a rise in Traveller numbers using service but this can be due to Travellers not self identifying.