



National Traveller MABS
Unit 2, North Park, North Road, Finglas, Dublin 11
01 864 8510 - www.ntmabs.org



Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of **The Tharie Times** for 2011.

In this issue we bring you a variety of news items from details of a soon to be published valuable education resource to an update on research into the financial burden of funerals within the Traveller community.

We also detail the background to a report currently being prepared on our local area development work over the past 3 years. We report on the Traveller Pride award of 2010 and highlight the effects of cutbacks on Traveller specific education.

Finally we provide information on the Social Policy Network meetings, a social policy forum open to anyone with an interest in this area.

We hope you enjoy this issue of The Tharie Times and look forward to receiving your opinions and comments.

Nancy Power
Nuala Ní Ghabhann
Coordinators

'A Way of life' to be Published

National Traveller MABS is pleased to announce that MABSndI will soon publish, 'A Way of Life', a Money Management Community Education Resource for Travellers. The original resource was developed by Belinda Mc Greal-Flaherty in North Galway MABS.

Over the past 3 years National Traveller MABS has supported many MABS services in the delivery of this valuable education resource to Traveller groups locally. Recently the original resource was reviewed, revised and updated by a team comprised of Belinda herself, Dermot Sreenan from National Traveller MABS, Carol Dunne of MABSndI and Margaret Deegan of Finglas-Cabra MABS.

The resulting material has benefited from the expertise of the group together with feedback from the various money advisers and Traveller participants who have had experience of the original resource. The resource has six modules and money advisers are guided step by step in terms of how to facilitate and deliver the various lessons in a culturally appropriate manner.

The six module plan covers the following areas, Managing Money, Control & Budgeting, Income Maximisation, Banking Services, Bill payments and Borrowing.

The overall experience of money advisers who have previously delivered the original programme has been positive. The updated publication is the culmination of work that started when Belinda took the initial step to design something appropriate to the needs of Travellers and National Traveller MABS decided to promote it nationally.

MABSndI's decision to publish "A Way of Life" is recognition of the need for specific resources in this area. "A Way of Life" is comprehensive in covering not just the lesson plans, but a background and understanding of Traveller culture and identity. It will provide a great opportunity to build links with the local Traveller community whilst at the same time imparting much needed skills and tools.

National Traveller MABS would encourage local services to contact us for any support in the delivery of this valuable resource.





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The Financial burden of Funerals within the Traveller community

National Traveller MABS acknowledges the financial pressure funerals can place on many low income families. For some within the Traveller Community, such pressures are exacerbated by the circumstances of the bereavement, a lack of resources and by an inability to access appropriate financial services. This can result in people incurring considerable debt and in some cases, borrowing from illegal moneylenders.

In 2010, Dr Stuart Stamp, Maura Boyle and Ciara Murray carried out exploratory research on behalf of National Traveller MABS into the financial burden of funerals within the Traveller community.

The research aimed, among other things, to;

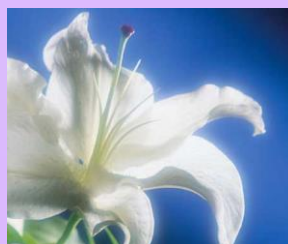
- Explore the importance of the funeral within the Traveller Community
- Explore the costs that can be incurred as a result of a bereavement
- Identify how funeral costs are currently met within the Traveller Community
- Identify any barriers to meeting such costs
- Examine how barriers identified can be overcome and
- Recommend possible alternatives to the present situation.

The research methodology was primarily qualitative in nature. Stuart and Maura carried out many in-depth interviews with key informants in the area. These included service providers, such as the insurance industry, funeral directors, money advisors and clergy. Interviews were also carried out nationally with several key individuals within the Traveller community as well as individual Travellers who had experienced debt following the burial of a loved one.

Ciara worked with a number of Traveller-specific focus groups to further explore the various issues that had become apparent. Feedback from these focus groups will be contained in the final report. It is envisaged that the report will be published this year.

Recommendations laid out in the published report will support possible strategies to address the issue and the financial exclusion of many within the Traveller community.

National Traveller MABS would like to take this opportunity to thank all within MABS who have participated in the research to date. We have been honoured to work with Stuart, Ciara and Maura, and look forward to circulating the final report to all MABS.



Developing and strengthening links...

As many of you are aware, NTMABS has been working locally to bring local MABS offices together with a diverse range of Traveller support organisations and service providers who have a remit to work with Travellers in their area. This project has now come full circle with a final report of the outcomes due in the spring of this year. This report will focus on financial issues that affect the Traveller community and how MABS nationally can support Travellers and local supports in tackling these issues.



From the 37 meetings that were conducted over the last number of years, a range of issues were identified which have been separated into 7 specific categories: social/cultural, illegal debt, accommodation, access to financial services, money management, education and employment. Similarly for the suggested ways of improving Travellers' access to MABS, the 5 main areas that were highlighted were: promotion of MABS, community education, targeted Traveller services, delivery of MABS and internal/structural changes.

It is envisaged that this report will lay the groundwork for strategies within NTMABS and it is anticipated that some of the current pilot initiatives, such as the MABS outreach clinics in Traveller centres, will be replicated around the country in the near future.



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Traveller Pride Awards 2010

Despite hail, sleet, and snow, the Traveller Pride Awards went ahead as planned on the 2nd of December. President Mary McAleese was on hand to give out the Lifetime Achievement Award which was presented to Nan Joyce for her trailblazing work for Travellers' rights.

Rosaleen McDonagh won both the community award and the overall Traveller Pride Award for 2010 for her work in pursuing a more inclusive community for Travellers. She also accepted the Breakthrough project award on behalf of the Gay Traveller Support Group who took part in the Gay Pride marches for the first time in both Dublin and Galway.



John Mongan – a boxing coach from Galway won the sports award and was presented it by the former Republic of Ireland soccer manager, Brian Kerr, who spoke warmly about his love of that sport.

Dylan Tighe the director of the play 'The Trailer of Bridget Dinngan' was there to present the Arts/Culture Award to Katie O'Donoghue from Cork who created an exhibition based on Traveller Culture.

Martin Collins, a great singer, won the Music Award and you can catch him perform regularly at the Cobblestone in Dublin 7. Laois Traveller Men's Enterprise Centre won the Enterprise award for the furniture business they successfully operate.



Denise McDonnell from Navan won the Youth Award for her work with the Brownies – the junior Girl Guides. Anne O'Donnell from Kildare won the Education award. She'd been inspired by her elder sister to re-engage with the Education system.

For the second year in the row the awards proved to be a great success and were an excellent way to start Traveller Pride Week. The Traveller way of life, like society at large, is changing, and all winners are proud of their identity and the positive contributions they are making to not just their community but to Irish society as a whole.



Social Policy

The **Social Policy Network** is a collaboration of social and voluntary organisations who share information and ideas on different policy issues and act as a support for each other. The group was established when a number of organisations came together to share policy ideas and develop future collaborations.

Over the last number of years, the group has gone from strength to strength and the network now consists of organisations and individuals from a wide range of interests such as disability, the elderly, Travellers, Citizen's information, women's health, homeless and many more.



National Traveller MABS has been involved with this group since 2008 and recently hosted a meeting at the offices of the CIB. Meeting similar groups and being exposed to different projects other organisations are working on has proved to be an excellent source of support and learning.

For more information, please contact Liz or Dermot at 01 864 8510 or email:

socialpolicynetwork@gmail.com for inclusion on the Social Policy Network mailing list.

Education Cuts Identified 2011



In November 2006, Minister Mary Hanafin stated at the launch of the report and recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy that, *“The link between education, lifelong learning, training and enterprise is perhaps the most vital in helping to increase the range of life choices available to Travellers.”*¹ The report emphasised moving away from Education provided on the basis of identity towards it being provided on the basis of need.

The cuts in Education in the December 2010 budget however appear to be clearly based on identity.

- Visiting Teacher’s for Travellers Service to end by June 2011.
- Resource Teachers for Travellers support to end by June 2011.
- Cuts to the 1.5hrs additional teacher hours per Traveller child.
- All Senior Traveller Training Centre’s to be phased out by June 2012.

The issue of ensuring children are educated according to their needs is not in dispute. The concerns arise because cuts are to services and supports that have seen a great improvement in the number of Traveller children staying on in post-primary education.

In 2008, the then Minister for Education, Batt O’Keefe said *“In 2006, the most recent year for which figures are available, 2,317 Travellers enrolled in our post-primary schools, compared with 1165 in 2000. In the same year 7,771 Traveller students were enrolled in our primary schools – twice the cohort enrolled two decades ago.”*¹



This staggering increase is being driven by the work of Visiting Teachers who provide a vital link between the home and school system. Additionally, Resource Teacher’s help prevent children dropping out when in transition to post-primary. The Senior Traveller Training Centre’s are an important opportunity for Travellers who’ve missed out on Education the first time around.



According to Bernie Ruane President of the Teacher’s Union of Ireland (TUI) said, Training centres are a place where *“Traveller adults particularly those who may not have benefited from education in the past to take up opportunities for second chance and further education. Once again the weakest have been unfairly and unjustly targeted.”*¹ The cuts appear to have been made without any real examination of the benefits of Traveller specific education resources and structures. The structures and network that exists appears to be ending without any obvious replacement of them. This can only bring about additional hardships for Traveller parents and Traveller students.

As Barnardos stated in January 2011 *“The cuts to Traveller-specific services is a short-sighted saving that will cement intergenerational cycles of disadvantage in the Traveller community.”*¹ The cuts to Traveller education, like all cuts to education and health, are being made so that Ireland’s economy may recover, but what cost will this have to future generations.

¹ Press release 21 November 2006 – DOE&S
<http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?maincat=&category=40100&category=40280§ionpage=12251&language=EN&link=link001&page=2&doc=33409>

¹ Press
Release <http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?maincat=&category=10861&category=43192§ionpage=12251&language=EN&link=link001&page=3&doc=42200>

¹ Press Release – TUI Cutbacks to Traveller Education ‘transparently discriminatory’ 25th Jan 2011

http://www.tui.ie/Cutbacks_to_Traveller_education_transparently_discriminatory_TUI/Default.1354.html

¹ Travellers will be worst affected by Cuts, says Barnardos – The Wheel