



The Tharrie Times

Issue 19, Spring 2015

Welcome

Welcome to issue 19 of 'The Tharrie Times'

NTMABS supports the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority as a necessary step to address the main focus of NTMABS that is - overcoming the financial exclusion of Travellers in Ireland.

In this issue, we highlight the upcoming Marriage Equality Referendum and look at what it will mean for many LGBT Travellers in Ireland. Additionally, we bring you cover of our successful Youth Forum Event which was held in December 2014. It was very positive to see so many young Travellers speak openly about financial issues.

We hope you enjoy reading the stories that we bring you in this edition. And, as always, we welcome your feedback!

Please visit our Facebook page and like us and visit us on www.ntmabs.org



Nancy Power
Joint Co-ordinator



Nuala Ní Ghabhann
Joint Co-ordinator

Marriage Equality Referendum



The LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) community within the Traveller community is becoming more vocal and has the support of many Traveller organisations. This is evident with the presence at gay pride of the Irish Traveller Movement and the establishment of Traveller specific supports such as the Pavee Point website and forum <http://lgbtpavee.yolasite.com>. As is evident in society in general, LGBT rights have become a popular topic of discussion within the Traveller community, particularly with the upcoming referendum on marriage equality.

For the estimated 4,000 LGBT Travellers in Ireland, accepting and being open about being Gay can be even more difficult than it is for the majority population. While many LGBT people in the settled community can face rejection from family and friends, very strong traditional family structures in the Traveller community, combined with a lack of access to information, can heighten the difficulty of being part of the LGBT community.

What are the issues for LGBT Travellers?

- the strong religious ethos in the community
- an assumption that all Travellers will marry and have a family
- a fear of being isolated and disowned from family.-
- the risk of depression and suicide (Travellers have a suicide rate which is 6.6 times that of the settled community - there are no specific details as to rate of suicide for gay Travellers).

The marriage equality referendum on May 22nd will be a chance for many members of the Traveller community to show their support for equality. In a recent interview with DailyEdge.ie Oein De Bhairduin, a Gay man and a member of the Traveller community stated that he believed that "people are starting to truly realise that the referendum does not simply reflect or create protections around "other" families, but our own too and from this understanding more people will be taking to the voting". According to De Bhairduin "It's an exciting time ahead and certainly not without its challenges, but I'm looking forward to what waits ahead".

National Traveller MABS is committed to Human rights and equality for all and will be supporting a Yes vote on May 22nd.

Social Inclusion Forum March 2015

‘Theme: Social Policy Innovation for Social Inclusion’

The Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) was established by Government as part of the structures to monitor and evaluate Ireland’s national Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) 2007-2016. This conference provides a forum for engagement between officials from Government Depts, Community and Voluntary organisations and people experience poverty in relation to NAPinclusion.

The 2015 conference took place in Croke Park on 25th March 2015. The theme of this year’s conference was ‘Social Policy Innovation for Social Inclusion’. National Traveller MABS along with various other groups, such as governmental departments, community / local groups, national support groups and researchers attended to discuss what they felt were the key strategic priorities this and future governments should implement to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

Hugh Frazer, NUI Maynooth, opened proceedings by acknowledging peoples frustration at coming to this event year after year, as many believe they just become talking shops and that social policy has been regressed in the last number of years. Robin Hannan from the EAPN (European Anti Poverty Network) showcased a video which showed interviews with people who were involved in regional workshops that looked at current poverty and social exclusion issues. A broad range of issues were highlighted such as direct provision, undocumented workers, Travellers, older people and children.

Roundtable discussions allowed participants to discuss in depth what they felt were the current key issues. While most advocacy and support groups attended the conference with their own agenda, it was obvious that each marginalised group had similar

stories to tell. Some of the parallel issues that emerged related to cuts to social welfare and its impacts, the current untenable direct provision system for asylum seekers, how we can better access the most vulnerable by doing direct outreach, one to one work (even if extremely expensive), and how the ‘life cycle’ approach in the poverty strategy doesn’t work for all target groups.

National Traveller MABS attended two separate workshops – Youth Exclusion and Social Housing. In the area of youth exclusion, the main feedback from participants highlighted that youth exclusion (inclusion) needs to be done holistically, funding needs to be adequately distributed and politics must stay out of funding distribution. Additionally, young people are often discussed but are not consulted – this needs to change. An interesting survey of young people undertaken by Eurofound showed that young people do not feel disengaged but feel that their voices are not heard enough.

The conference also had presentations from a group called ‘17th October’ (www.17october.ie) who organise a yearly event to celebrate the UN Eradication of Poverty. This group read out stories and poetry written by individuals who, for whatever reasons in their life, found themselves living in poverty and in some cases, homelessness. These stories brought to reality the feedback from both the roundtable discussions and workshops.

A report from the conference will be circulated to all participants and should be freely available on the Social Inclusion department website – www.socialinclusion.ie



Traveller Youth Forum



National Traveller MABS were delighted to host a Traveller Youth Forum in Croke Park on December 10th, 2014. The forum was attended by over 40 young Travellers from around Ireland. The young people discussed their concerns regarding money matters and identified ways in which National Traveller MABS could support them in accessing financial services and improve their financial capability.

Nancy Power, Joint Coordinator of National Traveller MABS welcome participants and emphasised to the young people in attendance that- *"As the next generation of Travellers it is important that you (young Travellers) have your say on what will impact on your lives. We hope you will share with us the financial issues that affect you and discuss with us how National Traveller MABS can best address and meet your needs"*.

The day was designed to allow discussion with youth on issues affecting young members of the Traveller community. To stimulate conversation, the short film, 'A Deal's a Deal' was shown. This film deals with the issue of illegal moneylending and is part of the education module entitled 'Overcoming Illegal Debt'.

A series of questions were posed to participants. These included main reactions to current community education resources. We also

focused on what were the main needs for Traveller youth in relation to financial education. The discussions were illuminating in terms of the pressures and stresses that some young Travellers are coping with. These differ to the majority population as the focus for many was on saving for weddings and attempting to raise money to create working opportunities.

The discussion took place on whether there was a need for a specifically tailored community education programme for Traveller youth. Participants agreed that existing programmes on planning, budgeting and saving were important, but there was a desire to know more in relation to the tools to enable them best achieve this.

It was also noted that there is a lack of facilities and services where young Travellers can access career advice and identify training and job opportunities.

The day was a great success and National Traveller MABS will be building on the outcome of this Forum in 2015. If you work with young Travellers and wish to become involved in future events, please contact our Community Education Worker, Dermot Sreenan.

Social Media – are you plugged in?



Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, are popular sites which offer users a way of connecting with friends, keep up to date with current affairs and, in the case of sites like LinkedIn, people can now advance their career from the comfort of their homes.

Social media has fast become a fashionable tool for organisations to inform the public of their services and to spread important issues. National Travellers is now on Facebook and has recently updated its website to ensure we inform service users and the general public of our work. Find us at www.facebook.com/pages/National-Traveller-MABS. Recently, National Traveller MABS carried out a survey with four Traveller Primary Health Groups.

The survey looked at the person's choice of social media sites, their usage and how important they view social media in their lives, both professionally and personally. It is envisaged that the findings will guide National Traveller MABS in developing the most effective means of communication with members of the Traveller community. In total, we received 33 responses. A full, detailed report on the findings will be available over the coming weeks but below gives you a snapshot of the use of social media by the respondents.

In terms of having access to the internet, 25 people said they had, while 8 respondents highlighted that they have no access to the internet.

Facebook was by and large the most popular social media site with 15 people stating that they use it. Only 2 respondents have Twitter accounts and similarly, 2 had Instagram accounts. 27 people have email addresses but it was noted by 4 respondents that this was for work purposes only.

When asked of the importance of social media in their life, 10 respondents stated that it is very important, with another 10 highlighting that it is somewhat important.

Lastly, many respondents also detailed their use of the internet to look up information regarding social welfare entitlements, banking, HSE services (such as medical card information) and useful contact numbers.

A more in-depth analysis of the data will be available on our website over the coming weeks.

Mental Health - the need for people to talk and seek help

Due to the frontline nature of MABS, MABS staff are all too aware that financial pressures can have a detrimental effect on a client's mental health. A key feature of MABS is that money advice staff listen to people who are experiencing financial difficulties and assuage their fears by putting in place a sustainable plan for financial recovery.

However often clients need more expert support to manage their mental health difficulties.

According to the **Samaritans** 'a large majority of Irish people are very worried about money... However, less than a third of men are choosing to talk about their problems, which is a real concern.'

The **All Ireland Traveller Health Study** carried out in 2008 found that nearly 60% of both male and female Travellers reported that their mental health was not good for one or more days in the last 30 days. Suicide among the Traveller community is running at six times that of the majority population which accounts for 11% of all Traveller deaths.

According to Thomas Mc Cann, CEO of the **Traveller Counselling Service**, there is a clear link between debt and mental health issues. The Traveller Counselling Service was founded in 2008 to

promote and support positive mental health within the Traveller community. The service offers counselling and psychotherapy using a culturally inclusive framework which acknowledges Traveller culture, identity, values and norms. The service which has a team of six accredited psychotherapists and counsellors is managed by Thomas who is both Psychotherapist and a member of the Traveller community.

If you are working with a Traveller client who wishes to avail of the Traveller Counselling Service, please contact the service at <http://travellercounselling.ie/> or call: **086-308 1476**

Additionally if you would like to avail of training to support you in your work with clients who have suicidal thoughts, the National Office for Suicide Prevention provides ASIST training (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training). This two-day interactive workshop in suicide first-aid is suitable for all frontline staff.

More information on ASIST is available at <http://www.nosp.ie/html/training.html>



¹All Ireland Traveller Health Study, 2008, UCD



The Originals



The Originals: A New Era For Traveller Men is a high end photography project involving 11 Traveller men from various educational and employment backgrounds.

The calendar is part of Involve/ Voice of the Travellers project for 2015's Traveller Pride Week.

Traveller Pride Week features events both nationally and locally which aim to increase the profile of the community by portraying the positive contributions Travellers make to society. The annual event is made possible with funding from the Department of Justice and Equality.

The idea behind the The Originals project is to challenge the stereotypes and misconceptions commonly associated with Traveller men. Stereotyping of all Traveller men being involved in illegal trades, association with bare knuckle boxing and feuding is common. This only serves to limit the growth for Traveller men such as the participants of this project. Stereotyping also discourages a younger generation from reaching their potential by compounding preconceived low expectations of them. This calendar offers a profile of Traveller men that do not fit this stereotype but who are not highlighted in mainstream media or Sunday tabloids.

National Traveller MABS have a small number of calendars available. If any office would like a copy, please contact Margaret Collins at 0761 07 2230.

The Originals Calendar 2015



Domestic & Sexual Violence: Good Practice Guidelines for Working with Traveller & Roma Women



Workshop invitation to services in North West Ireland



Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Sligo Traveller Support Group invite you to a workshop to explore issues and barriers that Traveller and Roma women face in relation to domestic and sexual violence. The workshop aims to build knowledge, capacity and skills of service providers to support Traveller and Roma women affected by violence, and informs good practice in service provision.



23 June, 2015, 1-5 pm
Sligo Northside Resource Centre, Forthill, Sligo

Email or call to register - vaw@pavee.ie / 01 878 0255

For further queries, please contact the Violence against Women Programme- Laura Pohjolainen or Tessa Collins at 01 8780255.

We look forward to seeing you then!



Ethnic Monitoring within the CIB Framework

Ethnic monitoring is the proactive gathering and use of data by service providers to ensure that a services offered can reasonably accommodate the specific needs of users from different ethnic groups.

National Traveller MABS is aware that monitoring the usage of any service can be made more complex when there are multiple users with multiple identities using the service as is the case with the CIB service delivery partners.

Acknowledging this diversity of users, National Traveller MABS recently made a submission to the CIB calling specifically for a monitoring system within the parameters of ethnicity.

National Traveller MABS believes that by introducing an effective ethnic monitoring process among service delivery partners, the CIB has an opportunity to become a model of good practice in ensuring that all services are equality focussed, accessible to all ethnicities and meet the needs of all ethnic groups.

To view the submission National Traveller MABS has made to the CIB in this regard, please visit our website at www.ntmabs.org

National Traveller MABS now on Facebook!!!

National Traveller MABS is on Facebook! We keep you up to date with current issues in the area of social and financial exclusion/inclusion



Also check out our new website – www.ntmabs.org.



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