



## **Traveller Visibility Group CLG**

### **Annual Report 2021**

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## **1. Chair Person's Statement**

2021 has been an exceptionally challenging year for members of the Traveller community and TVG. COVID has forced us to adapt our existing services and respond to numerous crises, as well as continuing to advocate for change at local and national level. COVID has made even more visible the discrimination that Travellers face on a day-to-day basis and has highlighted the need for radical change. Anti-Traveller racism remains central to Irish culture and while other minority groups may have gained some level of 'acceptance' in Ireland, Travellers remain violently marginalised and excluded. Institutional racism that exists in all areas of state provision (e.g. health, social services, housing and education) continues to push Travellers to the very edge of Irish society. TVG staff and volunteers in 2021 have continued their uphill struggle to ensure that Travellers obtain their basic rights in a country which remains one of the richest in the EU. Traveller racism is created by the values, policies and practices established by the settled community and until the Settled community starts to change, Traveller racism will continue. In this context, TVG has been able to achieve some remarkable successes this year and has been able to develop some new 'allies' within the settled community.

This has been my second year as Chair of the Board of Directors (BOD). As a member of the settled community it is a particular privilege to be Chair of the TVG Board. TVG is a Traveller-led organisation and it is crucial that this is reflected in the BOD. Our aim is to have a Traveller-led Board which includes members of the settled community with particular knowledge and skills that can help support the work of TVG. Building on the success of last year, we have been able to strengthen the membership of the BOD with two experienced and talented members of the Traveller community - Leanne McDonnagh and Margarita O'Driscoll. Unfortunately we have also had to accept the resignation of Colette Kelleher from the Board. Her resignation was in line with good governance practice and her becoming aware that there might be a potential conflict of interest between Colette's membership of the TVG Board and being a member of the Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force. Her knowledge and skills will be missed; however, she remains a strong supporter of TVG while not a member of the BOD. During the year, the BOD has held an induction day for new Board members and a workshop to review the organisation's Strategy Plan, as well as having monthly Board Meetings and meetings of the Human Resources/Finance Committee. The Board has continued its work on reviewing and updating TVG's governance documents in line with the Charity Regulator's new requirements.

Throughout the year, the staff team has remained strong and has been strengthened by members of the Traveller Community joining the Drugs Team and the Men's Health Project. Being led by Breda O'Donoghue (Director of Advocacy) and Eileen O'Shea (Director of Operations) and the TVG management team, TVG has provided a wide range of valuable services as well as advocating for radical change (information on these services is provided in the rest of this report). There has been relatively little staff turnover during the year. However, the resignation of Caroline Vasseur, who was the Health Coordinator and had worked with TVG for 14 years, is a significant loss to TVG. New staff have been appointed to refill the positions of Traveller Health Coordinator as well as the Drug and Alcohol Worker and a Community Development Worker. TVG has also been successful in appointing an intern, funded by the Community Foundation to work alongside John O'Sullivan in implementing the Traveller Men's Health Development Strategy. We have been particularly pleased to be able to appoint members of the Traveller community to posts with TVG.

A particularly significant event in 2021 was the publication of the Children's Ombudsman's report, *No End in Site: An investigation into the living conditions of children on a local authority halting site* (<https://www.oco.ie/library/no-end-in-site-an-investigation-into-the-living-conditions-of-children-on-a-local-authority-halting-site/>). The application was made to the Ombudsman by TVG and the Cork Traveller Women's Network. The report documents the deplorable conditions on the Spring Lane Halting Site in Cork, including extreme overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, safety concerns about access to the site, and unsafe and inadequate electrical works. The report stated that the conditions on the site resulted in 'significant and prolonged adverse impact on children' (p. 62). The Council have been required by the Ombudsman to respond to 10 detailed recommendations that focus on the condition of the site as well as the Council's policies and procedures. Discussions have taken place between the Ombudsman, Cork County Council and TVG to respond to recommendations as soon as possible. As a result of this report and of anti-Traveller statements made in the media by local politician, TVG established a series of meetings with editors of local and national newspapers. These meetings, facilitated and led by Breda O'Donoghue (Director of Advocacy), helped to establish TVG as a source of accurate information about the lives of Travellers. Subsequently a series of articles in local and national newspapers have described the findings of the Ombudsman's report and Breda has been called upon as an expert to give her opinion on radio programmes. Through this, TVG has increased its national profile as an organisation fighting for Travellers' rights. The report has also resulted in a series of direct conversations with Anne Doherty (Chief Executive) and Brian Geaney (Assistant Chief Executive) of Cork City Council and TVG about the Ombudsman's report and wider concerns of Travellers in Cork.

Covid restrictions resulted in the TVG staff continuing to work remotely and being unable to facilitate their usual group and individual work. However, when restrictions have been allowed, the TVG staff have been quick to re-establish face-to-face contact with members of the Traveller community. TVG, along with members of the Social Inclusion and Community Work Department at Cork City Council and HSE staff, have had to provide emergency support to some families living on halting sites. TVG supported individuals and families to register for Covid 19 vaccinations and to attend vaccination clinics. With all the challenges of COVID, the TVG Goras Crèche and preschool has continued to provide a first-rate service for children and local families. The children who attend the crèche represent and preschool represent and reflect the increasingly multicultural population of Cork, including members of the Traveller community.

For Traveller Pride 2022, TVG worked with the Cork Traveller Women's Network to create a fascinating trail through the city. Highlighted along this trail, was the new mural covering the front of the TVG office. This mural was designed with the help of Travellers in the community along with TVG staff and was beautifully painted on the four-story wall by Cork Community Artlink artists. Also included on the trail was a painted utility box on Grand Parade featuring a "sulkyroo" (a fictitious, Traveller version of Deliveroo!), 'Toraig on the Tobar' (a Traveller culture exhibition in Cork Public Museum), and a Traveller Ethnicity Tree in Fitzgerald's Park.

The Support Traveller and Roma (STAR) Projects as part of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS, 2017-2021) hosted by TVG has increasingly shown throughout the year, how institutional racism continues within the educational system. A further generation of Travellers are being failed, particularly by the secondary school system, and are leaving school without some of the essential knowledge and skills to live in our modern society. TVG will continue to advocate for the educational rights of Traveller children and their parents.

TVG has continued to run, in collaboration with Adult Continuing Education (University College Cork), the Leadership in the Community Programme. This programme has continued into its second year with over twenty women students who are working towards graduating in 2022. The Leadership in the Community Programme has been a great success in developing existing leadership within the local Traveller Community and encouraging women to take on new advocacy roles.

2021 has been an extremely busy year, as the TVG Team has had to respond to COVID and face new challenges. TVG continues to provide essential services as well as respond to 'new' and 'old' challenges. Anti-Traveller racism continues as a day-to-day reality for Travellers, which impacts on every aspect of Travellers' lives. This has not changed, but TVG has achieved some major successes this year, with the work of TVG gaining widespread recognition and having greater impact. Advocacy



work alongside service provision have taken major steps forward in responding to the needs and rights of Travellers. None of the work undertaken by TVG could have been achieved without the continuing support and guidance of members of the local and national Traveller Community. During 2021, TVG has achieved all of this development by employing a group of highly talented workers who are continuing their work alongside members of the Traveller Community.

I would like to thank, on behalf of the BOD, all the organisations, funders and supporters who make the work of TVG possible. These include: Health Service Executive, Cork City Council, the Traveller Health Unit, Cork Education Training Board, Cork Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, Pavee Point, Irish Traveller Movement, Pobal, Solas, University College Cork, Munster Technological University, Cork City Partnership, the Community Foundation, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth, parents of children who attend the TVG Goras Community Childcare Centre, Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance, local TDs and Councillors, and our fellow Traveller Organisations, especially the Cork Traveller Women's Network. We look forward to the continuing support of our partners and the wider community to continue the essential work of TVG.

**Alastair Christie Chair, TVG Board of Directors.**



## **2. Director of Advocacy**

2021 once again was a challenging year due to Covid 19 restrictions and the threat and impact of the virus itself. As noted in last year's report we were concerned that there were not enough preventative measures taken in city halting sites and group housing schemes to allow for families to safely achieve the covid 19 safety measures as advised by HSE and WHO. We advocated for measures to be put in place to assist the worst hit families in overcrowded and unsafe accommodation however very little was delivered here and we saw 4 halting sites in Cork hit with multiple Covid 19 outbreaks over the year.

At the start of 2021 from mid-Jan to late Feb our team worked full time on providing emergency support to these families living on halting sites along with members of Social Inclusion and Community Work Dept at Cork City Council and HSE. I believe that a lot of this emergency work and crisis response could have been avoided if proper measures were adopted in 2020. Still at time of writing there is little to no preventative measures on sites to reduce the risk of Covid 19. As the community overcame the large outbreaks on halting sites we began work to promote uptake of Covid 19 vaccine in the community. While we saw good uptake in older members of the community it are still many younger Travellers who are unvaccinated at this stage. TVG continues to share HSE and WHO information regarding efficacy and safety of the vaccine.

Due to the Government's Covid 19 restrictions, the TVG team were mostly working remotely and unable to facilitate their usual group work and 1:1 work.. However I was delighted with what our team could achieve under those circumstances. Whenever restrictions allowed throughout the year our team quickly reconnected with their groups and in some cases started new groups for specific short-term projects to keep Travellers connected with the service. This included a Healthy Ireland funded project on young Travellers' mental health, developing a Traveller culture walking tour of Cork for Traveller Pride and outdoor fitness challenges. It is important to highlight our team in TVG Goras Crèche and preschool here who were diligently running a full childcare service for the majority of 2021 and again we saw a great number of Traveller families and other multicultural families using the service

I would like to highlight the excellent programme for Traveller Pride 2021 which we delivered in collaboration with Cork Traveller Women's Network. Our team coordinated a Webinar on Horse ownership, mental health and its relation to gut health with UCC and a number of collaborators. This was attended by over 150 online participants and received much positive feedback. We created an awareness campaign promoting solidarity in the settled community to become Traveller allies and enjoy Traveller pride seeing 2 large billboards and 12 bus messaging posters run for 2 weeks across

the city. We also collaborate with Cork Community Art Link to create a traveller identity and culture mural on the walls of TVG which has received excellent feedback and has put the Visibility back into the TVG!

TVG was also involved in a number of successful anti-Traveller racism campaigns including taking part in a Cork Says No To Racism car rally across the city, filing a successful complaint to the BAI relating to anti-Traveller discrimination and hate speech on a local radio station. Most significantly in this line of advocacy work we saw the Office of the Children's Ombudsman (OCO) officially condemn the management of Spring Lane Halting Site and we are now working closely with the families of Spring Lane and OCO team to ensure that the Local Authority can deliver on the recommendations of the OCO report. A positive bi-product of working remotely has been a marked increase in our online and media profile. We worked hard as a team to develop close working relationships with communications and campaigning organisations as well as working with members of local and national press to better inform journalists of the context surrounding contemporary Traveller issues. It is our aim to work with the press to ensure they have the resources and context at hand when reporting on Traveller matters.

In 2021 we saw an increase in death by suicide in Cork and our team have focused on creating resources and guidance for Travellers experiencing poor mental health or bereavement by suicide or traumatic death. With this in mind TVG created a Traveller counselling service in Cork in collaboration with Coiscéim with the focus counsellors and psychotherapists having received TCAT and a genuine interest in supporting Traveller's mental health. Our Drug and Alcohol Team have been very busy this year focusing on relationships with treatment services and have been creating accessibility pathways with services such as Tabor Lodge and also working with Family Support Workers across Drugs projects to improve Traveller experience of such services and create a better understanding for Family Support Workers of the issues facing Travellers today.

Finally, I would like to highlight the increase of Traveller workers in TVG. The Drugs Alcohol Project now employ a part time Traveller Peer Drugs Worker and we have successfully created a paid internship role for a young Traveller man who works under the Traveller Men's Health Development Worker. TVG is currently fully staffed with all positions filled at present and I was delighted to see a Traveller Health Care Worker be promoted to Community Development Worker last year. TVG is always looking for ways to promote and employ Traveller workers and find ways for community members to build capacity to take on new roles and job opportunities outside of TVG too. This point in particular is a focus for our Development workers and our Education Coordinator who links education, training and employment together as a key priority for TVG in 2022.

As ever I would like to thank our fantastic Board of Directors, our TVG team for their continued hard work and creativity, our funders for their consistent support and the Traveller community of Cork for engaging with our service and keeping us pointing in the right direction.

**Breda o Donoghue, Director of Advocacy**



### **3. Declaration of Compliance with the Charities Governance Code.**

**Declaration (A) Fully Compliant:** On 20th October 2022 at an official Board meeting, the TVG Board of Directors agreed that TVG was fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code. The Co-Directors and Board will continue to review the Charities Governance Code of Compliance Form throughout the year and sign off the form each year at our AGM. The Co-Directors and Board will discuss any amendments to policy to respond to new legislation or change in practice or requirements that might necessitate a change in our policies,



internal systems and supporting documentation. Any changes to these documents will be discussed and agreed at Board level.

## **4. Management and Staff**

### **List of TVG Board of Management 2021:**

Chair and Secretary: Alastair Christie  
Treasurer: Aideen Creedon  
Siobhan O'Donoghue  
Chris McDonagh  
Jason Sheehan  
Cora Williams  
Company Secretary Alastair Christie  
Leanne McDonnagh (Appointed October 2021)  
Margarita O'Driscoll (Appointed October 2021)

### **List of TVG staff 2021:**

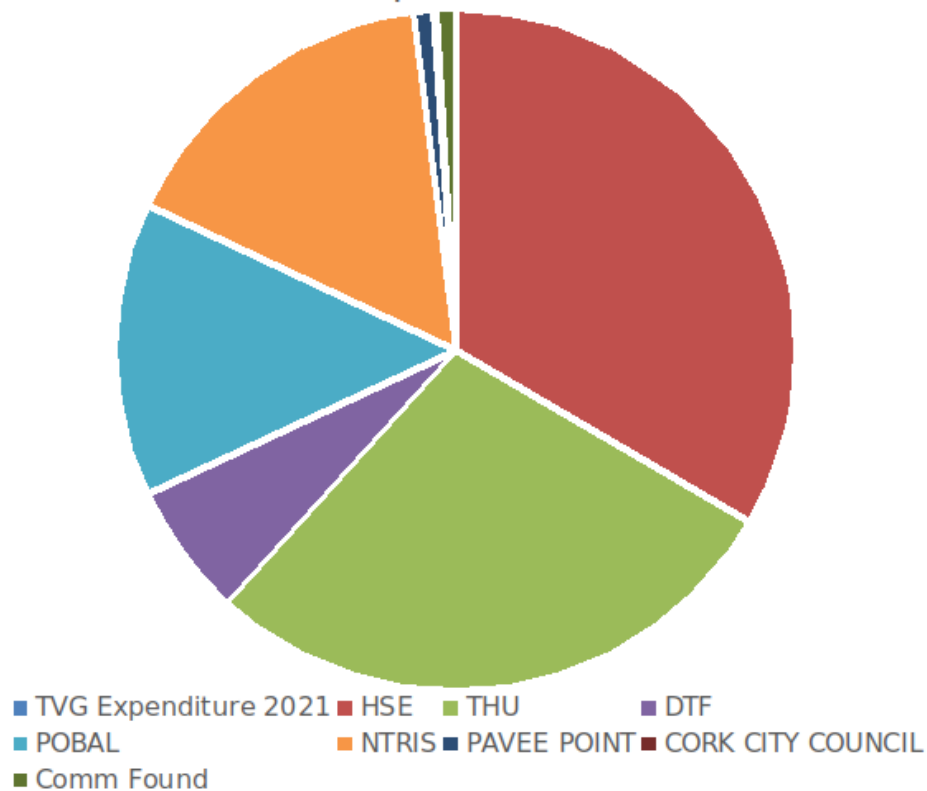
Breda O'Donoghue	Director of Advocacy
Eileen O'Shea	Director of Operations
Mary Coughlan	Project Administrator
Sarah McCarthy	Assistant Administrator (19 hours)
Caroline Vasseur	TVG Traveller Health Coordinator (Resigned Jun 2021)
Tehmina Kazi	TVG Traveller Health Coordinator (35 hours started Jul 2021)
John O Sullivan	Men's Health Development Worker (35 hours)
Thomas Erbsloh	Development Worker (21 hours)
Elizabeth McGrath	Women's Health Development Worker (17.5 hours)
Biddy McDonagh	Traveller Community Health Worker (17.5 hours)
Jean Donoghue	Traveller Community Health Worker (15 hours)
Nora Cash	Traveller Community Health Worker (15 hours)
Eileen Burke	Traveller Community Health Worker (19.5 hours)
Maria Stokes	Domestic and Sexual Gender Based Violence Worker 15 hrs)
Ann Jordan	Community Drugs and Alcohol Worker (21 hours)
Amanda O'Donnell	Traveller Peer Drugs and Alcohol Worker (14 hours)
Patrick McDonnagh	Traveller Men's Strategy Intern (16 hours)
Anne Burke	Education Coordinator (15 hrs)
Gemma Lewsley	Childcare Manager
Susan Mannion	Childcare Team Leader
Jemma Caughlan	Childcare Worker
Shauna Kiely	Childcare Worker
Jessica Varian	Childcare Worker

### **Community Employment Scheme 2021:**

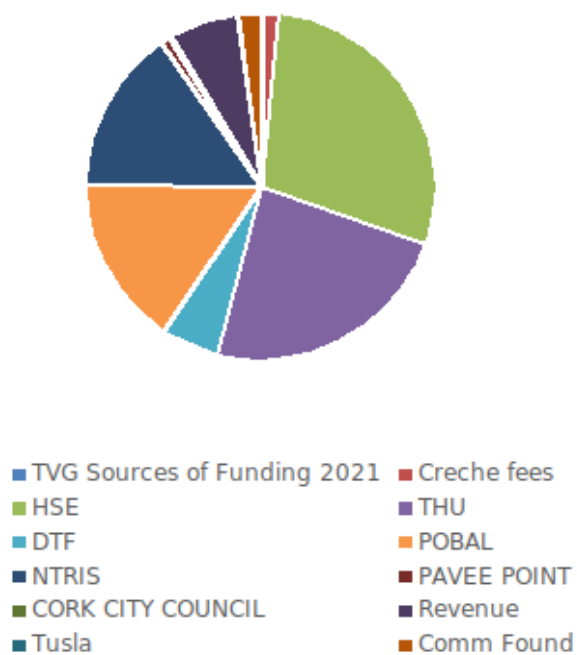
Helen O'Connor	Receptionist
Shannon O'Driscoll	Receptionist
Josie Heaphy	Housekeeper
Ray Manning	Caretaker
Ellen Quilligan	Community Development Worker
Joanne O'Donoghue	Childcare Assistant
Chelsea Kelleher	Childcare Assistant
Eve Broderick	CE Scheme Childcare Assistant

## 5. Financial Overview

TVG Expenditure 2021



TVG Sources of Funding 2021



## **6. Administration**

TVG Administration team saw another busy year at TVG. The additional administrative work balancing remote and in-office working during the Covid 19 restrictions were challenging. The team welcomed the introduction of a new Treasurer to the TVG Board. The Administration Team continues to assist the TVG Board and Operations team to maintain a transparent and clear financial reporting system while also keeping up to date with any legislative changes and any new requirements for best practice in governance of the organisation.

The Administration team is run by our Administrator Mary Prendergast (28 hours per week) and our Assistant Administrator Sarah McCarthy (19 hours per week). The team are open and always willing to assist the TVG team on administrating new projects, schemes and funding applications as they come in. Focus for 2022 will be on maintaining our financial reporting system and improving IT performance in the TVG office.

## **7. Committee and Interagency Participation**

Committee involvement has long been a very important part of the work of the TVG. This is one of the ways we work to progress the development of the Traveller community. In 2021, many of these committee meetings had to be moved online due to Covid 19 restrictions. Some of these meetings were less effective as a result however for the most part it was positive that we continued to work at committee level in order to build equality, increase awareness of matters affecting Travellers in our society and develop initiatives to ensure more positive outcomes for them. Members of the Traveller community were also supported to represent themselves and their community across a number of committees locally, regionally and nationally. The following lists all of the committees TVG participated in:

### **Local**

- Traveller Interagency Group
- Cork City Traveller Horse Initiative Steering Group
- Cork City Traveller Youth Workers Forum
- Cork City Interagency Traveller Education Subgroup
- Cork City Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- Spring Lane Residents Committee
- Cork County Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
- St Anthony's Park, Knocknaheeny, Community Centre Steering Group
- Healthy Minds, Traveller Suicide and Mental Health Project Steering Group
- Cork City Cancer Action Network
- Cork City Community Health Network
- Cork Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force Network
- North Side Drugs Initiative Committee
- Alcohol Pilot Strategy in Churchfield/ Knocknaheeny/Gurannabraher
- Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA)
- TVG & Cork City Local Councillors Network Meetings
- Cork City Childcare Committee
- Cork City Aged 0-3 Network
- Cork City Early Years Alliance
- Child Friendly Cities
- NTRIS STAR project Steering Group
- Traveller Education Strategy Working Group

### **Regional**

- Cork and Kerry Traveller Health Unit, HSE South
- Traveller Cultural Awareness Training Steering Group
- Cork and Kerry Traveller Primary Health Care Network
- Cork and Kerry Traveller Accommodation Group
- All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS) 2010 Working Group
- Southern Traveller Health Network
- Regional Traveller Mental Health Sub Group.

### **National**

- National Traveller Primary Health Care Network (Pavee Point, Dublin)
- National Traveller Men's Development Network (Pavee Point, Dublin)
- Minceirs Whiden Traveller Only Space Network
- Cena (Culturally Appropriate Homes Ltd) Steering Group
- National Drugs Network (Pavee Point)
- Irish Traveller Movement Central Group
- Irish Traveller Movement Coordinators Group
- Irish Traveller Movement Employment Sub Group
- Traveller Prison Initiative Group
- National Traveller Accommodation Working Group
- National Traveller Roma and Integration Strategy
- National Traveller Mental Health Network
- Traveller Domestic and Sexual Gender-Based Violence pilot project advisory group





## **8. Community Employment (CE) Schemes**

We continued to provide 10 CE placements to people in the Traveller community in 2021. CE workers are an excellent addition to the team as they are strategically placed within each section of the organisation so they can support the day to day running of the overall project and also take up training opportunities in their personal interest areas. These have included Administration Assistants, Receptionist, Care Taker, Community Development Worker and House Keeping.

CE placements can have a duration of 3 years per participant which can be very beneficial to the participant as well as the organisation. This can give adequate time to building of skill sets and preparation for the workplace.

In 2021 the following CE participants included:

Shannon O'Connor	Reception
Helen O Connor	Reception
Ray Manning	Caretaker/Maintenance
Josie Heaphy	Housekeeping
Maryanne O'Donoghue	Community Development
VACANT	Community development
Jemma O'Reilly (+ part time TVG employee)	ChildCare
Joanne O'Donoghue	Childcare(Admin)
Eve Broderick	Childcare
VACANT	Drugs and Alcohol Project

### **CE Childcare Places**

Criteria for CE places in Childcare changed in 2015. In order to take up a CE place in Childcare a person must

- 1) Be over 18 years
- 2) Attend classes and gain Fetac level 5 or 6 in childcare study
- 3) The person, when finished their CE scheme will have a recognised qualification and 3 years experience in an Early Years setting and will meet the minimum requirements for any job in Childcare

The person will automatically get their CE place for 3 years with full support with college work from the TVG Creche Manager.

## **9. Childcare Staff**

### **Staff**

Start of the year TVG Childcare was forced to close due to Covid-19. The Preschool did not reopen until the 8<sup>th</sup> March and the Crèche reopened on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Susan Twomey ran the preschool and had Aim support worker Jessica Varian who was hired in September 2021. The Crèche employees are Gemma Lewsley, Jemma Coughlan and Shauna Kiely. Eve Broderick and Chelsea Kelleher are the Crèche CE scheme childcare assistants. Our Crèche administrator is Joanne O' Donoghue.

Gemma Lewsley finished her Level 7 in May and is continuing her Level 8 at this time. Gemma also completed the course Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) which provides funding of €2 per ECCE child per week. Eve Broderick and Chelsea Kelleher are both studying their Level 6 under the scheme and Shauna Kiely is participating in Hanen training.



### **Funding**

Funding was received from Lets Grow Together which has supported us in providing learning equipment for the children in Preschool and Crèche. Susan Twomey's qualifications will see an increase in capitation towards Preschool children. TVG receive €69 per child but will now get €11.25 higher Capitation and €2 from the LINC which will calculate to €82.25 per ECCE child. We received a €1,500 grant in December towards improving ventilation in the service.



## Crèche/Preschool

The Crèche and Preschool have been doing really well. We have seen a decrease and increase in Preschool places throughout the year. The Crèche has been doing really well and has a waiting list of children waiting on Crèche places throughout the year.

We worked with Beag on creating toodle hearts which was a great success with the children and their family. Rachel created heart shaped cushions which had a recording device so that a family member could record a message for the child. It was used to support children in transitioning from their parents in the morning.



## **10. Health Programme**

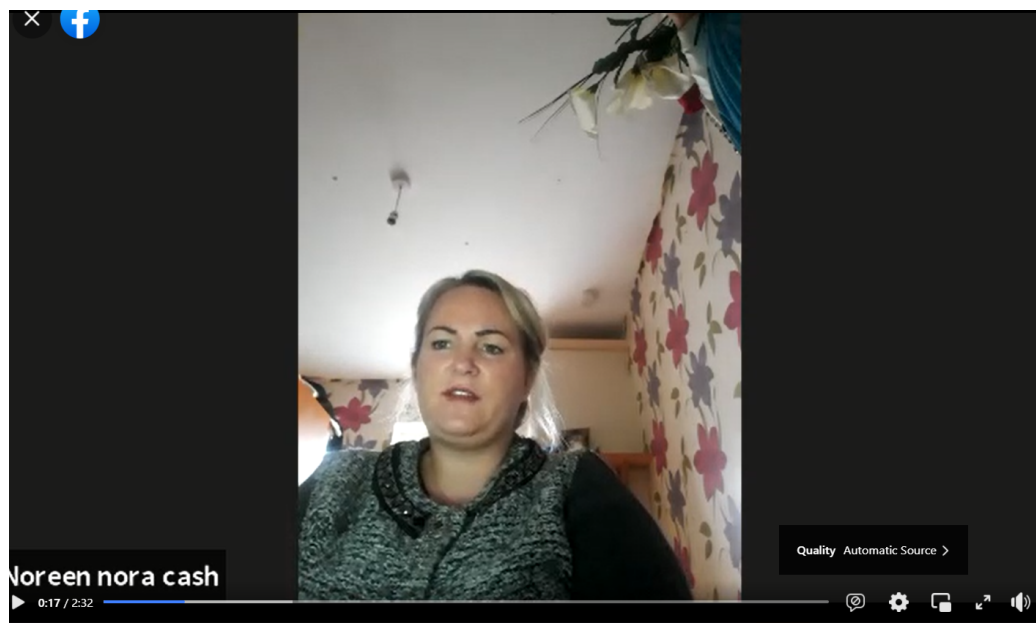
### **Traveller Community Health Work Team and Pavee Point/TVG Traveller women's awareness worker**

*The TVG Traveller Community Health Workers (TCHWs) are Nora Cash, Biddy McDonagh, Jean O'Donoghue and Eileen Burke. Each works part-time and engages the community around primary health care. Each worker has been assigned geographical areas within which they conduct outreach with Travellers. They also visit and support women and youth groups as well as facilitating the establishment of new groups and programmes. A key part of the Traveller Community Health Workers' role involves keeping Travellers informed about and linked in with health services in Cork, cancer screening programs, as well as actively delivering health promotion information.*

*In addition to this team, Maria Stokes is the Traveller Women's Awareness Worker (appointed November 2021) whose role is to support Traveller women access domestic and sexual violence support services and information. Maria has counterparts in different parts of the country, is jointly supported and coordinated by Pavee Point and TVG, and is an integral member of the TVG community health team. Tehmina Kazi, the TVG health coordinator (appointed July 2021) supports the team and coordinates the delivery of the Traveller community health programme for TVG.*

### **Covid-19 public health information and support work**

Covid-19 has once again dominated the team's work in 2021. The team put out five public health information videos on Facebook at the start of the year, all on the Covid-19 vaccines. These covered topics like the safety of vaccines during pregnancy and while breastfeeding and what exactly is in the vaccines.



From last year, our team members have been working in assigned geographical areas and with specific families. They link in with these families on a regular basis, to give information and offer support. Throughout the year, the team has made referrals to the HSE, public health, and the local authority for Travellers in need of Covid-19 tests, sanitary supplies, and self-isolation facilities. We have also worked with the community to try and prevent outbreaks where we know Travellers are

living in overcrowded conditions, by attempting to survey and plan for needs in the event of an outbreak and the TVG has liaised with the HSE and Local authorities weekly in that respect.

The TCHWs were tasked with preparing and distributing Covid-19 care and information packs across the whole community, and assisting some of the families and persons in quarantine with shopping and accessing various goods and services. The TVG has used Facebook and Whatsapp intensively throughout 2021 to ensure that Travellers had access to information and support. We have collaborated with other Traveller organisations regionally and nationally to produce fast, culturally appropriate public health information.

### **Family and accommodation/homelessness support work**

Unfortunately this year again, the TVG has observed an important increase in the number of Travellers who require support in securing accommodation, and in particular for homeless Travellers. Our staff have worked intensively with Travellers in long-term emergency accommodation, Travellers facing evictions from private landlords, Travellers being released from prison and treatment centres during Covid-19 lockdowns, families facing deferrals from the social housing list, Travellers families separated or at risk of separation due to child welfare interventions and Travellers living in health-detrimental substandard conditions on sites.

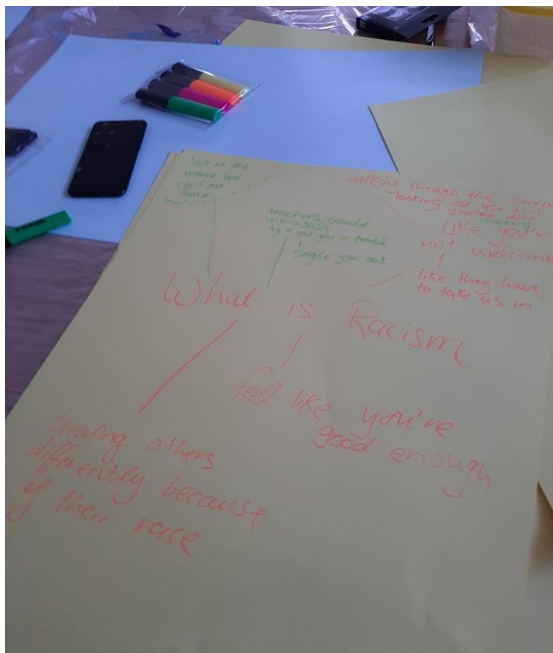
TVG have liaised extensively with bodies like the Traveller Accommodation Unit, and provided emotional, psychological and practical support face to face and over the phone to people.

TVG has built upon existing working relationships with various organisations that work with Travellers, such as Good Shepherd Cork, Cork Penny Dinners and St Vincent de Paul

**Healthy Ireland:** The Healthy Ireland project was set up to explore the impact of racial discrimination on young Travellers' mental health. It consisted of three workshops a week (one with each of the two Traveller girls' groups, and the third with a Traveller boys' group) of 1.5 hours duration each, over a six-week period from October to November 2021. These workshops have been facilitated by Fionnuala O'Connell and Raphael Olympio of the Cork Migrant Centre, as well as woodwork and cosmetics tutors from the Cork ETB, alongside TCHWs and other TVG staff. The discussions in the workshops will inform a new report that will make recommendations for youth services, on how to make their services culturally appropriate for Travellers. This report will be drafted by Tehmina Kazi and Niamh Kelleher, Co-ordinator of CESCA, in January 2022. A short animated film will be made of the report's findings.









### **Regional Traveller Youth Mental Health Sub-Group**

Eileen Burke, Nora Cash and Tehmina Kazi have taken part in the Regional Traveller Mental Health Sub-group, with Eileen Burke recording a voiceover for their animated video on Travellers' experiences of CAMHS.

### **Traveller Microbiome study and follow-on collaborations with the UCC Team**

The Traveller Immunity Study 2018 had its findings conveyed in a short animated video in 2021. Working in partnership with UCC, TVG has received a further grant to disseminate and explain the results of our microbiome work to all Travellers (including outside Cork), so that they will know how science supports and provides a new perspective and record of the distinct ethnicity of Irish Travellers. The second objective is to continue the work in a way that we hope may change policy regarding Traveller health and attitudes in society towards Travellers.

Tehmina Kazi chaired and co-ordinated a webinar on Traveller culture, horse ownership and accommodation for Traveller Pride Week 2021, using this study as a focal point.



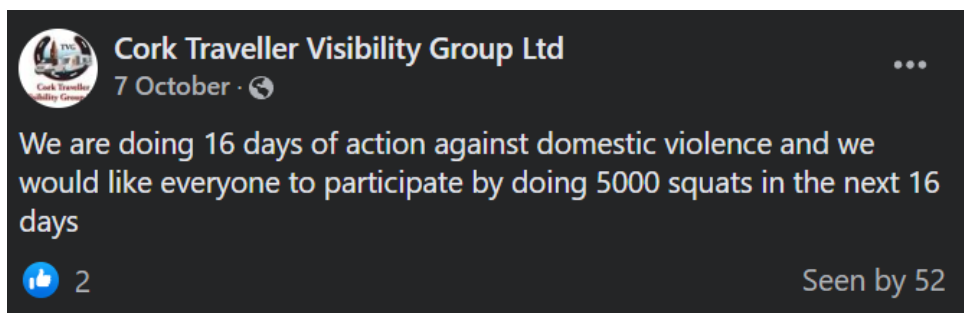
TVG Traveller Pride Webinar 2021 on Traveller Culture, Horses and Accommodation  
Wednesday 22nd September 2021 from 6.30pm to 8.15pm


Guest speakers Include: Dr Fergus Shanahan (UCC), Martin Collins (Pavee Point), Niall Crowley, (independent equality and human rights expert), Thomas McCann (Traveller Counselling Service) and Professor Patricia Burke Wood (York University, Canada) followed by Q and A



### Traveller Women's Groups and Beoirs Boutique

Beoirs Boutique has provided a way for Traveller women to actively celebrate one another at a distance, get support and information around self-care and mental well-being, and get in touch with one another beyond the boundaries of Cork city. With the Beoirs Boutique initiative, TCHWs have been involved in planning, inputs and well-being topics for the Facebook page with Ann Jordan and Amanda O'Donnell. It has been one of the most celebrated successes of the year, with 167 Traveller women members following the page. It has featured topics like Sixteen Days of Action Against Domestic Violence and the new Healthy Tips initiative, and has been used to co-ordinate charitable activities such as meal preparation for Cork Penny Dinners.





**Cork Traveller Visibility Group Ltd**  
 4 November at 11:09 · 🌐

Here are some healthy tips this winter for your children including: If a child is getting alot of chest infections our has asthma goats milk and a spoonful of cod lever oil every day is a natural remedy.

### Smart Health Solutions

Whether your child has a tummy ache, a stuffy nose, or a bug bite, doctors say that old-fashioned home remedies are often the best way to help him feel better fast. These time-tested treatments rarely have side effects, cost next to nothing, and use items you probably already have on hand. "Some, like ginger and chamomile, have even been confirmed by scientific studies to have healing effects," says Hilary McClafferty, MD, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' provisional section for complementary, holistic, and integrative medicine.

Of course, you should always call your pediatrician if your child's problem seems

#### Honey and Lemon Juice for a Sore Throat

Lemon dries up congestion and honey provides a soothing coating, says Lane Johnson, MD, associate professor of clinical family and community medicine at the University of Arizona College of Medicine. In fact, a recent study found that a spoonful of honey eased kids' coughs even better than cough medicine. Mix together a tablespoon of each, microwave for 20 seconds until warm (not hot), and have your child swallow the mixture a teaspoon at a time. Caution:

#### Chamomile Tea for Colic

eter Rabbit's mother fed him soothing chamomile tea in Beatrix Potter's classic tale, and you can give it to your infant to relax her intestinal muscles and calm her down, says Dr. McClafferty, a pediatrician in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Steep tea for four to five minutes, let it cool to room temperature, and then put one to two ounces in a bottle. Don't give your baby more than four ounces a day so that she'll be sure to have plenty of room for her tummy for breast milk or formula.

#### Baking Soda for Bug Bites

"My nana used to make a baking-soda paste for me when I was a child, and when I tried it on my own kids, they said that it stopped the itching better than store-bought products."

## Honey and Lemon Juice for a Sore Throat

Lemon dries up congestion and honey provides a soothing coating, says Lane Johnson, MD, associate professor of clinical family and community medicine at the University of Arizona College of Medicine. In fact, a recent study found that a spoonful of honey eased kids' coughs even better than cough medicine. Mix together a tablespoon of each, microwave for 20 seconds until warm (not hot), and have your child swallow the mixture a teaspoon at a time. Caution: Honey is not safe for babies under 1 year.

The TCHWs have also returned to running various group activities with males and females of different age groups, although these have had to stop when Covid-19 restrictions have been in place. These have included wall climbing, swimming, bootcamp, outdoor walks and lunches.









### World Suicide Awareness Day and Traveller Mental Health Day

TCHWs also promoted Suicide Awareness Day by uniting with other Traveller organisations in Cork. A beautiful display of photographs of young and older Travellers' hands holding a candle was compiled for our social media and the images fed into the national TTPS campaign (of which TVG was a member since 2019).

**Travellers Candles of Remembrance**  
Travellers Together Cork Kerry  
Preventing Suicide

Light a candle... Take a photo... Share with us... See all the candles together.

**10 September is World Suicide Prevention Day**  
This September, we invite Travellers and allies from across the region to remember their loved ones by lighting a candle. SEND a photo or drawing of this to:

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Travellers-Together-Cork-Kerry](https://www.facebook.com/Travellers-Together-Cork-Kerry)  
Text message or WhatsApp: 087 409 5523  
Email: [travellerstogethertcorkkerry@gmail.com](mailto:travellerstogethertcorkkerry@gmail.com)

Or share your photo with one of the workers in your local Traveller Project

All of the photos will be posted as an exhibition on Instagram and other social media and may be used in future prints or exhibitions. Names will not be shown.

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/travellerscandescorkkerry](https://www.instagram.com/travellerscandescorkkerry)

Logos at the bottom include: Travellers Together Cork Kerry, Travellers Together Kerry, Travellers Together Cork, Travellers Together Kerry, Travellers Together Cork, Travellers Together Kerry, Travellers Together Cork, Travellers Together Kerry, Travellers Together Cork, Travellers Together Kerry.

Throughout 2021, the TVG has played an active role in implementing various actions of the National Traveller Mental Health Network and the Regional Traveller Mental Health Network (Cork & Kerry).



## SECOND ANNUAL NATIONAL TRAVELLER MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Venue-Knock

Date-8th October 2021

Time-12pm Mass in the Basilica

The Tree of Hope will be Blessed & planted after Mass

We are asking Travellers and Traveller Organisations, both locally and nationally, who can't attend the event in Knock, to organise an event on the 8th October to celebrate the 2nd National Traveller Mental Health Day. This can be a walk, Mass, tree planting/plaque or memorial ceremony etc.

Please contact us via Facebook Messenger or  
email [N.Travmhnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:N.Travmhnetwork@gmail.com) for any  
information you need

On 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021, we marked the second National Traveller Mental Health day by sending a delegation to Knock and helping to plant a Tree of Hope. In terms of local actions, THCWs placed plaques at the trees that were planted for the first National Traveller Mental Health Day, both at Spring Lane and Loughmahon Park. They gave speeches alongside counsellors from the new Traveller Counselling Service at SHEP / Cosceim, which was launched at the same time.



On 10th December 2021, TCHW Biddy McDonagh joined other TVG staff members in delivering a letter to the office of the Taoiseach in Cork. This letter called for the Irish Government to take swift action on the Traveller mental health and accommodation crises.





### **Team training and upskilling**

- Two sessions of IT training have taken place this year, one on “Practical Productivity Using Gmail” and a second session on Microsoft Word.
- TCHW Jean O’Donoghue has been attending regular one-to-one sessions with a renowned dyslexia tutor.
- Two of the TCHWs have continued on to Year 2 of the Leadership Training course with UCC and the STHN for 2 mornings each week.

### **Traveller Women’s Awareness work/Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention and Support**

This year has been particularly challenging for the project. Through successive lockdowns and restrictions, there has been an increase in the need for support and emergency accommodation for women of all communities across Ireland experiencing violence in their home.

Maria Stokes has been settling into her new role with support from Tehmina Kazi, Eileen Burke and the team at Pavee Point.

Maria Stokes (and previously, Eileen Burke) had continued to meet on Zoom with the team of Traveller Women’s Awareness Workers, coordinated by Pavee Point, on a weekly basis. Eileen had also been meeting regularly with two local networks in Cork, survivors of domestic violence, and the Cork network of violence against women services.

Eileen had channelled her time and her energy in sharing and posting valuable information for women and families on TVG’s social media and Whatsapp each day, and has supported a greater number of women this year in accessing services with refuges, courts, etc.

### **Collaborations with the Drug and Alcohol Project**

The Health Team collaborated with the Drug and Alcohol Project on a number of fronts this year:

- A 10,000 Steps competition



Visit to Tabor Lodge





A Mobile DASH van visit

- TCHW Biddy McDonagh did a video with Ann Jordan on addiction treatment at Tabor Lodge.



### Our aims and hopes for 2022:

In the coming year, we hope that we will be able to meet with groups of Traveller women and young people across the city to run activities and programmes offline on a more frequent basis.

We hope to host public awareness campaigns on issues including the menopause, cystic fibrosis, long Covid and the impacts of intergenerational living on Travellers' mental health.

We are looking forward to supporting the delivery of the TVG Traveller men's strategy, from a primary health care perspective, and supporting men and boys in improving their health and well-being.

As always, our team will continue to work with Travellers in the community and campaign on all fronts and with TVG's partners and allies, around Travellers' access to accommodation, mental health, violence against women, children's access to education and health services, Traveller culture awareness and cultural competency within services, and challenging racism and discrimination against Travellers.

### **Individual & other Accommodation Supports/Advocacy**

- Due to Covid 19, there were very few opportunities to organise collectively on Traveller accommodation issues. As a result, the workload of supporting individual families increased exponentially, with many families in either a current homeless situation, or in precarious accommodation facing imminent homelessness, contacting the TVG for support.
- Support is being provided to a number of individuals, mostly on accommodation matters, or related issues. They may relate the housing list, housing applications, maintenance, electricity, rent receipts, proof-of-address. Supports include exploring the issue with the individual concerned, usually followed by an email to the Traveller Accommodation Unit to raise this issue (and to create an electronic paper-trail).
- There appears to be a common thread in many of the supported cases: difficulties with being a successful bidder on CBL, and a policy of deferrals (sometimes 'rolling deferrals') for sometimes minor convictions. This has led to some liaison with Housing allocations on the matter, along with, information gathering & distribution on CCC Policy on Housing List Deferrals. TVG has also contacted the Department, seeking an update on its NTRIS commitment to research Traveller difficulties with accessing the housing list.

### **Solidarity Building**

- As a Community Development Organisation, TVG works in solidarity with other groups facing marginalisation (and their organisations).
- A positive by-product of Covid-19 restrictions was the widespread use of Zoom and similar video-conferencing facilities, also provided some new opportunities for engagement in national networks (cutting down on travel and improving time requirements).
- We participated further in Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) meetings, both general ones and Planning meetings for the Shadow National Action Plan against Racism they are producing.

### **Conferences & Webinars that TCHWs participated in (not an exhaustive list)**

- Closing the Revolving Door conference (October)
- HSE Psychology webinar with Dr Paul Duggan (November)
- TUSLA Coercive control webinar (December)
- CESCA Equality Webinar (December)

### **Policy Submissions**

- Contribution to CESCA submission on the Equality Act consultation
- Submission to IHREC Strategy Statement 2022 to 2024
- Submission to INAR consultation survey
- Submission to National Adult Literacy Agency Financial literacy survey

## **Other**

- Ongoing liaison with Cork Traveller Women's Network, the Springboard worker on St. Anthony's Park, the Healthy Minds Project, the THU/ HSE, various Good Shepherd staff, the FLAC Traveller solicitor, National Traveller MABS, as well as Tusla.
- The TCHWs assisted the HSE around arranging Covid 19 group testing and sharing coronavirus awareness information.
- TCHWs spoke to Maria Delaney, a journalist from Noteworthy, who wrote an article in TheJournal.ie on health issues in the Traveller community.

## **11. Community Health Development Workers**

### **1. Traveller Accommodation 2021**

- Traveller accommodation continues to be one of the key issues for Travellers in Cork City, and is one of the key determinants for outcomes in other areas, notably health and education.
- The Covid-19 crisis continued in 2021 with various degrees of lockdowns, providing excuses and reasons why there was another year of little progress in the area of Traveller accommodation. Nationally the Report of the Expert Group on Traveller Accommodation from the summer of 2021 has been long-fingered to a 'Programme Board' in the Department, with no sign on the two key recommendations on the National Traveller Accommodation Authority, nor the repeal of the Criminal Trespass legislation being implemented. Meanwhile the Traveller accommodation budget underspend continues. 'Housing For All', the government's housing plan re-stated some Traveller-specific policy objectives, but notably failed to identify any numerical targets for the delivery of Traveller accommodation units (while there are several other numerical delivery targets in other areas).
- At a local level, May 2021 saw the publication of the report by the Children's Ombudsman (OCO) 'No End in Site'. While the report itself did not name Cork City Council, but concerned an investigation into 'a local authority' and an unnamed Traveller halting site, media reporting named Cork City Council and the Spring Lane site within hours of its publication. TVG and the Cork Traveller Women's Network had submitted a complaint on behalf of the children and parents in Spring Lane to OCO in March 2018. The report was damning on the lack of action on Spring Lane over decades, made a number of recommendations along with commitments by the City Council regarding implementation. Progress has been slow in terms of on-the-ground improvements, while there is another accommodation needs assessment underway and engineers look at various difficulties with the existing site. A national newspaper article, based on a Freedom of Information request, exposed a backtracking by City Council on the commitments already given to OCO, creating further issues of concern regarding the local authority's commitment to completing the actions recommended in the report. The new draft City Development Plan 'de-zoned' Ellis Yard as Traveller accommodation, and there is no apparent progress on delivering the Ellis Yard proposal for a new site, beyond the stated Council commitment. The OCO Report on Spring Lane received huge national attention, leading to visits by two Ministers-of-State shortly thereafter (including the Minister with responsibility for Traveller accommodation). A delegation from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Traveller Issues also visited the Spring Lane in late 2021.

Towards the end of the year, City Council provided two new welfare pods to two Spring Lane residents, and started work to upgrade the footpath to school.

- The small extended family in a so-called 'unauthorised site' at Nash's Boreen has been awaiting proper accommodation and proper facilities for the last two decades. In 2021, with the support of the legal unit in IHREC (aided by the TVG) brought the matter to the High Court. While there was much deliberation by City Council over the action taken, it has produced a settlement with some prompt actions thereafter, which would have been unlikely, was it not for the High Court case.
- The long awaited Equality Reviews of Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) by the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission (IHREC) was released during the summer. Once again it found statutory deficiencies with the Cork City TAP (an analysis by the ITM for the NTACC had found Cork City TAP to be the only one in breach of all four statutory obligations analysed; OCO had found the Cork City TAP to be "discriminatory"). IHREC's analysis centred on the adequacy – or not - of the needs assessment, the inclusion of Traveller nomadism and culture (including horses) and compliance with the Public Sector Equality & Human Rights Duty (PSEHRD). TVG attended IHREC Zoom webinars on the TAP Equality Reviews. TVG will seek to pursue these matters in 2022, as part of the statutory mid-term review of the TAP. Any attempts by TVG to apply the PSEHRD to Cork City Council Traveller practice and policy have been strongly resisted by Council officials up to now. While the TVG has been critical of some sections and omissions in the published new draft City Development Plan, we acknowledge the recognition of Traveller culture and horse ownership in the proposed plan.
- Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC) continued to meet mostly on video-conference during 2021, and in the absence of the Traveller site reps. TVG is represented on the committee by John O'Sullivan. TVG has no dedicated accommodation workers, though accommodation work forms a large part of the TVG's work, shared among a number of staff. In the latter part of 2021 the TVG established an internal accommodation working group to better co-ordinate this part of the work.
- The TVG continued to actively participate in the Accommodation Working Group of the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM). This included a joint TVG/CTWN power point presentation on the Spring Lane complaint brought to OCO to our sister organisations around the country. The THU Cork/Kerry THU Regional Traveller Accommodation Working Group (RTAWG) also continued to meet throughout 2021 on Zoom, and its report on Traveller Homelessness in Cork & Kerry was launched in late 2021.
- TVG & CTWN jointly submitted a complaint under the Standards in Public Office to the City Council's Ethics Registrar regarding a well-known anti-Traveller councillor on the grounds of anti-Traveller racism. This matter is still being investigated by the City Council. Both organisations also organised Zoom meetings with both the Press Council and the Broadcasting Commission on related matters and to open channels of communication.
- Early in the summer TVG organised a Zoom meeting with City Council's Housing Allocations on the operation of the Choice Based Letting system and the Accommodation Placement Service, City Council's Homeless Unit, again to open new channels of communication for TVG and CTWN staff beyond the Traveller Accommodation Unit.
- There has been a marked shift in requests to the TVG for accommodation supports during the year. While such requests related primarily to living conditions on Traveller sites in the

past, there has been a marked increase in requests from Traveller families in acute homeless situations, or Traveller families in very precarious housing situations facing imminent homelessness. Many of the difficulties of homeless Traveller families have common traits: difficulty with accessing the electronic CBL system, and receiving fair consideration within the system in line with City Council's adopted Allocation Policy; associated problems with the use of deferrals and other 'estate management' reasons for non-allocation in a system lacking any transparency and accountability. These ongoing difficulties have led to numerous referrals to the Traveller solicitor in FLAC, lodging of Equal Status Act complaints (discrimination), referrals to the Ombudsman and Freedom of Information requests to access housing files.

- Covid-19 did not allow for the establishment of a 'Traveller Family Accommodation' Clinic in TVG as yet.

## **2. Traveller Accommodation Actions over next Year**

- Seek to prepare and drive the Mid-Term Review of TAP (including the active involvement by LTACC)
- Actively engage in the third Public Consultation round on updated draft City Development Plan
- Ongoing liaison with OCO regarding the implementation of Spring Lane recommendations
- Ensure implementation of the recommendations from the Cathal O'Connell Equality Review of the CBL System (once completed) & general adherence with PSEHRD
- Strengthen the capacity of Traveller leadership on accommodation issues by co-opting two other Traveller Development Workers onto the LTACC (as either substitute members or attendees)
- Set up Meeting with UCC Planning Department Lecturer Brendan O'Sullivan, to upskill local Traveller organisations on planning matters
- Analyse and summarise the Brian Harvey Report on Traveller Homelessness, and distribute the information
- Follow up on the complaint to City Council regarding a local councillor's anti-Traveller hate speech , possibly to SIPO
- Engage on a new, outcome –focused NTRIS, with clear accommodation actions, and seek Munster Traveller representation on its new Steering Group

## **3. Policy Submissions**

- Detailed TVG Submission to Cork City Council in response to the published draft Cork City Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (Oct)
- Subsequent formal contact with Office of Planning Regulator regarding the draft Cork City Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (Oct)

- Joint TVG/CTWN Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth on proposed National Action Plan Against Racism (July)
- Joint TVG/CTWN Submission to the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights on the UN Universal Periodic Human Rights Review, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle (March)
- Joint TVG/CTWN Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth on the UN Universal Periodic Human Rights Review, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle (May)
- Joint TVG/CTWN Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth on the draft State Report to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (Nov)
- TVG Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth on the Review of the Equality Legislation (Nov) **(yet to be submitted)**

#### 4. Zoom Conferences & Webinars

- Travellers in Prison Initiative Web Conference (Oct)
- NUI Maynooth Housing Webinar (April, over two days)
- OCO Zoom for Traveller Organisations on `No End in Site` Report (June)
- Two Zooms with IHREC on Equality Reviews of TAPs (July & Sep)
- Two FLAC/IHREC Webinars on Review of Equality Legislation (both Nov)
- Traveller LGBT+ Coming Out Zoom (Oct)
- Web Consultation Meeting with Department of Children & Equality on UN Declaration of Right of Child (June)
- TVG Zoom Webinar on Traveller Culture, Horses & Accommodation (Sep)
- Two National Housing & Homelessness Coalition TravAcc Zooms (April & June)
- Raise The Roof Housing Webinar (Oct)
- Mercy Law Webinar on Minority Groups & Housing Services (March)
- Zoom with National Traveller MABS & Cork MABS on Caravan Loan Scheme (March)
- FEANTSA Webinar on Model Emergency Housing Legislation (March)
- Sligo Traveller Support Group Webinar for International Women`s Day (March)

#### 5. Other

- Ongoing liaison with CTWN, the Springboard worker on St. Anthony`s Park, the Healthy Minds Project, the THU/HSE, various Good Shepherd staff, the FLAC Traveller solicitor, National Traveller MABS, as well as Tusla
- Active Participation in the Irish Network Against Racism/INAR

- Liaison with NUI Limerick Research on Traveller Experience with Gardaí and courts
- Attempted liaison with IHREC on non-compliance with PSEHRD by City Council
- Actively linked up one local Traveller with the Cork Gay Project
- Facilitated information exchange on Irish Travellers with Zapatista delegation from Mexico.

## **Traveller Men's Health Worker Update**

### **TVG Traveller Community Development Internship**

TVG Community Development Internship In July 2021 TVG successfully recruited a Traveller man into the post of Traveller Community Development Intern. This post is a 3 year pilot program and is co-funded through the Community Foundation of Ireland. The Intern has worked with our development team to co-facilitate the Traveller boys Healthy Ireland Group which involved modules on mental health Training, woodwork classes and outdoor activities. He has participated in the Traveller Pride Information Workshops to the public during Traveller Pride Week 2021. The creation of this post has been an objective 1st identified in TVG Travellers Men's 5 Year Strategic Plan 2019-24. The Traveller Men's Health Worker has enjoyed working as a mentor and line managing this worker and having another Traveller man working on the TVG health team. In November 2021 the new worker has applied to undertake a 2 Year Youth and Community Diploma



### **Traveller Men's Training and Employment Initiatives**

Traveller mediation training a planned regional peer mediation program with the Traveller Mediation Service was planned for November 2021 and had to be rescheduled until early 2022. The Traveller Interagency in Cork City has at the request of TVG resumed and to help us look at creating initiatives, pathways and structures for Traveller men to progress to further education, training and employment. A planned Safe Pass training with the help of the Cork ETB will take place in early January 2022 for Traveller men in TVG.

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Judicial review of the Cork City Council Traveller Accommodation Plan 2019-24

In June 2021, IHREC successfully negotiated with CCC to undertake accommodation works for the families on Nash's Boreen in view of a pending judicial review of the Traveller Accommodation Plan 2019-24 in the Circuit Court. This agreement involved an ESB connection to the site, main sewage connection, mobile home replacements and an agreement to develop Traveller-specific accommodation on Nash's Boreen in the next 2 years. This was an extensive piece of accommodation work which spanned over a 5 year period and required intensive support to bring this agreement to fruition.

### **Representative Work**

As part of Traveller Pride 2021 the team organised and co-facilitated a Micro Biome webinar event. The webinar on the Micro biome gut health of Travellers and Horses showed through a UCC study with Travellers from Cork how animals can improve not only mental health but physical health for the Traveller community. This involved speakers from UCC and national Traveller projects, Equality Activists, and The Traveller Counselling Service. It was attended by 47 participants and over 100 viewers watched via social media.

In September 2021, the Traveller Men's Health Worker took on the role of Traveller representative on the Cork Local Drugs Task Force. This involves attending relevant training and monthly meetings and representing issues of addiction and supports in the community. During 2021 I have continued to represent TVG and the Traveller community on the LTACC and make representations where needed. I have represented TVG on the national ITM Accommodation working group.

Throughout the 2021 I have given presentations on the work of TVG and Traveller culture to Movember's project worker team, the Traveller Interagency, The national Probation service, and the HSE mental health social work team.

### **Covid 19 Response Work**

In January, 2021 the Traveller Men's Health Development team were part of the wrap-around service that was provided to Travellers in Ballyvolane in the wake of a Community Covid 19 outbreak. This involved the packing and the delivery of food packs and essentials to the community when self-isolating. The team also worked with the broader TVG Health team to prepare information sanitation packs to the community across the city and be on call at weekends to offer support where needed.

### **Healthy Ireland Project Fairhill Boys Group**

A group was set up to undertake modules on Traveller mental health, woodwork and outdoor activities. This project was a collaboration between TVG and Rafael Olympio from the Cork Migrant Centre.





### **Southside Men's Group**

The southside group has continued to meet during 2021 for Indoor and outdoor football.

## **11. Drugs and Alcohol Support Project**

This project started in 2007, in response to knowledge locally amongst Travellers and services about addiction issues in the Traveller Community. Research was written in 2006, by Jane Fountain called Illicit Drug Use in the Traveller Community. This gave more concrete information on issues around substance use and addiction. Between local knowledge and research, it was clear that Travellers knew that there were many families who needed drug and alcohol support, but they didn't know about the services in their area, or how these projects could support them. In tandem, there were no Traveller workers in the drug and alcohol services in the region, and very few services had input from the Traveller community, in relation to their service delivery to Travellers. This TVG project was set up to bridge these gaps.

### **How have Travellers informed this Project in 2021?**

#### **Traveller Peer Worker**

Amanda O Donnell is the first known Traveller ever to work in drug and alcohol services, in the Southern Region. This project was delighted to welcome Amanda in Spring 2021.

Amanda is from Cork City. She is a mother of 2 kids. Amanda is very keen to support her community to understand more about substance use, misuse and abuse. She is keen to help people to get help for their problems, and to work with services, so they understand more deeply, relationship work with Travellers.

#### **Outreach**

Getting out to the Community, via the usual groups and outreach was very different in 2021, due to ongoing Covid 19 restrictions. We used telephones, online video ( Zoom), social media, especially Facebook and 'meet ups' outdoors, more than any other year.

#### **Working alongside Traveller colleagues**

The D+A project works alongside the Traveller Community health and community worker team, and the Traveller Community Development team in TVG. This year we worked together on Active group activities, the video for social media explaining the Tabor Group residential service, running the Beoirs Boutique facebook page, meeting the project workers who can do family support 5 Step Method work with Traveller families, Young Women's Information Group, Steering Committee work and on the Tabor Group Traveller Pathway work.

### **How are Travellers informing addiction related services?**

Traveller engagement in addiction services continues to be challenging. This is for many reasons. There are no known Traveller workers in HSE or HSE funded agencies working in the substance misuse area in the south of the country. As Travellers often have numerous issues (early school leaving, unemployment, disability, homelessness, convictions ) happening together, underpinned by the experience of discrimination and racism, they tend to fall through gaps. Services still struggle to embed case management in their work. This is anecdotal, and deserves research to validate the experience of Travellers and services trying to support Travellers.

There is a Traveller Community rep on the CLDATE. The rep is most importantly a Traveller. The rep does not have to be a TVG worker, but at the moment the rep is Community development worker, John O Sullivan. TVG Drugs and Alcohol project and wider team inform John about what substance use related issues we encounter

## **Networking**

- This year, like every other, we try to build links with outside agencies. This year we met YMCA Elevate project workers, Good Shepherd project workers, D+A workers from Kerry and Cork, CDYS project worker, Family Resource Centre worker Carrigaline, The Pod Togher, Coolmine Team Leader southside, Recovery Academy project worker, Tabor Group staff, Sexual Health Centre staff

## **1-1 work with people in addiction**

### Number of people who've used the project

- In 2021, despite the reduced hours in the project, we worked with 13 individuals. We worked with people on their substance misuse and addiction, and on the issues surrounding these health needs i.e homelessness, imprisonment, Tusla referrals.

### Central issue effecting the people this project meets

- This year the central issue affecting people is securing accommodation. Of the 13 people we worked with, 10 are living in unstable accommodation, ranging from unserviced bays on halting sites, to unstable private rented accommodation, to B and B homeless persons accommodation.

### How did people find out about this project?

- People rang looking for help themselves, and services referred people to us. The TVG website and various social media pages also promoted access of the Drugs and Alcohol project throughout the year.

### Peer support

- TVG D+A project continued to support the online SMART recovery meetings. Ann has been co-facilitating 1-2 meetings a month during 2021.
- Ann and Amanda built links with the Recovery Academy. We forwarded information from their activities to the Community via social media and via 1-1 support. 1 man applied for the Mayfield group and one woman applied for the Mardyke gym membership. This project is advocating for a buddy system, when accessing the Mardyke, in particular.

### Information sharing

- Adapting our outreach to connect with people during COVID :
- This project started a Facebook page, called Travellers in Addiction and Recovery. We started a Facebook page, as we saw how much Travellers were using Facebook especially in the last year. We put up information about addiction and recovery, about Travellers using services, and about addiction services.

### Adapting information tools:

- This project developed the relationship with Tabor Group. We made a video together informing Travellers about the Tabor residential service

### Travellers access to Services

- Alongside Tabor group, this project is developing a specific pathway for Travellers who use their services. We started our conversations in January 2021 and this has expanded into a piece of work with Tabor Group, focused on increasing engagement between Travellers and the Tabor Group.



### Family Support

TVG Drugs and Alcohol team continue to work with Traveller families who may experience addiction or substance misuse through another family member. The team supports parents and siblings along with partners and spouses of people who are in recovery or addiction.

The project also works with the Traveller Health Care Workers (THCWs) in TVG to share information, knowledge and awareness around substance misuse, addiction and treatments services to families and individuals through group work and awareness campaigns.

### Family Support Project development

After finishing the training programme in Spring 2021 we followed up with in house training with the TVG TCHWs on family support to families affected by addiction. Mella Magee at Cork City partnership and this project, met with the trainees and the TCHWs in May, online and we met in person in October. 4 of the project workers involved have continued the relationship with TVG, in relation to the family support focus.

TVG picked up where the Family Support Network started. We continued to host the 5 Step accreditation supervision, after the FSN closed down. The supervision sessions continued monthly, finishing in December. Five workers have successfully completed the 5 Step method accreditation. Four workers will have completed the accreditation at the end of February.



The research was in draft form at the end of December and is due to be launched at the end of January. We are looking forward to the launch event.

### **Beoirs Boutique**

Beoirs Boutique started in mid-2021, as a way to support women to get recovery support for themselves or for their family members. Marie Roache, a volunteer with TVG, and TVG Drugs Worker linked with the TVG TCHWs and offered beauty therapies, with meditation and relaxation therapies, in TVG. Women's groups were booking us in with, with bookings until May, when COVID made sure we changed our direction.

By May, we moved BB online, to a group off the TVG Facebook page. As of December we, 111 women 'friends' of BB, with women, from Cork, and further afield, Limerick, Navan, Dublin, Galway and even London! Marie finished as a volunteer with BB in July, but the TVG TCHW team, the Healthy Minds Mental Health Outreach Worker, and the TVG UCC Social Work Student, have all worked on the Facebook group.

We secured funding for the group from the THU, at the end of 2021. We have held fortnightly 'Nominations' draw, to encourage women, to celebrate and support each other. We regularly post positive quotes, meditations, music by Traveller women, and other pieces of work by Traveller Women in particular.

### ***Networking – local to regional to national***



- This project continued involvement in the Regional Mental Health Network meetings. We ensured that Drugs + Alcohol issues were included in the discussion on Mental Health.



- Ann and Amanda have maintained their presence at the Pavee Point Traveller Drugs worker network meetings.
- Youth/ Education/ Employment: Amanda, Peer worker, Patrick McDonagh, Traveller Mens Development worker met the YMCA/ Elevate project workers, so we could bring information to the wider Traveller community
- Meeting family support workers 3 times. Eight different organisations were involved in the family support project. We met them online and in person, alongside representatives with the other regional Traveller projects
- Youth/ Adult / Substance misuse: Amanda and Ann met Coolmine team leader, Southside , James Leonard. Coolmine have taken over many of the Community based Drug and Alcohol projects. James was interested in flying a Traveller flag above his building. Watch out for this.
- Recovery: We met Mark Wright of the Recovery Academy Initiative, along with Patrick McDonagh. The Recovery Academy is creating ways for people to enjoy recovery and accessing sports and clubs in a supportive positive way.
- Tabor Group – As mentioned above, we started the Pathway work with Tabor. To accompany this, we made a site visit to their residential service in Fellowship, and we made an information video with an addiction counsellor, about residential treatment.
- Youth/ Adult/ Health: The Sexual Health Centre contacted the D+A project earlier in the year. Between staff changes at the Sexual Health project and then joining up with the Traveller Community Health Team to meet the SH team, we eventually met the SH workers, and their mobile van at the TVG. We invited the SH workers into addiction related trainings, in December and January, so they could build links with Traveller workers for future work

### **Supporting students, Volunteers and research**

This project focused on bias related research that was completed alongside the family support training.

TVG student placement workers took part in a number of activities and projects associated with the Drugs and Alcohol project including work for an early 2022 Webinar which was developed in late 2021 and developing the Beor's Boutique and Drugs and Alcohol project social media pages

### **Ongoing Team Training**

- Amanda took a break from the 'Substance Misuse Issues and Community Work Course' and she is looking forward to taking back up education later in the year.
- Ann and Amanda have been getting up-skilled in the family support Model, 5 Step
- Ann is doing psychotherapy training with *Flatstone*.

## **12. Education**

The STAR Project started with Gina and Rachel in January 2021. Jim was appointed in March 2021 and officially joined the team in September 2021. Since the start of the project the team has been a constant support to pupils and parents in all of the 14 STAR Schools(9 primary and 5 secondary).

Education Team on Star Project:

- Gina Miyagawa - Roma Support Worker
- Rachel Coffey - Traveller Support Worker
- Jim O' Connell - Home School Community Liaison
- Anne Burke Education Coordinator

Throughout the pandemic the STAR Project workers have provided ongoing wraparound service to the families, providing internet dongles, laptops and IT support, 1-1 work with children and parents, literacy classes, delivery of food hampers for families affected by Covid, delivery of activity packs for the pupils, Easter and Christmas Activities and much more. As well as the above work the 3 workers were a constant source of support to the 14 schools. The workers have always worked within the schools, where possible and also within the homes of the families, where school attendance was negatively impacted and the overall mental and physical wellbeing was so badly affected by the pandemic. Some of the projects that were undertaken are outlined below:

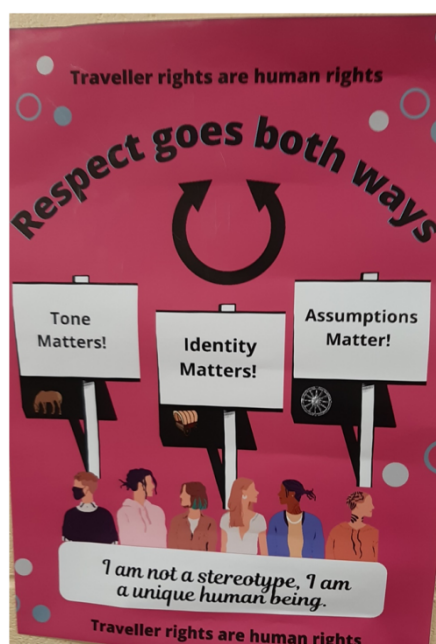
- Summer activities throughout June, July and August
- Music Generation
- Homework and Afterschool Clubs
- Write a Book Project
- Traveller and Roma Pride Week

Traveller Pride week 2021 was a huge success where both communities took part in a project in their own language. The young people were very proud to show other classes and it gave the young people the space to discuss it and was a huge proud moment for them. It also gave them a sense of being part of the school community and that their language mattered.





One of our older STAR groups also took part in the Healthy Ireland project in conjunction with the TVG health team. The young people made a poster on their experiences in school as young Travellers. This project ran for 6 weeks and the girls got to learn about racial justice topics, wellbeing, mental health and relaxation. The young people presented the poster to the school and it is now hanging in the main area. The project gave the young people a safe space to explore discrimination and understanding the impacts on their daily lives in school.



Another project that we are focusing on last year and this year is our book project. The project will work with Kids own publishing with 32 young people from both communities. The young people have been meeting each Saturday to work on the book and with a Traveller artist. The book will be produced, written and designed by the young people and it will be a resource for all schools who work with young Travellers and Roma.

The resources and books will contain Traveller culture and an understanding the impacts discrimination have on our young people. The project gives the young people a safe space to explore this and have an openness about their experiences being young minorities in the Irish school system.

Another success and highlight for our young people and the project was winning an award for the work done with the STAR team and pupils. The work was recognised and chosen as part of lifelong learning week in Cork City and it highlighted the fantastic work with the young people.



### **13. Mission Statement**

TVG is an independent, Cork-based, Traveller-led community development organisation. TVG will pursue social justice and equality with Travellers so that we can live free from racism and discrimination.

Values and Principles underpinning the TVG strategy and its work:

- TVG is an open and welcoming space for all Travellers and promotes Traveller visibility across Cork.
- TVG continually promotes Traveller participation and Traveller leadership.
- TVG works from a human rights and anti-racist perspective and will be Traveller-led.
- TVG promotes Traveller ethnicity and Traveller identities.
- TVG is committed to collective action with the Traveller community and works in solidarity with wider society to create a better Ireland.

### **14. Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all our funders throughout 2021 including: Social Inclusion (HSE), Traveller Health Unit (HSE), Cork Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force (HSE), Pobal, Cork Education Training Board, Cork City Council, Department of Justice, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth (DCEDIY). A special thank you to Traveller allies, our friends and supporters who join us in solidarity in the pursuit of social justice for Travellers in Ireland. As ever thank you to our community members who participate and engage in Traveller advocacy work with the TVG team.