

Annual Report 2024



Traveller Visibility Group



Chair Person's Statement

“
2024 has been a busy year for us all, but with teamwork and community support we made it.

Elizabeth McGrath

Community Development Worker

”

TVG Staff and Board have had a very productive year in 2024. I am delighted to announce the publication of TVG's 5-year strategic plan which has been developed over the past 18 months by the Board of Directors in collaboration with the TVG staff team. I look forward to launching this strategy in March 2025 as we celebrate the 8th anniversary of the state's recognition of Travellers as an indigenous ethnic minority in Ireland. As the strategy notes, much has been achieved by the various project workers in TVG in recent times, however the stark reality is there is much more before Travellers experience any meaningful change on the ground. We are seeing more Traveller activists speak on national and international stages about Traveller rights and anti-Traveller racism, and I am delighted to see TVG engaging and training more young Travellers in community development work. We will need more people speaking out about anti-Traveller racism to bring about positive changes for the Traveller community. Our Director of Advocacy, Breda O'Donoghue continually argues for the Traveller community to have greater input into the national and local decision-making in all areas that effects their lives.

It is reassuring to see anti-Traveller racism named in the National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) and it is very encouraging to see Traveller leaders working with state agencies to advise and deliver this plan. We will require oversight to ensure the ambition of the TRES is fully realised and opportunities to reflect on the outcomes of the strategy throughout the lifespan of this initiative.



A similar approach is required in the area of Traveller accommodation. TVG's Board is concerned at the continued lack of development in the local authority's delivery of Traveller accommodation. An approach in which 'we are consulted, but they decide' remains the default in our work with the local authority and in particular with housing departments. Radical change is required here if the accommodation for Travellers is to be improved significantly.

I am struck always by the passion and commitment of the team at TVG. The vast majority of the team are Travellers, living in the very community they work tirelessly to support. The Board takes their input and feedback seriously and acknowledge that the current funding structure is problematic. We are unable to provide meaningful salary increases based on time-served to our workers and are struggling to secure assurance of such funding and restructuring at present. The WRC complaint that led to an 8% pay increase for section 39 workers last year was a start but more is needed to ensure that our workers receive proper job security and remuneration for the crucial work they do. In 2022 the Irish government created a COVID-19 pandemic recognition payment for certain front-line public sector healthcare workers, to recognise their unique role during the pandemic. TVG staff, like in many other Traveller organisations, worked alongside their HSE colleagues delivering front line support to the Traveller community throughout the pandemic and have as of yet received no such support. There is no state pension or salary grade/increment structure available due to the current funding structure. We will continue to advocate for change here to ensure our team are paid fairly and can benefit from increased job security in the coming years.

While much of the work that TVG engages in is slow moving, often distressing and emotionally draining, I am always encouraged to see the resilience and strength of character within the community. While surrounded by inequality, discrimination and marginalisation, I also see Travellers proudly celebrating their ethnicity and identity, promoting their culture and supporting their families to enjoy Traveller life and culture as well as struggling through the hardship of their lived-experience in Ireland. In 2025 and beyond I am hopeful that our strategic plan along with a strengthening and development of our own team with the introduction of a Traveller Youth Development Worker alongside the development of the Traveller Education Unit will bring about some positive change and new opportunities for Travellers in Cork and beyond. Thank you as ever to all the team and the continued collaborative support of Traveller allies in the settled community. A huge thank you to the Traveller community in Cork who continue to influence and direct the work we do at TVG.

Alastair Christie

Chair, TVG Board of Directors.

“

2024 was an incredibly busy and successful year, with higher attendance than ever at key events!

Tehmina Kazi

Traveller Health Team Co-Ordinator

”

Director of Advocacy Statement

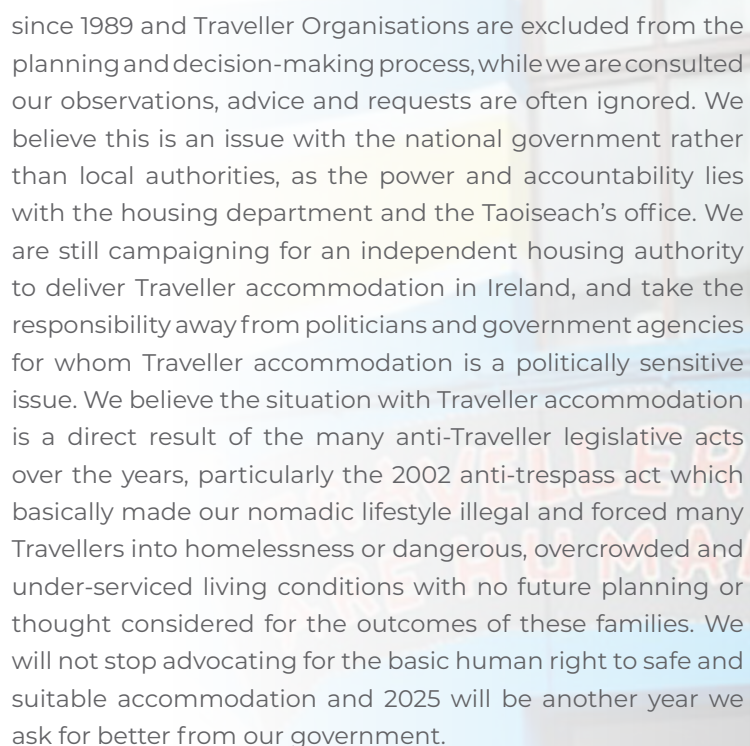


2024 was another busy year for TVG workers as we saw an increase in our work with local committees and working groups and also increased the number of groups we work with in the Traveller community. Our work has grown in education and men's health too over the year with the introduction of a new education mentoring programme in the northside of the city alongside the STHN and also the introduction of 2 new Traveller Men's team members working with our longstanding Traveller Men's Community Development Worker, John O'Sullivan. It's been great to see more Traveller men activities and groups added to the TVG programme with a significant focus on Traveller men's training and employment, young Traveller boy's education and physical health awareness.

Since TVG took on the STAR education pilot programme back in 2020, Traveller education and campaigning for an end to historic anti-Traveller racism in the education system has been a primary focus for TVG. As the STAR pilot will come to an end in July 2025, we have been looking at what education supports we can continue to deliver beyond STAR, to ensure that the Traveller community's education opportunities and developments remain a priority for TVG. It has been great to team up with the STHN and other education stakeholders like the ETB, TESS, UCC and MTU to create the Traveller Education Unit, a local collaborative partnership designing and delivering education initiatives for the Traveller community and campaigning for change in the school system. For too long Travellers have been negatively impacted by low expectations in the school system and negative stereotypes brought about by systemic and societal racism. Campaigning for change in this area is key and we are very excited to be developing a

training module for teachers that will be used in UCC's School of Education. We aim to have a similar accredited module on Traveller-specific material for many other areas of higher level training for public service professions including law, health and social work. TVG's Traveller Education Strategy Coordinator has developed a helpful report on the social determinants of education which clearly lays out the historic and current issues that are impacting Traveller outcomes in the education system. We will continue educating educators and policy decision makers on these determinants next year. We await with hope and optimism for the Traveller Roma Education Strategy (TRES) to be implemented and look forward to learning of any multi annual funding plans to support this strategy as we know schools and the community are in need of major resources to bring about real change. TVG has attended TRES consultation meetings and will continue to attend national meetings on this strategy.

Traveller accommodation continues to be a critical issue for Travellers, one that is a root cause for problems in physical and mental health along with education and employment opportunities for the community. TVG has 1 worker focusing solely on this social determinant of health and education at present with many more workers supporting Travellers with individual accommodation issues in the project. There is still so much inequality in the provision of Traveller accommodation in Ireland, and, locally, issues of Traveller homelessness, overcrowding and hidden homelessness continue to be a major problem. While we meet regularly with the local authority and have forged working relationships with the Traveller Accommodation Unit (TAU) we are still not seeing any real change. There is still no new Traveller accommodation built in Cork City

A group of people, including men and women of various ages, are standing in front of a building. A banner is visible in the background with the text 'TRAVELLER RIGHTS HUMAN RIGHTS'. The image is partially obscured by a large, stylized graphic on the right side of the page, which consists of overlapping geometric shapes in shades of blue, orange, and yellow.

since 1989 and Traveller Organisations are excluded from the planning and decision-making process, while we are consulted our observations, advice and requests are often ignored. We believe this is an issue with the national government rather than local authorities, as the power and accountability lies with the housing department and the Taoiseach's office. We are still campaigning for an independent housing authority to deliver Traveller accommodation in Ireland, and take the responsibility away from politicians and government agencies for whom Traveller accommodation is a politically sensitive issue. We believe the situation with Traveller accommodation is a direct result of the many anti-Traveller legislative acts over the years, particularly the 2002 anti-trespass act which basically made our nomadic lifestyle illegal and forced many Travellers into homelessness or dangerous, overcrowded and under-serviced living conditions with no future planning or thought considered for the outcomes of these families. We will not stop advocating for the basic human right to safe and suitable accommodation and 2025 will be another year we ask for better from our government.

Throughout the year we have advocated for equality and equity in education, accommodation, health and mental health with a particular focus on campaign around Traveller mental health awareness and suicide prevention. While we have accomplished a lot in 2024 there is still much more to do in 2025. The road is long but, working together as a team and with the wider Traveller community and settled allies, we hope to be part of making a real positive change for Travellers' lived experience in Ireland.

Breda O'Donoghue

Director of Advocacy.

Executive Summary

12 National

3 Regional

27 Local



Inter-agency Work

TVG participates in 42 local, regional and national committees:

- **27 Local** Committees and Working Groups
- **3 Regional** Committees and Working Groups
- **12 National** Committees and Working Groups

Public Events

TVG hosted 31 public events including 4 events for Traveller Pride celebrations and further events on accommodation, Traveller ethnicity, domestic violence, Traveller culture, mental health, education and youth work.





Research

TVG was involved in 7 distinct research projects in 2024. Research topics included education, health, sustainable energy and accommodation.

Presentations

TVG delivered 16 presentations on Traveller culture, and issues impacting the Traveller community to audiences across Ireland including UCC, DCU, National Traveller Partnership, Cork City Council, LGBTQ services, Youth Work Services, social work, planning and public health students.

Accommodation Workers Highlights

- TVG arranged a regional seminar between Cena and Traveller organisations in Munster to discuss Traveller accommodation issues in the region.
- TVG formulated a motion to the Irish Traveller Movement on the issue of Traveller homelessness and accommodation access.
- TVG supported two motions through the PPN and subsequently the Housing SPC to the full Council.
- TVG supported over 80 Traveller families on accommodation matters.



Education and Employment Team Highlights

- TVG collaborated with STHN, UCC Access and UCC's School of Education to create Cork's first ever accredited academic module on Traveller education at UCC.
- TVG staff created a document and supporting animation video on the Social Determinants of Education which will be shared across all education and related fields in 2025.
- TVG worked with 12 Traveller men on the MIG and TIG welding programs which ran for 12 weeks with each participant completing 60 hours and undertaking a particle exam to progress to the next phase of the program.
- TVG in partnership with the Cork ETB and the Cork City Partnership facilitated training in Construction Skills and 360 excavator training with a total of 8 Traveller men receiving Certificates in Safe Pass, Manual Handling, Abrasive Wheels and a Card/Ticket in CSCS 360 Excavator.
- TVG supported 40 families on a weekly basis through STAR Education Pilot Programme and one-to-one signposting and support.

Health Team Highlights

- TVG organised 13 impactful community engagement events, including Traveller Pride Week, Culture Night, Healthy Relationships training, and the 16 Days Campaign Coffee Morning.
- TVG Attended over 20 external Advocacy & Representation events, engaging in key discussions on racism, disability rights, heritage, and public health, including the National Traveller Women's Forum and 30 Years of Primary Healthcare for Travellers Conference.
- TVG Submitted three key policy responses, including the IHREC Strategy Statement and Women's Stories Consultation, and contributed to two major research projects with UCC and Pavee Point.
- 8 Traveller women's groups received support from Traveller Community Health Workers. On the other hand, the Traveller Men's Health Development team collaborated with 90 men and subsequently supported six Traveller men's groups in Cork City.
- Training & Capacity Building: In addition to other programs, TVG attended training sessions such as Travellers transforming Conflict at Dublin Castle and Hope and Courage Collective training, where they honed their advocacy and service delivery skills.

TVG Men's Development Team Highlights

- In 2024 TVG secured funding to support ongoing professional training and development for a new Traveller Men's Community Development Worker. This was a significant development as there are now 3 Traveller men working in TVG allowing them to create more events, and have a wider reach within the Traveller community.
- TVG Men's Health team took part in Men's Health Week, organising a 6 mile hill-walking hike in West Cork with 22 Traveller men.
- TVG and Cork Sports Partnership organised a four week sports on the green games and training activities in a local green area in Cork.
- A Traveller Men's Handball Tournament was held in July as part of TVG's Local Traveller Pride event week with over 16 Traveller men who participated.
- 2 arts and crafts projects were created with young Traveller children creating Barrell Top Wagon models.

TVG Advocacy Work

In 2024 TVG staff worked directly with Government departments, national agencies and bodies along with political party leaders to advocate for Traveller rights, to combat anti-Traveller racism and seek equality and equity in health, accommodation and education outcomes for Travellers. Our Director of Advocacy, Breda O'Donoghue, was particularly active in supporting the recruitment of the new Regional Traveller Mental Health Coordinator ensuring a focus on Traveller mental health is secured in Cork and Kerry. Breda also delivered a presentation to the Seanad on Traveller accommodation and its impact on health, mental health and education outcomes for Travellers. Breda worked with Senator Eileen Flynn and the National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) to encourage Traveller women to register to vote and get involved in politics. In 2024 TVG formally met with the following national and local Government leaders, state bodies and national organisations:

- Minister of State at the Department of Health, Colm Burke
- Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community, and first ever Traveller to be appointed to the Seanad, Eileen Flynn.
- Irish GP Council: TVG Director of Advocacy developed guidelines for best practice for GPs working with Travellers in Ireland
- The TVG Director for Advocacy delivered a presentation on GP best practice guidelines for working with marginalised communities at the European GP Conference in Dublin.
- TVG continued collaborating with the Oireachtas Joint Committee for Issues Impacting Travellers.
- The Office of the Children's Ombudsman
- IHREC- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
- National Traveller Advocacy Groups: ITM, NTWF, NTP.
- Cork City Traveller Accommodation Unit (TAU)
- Traveller Inter-Agency Group (Cork City)




Drugs and Alcohol Project

After a period of personnel change, we were delighted to see the TVG Drug and Alcohol project return to full service. In late 2024 the Traveller Peer Community Drugs Worker returned to TVG after maternity leave and was joined by a new full time Community Drugs Worker. The two workers have hit the ground running and organised multiple impactful events and group work, including the Farranree Young Women's Well-being Group, 16 Days of Activism Coffee Morning, Children's Pumpkin Carving Competition, and attended the Knock Trip for National Traveller Mental Health Day. An online presence has been created by the project to ensure that as many community members as possible know about the services offered. The team oversaw a number of social media competitions and giveaways that further strengthened community connections.

The Drug & Alcohol Team also participated in key training programs, including Connect Recovery, STORM V, Case Management, Trauma Training, National Drug Rehabilitation Framework, and Digital Abuse with Pavee Point, enhancing service delivery and will share their learning with the wider community.

Over the last 3 months of 2024 the Drug & Alcohol Team received 9 referrals and are actively supporting these individuals and their families. The team plan to launch a walk-in addiction support clinic beginning February 2025, offering guidance, case management, and referrals in a safe, private setting. TVG will establish a new Drug & Alcohol Steering Group in 2025, with plans for pop-up events, new Family Support Groups, and men's and women's recovery meetings in 2025. The team also aims to enhance visibility through an advertising campaign, outreach presentations, and inter-agency collaboration.





*I am not defined by my relapses,
but by my decision to remain in
recovery despite them.*

**Anonymous service
user of TVG Drug and
Alcohol Project**

”

Education Development

2024 was an extremely busy year for TVG's Traveller education development work. Following on from work with the Southern Traveller Health Network (STHN) and the Cork Traveller Education Working Group (CTEWG) TVG, the Traveller Education Unit (TEU) was formed, moving the CTEWG from a working group to an active and permanent space to focus on Traveller education development in Cork. The TEU strategy is underpinned by 4 pillars of focus:

- 1. The TEU Mentoring Programme:** In 2024, 6 Traveller women completed a train the trainer course with UCC to become education mentors to young Travellers in Cork. The STHN coordinated this training programme to create a mentoring project on the Northside of the city, working with parents, students and schools to develop the education outcomes of young Travellers moving from primary to secondary school. The aim is to ensure the smooth transition of Traveller children from primary to secondary school and to increase the number of Travellers completing the leaving cert. The Mentoring Project is currently working with 20 children in 3 primary schools and 2 secondary schools to achieve this goal.
- 2. Traveller Education Module for Teacher-training Programmes:** The TEU have met with UCC Head of School of Education, Prof Nicola Ingram to design and deliver a module that focuses on Travellers' historic and current experience of education for students of the Masters in Education programme in UCC. This will be the first accredited module on Traveller Education in UCC and it is hoped that this will help to combat historic and systemic anti-Traveller racism that is currently impacting Traveller students and schools faculties in Ireland today. This accredited module will be available to other professionals outside of UCC's education masters programme, who have an interest in Traveller Education. The module has been approved and is in the design stage with the aim to go live in September 2025 for the new academic year.
- 3. UCC Research Study on Traveller Education:** In conjunction with the Traveller Education Module, the TEU has engaged Dr Gemma Campion to undertake research on Traveller's lived experiences of schooling. There will be a particular focus on transition points primary to secondary, junior cert to leaving cert and leaving cert and beyond.
- 4. Sharing The Learning:** The TEU have booked the Millennium Hall in Cork City Council to host the inaugural TEU Traveller Education Seminar. This event is scheduled for 30th January 2025 and will see stakeholders, partners and allies working in Traveller education and training development meet together to explore ways to deliver the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) in Cork and to officially launch the Traveller Education Unit in the city, the first of its kind nationally putting Cork as a Traveller education development centre in Ireland.

Alongside this varied work in primary, secondary and third level education spaces, TVG's creche and preschool service continued developing its colourful offering. Our team received excellent training in areas such as Traveller Culture Awareness Training, trauma informed practice, equality & Diversity and INCO (Inclusion Coordinator) online Seminars with Cork City Childcare. Planned work in 2025 is to build connections with Traveller families using the crèche throughout the wider TVG project and connecting in with youth services and family supports that are available to Traveller families in the childcare service through the TVG Traveller Youth Development Worker.

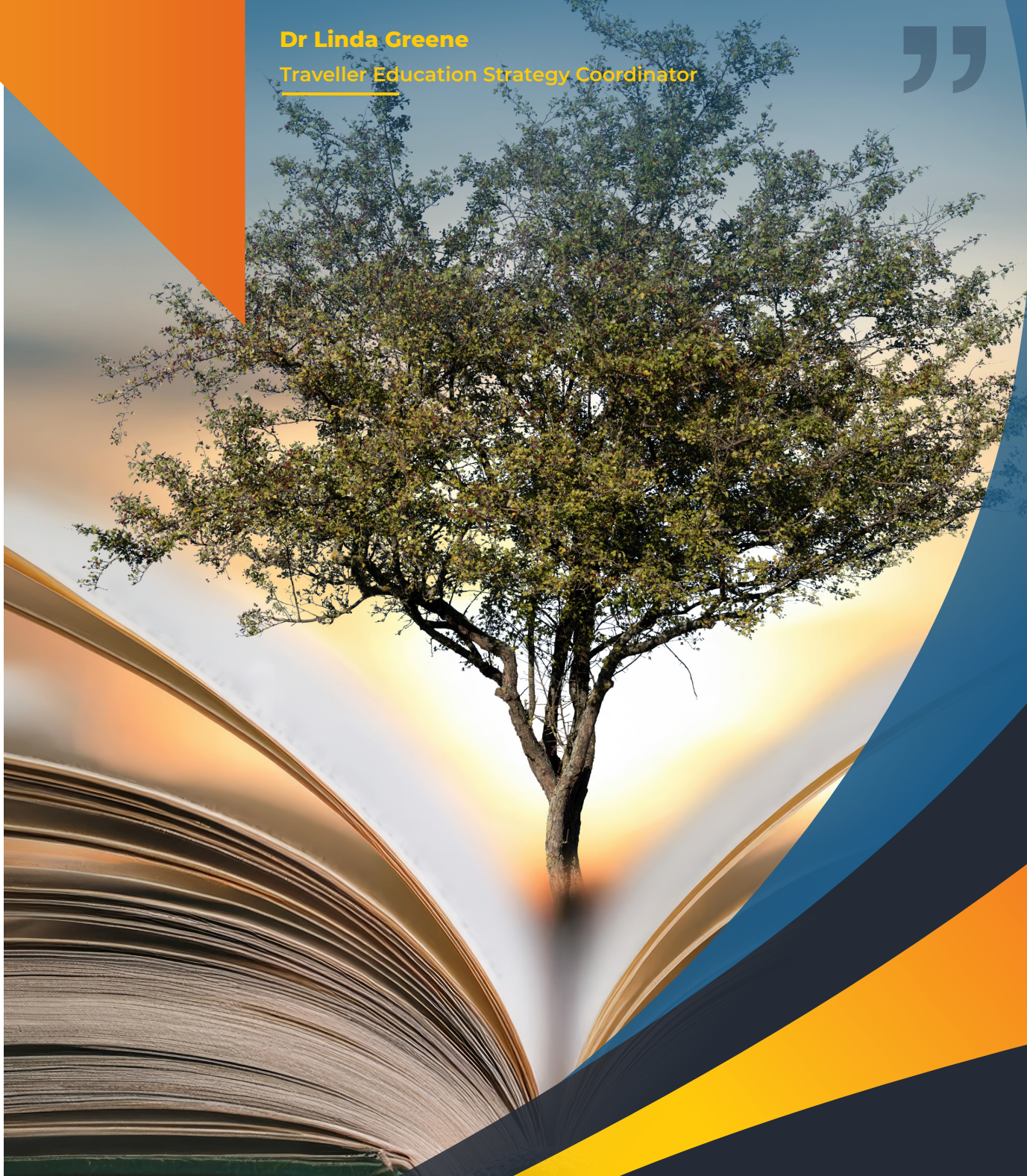
“

We get great satisfaction from seeing the children growing and learning through our work on the STAR project. There is some very innovative work happening with the establishment of Ireland's first Traveller Education Unit in partnership with the STHN and it's great that TVG is a part of this movement.

Dr Linda Greene

Traveller Education Strategy Coordinator

”



Management and Staff

List of TVG Board of Management 2024:

Alastair Christie	Chair and Secretary
Deirdre Kelleher	Treasurer
Jason Sheehan	
Cora Williams	
Leanne McDonnagh	
Maggie O'Neill	
Margarita O'Driscoll	

List of TVG Staff 2024:

Breda O'Donoghue	Director of Advocacy
Eileen O'Shea	Director of Operations
Mary Coughlan	Project Administrator
Sarah McCarthy	Assistant Administrator
Joanne Healy	Assistant Administrator
Tehmina Kazi	Traveller Health Coordinator
John O Sullivan	Traveller Men's Health Development Worker
Patrick McDonagh	Associate Community Development Worker
Bernie McDonnagh	Traveller Men's Strategy Intern
Thomas Erbsloh	Community Development Worker
Elizabeth McGrath	Women's Health Development Worker
Biddy McDonagh	Traveller Community Health Worker
Jean Donoghue	Traveller Community Health Worker
Nora Cash	Traveller Community Health Worker
Eileen Burke	Traveller Community Health Worker
Maria Stokes	Domestic & Sexual Gender Based Violence Worker
Noreen O'Reilly	Domestic & Sexual Gender Based Violence Worker
Emily Barrett	Community Drugs and Alcohol Worker
Ruth Bailey	Community Drugs and Alcohol Worker
Amanda O'Donnell	Traveller Peer Drugs and Alcohol Worker
Dr Linda Greene	Education Strategy Coordinator
Maryanne O'Donoghue	Traveller Education Worker
Bernadette O'Donoghue	Roma Education Worker
Gemma Lewsley	Childcare Manager
Susan Mannion	Childcare Team Leader
Jemma Coughlan	Childcare Worker
Shauna Kiely	Childcare Worker
Shauna Carroll	Childcare Worker
Tonya O'Sullivan	Childcare Worker
Petya Dobрева Petrova	Childcare Worker
Kayleigh Curtin	Childcare Worker
Donna Cambridge	Childcare Worker

Community Employment Scheme (CE)

We continued to provide 10 CE placements to people in the Traveller community in 2024. 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. In 2024 we further developed this offering to explore the opportunity to offer more Community development positions for CE staff where they could gain valuable work experience and specific community development training as part of their time at TVG.

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. Many of our current and past staff started at TVG on a CE scheme and then through on the job experience, certified training and career development were able to progress to long term employment.

In 2024 the following CE Workers included:

Helen O'Connor	Reception
Katieann Stokes	Reception
Ray Manning	Caretaker/Maintenance
Aimee Daly	Community development
Megan Cash	Community Development
Destiny Quilligan	Community Development
Shannon O'Driscoll	Childcare

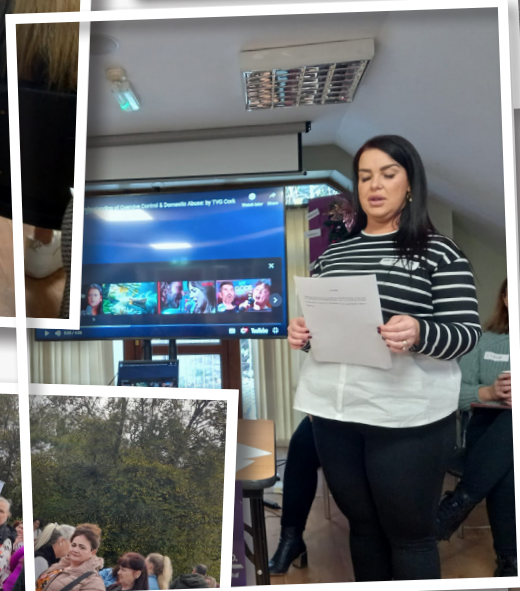
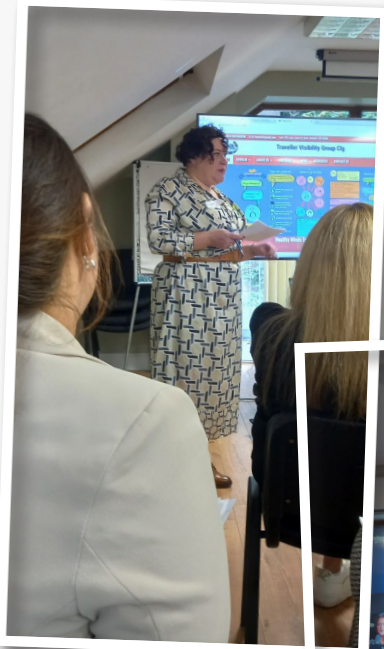
“

We have engaged with 52 Traveller men and young people across the different programs throughout the year and look forward to 2025 with energy and enthusiasm to meet the needs of the community going forward.

John O'Sullivan

Traveller Men's Health Development Worker







Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our funders throughout 2024 including: Social Inclusion and Cork Community Work Department (HSE), Traveller Health Unit (HSE), Cork Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force (HSE), Pobal, Cork Education Training Board, Cork City Council, Community Foundation of Ireland, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth, all colleagues in the Cork and Kerry Traveller Health Unit.

A further thank you to the UCC Social Work Students who took up work placement with our team in TVG over the year, thanks for your interest, passion and commitment to delivering anti-racist and culturally aware services in your future careers.

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.

Thank you

As ever, we couldn't do this work without the input and collaboration of the Traveller community in Cork. A huge thank you to all the people who link in with TVG in our community groups, research projects and special events and who reach out to TVG for support.






Traveller Visibility Group

 25 Lower John Street, Cork, T23 YX50

 www.tvgcork.ie

 021 4503786

 tvgcork@gmail.com