



Traveller Specific Drugs Initiative



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLERS CENTRE

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TSDI host Regional Workshops in conjunction with the National Advisory Committee on Drugs

In November 2006, the TSDI held a number of regional workshops for Traveller groups on the recently published report by the NACD. These workshops were attended by Traveller organisations, Local and Regional Drug Task Forces and other service providers, including drug services. These events provided many groups with the first opportunity to engage with local drug policy makers and service providers and secondly to access information on the research report: *An overview of the nature and extent of illicit drug use amongst the Traveller community: an exploratory study*, by Professor Jane Fountain. The research was presented by Professor Fountain and Mairead Lyons, director of the NACD in terms of the main findings and recommendations. A DVD on the research was shown and was followed by small group discussions on the research and secondly on the development of local responses to drug issues in the Traveller community. Below is a summary outline of the main themes in the regional workshops:

1) What things struck you/stood out about the main messages in the research about the issue of drugs in the Traveller community in both the DVD and the key messages input?

- Travellers speaking about drugs in their own community on the DVD itself was seen as positive as Travellers may feel more comfortable talking to other Travellers
- Rising cocaine use in the Traveller community
- Amount of fear about drugs in the Traveller community
- The lack of data on how many Travellers are using drug services and what drug problems they have
- Some people felt that there may be links between drugs and suicide and the pressure of hiding drug use in some cases could lead to suicide
- Drugs being used in the Traveller community are similar to that in the settled community
- It is important for services work with Travellers in responding to the issues of drugs.
- The risk factors for drug use named in the report are the issues that Traveller groups have been working on for many years and many of these issues have not changed
- Drugs services need cultural awareness training.

- It was commented that this is the first attempt at a national level to highlight issues for Travellers regarding drug misuse, and although it is difficult to have the issues named, there is a need for discussion among Travellers about it
- The NACD report should have an implementation plan
- There is a need to build on strengths/protective factors within the Traveller community, such as the role of the family

2) Are the issues in relation to drugs named in the NACD report about the Traveller community similar/or different to what's happening in your area and how?

The issues named below were additional points from local areas:

- Low self esteem and a sense of not belonging within the community for some Travellers was named as a contributing factor to drug misuse and to the increasing rate of suicide in the Traveller community
- Violence is occurring in the Traveller community as a result of drugs as it does in the settled community
- Early school leaving among young Travellers and the increasing numbers of young people accessing drugs
- The stigma the issue of dealing brings to the Traveller community and it was acknowledged that in all communities where there are drug problems there is dealing and the gardai need to address this issue
- Traveller parents are worried about younger Travellers and the risks for them in relation to drugs and about young people accessing drugs in school and as the DVD said 'Traveller parents are worried about young Travellers picking up 'bad habits''
- Traveller women have to date taken on a huge role addressing this issue
- Some people are turning a blind eye to the issue of drug misuse and drug dealing in the Traveller community, due to fear, when drug dealing is happening
- Travellers are worried that the drugs issue will be used 'as a stick' against Travellers. Some Travellers feel that things are bad and there are enough problems in the community without drugs, so there is a fear about openly discussing the issue. However this has changed over the last two years significantly with much more openness within the community on this issue now.

Regional Workshops Feedback

What's working well?

3) Can you name any positive initiatives or work happening in your area on the issue of drugs in the Traveller community

- Some work happening with Travellers, particularly Traveller men at risk of problem drug in Dublin and Bray
- More youth initiatives are available for young Travellers
- There is an education initiative in Dundalk for young Traveller males and Traveller men; this is being supported by the task force and HSE
- Traveller Community Health Workers are providing information on services to Travellers
- Traveller groups in Tuam have done a lot of work on the issue of drugs

Challenges

- Low literacy is an issue when developing drug education materials that are easy to understand as is the lack of funding available
- Travellers are not talking enough about drugs but Traveller groups are now beginning to do more work in raising awareness among Travellers
- Working with Traveller men is difficult as there is often a lack of funding to do this work
- There is a lack of supports for Travellers in prison and a difficulty staying of drugs when they get out [it was also acknowledged that some Travellers begin to use drugs in prison].
- There needs to be more links between Traveller groups and drug task forces and clear guidance on how Task Forces can support Travellers; what could the task forces be doing about this. One way could be the setting up of equality/intercultural sub groups within drug task force areas

4) What would you like to see happen in your area to try and address the issue of drugs in a way that would support Travellers and would work for Travellers?

- More Traveller reps on the task forces, but this can't be tokenistic. Capacity building needs to be done and the expectations on the rep need to be clear. Means of supporting Travellers on these structures needs to be looked at.
- One task force suggested bringing together a network of Traveller groups to decide who would sit on the task force and what would be the means of feeding back.
- It was suggested that there may be a need for regional outreach workers to work with Travellers around the country
- Leaflets about drug services should be distributed through Primary Health Care groups, Training centres and Traveller organisations and other places where Travellers can access the information
- Travellers are always giving their time in a voluntary capacity, there is a need to look at how to support Travellers on these issues in a paid capacity and the question was asked: what are Travellers chances of employment in this area?

What changes should happen?

- Traveller drug users should be able to have the *choice* of speaking to a Traveller regarding their drug use if they need to.
- Travellers becoming drug workers themselves both with the community and in drug services
- More drug awareness programmes, there is a need for increased drug education workers.
- To have workers within Traveller projects working on the drugs issue.
- Increased awareness re drugs education and drugs services – it is important to let the community know what the supports are.
- Raising the awareness of Traveller parents about drugs and providing information for them e.g. the leaflets produced by Pavee Point
- Drug awareness with Travellers should have a peer-led aspect: Travellers involved in delivering the training.
- Have Travellers working within drug projects
- There should be a member of the Traveller community sitting on task forces. The importance of a seat at the table was stressed.
- Travellers and Traveller groups are 'taking on' the issue of drugs in their community and are trying to do something about it in a positive way.

Finally, it's important to note that many of the issues named at the seminars are not new; however, it is clear that the drugs issue within the Traveller community is not confined to Dublin only and a national response is called for.

Ethnic Identifier to be used in the Drug Report System in 2007

This year the Drug Misuse Research Division of the Health Research Board will be rolling out an Ethnic Identifier in the drug data collection systems for drug services. Training will be provided by the HSE for staff within drug services who collect information. This was one of the recommendations in the NACD report and the TSDI have been working with the HRB on the type of question and categories to be used. They have explored the learning from the pilot ethnic identifier used under the Traveller Health Strategy to inform the design of the question.

This information, it is hoped will give a clearer picture of how many Travellers are accessing services and what drug related problems they are presenting with and information will be gathered anonymously. The purpose behind the ethnic identifier is that it will become part of a wider system of ethnic monitoring which involves measuring Traveller access, participation and outcomes from drug services and where gaps are identified these can be addressed.

It will take time before we have a clear picture of the experience of Travellers who are drug users and an assessment of their needs, which will feed into drug service planning and delivery.

NEWS BITES

Regional Workshops: The TSDI hopes to deliver three regional workshops in 2007 on the issue of drugs in the Traveller community. These workshops will include a review of the recent NACD research report

The TSDI calls for the National Drug Strategy to set up an Intercultural/Equality Sub Group under the auspices of the NDST to progress Traveller inclusion within drug policy in a letter to Noel Ahern T.D.

Merchants Quay and Pavee Point working in Partnership: A recent seminar hosted by Merchants Quay Ireland and Pavee Point Travellers Centre was attended by 115 participants from Traveller groups, groups representing ethnic minorities and drug service providers. A report from this seminar has been produced and will be available at the end of February on www.paveepoint.ie and www.mqi.ie

Intercultural Health Strategy: The TSDI has included a section on drugs in the composite submission by the National Traveller Health Network to the HSE working group Intercultural Health Strategy in relation to the issue of drugs

ITM strategic planning day names drugs as an issue of concern for the Traveller community: Traveller groups from around the country identified the issue of drugs as an internal issue they want work on in nearly all of the workshops that took place on the day, drugs are on the agenda for many local groups.

National Drug Strategy Updates

Meeting with Regional Drug Task Force

Co-ordinators December 2006

At this meeting we discussed the following:

- The role of the RDTF and the TSDI
- The NACD report findings and recommendations
- Information was shared on the work Traveller groups are doing on the issue of drugs and their links with Traveller groups
- How the RDTF are rolling out their action plans and Traveller inclusion within them.
- We presented an audit of all 10 RDTF area action plans and suggested ways to ensure Traveller inclusion within them. Nine out of the ten plans name Travellers as a target group and some plans have actions relating to Travellers. Some have already begun to work on these actions
- Finally we shared ideas on how Traveller inclusion could be fostered and supported on RDTFs

Meeting with the director of the National Drug Strategy Team

The team met with Patricia O'Connor, some of the following issues were discussed:

- How the NDST could support the implementation of the recent NACD report on Travellers
- A discussion document prepared by the TSDI on drug issues in the Traveller community which was circulated to the national drug strategy, the Minister with responsibility for drugs and the HLOG.
- The regional seminars with Traveller groups, drug service providers and drug task forces
- The newly established drugs network
- The team will now meet with the NDST four times a year and we will be bringing issues from the Traveller network to these meetings

A copy of the discussion document is available at drugsawareness@pavee.iol.ie

NACD Report Update

Letter to Noel Ahern T.D. Minister with responsibility for drugs

The TSDI recently wrote to the minister with responsibility for drugs in relation to the development of an implementation plan for the report recommendations. In launching the NACD report the Minister stated that *'the context of drug use in the Traveller community means that their drug service needs can be overlooked and the report shows they experience barriers. The report expresses the unique concerns of Travellers and this will help the National Drug Strategy and those on the ground to look at what they can do in planning services for Travellers.'* He commended Travellers who participated in the research and stated that Travellers needed to be involved in planning responses to their own needs and issues.

4 Page Synopsis Paper

The TSDI have developed a four page synopsis paper on the NACD report including our analysis of the research which is available on www.paveepoint.ie. In Pavee Point's Christmas newsletter we also wrote an analysis piece on the research and we also wrote an article for the Irish Examiner on the research itself.

Copies of the NACD report entitled: *An overview of the nature and extent of illicit drug use amongst the Traveller community: an exploratory study* by Professor Jane Fountain and a DVD on the executive summary of the research which is presented by Travellers can be accessed from the NACD offices on 01 6670760 or the TSDI.



NEWS BITES

Bray Travellers CDP have participated in a radio interview with a BBC radio programme in the UK dedicated to Travellers/Gypsies and Roma on their work on the drugs issue in Ireland. There are many similarities with drug issues for the Traveller community in Ireland and the UK and the TSDI have been working with a number of groups in the UK on this issue.

The next Drugs Network meeting for Traveller groups takes place in Pavee Point on February 15th from 11 until 3. All groups working on the issue of drugs or representing Travellers on local or regional drug task forces are welcome to attend. Contact us in the office to confirm attendance.

The National Traveller Women's Forum host Annual Forum Day on the theme of Drugs: this year the NTWF annual forum day event explored the theme of drugs from the perspective of the experience of Traveller women. At this event the NACD director Mairead Lyons presented the findings and recommendations, the TSDI did an input with Rosaleen McDonagh a member of the advisory group for the research. Kathleen Mc Donagh, Exchange House also presented the work that their addiction counselling service delivers to Travellers. The NTWF will be compiling a write up of the day and circulating this to those who attended.